



The Effectiveness of Using Translation as a Learning Strategy in the Afghan EFL Context

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Abstract: The usefulness of translation as a learning strategy in the EFL context remains a subject of ongoing academic debate, particularly in relation to meaningful learning and language proficiency. There are two opposing ideas: some practitioners reject its use because it negatively affects English skills, while others insist on using translation because it is efficient for comprehension and for a better understanding of EFL content. In most foreign contexts, students have been found to use it extensively for comprehension. However, little research attention has been paid to the EFL context of Afghanistan to examine the effects of using this strategy. This study explores the attitudes and perceptions of English major students to determine the effectiveness of translation as a learning strategy. A quantitative research design was employed to assess the efficiency of this strategy. A 5-point Likert-scale survey was used to collect data. A total of 132 Afghan undergraduate students majoring in English literature at Kandahar University participated in the study. For statistical analysis, IBM SPSS Statistics 2027 was used to obtain accurate results. Findings identified translation as a supportive strategy for addressing students' needs, reducing cognitive load, enhancing comprehension, aiding language skills, and promoting meaningful learning. These insights highlight the importance of translation but suggest caution in its use, as overuse limits learners' ability to build their language proficiency. Future researchers are encouraged to explore the pedagogical implications of translation as a learning strategy across diverse EFL contexts, considering variables such as cultural backgrounds, proficiency levels, and instructional strategies for its practical use.

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INTRODUCTION

The translation involves transferring ideas from one language to another while preserving their meaning (Wahid et al., 2022). As a learning strategy, it refers to using the L1 as a foundation for understanding or producing the L2 (Chamot, 1987). The translation strategy

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has strengths that can effectively improve learner autonomy and can be more learner-oriented (Dagiliene, 2012). EFL teachers use translation to support learning. Translation is a valuable tool that makes communication in another language easier (Akbari, 2008). Nhan (2024) states that using translation is an effective way to enhance English proficiency; however, several studies have shown that overusing it reduces learners' exposure to language skills. The use of translation is effective when applied in moderation and for specific purposes (Acar, 2020; Geng, 2024). It is emphasized that learners should not rely too heavily on translation and should use it judiciously. Teachers should use translation to support learning, but overusing L1 or translation can have drawbacks, such as leading learners to depend solely on translation and preventing them from understanding meanings from context (Topolska-Pąđ, 2010). Excessive reliance on the native language reduces exposure to English. Teachers should use the last resort and encourage students to use the target language to achieve proficiency (Stibbard, 1994; Kabir, 2020). Most teaching methods and approaches, such as CLT, the Direct Method, and the Audiolingual Method, also aim to minimize the use of translation as a learning strategy.

This ongoing debate creates uncertainty among practitioners about the efficacy of using translation as a pedagogical tool. Its implementation varies according to different EFL contexts. Educators' linguistic ideology and awareness play a pivotal role in shaping learners' processes and determining suitable learning strategies (Aghai et al., 2020). Researchers such as Shuchi and Islam (2016), Raju (2016), and Leonardi (2010) have demonstrated that translation supports and facilitates both teaching and learning, thereby making educational activities more manageable for instructors and students alike. Their findings indicate that incorporating translation in an EFL setting is a natural and effective practice within the language classroom. Additionally, the use of the mother tongue and code-switching between languages inherently aids in comprehension of a new language (Harmer, 2001).

Basically, it has already been proven in several research studies that language learners use various strategies in their learning process, and translation is one of them. According to Cook (1992), all L2 learners access their L1 while processing L2. Some teachers and linguists believe that the use of translation/L1 is effective in the EFL context because students perform better when they know they can ask and receive answers in L1. In the early stages of learning, translation is a strategy learners use to transfer meaning and messages from one language to another. Najduchowski (2008) states that using L1 can be an effective tool alongside the board and chalk. The effectiveness of this strategy depends on the context. Translation is a valuable tool at the elementary, intermediate, and advanced stages of language learning; however, when the goal is to make learning more active and meaningful, then its implementation helps learners understand, correct errors, and improve comprehension during reading (Newmark, 1991). Its use is valuable when we know we cannot handle the condition(s) in a foreign language. Translation/L1 is a pedagogical tool that facilitates teaching and learning of content (Djelloul & Neddar, 2017; Edelia & Maharsi, 2022). However, when it comes to language proficiency and skills, teachers should avoid overreliance on translation, as this rarely helps

learners improve their EFL skills. If the translation strategy is integrated into English instruction, it must be used selectively and strategically as a pedagogical tool to support learning (Saputra, 2020).

Translation has traditionally been a key component of the Grammar-Translation method (GTM), where it acts as a tool to explain content, meanings, and grammatical structures, and assists learners in understanding comparisons between a foreign language and their first language (Richards & Rodger, 2014). In fact, as Cook (2010) also noted, when the Grammar-Translation method declined, translation was largely rejected in many popular and highly regarded language-teaching theories of the 20th century. Nonetheless, translation continues to be utilized as a learning strategy in EFL contexts, especially when learners share their L1. Calis & Dikilitas (2012) argue that translation is more effective in EFL than in ESL because of students' limited exposure to language use outside the classroom. Putrawan (2019) also agrees that using translation in an EFL setting remains useful and is still commonly employed among EFL learners. However, overreliance on translation can hinder the development of students' language skills, because it prevents EFL students from developing independent strategies for engaging with a foreign language (Baw, 2002). Therefore, before implementing it, language teachers should assess the needs, context, conditions, and teaching environment, and make informed decisions.

In Afghanistan, English is taught as a foreign language. Despite widespread translation use, there is a significant lack of empirical research evaluating its effectiveness among Afghan EFL students, especially at the university level. The existing literature presents varied perspectives on translation use, ranging from strong support to outright rejection. However, the effectiveness, role, and extent of translation as a learning strategy in Afghanistan's EFL context remain poorly understood and unexplored. This research aims to systematically assess its usefulness and provide evidence-based recommendations for English language teachers and students at the university level.

Accordingly, the primary purpose of this study is to identify the effectiveness of translation as a learning strategy from the perspectives of students majoring in English at Kandahar University, Afghanistan.

To be more specific, this research aims to answer the following research questions:

- To what extent do the students use translation as a learning strategy to understand the contents in the EFL context?
- What are the situations where students use translation as a learning strategy?
- How does translation assist English major students in reducing cognitive load when engaging with academic content?

LITERATURE REVIEW

An examination of the literature reveals that there are still many controversies regarding the effectiveness of strategies used in English learning and teaching. The usage of translation for the aim of foreign language teaching and learning is bound to be associated with the

Grammar-Translation method in the United States. It was during the rise of GTM. However, the linguists soon suggested reducing its implementation as it had negative impacts on learners' oral proficiency. In the mid-19th century, amid numerous controversies surrounding the implementation, reduction, and rejection of GTM, alternative communicative methods and approaches were introduced to address gaps in GTM (Richards & Rogers, 2014). Despite the reduction or rejection of its implementation, recent research has revisited the role of translation in EFL contexts, suggesting that it can be effective when implemented in a contextually appropriate way that meets students' needs. Several studies in the EFL context have demonstrated its importance, as translation/L1 is one of the students' requirements in EFL classes. The use of translation is effective in the teaching and learning of foreign languages (House, 2009; Ibrahim, 2021). Students of languages naturally and constantly translate between their L1 and foreign languages (Cook, 2007). Learning a new language is achieved through learners' L1, as learners connect the foreign language with their L1 by comparing and contrasting similarities and differences (Cook, 2003; Lewis, 2009).

Numerous prior studies have demonstrated that translation enhances learners' English language skills. Within the context of student learning, translation plays a crucial role. It benefits language instruction by supporting student learning, simplifying the learning process, and serving as a valuable tool for language acquisition and an effective instructional strategy for reading, writing, and other language skills (Popovic, 2001; Bagheri and Fazel, 2011; Alaboud, 2022). Jubran and Arabiat (2021) and Shahrom et al. (2018) reported, in their respective studies, participants' positive attitudes toward using translation to improve English language skills. Lee (2013), conducting research in China, observed that all students, regardless of whether they were English majors or non-English majors, demonstrated improvement in reading skills with translation support. Translation is considered the preferred strategy because it simplifies content in a foreign language, thereby promoting language skills and the development of linguistic systems in EFL classes (Fernandez-Guerra, 2014). This approach has been proven to facilitate mastery of the four fundamental language skills, as well as learning key content areas such as grammar, communicative competence, vocabulary, and idioms (Liao, 2006; Ying et al., 2018; Al-Musawi, 2014; Thani & Ageli, 2020). Moreover, Soleimani and Heidarikia (2017) asserted that translation proves beneficial for understanding and learning complex grammatical structures.

The use of a dictionary, which is also used for translation and to acquire meanings, is also considered adequate. Chen (2011) found that a bilingual dictionary has a significant effect on EFL students' reading, as it plays an essential role in learning word meanings and vocabulary. The research results showed that students who use dictionaries, particularly bilingual ones, achieve higher scores in vocabulary and reading than those who do not incorporate them into their studies.

Comprehension is a key issue in education. Students understand best when they grasp the material. In EFL contexts, students often rely on translation to understand well. Many studies highlight the importance of translation for comprehension. For example, Mollaei et

al. (2017) showed that translation naturally occurs in language use, aiding learners in understanding easily. They also reported no difference between teachers' and students' views on the use of translation as a method, strategy, or technique in an Iranian EFL setting. Translation helps by boosting learners' metalinguistic awareness, supporting self-regulated discourse, saving time, and making lessons understandable (Saputra, 2020; Leung, 2005). Overall, these findings suggest that translation is crucial for effective teaching and supports foreign language learning by providing students with explicit instructional content.

EFL is the context where learners often feel anxiety, specifically while having questions or viewpoints and wanting to share them with the teacher in a foreign language. They fear making mistakes or worry that the teacher will get a bad impression of them. For reducing EFL learners' fear, using translation/L1 in an EFL context can help avoid students' fear of making mistakes (Wong, 2020). The use of a target language in the classroom can encourage learners to feel more comfortable and to participate more freely in class activities. (MacDonald, 1993; Arfianti & Wiadiati, 2020). Translation is a strategy that not only reduces anxiety but also strengthens learners' collaborative work and independent learning (Purwaningrum, 2023).

Evidence indicates that the use of translation as a pedagogical strategy is contingent on context and students' specific conditions. When students have strong language skills, reliance on translation can be reduced; conversely, when students' English language proficiency is limited, translation use typically increases to address their needs. Kulusakli, Boynukara, and Genc (2018) noted that most of their study participants used translation as an effective strategy. Students with higher proficiency levels employed translation less frequently than those with lower proficiency levels; Payne and Contreras (2019) observed that lower-level learners rely on translation as a practical learning aid, whereas higher-level learners advocate minimal translation use. Mutlu et al. (2015) conducted a study in Turkey that revealed that students relied on translation to enhance their English skills and master lexical items. Elementary EFL students used translation more frequently compared to pre-intermediate and intermediate learners. These findings demonstrate that translation's effectiveness varies among students; nevertheless, its value is closely associated with the students' stage of language acquisition and proficiency.

Sankaravelauthan and Vidyapeetham (2020) showed that many researchers often overlook translation, yet there are logical reasons and students' needs that underscore its importance. According to them, the main reason translation is neglected is GTM, whereas Cook (2001) argued that translation serves as a helpful resource when addressing external goals related to the classroom's educational objectives, since students need to understand words and grammar to become proficient in a foreign language. Translation helps in mentally comprehending English texts and is also beneficial for learners' perspectives, meaningful listening, writing, and mastering English idioms and expressions. Learning through the translation method enables students to use vocabulary and language structures more

efficiently, providing them with more opportunities to learn and improve immediately. (Karimian & Talebinejad, 2013; Linh, 2022).

Although translation is a commonly used strategy among Afghan EFL learners, there is still a lack of empirical research on its effectiveness and ineffectiveness among undergraduate English major students. Understanding how effective translation is as a learning strategy is vital for addressing students' needs related to meaningful learning, comprehension, cognitive load, and the development of English language skills. This study aims to fill this gap by examining the effectiveness of translation from the perspectives of English major students at Kandahar University.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This study employs a quantitative descriptive survey approach to examine the effectiveness of translation as a learning strategy. The method focuses on collecting and analyzing numerical data from students' views on using translation as a strategy at the undergraduate level at Kandahar University.

Population and Sampling

The target population consisted of undergraduate students (freshmen, sophomores, juniors, seniors) enrolled in the Department of English Language and Literature at the Languages and Literature Faculty at Kandahar University during the 2024-2025 academic year. The department had a total of 200 undergraduates. To determine the sample size, Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sample size table was used. According to this table, 132 out of 200 students are considered representative of the population. Therefore, 132 participants were given the questionnaire for data collection. A convenience sampling technique was used due to the availability of students during class hours.

Data Collection Procedures

The data were gathered using a questionnaire. A Google Form was used to collect the information. Participants were regular students recruited through the researchers' referrals. Data collection lasted over five weeks. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and volunteers took part.

Instrumentation

The questionnaire was distributed to learners via an online Google Form, which first collected demographic information, and the second section consisted of 30-item 5-point Likert-scale questions relating to students' perspectives on the use of translation. The collected data were analyzed using IBM SPSS (version 2027). The questionnaire measures students' beliefs, the extent of translation use, and the perceived usefulness of translation as a learning strategy.

Pilot Study. The pilot study was conducted to evaluate the reliability and validity of the questionnaire, initially developed by Liao (2006) and later adapted for this research. The IBT

(Inventory for Beliefs About Translation) and ITLS (The Inventory for Translation as a Learning Strategy) from Liao's (2006) questionnaires were merged and combined into a single questionnaire. About 20 students from the Department of English, Faculty of Languages and Literature at Kandahar University participated and completed a 30-item questionnaire. Afterwards, the collected data were analyzed to assess reliability and validity using SPSS.

Questionnaire's Internal Reliability. To assess the questionnaire's internal consistency, Cronbach's alpha was calculated in SPSS. The responses were collected from 20 participants. The following table shows the questionnaire's reliability, which is 0.923. Since the accepted Cronbach's alpha value is above 0.7, the reliability is considered suitable for this study.

Table 1. Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.923	30

Questionnaire's Validity. The questionnaire's content validity was established through expert review in the field. Based on their suggestions, the questionnaire was modified. To assess construct validity, an item-total correlation analysis was conducted in SPSS 27. This analysis examined how well each item correlated with the overall scale. The statistical results confirmed that all thirty items were statistically valid and showed significant positive correlations with the overall scale ($p < .05$).

FINDINGS

According to the study, an overwhelming number of students are comfortable with the use of translation in EFL classrooms. Table 2 below, based on a 5-point Likert scale (1-5), illustrates the degree (percentage and mean) to which students agreed or disagreed with the statements. The statistical findings reveal that translation is supportive and plays a significant role in meaningful learning. Findings suggest that translation is an effective strategy for almost all learners in the EFL context. Participants in the study have shown positive perceptions and believe that the role of translation in EFL classes is beneficial for meaningful learning, reduced cognitive load, and comprehension.

The first 17 questions were related to the IBT (Inventory for Beliefs about Translation), in which the purpose was to see whether the translation helps learners understand textbook readings and teacher's English instructions, write English compositions, improve their English skills, recall the contents easily, understand the vocabulary and grammar rules, complete the complex assignments quickly, and reduce anxiety or not.

Table 2. Questionnaire Statistics

No.	Items	Responses					Mean
		SD	D	N	A	SA	
1.	Translating helps me understand textbook readings.	3 (2.3%)	1 (.8%)	4 (3.0%)	45 (34.1%)	79 (59.8%)	4.48
2.	Translating helps me write English compositions.	2 (1.5%)	3 (2.3%)	15 (11.4%)	55 (41.7%)	57 (43.2%)	4.22
3.	Translating helps me understand spoken English.	2 (1.5%)	3 (2.3%)	10 (7.6%)	55 (41.7%)	62 (47.0%)	4.30
4.	Translating helps me speak English.	5 (3.8%)	4 (3.0%)	19 (14.4%)	64 (48.5%)	40 (30.3%)	3.98
5.	Translating helps me memorize English vocabulary.	4 (3.0%)	2 (1.5%)	3 (2.3%)	40 (30.3%)	83 (62.9%)	4.48
6.	Translating helps me understand English grammar rules.	5 (3.8%)	9 (6.8%)	13 (9.8%)	42 (31.8%)	63 (47.7%)	4.12
7.	Translating does not help me make progress in learning English.	49 (37.1%)	50 (37.9%)	12 (9.1%)	16 (12.1%)	5 (3.8%)	2.07
8.	Translation helps me understand my teacher's instructions in English.	0 (0.0%)	4 (3.0%)	17 (12.9%)	54 (40.9%)	57 (43.2%)	4.24
9.	Translation helps me interact with my classmates in English class to complete assignments.	3 (2.3%)	9 (6.8%)	12 (9.1%)	59 (44.7%)	49 (37.1%)	4.07
10.	The more difficult the English assignments are, the more I depend on Pashto translation.	5 (3.8%)	12 (9.1%)	31 (23.5%)	43 (32.6%)	41 (31.1%)	3.78
11.	Using a Pashto translation helps me finish my English assignments more quickly and saves me time.	2 (1.5%)	10 (7.6%)	14 (10.6%)	44 (33.3%)	62 (47.0%)	4.16
12.	Using Pashto translation while studying helps me better recall the content of a lesson later.	2 (1.5%)	5 (3.8%)	19 (14.4%)	59 (44.7%)	47 (35.6%)	4.09
13.	I like to use Pashto translation to learn English.	7 (5.3%)	12 (9.1%)	10 (7.6%)	48 (36.4%)	55 (41.7%)	4.00

14.	At this stage of learning, I cannot learn English without Pashto translation.	10 (7.6%)	12 (9.1%)	28 (21.2%)	41 (31.1%)	41 (30.1%5)	3.68
15.	I prefer my English teachers to always use English to teach me.	3 (2.3%)	6 (4.5%)	8 (6.1%)	51 (38.6%)	64 (48.5%)	4.26
16.	I feel pressure when I am asked to think directly in English.	4 (3.0%)	12 (9.1%)	25 (18.9%)	41 (31.1%)	50 (37.9%)	3.91
17.	When using English, it is best to keep my Pashto out of my mind.	9 (6.8%)	18 (13.6%)	29 (22.0%)	34 (25.8%)	42 (31.8%)	3.62
18.	When reading an English text, I first translate it into Pashto in my mind to help me understand its meaning.	2 (1.5%)	10 (7.6%)	5 (3.8%)	50 (37.9%)	65 (49.2%)	4.25
19.	When I write in English, I first think in Pashto and then translate my ideas into English.	3 (2.3%)	10 (7.6%)	14 (10.6%)	46 (34.8%)	59 (44.7%)	4.12
20.	When I listen to English, I first translate the English utterances into Pashto to help me understand the meanings.	9 (6.8%)	7 (5.3%)	17 (12.9%)	43 (32.6%)	56 (42.4%)	3.98
21.	When speaking English, I first think of what I want to say in Pashto and then translate it into English.	3 (2.3%)	15 (11.4%)	11 (8.3%)	45 (34.1%)	58 (43.9%)	4.06
22.	If I forget certain English words or expressions in the middle of a conversation, I translate from Pashto into English to help keep the conversation going.	6 (4.5%)	6 (4.5%)	16 (12.1%)	54 (40.9%)	50 (37.9%)	4.03
23.	I memorize the meaning of new English vocabulary words by remembering their Pashto translation.	2 (1.5%)	6 (4.5%)	12 (9.1%)	56 (42.4%)	56 (42.4%)	4.19
24.	I learn English grammar through Pashto explanations of the English grammatical rules.	4 (3.0%)	16 (12.1%)	25 (18.9%)	42 (31.8%)	45 (34.1%)	3.81

25.	I use the Pashto translation of grammatical terms such as parts of speech, tenses, and agreements to help me clarify the roles of the grammatical parts of English sentences.	3 (2.3%)	16 (12.1%)	20 (15.2%)	47 (35.6%)	46 (34.8%)	3.88
26.	I use English-Pashto dictionaries to help myself learn English.	3 (2.3%)	6 (4.5%)	8 (6.1%)	47 (35.6%)	68 (51.5%)	4.29
27.	If I do not understand something in English, I will ask other people to translate it into Pashto for me.	2 (1.5%)	5 (3.8%)	16 (12.1%)	46 (34.8%)	63 (47.7%)	4.23
28.	When the teacher assigns English articles for reading, I work with others to translate them.	2 (1.5%)	15 (11.4%)	14 (10.6%)	57 (43.2%)	44 (33.3%)	3.95
29.	I practice mentally translating my thoughts from Pashto to English in various situations.	3 (2.3%)	7 (5.3%)	19 (14.4%)	50 (37.9%)	53 (40.2%)	4.08
30.	I try to clarify the differences and similarities between Pashto and English through translation.	3 (2.3%)	6 (4.5%)	13 (9.8%)	43 (32.6%)	67 (50.8%)	4.25

The results presented in Table 2 indicate that among the initial 17 items, two items (items 1 and 5) exhibit the highest percentage at 93. 9%, and they correspond to the highest mean score of 4.48. This suggests a strong consensus regarding the utilization of translation. Both items reflect students' positive attitudes towards the effectiveness of translation in comprehending textbook readings and English grammar rules. They regard translation as a more significant strategy, particularly when the objective is either vocabulary memorization or critical reading. The majority of respondents strongly agreed with these statements. Furthermore, other items related to the IBT 14 items (items 3, 15, 8, 2, 11, 6, 12, 9, 13, 4, 16, 10, 14, and 17) also demonstrate that respondents generally held a favorable view of translation use, with mean scores ($M > 3.5$) and percentage ranges from 57. 6% to 88. 7%. The elevated mean scores and percentages indicate the students' agreement and positive perceptions of these items, thereby revealing that translation aids in understanding teachers' English assignments, instructions, textbook readings, grammar, writing compositions, vocabulary memorization, content recall, practical learning, and anxiety reduction. The only item that received relatively low mean scores ($M < 3$) was item 7, stating, "Translating does not help in making progress in learning English. " Although this item was phrased negatively, the strong disagreement expressed is a noteworthy finding that reinforces the overall positive

trend. Specifically, 37.1% of participants strongly disagreed, and 37.9% disagreed, further affirming the utility of translation. Overall, the responses indicate that participants — particularly English major students — hold positive views regarding the use of translation. This suggests that students primarily utilize translation to overcome educational challenges. Moreover, the results demonstrate that students' trust in teachers who consistently employ translation strategies stems from their belief that such methods support them when faced with complexities or challenging circumstances.

The second 13 questions were based on the ITLS (The Inventory for Translation as a Learning Strategy) to find the influence of translation as a strategy.

The results in Table 2 above show that among the second 13 statements related to ITLS, two items (items 26 and 18) have the highest percentage at 87.1% and the highest mean scores of 4.29 and 4.25, respectively. The majority of respondents strongly agreed with these statements. This indicates that students primarily rely on bilingual dictionaries and translation while reading, especially when they want to understand the exact meaning and learn effectively. Additionally, other items (items 30, 27, 23, 19, 29, 21, 22, 20, 28, 25, and 24) also show a high level of agreement, with means above ($M > 3.5$), and percentages ranging from 65.9% to 83.4%. The high percentages and mean scores suggest a positive trend among students regarding these items. The statistical findings demonstrate that translation reduces cognitive load.

The findings from the ITLS questions indicate that translation is a common and habitual practice among Afghan English majors. They find translation especially helpful for understanding the differences and similarities between English and Pashto vocabulary, grammar, reading, spoken language, and writing. Overall, the results show that translation is effective when reading English texts and translating them into Pashto (L1). According to these perspectives, translation is beneficial when listening to English speech, speaking English, and when initially thinking in L1 before translating into English.

Moreover, the findings show that using translation is helpful when learners forget English words or expressions during a discussion. It helps keep the conversation moving smoothly by allowing participants to continue effectively. For students, applying a translation strategy is important because it helps memorize new English vocabulary, understand English grammatical rules, and mentally translate thoughts from Pashto or L1 to English in different situations. It also helps clarify the differences and similarities between Pashto and English. Specifically, research findings state that translation is the most commonly used strategy and a vital learning tool for Afghan EFL students, supporting them in various contexts and language skills.

Overall, participants' responses indicated that translation as a learning strategy is an effective tool for learning a foreign language, primarily when used as a language-learning strategy. The scores for almost all questions were high. Although some items had lower averages than the maximum, they still fell within the high range. Of the 30 items from IBT and

ITLS included in a single questionnaire, only the seventh item had a mean score below 3, making it the least endorsed belief. Notably, the seventh item also reflected participants' positive attitudes, even though it appeared in a negative position in the questionnaire; therefore, its mean score was lower than those of the other items. Additionally, all other items received the highest mean scores (over 3.5), indicating that students mainly use translation to aid learning, reduce cognitive load, understand better, and overcome challenges across various language skills. For Afghan students, this strategy is an effective way to learn and understand content within the EFL context.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that translation is an effective learning strategy for vocabulary acquisition, reducing cognitive load, fostering meaningful learning, improving reading comprehension, and addressing students' needs in the EFL context. The results suggest that translation assists Afghan English major students in better understanding content, expressing ideas without anxiety, identifying similarities and differences between the two languages, fostering confidence among learners, and facilitating comprehension of teachers' instructions. As Al-Musawi (2014) similarly stated, the majority of students use translation because it satisfies their educational requirements in EFL classes, supports vocabulary learning, and enhances communicative competence. This cross-cultural alignment reinforces the utility of translation as a cognitive supportive tool. Although translation serves as a supportive strategy for content comprehension, its overuse has not been shown to be a practical pedagogical approach. Studies indicate that unplanned translation can hinder students' proficiency development, as it is typically used when understanding meaning is difficult.

The study's findings show that translation is effective for the reduction of students' cognitive load and makes learning easy, as Karimian and Talebinejad (2013) confirm that translation/L1 not only helps with understanding English texts mentally but also supports outlining ideas, writing, meaningful listening, and learning English idioms and expressions. The results align with those of Soleimani and Heidarikia (2017), who found that translation is a noticing strategy for learning complex grammatical structures and that translation significantly influences learners' ability to grasp them.

The findings of this study, along with several previous studies, emphasize the value of translation in enhancing various language skills in EFL contexts. Studies showed the positive role of translation in enhancing learner autonomy and comprehension. The present results extend existing evidence on the efficacy of translation, which aids Afghan learners in many ways, such as writing compositions, understanding textbook reading, making progress in learning English, memorizing vocabulary, engaging in meaningful interactions, collaborating, and better recalling lesson content. These results are in line with the findings of Putrawan (2019), Purwaningrum (2023), Arfianti and Wiadiati (2020), and Kulusakli et al. (2018), who observed that its usage is efficient for meaning-based learning, autonomous learning, class

activities, and collaborative work, as they do not bind themselves to the teachers. Indeed, this shared emphasis reinforces the idea that translation can scaffold understanding and build learners' confidence.

Findings of the current study align closely with previous research highlighting the effectiveness of English language skills, a finding supported by Mollaei et al. (2017), who indicate that translation as a method, technique, or strategy in the learning of English language skills is effective. This is also consistent with those of Shahrom et al. (2018) and Mutlu et al. (2015). Their studies similarly demonstrate that it is used as a significant strategy for learning, indeed, as a supportive strategy for building English language skills and vocabulary.

This finding is noteworthy, as it indicates that almost all participants, whether freshmen or seniors, held positive beliefs about the use of translation as a learning strategy. On the contrary, some studies found different results. Thani and Ageli (2020) found that students enrolled in orientation programs utilize translation most frequently, whereas fourth-year English students use it less than participants in the orientation program. Although the fourth-year students held negative perceptions concerning its use, they still employed it. This suggests that, despite its effectiveness, translation should be used judiciously and only, when necessary, as students tend to reduce its use as their proficiency improves. Payne and Contreras (2019) also report a related finding: 115 Ecuadorian students at the A1 and B1 levels perceived translation as beneficial at lower proficiency levels, whereas more advanced learners emphasized minimal use, indicating that increased proficiency correlates with decreased reliance on translation. It suggests that this strategy would be even more effective if used in line with students' needs, implemented strategically, and tailored to the context.

The findings of this study revealed that Afghan students relied on translation in the classroom to improve their language skills and meaningful learning. This is in line with the findings of Guerra (2014), who found that participants' responses supported the use of translation as a preferred language-learning strategy, helping improve understanding of the source and target languages. In general, the current study reveals that the majority of Afghan students are highly flexible with the usage of translation/L1 in the EFL context, where they feel comfortable when using translation while working on English skills, English competencies, expressing their thoughts, doing assignments, doing problem-solving activities, reducing cognitive load, and understanding the contents.

CONCLUSION

The study examined the use of translation as a learning strategy for English majors, emphasizing its potential to support comprehension and deepen understanding of course materials. Findings indicate that translation is a helpful tool in the Afghan EFL context. Based on this and other studies, employing translation as a strategy to address learners' needs is essential but requires careful implementation to avoid affecting language skills. It needs to be carefully integrated to prevent overdependence and sustain communicative competence. To

effectively use translation as a learning strategy, it is necessary to examine its application in different settings where English is taught as a foreign language. This approach helps teachers understand potential influences and make informed decisions about implementing this strategy.

The usage of translation as a learning strategy is highly effective for Afghan EFL students. Learning English with the aid of translation is efficient and valuable. Afghan students used translation to understand content and engage meaningfully with lectures. Additionally, translation helped develop students' LSRW skills, competencies, communication, confidence, and ability to complete assignments, as well as their class interaction, vocabulary, and grammar, and reduced anxiety. Based on the statistics, it is clear that translation as a learning strategy supports Afghan EFL students by helping them achieve meaningful learning in different contexts.

One limitation of the study was that the researchers examined translation as a learning strategy broadly in an EFL setting, encompassing almost all English skills, competencies, content, and meaningful learning, without considering learners' English language proficiency levels. Indeed, all students, whether freshmen, sophomores, juniors, or seniors, expressed positive attitudes toward translation, indicating they need its implementation across all classes. Although the study demonstrated the effectiveness of translation at the UG level in the Afghan EFL context, further studies are needed to examine the usefulness of translation for each skill and condition separately across all Afghan EFL settings. Therefore, future research should further investigate the case of translation from L1 to provide clear guidance on when and how to use it. Additionally, the study is limited to Afghan EFL students, so future research should include perceptions of Afghan EFL teachers regarding the implementation of translation in teaching. The findings are based only on a sample from Kandahar University, so they may not apply to learners of other native languages or different educational settings.

As English is predominantly taught as a foreign language and subject in numerous countries and educational settings, the reading of this study is strongly recommended for all EFL teachers and students interested in using translation as a learning strategy or approaching it rationally as a meaningful teaching tool. While translation can be a valuable strategy in meaningful learning, it is imperative to employ it strategically. Students should limit their reliance on translation across contexts, as excessive reliance may adversely affect their language proficiency. Educators have a vital role in guiding learners by establishing clear guidelines and monitoring their progress to ensure that the use of translation as a learning strategy enhances, rather than impedes, language development. By adopting these practices, both teachers and students can foster a more effective language learning environment that optimally balances the advantages of translation.

The study suggests that translation can be an effective strategy for enhancing comprehension, reducing cognitive load, and fostering meaningful learning among English majors. However, it is essential to implement it with caution and discretion, ensuring that it is employed only, when necessary, relevant, and beneficial to the learning process. The

findings of this study indicate that Afghan EFL learners use translation because it serves an important facilitative role in enhancing learners' educational experiences, is really necessary, and contributes to more meaningful learning. Therefore, the use of translation in EFL classrooms is advisable, as it can enhance instructional effectiveness and contribute to a more supportive language-learning environment.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION

This research paper was a collaborative effort among the three co-authors, each contributing distinct and significant parts to the completion of the study.

- Atiqullah Mashal took primary responsibility for the major sections of the study, including the Introduction, Literature Review, Methodology, and Data Analysis.
- Khalilullah Sarwari contributed to specific sections of the Methodology, particularly the parts concerning Data Collection and Validity, and was responsible for preparing and organizing the Reference List.
- Habibullah Popal authored the Conclusion, Limitations, and Suggestions sections and also carried out Language Editing and Error Correction throughout the manuscript.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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