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**“Translation as a Pedagogical Tool: Perceptions of the  
Students of the English Language Major at the  
University of Quintana Roo”**

**TESIS**

**Para obtener el grado de  
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**Presentan**

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## **Introduction**

### **Presentation of the topic**

Language is one of the most powerful tools of communication for many purposes in many fields, like business, education, scientific progress and many others. There are many languages around the world, and it doesn't seem appropriate to consider one language more important than another. We need to be conscious that people live in continuous interaction, since our daily necessities call for direct communication. In addition to this, we humans are constantly connected to one another, and this means that nowadays it is not enough just to be in touch with people, but to look beyond our boundaries and check what is around the corner.

Teaching a foreign language is not an easy task. It implies a lot of skills to satisfy the necessities of the student and that is why a teacher needs to be well prepared in order to transmit knowledge. In order to make this happen, language teachers need to explore new ways, methods and techniques that could successfully improve their teaching tools.

We want to emphasize that learning a new language opens many doors. The opportunities of a person who speaks more than one language are greater than a person who only speaks one. The competitive aspects of this modern world encourage us to demand more from ourselves, and this means that a person has to learn more, be more prepared and be able to communicate with people from other countries, and this will be achieved through the learning of new languages. In other words, we state that it is almost mandatory in these days to learn foreign languages in order to achieve success.

There are many methods to teach a foreign language. These methods have been improved in order to maximize the results. We can find a huge variety of structural and

dynamical methods, all of them valid and supported by experience and empirical studies. It means that the teacher has the capacity to select the one which better meets the students' needs in class. Many researches have been carried out to support those methods, and their advantages and disadvantages are closely related with the results of those researches. These results are refuted or complemented continuously; therefore, the methods that are used to teach a foreign language can be really controversial with the passage of time.

One of the most controversial points in teaching foreign languages is the use of translation in class. Many pedagogical experts, such as Howatt (1984), Kelly (1969), and Sweet (1964) argue that translation represents an interference when teaching a foreign language. On the other hand, many others argue that translation can be used as a practical tool in order to achieve different objectives in class, for example, Harmer (1990), Edge (1993), Finocchiaro & Brumfit (1983), among others. These authors' opinions, either pro or against translation, will be discussed or analyzed in the section of literature review.

For many years, there has been a huge debate about whether or not to use translation as a tool for teaching a foreign language. We think that this paper will help prove that translation could be considered as a new skill in the learning of a new language. We decided to choose this topic because we started to think that translation is a science that has the property to make the students think. Therefore, we state that translation could be considered as a necessary pedagogical and cognitive tool when learning a foreign language.

Many teachers believe that using translation is a disadvantage when teaching a foreign language. We want to prove that this is a misconception and that translation deserves a fundamental place in a linguistic pedagogical situation. This misconception has provoked a rejection of those activities which involve translation. Students are taught to avoid the use of the vocabulary in their mother tongue because it can damage their learning.

In our thesis we are going to show the different advantages of the use of the mother tongue to achieve a better command of the target language. This thesis will be supported by studies on the matter. Also, we are going to add surveys with the different analyses of the results. As a conclusion we think that this thesis will represent an important research trying to justify the importance of translation in class as an essential tool.

### **Background**

One of the main reasons which led us to choose this topic is the fact that we consider that translation is an excellent class tool. Fortunately many education experts are doing interesting researches based on the necessities of the students and the benefits of translation. For example, there is a web site "*transubstantiation*" which is devoted to translation analysis, research, and different studies on the matter. In an article taken from this web site (*In praise of Grammar Translation Method, October 12, 2009*); we analyzed the following information: first, in this study there is an analysis about the relevance of foreign language teaching after World War II and the birth of many foreign language teaching methods. At this point one of them, the grammar translation method, became really important within the wide range of language teaching techniques.

On the other hand other teaching methods, opposite to the grammar translation method arose and they banned the use of translation in class because it was considered that there was a lack of emphasis on the target language and its fluency. However, in the last few years the use of some aspects of the grammar translation method have been reassessed because of the advantages it offers. That is why in the early twenty first century some language teaching approaches allow a mixture of some aspects of the grammar translation method and some elements taken from other methods.

- **Translation in the classroom**

We found a very interesting previous study closely related to our thesis, namely a complete research by Cindy Cunningham (2000), "*Translation in the classroom: A useful tool for second language acquisition*". She made a deep analysis on the hypothesis about how translation offers several advantages in a foreign language class. For example, she suggests that it is not a good idea to avoid the first language in class, because students feel inhibited when trying to express themselves. It means that it is hard for the students to be forced to use the target language all the time in their learning activities.

Another important part of this paper is a part where she mentioned the benefits of oral translation according to the studies of Heltai (1989), who considers that oral translation represents a very productive activity where the students do not translate word by word, on the contrary, they build a general idea in their minds and focus on the real meaning. She also mentioned another advantage from translation, that it is offered a special skill to the students, through which they learn to be independent learners because they have the opportunity to make an autonomous analysis of their progress, not only by speaking activities in class to develop their target language proficiency, but also by developing translation activities in class.

The grammatical structures of languages can be compared through translation practice. However, as a result, this transference provides positive and negative interferences. Even though the negative interference is often highlighted, the positive interference is more significant as a process to find similar patterns. She makes a reference to Atkinson's (1989) statement about the use of translation as a mechanism, not only to present new language but also to reinforce previous language. The contrastive analysis,

which is implied in translation, is considered beneficial for students because they will know the meaning of the sentences even when they do not have a vast vocabulary, they will be able to understand the grammar rules of the target language by the structure of a sentence in a meaningful context.

She exposes an informal case study. She worked with Japanese students who were beginning to learn English. She identified a common problem in her English class; they were confused when using auxiliary verbs such as do/have/be in sentences, so she experimented with a guided activity in class. She gave them some sentences in English with its adequate translation; then they had to identify words associated with the auxiliary verbs and find a common word in Japanese. She concluded this case study with excellent results, because the students were able to find the missing words according to the context of the translated sentences. She stated that she has applied this activity in class for adult students who identified the correlation of the sentences' structure in an effective way.

As a conclusion of her study she states that it is not possible to convince all people that translation is an effective tool in class, but she assures that this methodology used with the correct materials could be very useful. She said that the teaching methodologies which imply translation are being tested by many teachers and she hopes that the potential usefulness of translation will be considered more and more often. As a personal conclusion we really liked this study because it comes from a person who teaches English to people with different origin. She is faced with different linguistic situations every day. Also, she does not try to impose the use of translation in class, but exposes many arguments by important scholars and a personal case study to support what she considers as a useful pedagogical tool in class; furthermore, she exposes opposite opinions which enrich the analysis of the topic.



- **Translation and Language Teaching**

Another excellent study was written by Angeles Carreres of Cambridge University, UK, *“Translation and Language Teaching”* (2006). This study is very well structured and it helped us understand some points about translation. It begins with an interesting phrase: “Translation is back! (But...was it ever gone?)”. She applied her 10-year experience of teaching a foreign language (Spanish) and translation in two different European universities (the University of Bayreuth in Germany and the University of Cambridge in the United Kingdom).

She did mention the controversy among the grammar translation method and the audio lingual method and the other communicative methods, which were based on the “damage” of translation when learning a foreign language. Then she explained the consequence of the banning of translation in class and its repercussions on teachers’ training, when most of them decided to base their teaching performance on the “accepted” methods. However, she mentions that translation has gained relevance the last few years, and that there are different researches that support its effectiveness.

She believes that translation needs more theoretical support to regain its importance as a pedagogical tool. An interesting point that she states in the study is the fact that translation became a “victim” of the grammar translation method because this did not take into account the communicative function of the language, thereby provoking a generalized rejection toward everything related to translation. She proposes that translation is a natural activity which promotes class discussions, and she states that students like to defend their versions, which represents an extra motivation in carrying out their tasks.

A key point that we consider essential to mention from this study is the fact that sometimes teacher and student take for granted their respective competence in their mother

tongue, which often represents a misconception. Translation brings us the opportunity to prove it. She also suggests that translation is not an exclusive subject for students at a high level who have approved target language proficiency. Translation should be introduced in the first years of a foreign language learning process. It means that translation works as a practical tool to understand primary structures.

She makes a reference to the new studies on translation and the textbooks which are used to carry it out. She holds that the new tendency to give a better place to translation is resulting in new textbooks with renewed ideas such as: González Davies, 2004, Lunn and Lundsford, 2003, Havel et al. 1995. It means that foreign language pedagogy is not only adapting translation as an effective teaching methodology, but also the translator training has been taken into account as a main objective. As a general conclusion she adds some interesting statements, for example the fact that the teacher should be seen as a long-time learner and the learner as a natural translator; she also states that even when teachers are not training professionals in translation they can benefit from this methodology (translator training). It is also important to consider all the objectives of foreign language teaching, including the communicative purpose in order to shape a complete pedagogical method and finally in her two last statements she highlights the significance of building bridges between language teaching and translation pedagogy and finally, she emphasizes the necessity to continue empirical studies to support translation pedagogy.

To end this section, it is important to mention that no similar researches have been carried out in the University of Quintana Roo. Therefore, this will imply that this will be the first investigation carried out of this nature and will be set as a sample to make the future investigators follow and bring a sense of notion about the topic related to this paper work

### **Definition of the problem**

If we want to categorize our topic of thesis as a problem, the central point of this discussion would be the uncommon application of translation as a pedagogical tool, the lack of emphasis on teaching techniques that incorporate translation in foreign language classes and the inadequate use of translation as an effective teaching process.

As we mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, translation had been forgotten since other teaching methods dominated the educational system because of the rejection to the direct use of mother tongue in class as a pedagogical tool. For the last two decades translation has undergone a favorable reappraisal. Some researchers have done some studies which support the fact that translation deserves a more important place in the educational system. It is important to mention that translation should be taken into account to achieve different objectives in class.

First of all it is crucial for this thesis to clarify the points of view that are being analyzed in order to formulate our main hypothesis whereby translation is a useful pedagogical tool in class. There are perspectives for and against the use of translation in class; both views will be analyzed in the structure of this research. This research requires the theoretical support of many studies because of the evolutionary nature of teaching methods. It means that there is a constant renovation of the teaching methodology in class.

## **Objectives**

First and foremost, the objectives to fulfill in this thesis will be based on the perception and beliefs of the students of the English language major of the University of Quintana Roo.

The objective of this thesis is to analyze the importance of translation as a useful tool to teach a foreign language. This paper will be based on numerous studies on the matter. There are studies which criticize the interference of the mother tongue and there are other ones which support the use of mother tongue to complement the teaching of a foreign language.

The research topic is based on the question whether or not translation should be considered as an effective strategy in order to teach a foreign language. The objective of this research is not to try to devalue the previous contrary methods which did not accept the use of translation in class and consider translation as a pedagogical tool. We just try to emphasize that translation is very useful as a complementary element to achieve a successful and meaningful foreign language learning experience.

## **Justification**

With this paper, we will try to support the idea that translation is good and helpful in language pedagogy.

We think that translation has been in a position in which it plays the role of a victim. By this we try to mean that translation has been stigmatized by many scholars of the field of teaching. So, we think that by doing this investigation we will show the true face and the possible support that translation could offer to the world of pedagogy. In other words, the honest intention of this paper is to confirm the importance of translation in language pedagogy.

Through the whole process of collection of data, we could notice that there are not too many papers that relate translation and teaching, and this is why we are doing this investigation in order to widen the availability of researches for those people who are interested in the fields of translation and teaching.

With this research we aim at making an impact on the perspective that the scholars of teaching have when they hear the word translation. The results we are hoping to get are to show that translation is a valid tool for teaching a new language, eliminate the stigmatization that grammar translation method gave to translation itself, and try to suggest new ways through which a person could learn a new language.

Something really interesting that is pushing us to do this thesis is to come up with a fresh idea on how to make a person learn a new language. Let's try to imagine a foreign language teaching class based only on translation without taking into account the old fashioned ideas of the grammar translation method. We believe that this will revolutionize the whole concept of teaching, because it is not too common to say that you came up with a new idea on how to teach a foreign language by only using translation.

## **Literature Review**

In this part of the paper we are going to review the previous studies which were carried out by outstanding education experts in the last decades of the XX century, not only the ones who support the use of translation but also the ones which reject its use. Before making a review of these studies, which were focused on the use of translation in class, it is important to make a general review about translation and its development in history. Then we consider crucial to make a review about the grammar translation method that is the main reference of these studies.

### **History of translation**

First and foremost, we should think what translation really is and how it emerged as a science through the centuries. We think of translation as the act to change a written message into another language, and its history differs according to which part of the globe we are considering. There have been many ideas whereby the art of translation began with the first great civilizations. But, from a realistic point of view, translation has co-existed with the humankind since the early days because the human being is naturally a communicative species and therefore the necessity of communicating with other humans emerged. In other words, let us imagine that in the early stages of the human existence there were lots of different tribes settled around the world whose languages, if we may call them like that, were raw and really simple, but the natural instinct of the mankind is to keep moving and exploring the world. Therefore, through emigrations the different tribes made contact and the necessity of communicating among them emerged along with the necessity of translators due to the fact that these tribes or settlement needed to create bounds. We know that in this case the word translator is a little bit in advance, but in a basic way to state it, we consider that they were the first translators in the history of the human beings.

In an article published in 2008 by Marouane Zakhir, two ideas that we consider very important are stated. The first one is how the western world believed that translation was born. In this article, the western world believed that translation appeared since the destruction of the Babel tower. A passage from the Genesis states that the descendants of Noah settled in the lands of Shinar in order to create a town ruled by God's will. But they committed the sin of creating a tower to reach the heavens. As a consequence, God destroyed the town and the Babel tower, and he punished the people by making them speak different languages so that they couldn't understand one another. God scattered them all over the world and, as a result, many new languages were created and so the necessity to find a way to communicate. This promoted the creation of the translation.

Through the passing of the time, people began to think that the story of Babel was not completely true, and this pushed people to start to research exact dates and reliable data that could confirm the beginnings of translation. For example, another theory states that translation had its roots in Roman times with Cicero and Horace whose techniques have influenced generations up to the twentieth century. Another milestone of the translation is the translation into Latin that St. Jerome did of the Greek Septuagint Bible.

In the sixteenth century the power of church decreased, this institution began to be less important in society, in other words, its power was decentralized. It means that Latin which was the language of church began to be less important. At this point the status of Latin as a universal language declined. In the seventeenth century some theorists such as Sir John Denhom (1615-69), Abraham Cowley (1618-67), and John Dryden (1631-1700) catalogued translation according to three types which were: metaphrase, paraphrase and imitation. In the eighteenth century, translation began to be considered in a more systematic

way due to the previous studies; one example was the book “Principles of Translation” which was written by Alexander Frayer Tayler in 1791.

In the nineteenth century two opposite tendencies rose with respect to translation; in the first one the author was seen as an artist who was able to improve the literature of the target language, and in the second one translation was seen as a mechanical process; however, in this century many theories were created around translation. Some of them were focused on poetic translation.

For example Pierre Daniel Huet analyzed the work of ancient translators, such as Quintilian and Cicero. In this analysis “On the best way of Translating”; he compared their ideas on translation with the ideas of St Jerome, and Erasmus. Then, in 1759, we can find “The Idler”, a work by Samuel Johnson; who analyzed how non-literal translation was used in old Greece in a successful way.

Fortunately there has been a special interest on the history of translation, and new projects and books have appeared in recent years. According to some scholars translation should be reassessed with appropriate methods and theoretical models.

### **Translation Schools**

Through history there are some important periods of time that have represented good moments for translation. There are schools of translation which have developed and supported the translation techniques. Myriam Salama-Carr in 1990 studied The Baghdad School, which grouped together translators of the Abbasid period around the person of Hunayn Ibn Ishaq. The Toledo School which was popular in twelfth and thirteenth century Spain has been the subject of many articles. The Vadstena monastery represented an important place for the development of the vernacular language in medieval Scandinavia, and its significance was revealed by Lars Wollin (1991).



The three most important Schools of Translation are: the American School headed by Malone, the Canadian School headed by Jean Paul Vinay and Jean Darbelnet and the Russian School headed by the theorists Retsker and Shveitser.

### **The Grammar Translation Method**

We believe that the different assumptions that many people have over translation have something to do with the grammar translation method. Moreover, we think that it is worthwhile to include this topic in the development of a thesis based on translation.

In order to go deeper in the history of translation, we think that the stage in which the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) was implemented is an important milestone in the schools of those days. Therefore, we will present an explanation focused on the grammar translation method in order to have a clear notion of what it is, how it works, its history and its most important characteristics.

This method was based on the psychological notion whereby the mind is a collection of separated modules or faculties assigned to various mental tasks: the intellect, the will and the emotions.

The creation, if we may call it like that, of the grammar translation method was based on the classical method, which was focused on the teaching of Latin and Greek because it was believed that by learning classical literature of the Greeks and Romans, the intellect will control the emotions and the will. But in recent years, it became a method based on the teaching of a foreign language. It is nearly impossible to give the credit to a person for its development. About its launching in the language teaching area, it is also difficult to set a precise time because of the fact that it is based on the Classical method, dating back to the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

The methodology implemented for this method is very simple. The classes were taught in the native language of the students. It is important to mention that the target language was rarely used in the classroom. An essential aspect of the GTM is that the teacher used long lists of words and definitions, which could be somehow tedious, that the students had to learn by heart in order to improve their knowledge of vocabulary. These lists of words were presented in an isolated way, without context.

Another key component of the Grammar Translation Method is the highly detailed grammar explanations taught to the students with the desire to teach them the alleged rules of the target language in order to get them accustomed to the correct use of words and word order. This method emphasized the study of the grammar through induction by studying the grammar rules. The scholars had the assumption that languages were made out of isolated words, and they thought that those words could be translated one by one into the foreign language on the basis of the grammar rules learnt in the classroom.

In this method, there are some advantages and disadvantages to be taken into account. Some of the advantages of the GTM are that in this method it is not really important if the teachers are well trained, it does not matter if the teacher has enough skills to teach a class based on the GTM because this method is taught through the mother tongue of the students, and as a consequence, the teachers can teach the target language without even being well trained in that language. Another advantage is that the students develop great skills when dealing with grammar and sentence structure, due to the fact that this method is aimed at developing mainly reading and writing skills. Also, the easiest way to explain the meaning of a word is by translating it into the mother tongue of the student.

On the other hand, some of the disadvantages are that this method is unnatural due to the fact that the natural way of learning a new language is through the four abilities;

listening, speaking, reading and writing. We also have the problem that students face when they try to speak the target language. These problems show up because in this method there is no emphasis on speech development. It is seen as a waste of time and therefore, the students fail when they try to express themselves orally. Another important disadvantage is that this method uses translation in order to teach. Using translation exclusively is not a trustworthy way to teach because each language has its own structure, meanings and idioms.

The fact of learning words with their equivalent in the target language is just not enough to cover the whole meaning of the word itself, due to the fact that there exists something called context. Also, students may face a very difficult problem when dealing with the target language because it is taught through rules instead of learning it through practice. As a consequence of the imperfection of the Grammar Translation Method a reform movement started to criticize the GTM because of its flaws, such as ignoring the spoken language, stressing the false equivalence of the words, and presenting isolated sentences, rather than connected texts or paragraphs.

### **Review of Literature supporting Translation Use**

There are different researches which support the use of the mother tongue when we are learning a foreign language because it is considered as a point of comparison and a guide in learning the structures of a new language. From a psychological point of view, the new learner always uses his mother tongue as a reference in analyzing the similarities and differences between the two languages. During the research that we have been doing, we have encountered lots of proposals from many authors. In this part, we are going to review and comment on some of them. In this initial stage, we are going to review some points of

view of some authors with respect to whether or not using an interlinguistic or intralinguistic methodology.

First we want to start with Julian Edge, who stated, “In classrooms where learners come from different language backgrounds, the teacher has no choice but to communicate somehow in English. But if the students really cannot understand you, or if a student really cannot express something that he or she clearly very much wants to say, then use the L1” (Edge, 1993)

In this fragment the author describes the impossibility of using an interlinguistic methodology in class where students speak different languages because the teacher can only communicate with them in the target language and the learning of the foreign language will be based exclusively on the interaction with L2 by using an intralinguistic methodology. On the other hand, there is a great advantage when using an interlinguistic methodology in class, where students and teacher share the same linguistic background, because of the effectiveness of the interlinguistic strategies. For example, Jeremy Harmer stated that, “Where the teacher is teaching a monolingual class, translation is obviously an excellent technique if the teacher is fluent in the students’ language. The main advantages are that it is quick and efficient” (Harmer, 1990). In this case, the teacher will be able to give a class with more opportunities because students and teacher can share the same language and culture. It means that the teacher is able to combine both methodologies; the communicative activities will be carried out with an intralinguistic methodology, and the parts of the curriculum which cover the cultural and linguistic aspects will be benefited by the use of an interlinguistic strategy.

We can take as a reference the communicative functional-notional system which was proposed by Brumfit and Finocchiaro who stated, “Translation drills have been the

subject of controversy until recently. Now, the majority of educators appreciate their value. Ideally, the student should not use the native language but this is unrealistic in some circumstances, and the teacher might wish to do a translation exercise in two steps within the same lesson” (Finocchiaro and Brumfit, 1983). Here, the authors suggest that in some cases it is required to translate a text from the mother tongue to the target language and vice versa as a useful exercise to practice the language structures. In other words, the authors suggest using both methodologies, interlinguistic and intralinguistic, in the same lesson.

Up to this stage we can state that the teacher’s performance in class will depend on the previous knowledge of the students about the target language and the teacher’s ability to put into practice the interlinguistic and intralinguistic methodologies in class.

During all the research we have been carrying out, we have found some authors who think that translation is a useful tool that could bring about improvements in the lessons.

About the benefits of using translation in a language class, Nunan and Lamb stated that “Problems arise when teachers try to avoid using the first language in class. The explanation is clumsy, consumes valuable class time and, judging by the student’s attempt to use it, not understood. A quick translation would have short-circuited the rather tortuous process”, (Nunan and Lamb, 1995). In this part, the authors suggest that it is sometimes necessary to use translation in order to make the lesson clearer. At some moments during the lesson, the students may have some problems with new words or with the instructions about an activity, and this suggests that sometimes the teacher could use translation instead of explaining complicated words or giving confusing instructions. Translation will make the job easier to the teacher. It is important for students to be careful with the positive and negative transferences, as Yule states, affirming that “If the L1 and L2 have similar

features, the learner may be able to benefit from the positive transfer of L1 knowledge” (Yule, 1995).

Nigel J. Ross emphasizes that “Translation is useful in an EFL classroom in order to compare grammar, vocabulary, word order and other language points in English and the students’ mother tongue” (N. J. Ross, 2000). Also Guy Cook makes a reference about this, stating that “Learners need a bilingual environment with a lot of translation and a lot of code switching and focus on form, meaning and language use” (G. Cook, 2001).

This fact gives us the idea that translation should be a useful tool for teachers because the students need to be familiar with the transposition of their vocabulary into L2, with the grammatical and syntactic structures of the target language and to have an active vocabulary in L2. As recent research is concerned, we have to mention that we found a really interesting article which was written by Michal Paradowski in 2007. In this article he explains the different processes that translation has been suffering with the passage of time. Paradowski wrote that translation decreased its popularity since the arrival of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) which was a methodology opposite to the Grammar Translation Method. At the end of his article he summarized many key points about the advantages of translation.

There are some methodologies which support the use of translation when teaching a foreign language. These studies are based on observations. For example there is a research about the analysis of the curriculum in Great Britain (Mitchell and others, 1981, in Allen and Harley, 1992). The results showed that 10.6 % of the curriculum observed included translation and 21.3% included the mother tongue. It means that 32% included the use of L1. In another study, carried out in Puerto Rico, C.W. Schweers in 1997 used surveys in order to gather data. The results were that the students liked to have explanations in

Spanish, and they considered it appropriate in different stages of the learning process, especially when they tried to verify their correct understanding.

Nevertheless, it is important to mention that the use of translation in class was banned by some important pedagogical experts during the second half of the last century. They claimed that translation was a useless activity in class. For example we have to mention the position of Howatt (1984) who thought that translation represented just isolated sentences and the spoken language was ignored by the teacher. In 1969, Sweet mentioned that the content of the texts which were used in class were not clearly analyzed by the student. We have to mention that these opinions are based on ideas of authors who disapproved the Grammar Translation method. Furthermore, in 1969 Kelly mentioned that translation should be used as a last resort in class, he described the translation as “a refuge for the incompetent”.

The last opinions were taken from not very recent literature references because the use of translation began to take a more important place as a pedagogical tool in the last decade of the last century and provoked greater acceptance of translation in class.

### **Translation in Foreign Language Learning and Teaching**

As mentioned before, translation as a pedagogical tool has become more popular in the last few years. Its consciousness-raising effects have been included by different teaching methodologies due to its effectiveness and productivity in class; however, the use of translation in the last few years has progressed in order to be adapted to more dynamic teaching structures. It means that there is more flexibility when using translation due to the new tendencies in Foreign Language Learning and Teaching. The following authors mention some benefits of translation in class:

The student is able to know the meaning of words because of the context of a text (Atkinson 1993) and also they develop their semantic abilities by using passive knowledge in an active way (Zannirato 2006).

There is a more effective comparison between the first language and target language because the students are able to find the equivalence of meaning in different formal devices “pragmatic concepts and functions” (Atkinson 1993). The learner bridges the gap between the native language and the target language. These differences that are identified by the learner are compared in a pragmatic and semantic way; this is why the students improve in their foreign language learning (Rabadán 2006).

The learner notices “the interaction between the source and the target languages, and so there is a balanced attention” (Rawoens 2006). This balanced attention is “useful for the learner in order to identify the mistakes in translation that are influenced by the native language” (Tomasello & Herron 1988, 1989). It means that “the interference of the first language that many times is related to translation could be analyzed in a positive way in order to find alternative translations” (Dakowska 2005).

The learner “is conscious of the differences in the frequency, distribution, and stylistic connotation of certain linguistic items and constructions” (Levenston 1971). The learners “control the tendency to rely on their intuitive knowledge of the native language” (W. Marton 1979/81). The students are able “to be conscious about what they know, should know and do not know about the target language” (Kuiken & Vedder 2002).

Translation helps students “develop adaptive and effective work habits” (Rabadán 2006). Translation also helps to have “a clear impact on the students’ understanding and information processing of the source language” (ibid).



Translation “contributes to the development of the student’s linguistic self-awareness” (Whyatt 2006), improving both “the understanding and the accuracy in the production of the target language” (Rabadán et al. 2006). It also provides an easy avenue to “enhance linguistic awareness and pride in bilingualism” (Malakoff & Hakuta 1991). Rather than insisting on fidelity to the original, translation activities can instill the precious capacity to concentrate on high-risk, globally important areas of text” (Pym 2006).

Translation can help recast transfer above all interference as an illuminating learning strategy, developing “metalingual awareness through coercing the learner to attend to and reflect on structural features of the target language and the native language” (Rabadán et al. 2006), thereby also helping him/her identify regularities in the input they will be exposed to in the future. Another important benefit of the translation is the fact that it invites discussion and speculation in the classroom, thereby markedly raising the level of class interaction; translation activities are “a real life activity, something that the students will probably need to engage in if they intend to use the language in their occupation” (Atkinson, 1993).

Translation may serve as “the most efficient and effective elicitation device and method of assessing both learners’ comprehension of lexical items and the mastery of a given area of grammar” (Dakowska 2005). On occasions, the simplest and clearest way is asking the learners to think of a translation. Translation activities provide “feedback as therapeutic measure, and check whether the meaning expressed in the learner’s utterance matches his/her intended one, otherwise indicating the mismatch and allowing for a modification” (ibid.).

After the rejection of grammar translation method and any use of translation in class there was a revival of this art; some critics rescued some good aspects of the grammar

translation method in order to adapt them to some translation strategies in class. The practice of translation in oral and written activities could work very well rather than consider the translation of isolated sentences. Students may be encouraged to translate “for gist, to seek pragmatic or stylistic equivalence, to consider the features of genre” (Swales 1990; Flowerdew 1993), or to produce different translations according to the needs of the audience.

The use of translation is being readmitted because of the new kind of focus in the use of this subject in class as an efficient way to explain the meaning of new vocabulary. An extra circumstance that supports the new reappraisal of translation is the fact that many times the native speakers are overrated by the teaching scholars which sometimes is not the only option for foreign language teaching. Translation involves far more than formal equivalence. The students will have the ability to get a better proficiency of the target language if they practice translation as an activity aiding a second language acquisition.

When the students use original texts they have to face different difficulties in the use of the target language. The students also learn how to find the differences between the first and the second language in order to avoid direct equivalence that does not represent an exact interpretation of the message. “The practice of translation has been condemned so strenuously for so long without any really convincing reasons that it is perhaps time the profession took another look at it” (Howatt 1984). The new century could represent a new period of renaissance of translation in language teaching.

Translation could be seen as the fifth skill in teaching; however, it is necessary to understand what the fifth skill is. It could be defined as the ability to function fluently in two languages alternately. This ability involves a spontaneous and direct connection between two languages. When a monolingual speaker tries to do this connection, he/she

should take advantage of translation in order to switch from the native language to the target language.

According to a research that was carried out by Sheweers (1999) the results showed some applications of the mother tongue in the L2 classroom such as: eliciting language, checking comprehension, giving complex instructions, testing, developing circumlocution strategies, negotiating of the syllabus, classroom management, language analysis, presentation of grammar rules, explanation of errors, and assessment. For this research 19 teachers were required, although the number of students was not specified. He argued that most of them, teachers and students, supported the use of the native language in classroom.

According to Guy Cook, “bilingualism and translation in the classroom are really quite authentic, together with the conscious focus on differences between languages...The notion that a bilingual environment with lot of translation and a lot of code-switching and focus on form is something alien to what people are learning a language for is really quite peculiar” (Cook, 2000). In short, Guy Cook considers that a bilingual environment is crucial and necessary for the development of the students.

Nigel Ross (2009) argues that “The real usefulness of translation in the English Foreign Language classroom lies in exploiting it in order to compare grammar, vocabulary, word order and other language points in English and the students’ mother tongue”. According to Daniel Linder (2002) “Translations is useful for promoting contextualized language use, discourse and textual-level language competence and cultural transfer skills”. He considers that “translation activities should be used, and they should be supported by communicative, natural language learning methods”. In short the fifth skill has become popular as having an important role in foreign language learning.

## **Pro and Cons of Translation**

### **Disadvantages**

Some disadvantages that someone could face when using translation as a teaching resource will be presented here. In order to understand the following negative points about translation as a pedagogical tool, one has to visualize a scenario in which translation plays the role as the only tool used by the teacher to make students learn a new language.

First of all, one has to understand that if a teacher bases his/her entire class using translation, this will be focused solely on two skills, reading and writing, due to the fact that all activities will be based on reading the material given by the teacher and then writing down the product of their translation in their notebooks. This is completely shocking because the listening and speaking abilities are completely excluded.

Also, we may encounter a big complication, as Sapir highlights when he states that “there are not two sufficiently similar languages to be considered as representing the same social reality (Sapir, in Bassnett-McGuire, 1991). This is trying to explain to us that if we try to compare the native language of the students with the target one, this will create a big confusion to the students, due to the fact that each language has its own culture, context and deep meanings that most of the time, the native language speakers can not understand.

Another important feature that diminishes the popularity of the translation as a pedagogical tool is the fact that, in most of the cases, translation as a subject aims at the final product of what is supposed to be translated, making the teacher keen on the final version of the translations. As a direct result of this, it leaves the students with no choice at the moment of deciding what word to use, of facing a problem with the meaning, etc. In other words, it does not give way to open discussion, and in the worst case scenario, it is

much worse when these problems do not show up in the classroom but in the house, when the translation is set for homework.

Something that is of paramount importance to mention is the problem of how to evaluate translation. One should know that at the moment of evaluating a translation or an essay or whatever the homework is, the teacher is highly subjective. In the case of translation, the teacher encounters a big dilemma due to the fact that there is not an available source on which the teacher can rely and base the grade of the translation handed in by the student.

This is a big problem because the student may interpret something that is correct, but if the teacher says that it is wrong because he/she does not look it in that way, the student will feel the constraints of the decisions of the teacher. This makes it impossible to make clear what is correct and what is incorrect. In order to give a solution to this, it is recommended that the teacher focuses more on the literal understanding of the text, rather than on its closeness to the source text.

The teachers need to evolve in order to be flexible to the final versions of the students and be open for other options and suggestions. If the teachers do so, this option could be used by the teachers as a basis for evaluating the students without being close-minded.

In addition to this, the teacher must have a good command of the native language of the students due to the fact that they may run into some problems during the translation process. This leaves us with no other option but to make sure that the teacher in charge of a class should have a high competence in languages, the target one and the students' one. This is because sometimes the students could encounter problems with the textual features in the translation activities given by the teacher. These problems have a bigger incidence

when the students are facing texts which are specific, such as poetry or technical manuals. From another point of view, students are lucky because they now can count with the help of technology, and another important aspect is that there is a growing interest in the culture of those countries in which the target language is spoken.

### **Advantages**

Translation works as a very useful tool to teach the target language as a complex system, since the students will be able to focus on the different characteristics of a language and analyze its structure in a deeper way. The students also will be able to make a simultaneous connection between meaning and form.

Learners will face authentic texts in order to reinforce their reading skills; they will learn the features of the target language by means of the reading practice. When the students practice this skill they can analyze the language system and real language in use. It is also a good way to evaluate and for remedial and revision work. Translation is an authentic activity that helps the learner to face the target language in a real context.

Another important advantage of translation in class is the fact that the teacher can apply translation at all levels at different stages of the class. Translation exercises are easy to understand by the students. Because of its humanistic approach they have the opportunity to follow the development of the lesson in a progressive way. Translation in class also helps students to notice the differences between two different language systems but in a more analytic way.

The teacher can take advantage of translation when he/she tries to avoid the ingrained errors that students used to make when using the target language. Another benefit is the fact that the students feel more confident using more complex words, and so they can

write in a more sophisticated way. Learners improve their ability to express their ideas. The translation skills of the students are very productive when decoding messages in a pragmatic way; it means that word by word translation should be avoided.

According to an article retrieved on the web “Teaching through Translation” by Jonathan Stoddart. The following reading subskills are improved by means of the use of translation in class:

- Recognizing the script of the L2
- Deducing the meaning and use of unfamiliar lexical items and meaning-patterns in the second language (including metaphorical and non-standard language)
- Understanding conceptual meaning
- Familiarization with cohesion
- Familiarization with coherence
- Identifying important/relevant information
- Deducing meaning from context
- Heightening awareness of genre and identifying sources
- Heightening awareness of different schemata
- Skimming
- Scanning

The following writing subskills are improved by means of the use of translation in class:

- Focusing on new information
- Guiding the reader through the message of the text
- Layout and script manipulation
- Replicating the function of stress and intonation
- Selection and use of register
- Selection and use of style
- Spelling
- Cohesion
- Coherence
- Sequencing
- Connecting clauses, sentences and paragraphs

Another important advantage is the gist of translation as an integrative ability that involves all four skills: the students could work together in order to get good group results in second language acquisition as a dynamic activity. The use of texts which interest them is an extra motivation in class. They will feel that their needs are attended.



## **Hypothesis**

### **1. Translation represents an effective pedagogical tool in class:**

There are many advantages when using translation in class in a correct way. Many theorists and researchers support that idea. It would be a good strategy to adapt the practice of translation skill in a pedagogical method in order to achieve the objectives of the teacher. Since the last decade of the last century, many scholars have focused their effort to reestablish translation in a correct status.

### **Research Questions**

- 1. What advantages does the use of translation provide when learning a foreign language?**
- 2. How do translation classes help students to develop their English language knowledge?**

## **Research Structure**

### **Participants:**

We worked with surveys in order to know the general opinions of the students in the English Language Major who have faced translation as a subject in their curriculum. In order to get reliable and balanced results, we selected students who are taking classes with three different teachers of translation at the University of Quintana Roo. At first we did not have a specific number of students; it depended on the students who were able to answer the questions according to their attendance to the class the day of the application. In this case there were fifty students.

At the moment of the survey application, the students were in their second and fourth semester of translation (eight/tenth semester of the Major). We applied the surveys in the morning groups and night groups. The average age of the students is early twenties. The students' English level average is post intermediate according to the requirements of the major. The surveys were applied in the classrooms of the University during class time.

### **Materials and instruments**

For this research we developed a survey consisting of seven questions that were designed in order to obtain the needed information. Each survey summoned the student registration number and what course of translation they were following at that moment. As mentioned previously, the survey basically consisted of seven open questions which, besides demanding a yes/no answer, also asked the student to explain the reason of his/her answer.

It is important to mention that the survey was designed with extreme care and consciousness because we were aiming at coming up with a simple and understandable survey. We worked with our thesis director in order to design the proper questions for the

survey according to his experience and our previous study of the topic. It is of paramount importance to state that the surveys could have been applied thanks to the permission of the translation teachers of the major. In other words, in order to use every means available for the success of the research, we relied on the teachers to apply the survey.

### **Procedures**

For the application of the survey we first asked for permission of the translation teachers by mail or calling to their office to see if they were able to let us apply the survey in their morning and night groups. Afterwards, we went with our thesis director for the last check of the format of the survey. Next, we printed “x” number of copies of the format, which could be found in the materials and instruments section, for the students. Then, we arrived to the classroom 10 to 15 minutes earlier in order to meet the teacher before beginning his/her class and ask him/her again if we could apply the survey. Soon after, the teacher introduced us to the group and asked them to answer the questionnaires very carefully.

After this introduction we explained to the students the objective of our research in a general way and then we gave them the questionnaires, we asked them to answer the questions in Spanish because we consider that the students feel more self confident when they want to express their ideas in their mother tongue. Moreover, we think that they are more careful in the grammar and the orthography of their answers.

Of course we monitored the students, they were able to ask when they did not understand the question or when they wanted to express something but they did not find the words to do it. After all the students had answered the questionnaires, we collected all of

them and thanked them for their participation. At the end we also thanked the teacher for his/her help.

### **Analysis of the results**

At this stage of the research we collected all the questionnaires in order to analyze them very carefully. The seven different questions were analyzed in a separate way. First we read all the answers to question number one; then we put together all the questionnaires that contained the same answers. After this separation of questionnaires we selected those which contained common opinions.

In order to do this selection we read each answer more than once in order to extract key words and terms that the students tended to express recurrently in their papers. It means that we tried to find the main tendencies of their opinions. After this careful analysis, we designed two graphics for the question. The first graphic shows the number of yes/no answers. In some questions we added a number of maybes because in some cases the students were doubtful. The second graphic shows the tendency of the student's opinions. In this graphic we tried to use concise statements to express the ideas of the students.

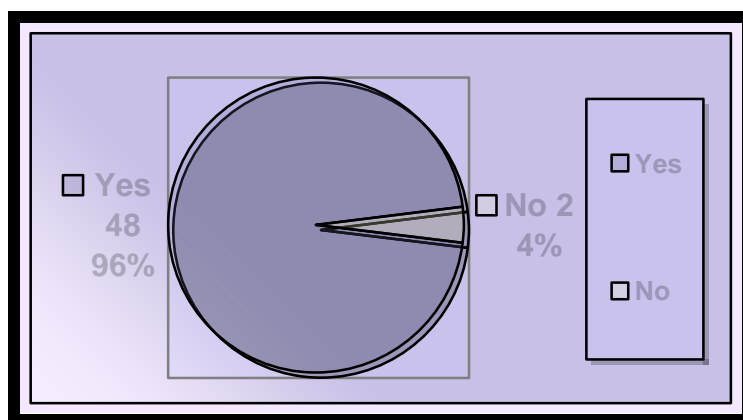
## Results

In this section we are going to present the results of the surveys that we applied to **fifty** students of the University of Quintana Roo who are in translation courses. The results will be put on display in graphics and also the most important aspects will be explained in a general way. The totals will be represented in percentages in order to have a numerical exemplification of the surveys. Next, the seven questions will be shown with the results:

### Question 1:

**Do you think that by taking a translation class you have improved in your English classes?**

First and foremost we have to mention that the only answers for this question were yes and no. There were not doubtful people; they were all sure and positive about their answers. The next graphic shows the percentages of the results obtained from this question.

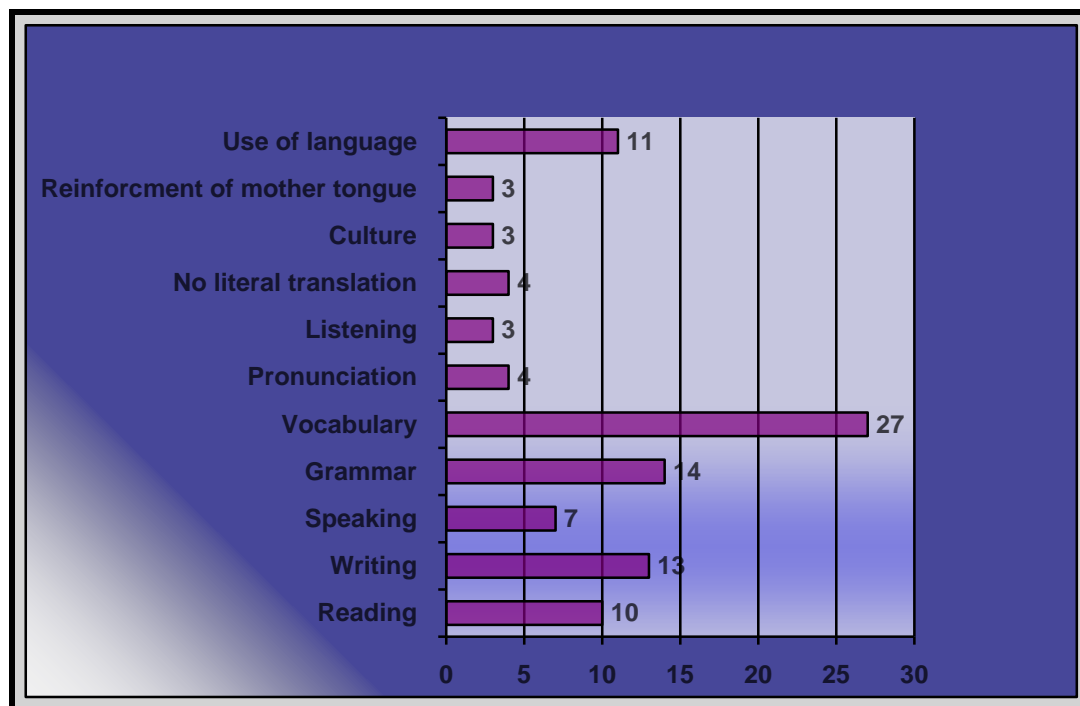


**Table 1**

The last graphic (table 1) shows that most of the students (96%) think that translation has helped them to improve their progress in the English class. Only two students (4%) think that translation is not useful in the English class.

In the next section of the analysis of the question, we are going to present the most common answers of those students who wrote an affirmative answer. The following

graphic (table 2) shows the most common ideas which were taken from the different affirmative answers of question one. They expressed some common aspects of their English classes that they consider are being reinforced with translation.



**Table 2**

**\*The numbers represent how many students mentioned some aspects of their English language classes that they consider are covered and improved by translation.**

The last graphic (table 2) shows a general tendency of the students about the relation between translation and vocabulary in English language learning. More than fifty percent of the students think that translation is a useful tool to acquire new vocabulary. There is also a recurrent tendency in the student's opinion about their improvement in grammar, writing and reading skills and use of language in their English language class. To a lesser extent, they consider that translation helps them to improve their speaking and listening skills. Furthermore, we could also notice that there were other concerns that the

students mentioned when answering the survey. For instance, some of them agreed on acquiring more culture, reinforcement of their mother tongue, avoiding literal translation when faced with translating exercises in the classroom or doing homework, and pronunciation improvement.

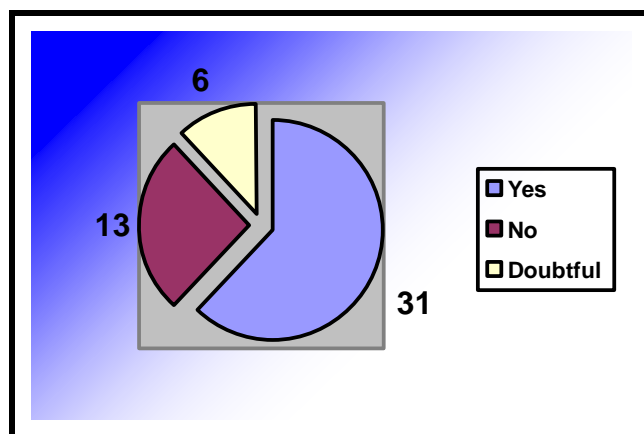
On the other hand, the two students who do not think that translation is useful in their English learning explained that they do not like the contact with their mother tongue when learning a second language. They just prefer to avoid their mother tongue because they consider that it is better to learn just by using the target language.

**Question 2:**

**Do you think it is possible to learn a foreign language through a translation class?**

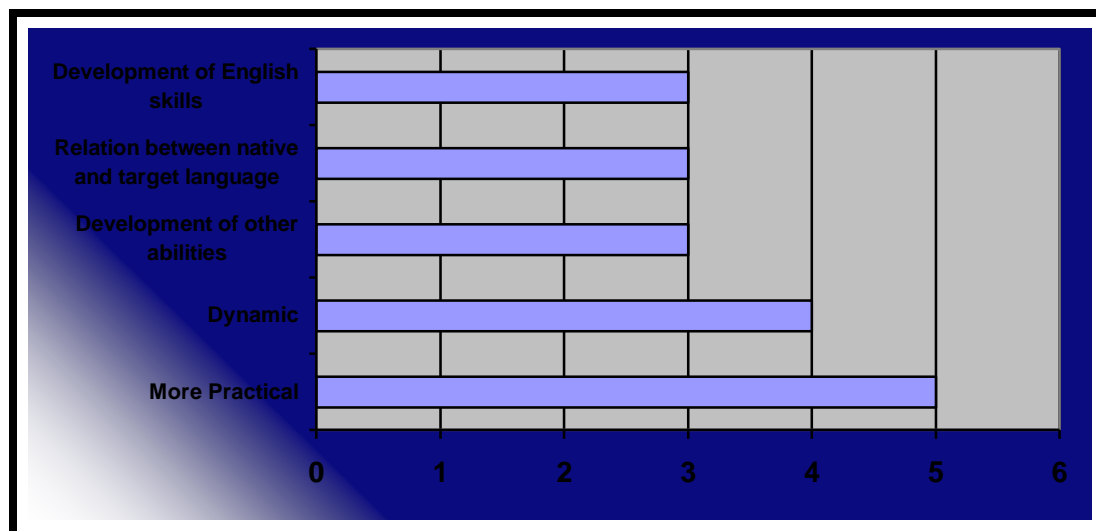
In order to begin we want to state that there were three different answers for question number two.

The most common answers were the ones where the students were supportive of the idea, those who did not like the proposal and last but not least those who were doubtful about how to decide. The answers are displayed in the following graphic (table 3):



**Table 3**

First we are going to present the opinions of the students who think that using translation could be a good idea in a foreign language class. The next graphic (table 4) represents the incidence of the aspects that they consider are improved in English class.

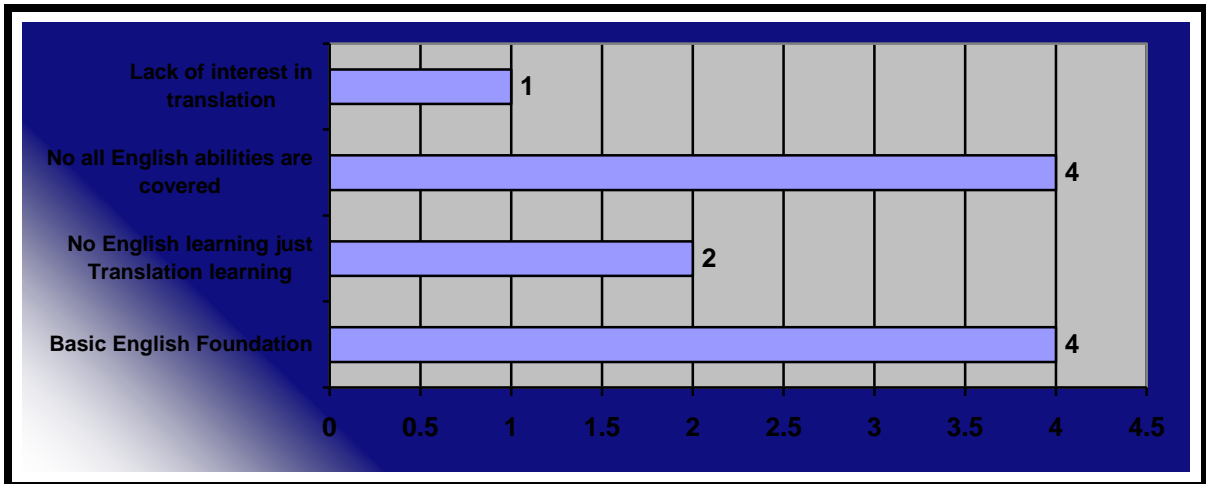


**Table 4**

Some of the students who gave an affirmative answer to this question think that an English class by means of translation could be more dynamic and practical and others said that it would be a good tool in order to create a relation between native and target language, and develop their English skills.

The next graphic (table 5) represents those students who are doubtful about an English translation class think in general that it is necessary to have a considerable command of English before facing translation as a pedagogical tool while other ones think that it would be successful just for those students who are comfortable with translation. Another important opinion implies that there should be an experimental course before implementing translation as a pedagogical tool in English classes.





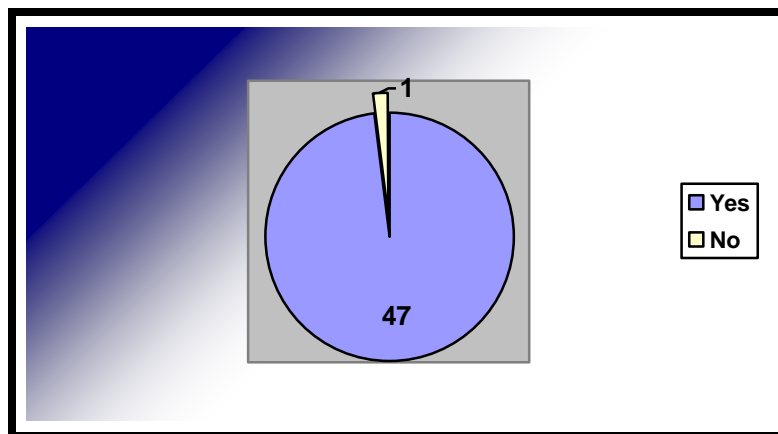
**Table 5**

The students who had a negative answer had four common ideas. There were two answers with the same number of incidence; the first one is that not all the English abilities will be covered in a class based on translation in order to learn a foreign language, and the other one is that here is the necessity of having a basic English foundation to take a class of this nature. Two students agreed that there will be no English language learning; they will just be developing their translation skills. And finally, one student stated that he/she is not interested in translation and thinks that it will not work.

### **Question 3**

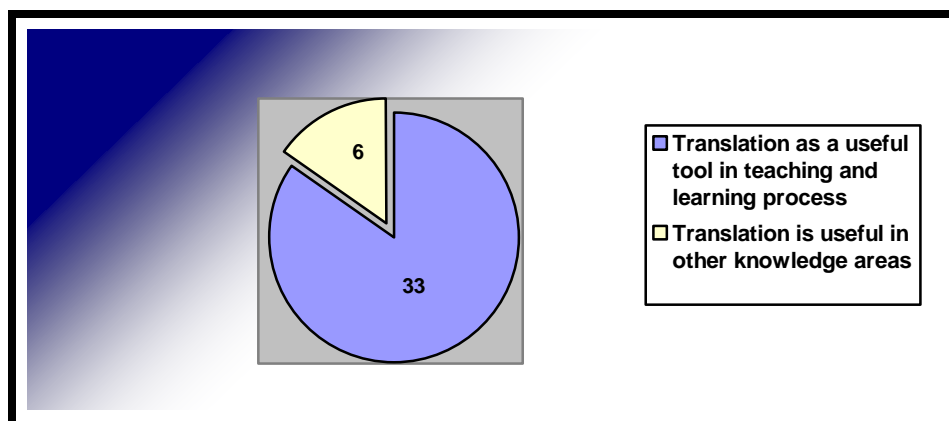
#### **Do you relate translation and teaching?**

There were just yes and no answers for this question. The next graphic (table 6) represents the incidence of the answers:



**Table 6**

There is a clear tendency in this question, almost all the students relate translation and teaching; just one student disagreed. The next graphic (table 7) shows in which aspects they relate translation and teaching:



**Table 7**

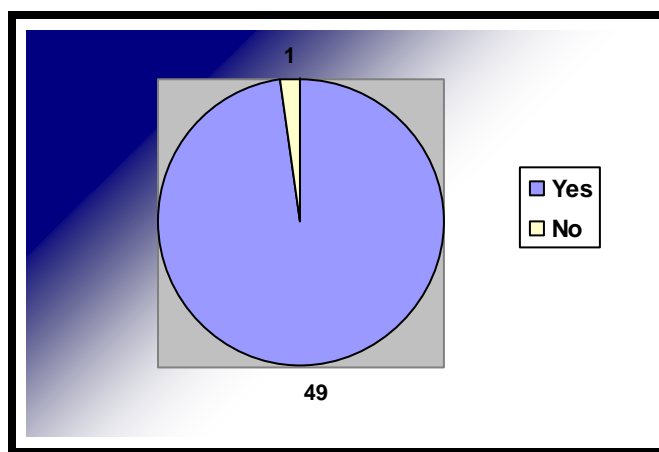
The students who stated that there were some kind of relationship between translation and teaching agreed on two main answers. The most popular is that they consider that translation is a useful tool when learning English and the other one is that translation is useful in other knowledge areas. They expressed that translation is very useful not only for the students but also for the teachers working as an excellent option for the teaching process. They think that grammar, vocabulary acquisition and English language abilities could be learned in a more practical way when the teacher uses translation in class.

Also they consider that translation is an excellent tool in order to improve the student progress in other knowledge areas like culture, characteristics of the target language and reading comprehension of specific information.

#### **Question 4**

#### **Do you consider translation a pedagogical tool?**

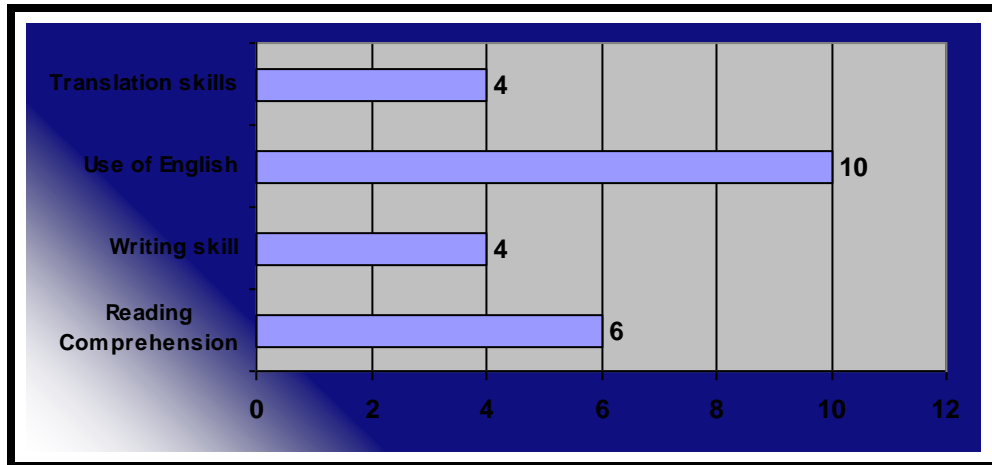
First we are going to present the numbers of incidence of the yes/no answers. The next graphic (table 8) represents the results:



**Table 8**

There is a clear tendency in the results; almost all students consider that translation is a pedagogical tool; just one student disagreed because he/she thinks that translation is a bad alternative when learning or teaching a foreign language.

In the next graphic (table 9) we present the most common opinions of those students who gave an affirmative answer:



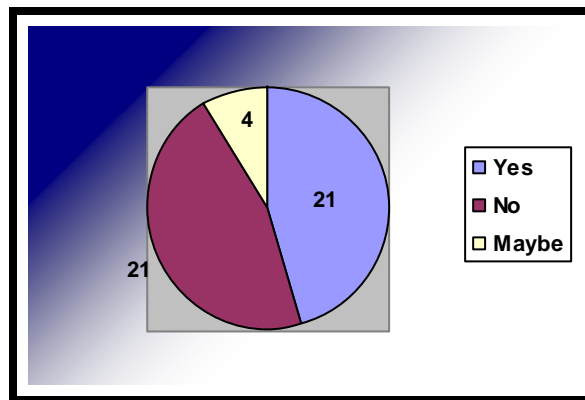
**Table 9**

We can see that ten students think that translation works as a pedagogical tool in order to teach the correct use of English; on the other hand, some students agree on the fact that translation helps to make progress in their reading and writing skills.

**Question 5:**

**Do you consider that translation could be efficient enough as a mean to teach a foreign language?**

In this question we found three different answers (yes, no and maybe). The next graphic (table 10) presents the numbers of the incidence of answers:

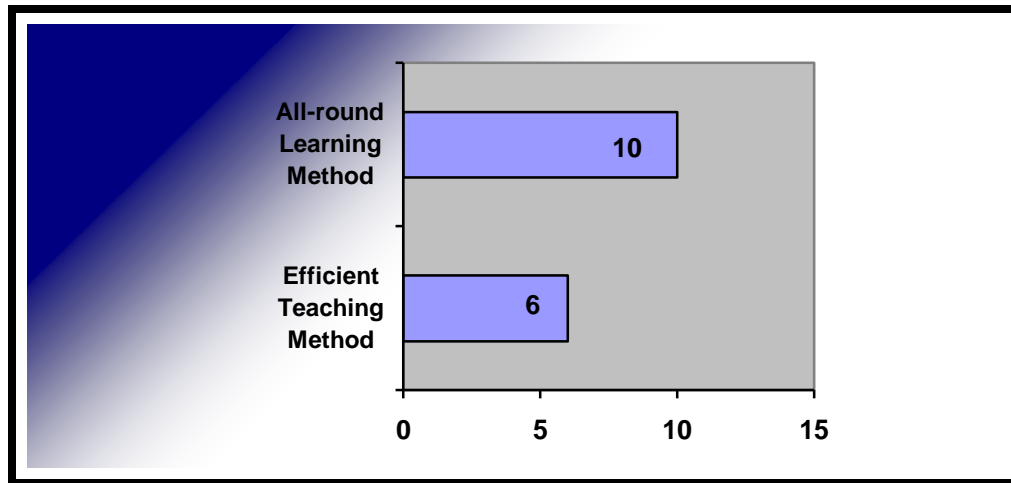


**Table 10**

In this question there was an equal balance of affirmative and negative answers and four students had not a definitive answer.

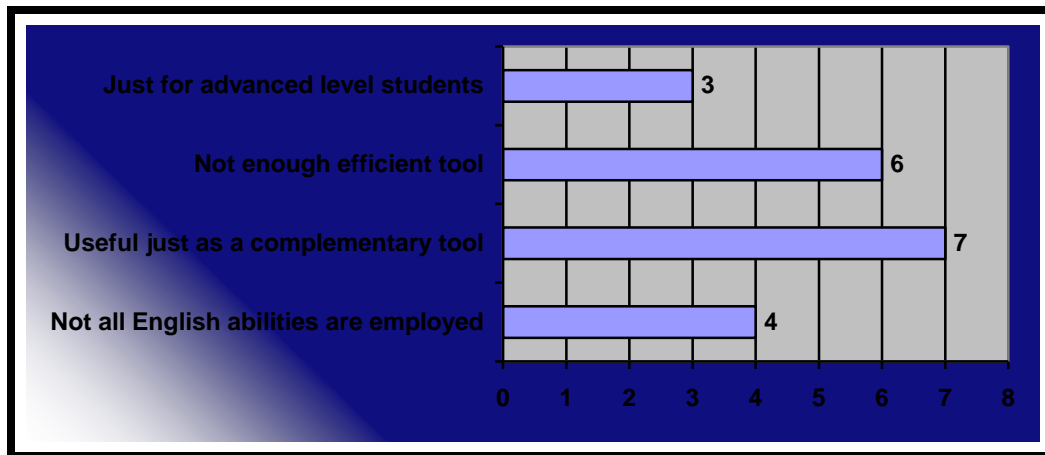
For this question we present two different graphics (table 11 and table 12) because of the balance of the results. The first one represents the affirmative answers and the second one the negative answers. As in the last graphics we show the most common opinions:

**1) Yes**



**Table 11**

**2) No**



**Table 12**

Those students who had an affirmative answer showed two main tendencies, the most common was the fact that they consider translation an all round learning method because of the opportunity that this subject offers to the student to practice different aspects of the target language. Other students thought that translation could work as an excellent

method to teach a foreign language. They think that teachers can take advantage from translation in an English class.

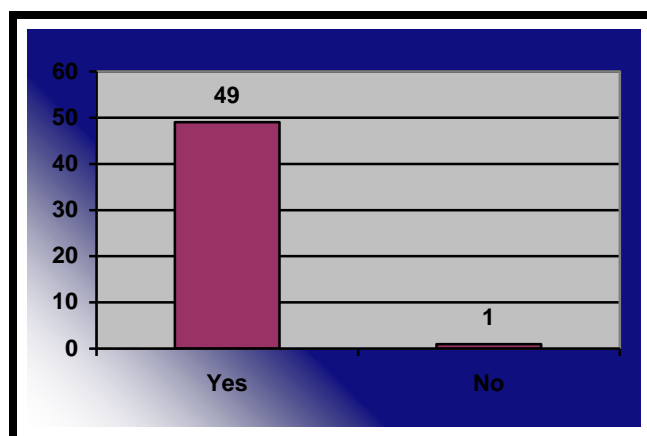
Those students who had a negative answer claimed that translation is not complete enough to be used as a teaching method; however, they did not show a radical position, most of them think that translation is an excellent complementary tool in order to make progress in their English classes, the others think that translation is not an effective tool, since not all the English abilities are employed or it is efficient just for advanced level students.

The students who are doubtful think that translation could be productive as a method in an English class according to the performance of the teacher and students.

### **Question 6**

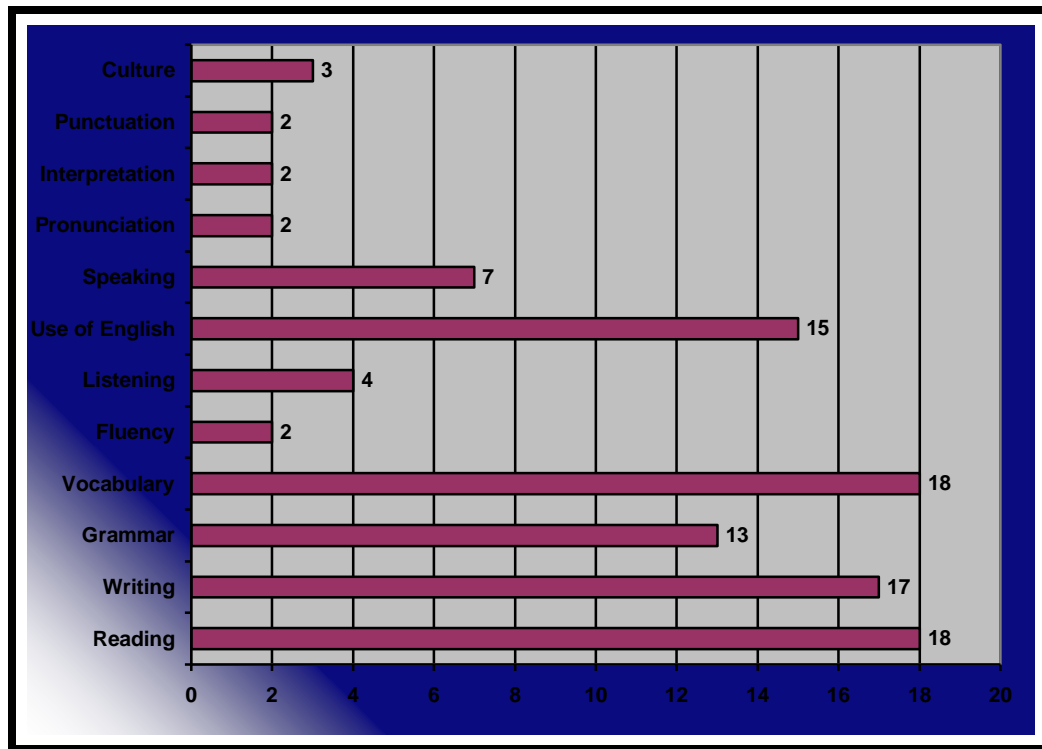
#### **Do you use or would use translation to improve your English skills?**

The next graphic (table 13) shows the incidence of yes/no answers:



**Table 13**

There is a clear tendency in this question, as almost all students gave an affirmative answer; only one student thought that translation is not useful to improve his/her English abilities. The following graphic (table 14) shows the main opinions of those students who think that translation is useful to improve their English abilities:



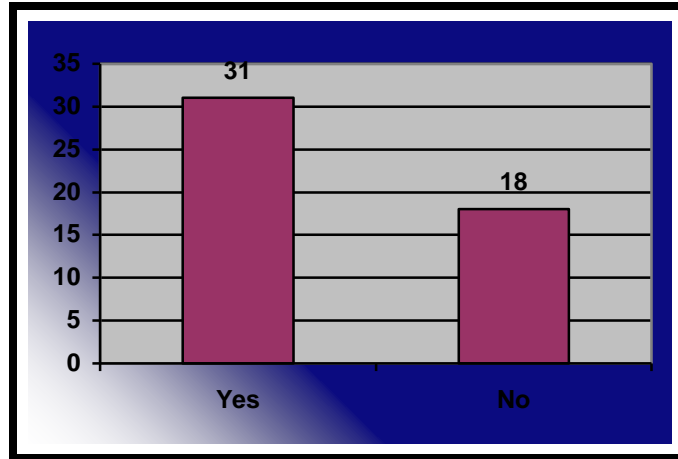
**Table 14**

The language abilities that were mentioned more times by the students were vocabulary acquisition, writing, use of English, reading, grammar and speaking. They consider that these abilities are improved when using translation. Other students mentioned abilities such as reading comprehension, listening, culture knowledge, punctuation, interpretation, pronunciation and fluency when speaking. The student who does not use translation as a tool to improve his/her English abilities argued that he/she rejects the use of translation for English language purposes.

### **Question 7**

**Do you think that the four English skills are covered in translation class?**

In the next graphic (table15) we present the number of yes/no answers:

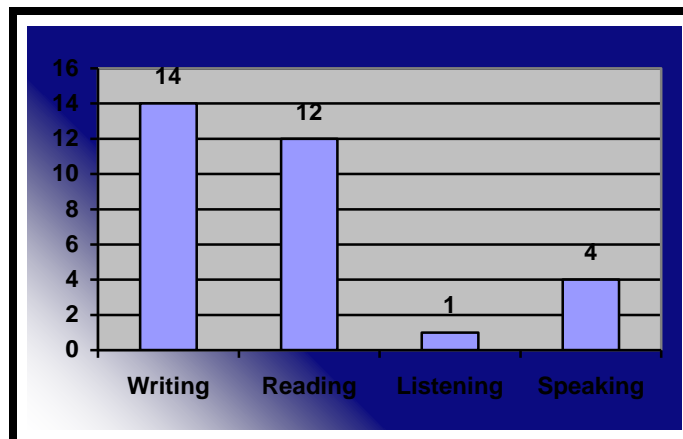


**Table 15**

There is a greater number of affirmative answers (those students who think that translation involves the four skills). On the other hand, those people who had a negative answer think that just some skills are employed in translation.

We have to mention that most of the students who think that translation involves the four skills, stated that writing and reading are more employed, and they consider that speaking and listening are practiced in a more balanced way when they face the interpretation course.

The following graphic (table 16) shows the incidence of those skills that are considered by the students who think that all skills are involved by translation:



**Table 16**



It is obvious to notice that there is a great emphasis on the writing and reading skills. On the other hand, there is a lower incidence of the listening and speaking skills.

## **Discussion**

It is found that almost all the students who participated in the surveys agreed that translation has helped them improve their English language acquisition. They think that translation is an important subject to make a constant progress in their English proficiency. One aspect that was relevant in our research is the fact they were really clear when specifying the abilities they consider are improved after facing translation as a subject. They mentioned many points that are important to be considered in an English language acquisition process.

We noticed that most of the students believe that their vocabulary has increased since they started working with translation. It is important to mention this point because it must be considered that translation is taken into account as a complete activity to learn new words. On the other hand, there is a clear disproportion with the other knowledge areas that they think are reinforced by translation. If we compare the times that vocabulary was mentioned by the students and the times the other areas were mentioned, there is a great difference, and we have to take into account this unbalance to get to future conclusions.

It was found that the translation class is considered as an important pedagogical tool, not only by just simply making the students learn more words, but by letting them be soaked with the culture of the target language and connecting in a deeper way with what they are learning.

For a more specific explanation, it was discovered that the participants had four common arguments through which they could explain the reason they considered translation as a useful pedagogical tool.

The first argument is that they could develop their translation skills way better due to the type of exercises practiced in the classroom. The second is that they can learn how to

apply the proper use of the language they are learning. The third and fourth ones had a lot of similarities because both can be placed in the same field. The participants feel like they are experiencing an improvement in their development of their writing and reading comprehension skills.

In this way, it could be noticed that the students are experiencing an improvement in their acquisition of the English language. This benefits are not only for the class of translation, but also represents a big help and benefit for the other subjects in which the English language is needed, because in this way the students can deliver a better performance at class time and at the moment of doing homework or when facing the language in a real-life situation.

Before explaining the next point it is very important to mention that the students who answered the questionnaires have some knowledge about techniques and methods in the foreign language learning and teaching process as some subjects included in the English language major curriculum cover these knowledge areas. It means that they are able to identify what is a pedagogical tool and how a teaching method works.

Almost all the students believe that translation could be an excellent aid for the teachers to improve their performance. A relevant point in common that was mentioned by the students is that they think that translation is useful for both processes (teaching/learning of a foreign language) in a correlative way. They are conscious that there is a direct and constant interaction between teaching and learning, and it means that translation works very well in both cases for them as a productive technique in class.

The results in the surveys not only reinforce the hypothesis that we formulated before, but also reinforce the information that supports this thesis. The scholars who designed teaching methods including translation as a pedagogical tool and those who

support these methods attached much importance to translation because of its role in class. In this research it was found that students subscribe to this importance of translation.

According to the perception of the students, it is proved that translation is useful to develop all the skills; however it is not a complete balanced activity. The students perceive this unbalance since they consider that there is a clear tendency towards the development of reading and writing skills.

Furthermore they mentioned some abilities that are closely related with those skills such as: reading comprehension, punctuation, culture, vocabulary. It means that they are conscious of their progress in their English skills as a manner to develop other abilities. In order to get deeper in the discussion, the importance of knowing the culture of the target language is a milestone in the process of learning a new language due to the fact that the students will perceive this as a valid context, and as a consequence, the students will be able to get into a much deeper perception of the new input received in the classroom.

This result is also important to get future conclusions in order to understand and formulate strategies to balance the English skills practice when translating in class.

This point is crucial in our research because the information that supports this thesis contains diverse points of view of authors who consider that translation is a really focused activity which neglects the development of listening and speaking skills. However, it is necessary to state that there are some anomalies. It is worthwhile to mention that, as stated in the literature review, in the research it was found that teaching through translation focuses solely on two skills: reading and writing. It is difficult to believe this is true because according to the analysis of the answers given by the participants, many of them who were at the advanced levels of translation, agreed on having a constant practice and development of the listening and speaking skills.

In other words, both the students of the beginning levels and those who are at an advanced level are experiencing an improvement in the four language skills. Obviously, there is a certain difference in the development of each ability, depending on the level of translation a student is coursing.

At this point of the discussion of the results it is necessary to mention that the Grammar Translation Method represents an important background of the actual and future teaching learning strategies which include translation. The structural and not dynamic procedures of the teacher in class classified this method as a tedious and less productive technique for the students. This process provoked a lack of use of translation in class; however, in recent years there has been a boom of translation and some scholars are trying to rescue its use as a pedagogical tool.

The new strategies which include translation as a pedagogical tool have changed in order to adapt the teaching strategies that were part of the Grammar Translation Method. The new translation methodologies are focused on more dynamic activities in order to avoid tedious or extremely structural classes. Now the students have the opportunity to use and take advantages of better materials. They manifested in the questionnaires their enthusiasm for using varied material. Also, they consider important and even crucial for their progress, the interaction that they have with the teacher to discuss the use of words in different contexts. In short these opinions gave us the opportunity to notice the new tendency of translation, at least in a local context, in this case at the University of Quintana Roo.

It is also important to mention that there exist several advantages and disadvantages when considering translation as a resource for teaching a foreign language.

As a starter, the disadvantages considered in the literature review were significant at the moment of coming up with the discussion of their impact in the conclusions of the research.

It is important to state that according to the results and comparisons with the literature review, the most significant result that may draw the attention is that the teachers of translation of the University of Quintana Roo are avoiding most of the disadvantages that tend to occur in a class when translation is used as a teaching resource, and this is because the teachers are avoiding to just focus only on the final product of the translation of the students, but trying to take care of the process of the students, based on how they managed to come up with the final result.

It is also of paramount importance to state that if someone wants to translate something, this person has to have a deep knowledge of both the source and the target culture. This is really important to mention because, according to the results of the survey, there was a great amount of participants who agreed on discussing the culture of the target language in the classroom, through the translation of authentic material.

There is a marked coincidence between the advantages of translation stated in the literature review of this research and the advantages or good qualities that the students relate to translation according to the results of the survey. The teacher is able to study in depth the language system, which is well appreciated by the students because of the future benefits that they obtain such as a good use of English and a good understanding of the characteristics of the target language in different contexts.

The students also feel that their reading proficiency progresses so that they are able to grasp the content of different kind of texts due to the constant practice in class. During this practice the teacher is able to take advantage from the students' interactions, because

he/she is able to identify ingrained errors that the students tend to commit when using English. Another good thing is the fact that teacher is able to take advantage of texts which interest them in order to motivate the students in a meaningful context.

## Conclusions

We found some interesting information in this research. We found that most of the students like translation not only as a subject which is part of the curriculum but also as a productive skill that improves diverse abilities in their English language acquisition. Most of the students believe that translation helps to speed up the effective learning of many aspects of the target language. They consider translation as a productive complementary subject.

Apart from the benefits that students perceive from the use of translation in class, they also think that the teacher could take advantage from translation. They, the students, see translation as a useful pedagogical tool that helps to teach additional subskills and language features that complement the four skills. Despite of this generalized agreement that translation works as a useful pedagogical tool in class, there is a marked gap in opinions about the use of translation as the only tool in class. More than half of students consider that translation is useful and productive only as a complementary tool in class, which is necessary in order to develop just some aspects of the target language, mainly subskills that are related with writing and reading.

At this point there is a match between the information that supports this research and the results of the survey. There is an unbalanced practice of the four English skills. The students perceive that there is a greater impact in the practice of the writing and reading skills; however, due to the activities that are developed during class time, for example the discussion of the meaning of a word, the context or when to use a specific expression, etc. enhance the students to practice the speaking and listening skills.



It means that the new boom of translation and its more recent techniques turn it as a more flexible subject, which is helpful to improve listening and speaking. The point is to keep practicing these new tendencies of translation in order to avoid the stigmatization of translation as a limited tool in class.

Another interesting conclusion is the fact that the respondents have noticed a progress in other areas like culture. They believe that the constant readings in class about different topics have helped them to encourage their interest in learning about other things, apart from the topics that are related with their major. It means that translation represents a subject that encourages developing other knowledge areas.

Almost all respondents mentioned that translation has helped them to improve their ability to read faster and efficiently understand the message of the text.

A paramount conclusion is that the students who were coursing the last semester of the major stated that translation is a complete subject that involves the practice of the four skills due to the fact that they were coursing the subject of interpretation. This is important for future research, since interpretation classes are more dynamic and somehow complete translation ones, due to their emphasis on spoken language practice.

As is stated in the last conclusions, the four skills are practiced; however, almost all students believe that there is less work on the speaking and listening skills. At this point we can suggest a future research about possible future techniques and methodologies in class in order to get the practice of the four skills involved in a proportioned way in a translation class.

A big limitation that was faced when developing this thesis is the lack of material available in the library of the university, as well as the poor number of thesis copies. The best solution was to almost base the research on the material that was found on the web. As

a recommendation, it is suggested that the school board try to increase the number of material related to translation.

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Appendix

Universidad de Quintana Roo  
Licenciatura en Lengua Inglesa

Matricula: \_\_\_\_\_

Traducción: \_\_\_\_\_

- 1) ¿Sientes que por el hecho de tomar clase de traducción has mejorado en tu clase de inglés? Explique
- 2) ¿Qué piensas si llegas a tener una clase donde puedas aprender un idioma extranjero por medio de la traducción?
- 3) ¿Relacionas de alguna manera la traducción con la enseñanza? Explique
- 4) ¿Consideras la traducción una herramienta pedagógica? Explique
- 5) ¿Como estudiante, consideras que la traducción podría ser lo suficientemente eficaz al momento de ser usada como medio para enseñar un idioma extranjero? Explique
- 6) ¿Utilizas o utilizarías la traducción para mejorar tus habilidades en el inglés? ¿En qué forma?
- 7) ¿En tu clase de traducción sientes que todas las habilidades del idioma inglés (speaking, listening, reading and writing) son abarcadas? ¿Por qué?