ABSTRACT

The use of translation in foreign language teaching and learning is traditionally out of favour. Therefore, there is a tendency to exclude it or avoid using it in the discipline. On the other hand, translation is believed to be a significant factor in language teaching/learning by which the most necessary skills of foreign language can be taught.

The present study aims to explore these two conceptions of translation focusing on its use in English language teaching (ELT) and English language learning (ELL) as a foreign language in the Yemeni context.

It is hypothesized that translation under the current circumstances is (a) an indispensable factor, (b) an effective means, (c) surrounded by some problems, and (d) that its exploitation depends on the teacher's experience, the level of the students and the discipline in which the learners are placed.

The methodology and procedures employed in conducting this study include: (i) survey of literature to examine the essential concepts and issues involved in translation, (ii) the use of translation in ELT/ELL, (iii) constrastive study and text translation for identification of problematic areas in both Arabic and English for their possible attributes and implications for the learning and teaching of English; and (iv) development and use of instruments in the form of teachers' and students' questionnaires for collecting data about felt needs for translation, its effectiveness and the problems related to its application in ELT/ELL.
The survey of the relevant literature concerning the development of some fundamental issues in translation shows that translation plays a vital role in breaking the language barriers, promoting better communication and contributing to linguistic creativity. The translation process requires full and intensive comprehension of the syntax, semantics and stylistics of an original as a prerequisite step for one to be able to transfer it into another language with the closest possible correspondence between the content of the texts in the two languages. The translator sometimes can face different problems when translating due to the untranslatibility of some aspects of a text or the differences between languages, etc. He/she may not get adequate help from translation theory or other resources to find suitable solutions for those problems.

The appeal of translation in ELT/ELL lies in the fact that it lends itself to various classroom activities which can help in facilitating, enhancing and consolidating both teaching and learning English as a foreign language.

It seems, however, that the traditional and maladroit methodology of dealing with translation in the classroom, along with the evolution of modern methods, have resulted in turning teachers and learners away from the use of translation to some extent. But recently, as seen in this study, a number of publications have given evidence of the potential contribution of translation to foreign language teaching and learning. It is viewed as a purposive pedagogical device, an inevitable part of L2 learning process, a learner's tool of contrastive analysis used intuitively and spontaneously, an inescapable fact since the first language sets the stage for the formal learning of any other.
It is believed that translation may not be a suitable basis for a methodology, especially, when used mechanically and exclusively to teach grammar rules, vocabulary and foreign language expression and the reading of texts by the means of excessive translation. None the less, translation when used appropriately has a variety of roles to play. It could help in practising and improving the learner's ability to communicate back into the mother tongue, increase his power and range of expression, and play an important role in fluency development. It also enables the teacher to select material to illustrate particular aspects of language.

The identification of some of the problematic areas in both Arabic and English through the contrastive study and text translations reveals that some of the differences between the two languages have a negative effect on the Arab learner of English. For instance, differences between sound systems of Arabic and English result in a great deal of spelling and pronunciation mistakes made by the Arab learner of English. The structure of the sentence, the tense system, the organization of text writing in the two languages also represent additional difficulties for the learner.

It was found that some of the errors related to word order, subject-verb concord and verbal sentences (sentences beginning with non-imperative verb) made by the learners are obvious results of negative transfer. Errors of the use of the English articles made by the participant learners and teachers also continue to exist sometimes due to the use of literal translation and at some other times apparently due to the lack of the ability to understand how the English article system functions.

As for the tense system, Arabic is considered to have only two tenses: madhi (past/perfect) expressing completed actions, and modharea' (present/imperfect) expressing uncompleted actions.
And although, as shown in this study, Arabic has its own ways of expressing almost all the correspondent tenses in English, it is found that tense represents a critical problem for the Arab learner and the teacher of English because the misuse of the English tense varies greatly.

Regarding the organization of text writing, a stretch of connected sentences taken from texts in translation or text translation exercises administered to teachers and students, there is evidence that the participating teachers and students did not satisfactorily succeed in producing a well organized and coherent English version of the texts given to them for translation. Inappropriate paragraphing, incorrect use of punctuation and devices which hold the text together were noticed.

In the light of the issues discussed in the theoretical chapters, self-perception from the teachers and students in the field to those issues were essential. Therefore, instruments in the form of teachers' and students' questionnaires were designed and administered. The statistical analysis and evaluation of the informants' responses to the questionnaires show that the need for translation and its effectiveness in ELT/ELL are considerably rated by the respondents, though the teachers' estimation of it is relatively lower. The students, for example, think that translation increases their awareness of similarities and differences between Arabic and English and helps in explaining the difficult areas in the foreign language. They also believe that it is very important to help the learners acquire translation skills. But many teachers find that translation is surrounded by problems as it is perceived as a demanding task, which needs to be studied and mastered before it can be used, and that it slows down the learning process.
Apart from that, there is evidence that: (i) translation is not fully used in the field, (ii) there is insufficient material on how to employ it, and (iii) uncertainty of the students about some issues like: whether the translation process is a discouraging task that hinders their learning of English, and how and when to use it.

It is also found that: (i) the students in the faculties of education tend to think negatively of the use of translation in comparison to the students of the faculty of Arts, and (ii) the higher the level of the students is, the lower they rate the use of translation.

Thus, it is concluded that translation should be included systematically in teaching English as a foreign language not only as an aid to improve the language skills, but also for developing the ability of the learner to translate. Problems in text organization and inaccuracies and errors made by Arab teachers and learners of English in areas like articles, tenses, sentence structure, etc. should not be neglected or overlooked. Rather, they should be taken seriously. Translation in this case, in addition to being an important part of the English learning process, becomes a tool to contrastive and error analysis. It can help in enabling the learner to learn more efficiently by exploiting his/her mother tongue.