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كلمة العدد

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

يسعدنا أن نقدم للقراء والباحثين العدد الثاني من مجلة المقالات الدولية، والذي يأتي استمراراً للنجاح الكبير الذي حققه العدد الأول، حيث لاقى اهتماماً واسعاً ومقروئية متميزة لدى الأكاديميين والمهتمين بالبحث العلمي.

كما يسرنا أن نعلن أن المجلة قد حصلت على التصنيف العلمي الدولي (ISI)، مما يشكل خطوة مهمة نحو تعزيز انتشارها الأكاديمي وإثراء المحتوى البحثي المنشور، حيث يتيح هذا التصنيف للمجلة وصولاً أوسع إلى الباحثين والمؤسسات العلمية، ويؤكد جودة الأبحاث المنشورة واستيفائها للمعايير الدولية.

لقد كان هذا النجاح دافعاً لنا لمواصلة الجهود في تقديم محتوى علمي عالي الجودة، يواكب التطورات البحثية الحديثة، ويساهم في تعزيز التفاعل العلمي وتبادل المعرفة بين الباحثين من مختلف التخصصات. فمع زيادة الإقبال على المجلة، أصبحنا أكثر حرصاً على توفير مساحة أكاديمية جادة للنقاش والتفاعل، من خلال نشر أبحاث متنوعة تغطي مجالات القانون، العلوم السياسية، العلوم الاجتماعية والاقتصادية، وكل ما يتعلق بالدراسات الإنسانية ذات القيمة العلمية المضافة.

في هذا العدد الجديد، نواصل تقديم مجموعة مختارة من الأبحاث والدراسات التي تواكب القضايا الراهنة، وتطرح تحليلات علمية عميقة، وفق نهج أكاديمي رصين. ونتوجه بالشكر لجميع الباحثين والمساهمين على ثقتهم ودعمهم، فالمجلة مستمرة بفضل مشاركاتكم وإسهاماتكم العلمية التي تجعلها منصة رائدة في نشر المعرفة الأكاديمية.

والله ولي التوفيق

رئيس التحرير



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المدير المسؤول ورئيس التحرير

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محتويات العدد

3-16	التعبير عن القيم كوظيفة من وظائف قواعد التعديل الدستوري حمزة الكندي
17-30	إشكالية البيروقراطية الإدارية وتأثيراتها على الجهاز الإداري بالمغرب رضى الهلالي
31-46	ممارسة الشرطة الإدارية المحلية بالمغرب: قراءة في الآليات والاختصاص حميد الموسوي
47-66	التدبير الملكي للشأن العام في المغرب وإنتاج التوازن التوفيق بين منطق السلطة ومنطق السوق منير قنديلي - الوافي محمد
67-78	طبيعة الرقابة الدستورية على استقلالية المؤسسة التشريعية ربيع السلماني
79-92	حصيلة عمل المحكمة الدستورية لسنة 2024 أحمد أكنيف - وداد لمسرد
93-110	التوازنات المالية بين المدرستين التقليدية والحديثة أنوار الوطاسي
111-122	البيولوجية الوراثية والذكاء الاصطناعي في التشريع المغربي عبد الرحيم لمسلم
123-134	مصير الديون في حالة عدم التصريح داخل أجل المحدد (صعوبات المقابلة 73.17) محمد لوديني

135-158	التحديات القانونية لتنفيذ أحكام القانون التجاري الليبي (رقم 10 لسنة 2023) رقية محمود امهدي
159-174	L'étendue De La Protection Juridique Du Cyberconsommateur El YASSINE Sara
175-194	L'entrepreneuriat : Une Alternative D'employabilité Pour Lutter Contre Le Chômage Des Jeunes Au Maroc Yassine ALAIADI
195-206	الحياة المدرسية ودورها في التربية والتحصيل الدراسي لدى المتعلمين مقاربة سوسيولوجية عبد العالي قايدي
207-214	INTERROGATING THE MERITS OF INCORPORATING TRANSLATION IN FLT Hajar EL SAYD
215-230	La dimension environnementale dans les politiques d'urbanisme : Étude analytique à travers le cadre juridique marocain OUHAMMOU Tarik
231-254	El turismo solidario en la comuna rural de Boujedyane Larache – Marruecos Mohamed Haouari

INTERROGATING THE MERITS OF INCORPORATING TRANSLATION IN FLT

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Abstract:

This study critically examines the merits of integrating translation into Foreign Language Teaching (FLT), aiming to question prevailing assumptions and explore the potential benefits and challenges associated with this pedagogical approach. The investigation focuses on theoretical considerations rather than practical applications, delving into the perspectives and beliefs of both educators and learners. The inquiry is driven by a need to reevaluate the role of translation in language education, a subject often overlooked in pedagogical discourse. Through a comprehensive analysis of the perceived advantages and drawbacks, this research aims to offer a nuanced understanding of the implications of incorporating translation into the FLT curriculum. The outcomes contribute valuable insights to the ongoing conversation surrounding effective language teaching strategies.

Keywords:

Translation ; Pedagogy ; Foreign Language Education; Language Learning .

Introduction

It has long been argued that translation as a pedagogical practice should be strictly avoided when it comes to language teaching/learning. In fact, a plethora of studies, conducted in the few past decades, on the role of translation in language learning warns of the detrimental effects translation may have on learners, which explains why teachers are resolutely instructed, and sometimes even admonished, not to resort to translation in the teaching process. However, for many scholars, translation is a vehicle in language learning; their argument is that translation is a skill that learners use professionally when they reach higher language levels, not to mention, of course, that it helps achieve learning, in a way or another.

The Council of Europe defines language learning as “[a] process whereby language ability is gained as the result of a planned process, especially by formal study in an institutional setting” (139). Therefore, for many years, language scholars and experts in applied linguistics excluded translation and forced it into a long exile, to reiterate Widdowson’s words (160), without being able to provide any empirical justification or scientific evidence that translation has detrimental effects on the learners of a foreign language, which is why Carreres claims that “we still lack a strong empirical foundation on which to base our practice” (1).

In keeping with Carreres statement, there have been recently attempts to summon translation back from its long-lasting exile, as voices to bring the issue to discussion are growing abundant. For instance, Duff, Stern, Widdowson, House, Cook, and Pym, among others, are all scholars that have shown intriguing concern for the use of translation in foreign language teaching, expecting, as such, “a change towards the pedagogical use of translation” (Stibbard 69). These scholars advocate the implementation of translation in foreign-language teaching as they believe that reconsidering using translation in teaching does not necessarily mean awakening the Grammar-Translation Method but instead making of translation a communicative and interactive activity of modern language teaching methods.

Larson believes that one of the most problematic issues in translation is “[...] how to find lexical equivalents for objects and events which are not known in the target culture” (163). Accordingly, bringing about the most appropriate equivalence is after all the underlying goal of any translator or teacher of language using translation in the teaching process. Nevertheless, finding equivalence is a complex process that requires a thorough knowledge of both the source and target cultures/languages, which explains why it is divided by Mona Baker, in her book *In Other Words: A Coursebook in Translation*, into different levels, namely equivalence at word level, equivalence above word level, grammatical equivalence, and textual equivalence.

Culture – Translation – Language

In the realm of translation, a profound understanding of cultural differences is indispensable. Translators navigate these complexities employing various strategies, often resorting to equivalence to bridge cross-cultural gaps, emphasizing that “translation is not seen as a problematic form of cross-cultural communication” (Robinson 183). Cultural nuances are meticulously considered by translators, recognizing their potential impact on the translation process.

The intricate relationship between language and national identity introduces a layer of complexity to the cultural-linguistic dynamic. Chen Hongwei posits that language, as a reflection of and influence on culture, serves as a symbolic representation of social identity (121). In a similar vein, Kramsch views language as a system of signs imbued with cultural value, symbolizing the intricacies of cultural reality (193). Sapir, offering a contrasting perspective, argues that no two languages can adequately represent the same reality, underscoring the role of culture in shaping language and perception (69).

Translation between languages, therefore, demands a profound comprehension of the involved cultures. This necessitates not only linguistic proficiency but also a nuanced understanding of the associated culture (Delisle 132). House underscores that translation is a dual act, both linguistic and cultural, inseparable due to the intrinsic embedding of language in culture (11-12). Hence, translation emerges as an intricate intercultural communication process, requiring mastery of the target language and a broad knowledge of the target culture.

At the core of translation lies cultural transfer—a nuanced process involving the navigation of cultural differences and traditions. The translator's competency in language use becomes crucial, as it directly impacts the quality of translation. It is incumbent upon translators to adeptly maneuver linguistic and cultural disparities, ensuring that expressions seamlessly align with the receptor culture (Nida and Taber 199). However, a persistent challenge arises when some words lack equivalents in the target culture, introducing the potential for diverse interpretations and adding a layer of complexity to the translation process.

Reasons to Incorporate Translation in Foreign Language Teaching

The use of translation in foreign language teaching has long been a subject of debate, prompting scholars to reevaluate its merits. Some, like Jeremy Harmer, Guy Cook, and Philip Kerr, advocate for translation as a constructive and beneficial asset in language instruction. However, others, including Anthony Howatt, stress the need to implement translation differently from traditional Grammar Translation Method (GTM) practices (Howatt 161).

The ubiquity of translation in daily life questions its exclusion from foreign language classrooms. Alan Duff challenges the dismissal of translation, asking why a tool prevalent outside the classroom should be omitted within it (Duff 6). Rejecting translation solely based on historical arguments against GTM is considered a fallacy by some researchers who argue for its constructive use in enhancing understanding and learning (Howatt 161).

Counterarguments against translation in foreign language classes center on realistic needs, emphasizing the humanistic, cognitive, practical, technical, and political justifications for its incorporation. Proponents argue that translation aligns with affective and humanistic approaches, reducing anxiety and facilitating early language learning (Stibbard 71). The judicious use of the first language (L1) is seen as crucial, with Jeremy Harmer advocating for its use to maintain a positive social atmosphere in the classroom (Harmer 133-134).

The practicality of translation is evident when considering time-saving strategies and avoiding disruptions. Scholars like Philip Kerr, Guy Cook, and Richard Stibbard view L1 use as a pragmatic approach to maintain lesson pace and foster an effective learning environment (Kerr 32; Cook 46; Stibbard 70). Additionally, translation becomes a valuable tool in explaining instructions, clarifying vocabulary, handling idioms, and teaching grammatical rules.

Technological advancements in language education introduce a new dimension. Despite reservations about the accuracy of online translation tools, modern pedagogy recognizes the significance of teaching learners how to use machine translation appropriately. The evolving landscape of global communication further underscores the importance of translation skills in various social, political, touristic, and trade settings (Stibbard 71).

Political considerations also come into play, as Kerr notes the dominance of English speakers in foreign language teaching. The marketing strategy of emphasizing native English speakers in teaching roles is recognized, but a shift in this trend is noted as the world undergoes constant change (Kerr 3-4).

The push toward a globalized world amplifies the need for translation. English as a lingua franca necessitates translation services, making translation a crucial skill in social, political, touristic, and trade contexts. Exposure to translation during foreign language education is seen as an asset for future performance (Stibbard 71).

While warnings against learners using translation persist, the inherent role of translation in language learning is acknowledged. Nick Ellis and Philip Kerr emphasize the significance of learners' own language in the learning process, with the understanding that learners naturally draw from their linguistic repertoire, contributing to what Ellis terms "transferring knowledge" (Ellis 153; Kerr).

Arguments against Incorporating Translation in Foreign Language Teaching

The reservations about incorporating translation in foreign language teaching often stem from the historical association with the Grammar Translation Method (GTM). In GTM, the primary focus on translating sentences and reading them aloud has been criticized for hindering students' ability to think in the target language, prioritizing the mother tongue and impeding language production (Larson-Freeman and Anderson 61). Consequently, the rejection of GTM has extended to a dismissal of any translation activity, leading to the neglect of translation as a valid language practice and improvement tool (Duff 9).

Alan Duff attributes this neglect to the perception that translation has become fossilized over the centuries, reinforcing the skepticism about its efficacy in language teaching (Duff 9). Critics argue that translation, by decreasing learners' exposure to the target language, limits the input they receive in the classroom (Duff 9).

Additional arguments against incorporating translation center on the view that it is restrictive and lacks communicative value within a communicative methodology. Angela Carreres asserts that translation exercises have no place in communicative language teaching, as they are considered detrimental to fluency and hinder learners from thinking in the foreign language (Carreres 5). Guy Cook expresses concern that learners who rely on translation may be forever locked into a laborious process, unable to think in the learned language (Cook 88).

Translation is also criticized for its potential to interfere with the integration of language skills. Kirsten Malmkjaer suggests that translation prevents students from thinking in the foreign language, rendering the teaching/learning process pointless and irrelevant (Duff 3). Excessive use of translation can lead to interference between the learners' knowledge of their mother language and the target language, creating challenges in finding appropriate equivalence for words and expressions without equivalents in the target language/culture.

Moreover, the argument against translation extends to its perceived limitation to two skills—reading and writing. This contradicts the integrated approach that aims to target all four language skills (reading, writing, listening, speaking), with critics asserting that translation fails to account for the comprehensive development of language abilities (Duff 5). The belief that translation is time-consuming and wasteful further reinforces the opposition, as it is seen as occupying valuable time that could be allocated to teaching the four essential language skills (Duff 5).

TFL: Approaches, Methods, and Techniques

Scholars like Harmer, Stern, Richards, and Rodgers, and Edward Anthony conceptualize "approach, method, and technique" as fundamental in defining, justifying, and discussing language teaching activities. Edward Anthony defines the approach as "a set of correlative assumptions dealing with the nature of language teaching and learning," emphasizing its role in shaping perceptions of

language education (qtd in Kumaravadiyelu 84). Richards and Rodgers characterize it as "theories about the nature of language and language learning" that underpin language teaching practices and principles (20). Practices and principles, they argue, should align with the chosen approach for efficacy.

The term 'method,' absent in Richards and Rodgers' classification, is defined by Anthony as "an overall plan for the orderly presentation of language material" that adheres to the selected approach (19). Harmer further explicates that a method is "the practical realization of an approach," positioning it as a procedural component within a broader approach (62). This aligns with Kumaravadiyelu's assertion that a 'method' is a constituent of the overarching 'approach,' signifying the relationship between theory and practice in language teaching (86).

Kumaravadiyelu's idea that an approach is an umbrella term also implies a hierarchical relationship within the tripartite framework of approach, method, and technique. Approach informs method, and method informs techniques, establishing a cascading influence (85). According to Richards and Rodgers, a technique is "implementational" and transpires in the classroom, necessitating consistency with the method and, by extension, the approach (19). In essence, a technique, characterized as "a sequence of classroom activities performed in the classroom environment," aligns with the chosen method and approach, highlighting its practical application in teaching (Kumaravadiyelu 85).

In summary, the interplay between approach, method, and technique in language teaching emphasizes the hierarchical nature of their relationship, where the approach sets the overarching philosophy, the method outlines the systematic plan, and techniques represent the applied activities within the classroom context.

Challenges of Translating Culture-Specific Items

Translating culture-specific items poses inherent challenges as languages are not only linguistically but also culturally distinct. Mustapha Ettobi emphasizes that translation not only grants access to otherwise inaccessible texts but also provides a view of the culture that produced them (206). However, achieving complete correspondence between linguistically and culturally different systems, such as Arabic and English, is impractical (Nida, "Toward a Science of Translating" 156).

The influence of culture on translation is underscored by various scholars, including Baker (1992), Bassnett (1980/1990), Lefevere (1975/1992), Hatim and Mason (1990/1997), Holmes (1972), Nida (1964/2002), Venuti (2001/2003), Hardwick (2000), and Newmark (1981/1988). They advocate considering cultural differences between source language (SL) and target language (TL) to establish effective communication. Translators must possess a bicultural understanding to navigate these differences (Taft).

Cultural expressions embedded in source text (ST) settings reflect the cultural sphere, requiring translators to shed light on these aspects. For instance, translating the Arabic metaphor "عينه حارة" (his eye is so hot) into English as "envious" captures the cultural nuance. Similarly, translating the Islamic/Arabic concept "عقيقة" (a goat to slaughter and distribute on the occasion of a newly born baby) may necessitate providing a gloss due to its absence in the TL culture.

Metaphorical expressions, like the English simile "mad as hell," embedded deeply in the language texture, pose challenges in translation. For example, translating it into Arabic as "غاضب جدا" (*Ghathibon jiddan*) requires cultural understanding to convey the intended meaning effectively (Ahmad Abu-Zaydeh 31).

In summary, the complexity of culture encompasses history, social structure, and everyday usage, making the translation of culture-specific items intricate. Translators, equipped with a solid cultural background, can employ appropriate methods, strategies, and techniques to convey the essence of a work from one culture to another.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper has undertaken a critical examination of the merits of incorporating translation into Foreign Language Teaching (FLT), challenging prevailing assumptions and exploring potential benefits and challenges associated with this pedagogical approach. The analysis has centered on theoretical considerations, delving into the perspectives of both educators and learners to provide a nuanced understanding of the implications of integrating translation into the FLT curriculum.

Our attempt has been to reveal that the historical aversion to translation in language teaching, particularly associated with the Grammar Translation Method (GTM), is being reconsidered by contemporary scholars such as Duff, Stern, Widdowson, House, Cook, and Pym. They advocate for a shift toward the pedagogical use of translation, transforming it into a communicative and interactive activity within modern language teaching methods. Despite challenges highlighted, there is a growing acknowledgment of translation as a valuable skill that learners can utilize professionally as they progress to higher language levels.

The intricate relationship between culture, language, and translation has been explored, emphasizing the indispensable role of cultural understanding in effective translation. The challenges of translating culture-specific items have been illuminated, highlighting the complexity of navigating linguistic and cultural disparities. Scholars argue that successful translation requires not only linguistic proficiency but also a nuanced understanding of the cultures involved.

In terms of Foreign Language Teaching (FLT), the paper has also attempted to discuss the interconnected concepts of approach, method, and technique, revealing their hierarchical relationship. The interplay between these elements underscores the importance of aligning language teaching practices with overarching theoretical frameworks.

The paper has also examined the reasons both for and against incorporating translation in FLT. Proponents argue for the practicality of translation, emphasizing its benefits in reducing anxiety, facilitating early language learning, and addressing realistic needs in language classrooms. The paper has acknowledged the pragmatic use of learners' first language (L1) and the potential role of technology in enhancing translation skills. On the contrary, critics argue against translation, citing historical associations with restrictive methodologies and potential interference between language skills.

As language teaching evolves in response to globalization and technological advancements, the ongoing dialogue surrounding the role of translation in FLT becomes increasingly pertinent. The need for a nuanced and context-specific approach to translation emerges as a key consideration, acknowledging its potential benefits while addressing the challenges associated with cultural and linguistic differences.

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