Translation Challenges Facing University Students a Case Study: EFL Students at Ajloun National University

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ABSTRACT: *This study aims at identifying the main translation challenges that face EFL students as well as investigating students' attitudes towards learning translation at Ajloun National University (ANU). The researcher used a quantitative research method. A total of 57 (male and female) (EFL) students responded to an online questionnaire consisting of 20 items. The results of this study revealed that EFL students at ANU had positive attitudes towards learning the translation course. The results also showed that a considerable number of students had difficulties translating texts from Arabic into English and vice versa. Moreover, the study recommended that the number of translation courses at universities should be increased, since one translation course is not enough to provide students with high-quality practice and knowledge to deal with translating texts correctly.*

KEYWORDS: Ajloun National University, challenges, EFL students, translation

INTRODUCTION

Translation is a means of human communication and it is essential in our daily life. However, it has always been a complicated work as it is a matter of cultural, structural and lexical differences. The need for translation is increasing because of the widespread immigration, globalization, and the continuous growth of technology, science, and trade. Translation can be defined as a mental process of conveying the message by transferring the characteristics and properties of two languages belonging to different origins. It is a field of contrastive linguistics since it is associated with at least two languages and their cultures (Richards,1953).

Catford (1995:20) explained that "Translation is the replacement of textual material in one language (SL) by equivalent textual material in another language." However, translation is a process through which the content of a text is transferred from the source language (SL) into the target language (TL). The language translated is called the source language (SL) while the language translated into is called the target language (TL) (Foster, 1958). Therefore, translators need to have good knowledge of the two languages, in addition to a high linguistic sensitivity, as they should transmit the original ideas, thoughts and opinions of the writer in the translated text as accurately and authentically as possible.

Processes In accordance with Ghazala (1995:01), translation is generally used to refer to all and methods used to convey the meaning of the source language to the target language.This definition highlights the concept of meaning as an important factor in the translation process. To be precise, when translating, understanding the meaning of the source text is crucial to have the suitable equivalent in the target text. Bassnett, (1980:21) pointed out that translation includes the transference of 'meaning' of one set of language signs into another through professional use of dictionary and grammar.

Nida and Taber (2004) mentioned two factors that influence students in translation: linguistic factors, and non-linguistic factors. The linguistic factors consist of five indicators. They are lexical, grammatical, contextual, textual, and semantic. While the non-linguistic factors comprise knowledge in ideology, historical, political, social, technical, biological, medical, agricultural, and economical.

Nowadays, the traditional Grammar-Translation Approach has been replaced by the Communicative Approach in most EFL departments, which focuses on the importance of the students' oral skills to be understood by native speakers of the language they study. Mainly, there has been a change of presenting language as a set of forms (grammatical, phonological, lexical) to present language as a system used to fulfill a range of communicative functions described as a communicative language competence. (Shejbalová , 2006) .

The Department of English Language and Literature at ANU offers many specialized courses at the undergraduate level as obligatory courses including linguistics, literature and language skills. Moreover, it offers only one translation course. The translation course description focuses on the following points: Principles of translation, translating general topics from English into Arabic and vice-versa, translating selected texts from published materials, such as books, journals, magazines and newspapers, discussing types of translation and ways of using them, practicing translation in the classroom as well as homework, problems facing translators in both Arabic and English and suggested solutions.

Translation is considered as a means for learning English language that affects the learning process within the classroom which has a competent involvement in all fields of knowledge and plays an important role in the world's communication and information. It also improves students' awareness of their native language as well as the foreign language. Facing difficulties and making mistakes in studying translation is inevitable ,so it can be difficult for EFL students to master translation skills and become qualified in translation. There are two major methods of translation: Literal Translation (word-for-word) and Free Translation (contextual translation of the meaning). (Akan et al., 2019).

Translating Arabic texts into English and vice versa needs a distinguished bilingual proficiency because the cultural and religious influences are very strong in both languages. Consequently, the researchers attempt to provide some useful suggestions and solutions to help EFL students at ANU overcome translation difficulties and improve the quality of their translation skills.

Purpose of the study

This study aimed to achieve the following objectives; identifying the students' attitudes towards learning translation, investigating the main translation challenges that faced EFL students, as well as improving translation skills from the students' perspectives at Ajloun National University (ANU).

Statement of the problem

The researcher noticed that there were some difficulties facing EFL students at ANU while translating from Arabic into English and vice versa. These difficulties could be classified into lexical, stylistic, grammatical, linguistic, cultural and lack of attention .These difficulties could hinder the students' understanding of the correct meaning and cause failure in translation examinations and thus negligence of the study of translation. Moreover, they lead to many difficulties when transferring cultural knowledge from the source language (SL) into the target language (TL) . In other words, the main purposes of this study were to investigate the main translation challenges that faced EFL students as well as to identify the students' attitudes toward learning translation and to provide ways to improve translation skills from the students' perspectives at Ajloun National University (ANU) that might be helpful for students, instructors, researchers and curriculum designer in this field.

Questions of the study

The study attempted to answer the following questions

1 - What are EFL students' attitudes towards learning the translation course at ANU?
2 - What are the most common translation challenges that face EFL students at ANU?
3 - What are the most preferable ways used by EFL students to improve their translation skills at ANU?

Significance of the study

This study might be of great significance for those who are interested in the field of translation, FEL students and instructors. Because there were no studies conducted on the translation challenges that faced EFL students at ANU and it offered extensive practice and analysis to the areas of translation challenges. The theoretical literature included in this research could contribute to increasing knowledge of the major challenges that faced EFL students at ANU while translating from Arabic into English and vice versa. The results and recommendations of this study could contribute to finding solutions to help students overcome translation challenges. In addition, it might be helpful for university instructors to determine the proper techniques, methods and activities for teaching translation to improve their students' competence and their performance in translation.

Limitations of the study

This study is limited to investigating the main translation challenges that face EFL students as well as identifying the students' attitudes towards learning translation and ways to improve translation skills from the students' perspectives at Ajloun National University (ANU). The results of this study were limited to the students who were

studying English language and literature in the second semester of the academic year 2020/2021 (ANU). It was also limited to its instrument, which was a questionnaire.

Definition of the terms

Translation: It is a process of transferring a written text from a source language (SL) to a target language (TL) (Munday 2004:6).
ANU: Ajloun National University, it's a private educational institution in Jordan.
EFL (English **as a Foreign Language**): is a term used to describe those who learn English in non-English speaking countries where English is not the dominant language. (Yoko 2011:152). **Translation challenges**: The difficulties that face EFL students during translation texts from Arabic into English and vice versa and these challenges can be classified into: lexical, stylistic, grammatical, linguistic, cultural and lack of attention.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section presents a brief overview of the previous empirical and non-empirical studies on translation carried out in a larger context to offer a variety of data and findings from different settings. These selected studies concentrated on the students' attitudes towards translation, translation challenges and ways to improve translation skills.

Cook (2010) took a huge step in changing attitudes towards translation in language teaching. He explained that translation can operate as an effective tool in language teaching. He also gave details about translation that had occupied place in the history of FLT, along with related issues like code-switching, bilingualism and first language use. Similarly, Josefsson (2011) conducted a study in Sweden to explore students' attitudes and strategies towards translation in the context of learning. Forty-six students from two classes studying English were chosen randomly to translate two texts and to complete a questionnaire. The results showed a pragmatic attitude among students towards using tools to facilitate the process of translation like using dictionaries or Google Translate; moreover, a general positive attitude towards translation exercise was expressed.

Çetiner (2018) carried out a study on analyzing students' attitudes towards Computer-Aided Translation (CAT) tools. Sixty-six students participated in this study, taking the Computer-Aided Translation course at the English Translation and Interpreting Department. Translation students' attitudes towards translation technologies were analyzed using pre-and post-tests and a questionnaire. The analysis showed that there were some statistically significant differences between pre-test and post-test scores and the results of the questionnaire. The results supported the view that students develop a positive attitude after they were taught the advantages of using computer-aided translation tools and more classes should be given on translation technologies in translation programs.

According to a study conducted by Altuwairesh (2021) to reveal the students' dictionary uses and preferences. A group of 95 undergraduate, translation students at King Saud University answered a multi-item online questionnaire. The results indicated that the participants preferred to use bilingual dictionaries more than monolingual ones. Moreover, the findings revealed that the respondents preferred using e- dictionaries to paper ones.

Many researchers have investigated the problems and challenges that EFL students encountered while studying translation. Al-Sohbani and Muthanna (2013) investigated the major challenges of Arabic-English translation and vice versa in Yemen. The use of both qualitative and quantitative analysis showed that several challenges obstruct the quality of the translation process . They categorized the major challenges into four patterns: lexical knowledge insufficiency; inadequate knowledge and practice of grammar; little cultural background; and inappropriate teaching atmosphere and methodology. The findings revealed that a re-systematic reform of the curriculum, the teaching method, and the students' admission processes should be carried out.

Dweik and Abu Helwah (2014) carried out a study to find out the linguistic and cultural difficulties that faced Jordanian graduate students at the Middle East University. The sample of the study consisted of 20 male and female students in the first academic year 2012/2013.The instrument of this study was a translation test designed by the researchers that consisted of six religious and historical Arabic texts. The findings indicated that students faced many linguistic and cultural difficulties, such as lexical, structural, punctuation and stylistic errors.

In another study conducted by Bakir and Lazim (2015) about the stylistic problems faced the Arab students at the university level at Ajman University of Science and Technology (UAE) in translation from Arabic into English. The sample consisted of thirty advanced-level students chosen from the Department of English Language and Translation. The researchers used a test. The students were asked to translate a text about Basrah, Iraq from Arabic into English at a given time. The results showed that the translator should be aware of both linguistic and cultural aspects of the text to be translated.

Mares (2012) carried out a study on the cultural problems in translation from English into Arabic that faced translators because of the mismatches in beliefs and culture between the Western and the Arab cultures. The researcher found that the main problematic aspects that occur in the translation process were the religious facts, cultural differences and diglossia.

Jabak, et al., (2016) conducted a study to find out the translating problems of collocations that faced the Saudi undergraduate students at the Department of English at Teachers college at King Saud University. The sample of the study consisted of 50 students. The researchers used a test that included 15 Arabic sentences that contained collocations. The findings of this study showed that most of the students might not provide close, equivalent and natural renderings for the collocations because of the lack of knowledge about the concept of collocation and adopting the literal translations for them.

Alqaed (2017) identified several translation problems encountered by Arab learners of EFL students' errors included errors in their use of lexical items, errors related to semantic and syntactic differences between the source and the target languages. It was found that most learners' errors when translating English lexical collocations were due to inaccessible collocation dictionaries, semantic, syntactic differences between the two languages. Affording bilingual dictionaries was recommended.

Taamneh (2018) investigated the most common translation problems encountered by fourth-year English majors at the University of Taymaa in Saudi Arabia. The researcher used two instruments: a translation test which consisted of 20 items and expressions and an interview to ask about their opinion concerning the reasons behind encountering such translation problems. The sample consisted of 15 male students .The findings demonstrated that the students' achievement of the translated items of the terms were the best compared with their results in the other two groups (lexical and cultural).

Hamdallah (1998) examined translation difficulties that face Arabic-speaking translator trainees at the college level. He focused on two approaches of the translation process. Firstly, start translating sentence by sentence to get the tone of the text, and then sit back, review the position, and read the rest of the text. Secondly, read the text two or three times, and find the intention, register, tone and mark the difficult words and passages . Next , start the translation process. He concluded that translation courses need a principled theoretical background that is not found in the courses taught at Gaza University and in a classical translation class, the teacher usually hands out students a 200-300 word passage to translate, followed by a lot of recommendations with plenty of dos and don'ts.

Jaback (2007) carried out a study on (200) Arab students to discover the problems they face in translating Arabic into English. The results showed that 55% of the translation problems were linguistic classified as follows: 69% were grammatical problems, 50% were lexical problems, and 46% were morphological problems. These results also presented that grammar is the main field of linguistic aspects which EFL learners suffer from.

Moharram (2004) conducted a study on Yemeni students' errors in translating Arabic into English . He found that there was a significant number of errors due to the unsuitable use of vocabulary, incorrect use of words, prepositions and gender, use of long and incorrect sentences, incorrect use of grammatical forms, and incorrect use of spelling. He clarified   that these problems might be caused by the lack of vocabulary items, the interference of the mother-tongue and cultural differences in terms of values and concepts.

Coban (2015) examined the abilities and skills a translator needs to develop according to general translation theories. It was found that there were many different skills needed which differed in code text types, and medium. Also, new developments in technology bring with it new skills to be acquired.

Kavaliauskienė and Kaminskienė (2009) investigated translation skills based on students' opinions of which one was more important, to translate into their mother tongue, or into English. To conclude, they gathered the data using two instruments: an interview and a questionnaire. There were 60 students participated in the study, most of their English levels were intermediate. It was found that 90% of students thought that translating into English was more important than translating into their mother tongue. Besides, students also thought that reading and writing skills were also important in translation.

Teleiba (2004) carried out translation training to develop students' translation skills in Egypt. The translation skills included reading comprehension skills, dictionary use, and the skill to render the text. During training, students learn to comprehend the text by answering several questions about the content of the text, identifying and finding the difficult word of the text, using a dictionary to find the meaning of a word based on the context, trying to understand the culture, and rewrite the content of the text in the target language. After the training, students did a test and answered a questionnaire. It was found that most students agreed that the training could improve their translation skills. Besides, there was a positive and significant correlation between students' scores and attitudes towards translation.

The previous studies concentrated on the students' attitudes towards translation, translation challenges and ways to improve translation skills. However, what distinguishes this study from the above studies is that it examines the students' attitudes, translation challenges and ways to improve translation skills among EFL students at ANU.

METHODOLOGY

This section presents the methodology which the researcher followed in conducting this study. It includes the design of the study, the participants of the study, the instruments of the study procedures and appropriate statistical analysis.

Participants

The population of the study consisted of 145 male and female EFL students studying English language and literature at ANU. A convenience sample of 57 male and female EFL students participated in this study. All participants were chosen randomly from different academic levels in the second semester of the academic year 2020/2021.

Table. 1
Distribution of the Study Sample

Gender	Frequency	Percentage%
Male	26	45.614
Female	31	54.385
Total	**57**	**100%**

Instrument

An online questionnaire was designed and developed by the researcher after reviewing the previous studies (Josefsson 2011), Çetiner (2018), Altuwairesh (2021), Al-Sohbani and Muthanna (2013); Dweik, and Abu Helwah (2014); Mares ,(2012); Jaback ,(2007) ,etc.).The questionnaire, in its first draft, consisted of 28 items, distributed to three domains related to students' attitudes, translation challenges and ways to improve translation skills. To check the validity of the questionnaire, it was reviewed by 5 faculty members at the Department of English Language and Literature at ANU. Based on reviewers' comments and suggestions ,the final draft of the questionnaire consisted of 20 items, classified into the three domains related to students' attitudes (1-5), translation challenges (6-15) and ways to improve translation skills (16 – 20). The 5-point Likert Scale was used (Strongly agree 5 to strongly disagree 1).

For reliability verification purposes, the final draft of the questionnaire was conducted on a pilot study of 12 EFL students at ANU. The internal consistency of the questionnaire domain has been calculated as the Cronbach's Alpha for each domain was as follows: 0.83 for students' attitudes, 0.81 for translation challenges, and 0.87 for ways to improve translation skills. In order to analyze the results, the mean score was classified into three levels: low (1-2.33), moderate (2.34-3.67), and high (3.68-5).

Procedures

To achieve the objectives of the current study, the researchers designed an online questionnaire using Google Drive. After obtaining the approval from the Department of English Language and Literature at ANU, the questionnaire link was distributed to all EFL students at the Department of English Language and Literature at ANU using the WhatsApp application. Data from Google Drive was downloaded, analyzed, and processed using SPSS.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results related to the first question of the study.

What are EFL students' attitudes towards learning the translation course at ANU?

To answer this question, means and standard deviations were shown in Table 2.

Table. 2

Means, standard deviations and level according to the first question

No	Item	N	M	SD	Level
1	Learning translation is interesting and helpful	57	4.38	.559	High
2	Learning translation is difficult but interesting	57	3.45	.491	Moderate
3	Learning translation is difficult and boring	57	1.82	.630	Low
4	Learning translation is easy and helpless	57	2.12	.656	Low
5	Learning translation gives me self confidence	57	3.87	.504	High

Table 2 showed that EFL student's attitudes towards learning the translation course at ANU. The highest shows are that learning translation is interesting and helpful (means

4.38) and learning translation gives me self-confidence (means 3.87). Even though some students thought that learning translation is difficult and boring (means1.82) , and learning translation is easy and helpless (means 2.12), the majority of students considered that learning translation is not only interesting but also helpful. While item 2 was moderate, learning translation is difficult but interesting (means 3.45), maybe because they cannot determine the appropriate way to learn translation and still they do not obtain the motivation for studying it. In general, the results of this question showed that EFL students at ANU had positive attitudes towards learning translation course at ANU. The findings of this question were compatible with the findings of Josefsson (2011), Çetiner (2018) and Altuwairesh (2021).

The results of these studies revealed pragmatic attitudes among students towards using tools to facilitate the process of learning translation, like using dictionaries or Google Translate; moreover, generally positive attitudes towards translation exercise were expressed after they were taught the benefits of translation. It should be emphasized that the students' attitudes were affected by the quality of learning. Undoubtedly, sociable and helpful people, a friendly atmosphere in the classroom is believed to bring a great desire for studying. Consequently, providing students with practical knowledge and answering students' questions enthusiastically are things teachers can do to help students make progress in learning translation appropriately. The majority of students preferred translating documents related to some topics that they feel interested in , such as entertainment, education, lifestyle and health because these topics have enough knowledge to understand and translate, and they were reasonably close to their daily life. Generally speaking, the results of this question showed that students had positive attitudes towards learning the translation course at ANU.

Results related to the second question of the study
What are the most common translation challenges that face EFL students at ANU?
Table 3 shows the statistical analysis of the means, standard deviations and level related to the second question .

Table 3

Means, standard deviations and level according to the second question

No	Item	N	M	SD	Level
6	I find difficulty in translating texts from Arabic into English and vice versa	57	4.31	.685	High
7	Finding suitable structures in the target language(TL) to transfer the ideas causes difficulty in translation	57	4.07	.650	High
8	I find difficulty in choosing the appropriate meaning of vocabulary from context.	57	3.98	.481	High
9	Lacking knowledge of pragmatic and semantic aspects of the target language (TL) leads to difficulty in translation	57	2.57	.498	Moderate
10	I find difficulty in translation because of the differences between the source language (SL) culture and the target language (TL) culture	57	1.98	.517	Low
11	I find difficulty in translation because of grammar and sentence construction variations	57	3.07	.416	Moderate
12	Choosing appropriate vocabulary (Word Choice) makes it easy to translate texts from English into Arabic and vice versa	57	3.96	.680	High
13	I find difficulty in translation because of using inappropriate language levels	57	2.08	.285	Low
14	Understanding special phrases and idioms in the target language (TL) texts causes difficulty in translation	57	2.94	.514	Moderate
15	I find difficulty in translation because of unsuitable teaching methodology and atmosphere in translation class	57	2.03	.275	Low

Table 3 presented the most common translation challenges that faced EFL students at ANU. Certainly, translation is a difficult subject, so it is inevitable for English majors to deal with these challenges. The results showed that a considerable number of students (4.31%) had difficulties in translating texts from Arabic into English and vice versa, finding suitable structures in the target language(TL) to transfer the ideas causes difficulty in translation (means 4.07), choosing the appropriate meaning of vocabulary from context(means 3.98) and choosing appropriate vocabulary (Word Choice) makes it easy to translate texts from English into Arabic and vice versa (means 3.96), whereas the lowest levels of translation challenges were difficult in translation because of the differences between the source language (SL) culture and the target language (TL) culture (means 1.98); difficulty in translation because of using inappropriate language levels (means 2.08) and finding difficulty in translation because of unsuitable teaching methodology and atmosphere in translation class (means 2.03), while the rest of the items were moderate . Because of these difficulties in translation, EFL students at ANU ought

to try their best to reduce these challenges by choosing the appropriate meaning of vocabulary from context meaning as well as spending more time on practicing translation.

These findings were inconsistent with the results of the previous studies conducted by Al-Sohbani and Muthanna (2013) , Dweik and Abu Helwah (2014), Bakir and Lazim (2015), Mares (2012) , Jabak ; Abdullah, and Mustapha (2016) and Taamneh (2018) . The results showed that the translation problems were linguistic, grammatical, lexical, and morphological and cultural. These results also presented that grammar was the main area of linguistic issues from which EFL learners suffered. The results of these studies concentrated on translation challenges that might be caused by the lack of vocabulary items, the interference of the mother-tongue, and cultural differences in terms of values and concepts.

 Results related to the third question of the study.
What are the most preferable ways used by EFL students to improve their translation skills at ANU? Means, standard deviations and level related to the third question were calculated. They are shown in Table 4.

Table 4

Means, standard deviations and level according to the third question

No	Item	N	M	SD	Level
16	Learning a lot of vocabulary improves my translation skills	57	4.15	.492	High
17	Doing grammar exercises from grammar books develops my translation skills.	57	4.49	.504	High
18	Doing grammar and vocabulary exercises from the internet increases my translation skills	57	4.05	.514	High
19	Reviewing teacher's feedback to learn vocabulary, grammar and ways of using them correctly develops my translation skills	57	3.49	.474	Moderate
20	Reading and practicing translating from newspapers, magazines, articles from English to Arabic and vice versa improves my translation skills	57	2.88	.504	Moderate

Table 4 illustrated the most preferable ways used by EFL students to improve their translation skills at ANU. The result showed that students applied many different ways and paid a lot of interest to enhance their translation skills and to be more qualified in translation. Table 4 also showed the most preferable ways to improve translation skills by EFL students at ANU were: doing grammar exercises from grammar books develops students translation skills (means 4.49), learning a lot of vocabulary improves students' translation skills (means 4.15) and doing grammar and vocabulary exercises from the internet increases students translation skills(means 4.05), while reviewing teacher's feedback to learn vocabulary, grammar and ways of using them correctly developing student's translation skills(means 3.49) and reading and translating newspapers' and

magazines' articles from English into Arabic and vice versa improves student's translation skills (means 2.88) were in moderate levels.

The findings of this question were well-matched with the findings of Coban (2015), Kavaliauskienė and Kaminskienė (2009) and Teleiba (2004) who found out different translation tasks required different skills as well as training could improve students' translation skills. Thus, many different skills to be acquired while training could be different in text types, medium, code and field. Moreover, new developments in the field of technology could bring with it new essential skills to be acquired by students to improve their translation skills.

CONCLUSION

The main purpose of the translation process is to provide a cross-cultural bilingual communication medium among people in the world. Recently, the importance of translation has been increased because of globalization, increased migration, rising international trade, the expansion of technology, and mass media. Basically, this study attempted to answer three questions related to identifying EFL students' attitudes towards learning translation, investigating the most common translation challenges as well as finding out the most preferable ways to improve translation skills from the students' perspectives at Ajloun National University (ANU) .

Regarding the first question, the findings revealed that the majority of the EFL students considered that learning translation is interesting and helpful .This showed positive attitudes towards learning the translation course at ANU. With reference to the second question concerning the most common translation challenges that face EFL students at ANU, the results showed that a significant number of students have difficulties in translating texts from Arabic into English and vice versa, finding suitable structures in the target language (TL) to transfer the ideas causes difficulty in translation and choosing the appropriate meaning of vocabulary from context. The final question asked about the most preferable ways used by EFL students to improve translation skills at ANU. The results showed that the students applied many different ways and had a lot of interest in enhancing their translation skills to make them more qualified at translation. Clearly, the highest level ways to improve translation skills by EFL students at ANU were doing a lot of grammar exercises and learning a lot of vocabulary from books, as well as doing grammar and vocabulary exercises from the internet enhances students' translation performance. The results of this study can be affected by the extent of transparency and objectivity of EFL students at (ANU) in responding to the research instrument.

Based on the results of this study, the researcher recommended that the number of translation courses at universities should be increased, since one translation course is not enough to provide the students with high-quality practice and knowledge to deal with different texts, as well as EFL students should recognize the importance of lexical, pragmatic and semantic differences between the SL culture and the TL culture. Furthermore, instructors should vary the methods and techniques to teach translation courses to help EFL students and they should consider group discussion and intensive

practice in teaching translation. Hopefully, this study will be helpful for EFL students and all those who are interested in translation and want to be professional in it.

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