USING TRANSLATION AS A PEDAGOGICAL TOOL IN EFL CLASSROOM AMONG THE PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS: A CASE STUDY

BY

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education

Kulliyyah of Education
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AUGUST 2021

ABSTRACT

The use of translation in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching and learning has always been a debatable issue and continues to be unresolved due to its controversial nature; positive vs negative impact. The English language pedagogy in Oman is no exception. It had gone through similar controversies between the communicative approaches of English language pedagogy and the actual translation classroom practices. Hence, the current study generally aimed to investigate the issue of using translation in the EFL pedagogy from the viewpoint of the EFL teacher education at Sultan Qaboos University (SQU). Specifically, it examined the role of the translation courses in managing the phenomenon of using translation in the English language classrooms in Oman. The researcher employed a qualitative research method to explore in-depth the viewpoints of the immediate authorities responsible for the English teacher education programme at SQU, English teacher supervision, and English language curriculum at the Ministry of Education (MoE). The perspectives of the SQU English student teachers and English teachers were also explored to gather a comprehensive and broader understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. To reach a saturation point, a purposeful sample of four instructors from SQU Education and Arts Colleges and eight English Curriculum Officers and Senior Supervisors from the MoE were interviewed in a face-to-face mode. Additionally, the researcher approached a puposive sample of 17 SQU English student teachers and 18 English teachers, both males and females, for their field practice perspectives. The descriptive analysis of the research findings stressed the debatable nature of the phenomenon of using translation in the foreign language pedagogical context in Oman. It also emphasized the role of the teacher education programme towards a better understanding of the role of the native language in learning a foreign language, on one hand, and how to manage the native language to the best of the foreign language teaching and learning, on the other hand. The future implications of this research study are hoped to positively influence the development of EFL teaching, learning and supervision in Oman, in practice as in theory; in light of the reported realization of translation, beyond any doubt, as a resourceful tool by all the leading authorities of English language at MoE and SQU.

خلاصة البحث

إن استخدام الترجمة في تعليم وتعلم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية مسألة مطروحة للنقاش تحمل بين طياتها آراء متضاربة ولا تزال مستمرة نظرا لطبيعتها المثيرة للجدل حول إيجابياتها وسلبياتها، ولأن تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية في سلطنة عمان لا يعد استثناءً ، فقد خاض خلافات مماثلة بين المنهج التواصلي التفاعلي في مناهج تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية وممارسات الترجمة المطبقة داخل الفصول الدراسية. ومن هنا فإن هذه الدراسة تهدف إلى التحقيق في مسألة توظيف الترجمة في مناهج وطرق تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية من منظور برنامج إعداد وتأهيل معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية بجامعة السلطان قابوس بشكل عام، ودور مقررات الترجمة بشكل خاص في ظاهرة توظيف الترجمة في قاعات الدراسة في عمان. وقد استخدمت الباحثة أسلوب البحث النوعي لدراسة وجهات نظر المسئولين عن هذا البرنامج في كل من جامعة السلطان قابوس (كلية التربية والآداب) ووزارة التربية والتعليم (الإشراف التربوي والمناهج) إضافة لوجهات نظر طلاب التدريب العملي بجامعة السلطان قابوس ومعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية بما يحقق فهما أشمل وأوسع للظاهرة قيد البحث. وتحقيقا لتكامل وشمولية عملية جمع المعلومات الوصفية، عقدت الباحثة مقابلات شخصية فردية لعينة مستهدفة تكونت من أربعة أساتذة في قسمي طرق ومناهج تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية بكلية التربية والآداب بجامعة السلطان قابوس، و ثمانية من مسؤولي مناهج اللغة الإنجليزية والإشراف التربوي للمادة بوزارة التربية والتعليم، كما طبقت الدراسة على عينة عشوائية بلغت سبعة عشر طالبا وطالبة من طلبة التدريب العملي بجامعة السلطان قابوس، وثمانية عشر معلما للغة الإنجليزية من خريجي جامعة السلطان قابوس، وذلك للوقوف على منظور شامل للممارسات الميدانية. وقد أكد التحليل الوصفي لنتائج البحث على جدلية موضوع البحث المتمحورة حول توظيف الترجمة في السياق التربوي لتدريس اللغة الأجنبية في سلطنة عمان كما هو الحال في أي مكان آخر، علاوة على ذلك فقد أكدت الدراسة على دور برنامج إعداد وتأهيل المعلمين لمادة اللغة الإنجليزية بجامعة السلطان قابوس في تحقيق فهم أفضل لدور اللغة الأم في تعلم اللغة الأجنبية من جهة ، وكيفية إدارة توظيف اللغة الأم على نحو فاعل في تعليم اللغة الأجنبية وتعلمها من جهة أخرى. وعليه فإنه من المأمول أن تكون لنتائج الدراسة بالغ الأثر في تطور مناهج تعليم وتعلم اللغة الإنجليزية، وأساليب الإشراف التربوي لمادة اللغة الإنجليزية بسلطنة عمان، لاسيما في ضوء ما رصدته الدراسة من إدراك رواد اللغة الإنجليزية في وزارة التربية والتعليم وجامعة السلطان قابوس لدور الترجمة الفاعل كأداة صفية مساندة.

APPROVAL PAGE

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Praise be to Allah, who hath guided us to this (felicity): never could we have found guidance, had it not been for the guidance of Allah' (Al-A'raf 7:43).

With utmost pleasure and pride, I would love to dedicate this work to my source of inspirations: dear father, my beloved guardian angel mother Mariyam, and my dear husband Ahmed and my precious children, AlMutaz, Mawada, AlMukhtar and Issa who granted me the gift of their unwavering beliefs in my ability and unlimited patience to accomplish this fundamental academic goal. To them and my dear siblings Intisar, Iftekhar, Dawood, Maysa, Nasser and Fahad, thank you for your unconditional love, support and care, without whom I would not have made it through my PhD degree.

Special thanks and appreciation to my main supervisor, Professor Dr. Ismail Sheikh Ahmad for his immense support, continuous encouragement, and academic leadership at every step of the research project, without which this work would not have been possible. Special thanks also to my co-supervisor Assoc. Prof. Dr. Faizah Idrus for her insightful remarks. I would also like to express sincere gratitude and the biggest thanks to my international co-supervisor Dr. Abdul Gabbar Al-Sharafi from SQU, for his unlimited support, encouragement and for believing in me and being there since my MA studies and for that, I will be forever grateful.

Last but not least, I also wish to express my sincere appreciation and special thanks to the wonderful informants, dear colleagues and friends from the Ministry of Education (MoE) and dear mentors and Associate Professors from SQU who provided their full time, effort and support for this project. Finally, to the internal and external members of my dissertation committee, thank you for the insightful remarks, invaluable advice, and sincere support.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BA	Bachelor of Arts
B. Ed.	Bachelor Degree in Education Programme
BES	Basic Education System
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
ECDS	English Curriculum Development Section
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ELCS	English Language Curriculum Section
ESD	Educational Supervision Department
G	Grade
GTM	Grammar-Translation Method
L1	Arabic Language / Translation
L2	English Language
MFL	Modern Foreign Language
MoE	Ministry of Education
MT	Mother Tongue
PLD	Post-Lesson Discussion
QMR	Qualitative Methods Research
RS	Regional Supervisor
SET	Senior English Teacher
SQU	Sultan Qaboos University

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 OVERVIEW

Throughout just over two decades of lived-through experiences at school field, I have observed many teachers and learners of different grades and levels accommodate bilingual activities by using translation in and outside of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms. Most of them practice it without any clear instructional guidelines or conscious knowledge. From my perspective as a former English language learner and later in my supervisory career as a Supervisor and then as a Senior Supervisor of English, I have reached to a conclusion that the use of translation by many EFL teachers and learners is generally spontaneous and to a great extent is based on individual lived experiences.

Probably, this could be attributed to several factors at the school level. Firstly, translation as a skill is not an integrated element in the Omani school curriculum of EFL. Secondly, translation is not a core or elective subject that is taught or learnt. Thirdly, supervisors of the English language are strong advocates of the monolingual theory of L2 (second language) use only. Mostly, they do not emphasize the use of translation in EFL which contributes to the absence of the guiding lines. Fourthly, limited attention is paid to the role of the L1 (first language) use in EFL (Cook, 2007) in terms of in-service training on inter-school or intra-school levels based on a tradition which has always been "granted as the foundation-stones of language teaching" (Cook, 2001, p. 2).

Due to such deliberate avoidance, less is known and available to both teachers and learners on the guidelines of using translation in the EFL classroom. This situation

leaves the matter unframed and in the hands of individual teachers to devise their own techniques of translation in their classrooms.

Unfortunately, such unplanned use of translation (Al-Kkamisi, 2019) from both teachers and learners in the EFL classrooms often leads to undesired consequences, especially when implemented without wise discretion and sufficient knowledge such as L1 overuse, L2 limited and only use, confused learning of L2, ambiguity in the learning objectives and outcomes, and teacher's English language incompetency among other things.

Another equally important factor related to the use of translation in EFL classrooms at the higher education level is the EFL Teacher Education Programme at Sultan Qaboos University (SQU). In this programme, a course in translation entitled Techniques in Translation (ENGL3324) is offered to students specialised in the English Language from the College of Education. Like all EFL students, I took this course when I joined SQU in the year 2000 as part of my qualification as an EFL teacher. Many years later, in the academic year of 2016/2017 to be specific, I joined SQU as an MA holder in the Translation Studies specialized in EFL teaching and learning, yet this time as an adjunct instructor to teach this exact translation course.

The content of the translation course remains the same. It covers only the translation techniques that EFL students may use, should they wish to, as amateur translators but not as prospective English language teachers. The course description reveals no integration between the course objectives and the inevitable future use of translation in the EFL classrooms in both teaching and learning processes, especially knowing that it is targeting prospective English language teachers. Moreover, English language students from the College of Education do not receive thorough direct pre-service training or guidelines on how to manage the use of translation effectively in

the EFL classrooms; neither in the micro-teaching nor in the teaching practicum as part of the pedagogical courses of Teaching Methods and the Teaching Practice.

In this sense, the use of translation in the EFL classrooms in Oman would continue holding a foggy and muddled position, making it difficult to develop or gain its appropriate value as a supportive pedagogical tool if it is not researched further to pave the way for relevant authorities to take informed actions. That is why the current study is expected to have potential implications on the EFL pedagogy in conjunction with effective use of translation as well as the EFL teacher education concerning the Techniques in Translation course.

1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Interest in translation in the Arab world goes way back to the old times before Islam (Al-Ma'ani, 2018). The golden era of the translation movement began with the appearance of Islam in the 7th century when the Prophet Mohammed PBUH sent his messengers to the non-Arabic speaking rulers (Prince, 2002 as cited in Jaber, 2015) to spread the new religion of Islam. This attempt required messengers who could translate the message of Islam in writing and spoken forms. Since then, the urge to learn foreign languages for communication and translation purposes has taken a prosperous dimension and contributed immensely to formulating the Islamic civilization (Al-Ma'ani, 2018). In his known book, *Introducing Translation Studies*, Munday (2010) explained that translation throughout history has played a vital role in 'inter-human communication' and provided valuable access to significant sources of knowledge for purposes of scientific and religious nature.

From a pedagogical perspective, the use of translation in teaching and learning foreign languages is not a novel phenomenon. It is a long-established practise that has

had a serious impact on the development of foreign language pedagogy. In the 18th century to the 1960s, translation as a pedagogical tool was a very common practice in many countries around the world in learning Greek and Latin and other modern foreign languages (Munday, 2010).

As a means for teaching and learning a foreign language, translation had been reasonably justified based on the fact that people prefer to relate what they do not know with what they know as a point of start (House, 2009; Cook, 2010). In this sense, translation has certainly a strong presence as people learn foreign languages through their language (House, 2009). This view is also supported by Cook (2010) who pointed out that translation aids foreign language learning when, for example, new knowledge is related to the existing knowledge, similarities and differences between the mother tongue language and the target language are highlighted, and language awareness is addressed.

In the past, translation in pedagogy was associated with the so-called Grammar-Translation Method (GTM) where the rote study of the sentence structure and grammar rules of the target language is the orientation of the teaching and learning processes (Larsen-Freeman, 2000; Cook, 2010). By the time, the GTM began to lose its reputation and popularity, especially with the introduction of other pedagogical methods that proved to be more effective such as the direct and the communicative methods between the 1960s and 1970s (Cook, 2010) which will be discussed further in Chapter Two.

As a consequence, the fame of translation in pedagogy started to fade out in many English-speaking countries such as the United Kingdom when the translation was strictly abandoned in pedagogy and only allowed in higher education language courses and professional translation training (Munday, 2010). At that time, translation

usefulness was suspected in the research circles of the second languages due to what she calls the 'unquestioned (mis)use' in the GTM (House, 2009). Although the use of translation for teaching and learning purposes is far different from the GTM (Allford, 1999), Cook (1998) confirmed that the reason behind not only rejecting translation in language teaching and learning but also vilifying it is taking the GTM as a 'stereotype' for translation. Deller and Rinvolucri (2002) explained that the implications of such orthodox thinking perceived the mother tongue as a taboo or stigma that should by all means be excluded from the foreign language classroom.

Notwithstanding, the last four decades have seen a recognized movement towards translation in general and translation in EFL pedagogy in particular. As justified by Maley (1989), it was not until the communicative movement has run 'short of ideas' allowing the revival interest in conventional practices such as translation come back. Translation, as known today, has been recognized as an academic discipline only by the second half of the 20th century (Munday, 2010).

At the beginning of the 21st century, breaking the "long silence" and opening "a door that has been firmly shut in language teaching for over a hundred years, namely the systematic use of the first language (L1) in the classroom" (Cook, 2001, p. 1), many researchers and linguists around the globe have called for reviewing and revisiting translation in the service of foreign languages teaching and learning which have created intense arguments between those who are with and those who are against. Interestingly, the opponents' debate against the use of translation in pedagogy not only has widened the understandings of methodology in general, but also the translation approach in specific by which a new path is open for a major 'paradigm shift' in the pedagogy of foreign languages (Hall & Cook, 2012). This is particularly through the consideration of the disadvantages and the potential advantages whereby

the uncovered merits of translation in pedagogy proved to be evident; far from being seen by the opponents as an obstacle and a hindrance in target language acquisition (House, 2009). Even though, some linguists might take the use of translation as a sort of limitation, translation indeed might be the tool to eliminate such limitations (House, 2009).

On a higher level, the use of translation in the foreign language classroom is not only a natural cognitive practice in which the connections of two languages are maintained in the learner's mind (Cook, 2001), but "also has a sound pedagogical basis" (Alford, 1999, p. 249). Atkinson (1993) went on another higher level confirming that there is no solid and sound theoretical background on the 100% use of target language in the classroom, which appears to be a mere assumption. By contrast, he believed that translation (the use of source language) can play an influential role in the fluency development of the learnt language (Atkinson, 1987).

Among many others, researchers like Pan and Pan (2012), Atkinson (1987; 1993), Allford (1999), and Mohamed (2014) believed in the advantageous deployment of translation in the foreign language classroom. Atkinson (1987), for example, advocated that the translation method has several benefits one should not underestimate that contributes to boosting foreign language learning and has a 'positive effect' as viewed by Pan and Pan (2012). For instance, the bilingual approach supported by Miles (2004), which includes the use of translation, enables learners to achieve an adequate level of comprehension mostly to explain complex grammatical rules. Translation also mediates as a communication tool between the teacher on one side and his/her learners on the other side. He argued that this method enables both communicating any issues or concerns associated with the teaching and the learning processes. In a similar vein, Macaro (2005, p. 171) maintained in his case

study that foreign language teachers use L1 in "(1) building a personal relationship with learners (the pastoral role that teachers take on); (2) giving complex procedural instructions; controlling pupils' behaviour; and (3) teaching grammar explicitly." He further cited 'time pressures', learners' age, and target language level as important factors too.

Allford (1999) elaborated that there are times in the foreign language classroom when the recourse to translation is inevitable to make learning more effective and to grasp the meaning. Nevertheless, the use of translation should be justified and well-controlled so that it is used whenever it is necessary and to the minimum level (Mohamed, 2014) because of the foreign language learning objectives. Moreover, Willis (1996, p. 130) advised, "Don't ban mother-tongue use but encourage attempts to use the target language."

Ostovar-Namaghi and Norouzi (2015) argued for the vital role the first language plays as a 'precious resource', which is repeatedly wasted due to the unsolid academic background of foreign language teachers. It often manifests that teachers feel guilty when using L1 and being censured by their supervisors for doing so. Unfortunately, the gap between theory and practice expands and creates a never-ending dilemma among practitioners.

Though the role of mother tongue language (translation) is often ignored or dismissed in the teacher training and the discussions of the methodology of foreign languages (Atkinson, 1978), translation has been and would continue being an essential component in foreign languages pedagogy in many countries around the globe which justifies the importance of making the best of it, rescuing translation in teaching from 'its long-dated slumber and placing it where it deserves' (Malmkjaer, 1998, p.446). Supportively, Dagilienė (2012) suggested in her survey that translation

is a good tool to be activated in the English language learning course that aims to enhance students' foreign language skills, especially if the students are well-trained in the proper use of translation skills. Allford (1999) voiced a similar stand confirming that knowing practical translation skills is an indispensable characteristic of modern foreign language (MFL) independent learners. However, the translation should be used with judicious use and wise discretion (Hall & Cook, 2013) with clear ideas about why, how, when, who, what and how much.

In Oman's context, Al-Belushy (2000) elaborated that what matters upon the controversial use of translation in the classroom is how it is approached more than if it is used or not. At the end of her MA dissertation, she highly recommended not only providing teachers with clear guidelines on how mother tongue language is used in English lessons but also providing these illuminating guidelines to student teachers during their education programme before joining the education arena. From a recent in-depth investigation, Al-Khamisi (2019) explained in his PhD thesis that the pedagogical element of L1 use in the EFL classroom is not only debatable but also uncertain.

Al-Ma'ani and Al-Kindi (2017) found in their paper, *Translation and EFL in Oman*, that Omani teachers are at the split just like many teachers around the globe (Hall, 2018) in term of whether or not to use the translation in their classrooms. Similarly, Al-Hinai (2006, p. 13) in his case study confirmed the existence of "a tension about what is ideal" between the beliefs and practices of the teachers concerning the use of L1. The recorded confused views of teachers indicate the need for a comprehensive awareness of using translation in the EFL. This too could be linked to Al-Belushy's (2000) previous need for a standardized philosophy on the use of translation in the EFL pedagogy in Oman.

In a survey investigating 18 underlying factors behind the low performance of English level at SQU from the perspective of students, 85% of the participants claimed that not only some teachers used Arabic when teaching, in fact, they used Arabic to teach English (Al-Mahrooqi, 2012). She believed that this could be attributed to the fact that those "teachers are neither pedagogically well prepared nor professionally well-monitored" (Al-Mahrooqi, 2012, p. 266).

Similarly, Al-Issa (2005) pointed out the vital role of the teacher education programme and EFL education system on the EFL policy implementation which needs to be closely reviewed and resolved for its inadequacy issue. In this regard, Hall (2018) also pointed out that teacher's beliefs and translation practices are very much shaped by their teaching, learning experiences with their peers, cultural background and educational tradition, and institutional pressures. Hall (2018, p. 6) further confirmed:

> There is evidence that the lack of consideration of own-language use in teacher training and education programs promulgates a monolingual ideal in many contexts, but that many teachers subsequently develop their own beliefs in the value of the learners' language as a classroom resource as their teaching experience develops.

From the advanced brief controversial literature review, it is obvious that very much has been said about the use of translation in foreign language learning and teaching within the EFL classroom context; with and against, to use or not to use. Yet, from a local view, less has been researched on how it could be utilized for the advantage of foreign language learning.

Most of the reviewed studies in Oman's context, such as Al-Hinai (2006), Al-Alawi (2008), Al-Hadhrami (2008), Al-Buraiki (2008), and Al-Shidhani (2009), focus merely on the attitudes of the teachers and learners towards the use of translation and

why it is used. The pertinent details of the mechanism or the strategic guidelines of how translation should be implemented are not appropriately addressed. Being specialized in translation studies, I think this could be attributed to one of the common assumptions that any bilingual teacher who is well-familiar with the L1 and targeted L2 is naturally capable of employing translation in his/her classroom without any specialised training. From this perspective, translation is not perceived as a science or a skill to be learned in addition to the debatable controversy of the issue in the EFL methodology in the first place.

Furthermore, based on the reviewed local literature, no previous studies were undertaken in Oman related to the English Language teacher education programme, especially knowing that this programme and the professional translator training are two separate streams though they hypothetically meet at one point, which is foreign language learning.

Thus, this study is needed to fill in this knowledge substantial gap and contribute to developing an interest in this issue, especially knowing that dismissing the use of translation in the EFL leads to restriction of language teaching as a whole (Cook, 2001). It is also important in producing an official guiding policy for effective use of translation in the EFL classrooms in Oman on one hand and exploring the chances of involving the translation in the EFL pedagogy in the teacher education programme at SQU through the Techniques in Translation or the Teaching Methods and Teaching Practice courses, on the other hand.

1.3 CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

In the Sultanate of Oman, EFL is taught and learnt as a core subject from an early age; six years. School students start learning the *English For Me* textbook that is specially