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Use of Translation in the Classroom by EFL Teachers in Libya (A descriptive study)

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Abstract

The use of translation in foreign/second language teaching has divided language teachers into supporters and opponents. Some teachers hold the view that translation should not be used in foreign language teaching. This view is apparently based on the criticism of the Grammar-Translation Method in foreign language teaching. Other teachers think that translation can be useful in foreign language teaching and learning. In Libya, some EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teachers claim that they find translation helpful in their teaching and that their students find it useful in facilitating their learning. These claims go in line with the views of some modern researchers and writers on the use of translation in foreign language teaching. Therefore, this study is to explore aspects of the use of translation by EFL teachers in the classroom in Tripoli and nearby areas. The study is based on data collected via a questionnaire from 171 teachers of English holding different qualifications and teaching English at universities, higher institutes, language centers and schools. The findings confirm that translation is widely used as a technique to check students' understanding, help students clarify the meanings of linguistic units, increase students' vocabulary, develop students' ability of contrastive analysis, and assess students' overall language learning. These findings support new research worldwide in favor of a controlled use of translation in foreign language teaching and learning. The findings open the venue for further investigation of this issue in other parts of Libya and other Arab countries.

***Keywords*:** English, foreign language, Libya, teaching, translation

Introduction

As with all professionals, teachers of English and translation usually meet during academic conferences on applied linguistics, language teaching and translation in different parts of the world. As usual, during academic events, professionals would engage in discussions on many issues, including controversial ones, related to their profession. One issue, which has always stirred hot discussions among language teachers is the use of translation in foreign/second language teaching. Some teachers seem to find translation useful in foreign language teaching and learning. However, other teachers hold the view that translation should not be used in foreign language teaching. This view is apparently based on criticisms of the Grammar-Translation Method in foreign/second language teaching (cf. Larsen-Freeman (2000, pp. 11-22); Harmer (2007, pp. 63-64), and Byram (2004, pp. 250-252)) and exaggerated fears by some language teachers of L1 interference in acquisition of the L2. This view is deeply rooted in the literature on foreign/second language teaching. For example, Kopczynski is quoted in Shiyab (2006, pp. 115-116) as saying:

> Translation should not be used in foreign language teaching because it causes language interference. Translation can inhibit thinking in the foreign language and can produce compound bilingualism rather than coordinate bilingualism. Besides, using translation in foreign language teaching can interfere in attaining automatic habits.

It has been noticed that Libyan teachers of English use translation in the classroom and that some students were inclined to use translation when their English failed them. The extent of translation use by Libyan teachers was not clear before the conduction of this study. Through informal discussions, some Libyan teachers who use translation in EFL classes claim that translation is very helpful in facilitating the process of teaching especially with low-level students. They also claim that their students find translation helpful in many ways, especially in clarifying grammatical and lexical concepts.

These claims by Libyan teachers (and their students) go in line with the views of many modern researchers and writers on the use of translation in foreign/second language teaching. For example, Cook (2010, p. xv) argues that "for the most contemporary language teachers, translating should be a major aim and means of language learning, and a major measure of success." He adds that "translation has an important role to play in language learning – that it develops both language awareness and use, that it is pedagogically effective and educationally desirable, and that it answers student needs in the contemporary globalized and multicultural world" (ibid, p. 155). (See also statements made by other researchers in the next section).

This study is intended to explore aspects of the use of translation by EFL teachers in the Libyan capital, Tripoli, and some nearby areas. The study aims to answer the following questions:

- Is translation widely used?
- Why is it used?
- How is it used?
- Do Libyan teachers agree or disagree with the views of some modern researchers and writers in favor of using translation in foreign language teaching?

Literature Review

Although the issue of translation in language teaching has been discussed by many writers worldwide (the most notable being Cook, 2010), to the best of my knowledge, only one previous study has been conducted on the use of translation by Libyan teachers in teaching English as a foreign language. This study was conducted by EnNaji Al-Mansouri from the University of Benghazi in the eastern part of Libya. It is an unpublished research paper entitled: 'Translation as a Teaching Technique in ELT Classroom'.

According to the author, the study is an attempt to examine the pedagogical role of translation in teaching English as a foreign language. He points out that "through analyzing the syntactic errors made by Libyan students […], we can argue that translation can prove to be a very useful pedagogical tool to learn grammar, syntax, [and] lexis […] of the target language" (Al-Mansouri, n. d., p. 1). The basic premise of this study is that translation is a real-life natural activity which cannot be avoided in language learning. Therefore, it should not be considered as a negative interference but as a useful tool in language learning, especially as a language testing method (Al-Mansouri, p. 1). The author stresses that "using translation can help teachers draw students' attention to ingrained syntactic errors, such as [those of] passive construction, word order, and conditional sentences or time-tense distinctions" (Al-Mansouri, p. 1). Methodologically, two approaches of analysis, Error Analysis and Contrastive Analysis, are used in this study to identify, classify and explain students' syntactic errors and mistakes (Al-Mansouri, pp. 9-10).

The paper includes a brief background on translation and foreign language teaching in which the author summarizes aspects of the issue including the negative reactions against the Grammar-Translation Method, the subsequent reform and use of other methods as well as the recent signs of revival and recognition of translation as an aid to language learning (Al-Mansouri, pp. 3-7). Based on his analysis and discussion of 1636 syntactic errors collected from sixty test papers, the following conclusions are made:

1. 22% of the errors reflect interlingua interference and 70.8% of the errors reflect intralingua interference. The remaining errors were either mistakes due to performance (5.9%) or fossilizations (1.3%), which defy classification and explanation. According to the author, this confirms that Libyan students' translation from Arabic into English is not greatly affected by negative transfer from Arabic. This supports the claim that translation from the native language into the foreign language helps rather than hinders language learning.
2. Translation is a useful technique not only to save time but also to provoke discussion and raise students' awareness of interaction between language 1 and language 2.
3. As a testing technique, translation can be useful in shedding light on the nature of learners' interlanguage system and measuring structure difficulty in the target language (Al-Mansouri, pp. 23-24).

In what follows, it will be helpful to provide the reader with a brief background on the issue of using translation in foreign language teaching.

Translation and Foreign Language Teaching

Although translation is a foreign-language-related skill it has been rejected by many language theoreticians and teachers as a means of teaching foreign languages. Following Cook (2010, p. xv):

> Translation in language teaching has been treated as a pariah in almost all the fashionable high-profile language teaching theories of the 20th century – so much so that towards the end of that century, other than at university level, it was no longer discussed in the academic literature as a serious candidate for aiding the learning of a new language.

Owing to the prevailing monolingual and communicative approaches in the twentieth century, use of translation in language teaching was dismissed completely despite the undeniable cognitive connection between translation and foreign/second languages acquisition. The rejection of translation was due to the widespread criticism of the Grammar-Translation Method in language teaching. Opposition to the use of translation in foreign language teaching has led to the replacement of the Grammar-Translation Method by the Direct Method (cf. Larsen-Freeman (2000, pp. 22-33); Harmer (2007, pp. 63-64) and Byram (2004, pp. 176-178)) which called for banning the use of L1 in the teaching of L2 (Koletnik, 2012, p. 2 and Cook, 1998, p. 117).

Harmer (2007, p. 63) points out that the direct method, which appeared by the end of the nineteenth century, was the result of a reform movement in response to the limitations of Grammar-Translation Method. Translation was ignored leaving the space for direct conversation between the teacher and the learners, relating the linguistic structures they were studying to objects and pictures in order to establish their meanings. It was considered significant that only L2 should be used in the classroom and translation was excluded completely. Koletnik (2012, p. 3) argues:

> Such exclusion is contrary to the intuition of teachers and students alike, as well as their awareness of possible and existing connections between two languages; though arguably the most convincing reason of all lies in the fact that translation will naturally and inevitably happen during the foreign language acquisition process.

However, the last decade of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty first century have witnessed the beginnings of a serious reconsideration of the possible benefits of translation in language teaching and learning. To this effect, modern writers and researchers have expressed views in support of the use of translation in foreign language teaching and learning. The following are some of these views:

1. "Translation has pedagogic advantages both for teachers and learners, […]. It is both a stimulus and aid in the cognitively demanding task of acquiring a new language, and […] for many language users it is a very practical and much needed skill" (Cook, 2010, p. xvi).
2. "Translation can be used both more imaginatively, and as a complement to direct method teaching rather than an exclusive alternative to it. Activities may involve oral as well as written practice, and focus on connected text rather than isolated sentences. Successful translation, moreover, may be judged by criteria other than formal lexical and grammatical

equivalence. Students may be assessed for speed as well as accuracy. They may be encouraged to translate for gist, to seek pragmatic or stylistic equivalence, to consider the features of genre […], or to produce different translations according to the needs of the audience" (Cook, 1998, p. 119).

3. "Translation is a little-used testing technique, but an interesting one which merits a more extended discussion. It is open-ended to a point: there is usually a limited range of correct responses. The reason it is rarely exploited is the widespread but mistaken assumption that students should be encouraged to think in English only, and discouraged from relating English to their L1. Very often, errors in English grammar are rooted in the L1. Students naturally think first in their L1, and when trying to express something in English are likely to be influenced by the way their L1 expresses the same idea. Paradoxically, the best way to combat such interference is by using deliberate contrast to make students aware how it occurs. […] Similarly, a good way to test whether students have overcome the temptation to imitate L1 and can express ideas through acceptable English grammar is to require them to translate something from L1 into English" (Ur, 1996, p. 86).
4. "The most successful learners are those who have a very specific concrete plan of action and consistently carry it out […]. One example of a concrete action that promotes vocabulary learning is keeping a vocabulary notebook […]. Many ELLs [English language learners] write translations in their vocabulary notebooks, a practice often frowned upon by ESL teachers […]. However, numerous research studies have convincingly shown that translation is in fact effective in learning vocabulary" (Folse, 2011, p. 365).
5. "One of the areas of FLT where "natural" use of translation seems most apparent is the acquisition of new vocabulary. It is my firm belief that every teacher applying a monolingual approach can report at least one instance when – after painstaking description and explanation of a word – their bilingual students would arrive at the "aha" moment, having translated the term into their native language. Such examples reveal that for bilingual learners translation is necessarily implicated in the process of understanding, simply because the student links and relates newly acquired words in L2 to their extant L1 vocabulary" (Koletnik, 2012, p. 3).
6. "Using L1 is not necessarily a negative factor for improving reading comprehension. In fact, using both languages is recommended in the process of learning English" (Iwai, 2010, p. 4).
7. "In general, L2 readers, especially in their introductory stage, are likely to translate words from English into their first language. They feel that they are unable to understand what a text is about without understanding the meaning of each word. They stop at a point when they encounter unknown vocabulary and look up a word in the dictionary to confirm its meaning" (Iwai, 2010, p. 3).
8. "Second language learners rely on the knowledge and the experience they have. If they are beginners, they will rely on their L1 as a source of hypotheses about how L2 works; when they are more advanced, they will rely increasingly on L2" (Larsen-Freeman, 2001, pp. 254-255).
9. "In the elementary stages, translation from L1 to L2 may be useful as a form of control and consolidation of the basic grammar and vocabulary, particularly where L2 is a synthetic language such as German or Russian, whose words are less context-bound than those of more analytical languages. This form of control should be regular but sparing, should not usually introduce new L2 items and must not dominate the teaching, which is aimed at L2 production of a freer kind" (Newmark, 1991, p. 61).

10. "Translation from L2 to L1 covering fiction, newspapers, periodicals as well as notices and advertisements, is a means of expanding language knowledge as well as consolidation. […] Translation is important as an exercise in accuracy, economy and elegance in manipulating a variety of L2 registers in a first degree" (ibid, p. 62).

These statements by different ELT and translation writers and researchers agree on a central idea: translation can be useful in different ways and at different stages of foreign/second language teaching and learning. The statements clearly indicate that use of translation in foreign/second language teaching and learning is both pedagogically useful and educationally acceptable. In the following section, it will be useful to provide the reader with a brief historical background about English as a foreign language in Libya.

English as a Foreign Language in Libya

English has been officially taught as a foreign language in Libya for around sixty years now. Following the end of the British rule and the declaration of United Kingdom of Libya (1951), headed by King Idris Al-Sunusi (1890-1983), a big shift of emphasis in foreign language teaching took place. The shift was from teaching Italian to teaching English (and to some extent French) in Libyan state schools. This shift in emphasis marked the start of a new phase in the history of foreign language teaching in Libya. This shift was apparently due to the rising prominence of English as an international language. English was taught as a subject to state school students from Grade 5 onwards. The Libyan population was still small at that time and the number of schools was limited. Classes of all grades were small in number, especially in rural areas. However, as time went on more students were admitted and more schools were needed in many parts of the country.

During the Kingdom period (1951-1969), the use of the Italian language among the population was declining and the use of English was rising especially among young people. The Italian language was mainly used by the older generation. In public administration, the official letterheads of almost all ministries were in both Arabic and English. Up until 1965, the curriculum used in Libyan education was a British series called: *Reader 1, 2 and 3*. In September 1965, the textbook series *English for Libya: Books 1, 2 and 3* was introduced for preparatory school. Mustafa Gusbi, a Libyan pioneer teacher and curriculum designer, authored this series. In secondary school, the Iraqi curriculum was used for first and second years.

In 1968, the government introduced English and French as two foreign languages: English from the fifth year primary school and French from the first year preparatory school. The need for extra teachers was great, so the government sought the assistance of international organizations including the Peace Corps of America, and American teachers were teaching at preparatory schools such as Tripoli Intermediate School. Tunisian teachers were also brought in to meet the Libyan school needs for teachers of French (Ben Said, 2013).

Thanks to huge oil revenues, the first seven or eight years of Gaddafi's rule witnessed the start of a wide range of social and economic development programs leading to a marked improvement in services and living standards. As a result, the number of state schools had considerably increased in all urban and rural areas of the country. During that time, the number of Libyan teachers (including teachers of English) was not enough to cater for all schools in the country. Thus, large numbers of teachers of all subjects, including English, were brought from Arab countries, such as Egypt, Sudan and Tunisia. Teachers of English were also brought from the United Kingdom and the United States of America, especially for university education.

Recruitment and selection of teachers were conducted by specialized committees to guarantee quality standards.

The history of English language teaching during the forty-two years of Gaddafi's rule was a turbulent one. It witnessed different times of rise and fall, as did the whole country. In the early 1970s, there was a change in the structure of the state school curricula. Part of this change was the removal of English as a subject from primary school curriculum. Instead, English began to be taught from Grade 7 (first year preparatory school) onwards. A new textbook series entitled *Further English for Libya: 1, 2 and 3*, authored by Mustafa Gusbi and Ronald John, was introduced for secondary school.

Most school teachers of English at that time were not Libyans. They were mostly Egyptians, Sudanese and Palestinians. In the same school, you could find teachers of English from four different countries. This variation in the nationalities of English teachers meant variation in their teaching experiences. This could be regarded as an advantage in the sense of bringing enrichment to the field of English language teaching. However, this variation was not without disadvantages. Being non-native speakers, the different Arab teachers of English exhibited different competencies, different teaching methodologies, different pronunciations and different ways of analysis. This was reflected in their students' linguistic performance. For example, you could see students of the same school having different pronunciations of same words. Nevertheless, during the first seven or eight years of Gaddafi's rule English was flourishing as a foreign language in Libya. Academically, students who had successfully completed secondary school were well prepared in English to join university programs where the medium of instruction was English, such as medicine, engineering and the English language.

By the mid-1970s, Gaddafi started to introduce major changes in domestic and foreign policies, which had negatively affected all aspects of life in the country. Locally, he introduced a new type of ruling system based on his Green Book, which summarizes his own view of democracy. He introduced Green Book Studies and Military Training as compulsory subjects for high school and university students. Internationally, the regime started to take antagonistic attitudes against the West over a number of Arab and international issues. By the beginning of 1980s, military conflict with Western powers started, and in 1986 American jetfighters bombed targets in Tripoli and Benghazi. This was in retaliation for an alleged bombing by Gaddafi regime agents in 1984 of a disco frequented by American officers in Berlin.

In a retaliatory move against the West, the Gaddafi regime removed English and French from all school curricula, set fire to English and French textbooks in public squares and banned teaching of these two foreign languages for a number of years. Libyan teachers of English and French were retrained to teach other school subjects like sports and art. Many of those teachers had to leave the teaching profession and join other businesses.

Later, political and military developments, such as the bombing of an American plane over the Scottish town of Lockerbie, followed by the imposition of international sanctions against Libya by the United Nations Security Council, nearly paralyzed the country (cf. Hilsum, pp. 108-132). This negatively affected education in Libya, and educational output standards began to fall down considerably.

In the early 1990s, English was reintroduced to the educational system after a gap of many years. This gap negatively affected a whole generation of young Libyans. Following the suspension of UN sanctions in 1999, the country started to revive and the demand for the English language increased. Since then, many state and private schools of English have been established in major cities and the number of Libyan students joining departments of English in Libyan

universities has increased. English language classes became crowded and the government had to import teachers of English from other countries once again, but this time from India, Philippines, Ghana and Iraq. More recently, international schools, such as the British Council, also resumed their activities in the country.

All the above-mentioned developments in Libya seem to have negatively affected the quality of English language teaching output, dragging it down below the required standard. Students of all levels show weakness in all four language skills. This can be attributed to a number of accumulated problems such as lack of good management, lack of student admission criteria, lack of sufficient funds, lack of suitable classrooms and language laboratories, and lack of specialized teacher training. To solve these problems, the whole profession needs a thorough reform and teachers at all levels need more training, especially in foreign language teaching methodology. However, at present this is not feasible because of the aftermath of the 17th of February 2011 revolution, which ended forty-two years of Gaddafi's rule.

The Study

This paper is a descriptive study of teachers' views on the use of translation in teaching English as a foreign language in Libya. The study is based on primary data collected from 171 teachers of English via a questionnaire. The questionnaire was used as an instrument of data collection because it allows for the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data, offers anonymity, and allows respondents to answer the given questions at their own selected time. Thus, avoiding any pressure of time usually associated with other instruments of research such as the interview. The questionnaire included both closed questions and open-ended questions to allow for the collection of factual data and opinion data. The questions were clear and easy to understand. For this purpose, simple language was used to avoid any ambiguity. No leading questions were included. The layout of the questions was pleasant to the eye and allowed for easy reading. The sequence of the questions was made easy to follow.

The questionnaire included a cover letter introducing the researcher and his institution. It also explained the purpose of the study and the relevance of the study to the respondents. In the cover letter, it was also made clear that participation in the study was voluntary and anonymity of information was guaranteed. A contact number was also provided in case the respondents needed to clarify any point. Finally, thanks were expressed in advance for the respondents' participation in the study.

The questionnaire was distributed to 185 randomly selected male and female teachers holding different qualifications and teaching different language levels in different state and private institutions. These institutions included universities, higher institutes, secondary schools, and language centers in Tripoli and nearby areas. The questionnaire consisted of three types of questions:

1. Background questions that included the following that included the following:
    a. Questions about the teacher, which included sex, age, qualification and type of employment (full-time or part-time).
    b. Questions about the teaching institution such as the type of institution (e.g. university, higher institute, language center), and institution affiliation (state or private).
    c. Questions about language levels taught (beginner, elementary, intermediate, or advanced).

2. Translation-use-related questions that included a closed question on whether the teachers (and their students) use translation in the classroom or not, and open-ended questions on why translation is used, and when and how it is used. These open-ended questions are supplemented by extra space for the respondents to provide additional information and express other views.
3. A closed question on teachers' agreement or disagreement with the above statements made by modern researchers and writers on the use of translation in foreign language teaching. A third category was also provided for undecided respondents.

Data Analysis

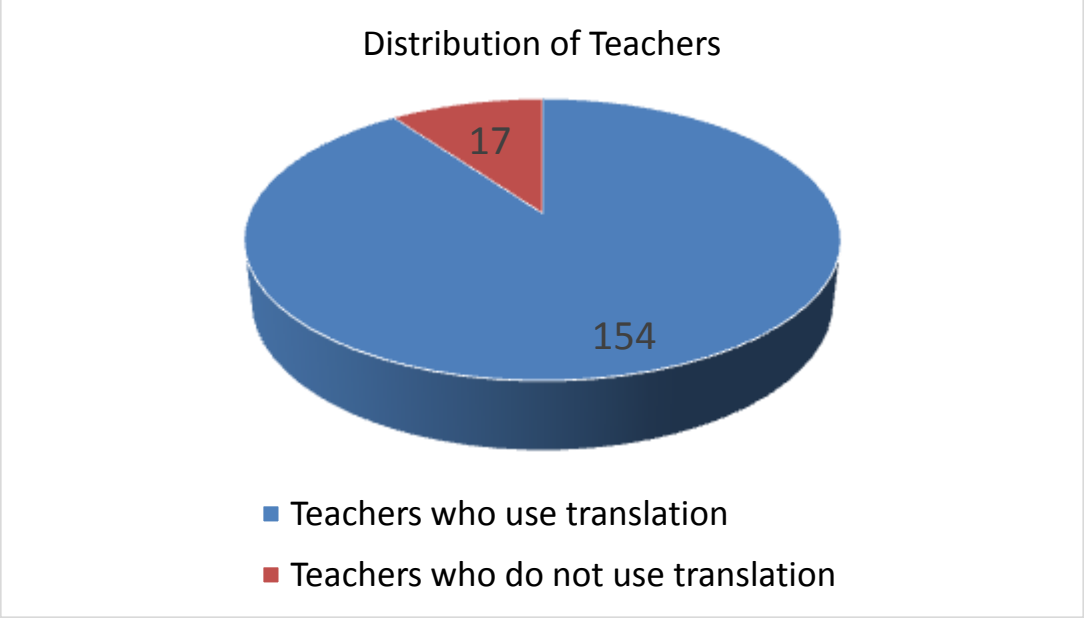
1. Analysis of Background Data

The questionnaire was distributed to 185 teachers, but only 171 were filled and returned. Ninety one questionnaires were filled by male teachers and 80 questionnaires were filled by female teachers. Eighty three questionnaires were filled by full-time teachers, 51 by part-time teachers and 37 by teachers who work on both full-time and part-time basis in different institutions. In terms of qualification, 20 teachers hold PhD degrees, 40 teachers hold MA degrees, 95 teachers hold BA degrees, 11 teachers hold diplomas, and 5 teachers hold certificates. Ninety five teachers work in state institutions, 55 teachers work in private institutions and 21 teachers work in both state and private institutions. In terms of types of institutions, 49 teachers work in universities, 20 teachers work in higher institutes, 73 teachers work in secondary schools or institutes, and 29 teachers work in language schools or centers. The teachers teach different language levels and most of them teach more than one level.

2. Analysis of Translation-Use-Related Data

In answering the key question: *Do you use translation in teaching English?* 154 teachers answered 'Yes' and only 17 teachers answered 'No'. Thus, the vast majority of subjects use translation in teaching English as a foreign language as can be seen from Figure 1.

Figure 1: Distribution of teachers



In answering the question: *Why do you use translation in teaching English?*, the respondents selected different reasons with variation in the number of teachers selecting each reason, as can be seen from Table 1 and in all subsequent tables.

Table 1: ***Reasons for using translation***

No.	Reasons why teachers use translation	No. of teachers out of 154
1	Because my students are weak in English	70
2	Because I believe that translation can help students learn English	38
3	Because translation develops contrastive knowledge	21
4	Because using translation saves time during class	37
5	Because I face problems in explaining things in English	26

This table shows that according to teachers' views the most common reason behind teachers' use of translation is students' weakness in English. The belief by some teachers that translation can help students learn English comes second as a reason for using translation. The table also shows that the last two reasons are related to the teachers not the students. The fourth reason is that translation saves time for the teacher in class and the fifth reason shows that teachers use translation because they face problems in explaining things in English and; therefore, translation makes life easier for them.

In answering the question: *How do you use translation in teaching English?* the teachers gave different answers as can be seen from the following table. These answers are ordered in terms of number of teachers who use each technique.

Table 2: ***How translation is used***

No.	How translation is used by teachers	No. of teachers out of 154
1	As a technique to help students clarify the meaning of a word, phrase, idiom or sentence	94
2	As a technique to check students' understanding	82
3	As a technique to increase students' vocabulary	57
4	As a technique for developing students' ability of contrastive analysis	17

5	As a technique for assessing students' learning	45
6	As a technique to strengthen students' command of English	29

Table 2 shows that some teachers use translation in more than one way. It also shows that the most common ways in which translation is used are the first three in the table; namely: (1) *As a technique to help students clarify the meaning of a word, phrase, idiom or sentence*, (2) *As a technique to check students' understanding*, and (3) *As a technique to increase students' vocabulary*. It is also clear from the table that most teachers use translation '*as a technique to help students clarify the meaning of a word, phrase, idiom or sentence'* (94 out of 154 teachers).

In answering the question: *Do your students use translation in their learning of English?* 146 teachers answered 'Yes' and only 25 teachers answered 'No'. In answering the related question: *If 'Yes', why do you think students use translation?*, the following reasons were given by the teachers:

1. Because students are weak in English.
2. Because students find it easier to express themselves in Arabic than in English.
3. Because students think that translation helps them understand content.
4. Because they find difficulties in asking questions in English, so they translate them into Arabic.
5. Because translation clarifies things for them.
6. Because with translation they save time.
7. Because they want to confirm that they understand what is given in class.
8. Because their ability in English is not good enough to let them think in the target language without referring to their mother tongue.
9. Because they try to understand the concepts that they do not have in their first language.
10. Because it is easier for them to learn the target language through their linguistic sets of rules that they already have in Arabic.
11. To help them increase their English vocabulary.

The above answers show that there are strong links between the reasons why teachers use translation in teaching English (see Table 1) and the reasons why their students use translation in learning English. The above reasons also explain why the teachers use translation as a technique for achieving specific teaching objectives (see Table 2).

3. Analysis of Data on the Teachers' Attitudes Regarding the above Statements by Modern Researchers and Writers on the Use of Translation in Foreign Language Teaching

In answering the question: *Do you agree or disagree with the following statements made by modern researchers and writes on the use of translation in foreign language teaching?* the majority of teachers expressed agreement, some teachers expressed disagreement, and very few teachers were undecided, as can be seen from Table 3.

Table 3: ***Teachers' attitudes towards statements by modern researchers and writers***

Statement number	Agree	Disagree	Undecided
1 (Cook, 2012, p. xvi)	118	41	12
2 (Cook, 1998, p. 119)	114	44	13
3 (Ur, 1996, p. 86)	111	50	11
4 (Folse, 2011, p. 365)	122	38	11
5 (Koletnik, 2012, p. 3)	127	32	12
6 (Iwai, 2010, p. 4)	102	56	13
7 (Iwai, 2010, p. 3)	115	44	12
8 (Larsen-Freeman, 2001, p. 254-255)	100	62	9
9 (Newmark, 1991, p. 61)	121	38	12
10 (Newmark, 1991, p. 62)	133	25	13

Finally, under '*Any other comments'*, some teachers made the following comments:

1. Most Libyan students find difficulties in learning English and they need translation to help them learn lessons.
2. Using translation in teaching is important, however, it has to be controlled and very limited. I tend to use translation in conveying grammatical and linguistic concepts that students do not have in their L1. I find translation very helpful and it does not have a negative impact on their process of learning and developing confidence in L2.
3. Judicious use of translation in the ELT classroom is OK. However, extensive use of the mother tongue is not recommended due to the negative effect that may have on learning L2.
4. I do use translation in teaching English and I do not feel ashamed of that as many teachers do. I think translation is inevitable. I think translation is very useful but with limits.
5. Translation is a useful technique in learning L2, but as a last resort. It may be used after other techniques fail to achieve the goals.
6. When translation from L2 to L1 is used to the minimum level and when it is necessary would be very useful, but if it is used by the teacher all the time, it will have a negative impact, particularly on speaking the language and on using L2 communicatively. We all have learned English under the Translation method.

These comments clearly show their writers' belief that translation, if used in a controlled manner, can be useful in teaching English as a foreign language.

Study Findings

Based on the above descriptive analysis of the data collected from the 171 teachers of English as a foreign language, the following findings are made:

1. Translation is widely used by teachers of English in EFL classrooms in Tripoli and nearby areas.
2. Some Libyan teachers do not use translation in teaching English as a foreign language.
3. Teachers use translation in the classroom because their students are weak in English and using translation saves time during class. Some teachers believe that translation can help students learn English and develop contrastive knowledge. Some teachers use translation in class because they face problems in explaining things in English.
4. Teachers use translation in EFL classrooms as a technique to check students' understanding, help students clarify the meanings of linguistic units, increase students' vocabulary, develop students' ability of contrastive analysis, strengthen students' command of English, and assess students' learning. These areas of translation use conform to views and findings of many modern ELT, EFL and FLT researchers and writers.
5. The majority of teachers covered by the study agree with the statements made by modern researchers and writers in support of a controlled use of translation in foreign/second language teaching.
6. The study shows no relationship between the teachers' age, sex, qualification, type of employment, type of institution, or language level taught and the use of translation in the EFL classroom.

Conclusion

This study was devoted to the exploration of aspects of the use of translation by EFL teachers of English as a foreign language in Libya, with a special reference to Tripoli and nearby areas. The questionnaire was used as an instrument of research to collect data from one hundred and seventy one teachers of English with different qualifications and teaching different language levels in different institutions. The aim of the study was to find out if translation was widely used, why and how it was used and if English teachers agree or disagree with views of modern researchers and writers on the use of translation in foreign language teaching. The study findings confirm that translation is widely used as a technique to check students' understanding, help students clarify the meanings of linguistic units, increase students' vocabulary, develop students' ability of contrastive analysis, and assess students' overall language learning. These findings support new research worldwide in favor of a controlled use of translation in foreign language teaching and learning. The findings open the venue for further investigation of this issue in other parts of Libya and other Arab countries in order to have a broader picture of the issue in this part of the world.

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I am a holder of PhD in Translation Studies from the University of Edinburgh. Currently, I am a faculty member at the Department of Translation of UAE University. I have been teaching translation and interpreting for fourteen years. So far, I have published six books and eighteen papers on translation and related issues. I am a professional translator and conference interpreter.

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