



ATTITUDES TO THE USE OF L1 AND TRANSLATION IN SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING

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Abstract

This research addresses the controversial methodological issue of own-language use and particularly translation in second and foreign language teaching and learning. In recent years, a re-evaluation of the assumption of a monolingual approach has begun, and this study focuses on the attitudes and opinions of experienced TESOL/TEFL practitioners in the UK and abroad. A combined approach was adopted using both semi-structured questionnaires and personal interviews to explore many of the contentious issues raised in the literature and traditionally held objections to use of L1 and translation. Any meaningful differences between views of UK and rest of world respondents were also sought. The findings, whilst highlighting the wide diversity of individual opinions, nevertheless indicate perhaps surprisingly, a considerable degree of overall support for judicious use of the L1 and translation in appropriate circumstances. Thus, 68% of respondents disagree that the Direct Method is the most appropriate technique and 86% do agree that carefully planned translation activity can play a useful role in the L2 communicative classroom, with 82% agreeing to the use of an eclectic approach. The overall findings firmly suggest the time is ripe to place use of L1 and translation back onto the language teaching agenda. Recommendations for practical classroom applications and further research are also made.

Keywords: Second Language Teaching and Learning, Translation, L1 Use

Introduction

Whilst in recent years there has been some reappraisal of the role of translation in second language teaching and learning (TISTL), there is apparently little empirical evidence to answer the question whether translation is a valuable part of the L2[#] curriculum or not. This study, in attempting to examine this question, draws principally on three recent texts (Witte *et.al.*, 2009; Cook, 2010; Leonardi, 2010), which offer wide-ranging arguments for a re-evaluation of translation in the L2 classroom.

[#] L1/L2 first/second language

In their interesting and varied collection of conference papers, the editors, Witte *et.al.* (2009), and contributors, argue convincingly for the relevance and usefulness of translation in various contexts and for a variety of purposes such as internet communication, language awareness, accuracy and fluency, intercultural competence, and literary understanding. After several decades of marginalisation or exclusion from second/foreign language methodologies and classroom practices, it is argued that now is an appropriate time to re-evaluate the benefits of TISTL and its cultural context, and that it should assume a new relevance in the field of ‘interculturality’, in particular for foreign language learners. The volume also contains descriptions of various types of translation exercises carried out in different countries.

Hall and Cook (2012) have published a ‘state-of-the-art’ literature review of the broad subject area, with particular emphasis on use of own language. The work presented here, focuses rather more on translation aspects. Both can be regarded as being on a spectrum of minimal/maximal use of the L1.

Background

Twentieth-century theories of language teaching and learning have largely ignored the function of translation, and even ‘vilified’ and ‘ostracised’ it, (Cook, 2010). The reasons for this appear to have been principally pedagogic (dull and demotivating), cognitive (prevents successful language acquisition and processing), and practical (not relevant in the real world). Apparently, little research has been carried out to support these views. Cook (2010: 155) also asserts that a “relentless propaganda campaign has been needed to make teachers and learners keep away from translation”. This, however, has caused confusion, leading many teachers to persevere with translation whilst both denying that they do so and arguing against its use, and to having a sense of guilt or ‘unprofessional conduct’ for underusing the L2 (Littlewood and Yu, 2011: 69; Mitchell, 1988: 28).

Whilst translation continues to be used in many language classes and appears in the syllabus and examinations of many educational authorities, the key problem area is in language teaching theory, i.e. the academic and professional literature pertaining to language teaching theory (mainly English). This field of ‘applied linguistics’ draws principally from research and theories in linguistics, psychology, and the study of SLA*, largely ignoring translation and causing its proponents to have difficulty in defending its use (Cook, 2010: 4).

* Second language acquisition

The main issues of contention are that translation focuses on grammatical accuracy at the expense of fluency, and exclusively on writing to the detriment of speech. It utilises non-authentic texts, and imbues knowledge about a language as opposed to an ability to use it – in prosaic terms the claim is that it is boring, unnatural and authoritarian. Malmkjaer (1998: 6) summarises some widely quoted objections to use of translation in foreign language classes as follows: (i) it is independent of the four language competence skills, (ii) it is markedly different from the four skills, (iii) it consumes valuable time which could be utilised in teaching the four skills, (iv) it is unnatural, (v) it can mislead learners into thinking that expressions in two languages correspond directly, (vi) it prevents learners from thinking in the second language, (vii) it produces interference, (viii) it is not a good test of language skills, (ix) it is only appropriate for training professional translators.

Widdowson (2003: 149-164) suggests that the principal problem of monolingual teaching is that it misunderstands that learners will always relate the new language to their own, even in their own minds, and that L1 is implicated in SLA. From psycholinguistic, pedagogic, and political perspectives he argues strongly for the L1 to be used as a resource for the bilingualisation process, and questions why this has not been embraced in L2 teaching. Cook, (2010: 37), goes further, arguing that translation cannot be treated separately from other bilingual activity, whilst Butzkamm and Caldwell (2009) even suggest that all teachers should be bilingual. Many writers, however, who support L1 use are still against translation, while others remain reluctant to see it as a stepwise transition. V. Cook, (2001: 407-8), referring to the issue of 'language compartmentalisation' and the reasoning for eliminating L1 based on Contrastive Analysis (CA) (Lado), asserts (with evidence) that L1 and L2 are in fact intertwined in the learner's mind in vocabulary, syntax, phonology and pragmatics, and that 'compartmentalisation' is "doomed to failure". If the goal of learning is to improve the students' mind cognitively, emotionally or socially, then the L2 must not be separated (from the L1).

The same author is firmly in favour of deliberate and systemic use of L1 in the L2 classroom since it aids in (i) explaining grammar, (ii) conveying meaning, (iii) class organisation (instructions, feedback, discipline), and (iv) making students realise what they really do or do not know. L1 can also be used to aid in linking of L1 and L2 in learners' minds, to carry out learning tasks in a collaborative way and to develop code-switching skills for later use. It is claimed that "bringing the L1 back from exile may lead not only to the improvement of the existing teaching methods but also to innovations in methodology" (p. 419).

Leonardi's work, (2010: 62-3) argues that use of translation or L1 in SLA is perfectly natural since L1 and L2 are constantly interlinked in the learner's mind (e.g. phonology, syntax, lexis and pragmatics), and that the amount and mode of use of L1 should vary according to classroom environment and learner needs. Even the communicative approach needs handling with care since over emphasis on communication rather than accuracy may harm language learners. Stern (1992), in comparing 'cross-lingual' and 'intra-lingual' teaching refers cautiously to translation from L2 to L1 and laments anti-translation dogmatism without openly advocating translation. He considers that the 'intra-lingual' position in teaching is so strong that, "many writers do not even consider cross-lingual objectives" (p.281), but that "the L1-L2 connection is an indisputable fact of life" (p.282).

Jin and Cortazzi (2011) note that surprisingly, a 'wider' grammar-translation approach has survived, albeit in a modified form, and mainly in textbooks for learning languages other than English. Whilst accepting that translation is rarely mentioned in recent ELT teacher training handbooks, they suggest, nevertheless, that creative translation activities can help in raising L2 language awareness by exploring different types of equivalence (e.g. pragmatic, functional, discourse patterns, genre/style), in addition to the nature of the texts and their audience context. This all requires both sociocultural and intercultural competence in addition to linguistic competence - abilities "high on the agenda in twenty-first century language teaching" (p.570).

Similarly, Gnutzman (2009: 55-58) observes that translation can be seen as a very communicative exercise since there is hardly ever one 'correct' translation. Additionally, developmental changes in SLA methodology such as (i) shift from behaviourism to cognitivism and role of the L1, (ii) learner centredness (identity, learner strategies), and (iii) growth of multilingualism and intercultural communication, are leading to more flexible approaches to acquisition of languages, and translation activities can be an enriching experience for suitably disposed students in a carefully managed classroom setting.

Witte (2009) also focuses on the dynamic 'process of translating' as opposed to the product itself (i.e. the translation), and its ability to make the learner aware of "linguistic and cultural relativity" in a self-reflective mode. Although it is admitted that achieving a truly second language identity, or becoming intercultural competent will involve intense and extended exposure to the L2 society, Witte contends that the translation process can have a considerable influence on foreign language learning at all levels, and particularly on

development of intercultural ‘third spaces’ i.e. a continuum between the languages and the cultures concerned, whereby the learner slowly shifts cognitive activities towards patterns and configurations of the L2. Thus, the activity of translating between languages, cultures, individuals, societies and discourses can offer the motivated foreign language learner the possibility of achieving some level of intercultural competence even within the limited boundaries of the foreign language classroom (p.93). In the same volume, Stiefel (2009), argues along similar lines, referring to “the translator as a mediator” in trying to attain a measure of intercultural competence in its different forms and moving through the various phases. Thus, translation provides a relevant context for practising language, social, and cultural fluency.

Leonardi (2010: 22-29), in arguing for use of translation notes particularly that translation (i) is not simply mechanistic, and *does* involve all the four skills especially when using authentic texts, enabling the learner to obtain a wider knowledge of language use in terms of structure, function and idiomaticity, (ii) is not a waste of time since it allows concurrent development of all four language skills, (iii) allows switching between L1 and L2, a useful and natural activity in an increasingly multilingual and multicultural world, (iv) allows for CA between L1 and L2 enabling the learner to understand how words, idioms, and structures may be used differently in L2, (v) can be a very comprehensive test of language ability if included in an examination since it encompasses all four skills, (vi) helps develop students’ analytical, creative, and problem-solving abilities which can also be applied in other areas.

The study, methodology and limitations

On the assumption that translation is almost certainly a component of learning a second language (at least via mental comparison, especially for beginners), e.g. Macaro (2003), the hypothesis was that (i) translation depends on and comprises all four skills normally used for testing competence and performance, (ii) it is linked to a range of linguistic and extra-linguistic skills and can be used in SLA to improve learners’ abilities, (iii) fully authentic texts provide a framework for decisions on lexical/semantic and cultural strategies, and a communication tool bound to cultural parameters, (iv) collaborative (teacher/student) learning in translation confers advantages whereby teachers are seen as facilitators rather than ‘authoritarian’ figures, and (v) translation can be useful in SLA as a tool amongst others. The specific objectives were thus: (i) to explore the attitudes and opinions of experienced TESOL/TEFL practitioners to a range of issues raised in the literature regarding TISTL, (ii) to explore responses to traditionally held objections to TISTL, (iii) to identify any differences between UK respondents and those from elsewhere.

The study utilised a semi-structured questionnaire survey based on five point agree/disagree Likert scales, that was developed, piloted, and then distributed online to language practitioners in the UK, Europe, and beyond using 'SurveyMonkey', in order to probe many of the contentious issues raised in the literature. Open-ended questions and a 'free-comment' section were included to enable respondents to elaborate on their views and opinions. Additionally, a number of personal interviews were conducted.* Completed questionnaires were received from 126 respondents (50 UK, 76 outside the UK), having an average of 22 years' teaching experience (two thirds more than 20 years), and many occupying senior positions across a wide range of public/private organisations and institutions. The quantitative data from the closed statements were analysed using simple statistics, and the qualitative data were hand analysed.

As with all such research, the findings are subject to and limited by the shortcomings, biases, assumptions and definitions inherent in the questionnaire statements, as perceived by respondents, (e.g. some statements may apply both to classroom translation and translation *per se*). Similarly, respondents may have different attitudes or stronger opinions than those choosing not to partake (i.e. sample bias). This is probably an inherent problem for any questionnaire study. Additionally, statements were purposely dispersed and not grouped together in specific categories, to minimise a build-up of a gradual bias on particular issues. In view of the contextual dependency as well as assumptions and definitional issues in many of the statements, the accompanying message to potential participants acknowledged this and requested reasonably rapid responses to the statements wherever possible (piloting indicated a maximum of ca. 20 seconds per statement). However, the number and geographical diversity of the responses and the definitive answers to many of the statements would appear to give added credence to conclusions drawn.

The fieldwork was carried out in September and October 2011, and principal questionnaire findings were published by the author in June 2012.

Quantitative results and discussion

The overall results in summary form from the complete sample are shown in Table 1.

* Fourteen interviews provided 'mini' case histories of teachers from widely diverse backgrounds and differing attitudes towards translation in language teaching (see the author's dissertation).

Table 1: Overall Questionnaire Results (Quantitative)

strongly disagree = 1, disagree = 2, neither agree nor disagree = 3, agree = 4, strongly agree = 5
 Number of respondents in brackets.

S.1. I am aware that there has been a renewed debate in recent years about the role translation can play in TESOL and foreign language learning. Yes 86.8% (105); No 13.2% (16)

	strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree	Rating Average
S.2. I consider that bilingual teachers are preferable for L2 teaching.	4.0% (5)	12.8% (16)	37.6% (47)	35.2% (44)	10.4% (13)	3.35
S.3. I minimise use of the L1 in the classroom as a matter of principle e.g. only for giving instructions, discipline etc.	8.7% (11)	11.9% (15)	18.3% (23)	45.2% (57)	15.9% (20)	3.48
S.4. I believe in an 'eclectic' approach to second language teaching.	4.0% (5)	3.2% (4)	10.4% (13)	43.2% (54)	39.2% (49)	4.10
S.5. Organisational or management constraints of my educational establishment limit use of the L1 to a minimum.	20.5% (25)	19.7% (24)	25.4% (31)	21.3% (26)	13.1% (16)	2.87
S.6. The Direct Method of teaching is the most appropriate way, and translation undermines the principle of monolingualism in the classroom.	19.2% (24)	48.8% (61)	14.4% (18)	15.2% (19)	2.4% (3)	2.33
S.7. I think that carefully planned translation activity can play a useful role within the communicative L2 classroom.	1.6% (2)	4.0% (5)	8.1% (10)	52.4% (65)	33.9% (42)	4.13
S.8. I believe that learners (especially beginners) always relate the L2 to the L1 in their own minds and that it is natural for them to mentally translate.	1.6% (2)	4.8% (6)	8.1% (10)	54.0% (67)	31.5% (39)	4.09
S.9. Translation does not require complicated or time consuming instructions which, which other tasks, may include partial answers to the exercise.	2.5% (3)	10.1% (12)	31.9% (38)	47.1% (56)	8.4% (10)	3.49
S.10. Translation aids teacher/student collaborative learning for problem solving and for 'scaffolded' help between students.	4.0% (5)	9.7% (12)	20.2% (25)	56.5% (70)	9.7% (12)	3.58
S.11. Translation helps learners develop flexibility and verbal/mental agility.	2.4% (3)	11.2% (14)	31.2% (39)	45.6% (57)	9.6% (12)	3.49
S.12. Translation enables learners to systematically acquire essential transferable skills (e.g. decision making, dealing with criticism, team working, analytical skills, problem solving, logical thinking, use of mono- or bilingual dictionaries).	5.6% (7)	12.8% (16)	38.4% (48)	34.4% (43)	8.8% (11)	3.28
S.13. Translation tasks build self-confidence since the translator is in control without needing simulated role play with others (as in the communicative approach).	4.8% (6)	20.8% (26)	39.2% (49)	30.4% (38)	4.8% (6)	3.10
S.14. Translation encourages code switching between the L1 and L2.	2.4% (3)	6.3% (8)	17.5% (22)	61.9% (78)	11.9% (15)	3.75
S.15. Translating into L1 can help to discover the stylistic and potential expressive powers of one's mother tongue.	4.0% (5)	7.1% (9)	19.0% (24)	46.8% (59)	23.0% (29)	3.78

	strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree	Rating Average
S.16. Translation helps build a reflective language consciousness about the function of language.	4.0% (5)	5.6% (7)	14.4% (18)	56.8% (71)	19.2% (24)	3.82
S.17. Translation of particular texts promotes learners' ability to expand their range of expressions since it does not allow them to resort to avoidance strategies (e.g. as in essay writing).	4.0% (5)	12.0% (15)	20.0% (25)	44.8% (56)	19.2% (24)	3.63
S.18. Translation increases learners' knowledge about language as well as their language awareness of e.g. intelligibility, linguistic precision and accuracy, and appropriateness.	2.4% (3)	7.3% (9)	8.9% (11)	54.5% (67)	26.8% (33)	3.96
S.19. Translation into the L1 is inefficient since learners seem to produce the worst work when forced to translate from the L2 into their mother tongue.	13.6% (17)	40.0% (50)	28.8% (36)	16.8% (21)	0.8% (1)	2.51
S.20. Translation hinders or restricts learners' free mode and choice of expressing themselves since it compels them to translate specific texts.	5.6% (7)	28.2% (35)	34.7% (43)	27.4% (34)	4.0% (5)	2.96
S.21. Translation prevents learners from thinking in the L2.	10.4% (13)	28.8% (36)	22.4% (28)	24.8% (31)	13.6% (17)	3.02
S.22. Translation is associated with deductive rather than inductive learning.	4.9% (6)	17.1% (21)	52.8% (65)	22.8% (28)	2.4% (3)	3.01
S.23. I consider that translation is too academic and divorced from the real world.	24.4% (30)	45.5% (56)	17.1% (21)	8.9% (11)	4.1% (5)	2.23
S.24. Translation tasks are usually only associated with literary and scientific texts.	27.0% (33)	45.9% (56)	16.4% (20)	10.7% (13)	0.0% (0)	2.11
S.25. Translation is only appropriate for the training of professional translators.	34.7% (43)	47.6% (59)	9.7% (12)	6.5% (8)	1.6% (2)	1.93
S.26. My students think that translation is boring/too mechanistic.	12.4% (15)	32.2% (39)	39.7% (48)	13.2% (16)	2.5% (3)	2.61
S.27. I generally consider that translation is boring and mechanistic.	27.5% (33)	35.8% (43)	19.2% (23)	10.8% (13)	6.7% (8)	2.33
S.28. I regard translation as a 'fifth' skill not directly linked to the other four taught skills, and should not, therefore, be used to teach any of these skills.	13.7% (17)	40.3% (50)	22.6% (28)	18.5% (23)	4.8% (6)	2.60
S.29. Only certain learner personality types might benefit from inclusion of translation activities.	10.6% (13)	32.5% (40)	19.5% (24)	31.7% (39)	5.7% (7)	2.89
S.30. Translation is very amenable to oral discussion and debate since there is no 'right' answer.	7.4% (9)	13.9% (17)	23.8% (29)	44.3% (54)	10.7% (13)	3.37
S.31. Translation is a very effective aid for the comprehension of words, sentences and texts.	2.4% (3)	8.1% (10)	18.7% (23)	53.7% (66)	17.1% (21)	3.75
S.32. Translation is an effective tool for vocabulary building.	3.3% (4)	10.6% (13)	12.2% (15)	56.1% (69)	17.9% (22)	3.75

	strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree	Rating Average
S.33. Translation allows learners to link grammar to usage in a more natural and fluent way compared to Direct and other recent methods.	5.9% (7)	24.4% (29)	37.8% (45)	24.4% (29)	7.6% (9)	3.03
S.34. Translation provides insights into the different forms and structures in the source and target language illustrating the structural specificity of individual languages.	3.3% (4)	5.7% (7)	8.1% (10)	58.5% (72)	24.4% (30)	3.95
S.35. Contrastive analysis can help those learners who prefer to acquire a foreign language in a conscious fashion and via explicitly formulated rules.	0.8% (1)	3.3% (4)	15.4% (19)	55.3% (68)	25.2% (31)	4.01
S.36. Becoming aware of the structural-formal and lexico-semantic differences between languages helps learners to see through both languages enabling 'facilitation' (positive transfer).	1.6% (2)	3.3% (4)	23.6% (29)	57.7% (71)	13.8% (17)	3.79
S.37. Translation lends itself to assessing textual, syntactical, and semantic comprehension involving either detailed grammatical understanding and/or global comprehension of complex and demanding texts.	2.5% (3)	10.7% (13)	18.2% (22)	57.0% (69)	11.6% (14)	3.64
S.38. Translation can help learners attain an almost complete understanding of texts, since it forces them to develop deeper and more detailed reading and comprehension strategies than those required for comprehension questions only.	4.9% (6)	17.1% (21)	18.7% (23)	43.9% (54)	15.4% (19)	3.48
S.39. Compared to other learner activities which concentrate on a few selected structures, translation of authentic texts integrates various difficulties in different ways, so is closer to real life language use.	7.4% (9)	21.3% (26)	22.1% (27)	42.6% (52)	6.6% (8)	3.20
S.40. Translation allows concurrent development of all four skills and can be considered as a 'fifth' skill to complement the four skills.	7.4% (9)	22.3% (27)	32.2% (39)	31.4% (38)	6.6% (8)	3.07
S.41. Translation potentially causes 'interference' (negative transfer) from the mother tongue.	6.6% (8)	20.5% (25)	16.4% (20)	45.1% (55)	11.5% (14)	3.34
S.42. Lexical/grammatical difficulties and an abundance of rules in translation may lead to learner frustration, lack of systematic transfer and poor outcomes.	2.4% (3)	17.9% (22)	33.3% (41)	34.1% (42)	12.2% (15)	3.36
S.43. Use of translation as a comprehension/proficiency assessment tool is unreliable since students may understand a text perfectly well but are unable to translate it adequately.	2.5% (3)	16.5% (20)	17.4% (21)	48.8% (59)	14.9% (18)	3.57

	strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree	Rating Average
S.44. Translation hinders text comprehension since it focuses on translational rather than foreign language questions.	9.9% (12)	31.4% (38)	34.7% (42)	17.4% (21)	6.6% (8)	2.79
S.45. Translated vocabulary results in wrong and misleading generalisations as to word meaning and function which can only be understood in the totality of the L2 context.	3.2% (4)	22.6% (28)	29.0% (36)	33.9% (42)	11.3% (14)	3.27
S.46. Translation topics should be re-introduced into second language learning/teaching textbooks.	5.9% (7)	26.9% (32)	37.8% (45)	24.4% (29)	5.0% (6)	2.96

Statements 1-7 can be regarded as more general in nature whilst the remainder relate to the impact of translation on the learner and teacher, and linguistic/grammatical implications.

It can be seen (S.1) that the overwhelming majority (87%) of respondents claim to be aware of the renewed debate in recent years about the role of translation, and the author considers that this is in line with both the relatively high response rate, and the apparent enthusiasm with which respondents offered free comments on the issues involved. One respondent mentioned (in free comments) that he considered the debate as ongoing and had never ceased. The issue of bilingual teachers (S.2), indicates a clear majority (46%) of respondents (38% neutral), as agreeing that bilingual teachers are preferable. In the debate between monolingualists and bilingualists this finding does broadly support the various arguments in the literature suggesting that many teachers recognise the need to be able to use the L1 as an important tool, and to the recognition of the growth of bilingualism. This should be related to S.8 indicating that an overwhelming majority (85%) of respondents believe that learners naturally mentally translate and relate L2 to the L1 in their own minds, fully supporting Cook's claim (2010: 52) that this phenomenon "should be harnessed rather than rejected". It is also in line with Leonardi's claim (2010: 62-3).

Nevertheless, it can be seen (S.3) that 61% of respondents agree that they minimise the use of L1 as a matter of principle with 21% disagreeing, implying, as Cook (2010: 52) intimates, that recognition of the need to use L1 does "not ... necessarily entail advocacy of translation", and that the engrained historical antagonism towards translation (in favour of the Direct Method) still predominates. V. Cook (2001: 393-423), while firmly supporting L1 use, notes that "once avoidance of the L1 has been relaxed, there is no intrinsic reason why translation is wrong, even if it has other snags", and other writers also illustrate a dividing line between L1 usage and translation.

The findings, therefore, of S.6 and 7 are perhaps very surprising, indicating that 68% of this sample disagree (19% strongly), that the Direct Method is the most appropriate way of teaching and that translation undermines monolingualism in the classroom (S.6), and that an overwhelming majority (86%) agree (34% strongly) that carefully planned translation activity can play a useful role in the L2 communicative classroom (S.7). Zojer (2009: 32-36) in listing the 'pros and cons' of translation, in fact mentions its continued 'shadow existence' during the last three decades as a teacher's 'forbidden friend', and refers to interviews with Direct Method teachers who, while totally opposed in principle, continued to use translation to a surprisingly high degree. Thus, maybe the findings above reflect to some degree this tendency which is further supported by responses to S.4 indicating again a very high (82%) agreement (39% very strong) to an 'eclectic' approach to FLT. This all tends to confirm also the ambivalent attitudes of teachers, and their "schizophrenic accommodation between the party line and reality" (Cook, 2010: 156). The statement (S.5) relating to organisational/ management constraints elicited a very balanced view with 34% agreeing that these limited L1 usage, and 40% disagreeing, which should be taken in conjunction with findings of the open question on this issue (see qualitative data).

Various statements relate to the purported 'pros and cons' of translation. Responses to S.9 indicate more than half of the sample, (32% neutral), agrees that translation does not require time-consuming instructions, which is a rebuttal to some extent of the view that it wastes time that could be devoted to practice in the L2. S.10 again elicits a strong majority (66%) regarding the advantage of translation for teacher/student collaborative learning and for 'scaffolded' help between students illustrating its role in the communicative L2 classroom. Similarly, (S.11), 55% of respondents predominantly agree (31% neutral) the value of translation for developing flexibility and verbal/mental agility in line with Schjoldager (2004: 135), and for S.12, 43% are in agreement regarding acquisition of transferable skills (38% neutral). In these aspects, teachers are regarded as facilitators rather than 'authoritarian' figures, and collaborative learning occurs via discussion and negotiation (Leonardi, 2010: 119-20).

Whilst critics of translation have described it as uncommunicative since students normally work individually and not in a 'communicative' spoken mode, translation can in fact be regarded as highly communicative since there is no 'right answer', and it is open to a variety of discussion about linguistic correctness, semantics, stylistics and cultural issues (Gnutzman, 2009: 55). 54% of respondents (S.30) agree with this, with only 21%

disagreeing, (24% neutral). Friedlander's work (1990, cited in Macaro, 2003: 230-1) also indicates advantages for ESL writers in drafting firstly in their own L1. There is rather more ambiguity about translation building self confidence (S.13), with 35% in agreement and 26% disagreeing, (39% neutral). This point was probably surprising to respondents and relates to Sewell's (2004) observation that translation appeals to a large number of students, depending on personality traits, although the predominant teaching mode remains communicative. A similar, evenly distributed pattern can be seen for responses to S.29 regarding personality traits and benefits from translation activities (37% agreeing/43% disagreeing).

Translation is seen by 74% of respondents as encouraging code switching (S.14) supporting much of the evidence in the literature for the increasing need for bilingualism in many contexts. This is also in accord with responses to S.2 and particularly S.8, and the earlier comments regarding bilingualism and need to use L1. Four statements (S.15-18), supposed advantages of translation as a teaching tool (cf. Duff; Sewell cited in Schjoldager, 2004: 134-35, and Zojer, 2009: 33-36), all indicate strong support for these 'pros' i.e. discovering stylistic and potential expressive powers of L1, building a reflective language consciousness about the function of language, expanding range of expressions and language precision, accuracy, appropriateness. Responses in the combined 'agree' categories vary from 64% to 81%, with remaining responses falling mainly in the neutral category. Schjoldager notes that translation is a real asset in the L2 classroom since it involves a "beneficial constraint" on the writing process, preventing the learner from straying into unfamiliar areas of the L2 framework.

Several of the famous 'cons' of translation are referred to in S.19-28 (cf. Zojer, 2009: 33-36). About half the sample, (29% neutral) disagree that translation into L1 (S.19) produces the worst work. S.20 is a mirror image of S.17 and shows this time a virtually evenly balanced range of opinions. The issue of translation preventing learners from thinking in the L2 (S.21) (cf. Malmkjaer, 1998: 6) interestingly shows an exact division of opinion (39% in each of the total agree/disagree categories), illustrating the complexity of this issue. Whyatt (2009), however, showed that students participating in a translation study exhibited awareness of language control and benefited in developing bilingual skills while engaging their 'full cognitive potential' in addition to organising both linguistic systems in their mind, enabling 'creative and guided manipulation'. Interlingual and intercultural awareness issues were also raised. Also relevant here is V. Cook's reference (2001: 407-8) to L1 and L2 being intertwined in the mind.

The question of deductive versus inductive learning (S.22) showed a balance around a high (53%) of respondents in the neutral category, possibly in this case reflecting a substantial 'don't know' or 'don't understand' element. S.23-27 reflect familiar arguments to justify refusal to use translation in foreign language classes. The notion of translation being too academic (S.23), only associated with literary and scientific texts, (S.24), and only appropriate for training of professional translators, (cf. Malmkjaer, 1998: 6) (S.25), are very firmly rebutted in this research (70%, 73%, 82% respectively). Cook (2010: 121-23), notes that the 'too academic' issue contributed to and fuelled the exclusion of translation in the 19th century. In an interesting discussion of these points he suggests that translation provides a deeper understanding of the nature of linguistics and an 'academic metalanguage' for language analysis, arguing that the academic nature of translation in language teaching is in no way incompatible with a practical and communicative application. Similarly, 63% of respondents disagree that they find translation boring and mechanistic (S.27) or that their students (S.26) think so (45% with 40% neutral), the latter representing more difficulty in assessing what learners actually think. The responses to S.23-27 tend to imply that respondents do broadly accept some type of translation as appropriate in the L2 classroom as a naturally occurring phenomenon of everyday life.

The question of translation as a 'fifth skill' (S.28, 40) is controversial. Some writers (e.g. Newmark, 1991 cited in Pellatt, 2009: 345) regard it as a fifth skill independent of and distinct from the 'four skills'. Others, such as Pellatt (2009), and Leonardi (2010: 22-26; 81-84), see it as a sum of those skills, as an interactive skill developing the four skills concurrently, and close to real life language usage. The latter rebuts the view that translation is a waste of time or radically different from the four skills by claiming it actually enhances them, and cites cogent examples to support this argument with which this writer agrees. This research shows (S.28) that while 54% of respondents do disagree with the notion of translation as a distinct skill, and not to be used to teach the four skills (23% agreeing), there is more ambivalence about its definite use as a 'fifth skill' to complement the four skills (S.40), with only 38% agreeing and 30% disagreeing, (32% neutral). However, when taken together with S.30 findings showing a 55% agreement regarding translation and its amenability to oral discussion (24% neutral), this does indicate a tentative direction in favour of the concept of an interactive fifth skill. This, perhaps is further reinforced by findings of S.31 indicating a 71% agreement for translation as a very effective aid for word and text comprehension (Pellatt, 2009), and S.37 showing 69% in agreement as an aid in assessing comprehension of complex and demanding texts, and S.38 (59% in agreement) all core aspects of a FL course. However, some of the purported disadvantages relating to comprehension, are

mentioned in S.43-45 (Zojer, 2009). Whilst (S.44) 41% do disagree (35% neutral) that translation hinders text comprehension, a high 64% do agree (S.43) that inability to translate adequately may make it unreliable as a comprehension assessment tool, and 45% agree (S.45) with rejection of translation on a semantic level, (26% disagreeing).

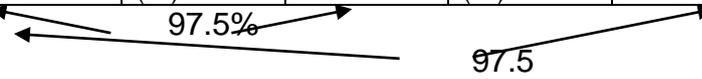
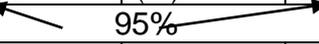
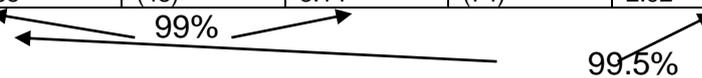
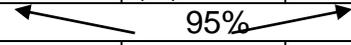
Translation as an effective tool for vocabulary building is probably well accepted (cf. Laufer and Girsai, 2008; Leonardi, 2010: 82), and S.32 shows a strong 74% in support of this. Leonardi claims it to be a very good way of handling false cognates and collocations (specifically mentioned by one respondent), and cites Krashen's comprehensible input concept supporting use of some L1 or translation. There is, however, an equally divided view (S.33) as to whether translation allows learners to link grammar to usage in a more natural and fluent way compared to the Direct Method (ca. 31% in each of the combined agree/disagree categories, 38% neutral), and 46% (S.42) agreeing that lexical/grammatical rules may lead to learner frustrations and poor outcomes (33% neutral).

The issues of CA and 'interference' are worthy of comment. Regarding the former, Leonardi (2010: 61) states that "contrastive theories prove that the use of L1 in foreign classes has taken different swings depending on which theoretical framework was followed and applied". In this work (S.34/35), a very high (ca. 80%) of respondents agree with the value of translation as a CA tool – an 'enrichment' activity (Leonardi, 2010: 42). Regarding translation and interference, Schjoldager (2004: 133-36) and Leonardi (2010: 27-8) review some of the many key issues in the literature. In the former, for example (p.133), Lado and Malmkjaer are cited as referring to the problems of correspondence and word-for-word translation, and production of incorrect language, while Coleman argues that "translation leads to an obsession with the individual word", and Schjoldager notes that many scholars believe translation should be banned from the L2 classroom because it encourages interference. Leonardi notes (p.28), however, that it is unnatural not to use L1 when using another language, and that CA helps noticing and controlling interference while also increasing positive interference, and Schjoldager refers to authors such as Snell-Hornby and Titford who are proponents of translation, to highlight contrasting aspects. In this work, perhaps surprisingly, a high (71%) of respondents (S.36) agree with positive transfer 'facilitation' of translation, whilst 57% (S.41) also agree with its negative transfer 'interference' (27% disagreeing). Taken together, (S.34/35, 36/41), the conclusion is that while there is acceptance of a certain degree of 'interference' as inevitable, there is apparently a high acknowledgement of the positive effects of translation for CA and 'facilitation'.

Cook, (2010: 22) notes that in most textbooks on language teaching and applied linguistics there is “little or no mention of translation”, and in this research, the thorny issue of whether translation topics should be re-introduced into FL learning/teaching textbooks (S.46), produced an almost exact division of opinion. One or two recent books, e.g. Hall *et. al.* (2011) have broken this pattern, addressing the issue directly.

Table 2 shows a comparison of the mean results between respondents from the UK (50) and those from the rest of the world (76), including Israel (26).

Table 2: Comparison Between UK/Rest of World/Israel

Statement	UK		Rest of World		Israel	
	Mean	Number	Mean	Number	Mean	Number
1	Yes 88%	No 12%	Yes 86%	No 14%	Yes 73%	No 27%
2	3.20	(50)	3.47	(75)	3.28	(25)
3	3.60	(50)	3.41	(76)	3.35	(26)
4	4.34	(50)	3.95	(75)	3.80	(25)
						
5	3.02	(47)	2.76	(75)	2.88	(26)
6	2.14	(49)	2.46	(76)	2.54	(26)
						
7	4.18	(50)	4.08	(74)	3.88	(25)
8	4.00	(49)	4.13	(75)	4.19	(26)
9	3.40	(45)	3.54	(74)	3.56	(25)
10	3.51	(49)	3.63	(75)	3.65	(26)
11	3.52	(50)	3.47	(75)	3.08	(26)
12	3.30	(50)	3.24	(75)	3.19	(26)
13	2.92	(49)	3.18	(76)	3.12	(26)
14	3.86	(50)	3.67	(76)	3.62	(26)
15	3.84	(50)	3.74	(76)	3.50	(26)
16	3.76	(49)	3.84	(76)	3.81	(26)
17	3.76	(49)	3.55	(76)	3.38	(26)
18	4.06	(49)	3.89	(74)	3.92	(26)
19	2.53	(49)	2.50	(76)	2.42	(26)
20	2.92	(48)	3.00	(76)	2.77	(26)
21	2.96	(50)	3.05	(75)	3.16	(25)
22	3.04	(49)	2.97	(74)	2.92	(26)
23	2.08	(49)	2.32	(74)	2.40	(25)
24	2.04	(48)	2.16	(74)	2.40	(25)
25	1.88	(49)	1.97	(75)	2.08	(25)
26	2.73	(48)	2.51	(73)	2.60	(25)
27	2.21	(47)	2.41	(73)	2.24	(25)
28	2.45	(49)	2.68	(75)	2.60	(25)
29	2.73	(49)	2.96	(74)	2.96	(25)
30	3.65	(48)	3.14	(74)	2.92	(25)
						
31	3.83	(48)	3.69	(75)	3.76	(25)
32	3.83	(48)	3.69	(75)	3.60	(25)
33	2.98	(47)	3.04	(71)	2.88	(24)
34	4.00	(48)	3.89	(75)	3.84	(25)
35	4.08	(49)	3.95	(74)	3.88	(25)
36	3.78	(49)	3.81	(74)	3.76	(25)
37	3.68	(47)	3.64	(74)	3.63	(24)
38	3.63	(49)	3.39	(74)	3.25	(24)
39	3.23	(47)	3.16	(75)	3.04	(25)
40	3.00	(46)	3.11	(75)	2.80	(25)
41	3.25	(48)	3.36	(74)	3.24	(25)
42	3.29	(48)	3.40	(75)	3.36	(25)
43	3.60	(47)	3.53	(74)	3.42	(24)
44	2.70	(47)	2.85	(74)	2.72	(25)
45	3.04	(49)	3.40	(75)	3.32	(25)
						
46	3.04	(45)	2.88	(74)	2.64	(25)

Footnotes for table 2:

1. Israel responses are a sub-split of the Rest of the World.
2. Statistical significances calculated using student t-test, from Standard Deviations

Whilst generally, there is a close directional matching of the trends and mean scores, some sharper differences do occur. In particular, UK respondents agree even more strongly with an eclectic approach (S.4) to L2 teaching than rest of the world respondents, and also disagree more strongly (S.6) that the Direct Method is the most appropriate approach (both statistically significant). This would seem to imply that within an eclectic approach, UK University TESOL practitioners are more open to use of L1 and maybe translation, which is supported by the finding (S.30) that they more strongly agree (99% significant) that translation is very amenable to oral discussion (perhaps in English or maybe using ‘scaffolding’), and by S.45 indicating a more neutral response regarding translation and semantics. However, it should be recognised that these statistical differences do not necessarily represent deeper meaning, but rather, in this sample size, stronger ‘directional’ trends.

Qualitative data and discussion

This section has elicited a rich source of comment and information which may be relevant to any practitioner in the ELT/SLA field (and beyond) with an interest in methodological issues. The material illustrates the wide and varying views of many language educators, and even to some degree the emotive nature of the topic, and has been analysed according to the type of responses either by identifying trends using a count of related comments or by discussion of responses and their relation to the quantitative data (statements S.2-S.46).

Q. What do you think your students feel/felt about the role of translation of authentic material of different types in the L2 classroom?

The responses to this question, with numbers of comments (brackets), are as follows:

- (i) Positive orientation (29): comments refer mainly to enjoying/liking/finding it useful/helping vocabulary building/aiding in CA/ faster understanding/ building self-confidence/aiding in cultural understanding/higher level students enjoying intellectual challenge and the ‘academic’ stimulus
- (ii) Positive orientation with reservations (26): comments refer mainly to need for careful handling/acceptable in small doses/selectively useful/acceptable for appropriate ‘authentic’ and specialists texts/useful for comprehension and identifying false cognates/aids vocabulary development and sentence building/useful for homework only
- (iii) Mixed/ambivalent responses (18): replies refer mainly to problems for multilingual classes/frustration and errors/value of small ‘doses’ and at higher levels for word nuances and issues of accuracy, and one respondent refers to students exhibiting

“the full range of feelings from loving to loathing” depending on a variety of contextual and subjective factors, e.g. teachers who can make translation into a ‘sterile’ experience

- (iv) Negative orientation (17): comments refer mainly to boring/too much work/very difficult/too demanding or stressful because of precision/loss of motivation/don’t like it but do it as necessary/not appropriate for language schools and in-company courses/assumes good L1 knowledge and skills/wastes time better spent on learning the L2
- (v) Don’t use/don’t know (16).

Whilst this question obviously cannot substitute for a direct student targeted questionnaire, it nevertheless indicates, through teacher perceptions, around 50% of those responding indicating a fairly positive view of translation in categories (i) and (ii) on the part of students, about 16% having an ambivalent attitude and only around 15% with a definitely negative view. This can be associated loosely with S.26 on the questionnaire indicating that whilst 40% of respondents were neutral regarding student views of translation tasks, 45% disagreed that their students think translation is boring/too mechanistic. Hence both S.26 and this question indicate, through teachers, a definitely positive attitude on the part of students, (even though some teachers would definitely prefer not). This is reinforced by S.27 indicating that around 63% of teacher responses as disagreeing that translation is boring and mechanistic, (19% neutral).

Q. Do translational skills help in ‘cultural mediation’ i.e. intercultural communication and competence?

The response summary to this question is as follows, (number of responses):

- (i) Yes / definitely (46)
- (ii) Yes conditionally/maybe/probably/perhaps (26)
- (iii) Not really/not necessarily/depends (11)
- (iv) No definitely (12)
- (v) Don’t know/not sure/possibly/ n/a (14).

Hence, approximately 67% of those who offered a response fall into categories (i) and (ii) with around 21% in categories (iii) and (iv), and the remainder undecided. One respondent, for example, referred to translation as aiding correct use of collocation by comparison of source and target cultures, whilst another, though in agreement, suggests that translation

teaching fails to sufficiently exploit the cultural aspect. In contrast, another considers that role-play and discussions are more effective in achieving cultural awareness.

Whilst a higher positive score might have been expected for this question, the literature (cf. Witte, 2009: 93-95; Stiefel, 2009: 99-117) emphasises the difficulties of developing a 'second language identity' particularly in institutionalised foreign language learning, and the tight hold of the metacognitive function of the native language. The whole area of using translation to shift the learner to mediator through practice of linguistic, social, and cultural fluency, is seemingly a complex one, and perhaps explains why respondents appear to have been less forthcoming on this particular aspect.

Q. Would you like to use translation in the classroom more than you do/did but are/were not allowed to by (political) constraints of the system?

The responses are as follows:

- (i) Definitely not (36)
- (ii) Probably not/use enough L1/prefer use of L2 (5)
- (iii) Don't feel 'political'/organisational constraints/free to choose approach and methodology (28)
- (iv) As in (iii) but prefer to minimise L1 (3)
- (v) There are constraints but use translation as/when appropriate (4)
- (vi) Would use translation more/sometimes but restricted by practical constraints (e.g. course type, aims, modules, class size, limited L1 knowledge) (15)
- (vii) No constraints but limited by bilingual competence, course aims, monolingual classes (6)
- (viii) Miscellaneous (8).

This question aimed to elicit directly from respondents what they were personally experiencing regarding organisational constraints. As one respondent indicated, this question might possibly comprise two parts, which makes analysis more difficult. Thus, 41 respondents (ca. 40%) would definitely not use more translation (without referring to constraints), 31 (ca. 30%) do not feel constraints without mentioning more translation, only 4 admit to organisational constraints but use translation as appropriate, and 21 (ca. 20%) might use translation more but refer to a variety of practical constraints. Interestingly, one comment strongly favours reinstating use of L1 for specific purposes, and berates the

general continuation of Bolitho's embargo*, while another specifically admits to using translation in spite of constraints. This information can be loosely linked to S.5 in the questionnaire, relating to organisational/ management constraints limiting use of L1, which shows a very evenly divided response, i.e. ca. 35% agreeing, ca. 40% disagreeing (20% strongly), and the remainder neutral. There is a loose matching from the two sources (30% and 40%) regarding the number expressing no constraints to use of L1. However, the ca. 1 in 3 respondents agreeing to experiencing some constraints must be regarded as important and in accord with Cook's claim (2010: 155) regarding pressure on teachers to minimise L1 and translation.

Q. *Any other comments?*

Again, a rich source of information is provided. Some comments raise the issue of 'it depends' and confirming that many 'neither agree nor disagree' answers in the questionnaire also include 'it depends' and 'don't know' responses. A number of specific points are noteworthy.

- (i) One senior UK TEFL lecturer expresses extreme displeasure at the possible re-introduction of translation tasks. This, however, appears to be the only comment in this section expressing outright condemnation.
- (ii) One respondent has a particular distaste for use of the word 'eclectic' in education claiming that it implies an unprincipled approach to use of different strategies, allowing teachers to use recipes for 'successful lessons' based on their own learning experiences without really understanding the 'why' of what they do in the classroom. This is supported by a teacher in France who also claims a lack of professionalism amongst teachers noting that in the main they "learn on the job" and "teach as they were taught" (i.e. grammar-translation). Nevertheless, S.4 indicates that an overwhelming majority of respondents (82%) do believe in an 'eclectic' approach to teaching, and it is interesting to speculate whether this means that they are all in fact 'guilty' of unprincipled teaching.
- (iii) Two comments mention that it *is* the role of teachers to show students different approaches/methods to learning, and that no one method, including translation, should be imposed on them.
- (iv) One comment refers to use of L1 as beneficial not only for language acquisition but

* embargo on use of mother tongue

also for lowering anxiety and creating a more amenable atmosphere for learning. In a similar vein, another respondent refers to use of L1 even in multilingual classes for involving all students in highlighting awareness of word etymology, in contrast to the more usual comment to the effect that translation should only be used for clarification purposes, specific words or phrases, and L1 should only be used at lower levels, or for subject specific vocabulary. One interesting comment on learner level, suggests that beginners need more use of L1 by way of explanations, whereas higher level students can benefit from comparison of “subtle differences and shades of meaning”.

- (v) The controversial issue of bilingualism amongst teachers is mentioned by several respondents. e.g. the bilingual teacher can use translation in a monolingual class for quick checks of L2 understanding, and can be more “aware of the stumbling blocks and the difficulty/ease of language acquisition”. It is suggested that bilingual teachers are especially useful for higher level students, whereas beginners “need non-natives not to be discouraged”. One respondent refers specifically to the “current dominance of the English native speaker in much of the profession” and the particular difficulties faced in language learning in the so-called ‘BANA’* countries. This causes an inherent problem for using translation tasks in ELT (in both the private and public sectors). Another respondent also emphasises the requirement for “proficient near-bilingual teachers” as a prerequisite for “using translation techniques as a very important tool in teaching”, though the downside would be a reduction in the all pervading L2 classroom environment. Additionally, translation tasks may skew a course too much towards reading and writing skills (as opposed to listening and speaking).

It is interesting that the responses to S.2, while indicating a 38% neutral response, show a very firm 46% of respondents as agreeing that bilingual teachers are preferable for L2 teaching. This does tend to imply that many teachers appreciate the need to be able to use the L1 (and/or translation) as appropriate, without being totally dependent on the ‘Direct Method’. This corresponds with the large (68%) of respondents who disagree (S.6) with the statement that the ‘Direct Method’ is the most appropriate way, and translation undermines the principle of monolingualism in the classroom. Cook (2010: 126-153), discusses at length issues relating to the growth in demand for and elevated status of the ‘native-speaker’, and levels of learners, and describes ways in which translation might be used even in multilingual classes or by

* Britain, Australasia, N. America

monolingual teachers. The latter could also endeavour to start learning their students' language(s) which could help to strengthen teacher-student relationships.

Another respondent, for example, would consider utilising translation in multilingual classes by use of 'scaffolded' help between students of different nationalities, which would correspond with Cook's concept of 'communicative translation' (2010: 148-9). Again, a very firm majority (66%) of respondents (S.10) agrees with the benefits of teacher/student collaboration and 'scaffolded' help between students, resulting from translation tasks. This supports the concept of 'collaborative learning' (Leonardi, 2010: 119; Anton and DiCamilla, 1999) whereby learning is regarded as a social process, and knowledge is acquired through discussion and negotiation, with teachers in the role of facilitators rather than 'authoritarian' figures imposing their knowledge. This is emphasised by one respondent who includes translation for classroom discussions and instructions.

- (vi) Regarding class levels, a number of comments refer more to use of L1 at beginner level, and use of translation tasks at more advanced stages only when appropriate, depending on a range of factors relating to student and teacher. Whilst Cook (2010: 129-134) notes that, in general, advanced learners will not require translation as a communicative need in the same way as beginners (rather for clarification, nuances, etc), one respondent claims that "it is essentially translation that empowers an advanced student in perfecting his skills in L2". Interestingly, another comment suggests that the issue is not whether to use L1, but rather "when and how" to use it, claiming that new teachers tend to be against its use, experienced teachers use L1 as a teaching aid, whilst untrained teachers use L1 in a deleterious way. This is emphasised by other comments stressing that both translation and all types of tasks can be "boring and/or non-communicative" if "poorly chosen or executed", and translation, as with other techniques, is very much situation dependent.
- (vii) The term "judicious use" was mentioned as a descriptor for translation activity by some respondents with a wide scope for teachers and learners. This should be seen as reflecting the response to S.7 which indicates a large majority (86%) of respondents as agreeing that carefully planned translation activity can play a useful role within the communicative L2 classroom.
- (viii) Two respondents refer to the problem of weaker students becoming dependent on translation which hinders progress and inhibits self-confidence, and on electronic translators which inhibit development of contextual "guessing and inference skills". Use of monolingual dictionaries was suggested. One also, interestingly, admits to

having seen the ‘pros’ and ‘cons’ of the Direct Method after teaching in that mode, whilst another refers to the habit-forming nature of translation.

- (ix) A publisher with many years’ teaching experience comments on S.46 regarding introduction of translation topics into coursebooks. He notes that for both economic and practical reasons, this is unlikely to occur, though there is an increase in availability of bilingual wordlists. As noted previously, S.46 was one that elicited an almost ‘perfect’ Gaussian distribution, illustrating a complete division of opinion on this issue.
- (x) A very perceptive comment regarding (British) university language degree courses, suggests that while L1 awareness can be increased by CA, this is constrained by an inherent weakness in English language skills and abilities (native and non-native speakers); such considerations may not be relevant at lower course levels or in ‘immersion’ type environments such as an Israeli ‘Ulpan’*. This comment should be considered in conjunction with responses to S.15 indicating a strong majority (70%) of respondents as agreeing that translation can help discover the stylistic and potential expressive powers of the L1.
- (xi) One issue of particular interest is that of translation as a ‘fifth skill’ which some respondents suggests *is* linked indirectly to the other (four) skills as an aid, but certainly not as a replacement. The questionnaire response to this issue (S.40) indicated a largely evenly divided result, with 38% in agreement and 32% neutral. The corresponding statement (S.28) indicates a fairly firm majority (54%, and 23% neutral) as disagreeing that translation as a ‘fifth skill’ is not directly linked to the other 4 skills, which taken together indicate, in the author’s view, that this concept of ‘fifth skill’ linked to the ‘four skills’ has quite a good uptake amongst respondents.
- (xii) The issue of transfer is mentioned e.g. in a comment agreeing that “linguistic systems are always interacting in the mind”, as do 85% of respondents (S.8) who agree that ‘learners (especially beginners) always relate the L2 to the L1 in their own minds and that it is natural for them to mentally translate’, information which supports the concept that translation is a natural phenomenon (cf. Leonardi, 2010: 62-3; V. Cook, 2001: 184-206).
- (xiii) One respondent rightly draws the distinction between using translation as a teaching tool and for training as a professional translator (cf. S.25 showing 82% of respondents disagreeing that ‘translation is only appropriate for professional translators’).
- (xiv) The author concurs strongly with the respondent suggesting that for language

* immigrant language classes

teaching, “the valuable part is the process, not the product of translation, and the discussion of alternatives”, in line with S.30 showing 55% of respondents agreeing (24% neutral) that ‘translation is very amenable to oral discussion and debate since there is no ‘right’ answer. This surely demonstrates the right pathway for utilising translation activity in the communicative L2 classroom - as an enrichment process whereby “interaction between language study, linguistics and translation studies is seen as mutually enriching” (Malmkjaer, 2005: cover).

It is intended to publish the respondent ‘free comment’ verbatim material and the ‘mini’ case studies in an appropriate format.

Conclusions and implications

The findings of the present work, notwithstanding the limitations of methodology, firmly suggest that the time is ripe for these issues to be placed on the language teaching agenda. In particular, this implies a reflective approach to enhance learner awareness of the sociocultural contexts from which and into which the translation is being positioned. Such a strategy should help in facilitating communicative and intercultural competence. The challenge for the profession on this issue is to steer a middle way between dogmatic banishment of the L1 and its beneficial use in systematic and selective ways, and in judicious doses, and whilst the general attitude to translation in the classroom may appear to be dismissive on the surface, the data from this study clearly indicate there is a far more complex discussion to be had.

A distinction should be made between translation in the classroom as a strategy for ‘management’ purposes, and its possible use as a ‘fifth skill’ with linked activities for language teaching. Regarding recent practical applications of translation exercises in FLT, several promising examples are described in Witte *et.al.* (2009). These relate to comparison of L1/L2 syntactic structures, incorporation of translation into task-based projects using various media for vocabulary learning, encouraging student involvement and control of their learning process, raising interlingual and intercultural awareness/realities, challenging students’ cognitive potential, developing communicative competence and language learning strategies, and audio visual translation to enhance pragmatic skills. Further examples in the literary area are described e.g. to enhance L2 conceptual metaphors, to heighten awareness of the ‘otherness’ of second language and culture, reading of bilingual (parallel texts) to aid in reading comprehension, and appropriate use of back translation as a pedagogic tool to

develop various language skills via authentic texts in different cultural contexts. There is considerable scope for further classroom experimentation in these areas.

Littlewood and Yu (2011) describe the 'strategic use' of L1 in various ways as an aid to achieving language learning goals. A recent British Council/BBC publication (2009) also refers to the value of carefully planned and well-designed translation tasks as a "highly communicative activity" for learners. These include classroom discussions of selected texts, comparison of versions of different kinds of translated texts, discussion of 'bad' translations, and group project work (e.g. relating to film, sub-titling, games, web pages). Teachers are invited (by the article editor) to share opinions and approaches. Again there is wide scope here for innovative teaching methodologies using authentic material together with new technologies.

Further research studies are recommended focussing both on language teachers in different contexts e.g. schools/colleges (to strengthen the current findings), and amongst large samples of learners at different levels and in different countries. An appropriate questionnaire would need to be developed for the latter. Both quantitative and qualitative studies are recommended, to build a wider picture. An accumulation of empirical data could firmly identify those aspects of translation tasks generally regarded as potentially valuable, e.g. the role of translation as an 'interactive fifth skill', and would greatly assist individual teachers who need to decide for or against its use in the classroom. Inevitably though, the issue of learner attitudes and motivation will be critical, in terms of whether students are genuinely interested in discovering cultural elements of language and stylistic differences, as opposed merely to focussing on perceived 'right answers' using electronic devices for examination purposes.

Bio-data

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