

AN OVERVIEW OF TRANSLATION IN LANGUAGE TEACHING METHODS: IMPLICATIONS FOR EFL IN SECONDARY EDUCATION IN THE REGION OF MURCIA

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Abstract: *Various activities and resources have been used across time to promote and enhance the learning of foreign languages. Among these, translation has been cherished or dismissed depending on the preferred teaching method at each period. With the arrival of the Communicative approach, which focuses on communicative competence, its role has apparently become even more unstable. This article seeks to explore the role of translation in the main teaching methods used in Spain since the late 19th century up to the present time. This will in turn serve as the background against which the current educational scenario (with the Communicative approach and the tenets of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) will be measured with a view to ascertaining the role that translation may currently play. The particular situation of Secondary Education in the Region of Murcia will be discussed in the light of the curricula for this stage.*

Key words: *translation, English as a foreign language (EFL), Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), teaching methods, Secondary Education.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Despite the fact that translation had been used for centuries as the unquestionable method to learn classical languages, as pointed out by Valdeón García (1995: 239) or Cuéllar Lázaro (2004: 1), it has not enjoyed the same popularity when it comes to the learning of modern languages. This change was mainly due to the advent of particular mainstream teaching methods:¹ while translation was praised in the years when the Grammar-Translation method was in vogue, the followers of the Direct method soon found it to be inadequate and even counterproductive. Thereafter, up to the boost of the Communicative approach, translation was generally rejected. However, it has been in recent times that it has experienced a revival. During the 1990s, Duff (1989) or Hurtado Albir (1994), among others, argued in favour of the use of translation in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom on account of “1) una nueva situación de la traducción en la sociedad actual; 2) un nuevo enfoque de las reflexiones en torno al hecho traductor [...]; 3) una nueva concepción de la didáctica de la traducción, y 4) una reconsideración del papel de la lengua materna en el proceso de aprendizaje de una lengua extranjera” (Hurtado Albir 1994: 69, in Cuéllar Lázaro 2004: 3). At the turn of the century, more arguments have been put forward for the rehabilitation of translation, namely: its potential role in bilingual education programmes (Cook 2010: 37) and the birth of Translation as an independent academic discipline (Enríquez Aranda 2003: 134).

In the light of this controversial situation, the aim of this article is to analyse the extent to which translation may be a valid didactic tool when learning foreign languages (FL), English in particular. For the purpose, the concept of pedagogical translation will be first reviewed so that the object of study is clearly defined and placed in the field of EFL, hence discarding any other contexts of use. Then, an account of the role of translation in the most widely-known teaching methods will be provided, along with a discussion about the advantages and disadvantages of the use of translation and the mother tongue (L1). Third, the function of translation in present-day Secondary Education in Spain will be assessed, paying special attention to its use as a pedagogical resource in the main educational documents, the *Common European Framework of References for Languages* and the official curricula for Secondary Education. More specifically, the focus of our research will lie on the curricula for the Region of Murcia.

¹ On the distinction between method and approach, see, for instance, Richards and Rodgers (2001: 18-20). Their somehow rigid division does not seem to hold anymore with the Communicative approach, according to Sánchez (2009: 18), since the latter stresses teaching processes, the means to put these into practice, the possibility of carrying out various adaptations and so on. Sánchez reviews the various definitions of methods (2009: 16-18) to advocate then a multidisciplinary approach to the topic (2009: 18-22), based on the why, what and how of teaching.

2. ON PEDAGOGICAL TRANSLATION

Translation may be understood as an end in itself, according to which textual material in one language is replaced with equivalent material in a different language (Catford 1974: 20), so that readers may access a final product. Yet, in this article translation will be simply analysed as a potential tool for the EFL classroom; likewise, it will leave aside translation used to train translators.

This distinction between translation and so-called *pedagogical translation* is not a new one, as reported by Delisle (1984: 41-42), Nord (1991: 140), Holmes (1994: 77), Hurtado Albir (2001: 52) or Sánchez Iglesias (2009: 5), among others. For the first one, “la traduction scolaire, aussi appelée traduction pédagogique, est une méthode destinée à faciliter l’acquisition d’une langue, ou, pratiquée à un niveau supérieur, à perfectionner le style. Elle n’est jamais une fin en soi, mais toujours un moyen” (1984: 41). Hurtado Albir, in turn, defines it as “[l]a utilización de la traducción en la didáctica de lenguas” (2001: 644). According to Holmes (1994: 77), this distinction seems to emerge from the need to set two types (or applications) apart: translation in translator training courses and translation as a general activity in any FL teaching (FLT) and learning (FLL) environment. In fact, Pegenaute blames the confusion between both for the neglect of translation (1996: 108).

In the same line, Vermes (2010: 83-85), who echoes Klaudy (2003: 133), has recently argued that an essential requirement to consider translation a valid didactic tool is to distinguish *pedagogical* from *real* translation in terms of their function, the object being dealt with and the addressee. As for the function, pedagogical translation is basically instrumental insofar as the translated text is a mere tool to improve students’ second language (L2) proficiency. Hence, it is not an end in itself, but a means. Conversely, in real translation the translated text is the ultimate goal of the translating process. Regarding the object, the main difference lies in the information that can be accessed through pedagogical or real translated texts: while the former contain information on the learners’ level of proficiency (i.e. language), the latter present information about reality (i.e. content). Finally, pedagogical translation has only one expected addressee, the language teacher, who may use the translated text as an assessment tool.² Real translation, on the contrary, has a potentially wider audience, that is, target language readers in search for information about reality. However, the audience for any pedagogical translation might be widened: depending on the methodology, fellow students may also belong to the prospective audience for a text translated by any of their peers. Vermes (2010: 84) also follows Klaudy (2003: 133) in distinguishing two types of pedagogical translation: on the one hand, translation used as a way to teach and learn a FL; on the other, translation used in translator training courses. Each pursues a different goal, though, i.e. obtaining information about L2 proficiency and obtaining information about translational proficiency, respectively.

On another note, Martínez pointed out that what she termed ‘pedagogical macrofunction of translation’ depended on two factors: the learners’ level of competence and the linguistic or extralinguistic aspect to be taught (1997: 156). She follows Duff (1989: 7), who argues that:

[d]epending on the students’ needs, and on the syllabus, the teacher can select the material to illustrate particular aspects of language and structure with which the students have difficulty in English (for instance, prepositions, articles, *if*-clauses, the passive). By working through these difficulties in their mother tongue, the students come to see the link between language (grammar) and usage.

It is also important to acknowledge that different types of translation will be profitable for different types of learners, bearing in mind the direction of the translation (whether direct or reverse) and the learners’ level of proficiency (Pegenaute 1996: 116). In fact, the second factor has also played a major role when discussing the potentialities of translation in FLT, as also explained by Atkinson (1987: 243-246), although some scholars have argued that it is more beneficial in general terms for advanced learners rather than for beginners (Valdeón García 1995: 240). Newmark, for whom “[t]ranslation is important as an exercise in accuracy, economy and elegance in manipulating a variety of L2 registers in a first degree” (1991: 62), has surveyed the type of translation suited to each level. Accordingly, it is a brief time-saver in initial stages, a means of control and consolidation of basic grammar and vocabulary in elementary stages, a mechanism to deal with errors and to expand vocabulary in intermediate stages, and a fifth skill and the essential skill to foster communication in advanced stages (1991: 61-62). Lado considers that since translation is a psychologically complex skill, it has to be taught after the L2 is mastered, “as a separate skill, if that is considered desirable” (1964: 54), like Newmark himself. Duff, on the contrary, proposed using translation as a “language learning activity” (1989: 8). In turn, Malmkjaer believed that translation was not possible without the four skills, as it was “dependent on and inclusive of them” (1998: 8).

² On translation as a testing tool, see Enríquez Aranda (2003: 122) or Vermes (2010: 90-91). The validity (or not) of translation for testing has been left aside in this article.

3. BRIEF HISTORY OF TRANSLATION IN THE TEACHING OF EFL

As outlined in sections 1 and 2, the didactic role of translation in FLT has fluctuated across time and has ranged from being the driving force of the classroom to being virtually an outcast (excepting, of course, translator training courses). This mainly depends on the teaching method under scrutiny, all of which, in turn, align — whether explicitly or implicitly — to different linguistic, psychological and pedagogical assumptions that determine *what* and *how* is to be taught (Sánchez 2009: 20).

Thus, a historical overview is essential to arrive at safe conclusions about the role of translation in FLT and FLL so that this may help understand its current role in the Communicative approach and in the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*. Accordingly, the Grammar-Translation, the Direct, and the Audio-lingual methods, as well as the Communicative approach, will be briefly surveyed, since these are the ones that have been implemented in Secondary Education. Others like Suggestopedia, the Silent method or the Total Physical Response, to name but a few, will be consequently left aside. A summary of the reasons for and against the use of translation and the L1 is also offered.

3.1. The Grammar-Translation method

The Grammar-Translation method — developed by German scholars (Howatt 2000: 131) and later on popularised through works such as those by the American linguist Sears— is probably the first that comes to mind when translation in FLT is mentioned. This method inherited the tenets of other traditional methods (Vermees 2010: 85), but at that time (that is, the 19th century) it started to be used with modern languages. The shortcomings of its methodology are probably responsible for the general hatred for translation (Vermees 2010: 86).

19th-century linguistics held the view that languages were subject to rules, which allowed for communication between speakers. This was also the implicit belief in the Grammar-Translation method: grammar rules constituted a formal code, guided by logic and especially present in literary or formal texts (Sánchez 2009: 45). Indeed, proficiency in a language was assessed in terms of the lexical and grammatical accuracy shown in translations (Enríquez Aranda 2003: 120). Consequently, this method advocated deduction, memorisation of rules and lists of vocabulary, translation and contrastive analysis.

Indeed, translation played a major part, although it was not the only activity in the repertoire. It was mainly used to point at different structures and rules of the L2. However, since it had the only purpose of exemplifying what had been taught, sentences were artificial and decontextualised. As Vienne puts it, this was “translation in a void” (1994: 52, in Malmkjaer 1998: 6).

The main criticism of this method is its disregard for oral skills or for interaction, due to the focus on form and on written texts. It is also taken to be scarcely motivating (Martín Sánchez 2010: 145). Bloomfield, from his structuralist standpoint, stated that “[t]ranslation into the native language is bound to mislead the learner, because the semantic units of different languages do not match, and because the student, under the practised stimulus of the native form, is almost certain to forget the foreign one” (1933: 505). All these criticisms led to the neglect of this method (Vermees 2010: 85-86), which motivated in turn the stigmatisation of translation as a didactic tool.

3.2. The Reform movement and the Direct method

The Reform Movement emerged as a reaction to the beliefs guiding the Grammar-Translation method and showed a clear preference for speech and orality, as well as for connected texts as the centre of the learning and teaching process (Howatt 2000: 171).

Following this reformist spirit, the Direct method appeared as part of the so-called Natural approach, whose most distinctive feature is the belief that languages other than the L1 are best learned following the path of nature; that is, learning an L2 should resemble acquiring one's L1 as much as possible (Sánchez 2009: 51), although both processes (i.e. acquiring one's L1 and learning a FL) are very different, as explained by Cuéllar Lázaro (2004: 2). As opposed to its predecessor (and according to the spirit of the Reform Movement), the Direct method focused on oral communication, which prevailed over written expression (Martín Sánchez 2010: 145). According to Sánchez (2009: 58), this method was not based on any linguistic theory, but on a set of assumptions arising from the way in which children acquire their L1. Firstly, languages were taken to be primarily oral (and not written). Hence, written language was not used until they had a good command of the oral language. Secondly, languages were taught by direct association of words and objects inside a specific context in which words became significant. In this line, Lavault, who tried to rehabilitate translation as a didactic tool (Cuéllar Lázaro 2004 : 2) refers to this method as “l'apprentissage par immersion, en établissant un rapport direct entre l'objet (montré ou dessiné) ou l'action (dessinée ou mimée) et le signifiant” (1985 : 14, in Martínez 1997: 156).

As a consequence, grammar was largely left aside and prevalence was given to vocabulary, situations and dialogues. Learning was inductive: it was practice, and not grammatical explanations followed by reflections on the language, that created the foundations for acquiring a language. So, there was no room for either translation or students' L1, which would be blamed for interference (see section 3.5). As for the typology of activities in use, this method was rather heterogeneous: teachers set the pace of their lessons and decided on the activities to be included; they only had to adjust to a given set of principles or assumptions —including that of “Never translate: demonstrate” (see Titone [1968: 100-101], in Richards and Rodgers 2001: 12)—.

There are several reasons why translation was banned in this method. First, it was associated to written language, hence the clash with the focus on the oral one. Second, it was supposed to interfere in the direct association between concept and word (see also Howatt 2000: 173). Finally, most teachers were native speakers of the language they were teaching and probably unable to translate into the students' L1.

Nonetheless, this method proved rather difficult to implement in public secondary education, since there were mismatches between naturalistic L1 learning and classroom FLL learning, and it did not consider “the practical realities of the classroom” (Richards and Rodgers 2001: 12-13). Further drawbacks of the method may be found (Martín Sánchez 2010: 145). On the one hand, the dialogues and situations represented in the classroom were not very likely to be encountered by students outside this environment. On the other, there was no correction, which might eventually lead to the fossilisation of errors.

3.3. The Audio-lingual method

The historical context wherein this method arose may help explain many of its features. After the entry of the United States in the Second World War, its government commissioned American universities to develop FL programmes for military personnel so that students might attain conversational proficiency in several FL (Richards and Rodgers 2001: 50-51). In this context, drilling, followed by positive or negative reinforcement, was recurrently used (Vermees 2010: 87). The Grammar-Translation method was useless in this respect because learners needed native-like pronunciation, and so was the Direct method due to the scarcity of pedagogical materials (Sánchez 2009: 66).

This method relied both on the structuralist linguistic paradigm and on behaviourism, which means that an L2 is learnt by imitation and repetition of sounds and grammatical structures with the aim of fixing particular structures (Martín Sánchez 2010: 145-146). Accordingly, most activities were based on straightforward memorisation and repetition (Sánchez 2009: 77).

Within this framework, grammar, which was learnt inductively (as in the previous method) recovered part of its bloom. Filling-the-gap exercises and memorisation were again in full use, along with contrastive analysis (Martín Sánchez 2010: 145).

Lado (1964: 53-54) summarised the reasons why the Audio-lingual method banned translation out of the L2 classroom:

Translation is not a substitute for language practice. Arguments supporting this principle are (1) that few words if any are fully equivalent in any two languages, (2) that the student, thinking that the words are equivalent, erroneously assumes that his translation can be extended to the same situations as the original and as a result makes mistakes, and (3) that word-for-word translations produce incorrect constructions.

3.4. The Communicative approach

The term *Communicative approach* is an umbrella term applicable to a range of approaches to FLT that stresses communication both as the goal and as the means to learn a language. It is often associated with the Functional-Notional approach, whose emphasis lies on functions such as time, location, travel, etc. The ultimate end is not the outcome of the learning process, but the process itself (Cuéllar Lázaro 2004: 2). It seeks to recreate real-life social and functional situations in the classroom to guide students towards communicative competence, which can be understood as a macrocompetence subsuming other subcompetences, among which the grammatical subcompetence has to be placed (Martín Sánchez 2010: 148-149).³ As a consequence, activities in the Communicative approach must: a) be grounded on the transmission of relevant content for the speakers; b) subordinate form to content; and c) be participative and interactive (Sánchez 2009: 111).

³ See Canale and Swain (1980) for a discussion of the four subcompetences: knowledge of the linguistic code, means of combining grammar and meaning, social rules, and verbal and non-verbal communication strategies. So, communicative competence is not limited to grammatical and linguistic competence, but also includes strategic, discursive and sociolinguistic competence.

As for translation, in contrast to the general belief that it has little to contribute (see also Carreres 2006), scholars like Tudor (1987) and Duff (1989) believe that translation has a place in the communicative language classroom.⁴ Tudor argues that “[t]ranslation, as the process of conveying messages across linguistic and cultural barriers, is an eminently communicative activity, one whose use could well be considered in a wider range of teaching situations than may currently be the case” (1987, in Duff 1989: 5). In turn, Duff concludes that “[t]ranslation develops three qualities essential to all language learning: accuracy, clarity, and flexibility [...]” (1989: 7).

3.5. Final remarks: arguments for and against translation and L1

This far, several arguments for and against the use of translation have been put forward, which will be summarised along with others and which evince that the destinies of translation and the L1 seem to be inextricably linked in FLT.

First, it has been argued that translation neglects oral language by focusing on the written counterpart (Pegenaute 1996: 108; Enríquez Aranda 2003: 121; Vermes 2010: 87); however, it may also be performed orally (Vermes 2010: 87). Second, translation has been catalogued as an unnatural activity (Malmkjaer 1998: 6; Carreres 2006: 5), even though it is part and parcel of bi- and multi-lingual communities (Vermes 2010: 88). Moreover, many scholars have pointed out that learners use it as a learning strategy, even mentally (Atkinson 1987: 242; Martínez 1997: 160; Němec 2011: 140), which has led them to conclude that learning should benefit from this natural impulse, rather than try to suppress it. In this line, it is worth referring to the experiment carried out by Martínez in 1997, as well as to Hurtado Albir’s remarks on the so-called *traducción interiorizada*, whereby learners use translation as a spontaneous strategy (1999: 13, in Sánchez Iglesias 2009: 12). Other less frequent arguments against are that it may be done by students in isolation (Pegenaute 1996: 114), that it is not a very demanding activity on the part of teachers (although Valdeón García’s 1995 experiment counterarguments this belief), or that it hinders learners’ expression in the L2 (Carreres 2006: 1). Yet, it is true that it may help introduce new (nuances of) meaning(s) (Duff 1989: 7; Enríquez Aranda 2003: 122); or raise speculation, discussion and even creativity (Duff 1989: 7; Němec 2011: 140).

Be it as it may, it has been claimed that the use of translation entails a series of benefits for language learners. First, it has been reported to foster participation and to be the preferred strategy by language learners (Pegenaute 1996: 115). Second, by using the learners’ L1 in the classroom, their level of anxiety in the early stages of learning may be reduced (Vermes 2010: 87).

Yet, the main argument against the use of translation seems to derive from the idea that the L2 should be acquired in the same way as the L1 (Enríquez Aranda 2003: 121), which gives way to the beliefs that it: a) promotes interference (Pegenaute 1996: 114) —possibly resulting in fossilisation (Martínez 1997: 156)—; b) reduces the chances of using the L2 (Valdeón García 1995: 240), especially in communicative environments; and c) misleads students (Malmkjaer 1998: 6).

However, scholars have pointed out that by using translation students may enhance their knowledge of the L1, mainly through contrastive analysis. Cuéllar Lázaro believes that the interference between the L1 and the FL can be used to promote language learning (2005: 56). This conscious learning may then result in the reduction of interference (Duff 1989: 6; Pegenaute 1996: 115; Cuéllar Lázaro 2004: 4, 6). Vermes even goes a step further when stating that interference may occur irrespective of translation and that any use of the L1 would then be deemed negative (2010: 89).

It is at this point that the L1 comes into play. Inevitably tied to the fate of translation in FLT,⁵ its use has also been a matter of contention, giving way to two positions: on the one hand, the so-called virtual position bans any use of the L1 in class (including immersion programmes); on the other, the maximal position deals with maximised target language use (Turnbull and Dailey-O’Cain 2009: 4-5). Atkinson (1987) first considered the functions and benefits of using the students’ L1 in the classroom and highlighted the way in which activities based on translation may play an important part in learners’ fluency. He presumed that the scant attention paid to the role of students’ L1 has led to teachers’ and students’ uneasiness about its use. He listed four main reasons for this shortage of information about the use of L1 (1987: 242): a) the links with the Grammar-Translation method; b) the monolingual environment in which teachers were trained; c) the influence of Krashen and his theories of acquisition versus learning; and d) the self-evident truth that you can only learn English by speaking English —which does not, however, imply that the L1 cannot be used in the classroom—. He analysed the advantages of a reasonable use of the L1 in the classroom and the ways in which it may be exploited by learners and teachers, along with the risks of its overuse.

⁴ See Cuéllar Lázaro (2005) for a thorough study on the relationship between the Communicative approach and translation.

⁵ In fact, “la sombra de la lengua materna es alargada” (Süss 1997: 59, in Cuéllar Lázaro 2004: 2).

An alternative view on the perception of the use of L1 by students and teachers, based on research data, is offered by Ferrer (2002). He concludes that both agree that there is a place for the L1 in the L2 classroom, and that cross-linguistic comparison (including translation) is the best way of using the L1. If the main role of cross-linguistic comparison is raising awareness of the similarities and differences between the L1 and the L2, students will improve not only their grammatical competence, but also their communicative one. Indeed, some other research carried out in communicative environments questions the need to leave out the L1 from the classroom setting and enhances its potential to help turn input into intake, along with its benefits for comprehensible input, negotiation of meaning and the establishment of links with previous ideas (Turnbull and Dailey-O’Cain 2009: 5-6).

4. THE CURRENT ROLE OF TRANSLATION IN THE MAIN EDUCATIONAL DOCUMENTS

In section 3, the use of students’ L1, as well as of translation in different teaching methods has been surveyed. Hereafter, its role in the main documents that regulate ELT in Secondary Education in the Region of Murcia at the beginning of the 21st century will be explored, i.e. the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR) and the official curricula for Compulsory and Post-Compulsory Secondary Education (CSE and PCSE, respectively).

4.1. The *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*

The *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment* was designed by the Council of Europe as the result of the research project entitled *Language Learning for European Citizenship* and was published in 2002 as a guide for the learning, teaching and assessment of FL across Europe. It is imbued with the tenets of the Communicative approach (see section 3.4), to the extent that its main goal is for learners to achieve communicative competence.

Before examining the role of translation in this document, it is first necessary to define the concept of *mediation* in the CEFR and its implications for FLT. Cited sparingly, it may be defined as the reformulation of an existing text which a third party cannot access; in other words, the target text does not reflect the meanings of the language users, but they act rather as mediators between speakers of different languages. The CEFR also stresses the importance of mediation itself in current societies (2002: 15, 87). In this line, De Arriba and Cantero (2004: 14-15) use the terms *personal* and *textual* mediation to refer to the oral and the written dichotomy proposed by the CEFR. Each of them can be further divided into *intralinguistic* and *interlinguistic*, depending on the use of one or more than one language, respectively. Thus, translation is considered an example of interlinguistic textual mediation.

Table 1 shows the classification of mediation activities in the CEFR:

Table 1. Mediation activities.

Oral mediation	Simultaneous interpretation	Conferences, meetings, formal speeches, etc.
	Consecutive interpretation	Speeches of welcome, guided tours, etc.
	Informal interpretation	Foreign visitors in home country; native speakers when abroad; social and transactional situations; of signs, menus, notices, etc.
Written mediation	Exact translation	Contracts, legal and scientific texts, etc.
	Literary translation	Novels, drama, poetry, libretti, etc.
	Summarising gist within L2 or between L1 and L2	Newspaper and magazine articles, etc.
	Paraphrasing	Specialised texts for lay persons, etc.

A distinction has to be made between the previous mediation activities and mediation strategies since, according to the CEFR, “[m]ediation strategies reflect ways of coping with the demands of using finite resources to process information and establish equivalent meanings” (2002: 87). The strategies are grouped attending to the different stages identified in any mediation process, i.e. planning, execution, evaluation and repair. Some examples are: preparing a glossary, noting down possible alternatives, bridging gaps, consulting experts and other sources, etc.

The CEFR also assigns a prominent position to mediation within language competence by stating that the development of language activities related to reception, production, interaction and mediation activates learners’ communicative language competence (2002: 14). This means that when an individual acquires a FL, the

competence in one language can neither be carried over to the other, nor separated from it, in such a way that the learner becomes plurilingual and develops culturality. These linguistic and cultural competences, which are gradually acquired when learning any language, are what allows the user to mediate between speakers of different languages (CEFR 2002: 43). Hence, action-based learning is grounded on mediating tasks and promotes the learner's mediating role. Every task needs to activate adequate general competences, especially the intercultural one, so that the learner may mediate between two cultures. The CEFR also refers to the importance of translation equivalents within lexical competence when dealing with the semantic relations that students need to acquire (2002: 115).

An analysis of the function of tasks in FLT and FLL according to the CEFR is also essential.⁶ The communicative tasks the user has to carry out must contain communicative activities and, therefore, strategies of the same nature. Among these activities and strategies, the CEFR explicitly mentions those of production, reception, interaction, mediation and non-verbal communication. Mediation activities are also presented as ways of developing communicative tasks in FLT. Nonetheless, the CEFR remarks that designing these tasks usually implies using more than one type of the previous activities “whether as an educational activity or in order to assist another pupil” (2002: 57).

In order to design communicative tasks, the CEFR provides a classification of communicative purposes, one of which is the aesthetic use of language, which is firmly justified within the teaching of FL because “[the] imaginative and artistic uses of languages are important both educationally and in their own right” (2002: 56). Some mediation activities (included as pedagogical ones) aimed to achieve the aesthetic use of language are retelling, performing or rewriting stories, among others.

Chapter 7, entitled *Tasks and their role in language teaching*, revolves around the idea that “[c]ommunication is an integral part of tasks where participants engage in interaction, production, reception or mediation, or a combination of two or more of these” (2002: 157). An example proposed is that students act as interpreters, in an informal way, for someone who is visiting a city. In this sense, the main goal of pedagogical tasks is “to actively involve learners in meaningful communication” (2002: 158) by means of activities that emulate situations directly involved with their daily life. The CEFR confirms that there are many studies on language-using tasks that students may employ to engage in situations pertaining to different domains (2002: 53).

Concerning methodology, the CEFR strongly recommends taking into account the feasibility in the classroom factor when designing tasks. In this line, the medium and the kind of text are key factors, especially in the case of mediating activities. Similarly, the CEFR also suggests that teachers should reflect on the resources students will need, how they will be taught and what is going to be demanded.

One of the objectives to be achieved, as given in section 6.1 (*What is it that learners have to learn or acquire?*), is to attain a fuller development of one or more specific language activities, including mediating ones. Therefore, more attention should be paid to certain kinds of activities, such as receptive or mediating ones. Yet, “such polarisation can never be total or be pursued independently of any other aim; however, in defining objectives it is possible to attach significantly greater importance to one aspect above others” (2002: 136). In other words, this partial competence must be incorporated into the more general communicative and learning strategies.

The same section in the CEFR offers some methodological guidelines for the teaching and learning of modern languages, the following of which stand out with regard to the use of translation as a pedagogical resource:⁷

- Using translations for students to process and produce texts.
- Translating into and from students' L1 (to convey lexical, grammatical and pragmatic meaning).
- Memorising lists of words with their corresponding translations to develop lexical competence.
- Translating texts of increasing complexity into L2 (to develop pragmatic competence).
- Assessing contrastive factors between similar languages, since their learners usually tend to translate word-by-word.

Finally, regarding the assessment and certification of competences, the CEFR states that plurilingual and pluricultural competences are acquired not only at school, but also outside and after it. In order to certify this

⁶ See Escobar Urmeneta (2004) and Zanón Gómez and Estaire (1990) for further information on the concept of task from a pedagogical perspective.

⁷ Prieto Arranz (2004) offers a wide classification of mediation-based activities to be carried out in a language instruction context. This classification follows the principles stated by the CEFR.

acquired knowledge, the CEFR questions “if the ability to cope with several languages or cultures could also be taken into account and recognised” (2002: 175), since this shows the learner’s ability to manage a plurilingual and pluricultural repertoire. This ability can be put into practice, according to the CEFR, through translating (or summarising) a second FL into a first FL, participating in an oral discussion involving several languages, interpreting a cultural phenomenon in relation to another culture, etc. (2002: 175).

4.2. The official curricula in the Region of Murcia

In this section, the role played by translation in the curricula for CSE (Decreto 291/2007), and PCSE (Decreto 262/2008), will be analysed. The main focus will lie on ELT, although the situation in classical languages will also be described due to the importance that translation techniques have for such courses.

As for English, the impact of the CEFR, a reference for both curricula, is clearly felt on their design. This way, while the justification of the discipline, the objectives, the contents and the assessment criteria are dealt with in the curricula, the methodological aspects are catered for by the CEFR.

In the section *Introduction of the English area in the Curriculum for CSE*, the fact that students must work on and with mediation strategies is made explicit, as the curriculum proposes that skills such as receptive and productive ones, or those related to interaction and to mediation must be developed. Furthermore, this section in both curricula suggests employing situations and simulations for students to acquire and infer the functioning rules of the language studied. The use of the former (including those on mediation) as pedagogical activities was already established by the CEFR, as explained in section 4.1. Accordingly, students will be able “to establish which elements from the foreign language have similarities to the languages they already know” as stated in the *Introduction* to the FL area, hence stressing the value of contrastive analysis between languages through translation strategies.

The contents to be acquired, along with their corresponding assessment criteria, are classified into levels (four in CSE and two in PCSE) in the curricula. Table 2 collects the main aspects where mediation, either in its written or its oral forms (see section 4.1), comes up, so that its potential use stands out:

Table 2. Mediation in contents and assessment criteria in the official curricula for ELT

LEVEL	CSE	PCSE
First	To communicate orally taking part in conversations and simulations on familiar topics.	To compare and contrast FL with languages students already know (3rd and 4th years).
Second	To use the acquired knowledge on the FL in different communicative contexts as a tool for self-learning and self-correction (also 3rd year).	
Third	To take part in communicative interactions with several communicative purposes and in	-
Fourth	conversations and simulations related to daily-life situations	-

Table 2 allows us to suggest that mediation is mentioned implicitly in the curricula, as it may give way to communicative situations of interest for the students, as well as to enable them to compare and contrast the language they are learning not only with the L1, but also with any other language students may already know. In this sense, the official curriculum for CSE states that during the fourth year a second FL must be offered as an optional course, whose curricular development is very similar to that of the first FL. Such second FL (usually French), may also have been offered in previous years as an optional course, depending on the school. In the fifth and sixth years of Primary Education, French is also taught, as well as in PCSE. As shown in Table 2, the role played by translation in PCSE is far more evident than in CSE with the explicit reference to the contrast of FL.

On the other hand, the importance of translation techniques in classical languages is paramount in the official curricula nowadays. In the Spanish educational system, Latin starts to be learnt from the fourth year of CSE, while Greek is added in PCSE. In the curriculum, translating into both directions is claimed to allow students to acquire and develop the ability to obtain and process information, and then use it. Translation comes up again when having to explain the similarities between different languages with a common origin, and compare the languages that the student already knows to Latin. Therefore, both L1 and L2 are present in the study of classical languages across this curriculum.

Table 3 shows that translation and translation strategies in both languages are strongly encouraged, in progressive difficulty, both as a process and as a result in L1 and L2, and through the use of translated texts as resources to develop subsequent tasks (analysis and reading). This is clearly in tune with the tenets of the Grammar-Translation method described in section 3.1:

Table 3. Translation in classical languages

	LATIN	GREEK
Objectives	-To analyse and translate originals and adapted texts (translation techniques). -To read and understand translated texts.	-To translate texts to understand the structure of the language (translation techniques). -To analyse translated texts.
Contents	Focus on form (morphology, syntax, etc.) and on written texts by focusing on translation and contrastive reading.	
Assessment	-Comparing Latin texts to their translations. -Translating original and adapted texts. -Summarising translated texts either orally or in written form. -Identifying key literary aspects in translated texts.	-Reading and analysing translated texts. -Translating into Greek.

5. FINAL REMARKS

This article has first reviewed the concept of translation for pedagogical purposes (to distinguish it from other uses of translation) and then shown that its use has been a constant matter of contention, even in the present day. In spite of the varying attitudes towards it across history due to the existence of several methods (some of which banned it, while others praised it), each of which represented a reaction to the former, it is still a valuable didactic resource at present according to the main educational documents related to the teaching of FL, insofar as the L1 and L2 are used for pedagogical purposes. In search for learners' communicative competence, the Communicative approach allows for the use of a wide range of activities, including translation. In this line, the CEFR also acknowledges the value of mediation as a communicative skill and, thus, justifies the presence of translation in the language classroom as another option to be implemented. It also provides some pedagogical instructions for students to obtain more benefits from translation-related activities, which are linked to the attainment of various subcompetences within communicative competence.

However, the role of translation across the curricula for Secondary Education examined (i.e. those for the Region of Murcia) varies depending on the language scrutinised, since there is a significant difference between modern languages like English and classical ones, as described above. Concerning the former, which is our focus of interest, the curricula promote mediation skills from the very beginning. Translation is seen as a means to infer the rules underlying both languages by comparing and contrasting, which seems to go in the line of the maximal position as to the use of the L1 in the classroom. The curricula also advocate situations related to real life or even to future professional interests, hence the use of different mediation activities as a pedagogical resource. It is also worth stressing that the translation as such, along with the possibilities it offers for contrastive analysis, are particularly highlighted in the last stages of CSE and in PCSE.

Future research may be conducted to establish comparisons among the curricula of several regions in Spain in order to assess the extent to which the flexibility of the tenets of the CEFR paves the ground for different methodologies. This might help spot differences and/or similarities as to the use of translation as a valid didactic tool.

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