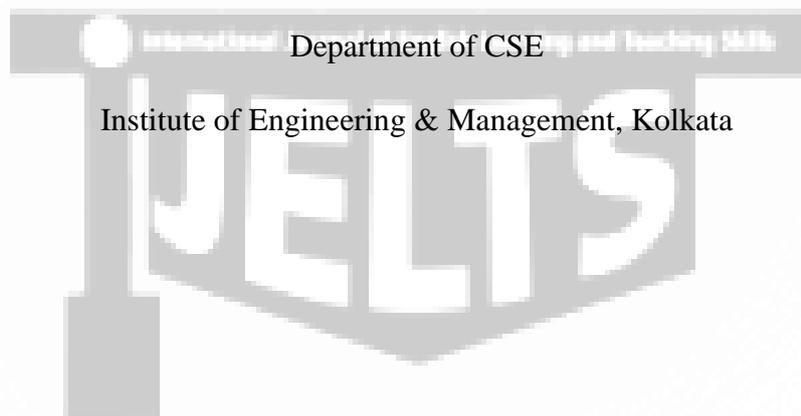


TRANSLATION AS A MEAN OF LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

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## Abstract

The present paper focuses on the use of translation in helping learning to acquire, develop and strengthen their knowledge and competence in the English language. Translation integrated into the language learning practice along with generally used learning activities ,such as reading,listening,writing,and vocabulary development could be defined as a “pedagogical tool”, considering that its purpose is to teach a language. Translation activities make students communicate both ways: into and from the foreign language. While translating students are incited to notice differences in structures and vocabulary, to strengthen grammatical competence,to shape their own way of thinking and to correct common mistakes that could otherwise remain unnoticed .Students can make the best out of their learning,if they are encouraged to use translation skills properly. This paper is based on a brief theoretical literature overview,analysis of the activities in the language classroom and analysis of the result of the survey.The findings of the survey suggest that translation is a good tool in the English language learning course aimed at enhancement of student ‘ foreign language skills .

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**Introduction**

Translation has always been the core of the controversies on whether it can be a valid and effective tool in foreign language learning. Until recently, translation was out of favour with the language teaching community. Translation as a language learning activity was considered as being unsuitable within the context of foreign language learning. It was criticized because of the close association with traditional grammar translation. Even today translation is often regarded as some kind of mechanical linguistic transfer of meaning from one language to another. It is still ignored as a useful language learning tool because of being not a communicative activity that is not suited to the general needs of the language learner. Translation is considered as time-consuming, boring and irrelevant.

However, in the last few decades there has been an increasing interest in the translation practice in the foreign language classroom. Recently foreign language teachers have been reviving the use of translation for different learning purpose. It was observed that translation for different learning process. Reading, grammar exercises, translation –“are in fact perceived by learners to be conducive to learning “. The present study grew out of a long term teaching practice and it was observed that translation as a method applied to language teaching practice induces deeper insight into meaningful contents of the material to be taught.

The problem discussed in the paper is the relevance of translation for enhancing foreign

language skills. The methods of the study are overview of the theoretical background, analysis of translation activities in the language classroom, and analysis of the result of the survey.

### **Theoretical Background**

Nevertheless, translation is perceived differently by linguists, methodologists and teachers. Its use in foreign language teaching provokes a great deal of disagreement and criticism. The main reason for this is the fact that throughout the years there have been a number of studies carried out, which have either favoured or completely ignored the use of translation as a learning method. Translation was considered as inefficient, unreliable and irrelevant. Significant limitation led to the idea that the use of translation in language learning had to be provided.

Malmkjaer (1998) briefly summarizes the main reasons why translation fell from favour:

1. Translation is independent and radically different from the four skills which define language competence: reading, writing, speaking and listening
2. Translation takes up valuable time which could be used to teach these four skills
3. Translation is unnatural
4. Translation misleads and prevents student from thinking in the foreign language.
5. Translation is a bad test of language skills
6. Translation produces interference.
7. Translation is only appropriate for training translators.

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Duf(1994) reveals further reasons why teachers objected to the use of translation in foreign language classes. The researcher stresses that translation is text bound and confined only two skills - reading and writing. Its is not a communicative activity as it doesn't involve oral interaction.

Nevertheless there are “significant and visible signs of a revival of translation in language teaching according to recent literature and applied linguistics”. Many theorists, linguists, teachers agree on the importance of using translation in foreign language class .For instance, Schaffner (1998) claims that the translation and related exercises could be beneficial to foreign language learning:

1. To improve verbal agility
2. To expand students' vocabulary in L2
3. To develop their style
4. To monitor and improve the comprehension of L2

Translation in foreign language class is in the process of becoming a form of “pedagogical translation”, which is no longer viewed as an in effective tool in language learning and is evaluated as a way to enrich learners 'competences. As a form of communication, translation involves interaction and cooperation between people, which makes it a very useful tool in foreign language teaching. translation heightens language awareness. While translating students are focused on identifying differences in structure and vocabulary, they have to evolve strategies to deal with them and to negotiate the potential of both language. The real usefulness of translation in foreign language class lies in comparison of grammar, vocabulary and othe rlanguage

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points in the target language and the student's mother tongue .Students are directly exposed to contrasting language systems of the target and the native languages.

According to Duff (1994), translation happens everywhere and all the time. The students, interpret signs and notices in the environment, and translate instructions, letters for friends and relatives .Moreover ,they mentally translate ideas from their mother tongue to english.

Translation might provide a guided practice in reading .Before starting translating a text it "should be read carefully and analysed in detail to determine the contexts in terms of what, how and why it is said "As translation is regarded a communicative activity ,it involves communication between the teacher and the student. On the one hand, students are involved in a conversation on the translation topic, which helps them strengthen their speaking skills. On the other hand ,students are requested to talk to both the teacher and other learners ,and the through listening to both the lecturer and the student improve their listening skills.

Researchers Nolasco and Arthur (1995) suggest that translation activities should meet the following criteria:

1. Language is used for a purpose.
2. Translation activities create a desire for communication
3. Translation activities encourage students to be creative and contribute their ideas.
4. Students are focused on what they are saying, rather than how they are saying it.
5. Students work independently of the teacher
6. Students determine what to say or write

Moreover, translation activities need not to be used in isolation, but should be include in an inherent part of the language learning course.

### **Discussion and Results**

The reason why translation was introduced was the need to improve students 'English language knowledge and to prepare them to pass language competence examination, during which examinees are required to translate a short text. At the beginning of the course ,translation activities were applied in the foreign language learning process to achieve progress in improving language skills in reading, writing, speaking, and listening. According to the researcher Duff (1994),properly designed translation activities can be employed to enhance the four skills and to develop three qualities essential to all language learning: accuracy, clarity and flexibility .The purpose of translation activites are preceded by grammatical and lexical exercises to practice and improve certain difficulties that learners have. On the other hand ,translation is starting point for further oral practice .

Translation activities consist of pre-translation and post translation exercises. Pre-translation activities are based on post - reading, grammar, vocabulary practical tasks. And post-translating activities are focused on rewarding, rewriting, revision and evaluating. The students read the text in pairs and try to find English equivalents of the words written on the lists. Then they compare results .They read, translate and analyse the most complicated part of the text. After having read the text, the learners are asked to do comprehension exercises, such as a answering questions, identifying true or false

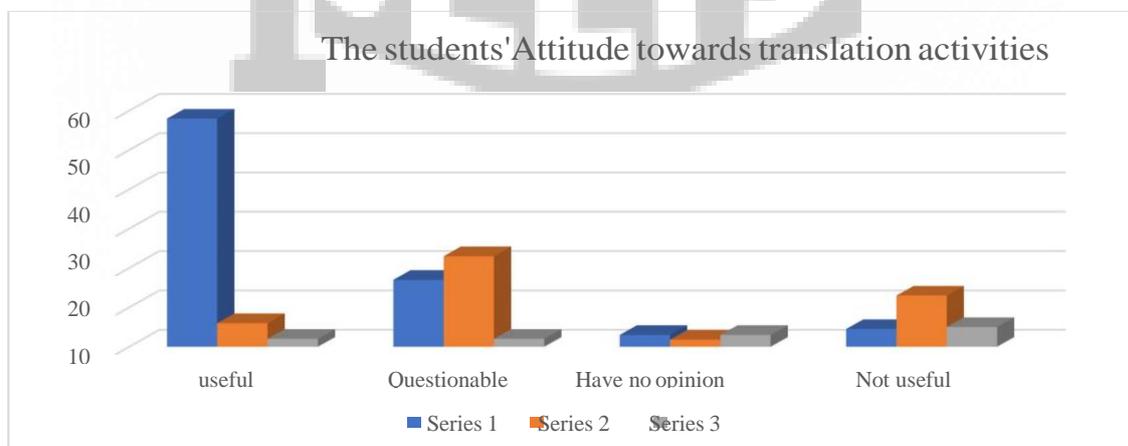
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statements, forming general question on the contents of the text. Finally, the students have to write a summary which is also a very important activity.

Back translation is another motivating type of translation activity which students enjoy. This activity is very effective when carefully prepared. All mentioned activities involve translation of the text. It serves as an introduction to the material the students will be working on. According to Mahmood (2006), translation may be useful because it can be interactive, learner-centered, it promotes the learner's autonomy, and uses authentic materials.

At the beginning of the term the students were not used to translate activities, but at an end most learners considered translation to be useful learning tool.



Viewing the results of the students assessment of translation as a learning method, 58% of the respondents considered translation to be a useful learning tool. 23% of the students doubted about the usefulness of translation tasks. 9% of the learners thought that translation could not help achieve progress in language learning and 10% did not have an opinion.

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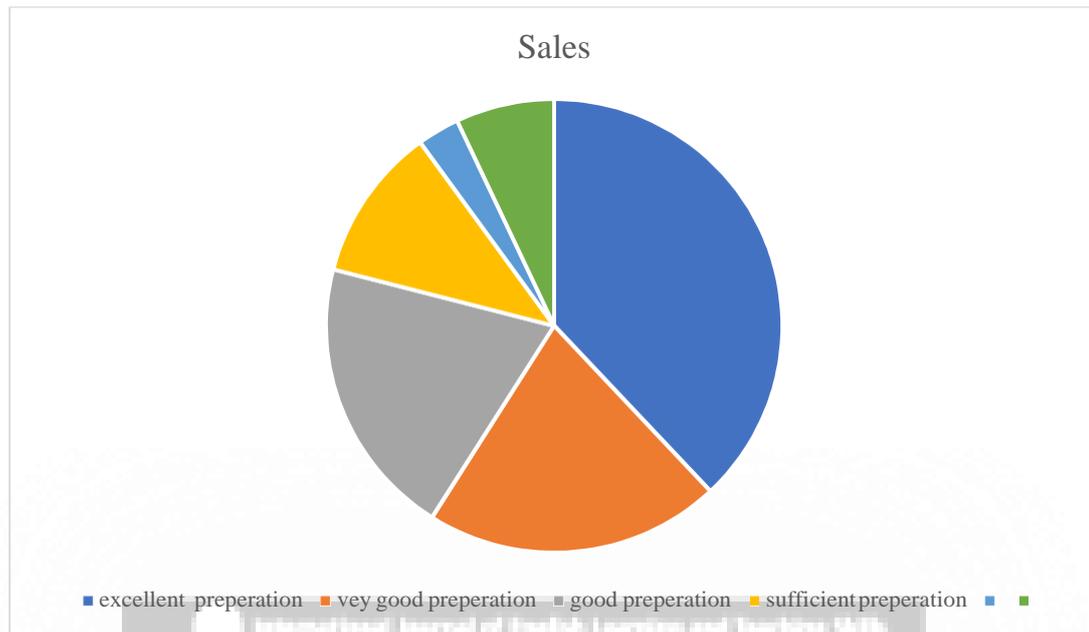


Chart 2. The degree of the students ' preparation for the examination

Chart 2 indicates that translation activities offered excellent preparation for 3% of the respondents. Very good was chosen by 7% of the respondents, Good – by 38% of the respondents, sufficiently - by 21% of the respondents. Satisfactory was chosen by 20% of the respondents and 11% of the learner mentioned that they had not prepared for the language competence examination at all. The results show that the majority of students believe that translation activities could help them to prepare for English language examination.

### Conclusion

Translation as a method of language teaching is still a subject under research and continues to be one of the most frequently discussed topics among linguists,

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methodologists and teachers. Translation in foreign language classes enhances better understanding of structures of the two language and also strengthens students' translation skill. It is an effective, valid tool in foreign language learning and can be used in the university classroom to improve knowledge in English. Still, translation should not be overused and should be integrated into language into language teaching at the right time and with the right students.



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