

To Translate or Not to Translate: The Case of Pedagogic Translation in the Foreign Language Classroom¹

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*Translation in language teaching:
Not whether but how*
(Carreres & Noriega-Sánchez, 2011, p. 281)

Abstract

In the present article, I revisit the ongoing controversy surrounding the use of translation in the foreign language classroom in general. I begin by defining the concept of 'translation' arguing that translation can be understood either as a method or as a means and that it is exactly the ambiguity of the term that has led to the current debate over whether or not it is pedagogically sound to use translation in the language classroom. Next, I review the role of translation in the Grammar Translation Method, the Direct Method, and Communicative Language Teaching outlining the root causes for the current insecurity, in some cases even animosity, towards translation in language teaching before discussing the most common arguments against and in favor of the use of translation in language teaching brought forth in the relevant literature. Finally, drawing on the literature presented and my own experience, I conclude that translation is indeed a valid means to use in the foreign language classroom while also suggesting that a solid research agenda be established that investigates the most effective uses of pedagogic translation in the foreign language classroom.

Resumen

En este artículo, reviso la controversia continua sobre el uso de la traducción en el aula de lenguas extranjeras en general. Empiezo con la definición del concepto de 'traducción', argumentando que la traducción puede ser entendida como un método o como un medio y que es exactamente la ambigüedad del término lo que ha llevado al debate actual sobre si es o no pedagógicamente sano utilizar la traducción en el aula de lenguas extranjeras. Después reviso el papel de la traducción en el método de traducción gramatical, el método directo y la enseñanza comunicativa de lenguas, señalando las causas profundas de la inseguridad actual, en algunos casos incluso de la animosidad, hacia la traducción en la enseñanza de lenguas, antes de discutir los argumentos más comunes en contra y a favor del uso de la traducción en la enseñanza de lenguas que se discuten en la literatura pertinente. Por último, partiendo de la literatura presentada y de mi propia experiencia, concluyo que la traducción es efectivamente un medio válido para utilizar en el aula de lenguas extranjeras, pero al mismo tiempo sugiero que se establezca una sólida agenda de investigación que determine los usos más efectivos de la traducción pedagógica en el aula de lenguas extranjeras.

Introduction

As an active foreign language teacher at a private university in central Mexico, I can attest to the fact that using translation in the language classroom is considered taboo in modern-day language teaching. This sentiment, often accompanied by resignation, is shared by many professionals worldwide. Carreres and Noriega-Sánchez (2011), for example, pointed out that "there has been a marked reluctance and often open hostility regarding the use of translation in language teaching" (p. 283). Drahota-Szabó (2019) lamented that activities involving translation have been neglected in German as a Foreign Language courses in Hungary. Hernández (1996), considering Spanish as a Foreign Language courses in England, confirmed that the mere mentioning of the word translation causes negative reactions in language teachers. Mbeudeu (2017) shared that in Cameroon, translation-based activities in English as a Foreign Language classes "should be totally avoided" (p. 76) and Cook (2010) even argued that "translation has been outlawed" (p. 3) forcing teachers who want to use it to go "underground" (p. 3).

Nevertheless, I do occasionally use translation in my foreign language courses, albeit with hesitation. Thus, the purpose of the present article is to examine the controversy surrounding the use of pedagogic translation in university-level language courses in order to

1. provide practicing language teachers with sound arguments to defend their use of pedagogic translation in the classroom and,
2. to invite the research community in language teaching and learning to define a research paradigm to thoroughly investigate how to effectively use pedagogic translation in the communicative language classroom.

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However, before discussing the arguments on both sides of the issue, a clear definition of the term 'translation' is in order since, as Petrocchi (2014) correctly pointed out, there is a general "confusion about the role of translation" (p. 99) in language teaching. The ambiguous use of the term 'translation', examined below, appears to be, in my opinion, the root cause for the present controversy.

The Definition of 'Translation'

After having extensively read about the use of translation in the language classroom, I realized that the term 'translation' has not been clearly defined in the language teaching literature. On the one hand, translation can be referred to as an **academic discipline or profession** and on the other, the term translation is used to mean the **result**, or end (Cook, 2010), of the act of translation, i.e., the translated text. Mehdi and Mehdi (2018) defined the **act of translation** as "the replacement of textual material in one language (SL) by equivalent textual material in another language (TL)" (p. 47).

A second important distinction has to be made between translation as a method and translation as a means (Machida, 2001). Method refers to a "generalized set of classroom specifications for accomplishing linguistic objectives" (Brown, 2001, p. 16). A language teaching method is based on a specific approach, which defines what language is and how it should be taught (Brown, 2001). **Translation as a method**, therefore, refers to an approach to language teaching in which the only method employed is the act of translation. This is, essentially, the Grammar Translation Method, discussed in greater detail in Section 3.

Means, on the other hand, refers to a "wide variety of exercises, activities, or tasks used in the language classroom" (Brown, 2001, p. 16), a term often used synonymously with technique or tool. When referring to **translation as a means**, the act of translation becomes "a means of learning" (Machida, 2011, p. 740). Thus, translation as a means is one specific technique, used among others, in the language classroom. It is the latter sense only that is referred to with the term **pedagogic translation**, defined by Petrocchi (2014) as "a tool for teaching a foreign language" (p. 95).

Having clarified the concept of pedagogic translation, I now discuss the role of pedagogic translation in language teaching. Next, I examine the arguments against and in favor of pedagogic translation in the language classroom followed by my conclusions.

The Role of Pedagogic Translation in Language Teaching

For centuries, language teaching was based solely on the scholarly study of classic languages such as Greek and Latin. Rather than fostering oral and written communication in the target language, instruction was focused on "grammatical rules, memorization of vocabulary [...], translations of texts" (Brown, 2001, p. 18). Expecting that "through the study of the grammar of the target language, students would become more familiar with the grammar of their native language" (Larsen-Freeman, 2000, p. 11), learners were faced with having to translate sentences such as 'The philosopher pulled the lower jaw of the hen' (Titone, as cited in Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 4). Exercises such as these had the sole purpose of "learn[ing] a language in order to read its literature or [...] to benefit from the mental discipline and intellectual development that result from foreign language study" (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 5). The main characteristics of this type of instruction in which the target language grammar was taught through the act of translation are listed below:

1. Classes are taught in the mother tongue, with little active use of the target language.
2. Much vocabulary is taught in the form of lists of isolated words.
3. Long, elaborate explanations of the intricacies of grammar are given.
4. Grammar provides the rules for putting words together, and instruction often focuses on the form and inflection of words.
5. Reading of difficult classical texts is begun early.
6. Little attention is paid to the content of texts, which are treated as exercises in grammatical analysis.
7. Often the only drills are exercises in translating disconnected sentences from the target language into the mother tongue.
8. Little or no attention is given to pronunciation (Brown, 2001, pp. 18-19).

Being able to successfully communicate in the target language was not the objective of the method (Larsen-Freeman, 2000) known as the **Grammar Translation Method**. Rather, the focus of language instruction was on reading and writing with little attention paid to the oral skills. Students were considered "successful language learners" (p. 15) if they were able to translate texts, particularly literary ones, into their native

language. Language was viewed as a set of rules which had to be deduced, studied, and analyzed using contrastive analysis of isolated sentences, fill-in-the-blank exercises, and the memorization of grammatical rules (Martín Sánchez, 2009). The result was “the type of Grammar-Translation courses remembered with distaste by thousands of school learners, for whom foreign language learning meant a tedious experience of memorizing endless lists of unusable grammar rules and vocabulary and attempting to produce perfect translations of stilted or literary prose” (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 6). It did “virtually nothing to enhance a student’s communicative ability in the language” (Brown, 2001, p. 19).

Towards the end of the 19th century, opposition to the Grammar Translation Method grew (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). According to Malmkjær (2010), the main characteristics of the Reform Movement responsible for the shift away from translation as a method in language teaching were the importance of the spoken language, a focus on texts rather than isolated sentences in language teaching, and a preference for a methodology that emphasized oral skills.

It thus appears clear that a language teaching method that focused on the translation of written texts and emphasized instruction through the explicit explanation of grammar rules while ignoring communicative abilities in the target language did not cater to this new direction.

As a solution and in answer to the concern that the Grammar Translation Method “was not very effective in preparing students to use the target language communicatively” (Larsen-Freeman, 2000, p. 23), a new method, known as the **Direct Method**, became popular. The principles of the Direct Method can best be summarized as follows:

1. The native language should not be used in the classroom.
2. The teacher should demonstrate, not explain or translate. It is desirable that students make a direct association between the target language and meaning.
3. The purpose of language learning is communication.
4. Lessons should contain some conversational activity – some opportunity for students to use language in real contexts.
5. Grammar should be taught inductively (Larsen-Freeman, 2000, p. 27-28).

According to Larsen-Freeman (2000), this method was based on the idea that “meaning is to be conveyed *directly* in the target language [...], with no recourse to the students’ native language” (p. 23, emphasis in the original text). Consequently, there was only “one very basic rule: No translation is allowed” (p. 23). Translation, understood here as the act of translation, was thus effectively banned from the language classroom. Rather, students were expected to deduce the meaning of new words and grammatical structures from the teacher’s demonstrations using “realia, pictures, or pantomime” (p. 29). Yet, while the method focused on increasing the target language vocabulary and developing oral language skills (Larsen-Freeman, 2000), it also had important shortcomings such as passive knowledge of vocabulary and the absence of error correction that could lead to fossilization early on (Martín Sánchez, 2009). In addition, Cook (2010) argued that the Direct Method and its underlying “belief in natural acquisition are no longer supported by the latest research” (p. 87). Thus, another shift in language teaching methodology was in order. A method based on the principle that “a language is best learnt by being used to communicate” (Bratož & Kocbek, 2013, p. 143) was needed.

Communicative Language Teaching is currently considered the most prominent and widely accepted approach to language teaching (Brown, 2001). It focuses on the communicative function of language in which “classrooms were increasingly characterized by authenticity, real-world simulation, and meaningful tasks” (Brown, 2001, p. 42), concepts based on Ellis’ (1994) argument that when learners are guided to focus on form and meaning within a particular communicative task, successful learning ensues. An exclusive focus on form, as seen in the Grammar Translation Method, was not sufficient to achieve **communicative competence**. According to Canale and Swain (1980), communicative competence consists of grammatical competence (the grammar of the language), sociolinguistic competence (the rules of the use of language in context), and strategic competence (a set of verbal and non-verbal communication strategies the learner is able to use in cases of communication difficulties).

Since communicative competence is the objective of Communicative Language Teaching, “instruction needs to point toward all its components [...] giving due attention to language use and not just usage, to fluency and not just accuracy, to authentic language and contexts, and to students’ eventual need to apply

classroom learning to previously unrehearsed contexts in the real world" (Brown, 2001, p. 69)³. The characteristics of Communicative Language Teaching catering to this new objective are listed below:

1. Classroom goals are focused on all of the components (grammatical, discourse, functional, sociolinguistic, and strategic) of communicative competence. Goals therefore must intertwine the organizational aspects of language with the pragmatic.
2. Language techniques are designed to engage learners in the pragmatic, authentic, functional use of language for meaningful purposes. Organizational language forms are not the central focus, but rather aspects of language that enable the learner to accomplish those purposes.
3. Fluency and accuracy are seen as complementary principles underlying communicative techniques. At times, fluency may have to take on more importance than accuracy in order to keep learners meaningfully engaged in language use.
4. Students in a communicative class ultimately have to use the language, productively and receptively, in unrehearsed contexts outside the classroom. Classroom tasks must therefore equip students with the skills necessary for communication in those contexts.
5. Students are given opportunities to focus on their own learning process through an understanding of their own styles of learning and through the development of appropriate strategies for autonomous learning.
6. The role of the teacher is that of facilitator and guide, not an all-knowing bestower of knowledge. Students are therefore encouraged to construct meaning through genuine linguistic interaction with others (Brown, 2001, p. 43).

Communicative Language Teaching thus emphasizes meaning over form. The primary goal of instruction is the appropriateness of linguistic structures in context. This sentiment is corroborated by Richards and Rodgers (2001), who pointed out that within the communicative paradigm "language use reflects the situations of its use and must be appropriate to that situation depending on the setting, the roles of the participants, and the purpose of the communication" (p. 173). The focus is therefore on "fluency and acceptable language" (p. 157) rather than grammatical accuracy.

Since Communicative Language Teaching is based on "inductive rule learning" (Ellis, 1994, p. 569), the "overt presentation and discussion of grammatical rules" (Brown, 2001, p. 43) is practically non-existent. Sun and Cheng (2013), for example, pointed out that Communicative Language Teaching has been criticized for being inappropriate in situations where accuracy is more important than fluency thus advocating that explicit focus on form be included in the communicative language classroom where appropriate⁴. And while, in theory, translation as one means of instruction "may be used where students need or benefit from it" (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 156), it remains largely banned from the communicative language classroom in practice. The following section aims to shed light on why this is the case.

The Controversy of Pedagogic Translation in the Language Classroom

The ban of the mother tongue from the language classroom, and therefore pedagogic translation as defined above, stems from the Direct Method in which using the native language is considered "counter-productive in the process of acquiring a new language [...] holding back learners from taking the leap into expressing themselves freely in the second language" (Carreres, 2006, p. 1). This sentiment still holds true in Communicative Language Teaching where translation as an instructional means is considered unnatural and useless (Carreres, 2006). Following is a list with the most common arguments leveled against the use of pedagogic translation in language teaching:

1. Translation is an artificial, stilted exercise that has no place in a communicative methodology. Also, it is restrictive in that it confines language practice to two skills only (reading and writing).
2. Translation into L2 is counterproductive in that it forces learners to view the foreign language always through the prism of their mother tongue; this causes interferences and a dependence on L1 that inhibits free expression in L2.
3. Translation into L2 is a wholly purposeless exercise that has no application in the real world, since translators normally operate into and not out of their mother tongue.

³ Brown's language use refers to sociopragmatically appropriate linguistic forms within a specific context whereas language use refers to grammatically correct forms of language without taking the situational context into account.

⁴ Similar to Sun and Cheng (2013), I am treating second and foreign language synonymously in this article referring to a language other than the learners' native language.

4. Translation and translation into L2 in particular are frustrating and de-motivating exercises in that the student can never attain the level of accuracy or stylistic polish of the version presented to them by their teacher. It seems an exercise designed to elicit mistakes, rather than accurate use of language.
5. Translation is a method that may well work with literary-oriented learners who enjoy probing the intricacies of grammar and lexis, but it is unsuited to the average learner (Carreres, 2006, p. 5).

All of these arguments can be summarized as follows: "It has been claimed – or insinuated – that [translation] is unhelpful to learning, unusable, dull, authoritarian, unpopular, artificial, and slows students down" (Cook, 2010, p. 125). However, these arguments have their weaknesses; one of them being the very definition of 'translation'.

First of all, the claim that translation is not a natural means of expression (Pintado Gutiérrez, 2012), is, in my opinion, a misunderstanding of the concept of pedagogic translation. Rather than considering translation as a means of instruction, it is understood as the result of the act of translation performed by professional translators. This, however, is not the purpose of pedagogic translation in the language classroom. I, therefore, believe that this particular point is irrelevant.

Second, the point that "translation is independent of and radically different from the four skills which define language competence" (Malmkjær, 2010, p. 186) can be rejected for two reasons: One, 'translation' here clearly refers to the activity of professional translators rather than pedagogic translation, and two, any translation work in the professional world involves intensive reading and writing as well as listening and speaking when dealing with clients (Malmkjær, 2010). Translation as a means to negotiate meaning in different languages and as a professional activity is therefore not independent of the four skills to be developed in the communicative classroom.

In addition, opponents of pedagogic translation have pointed out that it may invite students to assume that there is always an exact match between the words in the students' native language and the target language (Malmkjær, 2010) resulting in **negative transfer**. Ellis (1994) defined negative transfer as errors committed by students who wrongly assume that a native language structure is the same in the target language. From the perspective of language learning, negative transfer is considered harmful to the learning process since it hinders "the formation of [...] correct target-language habits" (p. 300). The worry is that pedagogic translation causes interference and "interrupts thinking in the language being learned" (Malmkjær, 2010, p. 186). However, as Malmkjær (2010) pointed out, learners who are being forced to deal with interference early on are actually at an advantage since communicating in a second language is a natural process. Pedagogic translation can therefore provide students with additional practice when dealing with language interferences.

In fact, I believe that carefully structured translation tasks are a potentially very effective pedagogical tool that can help learners 'notice' how two languages differ in their linguistic structures helping them become aware that there is no one-on-one relationship between the native and the target languages. **Noticing**, a concept that plays a central role in second language acquisition theory, is important for learning to take place (Ellis, 1994, p. 349) (See Figure 1):

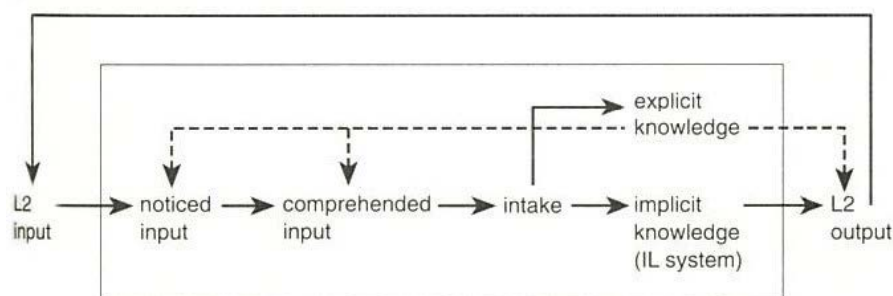


Figure 1. The role of noticing in second language acquisition

Figure 1 shows that noticed input turns into comprehended input, which, in turn, becomes intake. Intake, based on the noticing of different linguistic structures, leads to explicit knowledge stored in memory, which also supports the learner's capacity to monitor his or her own language production (Ellis, 1994). Consequently, I am convinced that rather than being too time-consuming (Malmkjær, 2010), another criticism leveled against pedagogic translation, it is an effective strategy to provide learners with noticed input to support foreign language learning.

Another frequent argument against pedagogic translation is that it is “focused more upon accuracy than fluency” (Cook, 2010, p. 88). While I think this is a valid concern, I do have two issues with this point: First, the focus of the translation activity depends on its purpose, to be discussed in more detail below, and second, the primary focus of Communicative Language Teaching on fluency is equally concerning as it produces a lot of fluent learners who, in my experience, lack accuracy. I, therefore, believe that an equal focus on form with pedagogic translation as one of the many tools at the teacher’s disposal can foster the development of accuracy in the communicative classroom.

In sum, the arguments against pedagogic translation seem to be deficient. In addition, language teachers often consider translation an effective solution in specific situations while language learners tend to believe that translation exercises are very useful for language learning (Carreres, 2006). Since learners refer to their native language in order to make sense of the target language structures, pedagogic translation “can help them systematize and rationalize a learning mechanism that is taking place anyway” (Carreres, 2006, p. 6). In the following list, the most common arguments advocating pedagogic translation in language teaching are summarized:

1. “Translating enhances communicative competence” (Petrocchi, 2014, p. 100).
2. “[T]ranslation activities can be employed not only to enhance the four main language skills; but also to develop accuracy, clarity and flexibility” (Mbeudeu, 2017, p. 79).
3. “[F]orm-focused exercises, including translation exercises, are more effective means of teaching grammatical accuracy than meaning-based work alone” (Malmkjær, 2010, p. 188).
4. Translation fosters language-mediating competence, mediating between two speakers of different languages, which is one of the competencies to be developed in the foreign language according to the Common European Framework of Reference (Drahota-Szabó, 2019).
5. Translation is an activity that occurs daily, students will most likely have to mediate between speakers of different languages in the future, using translation as a tool is a skill students will need outside the language classroom, translation exercises motivate students (Gutiérrez Eugenio, 2013).
6. Translation is useful to clarify meanings (Pintado Gutiérrez, 2012).
7. “Translation activities set up learning circumstances which generate cognitive processes (*noticing* [...]) which enable learners to acquire new and consolidate existing knowledge [...]. Thus, translation activities may result in ‘available input’ [...] being more effectively converted to *intake* by learners” (Machida, 2011, p. 742, emphases in original).
8. “[T]ranslation has been proven to activate different aspects of language processing, such as awareness of correspondence and difference between L1 and L2, distinction among patterns in each language, growth of transfer ability, and enhancement of mental flexibility and memorization” (Belpoliti and Plascencia-Vela, 2013, p. 69).
9. Translation can be used as a systematic tool to “take advantage of instances of difference or affinity between learners’ L1 and L2 to predict errors and evaluate them as developmental stages in a principled way” (Calfoglou, 2013, p. 94).

Pedagogic translation may actually promote the development of communicative competence rather than impede it. Another important point is made by Bratož and Kocbek (2013), similar to the argument put forth by Drahota-Szabó (2019) above: Apart from communicative competence, learning a new language raises intercultural awareness in the learners turning them into mediators between speakers of different languages. Thus, translation should not be considered as breaking with the main philosophy of Communicative Language Teaching but rather as a natural component of it further supporting the development of communicative competence (Bratož & Kocbek, 2013).

As for the translation critics’ focus-on-form objection, Carreres (2006) argued that pedagogic translation is actually a very effective way to help students grasp certain lexical or grammatical concepts. Figure 2 exemplifies pedagogic translation:

Second language:	Me <i>gusta</i>	<i>jugar fútbol.</i>
Native language:	→ It	<i>pleases me to play soccer.</i>

Figure 2. Pedagogic translation: Example 1

In Spanish, the construction with the verb *gustar* [something or someone pleases someone] does not have a direct equivalent in English and English-speaking learners of Spanish tend to struggle with the construction. Carreres (2006) maintained that using a literal translation, even if sounding strange, was more

effective than a long and probably unclear explanation in the target language (p. 14). I had a similar experience in my own beginners' class of German with Spanish native speakers. Using the same example, by happenstance, I also used the strategy of "hyper-literal, explicative" (Carreres, 2006, p. 14) translation (see Figure 3):

Second language:	<i>Ich spiele gern Fußball.</i>
Native language:	→ <i>Yo juego gustadamente al fútbol.</i>
Gloss:	I play pleasurably soccer.

Figure 3. Pedagogic translation: Example 2

In German, the construction with the adverb *gern* causes the learners' trouble. Opting to use an adverb that actually sounds very stilted but would remind my students of the related meaning of the verb *gustar*, they quickly understood this particular structure and were able to use it correctly in other sentences.

The opposite type of pedagogic translation advocated by Carreres (2006) is "communicative translation" (p. 14), similar to what professional translators do. While the former is an effective tool "to help learners grasp a particular L2 structure" (p. 14), the latter raises the learners' "awareness of style, register and extra-linguistic factors" (p. 14-15). She went on to claim, and I agree, that "both approaches, provided they are carefully applied, have their place in the language classroom and they should be viewed as mutually enhancing rather than exclusive" (p. 15).

However, what remains unclear is how to use pedagogic translation effectively in different learning situations, especially in the middle of the continuum suggested by Carreres (2006). Although it appears clear that in order to prevent us from falling back into the Grammar Translation trap "translation [...] must be integrated with other practical exercises" (Petrocchi, p. 98), the implementation of pedagogic translation in the language classroom has been disorganized and chaotic (Pintado Gutiérrez, 2012). One concrete proposal is to use the **task-based approach** since, according to Carreres (2006), it lends itself particularly well to the use of pedagogic translation in the communicative language classroom.

In task-based language teaching, classroom instruction is based on a specific language use task in a particular communicative context (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Nunan (2010) defined task as "a piece of classroom work that involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is focused on mobilizing their grammatical knowledge in order to express meaning" (p. 4).

Yet, due to the lack of a well-defined and solidified research agenda (Pintado Gutiérrez, 2012), a "thorough theoretical understanding of the nature of [pedagogic] translation" (Sun & Cheng, 2013, p. 237) remains elusive leaving many language teachers doubtful as to how to effectively implement it in their classrooms. Cook (2010) suggested a number of different activities that may be helpful to language teachers when choosing the tasks to be tackled by their students (See Table 1):

Activities	Comments
Corrected close translation	Form-focused literal translation of textual material even if the target language grammar is not adhered to (i.e., Carreres' (2006) hyper-literal translation)
Word-for word translation	Word-for-word equivalents adhering to the target language grammar
Teaching vocabulary	Presenting new vocabulary
Discussion of translation problems	Metalinguistic discussions with students to have them think explicitly about the target language such as talking about mistranslations found in movie subtitles and book titles, comparing various translations of the same source text, or discussing how to deal with racist or sexist language or puns
Traditional focuses in a communicative frame	Form-focused translation tasks within a communicative activity
'Sandwiching' as an aid to fluency	Using translation as a strategy to fill momentary lexical gaps
Communicative translation	Meaning-focused translation to achieve a specific communicative goal (i.e., Carreres' (2006) communicative translation)

Table 1. Activities for pedagogic translation in the language classroom

Table 1 lists a range of pedagogic translation activities from the hyper-literal end to the communicative translation end of the spectrum. However, teachers need to keep in mind that the specific translation activity must be adequate for the level of language proficiency the learners possess as well as their age, their previous learning experiences and preferences, and their learning styles (Cook, 2010). Investigating how

these variables affect the effectiveness of our pedagogic translation tasks is the next step in our quest to understand how translation as a means can benefit our foreign language learners.

Conclusions

The objective of the present article was to shed light on the incessant debate over whether or not to include pedagogic translation in the foreign language classroom. To do so, I first defined the concept of 'translation', then I reviewed the role of translation in the Grammar Translation Method, the Direct Method, and Communicative Language Teaching, and finally, I discussed the arguments in contra and in favor of pedagogic translation in Communicative Language Teaching. I reached one main conclusion: There appears to be a great misunderstanding between professionals in language teaching regarding the role of translation as a pedagogic tool teachers use in their language classrooms, a broad method of language teaching, and a professional activity carried out by translators. This confusion about what we mean by 'translation', in my opinion, continues to hinder fruitful dialogue among language teaching professionals. I would even suggest that the arguments leveled against translation in foreign language teaching presented previously are the result of a largely erroneous assumption that the proponents of pedagogic translation are either referring to translation as a profession or are calling for a return to the Grammar Translation Method. As a consequence, translation as an effective pedagogical tool in the language classroom has not been sufficiently studied (Cook, 2010) and language teachers like me have needlessly felt a pang of guilt when using pedagogic translation in their classrooms.

After having carefully considered the arguments in support of pedagogic translation, I believe that pedagogic translation is a potentially methodologically sound tool in the language classroom for teachers to explicitly discuss not only form but also differences in meaning caused by different sociolinguistic variables such as politeness, register, and style which further builds intercultural awareness and thus communicative competence in their students.

As an active language teacher, I am in favor of pedagogic translation as one of the techniques to be used in the classroom. In my own experience, when translation is used to make language learners notice, appreciate, and understand the differences between the native language and the target language, it is actually beneficial to their language learning process. My second conclusion is therefore that I will not only continue to use translation as a pedagogical tool when the learning context warrants it, I feel justified in doing so.

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