LLT Journal, e-ISSN 2579-9533, p-ISSN 1410-7201, Vol. 24, No. 1, April 2021, pp. 240-248

LLT Journal: A Journal on Language and Language Teaching
http://e-journal.usd.ac.id/index.php/LLT
Sanata Dharma University, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

THE CORRELATION OF ENGLISH PROFICIENCY LEVEL AND TRANSLATION STRATEGIES USED BY INDONESIAN EFL LEARNERS

Delti Yulita
Universitas Timor
yulitadelti@ymail.com
DOI: 10.24071/llt.v24i1.2812
received 19 August 2020; accepted 8 December 2020

Abstract
The importance of using translation to improve English language proficiency has been a debatable topic, specifically the effect of learners' proficiency level in which dictate how the learners use the translation as a learning strategy. Thus, this study was purposed to find out the relationship between English proficiency level and EFL learners' use of translation strategies. The Inventory for Translation as a Learning Strategy (ITLS) questionnaire was administered to 40 University students that divided into B2 and B1 based on CEFR level. One-way ANOVA results show that both learners are highly using translation as a learning strategy with mean score > 3. Nonetheless, the significance difference was found in using translation to improve English skills such as reading, writing, speaking, and listening in which high proficient learners were less likely using translation strategies than low proficient. Furthermore, the correlation analysis shows the negative correlation between English proficiency and translation strategies and a positive correlation in using translation to find differences and similarities between L1 and L2. The pedagogical implications present that high and low proficient learners were benefited using translation strategies to enhance their English skills.

Keywords: translation strategies, high proficient, low proficient

Introduction
Translation is a learning strategy that enables learners to learn English more quickly as it facilitates the communication process by interpreting the message and information from L1 into L2 reversely. The use of translation is profoundly accepted and playing an important role in EFL learning covering the practice with all English skills from listening, reading, speaking, and writing (Liao, 2002). Translation has been considered as an appropriate strategy to carry meaning linguistically, semantically, and pragmatically from one language (L1) to other language (L2).

In terms of popularity, the use of translation has been neglected and even omitted. Whilst many researchers settle that translation is a powerful tool to increase students' confidence in learning foreign language, other researchers are

against using translation and native language in the classroom (Al-Musawi, 2014). Many teachers believe that L1 translation interferes with the acquisition of L2 since students are required to think in the target language (Liao, 2006). Therefore, such new teaching methods like CLT and Communicative Approach do not focus on using translation and tend to limit and intolerance in the use of mother tongue in the learning process.

The revival of translation has been promoted in the last decades claimed that although the students were discouraged to use translation, foreign language learners habitually use translation as learning strategy in facilitating and acquiring a new language (Musawi, 2014). Another study by Karimian & Talebinejad (2013) in Iran found that most Iranian EFL learners use translation as affective strategy. It helped them to reduce anxiety and feel more confident. While in Indonesia, Djo (2016) found that most of the students believed that translation is significant useful, especially in understanding difficult reading materials, vocabulary learning and retrieving meaning. Those studies emphasized the benefit of translation that could help students' learning process in a way such reducing anxiety and be more confidence in learning activities. Nevertheless, since the learners have distinctive characteristics and competencies, some researchers argue if various learners will have different ways to employ translation in the learning process.

A contrary between study by Dagiliene (2012) and Pekkanli (2012) give conflicting view related to the effect of students' background variables specifically the proficiency level and educational background towards the use of translation. Dagiliene found students' perceptions are quite positive about translation and the attitudes rely upon learners' proficiency. Feedback by less proficient students indicate that translation is not relevant or useful for students at lower or beginner level. Meanwhile, study by Pekkanli (2012) found that students in a lower level of English prefer to use L1 and translation as a learning strategy to help them learning English.

Furthermore, Calis & Dikilitas (2012) found negative comments for higher proficient students that prefer to learn through L2. Next, another study by Tan (2015) in China found that the use of translation as learning strategy and English proficiency level based on CET 4 (College Test Band 4) is negatively correlated. Low achievers show a tendency to use translation as a social learning strategy while the higher achievers likely to avoid using L1 or translation.

Moreover, research by Liao (2006) presented that the students having high proficiency level hold negative beliefs regarding translation in learning foreign language and had the tendency to avoid using translation. The study found that English proficiency did not generate any significant difference in translation beliefs and strategy used calculated by quantitative analysis. However, the qualitative interview data exposed some differences between high proficient and low proficient learners regarding translation beliefs and strategy used.

A new perspective is risen that some researchers questioning how the level of students' proficiency affect the use of translation strategy in language learning. Asgarian (2013) stated that as learners develop and growth, they become users of monolingual resources and develop habit thinking in English. This argumentation leads to the conclusion that as the students become more proficient, they less likely to use translation in learning target language.

Given the importance of considering learners' proficiency as one variable that differentiate the use of translation strategy, this present study focuses on finding the correlation between English level proficiency (TOEFL) and the employment of translation as learning strategy by University students in Indonesia. It is also to investigate the frequencies of using translation as a learning strategy by students from a different proficiency level of English. The questions for this study were formulated into:

1. What are the differences between high proficient learners (B2) and low proficient learners (B1) in the use of translation strategies?
2. What is the correlation between TOEFL score and the use of translation strategies in English language learning?

Method

Participants

The participants are 40 Indonesian EFL University students enrolled at postgraduate program coming from different majors. The students were categorized into a higher level and a lower level of English proficiency. There will be two groups, B2 and B1 level in which both groups are placed as an independent user with different descriptors as reference level. Based on CEFR level, the TOEFL cut level score for B1 is 460-542 and for B2 is 543-626. Each group consists of 20 students. The normal distribution test was conducted before measuring the questionnaire to evaluate the validity of participants' group level.

Data Collection

The Inventory for Translation as a Learning Strategy (ITLS) Questionnaire by Liao (2002) was used to measure the students' frequency in using in different variance of strategy. It consists of 28 statements. The scale is using the Likert scale from 5 as Strongly Agree, 4 as Agree, 3 as Partial Agree, 2 as Disagree, and 1 as Strongly Disagree. The data describes as the high mean score of strategies display the frequent use of translation in learning English (Liao, 2002). Among the 28 items in ITLS questionnaire, all of which were broken down into five variables of strategies. The factor analysis was obtained from the questionnaire to show the common learning strategies and generated into five components by Liao (2006). This factor analysis is effective to summarize and explore the differences between two groups as it has been validated proven by Al Musawi (2014).

Data Analysis

In term of finding the differences between B1 and B2 group in using translation strategies, One-way ANOVA was calculated. Furthermore, the measurement of translation strategies usage was described by the following criteria: total mean score, $M > 3$ considered as High level; $2.5 < M < 3$ considered as Medium level; and $M < 2.5$ considered as Low level of use. In order to explore the correlation between English proficiency (TOEFL score) and the use of translation strategy, Pearson correlation analysis was applied. The software SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science) version 22.0 was employed to analyze the gathering data in this study.

Findings and Discussion

Normal Distribution Test and Differences between the Two Groups

The groups are divided into B1 and B2 based on their TOEFL score. Based on CEFR level, the TOEFL cut level score for B1 is 460-542 and for B2 is 543-626. Lillifoers test was applied to test the normal distribution of participants' score.

Table 1. Normal distribution test

Groups	N	Mean	Std Derivation	t-value	Lo
B2	20	567.3	10.28	14.16	0.108
B1	20	508.25	15.75		0.105

As is displayed, there is significant difference between B2 and B1 in TOEFL scores with *t* value =14.16, $p<0.05$, *t* critical two-tail = 2.021, *t* value is high enough above *t* critical that claimed the difference between both groups is statistically significant.

From the data displayed, it is found that Lo = 0.108, while from the Lilliefors table with level of significance or $\alpha = 0.05$, the value of Ltable= 0.190. Since Lo < Ltable, then the data has normal distribution. From the data displayed, it is found that Lo = 0.105, while from Lilliefors table with level of significance or $\alpha = 0.05$, the value of Ltable= 0.190. Since Lo < Ltable, then the data of B1 group has normal distribution.

Differences in Use of Translation Strategies between the two groups

Liao (2002) has categorized the factor analysis of the ITLS questionnaire into five variables, it is divided into five strategies as described in table below:

Table 2. Variables of ITLS Questionnaire

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

The result of the questionnaire was formulated through one-way ANOVA to find the degree of differences between translation strategies used by two level proficiency groups.

Table 3. One-way ANOVA for comparing the samples

Strategies	B2 Group (higher level)		B1 Group (lower level)		t	Sig. (2-tailed) P<.05
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation		
S1	2.59	0.62	3.20	0.50	3.432	0.001*
S2	2.91	0.69	3.21	0.76	1.305	0.200
S3	3.56	0.30	3.54	0.37	-0.186	0.853
S4	2.93	0.73	3.23	0.54	1.465	0.151
S5	3.09	0.60	3.32	0.61	1.199	0.238

The table shows the degree of differences between B2 and B1 group in using translation strategies in learning English. Except for S1, the other strategies (S2, S3, S4, and S5) has t-value below t-critical showing minor differences between B2 and B1 group. There is a significant difference of S1 with t-value 3.432 which is above t-critical and P=0.001<0.005. It shows the mean score for the higher level of English proficiency is 2.59, considered as medium use, which means that higher achievers more frequently avoid the interference of translation and the use of Indonesian in learning English skills like reading, writing, listening, and speaking rather than the lower achiever which have mean score 3.20, considered as high use.

Another difference was found in the use of S4 showing the tendency of lower English proficiency prefers to use translation as social learning strategy. The mean score of 2.93 showing that higher proficient is in the medium level and the lower proficient is in the high level with mean score 3.23. The low achievers tend to ask others to translate the unknown words or text to get the right comprehension. Meanwhile, the higher achievers avoid using translation when interact with people and showing the tendency of autonomous learning that they rarely ask other people to translate for them.

In terms of learning forms and structure in areas such as vocabulary, grammar, idioms, and phrases (S2), the lower proficient is considered as high use of the strategy with mean score 3.21. Meanwhile, the higher proficient got 2.91 as the mean score which considered as medium use. It reveals that low achiever focuses more on words meaning level that they do the English-Indonesian and vice versa translation to find the meaning of vocabulary, idioms and phrases and to understand the grammar formula. The higher achiever is heading towards the level of English-English translation or sentence meaning level and focus on function rather than form.

Minor difference is found in the use of S5 that both groups were categorized in high use of learning aids with the mean score above 3, B2 has 3.09 and B1 has 3.32. The low achievers frequently use the learning aids like dictionaries in as a translation tool and taking notes in Indonesian. The higher achiever is having high skill in using electronic or and mostly do not take notes in Indonesian.

The lowest difference amidst the two groups is found in terms of avoiding the use of Indonesian when using English, practicing translation and clarifying the differences and similarities between Indonesian and English (S3). The mean scores of 3.56 for B2 and 3.54 for B1 show that both groups are frequently use this strategy in learning English. Even the higher level showed the highest

frequency of this strategy than the lower level. It can be considered that the higher level has high awareness of using translation to find L1 and L2 differences and similarities in the process of language acquisition. It also reveals the higher proficient tend to practice mental translation and to ask questions more than lower proficient. These strategies help them to develop their ability to think directly in English.

Correlation between TOEFL level scores and the use of Translation strategy

Pearson correlation analysis was employed to investigate the relationship between English proficiency and translation strategy. The statistical correlation being described in table below.

Table 4. Pearson Correlation Analysis

		S1	S2	S3	S4	S5
TOEFL scores	Pearson Correlation	**-.577****	-.299	**.105**	-.293	-.241
	Sig (2-tailed)	.000	.061	.520	.066	.134
	N	40	40	40	40	40

Table 3 pictures the correlation between TOEFL score levels and the use of translation strategies in five categories. Four strategies, S1, S2 S4 and S5, are negatively correlated with English proficiency (TOEFL score levels). The most significant difference is found in the use of S1 with level of significance at -.577. It indicates that as the score of TOEFL increase, the use of translation strategy to improve English skills decrease.

The result shows, although it is not significant, the positive correlation in the use of S3 which discovered the higher proficient simultaneously avoid using Indonesian when using English. The higher achiever is benefited using the translation in order to explore their linguistic competence of both languages. To sum up, higher proficient has higher awareness of L1 and L2 differences and similarities than lower proficiency. And this conclusion gives the supporting evidence that translation is still being used by high proficient level.

Unlike the previous study by Tan (2015) and Cao (2008) that found out all the translation strategies were significantly negatively correlated with English proficiency, this present study discovered that there is positive correlation in one factor analysis (S3) between two groups. This inconsistency and contradiction could stand for some reasons such as learners' characteristics and L1 background. Previous studies by Tan and Cao were dealing with Chinese that has significant difference than with English in terms of form and function rather than Indonesian with English. A possible explanation for this contradiction between Indonesian and Chinese learners is based on Schachter theory of avoidance (1974), it is pointed out that learners avoid using L2 forms because of the influence of native language and there is a structural difference between L1 and L2. This cause the Chinese learners less likely to get rid of using Chinese when learning English. Moreover, detail study by Li (1996) towards the Chinese learners found they avoid English function such as relative clause because the tendency of pragmatic differences.

Aside from the finding that shows the negative correlation of proficiency level and translation strategy, it cannot be avoided that Indonesian learners, both higher and lower achiever, still use translation strategy in learning English. Both learners peculiarly tend to keep practicing mental translation when it is not possible to do direct translation. Al-Musawi (2014) discovered that the learners use an extensive range of learning strategies, included translation. Those strategies assist them to elevate their English skills and to overcome some obstacles in the learning process. Similarly, this present study shows that both proficiency groups use translation strategy moderately as one of learning strategies.

Another supporting claim was emphasized by Liao (2006) that both learners, lower and higher proficient, agreed that translation held a crucial part in their English learning process. Nonetheless, both groups have different ways of using the translation during the learning process. As stated earlier that the high proficient learners have developed habit thinking skills, so based on the Oxford classification strategy (1990) that it might be possible for them to use the translation as their metacognitive and cognitive strategy rather than affective strategy like most of the low proficient. It can be concluded that the high proficient had a better awareness on how to translate and when it necessary to translate.

Given the importance of translation strategies are frequently used by the less proficient learners, as a pedagogical implication, teachers should encourage practicing the autonomous learning approach. Learning autonomy could alleviate the low achievers to comprehend English skills by way of independent learning and self-monitoring that boost them to be more proficient (Darwis, 2011). Low proficient levels need to be guided and motivated through the learning process constantly and constructively, so they could achieve higher proficiency sooner and develop habit thinking skills. By implementing the translation strategies and the use of L1 with some consideration and limitation, the learners feel more confidence and reduce the anxiety in foreign language learning.

Conclusion

The study focused on two questions, firstly what the differences between two level groups are, B2 and B2, in using translation as a learning strategy. Secondly, how the correlation between the TOEFL score and the use of translation strategy. The results are calculated based upon the one-way ANOVA and Pearson Correlation.

The significance difference between the higher and lower proficient was found in the use of translation strategy to enhance specific language skills such as English reading, writing, and speaking. This strategy was significantly negatively correlated with English proficiency indicating that the lower proficient learners use translation more often to improve their English specific skills. The analysis implicated that the higher proficient learners try to avoid using L1 in the learning process and be more focus on forming habit to think directly in L2 without interference of the mother tongue.

There is positive correlation found in using translation strategy as a way to find differences and similarities between L1 and L2 where the higher proficient employed this insight to improve L2 competence. The findings confirm that higher proficient more benefited by this strategy that they practice translation to

raise the awareness of L1 and L2 differences and similarities. Moreover, the high proficient learners more frequently avoid using Indonesian when using English than their counterparts who were less proficient learners.

There are some limitations for this present study that the number of samples is not big enough to represent the entire population of University students at Master program. This limitation occurred in order to find the normal distribution of the students' TOEFL score where the balance of each level group has to be maintained. Some other variables such as gender, students' background, job and length of study English should be considered as factors that influences the use of translation strategy. The limitation should be noted before the generalization of this finding that different variables and culture has impact to the use of translation strategies between higher and lower proficient learners.

References

Ali, S. (2012). Integrating translation into task-based activities - a new direction for ESL teachers. *Language in India, 12*(8), 429-438.

Al-Musawi, N. (2014). Strategic use of translation in learning English as a foreign language (EFL) among Bahrain university students. *Innovative Teaching*, 1-10.

Asgarian, A. (2013). The Iranian EFL teachers' perceptions on translation strategy use. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences, 70*, 922-928.

Ashouri, A. F., & Fotovatnia, Z. (2010). The Effect of Individual Differences on Learners' Translation Belief in EFL Learning. *English Language Teaching, 3*(4), 228-236.

Baharudin, H. (2017). Translation strategies and techniques of Arabic novel by university students. *Journal of Language Studies, 17*(4), 225-243.

Calis, E., & Dikilitas, K. (2012). The use of translation in EFL classes as L2 learning practice. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences, 46*, 5079-5084.

Cao, C. (2008). Learners' belief about and strategies of using translation in English learning: A study of college English majors in Urumqi (Master Thesis ed.). Urumqi: Xinjiang Normal University.

Dagilienė, I. (2012). Translation as a learning method in English language teaching. *Studies about Languages*, (21), 124-129.

Djo, F. C. (2016). *EFL Students' use of translation as a language learning tool*. Salatiga: Satya Wacana Christian University.

Guerra, A. F. (2014). The usefulness of translation in foreign language learning: students' attitudes. *IJ-ELTS*, 153-170.

Hawkins, S. J. (2015). Guilt, missed opportunities, and false role models: A look at perceptions and use of the first language in English teaching in Japan. *JALT Journal, 37*(1), 29-42.

Karimian, Z., & Talebinejad, M. (2013). Students' use of translation as a learning strategy in an EFL classroom. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research, 4*(3), 605-610.

Li, J. (1996). Underproduction does not Necessarily Mean Avoidance: Investigation of Underproduction using Chinese ESL Learners. *Pragmatic and Language Learning*, 171-187.

Liao, P. (2002). Taiwanese college students' belief about and strategy use of translation in English learning (Unpublished doctoral dissertation ed.). Texas, USA: The University of Texas at Austin.

Marqués Aguado, T., & Solís-Becerra, J. A. (2013). An overview of translation in language teaching methods: Implications for EFL in secondary education in the region of Murcia. *Revista de Lingüística y Lenguas Aplicadas, 8*(1), 38-48.

Mirbazel, S. K., & Arjmandi, M. (2018). The effect of English teachers' code-switching and translation strategies on the enhancement of Iranian EFL junior secondary program students' language learning. *Journal of Applied Linguistics and Language Research, 5*(3), 204-217.

Mogahed, M. M. (2011). To use or not to use translation in language teaching. *Translation Journal, 15*(4), 2-4.

Mollaei, F., Taghinezhad, A., & Sadighi, F. (2017). Teachers and learners' perceptions of applying translation as a method, strategy, or technique in an Iranian EFL setting. *International Journal of Education and Literacy Studies, 5*(2), 67-73.

Mutlu, G., Bayram, D., & Demirbüken, I. B. (2015). Translation as a learning strategy of Turkish EFL learners. *International Journal on New Trends in Education and Their Implications, 6*(2), 225-234.

Oxford, R. (1990). Language learning strategies: What every teacher should know. Boston: Heinle & Heinle.

Liao, P. (2006). EFL learners' beliefs about and strategy use of translation in English learning. *RELC Journal, 37*(2), 191-215.

Pan, Y. C., & Pan, Y. C. (2012). The use of translation in the EFL classroom. *The Philippine ESL Journal, 9*, 4-23.

Pekkanli, I. (2012). Translation and the contemporary language teacher. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences, 46*, 955-959.

Tan, S. (2015). The relationship between English language proficiency and EFL learners' use of translation strategies. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics and Translation, 1*(4), 55-60.

Tardzenyuy, N. C. (2016). Revisiting translation strategies and techniques. *International Journal of Comparative Literature and Translation Studies, 4*(4), 48-56.