

Does Translation Contribute to Facilitating Second Language Acquisition?

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Abstract—Translation integration into second language acquisition (SLA) has been an ongoing debate. The present study examined the function of translation as a pedagogical vehicle in facilitating SLA by implementing a mixed-method design incorporating a questionnaire and semistructured interviews. The questionnaire was distributed to 355 learners enrolled in the English Language and Translation BA program at Qassim University, Saudi Arabia, and eight participants were also interviewed. The questionnaire investigated how translation did or did not facilitate SLA, while semistructured interviews offered students' detailed perspectives on the benefits and challenges of utilizing translation as an instructional strategy to accelerate SLA. Questionnaire data were analysed via descriptive statistics and interview data were analysed via thematic analysis. The study provided empirical evidence underscoring the pivotal role of translation in facilitating SLA. The results of both the questionnaire and interview data indicated that translation contributes positively to efficient language skills development, comprehension of academic material and word meanings, vocabulary acquisition and retention and understanding of grammatical differences between the first (L1) and second (L2) languages. However, participants acknowledged that reliance on translation could obstruct learners' thinking ability in the L2 and constrain direct engagement. Nevertheless, the interview data revealed several challenges, including the harmfulness of overreliance on translation—which could obstruct learners' thinking ability in the L2 and constrain direct engagement—and impediments to communication. The study recommends that translation be thoughtfully integrated into L2 contexts while maintaining a balance between translation and the L2 throughout the learning process, particularly in early stages.

Index Terms—translation, second language acquisition, language learning, pedagogical translation

I. INTRODUCTION

Adopting translation in the learning process to facilitate second language acquisition (SLA) constitutes a critical element in the academic field and learners' professional development. According to Widdowson (2014) and Cook (2007), second language (L2) learners frequently use translation throughout language learning. As a language acquisition method, translation has the potential to develop essential language skills (Pym et al., 2013; Pym, 2016; Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Indeed, translation is often regarded in the literature as the fifth core language skill (Saricoban, 2012; Pym et al., 2013). Accordingly, there is considerable interest in translation pedagogy within the context of L2 learning (Garcia & Pena, 2011; Leonardi, 2010; Malmkjær, 2012; Priya & Jayasridevi, 2018; Pym, 2011). According to Shiyab and Abdullateef (2001), "translation facilitates and speeds up the learner's comprehension process" (p. 1). Recent scholarly investigations have demonstrated positive correlations between the use of translation and SLA (Keck, 2006; Kidd & Donnelly, 2020; Wach & Monroy, 2020). According to House (2009), students' first language (L1) is a significant asset for aiding SLA. Ali (2012) noted that translation encourages learners to view the L2 through their L1 and enables them to compare the two languages throughout the learning process. Moreover, translation offers students the opportunity to apply their knowledge of the L2 in practical use (Lan, 2008; as cited in Barus & Ekalestari, 2022). Translation is thus fundamental in supporting effective communication in the L2 (Cook, 2010).

Recent studies have revealed that translation as a pedagogical method has been employed for a variety of communicative purposes (González Davies, 2004; Kerr, 2014). The employment of translation in L2 learning contexts, as argued by Leonardi (2010), is designed not to train professional translators but to facilitate SLA. Moreover, González Davies (2002) differentiated between the use of translation as a strategy for L2 learning activities and as a strategy to prepare students who wish to pursue translation and interpreting programs. Oguz (2014) notes that translation cannot be ignored in second language learning. Consequently, Gutiérrez (2021) argues that it is essential for education stakeholders to adopt strategies that use translation effectively in language learning. To sum up, translation, through supporting and promoting diverse language skills, exerts a crucial impact on students' advancement in comprehensive competence in both their L1 and L2 (Károly, 2014).

Understanding the interplay between translation and SLA is crucial to understanding the learning process. Studies on the practice of adopting translation in SLA have revealed that translation instruction enhances students' L2 proficiency (Alahmadi & Foltz, 2020; Alshaihi, 2022; Boustani, 2020; Saz et al., 2015). Furthermore, research from cognitive linguistics and neuroscience has provided evidence advocating for the implementation of translation in language learning (Kerr, 2014). Nevertheless, the contributions of translation as a medium for facilitating SLA and learners' perspectives on

the benefits and challenges of adopting translation as a pedagogical strategy to facilitate SLA remain underexplored, underscoring the need for a study to investigate the act of translation as an approach to facilitating SLA. Accordingly, the current study seeks to extend the literature in two ways: first, by examining the effectiveness of translation as a pedagogical vehicle to facilitate SLA; and second, by investigating the benefits and challenges of utilizing translation as an approach to aid L2 learning from the student perspective—here, English Language and Translation students at Qassim University, Saudi Arabia. The findings will offer implications for L2 program designers, learners and teachers and professionals on whether to adopt translation in L2 learning and teaching. In addition, the findings will identify the benefits and challenges of adopting translation as a strategy to accelerate students' SLA.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

An increasing number of studies have debated the function of translation in L2 learning and have highlighted its usefulness as an instructional tool that merits further investigation (Alaboud, 2022; Boshraadi, 2014; Cook, 2010; House, 2009; Kerr, 2014; Kim, 2011; Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2013; Vermes, 2010). Appropriately designed integrations of translation can be adopted in L2 learning contexts to improve language skills (Duff, 1994; Marton & MacIntyre, 2020; Pavón Vázquez & Ramos Ordóñez, 2018; Pym et al., 2013; Tsagari & Giannikas, 2020). For example, language learners tend to rely on their L1's vocabulary to comprehend unknown words in the L2 (Cook, 2007) and translation may thus serve as a valuable cognitive strategy in L2 vocabulary acquisition (Hummel, 2010; Laufer & Girsai, 2008).

There remains a scholarly debate regarding the inclusion of translation in language learning methodologies. Methodologies such as the *direct method* reject the use of translation in learning settings and view students' habits in the L1 as obstacles to L2 learning, whereas the *reform movement* favours the employment of L2 as the main medium of teaching and interaction in classrooms (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2013). Alternatively, *communicative language teaching* seeks to enhance learners' communicative competence in the L2 through interaction and communicative activities, although it permits the careful involvement of the L1 when deemed necessary (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2013). According to Munday (2016), incorporating translation into L2 learning and teaching has largely been abandoned in most English-speaking countries. Nevertheless, Liao (2006) reported that students utilized translation during the learning process to expand their proficiency in the L2 and that translation assisted them in verifying their understanding of various language tasks. Such findings support the notion that translation may be employed as a strategy in SLA that also serves as a valuable method for understanding complex information in the L2.

Karimian and Talebinejad (2013) studied the utilization of translation as a technique in learning English and aimed to determine the translation strategies employed among language learners during the learning process. A questionnaire survey of 170 Iranian L2 learners and interviews with 120 students revealed that learners employed various translation-based strategies to aid them in their comprehension, retention and production of English.

In another study, Boshraadi (2014) examined the use of translation as an L2 teaching method with 180 L2 learners. This sample was distributed into six groups based on proficiency level. The experimental groups were instructed via translation-based teaching methods and a posttest and questionnaire were employed to evaluate L2 learners' thoughts on the use of translation as an instructional approach. The findings supported the notion that translation, including translation practices within the classroom, is an effective strategy for enhancing L2 learning.

In the same vein, Alshaikhi (2022) investigated the support of translation in enhancing English language proficiency at the University of Tabuk, Saudi Arabia. Pym's (2013) framework was adopted to assess the effect of translation activities on language proficiency via pre- and posttests. The findings demonstrated that translation significantly improved and promoted SLA.

In contrast to these findings, others have argued against the use of translation within L2 learning settings (Marqués-Aguado & Solís-Becerra, 2013; Sali, 2014). Translation has long been excluded from many language learning classes (Popovic, 2001). The primary criticism of incorporating translation into language learning is that translation is primarily used in reading and writing only, prompts learners to think about the L2 through their L1, has limited real-world applicability, results in more errors and is considered to be effective only in literature and grammar curriculum (Carreres, 2006). Others have argued that translation has various limitations when it is utilized in L2 instruction. Translation may encourage learners to think in a single language and then move to a different one, prevents teachers and learners from engaging in a single language, and creates a misconception among students that there is a one-to-one resemblance in two different languages (Newson, 1988). A study that interviewed Iranian teachers about their perspectives on using translation in classroom found that Iranian L2 teachers do not support employing translation within the L2 learning journey (Asgarian, 2013).

In the same vein, Almoayidi's (2018) review of the literature on the integration of the L1 in L2 classes noted that exposing learners to the L2, rather than their L1, is essential for successful SLA. While some scholars have argued that the use of translation facilitates the learning process, others have indicated that it hinders learning the L2 by reducing students' direct interaction in the L2. The findings suggested that learning methods that use only the L2 make the learning process more enjoyable and beneficial.

In a study seeking to examine previous research findings suggesting that L2 learners may acquire new vocabulary more effectively through translation than other contexts, Alroe and Reinders (2015) employed a sample of more than one thousand Thai freshmen learners of English. The students were separated into three groups, each tasked with acquiring

thirty new English words: bilingual translation pairs; context within English sentences accompanied by graphic illustrations; and illustrated English sentences provided with Thai translation. A posttest did not show any notable difference among the three groups, suggesting that translation use in classroom to facilitate SLA is not justified.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. *Research Questions*

This study investigates the following research questions:

1. To what extent does translation contribute to facilitating second language acquisition?
2. What are students' perspectives on the benefits and challenges of utilizing translation as a pedagogical vehicle to support second language learning?

B. *Participants*

The study recruited 355 undergraduate male students in the English Language and Translation BA program at Qassim University. The program is structured as a 4-year academic course of study comprising eight levels, offering a comprehensive curriculum designed to facilitate learning English. The program includes a diverse range of subjects, such as language skills, linguistics and translation. English is utilized as the medium of instruction in all courses of the program. Subjects were duly notified that participation was entirely voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any stage without incurring any adverse consequences. Further, all responses provided were handled with the utmost confidentiality. Ethical approval was granted by the Ethical Committee of the Deanship of Postgraduate Studies and Scientific Research at Qassim University, Saudi Arabia (Reference No. 25-33-06).

C. *Study Design*

A mixed-method design was adopted that incorporated a questionnaire and semistructured interviews. The rationale for adopting mixed methods in this study was to leverage their complementary strengths and the advantages of both to facilitate a thorough analysis of the investigation. In the area of translation research, questionnaires have been employed mainly to explore translation as a profession or to survey the opinions of translation students on teaching and learning processes (Saldanha & O'Brien, 2014). Accordingly, the questionnaire was administered to collect quantitative data regarding the extent of the role of translation in facilitating L2 learning.

Because one objective of the study was to obtain a comprehensive understanding of student perspectives with respect to the benefits and challenges of adopting translation as an instructional method in facilitating SLA, a qualitative component—semistructured interviews—was also incorporated. Qualitative research generally focuses on investigating and detailing a case, providing the researcher with a thorough, thoughtful understanding of a present issue in a real context (Yin, 2018). Researchers routinely employ semistructured interviews to obtain a comprehensive understanding of respondents' beliefs or perceptions related to a specific topic (Smith, 1995). The interviews, conducted by the author, followed a flexible set of questions and were audio-recorded for analysis.

D. *Data Collection Procedures*

(a). *Questionnaire*

To examine the extent to which the use of translation as a pedagogical tool can facilitate SLA, an online questionnaire was administered owing to its methodological efficiency in reaching a broad and diverse sample of participants. Questionnaires comprise a number of questions or statements to which respondents provide written responses or select answers from among existing options (Brown, 2001). Questionnaires are commonly utilized in studies of L2 learning (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2009). The questionnaire was constructed and items were developed based on the author's expertise in teaching translation to undergraduate students of English language and translation. To ensure the validity of questionnaire items, a rigorous and comprehensive review was conducted by two experts in teaching English as a second language and translation. Necessary amendments were then made accordingly. The author then reviewed the items with the experts to finalize the questionnaire.

Following this review process, a group of 35 students was selected to pilot-test the questionnaire. Pilot-testing prior to data collection is a best practice in questionnaire design as it helps the researcher identify potential issues in the content, grammar and format of the questionnaire (Bradburn et al., 2004; Jenn, 2006). After successful completion of the pilot test, the questionnaire was distributed to participants via Google Forms, which required respondents to select the option that best described their situation. Participants responded using a five-point Likert scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree). Oral translations of questionnaire items were provided when deemed necessary.

(b). *Semistructured Interviews*

Interviews involve structured conversations comprising questions and answers designed to achieve specific objectives; their primary aim is to obtain insights about the subjective meanings that individuals attribute to the topic under investigation (Rietveld & Van Hormelen, 2019). Interviews can be classified into three main categories: highly structured, completely unstructured and semistructured. Semistructured interviews represent a hybrid approach that combines elements of both structured and unstructured formats (Lapan et al., 2011; Merriam, 1998). The interviews for this study

were conducted by presenting participants with a series of questions, which participants answered directly. According to Adler and Adler (2012), an adequate sample in qualitative research can range from a single participant to more than 100. Accordingly, eight interviewees—one from each of the eight distinct levels of study—were selected to obtain diverse insights and capture a wide range of student perspectives on the benefits and challenges of utilizing translation as a pedagogical vehicle to support SLA acquisition. The average duration of each interview ranged from 15–20 minutes. The interviews were audio-recorded. Participants were assigned numerical identifiers to ensure confidentiality, which were subsequently used in reporting the data.

E. Data Analysis

The quantitative data obtained from questionnaires were analysed in SPSS (version 28). Descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations and frequency, were calculated to summarise responses and interpret the five-point Likert scale. Inferential statistical techniques, including hypothetical means and one-sample *t* tests, were applied to evaluate the significance and relative position of each questionnaire item.

The interviews were analysed thematically to reveal students' perspectives on the benefits and challenges of adopting translation as an instructional strategy to aid in learning a second language. According to Clarke and Braun (2017), thematic analysis is administered to uncover respondents' perspectives and aims at understanding their thoughts about a specific phenomenon. Interview analysis followed six phases outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006) as follows: (a) becoming familiar with the data and transcribing the interviews verbatim, (b) creating initial codes, (c) identifying themes, (d) refining and examining themes, (e) identifying and naming themes and, finally, (f) revealing the final analysis. Codes are typically employed to organize and group data with similar meanings to help authors efficiently locate and cluster related segments for analysis (Stuckey, 2015). Following the recommended guidelines of Saldaña (2013) for small-scale studies, the author applied manual coding to the transcribed interview data. From these codes, the author then constructed themes, i.e., a structured frame presented to organize and report the researcher's analysis (Clarke & Braun, 2017).

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results of the data collected via the study instruments, including the statistical analysis of the questionnaire data and the results of the thematic analysis. Then, it presents a detailed discussion of the results. The results are discussed in the same order as the study's research questions.

A. The Extent of Translation's Contribution to Facilitating SLA

The following table presents the means, standard deviations, hypothetical means, *t* test values, relative means, significance levels and the evaluated level of each questionnaire item relating to the contribution of translation in facilitating L2 learning. Correlation coefficients were calculated between each item of the questionnaire and its total score. The correlation coefficients ranged between 0.51–0.66 and all were statistically significant at the 0.01 level. The questionnaire utilized in this study showed strong reliability, with a Cronbach's alpha (α) coefficient of 0.823.

TABLE 1
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR THE CONTRIBUTION OF TRANSLATION IN FACILITATING L2 LEARNING

No	Statement	Frequencies and ratios	Response options					Mean	Std. dev.	Hypothetical mean	t	Relative mean	Sig. (2-tailed)	Level	Rank
			Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree								
1	Translation should be an essential strategy in acquiring a second language.	F	107	179	53	10	6	4.04	.845	3.4	14.369	80.9%	0.01	High	4
		%	31.1	50.4	14.9	2.8	1.7								
2	Translation should be used primarily in the early stages of second language learning.	F	81	153	74	40	7	3.73	.998	3.4	6.324	74.7%	0.01	High	6
		%	22.8	43.1	20.8	11.3	2								
3	Translation should be employed exclusively to clarify complex terms.	F	8	27	89	137	94	2.20	.991	1.8	7.708	44.1%	0.01	low	11
		%	2.3	7.6	25.1	38.6	26.5								
4	Translation helps enhance reading comprehension.	F	158	119	56	15	7	4.14	.965	3.4	14.519	82.8%	0.01	High	2
		%	44.5	33.5	15.8	4.2	2								
5	Translation improves writing skills.	F	102	115	80	49	9	3.7	1.101	3.4	5.303	74.2%	0.01	High	8
		%	28.7	32.4	22.5	13.8	2.5								
6	Translation plays a crucial role in acquiring new vocabulary.	F	164	134	38	12	7	4.22	.912	3.4	17.107	84.4%	0.01	High	1
		%	46.2	37.7	10.7	3.4	2								
7	Translation facilitates grammar learning in a second language.	F	68	152	99	26	10	3.68	.958	3.4	5.539	73.6%	0.01	High	9
		%	19.2	42.8	27.9	7.3	2.8								
8	Translation helps develop listening skills.	F	97	116	76	49	17	3.63	1.159	3.4	3.891	72.8%	0.01	High	10
		%	27.3	32.7	21.4	13.8	4.8								
9	Translation helps enhance speaking skills.	F	122	105	80	34	14	3.80	1.128	3.4	6.818	76%	0.01	High	5
		%	34.4	29.6	22.5	9.6	3.9								
10	Translation helps in understanding the linguistic differences between the first and second languages.	F	146	125	64	15	5	4.10	.937	3.4	14.153	82%	0.01	High	3
		%	41.1	35.2	18	4.2	1.4								
11	I use translation as a strategy to comprehend academic content.	F	82	140	98	21	14	3.71	1.011	3.4	5.932	74.2%	0.01	High	7
		%	23.1	39.4	27.6	5.9	3.9								
SUM1							41.019	5.804	34	22.784	74.52%	0.01	High		
12	Excessive use of translation can create an obstacle in learning a second language.	F	77	115	97	52	14	3.53	1.102	3.4	2.26	70.6%	0.02	High	2
		%	21.7	32.4	27.3	14.6	3.9								
13	Relying too much on translation can weaken the ability to think in the second language.	F	88	137	87	36	7	3.74	1.005	3.4	6.38	74.8%	0.01	High	1
		%	24.8	38.6	24.5	10.1	2								
14	Translation limits direct interaction in the second language.	F	65	118	104	58	10	3.47	1.056	3.4	1.41	69.4%	0.16	moderate	3
		%	18.3	33.2	29.3	16.3	2.8								
SUM2							7.247	2.388	5.4	14.575		0.01	low		

Items 1–11 in Table 1 pertain to the function of translation in facilitating SLA, whereas items 12–14 delineate the potential impediments associated with the integration of translation into L2 learning contexts. As shown in Table 1, the total mean of the items 1–11 was 3.75, with a relative mean of 74.52%, whereas for items 12–14 the total mean was 3.58 and the relative mean was 71.6%. The results indicated that all items correlated with the role of translation in L2 learning

received high ratings, with the exception of item 3, which received a low rating. The means and standard deviations of questionnaire items (1–11) are listed as follows, in descending order, starting with the highest value: item 6 ($M = 4.22$, $SD = 0.912$), 4 ($M = 4.14$, $SD = 0.965$), 10 ($M = 4.10$, $SD = 0.937$), 1 ($M = 4.04$, $SD = 0.845$), 9 ($M = 3.80$, $SD = 1.128$), 2 ($M = 3.73$, $SD = 0.998$), 11 ($M = 3.71$, $SD = 1.011$), 5 ($M = 3.07$, $SD = 1.101$), 7 ($M = 3.68$, $SD = 0.958$), 8 ($M = 3.63$, $SD = 1.159$) and 3 ($M = 2.20$, $SD = 0.991$). Although the items addressing the impediments of translation in L2 learning (items 12 and 13) received high ratings, item 14 received only a moderate rating. The following are the means and standard deviations for questionnaire items 12–14, in descending order, starting with the highest value: 13 ($M = 3.74$, $SD = 1.005$), 12 ($M = 3.53$, $SD = 1.102$) and 10 ($M = 3.47$, $SD = 1.056$). Thresholds were established for high (hypothetical mean of 3.4) and low (hypothetical mean of 1.8) levels of agreement.

Artar (2018) posited that translation enhances fundamental language skills. As indicated by Table 1, participants overwhelmingly agreed on the effectiveness of translation as a pedagogical vehicle in L2 learning, particularly in the early stages. According to Putrawan (2019), beginners may benefit from the use of translation, as it can facilitate language learning in a more comfortable environment; indeed, in this study, translation was found to foster the development of various language skills.

According to Nation (2001), vocabulary is a fundamental element of SLA. The findings of the present study suggested that learners perceive translation as a valuable and effective tool for acquiring and developing vocabulary, as it enables matching the word in the L1 with its correspondent in the L2, thereby facilitating long-term retention and greater semantic understanding of the vocabulary in the L2. This supposition aligns with the findings of other studies that translation can substantially improve learners' vocabulary awareness and understanding in the L2 (Alshaikhi, 2022; Khrystych, 2025).

Further, participants agreed that translation enhances their reading comprehension and writing proficiency, indicating that translation is a valuable strategy that should be implemented when learning or teaching reading and writing courses in an SLA context. These findings align with those of Alaboud (2022), who reported that translation functions as a constructive method for improving learners' reading comprehension skills within an L2 context and with those of Abas and Ghanem (2023), who reported that translation significantly enhanced learners' writing proficiency and provided opportunities to refine their writing skills.

In addition to reading and writing, the findings suggest that learners view translation as a strategy for developing their listening and speaking skills. These findings are consistent with those of Naghipoor and Bolori (2013), who observed that the integration of translation significantly enhanced learners' listening comprehension in an L2 context. However, these findings contrast with those of Priya and Jayasridevi (2018), who argued that prolonged reliance on translation in SLA is associated with limitations in developing speaking proficiency.

The findings also reveal that translation facilitates learners' understanding of grammar variations in both languages (L1 and L2). These results are aligned with several studies that have reported that incorporating translation into L2 learning contributes to a deeper understanding of grammatical and structural differences between the two languages (Khrystych, 2025; Priya & Jayasridevi, 2018).

Further, these findings imply that learners regard translation as a meaningful strategy for enhancing their comprehension of academic material. This result indicates that translation may serve as a valuable pedagogical approach for interpreting the complex terminology frequently present in academic courses. These findings are in accordance with those of Machida (2011), who argued that translation is naturally employed in comprehending new ideas or meaning in an L2. However, the findings also revealed that most participants disagreed with the notion that translation should be used solely to explain and elaborate complex terminology. Moreover, they acknowledged that reliance on translation in SLA may obstruct learners' ability to think in the L2 and constrain opportunities for direct engagement with the L2.

In conclusion, the majority of the English Language and Translation students at Qassim University recognized translation as a substantial facilitator of L2 learning. According to Priya and Jayasridevi (2018), translation has often been misconstrued as an outdated methodology in L2 learning contexts—perceived as restrictive, misleading and a hindrance to learners' ability to think in the L2. Nevertheless, they argued, when properly integrated into L2 learning through reading, listening, writing and improving vocabulary, translation can serve as a valuable pedagogical vehicle that facilitates SLA—an assertion that is substantiated by the findings of the present study. Moreover, these findings align with other studies finding that the incorporation of translation can improve vocabulary acquisition and enhance proficiency in reading and writing (Huang, 2023) and can serve as an effective strategy in SLA (Liu & Yang, 2025). However, these findings are inconsistent with the findings of other scholars, who have argued that the L2 should be used as extensively as possible within classroom settings to ensure that learners consistently use it as the primary medium of communication (Almoayidi, 2018; Turnbull, 2001). The complex nature of L2 learning environments may explain some of the observed variability of scholarly perspectives on the contribution of translation to SLA.

B. Students' Perspectives on Benefits and Challenges of Utilizing Translation as a Pedagogical Vehicle to Support L2 Learning

The second research question endeavoured to elucidate participants' perspectives on the benefits and challenges associated with integrating translation into SLA. Semistructured interviews with open-ended questions were used as the main instrument for gathering the data pertaining to this question. The qualitative analysis of responses evolved around seven main themes, which were further subdivided into various subthemes. The findings obtained from these interviews offer substantive insights into the benefits and challenges of employing translation as a methodological strategy for

supporting SLA.

(a). *Learning Efficiency*

Ascertaining the most effective method for optimizing learning efficiency in SLA is a prevalent concern among L2 learners. In accordance with this notion, Student 7 argued that “*translation is a strategy that speeds up the process of learning a second language,*” while Student 3 indicated that “*the use of translation facilitates more rapid understanding among learners.*” These findings echo those of Artar (2018), who argued that translation facilitates SLA by enabling learners to save time, and Khan (2016), who demonstrated that translation can effectively support SLA. Nevertheless, Student 1 also noted that “*translation is a complex process that necessitates an advanced level of language proficiency.*” This statement suggests that the use of translation constitutes a significant challenge for early-stage learners, as its effective use necessitates a relatively advanced level of language proficiency. Perhaps surprisingly, this statement is inconsistent with the findings of previous studies, which have suggested that the use of the L2 may be more appropriate for advanced learners, whereas translation can be beneficial for beginners in SLA (Asgarian, 2013) but may diminish in effectiveness as language proficiency increases (Liu & Yang, 2025).

(b). *Meaning Comprehension*

Comprehension of meaning emerged as a significant benefit of utilizing translation within SLA contexts, as indicated by the majority of the respondents. Student 3 stated, “*without translation, I would be unable to comprehend the meanings of words in the second language.*” Student 5 argued that “*I unconsciously translate from second language to my first language to understand things.*” Further, Student 2 stated, “*translation is a useful way to provide the accurate meaning, rather than guessing it from context, which might not always be correct.*” These findings indicate that learners regard translation as a reliable strategy for comprehending and obtaining the accurate meanings of unknown vocabulary in the L2. These results support Machida’s (2011) assertion that students naturally adopt translation to understand new ideas or meaning in the L2 and the findings of Al-Musawi (2014), who indicated that the central role of translation is “to transmit appropriate meaning of a word or a sentence linguistically, semantically, and pragmatically” (p. 1). Further, Student 5 stated that “*in the early stages of second language acquisition, learners unconsciously rely on translation by default for understanding meaning.*” A fellow Student 7 argued “*translation is a comfortable and safe zone for beginner second language learners.*” These statements suggest that translation is a preferred strategy among beginners in an SLA context, as it offers a perceived sense of security in comprehending word meanings. This result is consistent with the findings of Mutlu-Gülbak et al. (2015) and Putrawan (2019), who suggested that translation facilitates SLA among beginner or lower-level learners by offering a more comfortable and secure learning experience. Nevertheless, Student 1 argued that “*literal translation, which is often the strategy used for learning a second language, may not convey the accurate meaning of certain words.*” Another respondent (Student 8) noted that “*literal translation may mislead the student about the meaning of words.*” Such statements indicate that some learners consider translation to be a misleading strategy rather than a supportive strategy in L2 learning. This assumption is consistent with the findings of Azzan and Sakale (2025), whose study indicated that “in many cases, a literal translation may result in awkward or unclear language, as it may not accurately convey the intended meaning” (p. 119).

(c). *Language Skills Development*

The findings pertaining to this theme suggest that the majority of interviewees perceived translation as an impactful pedagogical strategy for developing L2 skills. For example, Student 4 noted that “*translation is a helping tool in learning vocabulary;*” similarly, Student 5 stated that “*translation increases students’ vocabulary size.*” These findings indicate that a subset of L2 learners employ translation as a strategic tool to facilitate the acquisition of unfamiliar vocabulary. These findings support Webb’s (2009) assertion that acquiring vocabulary via translation is a valid method for L2 learners. Additionally, Student 7 claimed that “*translation facilitates the development of reading and writing skills.*” This statement indicates that translation serves not only as a strategy for vocabulary acquisition but also as an approach for enhancing reading and writing proficiency in the L2. This suggestion is supported by Artar (2018), whose study revealed that participants benefited from translation as an effective method for enhancing their reading and writing proficiency.

(d). *Memory Retention*

The findings related to this theme indicated that several respondents perceived translation as an effective strategy for improving long-term retention of information. Accordingly, using translation in the context of SLA may facilitate improved vocabulary retention. This perspective is exemplified by Student 2, who stated, “*translation keeps the meaning of vocabulary in my mind for a long time.*” These findings correspond with those of Liu and Yang (2025), who demonstrated that the integration of translation significantly enhanced vocabulary retention among L2 learners.

(e). *Subtitling as a Language Learning*

Subtitling is a multimodal language learning strategy adopted by numerous learners. One of the respondents (Student 4) stated, “*I started learning a second language through subtitles.*” Similarly, Student 8 argued that “*subtitling is a good strategy for learning a second language.*” This perspective indicates that subtitling is regarded by a considerable number of learners as a helpful strategy for acquiring an L2—an assertion supported by Aksu Ataç and Günay Köprülü (2018),

who argued that a significant number of L2 language learners benefit from subtitling.

(f). *Harmfulness of Overreliance*

A significant proportion of interviewees articulated concerns that employing translation as a primary language learning medium, rather than as a supportive pedagogical strategy, may yield counterproductive outcomes in SLA contexts. Student 6 argued that “*excessive use of translation hinders learners second language acquisition.*” These findings are consistent with those of Huang (2023), who reported that “overreliance on translation might hinder the overall learning journey of second language learners” (p. 201).

(g). *Communication Impediment*

A limited number of respondents reported that the employment of translation in SLA may negatively affect communicative proficiency, particularly with respect to speaking skills, which may consequently impede cognitive processing in the L2. Student 6 stated that “*translation causes a lack of communication skills and hinders learners’ ability to think in the second language.*” A fellow participant (Student 8) argued that “*translation may limit learners’ ability to communicate effectively in the second language, particularly in speaking.*” These statements suggest that translation may obstruct practice in the L2, thus limiting students’ ability to engage and think in it. These findings align with Cook (2010), who argued that employing translation during the learning process may impede effective communication, hinder students’ ability to acquire a new language and obstruct their ability to think in the L2. In contrast, Huang (2023) asserted that translation serves as a dynamic and interactive strategy that enhances communicative competence in SLA. Taken together, these findings indicate that the use of translation in L2 learning contexts is complex and may have a variety of effects, depending on the learner and the context.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The present study aimed at examining the role of translation as a pedagogical vehicle in facilitating SLA in the English Language and Translation BA program at Qassim University, Saudi Arabia. A mixed-method research design incorporating a questionnaire and semistructured interviews was employed. The questionnaire investigated the contribution of translation in facilitating L2 learning, whereas the semistructured interviews presented a detailed comprehension of students’ perspectives on the benefits and challenges of utilizing translation as an instructive strategy to accelerate the L2 learning process. Descriptive statistics were used to analyse the questionnaire data, while interviews underwent thematic analysis.

The study provided empirical evidence underscoring the pivotal role of translation in facilitating L2 learning. The findings indicated that translation contributes positively to language skills development, comprehension of academic material, L2 vocabulary acquisition and understanding of grammatical variations between the L1 and L2. Despite these benefits, however, the participants also acknowledged that (over)relying on translation in SLA may obstruct learners’ ability to think in and directly engage with the L2.

The interview data revealed numerous key benefits of utilizing translation in SLA, including learning efficiency, meaning comprehension, language skills development, memory retention strategies and enhanced language learning. Interviewees indicated that translation accelerates SLA, enhances comprehension of word meanings, facilitates language skills development, aids long-term retention of vocabulary and encourages the use of subtitling as a language learning tool. Nevertheless, the interview data also revealed a number of challenges, particularly with respect to the harmfulness of overreliance on translation and potential communication impediments. A significant proportion of interviewees articulated concerns that employing translation as a primary language learning medium, rather than as a supportive pedagogical strategy, may yield counterproductive outcomes in SLA contexts. A limited number of respondents reported that the employment of translation in SLA may negatively affect communicative competence.

The study recommends that translation be thoughtfully integrated into L2 contexts while maintaining a balanced use of translation and the L2 throughout the learning process, particularly in the early stage.

Further research is recommended to explore how translation can be effectively utilized across individual language skills, with the aim of identifying best practices and methods for integrating translation into the teaching and learning of individual language skills.

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