

The Use of Translation as a Learning Strategy: A Case Study of Students of the University of Bahrain

Aisha S. Thani^{1*} and Nuri R. Ageli²

¹Senior Human Resources Specialist, Ministry of Education, Bahrain

²Associate professor, University of Bahrain, Bahrain

Corresponding Author: Nuri R. Ageli, E-mail: nageli@uob.edu.bh

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ABSTRACT

The use of native language in learning English is a controversial issue. Some studies advocate its use while others are against it. As far as Arab Bahraini students are concerned, there are no studies that show whether translation is useful for students with different language proficiency and therefore, this study is filling a gap in knowledge in this area. This research aims to determine to what extent translation as a learning strategy is used by 4th year students and Orientation program students at the University. One hundred students from both groups participated in a survey with two sets of questionnaires related to beliefs and strategy use. The results of this qualitative and quantitative study have revealed that the majority of orientation students use translation as a learning strategy and hold positive beliefs about it, whereas a small percentage of the 4th year English major students still use translation as a learning strategy although they hold negative beliefs about it. As a result, it is recommended that students at public schools should have more exposure to English language during English classes, enabling them to think directly in the target language without being pressured to use translation. As a result, the number of students in the University orientation program will ultimately decrease due to the improvement of their language proficiency.

1. Introduction

The use of translation as a learning strategy has been very common among foreign language learners and therefore, some researchers proved its effectiveness in EFL context more than ESL (Calis and Dikilitas, 2012). The fact that translation is used in both contexts can affect the learning process. It might be helpful in some early stages of learning a new language, but the excessive use of the first language as a strategy to learn a second/foreign language may prevent students from approaching new strategies (Baw, 2002).

With that being said, the use of L1 in ESL/EFL classes is still debated although it was considered unfavorable in the 80s and 90s. Some were for its use (Friedlander, 1990; Kobayashi and Rinnert, 1992; Kern, 1994; Husain, 1995; Omura, 1996; Prince, 1996; Hsieh, 2000) whereas others were against it (Bloomfield, 1961; Hartmann and Stork, 1964; Lado, 1964; Huebener, 1965; Gatenby, 1967). Therefore, approaches to acquiring new language skills vary according to the status of the target language (second/foreign).

Garcia (2009) has developed a new concept called “Translanguaging” which involves both teaching and learning processes. It is a theory that aimed to increase the level of understanding and comprehension of both teachers and students through a reasonable use of the L1 (Ringbom, 2016). Nevertheless, MacSwan (2017) criticized his theory arguing that in this concept each language still holds its specific grammar, whereas, Otheguy & Reid (2015) believed that language is one system, one grammar and learners have to map its features.

As for the relationship between beliefs, perceptions, and attitudes (Brantmeier, 2005), there are two types of perceptions that are described in literature: first learners' perceptions of themselves i.e. how they understand and make sense of themselves and their own learning process (Liskin-Gasparro, 1998; Williams & Burden, 1999); Second, their perception of the learning situation i.e. how they experience and understand aspects in the classroom (Brown, 2009). However, the term "Beliefs" is used frequently, as it is more overarching and pervasive (Wesely, 2012). Beliefs that are associated with students themselves are often related to the notion of self-efficacy (Graham, 2006) as they are considered to be an important factor which can predict learners' future achievements. As a matter of fact many researchers have dealt with self-efficacy in ESL/EFL context in relationship to other factors such as learning strategies (Yang, 1999; Wong, 2005; Gahungu, 2010; Bonyadi, et al, 2012; Nosratinia et al, 2014), and achievement (Mills, et al, 2007; Magogwe & Oliver, 2007; Hsieh & Schallert, 2008; Hsieh & Kang, 2010; Woodrow, 2011).

Despite the fact that English in the Kingdom of Bahrain is considered a second language (L2) as students learn English from early stages at both government schools and private schools (Sdiri, 2017); however, it has been generally observed by the researchers of this work that English language teachers at government schools tend to use Arabic (L1) when teaching English (L2). Moreover, English teachers in Bahraini government schools are bilingual, and some of them tend to teach English by using some aspects of the Grammar Translation Method (GTM), unlike English teachers in private schools who are mostly native speakers. Teachers' linguistic ideology or awareness plays an important role in shaping students learning process (Aghai, 2016). In other words, teachers are responsible for students' choices to learn the language, as well as responsible for the extent of the usage of the L1 in the classroom (Miller, 2012).

2. Statement of the problem

The use of the native language in learning English is controversial. Some studies (Friedlander, 1990; Kobayashi and Rinnert, 1992; Kern, 1994; Husain, 1995; Omura, 1996; Prince, 1996; Hsieh, 2000) advocate its use while others (Bloomfield, 1961; Hartmann and Stork, 1964; Lado, 1964; Huebener, 1965; Gatenby, 1967) are against it. As far as Arab Bahraini students are concerned, there are no studies to show whether translation is useful for EFL/ESL students with different language proficiency, and therefore, this study is filling a gap in this area of knowledge by examining the beliefs and use of translation as a learning strategy among students in the orientation program and 4th English majors at the University of Bahrain.

3. Research Questions

The current study seeks to find answer to the following questions:

1. Does the use of translation as a learning strategy by the orientation program (OP) students and 4th year English major students enhance the language learning skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking)?
2. How do 4th English major students use translation as a learning strategy in comparison with orientation program students?
3. What are the beliefs about the use of translation as a learning strategy by both 4th year English major students and orientation program (OP) students? Which beliefs are the most and the least common among University of Bahrain students?
4. In which skill(s) do orientation students and 4th year English major students use translation the most?

4. Research Objectives

The major aim of this research is to analyze and understand the use of translation as a learning strategy by university of Bahrain students. Besides, the research intends to meet the following mentioned objectives:

1. To analyze and understand the learners' perceptions of using translation to learn English.
2. To determine the extent of the use of translation as a learning strategy by 4th year students in comparison with students enrolled in the orientation program (OP).
3. To find out the skill/s with which students use translation the most.

5. Significance of the Study

This study is significant in that it examines translation as a strategy used by students to facilitate learning English (Liao, 2006) and to explore its impact or effectiveness after a duration of time (three years gap). This study investigates whether there is a relationship between students' proficiency level in English and the use of translation as a learning strategy. Thus, it will enable teachers to figure out alternative strategies to use in teaching English as a foreign language through knowing students' beliefs and the strategies they use in their learning process.

6.Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

6.1 Learning Strategies Used in Learning a Foreign Language

According to Oxford (1990), strategies used for language learning are defined as “operations employed by the learner to aid the acquisition, storage, retrieval, and use of information. They are specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations”. Traditional methods have been changed to students learning method, and the number of language studies have increased depending on the learner’s mindset. Teachers were found to be encouraging students by providing “learn how to learn” techniques (Berns, 2010). A wide range of learning strategies were found to be utilized by successful language learners. It has been observed by Stern (1992, p. 261) as cited in Hismanoglu (2000) that all language learners use either conscious or unconscious language learning strategies while processing any new information and task performance in the language classroom.

Martinez (1996) stated that the basic four strategies which are included in other classifications are cognitive, metacognitive, social and communicative strategies. Berns (2010) pointed out that cognitive strategies help in understanding and learning the linguistic system. In simple words, it can be said as interpreting the meaning of a difficult word in a text. The Metacognitive strategy often specifies as “thinking about thinking”, which deals with how to learn or learning to learn. This method actually uses aspects like setting, planning and organization of the language task. Heyun (2011) stated that some of the examples of social strategies are looking forward to help from a friend, participation in group conversations even if it is not completely understandable. Castro (2009) mentioned that communication strategies comprise psycholinguistic plans, which will be communicative competence for any language user. In other words, it could be said that they are the study of oral production.

Translation as a strategy or translation as a mental process is considered to be a cognitive unconscious process (Kern, 1994). Campbell (2002) showed that if teachers completely ignore and stop the usage of translation, it might have a reverse effect on students. It might lead to a negative feeling about the teacher and the teaching method he/she is trying to accomplish, as the usage of translation helps the students to understand the native equivalent more clearly and easily. However, not all scholars agree with this point of view, because according to Lihong, (2016) students psychological state in ESL classes has been related to self-efficacy beliefs such as pain, stress, fear, anxiety etc. in performing a task. Added to that, the term self-confidence has been examined and defined in foreign language classes by Clement, Domyei, & Noels (1994) as “self-perceptions of communicative competence and concomitant low levels of anxiety in using the second language” (Noels et al.,1996: 248). As a result, students’ perceptions in learning a second language can predict their future achievements.

6.2 Learner's perception and mindset in regard to learning a second / foreign language

Students have diverse views on the usage of translation in foreign language learning. Pan (2005) specified that learners find ease in linking the new words to their native language. As most of the time teachers encourage students to think in the target language, most learners depend on their native language, to help them learn and use the target language. In fact, the mindset of a learner has huge impact on the acquisition of learning a foreign language. The term mindset has to do with natural talent or what is recognized by Chomskys’ theory as ‘Innateness’ which he referred to in his theory of Universal Grammar (1965). Innateness means that much of what we know about language is innate and must be combined with adequate environment or exposure. However, the natural aptitude and/or innateness are given little attention in relation to learning a second language. Perceptions of second language acquisition are important, because “learners hold their beliefs to be true and these beliefs then guide how they interpret their experience and how they behave” (Wenden,1998, p.517).

It is believed that language or linguistic ideologies are “sets of beliefs about language articulated by users as rationalization or justification of perceived language structure and use” (Silverstein, 1979, p. 193). Also, in the *Dictionary of Sociolinguistics*, “language ideology is defined as a set of shared attitudes and beliefs about language, underpinned by certain social or cultural values. Language ideologies often serve to rationalize existing social structures, relationships and dominant linguistic habits” (Swann, Deumert, Lillis, & Mesthrie, 2004, p. 171).

A study made by Mori (1999) examined the epistemological beliefs of students who learn a second language. He found that “a strong belief in innate ability is associated with lower achievement. It showed that if students perceive their own ability as a controllable, increasable entity, they have better chance to attain higher proficiency” (Mori, 1999, p.408). Mercer & Rayan (2009) believed that there are two basic distinctions of mindset; fixed and growth. Fixed language learning mindset describes a person who believes that acquiring a second language successfully is a result of natural gift, while the growth mindset describes a person, who believes in a huge amount of effort to gain a second language.

In addition, students who have a low proficiency in a second language tend to pause when asked questions in the target language (Wright, 2010). He believed that this pause stands for their “mental translation” which he called as “wait time” in order to process and understand the question in their native language. In some cases, it might be right. However, I do agree with Quiñones-Guerra, (2016) who stated that students do not always master their native language, therefore if they are unable to grasp the meaning in L1 they eventually would fail to comprehend it in L2. Hence, it is important for students to be aware of the language limitations.

6.3 The use of translation as a learning strategy (The Argument)

From various studies on language learning strategies, translation has been determined as one of the cognitive learning strategies. Chamot (2004) pointed out that this type of strategy involves providing awareness of ideas from one language to the other by using word-for-word. Wharton (2007) mentioned that L1 will provide learners with a definite communicative goal for the production of L2. Yau-hau Tse (2011) observed that learning strategies like translation and deduction were preferred by students who concentrated on grammar instructions. Students who were concentrating mainly on language proficiency followed strategies like inference and substitution. Therefore, it can be concluded that different strategies would be used depending on the language task.

In Taiwan, a study on college students found that learners had conflicting views about translation, resulting from their different understanding of both, the positive and negative effects of using translation (Liao, 2006). This is due to students’ use of a wide variety of strategies involving translation, such as cognitive, memory, compensation, social, and affective strategies. Learners’ opinions about translation generally affected their choice of translation strategies. In addition, foreign language major students and proficient learners tended to report less use of translation, which contradicts with other researchers who proved its benefits in the EFL context (Calis & Dikilitas, 2012).

The use of translation might be helpful at certain early stages of the learning process as some researches as proved through examining the usage of translation on students at different levels - from Grade 10 (Laufer and Girsoi, 2008), Elementary School (Ramachandran and Rahim, 2004; Calis and Dikilitas, 2012), High School (Moritomo and Loewen, 2007) and preparatory courses in university (Almohaimeed and Almurshed, 2018). According to these studies, translation helps students to memorize and overcome learning difficulties as well as enable them to comprehend the target language through their mother tongue.

The studies have in fact focused on the role of translation in language learning by looking at the learner’s perceptions and proficiency level through vocabulary. Other studies have also examined the use of translation in learning vocabulary by college students (Salih & Ridha, 2014; Mutlu; Bayaram; Demirbuken, 2015) and have reported results in its efficacy. Nevertheless, using translation as a learning strategy will have negative impact at later stages. Despite the universality of grammar (Chomsky, 1965), learners will come across Language Parameters (Chomsky, 1982) where they will find language acquisition getting complicated and students will realize that not everything in the first language can be translated correctly into the foreign language. Therefore, translation skills are not good enough to enable learners to understand and analyze the grammar rules of the target language.

Many researchers have conducted studies on learners’ self-efficacy beliefs and learning strategies based on proficiency levels and found a positive and significant relationship between them (Yang, 1999; Wong, 2005; Magogwe & Oliver, 2007; Gahungu, 2010; Nosratinia, et al, 2014; Mastan & Maarof, 2014). One study, however, by Bonyadi, et al (2012) conducted on 130 ESL Iranian college students found a weak relationship between learners’ self-efficacy beliefs and the learning strategy used.

In Bahrain, Al Musawi (2014) had conducted a study on University of Bahrain students to explore the use of translation as a learning strategy. The randomly chosen participants were undergraduate students, majoring in English language and literature, with a minor in translation. Their proficiency level in English was estimated to be upper intermediate based on their scores in essay writing, their GPA in English courses, and teachers’ opinions. The results revealed two contradictory tendencies toward using translation as a learning strategy: (1) utilizing translation to read, write, comprehend, and learn English vocabulary. (2) Not using translation to learn English expressions, idioms, proverbs, and grammatical rules. In the author’s point of view, the reason for this contradiction in the result appears to be the sample. The participants, who were English major students with a minor in translation, were taught not to use literal translation with English expressions, idioms, and proverbs. Thus, choosing translation students would not ultimately give accurate results.

Having said that, the scope of this study seeks to examine the use of translation as a learning strategy by students at the University of Bahrain (UoB) from two different levels: students from the orientation program (OP) and fourth year English

major students. (OP) students are chosen randomly whereas fourth year English major students according to those who are taking English 405 Language Development course, the last in the series of three language development courses.

7. Methodology

The study is qualitative and quantitative in nature, involving primarily a survey developed by Liao (2006) consisting of two sets of questionnaires concerning beliefs and strategy use. The survey aims to identify beliefs regarding translation as a learning strategy shared among University of Bahrain students; to investigate what specific translation strategies these students are using to learn English, and to explore the relationship between translation beliefs and translation strategies.

7.1 Participants

The participants in this study comprised 100 students from the University of Bahrain (UoB), who were selected randomly from the orientation program (OP) and 4th year English major students who were taking the Language Development course ENGL 405. To keep the sample homogenous, only Arab Bahraini students participated in this study.

7.2 Instrumentation

The two questionnaires on students' beliefs and strategy use were developed by Liao (2006). Due to the difficulty that may face the orientation program (OP) students, an Arabic version of the questionnaires was used for them, which was revised by Dr. Ageli, an instructor of translation and English at the University of Bahrain. The questionnaires are described as follows:

1. For strategy use measurement, the *Inventory for Translation as a Learning Strategy* (ITLS) was used with some modifications (two negatively worded items (items 11 and 23) to allow for the detection of participants' bias responses).
2. For beliefs measurement, the *Inventory for Beliefs about Translation* (IBT) was used with modifications. In order to evaluate whether participants' performance on the individual items was consistent, four items (items 19, 20, 21, and 22) on the IBT were negatively worded, or items that represented the absence or dislike of using translation in English learning to detect bias and ensure reliability.

8. Results and Discussion

8.1 Reliability and Internal Consistency

The reliability test was done depending on the variables for this research. Table (4.1) below presents the reliability figures for Cronbach's alpha for the sample responses for 100 participants derived from SPSS version 20. The value of Cronbach's alpha above 0.7 is considered acceptable as the higher value of Cronbach's alpha indicates good internal consistency of the items in the scale, according to Gliem .A. and Gliem .R. (2003).

Table (1): Reliability and Internal consistency – main sample

Construct	No. of questions	Items	Cronbach's alpha (Reliability measure)
Translation as learning strategy	26	Q1-Q26	0.929
Beliefs about translation	24	Q27-Q50	0.875

Table (8.1) indicates that Cronbach's alpha for questionnaire's variables is above 0.7 along with Cronbach's alpha value for all questionnaire's is (0.947). Thus, it can be said that the internal consistency of the items is achieved, and the data are reliable.

8.2 Sample Responses

The sample responses were explored through the derivation of Means, Standard Deviations and the results are as follows:

Table (2): Results of Descriptive Sample Responses for the Use of Translations as a Learning Strategy

No.	Statements	OP Students		4th Year Student	
		P% of use	Mean	P% of use	Mean
1	When reading an English text, I first translate it into Arabic in my mind to help me understand its meaning	95.83%	3.50	26.92%	1.88
2	When I watch English TV or movies, I use Arabic subtitles to check my comprehension	93.75%	3.67	34.62%	2.27
3	When I write in English, I first think in Arabic and then translate my ideas into English	85.42%	3.46	19.23%	1.79
4	I use an electronic translation device to help myself understand English	85.42%	3.31	48.08%	2.37
5	If I forget certain English words or expressions in the middle of conversation, I translate them from Arabic into English to help me keep the conversation going	83.33%	3.35	46.15%	2.52
6	When I listen to English, I first translate the English utterances into Arabic to help me understand the meanings	83.33%	3.23	11.54%	1.71
7	I memorize new English vocabulary words by remembering their Arabic translation	79.17%	3.33	42.31%	2.29
8	If I do not understand something in English, I will ask other people to translate it into Arabic for me	79.17%	3.19	34.62%	2.00
9	When speaking English, I first think of what I want to say in Arabic and then translate it into English	75.00%	3.23	23.08%	1.85
10	After I read English articles, I use an available Arabic translation to check if my comprehension is correct	72.92%	3.10	26.92%	1.96
11*	When reading English, I try to grasp the meaning of what I read without thinking of Arabic equivalents	70.83%	2.92	65.38%	2.75
12	I use Arabic-English dictionaries to help myself learn English	68.75%	2.88	46.15%	2.33
13	I use English-Arabic dictionaries to help myself learn English	66.67%	2.94	51.92%	2.48
14	I use Arabic translation of grammatical terms such as parts of speech, tenses and agreements to help me clarify the roles of the grammatical parts of English sentences	66.67%	2.92	17.31%	1.75

15	I learn English idioms and phrases by reading their Arabic translation	66.67%	2.77	28.85%	1.94
16	I practice mentally translating my thoughts from Arabic to English in various situations	66.67%	3.02	42.31%	2.29
17	I try to clarify the differences and similarities between Arabic and English through translation	62.50%	2.83	42.31%	2.37
18	When the teacher assigns English articles for reading, I work with others to translate them	58.33%	2.58	9.62%	1.52
19	I learn English grammar through Arabic explanations of the English grammatical rules	56.25%	2.60	5.77%	1.37
20	I take notes in Arabic in my English class	56.25%	2.60	3.85%	1.31
21	I ask questions about how an Arabic expression can be translated into English	50.00%	2.54	36.54%	2.27
22	I write Arabic translations in my English textbooks	47.92%	2.42	21.15%	1.63
23*	When speaking English, I think of what I want to say in English without thinking first in Arabic	43.75%	2.44	76.92%	3.10
24	I read the Arabic translation scripts before I listen to instructional English tapes or CDs	39.58%	2.33	15.38%	1.63
25	I write Arabic outlines for my English compositions	37.50%	2.23	3.85%	1.25
26	I listen to or read Arabic news in order to understand English radio/TV news better	31.25%	1.94	19.23%	1.67

Table (3): Results of Responses for Beliefs about Using Translation as a Learning Strategy

No.	Statements	OP Students		4th Year Student	
		P% of Agreement	Mean	P% of Agreement	Mean
1	Translating helps me understand textbook readings	95.83%	3.48	78.85%	2.83
2	Using Arabic translation helps me interact with my classmates in English class to complete assignments	93.75%	3.38	34.62%	2.12
3	Translating helps me memorize English vocabulary	93.75%	3.50	69.23%	2.81
4	Translating helps me write English compositions	91.67%	3.46	63.46%	2.62
5	Translating helps me understand spoken English	89.58%	3.40	61.54%	2.65

6	I believe one needs to be involved in an English-speaking culture for some time before he/she is able to think in English	89.58%	3.38	78.85%	3.08
7	The more difficult English assignments are, the more I depend on Arabic translation	83.33%	3.21	36.54%	2.08
8	I like to use Arabic translation to learn English	83.33%	3.17	44.23%	2.27
9	Using Arabic translation while studying helps me better recall the content of a lesson	87.50%	3.35	34.62%	2.06
10	Using Arabic translation helps me finish my English assignments more quickly and save time	87.50%	3.29	40.38%	2.06
11	Translating helps me speak English	87.50%	3.27	57.69%	2.50
12	I will produce Arabic style English if I translate from Arabic to English	72.92%	3.00	48.08%	2.35
13	I feel pressure when I am asked to think directly in English	72.92%	2.94	28.85%	1.98
14	Translating helps me understand my teacher's English instructions	72.92%	2.92	46.15%	2.37
15	I prefer my English teachers always use English to teach me	66.67%	2.90	88.46%	3.46
16	I think everyone has to use Arabic translation at this stage of learning	64.58%	2.83	34.62%	2.17
17	Translating helps me understand English grammar rules	60.42%	2.69	38.46%	2.25
18	At this stage of learning, I cannot learn English without Arabic translation	60.42%	2.69	21.15%	1.85
19*	The use of Arabic translation may interfere with my ability to learn English well	58.33%	2.71	63.46%	2.73
20	Translating helps me learn English idioms and phrases	52.08%	2.60	53.85%	2.60
21*	Arabic translation lowers the amount of English input I receive	50.00%	2.52	48.08%	2.60
22*	When using English, it is best to keep my Arabic out of my mind	47.92%	2.60	71.15%	2.98
23	I tend to get frustrated when I try to think in English	47.92%	2.42	23.08%	1.87

24*	Translating does not help me make progress in learning English	35.42%	2.13	30.77%	2.04
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***The score of the item was reversed:**

There is a wide variety of strategies involving translation: cognitive, memory, compensation, social, and affective strategies and learners' opinions about translation generally affect their choice. In order to analyze and discuss the results, the ITLS is categorized into five main strategies, and IBLS is divided into three main categories as follows:

Table (5.1): ITLS Categories

Variable	Description
S1	Strategies to enhance English skills such as reading, writing, listening, and speaking.
S2	Strategies to learn English forms or structures in areas such as vocabulary, idioms, phrases, and grammar.
S3	Strategies to avoid the use of L1 when using English, to practice translating, and to clarify the differences and similarities between Arabic and English.
S4	Strategies to interact with other people in learning.
S5	Strategies to use learning aids such as dictionaries and to take notes.

Table (5.2): IBLS Categories

Variable	Description
B1	Beliefs about positive effects of translation on learners' affective and metacognitive aspects of English learning.
B2	Beliefs about positive effects of translation on enhancing learners' English skills and classroom interaction.
B3	Beliefs about negative effects of translation in learning English.

9.1 Discussion of the First Research Question

To answer the first research question, I have chosen the items concerned with S1; these are strategies to enhance English skills such as reading, writing, listening, and speaking.

Does the use of translation as a learning strategy by OP students and 4th year English major students enhance the language learning skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing)?

As shown in Table (2) the use of translation as a learning strategy does enhance language learning skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) for both 4th year English major students and OP students. However, the latter reported more positively toward the use of translation as a learning strategy than 4th year English major students.

Starting with listening, the large majority of the OP students (83.33%) when listening to English first translate the English utterances into Arabic to help them understand the meanings, while a minority of 4th year English major students follow suit (11.54%). This strategy actually affects students' communication skills, as they are unable to easily grasp the meaning in English without going through this unconscious process. In fact, this high percentage of the OP students shows that during school, they were not perhaps used to listening to English as much as they should be. In other words, they listened to Arabic during the class more than English. It is clear from the results obtained from the speaking skill that with the passage of time 4th year students' habit of using mental translation to help them speak English got eliminated. Clearly, many factors can affect student's ability to enhance speaking skills, teachers, friends, and sometimes family. In fact, learning English expressions take time, therefore in order for learners to master them they need more practice and exposure to the English culture. It can be

inferred from the results gained from these two skills (listening and speaking) for OP students that if listening is weak, then speaking will be weak too. As for reading, the majority of OP students first translate a text into Arabic in their mind to help them understand its meaning (95.83%) compared to a minority of the 4th year students (26.92%). This is actually a time-consuming process, because students have the feeling that they need to understand every single word in English, which wastes a lot of time, instead of trying to comprehend the meaning of the message conveyed. Eventually students will have a negative attitude toward reading as the more they feel the need to translate the more they get frustrated and neglect reading. After reading English articles, a significant proportion of the OP students use any available Arabic translation to check if their comprehension is correct (72.92%), whereas only a small percentage of the 4th year students need that reference (26.92%). The approximately high percentage of OP students (72.92%) who need to check comprehension might be those who did not choose English as a major; in other words, they need English for specific purposes (other majors). As Harmer and Harbord's claim that using L1 is a valid technique to check comprehension (2007, p. 133; 2008, p. 354) as cited in (Fortune, 2012). This technique would be beneficial if it is used in the EFL context, along with other L2 checking techniques.

When reading English, most of OP students (70.83%) do not try to grasp the meaning of what they read without thinking of Arabic equivalents, whereas more than half of the 4th year students (65.38%) try to do so. Quinones-Guerra, (2016) also stated that it is normal for learners to link the meaning between two languages in their mind which, in other words, is an innate process. He also added that mental translation might only help students to understand the text at a macro level and not at the micro level. It can be said that mental translation is a normal process only when it comes to meaning and not literal translation.

As for the writing skill, the large majority of OP students (85.42%) first think in Arabic and then translate their ideas into English, while only few of the 4th year students use this strategy (19.23%). This is actually might be the reason for producing Arabic style English. A minority of the OP students (37.50%) write Arabic outlines for their English compositions, while almost none of the 4th year students do so (3.85%). After all, it seems that OP students are still unaware of language parameters, that is, Arabic is a "right-to-left orientation, and has multiplicity of scripts, frequent omission of vowels, and complex morphological structure" (Abu-Salem & Chan, 2006, 22). Another reason is that OP students who had just graduated from schools used to memorize writing texts.

9.2 Discussion of the Second Research Question

How do 4th year English major students use translation as a learning strategy in comparison with orientation program students?

The students in this study reported employing a wide variety of strategies that involved translation. A significant proportion from the OP students (79.17%) memorize new English words by remembering their Arabic translation, while almost half of the 4th students use the same strategy (42.31%). This agrees with Pan, (2005) who reported that learners find ease in linking the new words to their native language. Other studies which examined the use of translation in learning vocabulary by college students are Salih & Ridha, (2014); Mutlu; Bayaram; Demirbukan, (2015) who also reported results on its effectiveness. The result of 4th year students (42.31%) indicates that even advanced learners find ease in linking new English words to Arabic. A small percentage of the 4th year students (28.85%) learn English idioms and phrases by reading their Arabic translation, while more than half of the OP students do so (66.67%). This finding disagrees with that of the study conducted by Al Musawi (2014) study as more than half of the OP students (56.25%) learn English grammar through Arabic explanations of the English grammatical rules. In my opinion, translation and grammar might cause students a lot of confusion as both languages (Arabic and English) have different grammatical features and equivalence in translation is not always the same. A very small percentage of the 4th year students needed Arabic explanations (5.77%); they seem to realize the differences between the two languages. Surprisingly, when reading English, most of the OP students (70.83%) do not try to grasp the meaning without thinking of Arabic equivalents, compared to more than half of 4th year students (65.38%) who try to grasp the meaning only in English. Likewise, in speaking, less than half of OP students (43.75%) think of what they want to say first in Arabic, whereas most of 4th year students (76.92%) think directly in English. Considering translation as a social activity, the majority of OP students (79.17%) who do not understand something in English, ask other people to translate it into Arabic for them, which is in line with the findings of Heyun (2011). Surprisingly, both groups reported that they practice mental translation of their thoughts from Arabic to English (66.67% of OP students) | (42.31% of 4th year students) in various situations. Added to that, a significant proportion of both groups (50.00% of OP students) | (36.54% of 4th year students) ask questions about how an Arabic expression can be translated into English, which is unlike what Al Musawi (2014) claimed in his study. More than half of both groups (66.67% of OP students) and (51.92% of 4th year students) use English-Arabic dictionaries to help them learn English, whereas OP students use Arabic-English dictionaries more than 4th year students (68.75%) | (46.15%) respectively. Despite the fact that it was stated by Berwick & Horsfall (1996) that "bilingual dictionaries

are sometimes thought of as inferior to monolingual dictionaries, especially for advanced learners” (as cited in Fortune, 2012, p. 76), monolingual dictionaries will improve vocabulary and eventually their writing skills. Extensive Reading (ER) researches have demonstrated that the more students read and engage with vocabulary, the lesser they will eventually need to refer to a dictionary as they will be able to guess the meaning from the context (Alzu’bi, 2014; Brown, 2000; Koch, 2009) as cited in (Sakurai, 2015).

Discussion of the Third Research Question

What are the beliefs about the use of translation as a learning strategy by both 4th year English major students and orientation program (OP) students? Which beliefs are the most and the least common among University of Bahrain students?

The participants in this study reported various beliefs about using translation to learn English. The results of the descriptive analysis of the IBT show the most common and the least common beliefs held by the participants from both groups. The result shows they believe one needs to be involved in an English-speaking culture for some time before he/she is able to think in English (3.38). It was pointed out by Pan (2005) that learners need to involve and think in their second language to the maximum. The author totally agrees with this view, because in order to be familiar with an English-speaking culture, a student must be exposed to it as much as possible.

Students, however, reported that they feel they are under pressure when they are asked to think directly in English (2.94). This actually was clarified by Wright, (2010) when he stated that students who have low proficiency in the second language tend to pause when they are asked in the target language. He believed that this pause stands for “mental translation” which he called “wait time” in order to process and understand the question in their native language. While some students believe that translating helps them understand their teacher’s English instructions (2.92), others prefer that their English teachers always use English to teach them (2.90). This statement does not agree with the findings of Campbell, (2002) when he stated that if teachers completely ignore and stop the use of L1, it might lead to a reverse effect on students. In other words, students might have negative feeling toward the teacher and the teaching method.

In view of the Mean of the 4th year English major students, it is clear that it is lower than those in the OP. However, the most common belief is the preference that their English teachers always use English to teach them (3.46). They believe one needs to be involved in an English-speaking culture for some time before he/she is able to think in English (3.08). Also, when using English, it is best to keep their Arabic out of their mind (2.98). In addition, translating helps them understand textbook readings (2.83) as well as memorizing English vocabulary (2.81). So, in terms of learning vocabulary both groups agree on the effectiveness of using translation as a learning strategy. On the other hand, they do not agree that everyone has to use Arabic translation at this stage of learning (2.17). Besides, they are not of the opinion that using Arabic translation helps them interact with their classmates in the English class to complete assignments (2.12), or even finish their English assignments more quickly to save time (2.06). Moreover, they do not feel pressure when they are asked to think directly in English (1.98) and they do not tend to get frustrated when they try to think in English (1.87). At this stage of learning, they do not indeed to believe that they cannot learn English without Arabic translation (1.58). These results actually show that 4th year students do not have the belief that translation would help them in their learning process, compared to OP students who hold strong beliefs about the benefit of using translation as a learning strategy.

9.4 Discussion of the Fourth Research Question

In which skill(s) do orientation students and 4th year English major students use translation the most?

Based on the results obtained from the ITLS questionnaire, items with the highest percentages were speaking and reading. Translation helps the majority of OP students (83.33%) to remember certain words or expressions. For instance, if they forget certain English words or expressions in the middle of conversation, they translate them from Arabic into English to help keep the conversation flowing. Interestingly, almost half of the 4th year English major students (46.15%) use the same strategy. Besides, a significant proportion of OP students (75.00%) process mental translation while speaking. For example, when they want to speak in English, they first think of what they want to say in Arabic, unlike 4th year English major students (23.08%).

A significant proportion of both groups (70.83% of OP students) | (65.38% of 4th year students) reported that when reading English, they try to grasp the meaning of what they read without thinking of Arabic equivalents. Quinones-Guerra, (2016) in his comments on Sakurai, (2015) suggested restricting the use of translation when it comes to Extensive Reading (ER) because it will decrease the quantity of reading and comprehension. He further stated that students do not always master their native

language. Therefore, if they are unable to grasp the meaning in L1, they eventually fail to comprehend it in L2. He also stated that it is better to enable students to use translation in order to realize the limits and recognize language transfer. The author does not agree with this point, because this will produce some negative effects and this, consequently, will slow the learning process as pointed out by Sakurai, (2015). Likewise, OP students also try to think directly in the target language upon the advice of their instructors (informal communication). In the author's point of view, this is considered to be a positive implication that we get from orientation students, because it raises their awareness of the target language features, boundaries, and limits which will eventually help them in the advanced levels.

10. Conclusion and Recommendations

In a country like Bahrain, English is considered to be a second language (Sdiri, 2017) where it is taught in schools from early stages; however, the use of translation as a learning strategy has been very popular among learners (Liao, 2006). Despite the fact that many researchers (Friedlander, 1990; Kobayashi and Rinnert, 1992; Kern, 1994; Husain, 1995; Omura, 1996; Prince, 1996; Hsieh, 2000) have supported the use of L1 as a base to learn L2 as it is beneficial and can improve students' proficiency, others (Bloomfield, 1961; Hartmann and Stork, 1964; Lado, 1964; Huebener, 1965; Gatenby, 1967) have held the opposite view, and believed that it might be effective depending on the status of the target language i.e. whether English is taught as a second language or as a foreign language. Some researchers (Yang, 1999; Wong, 2005; Magogwe & Oliver, 2007; Gahungu, 2010; Bonyadi, et al, 2012; Nosratinia et al, 2014), on the other hand, were of the opinion that using translation can be efficient in both contexts (ESL/EFL) depending on students' self-efficiency. Hence, this matter is still debated and more studies are written on this issue. This study aimed to analyze and understand the use of translation as a learning strategy by both orientation students and 4th year English major students and their beliefs about it at the University of Bahrain. Also, the study sought to determine the extent of the use of translation as a learning strategy by comparing the two groups as well as to find out the skill/s that students used most with translation.

According to this study, orientation students who were mostly taught by bilingual teachers in government schools have shown a tendency to use Arabic as a base to learn English, and most of them hold positive beliefs about it. Orientation students may not be aware that the reason for the low proficiency in English might be the excessive use of L1 to learn L2, which led them to be placed in the orientation program. Students who prefer to use translation along with reading, assuming that it would help them understand the meaning of vocabulary and facilitate understanding the text as a whole are unaware of the fact that the brain functions differently when we translate (Wolf and Stoodley, 2008). This again emphasizes the idea that the use of translation slows down the acquisition of fluency of learning the second language as indicated by Danchev (1983), Malmkjær (1998), and Newson (1998).

Despite the small numbers that still use L1 in certain situations, the majority of the students prefer to think directly in the target language. The author personally thinks that much exposure is the key to learn English, especially for those who graduate from government schools. While most of the subjects in private schools are taught in English, students in government schools are exposed to Arabic more than English. Therefore, it is imperative that English classes should be taught in English only as other subjects are taught in Arabic. Furthermore, it is better to use English to the maximum, especially for communication skills. It is noted that some English teachers prefer to communicate with students using L1 outside the context, but this might have negative impact on students' speaking skills, which causes them to face some difficulties in speaking English in various situations. In fact, some students were found to perform well in writing, but their speaking skills were very poor or vice versa. Therefore, the use of L1 by both, teachers and students, may deprive them of the opportunity and valuable time to benefit from working within one language as pointed out by Danchev (1983), Malmkjær (1998) and Newson (1998).

Moreover, this study has shown that 4th year English major students have eliminated the habit of using translation as a learning strategy. Based on the finding of this study, it is assumed that advanced students do have other learning strategies because translation does not play a huge role in their learning process, which is in line with by Baw (2002) findings reflected clearly by 4th year students.

Finally, translation as a learning strategy should be abandoned from the early stages of language acquisition. Learners must have maximum exposure with an adequate environment in order to immerse and think in the target language. This is in line with O'Malley, Chamot, Stewner-Manzanares, Kupper, and Russo (1985) as cited in Sakurai (2015) when they described translation as "ineffective strategy used by language learners at beginning and intermediate levels".

11. Suggestions for Further Research

This study has dealt only with the use of and beliefs about translation as a learning strategy by students with two different levels of proficiency at the University of Bahrain. Therefore, it would be worthwhile to replicate it and investigate teachers' use and beliefs to figure out whether there is a correlation between students' use of translation as a learning strategy and teachers' use of translation in teaching. Furthermore, selecting students accepted as English majors in the orientation program will give more insight about the development of the language acquisitions through conducting a longitudinal study. The extent of language interference between L1 and L2 can also be examined through administering a writing test to students.

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