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TEACHING FUTURE TRANSLATORS LANGUAGE THROUGH TRANSLATION— DOES IT HELP THEIR TRANSLATING?

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Abstract

Following a long-running debate on the role of translation in additional language teaching (ALT) (see for example, Cook, 2010; Leonardi, 2010; Laviosa, 2014), it can be stated with some confidence that translation and other multilingual practices are no longer frowned upon when employed as additional language teaching and learning tools. At the same time, teachers no longer tend to follow particular teaching methods rigorously and instead aim to develop personalised approaches suited to their contexts, yet “informed by principled pragmatism” (Kumaravandivelu, 1994, p. 27).

Koletnik M. (2020). Teaching future translators language through translation—does it help their translating? *Current Trends in Translation Teaching and Learning E*, 7, 314-356. [10.51287/cttl_e_2020_10_melita_koletnik.pdf](https://doi.org/10.51287/cttl_e_2020_10_melita_koletnik.pdf)

However, the discussion about the benefits of using translation as a strategy in the ALT of future translators seems to be lagging behind, and this despite decades-old pleas by translation scholars (see for example, Berenguer, 1999; Bernardini, 2004) to adapt students' additional language learning to their future needs, thus saving precious time. With this in mind, the present paper seeks consensus on this issue by exploring the potential and limitations of employing translation exercises in the ALT of future translators, and its effect on the development of students' emerging translation competence. It is based on a longitudinal, mixed-method study that used qualitative and quantitative data to provide an empirically underpinned answer to the following question: if we teach future translators additional language through translation, does it help their translating? This may seem redundant, and yet it has received insufficient scholarly attention. Findings indicate a directionality-based difference in the translation competence of two groups of students taught additional language with or without recourse to translation. It is thus suggested that careful introduction and judicious use of translation in ALT to complement monolingual tuition, could contribute to developing students' language and translation skills in both their additional language as well as their mother tongue.

Keywords: translation, additional language teaching (ALT), language competence, translation competence

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the last quarter-century or so, the scholarly debate on the role of translation in additional language teaching (ALT) has prompted a proliferation of monographs, chapters and papers, (see for example, Malmkjaer, 1998; Cook, 2010; Leonardi, 2010; Carreres & Noriega-Sanchez, 2011; Laviosa, 2014) to mention but a few of the most important contributions. However, the topic of translation in ALT has been causing controversy for far longer than that. In fact, scholarly debate addressing it seems to have celebrated its centenary, with Paul Kern’s paper “The Question of Translation in the Teaching of Modern Languages” having appeared in the *The School Review* in 1905. Given its decades- if not century-long existence, it is thus unsurprising that in the meantime this debate has matured to the point where translation in ALT appears to be widely advocated and practised, albeit the former to a greater and the latter to a lesser, or rather rarely admitted, extent (see for example, Pym et al., 2013; Mertelj, 2019).

Koletnik M. (2020). Teaching future translators language through translation—does it help their translating? *Current Trends in Translation Teaching and Learning E*, 7, 314-356. 10.51287/cttl_e_2020_10_melita_koletnik.pdf

2. BACKGROUND

Several factors appear to have contributed to this development. On the one hand, the historical causes that prompted the anti-translation discourse in the 20th century, received extensive examination that revealed their flaws (see for example, Pym, 2016). On the other hand, the last three decades of empirical research allowed scholars and practitioners to demonstrate translation's benefits, particularly in the didactic areas of vocabulary (see for example, Laufer & Girsai, 2008; Nation, 2011; Masrai & Milton, 2015); and grammar learning (see for example, Butzkamm, 1985; Källkvist, 2008; Jung, 2016); as well as reading comprehension (see for example, Jarvis & Jensen, 1982; Mahmoud 2006; Pakzadian et al., 2012). This said, the research also identified other areas that, in the past, were traditionally associated with translation but may not have been best suited for it, i.e. areas where translation may not be the most effective choice for some learners and should be applied cautiously and judiciously, e.g. written communication (see for example, Kobayashi & Rinnert, 1992; Cohen & Brooks-Carson, 2001; Lifang, 2008) and language testing and/or assessment (see for example, Larsen, 1990; Källkvist, 1998; Turkan et al., 2013).

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In addition to evidence-providing research, reasons for a more favourable attitude to translation in ALT can also be found in recent changes to the dominant language pedagogical discourse. Language educationalists today seem no longer preoccupied “with the quest for the best or most effective teaching method(s)” and take a more holistic position. They look for benefits from a well thought out yet personalised approach “informed by principled pragmatism” (Kumaravandivelu, 1994, p. 27), which is increasingly characterised by their awareness of additional or ‘other’ languages that enter their pedagogical practice and create a Translanguaging Space (Li, 2017, p. 15), where room is made for translation and other bi- and multilingual practices.

However, the discussion about the role and possible benefits (and pitfalls) of using translation and other practices that allow resort to multiple languages in the ALT of future translators seems to be lagging behind this debate. This has happened despite several decades of appeals by translation scholars (see for example, Berenguer, 1999; Bernardini, 2004) to adapt translation students’ language learning to their future needs in order to save precious time. This is made more surprising by the fact that language or linguistic competence is still

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perceived as constituting a central component of translation competence. For example, the latest models establishing a wider and more interdisciplinary framework for translation competence, among them the currently five-componential PACTE (Hurtado Albir, 2017) and EMT models, consider the linguistic (sub)competence “the driving force behind all the other competences” (EMT, 2017). Moreover, it was the Autonomous University of Barcelona’s PACTE group (cited in Cerezo Herrero, 2015, p. 300) that suggested “language teaching for translator trainees should present a methodology of its own and be clearly differentiated from general language teaching”.

While scholarly contributions addressing the general relevance of needs-tailored language teaching in translator training have been quite numerous in recent years, (see, e.g. the 2014 special issue of *The Interpreter and Translator Trainer*), to date, relatively few studies (e.g., Beeby, 2003 and 2004; Schjoldager, 2004) have addressed the relevance of *translation* as an ALT practice in translator training. Even less scholarly work has presented research-based evidence on how translation as an ALT practice may (or may not) contribute to the development of students’

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translation competence in different languages (see for example, Källkvist, 2013).

In this vein, the present paper is an attempt to contribute to closing this gap by exploring the potential and limitations of employing translation in the ALT of future translators, more specifically the effect of such didactic practice(s) on strengthening selected aspects of students' grammatical competence, followed by an investigation of its subsequent effect on the development of their translation competence. It is based on a longitudinal, mixed-method study that used qualitative and quantitative data to provide an empirically underpinned answer to the question: if we teach future translators additional language through (bidirectional) translation, does it help their translating?

3. METHODOLOGY AND MATERIALS

Findings presented in this paper are based on the second of the two research questions that sought to answer:

1. Can translation be used in ALT to strengthen selected aspects of linguistic competence? (Part 1 of the experiment)

Koletnik M. (2020). Teaching future translators language through translation—does it help their translating? *Current Trends in Translation Teaching and Learning E*, 7, 314-356. 10.51287/cttl_e_2020_10_melita_koletnik.pdf

2. What is the influence of translation used as an ALT tool on the later development of students' translation competence? (Part 2 of the experiment)

The research was carried out in the period from 2012 to 2016 with students of the undergraduate (BA) Interlingual Mediation Programme¹ at the University of Maribor's Department of Translation at the Faculty of Arts in Slovenia. It was conducted for the Slovenian (L1)–English (L2) language pair and included three generations of students. Initially involved in the project were a total of 117 students. However, owing to the longitudinal nature of the study and the multi-method approach that monitored several variables, the final population that was assessed statistically in Part 1 of the experiment totalled 45 students.

In order to answer the first research question, a mixed methods approach was used, which relied on analysing collected pre-test, periodical and post-test

¹ The 3-year Bologna-compliant Interlingual Mediation Programme (in 2019 renamed Translation Programme) offers students linguistic, cultural, literary, and translation content in Slovene and their selected L2(s). Upon successful completion of the programme, students can proceed to study translation at the Master's level or transfer to other fields.

Koletnik M. (2020). Teaching future translators language through translation—does it help their translating? *Current Trends in Translation Teaching and Learning E*, 7, 314-356. [10.51287/cttl_e_2020_10_melita_koletnik.pdf](https://doi.org/10.51287/cttl_e_2020_10_melita_koletnik.pdf)

statistical data, quantifiable results from online background surveys and results obtained by a qualitative investigation of students' beliefs and perceptions. The 32-week experiment was carried out in semesters 1 and 2 of the students' first academic year for all three generations in a class that was aimed at developing their linguistic competence in L2 and focused on grammar. The design involved two groups: the experimental group, whose linguistic skills were developed, among other methods by means of bidirectional translation exercises (Group P), and the control group, which received no translation exercises (Group N).

The first research question was tested by computing independent samples *t*-tests to identify average gain scores. These were calculated based on pre-test/post-test results, and separately also for the results of periodic examinations. In absolute terms, Group P outperformed Group N on the pre-test/post-test comparison ($\Delta=2.94$)²; however, the relative average gain was greater in Group N ($\Delta=2.66$). Nevertheless, there was no statistically significant difference between groups as determined by *t*-test

² Of a total of 100 points.

Koletnik M. (2020). Teaching future translators language through translation—does it help their translating? *Current Trends in Translation Teaching and Learning E*, 7, 314-356. 10.51287/cttl_e_2020_10_melita_koletnik.pdf

($p=0.497$) at the 0.05 significance level. The gain over periodic examinations yielded even less dispersed results. The success of both groups was practically aligned ($\Delta=0.07$)³, and again no statistically significant difference could be established by the *t*-test ($p=0.853$) at the 0.05 significance level. It was thus established that translation can be used in ALT to strengthen selected aspects of linguistic competence; however, monolingual language teaching was also effective and efficient. A more detailed description of Part 1 of the experiment is beyond the scope of this paper and can be found in Koletnik (2017).

3.1 Experimental design

The second research question, which is our central focus here, investigated the influence of translation exercises, when used as an ALT tool, on the development of students' emerging translation competence (Part 2). The experimental design was divided into three distinct steps: (1) testing the students' translation competence by means of bidirectional translation; (2) collecting responses to

³ Of a total of 15 points.

Koletnik M. (2020). Teaching future translators language through translation—does it help their translating? *Current Trends in Translation Teaching and Learning E*, 7, 314-356. 10.51287/cttl_e_2020_10_melita_koletnik.pdf

questionnaires about the representative translations from competent native speakers of L1 and L2; and (3) analysing and comparing the representative translations with originals to corroborate results obtained from the informants.

3.1.1 Testing the students' translation competence

In step one, a total of 43 bidirectional (Slovene–English and English–Slovene) translations were collected from students in all 3 generation groups that participated in Part 1 of the experiment. For practical purposes, the decision was made to work with 6 representative translations, prepared by 2 students from each generation, i.e. one who was taught language via translation (group P) and one who did not use the translation (group N). The representative translations for each group were selected based on the student's relative pre-test/post-test gain, taking into account a comparable initial value after having excluded the outliers.

With input from Colina (2003, pp. 83-84) and Nord, (2002, pp. 135-136), the following criteria were used in the selection of the originals: (i) the text was coherent but not too long; (ii) it was interesting and entertaining; (iii) it presented a likely translation

Koletnik M. (2020). Teaching future translators language through translation—does it help their translating? *Current Trends in Translation Teaching and Learning E*, 7, 314-356. [10.51287/cttl_e_2020_10_melita_koletnik.pdf](https://doi.org/10.51287/cttl_e_2020_10_melita_koletnik.pdf)

situation; (iv) it was communicative; (v) it was authentic; (vi) the students were familiar with the text type to which it belonged; and finally (vii) the possible translation could involve grammatical structures under instruction. Consequently, the length of original texts was 900 characters for L1 (to be translated into L2) and 1100 characters for L2 (to be translated into L1), and the time available to complete the translations was 90 minutes. In the instructions, students were given a short translation brief stating the commissioner, source, medium, recipients and purpose of the translation. Because their study program did not include any hands-on translation courses in year one, the students' only prior translation practice occurred in the language class with us in Part 1 of the experiment.

3.1.2 Collecting responses to questionnaires

In step two, responses to online questionnaires about the representative translations were collected from respondents. Questionnaires were fully or partially completed by 19 native speakers of L1 and 23 speakers of L2. For the ensuing analysis, however, only fully (>80% of answers) or partially usable (>50% of answers) surveys and items were selected, which amounted to an average of 14 surveys per language.

Koletnik M. (2020). Teaching future translators language through translation—does it help their translating? *Current Trends in Translation Teaching and Learning E*, 7, 314-356. 10.51287/cttl_e_2020_10_melita_koletnik.pdf

The questionnaires did not include original texts, only students' translations. The questions elicited respondents opinions and were divided into four pre-determined categories: (i) overall acceptability of a translation; (ii) grammatical correctness, fluency and naturalness of expression; (iii) inconsistencies and/or inadvertent mistakes that could be attributed to a lack of understanding of the original; (iv) word-for-word translations, incomplete paraphrasing, and fear of interfering with the original. While category (i) measured the holistic general impression of a translation, category (ii) was closely linked to results of the Part 1 of the experiment. Categories (iii) and (iv) were established based on previous studies that had compared translation students with experienced translators—particularly Gile (1995) and Colina (2003).

Colina (2003, p. 35), summarizing and critically evaluating relevant studies from the 1980s and 90s, established that, in contrast to professionals, translation students seem to disregard meaning or the overall text semantics and remain overly reliant on their “version of the world,” which was tested by (ii). In addition, they are deemed to display excessive fear of interfering with the original,

Koletnik M. (2020). Teaching future translators language through translation—does it help their translating? *Current Trends in Translation Teaching and Learning E*, 7, 314-356. [10.51287/cttl_e_2020_10_melita_koletnik.pdf](https://doi.org/10.51287/cttl_e_2020_10_melita_koletnik.pdf)

frequently focusing heavily on individual lexical items [sign-oriented translation], while being unsuccessful when separating words from meanings, which is apparent from incomplete and unsuccessful paraphrase and was tested by (iii). In this, Colina seems to agree with Gile (1995):

When enrolling in a translation course, most students are only aware of linguistic aspects of translation, and even this is generally limited to the school-translation approach, the one they have been taught for language acquisition purposes through-out their years at school. When given a text to translate, they use ‘translinguistic equivalences’ they have learned, supplement them with lexical ‘equivalences’ they find in dictionaries, and seek target-language syntactic structures approximating those found in the source text without being aware of or taking into account the fact that texts are translated to serve some purpose, or giving a thought to the possibility that this could have some implications on how they should be translated (p. 26).

Colina (2003, p. 36) continues that this focus on the lexis is an attribute shared by students of translation and foreign language learners, and goes on to conclude that the ALT approach to which students

Koletnik M. (2020). Teaching future translators language through translation—does it help their translating? *Current Trends in Translation Teaching and Learning E*, 7, 314-356. [10.51287/cttl_e_2020_10_melita_koletnik.pdf](https://doi.org/10.51287/cttl_e_2020_10_melita_koletnik.pdf)

were exposed may be “a factor determining their behaviour when they are confronted with a translation task”.

3.1.3 Analysing and comparing the representative translations with originals

The third and final step of investigation on the second research question comprised a contrastive analysis of students’ translations with originals according to three pre-selected criteria: (i) lexical literalness, i.e. instances of literal (word-for-word) or loan translations; (ii) syntactic literalness, i.e. original-language syntactic approximations; and (iii) collocations. As was shown by Zulprianto (2013, p. 267), students “tend to apply literal methods or strategies in their translations especially in terms of word order or syntactical constructions”. Because of this they do not necessarily produce inadequate translations, but they may produce “less natural target texts”. However, literalness or literal meaning was, in the context of this study, conceptualised differently from Zulprianto’s definition (p. 268) of “meaning in isolation, or context-free meaning” or dictionary meaning. Instead, it was characterised by borrowing words and syntactic structures from another language by approximating the word choice and/or word order to

Koletnik M. (2020). Teaching future translators language through translation—does it help their translating? *Current Trends in Translation Teaching and Learning E*, 7, 314-356. 10.51287/cttl_e_2020_10_melita_koletnik.pdf

this language. The third criterion, collocations, was understood in line with Baker's definition (2011, p. 52) as “semantically arbitrary restrictions which do not follow logically from the propositional meaning of a word” and as a “tendency of certain words to co-occur regularly in a given language”.

The three selected criteria also emerged from the analysis of translation errors made by students in their bidirectional translations, and were, to some degree, also indicated by informants' responses. Criterion (i) was tested on five salient lexemes, criterion (b) on four salient syntactic structures, and criterion (c) on six representative collocational patterns. The selected instances or occurrences of errors and their number(s) were not determined randomly but rather established *ex post facto* on the basis of recognized translation problems and were the same for both languages, to ensure comparability of analysis was maintained. Ultimately, the results were compared with the responses to questionnaires and tested for convergence; the objective was to examine whether conclusions were similar and whether generalizations could be drawn from them.

Koletnik M. (2020). Teaching future translators language through translation—does it help their translating? *Current Trends in Translation Teaching and Learning E*, 7, 314-356. 10.51287/cttl_e_2020_10_melita_koletnik.pdf

3.3 Results

3.3.1 Questionnaires for native speakers

(i) Overall acceptability of translations

The overall or general acceptability of a translation was measured by a 10-point Likert item, with informants entering a numeric value corresponding to the degree to which they agreed with the statement. The means and standard deviations were computed and are presented in Fig. 1 and Fig. 2 below. As is evident from these figures, the highest rated in both languages were the translations prepared by student (S)6. For L1, S6's translation was followed by the translations prepared by S3 and S4 (in reverse order for L2), S5, and then by S2 and S1 (again, in reverse order for L2). Thus, no difference could be observed in overall acceptability based on the directionality of a translation.

The next investigated parameter was the difference in perceived general acceptability based on a student's belonging to either group P or N. The highest values in both L1 and L2 were assigned to translations by a student who did not translate (N), followed by two students who translated (P), and then by N-P-N students for L1 and N-N-P students

Koletnik M. (2020). Teaching future translators language through translation—does it help their translating? *Current Trends in Translation Teaching and Learning E*, 7, 314-356. 10.51287/cttl_e_2020_10_melita_koletnik.pdf

for L2 (see Fig. 1 and Fig. 2). Consequently, again, no clear-cut distinction between groups for either L1 or L2 could be made in this respect.

Table 1 Overall acceptability of translations – L1 (Slovene), rankings

Rank	Student	Translation (P) / No translation (N)	Gen.	Average	Std. deviation	Min/max ranking
1	S6	N	GEN2	8.1	1.41	5-10
2	S3	P	GEN2	7.2	1.85	2-8
3	S4	P	GEN1	6.6	1.45	3-8
4	S5	N	GEN1	5.1	2.09	2-8
5	S2	P	GEN3	4.9	1.77	2-8
6	S1	N	GEN3	2.7	1.53	1-6

Table 2 Overall acceptability of translations – L2 (English), rankings

Rank	Student	Translation (P) / No translation (N)	Gen.	Average	Std. deviation	Min/max ranking
1	S6	N	GEN2	7.4	2.18	2-10
2	S4	P	GEN1	6.9*	1.36	5-9
3	S3	P	GEN2	6.6	1.88	4-10
4	S5	N	GEN1	6.4	1.8	2-9
5	S1	N	GEN3	4.6	1.87	2-9
6	S2	P	GEN3	4.5	2.39	1-8

* Value, based on a total of 13 response units

(ii) Grammatical correctness, naturalness (native-likeness) and fluency

The grammatical (morphosyntactic) correctness, naturalness and fluency of representative translations were measured on a 5-point Likert scale. Again, mean values and standards deviations were calculated for each student individually and for

Koletnik M. (2020). Teaching future translators language through translation—does it help their translating? *Current Trends in Translation Teaching and Learning E*, 7, 314-356. 10.51287/cttl_e_2020_10_melita_koletnik.pdf

groups P and N. Calculated standard deviations, ranging from 0.35 to 1.03 for answers about translations into L1 and 0.8 to 1.19 for answers about translations into L2 showed a relatively dispersed dataset. Based on averages for individual students, group mean values were then calculated for each item, showing a difference between groups P and N in terms of translation directionality. As is evident from Fig. 3, all values attributed to group N for L1 translations were lower than those attributed to group P, while group P's values were lower for translations in L2, albeit with less pronounced differences.

Table 3 Grammatical correctness, naturalness, fluency—groups P and N

Group average and difference (Δ)	Gramm. correctness			Naturalness			Fluency		
	N	P	Δ	N	P	Δ	N	P	Δ
Direction L2>L1	2.2	3.1	0.9	2.6	3.1	0.5	2.9	3.4	0.5
Relation (N vs P)	<			<			<		
Direction L1>L2	3.1	2.9	0.3	2.9	2.8	0.2	3.1	3.0	0.1
Relation (N vs P)	>			>			>		

(iii) Understanding of the original

The next item under analysis tested the assertion that, given the lack of a proper translation strategy and not possessing enough knowledge of the subject, students would adapt the translation to their

Koletnik M. (2020). Teaching future translators language through translation—does it help their translating? *Current Trends in Translation Teaching and Learning E*, 7, 314-356. 10.51287/cttl_e_2020_10_melita_koletnik.pdf

rendering of reality. To this end, informants were asked whether they observed a) inconsistencies in translation or found that students did not understand the original and/or whether they observed b) awkwardness in translation or found that students had understood the original but were unable to properly express themselves. Informants were also asked to provide example(s) supporting or reason(s) for their answers, and multiple answers, i.e. informants selecting both options, were possible. The frequency of answers, i.e. the total number of observed instances of items a) and b) was calculated and is presented in Table 4.

Table 4 Inconsistencies and/or awkwardness—groups P and N

Group average and difference (Δ)	Inconsistencies			Awkwardness		
	N	P	Δ	N	P	Δ
Direction L2>L1	16	4	9	24	23	1
Relation (N vs P)	>			>		
Direction L1>L2	4	3	1	26	31	5
Relation (N vs P)	>			<		

Again, a difference could be observed between groups in terms of directionality. As is evident from Table 4 above, group N's translations into L1 were considered more inconsistent whereas group P's translations displayed more awkward formulations in L2.

Koletnik M. (2020). Teaching future translators language through translation—does it help their translating? *Current Trends in Translation Teaching and Learning E*, 7, 314-356. [10.51287/cttl_e_2020_10_melita_koletnik.pdf](https://doi.org/10.51287/cttl_e_2020_10_melita_koletnik.pdf)

(iv) Strong focus on words, incomplete formulations and paraphrasing, and fear of “interfering” with the original

This part counted the frequencies of informants’ answers, with multiple answers possible. These answers produced the most divergent picture. Expressed in terms of differences between groups P and N, group N reached a higher (=interpreted negatively) total value for focus on words in the L1 criterion ($\Delta=6$), in the incomplete formulation/paraphrasing in the L1 criterion ($\Delta=2$), and in the fear of interfering with the original in the L2 criterion ($\Delta=4$). Group P got higher values in the fear of intervening with the original in the L1 criterion ($\Delta=3$) and the incomplete formulations/paraphrasing in the L2 criterion ($\Delta=4$). Aside from the strong focus on words in the L1 criterion, the differences in scores were not large enough to allow deductions or generalizations.

Table 5. Strong focus on words, incomplete formulations/paraphrasing, fear of interfering with the original—groups P and N

Koletnik M. (2020). Teaching future translators language through translation—does it help their translating? *Current Trends in Translation Teaching and Learning E*, 7, 314-356. 10.51287/cttl_e_2020_10_melita_koletnik.pdf

Group average and difference (Δ)	Strong focus on words			Incomplete formulations/paraphrasing			Fear of interfering with the original		
	N	P	Δ	N	P	Δ	N	P	Δ
Direction L2>L1	22	16	6	16	14	2	16	19	3
Relation (<i>N vs P</i>)	>			>			<		
Direction L1>L2	18	18	0	5	9	4	10	6	4
Relation(<i>N vs P</i>)	=			<			>		

Koletnik M. (2020). Teaching future translators language through translation—does it help their translating? *Current Trends in Translation Teaching and Learning E*, 7, 314-356. 10.51287/cttl_e_2020_10_melita_koletnik.pdf

3.3.2 Comparative analysis of translations

The comparative analysis of translations with originals was made on the basis of selected criteria of lexical literalness and syntactic literalness, and collocational patterns. To ensure comparability of analysis, the same numbers of salient lexemes (5), syntactic structures (4), and collocations (6) were selected for both languages. The salient items were either omitted in translations or presented a translation problem in accordance with Baker (2010).

As is evident from Table 6 below, the comparison between groups P and N revealed fewer instances of all items under analysis in Group N's translations in L2, most notably in the category of lexical literalness ($\Delta=8$). Group N also made fewer collocation errors in L1, but earned a slightly higher score in the criterion of syntactic literalness in L1. In terms of lexical literalness in L1, no difference could be established between groups. This said, however, in all criteria but lexical literalness in L2, the differences do not exceed 2 instances and do not allow for reliable differentiation between the two groups.

Koletnik M. (2020). Teaching future translators language through translation—does it help their translating? *Current Trends in Translation Teaching and Learning E*, 7, 314-356. 10.51287/cttl_e_2020_10_melita_koletnik.pdf

Table 6 Comparative analysis by individual criteria—groups P and N

Group average and difference (Δ)	Lexical literalness			Syntactic literalness			Collocations		
	N	P	Δ	N	P	Δ	N	P	Δ
Direction L2>L1	6	6	0	4	3	1	4	5	1
Relation (N vs P)	=			>			<		
Direction L1>L2	2	10	8	5	6	1	6	8	2
Relation (N vs P)	<			<			<		

However, during analysis it became apparent that not only occurrences of items under analysis should be measured but also their absence. Thus, in a further step, omissions or non-occurrences were taken into consideration and ultimately linked with data on the general acceptability of translations as perceived by informants (cf. Fig. 1 and Fig. 2). The results by individual students are presented in Table 7.

Table 7 Comparative analysis: occurrences/omissions vs overall acceptance

L1	S6 (N)	S3 (P)	S4 (P)	S5 (P)	S2 (N)	S1 (N)
Ranking based on informants' overall acceptance	1	2	3	4	5	6
Total occurrences of items under analysis (x/15)*	1	4	2	4	8	9
Total omissions (x/15)	4	3	4		2	4
L2	S6 (N)	S4 (P)	S3 (P)	S5 (P)	S1 (N)	S2 (N)
Ranking based on informants' overall acceptance	1	2	3	4	5	6
Total occurrences of items under analysis (x/15)*	1	4	9	4	8	11
Total omissions (x/15)	3	3	2		3	1

* A lower value indicates a better result.

Koletnik M. (2020). Teaching future translators language through translation—does it help their translating? *Current Trends in Translation Teaching and Learning E*, 7, 314-356. 10.51287/cttl_e_2020_10_melita_koletnik.pdf

As is evident from the above figure, a trend was observable similar to that established in overall acceptability of translations by informants. In both, the best scoring translations had been prepared by S6 for L1 and L2 alike; these exhibited the lowest number of lexical and syntactic literalness, and collocation errors, and had a comparable level of omissions. The lowest- and second lowest-ranking translations were prepared by S1 and S2 in L1 and in reverse order in L2. In similar fashion, the second and third highest-ranking translations were prepared by S4 and S3 in L1, and this order was reversed in L2. The comparative analysis thus produced results similar to those that were established from informants' answers.

4. DISCUSSION

The process of testing the research question, which investigated the effect of translation used as a language teaching tool on the development of students' emerging translation competence, revealed several differences between translation group P and non-translation group N that may be linked to the directionality of the translation. Based on informants' replies to questionnaires, group P students' translations were considered to be more

Koletnik M. (2020). Teaching future translators language through translation—does it help their translating? *Current Trends in Translation Teaching and Learning E*, 7, 314-356. [10.51287/cttl_e_2020_10_melita_koletnik.pdf](https://doi.org/10.51287/cttl_e_2020_10_melita_koletnik.pdf)

grammatically correct, closer to natural expression, and more fluent in L1 (Slovene). On the other hand, group N students' translations were assessed as more grammatically correct, closer to natural expression, and more fluent in L2 (English); however, the difference was less substantial.

A difference according to the directionality criterion could also be observed in terms of inconsistencies that would testify to students' poor or inadequate understanding of the original and/or awkward formulations showing they had understood the original but been unable to express themselves properly. Group N students' translations were considered more inconsistent in L1, while group P's translations displayed more awkward formulations in L2.

Additionally, the comparative analysis of translations with originals revealed fewer cases of lexical literalness (word-for-word translations) in group N's translations in L2; these had previously been identified as characteristic of inexperienced translators (and language students), for example, by Gile (1995) and Colina (2003), while no or insignificant divergence between the groups could be established according to the other investigated criteria.

Koletnik M. (2020). Teaching future translators language through translation—does it help their translating? *Current Trends in Translation Teaching and Learning E*, 7, 314-356. [10.51287/cttl_e_2020_10_melita_koletnik.pdf](https://doi.org/10.51287/cttl_e_2020_10_melita_koletnik.pdf)

Interestingly, however, no clear-cut difference between groups was evident from informant's answers as to the overall or general acceptability of students' translations. Based on average attributed values, translations prepared by Student 6 (S6) were rated the highest in both languages, followed by those prepared by S3 and S4 (in reverse order for each language), S5, and S2 and S1 (again in reversed order for each language). This could further underpin findings by Pokorn K. and Koletnik that some translation students seem to be “equally successful, regardless of the direction of translation and regardless of their language combination, while others have been struggling in all directions with all languages that they study” (2019, p. 239).

Based on the above, it is therefore tentatively possible to conclude that initial monolingual L2 teaching encourages the development of students' translation competence in L2 and a departure from lexical literalness in their L2 translations, while the use of bidirectional translation in ALT benefits above all students' translations into L1. These findings are supportive of the opinion that time could be saved if foreign language teaching were directly adapted to the needs of future translators. It is thus suggested that careful introduction and

Koletnik M. (2020). Teaching future translators language through translation—does it help their translating? *Current Trends in Translation Teaching and Learning E*, 7, 314-356. [10.51287/cttl_e_2020_10_melita_koletnik.pdf](https://doi.org/10.51287/cttl_e_2020_10_melita_koletnik.pdf)

judicious use of bidirectional translation in ALT, which would complement monolingual L2 tuition, would yield the best results in developing students' translation skills in both languages.

5. CONCLUSION

Given the decades-long scholarly debate on the role of translation in ALT, which has found its proponents and opponents among Translation Studies and ALT pedagogy scholars, and which has—to my firm belief—meanwhile reached the point where translation's place in the ALT classroom for specific or non-specific uses is not (or should not be) disputed, it was surprising to find a real scarcity of empirical research into its (in)effectiveness in additional language teaching for future translators. In this context, the question of whether we should teach future translators language with recourse to translation exercises and whether this helps their translating seems seriously redundant, and yet it has not received the scholarly attention that would seem to be warranted by such an important area.

The empirical research reported in this paper attempts to close this evidence gap. Based on data accumulated through a mixed-method longitudinal study, it upholds the view that careful introduction

Koletnik M. (2020). Teaching future translators language through translation—does it help their translating? *Current Trends in Translation Teaching and Learning E*, 7, 314-356. [10.51287/cttl_e_2020_10_melita_koletnik.pdf](https://doi.org/10.51287/cttl_e_2020_10_melita_koletnik.pdf)

and judicious use of bidirectional translation exercises (and other bi- and multilingual practices) in future translators' additional language teaching, which complements monolingual tuition, is supportive of the development of their translation skills in both languages, L2 and L1. In order to cater for specific needs of translation students, however, teachers should assume a holistic position and develop individually-tailored classes where the teaching, content, objectives, materials, and assessment contribute to the development of both linguistic and translation competences. Nevertheless, language and translation competences should be acquired by translation students in such a way that the two strengthen each other because ultimately, to conclude with lines borrowed from Bernardini (2004, p. 26), “one learns the language in order to become a translator, not an economist or a politician”. The hope is that this research has provided empirically underpinned evidence that this is in fact so.

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