LOST IN TRANSLATION, FOUND IN AI: THE RENAISSANCE OF PEDAGOGICAL TRANSLATION

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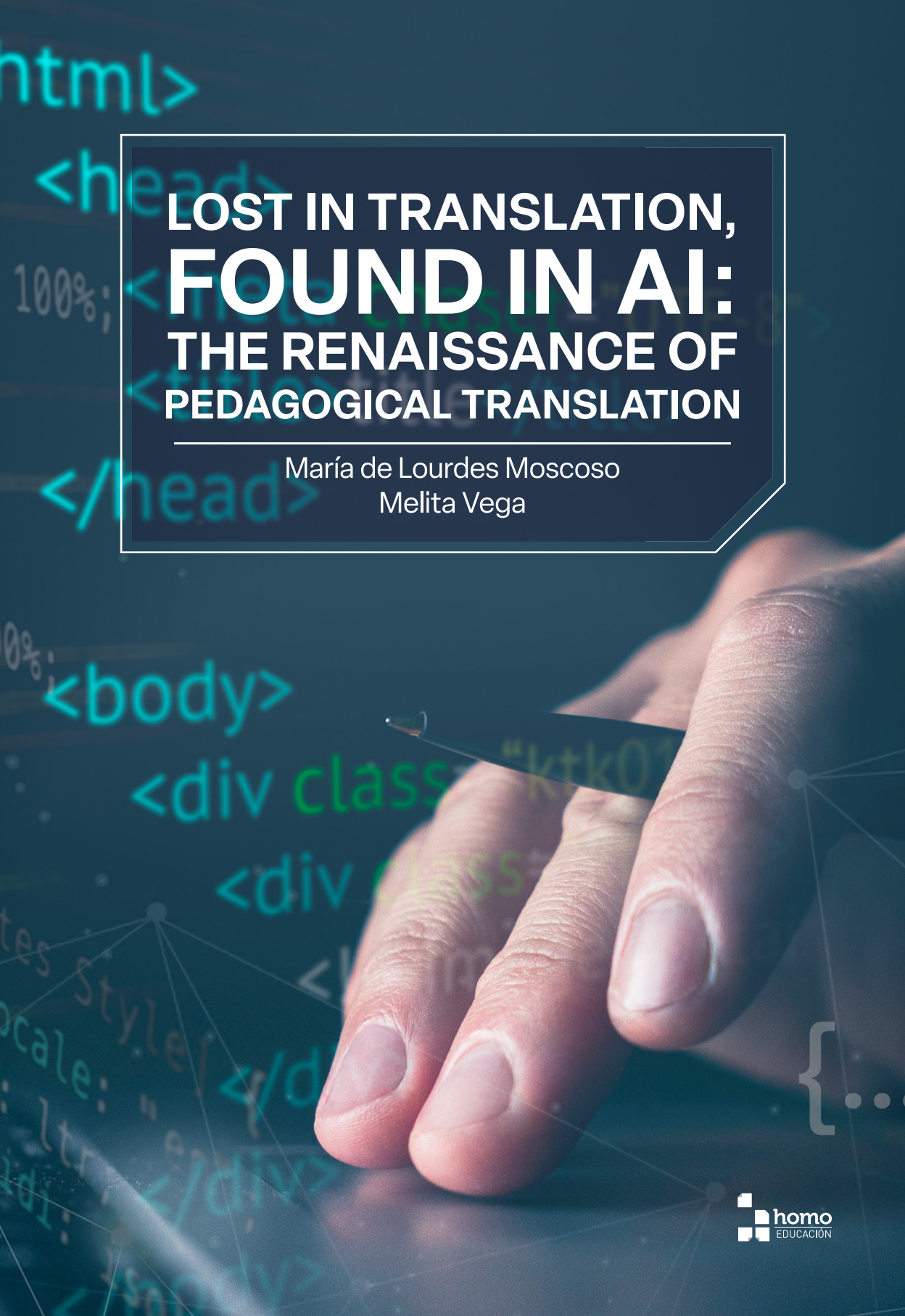

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THE RENAISSANCE OF PEDAGOGICAL TRANSLATION

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María de Lourdes Moscoso y Melita Vega

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FOREWORD

To AI or not to AI? That is not the question. How to use AI in the English classroom? Now, that is the question.

The book Pedagogical Translation in EFL is a call for reflection on your teaching methods as well as your own process of language learning. As someone who has learned three languages through full immersion, this book has made me recall my own learning process and how translation has been key, especially during the first attempts to understand and use the second language (L2).

At the time, a paper dictionary was the only tool available since smartphones had not been invented yet. I had my Italian-Spanish dictionary, and even though some may say that both languages are similar, it is surprising just how many words can be misinterpreted. Take the word ***salire,*** for example. *Salire* means a completely different action from what a Spanish speaker may understand when hearing it for the first time. During my first days in Italy, to get off the bus, I always chose the door with the ***salita*** sign above it and got scolded by the bus driver and angry passengers trying to get on the bus. I recall a time when I had a doctor's appointment, and someone

started yelling "***salga, salga,***" so I just left the building, quite annoyed by her rudeness. When I told a bilingual friend about both episodes, she laughed her head off and explained that "salire" means ***subir – go up,*** and not ***salir – leave,*** as I had understood. False cognates may have this effect, but if I had just checked the dictionary the first time, I wouldn't have missed my doctor's appointment.

English, being much different from Spanish, was more difficult to learn, so I remember relying on translation a lot more than I did when learning Italian. In the beginning, I couldn't catch any words, so it didn't matter if the person speaking to me (I wouldn't dare to say with me since I wasn't able to answer) rephrased their statements or questions several times. I just didn't understand; I couldn't even look up the word(s) in a dictionary because I didn't even know what to look for. Nevertheless, survival is a powerful motivator when learning a language, so at some point, I began to differentiate certain words and understand them enough to look for their proper meanings in Spanish. Only then would I remember the word and incorporate it into my lexicon. I cannot say when, how, or how long it took me to understand and use the new language; neither can I say that I learned it word by word or phrase by phrase. But I can say that translation was one tool, a useful one, among other things that allowed me to make sense of what I was hearing and applying in my speech. I think we all can relate to this: learning a language is a process that requires time and effort until at some point, you get your Eureka! moment; that is, finally being able to understand and express thoughts without help. I might not have memorized a whole dictionary, but translation was definitely part of my learning process.

However, as an English professor who has practiced the Communicative Approach, translation became a forbidden word — a sort of Lord Voldemort: thou who should not be mentioned. Since one´s first language (L1) must never be used in the classroom, imagine my surprise when, after reading this book, I became familiar with the term Pedagogical Translation, described by some as the fifth skill. Translation can be used with a purpose, such as to compare and contrast structures and nuances between languages. Then,

the question of how to use it becomes THE question.

This book has also opened my eyes to the difficult task of programming machines to translate different languages properly. Converting words and sentences into another language may seem an easy task for a human yet having a machine do it is a quasi-impossible task if, aside from the literal meaning of each word, it has to recognize context, grammar structures, colocations, etc., while maintaining the original intention of the text and the way the utterance is said in the other language. If this is difficult for a human translator, how can a machine be programmed to understand sarcasm, jokes, and the context in which an expression applies?

Reading the history of Machine Translation (MT) gave me a new respect for online translators such as Google, which I have criticized so many times for being imprecise, even though I must recognize that the quality of its translation has improved over time. Thus, despite the limitations of machine translators, I have found a new admiration for the minds in charge of programming these tools that enable people to jump from one language to another while keeping the original meaning and the L2 structure. Human translators have yet to be replaced by digital tools since we have the awareness and experience to identify the subtleties of both the original text and the translation; that said, MT is coming close. Thus, our task as language professors is to adapt our teaching to the upcoming changes and learn how to apply the available tools in the classroom without demonizing their use.

One of this book's proposals involves the educational and strategic use of online translators not only as a dictionary to look for the meaning of a word meaning but also as a way of reaffirming the student's confidence when using the language. The study conducted by the authors offers insights into students' dependence on online machine translators (OMTs) and suggests using translation to help them understand aspects inherent to both L1 and L2. For example, comparing how some expressions differ from one language to another and how they can be modified to convey the same meaning. From the student's point of view, being able to look for some words or phrases in their OMTs contributes to their confidence in using the language, so it may

be considered a confirmation tool. Naturally, what needs to be questioned is the use of AI to avoid doing the assignment, which, aside from the concerns regarding plagiarism or blatant cheating, may mean not learning the language. This is why the authors suggest carefully preparing activities in which translation becomes a valuable learning tool, and AI is used as a source of information that does not interfere with the student's creativity and unique way of expressing their thoughts.

The advances of online translators and the widespread use of artificial intelligence cannot be denied. As university professors, we can set some rules in the classroom, but our most important task in this era of technological innovation is to adapt to the changing world and find new and creative ways to incorporate technology in the classroom. Today's learners have these tools in their hands, so instead of demonizing translation and AI, it is important for us to adapt and use them in a thoughtful way that will enhance learning. In other words, instead of asking ourselves whether to *AI or not to AI*, we should ask ourselves *how to AI.* I believe the human mind is still more powerful and creative than any machine.

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INTRODUCTION

Translation has long been a contentious yet ever-present tool in the teaching of languages – even if those in the language teaching business are willing to admit it or not. With its roots going back to the invention of writing, translation has historically served as a facilitator in the dissemination of knowledge, culture, and scientific advancements (Lonsdale, 1996). From its starring role in the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) in the 19th century to its near-total banishment from EFL classrooms in favor of newer, more immersive approaches in the 20th century, translation has continually evolved as a pedagogical strategy. While modern classroom approaches often prioritize communication and fluency, advancements in technology—particularly the rise of online machine translation tools—have reignited debates about the role of translation in the EFL classroom and its impact on learner achievement and classroom policies. In this book, we explore the role and potential of pedagogical translation in the EFL classroom, examining its historical roots, criticisms, advantages, and how it has been impacted by technological advancements. By examining the results of translation-related exercises and consultations with a small group of university professors and

students, we also offer insights into how both traditional and modern forms of translation can shape language learning in today's classrooms.

Chapter 1 begins by situating translation in its historical context. It traces the origins of translation as a language-learning method, focusing on the Grammar Translation Method and the subsequent shift to communicative approaches. The chapter also looks at the influence of Contrastive Analysis (CA) in helping foster second language acquisition through prediction and explanation of errors through the study of differences between languages (Lado, 1957). By tracing the development of these approaches, we gain insight into the shifting paradigms of language education and the persistent influence of translation in various forms.

Chapter 2 explores the polarizing views surrounding translation in language learning. On the one hand, critics argue that it inhibits spontaneous communication and promotes reliance on students' first language. On the other hand, proponents highlight its benefits, such as promoting cultural understanding, enhancing accuracy, and fostering deeper connections between linguistic structures. This chapter aims to offer a balanced perspective by evaluating each of these arguments as well as shedding light on the inevitability of translation in language education, either naturally via translanguaging or as a pedagogical tool.

Chapter 3 offers a glimpse into the evolution of Machine Translation (MT) from its earliest experiments guided by the notion of a universal language in the early 17th century to the more sophisticated online machine translation (OMT) system driven by artificial intelligence today. By connecting these advancements to EFL classrooms, the chapter explores how students and teachers can harness these tools effectively while remaining aware of their limitations.

Chapter 4 transitions from theory to practice, presenting the findings of an in-class activity involving students at a university in Cuenca, Ecuador. By incorporating intentional OMT use into classroom activities, we aimed to assess their effectiveness and uncover potential benefits and drawbacks. The findings of this experiment shed light on the practicalities of the intentional use of such technologies in an educational setting.

Chapter 5 shifts the focus to educators, analyzing the results of a questionnaire conducted with university professors in Cuenca, Ecuador. The chapter delves into their perspectives on the use of students' first language in the EFL classroom, their attitudes toward OMTs, and their policies on whether such practices constitute academic dishonesty. By presenting these insights, the chapter aims to shed light on how translation, L1 use, and OMTs are perceived and managed in higher education.

Together, these chapters examine the multifaceted role of pedagogical translation in the EFL classroom. By considering historical perspectives, technological advancements, practical applications, and academic viewpoints, this book aims to contribute to the ongoing discussion on the reintroduction of pedagogical translation in language classrooms. It also invites educators to explore new ways to intentionally harness its potential in classrooms.

CHAPTER 1

HISTORY OF TRANSLATION AND LANGUAGE LEARNING METHODOLOGIES

Introduction

Translation is the process of transferring written or spoken text from one language (the source language) into another language (the target language) while preserving the meaning and context as accurately as possible (Catford, 1965). This process involves linguistic and cultural knowledge to ensure that the translated message maintains its intended impact and relevance in the target language (Newmark, 2009).

The history of translation dates to ancient times and has played a crucial role in disseminating knowledge, culture, and religious texts across different civilizations. "Translation dates back almost as far as does writing itself, and translation has played an essential role in the spread of government, culture, and science" (Lonsdale, 1996, p. 22). Translation has been pivotal since ancient times, with early examples including the translation of the Sumerian Epic of Gilgamesh into various Asian languages and the translation of Egyptian hieroglyphs into Greek during the Ptolemaic period (Robinson, 1997). One of the most significant early translation efforts was the Septuagint, a Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible produced in the 3rd century BCE. This work was crucial for making Jewish scriptures accessible to a broader audience in the Hellenistic world (Nida, 1964). It is important to mention that Cicero

already thought about discerning free from faithful translation. Word-for-word translation started with the Romans and is still used today (Moscoso, 2011). The idea of taking culture into account when translating was also born with the idea of nationalism (Bassnett-McGuire, 2014).

In the Middle Ages, translation efforts were heavily influenced by the spread of Christianity and Islam. Key texts, including the Bible and the Quran, were translated into numerous languages to aid religious conversion and education (Baker, 2018). On the other hand, the translation of classical Greek and Roman texts into Arabic during the Islamic Golden Age (8th to 13th centuries) played a significant role in preserving and expanding scientific and philosophical knowledge. These works were later translated into Latin, reintroducing them to Europe during the Renaissance and Enlightenment periods, when translation was also used as a tool for spreading new ideas and scientific discoveries. The translation of works by philosophers like Voltaire, Kant, and Newton facilitated the exchange of knowledge across Europe (Venuti, 2012).

It was not until the Modern Era (19th and 20th centuries) that translation became an academic discipline. Key figures, including Nida (2002), developed theories on equivalence and dynamic translation, emphasizing the need to consider cultural context and reader response.

In the contemporary era, translation continues to be a vital practice in global communication, literature, and international relations. Technological advancements such as machine translation have transformed the field, thus making translation faster and more accessible, though still requiring human oversight to ensure quality (Pym, 2023).

Translation theory itself has been shaped by many influential theorists over the years, each contributing significant ideas to the field. Table 1 lists some of the most prominent 20th-century theorists to have published works in this area.

Theorist	Period	Concepts	Notable Works
Eugene Nida	1914 - 2011	Equivalence between languages	*Toward a Science of Translating* (Nida, 1964), The *Theory and Practice of Translation* (Nida & Taber, 2003).
Roman Jakobson	1896 - 1982	Intersemiotic translation (translation beyond languages to include other forms of communication, such as art and music). Difference between intralingual translation, Interlingual translation, and Intersemiotic translation	*On Linguistic Aspects of Translation* (Jakobson, 1959).
Lawrence Venuti	1953 -	Foreignization (retaining elements of the source culture) Domestication (adapting text to target cultures)	*The Translator's Invisibility* (Venuti, 2017), *The Scandals of Translation* (Venuti, 2002).
Hans Vermeer	1930 - 2010	Skopos Theory emphasizing the purpose of translation.	*Grundlegung einer allgemeinen Translations theories* (Reiß, 2010).
Susan Bassnett	1945 -	Exploration of cultural and theoretical aspects in translation	*Translation Studies* (Bassnett, 1980), *Constructing Cultures* (Bassnett & Lefevere, 1998).

Table 1: *Major Contributors to Translation Theory*

The Way Back to Translation

Throughout the history of English teaching and other languages, the earliest methodology to come into play was the Grammar-Translation Method (GTM), followed by several other methods and approaches that reflected shifts in educational philosophy and advances in linguistic theory. This first traditional method of language instruction dates to the early 19th century and was based on the classical method of teaching Greek and Latin. Key features included a focus on grammatical rules and vocabulary through rote memorization, extensive use of translation exercises from the target language into the native language and vice versa, with priority given to reading and writing skills, a teacher-centered approach, and the use of students' native language as the medium of instruction (Richards, 2015). After GTM, other approaches to language teaching emerged, many of which were based on creating more immersive experiences in the classroom, as shown in Table 2.

Method	Period	Major contributors / developers	Emphasis
Direct Method	Late 19th - Early 20th Century	Maximilian Berlitz Lambert Sauveur	Oral communication and teaching through the target language only. Everyday vocabulary and sentences, use of questions and answers to practice speaking, and inductive teaching of grammar (Richards, 2015).
Audiolingual Method	1940s - 1950s	Charles Fries Robert Lado Nelson Brooks	Based on behaviorist theories. Listening and speaking skills, drills, and pattern practice to reinforce correct language habits and heavy reliance on repetition and memorization (Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

Method	Period	Major contributors / developers	Emphasis
Total Physical Response (TPR)	1960s - 1970s	James Asher	Physical movement in response to commands in the target language, aimed at reducing learner stress and making language learning more enjoyable (Richards & Rodgers, 2014).
Silent Way	1960s	Caleb Gattegno	Learner autonomy and active discovery. Use of color-coded charts and rods to teach language concepts, minimal teacher speaking, and encouragement of learners to produce language (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011).
Suggestopedia	1970s		Developed by Georgi Lozanov. Relaxation and positive suggestion to enhance learning, use of music, comfortable seating, and a positive classroom atmosphere, aimed at lowering psychological barriers to learning (Richards & Rodgers, 2014).
Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)	1970s - Present	Dell Hymes Michael Halliday	Ability to communicate meaning in real-life situations, functional language use and fluency over accuracy, use of authentic materials, and real-world tasks (Larsen-Freeman, 2000).

Method	Period	Major contributors / developers	Emphasis
Natural Approach	1980s	Stephen Krashen Tracy Terrell	Exposure to comprehensible input, focus on meaning rather than form, reduction of learner anxiety, and encouragement of natural communication (Larsen-Freeman, 2000).
Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT)	1980s		Use of language to complete specific tasks, focus on real-world language use, and practical communication skills (Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

Table 2: *Overview of Language Teaching Methods*

The GTM, while historically significant and effective for developing reading and writing skills, was considered to have notable limitations in promoting communicative competence and fluency. Modern language teaching methods that appeared after were said to incorporate more balanced and interactive approaches to address these shortcomings. However, with the advent of AI and online machine translation (OMT), there has been a resurgence in the use of translation in the EFL classroom (O'Neill, 2019).

Translation in English Learning Environments

Translation as a technique for English learning has been a topic of considerable debate among language educators and theorists. Translation can be a valuable tool in learning a foreign language if used in a balanced and complementary manner with other pedagogical methods. It is important to consider both the benefits and potential drawbacks to maximize its

effectiveness in the learning process (Zhou et al., 2022).

Advantages

Facilitation of Comprehension and Retention. Translation helps learners understand complex English texts by providing equivalent meanings in their native language, which can enhance comprehension and retention. This technique is particularly beneficial for beginners who may struggle with entirely monolingual instruction (Cook, 2010).

Development of Bilingual Skills. By engaging in translation exercises, learners develop bilingual proficiency, which can enhance cognitive flexibility and metalinguistic awareness. These skills are valuable for learners in multilingual contexts and those aiming to become professional translators or interpreters (Cummins, 2003).

Cultural Awareness. Translation activities expose learners to cultural nuances and idiomatic expressions, fostering a deeper cultural understanding of both the target and source languages. This awareness is fundamental for effective communication in a globalized world (Kumaravadivelu, 2003).

Confidence Building. Providing learners with translation tasks can build confidence, as they can use their first language (L1) as a scaffold to learn and produce the second language. This supportive approach reduces anxiety and encourages more active participation in language learning (Auerbach, 1993).

Disadvantages

Overreliance on Native Language. One of the primary criticisms of using translation in language learning is the potential for learners to become overly reliant on their L1. This reliance can hinder the development of direct thinking

and processing in English, which is essential for achieving fluency (Harmer, 2014).

Interference Errors. Translation can lead to interference errors, where learners incorrectly apply rules or structures from their native language to English. These errors can fossilize if not addressed, complicating the acquisition of accurate and idiomatic English usage (Lado, 1957).

Limitation of Productive Skills. Translation exercises often emphasize reading and writing at the expense of speaking and listening skills. As a result, learners become proficient in translating texts but may struggle with oral communication and aural comprehension in real-life situations (Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

Contextual Limitations. The effectiveness of translation as a learning tool is context-dependent. In environments where immersion and direct exposure to English are possible, translation might be less beneficial than other methods, such as task-based learning or content and language integrated learning (CLIL) (Marsh, 2002).

Contrastive Analysis and its Role in Translation

Contrastive Analysis (CA) is the systematic study of two or more languages with the aim of identifying their structural differences and similarities (Lado, 1957). Originally developed to assist in second language acquisition by predicting and explaining potential difficulties, CA has played a significant role in translation, especially in identifying and addressing potential translation issues arising from differences between languages.

Through CA, translators can anticipate potential areas of difficulty and errors, a foresight that allows for more precise and nuanced translations (James, 1981). For example, English and Spanish have different word order

rules (e.g., adjective placement), and CA can help translators navigate these differences.

CA helps understand how different languages express meaning, which is crucial for translating idiomatic expressions, metaphors, and culturally specific terms (Hatim, 2014). For instance, idioms that make sense in one language might be nonsensical or have no direct equivalent in another, and CA can guide translators in finding appropriate translations. Insights from CA can enhance the development of bilingual dictionaries and computer-assisted translation tools by providing more accurate translations and explanations of language structures (Catford, 1965). These resources become more reliable for quick references and decision-making.

Translation is not only about linguistic accuracy but also about conveying the appropriate cultural context and pragmatic meaning (Moscoso, 2011). CA can shed light on the socio-cultural norms embedded in language use (Nida, 2002), a particularly important aspect in the translation of texts including literature, legal documents, or marketing materials, where cultural sensitivity is key.

CA can be integrated into translator training programs to equip future translators with a deeper understanding of linguistic contrasts and how to handle them effectively (Baker, 2018). This training can include practical exercises based on CA findings, allowing translators to practice and refine their skills in handling language-specific challenges.

Key Contributions of CA in Machine Translation

CA has significantly contributed to the field of MT by improving the accuracy and quality of translations generated by automated systems since it helps understand and address the linguistic challenges that arise when translating text from one language to another using computer algorithms. Among the most notable contributions are the following:

Error Reduction

By identifying structural differences between languages, CA helps reduce common translation errors. For instance, differences in syntax, such as word order and grammatical structures, can be addressed by incorporating CA insights into MT algorithms (Somers et al., 2006).

Improvement of Translation Models.

MT systems can be designed to better handle complex translation tasks by providing valuable data that can be used to generate more effective translation models and to understand how different languages express similar concepts (Hutchins, 2010). For instance, CA can help MT systems better translate idiomatic expressions and collocations by providing context-specific translations.

Enhancement of Bilingual Corpora

MT systems training can be enriched with insights from CA. This involves annotating corpora with information about linguistic contrasts, thereby improving the quality of machine learning models (Dorr, 1997) and producing more accurate and contextually appropriate translations.

Handling of Ambiguities

CA helps resolve ambiguities that arise from polysemy (words with multiple meanings) and homonymy (words that sound alike but have different meanings). By providing detailed linguistic contrasts, CA allows MT systems to choose the correct translation based on context (Nirenburg et al., 1994). This is crucial for languages where a single word can have multiple meanings depending on its usage.

Cross-Linguistic Interference

CA addresses cross-linguistic interference issues, where the structure of the source language affects the translation into the target language. By understanding these interference patterns, MT systems can be adjusted to minimize such errors (Ghazala, 2018). This is particularly important in languages with similar vocabulary but different syntactic rules, such as Spanish and Italian.

Translation as the Fifth Skill

Translation has been recognized as a vital skill in language learning, often referred to as the fifth skill, alongside listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Pym, 2023). This perspective highlights the importance of translation in developing comprehensive language proficiency. One of the more prominent arguments favoring translation as a fifth skill is based on its role in reinforcing the four other language skills since it requires accurate comprehension (reading and listening) and production (writing and speaking) of a language. This holistic engagement with the language supports deeper learning and develops bilingual competence (Leonardi, 2011). This enables learners to switch between languages and understand the subtleties and idiomatic expressions of both, an essential skill for effective communication in multilingual contexts (Cook, 2010).

As mentioned previously, accurate translation is strongly based on how much culture is considered when conveying one language into the other. Cultural awareness exposes learners to cultural references, idioms, and expressions unique to the target language. This fosters an understanding of cultural differences and similarities, thus enhancing cross-cultural communication skills (Laviosa, 2014).

Another skill enhanced by translation is the promotion of critical thinking and problem-solving, as evidenced when learners navigate linguistic challenges and find suitable equivalents for complex ideas. This

cognitive engagement increases overall language proficiency (Kelly, 2005). Translation also provides practical applications for language learners, thus preparing them for real-world scenarios where they may need to translate or interpret information. This practical skill is valuable in various professional and personal contexts (Pym, 2023). Examples in classrooms include incorporating translation exercises, such as short texts, idioms, or dialogues, to help students practice and improve their language skills in a structured manner (González-Davies, 2004). However, it is important to remember that the more authentic the materials are, the better the exposure to real-world language use and cultural contexts, making the learning process more engaging and relevant (Malmkjær, 2010). Authentic material can include news articles, literary texts, advertisements, or any material that might be thought-provoking to them due to their age or interests.

Machine Translation (MT)

Despite its long history dating back to the 17th century, machine translation truly did not hit its stride until some of the most prominent companies started launching mechanisms that merged linguistic expertise with advancements in computer science. Perhaps the most recognized and used tool is Google Translate, launched in 2006. Initially based on statistical machine translation (SMT), Google Translate switched to neural machine translation (NMT) in 2016, a move that significantly improved translation quality by leveraging deep learning techniques to provide more accurate and natural translations (Wu, 2016). Today, Google Translate supports over 100 languages and is used by millions worldwide through its web interface and mobile applications.

Following the success of Google Translate, DeepL, Microsoft Translator, and OpenAI have also been instrumental in advancing the field of AI translation, as they span fundamental research in neural networks and machine learning, the development of practical translation systems, and ongoing efforts to improve the accuracy, accessibility, and capabilities of AI-powered translation technologies.

Just as machine translation received a significant boost in its development through the collaboration between linguistics and advancements in computer science, machine translation also received a significant increase in accessibility for the masses, particularly among language students, thanks to advancements in smartphone technology. Given the multiple contributions and studies conducted by researchers, translation is not only a distinct academic discipline, but also a separate skill - the fifth skill - that can be fostered and acquired with the help of other technology-based tools used to learn languages. Many authors contend that leveraging technology, such as online translation tools and software can facilitate translation practice and provide immediate feedback, thus helping learners refine their skills and understand the intricacies of both languages (Fernández-Guerra, 2014; O'Neill, 2019; Owen, 2003). The resurgence of pedagogical translation in the EFL classroom will be explored further in Chapter 2, followed by a review of the evolution of machine translation and its applications in the EFL classroom in Chapter 3.

CHAPTER 2

TRANSLATION IN THE EFL CLASSROOM – A RESURGENCE OF THE FIFTH SKILL?

The Foul-Tasting Legacy of the Grammar Translation Method (GTM)

Translation and the use of students' native language (L1) in the EFL classroom continue to remain hotly debated among professionals in the field, primarily due to their ties with the now defunct Grammar Translation Method (GTM) that saw learners translating texts from their L1 into the target language (GTM) and vice versa. Also called the Classical Method, GTM was originally used to teach reading and appreciation of literature in classical languages such as Greek and Latin. Its primary mechanism featured considerably long lists of vocabulary in both the source and target language and the completion of exercises that focused on translating sentences without regard for context. The grammar of the target language itself was taught in the students' L1, thus considerably limiting the amount of contact with the L2 (Leonardi, 2011). Despite never actually working towards achieving proficiency in the L2, it was believed that, by studying the grammar of the L2, students would gain enough familiarity with their L1 and further develop their intellect. Despite lacking focus on developing oral proficiency, this method dominated European and Foreign language teaching from the 1840s to the 1940s (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011).

GTM soon fell out of favor with the rise of the Communicative Approach to language teaching (CLT) in the 1970s, which placed greater emphasis on communicative competence, meaningful L2 input, and production (Richards, 2015). Its meteoric rise was also, among other things, a reaction against GTM and other methods based on rote memorization and repetition that were considered boring and ineffective. In Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), there is no place for students' L1 as it is perceived as an obstacle when carrying out authentic communicative activities that prioritize fluency over accuracy (Ayachia, 2018; Carreres et al., 2017; Colina & Lafford, 2017; Linh, 2022; Payne & Contreras, 2019). As a result, L1 use was demonized, and translation was essentially booted from EFL learning contexts (Cerezo Herrero & Pérez-Sabater, 2024).

Critiques Against the Use of L1 and Translation in Foreign Language Learning

First used in schools in former British colonies, the monolingual feature of CLT has been categorized as politically oppressive by some authors (Topolska-Pado, 2010). Even with the introduction of alternative language teaching methods in the following years, CLT remains the dominant approach in North America and Europe, mainly due to the geographical proximity to and influence of the United Kingdom. Thus, to this day, the use of L1 in the EFL classroom continues to carry a stigma due to the enduring dominance of CLT (Cerezo Herrero & Pérez-Sabater, 2024). Several criticisms regarding translation in the EFL classroom can be found in the literature, which will be summarized in the following section.

It Fosters the Misconception that there is an Exact Equivalent for Every Word in the Students' L1 in the L2

For some authors, translation exercises can sometimes encourage a word-for-word approach to language learning, leading some students to make

direct, literal translations that may not capture the nuances, idiomatic expressions, or grammatical structures of the target language (Phipps & Gonzalez, 2004). This can result in awkward, non-natural or incorrect language use, which may prevent students from developing a deeper understanding and appreciation of how the target language differs from their native language.

It Prevents Full Exposure to the Target Language

One of the strongest criticisms against using translation in the EFL classroom is that it supposedly limits students' exposure to the L2. Since the L2 teaching process in CLT is intended to mirror L1 acquisition, immersing students in the target language is considered crucial for developing fluency and communicative competence (Cerezo Herrero & Pérez-Sabater, 2024). Under this premise, translation activities that require students to think in their L1 rather than directly in the L2 are thought to slow down the process of internalizing the target language and inhibit the natural acquisition of language patterns.

It Does not Promote Authentic Communication

Since its main activities are focused on reading and writing, translation often focuses on accuracy and correctness, which can lead to an underemphasis on fluency and not effectively prepare students for real-life language use, that is, authentic communication (Pekkanli, 2012). In a CLT approach, the primary goal is to develop students' ability to communicate effectively in real-life situations, even if they make grammatical or vocabulary mistakes (Ayachia, 2018). Therefore, translation can make students overly concerned with getting every word correct, stifling spontaneous language use and reducing confidence in their ability to communicate in the target language.

It May Reinforce Cross-Linguistic Transfer

Translation can reinforce negative language transfer, where students apply grammatical rules, vocabulary, or sentence structures from their L1 to the L2, sometimes erroneously, as cross-linguistic challenges vary among learners (Elvin & Escudero, 2019). By relying on translation, students may struggle to break free from the influence of their native language and develop a more authentic sense of the target language's unique structures and expressions.

It May Cause Overreliance and Dependency

It has also been said that overusing translation in the EFL classroom, either by instructors or students, may lead to a dependency on the L1 to the point that students struggle to function in situations where they cannot rely on their native language, such as when speaking with native speakers or in immersive environments (Huang, 2023; Payne & Contreras, 2019).

It is not Aligned with CLT Goals

In EFL classrooms that follow CLT approaches, interaction, communication, and the practical use of language are emphasized; therefore, translation is often seen as incompatible with these goals as it is more aligned with grammar rules and vocabulary rather than fluency (Banitz, 2022). In addition, in some CLT classroom environments, the use of students' L1 by instructors to give explanations or translate certain words may create the impression of a lack of teaching competence. There is also the concern that focusing on translation activities simply does not belong in the language classroom as learners are not working towards becoming professional translators (Colina & Lafford, 2017).

It Presents Cultural and Contextual Limitations

Since language is deeply embedded in culture, and certain phrases, idioms, or expressions may not have direct equivalents in students' native culture and language (Fernández Guerra, 2012). Therefore, translation exercises may not always adequately convey the cultural and contextual nuances of the target language, a situation that can lead to oversimplification of these complexities and misunderstandings or a lack of appreciation.

Strategic use of the L1 in the EFL Classroom through Translanguaging

The notion that the use of L1 in EFL classrooms should be discouraged stems from the belief that successful learning of an L2 is dependent on maximum exposure. However, there is a belief that students who have yet to gain proficiency in an L2 are highly unlikely to be able to think in a new language (Payne & Contreras, 2019).

Translanguaging, first coined in the 1980s in the United Kingdom, where different languages are spoken, including English, Welsh, and Scottish, refers to the natural use of two languages fluidly and with constant switches among their speakers (Cenoz, 2019). As a language learning approach, translanguaging applies the principles of semiotics, such as non-verbal language, gestures, and body language, as well as visual supports and students' L1 to clarify content (Pinho Feller, 2020). From a linguistic perspective, translanguaging, much like translation, requires students to use their complete linguistic arsenal in both their L1 and L2. Instructors who use translanguaging in their classroom must also evaluate their students' general linguistic skills and ability to learn and write text (Couto-Cantero & Fraga-Castrillón, 2023).

Reintroducing translation into EFL classroom activities through translanguaging and allowing greater use of students' L1 has sparked renewed interest among researchers in the field, with many asserting that restricting or prohibiting the use of students' L1 altogether is neither a foolproof nor

a more pedagogical way to promote language learning (Carreres et al., 2017; Cenoz, 2019; Cerezo-Herrero & Pérez-Sabater, 2024; O'Neill, 2019; Sánchez, 2009; Zhang, 2023). As it involves strategic use of students' L1, translation in the EFL classroom weaves in different approaches that have been found to support language proficiency in several aspects ranging from linguistic, cultural, social, and motivational (Colina & Lafford, 2017). In addition to reducing the amount of time needed to explain a particular word or expression in the classroom, perhaps one of the most significant arguments in favor of using translation is that it enables contrastive analysis with students' L2 to drive home key learnings regarding complex structures, false cognates, and words with no equivalents, among others (Colina & Lafford, 2017; Topolska-Pado, 2010).

Arguments in Favor of Reintroducing Translation to The EFL Classroom

The resistance to the conscious use of the L1 in language classrooms in CLT also responds to the goal of acquiring an L2, similar to how children acquire their L1 through input. However, this view has been viewed as impractical, particularly since a context in which learners only have a certain number of hours of contact with the L2 within the confines of a classroom cannot compare to a context where learners are fully immersed in an environment that uses the L2 both inside and outside the classroom (Carreres, 2006).

According to Owen (2003), translation is perhaps the world's oldest tool for teaching and learning a second language. Other authors contend that students already engage in automatic translation in the EFL classroom right from the start as they tend to identify with their L1 to make sense of the L2, particularly as a means of understanding that the L2 is a different language with different grammatical rules and expressions (Payne & Contreras, 2019; Topolska-Pado, 2010). Included among the arguments in favor of reintroducing translation into the EFL classroom are the following:

Translation is an Inevitable Part of Learning a Foreign Language, So Why Fight It?

Even if students' L1 is not consciously the focus of a class activity, the translation that naturally occurs among learners, even if only in their heads, helps foster a positive learning environment and can even help reduce anxiety (Hassane, 2023). The use of L1 is also beneficial for language learning because it fosters interest and understanding in class tasks and assignments, particularly among students with lower levels of language proficiency (Colina & Lafford, 2017).

It Enhances Vocabulary Acquisition and Comprehension

Contrary to the belief that translation reinforces the idea that there is an exact equivalent for every word in the students' L1 in the L2, translation can make students aware that there is not always a one-to-one correspondence between words or concepts in two languages and that culture can influence thought and expressions (Topolska-Pado, 2010). By translating words, phrases, or entire sentences from their L1 into the L2, students can establish clear connections between new vocabulary and concepts they already understand. This direct link can be especially helpful for beginners who struggle to grasp new words through context alone (Carreres et al., 2017). Moreover, translation can aid in clarifying the nuances of meaning, helping students better understand polysemous words, idioms, and culturally specific expressions.

It has also been argued that translation exercises can reinforce comprehension of complex texts (Duff, 1989). When students translate a passage, they must engage with the material at a deeper level, considering not only the meaning of individual words but also the overall structure and coherence of the text. This process encourages close reading and critical thinking, skills that are essential for advanced language learners. In other words, it invites further exploration to achieve clarity when working through complex structures in the L2.

It Facilitates Cultural Awareness

Suppose one applies a more multidimensional view of translation. In this case, translation in language classes engages students in many cross-linguistic activities across different media types and for different purposes (Colina & Lafford, 2017). When students translate texts, they are often confronted with cultural references, idioms, and expressions that do not have direct equivalents in their native language, such as the case with marketing material. This challenge can lead to discussions about cultural differences and how language reflects and shapes cultural identity. By completing translation tasks, students can gain a deeper understanding of the target language culture and how it contrasts with their own. This awareness not only enhances their language skills but also promotes intercultural competence, a key component of global citizenship in an increasingly interconnected world.

It Supports Communicative Skills

While translation is often associated with a focus on accuracy and form, it can also support the development of communicative competence rather than acting as an inhibitor (Banitz, 2022). Translation exercises can be designed to encourage students to express meaning in natural and contextually appropriate ways rather than simply producing literal translations. For example, students might be asked to translate a conversation or a piece of writing to make it sound idiomatic and fluent in the target language. Such a task would require them to consider tone, register, and the communicative intent behind the original text, all of which are critical elements of effective communication. Having students participate in real-life translation activities versus role plays based on fictitious scenarios is another form of engaging in authentic communication (Colina & Lafford, 2017).

It Fosters Analytical Skills

In addition to reading skills, translation fosters lexico-grammatical competence as it requires learners to pay close attention to form and meaning (Bălănescu, 2023). Rather than considering L1 influence as a form of negative transfer, it can be seen as a means of enriching language competence and proficiency.

Translation as the Fifth Skill in the EFL Classroom

Many authors believe that translation need not be separated from other language skills such as reading, writing, speaking, and listening and instead be considered a fifth macro-skill (Ayachia, 2018; Campbell, 2002; Colina & Lafford, 2017). Outside the classroom, translation is often perceived as an activity that helps bridge gaps in meaning among people who speak different languages and have different cultures (Bălănescu, 2023). According to Topolska-Prado (2010), the realities of contemporary life in an era of globalization and advancements in communication technologies have significantly enhanced the importance of translation alongside the other four language learning skills. Translation, therefore, takes place in many situations since learners travel as tourists, interact with foreigners, and live in multicultural cities worldwide. In other words, the act of translation is not only the domain of professional translators but a means of negotiating meaning to help bridge gaps between cultures.

Given concerns raised by some educators regarding the use of translation in the language classroom where learners are not studying to become professional translators, it is important to highlight the difference between teaching translation as an end and pedagogical translation as a means. The former focuses on professional training in the field of translation, while the latter focuses on using translation as a tool to teach a language (Cerezo Herrero & Pérez-Sabater, 2024; Duff, 1989); therefore, the argument that

translation is an inauthentic means of communication may be the result of a misunderstanding of what entails pedagogic translation in the language classroom (Banitz, 2022).

It is also worth noting that the ability to speak and understand two languages does not guarantee the ability to translate effectively. Therefore, pedagogical translation, as a fifth skill, should also be practiced and honed like the other language learning skills (Carreres, 2006; Topolska-Pado, 2010). A single-minded focus on achieving fluency among language learners through CLT can be seen as concerning as it often comes at the expense of accuracy, which is conversely seen as a negative aspect of translation (Banitz, 2022). Considering that life beyond the EFL classroom often requires translation, educators would do well to respond to students' requests for the translations of particular words and phrases in the L2 and consider translation as one of the main tools available in their pedagogical toolkit.

Overcoming Potential Challenges

Despite its benefits, translation in the EFL classroom is not without challenges. One of the primary concerns is that over-reliance on translation can lead to a lack of immersion in the target language, potentially hindering fluency development. To address this issue, translation should be used judiciously and in combination with other language-learning strategies. Teachers and instructors can balance translation activities with opportunities for immersive, communicative practice, ensuring that students develop both accuracy and fluency.

Another challenge is the risk of students becoming too dependent on their native language when learning English. To mitigate this, the complexity of translation tasks can be gradually increased to encourage students to rely more on their knowledge of English rather than on direct translation from their native language. For example, engaging in the practice of inverse translation, that is, translating from one's L1 into their L2, to support the reinforcement of previously learned language structures (Cerezo Herrero & Pérez-Sabater, 2024). Additionally, translation can be presented as a

problem-solving activity, where students are encouraged to find creative solutions to linguistic challenges rather than simply translating word-for-word.

Perhaps one of the biggest challenges to overcome in reintroducing translation into the EFL classroom is the apparent misunderstanding among professionals regarding the difference between using translation as a pedagogical tool to foster language learning and translation for professional purposes (Banitz, 2022). Rather than allowing the emergence of feelings of guilt over using students' L1 through translation activities in the language classroom, EFL instructors may wish to broaden their perspectives and start to look at translation as a means of helping their students pay closer attention to the differences between their L1 and L2 (Banitz, 2022). To accomplish this, further education on how translation models can be used in the classroom may be beneficial to prevent heavy reliance on the on-the-spot translation of words or codeswitching in language lessons.

Many authors agree that L2 teaching cannot and should not be separated from L1 since learners are not blank slates; their pre-existing L1 will inevitably shape how they perceive the world. Therefore, it must be accepted that learners will inevitably engage in mental translation, at least until they reach advanced levels of language learning, as a means of making sense of and accessing their L2 (Cerezo Herrero & Pérez-Sabater, 2024; O'Neill, 2019). With this in mind, it stands to reason that translation has a valuable role to play in the EFL classroom, mainly when used as a complementary tool alongside other language-learning strategies. It enhances vocabulary acquisition, supports comprehension, fosters cultural awareness, and aids in developing communicative skills. However, to maximize its benefits, translation should be used thoughtfully and strategically, ensuring that it supports the overall goals of language learning instead of acting as a hindrance (Bălănescu, 2023). When balanced with immersive, communicative practice, translation can be a powerful tool for helping students achieve greater proficiency in English.

CHAPTER 3

A BRIEF REVIEW OF THE HISTORY OF MACHINE TRANSLATION (MT)

Introduction

The availability of Machine Translation (MT) systems has brought significant changes to communication dynamics in society, particularly in the wake of globalization and a growing need to overcome language barriers in various environments, from medical to academic (Tuilan et al., 2023). In the field of language learning, MT, particularly in the form of online translators and dictionaries, has become an increasing presence due to continuous Wi-Fi and cellphone connectivity coupled with the constant use of portable technological devices in the classroom. Not surprisingly, the increased use of MT through online machine translation tools (OMT) in EFL classrooms has been a topic of debate in the field of language learning, with many educators questioning not only the quality of the results but also to what degree their usage contributes to academic dishonesty (Ducar & Houk Schocket, 2018; O'Neill, 2019; Payne & Contreras, 2019). As technology progresses, many authors have taken a balanced stance on MT depending on the level of the student and the objective of the task at hand (Mundt & Groves, 2016).

For some, the use of MT through online translators and dictionaries conjures unhappy memories of the Grammar-Translation Method (GTM),

long eschewed in foreign language classes due to its roots in memorization of rules and little focus on oral production. Part of the resistance also stems from the fact that the use of MT requires a conscious use of students' mother tongue (L1), which was also banned from EFL classrooms with the emergence of communicative language teaching approaches in the 1960s and 1970s due to misguided concerns that it did not promote authentic communication (Cancino & Panes, 2021; Carreres *et al.*, 2017; Payne & Contreras, 2019).

Other authors have called for a review of first language use and translation in the EFL classroom altogether (Ayachia, 2018; Carreres et al., 2017; Colina & Lafford, 2017; Jolley & Maimone, 2022). Niño (2009) has long suggested that translation and the use of online translators in language classes allow for comparisons to be made between students' L1 and the L2 to provide answers to their linguistic needs. Other authors assert that online translators enable students to explore a foreign language, learn to recognize errors through editing the translator's results, and become even more aware of how translations are not simply identical reproductions of an original text and that the act of translating requires a more thoughtful and purposeful search for appropriate words and phrases (Ducar & Houk Schocket, 2018; O'Neill, 2019).

Regardless of where researchers and educators fall on the debate, MT has undergone significant advancements that have improved its quality, thus generating a profound impact on communication as well as the field of language learning. Therefore, any discussion regarding the presence of online translation tools in EFL merits a review of the evolution of machine translation itself.

The Early Days of MT

The roots of MT of natural human languages can be traced back to the 17th century, with the earliest contributions stemming from different thoughts on the nature of language, including ideas of universal languages and mechanical dictionaries (Hutchins, 2010). Some thoughts were focused on creating secret languages and codes to enable humans to communicate without being discovered. In contrast, others stemmed from the idea of a

universal language that would enable communication beyond borders. One of the first technical advancements in the field of secret languages and codes was led by Johann Joachim Becher. In 1661, Becher developed a proposal for a universal language in numeric form that is widely considered an early, yet cumbersome, model for future machine translation systems. Based on dictionaries related to one another through numerical codes, Becher's idea was somewhat rooted in the school of language universals that would enable people to understand different languages. However, the despite its inspiration from Becher's invention, the MT systems that would follow received very little influence from the theory of language universals. On the other hand, while cryptology based on mathematical methods gained prominence in secret codes, they soon proved unsuitable for translation processes (Stein, 2018).

More practical proposals emerged from two engineers between 1933 and 1947. In 1933, Georges Artsrouni (France) obtained the first patent for a type ofmechanical brain that operated as a storage device with the ability to capture and print information in the form of paper tape. While the potential applications for the machine included automated printing of railway schedules and phone directories, Artsruni himself perceived his invention primarily as a mechanical dictionary that could generate basic word-based translations into three languages, with the potential for more (Hutchins, 2004).

A second patent was obtained by Petr Trojanskij (Russia) that same year for a more advanced mechanical dictionary that went further than the simple mechanization of the dictionary (Hutchins, 2004). It was intended to implement a translation process using universal symbols for coding and understanding grammatical structures based on Esperanto, an artificial language developed in 1887 as an international medium of communication (Coluzzi, 2024). In 1947, Andrew Booth and Warren Weaver proposed their ideas for translating languages through computers, which had been newly invented at the time (Hutchins, 2004).

Even since its earliest days, MT has long been subject to a myriad of perceptions from the most fervent supporters and the most vicious detractors. While its development in World War II was initially heavily

supported by the military and intelligence-gathering organizations, it soon fell victim to a wave of criticism and funding cuts as the increasing number of linguistic problems came to light (Slocum, 1985). Many researchers agree that the most significant advancements began in the 1950s and were influenced by a series of technological, economic, and geopolitical factors (Jolley & Maimone, 2022; Sin-wai, 2023; Wang *et al.*, 2022).

Hutchins (2001) has described the evolution of MT as having four significant periods: an early developmental and experimental period from 1946-1954; the period of massive research on direct translation models from 1956-1966; the interlingual and transfer period from 1966-1975; and the current period influenced by advancements in artificial intelligence marked significantly by the launch of Google Translate in 2007 (see Figure 1).

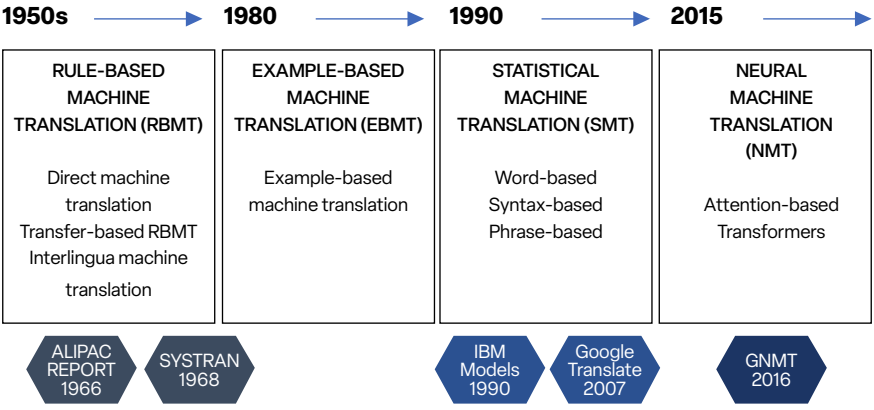

Figure 1: *Timeline of Machine Translation (MT)*

Evolution of Modern MT

MT is the application of computer and language sciences to develop systems that produce translations with or without human assistance (Cira Napoletano & Canga Alonso, 2023). Google Translate, widely known as a primary online translator tool for its efficacy, speed, and accuracy, is widely considered a viable alternative to a human translator and is often the only form of MT that enjoys a high level of familiarity.

The best-known developments in modern MT systems are often traced to the invention of the world's first computers in the late 1940s (Hutchins, 2010). Advances in research on MT in the following decades were driven by concerns in the United States about advancements in science and technology by the Soviet Union, which resulted in most MT systems being designed for military uses (Wang et al., 2022). In 1954, Georgetown University, in collaboration with IBM, conducted an experiment that involved successfully translating 60 Russian sentences into English, marking a significant achievement in MT (Hutchins, 2010; Jolley & Maimone, 2022; Sin-wai, 2023).

The Automatic Language Processing Advisory Committee (ALPAC) report in 1966 prompted a wave of skepticism about MT over claims the technology was too costly and slow compared to human translation (Hutchins W. , 2010). While the report led to a severe decline in funding for research into MT for more than a decade, it nonetheless prompted researchers to strengthen their focus on incorporating greater linguistic knowledge and semantic analysis into their approaches to further develop machine-aided translation technology all while improving the quality of MT output (Stein, 2018; Sin-wai, 2023).

Up until the mid-1960s, the general model of machine translation was the direct approach, with most systems created especially for one pair of languages, usually Russian to English. The analysis involved in the translation process included the determination of the appropriate word order of the translated text in the target language (English) and recognition of word classes such as verbs and nouns to be able to differentiate homographs; little attention was paid to semantics (Hutchins, 2010).

After the APLAC report, the goals in MT research shifted to more indirect approaches, leading to increase diversity in language pairs. A key milestone during this time was the launch of SYSTRAN, used initially as a Russian-English system by the U.S. Air Force since 1970. After being adapted for English to French translation in 1978, it became one of the first successful MT companies to offer a commercial translation system that was considered an improvement on the direct translation system tested at Georgetown

(Hutchins, 2010). By the 1980s and early 1990s, when computing became more commonplace, MT systems matured further and were adapted for desktop computers, thus becoming available in academic institutions. At the time, approaches to MT were based primarily on rule-based and corpus-based models (Cira Napoletano & Canga Alonso, 2023).

Rule-Based Machine Translation (RBMT)

RBMT is one of the earliest approaches to automated language translation and was the predominant model from the 1950s to the 1980s. It operates on a foundation of linguistic rules, carefully designed to convert text from a source language to a target language. RBMT is mainly manual and time-consuming due to the use of bilingual dictionaries and pre-programmed linguistical rules (syntactic, semantic, and morphological) to perform substitutions and transfers from one language to another (Sen & Jamwal, 2024).

According to Sten (2018), RBMT systems rely on a deep understanding of the linguistic structure of both the source and target languages during the translation process, usually covered in three phases:

1. **Analysis:** In this stage, the system analyzes the source language text to break it down into grammatical components. This involves parsing sentences, identifying parts of speech, and understanding the syntactic structure.
2. **Transfer:** Once the analysis is complete, the system maps the grammatical structures and vocabulary of the source language to the target language. This step involves a set of transfer rules that guide the conversion of syntactic and semantic elements from one language to another.
3. **Generation:** The final stage involves generating the target language text from the mapped linguistic elements. The system ensures that the output is grammatically correct and adheres to the linguistic norms of the target language.

Often considered a classical approach, RBMT includes several methods that differ in how they apply linguistic rules to perform translations, including the following:

Direct Machine Translation (DMT)

Also known as literal translation, word-based translation, or dictionary translation, DMT involves the straightforward application of rules to directly map words and phrases from the source language to the target language (Stein, 2018). As it is a system designed to translate from one specific language into another, the process involves performing the minimum work necessary to complete a translation (Slocum, 1985). This method relies on bilingual dictionaries and basic grammatical rules to perform word-to-word or phrase-to-phrase translation with little to no linguistic analysis. That is, it focuses on replacing words in the source language with their equivalents in the target language without conducting extensive syntactic or semantic analysis, leading to relatively simple and fast translation processes but a final product that often lacks fluency and accuracy.

Transfer-Based Machine Translation (TBMT)

With a transfer approach, the meaning of a grammatical unit, e.g., a complete sentence, differs depending on its language of origin or the language into which it is to be converted. This involves a third translation phrase called Transfer (Slocum, 1985). Considered more sophisticated than direct translation, TBMT starts by analyzing and parsing the source language text, followed by mapping the structures identified to equivalent ones in the target language and conversion of syntactic and semantic elements from the source language to the target language (Sharma *et al.*, 2023). While TBMT systems can handle more complex sentences and produce more accurate translations compared to direct translation methods, it nonetheless remains labor-intensive to develop and maintain the set of transfer rules (Sakre, 2019).

Interlingua-Based Machine Translation (IBMT)

IBMT uses an abstract, language-independent representation of the source text that captures its meaning, known as an interlingua, as an intermediate step in the translation process (Sharma et al., 2023). The concept of linguistic universals proposed by linguistics serves as the foundation for an interlingua. Therefore, the representation of a given unit of meaning would be the same regardless of the language in which it is expressed (Slocum, 1985). The source language text is first converted into the interlingua, and then the interlingua is converted into the target language. The approach allows for the translation between multiple languages using a single interlingua, reducing the need for extensive bilingual rules for each language pair. However, developing a comprehensive interlingua that can accurately capture the meaning of a text in different languages is highly complex and challenging (Sen & Jamwal, 2024).

While RBMT offered several advantages in its heyday, mainly regarding linguistic accuracy and transparency, it had several limitations. In addition to struggles with idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms, perhaps the most significant limitation was the time and effort required in developing and maintaining a large set of grammatical rules, which also complicated the incorporation of different dialects and new language pairs. Because linguistic rules were written manually by trained linguists and the rules themselves were not easily transferrable from one language to another, RBMT was never a viable option for use for open-source translation (Jolley & Maimone, 2022; Wang *et al.*, 2022).

Example-Based (EBMT)

In later decades, the substitution and transfer-based models would be replaced by more effective technologies thanks to the broader availability of bilingual corpora, which led to a rise in the prominence of corpus-based methods. In the 1980s, example-based machine translation (EBMT)

emerged as a more flexible, reliable, and scientific-based approach that used examples, analogies, and existing databases to retrieve similar sentence pairs to translate text. That is, EBMT was based on the idea of translation by analogy without a deeper linguistic analysis (Sakre, 2019).

The EBMT model differs from RBMT in that it relies on a database of previously translated examples to perform translations. Instead of using redefined linguistic rules or statistical models, EBMT translates text by finding similar examples in its database and uses them as references to complete the translation (Sen & Jamwal, 2024). Instead of translating all the words in a phrase individually, the system searches for similar phrases in the target language and substitutes only dissimilar words, thus reducing the time to complete the translation. As long as similar sentence pairs or examples could be found in the bilingual corpora, the resulting translation was of high quality. A major advantage of EBMT was the ability to reuse existing translations instead of writing rules and exceptions, which was time-consuming (Wang et al., 2022).

Statistical Machine Translation (SMT)

In the 1990s, at an IBM research center, SMT was introduced as an alternative to RBMT that relied less on human input for the writing of rules and more on the study of parallel texts and phrases in different languages to create statistical models so machines could acquire translation knowledge (Sakre, 2019). With SMT, an identical sentence in two languages can be divided into words and then matched after the fact. The algorithm in the system estimates the probability of a target language phrase based on the input text by paying close attention to the most common translations for words (Stein, 2018). As more data becomes available, SMT systems can be continuously improved; however, as they rely heavily on the quality and quantity of bilingual data, it is still prone to errors, particularly for vague phrases (Sen & Jamwal, 2024).

SMT systems also include phrase-based machine translation (PBMT), which adds the division of texts into phrases to improve precision and expand the scope of bilingual texts for learning purposes. With phrases as the basic

unit of translation, PBMT systems can be considered an advancement over word-based machine translation (WBMT) models that focus on dividing texts into words without regard for word order. In syntax-based machine translation, the basic unit of translation is partial sentences or utterances rather than a single word or strings, as in the case of PBMT (Sharma et al., 2023). Both RBMT and SMT are similar in terms of errors but with differences in type. While RBMT systems offer high-quality sentences based on word order, syntax and coherence, SMT systems offer higher caliber translations in terms of word choice, proverbs, and expressions. In other words, a larger corpus brings improved output (Stein, 2018).

While the prominence of RBMT and the complexity of SMT delayed its widespread adoption, the advent of the internet paved the way for the emergence of online translators based on SMT offered as a free service by early web navigation companies such as Altavista and Yahoo Babelfish (Way, 2021). At the time of its launch in 2006, Google Translate was based on an SMT model and created waves in the industry not necessarily for its precision but for its convenience. While SMT was a significant advancement in machine translation, it has been largely superseded by Neural Machine Translation (NMT), which employs deep learning techniques for even more accurate and fluent translations (Sharma et al., 2023).

Neural Machine Translation (NMT)

The landscape of machine translation changed dramatically with the use of the neural machine translation model (GNMT) in 2016 by Google Translate (Aiken, 2019). Unlike its predecessor, SMT, NMT treats translation as a single, continuous process rather than breaking it down into smaller sub-problems. In processing and translating entire sentences instead of smaller phrases by combining neural networks with artificial intelligence, NMT translates large amounts of text with a high level of precision and awareness of context. The resulting translations are not only accurate, but also very similar to human translation due to the use of deep learning techniques; that is, NMT systems

recognize patterns and links between words and phrases, can simulate human thinking, and learn from errors, thus becoming more proficient over time. Since NMT learns the entire translation process simultaneously it is able to capture complex language patterns and dependencies more effectively to produce more fluent and accurate translations compared to SMT, including context-dependent words and phrases (Sin-wai, 2023).

The Future of NMT in the Field of Language Learning

The future of NMT is deemed incredibly promising (Sharma et al., 2023). Today, Google Translate, DeepL, and other translation tools heavily rely on NMT, which is expected to branch out into specialized models for specific areas, including legal, medical, and technical. In addition to expanded language coverage and integration with other AI modalities, such as speech and image recognition, the processing time for NMT models will also increase considerably, enough to meet the requirements of real-time applications such as subtitling and simultaneous interpretation (Wang et al., 2022).

Despite the continued controversies surrounding overuse and dependency, applications for machine translation powered by neural networks and AI in language learning will likely grow-grow. In addition to adaptive and personalized learning, NMT offers automated assessment and feedback for students and educators. It promises to provide real-time corrections and suggestions, which can help learners understand their mistakes and learn more efficiently. It is also expected that NMT systems will likely improve in understanding and preserving context, idioms, and cultural nuances, thus providing more accurate translations for language learners to grasp real-world usage.

CHAPTER 4

THE USE OF ONLINE MACHINE TRANSLATORS IN UNIVERSITY EFL CLASSES

Introduction

The use of MT, particularly Google Translate (GT) in EFL classes, has been a topic of interest among educators and researchers. With the constant presence of portable technological devices and widespread Wi-Fi connectivity, for the generation of so-called digital natives, it has become second nature to obtain instant answers to burning questions, particularly in the EFL classroom. Despite continued debate over whether translation is an outdated form of teaching that has no place in EFL classrooms, it must be accepted that translation in the EFL classroom is unavoidable, regardless of what institutional policies may be in place; this is particularly true in lower-level learners and adults, who will engage in a top-down form of processing information combined with their own cultural and linguistic knowledge of their native language (L1) to be able to process information in the target language (L2) (Payne & Contreras, 2019).

Studies have shown that the average percentage of students of different foreign language classes who use online translators ranges from 80 to 90% (Ducar & Houk Schocket, 2018; Ghorianfar et al., 2023; O'Neill, 2019), even when classroom policies may forbid it, students cannot seem to resist

using it for a wide range of purposes due to its free access, efficiency, and convenience (Lee, 2019). One of the most common uses for machine translators such as Google Translate by university students is an online dictionary to verify the translation of individual words, which is typically considered an ineffective use of the technology (Ata & Debreli, 2021; Urlaub & Dessein, 2022). Another common use is for reading comprehension (Yang et al., 2023) and writing assignments (Tuilan *et al.*, 2023), although some studies report machine translation for certain language pairs is not yet capable of producing error-free essays free (Groves & Mundt, 2015; Lee & Briggs, 2021).

The literature shows that views among students on MT are diverse; while most are fully aware of the technology's limitations, including inaccuracy and literal translation, they are quick to acknowledge its benefits, particularly in the form of an assistant to complete assignments (Kasperė & Liubinienė, 2023). Studies report that, when using online translators, students learn from their errors and acquire a perspective of writing as a process due to the need to edit MT output (Lee, 2019; Organ, 2023).

Given the ease of access to this type of online tool, the language instructor needs to know what resources are available and the effect they can have on learning. Given the futility of attempting to ban the use of online translators completely, many authors agree that efforts would be better placed on understanding their full capabilities and weaknesses and welcome it as another tool in the EFL classroom. Ducar and Schocket (2018) state that the role of the instructor is to encourage the responsible and effective use of online translators so that students understand that progress toward greater proficiency and ethical use of technologies are important skills in the 21st century.

Therefore, this chapter presents the results of a classroom activity involving the use of online translators by university students in the EFL classroom to gauge their perceptions regarding accuracy and usefulness as well as their emotional reactions when being deprived of these digital tools in class.

Method

This study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining concurrent quantitative and qualitative strands to gain a comprehensive understanding of student's perceptions and experiences with online translators and artificial intelligence in the EFL classroom. The approach applied was descriptive and non-experimental. The decision to combine quantitative and qualitative strands was based on the premise that this approach yields more evidence than quantitative investigation or qualitative inquiry alone when scrutinizing a problem of interest (Creswell, 2017).

The quantitative component was addressed through closed-ended questions in two questionnaires, which provided measurable data on general trends and attitudes. Meanwhile, the qualitative aspect was explored by allowing students to elaborate on their opinions and share nuanced perspectives. By integrating these two approaches, the study not only identified patterns in student responses but also uncovered deeper insights into their experiences and reasoning. This methodological triangulation enhanced the reliability and depth of the findings.

Participants and Site

According to Rahi (2017), convenience sampling describes the data collection process from a research population that is effortlessly reachable to the researcher. Therefore, the researchers worked with a sample of 52 university students enrolled in two 80-hour EFL courses at a private university in Cuenca, Ecuador, between February and June 2024. It is worth mentioning that, according to the Council of Higher Education of Ecuador (CES, for its acronym in Spanish), attainment of a B2 level in a foreign language according to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) is compulsory for graduation from any program (Consejo de Educación Superior, 2017); thus, students may meet this requirement by taking an exam or enrolling in English courses delivered through the university language unit, which are divided into eight levels.

The two courses were assigned to the same professor-researcher in the same academic period and consisted of students from varying academic programs ranging from architecture to civil engineering. The students' ages ranged from 18 to 22 years of age and were enrolled in the final two levels of English to obtain a B1 level, called Intermediate and Advanced, respectively. Classroom policies instituted by the professor allowed the use of cellphones, laptops, and other digital devices to assist in developing classroom activities but banned them for official quizzes and final exams.

Instruments

Two questionnaires were developed using Google Forms: a general perception questionnaire on the use of online translators and artificial intelligence in the EFL classroom and an exit questionnaire to evaluate students' reactions regarding two in-class writing assignments completed with and without the aid of machine translation or technological devices. The questionnaires contained an equal number of closed and open-ended questions, thus enabling students to provide additional details on their opinions. All questions were written in Spanish to ensure full comprehension and administered via Google Classroom, which all students had been using throughout their courses. All activities took place inside the classroom within regular class hours.

Before the questionnaires were implemented, a pilot test was conducted to ensure their clarity, relevance, and effectiveness in capturing the desired data. A small group of students and professors from two other classrooms of the same level participated in this pilot, allowing the researchers to identify and address potential issues, such as ambiguous wording or technical difficulties. Feedback from the pilot test was used to refine the surveys, ensuring the final versions were both reliable and user-friendly.

Procedure

The questionnaires and class writing activities were conducted in phases (See Figure 2). Students from both the penultimate and final courses

responded to the perception questionnaire with 12 questions probing how they engaged in translation activities in and outside the EFL classroom, the types of translation and AI tools they used in class, their perceptions of the efficacy of the tools, and whether their use should be permitted in the EFL classroom.

Under the premise that students enrolled in their final English course would have sufficient proficiency to conduct a comparative analysis of their own work, one researcher-instructor invited their students enrolled in the Advanced course to participate in two in-class assignments in the same week of class. The first involved writing a 150-word tip article on how to perform a specific task or learn a new skill to practice parallel structures. For this activity, students were instructed to write the article using pen and paper without using any digital device or consulting their classmates. This was done not only to evaluate their true level of English without the assistance of a digital device but also their reactions while completing the assignment independently and with full knowledge that it was to be graded out of one point.

Prior to the final exam, students were then asked to write a 150-word commentary about how to make the world a better place, to practice how to make non-count nouns countable by adding different types of quantifiers to abstract ideas, foods, liquids, and activities (e.g., a piece of, words of, an act of, a bunch of, etc.). For this activity, students wrote the commentary in their L1 and used an online translator(s) of their choice to transfer the text into English for post-analysis. Students were then instructed to compare the original text in Spanish with the MT version for revisions or corrections, if necessary, before submitting for grading (out of one point). To finalize the activity, students completed an exit questionnaire containing four questions regarding their level of trust in the machine translation of their original text and how they felt compared to the previous activity in which they wrote the tip article without any assistance.

In addition to the questionnaires, the researchers held a focus group with five students to obtain feedback on their assignments, the use of machine translation, and feelings regarding being separated from their digital devices

in class. Qualitative data from the open-ended questions and focus group were subjected to a thematic analysis (Clarke & Braun, 2016), which has been deemed a flexible and appropriate approach to identify patterns within human subjects' experiences and perspectives. Following preliminary coding, the researchers engaged in an iterative process to fine-tune and determine principal themes.

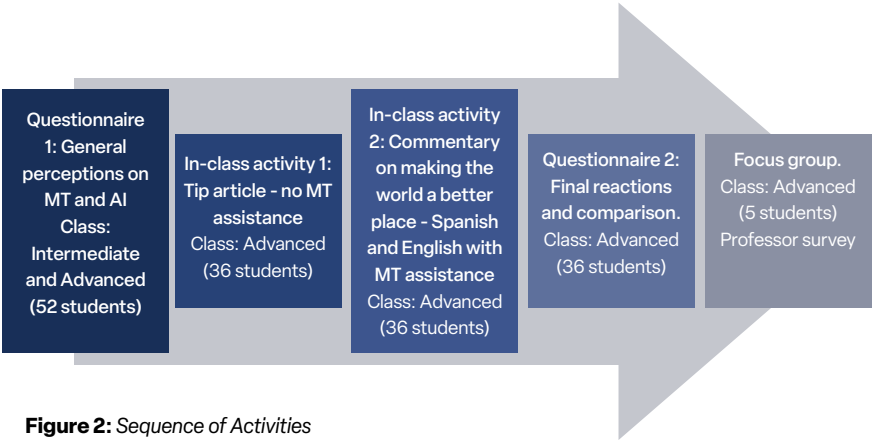

Figure 2: *Sequence of Activities*

Results

A total of 52 students in both classes responded to the general perception questionnaire on the use of online translators and AI tools in and outside the EFL classroom. The themes in the questionnaire included general perceptions of usage, accuracy, and specific uses in an EFL classroom context.

General Perceptions on Online Translators

All students reported using translators in general and in the EFL class, primarily Google Translate, followed by DeepL. When asked for what purpose, the students in both classes responded that they used online translators to verify the meaning of certain words, to confirm whether the idea they were trying to convey made sense and to spell check their work.

When asked whether they used online translators or AI tools outside of the EFL classroom, approximately 78% of students responded affirmatively. Regarding online translators, students reported using them to watch movies or understand songs in English, read academic papers, and understand TikTok videos. Students reported using AI tools to complete assignments quickly and efficiently and fix spelling mistakes. Within the responses, security emerged as a major topic, with many students noting they relied equally on online translators and AI to "confirm or brainstorm ideas" and to "make sure that what I'm doing is right." (see Table 3)

Online translators	**AI tools**
Check word meanings Confirm and verify thoughts and meanings Correct grammatical or spelling mistakes Understand movies in English and videos on social media Read academic papers	Confirm and verify thoughts and meanings Correct grammatical or spelling mistakes Identify subtopics for essays

Table 3: *Top Uses of Online Translators and AI Tools Outside the EFL Classroom*

Accuracy of Online Translators and AI Tools

Regarding their opinions on the advantages and disadvantages of online translators in class, most students reported favorable opinions on their efficacy in general, particularly in terms of speed, as an efficient tool for word searching, demonstrating the differences in meaning and correcting spelling mistakes. Among the disadvantages, students reported experiencing high inaccuracy rates when translating complex sentences, as most online

translators deliver literal translations without consideration for context. Students offered the following comments:

> *"It depends a lot on what you're looking for exactly...you have to know how to tell the platform what you really want to say."*

> *"There are certain things it cannot identify well and can make you doubt what you know...as an advantage, it can help you when you can't remember a certain word."*

> *"It works most of the time, but in other cases, translators don't understand the context of what I'm trying to say, and they translate in a different way. There are many advantages, especially regarding vocabulary, but it isn't always precise."*

> *"I would say there are many advantages...it helps us learn words we wouldn't know only by writing, and it gives us the meaning."*

A smaller group of students commented on potential dependency issues as a disadvantage, noting that students tend to experience these issues when they do not use the tool. Regarding AI tools such as Chat GPT, a few students reported using the tool as a translator. However, they noted that when they do so in combination with an online translator, the result is often an overly formal translation that does not match the tone or context under study in the classroom.

> *"I think it's a precise method, but at the same time, it has huge disadvantages in that people get lazy when they have to think, and they prefer that someone or something else do the work for them."*

> *"I've found more disadvantages than advantages since most of the time, it doesn't have a good grammar and doesn't use the right connectors. I usually get confused because I usually look for word meanings and the*

[online] translator gives me a meaning that is too formal in Spanish…a person who knows English, like my professor, knows how to use the language more colloquially."

Use of Online Translators and AI Tools in The EFL Classroom

When asked whether online translators and AI tools should be permitted in the EFL classroom, students gave divided responses. Most responded that they should be allowed during regular classes (see Figure 3).

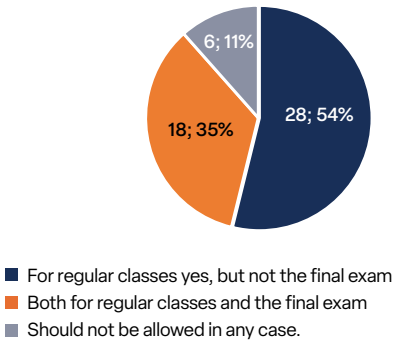

Figure 3: *Students' Opinion on the Use of Online Translators and AI in the EFL Classroom*

When probed on what they believed was the best use of these tools inside an EFL classroom, students offered consistent responses, with most commenting that they should be used primarily as a dictionary for verification and support purposes. One student remarked that a key usage should be back translation; that is, inputting text already translated in English back into the tool for translation into Spanish to determine whether its meaning remains intact. Another suggested limiting their use to translating unknown phrases or words and then stop their use altogether to allow independent thinking and prevent "monotony and becoming accustomed to having everything handed to us."

In-class Activity Results

Students who participated in the two in-class activities also responded to an exit questionnaire that asked them to share their experiences writing without any digital assistance and then using the online translator of their choice to complete the assignment and compare the results.

When asked how they felt while completing the first writing assignment (tip article) without the help of any online translator or digital device, approximately 60% of students reported feeling stressed to some degree. The emotions reported include frustration, nervousness, confusion, and even anxiety. One student reported feeling like they were taking an exam; another noted they realized just how far their dependency went, commenting, "I discovered I use the online translator more than I think I do."

Instead of feelings of anxiety or confusion, eight students reported feeling slightly calmer and focused on finding synonyms and other options to convey their ideas. In their words:

> *"Sometimes I had to replace words with more explicative phrases, like blender."*
> *"It [the exercise] made me look for new options and more simple ways to say things."*
> *"I felt good because while I got blocked at the beginning, later I was happy to know that I can do it alone."*

Exit Questionnaire Results

As mentioned previously, the 36 students enrolled in the Advanced EFL course were asked to complete two writing assignments, one unaided and the other with online translators or AI tool. The students completed a questionnaire immediately after completing both assignments that probed their experiences and perceptions.

Trust in Online Translator/AI Output

First, students were asked how often they revised or corrected the output from their online translators or AI tools. One quarter responded they always did so, followed by 61.1% who stated they did this sometimes. When asked how often they made these revisions prior to handing in an assignment to their EFL professor for grading, the total number of students who reported they always checked the output increased to 58.3%, followed by 30.6% of those who said they did this sometimes. While the students' English level was relatively high, it is worth noting they still felt the need to verify the outcome of the online translator (see Figure 4).

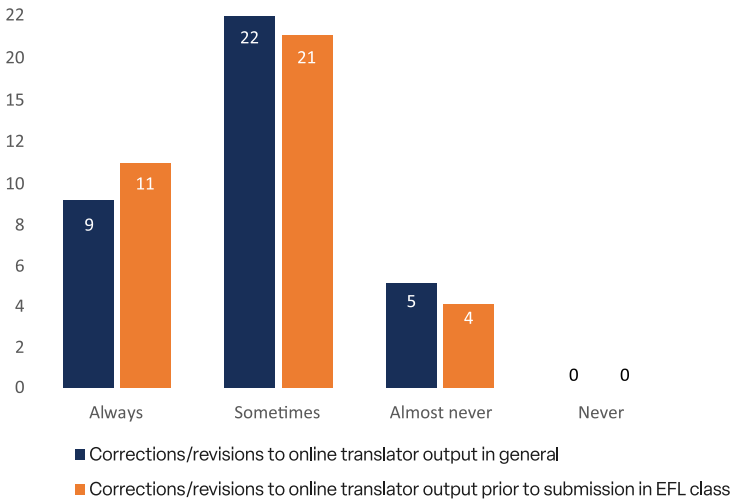

Figure 4: *Revisions Made to Translated Texts Prior to Submission in the EFL Classroom*

Overall Satisfaction with the Performance of Online Translators

Eleven students reported making no changes to the MT version of the 150-word text, noting they perceived it to be correct. The rest reported having to make between six to eight corrections prior to submitting the final text to the professor. The revisions made by the students covered the following areas:

Grammar and Syntax: Correcting "awkward sentence structures or errors in verb tense."
Idiomatic Expressions: Rephrasing idioms or cultural expressions that were mistranslated.

Contextual Accuracy: Adjusting words or phrases that do not match the intended meaning in a specific context.

Formal/Informal Tone: Ensuring "the translation fits the desired tone", especially for academic or professional writing.

One student remarked they saw the need to make many changes because the machine-translated version of their text contained words with a similar meaning but were written differently.

> *"DeepL does not translate the same way as Google Translate; DeepL is the closest translation. AI makes small changes in the translation but tries to focus on the same [thing]. No translator is the same, and that's why it should only be used for certain words and not for complete phrases or texts."*

Regarding their opinions on how well online translators work, they mostly appreciated the ease of use, speed, and accessibility of AI translators, mentioning that they find these tools convenient for quick translations and everyday tasks. Many expressed that online translators are good enough for basic understanding and common phrases but not more complex expressions. They pointed out areas where online translators fall short, such as handling issues with contextual accuracy, handling complex sentences, or translating nuanced cultural phrases. They also mentioned frustration with errors in grammar or syntax, especially for academic or formal use.

"MT use words which end up being too technical for the context."
"The grammar was not well translated."
"In general, online translators did not convey accurately what I wanted to express."
"I had to enter some more than two versions of the text in Spanish to finally get the results I was looking for."
"I found some grammar mistakes such as questions translated as sentences."

Stress vs. Ease Regarding the Purpose of the Exercise

Compared to the results of the first questionnaire probing their feelings when writing without the assistance of online translators, most students noted they felt less pressured, nervous, and anxious with the second writing activity since they had access to the online translator of their choice to verify their word choices. In addition to feeling calmer the second time, nearly half the students also reported feeling good about their knowledge of English, commenting that the exercise made them more aware of their capacity to write texts in English that can be understood.

Eight students reported still feeling slightly nervous, anxious, and unprepared, even with the aid of online translators. One student commented they felt as if they were committing plagiarism, while another felt that their nervousness stemmed from using different online translators and feeling confused at seeing the changes in the different outputs. "I felt doubt because of the number of times I used the translator and how many times it [the text] was wrong."

Results from the focus group held at the end of the course showed that students felt greater freedom in completing their tasks since they knew what was expected of them the second time. However, they still questioned the results from the multiple online translators they had used, noting how "even they" could tell certain words were being misused. The group also conveyed their appreciation for the classroom activity, noting that "being in on" the

purpose of the assignment forced them to critically analyze their work and think about their learning progress.

Discussion

Increased use = Dependency?

The results showed that most respondents use AI or OMTs, suggesting a growing reliance on these tools for language-related tasks such as writing assignments, vocabulary research, and understanding of films and other forms of social media. This high level of use stems from ease of access, speed, and convenience, thus highlighting a shift from traditional methods (e.g., dictionaries or human assistance) to more tech-based solutions driven by advancements in AI technology (Tuilan et al., 2023).

Despite the benefits, students are aware of the limitations and drawbacks of using online translators, including dependency, reduced motivation to learn vocabulary, and concerns about accuracy. Many reported having felt deeply stressed, anxious, and "out of their comfort zone" when asked to complete writing activities in the EFL classroom without the aid of an OMT. Students were uncomfortable relying on their own knowledge without being able to fact-check, which suggests a decline in self-confidence not only in their language abilities inside the EFL classroom but also in other courses. These observations coincide with previous studies conducted in Asia that have highlighted the link between OMT use and decreased self-reliance among students when learning English (Briggs, 2018; Murtisari *et al.,* 2019; Tuilan *et al.*, 2023).

However, despite some studies suggesting that over-reliance on these tools might reduce students' exposure to and practice with the target language, the results of the in-class experiment show that students did not perceive this to be the case. Most reported they felt they had strengthened their knowledge in key areas despite any feelings of anxiety or stress throughout the process.

Perceptions of Accuracy and Trust

Most respondents found the online translators they used to be accurate, which reflects advancements in AI language models that are capable of handling complex translations with few errors. Despite positive perceptions of accuracy, students do not completely trust online translators/AI to handle more complex sentences, phrases, or idiomatic expressions, particularly when using multiple online translator platforms that provide different outputs that can cause confusion. Even with access to all their digital devices and multiple online translation platforms, many students reported they still felt the need to cross-check results due to the confusing outputs. These findings are in contrast with other studies conducted using OMTs. In one pilot study, Polakova and Klimova (2023) found that 50% of participating students were unaware of the disadvantages of using machine translation.

Overall, the students perceive online translators such as Google Translate and its rival DeepL as valuable tools that aid their EFL learning, particularly for writing and vocabulary tasks. This finding coincides with other studies that focus on OMTs (Polakova & Klimova, 2023). While students showed their appreciation for the convenience and support OMTs provide, their responses also revealed awareness of the potential drawbacks and self-reflection on issues concerning dependency and confidence in their language abilities.

Implications

The study has limitations, including the lack of a control group, and a small number of participants. That said, the results suggest a learning opportunity in the EFL classroom, where the effectiveness of OMTs can be enhanced when students receive proper instruction and guidance on how to question the results and use them effectively. However, opinions on whether online translators and/or AI tools should be prohibited in the EFL classroom due to concerns of plagiarism or academic dishonesty remain divided. This opens the door both classroom instructors and students to negotiate the terms of their usage in a way that reduces dependency and fosters learning.

Given that technology has advanced considerably and that students in the EFL class are already performing translations in their heads as it is a natural, often unconscious drive, the idea of prohibiting the use of translation and machine translation seems to make less sense. Given the improvements currently being made by technology companies such as Google and ChatGPT to improve the quality of their translation output, it may make more sense to put efforts towards designing EFL classroom assignments with student input that focus on fostering their critical thinking and self-reliance.

CHAPTER 5

PERCEPTION AMONG UNIVERSITY EFL PROFESSORS REGARDING ONLINE MACHINE TRANSLATION TOOLS

Introduction

The EFL classroom has changed significantly over the past decades, particularly given the integration of technological advances to support learning activities. One area that merits discussion is the effect of these advancements on Machine Translation (MT) and its use in the EFL classroom. Thanks to technology, the ready availability of online dictionaries has freed language students from carrying paper dictionaries to look up words and verify meanings in the target language. Their ease of access and free online availability means these online tools can be accessed anywhere and from any device. With the latest advancements in artificial intelligence (AI), Online Machine Translation (OMT) and other AI-powered tools have become a growing presence in the EFL classroom as they aid students in obtaining immediate translations of not only words and phrases but entire passages of text (O'Neill, 2019).

The literature suggests that including tasks that require L1-L2 translation, aside from serving as a means of engaging large classes, may increase confidence and sense of attainment, particularly among low-proficiency learners. The impact of online translation tools on writing development

has also been studied by various authors who note that online translators like Google Translate can improve EFL writing by enhancing vocabulary, reducing grammatical and spelling errors, and increasing overall writing quality, especially when used with proper instruction (Cancino & Panes, 2021; Ducar & Houk Schocket, 2018; Kasperė & Liubinienė, 2023; Lee, 2019; O'Neill, 2019). At a university level, other authors assert that more and more undergraduate students fully recognize the positive impact of OTs in the EFL classroom (Briggs, 2018; Tuilan et al., 2023).

Nevertheless, despite the ubiquitous use of online translators in the EFL class, the practice of engaging in pre-planned, in-class translation activities, including ones that purposely call for the use of online translation tools, is still met with some resistance by educators due to a variety of factors, including negative associations with the Grammar Translation Approach (GTM) to language teaching and concerns regarding dependency and possible interference with authentic communicative activities (Cancino & Panes, 2021; Carreres et al., 2017; Payne & Contreras, 2019).

Another concern is ambiguity in OMT output, which can severely impact text quality and often goes undetected by lower-level language learners who lack the skills to identify a faulty translation (Ducar & Houk Schocket, 2018). Concerns have also been raised regarding plagiarism and assessment of OMT-aided assignments in the EFL class and how these compare to original pieces submitted by students who have put in a significant amount of time and effort in their writing without technological assistance (Somers *et al.*, 2006). Despite these concerns, the increased presence of online dictionaries and translation tools in the EFL classroom seems to point to a growing acceptance of their use among educators, albeit with certain restrictions (Stapleton & Ka Kin Leung, 2021).

Given the ready access to online language resources, educators continue to face the issue of knowing what resources are available to students and their effects on the process of learning a language. Therefore, this chapter presents the results of an online questionnaire that probed the perceptions of eight university-level EFL professors regarding the use of online translators and translation activities in the EFL classroom.

Method

As mentioned in Chapter 4, this study employed a qualitative approach to understand university EFL professors' perceptions and practices with OMTs and artificial intelligence in the EFL classroom. The decision to apply a qualitative approach was based on the premise that it was suitable for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups attach to a particular human issue (Creswell, 2017).

Participants and Site

The researchers used a non-probabilistic sampling method to recruit participants. This involved sending email invitations to their personal networks of colleagues of university EFL professors from different institutions in Cuenca, Ecuador. A total of eight out of 12 professors responded to the invitation within the timeframe indicated and had varying levels of experience ranging from 10 to 20 years. All the professors work with undergraduate students whose first language is Spanish.

Attainment of a B2 level in English is compulsory for graduation from any program at the university level in Ecuador (Consejo de Educación Superior, 2017). Students can meet this requirement by taking a proficiency exam or by enrolling in English courses delivered through the language units at the universities. In addition, at some universities, students are required to pass certain English levels to advance in their undergraduate studies.

Instruments and Procedure

The questionnaire was developed using Google Forms and contained both closed and open-ended questions regarding translation as a tool in EFL learning, the types of OTs professors were most familiar with and why, their classroom policies regarding their use, and insights on how to effectively incorporate translation activities in the EFL classroom. Qualitative data

from the open-ended questions underwent a thematic analysis (Clarke & Braun, 2016) to identify patterns in the experiences and perspectives of the questionnaire respondents. Following preliminary coding, the researchers conducted an iterative process to categorize and then analyze the major themes that emerged.

Before the questionnaire was sent to participants, a pilot test was conducted to ensure the questions posed were clear. Discussions were first held with a group of professors from other English language teaching institutions, including other universities and high schools. Two high school-level teachers and two university professors were shown a preliminary list of questions and asked to provide feedback. Their responses focused on ensuring that the time needed to complete the questionnaire would not surpass 10 minutes and ensuring multiple options for different OMTs were included among the list of tools featured.

Results

Translation as the Fifth Skill in Second Language Acquisition

All professors consider that either consciously or unconsciously, teachers and students use translation in some form in the English classroom. While all the professors noted they engage in translation activities in the class and perceive it as an innate activity, not all consider it a fifth skill alongside reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Some of the comments include the following:

> *"It is of utmost importance to be able to translate. Starting with the premise that everyone who starts studying a second language already has an L1, it is nothing but impossible to try to "turn off" their NATURAL desire to translate into their mother tongue..."*
> *"The combination of both (MT or EFL translation) helps improve one's language ability."*

"It is the most economical way, linguistically speaking, to have easy and fast access to meaning and thus understanding vocabulary and context."
"Translation is innate to anybody who tries to make sense of the new language to which they are being subjected, and it should be used with caution and wisely."
"If used correctly, it could provide the scaffolding that a pupil needs to overcome their fears and anxiety and improve their ability to understand."
The responses were also inconsistent since one professor mentioned, *"It is necessary with certain grammar topics, especially for lower levels,"* and another, *"I would agree but only with advanced students."*

Use of Translation in the EFL Class

Most (87.5%) of the professors asserted they use translation to teach English, while the rest said they do not (see Figure 5).

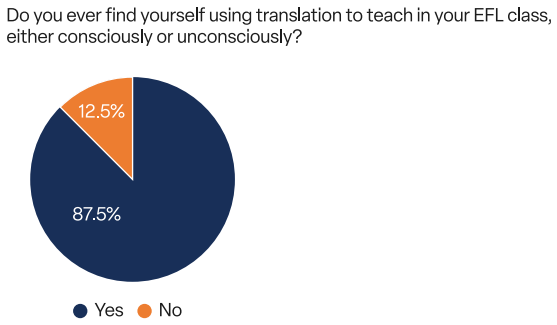

Figure 5: *Unconscious Use of Translation by Professors*

When asked about the circumstances in which they incorporate translation into their EFL classes, the respondents acknowledged they deemed it important to teach new vocabulary, explain grammar, compare the different OMT outputs, and raise awareness among students as to how useful or not OMTs can be. As one professor stated, *"Imagine a setting in which a student needs to make sense of what he/she is being taught, and the teacher only uses English because Spanish is demonized. You are only causing*

more anxiety."

Many professors are also fully aware of cultural concerns and the importance of taking these into consideration when translating.

Use of Online Machine Translators (OMT) for Teaching Purposes

Professors reported using OMTs in their professional practice as educators, with Google Translate mentioned as the most used translation engine, followed by Linguee. ChatGPT was not considered a platform for translation but more of an essay-writing and question-answering tool (see Figure 6).

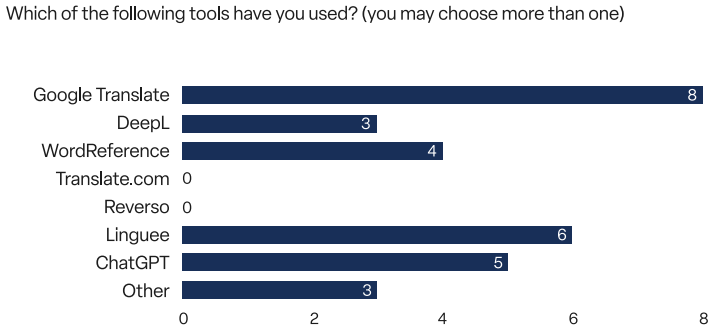

Figure 6: *Use of Common OMTs by Professors*

When asked about purpose, most respondents cited verification of the meaning and spelling of certain words rather than confirmation of the accuracy of complete sentences (see Figure 7).

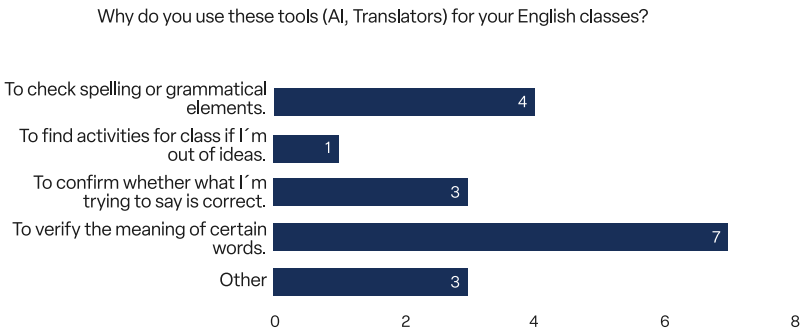

Figure 7: *Reasons for the Use of OMTs by Professors*

Classroom Policies Regarding AI and OTs

When asked about their classroom policies regarding the use of OMT and AI tools such as ChatGPT, most professors agreed they considered it a form of academic dishonesty; while some professors commented on the futility of going against the use of OMTs in class, most nonetheless confirmed they held policies that banned their use for formal exams, quizzes, and writing activities. None of the respondents mentioned these tools should be completely forbidden (see Figure 8).

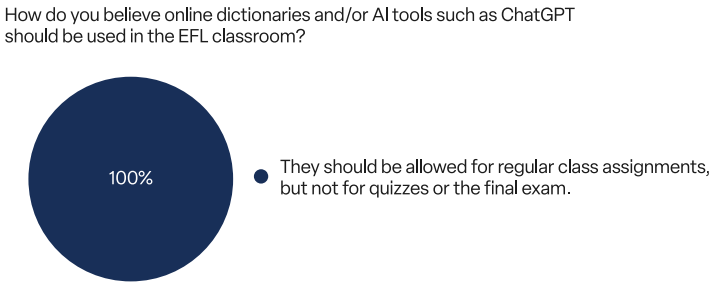

Figure 8: *Classroom Policies on OMTs by Professors*

Students' answers were varied when asked to rate the precision of online translators and AI tools used by their students, with most noting that despite the continuous improvements and relatively high accuracy rate, OMTs continue to require human correction. Some professors expressed frustration with the lack of a human tone in much of the OMT output and the inability to grasp the subtleties of style for longer texts. "Unless the original text is written in a direct style, the machine translation will always require human editing," commented one professor.

Shared experiences on the use of AI or OMTs in their EFL Classroom

When asked about their experiences using AI or OMT for their classroom planning, the responses showed a diversity of uses ranging from game creation to meaning recognition (see Table 5).

Uses for AI and OMT for EFL classroom planning activities
Creation of games with AI
When teaching C1 and finding completely new words
To show students how they can identify their weaknesses and mistakes
To have fake conversations
To look up linguistical features and compare the results from different platforms.
Make students realize how the meanings are sometimes lost.
To compare the results of two students using the same online translator who end up with different translations even when entering the exact same phrase.

Table 5: *Uses for AI and OMT in Professional Practice*

Discussion

Reluctant Acceptance of Translation as the Fifth Skill

The professors' responses reflected a division in opinions on translation as a formal skill in second language acquisition, with both positive and negative reactions. Many see its practical use, especially in teaching new vocabulary and grammar, suggesting a pragmatic approach to language instruction. This highlights that while professors recognize students' inherent tendency to translate between their L1 and L2, the formal widespread recognition of translation as an attainable skill in the EFL classroom is still in progress. Many authors have called for a revival of translation as a macro-skill, noting that its banishment from the EFL classroom during the rise of communicative language teaching approaches in the 1960s and 1970s was unjust (Ayachia, 2018; Carreres et al., 2017; Colina & Lafford, 2017; Nguyen, 2024). Since much of human learning involves moving from the familiar to the unfamiliar, translation can serve as a bridge between the two as it is a form of mediation (Cook, 2010).

Translation in Teaching

Most respondents indicated their awareness that both professors and students use translation, either consciously or unconsciously, in their EFL classes. This finding coincides with other studies on the use of L1 and translation and translanguaging in EFL classroom environments (Topolska-Pado, 2010; Zhang, 2023). This indicates that while translation may not be the central focus of their teaching, it serves as an auxiliary tool for tasks like explaining grammar, confirming understanding, or even pointing out potential pitfalls of over-reliance on translation.

The circumstances in which translation is used, such as teaching grammar and vocabulary, show that many professors still consider it essential for clarifying complex or unfamiliar concepts. Some instructors also aim to raise

awareness of when translation can be helpful or misleading, indicating a reflective and cautious use of the technique.

While the questionnaire results point to a particular usage of translation as a means to an end in the EFL classroom, its pre-planned use as a teaching tool itself by educators was not observed. Given the historical, strict divide between language learners and translators, with the latter group perceived as professional, this result is not surprising. However, translation need not be restricted to students with an interest in the profession per se; instead, it can be employed as a teaching tool in a structured manner by clarifying its purpose, establishing learning outcomes, and analyzing the characteristics of the intended audience and context. Having students participate in real-time translation activities versus role plays based on fictitious scenarios is another form of engaging in authentic communication (Colina & Lafford, 2017).

Use of AI and OMTs

Professors widely adopt AI tools such as Google Translate, DeepL, and ChatGPT, particularly for verifying spelling and grammar, finding activities when running out of ideas, and checking the accuracy of word meanings. It is also worth noting that many professors mentioned they allow AI and OMTs in class as digital teaching assistants, particularly for large class sizes that make it difficult to respond to every single question posed by students. This view has also been echoed by other authors who have found that translation can assist with instructions and explanations in the classroom (Payne & Contreras, 2019; Tuilan et al., 2023).

This reflects the growing role of AI tools in language teaching, not just as a student tool but also a classroom management resource for educators. While these tools are useful for addressing everyday classroom challenges, teachers also seem aware of their limitations, recognizing that AI-generated text requires human oversight to ensure it aligns with natural language use.

Policy on AI/Translation Use by Students

The results of the questionnaire show the diversity in how professors handle student use of AI and online translators. Many allow these tools for regular in-class assignments but not for tests or final exams, thus reflecting a reluctance to allow their full use. However, some respondents were stricter in their views, considering the use of AI in any form to be academic dishonesty, especially when students copy and paste output without processing the information.

While the use of online translation tools offers scaffolding for initial learning, the classroom policies mentioned by the professors show students are still required to produce original work without AI assistance as a final product. These practices coincide with other studies of similar classroom practices that show a lack of consensus among educators on how to effectively deal with cases of OMT misuse or overuse without diminishing their potential benefits in the EFL classroom (Ducar & Houk Schocket, 2018; O'Neill, 2019; Payne & Contreras, 2019). One area of continued debate is whether the machine translation of a text originally written by a student in their L1 should be considered academic dishonesty since the translated work can still be considered a product of their own intellect (Mundt & Groves, 2016). A study by Nino (2022) examining perceptions held by higher education and secondary education teachers on the issue found 75% of respondents did not report any case of online translation plagiarism due to a lack of evidence and institutional support. Thus, there appear to be opportunities for education institutions to strengthen their policies governing the use of these technologies as learning aids for students, all while providing clear guidelines for educators on how to regulate their use.

AI and OMT in Classroom Exercises

Professors demonstrated their growing comfort with experimenting with AI-driven exercises, such as using ChatGPT for conversational practice or

comparing student-written essays with AI-generated ones. These methods are not just for students to see the contrast but also to raise awareness about the limitations of AI and the need for students to develop their linguistic skills. However, professors emphasized they can easily detect when students rely too heavily on AI and thus ensure students understand the consequences of misuse. Some noted that comparing the outputs of different OMTs provides an opportunity to encourage students to apply critical thinking and not blindly trust the first OMT they use (Kasperė & Liubinienė, 2023; O'Neill, 2019). In environments where AI and OMTs are prohibited for formal examinations, these types of critical thinking exercises can help reduce anxiety and increase self-reliance among students who may have developed a dependency on online translation tools. This points to greater opportunities in which teachers can encourage the use of technology to encourage reflection among students on how to engage with it.

In addition, the use of AI and OMTs also involves the students' L1, which has been mentioned in the literature on translanguaging as an important and useful element in the development of fluency in the EFL classroom rather than a hindrance to be avoided at all costs (Zhang, 2023).

Perceived Precision of AI and OMTs

Many participants recognize that AI and OMTs are accurate most of the time but still require human intervention, particularly for producing natural, context-appropriate language. This accuracy rating varies, with some reporting about 40% precision for student use. Professors showed concern about the literal translations provided by tools like Google Translate, emphasizing that while helpful, AI lacks the human tone and cultural nuance needed for higher-level language tasks. This concern coincides with those of other educators in past studies who have expressed skepticism related to OMT output, particularly regarding inaccuracies in the translation of idioms and lack of contextual awareness (Briggs, 2018; Cancino & Panes, 2021; Ducar & Houk Schocket, 2018; Lee, 2019; O'Neill, 2019; Stapleton &

Ka Kin Leung, 2021). Another issue raised was the misuse of register; that is, when the output of an AI tool is overly technical compared to the context of the assignment. For example, the Spanish language is often indirect in its writing style, which does not always translate well literally and thus requires modifications in English.

Balancing AI as a Learning Aid

Many professors view AI as a potential ally in large classroom settings, where responding to every student's question in real time is not feasible. In this sense, AI and its associated online translation tools function as teaching assistants capable of answering immediate queries about grammar or vocabulary. However, when it comes to graded assignments, professors generally forbid their use to ensure students' authentic understanding and language ability are tested, a practice that is consistent with other studies (O'Neill, 2019). This approach shows the delicate balance professors attempt to achieve in maintaining academic integrity as they recognize the need to embrace AI and online translators in the EFL classroom.

Pedagogical Implications

The results reflect the growing integration of AI and online translation tools in EFL classrooms, along with the challenges it brings. Professors generally appreciate the usefulness of translation and AI tools but remain cautious of their overuse, especially for higher-stakes tasks like tests and final projects. The nuanced approach to allowing AI for learning but limiting it for performance assessment shows educators' understanding of the benefits and potential drawbacks. This suggests that while AI tools are reshaping the classroom, human oversight remains crucial for ensuring meaningful language learning. In the development of writing proficiency, for instance, educators would do well to dedicate class time to teaching writing as a process and focus on overall content instead of achieving grammatical accuracy.

Moreover, professors must consider many important aspects should they decide to incorporate translation into their classes, the level or prior knowledge of students being the most obvious, but also the context of the class, the objectives of the curriculum, the specific purpose of learning, and the students' background.

Although machine translation can be a helpful learning tool, it often falls short in handling register, style, and the subtleties of formal writing, especially in Spanish. For this reason, correction is often needed for accuracy and tone. In addition, AI-powered writing tools such as ChatGPT, while helpful for generating ideas, may be insufficient for writing assignments as they lack the depth and originality needed for academic writing.

In summary, translation is an essential skill for language learners. Whether consciously or not, students often translate in their minds, and this practice—either mentally or in writing—enhances their vocabulary and understanding of colloquial nuances. While mental translation is beneficial, combining it with OMT in a more guided manner can further aid language acquisition. In classes, students can be encouraged to use online translators for in-class assignments, allowing them to explore linguistic features and compare translation outcomes.

As discussed previously, there have been renewed discussions about the purpose of pedagogical translation in EFL, particularly since the early 2000s. Given the pervasiveness of technology in language learning, translation appears to be experiencing a resurgence. As artificial intelligence continues to advance, AI-powered online translation tools will continue to evolve and bring significant changes to how languages are learned and taught. Considering the unlikelihood of language learners not taking advantage of the time-saving features of technology, these advancements call on both academic institutions and educators to adapt their current approaches in foreign language teaching pedagogy to include translation as a teaching approach and OMT as a strategic tool in the classroom. If translation can serve as a language learning strategy, it can be perceived once again as an act of communication.

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Rethinking Translation in the EFL Classroom: Past, Present, and Pedagogical Potential

Long regarded as both indispensable and controversial, translation has played a complex role in the teaching of foreign languages. From its starring role in the Grammar Translation Method (GMT) to its near banishment in the era of the communicative approach, the perception of translation in the classroom has evolved alongside changing educational paradigms.

By bridging historical insights with modern technological realities, this book explores the resurgence of **pedagogical translation** in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education—whether through traditional methods, natural translanguaging, or the use of online machine translation (OMT) tools powered by artificial intelligence (AI).

Drawing on classroom-based research and educator perspectives from Ecuadorian universities, this book offers critical reflections on how translation can both support and challenge language learning goals. Topics include ongoing controversies, the evolution of OMT, and implications for academic integrity and teaching practice.

Ideal for language educators, researchers, and teacher trainers, this book invites readers to reconsider translation not as a taboo, but as a dynamic, adaptable, and potentially transformative tool in the modern EFL classroom.

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