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**THE APPROPRIATENESS OF TRANSLATION IN EFL LEARNING:  
A CASE STUDY OF ALBAHA UNIVERSITY LEARNERS' AND  
TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES, KSA**

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*Yabancı Dil Olarak İngilizce Öğrenmede Çeviri: Albaha Üniversitesi  
(Suudi Arabistan) Öğretmen ve Öğrenci Görüşlerine İlişkin Bir Durum  
Çalışması*

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**Abstract**

The argument on the potential importance of using EFL/ESL learners' source language inside English classrooms has been a subject for prolonged discussions and brainstorming sessions for a big number of language scholars and professionals. The current study attempted to investigate EFL learners and teachers' perspectives on the role of translation in language learning. Two modified versions of [PRTLQ] translation questionnaire (Afzal, 2013) are administered to randomly selected 50 EFL students from level 3 and level 8. In addition, 20 Arab teachers from Foreign Languages Department at Faculty of Arts and Humanities of Albaha University, KSA were given the teacher version questionnaire in the academic year 2015/2016. Results of the study indicate that there is statistically significant difference in views on the usefulness of L1 translation between EFL learners and teachers in favor of the learners. In addition, level three students differ in their perceptions on translation from level eight in favor of those of level three. Furthermore, EFL teachers' attitudes toward translation don't correlate with the variable of academic degree, but they correlate with years of experience and translation or interpretation experience variables respectively. The findings can have remarkable implications for EFL teachers concerning the appropriateness of L1 translation in language learning contexts as an incremental productive teaching approach that might lead to an increase in overall English as a foreign language learning outcomes.

**Keywords:** translation, perspectives, language learning, source language, target language.

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**Özet**

İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğrenen öğrencilerin ana dillerini sınıfta kullanmalarının potansiyel önemi pek çok araştırmacı ve dil eğitimcisi için uzun tartışmalara konu olmuştur. Bu çalışma yabancı dil öğrencilerinin ve öğretmenlerinin dil öğrenme sürecinde çeviri kullanımına ilişkin görüşlerini incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. PRTLQ çeviri anketinin (Afzal, 2013) iki değişik versiyonu üçüncü ve sekizinci sınıflardan rastgele örneklem yöntemiyle seçilen 50 yabancı dil öğrencisine uygulanmıştır. Ayrıca, Albaha Üniversitesi'nin Sanat ve İnsani Bilimler Fakültesi Yabancı Diller Bölümünden 20 Arap öğretmene de anketin öğretmenler için uygulanan versiyonu 2015-2016 akademik yılında uygulanmıştır. Çalışmanın sonuçları, yabancı dil öğretmenleri ve öğrencileri arasında ana dille çevirinin yararlı olduğu görüşü açısından istatistiksel olarak anlamlı bir fark olduğunu göstermektedir. Ayrıca, üçüncü sınıf öğrencileri sekizinci sınıf öğrencilerinden çevirinin kullanımını desteklemeleri bakımından farklılaşmaktadır. Bunun yanı sıra yabancı dil öğretmenlerinin çeviriye yönelik tutumlarıyla akademik unvan düzeylerinin ilişkili olmadığı ancak deneyim süreleri ve çeviri eğitimi deneyimleriyle ilişkili olduğu bulunmuştur. Bu çalışmanın sonuçlarının, yabancı dil olarak İngilizce öğrenmenin kazançlarını bütüncül olarak arttıracak yararlı bir öğretim yöntemi olarak ana dille çevirinin uygun olup olmadığı konusunda yabancı dil öğretmenlerine önemli çıkarımlar sağlayabileceği düşünülmektedir.

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**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Çeviri, Bakış açısı, Dil öğrenimi, Araştırma dili, Hedef dil

**Introduction**

Translation has been used by foreign language learners to facilitate language learning for many years, but translation has played various roles using different language teaching methods. While some FL educators may consider translation as a suitable means to evaluate students' understanding and an important writing exercise, other teachers may not accept the use of L1 and translation in EFL/ESL classrooms. As Malmkjær stated, "the issue of the use of translation in language teaching is one on which most language teachers have a view." (2010: 1), but fairly often, teachers' views are not strongly in favor of it. Especially, from the turn of the twentieth century onwards, many theoretical works and practical methods in language pedagogy have assumed that a second language (L2) has to be taught without reference to the learners' first language (L1). It has become a common perspective among teachers that

the translation of L1 gets in the way with the acquisition of L2. For example, the Grammar-Translation Method views translation as essential for foreign language instruction and learning (Schäffner, 2002.). However, this method has been criticized in foreign language teaching for decades as a traditional method. In this respect, Takkaç, Çatal and Akdemir (2011) investigated the attitudes of two samples of EFL male and female university students in Turkey towards syllabus, methods and teaching styles of foreign language courses. Based on the analysis of the subjects' responses to the questionnaires, it was found that students were less motivated when using traditional methods in EFL teaching .Under the later-developed Direct Method and Audio-Lingual Method, translation was forbidden and no longer included as a part of classroom activities. In the present most popular Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach, the target language is used during authentic, functional, communicative activities, and students' native language has no particular role in the classroom. Many CLT teachers maintain that the best way for learners to have native-like control of the target language is to think in that language rather than to translate or reprocess the target language into their mother tongue. Therefore, Efe, Demiröz and Akdemir (2011) showed that when they used authentic material in teaching vocabulary, idioms and daily spoken expressions to EFL learners, the task of language learning has been made easier and more successful.

While many foreign language educators may have neglected the role of translation in language teaching, from the learners' points of view, translation is still widely used in their learning (Chamot, O' Malley, Kupper & Impink-Hernandez, 1987; Naiman, Frohlich, Stern & Todesco, 1978; Tudor, 1987; Vermes 2010; 1985b). For instance, Naiman *et al.* (1978) tried to identify strategies used by Good Language Learners (GLLs), and found that one of the strategies often used by GLLs was to "refer back to their native language reasonably (translate into L1) and make effective cross-lingual comparisons at different stages of language learning" (p. 14). It seems that learners very often use translation as a learning strategy to comprehend, remember, and produce a foreign language. However, relatively little research attention so far seems to have been dedicated to a consideration of the use of translation in language learning from the learner's points of view or perspectives.

With regard to using translation as a learning strategy, translation has often been defined as one of the cognitive learning strategies (Chamot & Kupper 1989; Chamot *et al.* 1987; O'Malley, Chamot, Stewner-Manzanares,



Kupper & Russo, 1985; 1985b; Sager 1994). Translation, in a rather broad sense, can be seen as a phenomenon of transfer of one's language to another language. Under the CLT approach, however, language teachers propose that translating is not a good learning strategy. They argue that by thinking in the target language, students increase their chances of becoming fluent and accurate in that language and avoiding interference and potential detrimental effect from their L1. Nonetheless, such an assumption seems to lack much empirical evidence. Corder (1983) would rather emphasize more on viewing L1 as a facilitative valuable resource which learner can use for translation to make up their limitations in learning an L2. He assumed to redefine the concept of 'interference' as 'intercession or mediation' in order to consider learners' use of their L1 as a strategy of communication. In fact, more and more studies have suggested a positive role of translation or L1 transfer in students' language learning. (Byram & Morgan, 1994; Ellis, 2005; Eskildsen, 2008; Han 2005; Mouhanna, 2010; Poole, 2005; Seleim, 1995).

Although growing numbers of researchers have considered the positive potential role of translation in language teaching and learning, very little attention has been given specifically to students' and teachers' perspectives, that is, their particular perspectives about translation and their frequent use of translation as a learning strategy. Thus, this study attempts to explore EFL Saudi university students' and teachers' perspectives towards translation learning and how they use translation to learn and teach English. In addition, it compares between EFL learners and teachers' perceptions toward the role of translation in English language learning to spot light on what they agree and disagree on which can have pedagogical implications that may help them better learn the target language and increase their language learning outcomes through identification of the mismatches in learners and teachers views and perceptions on the importance of translation as a facilitative productive language learning strategy.

### **Context of the Problem**

Students in the foreign languages department at the Faculty of Arts and Humanities of Al-Baha University in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia too much rely on word to word translation into L1 in almost all courses taught to them and they usually prefer to memorize what has been translated by the instructors in classes. This has been noticed by the researcher and his colleagues in nearly all of the courses taught to EFL learners majoring in English language. In an interview with the students they showed great interest



in translation especially in the content area courses taught to them in linguistics, literature, applied linguistics and even language skills.

The present study investigates EFL learners' and teachers' views on the importance of translation into Arabic in language learning. It is an attempt to recognize their views and perspectives on the potentiality of using translation as a facilitative foreign language learning strategy so as to explicitly reach a number of pedagogical implications that might help standardize their preference in one-to-one translation into their L1 and how to use this approach as a facilitative productive EFL learning strategy that might help increase their language learning outcomes.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Numerous studies in the domain of ESL/EFL have considered the facilitative role of translation in language teaching and learning, but little attention has been given to students' and teachers' perspectives, that is, students' and educators' perceptions about translation and their use of translation as a language learning strategy. Therefore, the current study is an attempt to identify EFL Saudi university students' and teachers' conceptions on the importance of translation in language learning. Furthermore, it examines EFL learners' and teachers' perspectives on the significance of translation in EFL learning to determine and analyze their discrepancies and similarities in an endeavor to reach conclusions that can have pedagogical implementations that may enable them to successfully learn their FL and develop their use of translation as a productive incremental facilitative language learning strategy. This raises the following questions:

- 1- What are EFL learners' and teachers' perspectives on the benefits of translation in EFL learning?
- 2- What is the difference between EFL learners' and teachers' perceptions about the importance of translation in EFL learning?
- 3- What is the relationship between EFL teachers' views on the role of translation in EFL learning and a set of variables such as degree, years of experience and their translation or interpretation practices?
- 4- What is the difference between level three and level eight EFL learners' perceptions about the role of translation EFL learning?



## Review of Literature

### L1 effectiveness/interference on L2

The positive view of L1 influences on L2 is represented by the theory of Common Underlying Proficiency (CUP). Cummins (1983) suggests a “dual-iceberg” analogy to explain the transfer of bilingual learners' first language to the second language. In Cummin's model, L1 and L2 proficiencies overlap with the common sector, which is below the "surface". In the separate sectors we find the surface features of the respective linguistic structures of L1 and L2. As the double iceberg indicates, superficially, L1 and L2 are separate proficiencies, but originally, they interfere and share certain abstract general fundamentals and conditions common to all natural languages. L2 learners show their language proficiency in two different ways, i.e. the native language and the second language, but skills, knowledge and ideas developed in L1 can be easily transferable to L2. The CUP model clarifies that there is an essential cognitive or academic proficiency that is common across languages, which follows the transfer of literacy-related skills across languages. Cummins (1983) shows that there are three literacy-related components across languages in the CUP. The first most obvious element of CUP is perhaps conceptual knowledge. By the same token, subject matter knowledge, higher-order thinking skills, reading strategies, writing composition skills and so on developed through the medium of L1 transfer. Furthermore, when these literacy skills became available to L2 learners through sufficient exposure and motivation, they got motivated to better learn an L2. The second major element to exist in the CUP is a common experience. Francis (2000) sets forwards the third element that exists in the CUP includes actual linguistic knowledge. These transfers may include comprehension competencies, discourse competencies, formal schemata, non-formal schemata, and organizational skills.

In relation to this, some studies have asserted the role of L1 proficiency in the development of L2 learning and usage. For instance, Elkılıç, Kızıldaş, Akdemir and Topaloğlu (2010) confirmed when foreign language learners master using their mother tongue proficiently, they can eventually succeed in their FL learning. The more they are aware of the contrastive analysis of both languages from cultural and structural perspectives the better L2 learners they can be. Thus, the facilitative role of L1 usage and proficiency in increasing L2 learning outcomes has to be put into consideration.

In line with this, Upton and Thompson (2001) investigated the L1 use in L2 reading process of 20 native speakers of Chinese and Japanese ESL

learners at three different proficiency levels in the USA, applying think-aloud protocol analysis and retrospective interview. The study gave an answer to the question of where L2 readers use their L1 cognitive resources and how this cognitive use of the L1 enables them to understand an L2 text. It presented many remarkable findings. First, reading in L2 was not a monolingual activity. L2 readers resorted to their L1 while they were reading and used it as a strategy to help apprehend a text written in L2. L2 readers with various levels of L2 performance used L1 and L2 to different degrees in their endeavors to figure out a text they were reading. Secondly, the lower group tended to use L1 when faced with new L2 vocabulary words more than the higher group. Thirdly, the low-achieving readers had a greater preference to go through an L2 text and sentence meaning depending on their L1, while the high-achieving learners used L2 as the medium of thought. Fourthly, the low-ability students evaluated their comprehension of L2 by translating to and assure their understanding in the L1. The study proposed that the importance of L1 in L2 reading was not only that of translation, but it goes further beyond this. To sum up L1 can play a crucial role in all aspects of L2 reading including grammar, context, meaning and reading comprehension strategy training.

Moreover, Hall (1990) analyzed revision strategies in controlled L1 and L2 writing tasks. Four advanced ESL writers with different L1 background wrote two argumentative essays in their native languages and two in English. Revisions were then examined for specific discourse and linguistic features. The results of this study clarified some striking similarities between L1 and L2 revisions with regard both to the linguistic and discourse features for the changes and to the stages at which the changes were initiated. Hall (1990) proposed that the advanced ESL writer was capable of using a single system of revision across languages, and this system was initially shaped in their first language and subsequently transferred to the second language.

Pedagogically speaking, as Wang (2010) shows the role of L1 in L2 is vigorous and dynamic. Therefore, with a multidimensional perspective in mind, teachers could employ more retrospective measures in the pedagogical situations. Various research techniques can be combined to explore learners' cognitive operations. It is suggested that equal attention should be given to the students' idea development and language improvement. This study enlightens the use of L1 in the classroom. Many modern teaching methods treat L2 in isolation from L1. The current study, however, challenges the complete rejection of L1 in the L2 classroom through studying EFL learners' and teachers' perspectives on the role of translation into L1 in facilitating the



learning of English as a foreign language. It is an endeavor to standardize and rationalize Saudi EFL learners' at Albaha University preference for Arabic equivalent words in their English classrooms. It also tries to compare between level 3 and level 8 students' preferences in relation to their teachers. A number of studies EFL concluded that high-level learners should be encouraged to think in L2 as much as possible if the ultimate goal for L2 learning and teaching is to achieve a native-like L2 proficiency. What's more, L2 learners should be selective when using L1 and L2 educators generate a guideline to the advantages and disadvantages of L1 use. In sum, the varied role of L1 transfer on L2 implies the objective existence and usage of L1 in the acquisition of L2, which exploited to its advantages will greatly facilitate the pedagogical processes (Davis & Bistodeau, 1993; Hashim, 2006; Upton, 1997; Polio, 1994).

#### **ESL/EFL Learners' Perspectives about Translation into their L1**

Despite the recent criticism, translation in language learning still exists (Chamot, 1989; Naiman et al. 1978; O'Malley et al. 1985; Politzer, 1983). Naiman et al. (1978) tried to figure out strategies used by "Good Language Learners" (GLLs), and found that one of the strategies often used by GLLs was to "refer back to their native language(s) judiciously [translate into L1] and make effective cross-lingual comparisons at different stages of language learning" (p. 14). Increasingly, studies suggest a facilitative role of translation or L1 transfer in students' language learning (Byram & Morgan 1994; Ellis, 2005; Eskildsen, 2008; Han 2005; Mouhanna, 2010; Poole, 2005; Seleim, 1995).

During the past decades, there has been a growing awareness of, and concern in , strategies as language educators collectively agree that strategy use develops language learning. O'Malley, et al. (1985) pointed out that translation is a frequently used learning strategy. Of 11 cognitive strategies identified by the researchers, translation constituted 11.3% of all strategy uses by beginner and intermediate ESL learners, second only to such strategies as repetition (19.6%), note taking (18.7%), and imagery (12.5%).

Translation, in addition to transferring meanings and conveying messages, can also be employed as a strategy for learning foreign languages. Chamot (1989) defined the translation strategy as "using the first language as a base for understanding and/or producing the second language" (p.77). A number of theoretical works in ELT shows that the use of translation as a strategy in L2 learning should be banned (Hawks, 2001; Pennycook, 1994; Patek; 2003 Wringe, 1989). However, some scholars do think that translation



has excessively been used by EFL learners as a strategy of learning a second language. Almost all L2 learners resort to their L1 while processing L2 (Husain, 1994). Thus, some scholars may argue that translation can be a source of transfer and conveying meaning which would lead to interference. But Weschler (1997) considered that maintaining and enhancing one's native language does not inhibit the development of the second language acquisition. The use of students' source language, as Eslami and Fatahi (2008) stated, may also increase their aptitude to learning by minimizing the amount of language and culture content and shock they encounter. In fact, the language professionals should not reject using any of the two languages in balanced ways. In line with this, Turnbull (2001) summed up that when EFL teachers switch to L1 usage, they have to make sure that FL learners have mastered difficult grammatical structures or newly encountered vocabulary words. Thus, it is necessary for teachers to use the target language as possible and as much as they can, especially that in this context students have limited access to the foreign language they are trying to learn with regard to their outside classroom environment. Moreover, Cook (2001) in reinforcing of the role of L1 mentions that "bringing the L1 back from exile may lead not only to the improvement of existing teaching methods but also to innovations in methodology" (p. 189). Furthermore, Brooks and Donato (1994, cited in Cook, 2001) argue that the use of mother tongue is a normal psycholinguistic procedure that can promote L2 development and enables the learners to communicate with one another in the target language.

Additionally, It is crucial to affirm that source language in translation should not be excessively used at the expense of L2 learning and production. It is favorable in situations where it is important, necessary and where otherwise classroom time would be wasted. That's to say EFL teacher is not recommended to use the mother-tongue automatically to translate everything to the learners. The overuse of L1 in English classrooms is detrimental to foreign language learning that it (a) discourages the learners from thinking in English (the language they are learning) and so it will not be taken seriously as a means of communication. "Word by word translation can be a hindrance to the learning process by discouraging the student from thinking in English". (Kavaliauskienė & Kaminskienė, 2007). Students in most cases think in their L1 and depend too much on it. This makes them (b) acquire and develop the habit of mental translation of the passages and short sentences they work on. They interfere their L1 between thought and communication and expression developing a three-way process in production and expressing their ideas. So,



all their attempts to communicate in the target language are screened and filtered through their source one: "The mother-tongue is not relinquished, but it continues to accompany - and of course to dominate the whole complex fabric of language behavior... all referent- whether linguistic or semantic - are through the Mother tongue" (Liao, 2006).

In connection with this, Fernández (2012) in her study made clear that numerous scholars have contended that translation is not a helpful tool when learning a second or foreign language; since it offers a simple one-to-one relationship between the source and the target language, it can cause interference between them, and it is an artificial exercise that has conform with the principles of the communicative approach to language teaching. Contemporary studies, however, clarified that translation can be a great aid to foreign language learning. Thus, the aim of her study was twofold: (1) to present and evaluate the arguments that support the use of translation in FL classroom, and (2) to introduce the findings of a questionnaire that investigated students' stances towards translation tasks and their importance in L2 learning. Results revealed that students' attitudes were unexpectedly positive for many reasons: translation was one of their favorable language learning tasks, it was motivating, it facilitated a deeper understanding of the form and content of the source language text, it promoted learners' awareness of the differences between both linguistic systems, it enabled them to re-word their ideas faster and easier, and it helped them acquire linguistic and cultural knowledge.

In this regard, it is not a big deal that how learners are successful in reading or listening, the majority of language learners keep the mental translating a language into another. Depending on this idea, EFL professionals gave attention to the significance of L1 in L2 learning endeavors (Kavaliauskienė & Kaminskienė, 2007). As reported by Harmer (2001), the resort to both learners' source language and their attempt to switch to the target one is facilitative, incremental and contributing to success in foreign language learning. Learners "use of native language may be differentiated based upon their perspectives and skills". He also shows that "No one is in any doubt that students will use their L1 in class, whatever teachers say or do". Therefore, prohibiting translation in foreign language classes may create a stressful situation to many L2 learners, if regarded exclusively, there are many ways and advantages of using translation in both EFL teaching and learning. So the present study aimed to analyze learners' and teachers' views and perceptions

on translation into L1 preference which could be considered as a helping factor for the learners to arrive at their learning objectives in EFL classes.

With the growing importance in learner-centered language teaching, what helps the learner in his or her own way has been an asset. On the basis of this fact, the researcher is attempting to lighten the cognitive load of language learning, and has investigated how translation can be helpful for learners to arrive at their objective in the most economical way. The current study also examines the difference in learners' and teachers' perspectives toward the significance of translation in learning English as a foreign language which has been a debatable topic in applied linguistics and language education contexts.

It is noted that EFL/ESL teachers' and learners' perceptions and perspectives on the use of translation as a second or foreign language learning utility has not been extensively tackled in language pedagogy research. In this regard, Malmkjar (1998) stated that "the idea of translation usage in language teaching is a concept that language educators have a view." Therefore, the current study investigates EFL learners' and teachers' views on translation usage, benefits in language learning in general, and specifically opinions and perspectives related to teachers' degree, teaching experiences, as well as their translation or interpretation practices. In addition, it compares learners' perspectives with those of teachers about the gains and benefits of L1 translation in learning a foreign language. It also, investigates the differences between level three and level eight EFL learners' views on the importance of translation in EFL learning in the Department of Foreign Languages at Faculty of Arts and Humanities of Al-Baha University in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in the academic year 2015/2016.

#### **Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of this study were as follows:

- a) to investigate EFL learner's and teachers' perceptions on the role of translation in EFL learning.
- b) to find out differences in perspectives about the role of translation in EFL learning between EFL teachers and students.
- c) to examine the difference between higher level EFL learners and their lower graders in perspectives about the benefits of translation in EFL learning.
- d) to determine the relationship between EFL teachers' views about the importance of translation in EFL learning and a set of closely related



variables including degree, years of experience and their translation or interpretation practices.

### **Hypotheses of the Study**

1- There are statistically significant differences at 0.05 levels in perspectives on the benefits of translation in EFL learning between EFL learners and teachers in favor of EFL learners.

2- There are statistically significant differences at 0.05 levels in perceptions about the significance of translation in EFL learning between level three and level eight EFL learners in favor of level three learners.

3- There is positive correlation between EFL teachers' perspectives about the effectiveness of translation in EFL learning and the variables of academic degree, years of experience and translation or interpretation practices.

### **Definition of Terms**

**Language learning perspectives/attitudes:** They are predictors of success in language learning. They are a non-linguistic variable which formulates a psychological construct that can contribute to language learning outcomes (Dörnyei, 2001).

**L1 interference in L2:** Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982) define interference as the automatic transfer, due to habit, of the surface structure of the first language onto the surface of the target language.

**Language transfer:** the process of using your knowledge of your first language or another language that you know when speaking or writing a language that you are learning (Ellis, 1997).

### **Limitations of the Study**

Administration of the study instruments included the randomly selected EFL learners' two samples (level 3 and level 8 students) and the staff members in the Department of Foreign Languages at the Faculty of Arts and Humanities and other similar faculties of Al-Baha University in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) in the academic year 2015/2016.

### **Significance of the Study**

- The present study investigates EFL learners' and teachers' perceptions on the effectiveness of translation in EFL learning.

- It compares between learners' and teachers' perspectives on the usefulness of translation in EFL.

- It investigates the difference in views between level three and level eight EFL learners,



- It examines the relationship between EFL teachers' perspectives and the variables of degree, years of experience and translation or interpretation practices.

### **Method**

#### **Sample of the Study**

The study is confined to randomly chosen two EFL learners samples from level three (SS = 50) (the first level) and level eight (SS = 50) (the last level) totaling 100 and 20 non-native English professors, associate professors, assistant professors and lecturers in the Department of Foreign Languages at the Faculty of Arts and Humanities and other similar faculties of Al-Baha University in the academic year 2015/2016.

#### **Pilot Administration**

Two modified versions of Perspectives on the Role of Translation in EFL Learning Questionnaire [PRTLQ] (Afzal, 2013) were administered to 50 EFL students from level 3 and level 8 and 20 teachers. The questionnaire contains 25 statements and is divided into two main parts: **(A) How do you feel about translation into Arabic?** The subjects were asked to respond to twenty five items on the Likert scale of 1 to 5, indicating the degree to which they agreed with statements concerning their perceptions on translation into their L1 (Arabic) and its facilitative role in learning English as a Foreign Language and teaching [EFL], 1 standing for 'I strongly disagree', and 5 for 'I strongly agree'. **(B) Why do you think translation can be useful in EFL classrooms?** The respondents were asked to respond to fourteen items on the Likert Scale of 1 to 5, indicating their attitudes about the role of translation in increasing EFL learners' language learning outcomes and help them do their language tasks. Teachers were asked to write information on their degrees, years of experience and translation or interpretation experience before they responded to the statements of the questionnaire. This was done to determine validity and reliability of the students' and teachers' versions of the questionnaire.



**Table (1)**  
**Validity of EFL Teachers [PRTLQ] (Afzal, 2013)**

No.	(A)- How do you feel about translation into Arabic?
1	.414*
2	.753**
3	.779**
4	.559*
5	.640**
6	.578**
7	.451*
8	.257*
9	.466**
10	.756**
11	.845**
	<b>(B) Why do you think translation can be useful in EFL classrooms?</b>
12	.811**
13	.745**
14	.761**
15	.524*
16	.476*
17	.678**
18	.588**
19	.730**
20	.618**
21	.614**
22	.825**
23	.691**
24	.660**
25	.677**

\*\* (0.01)

\* (0.05)

The above table (**Table 1**) results show that there is a positive correlation at 0.01 and 0.05 levels between all the items in the Role of Translation in EFL Learning Questionnaire [Teachers' version] (Afzal, 2013) and total subjects' scores in the scale. They also show that there is a positive correlation at 0.01 levels between the statements and the translation perceptions about two basic questions (A) and (B) they relate to. Thus, the teachers' version of the questionnaire is ready for administration to elicit their perspectives on the appropriateness of translation into L1 (Arabic) in teaching



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English as a foreign language to the students at Foreign Languages  
Department of Al Baha University in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in the  
academic year 2015/2016.

Sajjad Bilal, Under Construction, Durgam

**Table (2)**  
**Validity of EFL Students [PRTLQ] (Afzal, 2013)**

No.	(A)- How do you feel about translation into Arabic?
1	.605**
2	.651**
3	.659**
4	.819**
5	.602**
6	.495**
7	.495**
8	.465**
9	.476*
10	.491**
11	.771**
	(B) Why do you think translation can be useful in EFL classrooms?
12	.704**
13	.656**
14	.747**
15	.724**
16	.640**
17	.639**
18	.662**
19	.561**
20	.600**
21	.617**
22	.805**
23	.613**
24	.707**
25	.810**

\*\* (0.01)

\* (0.05)

The above table (**Table 2**) results indicate that there is a positive correlation at 0.01 and 0.05 levels between all the items in the Role of Translation in EFL Learning Questionnaire [Students' version] (Afzal, 2013) and total subjects' scores in the scale. In addition, they clarify that there is a



positive correlation at 0.01 levels between the statements and the translation perceptions two basic questions (A) and (B) they relate to. Therefore, the students' version of the questionnaire is suitable and ready for administration in an endeavor to investigate whether they perceive translation into L1 (Arabic) in their EFL learning as an incremental helpful and facilitative strategy that might help increase their overall language learning outcomes and enable them to successfully do their language tasks or not.

**Table (3)**  
**Reliability of EFL Teachers [PRTLQ] (Afzal, 2013)**

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.873	25



The reliability of teachers' questionnaire was calculated using Alpha Cronbach coefficient and its value was .873 which means the translation perceptions inventory which is the instrument of the current study is of high reliability. Thus, it is statistically valid and reliable for administration to investigate the subjects' views on the importance of translation in EFL learning and teaching which might have positive incremental influence on increasing overall foreign language learning success and outcomes. That's to say that administration of the instrument of the present study can present a set of pedagogical implications to facilitate language learning process.

**Table (4)**  
**Reliability of EFL Students [PRTLQ] (Afzal, 2013)**

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.930	25

The reliability of students' questionnaire was calculated using Alpha Cronbach coefficient and its value was .930 which means the translation conceptions inventory which is the scale of the current study is of high



reliability. So, it is statistically valid and reliable for implementation to examine the respondents' perspectives on the appropriateness of translation in EFL learning.

**Results**

**Table (5)**  
**Differences between EFL Learners and Teachers in [PRTLQ]**

Sample version	Mean	Standard Deviation	t-test	P-value	Significance Level
Learners	3.2615	0.67916	2.562	0.012	0.05*
Teachers	2.8531	0.47600			

0.05\*

$t = 2.562^*$

The above table (**Table 5**) shows that there are statistically significant differences at 0.05 levels in perspectives on the benefits of translation in EFL learning between learners and teachers in favor of those of learners. This in turn verifies hypothesis (1#) that there is statistically significant difference at 0.05 levels in conceptions on the benefits of translation in EFL learning between EFL learners and teachers in favor of the learners (level 3 and 8 totaling 100) who were randomly chosen from the Department of Foreign Languages at Faculty of Arts and Humanities of Albaha University in KSA in the academic year 2015/2016.

In line with this, Fernandez-Guerra (2014) in her study made a survey of Spanish EFL students responses and views on translation activities and their roles in language learning. The results indicated that the students had positive opinions on the importance of translation in learning because of some reasons: they preferred translation assignments and tasks as they make it easier to learn an L2, they allow them to understand differences between the source and the target languages, they help them reformulate their ideas and sentences in clearer ways and generally translation enables them to learn linguistic and cultural information of the target language.

In accordance with this, Hsieh (2000) in his study clarified that translation enabled his students in EFL Taiwan to develop their vocabulary learning, reading strategies and cultural background. That's to say that more



than (70%) of the participants who responded to his questionnaire showed that translation assisted them to focus on the structure of the text in their English reading tasks and also others reported that they have become able to know many meanings of the new vocabulary words. Consequently, those students realized that translation had a positive facilitative influence on their lexical acquisition and reading comprehension.

Furthermore, Hussein-Maasoum and Mahdiyan (2010) in their study attempted to identify Iranian EFL adult learners' views about using translation in their foreign language learning. They also aimed to know and decide in which language tasks they like to use translation more. To achieve this end, 20 adult learners were interviewed and asked questions to know their opinions about the subject matter. Their findings revealed that more than 68% of the students preferred to use translation as a facilitative language learning strategy as they reported that they use their L1 when they found it difficult to express themselves in English which enabled them to feel secure and successfully do the language tasks. Therefore, about 76% of them agreed that EFL teachers may use L1 to explain some difficult English vocabulary words such as abstract words and others which can increase their foreign language learning outcomes.



Bouangeune (2009) in his study investigated the effect of translation into L1 of new vocabulary words taught to EFL learners in Laos who represented the experimental group students. The control group students did not have first language instruction and translation. The results indicated that the experimental group outperformed the control one in language performance. Therefore, Bouangeune (2009) explained this difference in terms of the successful use of L1 in instruction and the precise translation of the new lexical items presented to EFL learners.

Moreover, Saito and Ebsworth (2004) examines Japanese EFL students' views on the use of their L1 in English classes. They found out that the use of first language was useful to them. They attributed the learners' preference to be taught English language by Japanese teachers to their positive attitudes toward translation in EFL classrooms as they are able to teach vocabularies and present ideas in Japanese. The researchers commented on that the students were amazed as their English native speaking teachers did not agree that they could use Japanese in class.

Thus, the above studies assert that EFL learners have more positive conceptions on the role of translation in language learning than those of the teachers. Consequently, these studies are consistent with the findings in

(Table 5) that there are significant differences at 0.05 levels in perceptions on the gains of translation in EFL learning between learners and teachers in favor of those of learners. Therefore, this result draws our attention to the necessity of matching EFL teachers' views on L1 usage and translation practices in English classrooms with those of the learners so as to meet students' expectations and satisfy their language learning needs as possible and as much as we can.

**Table (6)**  
**Differences between Level Three and Eight EFL Learners in [PRTLQ]**

Sample version	Mean	Standard deviation	t-test	P-value	Significance Level
L3 Learners	3.7540	0.42561	10.540	0.039	0.05*
L8 Learners	2.7689	0.50560			

0.05\*

$t = 10.540^*$

The above table (Table 6) indicates that there are statistically significant differences at 0.05 levels in perceptions on the gains of translation in EFL learning between level three and eight EFL learners in favor of those of level three learners. This in turn verifies hypothesis (2#) that there is statistically significant difference at 0.05 levels in perceptions on the gains of translation in EFL learning between level three EFL learners and level eight in favor of level three learners who were both randomly chosen from the Department of Foreign Languages at Faculty of Arts and Humanities of Albaha University in KSA in the academic year 2015/2016.

In agreement with this, Omar and Mohamed (2014) conducted their study to figure out ESL preservice teachers' prospects of translation in ESL instruction in an outside-cities school. The objective of the study was to minimize the gap between two stands: translation pedagogy (finding equivalence between source and the target text) and pedagogical translation (use of translation in language teaching (Zabalbeascoa, 1997)). Subjects of the study were 18 final year ESL preservice teachers who were enrolled in ESL outplace education project in an outside-cities school. The participants were asked to describe how they knew meaning of English words through translation in ESL classroom. Data was gathered by an online interview that



consisted of 7 questions, accompanied by focus group interview. This study has showed ESL teaching using translation in an outside-cities school should consider the following: (1) developing proficiency in natural language or conversation through understanding the meaning at word and sentence level via translation to relate to the learners' everyday experiences, (2) providing ample opportunity for learning, even overlearning, through translation via recitation, repetition, and practice toward automaticity of knowledge and skills, and (3) scaffolding for understanding and development of thinking skills through the methods of translation. Specifically, the findings from this study revealed pertinent areas to be focused on when using translation in ESL classroom i.e. learner proficiency level, scaffolding, content of the materials, relevancy to the context, and spiral learning.

In connection with this, Tang (2002) in his examined EFL Chinese learners' attitudes toward the use translation into L1 in language learning. He collected the data using interviews and classroom observations. The findings showed the reasons for using L1 in L2 classrooms included: efficiency and being less time-consuming. The study indicated that enabling the use of L1 in L2 classes facilitates L2 learning and helps teaching and learning, especially for low level students who preferred using L1 in English classes more than the higher graders.

In addition, Latsanyphone (2009) in his study reported that a good number of English educators do not show concern in using L1 in EFL/ESL classrooms settings. That's because they think that English must be taught in English to increase learners' access to the target language which would improve their understanding of English and speed up their language learning. Latsanyphone managed to find a justification to the contrary as he used L1 in teaching English vocabulary to 169 students of a low proficiency level. It was found that resorting to learners' source language (L1) in teaching EFL in Laos developed their learning and remembering of new vocabulary words both individually and in connected sentences. This is probably because of comprehensible simple meaning and interpretation in L1 and translation drills in class.

In line with this, the use of translation into L1 in EFL classrooms has been an argumentative subject for decades. An L2 only approach proposes that depending on the target language in L2 classroom enhances the learning of that language. Nevertheless, Bhootha , Azmanb and Ismail's (2014) study is directed by researches that advocate using L1 in ESL/EFL class settings to forward other than slow down second language learning. Therefore, they



investigated the use of L1 in the EFL reading comprehension classroom in a University in Yemen. They collected data from a randomly chosen sample of 45-Yemeni EFL enrolled at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. Data collection process was done using a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews to guarantee accuracy of the subjects' responses. The study findings clarified that the students figure out the use of Arabic as an incremental facilitative enabling strategy in their EFL learning endeavors and classrooms settings; and that it has numerous objectives: to translate new words, to introduce concepts, to offer interpretations and to cooperate with their peer groups. Thus, they summed up that L1 translation can be used as a fixing-up and bridging strategy to enable learners to increase their learning and understanding of L2 items they are exposed to. It can also be applied in pedagogical settings by EFL teachers to enrich second language learning experiences as well as increase involvement in English language classroom context. This in turn can lead to vocabulary growth and L2 knowledge development.

Furthermore, Alkadasy (2008) in her study indicated that Arabic (L1) in Yemeni context can never be forbidden or stopped in English as a foreign language pre-university and university classrooms. She also showed that Arabic has an important function in EFL learning, especially with low graders. She added that English educators are not alert to the influential use of Arabic in the EFL learning. Moreover, learners think that Arabic is the best way for them to comprehend English. She ended up with that language professionals can be made acquainted that using Arabic purposefully would improve communication in English classroom as far as EFL students are concerned. Thus, translation can be considered as a facilitative language learning and instructional strategy that may help L2 learners increase their understanding and knowledge about the target language, which eventually may lead to an increase in their overall language learning outcomes.

Therefore, the aforementioned studies confirm that EFL learners have positive perspectives on the importance of translation in L2 learning depending on their progress and development in L2 and the language content they are taught and exposed to during their years of EFL study. So, these studies are consistent and compatible with the findings shown in (Table 6) that there are significant differences at 0.05 levels in perspectives on the benefits of translation in learning English as a foreign language between level three students and level eight in favor of those of level three students.



**Table (7)**  
**Correlation between EFL Teachers[PRTLQ] and the Variables of Degree, Years of Experience and Translation Practices.**

T- [PRTLQ]	A.degree	Y- experience	Y- translation
Correlation	.335	.514	.502
Sign.	.148	.020*	.026*

0.05\*                      N = 20

r = \*.05

The above table (**Table 7**) clarifies that there isn't positive correlation between EFL teachers' responses to [PRTLQ] and the variable of academic degree (.335). But there is positive correlation at 0.05 level between their views and the variable of years of experience (.020) and also positive correlation at 0.05 level between EFL teachers' perceptions on the fruitfulness of translation in EFL learning and the variable of translation experiences (.026) which partially verifies hypothesis (**3#**) that there is positive correlation between EFL teachers' conceptions about the usefulness of translation in EFL learning and the variables of degree, years of experience and translation or interpretation practices.



In conformance with this, Al-Buraiki (2008) started a study to examine the English teachers' attitudes in basic education schools in the Sultanate of Oman. The results indicated that EFL experienced teachers had positive inclinations to resort to L1 usage, especially in teaching the young learners. Sharma (2006) studied the points of view of English teachers and students in Nepal about using the native language in EFL classroom settings. All respondents showed preference to the infrequent use of L1 in learning English. Furthermore, they added that cautious use of the first language is advocated because it enables students to learn English in better ways. Proportionately, Kim and Petraki (2009) documented that Korean students' and teachers' showed that the native language has a facilitative role in the language classes, specifically with EFL beginning learners.

In line with this, Jadallah and Fuad (2010) in their study made an interview to a number of EFL lecturers who had been teaching for years to find out their stands on the use of Arabic in English classes in Palestine. Participants of the study didn't object using Arabic in teaching English as a foreign language as they thought that there are some causes to benefit from Arabic in classrooms e.g., introducing the complex vocabulary words, making

learners feel more less tensioned, managing the class time and monitoring whether they totally understand the instructions or not.

Moreover, an important reason for EFL teachers' usage of L1 in classrooms is to develop communication between them and their students. Harbord (1992) states that L1 is used in teaching L2 classes in order to increase teacher-student communication and teacher-student relationship in an endeavor to increase target language learning outcomes. In agreement with this view point, Auerbach (1993) clarifies that promoting rapport between EFL learners and teachers is a remarkable objective that can be achieved through limited use of L1. Nation (2003) believes that it is feasible and more communicative to use L1 in the EFL classrooms to enable learners to successfully communicate with their teachers. Thus, cautious use of L1 in English classes can be considered an effective way to develop language learning and enhance teaching practices as far as EFL/ESL is considered.

In addition, Mohebbi and Alavi (2014) in their study examined EFL teachers' conception about using L1 in English classrooms in different private schools in Iran. In order to achieve the aim of the study, 72 English teachers gave their responses to a questionnaire to elicit their perceptions on using L1 in L2 class settings. Results of the study indicated that EFL teachers in Iranian context accept using L1 to give feedback to learners, introduce new lexical items, teach grammatical rules, communicate with students, save time in class and give support to learners. Furthermore, contrarily to contemporary studies in second language pedagogy, the subjects of the study showed that they don't draw back on EFL learners L1 to give instructions for exercises or others.

Wilkerson (2008) studied how teachers use L1 (English) in teaching L2 (Spanish) classes. Unexpectedly, five faculty members who share similar academic qualifications and experiences used L1 in different ways. He noticed that a teacher used L1 (English) all the time in teaching L2 (Spanish) and another one used L2 in teaching and resorted to L1 in translation and in remedial instruction to increase students' understanding of some previously taught L2 items. Analysis of collected data showed that teachers apply L1 in classroom settings primarily to successfully manage time to finish L2 activities and offer learners friendly and relaxing classroom atmosphere.

Thus, the above studies support the finding that there isn't positive correlation between EFL teachers' responses to [PRTLQ] and the variable of academic degree (.335), except for Wilkerson's study (2008). In addition, Albaha University EFL instructors' views on the importance of translation in learning English positively correlate with the variable of years of experience



(.020) and also with that of translation or interpretation experiences (.026). So, these findings partially verify hypothesis (3#) that there is positive correlation between EFL teachers' conceptions about the usefulness of translation in EFL learning and the variables of degree, years of experience and translation or interpretation practices.

### Discussion and Conclusion

The main objective of this study was to investigate EFL learners and teachers' perspectives on the gains and benefits of translation in learning English as a foreign language. In addition, it also aimed to compare between teachers and students' views on translation. Furthermore, it attempted to compare between level three (the first level) and level eight (the last level) students perceptions on the efficiency of translation in language learning at the Department of Foreign Languages at Faculty of Arts and Humanities in Al Baha University, KSA in the academic year 2015/2016. It also examined the potential relationship between teachers' views and the variables of academic degree, years of experiences and translation or interpretation experiences. Statistical analysis of the study findings clarified that there is difference at 0.05 levels in perspectives on translation between EFL learners and teachers in favor of learners. Moreover, the same difference occurs between level three and eight students in favor of those of level three. The variable of academic variable didn't correlate with teachers' perceptions on the fruitfulness of translation in English language learning. But, both of years of experience and translation or interpretation experience variables positively correlated with their view on translation role in EFL learning.

Thus, the study finding that the differences in views on translation between level three and level eight learners was in favor of those of three comes in accordance with Butzkamm (2003) view who says "with growing proficiency in the foreign language, the use of the mother tongue becomes largely redundant and the FL will stand on its own two feet" (p. 36). ESL/EFL professionals agree on that the more learners are exposed to the target language, the better L2 users they can be and the less L1 dependent they will be.

In addition, the finding that EFL learners' perceptions on translation differ from those of their teachers is in contrast with the views of a good number of scholars who advocate L1 usage as a necessary facilitative tool in FL learning (Alkadasy, 2008; Auerbach, 1993; Kim & Petraki, 2009; Nation, 2003; Sharma, 2006; Wilkerson, 2008). Thus, the mismatch between learners' and teachers' perceptions on the appropriateness of translation in L2 learning



as indicated by the present study should be taken into consideration by language educators and course designers. That's to say, ESL/EFL teaching methods have to be compatible with students' needs and expectations. Future research may study the correlation between EFL teachers' perspectives on translation and their teaching practices in actual classroom settings. Also, future research can trace teachers' and learners' excessive use of L1 in L2 classes.

Moreover, the finding of the current study that academic degree didn't correlate with EFL teachers' conceptions on the usefulness of translation in language learning. But, they correlated with the variables of years of experience and translation experiences. This is supported by Mohebbi and Alavi's study (2014) in which they found out that language teachers basically used the source language to: 1) introduce new vocabulary words, 2) teach grammar, 3) have good relationship, 4) manage class time, 5) help students and 6) do long tasks in a short time. It was also implied that teachers' experiences played an important role in using L1 only as a supportive teaching strategy in order to avoid extreme practice of it in foreign language classrooms. Thus, L2 teachers should be directed to use L1 in a reasonable way, as minimized usage of L1 in L2 classes would play the role of a relaxing tool that can reduce EFL learners' tension and anxiety (Bruen & Kelly, in press). To sum up, today, language scholars and professionals think that we shouldn't neglect the effect of L1 on successful acquisition of L2. Thus, the current study attempted to spot light on the importance of translation into L1 in EFL learning classrooms as perceived by language teachers and learners and among learners themselves in different levels of their study of the target language.

Nevertheless, the present study findings should not be considered as general in nature. That's because according to Ellis (1997) who indicated that L1 usage in L2 classrooms is highly based on the teaching environment and context. For instance, Auerbach (1993) arranged an imperative case for using students source language in ESL classrooms in popularity-language settings as in the USA, but Ellis (1997) concludes that the context is very different in EFL settings where learners are only exposed to L2 in their classrooms.

In addition, help should be given to EFL teachers concerning the necessary conditions and circumstances that direct them to the ideal situations in which translation into L1 could be impressive in foreign language learning in order not to go astray and avoid L1 domination in L2 classrooms. Parameters including students' language level, task types and objectives,



attitudes of institution administration and classroom settings can have an influence on the effective role of L1 in supporting EFL learning and teaching. Furthermore, future research may investigate the relationship between learner and teacher use of translation into L1 and increasing overall language learning outcomes.

Thus, it is necessary to foster that EFL teachers have dominant roles in applying translation into L1 strategy in English classes. Thompson and Harrison (2014) showed that most of the teachers in their study favored L1 translation although the teacher's manual banned L1 usage in L2 classrooms.

With regard to the current study and its findings, translation into L1 as a potential promoting EFL learning strategy argument has been moved a step forth. However, future research is necessary to further discuss the issue of L1 usage in English education and applied linguistics research. This in turn can tackle the subject matter from different prospects in an endeavor to present linguistic pedagogical evidences on the suitability, practicality and the benefits of translation into L1 in English as foreign language classrooms. Finally, whether to use L1 in FL learning and teaching or not is a question which still needs further investigation and efforts from EFL/ESL language scholars and professionals.



### Sonuç

Bu çalışma ve sonuçları açısından, bir yabancı dil öğrenme stratejisi potansiyeli olan anadile çeviri tartışmasında ileriye yönelik yeni bir adım atılmıştır. Bununla birlikte, yabancı dil olarak İngilizcenin eğitimi ve uygulamalı dilbilim araştırmalarında anadili kullanımını tartışmak için daha fazla çalışma gerekmektedir. Bu araştırmalar, çevirinin yabancı dil eğitimi sınıflarında kullanımının pratik yararları ve uygunluğu açısından dilbilimsel ve eğitsel dayanaklar ortaya koyabilecektir. Sonuç olarak, anadilin yabancı dil eğitimi ve öğretiminde kullanılıp kullanılmayacağı sorusu ilgili alandaki araştırmacı ve eğitimcilerin çabalarıyla gerçekleştirilecek araştırmalara gereksinim duymaktadır.

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