

## Short story-based Translation: A Technique for EFL Teaching Algerian Secondary Education (Bechar)

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### Abstract:

As far as English as a Foreign Language Teaching (EFLT) is concerned, best approach, method and technique for better quality teaching are highly required. Teachers often fail to achieve successful EFLT probably because of the inappropriate usage of the teaching method and/or techniques, or because of unsuccessful teaching text selection. Short story is a literary genre, form and text that can be authentically explored for EFLT.

Translation of the text, passages, phrases and/or words could be a relevant technique that may guarantee better short story investment especially for learners' linguistic needs. This paper is an attempt to investigate the usefulness of short story translation-based technique to EFLT in Algeria.

A survey distributed to Secondary Education English teachers is used for data collection. The study shows that teachers are for the use of short story in EFLT, as it is simple, motivating, interesting and most importantly short. It shows also that translation can be successfully used with short story as a technique for EFLT particularly for lexicon repertoire enrichment, merely because of the linguistic richness that short stories offer.

**Keywords:** Short story - translation - technique - EFL - Teaching.

## ترجمة القصة القصيرة تقنية لتدريس اللغة الإنجليزية لغة أجنبية في التعليم الثانوي في الجزائر (بشار)

الملخص:

لطالما كانت أحسن طرق وتقنيات التدريس إحدى الغايات التي اهتم بها الفاعلون في حقل التدريس. في كثير من الأوقات يفشل المعلمون في الوصول إلى تعليم اللغة الإنجليزية باعتبارها لغة أجنبية بسبب استعمال طريقة تدريس غير مناسبة أو إخفاق في اختيار النصوص التعليمية المناسبة. القصة القصيرة هي نص أدبي يمكن أن يُستثمر في تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية، ولعل ترجمة النص أو مقتطف منه أو جمل وحتى كلمات يمكن أن يُعتمد تقنية من تقنيات تدريس هذه المادة لاسيما للوصول إلى فهم للنص، وتوسيع المعرفة اللغوية للمتعلم. هذه الدراسة هي محاولة للبحث في نجاعة استعمال ترجمة القصة القصيرة تقنية لتدريس اللغة الإنجليزية لغة أجنبية. تم استعمال استبيان، وزع على أساتذة اللغة الإنجليزية للتعليم الثانوي في ولاية بشار وسيلة لجمع المعطيات المتعلقة بالدراسة. توصلت الدراسة إلى أن هذه التقنية يمكن استعمالها، لأن القصة القصيرة تتسم بالقصر والبساطة والتحفيز. توصلت الدراسة أيضا إلى أن هذه التقنية يمكن استعمالها خصوصا في توسيع المعرفة اللغوية في اللغة الإنجليزية. الكلمات المفتاحية: القصة القصيرة - الترجمة - تقنيات التعليم - الإنجليزية.

## 1- Introduction :

A glance at the historical sketch of the different approaches and methods used for language teaching shows that translation was a technique for lexicon memorisation in Grammar Translation Method (GMT) (Richards and Rodgers , 2001). However, it felt short of expectation, as language is not only lexicon memorisation learning through a mechanical process, although it is an important part as far as language learning is concerned. Short story-based translation can be a useful technique in teaching English as a foreign Language (EFL). In this paper, we will explore the usefulness of short story as a literary text through translation technique. It is the application of literature-based approach to language teaching and learning that powerfully bridges literature with language in teaching and learning environments. The study will answer the following questions: Can short story-based translation be a successful technique to EFL teaching/learning? Moreover, how can teachers best explore short story's features to do so? In order to answer these questions, an electronic survey has been designed and distributed to English teachers. Before figuring out the result of the survey and discuss them, we will start first by literature review that is concerned with two main parts, short story and translation, finally, we will come out with a conclusion that will summarise the achieved results as well as some recommendations for practical use in EFL teaching contexts.

## 2- Literature and Language relationship:

Literature mirrors life and by doing so, it is inspired by language. According to Ezra Pound, 'great literature is simply language charged with meaning to the utmost degree' (Lazar, 1993, p. 02). The word literature is usually restricted to 'great works' which are 'notable for literary form of expression'. Montgomery. Martin. Alan Durant., Tom Furness & Sara, Mills (2000) renew literature and make a difference between 'literary texts and non-literary texts in the virtue of the nature and extent of their linguistic patterning' (p. 325). In written literary texts, language is inevitably and paramountly regarded as the tool to convey both linguistic and literary purposes. Thus, the power of the text is directly linked to the power of the language used.

Language is defined as a means of communication. Any sign, symbol, gesture, utterance, peace of writing which are used to convey meaning are considered language. In turn, it is defined from different angles, linguistic, social, cultural, and semantic; however, they share that communication is the goal of language.

The role of language in peoples' social lives is crucial. Kramersch (1998) defines language as "the principal means whereby we conduct our social lives" (p. 03). This definition asserts the value of language in maintaining social relationships. It is one of different functions of language. Kramersch (1998) added, "language is a system of signs that is having itself a cultural value ... we can say that language symbolises cultural reality" (p. 03). This is another vision of language nature expressed by Kramersch where she connects language with culture. Feelings and emotions are expressed through language as a psychological function of language. Mental and cognitive function is said to be fulfilled by language in which language user patterns the linguistic items in a systematic and a coherent path.

### 3- Short story use in language teaching :

Despite the fact that literary texts in general are required in language classrooms not all of them can be successfully used. As far as public schools are concerned, overcrowded classes, overloaded syllabi and limited time are constraints usually faced by language teachers, the presence of which pushes language teachers to ignore poetry use because it usually necessitates very long time to grasp. The length of novel is also a constraint that often results in its ignorance from teachers to introduce. Moreover, drama, which is acted out plays in crowded classes, seems a very tough task, which may lead to negative teaching results. Because of all the pedagogical constraints that often handicap the effective usage of the different literary texts in language courses, short stories stand as the best literary text to be used in language teaching courses. Poe defines it as " a narrative that can be read at one setting of from one-half hour to two hours, and that is limited to a certain unique or single effect, to which every detail is subordinate" (cited in Peradede, 2011, p. 17).

Hirvela and Bayle (1988) also supported the idea of short story to be the most suitable literary text in language classroom. They agree that short story is the genre that is less feared and the second most enjoyed after novel, because of its easiness to find and it is definite to understand (Cited in Peradede p 18). Yorke (1986) argues that students usually tend to react only the story.

Chambers (1984) explains that story is the fundamental grammar of all thought and communication. Arthur (1968) also supports the use of short stories as a narrative text because "stories received as literary experience are repeatable and the language of literature is memorable" (Cited in Hirvela, 1993, p. 275).

A short story is a literary genre like other literary genres as novel, poem, play...etc. However, a short story has many characteristics that other genres, forms and texts do not share. In fact, there are several benefits of short stories when used as a resource in the teaching and learning process of languages in general and foreign languages in particular. Short stories can be beneficial since literature has the quality of being universal. Furthermore, short stories will enable teachers to deal with different problems that people encounter in their daily lives.

Angel (2001) listed the pedagogical advantages of short story use in language classroom over other literary texts. He believes that short stories simplicity makes the task easier for students. Short stories help students to be more creative and raise the critical thinking skills because the task of reading requires more attention and analysis. Texts taken from shorts stories also raise cultural awareness because learners will get across of different cultures reflected by the authors in literary production. Angel speaks about the role of short stories in reducing students' anxiety and in helping them feel more relax. According to him, short stories provide the opportunity for students to discover multicultural contexts because of its universal language. They offer a fictional and interesting world. (As cited in Hirvela, 1993)

### 3.1- Criteria for text selection :

It has been agreed that literary texts vary in genre, form, length, and lexicon and so on. Time can sometimes be a constraint to reach the final objectives of language learning. Moreover, failure to successfully reach the objectives of teaching/learning often falls on the text selected to be the basis of the learning course Despite the fact that literature is used in language classroom, if texts are not carefully selected, literature use would be of nonsense or even disadvantageous.

Sage (1987) summarised criteria of text selection in the following: Contemporaneity, inclusiveness, brevity, accessibility of style, completeness and cultural significance

In addition to these criteria, Tomlinson (1986) offers another list of selection criteria. They can be summarised in surface simplicity, potential depth, affective potential, contemporary language and potential for illustration (p. 272).

#### 4- Translation as a technique in language teaching :

English teachers often neglect or reject incorporating translation into language classrooms because of its close association with the grammar translation method; however, certain researchers (Whyatt, Weydt and O'Muireartaigh, as cited in Tsagari and Floros, 2013) have proven that it is promising to apply translation tasks to improve L2 learner proficiency in language control and reading skills. Translation has mostly been recognized and used as a cognitive strategy in reading (O'Malley and Chamot, as cited in Tsagari and Floros, 2013), and considered a convenient method to verify comprehension of the source text (Vinay and Darbelne, as cited in Tsagari and Floros, 2013).

According to Kaye and Writer (n. d) translation has different benefits especially in English Language Teaching. Many ELT teachers and theorists now see the validity and value of translation as an activity in communicative classrooms (although few course book writers offer ideas and materials for this area). Below are some of the ways translations can have a positive impact. Translation activities, if designed well in the classroom can practise the four skills. Translation can have a crucial role in encouraging students for communication. Activities designed based on translation offer the possibility to enrich the learning environment through communication. Moreover, managing translation activities for students working in groups help them to discuss the meaning and the use of language in deepest possible levels since they work on understanding the language and searching for equivalent vocabulary in the other language. Translation is a real-life, natural activity and increasingly necessary in a global environment.

Many learners living in either their own countries or a new one need to translate language on a daily basis, both informally and formally. This is even more important with the growing importance of online information.

Translation can help in the writing process because it can provide lower level students with an access for more information in an easy way. Moreover, translation is useful in offering the opportunity for discussing similarities and differences between the two languages being used, which helps learners appreciate the strengths and weaknesses of L1 and L2. Translation activities can target highly specific learning aims like vocabulary, grammar points, etc. Finally, translation is a natural and logical way to develop learners' skills to reach higher levels.

### 5-Methodology :

In order to collect data for the research, an electronic survey has been designed for secondary education teachers working in Bechar. The survey has been sent to the informants via the internet. The internet helped in facilitating the task since many secondary schools as far from the city-center.

#### Format of the survey:

The survey is composed of different sections. It is composed of four parts that build up the whole questionnaire. The first part is concerned with collecting personal information about the informants. The second is about professional career about the participants. The third part tries to search for the usefulness of short story in English teaching. The last one is concerned with translation activities used in connection to short story text in secondary education. The survey questions were sent to all English teachers in Bechar. Ninety-eight (98) surveys were electronically sent, but only seventy-eight could participate and answer the survey questions.

A section of the questionnaire is especially reserved for short story-based translation activities. This is accounted for by the fact that translation technique in ELT (English Language Teaching) can be best explored only if well-designed activities are tailored. These activities should be built up to meet learners' needs taking into account the pedagogical learning requirements.

#### Findings :

In this part, we introduce only what we think are important findings, mainly results of questions related to short story usage and short story-based translation activities.

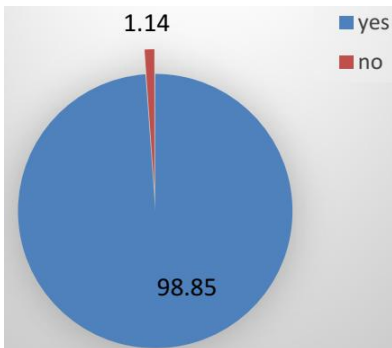


Figure 01: Informants' opinions about short story

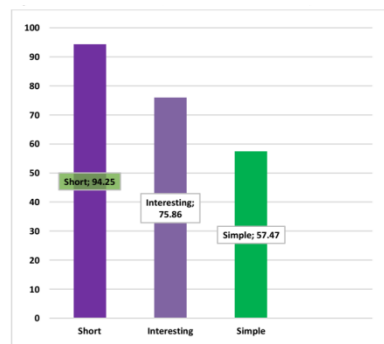


Figure 02: Informants' answers about short story

use for ELT

features

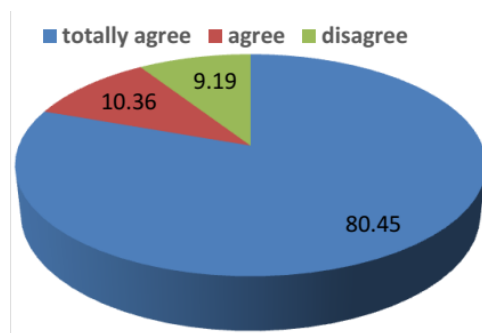


Figure 03: Participants' points of view about translation in EFL

Table 01: Order of teaching purposes of short story-based translation activities.

Target of short story-based transon	Order
Translation is used for teaching grammar	02
Teaching lexicon and registers	01
Phonetics	05
Improving reading skill	03
Improving speaking skill	04

Table 02: Short story-based translation Activities.

01		02		03		04		05	
Lexicon/registers		grammar		Reading skill		Speaking skill		Phonetics	
New words	100%	Passive & active voices	57.47%	Keywords	91.95%	Uttering translated paragraphs in L2	93.10%	Vowels (nasals...)	94.25%
Adjective	91.95%	Tenses	68.96%	Title	17.42%	Uttering translated words and phrases	74.71%	Intonation	94.25%

## 6-Discussion :

As it is shown through the graphs and tables, participants agree with the use of short story-based translation to enhance both teaching and learning of English as a foreign language in Secondary Education in Algeria.

The first graph shows that 98.85% of English teachers who participated in the study agree on the use of short story as an approach to EFL teaching. Only 01.14% disagree to use short story in EFL classroom.



The second graph summarises informants' answers about short story characteristics that make a short story easily selected and implemented in EFL classroom. In fact, 94.25 % teachers think that short stories are used in EFL teaching because they are short. Length of the text is paramountly considered as time and syllabus are pedagogically limiting teachers' liberty in language teaching. 75.86% of participants said that they use short story because it is interesting, the fact that learners become more motivated to learn the language. Whereas 57.47% of the informants are with the use of short stories because of its simplicity in comparison with other literary genres like poetry which lexicon may be difficult to grasp although its texts are often characterised by being short.

The third graph is concerned with the answers of the informants about whether or not they totally agree, agree or disagree with the use and application of translation as a technique to teach EFL. The choice of using totally agree and agree in one part whereas disagree in the other part is accounted for by my belief that English teachers opinions can divided in such scaling. Those who totally agree are a part of teachers who agree and may be dissatisfied with the way translation tasks are used. Disagreement can be simply expressed by 'disagree'. The graph shows that the great majority of informants (80.45%) totally agree with the translation to be utilised in EFL classroom, ten percent 10.36% do agree with translation technique, whereas 09.19 % disagree to use translation to teach EFL.

When they are asked about the type and target of activities that short story-based translation can take place, their answers were lexicon (register), grammar, reading skill, speaking skill and phonetics activities and teaching purposes. As shown in table 01 teachers use short story-based translation to teach lexicon, grammar, reading skill, speaking skill and phonetics respectively.

Participants were inquired about what specific linguistic items they usually target when using short story-based translation in teaching lexicon, grammar, reading, speaking and phonetics. Their answers diverge as their experiences and teaching approaches differ. As for lexicon, 87 teachers (100%) said that they target new words whereas 80 (91.95%) used it for adjectives as short story is a literary text which may be concerned with description. For grammar, 50 participants (57.47%) said that translation is used to teach passive and active voices whereas 60 informants (68.96%) said that they use translation to teach tenses. Reading skill is also taught with short story-based translation activities, 80 teachers (91.95%) use translation for texts' key words understanding and only 15 teachers (17.42%)

used it to translate short story text title. This is may be accounted for by the belief that if titles are understood by using translation, readers are less suspicious and motivated to pursuit reading. As for speaking skill teaching, 81 informants (93.10%) think that translation can be best used to make learners utter translated paragraphs as a technique and a learning task to enhance learners 'speaking skill, but 65 teachers (74.71%) use it for words and phrases utterance.

The last teaching angle through short story-based translation is phonetics. 82 participants (94.25%) said that translation helps them teaching the pronunciation of difficult vowels through illustrating from L1 examples. The same (94.25%) are with using translation to teach intonation as it facilitates its understanding, which, in turn, make learners able to produce it correctly in real-life situations.

### 7-Conclusion :

In Algeria, English is regarded as one of the most outstanding foreign language since it is taught to students from the first year in the middle school to university. The status of English in Algeria is built up due to its wide spread as being a lingua-franka in all over the world. It is, then, the tool for technology mastering. As far as English as a Foreign Language teaching is concerned, teachers always think of the best way to reach successful learning and teaching. The implementation of short story as a resource for English teaching is thought to be an alternative to the traditional teaching methods. However, linguistic constraint can be a barrier for perfect application of this method in EFL classroom. This pedagogical problem can be solved through the use of translation as a technique for better short story text exploration in EFL courses. Short story-based translation technique can be successfully used to teach lexicon, grammar, reading skill, speaking skill and phonetics. Teachers are likely invited to select the appropriate short story to be the basis for translation-based teaching activities; otherwise, it may lead to negative learning and more demotivated learners, as the text is difficult, long or boring for learners. Moreover, after having carefully selected the suitable text that would respond to learning requirements and learners' needs, teachers ought to explore the text through well-designed translation tasks. Tasks can be designed to meet learning purposes in lexicon, grammar, reading, speaking and phonetics. We recommend a reasonable implementation of short story translation so that a preservation of foreign language teaching environment is guaranteed. Teachers should not bargain on total translation in EFL courses merely because it concerns a foreign

language which needs to be learnt by the language itself, the course. Although translation is recommended in EFL learning context, abuse in its use would probably lead to learners totally depending on translating English without any account for critical thinking. If this happens, translation-based EFL teaching will lead to negative EFL learning. The course of foreign language learning would switch to a course where EFL is roughly practised.

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