



UNIVERSIDAD DE QUINTANA ROO

División de Ciencias Políticas y Humanidades

**Application of Translation as a Method for Teaching English
in the Initial Stages**

TESIS

Para obtener el grado de:

LICENCIADO EN LENGUA INGLESA

Presentan

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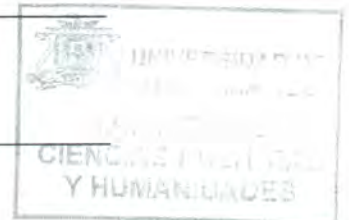
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INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

Language is not only a means of communicating thoughts and ideas; it also forges friendships, cultural ties, and economic relationships. Therefore, we can say that it is obviously a vital tool. We are living in a cosmopolitan world where different languages are spoken and where communication is very important. The majority of people are always looking for opportunities to make friends everywhere, get a better job, and even travel abroad. In order to attain those goals, it is important to be in touch with people, that is to say, to communicate. However, what happens when you find someone who does not speak your language? Therefore, the use of a language is very important; it does not matter whether it is spoken or written because it represents a necessity which we have to deal with. As we know, language is one of the most important tools of communication. Learning a new language is important since the future of people is based on the necessity to command other languages in order to have more opportunities to expand one's cultural baggage. Because of the necessity to communicate with others, nowadays it is essential to learn a second language. The importance of learning a second language cannot be overstated. The benefits are both immediate and long-term. In terms of community, learning a second language also increases understanding and compassion for other cultures. Moreover, when someone has to express themselves in another language, it automatically improves their ability to express themselves in their native tongue.

A new language opens up a whole new culture. A foreign language gives us access to another culture, and our lives take on a new dimension. The great German poet, Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe, said in 1827: "Whoever is not acquainted with foreign languages knows nothing of his own." Learning a language of another country helps one understand its culture. Language becomes a peephole to look at the nation's culture, its traditions and its

history. During the last few years, there has been a language which has become one of the most important around the world. It is essential to mention that all the languages have their own importance; nonetheless, English is the one which has the greatest number of speakers around the world, including native and non-native speakers. The ever-growing need for good communication skills in English has created a huge demand for English teaching around the world. For that reason, this language is taught in many places as a second language. When someone has to express themselves in another language, it automatically improves their ability to express themselves in their native tongue. Eventually, the people who learn a second language get a number of benefits because it helps them to improve their first language, to increase their vocabulary and to achieve better results in their schools and their lives.

There are some places where teaching English is a compulsory task due to the fact that they are close to a country where English is the official language. Teaching English to speakers of other languages is both challenging and rewarding. More and more internationally-minded people are choosing to teach English as a second language both in the United States and abroad. The worldwide demand for English has created an enormous demand for quality language teaching and language teaching materials and resources. This is the case of Mexico, the place where we are living in, which has the influence of the United States. Because of that, here in Mexico, to teach English is a kind of compulsory task. However, the process of teaching or learning a language is not easy because it comes along with a number of rules.

Whether in the United States or in other countries around the world, teaching English as a second language involves using different tools and methods. The objective is to give learners the opportunity to communicate with speakers of English worldwide.

Over the years, there have been many changes in the way foreign languages are taught. Some of the methods have come and gone as most fads do, but others have become ingrained

in the more modern techniques as basic necessities of language learning. The eminent Moravian educator Comenius said in 1632, “Every language must be learned by practice rather than by rules, especially by reading, repeating, copying and by written and oral attempts at imitation.” Despite his wise words, change took a long time coming and it was not until the 19th century that effective language learning was taken seriously. Since that century a number of methods have emerged.

Long before Grammar-Translation (GT) methods arose in the 19th Century, there had been an emphasis on grammar in language teaching using translation techniques which had been developed in the 16th Century (Bowen, Madsen, & Hilferty, 1985, p. 15). During the reign of the GT paradigm, translation was used to *understand* and *learn* grammatical use of the L2 better by providing meaning (mother tongue translation). Translation is a long-standing method in teaching foreign or second languages; it has become a fundamental study nowadays to deliver beneficial information from one language to another. For that reason, we are proposing translation as a teaching method in the first levels of English.

1.2. Problem Statement

Translation has been widely used as an aid to language teaching and learning, and comes naturally as a resource for those who are able to use it for these purposes. In addition, it is a useful skill personally, socially, and professionally. It provides educational insights into the nature of language and culture. It also helps in the safeguarding of students’ first-language identities, ensuring that the learning of a new language is an addition rather than a substitution. Yet, strangely, translation has become a pedagogic outlaw, ignored or ridiculed by almost every major language teaching theory of the last decades.

Arguments against translation have been largely based on partial observations, and there is now a strong need for a more rational and evidence-based reassessment. The knowledge of learning processes in the brain improves other teaching methods and strategies

to be developed. That is why we are proposing the use of translation as a method of teaching in the initial stages and, because of this, we are looking for evidence to prove that translation could help the process of teaching-learning, even when some researches do not agree with these assumptions.

1.3. Justification

This paper aims at supporting the conception of translation as a method for teaching English in the first levels. This research study has as its objective to investigate whether learners perceive that the use of translation as a method to reinforce teaching is useful in the acquisition of English. Moreover, we are going to focus on which benefits translation carries as a teaching tool when a foreign language is taught as its longstanding bad reputation has stopped its development in education in some ways. We also want to state that this study is perceptual. It means that we are interested in students' attitudes toward translation as a method for teaching English in the first levels.

The topic is based on some controversial arguments about whether or not translation should be considered as a useful tool in the early levels to teach a new language, in this case English. There are no other similar studies, which encourages us to prove our proposal that translation in classroom could be implemented as a teaching method to accelerate the learning process. We mean to use translation as a learning strategy inside the classroom taking into account that learners learn in different way and some teachers have opted for eliminating the use of the L1 and translation exercises in the classroom. Thus, we wonder whether or not this measure is adequate for differences in learners.

In fact, we believe that translation may contribute to the development of greater competence at the lexical and grammatical levels. Additionally, these types of exercises allow for greater intercultural comprehension between the source language and the target language. Therefore, it could be a great idea to apply these exercises of translation at the beginning of

any course to learn a new language. Thus, if it is prudently used, any identified problem could be corrected in the first lessons for students with lower language skills, as we are proposing in this research.

1.4. Objectives

It has been suggested that translation could help the teaching-learning of a language if it is applied since the first levels. Cook (2007) asserts that it will bring more benefits than detriments. The main objectives of this research is to find out whether students perceive translation to be helpful in the acquisition of English. It means to take into consideration the combination of languages, the mother tongue and the target language.

Moreover, we want to provide support for the idea that translation is useful as a reinforcement tool for learning English language (structures and vocabulary) in the first levels even when there are some assumptions against this idea. Those we do not want to attack but give it the opportunity to this new method of leaving behind its bad reputation.

Currently, translation is taught in advanced semesters; however, based on some experiences that we have during the major, we consider that it could be useful to place it since the beginning of a language course.

II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Translation has been present in our lives since early history; moreover, it is widely use around the world in order to break the barrier between languages and allow communication among human beings. In the present day, translation is one of the most critical jobs in modern society. As the whole globe is coming together based on information sharing and communicative advances, it is only natural that there has been a constant demand and an unprecedented need for translation of ideas from one language to another.

The use of translation has taken a wide importance. Because of that in the education field it is used and needed as a subject. For instance, when a language is being taught in a different cultural environment, translation is used as a teaching method. This is one of the main points in this research study. However, to speak deeply about translation and its use in education it is important that you know about its history and background of how it became an important subject over time.

2.1. Background

Translation was very important in teaching Greek and Latin in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. According to Mustain (n/d), the rise of Humanism inspired translators from various European countries to translate many texts, especially those of the ancients and the Renaissance has been termed "the great age of translations." Some of those texts belong to Plato, since the strong tendency of translation during those centuries gave the opportunity for Plato's work to be translated into English by different scholars over the curse of that time.

It is important to mention that Latin was language of the day, and for those who wrote in such languages as Flemish, Dutch, or Czech, Latin was almost indispensable in the spreading of texts. If the authors were not knowledgeable in Latin in some way, they hired translators or arranged to have the hiring done by their publishers. Translating a work from a

foreign tongue into other was seen by many as a noble challenge and a contribution to a national literature.

Another main translation transmission was through the School of Toledo where translations were made from Arabic to Latin and later to Spanish, and helped the scientific and technological development for the European Renaissance. A history of translation charts these intersections. They may be rooted in violent historical conflict and imperial expansions but it is never a simple process of translation for appropriation (Mustain, n/d).

Perhaps the best documented example of translation history is that of the Bible, but the work of scholars and great thinkers from all over the world has also been translated. These translations have permitted the cross-germination and exposure to ideas and values that have then spread across the world because of their availability in other languages. This was an excellent role of translation inside the religion.

Moreover, one of the most ancient translated texts discovered by Napoleon during his invasion of Egypt at Alexandria is the Rosetta Stone, which is a stele with three inscriptions: Demotic, ancient Egyptian and ancient Greek. It became the key for unlocking the lost language of hieroglyphs and provided a portal to the ancient world of Egypt.

In this way, translation has been working as an important tool for communicating people and culture for a long time. Now, we can take some of these bases to discuss arguments focusing on translation, and some reasons to use translation as a method to teach a language.

2.2. Translation in ELT Methods

As mentioned above, translation was very important in the teaching of foreign languages for a long time. One example of this was its role in the Grammar Translation Method, which was derived from the classical method of teaching Greek and Latin. The manner in which this method worked was criticized as the learning experiences were so tedious and with scant

results as learners had to memorize huge lists of rules and vocabulary, and this method involved translating whole literary or historical texts word by word. However, new methodologies appeared and improved teaching, such as the Direct or Natural Method established in Germany and France around 1900, where the teacher and learners avoid using the native language and just use the target language (Howatt, 1984). Then, the Audio-Lingual Method appeared trying to teach the target language directly, without using the L1 to explain new items. Later, humanistic methodologies such as the Silent Way and Total Physical Response and communicative approaches moved even further away from the L1, and from these arise many of the objections to translation (Cook, 2007). Now, we have an idea of where those misconceptions of translation came from, as the poor efficiency of the methodology of Grammar Translation Method is one of the causes why translation is rejected inside the classroom in these days and, moreover, as a subject, it was labeled “boring”, “uncommunicative”, “difficult”, “pointless” and the like, and suffered from too close an association with grammar (Duff, 1994).

Although the Grammar Translation Method is unsatisfactory for all sorts of reasons, using translation activities does not have to mean using that kind of method. There is no reason why translation should not play a part in a modern approach if it has a correct use inside the classroom since translation and other abandoned activities are now a feature of many communicative classrooms and successful aids to learning, although the approach to using them has changed. As Duff (1989) says, teachers and students now use translation to learn, rather than learning translation. Modern translation activities usually move from the L1 to L2, (although the opposite direction can also be seen in lessons with more specific aims), have clear communicative aims and real cognitive depth, show high motivation levels and can produce impressive communicative results.

2.3. Controversy in the Use of Translation in the Classroom

There are some controversies about the use of translation when a language is being taught or learnt (English and Spanish in our case) because it is said that the mother tongue interferes with the target language borrowing patterns from the first one, extending patterns from the second one, and expressing meanings using the vocabulary and syntax which are already known (Richards, Platt, & Platt, 1992). However, it is considered a great tool as it makes you able to read and understand ideas without losing the essential information according to the context as it is a common psycholinguistic process that facilitates L2 production and allows the learners both to initiate and sustain verbal interaction with one another (Brooks and Donato, 1994). Translation trains students in main aspects to find an exact equivalence between the mother tongue and the target language, but it still causes a great debate among researchers interested in language teaching. That is why we are going to mention some of them as their points of view have an important influence in this research.

First of all, we want to quote to Ross (2000, p. 11) who stated that “Translation is useful in EFL classroom in order to compare grammar, vocabulary, word order and other language points in English and the students’ mother tongue”. As we notice, translation is considered necessary inside the classroom as a reinforcement tool for all those aspects that are essential in a language. We are talking about language use, which is one of the main points for Cook (2007, p. 27) who agreed with the use of translation, stating that “Learners need a bilingual environment with a lot of translation and a lot of code switching and focus on form, meaning and language use.”

Based on our experience, we consider translation to be a necessary tool for students to acquire a language. However, there are some misconceptions that bias teachers against this process because the prevalence of grammar-translation method led to an extraordinary phenomenon: students were unable to speak fluently after having studied the language for a

long time. For this reason, translation has been defined as “uncommunicative, boring, pointless, difficult, and irrelevant” (Duff, 1994). Furthermore, it is said that translation implies the use of the mother tongue, which some think is a waste of time as the time inside the classroom is the only exposure time that students have to practice the target language.

Nevertheless, it is inevitable to use the L1, as Nunan and Lamb stated, claiming that “Problems arise when teachers try to avoid using the first language in class. The explanation is clumsy, consumes valuable class time and, judging by the students’ attempt to use it, not understood. “A quick translation would have short-circuited the rather tortuous process” (Nunan & Lamb, 1996, p. 95). Moreover, we should take advantage of translation because there are some languages that have similarities which, more than interfering, could be useful to make an analysis between both languages whenever we were able to get positive interferences as Yule emphasizes “if the L1 and L2 have similar features, the learner may be able to benefit from the positive transfer of L1 knowledge” (Yule, 1995. p. 103).

Translation is sometimes referred to as the fifth language skill alongside with the other four basic skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing): “Translation holds a special importance at an intermediate and advanced level: in the advanced or final stage of language teaching, translation from L1 to L2 and from L2 to L1 is recognized as the fifth skill and the most important social skill since it promotes communication and understanding between strangers” (Ross, 2000, p. 34).

No matter how good the students are at comprehending authentic reading or listening materials, the majority keeps mentally translating from L2 into L1 and vice versa. This fact makes teachers of foreign languages aware of the importance of translation in language classrooms. However, instead of just using translation to decipher the target language into our mother tongue we can take it as a strategy because we can use translation to figure out a language but also to practice how much we know about the target language practicing

intralinguistic and interlinguistic methodologies as Brumfit and Finocchiaro (1983, p. 37) argued that

Translation drills have been the subject of controversy until recently. Now, the majority of educators appreciate their value. Ideally, the student should not use the native language but this is unrealistic in some circumstances, and the teacher might wish to do a translation exercise in two steps within the same lesson.

Translation is a good element in language teaching specifically because there are not always perfect or exact equivalents between languages but that equivalence is what allows people to know a language. That is the reason why we thought it could be useful in the first years of language learning as the first technique students learn is literal translation which is fossilized. We have to say that sometimes literal translation works and sometimes it does not and through the time it is complicated to use other techniques as modulation, calque, equivalence, borrowing, etc. That is why Carreres (2006) suggests in that translation should be introduced in the first years of a foreign language learning process because it is not an exclusive subject for students at high level who have target language proficiency.

Moreover, Cunningham (2000) explains that, while most literature available in support of the use of the mother tongue in the class appears to favour its use with advanced level learners, it is possible to apply it to classes for students with lower language skills, if it is prudently used. It means that translation can be used as a teaching method, but teachers cannot base their classes just on it, as there will be a dependence on translation which will avoid attaining the lesson goals. If translation aids the student in relating the L2 with the L1, then it is good. If it helps students realize where their mistakes are developing or how others may interpret what they are saying in the L2, then it is something to consider (Edge, 1984).

In summary, there are both positive and negative arguments toward the use of translation in English language teaching. They are summarized below.

Arguments against translation:

- Translation implies just 2 abilities: reading and writing.
- Translation is not a communicative activity; there is a lack of oral interaction.
- Translation does not fit as classroom exercise since students do not write their own texts.
- Translation has not been practiced in a systematic, eventual and planned way.
- Translation is associated to literary and scientific texts, which do not fit to the communicative needs of students (Viqueira, 1992:76).

Arguments in favor of translation:

- In the teaching methods of LL2 there is a thematic absence, the acquired knowledge of the apprentices about their own countries of origin. However, the apprentices have to use a L2 through explanations of what they already know. Although it should be accepted that there is no a way to avoid the interference of L1 to the moment we express in other language (interferences or negative transference. Such interferences demonstrate that the conscience linguistic of L1 cannot be and must not be removed at a stroke (Süss, 1997).
- Translation obeys to the imperative of the communication. It not just a comparison and search of the correspondences between L1 and L2, but it is the search of the last sense of the messages (Thomas, 1995). Thus, translation requires something else than just linguistic aptitudes.
- According to Gibert (1989), translations states new exigencies to the learner to increase his communicative competence in L2 , because he faces to texts of other authors, to concepts that cannot be involved and ideas and actions that can be

unknown. As consequence, the lexis is increased and stimulates resources and searches less used in the language.

- To Valero Garcés (1996) translation is the communicative activity for antonomasia, applicable to many more situation of learning than it is thought.
- According to Arbuckle (1990) the value of the direct translation should not be forgotten in L2 classes, because it demands to the student accuracy, the appropriate use of the grammar, knowledge of phraseology and style. It has to be other technique of teaching of L2. It carries in a natural way the contrast of the languages in their use. On the other hand, the inverse translation (from L1 to L2) in a humble and revealing activity, that does not have the prestige of the oral competence but is essential to observe the idiosyncrasy of L2 and to improve in its competence.
- In the opinion of Viqueira (1992), that Titford (1985) follows, translation has to be a post communicative activity because it has been taught out of time, when the student has not reach enough linguistic level to take advantage of his effort. Moreover, translation avoids waste of time in the L2 teaching.
- According to Rivers and Temperley (1978) translation is useful from L2 to L1 (direct translation) as from L1 to L2 (inverse translation): from L2 to L1 (direct translation) is useful to clarify the meaning of abstract concepts, functional words and logical connectors, just as idiomatic expressions. In the first stages of knowledge the student gets familiar with the different levels and register of the language: (a) *Good morning, peter. How are you?;* (b) *Hi, Pete. How's it going?* From L1 to L2 (inverse translation) there are two useful basic techniques: (a) translation in isolated sentences; (b) translation of direct sentences. Translation of isolated sentences has been criticized for the decoupling that has of real communicative situations, but is useful to familiarize the student to the proper structures of L2.

As this is an original paper, there are no similar studies; however, there are some studies that propose translation as a good method to teach a new language or at least as a reinforcement tool. Numerous studies indicated that both negative and positive transfers between the L1 and the L2 were important for the development of interlanguage, the complex system of L2 learners. Many teachers recognize that using the L1 in the classroom is a positive representation of interlanguage. The data on interlanguage and language transfer show that it is highly probable that L2 learners will always think most often in their L1, even at the advanced level (Mahmoud, 2006). Moreover, translation in L2 classroom offers a way to highlight similarities and differences between L1 and L2 forms. Translation is useful for L2 acquisition because, firstly, it uses authentic materials, secondly, it is interactive, thirdly, it is learner-centered, and finally it promotes learner autonomy (Mahmoud 2006).

Regarding the use of L1 in the L2 classroom, it is important to find out how students themselves feel about it. Schweers (1999) conducted a research into this issue and found out that a high percentage (88.7%) of the student participants felt that mother tongue should be used in their English classes. Moreover, if learners of a second language are encouraged to ignore their native language, they might well feel their identity threatened. Janulevièienė and Kavaliauskienė (2000) researched the use of mother tongue and translation in ESP (English for Specific Purposes) classes. Their data were close to those reported by Schweers. As many as 86% out of 110 respondents felt that the native language should be used in the classroom, particularly for explaining difficult concepts (90%), introducing new material (57%), defining new vocabulary (74%), explaining the link between English and Lithuanian (55%). It is noteworthy that the exclusion or minimal use of translation in mastering complex issues in ESP has been a long-felt source of dissatisfaction, mainly on the part of the students. Learners constantly wished to check the exact meanings of the professional terms in their native language by consulting bilingual dictionaries or asking for teacher's explanations.

Native language use in the classroom can cause students to think that words and structures in English have an L1 correspondence, which may not exist. Therefore, raising students' consciousness of the non-parallel nature of language allows learners to think comparatively (Atkinson 1993). The important question is how to reach a balance of L1 in the learning process. It is suggested that four factors should be considered, namely, the students' previous experience, the students' level, the stage of the course, and the stage of the individual lesson (Atkinson 1993).

These studies and assumptions made us think of translation as an aid for the first years of language teaching-learning, which is why we are proposing translation as a method.

2.4. Modalities of Translation of L2 Teaching

Translation appears in different modalities according to its application as pedagogical tool and/or ability in teaching and learning of a L2 and that should be clearly differentiated:

- Version vs. translation (Lavault, 1985; Puren, 1988; Fernández Fraile, 1995; Sánchez Pérez, 1992)
- Translation of isolated sentences vs. textual directed translation (Rivers & Temperley, 1978).
- Literal translation vs. free translation (Barbe, 1996)
- Translation for L2 teaching vs. professional translation (Pisarka, 1986)
- Internalized translation vs. explanatory translation (Hurtado Albir, 1987)
- Pedagogical translation vs. professional translation (Arriba Garcia, 1996; Pagenaute, 1996).
- Explanatory translation vs. interlingual translation (Zurita, 1997).
- Designative translation vs. explanatory translation (Moreno Garcia, 1997)
- Unprofessional translation vs. professional translation (Smith, 1994; Kirali, 1995; Lörcher, 1996)

- Microlinguistics translation vs Macrolinguistics translation (Pérez Tuda, 1999; García Izquierdo, 2000).

Moreover, the direction of the activity make possible to distinguish between:

- Direct translation vs inverse translation (Kelly, 1997; Arbuckle, 1990).

It is important to distinguish the criteria in which those dichotomies are based on. There are four criteria: a) grammar, b) the variable competence of the apprentices, c) the alternant prominence of the teacher and the student, and d) the direction of the activity depending on the code.

1. Binarisms based on grammar:

(a) Version vs translation is a distinction based on the grammatical component that is object of the exercise: it is the version, the morphologic component (*Recte Loquendi*), in the translation of the syntactic component through the stylistic (*Bene Loquendi*). It is proper of the grammar-translation method, however is in force in an explicit or implicit way in many contrastive studies and in classic manuals of translation (Sánchez Pérez, 1992; Vinay & Darbeinet, 1958; Pérennec, 1994).

(b) Microlinguistic translation vs macrolinguistic translation is a distinction based on the linguistic object of the translation object. The Microlinguistic translation is centered in the sentence and its constitutive units (Lexical, morphological, phraseological, etc.). Macrolinguistic translation is centered in the text as the top unit of the linguistics realization. It is proper binarism of the applied linguistics to the translation (in its first levels) and, in less measure and viceversa, of the textual linguistics. (Perez Tuda 1999; Garcia Izquierdo, 2000).

2. Binarisms based on the variable competence of the students:

(a) Literal translation vs free translation: it is the classic distinction in the history of translation, which has its foundation in the mistakes of estimated evaluative attribution of

the apprentices facing to the deep knowledge of the no apprentices. It's proper of the traditional grammar.

(b) Pedagogical translation vs professional translation: it is opposition that expresses the diverse degree of the strategic competence between the apprentices of a L2 and the professionals in view of the difficulties that set out the resolution of linguistic and cultural problems through the texts. Moreover, the translation is reflected as a didactic tool or it is considered as a goal itself. It is proper of the functional- communicative method (Pisarka, 1986; Arriba Garcia, 1996; Pagenaute, 1996; Arbuckle, 1990).

3. Binarisms based on the opposition of teacher/student prominence:

(a) Explanatory translation vs internalized translation: it is based on the carried out contrastivity by the teacher in a concrete, deliberate and conscious way in view of the translator effort of the student in his L1 in process of learning of a L2 (Hurtado Albir, 1987).

(b) Explanatory translation vs interlingual translation get together with the prominence of the teacher in view of the interlingual translation, based on what the student translate using L2 (Initial, medium and superior level and improvement)(Zurita,1997).

4. Binarism based on the direction of the codes:

(a) Direct translation vs inverse translation. Based on the initial and final point of the used code. The direct translation begins in the L2 to finish the translator process of the L1. The inverse translation is advertised in the last levels of the teaching of L2, when the competence of the second language is more acceptable.

The binarisms of the translation studies are based on parameters of different nature, relative to the grammatical components which are objects of study and translation, the interlanguage of the students, the dialectic and pedagogical relation between student and teacher and the departure and arrival language of the translated texts. Those binarisms do not

respond to the same character of the translator ability, but they depend on the degree of the students' competence in L2 and the goal of the learning.

2.5. Translation as a Teaching Method

The ability to speak a foreign language is more than advantage, it is becoming a necessity. As a result, translation is a suggested methods by linguists and methodologists are looking for more effective approaches to language teaching, even when is still ignored by many teachers as an effective language learning activity because teachers often feel that translation involves no oral interaction and therefore is not a communicative activity, and that it is not suited to the general needs and skills of the language learner. Moreover, many of them consider use of the mother tongue in foreign language teaching undesirable, or feel that translation is time-consuming, boring and irrelevant. This does not have to be the case. All this happen because we think there is no a correct use of translation inside the classroom and that causes a controversy.

First of all, based on our personal experiences, we want to state that translation can be an interesting and a useful activity when a language is being taught. According to Duff (1994), "translation develops three qualities essential to all language learning: accuracy, clarity and flexibility. It trains the learner to search (flexibility) for the most appropriate words (accuracy) to convey what is meant (clarity)." This is a clearly example of how translation is an aid to develop a student's ability to communicate in a target language as it represents a method which provides a basis to acquire a great competence and, therefore, with a great speaking skills, which it is also ideally suited to the practicing of other language skills. Nevertheless, students should not be required to translate without having been given practice in the skill. Furthermore, it is essential that the teacher always explains what the purpose of each activity is so that the students know which is the objective of the activity.

Teacher should not base the complete lesson in translation; they should combine with other activities, depending on the needs of the learners. A translation exercise can be preceded by grammatical and lexical exercises to provide additional practice on certain points, and also to prepare the translation exercise. Alternatively, the translation exercise can be used as a starting point for further oral practice. Translation can also be integrated with teaching functions in the foreign language. For instance, the function of warning can be practiced in various communicative oral exercises, and then complemented with the more formal types of warning based on oral translation of written texts. Moreover, the teacher can also select material which should be interesting and varied, covering the full range of styles and registers to illustrate particular aspects of language and structure with which the students have difficulty in English. The dictionaries and gadgets are also indispensable. It is important to recognize the problems of translation as difficult and time-consuming activity using literary texts) and find solutions to these, such as ensuring these tasks are short and maintaining the element of a communication gap where possible. By working through these difficulties in their mother tongue, students come to see the link between language and usage.

2.6. Types of Possible Translation Exercises in Class of L2

Translation can be applied in the curriculum of a L2 with the purpose of demonstrate translation as a useful tool in teaching and learning. Some authors do not recognized translation as a pedagogical tool but some others consider it as other skill that should be included in the teaching and learning of a L2.

Proposal by Kelly (1997)

Kelly (1997) proposes translation exercises of general texts (literary, journalistic, etc.) instead of those of specialized themes. It proceeds in the following way:

- It facilitates the news, journalistic and short texts, in L1 in class, not before;
- The Ss read and retain;

- The content is discussed in class the next day;
- The Ss write the L2 version of the text;
- At least 2 versions produced by the Ss are contrasted;
- The grammar, vocabulary, orthography and the textual coherence;
- The original text and the translations are consulted.

The exercise of Kelly demands that the text is visualized all the time, the texts are news and shorts and the greatest students participation. The revision is made as a whole, linguistic and translator. The teacher has a directive role in every moment. However, there are no precise instructions about the chronology of the application of such activities or number of adequate exercises to every level in the learning of L2.

Proposal by Zurita (1997)

Zurita makes a difference between explicative translation and interlingual translation. The explicative translation implies 2 modalities, notional and pragmatic. The notional explicative translation is more contrastive and microlinguistics than the pragmatic explicative translation: it refers to the concrete words which meaning is unknown in L2, to the false friends and the contrastive grammar rules, for example, the reflection Spanish verbs elide the possessive (-Me lavo las manos / I wash my hands- or -Me visto / I get dressed-). The pragmatic modality is in charge of the L2 expressions in the habitual situations of use of the codes, as the formulas of identification, nationality, profession, the formulas of greeting and recognition, courtesy, request, etc. (Ex. - ¿Me dejas tu boli, por favor? - / -Can you give me your pencil, please?-) it is about modalities of explicative translation relative to the first stages of the learning of L2. This is the reason why the exercises selection is directed by the teacher. Definitely, the use of the explicative translation must be considerate in every moment by the teacher as a pedagogical tool.

Interlingual translation; since there is no a total break with the L1, the interlingual translation should be practiced in class as other pedagogical tool, but with diverse purposes and finalities according to the level of competence of the students. The cases of use are diverse according to the proficiency of the L2:

- Initial level: everything or almost everything is translated by the Ss. This happen in a natural way in the early stages.
- Medium level: the Ss start to think in L2 and the translation lies on the structures, words or idiomatic expressions that ignore, however it happens in a natural way.
- High level: there are better oral ability and speed of answer. There is a better grammatical control in writing than in the speaking. According to Zurita (1997) the translation is used just to speak impetuously or when concrete words or structures are ignored in Spanish.
- Improvement level: it is thought, automatically, in L2. The translation by the teacher is just asked to give a specific lexical sense and to the search of correspondence of idioms and phraseology.

The proposal by Zurita exposes how the Ss of L2 use translation strategically the L1 when L2 is used, which does not give guidelines to the inclusion of concrete translation exercises in class of L2 or in its possible chronology, that is, there is an indecision to the time of applying the exercises in an integral way in a planned process of teaching and learning of a foreign language.

Proposal by Newark (1992)

Newmark (1992) presents what he calls an integrated proposal, in which he relates types of translation and types of Ss: (a) to the first stages of learning of a L2 the direct translation save time, consolidates the lexical and grammatical base and facilitates the comprehension and memorizing, even when its practice has not dominated the teacher

function. (b) To the medium level the direct translation of words and sentences is valid to try mistakes and interferences. And, sometimes, the synonymy of certain semantic fields, as well it is useful to spread the vocabulary in L1. (c) To the high level, the translation has to be recognized as the fifth ability, apart from the speaking, writing, reading and oral comprehension, as it is centered on the text and requires a high knowledge of both languages.

From the integrated proposal of Newmark is deduced that the practice of translation should not be abandoned in any level of a L2 course, and should be integrated as one of the abilities in the high level of learning, as it has been proposed. Other thing is the concrete application of the translation exercises and its different modalities, something that corresponds to the teacher of L2, who must know the interlanguage of the apprentices and the level of progress of the communicative competence of the group. However, it calls the attention that Newmark, an expert translation teacher, proposes the need of integrate translation in a L2 course. It is said that the teaching of the LL2 shows a dominated view by the grammarians of mother language and teachers, and that even many translators and translation teachers do not make such proposals in the Translation faculties in the first courses of their respective majors.

Translation change our way of thinking, and helps us to understand better the influence of the one language on another, and to correct habitual errors that would otherwise remain unnoticed. Translation enables us to explore the potential of both languages, their strengths and weaknesses. Moreover, the students should be led to consider the expressive possibilities of the target language and to discover that it is not always possible to attain exact equivalence. In this way they will learn to evaluate possible versions to see which most fully captures all the implications of the original, and will find out that they need to look beyond single words, chunks of sentences, or even complete sentences to whole stretches of text as

they make their decisions. Ultimately, they will learn to translate ideas, not words. This is one of the main reasons why we consider translation of texts the most important of activities.

Furthermore, translation should encourage discussion. According to Šavelová (2006), all translation should lead to discussion, without this, the use of translation in the classroom is purposeless. Pair work and group work are effective as they give students opportunity to compare and discuss their suggestions with others. All students should be equally involved in the task in order to make meaningful the activities.

Today, with the new communicative approach to language teaching, translation is gradually becoming recognized as a valid activity for language practice and improvement that could be useful for those students in lower levels. One example is Atkinson (1987), who applies the same arguments as Heltai (1989) to support translation in classes with learners at an earlier stage of L2 acquisition. Heltai (1989) states that advanced learners tend to fossilize in their acquisition of vocabulary because they have learned circumlocution skills. Forcing advanced students to search for other words gives such learners a new goal in their studies.

2.7. Reasons to Use Translation in the Classroom

It is said that translation is used in the classroom by the learners as the amount of L1 use by particular students may well have to do with differing learner styles and abilities. "No one is in any doubt that students will use their L1 in class, whatever teachers say or do." According to J. Harmer (2001), a principal cause of this L1 use is provoked by the activity; for instance, students who are linguistically incapable of activating vocabulary for a chosen task use L1. Another reason is that translation is a natural thing to do in learning a language, and code-switching between L1 and L2 is regarded as naturally developmental.

Recent articles argue that there is no reason why translation activities cannot be incorporated into a communicatively based lesson, and they promote different activities that suit the different goals and aims of students (Atkinson, 1987; Edge, 1986; Heltai, 1989;

Tudor, 1986). If the translation activities are done in pairs or in small groups, the students must use the target language for negotiation in order to agree on the more appropriate language to be used (Heltai, 1989; Edge, 1986). Atkinson (1987) suggests that activities that involve some translation promote guessing strategies amongst students and helps reduce the word-for- word translation that often occurs and which results in inappropriate L2 use.

Therefore, if translation is used in the classroom anyway, teacher should take into account some of the following reasons:

- It helps learners understand the influence of L1 on L2 and correct errors of misuse of particular words or structures, allowing them to think comparatively.
- Translation involves contrast; it enables us to explore the potential of both languages, their strengths and weaknesses.
- It forces learners to think carefully about meaning, not just to manipulate forms mechanically.
- It encourages students to take risks rather than avoid them.
- Outside the classroom translation is going on all the time. Why not inside the classroom?
- Translation develops three qualities, which are essential to language learning: accuracy, clarity and flexibility, training the learner to search for the most appropriate words to convey what is meant.
- It encourages discussion.
- Translation activities develop the learners' metalinguistic awareness.

Many other reasons could be mentioned, but these are the most important. We consider that translation should be seen from a different perspective, and teachers should take advantage of what it represents for students who use it consciously and unconsciously as an aid in the classroom.

III. RESEARCH METHODS

3.1. Participants

Due to the fact that we want to investigate whether students perceive that translation can be useful as a teaching method in the basic levels, we chose a group of students who were in one of the Basic English levels to implement some translation activities and a survey. The design of this study was that of classroom action research because it involved a deliberate intervention in order to bring about a change or improvement in practice, which Burns (year) has identified as a central component of the action research paradigm.

Action research involves the principled collection of data so that changes in the teaching situation are based on information rather than intuition. According to Van Lier (1996, p. 32), “action research is a small scale intervention in the functioning of the real world and a close examination of the effects of such intervention.”

3.2. Procedure

First of all, we had to talk with the teachers in charge to ask for permission and to know how many hours we could have to apply our activities. The teacher gave us two hours per week. It is important to mention that they were taking summer classes; therefore, they had to attend classes for four hours on weekdays. Each week, teachers gave us the topic they were been teaching; thus we were able to select the kind of text that the students would have to translate. The texts selected for translating were two (one in English and one in Spanish). Our intention was that they were familiar to the students, with some words and structures that they had been learning in each unit. The activities were managed in the following way:

- We gave them two copies with the texts, one in English and one in Spanish.
- Students had to translate one text from Spanish to English.
- Students had to translate one text from English to Spanish.
- Students were asked to translate individual.

- Students did not use dictionary to translate.
- If there were some words which learners did not know, they had to ask us about the meaning.
- At the end of the class, learners and we translated together some parts of the text.
- Feedback was provided by correcting individual translation work and, presenting common mistakes/errors in the activities.

As we said before, the objective was to familiarize them with translation activities because at the end of all the classes we asked them to answer a survey which would help us to find out how the students were feeling about this method. We already had made the questionnaire with eleven questions, which were written in Spanish. We wrote down open and yes/no questions. Each question was related with the use of translation as a method. In general, the questions we were about what translation means to them, how they feel with the translation process, if they would like to have this method in their future classes and what they recommend to improve it.

The last day of class, we just asked them to answer our survey and likewise we asked them to answer it in Spanish, thus we would obtain better results from the explanation of the students.

IV. RESULTS

Knowing the students' perception about translation was one of the most significant results for us. That is why we asked to explain what translation means to them. According to the survey in question one (see Appendix for full questionnaire) we realized that students consider translation as a way to interpret and comprehend ideas from one language to another taking into account the sense of the original message. In this question, one of the students said that “translation is to understand what is written in another language”.

It is necessary to point out that those students had not taken translation class before. As we obtained the following answers for question 2: 80% of the class admitted that they were familiar with translation, since they had been carried out with some translation exercises before, although 20% of them said that they have never been tried translation exercises. (See Figure 1)

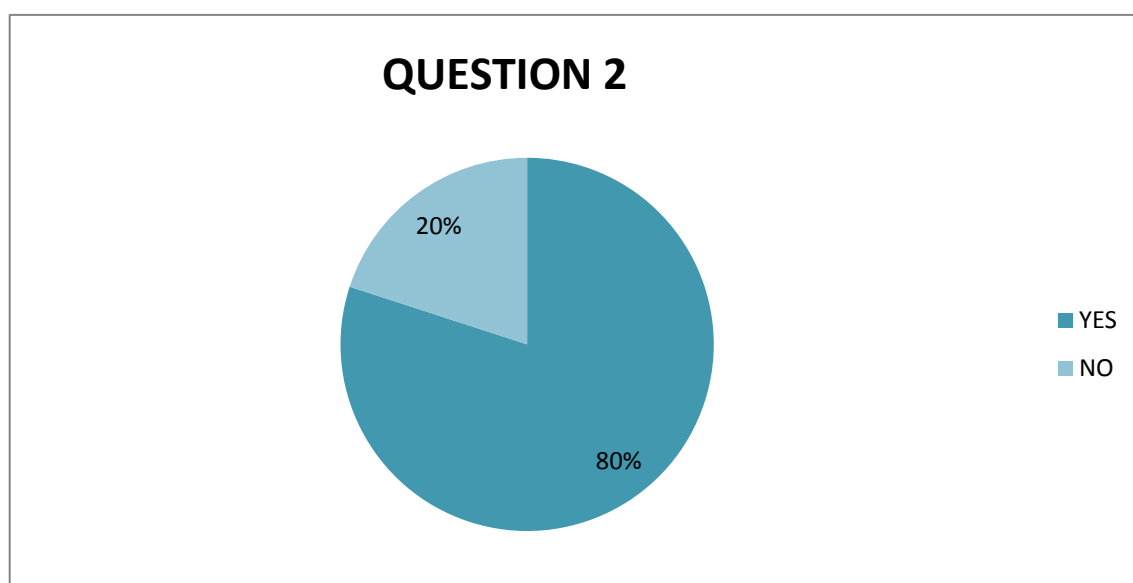


Figure 1. Answers to Question 2.

The goal of question 3 was to know how they felt when they did the exercises; in general students felt comfortable because they like those kinds of exercises, “we can learn and practice at the same time” said one of the students. Moreover, they improved skills such as

reading, writing and grammar. It was mentioned that “those kinds of exercises made me use the reasoning to adapt the text to the new language”, which is one of the answer of a male student.

In question 4, the intention was to know if translate was complicated for them, the results were that 57% of the students admitted that those kinds of exercises were not complicated for them since they had already done something like this; furthermore, the level of complexity was not difficult. The 29% stated that translate was difficult for them as one of the Ss answer: “I used to translate an isolated word or phrase out of a context”. Some students, 14%, were neutral; one of them said: “For me the fact to change a text from English to Spanish or Spanish to English was either easy or difficult” (See Figure 2).

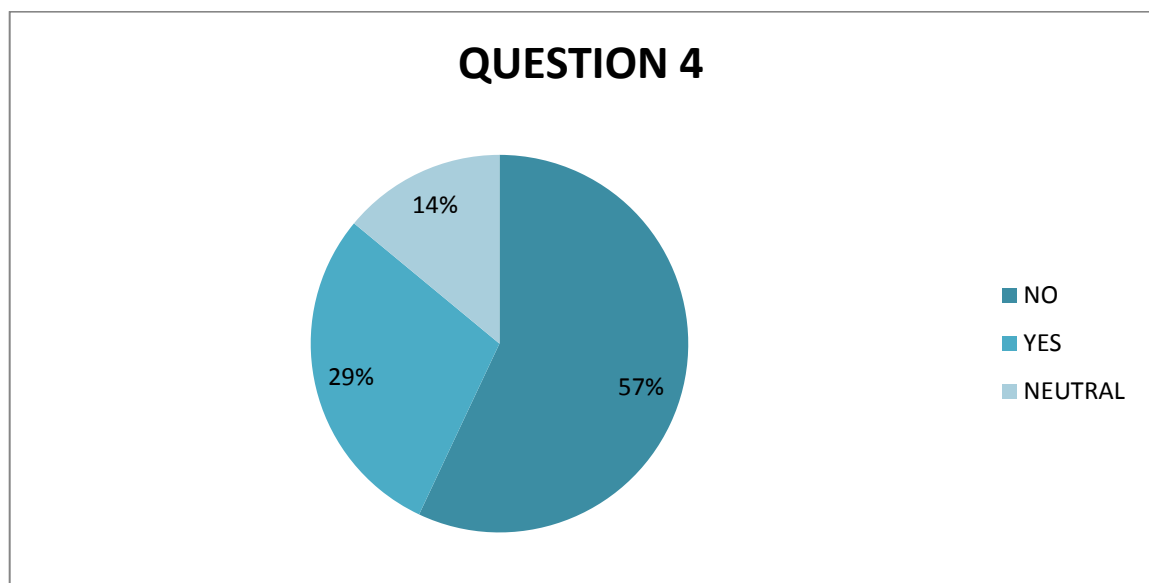


Figure 2. Answers to Question 4

In question 5, it was found out that translating from one language to another was not really complicated for students. “For us these texts were easy to translate,” mentioned some students. Nevertheless, they had some difficulties. The 43% of Ss have more troubles when

they had to translate from English to Spanish. In contrast to translate from Spanish to English, this was more complicated for the 43% of them. The lack of vocabulary was one of the problems that they had, because they were not quite familiar with the target language (English). A secondary problem was the fact that most of them were using the literal sense for translating, “Because I do not lose the original message of the first language” said a male student. However, the 14% of Ss mentioned that both parts were difficult to translate. “Both were difficult for me because I need to learn more vocabulary” declared a student. (See graphic 3).

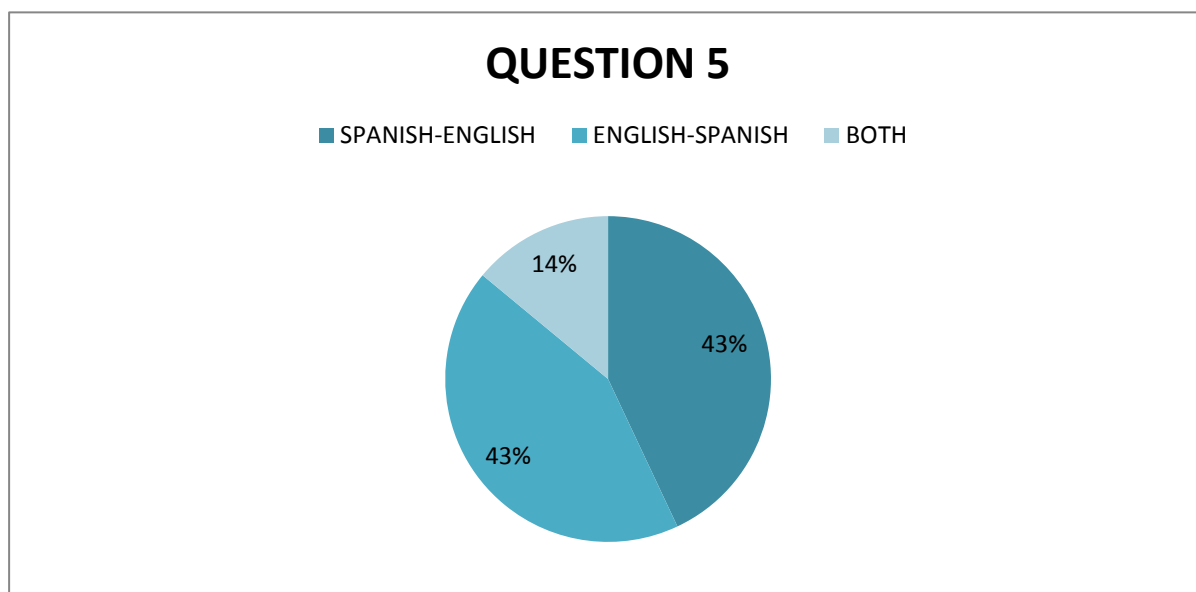


Figure 3. Answers to Question 5

In question 6 and 7, it was discovered that the translation exercises provide benefits to students, furthermore help them to develop some skills and sub-skills, such as vocabulary and grammar. Most of the students said that translation helped them to improve their reading and writing skills, as well as the use of grammar. “It helped me to better in reading and writing at the same time it provided me a lot of new vocabulary” told a female student. These activities

also helped them in their comprehension, when they have to read, and be aware about the use of grammar.

In question 8, students answered that translation will be helpful because they can practice the language as it makes you write and comprehend the target language. Consequently, in question 9, they proposed to use more interesting texts with a difficult level and some images, and deeper debates. One of the students proposed: “It would be good if at the end of the class we can debate more time about the correct pronunciation and better translation”.

In question 10, students admitted that translation is a good method because “it makes you write and comprehend English better”, a student mention. Also, another student declared “it is effective for improve themselves in English”. Moreover, some of them said that they apply previous knowledge.

“I would like to have those kinds of translation exercises to practice English”. This is one of the answers obtained of one of the students in question 11. The general reason was that they considered translation as a good strategy due to the fact that they consider it practical and efficient as it provides new vocabulary, fluency and it is a fun way to learn.

V. CONCLUSION

The application of translation as a method for teaching English in the initial stages should be applied as there is enough perceptual evidence to demonstrate that translation in the classroom can aid learners in their studies of a new language. Moreover, we have a better understanding about learners' general perceptions and attitudes toward this methodology during this study, which was positive according to the obtained results. We are not saying that the classroom working language must be the mother tongue. We believe that the target language should be used in the classroom as much as possible but using it exclusively, when trying to explain, is a rather difficult task. However, translation will accelerate the process of learning since used it conveniently constitute important tools for language learning requiring several abilities such as accuracy, clarity and flexibility.

The initial stage is a good period to implement translation as it provides new vocabulary; develops learners' metalinguistic awareness; encourages students to take risks rather than avoid them; forces learners to focus not only on meaning, but on the form of the text; helps learners understand the influence of L1 on L2 to correct errors of misuse of particular words or structures; and allows them to think comparatively. In summary, it makes students aware that literal translation is not the only technique, since it gives a wide variety of strategies that can be used such as borrowing, calque, transposition, modulation, equivalence, adaptation and compensation.

All those benefits could carry on provided that the instructor teaches methods and strategies to be employed. The classroom situation and the types of assignments are also important. Moreover, if translation activities are well designed, the four skills (listening, reading, writing and speaking) could be practiced.

In our opinion, translation should be considered as an option of teaching method. It can be used for language practice and improvement as other methods. We have attempted to

show that translation can be introduced purposefully and successfully in language courses since early stages. At the same time, we also consider that a deeper experimental study could reveal irrefutable evidence to implement translation as a teaching method in the initial stages.

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APPENDIX

1. ¿Qué es la traducción para ti?

2. ¿Habías realizado antes ejercicios de traducción similares a los ejercicios aplicados?
 - a) Si
 - b) No

3. ¿Cómo te sentiste al realizar este tipo de ejercicios de traducción?

4. ¿Traducir fue muy complicado para ti?
 - a) Si
 - b) No
 - ¿Por qué?

5. ¿Qué fue más complicado traducir de inglés-español ó de español-inglés? ¿Por qué?

6. Con base a los ejercicios realizados durante las clases ¿El traducir te ayudo a mejorar alguna habilidad? ¿Cuál fue y por qué?

7. ¿Qué otro beneficio obtuviste mediante los ejercicios de traducción?

8. ¿Crees que la aplicación de este tipo de ejercicios de traducción podría ser efectivo para mejorar tu aprendizaje del inglés?
 - a) Si
 - b) No
 - ¿Por qué?

9. ¿Qué mejorarías de este tipo de ejercicios para que sea benéfico para ti?

10. ¿Crees que el uso de la traducción es un buen método de enseñanza?

a) Si b) No ¿Por qué?

11. ¿Te gustaría que este tipo de ejercicios se repitieran durante tus lecciones de inglés?

a) Si b) No ¿Por qué?