

The attitudes of future English teachers towards the use of translation in language teaching (TILT)

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SVEUČILIŠTE U ZAGREBU
UČITELJSKI FAKULTET
ODSJEK ZA UČITELJSKE STUDIJE

Ivana Šarić

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TOWARDS THE USE OF TRANSLATION IN LANGUAGE
TEACHING (TILT)**

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Mentor rada:

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Summary

The topic of this thesis is the use of translation as a method of learning foreign languages. The aim of this paper was to present the attitudes of future English teachers from Croatia (currently students at the Faculty of Teacher Education in Zagreb) about the use of translation in foreign language teaching and learning. The research consisted of questions related to the amount of translation used, the level at which it should be used, with which age group and how often, as well as questions about ideas on how to implement translation in foreign language teaching. The paper touched on the following topics: whether translation is a positive or negative method and how welcome it is to use L1 in teaching a foreign language. The introductory part set a theoretical framework, presenting theoretical views on the mentioned topics. The paper also looked into the question of how much the teacher's previous experience influences the choice of methods to use in teaching, and it also presents the benefits and advantages of using translation in terms of developing certain language skills. Translation in foreign language teaching is a topic that has preoccupied many theorists, as well as practitioners. Ever since the beginning of the twentieth century, when translation was forced to the background, and when it was almost forbidden in language learning, it has been debated whether translation has more positive or negative sides. It seems that, like any other method, translation should not be used as the only method because then the development of some of the language skills could be neglected.

Taking everything into consideration, the respondents mostly answered that they would use translation in moderation.

Key words: translation, TILT, foreign language learning, teaching method, teachers' attitudes

Sažetak

Tema ovoga diplomskog rada jest uporaba prevođenja kao metode za učenje u nastavi stranoga jezika. Cilj ovog rada bio je prikazati stavove hrvatskih budućih učitelja (trenutno studenata Učiteljskog fakulteta u Zagrebu) o korištenju prevođenja u učenju stranoga jezika. Istraživanje se sastojalo od pitanja vezanih uz količinu korištenja prevođenja, stupnju poučavanja na kojemu bi se koristilo, s kojom dobnom skupinom i koliko često, kao i pitanja o idejama kako implementirati prevođenje u nastavu stranoga jezika. Rad ispituje sljedeće teme: je li prevođenje pozitivna ili negativna metoda i koliko je poželjno koristiti prvi jezik učenika u poučavanju stranoga jezika. Postavljen je i teorijski okvir u vezi sa spomenutim temama. U radu se postavlja pitanje o tome koliko prethodno iskustvo učitelja utječe na odabir metoda koje će koristiti u poučavanju, a također su predstavljene i koristi i prednosti koje donosi uporaba prevođenja u smislu razvoja pojedinih jezičnih vještina. Prevođenje u nastavi stranoga jezika tema je koja zaokuplja mnoge teoretičare i praktičare. Još od početka dvadesetoga stoljeća, kada je prevođenje palo u drugi plan i kada je bilo skoro zabranjeno, raspravlja se ima li prevođenje više pozitivnih ili negativnih strana, no čini se da se kao i svaka druga metoda ne može koristiti sama jer to bi moglo imati negativan utjecaj na razvoj pojedinih jezičnih vještina.

Uzimajući sve u obzir, ispitanici su u najvećoj mjeri odgovorili da bi prevođenje koristili umjereno.

Ključne riječi: prevođenje, TILT, učenje stranoga jezika, metoda poučavanja, stavovi učitelja

1. INTRODUCTION

The world around us offers an enormous amount of information and different kinds of contents. However, the contents are often offered in a foreign language. People from smaller countries such as Croatia, with their national language spoken only there, depend on foreign language skills – mostly English. In order to follow all current events, and to be as competent as possible for work in their country, but also abroad, people need good knowledge of the language. The first step in learning a new language is connecting unknown words with those from our domain language (L1). This transferring “of one’s language to another language” is defined as translation (Liao 2006: 192).

Translation used to be a widely accepted teaching method for many centuries. It has its roots in the Middle Ages in the form of the Grammar Translation Method, when used for teaching classical languages. It served as a process for reaching goals such as reading literature and developing intellectually by learning new languages (Skopečková, 2018). It was seen as a predominant method in foreign language teaching from the 1840s until the beginning of the twentieth century. After decades of using the Grammar Translation Method, students, teachers, and scholars felt fed up. It also brought about some negative consequences:

“The main failure of the Grammar-Translation Method at a theoretical level was that it isolated language from its senders and receivers, their intentions and their preconditions; language was taught without considering its intrinsic social links, and ultimately reduced the systematically ordered units on different linguistic levels which very often created the false illusion of structural equivalents among learners” (Gommlich, 1997:172).

In her work, Skopečková (2018) drew a parallel between communication and translation, stating that “communication is commonly understood as a process based on the transmission of a message between the addresser and the addressee” (Skopečková, 2018: 6). This means that both participants in a communication process have to speak the same language, or if not, have to decode the meaning of the message. To establish communication, one

participant has to learn the other participant's language, or they both need the message to be translated into their respective languages. In conclusion, in the process of communication between two different languages, translation is much needed.

Since the beginning of the twentieth century translation was utterly omitted and almost banned (Skopečková, 2018), and as Kelly and Bruen (2015: 152) put it, it was perceived as a "last refuge for the incompetent". The method that took the Grammar Translation Method's place was the Direct Method.

To make it clearer, it is necessary to point out the characteristics of the Grammar Translation Method and the contrasting Direct Method. As Skopečková (2018) explained, there are two opposing concepts – direct and indirect methods. The Direct method tries to teach a foreign language intuitively; this approach imitates the acquisition of L1 and is primarily focused on the spoken, rather than written language, so translation and L1 are in general omitted. Theorists that support this method believe that "a second language (L2) should be taught without reference to the learners' first language (L1)" (Liao, 2006: 192). Natsir and Sanjaya made a table with the characteristics of the Direct Method, and here are the most relevant ones:

- Everything is mostly done with communicative intent
- Students use the language through communicative activities such as game and roleplays
- Communication is purposeful
- Using authentic materials
- Activities are often carried out by students in small groups
- Grammar is taught inductively
- Students' native language is permitted
- Most of the activities are explained by using the target language and the native language only for certain things

(Natsir and Sanjaya, 2014: 59)

On the other hand, the Grammar Translation Method is an indirect method that focuses on practicing and preparing for L2 communication. This method is also oriented on writing rather than listening and speaking. Brown listed the main characteristics of the Grammar Translation Method:

1. Classes taught in the mother tongue; little use of the L2
2. Much vocabulary taught in the form of lists of isolated words
3. Elaborate explanations of the intricacies of grammar
4. Reading of difficult classical texts begun early
5. Texts treated as exercises in grammatical analysis
6. Occasional drills and exercises in translating sentences from L1 to L2
7. Little or no attention to pronunciation

(Brown, 2006: 27)

Malmkjær described the process of learning a language using the Grammar-Translation approach, and she explained what the practice was like:

“The scholar would study the grammar of a language, and read texts, almost invariably religious or literary, with the help of a dictionary and the acquired grammar. This method would obviously normally involve writing down the meanings, [...], writing down translation of the text”.

(Malmkjær, 1998: 2)

Since the 1970s, the Communicative Approach, with the principle of natural language acquisition, appeared and has become generally accepted, with translation staying abandoned. Translation was perceived, and maybe somewhere still is, as formation or conversion of individual units from L1 to L2 and vice versa (Cook, 2010). In this sense, translation is looked at as a word-for-word process without considering its other components and benefits. Skopečková (2018) conducted a study on the Czech curricular documents in which she wanted to examine whether the conception of translation that Cook

(2010) mentioned (translation as a formation and conversion of individual units) is embedded in the Czech school documents. She found out from her research that translation is “present only in terms of the ability to use different types of dictionaries” (Skopečková, 2018: 9). Educational outcomes in their documents were, for example:

The pupil shall:

- Use a bilingual dictionary
- Find information or the meaning of a word in a suitable explanatory monolingual dictionary
- Utilise various types of dictionaries, etc.

(Skopečková, 2018: 9)

What Skopečková (2018) resents about the curriculum is that the curriculum relies on the development of only one skill - reading comprehension - which is important, but should not be the only expected outcome from such a complex activity as translation.

There is also another view, or in other words – another distinction, of the two contrasting methods. The Direct Method is, in this case, presented as the Focus on the Meaning approach, while on the other hand, translation is presented as a Form approach. As Kelly and Bruen (2015) explain, the Focus on Meaning put the meaningful communication in the L2 as a priority, putting emphasis on the meaning of the message, as well as fluency. Focus on the Form approach, on the other hand, highlights the grammatical components and rules of the foreign language, and accuracy.

Zojer states that “it soon became clear that the learner outcomes of the behaviouristically inspired direct methods did not fulfil all expectations, (so) translation continued its ‘shadow existence’...” (Zojer, 2009: 31). Poppins adds that:

“there’s no neurological evidence that translation harms L2 acquisition. It wasn’t because they were doing translation that students were unable to

“speak or understand when out in “real life”. It was because they had spent far too little time practising listening and speaking” (Poppins, 2020).

That is why it is important to use more methods and strategies in order to develop more than just one language skill. Cook (2007), who supports using translation, argues that translation comes naturally as a teaching, and also learning, technique because the learners keep the two languages in contact; they “use translation as a learning strategy to comprehend, remember, and produce a foreign language” (Liao, 2006: 192); they naturally make cross-lingual comparisons between the two languages.

Brown explained the changing of favourable methods as:

“a cyclical pattern in which a new paradigm (to use Kuhn’s term) of teaching methodology emerged about every quarter of a century, with each new method breaking from the old but at the same time taking with it some of the positive aspects of the previous paradigm.”

(Brown, 2006: 27-28)

If we set aside both methods and look at translation as a teaching tool, we will see that translation, as Cook (2007) argues, is an essential skill that every learner should possess to be competent in a foreign language. He also states that translation should be added to the list of the other four skills: reading, writing, listening and speaking.

In recent times, translation and use of L1 in foreign language learning classes has been experiencing a positive change. As Zergollern-Miletic (2014) claims, over the past decades, translation theories have experienced significant development. Năznea highlights two attitudes to mother tongue and translation in language classes:

- The importance of using the mother tongue during classes since it motivates learners to take part actively in the class
- The importance of translation since it can contribute to the development of linguistic, grammatical and cultural features

(Năznea, 2014: 76)

Năznean (2017) also concluded her paper with the statement that the best way of acquiring a foreign language is engaging both directions – “a sense of balance between confident communication in the foreign language and a consciousness of rules” (Năznean, 2017: 156). Further discussion on the use of mother tongue in a foreign language classroom will be brought in the following chapter.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1. A few words on using L1 in the foreign language classroom

Liao (2006), in his paper, presented that students often resist learning new words from the context and believe that learning from translating (linking L2 word to its native language equivalent) is more effective. His study also showed that 88% of students agreed that it is easier for them to write in their native language first and then translate it into English, while several students preferred direct writing in English. As Liao also concludes from his study, a great number of teachers believe that it is necessary for lower-level students to rely on translation, but that those students at a higher level do not need translation, and do not profit from translating. Although it is shown that lower-level students benefit from translating more (regarding vocabulary acquisition), it is confirmed from the study that the advanced learner “will always gain some insight into points of L1-L2 difference and conflict on a syntactic, semantic and stylistic level and this may ultimately improve his L2 competence” (Liao, 2006: 197). Nevertheless, it is believed that students at a higher level should use English directly without translation, but the truth is different from the students’ perspective. They rely on their native language to discover the complexities of the foreign language. Furthermore, it is believed that it is natural for students to rely on their mother tongue when learning unknown words because they “feel more confident if they have a chance to check the accuracy of the words in their native language” (Năznean, 2014: 76). Năznean (2014) also listed why using their own language could be helpful:

- own-language use can encourage attentiveness to other cultures and ways of thinking
- own-language use promotes a good relationship between teacher and students

Moreover, she also argues that the teacher should allow students to express their thoughts in their native language and then help them translate into L2 if they do not know how to express their opinion in L2. When students are advised to use the target language all the time, “some students may have come to believe that it is detrimental for them to depend on their native language while learning and using the target language” (Liao, 2006: 195).

Translation is also seen as “an important real-life skill that has a communicative purpose” (Marinac & Barić, 2018: 907). This claim counters the widely accepted premise that translation does not have anything to do with real life and oral communication. Even though translation was used mostly in written form, it does not mean that it has to stay that way. The world is changing; it is becoming a fast-paced place; teaching methods are changing, as are learning methods; children’s brains are advancing more and more with the advent of new technologies, so the concept of translation also has to be changing.

Cook (2007) stated why translation in language learning is useful:

- Cognitively – as an aid to language acquisition
- Pedagogically – as a motivating factor
- Functionally – as a needed skill

There is no need to explain this model in depth because it is clear and straightforward. As has already been mentioned, Cook’s opinion about translation is evident. He really appreciates this method and thinks that it should be added to the other four language skills (as Kelly & Bruen (2015) also think). Furthermore, he perceives translation as a ‘crown’ of language competence. When talking about the world’s pace changing and children’s seeking for something new and fast, the pedagogical factor, as a motivational

factor, is today very important. It could be presumed that children would find translating some literary work boring and monotonous. It is important for every teacher to keep up with children's pace and give them something that they would find exciting. Some creative ideas on how to implement translation into a foreign language classroom could be found in chapter 4.6. *Ideas for implementing translation in teaching.*

2.2. Is translation a positive or a negative method in language learning?

Even though translation is perceived as valuable knowledge and skill, as Marinac and Barić (2018: 906) state, “there is still no consensus on the importance, aims and ways of implementation of translation into the foreign language classroom”. Many theorists have touched on the subject of translation, and whether it is a positive or a negative method in teaching a foreign language, and some theorists' views will be presented further in this chapter.

There are many theorists who see more disadvantages than advantages in using translation, but are ready for discussion on this topic. One of them is Malmkjær (1998:6) who listed some disadvantages of translation:

- is independent of the four skills which define language competence: reading, writing, speaking and listening
- is radically different from the four skills
- takes up valuable time which could be used to teach these four skills
- is unnatural
- misleads students into thinking that expressions in two languages correspond one-to-one
- prevents students from thinking in the foreign language
- produces interference
- is a bad test of language skills

- is only appropriate for training translators

Even though Malmkjær (1998) listed disadvantages, she wishes this list to vanish by making translation more suitable for classrooms, for everyone, not only those who like grammatical systems.

In their paper, Kelly and Bruen (2015) cited many authors (Cook (2009), Schjoldager (2003), Lado (1964), Irons (1998)) who listed negative aspects of using translation in foreign language classrooms. Some of the reasons why translation in language teaching (TILT) is not welcome are as follows:

- 1) the difficulty of translating from L1 into L2;
- 2) reliance on L1 when learning L2;
- 3) the heavy influence of the source language;
- 4) a detrimental effect on the acquisition of the native-like communication;
- 5) hindering of development of fluency in spoken language;
- 6) encouraging a word-for-word translation.

On the contrary, Hentschel (2009) introduces the question of why word-for-word translation is perceived as inadequate and useless. As she argues, this process happens anyway, so why not make something useful out of it. Hentschel states that it is impossible to shut L1 off, so there is no need for forbidding it – we should employ it. As she states: “what looks absurd at first sight can turn out to be a big step towards understanding a grammatical structure” (Hentschel, 2009: 25). Hentschel used the example from her study in which Mongolian, Mandarin, and German were used for comparison with English. She used a sentence which would, translated in a word-for-word way, mean: *I give he buy one volume book*. This example shows that what is needed is a higher cognitive level to resolve the real meaning. One should really have knowledge of both languages - their vocabulary, their grammatical structures, and word formation. One should know which form to use to make a meaningful sentence. One should also know that in English you have to add *to* to the verb and use the inflected form of the pronoun *he*. By doing so, you get ‘I – to give him – bought a book’ which makes the sentence and its meaning much clearer. This example shows how useful word-for-word translation could be in terms

of understanding the language and especially grammar (Hentschel, 2009). By using translation exercises, learners could gradually understand why it is better to use the present perfect tense instead of the past simple, without putting much attention to learning grammatical rules by heart. Furthermore, Märlein (2009: 138), citing Kabel (2004), adds that “word-by-word translations are used to make the foreign word order visible in the readers’ mother tongue in order to make it possible for them to create new sentences from the given ones by exchanging or combining parts of the sentences”. As Zergollern-Miletić states: “translation has proved to inspire motivation for learning FLs, as well as for learning L1, and it has long been recognised that the beliefs and attitudes of learners constitute a key element in L2 acquisition” (Zergollern-Miletić, 2014: 1).

In their research, Kelly and Bruen (2015) got a great number of useful answers in favour of translation from German and Japanese lecturers. The lecturers reacted positively to the use of translation in classes. They emphasized that translation serves as a vocabulary-building exercise; it develops an understanding of the context in which some phrases can be used; students become familiar with particular grammatical structures; and translation primarily aids comprehension rather than the content’s production. They also emphasized a beneficial advantage of translating – highlighting gaps in students’ language knowledge. It has to be pointed out that gaps in vocabulary and grammar are more obvious than in any other task. Lecturers added that they like adding variety to their lectures and highlighting cultural issues by giving students, for example, a Japanese story.

From their students’ point of view, translation is also well received. They pointed out that translation is very helpful; it gives them the feeling of learning real Japanese; it gives them a sense of understanding the language and “multiple meanings of an English word” (Liao, 2006: 196) and builds their confidence. Having experienced all of it together, they really improved their language knowledge.

One more reason why translation is useful was mentioned by many authors such as Marinac & Barić (2018), Zergollern-Miletić (2014), Liao (2006),

Skopečkova (2018), and Kelly and Bruen (2015), and it is that translation develops language awareness, increases awareness in seeing the similarities and differences between the first language and the target language, and increases the awareness of stylistic differences between the two languages.

Zergollern-Miletić (2014) also emphasized the development of reading skills. In addition, Liao (2006), Kelly & Bruen (2015), and Lee (2013) suggest the understanding of the text and development of the learner's independence. Students from Liao's study stated that, with translation, "ideas were easier to develop, thoughts and opinions could be expressed more clearly, and words could be more easily found through the use of dictionary" (2006: 196). As Skopečkova (2018: 12) states, students gradually "discover the complexity of translation, involving much more than word-level, dictionary dependence or linguistic aspects". When a more advanced translation level is reached, learners are ready to create their own interpretations, finding new solutions and possibilities (Skopečkova, 2018).

We would like to mention here that there was a study in Croatia conducted by Zergollern-Miletić, which looked into the skills that could be developed by using translation in class. The study included second-year students from the Faculty of Teacher Education in Zagreb. The study was conducted within the course Integrated Language Skills in English. What Zergollern-Miletić (2014: 4) confirmed with her study was that translation could develop skills such as: "understanding the source text, activating and using the learned vocabulary, activating and using the learned grammatical structures, and understanding cultural differences".

To make it more precise, here is the list of advantages /positive sides of using translation in language teaching (mentioned by Kelly and Bruen (2014: 153), Marinac and Barić (2018: 908-909), and Naznean (2014: 77)):

Translation:

- expands vocabulary in L1 and L2
- raises awareness about the similarities and differences between languages

- encourages attentiveness to other cultures
- promotes a good relationship between teachers and students
- is time-efficient way to teach and test the L2
- can be adopted in large classes

Translation could also be a playful activity. It could be used as a fill in the gaps task, a matching task, or a task to identify sentences in which the word order is incorrect. Also, we can make use of the technologies we use every day by translating learners' favourite advertisements, songs, or parts of their favourite TV shows. It does not have to be a monotonous, dull process. Instead, the work could be done in small dynamic groups organized in a way that it looks like a small project that pupils need to carry out. This could be a great opportunity for introvert learners to participate in activities they usually would not feel comfortable participating in, and learners could discover the similarities and differences in the structures (Náznean, 2014). Poppins wrote an article about why translation is negative and why it is a positive method. He made a short section "Translation is fun?" in which he described translation as an interesting and challenging activity which we do not have to be afraid of as: "if you're into languages or doing rubrics cube or, for that matter, playing Angry Birds, it can be an enjoyable puzzle" (Poppins, 2020).

3. STUDY

3.1. Aims

This study aims to investigate the attitudes of future (English) teachers towards the use and importance of translation in language teaching (TILT). Specifically, the study aims to show future teachers' attitudes and ideas on how to implement translation into foreign language teaching classrooms.

3.2. Participants and method

The participants were 57 students from the Faculty of Teacher Education Zagreb in Croatia. At the end of their studies, the students will be qualified as primary school teachers as well as English teachers. Future teachers instead of practising experienced ones were chosen for this study because we wanted to

get an insight into what future teachers, still students, think about implementing translation into their practice. The anonymous online questionnaire was sent to respondents by e-mail and was in the form of Google form. The gender information was not crucial for this study, because students at this faculty are mostly female. The study was taken by first- to fifth-year students (age 20 – 24). These students are new to the world of teaching. All of them have had at least some teaching experience. Their minimum teaching experience was four lessons of English (two lessons in lower grades, and two lessons for upper-grade students). Throughout their studies they had had various classes regarding teaching, teaching methods, and creative ways of teaching. They had also had English grammar courses, some of them also English culture courses, and courses focused on children's literature. All these courses left some ideas and experiences for the students to choose whether they would choose to use translation in their teaching.

The fourth- and fifth-year students had completed the course Fundamentals of translation for teachers of English. In that course students were given the opportunity to experience translating by themselves. The course was divided into two parts. The first part of the semester was intended for translating from English into Croatian because Croatian is most students' L1. In the second part of the semester students were challenged to translate from Croatian into English. It was a more difficult task because they are not as skilful in English as they are in their L1. The course also provided students with contents regarding English history, culture, business, and school system, so they could learn something new and think about the "story" they were translating. The cultural data presented an additional challenge.

The data obtained was analysed in such a way that we separated the answers of the participants who had taken the course Fundamentals of translation for teachers of English from those who had not. In the rest of the text we will refer to the course as *Fundamentals*. There were 54% of students who took Fundamentals, and 46% of those who did not.

The data were collected from an online questionnaire taken through Google Forms and written in Croatian to get more attention from potential participants and make it easier for them to answer. It was believed that the answers would

be more precise if the respondents wrote in their L1. The survey consisted of nine questions: the first one was identificational (the year of study), and the rest of the questions were related to translation (such as their attitudes toward using translation and ideas on how to implement translation into their classrooms). The questionnaire consisted of open-ended questions mostly, but there were also multiple-choice questions. The following are the questions translated into English:

1. Year of study
2. Do you consider translation in English teaching to be a positive or negative method of learning? Explain your answer.
3. Can you list the positive sides of translation?
4. Can you list the negative sides of translation?
5. In your opinion, will your previous learning experience affect your choice of methods in your teaching? Please elaborate.
6. To what extent would you use translation?
7. Can you give an example of a task/situation where you would use translation?
8. For what purposes would you use translation the most? Sort them in order of importance: vocabulary acquisition, grammar acquisition, communication skills development, reading skills development, writing skills development.
9. In which grade (5th, 6th, 7th, 8th) would you use translation the most, and in which the least?

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Positive or negative attitude towards translation in language learning/teaching

The second question of the questionnaire, which was the first question related to the topic, concerned the respondents' attitude towards using translation in English language teaching. The data, as shown in Diagram 1., showed that most respondents had mostly positive attitudes about translation in English teaching, while negative attitudes and indecisiveness (answering 'both positive and negative') were expressed to a similar extent. It should be pointed out that the respondents who answered 'both positive and negative' stated that translation is favourable if not used as the only teaching method and not used too much. This goes hand in hand with Di Sabato (2007), cited in Zlatnar Moe, Mikolič Južnič & Žigon (2015: 89), who states that translation should be integrated with other approaches such as interculturality, lexicogrammar and text chunking, and the use of modern technologies.

Considering the year of study (Diagram 2.), we could notice that in the fifth year of study, the positive attitude towards translation is higher than in all other years, and the negative attitude towards translation is the lowest. On the other hand, as the graph shows, the fourth year's views differ in the appearance of the graph from the other years. The results are more densely set, and there is little difference between the attitudes. These results can be interpreted in this way: fourth-year students become more aware of their future work and their responsibilities. Also, they may be aware of the pros and cons of various methods. In addition, fourth year students enter classes during their practice period and try specific methods on their own. The attitude 'Both positive and negative' may be the result of fourth year students' awareness that each method has both positive and negative sides, but they could also be experiencing some uncertainties about using particular methods. When we look at the differences between the students who took the course *Fundamentals of translation for teachers of English* and those who did not, we cannot conclude that there is a difference between these two categories. What further proves our claim is the

fact that the fourth-year students' results differ considerably from the fifth-year students' results. (Diagram 3.)

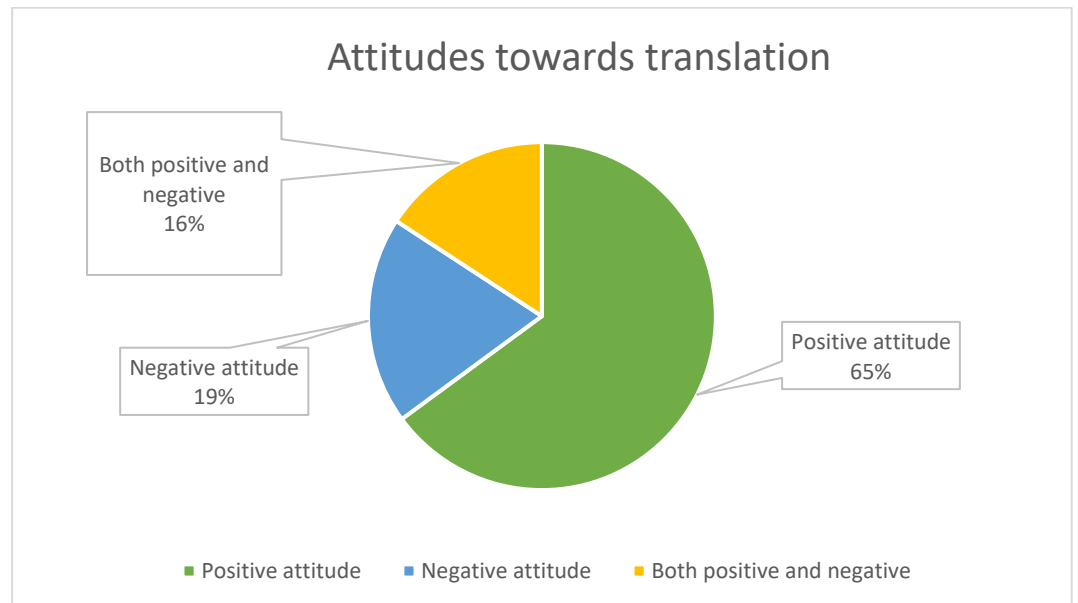


Diagram 1. Attitudes towards translation

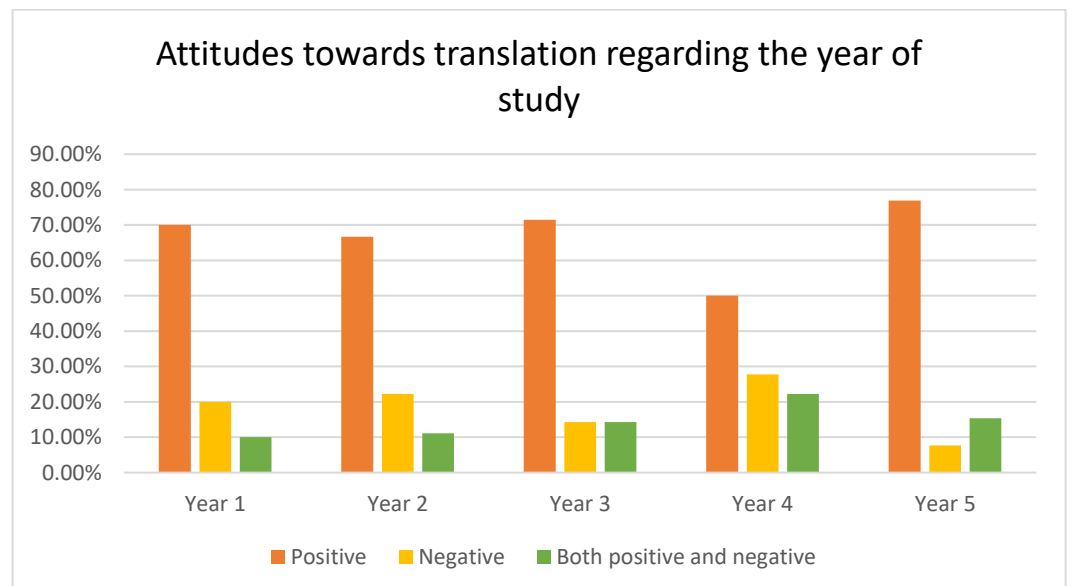


Diagram 2. Attitudes towards translation in language learning regarding the year of study

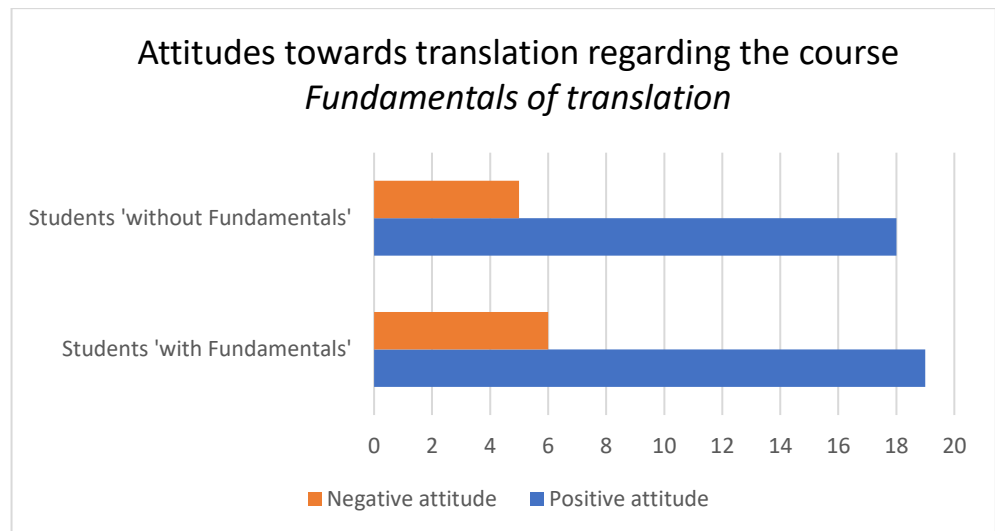


Diagram 3. Attitudes towards translation regarding the course *Fundamentals of translation*

4.2. Positive sides of translating in language learning

Although translation is still being avoided owing to the negative image brought by the Grammar Method, it certainly has its positive sides. The respondents of this questionnaire also recognized them. Some of the prominent positive aspects pointed out by the respondents are:

- Vocabulary expansion
- Understanding of instructions and tasks
- Faster and easier vocabulary acquisition
- Helps in better understanding of sentence structuring
- Useful for checking comprehension (or grammatical rules and their use)
- Developing of cognitive processes
- Direct learning – from the context
- A fast, easier way of learning
- Encourages creativity and motivation

- Dissemination of general knowledge about the world and cultures
- Correlation between two (or more) languages
- Creating the habit/ability of quickly switching from one language to another
- Developing students' self-esteem when knowing what the text (or conversation) is about.

The difference between students who took the *Fundamentals of translation* course and those students who did not, is that the students who took the course stated as a positive side of translation learning about the English-speaking cultures and their differences from their own culture. This fact certainly shows that the course provided the experience of learning about the English-speaking cultures by translating texts from English into Croatian and vice versa. Those texts included topics such as the educational system of an English-speaking, politics and/or economics, etc. In this way, in addition to developing language competencies, the students acquired new knowledge about the cultures of the English-speaking countries. As Weatherby (2009: 25) states, “realistic texts should be used” because they “provide a good motivation for teaching and learning”. Also, one of Kelly and Bruen student's answer to the question of what they found interesting and useful in their module was “learning Japanese as it's used in Japan (not using textbooks designed for foreigners)” (2015: 161).

4.3. Negative sides of translating in language learning

Many people see translation as a monotonous, harmful method, and also an unnecessary method. As it has already been mentioned, what brought translation to this place, was The Grammar Translation Method. The results of our questionnaire highlight the following negative characteristics of translation in English language teaching:

- the translation may be too strenuous, complicated, dull, monotonous
- learners may feel overwhelmed if they translate too often

- some words do not have their counterpart in English (for example, the Croatian term *odgoj i obrazovanje* , and learners find it frustrating rather than challenging
- a text could only have its true meaning in the source language, which may be lost by translating it into another language
- a context may be lost because of the well-known *word-for-word* translation
- constant reliance on translation
- causes learning by heart
- leads to not being able to explain the meaning of a word using a foreign language
- learners do not listen and try to understand a context because they know that the teacher will translate for them

All of these statements may be true to a certain point, but the key to turning translating into a positive method is to combine translation with other methods and activities - not to use it the same way every time, but to “spice it up”, make it interesting, challenging, yet not too difficult. When using translation in class teachers should focus on the process rather than the product of translating. This would “help to ensure that students do not feel under attack from teachers’ criticism of their product” (Weatherby, 2009: 22). Weatherby (2009:23) citing Gile (1994) argues that in this process-based translation, the target language texts serve “as a looking-glass revealing their methods, insofar as their problems are generally symptoms of methodological weaknesses”. By putting more attention to the process, learners would have more time to think about the text - the isolated words, the connection between these words, phrases and sentences - without feeling pressure and thinking about the final grade. Not only that students remember new words and phrases, but they also learn how to translate. Besides, it is really of great importance that teachers are aware of the difference between teaching a language through translation and teaching

translation. Teaching translation should be present in advanced learning, while in lower grades teaching through translation is more suitable.

Related to the topic, it could happen that teachers would not be interested in using translation in their classes. The reason why could be that teachers are many times not prepared for teaching a foreign language through translation because they do not have proper knowledge (if any at all) about translation and/or teaching through translation. Good knowledge of L1 is also required for translation to be successful, so teachers need to be fluent in, for example, Croatian to know if the English translation is really accurate.

4.4. Does previous experience influence the choice of methods that future teachers will use in their work?

People are exposed to different types of education system. Some came out of it with a positive experience, while some have negative experiences and bad memories. We all know the sentence: “Oh, I did not have a perfect teacher.” When we say “not a very good teacher”, it can include their character, attitude towards students, their coping with the teaching content, transfer of knowledge, as well as the choice of methods in their teaching. In fact, the choice of methods plays a significant role because it creates an image of a particular subject or a particular teacher in students. If the method used is boring to them, the subject will also seem boring, and they will probably not love it. Theorists (for example Marinac & Barić, 2018: 907) believe that teachers’ “own learning experience and also their experience as teachers shape their beliefs and teaching styles. Their culture, their teaching context, as well as their personality, play a significant role”. Our research wanted to examine what young people who have gone through the education system like most young people in Croatia, but are also in some way already involved in the teacher role, think about this topic. Since our respondents are university students who are future teachers, we wanted to examine their opinion on whether their previous experience in school as students influences the choice of their methods as future teachers.

Considering the conducted research, regardless of the year of study, all respondents stated that the teaching of their teachers and professors at the university, and the teaching practice some of them went through during their

studies left a mark on them. There is no doubt that all respondents will take advantage of the methods that have positively influenced them and their learning, and that have shown effectiveness. The Methods they did not like will be avoided in their future work. The respondents also added that they would modify some positive methods concerning their personality, their students' personality, and their prior knowledge and interests. Future teachers want their teaching to be creative and interactive, so for example, some of them pointed out that they are likely to use *jazz chants* in their work. They also pointed out that, with the methods they have already experienced, they feel more comfortable and secure so that when they are insecure or unprepared for class, they will first think about their teachers' methods and activities.

It is important to mention one more distinction between the respondents made for an easier understanding and analysis of our research results. As respondents have already been divided to those with *Fundamentals* and those without it, they will also be divided to younger and older students – younger meaning the students from year 1, 2 and 3, and older students who are students of year 4 and 5. One difference that appeared between younger and older students is that older students in their answers mentioned the experience gained in college - their professors' methods in different courses and their own experience gained during classes and during their teaching practice. Interestingly, older students mention the experience gained at college. This information shows that they are already seriously considering their calling and which way they will work.

4.5. Frequency of use of translation in language teaching

The frequency measures offered in the questionnaire were as follows: *rarely*, *moderately* and *often*. The respondents answered as expected (see Diagram 4.) - most answered that they would use translation *moderately*. This goes hand in hand with all their previously stated attitudes (e.g., that translation is favourable if it is not used as the only method, and if it is not used too often). The most positive attitude was expressed by third-year students, who stated that they would use translation *moderately* and *often* without the *rarely* answer. Contrary to this view, the fourth-year students altogether avoided the *often* answer, and

responded ‘moderately’ and ‘rarely’. If we compare these data to the diagram showing their attitude towards translation (it was mostly positive, but also mostly negative) we can assume that fourth-year students will not really be inclined to using translation (or will generally use it to a lesser extent than the students of other years).

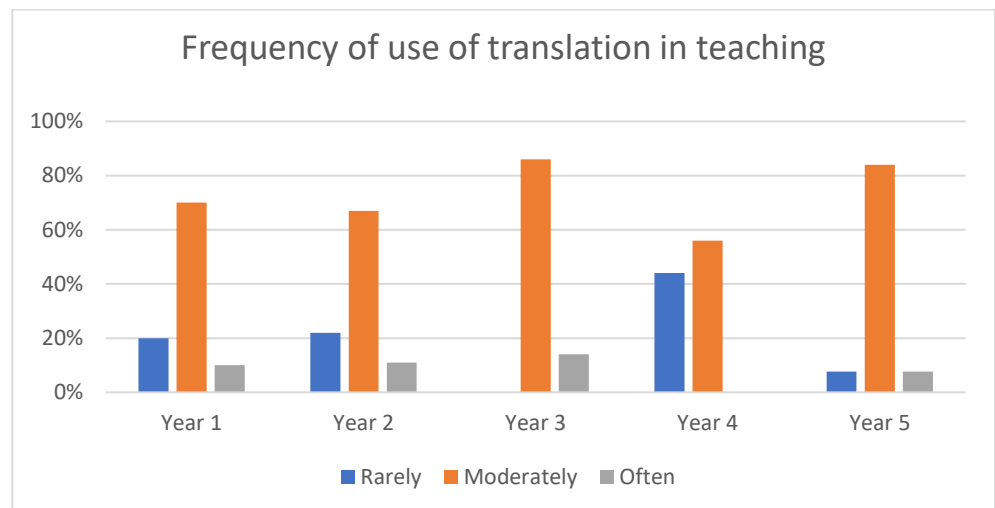


Diagram 4. Frequency of use of translation in teaching

In our work we have mentioned several times a work by Marinac & Barić (2018). The article is based on the authors’ research that was conducted in Rijeka, and included English, German and Italian LSP. The study revealed that in the Croatian context the majority of LSP teachers use translation in language teaching, however, there seems to be a lack of certainty about its usefulness. In addition, LSP teachers' approach to translation appears to be rather traditional given there is no diversity in the methods mentioned. Our research has shown that future English teachers consider mid to low frequency to be appropriate for translation in language teaching (Diagram 4).

4.6. Ideas for implementing translation in teaching

In our view the most interesting part of the questionnaire is how future teachers would implement translation in their teaching, what tasks and activities they would use, and in what situations. This is an area where students have acquired competence throughout the study and an area that describes the teaching profession: without creativity, primary school is not a real primary school

because it does not give children everything they need in their development process. Consequently, translation should be an activity that enhances creativity, as well as the awareness of the learning process. As Newson (2009: 64) stated, “in translation work the students’ perception of the learning process is especially crucial”.

The respondents' answers to this topic can be divided into two groups. The first group would be the use of translation for **technical purposes**, and the second group would be the use of translation in a **creative way**. The technical purposes include the use of translation for a so-called purely educational purpose, and the examples given by the respondents are:

- using translation to teach new vocabulary in lower grades when students are still beginners
- using translation to explain terms that are unusual, difficult to explain in English, or if explained more than once in English and students still do not understand what they mean
- using translation to explain grammar, for example, when explaining rules for direct and indirect speech, conditionals, verb tenses, modal verbs, conversions from declarative sentences to interrogative ones, explaining sentence structure, and others
- using translation when working on a new text - for an easier understanding of the text
- using translation to check comprehension in writing or orally

When mentioning the technical purpose of using/implementing translation into a foreign language classroom, Năznea (2014: 76) explained for which purposes the use of L1 is useful, and these are:

“when the teacher explains complicated concepts, introduces new topics and new vocabulary, checks for comprehension, organizes the classroom, tries to maintain discipline, forms the groups for the activities and evaluates students, or when the level of the classroom requires him to use the native language”.

Regarding the creative way of using translation, the respondents stated that they would:

- translate short films or videos
- translate short texts, poems, proverbs, phrases, metaphors
- organize something like extracurricular activities where they would teach phrases needed for everyday communication (how to talk to classmates, how to buy bread, how to ask how much something costs, how to talk in a restaurant, or at the airport) – the learners would say in Croatian what they want to say or ask and we would all translate this into English together
- make plays - pupils would get their roles with a transcript, without knowing in advance what the text was about. This would encourage them to set aside a few hours on their own and translate their part to know their role. Thus, they would translate in a creative and interesting way, unconsciously learning how to use the dictionary and combine words into a meaningful whole, paying attention to the verb tense.
- record short TV shows and translate them into English
- translate picture books and compare with the original; here we should add that the translation of the picture book could be done in lower grades while the comparison with the original should be made in upper grades when students are at a higher cognitive level when they are already familiar with English, its verb tenses, and sentence structure.

Năznean (2014: 77) suggested an interesting activity when the stimulating and exciting activity is necessary: “discussion and comparisons of foreign language idioms, as aspects related to culture and civilization or to the everyday life”. By doing that, students discover by themselves that translation can be a complex but interesting activity (Năznean, 2014), and also learn a lot about different cultures, their rituals and beliefs.

Náznean (2017: 154) carried out an activity in which she wanted to sustain Malmkjær's argument that

“if real-life translation were emulated in the classroom, it would soon become clear to language students that expressions in the two languages do not necessarily correspond word-for-word and that even if they do, the contexts for the two texts may differ so radically that the TL expression which is usually considered the closest ‘equivalent’ of the SL expression is in fact unsuitable for TT”.

She brought the activity to check students' knowledge of words and phrases related to underwater pipes, but it turned out that she could also check their grammar and lexical knowledge. What she established in her paper is that both students and teachers have to be “aware of the fact that they have to take into consideration not only the meaning of the source text, but also other features such as form and style” (Naznean, 2017: 156).

4.7. Purposes/benefits of translation

In this thesis, one of the aims was to see which benefits of translation future teachers value more. In the answers by 57 respondents, 28 different combinations of orders by the importance of translation purposes were obtained. This data show how much upbringing and education largely shape the opinions and characteristics of a particular teacher. Although all our respondents study at the same faculty, their opinions differ significantly. The respondents did not arbitrarily offer their answers, but they were asked to choose from a number of offered answers. The respondents were supposed to rank them according to their preferences – from the most important ones to the least important. The answers offered were: vocabulary acquisition, grammar acquisition, communication skills development, reading skills development, and writing skills development.

The results will be divided into those given by the respondents who took the course *Fundamentals of translation*, and those who did not. The most often repeated combination by the students who did not take the course *Fundamentals of translation* is (from the most important to the least important):

- vocabulary acquisition
- grammar acquisition
- communication skills development
- reading skills development
- writing skills development

For the students who took the course *Fundamentals of translation* the results were as follows from the most important to the least important:

- grammar acquisition
- vocabulary acquisition
- writing skills development
- reading skills development
- communication skills development

What can be concluded from our results is the fact that the students who took the *Fundamentals* realized how much the grammatical rules of a language are important in translating texts or writing. Besides concentrating on words when translating a text, especially the new ones that we learned from the dictionary when translating, it is a demanding task to shape and organize all the elements into one meaningful whole. In this way, the person translating must pay attention to all grammatical rules to not convey a wrong message. Even though Malmkjær (2009) mostly emphasizes the disadvantages of translation in language learning, she also states that translation could be a useful skill later in life.

4.8. The amount of use of translation concerning the form/grade¹

The amount of use of translation concerning grades refers to the question of how much the respondents would use translation in which grade. Specifically, the questionnaire offered a period from the fifth to the eighth grades. In the fifth grade, students are still beginners because they have moved from the level of indirect learning of English through games to the level of introducing grammar (the present simple tense, the comparison of adjectives, etc.) By the eighth grade, their knowledge is supposed to be considerably expanded (the acquisition of the present perfect, for example).

The results from the questionnaire related to this question are shown in Diagram 5. As can be seen from the diagram, 68% of the respondents would use translation the most in the fifth grade, decreasing the use towards the eighth grade. 28% of respondents would use translation the least in the fifth grade and the most in the eighth grade. Only 4% of the respondents would use translation equally all the time.

The data visible in the diagram are unambiguous - most respondents would use translation the most in the fifth grade. However, the background of the respondents' answers is not visible through the diagrams and numbers. If we take into account all the respondents' answers, we get a different perspective.

A more detailed analysis leads to differences in the perception of translation in teaching. Some respondents see translation as mere translating the teacher's instructions during the lesson, explaining grammar and translating words from English into Croatian, or vice versa. Therefore, they responded that they would use translation most in fifth grade when students are still beginners and too young for more in-depth language analysis. They think that it is suitable for students to translate the keywords of that class and translate the text and instructions to follow the lessons with ease.

On the other hand, those who see translation as a teaching method in the sense that they process teaching contents by translating shorter texts and similar, stated that they would use such translation with an increase from the fifth to

¹ The term *form* is a British term, while the term *grade* is predominantly American

the eighth grade. The reason for this is that with learners' increasing experience, they have a broader range of vocabulary; they already understand specific grammatical rules and can expand their knowledge more easily, notice new things, and actually learn the language in all its complexity.

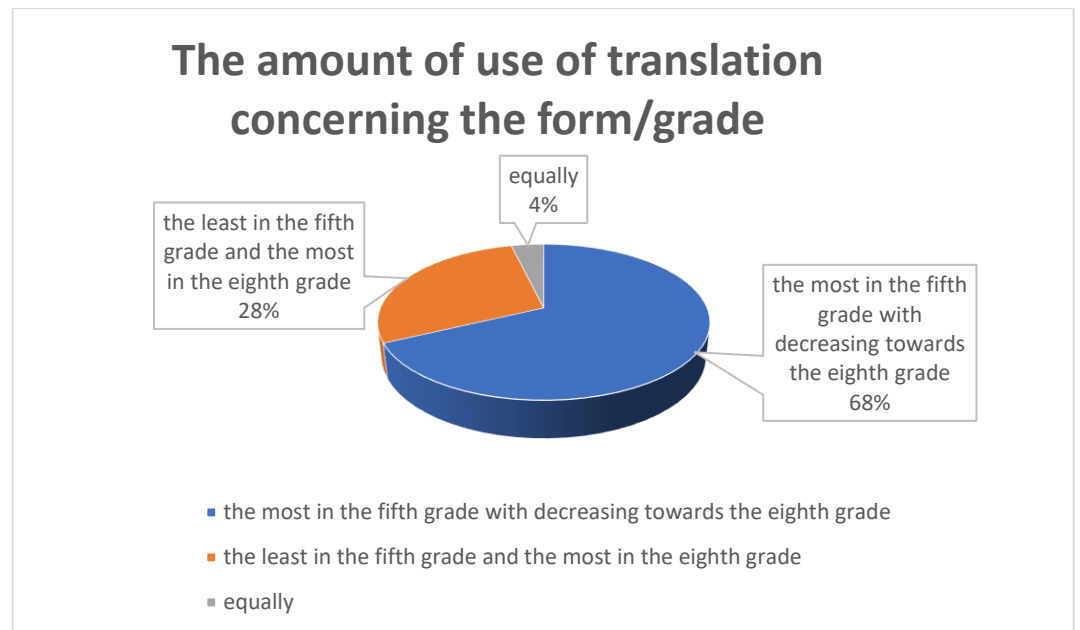


Diagram 5. The amount of use of translation concerning the form/grade

5. CONCLUSION

People learn throughout their whole lives, and knowledge of languages is one of the most important aspects of knowledge and skills in this increasingly advanced modern world. That is why it is important to keep up with learning languages because not knowing a foreign language is a disadvantage. Lack of knowledge of a foreign language, especially English, is a major obstacle in contemporary business and social life. The language learning process depends on the participants in that process and the methods used. Each method has a different scope of developing skills. Thus, some methods develop reading skills, while others, for example develop speaking skills.

Translation is a method that has raised quite a bit of dust. There are many different views on translation. In the past, translation was used as part of the

Grammar Translation Method, which included reading, transcribing and translating - mostly based on translating written texts, and the oral part (speaking) was neglected. It was for this reason that a kind of rebellion began, the Communication Method or Direct Method took over. As its name suggests, the latter is a method that advocates learning directly from the contact with the language. In this way, speaking, and using only a foreign language without any reliance on L1 prevailed, and the use of L1 in foreign language teaching was almost completely banned.

Much of the literature, but also the opinions of people in general, vary between negative and positive views on translation. To the above can be added the results obtained in our research, which are:

- 1) the negative sides of translation - the difficulty of translating from L1 into L2, reliance on L1 when learning L2, the heavy influence of the source language, and the detrimental effect on the acquisition of the native-like communication, hindering of development of fluency in spoken language, encouraging a word-for-word translation, causing learning by heart, feeling overwhelmed if translating too often;
- 2) the positive sides of translating - vocabulary expansion, a better understanding of sentence structuring, useful for checking comprehension, developing of cognitive processes, correlation between two (or more) languages, creating the habit/ability of quickly switching from one language to another.

Our research showed that future teachers have a generally positive attitude towards translation in English language teaching and that they would use it in teaching moderately. Also, many ideas were obtained on how to implement translation in teaching (e.g. translating a transcript for a class play, etc.).

It needs to be pointed out that it was difficult to find a larger number of respondents and obtain answers. In order to get more reliable results, such a study should be repeated at least two more times and more respondents are needed in order to establish possible differences

between the years of study. Translation in language teaching (TILT) should become an important topic for further research.

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Appendix 1. A questionnaire on future teachers' attitudes toward using translation

Prevođenje u nastavi engleskog jezika - stavovi budućih učitelja

Drage kolegice i kolege, pred vama se nalazi kratki upitnik o vašim stavovima o prevođenju u nastavi engleskog jezika. Rezultati ovog upitnika bit će korišteni u svrhu diplomskog rada te vaši odgovori ni na koji način neće biti korišteni u druge svrhe. Unaprijed zahvaljujem!

*Obavezno

1. Koja ste godina Učiteljskog fakulteta? *

2. Smatrate li prevođenje u nastavi engleskog jezika pozitivnom ili negativnom metodom učenja? Objasnite svoj odgovor. *

3. Možete li navesti pozitivne strane prevođenja? *

4. Možete li navesti negativne strane prevođenja? *

5. Po vašem mišljenju, ovisi li vaše prethodno iskustvo učenja o tome koje ćete metode poučavanja koristiti u svojoj nastavi? Opišite. *

6. U kojoj biste mjeri koristili prevođenje? *

Označite samo jedan oval.

- rijetko
 umjereno
 često

7. Možete li navesti primjer zadatka/situacije u kojem/kojoj biste koristili prevođenje? *

8. U koje biste svrhe najviše koristili prevođenje? Poredajte ih redom po važnosti: za učenje vokabulara, za usvajanje gramatike, za razvijanje komunikacijskih vještina, za razvijanje vještine čitanja, za razvijanje vještine pisanja. *

9. U kojem razredu (5., 6., 7., 8.) biste prevođenje koristili u najvećoj, a u kojem u najmanjoj mjeri? *

Google nije izradio niti podržava ovaj sadržaj.

Google Obrasci

Appendix 2. Diagrams

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Appendix 3. Izjava o izvornosti završnog/diplomskog rada (eng. Statement on the authenticity of the final/diploma thesis)

Izjava o izvornosti završnog/diplomskog rada

Izjavljujem da je moj završni / diplomski rad izvorni rezultat mojeg rada te da se u izradi istoga nisam koristio drugim izvorima osim onih koji su u njemu navedeni.



(vlastoručni potpis studenta)