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Research Article

## Pedagogical Translation: Nature and Benefits

Abdellah Badda

Department of English and German Philology, Cordoba University, Spain;

[Badda2stars@gmail.com](mailto:Badda2stars@gmail.com) 



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**Abstract.** The controversy about using L1 in the EFL classroom has always been heated. Despite the overwhelming claims which call for a serious total rejection of L1 in EFL teaching, it has been admitted in the literature that L1 still finds its way to the EFL classroom practices either strategically or unintentionally. Recent research shows that the use of L1 can still be appreciated by students and teachers on the grounds that there are undeniable benefits of implementing learners' mother language in class. In this paper, the researcher examines the possible benefits of using L1 in EFL classes. Pros of incorporating L1 are highlighted in light of which the researcher highlights the view that a controlled systematized incorporation of translation exercises can find some room in EFL teaching. However, the practical extent of implementing L1 is being questioned for there is scarce theorisation on how translation can be incorporated practically without affecting students' need for maximum exposure to L2. The article concluded with a call for more empirical research which can narrow the gap between the stances of acceptance and a practical implementation of translation tasks in foreign language teaching.

**Keywords:** pedagogical translation, EFL teaching, translation tasks, benefits, systematic incorporation

## INTRODUCTION

Throwing light on the decision of implementing L<sub>1</sub>/translation in EFL classes, it is very interesting to mention the fact that specifying the nature, the extent and the position of translation in foreign language teaching was and still triggers a lot of debate among proponents and opponents. Additionally, a worldly wave of investigating the nature and position of translation in foreign language teaching as well as trying to closely define translation has commonly resulted in specifying different types of translation, including *pedagogical translation*, *professional translation*, *school translation*, and *real translation*. For the sake of placing the present paper within the context of EFL teaching, two types of translation will be stressed, namely pedagogical translation and professional translation.

Addressing the issue of including translation in the EFL classes, it is obvious that referring to types of translation remains significant. Accordingly, professional translation and pedagogical translation are two concepts which will be taken into account in this paper. Additionally, indicating the differences between the two types of translation mentioned above is deemed very important for the purpose of exposing the most underlined benefits of incorporating L<sub>1</sub> in the process of teaching English as a foreign language.

Professional translation, as the term implies, is the type of translation carried out by a professional translator wherein the process of rendering a source text into the language of a target text which should provide a given audience with the chance of enjoying the same feeling of the source text. It goes without saying that producing this type of translation entails the contribution of key non-textual factors including context, goal or purpose, target text and audience/reader. Based on these, professional translation is called real translation by Klaudy (2003). The same researcher argues that this type of translation activity intends to produce a text for the target language readers in a process which basically aims to produce a text which enjoys the same effect of the source text.

Shedding more light on this type of translation, De Arriba (1996) uses the term real translation. In this regard, De Arriba (1996) contends that real translation is an end in itself since its purpose is that of transmitting one message which has to be understood by its audience. In line with Klaudy's above-mentioned contention, this type of translation only takes place when the considerations of the situation or the context are known to the translator, particularly where the text should appear and for which type of readers it is directed (De Arriba, 1996). Besides, professional or true translation can only be carried out after a full comprehension of the source text is ensured.

Contrary to professional translation, pedagogical translation as the word implies, is related to educational contexts. In this context, Witte et.al (2009) claims that pedagogical translation is considered a fifth skill alongside reading, listening, speaking and writing meaning that EFL learners are supposed to be able to translate along with being able to read, listen and respond and express themselves in written form. Pedagogical translation, in light of this claim, is a means to learn the language, to control comprehension and to explain words or structures that may be difficult for

the students (De Arriba, 1996). This type of translation takes place for the teacher where it is possible to translate a given produced text without context. What differentiates pedagogical translation more is that it can happen without comprehension at all keeping in mind that the purpose of the translation exercise partly consists in checking this understanding (De Arriba, 1996). This article aims at identifying and showcasing the aspects of benefit which the use of translation in FL teaching can bring to EFL teaching and learning. It also aims to contributing to the existing knowledge by addressing the identified gaps in literature regarding the practical implementation of pedagogical translation in EFL classes.

## **METHOD**

This article employs a comprehensive literature review methodology to investigate how translation tasks can be a source of benefit in FL teaching practices. By combining existing research, the study aims to provide a nuanced understanding of the nature of pedagogical translation as well as its advantages for EFL classroom practices. For this purpose, the paper is structured around a systematic literature review approach with focus on scholarly articles. This design allows for the identification of theoretical views and frameworks which demonstrate the effect of pedagogical translation on EFL teaching.

To collect data, a comprehensive and focused data research was conducted. Peer-reviewed articles published in renowned journals were thoroughly consulted. Comparative analysis was utilized to compare and contrast the findings of previous research. This analytical step led to synthesizing the findings and draw conclusions about the advantages of using translation in EFL classes. This synthesis highlights a gap in previous and recent research about an effective acceptable use of translation exercises in FL teaching and suggests lines for future research.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Nature of Pedagogical Translation**

With very specific connection to the notion of pedagogical translation, it has been argued that this type of translation supports and complements language proficiency in FL classrooms (Leonardi, 2010; Cook, 2010). In foreign language learning, translation is specifically considered as a language skill, which plays a beneficial role in complementing language proficiency for bilingual learners and help them enhance the skills of problem solving (Leonardi, 2010). Laviosa and Gonzalez-Davies (2020) have recently argued in a study on using translation in FL teaching that FL teachers made use of translation because they intended to check students' understanding of the taught material. Interestingly, in her recommended translation framework, Leonardi (2010) introduces translation as a pedagogical classroom activity/process which should take three important steps wherein translation activities exclusively target the acquisition and development of students' comprehension and learning skills.

Trying to narrow the nature of pedagogical translation, it is of interest to refer to Gile (1995) who makes a clear distinction between professional translation and pedagogical translation through labelling the latter school translation. In light of this,

Gile (1995) sees that this type of translation, because it is pedagogically-based, focuses on the language itself not on a translated product. Thus, other factors are deliberately disregarded with regards to school translation. In line with this, De Aarriba (1996) argues that pedagogical or school translation is the type of translating activities or tasks which happens in foreign language classrooms with specifically-inherited characteristics. De Arriba (1996) underlines that the goal of using pedagogical translation is mainly to enable students with comprehension not to make a reader or a listener comprehend. Based on this, pedagogical translation is mainly educational and very specifically intended for students and teachers and has nothing to do with translating as a profession.

### **Pedagogical Translation as a Source of Benefit**

The use of translation in foreign language teaching has been severely criticised for a variety of reasons. However, the opponents of L<sub>1</sub> do not seem to go beyond the traditionally widespread arguments against the principles of the grammar translation method. Their advocacy for monolingual teaching in FL classes deliberately eliminates and bans any possible inclusion of L<sub>1</sub> in classroom practices. As a reaction against monolingual methods to foreign language teaching and the unfair-felt ban of L<sub>1</sub> in class, the use of translation is back to be regarded as a source of benefit when systematically incorporated. In this regard, various research-based benefits of translation indicate the necessity of reconsidering the decision of banning.

Recently, Gonzalez-Davies (2020) carried a study which led to the conclusion that the use of translation tasks can enhance the process of delivering the lesson plan, which means that the use of pedagogical translation in FL classes does not entail spoiling or replacing the English lesson. In this vein, translation is seen as a source of help for teachers. In the same context, Popovic (2001) stresses the fact idea that translation activities can promote teaching and learning. Additionally, the use of translation is considered beneficial in the sense that it values students' identity and existence in the EFL classroom as it promotes students' cognitive abilities of thinking in their L<sub>1</sub> though they might be banned from using it by teachers (Ellis, 1985).

In line with Ellis (1985), Corder (1981) views L<sub>1</sub> as a valuable resource which learners can use to make up for their limitations in learning L<sub>2</sub>. In plain words, translation activities can be of good help for beginners and pre-intermediate learners of English. This very specific type of learners may find it difficult to build comprehension. In this connection, Lewis (2009) stresses the benefit of using translation to boost students' levels of self-confidence in class and facilitate learning. Functioning this way, translation can be regarded beneficial in setting anxiety, stress and frustration-free classes wherein positive feelings of security are provided (Lewis, 2009; Butzkamm, 2003). Similarly, Burlings (1968) has already argued that L<sub>1</sub> can play a further role in containing students' fear not to understand or adapt to the lessons. Very likely, it is a feeling which may arise because of a lack of comprehension or poor linguistic knowledge, especially for beginners.

Throwing more light on disregarded benefits of translation, Husain (1995) sees that translation activities can help in decreasing the psychological burden of learning a foreign language. More recently, Balabakgil and Mede (2016) find it beneficial to use

translation on the grounds that it can provide a psychological boost believing that eliminating translation through banning L1 in the EFL class is a demotivating step for learners. On another level, Lin (2008) stresses the advantageous aspect of using translation in FL classes arguing that translation activities offer the possibility of comparing L1 and L2 which allows students to use their knowledge in both languages. Similarly, Atkinson (1987) indicates to the same benefit stating that use of translation in FL learning helps learners at early levels to focus on the structural differences and similarities between the two languages. In this regard, Bonyadi (2003) and Owen (2003) also argue that comparing the two languages within translation exercises is believed to increase students' awareness of L2.

As one of the proponents of using translation in foreign language teaching, Schöffner (1998) lists more benefits of using translation activities in FL teaching. In this context, Schöffner argues that translation can 1) improve verbal agility 2) expand students' vocabulary in L2 3) develop their style 4) improve their understanding of how languages work 5) consolidate L2 structures for active use 6) monitor and improve the comprehension of L2 (Schöffner, 1998). Further benefits of translation can be summarized from Mahmoud (2006) claims in this regard. He argues that using translation tasks in EFL teaching permits:

- using authentic material.
- communication as it is interactive.
- learner-centeredness.
- learning autonomy.

Further benefits of pedagogical translation are suggested by Carreres (2006) from a study which led her to conclude that translation practice can assist learners to arrange their learning. The same researcher contends that using translation in language courses can play a role to equip learners with reading skills to 1) deal with difficult texts, 2) draw students' attention to the stylistic features of texts in L1 and L2 and 3) develop learners' foreign language linguistic skills.

### **Challenges of Application**

Based on the above discussion of previous research findings, the idea of using translation in EFL classes seems to be a promising methodological step which is likely to assist students and teachers alike. However, it should be noted that theorising about a possible inclusion of translation activities is not enough for effective implementation. Meanwhile, it should be stressed that what has been said about the benefits of pedagogical translation is much more than what should have been done for the practical application of these ideas which constitutes a big shortage of literature in this regard (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

In connection with this very interesting claim, it is discouraging to state that practical suggestions about using translation in EFL teaching are very scarce except some general guidelines. In the absence of frameworks which govern the use of translation in FL classes, Leonardi (2010) remains one of the advocates of pedagogical translation who proposes a framework for using this type of translation in classes. Leonardi (2010) suggests that the translation activities should fall within a three stage lesson, namely pre-translation, while-translation and post-translation stage. In each

stage, translation activities are designed to help students understand and build their learning.

More recommendations about using translation were provided by Mahmoud (2006) who advocates designing translation activities for EFL classes with the following considerations in mind:

- Translation activities can be used with students who speak the same L1.
- Translation activities can't be used with multilingual classes.
- Students need more time to review their translations done for comprehension tasks.
- Teachers should limit error-correction. Instead, they should value and acknowledge students' correct answers.
- Translation exercises should judiciously be used in that they do not constitute the teacher's sole methodological repertoire.
- Translation should be combined with other activities in the same lesson.

As a matter of fact, the decision of banning the use of translation in foreign language teaching and learning may seem logical in the absence of ample experimental research about the effective procedural methodologies to include translation in the EFL classes. In this regard, the author of this paper carried out an experimental study which attempted to examine the effectiveness of using translation activities in teaching reading comprehension to beginners (Badda, 2024). The study investigated a systematic inclusion of short L1-related exercises during the three phases of the reading lesson. The study revealed the following recommendations for using translation tasks in teaching the reading skill:

- Translation tasks can be used in the pre-reading stage to prepare students for comprehension.
- Translation exercises can preferably be used in the post reading stage for further/total comprehension of the text.
- Post-reading translation activities can be used to facilitate follow-up activities for the reading lesson such as speaking, debating or writing.
- Translation tasks should be limited and mixed with common tasks.
- Translation tasks should be short, not exceeding 3 minutes for the pre-reading stage and a maximum of 10 minutes for post reading stage.
- Translation tasks should be designed carefully to serve the comprehension of the text not to achieve its translation.

## CONCLUSION

Thorough review of the previous research about the current standpoint towards the use of translation in EFL classes could lead to discovering an interesting change in how translation is perceived in the present time. It is less arguable that incorporating L1 in EFL classes is gaining more support for the wide range of benefits it can bring to the teaching and learning processes. However, it has been stressed in this paper that literature which can provide practical insights for an effective implementation of translation in EFL teaching is scarce. This makes it challenging to take the step of incorporating L2 classes. Accordingly, it is obviously of paramount

importance for future empirical research to place more focus on the above-mentioned shortage in practical ideas to support the possibility of using translation tasks in FL classes.

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### DECLARATION OF CONFLICTING INTERESTS

The author of the present article declares no potential conflicts of interest regarding the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

### DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The present study did not generate any datasets. Therefore, data sharing does not apply to this article.

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