

## TEACHING SECOND LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY: THE ROLE OF TRANSLATION AND ASSESSMENT

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**Annotation:** This article examines the role of translation and assessment in enhancing second language (L2) learners' proficiency. It argues that translation is not merely a remedial tool but an effective strategy that develops learners' ability to transfer cross-linguistic knowledge and fosters metalinguistic awareness. The article distinguishes between formative and summative assessment types, with a particular focus on diagnostic feedback and performance-based assessment. As a key conclusion, the use of task-based translation exercises aligned with "Can-do" statements and criterion-referenced rubrics for assessing learners' interlanguage development is recommended

**Key words:** Second language proficiency, translation pedagogy, language assessment, formative evaluation, summative assessment, cross-linguistic transfer, metalinguistic awareness, interlanguage, performance-based tasks, criterion-referenced rubrics.

**INTRODUCTION.** In Europe, classical language teaching placed translation at the center of the teaching and learning process. However, beginning in the 19th century, with the development of modern approaches and methods that supported oral communication skills and promoted more “natural” ways of acquiring second or foreign languages, translation-oriented methodologies were largely rejected in the classroom. Despite this shift, translation has continued to be used as a pedagogical resource aimed at enhancing learners’ foreign language proficiency through activities such as reading comprehension exercises, contrastive analysis, and reflection on written texts. This ongoing practice has gradually restored translation’s role in language teaching, partly due to the emergence and consolidation of Translation Studies as a discipline, as well as changing perspectives within Applied Linguistics in recent decades.[1]

Innovations in other fields have also contributed to our understanding of translation and influenced teaching practices. Behavioral and electrophysiological evidence suggests that activation of the first language is an unconscious correlate of second language comprehension; therefore, translation can be considered an inevitable

and unconscious element in understanding a foreign language (Thierry & Wu, 2007). If this is the case, it becomes clear that translation has never fully disappeared from the language classroom. Despite accusations that its use is artificial, there have been significant calls in recent years for its “reinstatement” in language teaching (Cook, 2010). Moreover, critics of dogmatic communicative approaches question the very notion of “naturalness” in classroom language learning (Pintado Gutiérrez, 2012), thereby weakening arguments against translation. There is also growing evidence that translation is once again being recognized as an essential component of communicative competence.[2]. As a language learning activity in foreign language classrooms, translation has been referred to by various terms since the era of medieval scholasticism and the widely criticized 19th-century Prussian grammar-translation method. These terms range from general labels such as “school translation,” “pedagogical translation,” and “academic translation,” to more recent concepts like “translation activity,” which align with post-communicative and cognitive paradigms (Machida, 2011). In English Language Teaching (ELT), translation continues to evolve through the integration of new technologies, including paper-based and electronic handheld resources, specialized software, online platforms, and virtual forums. All of these tools can facilitate “translation activity” within the teaching and learning process. By leveraging 21st-century technologies, it is possible to adapt so-called “outdated” methods to better prepare learners for engaging with both classical and modern texts.

**MAIN BODY.** With the development of modern approaches and methods in language teaching that emphasize oral communication skills and promote more “natural” ways of acquiring a second or foreign language, methodologies that required translation in the classroom were largely rejected. Nevertheless, translation continues to be used as a pedagogical resource aimed at enhancing students’ foreign language competence through activities such as reading comprehension exercises, contrastive analysis, and reflection on written texts.[3]. By examining students’ performance in problem-solving tasks at the Autonomous University of Zacatecas, this chapter seeks to demonstrate the validity and relevance of pedagogical translation in the context of English language learning in Mexico, particularly at the undergraduate level. In this context, translation is considered an integral component of reading courses within humanities programs. It is not treated as an end in itself, but rather as a means to improve reading skills in a foreign language. Furthermore, it serves as a tool to strengthen students’ writing and communication skills in their native language.[4].

Using process-oriented research methods and drawing on developmental learning theory (see Dam-Jensen & Heine, 2009), this study analyzes how students approach problem-solving tasks. At the Department of Literature and Linguistics in Zacatecas, translation is taught not as a primary objective, but as a supportive strategy for enhancing foreign language reading comprehension. Additionally, it plays a crucial

role in reinforcing students’ abilities to write and communicate effectively in their first language, making it an essential component of undergraduate programs.[5]

#### Key Terms

**Pedagogical Translation:** The use of translation into the learners’ native language as a tool to facilitate foreign language learning in the classroom.

**Grammar-Translation Method (GT):** A traditional approach in which grammar instruction and translation exercises are used to develop students’ reading ability and intellectual skills, particularly for understanding literature in a foreign language.

**Problem-Solving Task:** An activity in which students must analyze a problem, understand its nature, and propose strategies for its resolution.

**Process Research:** An empirical research approach that focuses on observing and understanding how and why phenomena occur and develop over time.

**Think-Aloud and Observation Report:** An empirical record of students’ discussions, identified problems, and proposed solutions, aimed at improving future learning outcomes.

**Communicative Language Teaching (CLT):** An approach that emphasizes interaction and communication as the primary goals of language learning.

**English for Reading in Literature and Linguistics (ERLL):** Specialized reading courses in English designed for undergraduate students of literature and linguistics, rather than for general foreign language learners.

**CONCLUSION.** Although contemporary language teaching methodologies prioritize approaches centered on oral communication, the significance of translation has not been entirely diminished. On the contrary, it has been reconceptualized in the form of pedagogical translation and is now widely recognized as an effective tool in foreign language learning. Research indicates that translation contributes to the development of learners’ reading comprehension, analytical thinking, and problem-solving skills.

Particularly at the undergraduate level, especially within the humanities, translation serves as a crucial instrument for facilitating a deeper understanding of foreign-language texts. It not only enhances students’ reading proficiency in the target language but also strengthens their ability to express ideas clearly and coherently in their native language.

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