

**PEDAGOGICAL USE OF TRANSLATION IN FOREIGN
LANGUAGE CLASSROOMS**

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Abstract. This article argues that translation should be recognized as a valid and effective pedagogical tool in foreign language teaching. Despite the long-standing dominance of monolingual communicative approaches, the strategic use of translation significantly enhances learners' grammatical awareness, vocabulary acquisition, and metalinguistic reflection. Drawing on the research of Guy Cook, Munise Gultekin, and Dalila Benelhadj Djelloul & Bel Abbes Neddar, the article demonstrates that translation fosters deeper language comprehension and supports balanced bilingual/multilingual competence, particularly in multilingual classrooms. The study concludes that translation, when used selectively and purposefully, serves as a powerful complementary method in contemporary foreign language pedagogy, contributing to both practical outcomes and cognitive development.

Keywords: translation in language teaching, L1 use, bilingual instruction, metalinguistic awareness, vocabulary acquisition, scaffolding, multilingual competence, communicative approaches.

Introduction. For much of the 20th century, translation was largely excluded from foreign language classrooms following the rise of

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communicative approaches that prioritized immersion and exclusive use of the target language (L2). The prevailing view held that reliance on the first language (L1) interfered with learners' ability to think and communicate directly in the L2. However, in today's increasingly multilingual and globalized learning environments, the complete exclusion of translation and L1 can limit comprehension and slow progress.

Thesis: The strategic incorporation of translation into foreign language teaching significantly improves learners' grammatical awareness, vocabulary retention, and metalinguistic competence, leading to more robust and realistic bilingual or multilingual proficiency than methods relying solely on monolingual instruction.

In *Translation in Language Teaching: An Argument for Reassessment*, Cook argues that the rejection of translation stems more from ideology than evidence [1]. He emphasizes that translation "develops both language awareness and language use," and is especially effective in multilingual classrooms where students do not share a single L1.

Gultekin's study positions translation as a temporary scaffolding tool that helps learners decode complex L2 structures by consciously comparing them with their L1 [4]. This accelerates grammar comprehension and vocabulary development, particularly at lower and intermediate levels.

Djelloul and Neddar surveyed EFL teachers and found overwhelmingly positive attitudes toward the use of translation as a teaching aid [3]. Teachers reported using translation frequently to clarify abstract vocabulary, explain grammar points, and make difficult concepts more accessible when monolingual explanations were insufficient.

Discussion. Synthesizing these studies, several pedagogical advantages of translation emerge:

- Enhanced metalinguistic awareness: L1–L2 comparison deepens understanding of grammar, syntax, and semantic relations [1] [4]. From a

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pedagogical perspective, such comparison helps learners notice how languages function differently and avoid mechanical memorization. When similarities and differences are made explicit, grammatical patterns become more meaningful and easier to apply in practice.

- Improved vocabulary acquisition and semantic precision: Translation reveals lexical nuances that may be difficult to capture using L2-only explanations [3]. In practical classroom experience, translation often allows learners to grasp subtle meanings, connotations, and usage restrictions that would otherwise remain unclear. This leads to more accurate and confident vocabulary use.
- Reduced cognitive load and increased motivation: L1 support lowers anxiety and boosts confidence, especially for beginners [4]. Providing limited L1 support creates a sense of security and reduces frustration, which is particularly important at early stages of learning. As a result, learners are more willing to participate actively and take communicative risks.
- Effectiveness in multilingual settings: Translation into a shared instructional language or selective bilingual tasks is often the most practical solution in culturally diverse classrooms [5]. In multilingual groups, translation serves as a common reference point that ensures equal access to meaning and instructions, making classroom interaction more efficient and inclusive.

However, translation must be applied strategically. Excessive reliance on the first language may slow the development of spontaneous L2 production. Therefore, the use of translation should be gradually reduced as learners' proficiency increases, allowing them to move toward more fluent and autonomous communication in the target language [1].

Conclusion. Modern research demonstrates that translation is not an outdated or counterproductive method. When used purposefully, it enhances grammatical understanding, strengthens vocabulary retention, and fosters metalinguistic and multilingual competence. Contemporary frameworks,

including the CEFR Companion Volume, explicitly incorporate mediation and plurilingual practices such as translation. Therefore, translation should be reintegrated into foreign language teaching as a complementary and flexible tool, aligned with learners' proficiency levels, linguistic backgrounds, and instructional goals.

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