

## A Study on EFL Learners' Belief about Translation as a Learning Strategy in Indonesia

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Although it sounds controversial, the practice of foreign language learning tends to consist of the use of translation. Therefore, the main aims of this study are to investigate EFL learners' belief about translation, the use of translation as their EFL learning strategy, and to find out the correlation between their belief about translation and the use of translation as their EFL learning strategy. This study was conducted through a quantitative approach in which the data were collected by using two kinds of questionnaires. Based on the findings, Indonesian EFL learners believe that translation helps them acquire English skills and other English language aspects. They use translation as their language learning strategy for learning EFL skills and aspects such as speaking, reading, writing, listening, vocabulary, grammar, and idioms and phrases. This study also reveals that there is a correlation between EFL learners' belief about translation and their use of translation as an EFL learning strategy.

### 1. Introduction

A large number of studies concerning the role of learning strategies in foreign language teaching and learning has been reported (Wong and Nunan 2011). Moreover, there is now much evidence that states learning strategies can significantly predict learners' success in language learning, English language learning in particular (Setiyadi, Sukirlan, and Mahpul 2016), and that the most frequently used language learning strategies are metacognitive, compensation, and cognitive strategies (Habók and Magyar 2018). One of the studies is on translation as a cognitive learning strategy (Liao 2006) in foreign language teaching and learning, although this is controversial (Tan 2015). In other words, learners' first language (L1) is included in the process of EFL teaching and learning. Despite experts' rejection of the use of L1 in foreign language learning (Sorhus 1975; McDonald 1993; Carreres 2006; Mogahed 2011 cited in Ying et al. 2018), other experts publicly support the inclusion of translation to help learners acquire knowledge of the foreign language (Corder 1981; Popovic 2001; Fernandez-Guerra 2014 cited in Ying et al. 2018).

The importance of translation as an EFL learning strategy has also been studied extensively. This sounds controversial because this perspective is closely related to Grammar Translation Method,

which views translation as a vital tool for foreign language teaching and learning. However, the practice of EFL language teaching and learning tends to consist of the use of translation because it helps learners acquire the knowledge of the foreign language. Translation plays an important role to help learners improve their understanding about EFL (Al-Musawi 2014; Dagilienė 2012; Joyce 2018; Karimian and Talebinejad 2013; Liao 2006; Tan 2015). It is also believed to make a positive impact on EFL learners learning (Aktekin and Gliniecki 2015; Dagilienė 2012; Guerra 2014; Karimian and Talebinejad 2013; Liao 2006; Mutlu, Bayram and Demirbukan 2015; Al-Musawi 2014; Lee 2015, cited in Tsagari and Floros 2015).

To support the research findings on the importance of translation, the use of L1 in EFL teaching and learning has also been well reported. It is believed to play a significant role to help EFL learners acquire EFL mastery and knowledge (Galali and Cinkara 2017) and decrease their insecurities (Pan and Pan 2010). L1 is also useful for explaining vocabulary, grammatical rules, teaching instructions, organization purposes, and for checking learners' understanding (Hanakova and Metruk 2017) as well as for clarifying different concepts between L1 and the target language being learned (Jan, Li and Lin 2014). L1 should be allowed to be used by beginners, although its use should be then limited as they become more advanced learners because it is effective if utilized appropriately (Gomathi and Kiruthika 2013).

If viewed from EFL teaching and learning, there is actually a direct linkage between EFL teaching and learning – the way teachers teach and the way students learn – and translation. Both teachers and students cannot avoid using translation in their teaching and learning (Hanakova and Metruk 2017; Paker and Karaağaç 2015). Although translation plays a different role in various methods of language teaching accommodated for students from various social backgrounds, most teachers agree that it is a powerful tool to help their students understand foreign words and expression and express their ideas in the language they learn more confidently. However, some teachers also argue against using a native language in the class because they consider it as a serious barrier to effective language teaching and learning (Al-Musawi 2014). In addition, Iranian students are also reported to employ translation as a learning strategy to help them learn English language (Karimian and Talebinejad 2013). To help new EFL learners learn English, this strategy should be allowed to use. When they reach higher level of EFL proficiency, they are required to directly think in English to improve their overall English abilities (Tan 2015).

Translation has been long used as a teaching tool by EFL teachers and a learning tool by EFL learners in Indonesia. Translation falls within cognitive learning strategies (Liao 2006). On the one hand, some EFL teachers may consider translation as a critical means to make sure that their students

have totally comprehended what they have taught to them, while on the other hand, some teachers do not allow their students to make use of their native language and translation in the classroom (Liao 2006).

Despite the fact that learners' success in language learning and acquisition is influenced by variables such as motivation and aptitude (Skehan 1989 cited in Sadeghi and Attar 2013) as well as learning strategies and age (Ellis 1994 cited in Sadeghi and Attar 2013), this present study only focuses on exploring translation as a learning strategy by young adults who learn English as a foreign language in a public university. In general, this study seeks to find out if translation as an EFL learning strategy still exists among EFL learners in a public university in Lampung Province, Indonesia, as reported by other studies conducted in other countries. Therefore, the present study attempts to address the following research questions:

1. What is EFL learners' belief about translation in EFL learning in Indonesia?
2. What is EFL learners' use of translation as an EFL learning strategy in Indonesia?
3. Is EFL learners' belief about translation correlated with the use of translation as an EFL learning strategy in Indonesia?

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. What is Translation?

Translation refers to a process of changing words and transferring meanings into a different language. It can also refer to something that is translated both in oral and written forms. Catford (1965, cited in Putrawan 2015) states that translation is an operation performed on languages which occurs when we substitute a text in one language (source language) for a text in another language (target language). In addition, Larson (1998, cited in Putrawan 2017) defines translation with a focus on meaning by stating that translation means transferring the meaning of the source language into the receptor language by going from the form of the source language to the form of the receptor language by way of semantic structure. The meaning does not change at all, yet the form does.

Furthermore, Vermeer (1986, cited in Snell-Hornby 1988) does not agree the view that states that translation is simply a matter of language. He views that it is a cross-cultural transfer. He further says that a translator should be bicultural, even multicultural, because language is an intrinsic part of culture. It means that a translator must also be at home in, at least, two cultures. In other words, he/she must be bilingual and bicultural.

Simply put, translation refers to the changing of words and meanings, both in written and spoken, from one language into another. However, it is not that simple because translation is

culturally-bound in which a word cannot be literally translated into another language as it is, otherwise it sounds weird and awkward. In other words, a good translation should not be only linguistically correct, but also culturally appropriate.

From language teaching and learning perspective, translation is divided into two types, pedagogical translation and real translation (Klaudy 2003, cited in Vermes 2010). Pedagogical translation refers to a tool for improving learners' foreign language proficiency, whereas real translation is defined only if the goal of translation is to develop translation skills. Gile (1995, cited in Vermes 2010) also makes a distinction between school translation and professional translation, the former focuses on the language, while the latter focuses on the content of language. Translation for foreign language learning can be defined as reproducing the message of the source text while at the same time paying attention to different language structure, while translation for professional purposes refers to the text production for specific purposes. This simulated translation focuses on the function of the text.

## 2.2. Belief about Translation in EFL Learning

If related to EFL learning through translation, EFL learners' belief about translation can be defined as learners' feeling of being certain that translation can help them improve their English. In other words, they believe that translation is a tool for helping them learn EFL.

Liao (2006) revealed that English learners have belief that translation plays an important role in their English language learning. Various strategies involving translation are used by English learners including cognitive, memory, compensation, social, and affective strategies. Advanced English learners (students whose major is EFL) tend to have negative belief about translation and do not make use of translation quite often compared to those whose major is not EFL.

The same findings were also reported by other studies (Aktekin and Gliniecki 2015; Al-Musawi 2014; Dagiliené 2012; Guerra 2014; Karimian and Talebinejad 2013; Mutlu et al. 2015). They state that translation is believed to be very beneficial as a tool for learning EFL. Learners are also reported using translation as a learning strategy very frequently in their English learning.

From the findings above, it is quite clear that translation does exist in EFL teaching and learning and it plays an important role as a learning tool for EFL learners to help them learn, improve, and develop more about English.

### 2.3. Translation as an EFL Learning Strategy

Oxford (1990, cited in Rodríguez 2016; Khonbi and Sadeghi 2015) defines learning strategy (LS) as “specific actions employed by learners to make language learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations.” LS is classified into six types which include memory-related strategies, cognitive strategies, compensatory strategies, metacognitive strategies, affective strategies, and social strategies (Oxford 1990, cited in Viriya and Sapsirin 2014; Ahmadi and Mahmoodi 2012). In addition, Liao (2006) states that since studies on language learning strategy were widely conducted and various different classifications of the strategy were proposed, translation has been classified into one of the cognitive learning strategies.

Al-Musawi (2014) emphasizes that translation as a learning strategy can be used as an effective medium for developing learners’ communicative competence. It is also a cognitive activity for students to help them learn new phrases and expressions in the language they learn. It is also a problem-solving exercise in which students can develop their capabilities in language analysis and processing. O’Malley, Chamot, Stewner-Manzanares, Kupper, and Russo (1985, cited in Al-Musawi 2014) state that there are 11 cognitive strategies identified when learning English, and 11.3% of the learners investigated state that they make use of translation as one of their learning strategies, 19.6% of them make use of repetition, 18.7% of them use note-taking, and 12.5% of them use imagery learning strategy. It implies that translation is still used for language learning.

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1. Participants

A total of 68 undergraduate learners of EFL (learners whose major is English Education) in a public university in Lampung Province, Indonesia took part in this study, which took place in 2018. At first, there were 71 first-year students at the department who were invited to respond to questionnaires, but only 68 responses were valid. 29.4% of the participants were male, the rest were female.

### 3.2. Instruments and Procedure

The participants in this study were required to fill out two kinds of questionnaires developed by Liao (2006). The first questionnaire was the *Inventory for Belief about Translation (IBT)* which was used to measure the participants’ belief about translation, and the second one was the *Inventory for Translation as a Learning Strategy (ITLS)* which was used to look at the participants’ use of translation in their EFL learning. The two kinds of questionnaires were translated from English into Indonesian so that the

statements and/or questions in the questionnaires could easily be understood by the participants. Firstly, it was decided that the questionnaires be administered in English, the original version, however, some students reported having difficulty in understanding some contents of the items. Then, a faculty member, who had a doctorate degree and was highly proficient in both English and Indonesian, was invited to review the translated Indonesian version for appropriateness, clarity, and readability.

The IBT consists of 24 items measuring the respondents' belief about translation, while the ITLS consists of 28 items measuring how translation is used to learn English skills and aspects. Both the IBT and ITLS are on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Since the IBT and ITLS were developed by Liao (2006) for the Taiwanese students, then to find out if the two questionnaires were valid and reliable in Indonesian context, a pilot survey was also undertaken to 50 students before the current study was conducted. In addition, the pilot survey aimed to ensure all information was provided to the participants and the instructions were clear, to ensure all statements were understandable, and to ensure the questionnaire was a reasonable length that participants were motivated to complete all statements (Schleef 2014).

The validity analyses were done to see the extent to which each questionnaire really measures what it claims to measure through Pearson Product Moment analyses ( $p < 0.05$ ). The validity of the IBT was proven to be acceptable ( $0.00 < 0.05$ ) and the validity of the ITLS was also proven to be acceptable ( $0.00 < 0.05$ ). In addition, to determine if the items are consistent with the test in measuring the phenomena under study, the internal consistency of the items was measured through a single correlation coefficient (Cronbach's Alpha). If alpha is high ( $> 0.60$ ), this suggests that all of the items in the IBT and ITLS are reliable which means that the entire test is internally consistent. The results of the reliability analyses are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Internal reliability coefficients of the IBT and ITLS items

Variables	N of Items	Cronbach's Alpha (n=68)
Belief about translation (IBT)	24	0.646
Use of translation as a learning strategy (ITLS)	28	0.907

The collected data in this study were analysed quantitatively by using SPSS 23 for Windows through several statistical methods including *descriptive statistics* which was used to summarize the participants' responses to the IBT and ITLS (total mean score  $M > 3.5$  = High,  $M \geq 3 = 3.5$  = Medium, and  $M < 3$  = Low). Besides, a correlation analysis was used to investigate the correlation between the two

variables under investigation, participants' belief about translation and the use of translation as their learning strategy.

### 3.3. Results

With regard to the participants' belief about translation in their EFL learning (RQ1), the participants' responses to the IBT items were computed through descriptive statistics as presented in Table 2. Among the 24 items in the IBT, 12 of them fall into high means category ( $M > 3.5$ ). The items that fall into low means category include Items 19 and 22, which means that the items become the least common belief.

Table 2. Means and standard deviations for the IBT items

Item	Item Description	N	Mean	SD
5.	Translating helps me memorize English vocabulary.	68	4.32	.781
2.	Translating helps me write English composition.	68	4.28	.750
4.	Translating helps me speak English.	68	4.24	.794
3.	Translating helps me understand spoken English.	68	4.15	.738
9.	Translation helps me understand my teacher's English instructions.	68	4.13	.731
7.	Translating helps me learn English idioms and phrases.	68	3.97	.828
10.	Translation helps me interact with my classmates in English class to complete assignments.	68	3.96	.742
12.	Using Indonesian translation helps me finish my English assignments more quickly and save time.	68	3.88	.820
11.	The more difficult the English assignments are, the more I depend on Indonesian translation.	68	3.84	.908
6.	Translating helps me understand English grammar rules.	68	3.79	1.001
13.	Using Indonesian translation while studying helps me better recall the content of a lesson later.	68	3.76	.831
14.	I like to use Indonesian translation to learn English.	68	3.62	.881
24.	I believe one needs to be immersed in an English-speaking culture for some time before he/she is able to think in English.	68	3.49	1.240
18.	I think everyone has to use Indonesian translation at this stage of learning.	68	3.15	.981
20*.	I prefer my English teachers always use English to teach me.	68	3.13	.879
17.	At this stage of learning, I cannot learn English without Indonesian translation.	68	3.06	.960
21.	I feel pressure when I am asked to think directly in English.	68	3.04	.854
1.	Translating helps me understand textbook readings.	68	3.01	1.044

19.	I will produce Indonesian-style English if I translate from Indonesian to English.	68	2.93	.869
16*.	Indonesian translation diminishes the amount of English input I receive.	68	2.81	.950
15*.	The use of Indonesian translation may interfere with my ability to learn English well.	68	2.65	1.062
23*.	When using English, it is best to keep my Indonesian out of my mind.	68	2.63	.991
22.	I tend to get frustrated when I try to think in English.	68	2.57	.903
8*.	Translating does not help me make progress in learning English.	68	1.50	.702

*N: Population Size, SD: Standard Deviation*

*\*The scores of the items 8, 15, 16, 20 and 23 are reversed.*

In addition, with regard to the participants' use of translation as their EFL learning strategy (RQ2), the participants' responses to the ITLS items were also computed through descriptive statistics as presented in Table 3. Based on Table 3, it can be seen that the most frequently used strategies (Items 17, 18, 19, 12, 3, 13, 15, 1, 5, 4, 14, 7, 2, 11, 23, 9, 16, 26, 6, 21, and 20) receive high means ( $M > 3.5$ ) and there is only one item (Item 24) that is the least used strategy ( $M < 3$ ).

Table 3. Means and standard deviations for the ITLS items

	<b>Item Description</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
17.	I use English-Indonesian dictionaries to help myself learn English.	68	4.32	.800
18	I use Indonesian-English dictionaries to help myself learn English.	68	4.25	.904
19	I use an electronic translation machine to help myself learn English.	68	4.22	.895
12.	If I forget certain English words or expressions in the middle of conversation, I translate from Indonesian into English to help me keep the conversation going.	68	4.13	.771
3.	After I read English articles, I use an available Indonesian translation to check if my comprehension is correct.	68	4.04	.871
13.	I memorize the meaning of new English vocabulary words by remembering their Indonesian translation.	68	3.97	.846
15.	I use Indonesian 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.	68	3.96	.762
1.	When reading an English text, I first translate it into Indonesian in my mind to help me understand its meaning.	68	3.96	.984
5.	When I write in English, I first think in Indonesian and then translate my ideas into English.	68	3.90	1.010



4.	To write in English, I first brainstorm about the topic in Indonesian.	68	3.87	.809
14.	I learn English grammar through Indonesian explanations of the English grammatical rules.	68	3.85	.833
7.	When I listen to English, I first translate the English utterances into Indonesian to help me understand the meanings.	68	3.84	.956
2.	I read Indonesian translations in the course reference book to help me better understand English articles in the textbook.	68	3.82	.752
11.	When speaking English, I first think of what I want to say in Indonesian and then translate it into English.	68	3.81	1.055
23.	I practice mentally translating my thoughts from Indonesian to English in various situations.	68	3.78	.826
9.	When I watch English TV or movies, I use Indonesian subtitles to check my comprehension.	68	3.76	.979
16.	I learn English idioms and phrases by reading their Indonesian translation.	68	3.75	.780
26.	I try to clarify the differences and similarities between Indonesian and English through translation.	68	3.69	.815
6.	I write Indonesian outlines for my English compositions.	68	3.66	1.074
21.	I ask questions about how an Indonesian expression can be translated into English.	68	3.60	.883
20.	If I do not understand something in English, I will ask other people to translate it into Indonesian for me.	68	3.54	.905
27*.	When reading English, I try to grasp the meaning of what I read without thinking of Indonesian equivalents.	68	3.47	1.000
22.	When the teacher assigns English articles for reading, I work with others to translate them.	68	3.46	.800
25.	I write Indonesian translations in my English textbooks.	68	3.28	.960
10.	I listen to or read Indonesian news first in order to understand English radio/TV news better.	68	3.21	.986
8.	I read the Indonesian translation scripts before I listen to instructional English tapes or CDs.	68	3.04	.937
28*.	When speaking English, I think of what I want to say in English without thinking first in Indonesian.	68	3.01	1.044
24.	I take notes in Indonesian in my English class.	68	2.94	.912

To investigate the correlation between belief about translation and the use of translation as an EFL

learning strategy (RQ3), the data obtained from the IBT and ITLS questionnaires were statistically computed through SPSS 23 for Windows (correlation analysis). As mentioned earlier, in the IBT the participants were provided with 24 items and in the ITLS with 28 items. The Table 4 below provides data about correlations between belief about translation and use of translation as a learning strategy. It can be seen that the correlation between belief about translation and use of translation as a learning strategy is 0.703 which means that the correlation is significant in which the significance value is .000 ( $0.000 < 0.05$ ).

Table 4. Correlations between belief about translation and use of translation

		<b>Use of Translation (Y)</b>	<b>Belief about Translation (X)</b>
Pearson Correlation	Use of translation	1.000	.703
	Belief about translation	.703	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	Use of translation	.	.000
	Belief about translation	.000	.
N	Use of translation	68	68
	Belief about translation	68	68

#### 4. Discussion

Based on the findings above, viewed from belief about translation perspective, Indonesian EFL learners believe that translation helps them comprehend and acquire English skills and other EFL aspects such as writing, speaking, vocabulary, and idioms and phrases. The findings are in line with Liao's (2006) study that states that students believe translation helps them acquire English skills in terms of writing, speaking, vocabulary, and idioms and phrases. Other studies also revealed that students believe translation is of importance in English learning as a tool for assisting them learn English (Aktekin and Gliniecki 2015; Dagilienė 2012; Karimian and Talebinejad 2013). In addition, this current study also found that EFL learners believe translation helps them interact with their classmates to finish assignments, understand English grammatical rules, recall the content of a lesson in the future. They also believe that to be able to think directly in English, someone should be immersed in an English-speaking culture for some time. Simply put, they believe that translation plays an important role in their EFL learning. On the contrary, they do not believe that learning EFL through translation makes them produce Indonesian-style English. However, the interesting one is that they do not believe either that they get frustrated when they try to think in English. This finding

means that they actually, on the one hand, want to think directly in English, however, they still believe that translation helps them learn English, on the other hand. This might be due to the fact that the participants in this study, first-year students whose major is English Education, tend to be less proficient in their EFL mastery that they depend much on translation.

Viewed from the use of translation as a learning strategy, this study also revealed that the participants most frequently use bilingual dictionaries and an electronic translation machine to learn EFL. In addition, they also use translation as a learning strategy to learn EFL skills such as speaking, reading, writing, listening, and other EFL aspects such as vocabulary, grammar, and idioms and phrases. These findings are consistent with Liao's (2006) findings which state that students most frequently use translation to learn English vocabulary, idioms, phrases, and grammar, to read, write, speak, and check reading and listening comprehension. These findings are also in line with findings revealed by other investigators (Calis and Dikilitas 2012; Dagilienė 2012; Guerra 2014; Mutlu et al. 2015). The participants in this study also report that they use translation to clarify the differences and similarities between Indonesian and English and if they do not understand about something in English, they ask other people to explain it using translation. These findings also confirm that translation still exists in ELF learning in Indonesia. It is still used most of the time for learning and comprehending English.

In relation to the correlation of EFL learners' belief about translation and their use of translation as an EFL learning strategy, this study revealed that there is a linkage between belief about translation and use of translation as an EFL learning strategy. The empirical evidence in this study is in line with Aktekin and Gliniecki (2015) who state that there is a strong bond between belief and learners' strategy use. The relationship between EFL learners' belief and their use of translation as a learning strategy indicates that the EFL learners' belief is closely related to their use of translation as an EFL learning strategy.

## 5. Conclusion

This study investigates EFL learners' belief about translation, their use of translation as an EFL learning, and the correlation between their belief and use of translation as an EFL learning strategy.

Indonesian EFL learners believe that translation helps them comprehend and acquire EFL skills and other EFL aspects such as writing, speaking, vocabulary, and idioms and phrases. The EFL learners also make use of translation as their learning strategy for learning English skills such as speaking, reading, writing, listening, vocabulary, grammar, and idioms and phrases. Thus, the empirical evidence explicitly explains that translation still exists and cannot be avoided in EFL

learning as a means to learn the language. In addition, this study also revealed that there is a linkage between EFL learners' belief about translation and the use of translation as an EFL learning strategy.

The findings in this study also have implications for EFL teaching and learning. This study revealed that translation plays an important role in EFL learning in Indonesia as reported by other studies conducted in other countries. Indonesian EFL learners believe that the inclusion of translation into their EFL learning helps them acquire more knowledge about English. Therefore, translation or inclusion of learners' L1 should be allowed to involve at their initial stage of EFL learning in order for them to be able to comprehend EFL much more easily. Teachers should also provide space for translation in teaching EFL skills, vocabulary, grammar, and idioms and phrases, especially to elementary EFL learners because translation in language classrooms "is doing no harm" (Pym and Ayvazyan 2017: 404). Therefore, L1 and translation need to be closely looked at as a foreign language teaching and learning method or technique (Ramsden 2018).

However, this study also has some limitations. Although this study is able to describe EFL learners' belief about translation, their use of translation as an EFL learning strategy, and the correlation between their belief about translation and use of translation, this study was carried out in a small sample size (n=68). Therefore, adequate number of subjects from different proficiency levels and background are required for future research to provide more precise conclusions. In addition, more advanced statistical analyses with more various variables are also required to provide more reliable findings. To support the quantitative results, interviews with students and teachers may be effective to get a deeper understanding and insight on the use of translation in EFL teaching and learning.

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