

## **A Survey on Translation as a Learning Strategy by EFL Higher Education Students in English Learning**

**Alfira Dewi Edelia<sup>1\*</sup>, Ista Maharsi<sup>2</sup>**  
Universitas Islam Indonesia, Indonesia<sup>1,2</sup>  
Email: alfiraedelia80@gmail.com<sup>1</sup>

### **ARTICLE INFO**

*Article history:*

Received  
June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2022

Revised  
August 12<sup>th</sup>, 2022

Accepted  
November 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2022

### **ABSTRACT**

Many language teachers assume that the use of translation as a learning strategy to learn a language can harm the learning processes. In contrast, many learners need translation as a learning strategy to help them understand the meanings of texts. This paper reports on the use of translation strategies in English learning by EFL higher education students at an Islamic private university. This study employed a survey study. Data were collected from the Inventory for Translation as a Learning Strategy (ITLS) questionnaire consisting of 27 items that were adapted from Liao (2002). The participants were 97 students who enrolled in the English Education major batch of 2018 and they were randomly selected. Findings show that the most frequent strategy use of translation is the use of electronic machines and English-Indonesia and Indonesian-English dictionaries ( $M=4.15$  and  $SD=0.91$ ). Meanwhile, the least frequent strategy use of translation is to ask questions to peers and seek to find the meaning of idioms and expressions collectively in searching for unknown or new information about the English language ( $M=2.63$  and  $SD=1.14$ ).

**Keywords:** *EFL; language learning; learning strategy; translation; translation as a learning strategy*

How to cite

Edelia, A. D. and Maharsi, I. (2022). A Survey on Translation as a Learning Strategy by EFL Higher Education Students in English Learning. *Pedagogy : Journal of English Language Teaching*, 10(2). 111-122

DOI 10.32332/joelt.v10i2.4809.

Journal Homepage

<https://e-journal.metrouniv.ac.id/index.php/pedagogy>

This is an open access article under the CC BY SA license

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>

## INTRODUCTION

Translation is a tool used by foreign students to transfer from one language to another. There is increasing evidence that suggests learning strategies can significantly influence students' performance in learning a language, especially English (Setyadi, Sukirlan, and Mahpul 2016). One of the previous studies from Al-Musawi (2014) about translation as a language learning strategy stated that the most popular strategies used by Arab students to learn English are using online translation tools to learn new vocabulary words, phrases, idioms, and grammar in English in order to remember the meaning of English necessity and to verify whether they properly understood the material. Additionally, Arab students attempt to not think in their mother tongue when speaking English. The least frequent strategies employed by Arab students are asking questions of one another and attempting to discover the meaning of idioms and expressions collectively. They also attempt to connect English words to their Arabic equivalents. In other words, Arab students still use translation as a strategy to improve their knowledge of English. In Indonesia, studies on translation as a strategy of learning were found in previous studies conducted by Putrawan (2019) The results of this study showed that EFL students in Indonesia still frequently employ translation as a learning strategy for English as a foreign language. According to the results of the study,

participants still use an EFL learning strategy that involves translation to enhance their English skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking). Participants in the conversation reported using translation to make their conversation flow and be understandable. They also employ an English-Indonesian dictionary and online translation tools. students employ translation as a learning strategy to develop their English abilities and to keep their speaking fluency. Hence, like Arab students, translation is still used by Indonesian students to help them learn English. Several studies on translation strategies in language learning have been conducted in other countries. Meanwhile, studies are still being conducted in a limited number in Indonesia. Therefore, more research should be conducted to identify EFL students' translation strategies in the context of Indonesia.

This study identifies how EFL higher education students employ translation as a learning strategy to learn English. Al-Musawi (2014) points out that in linguistic, semantic, and pragmatic transmission, translation plays a critical role in determining the relevant meaning of words and phrases. Even though the translation has a different role in different teaching methods, Liao (2006) argues that some foreign educators may forbid or prevent students from using native languages and translations in the classroom, but others consider that translation is a crucial process for ensuring

student knowledge and essential writing practice. Moreover, Al-Musawi (2014) affirms that most teachers believe translation is a useful process for assisting students in understanding foreign words and idioms and expressing themselves more confidently. In addition, Iranian students employ translation as a learning process to assist them to acquire English (Karimian and Talebinejad, 2013). This strategy should be allowed to be used to help new EFL learners learn English. When learners attain a greater level of EFL competence, they are forced to think directly in English to develop their general English ability (Tan, 2015). Therefore, the use of translation in English learning plays an important role in the language learning of EFL students. In addition, this study.

The purpose of this study is to find the answer to the research question "In what way do students of English education use translation as a learning strategy?"

### **Translation As a Learning Strategies in EFL Contexts**

Translation may be acknowledged as an important means to ensure students' understanding and as an important writing exercise by certain foreign language educators, while some other teachers may entirely forbid or discourage the use of the native language and translation in the classroom. The translation is used to ensure that information is successfully communicated throughout the world

where every important communication is translated into multiple languages as soon as possible. In other words, translation is also used as a general strategy in language education majors. The importance of translation in global communication cannot be overstated. Without translation, it is difficult to imagine global news (Adil, 2020).

In this modern era, translation has become more common for conveying meanings and messages. Translation refers to transferring the lexical and syntactic level of a source language into other languages to understand meanings (Liao, 2006) Furthermore, Al-Basrah and Abdul Ridha (2014) argue that translation is the process of dealing with two different types of language. The first is the source language (the one being translated), and the second is the target language (the target language form). It means that translation is an interpretation facility that assists students in interpreting information between two or more languages.

In EFL contexts, translation has been widely employed as a strategy for learning a second language because when exposure to the target language is limited, translation is important to facilitate learners to learn in the environment and acquire the language being learned (Asgarian and Musayeva Vefali, 2015) In addition, translation played a different role that is accommodated for learners from various social background and to is used to assist students to improve their communication abilities as to

understand or develop a second language using one's first language (Chamot and O'Malley, 1987, Al-Musawi, 2014, Asgarin and Musayeva Vefalı, 2015). Teachers recognize translation as a powerful tool for helping students acquire confidence in comprehending new vocabulary, and foreign expressions, and expressing ideas in the target language.

Translation is commonly favored by foreign language learners as one of the cognitive strategies, according to studies on language learning strategies and different classifications of these strategies (Assist and Mutlu, 2018). Learners of a foreign language mostly employ cognitive strategies as one of their language learning strategies. Foreign language learners mainly employ cognitive methods as one of their language learning strategies. It is most recognized as a teaching tool used by individuals who support the grammar-translation method, which encourages translation (Gülten, Kulusaklı, and Boynukara 2018). Chamot and O'Malley (1987) elaborate that cognitive strategies include learners' verbal association with new knowledge or previously learned information, and they can also physically group materials to be studied, take notes, or write summaries to assist them to remember important information. Students recognize and acquire what is needed in the linguistic component to use a second language, which is an important cognitive component in assisting students' learning strategy (O'Malley et al., 1988). Translation

as a learning strategy may be a useful method for enhancing learners' communication ability (Al-Musawi, 2014). It is also a cognitive activity for students to assist them in learning new words and expressions in the language that they are learning. It is also a problem-solving activity in which students may improve their language analysis and processing skills. It indicates that translation is still used to learn a language (Putrawan, Mustika, and Riadi, 2019).

## **METHOD**

This study was designed as a survey study. There were 97 student respondents from the fourth year of an English teacher education program. The questionnaire was adapted from Liao (2002), and it is called the Inventory for Translation as a Learning Strategy (ITLS) consisting of 28 items. Before being distributed to the respondents, the ITLS was translated from English to Bahasa Indonesia. The questionnaire's Chinese context was changed to Indonesian. In item 8 of the questionnaire, the researcher adopts the tapes/CDs to audio/videos. An online Google Form will be used to conduct the survey on EFL translation strategy and distributed questionnaires to participants. The questionnaire link would be given by the researcher through email or personal chat.

**Table 1. Questionnaire of the Inventory for Translation as a Learning Strategy (ITLS) by Liao (2002) (Bahasa Indonesia version)**

Item	Statement	Scales				
1	When reading an English text, I first translate it into Bahasa Indonesia in my mind to help me understand its meaning	1	2	3	4	5
2	I read Indonesia translations in the course reference book to help me better understand English articles in the textbook	1	2	3	4	5
3	After I read English articles, I use an available Indonesia translation to check if my comprehension is correct	1	2	3	4	5
4	To write in English, I first brainstorm about the topic in Indonesia	1	2	3	4	5
5	When I write in English, I first think in Indonesia and then translate my ideas into English	1	2	3	4	5
6	I write Indonesia outlines for my English compositions	1	2	3	4	5
7	When I listen to English, I first translate the English utterances into Indonesia to help me understand the meanings	1	2	3	4	5
8	I read the Indonesia translation scripts before I listen to instructional English audios or videos	1	2	3	4	5
9	When I watch TV shows or movies in English, I use Indonesia subtitles to check my comprehension	1	2	3	4	5
10	I listen to or read Indonesia news first in order to understand English radio/TV news better	1	2	3	4	5
11	When speaking English, I first think of what I want to say in Indonesia and then translate it into English	1	2	3	4	5
12	If I forget certain English words or expressions in the middle of conversation, I translate from Indonesia into English to help me keep the conversation going	1	2	3	4	5
13	I memorize the meaning of new English vocabulary words by remembering their Indonesia translation	1	2	3	4	5
14	I learn English grammar through Indonesia explanations of the English grammatical rules	1	2	3	4	5
15	I use Indonesia 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	1	2	3	4	5
16	I learn English idioms and phrases by reading their Indonesia translation	1	2	3	4	5
17	I use English-Indonesia dictionaries to help myself learn English	1	2	3	4	5
18	I use Indonesia-English dictionaries to help myself learn English	1	2	3	4	5
19	I use an electronic translation machine to help myself learn English	1	2	3	4	5
20	If I do not understand something in English, I will ask other people to translate it into Indonesia for me	1	2	3	4	5

21	I ask questions about how a Indonesia expression can be translated into English	1	2	3	4	5
22	When the teacher assigns English articles for reading, I work with others to translate them	1	2	3	4	5
23	I practice mentally translating my thoughts from Indonesia to English in various situations	1	2	3	4	5
24	I take notes in Indonesia in my English class	1	2	3	4	5
25	I write Indonesia translations in my English textbooks	1	2	3	4	5
26	I try to clarify the differences and similarities between Indonesia and English through translation	1	2	3	4	5
27*	When reading English, I try to grasp the meaning of what I read without thinking of Indonesia equivalents	1	2	3	4	5

The ITLS consists of 28 items on a 5-point Likert scale, Each statement is rated by the participant on a scale of one point (never) to five points (always). The data scale used in this questionnaire is the Likert scale, with scoring techniques as follows:

**Table 2. The Score for Likert-scale**

Likert-scale	Score
Never	1
Seldom	2
Sometimes	3
Often	4
Always	5

The researcher employed descriptive statistics to analyze the data. The researchers calculate the mean (M) and standard deviation (SD) of the student's test results. Furthermore, SPSS 26 was used to calculate the validity and reliability of the instruments. The result of validity shows (Pearson Correlation) > R-table of 0,195 (N =97). Therefore, 27 of the questionnaire items are valid. Meanwhile, the Cronbach alpha value is 0.899. This implies that the questionnaire items are highly reliable.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Participants completed the ITLS questionnaire to respond to the research question. the mean and standard deviations were calculated using descriptive statistics and are displayed in Figure 1. The results report the most frequent strategy used and the least frequent strategy used by EFL learners. The most frequently used strategies are shown in (Items 19, 5,3, 12, 13, 6, 9, 1, 4, 17, 23, 11, 14, 16, 18, 15, 26, 2, 7, 27, 21, 24, 10, and 25) receive high means ( $M > 3.5$ ) and there are three items (Item 20, 8 and 22) that are the least used strategy ( $M < 3$ ).

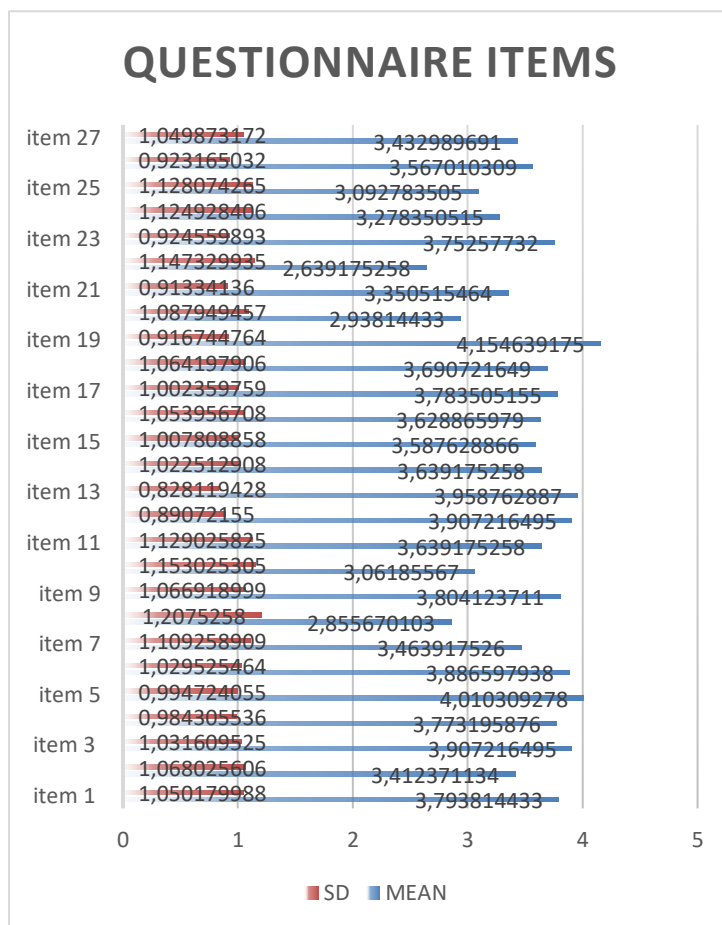
The result shows that the most frequently used strategy was found in item 19 (I use an electronic translation machine to help myself learn English) with mean ( $M = 4.15$ ) and standard deviation ( $SD = 0.91$ ). The second frequent strategy was found in item 5 (When I write in English, I first think in Indonesia and then translate my ideas into English) with mean ( $M = 4.01$ ) and standard deviation ( $SD = 0.99$ ). The third frequent strategy is found in item 13 (I memorize the meaning of new English

vocabulary words by remembering their Indonesia translation) with mean (M=3.95) and standard deviation (SD=0.82).

Meanwhile, the least frequently used strategy was found in item 22 (When the teacher assigns English articles for reading, I work with others to translate them) with mean (M=2.63) and standard deviation (SD=1.14).

The second least frequent strategy

was found in item 8 (I read the Indonesia translation scripts before I listen to instructional English audios or videos) with mean (M=2.85) and standard deviation (SD=1.20). The third least strategy was found in item 20 (If I do not understand something in English, I will ask other people to translate it into Indonesian for me) with mean (M=2.93) and standard deviation (SD=1.08).



**Figure 1 Result of Each Item**

What can be seen in this study is the questionnaire results show that participants frequently use strategy are electronic and bilingual dictionaries to help them learn English. Furthermore, students also use translation to improve their English language abilities, including vocabulary, grammar, idioms, and phrases, as well as to read, write, and verify their reading and listening comprehension. The result of this study is similar to the result of Liao (2006). The purpose of the study was to identify the various types of learning techniques employed by Taiwanese students. Enrolled in a five-year junior college with 351 students located in central Taiwan (eight classes). The results show that students most frequently use translation to read, write, and assess reading and listening comprehension as well as to acquire English vocabulary, idioms, phrases, and grammar. The students also report that they prefer to think in their first language first and then translate their thought into English (item 5) and students also first remember their first language in order to memorize new English words (item 13). Accordingly, this result indicates that when it comes to writing or memorizing new vocabulary words, students rely on their first language. According to Chamot (1987), It may be stated that the learner's first language is the most important tool for constructing meaning and developing their own foreign-language productions. Consistent with the result of the current study, Gülten, Kulusaklı, and Boynukara (2018) stated that when studying a new

language, students heavily rely on their first language. In similar line, the least frequent strategy showed that students rarely ask or work together with their friends when they do not understand something in English (item 20&22). This result is inconsistent with the result reported by (Putrawan, Mustika, and Riadi, 2019) that students do not ask explanation to each other if they do not understand something in English or to identify idioms or words.

In addition, it shows that the majority of participants agree that using online translation tools and a bilingual dictionary is beneficial to their EFL study. Thus, it is clear that the majority of participants rely on online translation tools and their first language to help them learn English. Meanwhile, they also learned that online translation tools may be incorrect or faulty in their translations, so they had to translate the materials themselves. Moreover, students prefer using online translation tools and bilingual dictionaries to assist them in their English learning instead of asking or working together with their friends. Thus, the results show that translation is still widely used by EFL students to assist them in language learning.

Aktekin & Gliniecki (2015) further state that translation is a beneficial learning resource for students who want to improve their English comprehension, memorization, and production, as well as complete various English tasks. Mutlu, Bayram, & Demirbukan (2015) also state that translation is used by adult English learners to improve their reading,



listening, writing, speaking, and vocabulary abilities in English. Thus, translation is still widely used by EFL students to help them in learning languages. Meanwhile, although not frequently used, strategies of asking questions to each other and seeking to find the meaning of idioms and phrases in a collective way are present. Students prefer using online translation tools and bilingual dictionaries to assist them in their English learning (Al-Musawi, 2014).

## CONCLUSION

The aim of the research is to identify what types of EFL translation strategies are used in English learning. The results of this study suggested that in terms of using translation as a strategy for learning English the majority of participants frequently use translation and find it helpful and significant, particularly when thinking in their mother tongue first and translating their thoughts into English, as well as brainstorming in writing English to appropriately comprehend the text. According to the study, translation provides benefits for EFL learning in many forms, such as online translation tools or bilingual dictionaries, in order to determine the meaning of words. In this regard, the application of translation strategies in learning English does exist, and it assists students in better understanding and memorizing new vocabulary. Meanwhile, the least strategy revealed that participants prefer to employ online translation tools and bilingual dictionaries to assist them in their English learning, as they rarely ask

each other questions or seek the meaning of idioms and phrases in a collective way in searching for unknown or new information about the English language. As revealed in this study, translation is heavily used by EFL students, and translation itself is important to their English learning. Therefore, to help them easier to understand English, translation should be permitted during their English learning. Nonetheless, this present study focus on higher education students. The researcher suggests conducting the study in high schools in the future. in order to identify differences in various levels of learners employing translation as a learning strategy.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The researchers would like to express gratitude towards all the 97 participants, who enrolled in the English Education Study Program students' batch 2018. The researchers would also express their gratitude to the editors and reviewers of *Pedagogy: Journal of English Language Teaching* for their constructive feedback to improve this journal article.

## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

The manuscript was jointly written by ADE and IM. ADE completed her thesis, the embryo of this manuscript, under the advisory of IM.

## REFERENCES

- Adil, M. (2020). Exploring the role of translation in communicative language teaching or the communicative approach. *SAGE Open*, 10(2), 2158244020924403.
- Aktekin, N. Ç., & Gliniecki, A. U. (2015). ELT students' beliefs about and strategy use of translation. *International Online Journal of Education and Teaching (IOJET)*, 2(1), 12-24.
- Al-Musawi, N. M. (2014). Strategic Use of Translation in Learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) among Bahrain University Students. *Innovative Teaching*, 3(4). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2466%2F10.03.IT.3.4>
- Asgarian, A., & Musayeva Vefali, G. (2015). How do English translation majors use translation strategies? A survey of the Iranian EFL context. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 36(3), 313-329. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2014.921186>
- Chamot, A. U., & O'MALLEY, J. M. (1987). The cognitive academic language learning approach: A bridge to the mainstream. *TESOL quarterly*, 21(2), 227-249. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/3586733>
- Désilets, A., Melançon, C., Patenaude, G., & Brunette, L. (2009). How translators use tools and resources to resolve translation problems: An ethnographic study. In *Beyond Translation Memories: New Tools for Translators Workshop*.
- Gülten, G. E. N. Ç., KULUŞAKLI, E., & BOYNUKARA, E. (2018). EFL Learners' Use of Translation as a Learning Strategy. *ELT Research Journal*, 7(4), 175-188.
- Hayati, M., & Fattahzadeh, A. (2006). The Effects of Monolingual And Bilingual Dictionaries on Vocabulary Recall And Retention of EFL Learners, *The Reading Matrix*, Vol.6, No.2
- Karimian, Z., & Talebinejad, M. R. (2013) Students' use of translation as a learning strategy in EFL classroom. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 4(3), 605-610. DOI:10.4304/ jltr.4.3.605-610
- Liao, P. S. (2002) Taiwanese students' beliefs about translation and their use of translation as a strategy to learn English Doctoral dissertation, The Univer. of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX.
- Liao, P. S. (2006) EFL learners' beliefs about and strategy use of translation in English learning. *Regional Language Centre Journal*, 37(2), 191-215. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0033688206067428>
- Limantoro, S. W., & Datu, Y. A. (2021). English-Indonesian Translation Strategies Made By Vocational Students. *Lensa: Kajian Kebahasaan, Kesusastraan, dan Budaya*, 11(2), 153-170.
- 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.

- O'MALLEY, J. M., Chamot, A. U., Stewner-Manzanares, G. L. O. R. I. A., Russo, R. P., & Küpper, L. (1985). Learning strategy applications with students of English as a second language. *TESOL quarterly*, 19(3), 557-584. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/3586278>
- O'Malley, J. M., Russo, R. P., Chamot, A. U., & Stewner-Manzanares, G. (1988). Applications of learning strategies by students learning English as a second language. In *Learning and study strategies* (pp. 215-231). Academic Press. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-12-742460-6.50018-9>
- Putrawan, G. E., Mustika, I. W., & Riadi, B. (2019). A study on EFL learners' belief about translation as a learning strategy in Indonesia. *Kervan-International Journal of Afro-Asiatic Studies*, 23(1), 235-249.
- Ramachandran, S. D., & Rahim, H. A. (2004). Meaning recall and retention: The impact of the translation method on elementary level learners' vocabulary learning. *RELC journal*, 35(2), 161-178. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F003368820403500205>
- Ridha, N. S. A. (2014). Associations between EFL learners' beliefs about and their strategy use of translation in English learning: the case of Iraqi learners. *Journal of the College of Arts*, 70, 31-53.
- 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.

