

Applying Translation in EFL Reading Courses of Iranian Adult Learners

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Abstract: Looking at the writings about the application of translation in EFL classes proves that this argumentative issue has undergone contradictory trials. In the current study attempts have been made to survey the opinion of Iranian Adult learners about using translation in their classes. It was hypothesized that a translation provided by the teacher may facilitate the process of comprehension for learners. Thirty novice adult learners were asked to state their ideas about the application of translation in teaching reading comprehension through questionnaire items. In the next step, nine of them were interviewed and finally in the experimental phase, they were divided into two groups. The experimental group was taught reading text through translation and the control group received no translation. After six weeks of instruction, the obtained results showed there was a meaningful difference between the performance of control and experimental groups in reading comprehension tests. Meanwhile the questionnaires and interviews supported the view that students welcome the use of mother tongue to understand reading passages.

Key words: translation, reading comprehension, mother tongue, EFL, teaching method.

1. Introduction

Whether or not to apply translation as a technique in ESL/EFL classrooms has been the topic of hot debates in the world of TESOL up to now. Those who are against using of translation in classes refer to the dismissed Grammar-Translation Method and mention that it wasn't a successful method in training students fluent enough in target language. Harbord (cited in Cunningham 2000) stated: A return to Grammar-Translation with all of its negative connotations; as well, the isolation of lexis from any real context prevents students from gleaning insight into the multiple uses and meanings of the word.

However, the idea of abandoning the native tongue is too stressful to many learners, who need a sense of security in the experience of learning a foreign language (Kavaliauskienė, & Kaminskienė: 132). In this respect, some scholars aired different viewpoints concerning the use of translation and opened new horizons, which showed that not only a judicious use of translation is not debilitating, but also it helps learners to establish a better connection between their own language and the target language. Duff strongly supports the view that translation is an excellent means of improving one's language because it invites speculation and discussion. (1990: 7).

One of the clear advantages of using translation as a technique in EFL classes can be the improvement of the students' perception of reading comprehension passages. Reading is a dynamic, cognitive and interactive process. It is not merely a process of decoding of codes in printed form but a process of creating meaning as a result of the transaction between the reader and the text (Kabilan et.al,2010:128). As Upton (1997) asserts, reading in a second language is not a monolingual event and L2 readers have access to their first language as they read and many use it as a strategy to help comprehend an L2 text. Cook (1992) also

added that second language learners use their L1 (first language) while processing an L2. Her idea is that an instructor must not separate the L1 from the L2, but instead should make use of the L1 while instructing the student (cited in Kasmer, 1999:3).

ELT in Iran has not an old history and this discipline needs to be emphasized much more than the past. Those old-fashioned and out of date ideas about the mere use of target language were not fruit-bearing in training competent language learners in the target language. Most of adults learning English feel difficulty when they are asked to read a passage and answer comprehension questions especially in cases where the topic of the text passages are unfamiliar because of cultural differences or lack of background knowledge.

Based on the above reasons about the importance of background knowledge in communication, the tendency among the learners to shift to their mother tongue and seeming inability they have in translation, this study attempts to find out whether the provided translation of the gist of the reading article by the teacher can be effective or not in increasing the performance of Iranian adult learners in false-beginner level on reading comprehension questions. The questions, which this study attempts to answer, are twofold:

1. Is there any relationship between a given translation by the teacher and the novice adult students' achievement in reading comprehension tests?

2. What are the attitudes of the mentioned learners toward using translation as an aid to their comprehension?

2. Translation in EFL Contexts

A great deal has been written on the use of translation in EFL/ESL classes. A historical overview of the use of translation shows that after Grammar Translation Method, which strongly used translation as the major activity for language learning in the classroom, as dissatisfaction towards the grammar-translation method grew and the demand for oral competence became more evident, the 19th century reformers in Europe believed that, among other things, "translation should be avoided, although the native language could be used in order to explain new words or to check comprehension" (Richards & Rodgers 2001, as cited in Wharton, 2007:3). The use of mother tongue was banned especially by advent of Direct Method. This method which was established by the efforts of reformists like Sweet saw no place for the use of the students L1 in the classroom, however as mentioned in Cook (2010:18) Sweet didn't reject translation and explicit grammar teaching and boycotting translation was much more a matter of practical expediency which was brought about by changes in learner and teacher demography.

In the fifties and sixties Behaviorists and Contrastive Analysis proponents saw the first language as central in language learning but mainly as a source of interference with the development of habits in L2. Some years after the Reform Movement¹, Audio Lingual Method which was based on behavioral psychology Richards & Rodgers (2001:56) put translation in the black list because it was believed patterns of mother tongue may interfere with the patterns of target language and it hinders learning. Lado who proposed the strong version of Contrastive Analysis (1964:53) stated, "a good translation cannot be achieved without mastery of the second language. We, therefore, teach the language first, and then we may teach translation as a separate skill, if that is considered desirable."

However, the Cognitive Approach, as a reaction to the Audio-lingual Approach rediscovered valuable features in the previous methods and, thus, emphasized translation (Stern, 1983). In this way the role of the mind, mentalistic activities, conscious and meaningful learning were also emphasized. The natural outcome of this emphasis was the revival of translation as a means of making the learning more meaningful and contextualized. Although translation was applied as a technique in some teaching methods, its role was quite marginal. In suggestopedia, native language translation is used to make the meaning of the dialogue clear. The teacher also uses the native language in class when necessary. Similarly in Community Language Teaching, the teacher translates what the students want to say in chunks (Larsen-Freeman 2000:96) but as

they go further translation will fade out. The Communicative Approach was initially hostile to the use of translation in the classroom, but later it adopted a flexible approach (Bonyadi, 2002).

In spite of the aforementioned ideas, in recent years, attempts have been made to revive translation in EFL/ESL and dedicate some time to it in the process of language teaching and learning. Translation is sometimes referred to as the fifth language skill alongside with the other four basic skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). Similarly Ross in Kavaliauskienė & Kaminskienė, (2007: 133) asserted: Translation holds a special importance at an intermediate and advanced level: in the advanced or final stage of language teaching, translation from L1 to L2 and L2 to L1 is recognized as the fifth skill and the most important social skill since it promotes communication and understanding between strangers". Howatt (1984:161) says "the practice of translation has been condemned so strenuously for so long without any really convincing reasons that it is perhaps time the profession took another look at it".

2.1. Code-switching

Code switching is defined as "a situation in which a speaker uses a mixture of different languages or different varieties of the same language (Akmajian et al. 1997:546). Translation is a natural thing to do in learning a language, and code switching between L1 and L2 is regarded as naturally developmental. The amount of L1 use by particular students may well have to do with differing learner styles and abilities. "No one is in any doubt that students will use their L1 in class, whatever teachers say or do" (Harmer 2001:131). Cook (2001:117) argues that code switching is a natural phenomenon in settings in which the speaker share two languages, so teachers should not necessarily discourage it. Castelloti and Moore (1997) believe that code switching should be deliberate if it is to benefit the students TL proficiency; teachers should decide before a lesson when they are going to use the L1 (cited in Turnbull&Arnett 2002). In some cases it is inevitable that language learners use their dominant languages as a resource. Indeed it is a kind of individual learning style for some students. They need to be able to relate lexis and structures of target language into their equivalents in their mother tongue. Therefore, sound pedagogy should make use of this learning style.

2.2. Translation as a learning strategy

Among strategies used by EFL learners, translation is undoubtedly one of the most prevalent strategies. Studies have shown that learners naturally rely on their mother tongue to develop their thoughts and ideas. As Liao (2006, 196) reported In O'Malley et al.'s study (1985b), translation was found to be a frequently used learning strategy. Out of 11 cognitive strategies identified by the researchers, translation accounted for 11.3% of all strategy uses by beginning and intermediate-level ESL learners, second only to such strategies as repetition (19.6%), note taking (18.7%), and imagery (12.5%). Moreover, as Atkinson in Kavaliauskienė & Kaminskienė (2007:134) has said "Native language use in the classroom can cause students to think that words and structures in English have an L1 correspondence, which may not exist. Therefore, raising students' consciousness of the non-parallel nature of language allows learners to think comparatively.

2.3. The role of translation in reading comprehension

2.3.1. Inner speech and mental translation

When a learner tries to read a reading passage in a foreign language, a lot of mental processes take place in his/her mind. Meanings of the words in the passage are consequence of the generalization of concepts, of the synthesis of many perceptive experiences; they are, therefore, act of thought. Thoughts, words, and meanings are tightly interwoven, and it is probably more interesting to study them as a single system rather

than try to isolate components and maniacally demark their limitations (Reading and concept evolution, 2008).

Here Vygotsky proposes the idea of inner speech and believes the process of reading is a kind of changing words into sense. Inner language, in Vygotsky's opinion at least, is a translation of words into thought (cited in Ehrich 2006, 13). While translating a text into mental language, we have to turn meaning into sense. Paulhan, quoted by Vygotsky, defines sense as "the sum of all psychological events aroused in our consciousness by the word"(Ehrich, 2006,15). Meaning - in this view - is just one of the zones of sense, the most stable, and precise. A word acquires its sense from the context in which it appears; in a different context, its sense is altered. Mental translation is related to what Vygotsky has called "inner speech," an internalized language that is for oneself, as opposed to external, social speech produced for others (Upton & Lee-Thompson 2001). When EFL learners, mostly in beginner and low-intermediate level, try to read a passage, they unconsciously translate it in their minds in order to make it meaningful for themselves. Kern (1994) defines mental translation as the "mental reprocessing of L2 words, phrases, or sentences in L1 forms while reading L2 texts" (p. 442). Studies have shown that mental translation is a common cognitive strategy for high school and adult language learners (Upton & Lee-Thompson 2001).

2.3.2. Background knowledge in understanding a reading passage

Among the factors involved in understanding a reading passage, background knowledge-or in a more scientific term, schema definitely plays an important role. Studies have proven that existence or lack of this factor greatly affects the performance of learners in comprehension questions. As Widdowson (2007:28) asserts, "you cannot make sense of anything without bringing it within the concepts of what is preconceived as familiar. Furthermore, matching the material used with students' backgrounds can easily facilitate a guided negotiation of meaning." By choosing texts and topics that are more readily relatable to student's cultural backgrounds, the EFL instructor ease students' recall of the text as students will be able to access their own schemata to process the ideas presented in readings or discussions (Kasmer, 1999:9). Everything new has to be related to what is given. 'it has been shown that even across passages on the same general theme, which had identical structure and syntax and very similar vocabulary, the more familiar version is better recalled' (Alderson in Sadeghi, 2007). This is true *a fortiori* when the text is situated in an unfamiliar culture: Steffensen et.al. (1979) gave texts about weddings to L1 readers from India and North America and observed that cultural familiarity or the lack thereof led the readers to make numerous inferences about the events and situations in the text. Giving L2 readers access to information about the L2 culture can be an important way of helping them with reading comprehension (cited in Walter 2004).

2.3.3. The role of L1 in comprehending L2 reading texts

Reading in a foreign language is not a monolingual event. Learners inevitably bring their prior system of their native language to comprehension process of a reading passage in a foreign language. Cohen (1995) used a survey given to bilingual and multilingual university students to explore factors influencing language of thought. He found not only that people with access to two or more languages frequently shift between them, but also that these shifts can be either unintentional (e.g., it is easier to think in one language than another and so the brain automatically shifts languages) or intentional (e.g., using another language to help understand the grammar or vocabulary of the target language) (cited in Upton & Lee-Thompson 2001).

Studies like this one support this notion that we cannot separately consider the target language from the learners' native language as the only determining factor in reading comprehension.

2.4. Previous studies

Since the idea of using translation in language teaching has not many proponents, there are not numerous researches concerning this issue but some of them containing the most effective ones are noted below. In a study which Kern (1994) conducted concerning the role of mental translation as a cognitive strategy he not only found that the subjects make frequent use of translation as a strategy to understand the L2 text, but also that mental translation during L2 reading seemed to serve the functional purpose of facilitating the generation and conservation of meaning. He also found that L2 readers most frequently used mental translation in response to specific obstacles to comprehension, such as unfamiliar words and structures. Cohen (1995) conducted a study surveying factors influencing language of thought, concluded that bilingual or multilingual subjects intentionally or unintentionally shift thinking in one language or another one to understand the grammar and vocabulary items of the target language.

Some few studies related to the use of translation as a technique in EFL classes are conducted. Nazary (2008) did a research on Iranian university students and concluded that they have not a positive attitude toward the use of translation in class. Another study by Jahangard et.al (2010) which was conducted on high school students in order to find whether students who gain lexical knowledge through the translation method are able to transfer their knowledge to reading comprehension showed that a significant improvement in the reading scores of the learners in Grade One and Two after the vocabulary instruction treatments were introduced.

3. Method

3.1. Subjects

The students who were selected as subjects in this study were 30 pre-intermediate male students of Bojnourd University who all were attending the pre-requisite course for general English. Then they were divided into two groups of 15, one as control group and the other as experimental. According to Dornyei (2007: 45) the minimum number of participants for a quantitative research should be thirty. So the researcher tried to fulfill this condition. Two types of instruments were employed in the study: 1) the pretest and posttest, and 2) the questionnaire. Both the pretest and posttest were reading comprehension passages following by questions, which were exactly alike for the experimental and control groups. The questionnaire which will be illustrated in the next session is consisted of two parts: in the first one having 15 items it is tried to investigate the learners attitude toward the use of translation in English classes and in the next part fifteen statements are written to see whether the learners make use of translation as a learning strategy or not.

Since the number of the subjects in the class is only thirty, the power and the generalizability of the results of the research are reduced. The second limitation is that the design of the study is two groups pretest-posttest design with one control group available. Here because of weaknesses of quantitative research the findings may be superficial. In order to level this problem they were provided with a questionnaire to assert their ideas about the importance and application of translation. Moreover, to get a more profound insight about what actually happens in the learners' minds relating to reading comprehension and the use of translation, the researcher conducted a semi-structured interview with eight participants, which were randomly selected from the aforementioned population. In spite of these limitations, the researcher believes this study should provide some helpful insights into the impact that translation has on students' reading comprehension achievement.

The subjects were divided into 2 groups of fifteen, a control group and experiment group. They were given a reading comprehension test of which the total score was 6. There were three types of questions: matching, true false and fill in the blanks and multiple-choice questions. The final score of every student was computed

according to the percentage of his or her right answers. Time allowed for the test was 15 minutes. A posttest with the same design, but different reading passages, was also given to them after one session of instruction.

The subjects also had to do a questionnaire containing 30 items, which was related to their opinions towards the use of translation, and using translation as a strategy in foreign language classes mainly in reading comprehension. They were asked to give their opinion by marking one of the five choices for each item: *Strongly Disagree*, *Disagree*, *I cannot tell for sure*, *Agree*, or *Strongly Agree*. It is worth mentioning most of the questionnaire items were adopted from Liao, 2006.

3.2. Data collection and analysis

To gather thorough information, the researcher attended two classes, completely explained the nature and the objectives of the research, and then gave some instructions about filling the questionnaire. It took about 20 minutes for the examinees to do the task. After that, for each group a pre-tests and a post-tests were conducted. The situation for the pre-tests was the same. Both groups were asked to answer to the same tests in 15 minutes after the instructor taught the reading passage by presenting synonyms, paraphrasing sentences and relating the main ideas to previous knowledge of the students but the medium of instruction was just English, and the mother tongue was not used in the classroom.

In post-test session the control group received the treatment like that of in the post test but the experiment group received a different one, i.e. besides usual techniques of teaching reading, the instructor also provided the translation of the main idea of the passage in Persian as a post-reading activity. Then students were asked to answer the reading comprehension tests provided at the end of the passage in 5 minutes.

4. Data analysis

The data obtained from the pretest/posttest and the questionnaires were analyzed and interpreted using Statistical Packages for the Social Sciences (SPSS). To answer the first question of the study, the mean and the standard deviation of the pretest and the posttest of control and experiment groups were calculated and a *paired-samples t-test* was performed. To investigate students' attitudes towards translation, the data obtained from the questionnaire which had 30 items in it was analyzed by assigning the values 1 to 5 to the choices they made, so that the more they agreed, the higher their score was. It was done based on the choices, which respectively mean strongly disagree, disagree, I cannot tell for sure, agree, or strongly agree.

4.1. Analysis of the results obtained from the questionnaire

As mentioned earlier, the participants asserted their ideas about the use of translation and about translation as a strategy, which can be used in foreign language classes concerning the reading comprehension. Each part of questionnaire having 15 items was given on separate piece of paper. The means were computed on the participants' responses to the items and are presented in Table 1 and Table 2. It is reckoned translation played a positive role in the examinees current English learning experiences.

Table1. The examinees responses to the items concerning their beliefs about translation

Item explanation	Mean Out of 5
1. Translating helps me understand textbook readings.	4.4
2. Translating helps me learn English idioms and phrases.	4.53

*3. Translating does not help me make progress in learning English	4.46
4. Using Persian translation while studying helps me better recall the content of a lesson later.	3.86
5. I like to use Persian translation to learn English.	3.6
*6. Persian translation diminishes the amount of English input I receive.	4.06
7. At this stage of learning, I cannot learn English without Persian translation.	2.4
8. I feel pressure when I am asked to think directly in English.	3
9. I tend to get frustrated when I try to think in English.	2.46
*10. When using English, it is best to keep my Persian out of my mind.	3.06
*11. Translation hinders processing the information in my mind.	3.93
12. I feel a given translation of the text increases my self-confidence in answering the comprehension questions.	4.33
13. A given translation of the passage in Persian makes my attitude positive toward comprehending it in English.	4.2
14. If I receive translation of the gist in Persian after reading the passage, it has a positive effect on my comprehension.	4.26
15. A given translation of the gist of the passage in Persian makes me feel confident toward comprehending it.	4.26

*. The scores of the items 3,6,10, and 11 were reversed.

As the table shows, items 1, 2, 3, 6, 12, 13, 14, and 15 have the highest means ($M > 4$) so they are the most prevalent ideas amongst examinees about the use of translation. On the other hand items 7 and 9 have the lowest means ($M < 3$) which reveals that they are not so common ideas from the viewpoints of examinees. Taking a precise look at the means discloses the following facts: a) most learners consider translation as a useful aid in comprehending reading comprehension articles, b) the use of mother tongue by the teacher can be a positive means while trying to explain and make the reading article digestible for the learners, and c) the adult beginners heavily rely on translation in reading comprehension exercises. These findings are compatible with those of Kern (1994) that he found the students often used translation to understand the text. On the contrary, the examinees somehow rejected two items which can be interpreted as follows: a) they try to separate themselves from their mother tongue and try to think in their internalized version of English, b) Only in some specific kind of exercises they welcome the use of translation, so the teacher should beware of probable negative effects of the application of translation.

The examinees also were asked to state whether they use translation as a learning strategy_ here, the emphasis was on reading comprehension_ or not. Therefore, they were provided with a form of fifteen items and were asked to rate the statements on five point Likert scale.

Table 2. The examinees ideas about translation as a learning strategy mainly in reading comprehension

Item description	Mean Out of 5
1. When reading an English text, I first translate it into Persian in my mind to help me understand its meaning.	4.6
2. I read Persian translations in the course reference book to help me better understand English articles in the textbook.	3.66
3. After I read English articles, I use an available Persian translation to check if my comprehension is correct.	3.73

4. When I watch English TV or movies, I use Persian subtitles to check my comprehension.	4.46
5. I memorize the meaning of new English vocabulary words by remembering their Persian translation.	4.13
6. I learn English idioms and phrases by reading their Persian translation.	3.66
7. I use English-Persian dictionaries to help myself learn English.	3
8. I use an electronic translation machine to help myself understand reading passages in English.	4
9. I ask questions about how an English expression can be translated into Persian.	2.53
10. When the teacher assigns English articles for reading, I work with others to translate them.	4.46
11. I write Persian translations in my English textbooks.	3.73
*12. When reading English, I try to grasp the meaning of what I read without thinking of Persian equivalents.	3.13
*13. I never try to translate an English reading passage into Persian in my mind and just try to think in English.	3.46
*14. I try to paraphrase an English text rather than translation it into Persian in my mind.	4.33
15. I get into the habit of asking teacher to provide Persian translation of English reading passages.	3.46

*. The scores of the items 12, 13 and 14 were reversed.

Meticulously looking, it can be grasped from the table that in some cases like reading in a foreign language or watching a movie, the learners' comprehensions depend on the translations that they receive. They memorize new words meaning by remembering their translations in their minds and mostly try to translate the input of L2 in their minds into their mother tongue to understand it. Items 1, 4, 5, 10, and 14 were the most popular strategies ($M > 4$). This fact is in accordance with Chamot (1987) findings who described the translation strategy as 'using the first language as a base for understanding and/or producing the second language' (p. 77). The other side of the coin is that in some items such as 9 ($M < 3$), the respondents showed translation is not the only strategy for understanding a reading passage and they analyze the meaning of sentences in their minds in L2.

In addition to the data obtained from the questionnaires, the findings of the interview were quite beneficial. Almost all the nine selected participants believed in cases that the reading passage is about social behavior or cultural aspects of life of unknown people, they face difficulty in comprehension so they rely more heavily on their native language to understand the passage. The other fact was that because of the nature of these passages, which are really full of idiosyncrasies as well as due to the participants' partial mastery on reading skill in a foreign language, they get used to read the passage word by word (bottom-up model) and as an unknown word appear, they miss the meaning of the sentence.

The facts got from the questionnaires and the interview inspired the researcher to carry out the experimental phase of the research. As mentioned before, the 30 selected participants were divided into two groups experimental and control. To ensure both groups have the same ability in reading comprehension, they were provided with two reading comprehension passages and were asked to answer the six questions at the end of each one. The analysis of the results proved that both groups approximately were of the same ability in the stated skill.

Table 3: Groups Statistics of pre-test for experimental and control groups

Code	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pretest control	15	4.67	1.589	.410
Pretest experimental	15	4.60	1.639	.423

As it can be induced from the above table, the mean of the scores which were obtained by the students of both groups proves the fact that their initial performances in answering the reading questions were approximately similar, so every change after the period of treatment can be attributed to the use of translation in experimental group.

The next step was verifying the hypothesis of the study that was investigating the relationship between the provided translation by the teacher and the students' performance in reading comprehension tests. During a period of six-week course, the researcher attended in both experimental and control groups classes to take the same reading comprehension tests. The experimental group received a specific treatment that was a translation of the gist of passage. In harmony with Harbord (1992: 354) who said: "Word-for-word translation occurs when the learner's unconscious need to make assumptions and correlations between languages is ignored," this kind of translation was avoided and the students were provided with communicative and natural translation of the gist of the reading passage. After teaching each passage in English and giving time to students to ask some questions all in the foreign language (the control group exactly received this part), the researcher tried to translate the gist of the passage which was mostly about some traditions or cultural events of the other nations. It was tried somehow to activate the students' minds and facilitate the process of intake for them by relating and simulating those strange cultural or traditional events to those of their own culture. After each session, the participants answered the comprehension questions and finally after six weeks the results of both groups were compared. The data showed in control group there were no change and development in comparison to their pretests, which were taken six weeks ago. On the contrary, the results of the experimental group appeared meaningfully different from the previous ones.

Table 4: Statistics of posttest of the control and experimental groups

code	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Post. Control	15	4.53	1.598	.413
post.exprim ental	15	5.47	.743	.192

According to table four, the difference between the posttest of the two groups discloses that the treatment has sharply increased the level of students' achievement on reading comprehension questions. To be sure, that the 1.04 difference of these two means is meaningful and just because of the given treatment, the researcher computed the t-test.

Table 5: Paired Samples Test of the means of the posttest of control and experimental groups

	Paired Differences					t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Pair 1 Post.con. post.ex.	-.933	1.285	.235	-1.413	-.454	3.979	29	.000

As table five shows, there was significant difference in pretest and posttest ($p < 0.5$). The findings supported the effectiveness of translation when dealing with reading comprehension.

6. Conclusion and Implications

The purpose of this study was to explore the application of translation effects on students' reading comprehension. The results showed that there was a significant difference between the students' reading comprehension ability before and after the treatment. Almost all students improved in the posttest and showed positive attitude in the questionnaire. Therefore, instruction through translation was beneficial to students' learning except in very few cases. The researcher induced the results and conclusions on the benefits and applications of using translation in this study as follows:

Translation can be used as a supplementary activity besides the usual techniques, which are prevalent in EFL classes. As Cook (2001, 121) says: "Grammar-translation holds no monopoly, and translation may be used as a complement to direct method teaching rather than an exclusive alternative to it." Therefore, it deserves specifying some time to this activity.

The students' mother tongue helps them understand input in L2 and clears the way of learning for them. In this respect Duff (1992, 71) asserted: "People's L1 shapes their thinking and translation helps them to understand better the influences among languages." On this ground, it can be said EFL teachers should not consider the use of mother tongue as a villain behavior, which should be avoided.

As mentioned earlier, on the one hand reading in a foreign language is not a monolingual event (mental translation), and on the other hand the students are not skillful enough to understand the passage thoroughly. Therefore, the teacher may help them by providing the translation of the gist of the reading passage and facilitate the process of comprehension.

Teachers and students should avoid word for word style in translation because it may shape wrong concepts of foreign language items in students' minds. In the same vein Atkinson (1987) in Cunningham (2000:4) suggests that activities that involve some translation promote guessing strategies amongst students and helps reduce the word-for-word translation that often occurs and which results in inappropriate L2 use.

In some special kind of reading passages, mainly texts about culture and traditions of the people of other nations, beginner learners may not be successful in comprehension now that lack of back ground knowledge and cultural differences. In this study by providing a brief translation of the gist this problem was leveled to great extent.

It is worth mentioning in the context of EFL in Iran, this study was somehow viable; the participants were all adults and the amount of given time specified to translation was almost limited. The experience has proved that overusing translation is not only beneficial, but also counter-productive. The researcher hopes conscientious EFL teachers put into practice the findings of this study and, based on their diagnosis, apply translation as a technique whenever it is helpful.

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