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THE ROLE OF L2 TRANSLATION ACTIVITIES IN TRANSLATION-ORIENTED FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING: A STUDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract. *Translation as a language teaching tool, especially into a foreign language (L2 translation), has long been surrounded by controversy in teaching English for general and translation purposes. The article considers the problem of using L2 translation activities in teaching foreign languages to translation students. The aim of this study was to determine the attitude of 65 3rd and 4th-year translation students of the Linguistics University of Nizhny Novgorod, Russia, towards the use of L2 translation activities in foreign language training in terms of their benefits for L2 acquisition and the students' professional development. The two stages of the study included: (a) the use of L2 translation activities in 'English as a major foreign language' classes and (b) the collection of student feedback about the above-mentioned activities by means of a questionnaire. The results indicate that L2 translation activities were positively viewed by the participants and considered beneficial for both: (a) L2 acquisition and practice and (b) developing professionally significant skills and abilities through using their L2 in a quasi-translation context. The implication of this study is that L2 translation activities, if designed and implemented with the translation profession in mind, can make a valuable contribution to the teaching of foreign languages to trainee translators.*

Key words: *translation, translation activities, L2 translation, translation-oriented foreign language teaching*

1. INTRODUCTION

The translator uses foreign languages in contexts which are highly demanding and require a high level of proficiency as well as special skills, cognitive mechanisms and abilities. Therefore, the teaching of foreign languages to trainee translators should be professionally oriented, i.e., aim to facilitate the acquisition of skills and development of cognitive mechanisms and psychological characteristics which ensure the adequate use of a foreign language in translation contexts. One way to do this could be through the use of translation activities in foreign language instruction.

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Translation as a language teaching tool has long been surrounded by considerable controversy, with L2 translation viewed with ‘downright animosity’ (Carreres, 2006). Despite once being the leading teaching tool within the Grammar Translation Method (GTM), it later became ‘the pariah of English language teaching’ (Cook, 2010) and was heavily criticised and ignored by the proponents of language teaching methodologies which succeeded the GTM. Today, the trend seems to be changing with more teachers speaking openly about its benefits, and publications appearing in scientific journals and proving its effectiveness as a language teaching tool (Cook, 2010; Djelloul & Neddar, 2017; Drobot, 2018).

Similarly, there is a controversy about and a lack of research into the usefulness of L2 translation activities in teaching foreign languages to translation students. L2 translation has been claimed to be a demotivating, hopeless, unnecessary (Carreres, 2006; Fernández-Guerra, 2014; Mogahed, 2011; Popovic, 2001) and professionally counterproductive task (Gile, 1995; Menck, 1991; Schäffner, 1998; Snell-Hornby, 1992; Stewart, 2008). However, there has been no detailed investigation of this issue.

Contrary to the established opinion, many studies have demonstrated that learners seem to highly enjoy L2 translation activities in a general English classroom (Carreres, 2006; Dagilienė, 2012). This prompted us to investigate students’ attitudes to such activities in a translator training context. The aim of this study was to determine the attitude of 3rd and 4th-year translation students of the Linguistics University of Nizhny Novgorod, Russia towards the use of L2 translation activities in foreign language training in terms of their benefits for L2 acquisition and practice and the students’ professional development. It is expected that this study will provide some valuable insights into the potential benefits and downsides of the use of L2 translation activities in teaching a foreign language to trainee translators.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1. Terminology

The term ‘translation’ is widely used in different contexts. Therefore, a distinction should be made between translation as:

- (1) a professional activity which is an end in itself;
- (2) a classroom activity which is a pedagogical tool used for improving and assessing students’ translation skills in translation classes and teaching a foreign language and testing students’ language knowledge in foreign language classes;
- (3) a classroom strategy used for ‘management’ purposes (L1/native language translation).

In this paper, the term ‘translation’ will be used to refer to translation as a foreign language teaching technique.

2.2. The attitude to the use of translation in foreign language teaching

2.2.1. *Negative attitude*

The opponents of the use of translation in an EFL classroom claim that it undermines the process of second language acquisition in that it is a skill independent of the traditional four skills whose practice, therefore, does not contribute to their development (Carreres, 2006; Vermes, 2010). More specifically, they claim that translation is not helpful in the acquisition of new vocabulary or grammatical structures as: (a) exact translation is not always possible

due to differences between languages; (b) giving a translation equivalent to explain the meaning of new language may reduce students' use of L2; (c) translation cannot be used in multilingual classes.

In addition, translation is not seen as encouraging communicative language use and promoting language practice in real-life conditions. It is claimed that translation focuses more on the language itself and its formal properties rather than on developing an ability to use it (Druce, 2012; Vermes, 2010). As regards its nature, it is considered to be:

(a) an uncommunicative, non-interactive activity which is performed by students individually (Carreres, 2006);

(b) an unnatural activity as it has no application in the real world and is not necessary for non-translators (Druce, 2012; Malmkjaer, 1998; Vermes, 2010).

More generally, translation is said to prevent learners from developing a second language identity by inhibiting thinking in L2 making them view L2 through L1, thereby strengthening their dependence on L1 (Carreres, 2006; Pan & Pan, 2012).

2.2.2. *Positive attitude*

On the other side of the debate, translation as a classroom activity is viewed as efficient and important (Čarapić, 2022) and is considered to be an 'enrichment' activity (Leonardi, 2010) which enhances the process of L2 acquisition.

It has been argued that translation is 'a sum of the four skills' (Leonardi, 2010) and brings into play all of them (Gomes Ferreira, 1999; Malmkjaer, 1998), thereby supporting, further strengthening, consolidating (Mažeikienė, 2018) and developing them concurrently (Leonardi, 2010), as well as being a means of testing students' ability to apply these skills (Gomes Ferreira, 1999).

Moreover, translation is seen as an effective tool and a useful cognitive strategy in developing vocabulary (Djelloul & Neddar, 2017; Fernández-Guerra, 2014; Laufer & Girsai, 2008; Leonardi, 2010) and teaching grammar (Duff, 1989; Petrocchi, 2006).

Many scholars believe that translation encourages and facilitates meaningful real-life language use as it emphasises the 'link between language and usage' (Štulajterova, 1998) and encourages students to discuss L1 and L2 'in use', forces students to fine-tune their language to specific contexts and meanings, helps to develop precision and accuracy of expression and contributes to a deeper understanding of L1 and L2 (Takimoto & Hashimoto, 2010).

In addition, many authors agree that translation is a natural real-life activity which 'happens everywhere, all the time' (Duff, 1989, p. 6) and is considered an indispensable social skill in the modern globalized world (Drobot, 2018).

It has also been noted that translation can reduce negative interference and lead to 'positive interference' (Leonardi, 2010) through what some scholars call three 'C's' – comparison, consciousness and control (Whyatt, 2009).

Finally, translation is viewed by many researchers and scholars as a highly communicative classroom activity as it lends itself well to interaction among students and the teacher, thereby promoting collaborative learning (Druce, 2012; Leonardi, 2010; Mahmoud, 2006), and is even regarded by some scholars as a possible component of a communicative approach (Popovic, 2001).

If properly implemented, translation can be learner-centered (Mahmoud, 2006), contribute to learner autonomy (Mahmoud, 2006), encourage students' active involvement (Takimoto & Hashimoto, 2010), make learning more meaningful (Weller, 2008) and promote the development of communicative and problem-solving abilities (Koppe & Kremer, 2007).

To conclude, the analysis of the arguments in favour of translation demonstrates that they seem to be the exact opposites of those against it which suggests that the problem is not translation activities per se but the way they are viewed and, more importantly, designed and implemented.

2.3. The attitude to the use of translation in teaching foreign languages to translation students

The general opinion seems to be that translation is counterproductive in teaching foreign languages to translation students as the negative effects outweigh the possible benefits. Scholastic translation (i.e., translation exercises in language teaching) has been referred to as 'translationese' and is seen as inappropriate and inadequate for training professional translators (H.P. Krings) (as cited in Menck, 1991, p. 151).

First, it is claimed that scholastic translation has little in common with professional translation and therefore comes into conflict with it. In the two contexts: (a) the concept of translation is defined differently (Schäffner, 1998; Vermes, 2010); (b) the use of translation is qualitatively different (Gile, 1995); (c) translation activities have different objectives and require a different mode of thinking (Menck, 1991). As a result, there is a shift in priorities and those aspects which are essential for translator training receive much less attention (Stewart, 2008).

Second, scholastic translation is said to reinforce false beliefs about translation which have to be later dealt with by teachers of translation (Sdobnikov, 2007; Snell-Hornby, 1992). These negative effects may include the following. On the one hand, translation may be seen as a process of finding one-to-one correspondences in the target language. This can reinforce the belief that the knowledge of translation equivalents in two languages is enough to produce an adequate translation. Besides, such beliefs can account for an unprofessional approach to the assessment of a translated text based on the number of active vocabulary items used. Other negative effects may include over-reliance on thematic glossaries and bilingual dictionaries and lack of strategies for establishing correspondences in a particular context through heavy reliance on the topic vocabulary studied in class.

Critics also argue that scholastic translation encourages students to make word-for-word translations (Gomes Ferreira, 1999; Malmkjaer, 1998; Pan & Pan, 2012; Weller, 2008) and overgeneralizations thinking that a corresponding foreign word can be used in exactly the same contexts and situations as the word from their native language.

Yet another argument (which accounts, to a certain extent, for the above-mentioned problems) is that foreign language teachers are, for the most part, not professional translators and therefore cannot ensure an adequate approach to designing and implementing translation activities through lack of translation knowledge and experience (Sdobnikov, 2007).

It cannot be denied that the arguments presented above are not unreasonable. However, it should also be borne in mind that translation activities are a type of pushed-output tasks (Laufer & Girsai, 2008) which require students to speak or write on various themes through need or motivation beyond their normal comfort level, set predetermined conditions and force students to make use of specific linguistic resources. Viewed in this light, translation activities can develop students' psychological readiness to use a foreign language under conditions similar to translation contexts and make students' language knowledge more mobile and concrete.

2.4. L2 translation: pros and cons

When it comes to L2 translation (i.e., translation into a foreign language, also referred to as inverse translation), criticism against it is even more severe, bordering on ‘downright animosity’ (Carreres, 2006). It is claimed to be:

(a) more difficult and demanding than L1 translation (Fernández-Guerra, 2014; Popovic, 2001);

(b) unnatural, purposeless and unnecessary because it has no application in the real world even for professional translators who normally translate into their mother tongue (Mogahed, 2011);

(c) counterproductive as it leads to interference and students’ dependence on L1;

(d) unrealistic, frustrating and de-motivating because students’ knowledge of L2 will always be inferior to that of L1.

As to the positive effects of L2 translation, it is noteworthy that all the above-mentioned benefits of translation activities equally apply to L2 translation. In addition, it has been pointed out that it helps to ‘systematise and rationalise’ a learning mechanism which takes place naturally in the human brain (Carreres, 2006). Many authors stress that translation is highly appreciated and enjoyed by students (Carreres, 2006; Dagilienė, 2012) and is seen as a valuable teaching tool by teachers as it can ‘prompt’ students to use specific vocabulary or grammar (Byram, 2000).

We believe that in the context of translator language training, L2 translation could also prove beneficial. Despite existing opinions that it is an absurd, hopeless and unnecessary task as translators normally operate into their L1, there is a growing body of evidence that translation into L2 is a ‘normal and widespread’ activity (Pokorn, 2016), especially with ‘minor’ languages and in multilingual communities in both institutional and non-institutional settings.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Participants

The participants were 3rd and 4th-year full-time translation students of the Higher School of Translation and Interpreting (Linguistics University of Nizhny Novgorod, Russia) enrolled on a 5-year translation training programme with English as their L2 language and Russian as their native/L1 language. Overall, the study involved 65 students (58 female, 7 male) who ranged in age from 19 to 21. The number of participants, as well as the gender distribution, were determined by the student population in each year of study and were not manipulated by us in any way.

In the 3rd year, students begin to study specialisation courses which include ‘Translation Studies’, ‘A Practical Course in Translation from L2’, ‘Theory of Specialised Translation’. At this stage, they mostly have no (or little) formal translation experience and only have a general understanding of their future profession and the competencies required to be good at it.

4th-year students, however, have more advanced knowledge of translation as a field of study and a profession and more translation experience in the academic and possibly real-world contexts. They have a better understanding of the challenges of the translation profession and skills and abilities the translator needs. However, ‘A Practical Course in Translation into L2’ is not part of the fourth-year curriculum and is studied in the fifth year.

Both groups have a good command of the English language, with 4th-year students being obviously slightly superior to 3rd-year ones. However, none of them had any previous experience of long-term exposure to English in an English-speaking country.

3.2. Research design

The study consisted of two stages. During the first stage, L2 translation activities were used in 'English as a major foreign language' classes over a 5-month period (1 term). They were given to students at the end of each vocabulary unit (3 units) and section of a unit (3 sections per unit) as consolidation activities. The activities were: (1) Render an article into English; (2) Act as interpreter.

Taking into account the opinions of many critics that L2 translation is counterproductive in teaching languages to translators, we identified the following criteria for our translation activities: (a) real-life (and if possible (quasi-)professional) context; (b) communicative purpose; (c) interesting content; (d) negotiation of meaning; (e) use of active vocabulary. From an organizational point of view, they had to involve pair/group work, discussion of alternatives, L1/L2 differences and similarities as well as L1/L2 correspondences.

The first task required students to render into English a short article (350 words) on an issue related to the topic of the unit and present it in class (orally, in groups/pairs or individually). The articles were provided to the students by the teacher. In the second task, each student was supposed to act as interpreter in a conversation between two Russian-speaking individuals. The texts for these 'conversations' were made up by the students in pairs as homework; however, the dialogue for each 'translator' was chosen randomly, so the students could not prepare in advance. Both tasks were followed by the group's comments on the rendition from the point of view of its intelligibility, clarity and appropriateness of the language used, and possible translation alternatives.

During the second stage, a questionnaire was given to students to find out their attitude to the use of the translation activities described above. This will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

3.3. Data collection and analysis

The study used a mixed methods approach. The data were collected through a questionnaire that consisted of closed-ended (CEQ) (7) and open-ended (OEQ) (9) questions. An obvious benefit of such a questionnaire is that it combines precise and relevant responses and the ease of comparison provided by closed-ended questions (quantitative data) with more detailed answers to open-ended questions containing students' personal opinions, attitudes and ideas (qualitative data).

The questionnaire aimed to find out the students' attitudes to and opinions about three aspects relating to the use of L2 translation activities and were grouped into three sections: (1) usefulness for L2 learning and practice; (2) usefulness for professional development; (3) degree of psychological comfort. A 5-point Likert scale was used for each question, ranging from 1) Strongly agree to 5) Strongly disagree.

Table 1 Questionnaire

<i>Usefulness for L2 acquisition and practice</i>
1. Do you agree that L2 translation activities are useful for developing L2 speaking skills? (CEQ)
2. Do you agree that L2 translation activities are useful for expanding and practising L2 vocabulary and grammar? (CEQ)
3. Do you agree that L2 translation activities can help you to identify and gain a better understanding of L1/L2 differences? (CEQ)
4. Did L2 translation activities change your personal assessment of your L2 proficiency? How? (OEQ)
5. Did L2 translation activities change your ideas about the character of translator's L2 knowledge? How? (OEQ)
6. Did L2 translation activities change your approach to learning L2? How? (OEQ)
<i>Usefulness for professional development</i>
7. Do you agree that the knowledge of bilingual word correspondences is key to good translation? (CEQ)
8. Did you find L2 translation activities useful for developing professionally important skills? In what way? (OEQ)
9. Did L2 translation activities have any effect on your self-image as a future interpreter? How? (OEQ)
10. Do you agree that the use of L2 translation activities in foreign language classes contributes to professional translator training? (CEQ)
11. Which translation activity did you find especially useful for developing professionally important skills? Explain your choice. (OEQ)
<i>Degree of psychological comfort</i>
12. Do you agree that L2 translation activities are performed outside one's comfort zone? (CEQ)
13. Do you agree that this challenge is beneficial for your development as an L2 user and translator? (CEQ)
14. Which activity did you find more stressful? Why? (OEQ)
15. Which activity did you find more enjoyable? Why? (OEQ)
16. What difficulties did you face when doing L2 translation activities? (OEQ)

We used a paper questionnaire, and the students were expected to answer the questions in writing. The questionnaire was anonymous as full identification was not essential to the purposes of the study. Individual students will be referred to as S1, S2, etc. The questions were in the students' L1 to ensure complete understanding of what was being asked. The students answered open-ended questions in their L1 which allowed them to express their ideas more clearly and precisely. The answers were then translated into English. Sixty-five completed questionnaires were collected, i.e., all the participants gave their responses.

The qualitative data collected from open-ended questions were analysed using thematic analysis which allows the researcher to identify and analyse patterns of meaning across a data set (Braun & Clarke, 2012). The themes identified provided insight into some common attitudes and opinions shared by translation students about different aspects of using L2 translation activities in a foreign language classroom.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Usefulness for L2 acquisition and practice

Table 2 Usefulness of L2 translation activities for L2 acquisition and practice

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1. Do you agree that L2 translation activities are useful for developing L2 speaking skills?				
38,5%	49,2%	7,7%	4,6%	0%
2. Do you agree that L2 translation activities are useful for expanding and practising L2 vocabulary and grammar?				
57%	33,8%	9,2%	0%	0%
3. Do you agree that L2 translation activities can help you to identify and gain a better understanding of L1/L2 differences?				
46,2%	38,4%	15,4%	0%	0%

The quantitative data demonstrate that the students seem to be in agreement about the benefits of L2 translation activities for the specified aspects of L2 acquisition and practice. Interestingly, students felt that they benefit more from vocabulary and grammar activities (Strongly agree – 57%) than from speaking activities (Strongly agree – 38,5%). This finding could be explained by the fact that the students' attention was mainly focused on finding the right vocabulary as well as grammatical and sentence structures in L2. This explanation can also account for the fact that the majority of the students (Strongly agree – 46,2%) agreed that L2 translation activities are beneficial in terms of identification of differences between L1 and L2. Switching between the two languages, comparing linguistic means in L1 and L2 when selecting a translation equivalent can be helpful in raising awareness and consolidation of knowledge of the cross-linguistic differences and similarities between the two languages.

Answers to Questions 4, 5, 6 (qualitative data) revealed the following common themes. First, many students admitted that they were sure that learning topic vocabulary and practising it through learning activities was enough to produce a good translation. This opinion was particularly predominant among 3rd year students.

Many were surprised that their L2 knowledge did not function as efficiently as they had expected. Some students observed that they had “struggled to recall the right L2 word or phrase in response to an L1 equivalent of an active vocabulary item” (Ss 5, 7, 13, 19, 22, 45, 51), though they had done vocabulary exercises which required them to provide L1 or L2 equivalents for the active vocabulary items.

In addition, it emerged from the students' answers that first-hand experience of L2 translation gave them new insight into the importance of having an extensive vocabulary and being able to find the right language to communicate an idea clearly and precisely. They admitted that “knowing as many words as possible” (S7) was a priority for a translator. Participants also stressed the importance of “being able to find a synonym or a synonymous phrase when you don't know or have forgotten the right word” (S17) or “when the right word does not come to mind at the right moment” (S18), “knowing different ways of saying the same thing” (S2).

Finally, students admitted a certain shift in their attitude to the process of learning L2. They stated that they “better understood the purpose of classroom activities and practice exercises” (S14), “understood the importance of paying attention to every new word, phrase and grammatical structure” (S1), “came to appreciate the knowledge of a large number of set phrases and clichés” (S57, 45), “understood what their priorities should be in learning a foreign language” (S64). Some pointed out that this experience gave them motivation to expand their vocabulary and “find different ways of saying the same thing” (S28). This indicates that students begin to see their L2 as a professional tool, relate their knowledge of the language to the professional context of its use and adopt a more conscious and professionally-oriented attitude to what is going on in the foreign language classroom.

4.2. Usefulness for professional development

Table 3 Usefulness of L2 translation activities for professional development

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
7. Do you agree that the knowledge of bilingual word correspondences is key to good translation?					
	13,8%	27,7%	6,2%	52,3%	0%
10. Do you agree that the use of L2 translation activities in foreign language classes contributes to professional translator training?					
	20%	61,5%	12,4%	4,6%	1,5%

Answers to Question 7 produced somewhat mixed results. On the one hand, a large proportion of the students (Strongly agree – 13,8%, Agree – 27,7%) believe that the knowledge of bilingual correspondences is essential to producing a good translation. This could in part be accounted for by the reliance on topic vocabulary which led to the assumption that without knowledge of these words and phrases students would have experienced difficulties during L2 translation activities. This assumption, though not entirely false, is still undesirable for a future translator. Consequently, more thought should be given to the design of L2 translation activities to ensure that they do not contribute to the formation of wrong beliefs.

However, the fact that a slightly larger proportion of the participants (Disagree – 52,3%) disagree with the question, seems reassuring. It suggests that these participants understand that to produce an adequate translation one cannot rely on bilingual correspondences only. This seems to, at least in part, refute the concerns expressed by the opponents of translation in a foreign language classroom that L2 translation activities instil a false belief about the existence of perfect one-to-one correspondences between languages.

Answers to Question 10 revealed a generally positive attitude of the participants to the contribution of L2 translation activities to their professional development as translators. Only a small minority of the students (Disagree – 4,6%, Strongly disagree – 1,5%) felt that these activities were unnecessary rather than useful in this respect. Still, more students seem to “Agree” (61,5%) that “Strongly agree” (20%) with the question which suggests that L2 translation activities are not seen as key to their professional training. This is in line with the role given to these activities within translation-oriented foreign language training – they

were not intended to provide training in L2 translation but to ensure students' exposure to their future profession and development of awareness of its challenges.

The analysis of the qualitative data (questions 8, 9, 11) revealed that both 3rd and 4th-year students agreed that the L2 translation activities were useful in terms of providing insight into and first-hand experience in their future profession. However, their reasons for thinking so were slightly different. While 3rd year-students seemed to enjoy and appreciate the novelty and professional character of the activities, the opportunity "to try their hand at translation" (S34), "to feel like a professional translation" (S41) and "were excited about acting as real translators" (S53), 4th-year students stressed the importance of these activities in terms of providing more opportunity "to practise translation skills" (S12), "to use active vocabulary in a professional context, to see how well they have mastered it" (S45).

Some students felt intimidated by these activities at first because they "felt that they didn't know how to translate the passage" (S19), "were at a loss as to how to find the right words" (S59), "felt that their language knowledge was letting them down" (S62). Nevertheless, they admitted the importance of such activities in terms of providing exposure to their future profession – "if I want to be a good translator, I shouldn't shy away from such activities" (S2).

There was a small proportion of participants who felt that translation activities should be used in translation classes, while language classes should focus on practising foreign language only – "in a foreign language class, we should learn new words, make up dialogues, retell texts" (S63).

The "Act as interpreter" activity was quite predictably rated as an especially useful activity as it "creates conditions similar to those in which professional translators work" (S61), "gives us a taste of what translator's work is like" (S12), allows us to "experience first-hand the difficulties that translators face in their work" (S11).

4.3. Degree of psychological comfort

Table 4 Degree of psychological comfort during L2 translation activities

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
12. Do you agree that L2 translation activities are performed outside one's comfort zone?				
38,5%	40%	13,8%	7,7%	0%
13. Do you agree that this challenge is beneficial for your development as a translator?				
29,2%	41,5%	18,5%	10,8%	0%

The data received for Question 12 demonstrate that a large majority of the students (Strongly agree – 38,5%, Agree – 40%) find L2 translation activities challenging and uncomfortable. However, the answers to Question 13 suggest that the participants understand the importance of dealing with this discomfort and are getting used to such stressful conditions. Two observations immediately strike the eye. The first one is that while 38,5% of the students strongly agreed that L2 translation activities were performed outside one's comfort zone, only 29,2% strongly agreed that this challenge was beneficial for them. The second observation is that there is a slight increase in the number of participants who "Neither agree or disagree" and "Disagree", 18,5% and 10,8% respectively. This may in part correlate

with the negative opinions expressed by some students about the advisability of including L2 translation activities in translator language training.

Predictably, the participants were unanimous in identifying the “Act as interpreter” activity as more stressful. As to the more enjoyable activity, opinion was divided and no apparent correlation with the year of study was observed. The difference of opinion could be accounted for by the students’ different preferred types of activity, with some enjoying a more comfortable and collaborative learning environment and others thriving on more stressful and challenging tasks. This inference is partly supported by the data. The students commented that the “Act as interpreter” activity “allowed them to test their L2 knowledge” (S43), “to see how they could use L2 under pressure” (S31), “to see what they were capable of” (S53), while the “Render the article into English” activity was described as “inviting collaboration and discussion” (S23), “group work and interaction with other students” (S58), “giving some flexibility in terms of language” (S11), “giving opportunity to discuss alternatives and defend your choice” (S60), “challenging but motivating” (S57).

With regard to the problems encountered by students, the following difficulties have been identified as common to a large proportion of students:

(a) dependence on the original text and lack of flexibility when choosing the right language to render the ideas into L2;

(b) lack of strategies for and experience in quickly and efficiently dealing with difficulties in finding the right translation equivalents and attempts to produce a word-for-word translation which proved clumsy and inadequate;

(c) slow recall and retrieval of linguistic resources in L2, including those which are “well-known” to students;

(d) slower speech in L2;

(e) time constraints (“Act as interpreter”);

(f) psychological discomfort and lack of psychological readiness for translation activities.

Once again, these data indicate the students’ unpreparedness for using their L2 in quasi-professional contexts which results in word-finding and retrieval problems, slower speech rate and overall discomfort when doing L2 translation activities.

5. CONCLUSION

The study focused on the use of L2 translation activities in teaching foreign languages to trainee translators and aimed to find out 3rd and 4th-year translation students’ attitude to these tasks. Overall, the evidence from this study suggests that L2 translation activities were viewed by the participants as useful both in terms of benefits for L2 acquisition and practice as well as giving the students an opportunity to relate their L2 knowledge and the process of its acquisition to a quasi-translation context and to draw adequate conclusions, some encouraging and some disappointing and offering much food for thought.

In particular, the students highlighted that these activities were beneficial in terms of L2 vocabulary, grammar and speech practice as well as raising awareness of cross-linguistic differences between L2 and L1. L2 translation activities gave them valuable insights into how language is used in translation and the extra demands placed on the translator’s L2 competence and changed their idea of what the translator’s knowledge of L2 should be like.

The students also agreed that this learning experience caused a shift in their attitude to the process of learning L2 towards a better understanding of and a more meaningful approach to L2 activities. It also contributed to their professional development in terms of giving them some L2 translation practice and allowing them to identify with the profession and strengthen their self-image as future translators. Finally, the participants noted that this experience made them aware of some important problems with their L2 knowledge and use such as a weak L1 – L2 link, word-finding and retrieval problems, slower speech, lack of strategies for dealing with difficult situations and lack of psychological readiness to perform under such stressful conditions.

However, the study revealed some areas which require attention. These include the opinion expressed by some participants that L2 translation activities do not belong in the foreign language classroom and divergence of opinion among the students about the role of bilingual correspondences in translation. The former may simply reflect some students' personal opinions but it may also imply a certain lack of understanding of the aims and potential benefits of classroom activities. The latter is an important issue in translation, and it is essential that the students have a professional attitude to the use of bilingual correspondences.

The study has several some implications for translator language training:

1. L2 translation activities should have a place in the teaching of foreign languages to trainee translators.

2. When planning, designing and implementing L2 translation activities, it is crucial to prevent possible negative effects and ensure that these activities do not become counterproductive.

3. Foreign language teachers who work on translation training programmes should have a good understanding of the essence and challenges of the translation profession.

A potential limitation of the study could have been the method of collecting qualitative data. It is possible that an in-person interview could have provided more detailed information than written answers to open-ended questions. On the other hand, it may well be that the students could have been more reluctant to share their opinions in person. Besides, the “in-person interview” option was discarded due to a large number of participants.

Future research could focus on the different aspects of designing and implementing L2 translation activities used as part of foreign language training for trainee translators so as to ensure their effectiveness for L2 acquisition, their value for the professional development of students and prevention of the formation of false beliefs about or unprofessional approaches to translation.

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