

Investigating Students' Perspectives on Directionality in Translation: Case of Second-Year License Students of English at the University of Ghardaia

استقصاء وجهات نظر طلاب الليسانس في موضوع الاتجاهية في الترجمة: دراسة حالة طلاب السنة الثانية ليسانس بجامعة غرداية

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Abstract:

This study investigated students' perspectives on translation directionality at the department of English, University of Ghardaia. A questionnaire examined 40 students' perceptions of difficulty between Arabic-English and English-Arabic translation, preferred direction, self-rated abilities, practice frequency, and challenges. Results showed diversity in views, with some finding Arabic-English more difficult and others English-Arabic. Most preferred Arabic-English translation, though over 40% had no preference. Students rated abilities positively and practiced occasionally in both directions, with over 60% believing English-Arabic improved language skills. Common challenges in both directions included vocabulary and choosing words between languages as well as translating cultural references and idioms. This study provides insights into diverse translation direction experiences and how directionality impacts learning. Findings can inform curriculum design and support for both translation directions.

Keywords: Translation; directionality; Arabic-English translation; second-year; University of Ghardaia.

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ملخص:

هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى استقصاء وجهات نظر الطلاب في موضوع الاتجاهية في الترجمة. تم توزيع استبيان لمعرفة وجهة نظر 40 طالبًا حول صعوبات الترجمة من الإنجليزية إلى العربية والعكس، والاتجاه المفضل، وتقييم الذات الخاص بالقدرات الترجمة، ووتيرة ممارسة كل اتجاه، وكذا التحديات الخاصة بكل اتجاه. وقد أظهرت النتائج تباينًا في الآراء، حيث اعتبر البعض الترجمة من الإنجليزية إلى العربية أصعب، والعكس بالنسبة للبعض الآخر، كما فضل معظم الطلبة الترجمة من العربية إلى الإنجليزية، وعبروا عن قدراتهم بشكل إيجابي، وأشاروا إلى أنهم يمارسون الترجمة في كلا الاتجاهين بشكل متقطع، وقد أيد أكثر من 60% مسألة التأثير الإيجابي لعملية الترجمة من الإنجليزية إلى العربية على مستواهم اللغوي. وقد شملت التحديات الأكثر شيوعًا صعوبة المفردات، واختيار الكلمات، وكذا ترجمة المراجع الثقافية والعبارات الاصطلاحية في كلا الاتجاهين. ويمكن القول إجمالاً بأن الدراسة قد سلطت الضوء على تجارب الطلاب المتباينة بخصوص الاتجاهية في الترجمة، وكيفية تأثير كل اتجاه الترجمة على عملية التدريب وبالتالي يمكن لنتائج الدراسة أن تسهم في تحسين تصميم المناهج ودعم الطلاب في كلا الاتجاهين.

كلمات مفتاحية: الترجمة، الاتجاهية، الترجمة عربي – انجليزي- عربي، السنة الثانية، جامعة غرداية

1. INTRODUCTION

Translation is a complex skill that involves rendering meaning from one language to another in a clear and accurate manner. It requires a sophisticated blend of linguistic abilities as well as cultural knowledge. An important consideration within translation pedagogy is the issue of directionality, or the language pair orientation of instruction. Specifically, course designs must determine whether students should be trained to translate predominantly into their first language (L1) or second language (L2), or encompass a balanced approach across both directions.

Understanding learners' viewpoints and experiences with different instructional methods can provide valuable insights to help translation educators make informed decisions about curriculum design and teaching practices. Students spend a significant amount of time engaged in translation work during their studies, so their perceptions, preferences, and self-assessed development offer meaningful perspectives on the different challenges and opportunities encountered when working in each direction. Understanding learners' perspectives can provide valuable insights to help shape effective teaching practices.

Previous studies have explored various aspects related to directionality in translation, shedding light on students' perceptions, preferences, and the impact of directionality on translation teaching. For instance, Marcelina Pietryga (2022) conducted a study focusing on students' subjective perception of directionality in translation. The findings revealed that while many students found (L2) translation more cognitively demanding, preferences could change with the amount of translation training. Vocabulary, grammar, and punctuation were identified as common challenges in both directions of translation.

Similarly, Doha El Islam Hadadoua, Dr. Kellou, and Dr Bekouche (2022) investigated the impact of directionality on translation teaching at the Translation Institute - University of Algiers 2. Their analysis of the teachers' questionnaire showed that directionality had an impact on translation teaching and revealed that teaching translation should be different in the two directions. However the analysis of the students questionnaire indicated that there was certain level of similarity between the two directions .The data collected demonstrated that

students encountered the same type of difficulties (language difficulties) and wanted to develop the same type of competence (linguistic competence) in both directions

Examining the quality of translation outputs in educational settings, a study by Pokorn K. Nike (2020) explored the influence of directionality on the quality of translations. The research aimed to determine whether translation errors were influenced by directionality or a weak development of objective competencies. The results indicated that translation quality was affected by factors beyond directionality, such as mastery of the second language and general knowledge.

Furthermore, Öztürk Asiye (2020) conducted a study on the effect of directionality on performance and strategy use in simultaneous interpreting. The research focused on the English-Turkish language pair and revealed significant differences in students' performance and translation quality between the two directions.

Building upon these previous studies, the present research aims to investigate English language students' perspectives on directionality in the module of translation. Specifically, this study focuses on the challenges students face and their preferences regarding translation direction among second-year license students of English at the University of Ghardaia during the academic year 2023-2024.

The research paper seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What are students' perceptions of the level of difficulty in translating into L1 compared to L2?
2. What translation direction do students prefer?
3. What specific challenges do students encounter most frequently when translating into each language?

2. Methodology

This study employed a quantitative research design using a questionnaire to collect primary data. The participants were 40 second-year undergraduate license students majoring in English language the University of Ghardaia. They study the module of translation (Arabic – English - Arabic) as part of their program during the 2023-2024 academic year.

A 10-item questionnaire was developed by the researcher to collect data on students' perceptions, preferences, self-ratings and challenges related to translation directionality in the context of the translation module. The questionnaire items elicited both multiple choice responses and brief descriptive feedback. The questionnaire was distributed to participants during regular class time. Data from the completed questionnaires was analyzed using descriptive statistics to determine frequencies and percentages.

Key findings were identified and compared to prior literature on translation directionality. Student feedback was categorized and summarized thematically.

3. Results

3.1 Which direction of translation do you find more challenging?

Table 01: Perceived Difficulty of Translating in Different Directions

Responses	Number	Percentage
Translating from English (L2) into your native language (L1)	15	37.5%
Translating from your native language (L1) into English (L2)	12	30%
Both directions are equally challenging	13	32.5%
Total	40	100%

The results reveal that (37.5%) of the participants found translating from English (L2) into their native language (L1) more challenging. Meanwhile, (30%) of the participants found translating from their native language (L1) into English (L2) more challenging. Interestingly, (32.5%) of the participants considered both directions to be equally challenging.

These findings indicate that there is a diversity of preferences and perceived difficulties among the participants when it comes to translation directions.

3.1 What is your preferred direction of translation?

Table 02: Preferred Direction of Translation

Responses	Number	Percentage
Translating from English (L2) into your native language (L1)	08	20%
Translating from your native language (L1) into English (L2)	15	37.5%
No specific preference	17	42.5%
Total	40	100%

In this question, students were asked to indicate their preferred direction of translation. The results reveal that among the 40 participants, (20%) expressed a preference for translating from English (L2) into their native language (L1). On the other hand, (37.5%) of the participants indicated a preference for translating from their native language (L1) into English (L2). Interestingly, a significant portion of the participants (42.5%) did not have a specific preference and did not favor one direction over the other.

3.3 Do you feel that your translation skills have improved over time?

Table 03: Improvement of Translation Skills over Time

Responses	Number	Percentage
Yes, significantly	05	12.5%
Yes, to some extent	31	77.5%
No, not really	01	2.5%
Not sure	03	7.5%
Total	40	100%

Students were then asked if their translation skills had improved over time, (12.5%) of them feel that their translation skills have improved significantly over time. The majority of participants, (77.5%), reported that their translation skills have improved to some extent. Only a small proportion, (2.5%), stated that their skills have not improved significantly. Additionally, (7.5%) of the participants were unsure about the improvement of their translation skills.

3.4 How often do you practice translation into your second language (L2)?

Table 04: Frequency of Translation Practice into L2

Responses	Number	Percentage
Frequently	07	17.5%
Occasionally	18	45%
Rarely	15	37.5%
Never	00	0%
Total	40	100%

The next question was about the frequency of translation practice among the participants in their second language (L2). The results indicate that (17.5%) of the participants practice translation into their second language frequently. The majority of participants, (45%), reported practicing translation occasionally. Additionally, (37.5%) indicated that they rarely practice translation into their second language. Notably, no participants reported never practicing translation into their second language.

3.5 How often do you practice translation into your native language (L1)?

Table 05: Frequency of Translation Practice into L1

Responses	Number	Percentage
Frequently	07	17.5%
Occasionally	26	65%
Rarely	07	17.5%
Never	00	0%
Total	40	100%

The next question posed to students had to do with the frequency of their practice in translating into their native language (L1). The results indicate that (17.5%) of the participants practice translation into their native language frequently. The majority of participants, (65%), reported practicing translation into their

native language occasionally. Additionally, (17.5%) indicated that they rarely practice translation into their native language. Notably, no participants reported never practicing translation into their native language.

3.6 Do you believe that translating into your second language (L2) helps improve your language proficiency?

Table 06: Impact of Translating into L2 on Language Proficiency

Responses	Number	Percentage
Yes, definitely	25	62.5%
Yes, to some extent	13	32.5%
No, not really	02	5%
Not sure	00	0%
Total	40	100%

In question 6, participants were asked about their belief regarding whether translating into their second language (L2) helps improve their language proficiency. The results reveal that (62.5%) of the participants believe that translating into their second language definitely helps improve their language proficiency. Additionally, (32.5%) of the participants believe that it helps to some extent. Only a small proportion, (5%), stated that translating into their second language does not really help improve their language proficiency. Notably, no participants were unsure about this belief.

These findings indicate a strong belief among the majority of participants that translating into their second language (L2) contributes to improving their language proficiency.

3.7 How would you rate your abilities in translating from L1 to L2?

Table 07: Self-Rating of Translation Abilities from L1 to L2

Responses	Number	Percentage
Excellent	00	00%
Good	20	50%
Average	17	42.5%
Below average	03	7.5%
Poor	00	00%
Total	40	100%

As we can see, none of the participants rated their abilities as excellent or poor. The majority of participants, (50%), rated their abilities as good. Additionally, (42.5%) rated their abilities as average, while (7.5%) rated their abilities as below average.

3.8 How would you rate your abilities in translating from L2 to L1?

Table 08: Self-Rating of Translation Abilities from L2 to L1

Responses	Number	Percentage
Excellent	00	00%
Good	19	47.5%
Average	18	45%
Below average	03	7.5%
Poor	00	00%
Total	40	100%

In the next question, number 8, participants were asked to rate their abilities in translating from their second language (L2) to their native language (L1). The results indicate that none of the participants rated their abilities as excellent or poor. The majority of participants, (47.5%), rated their abilities as good. Additionally, (45%) rated their abilities as average, while (7.5%) rated their abilities as below average.

3.9 When translating from English (L2) to your native language (L1), what challenge do you face the most?

Table 09: Challenges when Translating from L2 to L1

Responses	Number	Percentage
Difficulties with vocabulary	18	45%
Challenges with grammar structures	03	7.5%

Issues translating cultural references/idioms	17	42.5%
Problems with style/register	02	5%
Other (please specify)	00	00%
Total	40	100%

The questions that followed revolved around the most common challenge students face when translating from English (L2) to their native language (L1). The results indicate that the most common challenge, according to the participants, is difficulties with vocabulary, with (45%) of participants selecting this option. Challenges with grammar structures were identified by (7.5%) of participants. Issues translating cultural references/idioms were reported by (42.5%) of participants. Problems with style/register were mentioned by (5%) of participants. No participants specified any other challenges.

3.10 When translating from your native language (L1) to English (L2), what challenge do you face the most?

Table 10: Challenges when Translating from L1 to L2

Responses	Number	Percentage
Difficulties finding the right words	27	67.5%
Challenges rendering complex grammar structures	00	00%
Issues translating cultural references/idioms	07	17.5%
Problems matching the appropriate style/tone	06	15%
Other (please specify)	00	00%
Total	40	100%

The final question asked the participants to identify the most common challenge they face when translating from their native language (L1) to English (L2). The results indicate that the most common challenge, according to the participants, is difficulties finding the right words, with (67.5%) of participants selecting this option. No participants reported challenges specifically related to rendering complex grammar structures. Issues translating cultural references/idioms were mentioned by (17.5%) of participants, while problems matching the appropriate style/tone were reported by (15%) of participants. No participants specified any other challenges.

3. Discussion of Results

The present study aimed to explore the participants' perceptions and preferences regarding translation directions, their self-rated abilities, and the challenges they face when translating between languages.

Regarding the participants' perception of translation direction difficulty, the results showed that translating from English (L2) into their native language (L1) was considered more challenging by (37.5%) of the participants.

In contrast, (30%) of the participants found translating from their native language (L1) into English (L2) more challenging. In this context, Campbell (1998) states that difficulty of translating into a second language can be attributed to the complexities of grammatical structures, cultural references, and idiomatic expressions that may need to be accurately rendered in the target language.

Interestingly, (32.5%) of the participants considered both translation directions equally challenging. Kiraly (2000) suggests that while production difficulties may arise when translating into a foreign language, comprehension of the native language text tends to be deeper, more nuanced, and more accurate.

This finding highlights the nuanced nature of translation and the diverse challenges faced by translators depending on the direction of translation.

Similarly Hadj Mahammed and Kellou (2020) suggest that translators and interpreters should be trained in both language directions, from a foreign language into their mother tongue and vice versa, as this is a requirement in the translation and interpretation market. This supports the notion that translators should be proficient in both translation directions to meet market demands.

When examining the participants' preferred direction of translation, (37.5%) expressed a preference for translating from their native language (L1) into English (L2), while (20%) preferred translating from English (L2) into their native language (L1). These preferences are subjective and may be influenced by various factors, including language proficiency, cultural familiarity, and personal comfort. It is worth noting that a significant proportion of participants (42.5%) did not have a specific preference and were neutral towards translation direction.

The participants' self-rated abilities in translation revealed that none of them rated their abilities as excellent or poor. Instead, (50%) rated their abilities as good, (42.5%) as average, and (7.5%) as below average when translating from (L1) to (L2).

Similarly, when translating from (L2) to (L1), none rated their abilities as excellent or poor, with (47.5%) rating their abilities as good, (45%) as average, and (7.5%) as below average. These self-ratings indicate a generally positive perception of their translation abilities although a considerable proportion acknowledged room for improvement.

The frequency of translation practice into the second language (L2) and native language (L1) revealed interesting patterns. While (45%) of participants reported practicing translation into their second language occasionally, only

(37.5%) reported practicing it rarely. This finding suggests that a substantial number of participants recognize the importance of regular practice in maintaining and enhancing their translation skills in their second language. Similarly, (65%) of participants reported practicing translation into their native language occasionally, indicating the significance they attribute to maintaining proficiency in their mother tongue.

The impact of translating into the second language (L2) on language proficiency was explored, and the results showed that (62.5%) of participants believed that translating into their second language definitely helps improve their language proficiency. An additional (32.5%) believed it helps to some extent. This finding supports the notion that translation practice can contribute positively to language development, as proposed by Mikoyan (2000). The participants' belief in the benefits of translating into their second language aligns with the frequency of translation practice reported earlier, suggesting a correlation between practice and perceived improvement in language proficiency.

When examining the challenges faced by participants when translating from (L2) to (L1), difficulties with vocabulary emerged as the most common challenge, as reported by (45%) of participants. This finding underscores the linguistic complexities and vocabulary gaps that translators may encounter when rendering texts into their native language. In contrast, when translating from (L1) to (L2), the most common challenge reported was difficulties finding the right words, selected by (67.5%) of participants. This challenge can be attributed to the need for accurate lexical choices and appropriate vocabulary usage in the target language.

4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the results of the study indicate diverse preferences and perceived difficulties among translators when it comes to translation directions. While some participants found translating from English (L2) into their native language (L1) more challenging, others found translating from their native language (L1) into English (L2) more difficult. The study also underscores the importance of training in both translation directions and highlights the benefits of practicing translation into both the native language and the second language. Challenges related to vocabulary, cultural references/idioms, and style/register were commonly reported by participants. These findings contribute to our understanding of the complexities of translation and can shape training programs and strategies to enhance translators' skills and proficiency in both directions.

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6. Appendix

Questionnaire:

Full name:

Group:

Dear Participant,

We kindly request your participation in this study that aims to investigate the perspectives of 2-Year License students at the University of Ghardaia on directionality in the translation module. Your responses will be kept confidential and anonymous, and the data collected will be used solely for research purposes.

Thank you for your time and valuable input.

1. Which direction of translation do you find more challenging?
 - a) Translating from English (L2) into your native language (L1)
 - b) Translating from your native language (L1) into English (L2)
 - c) Both directions are equally challenging
2. What is your preferred direction of translation?
 - a) Translating from English (L2) into your native language (L1)
 - b) Translating from your native language (L1) into English (L2)
 - c) No specific preference
3. Do you feel that your translation skills have improved over time?
 - a) Yes, significantly
 - b) Yes, to some extent
 - c) No, not really
 - d) Not sure
4. How often do you practice translation into your second language (L2)?

- a) Frequently
- b) Occasionally
- c) Rarely
- d) Never

5. How often do you practice translation into your native language (L1)?

- a) Frequently
- b) Occasionally
- c) Rarely
- d) Never

6. Do you believe that translating into your second language (L2) helps improve your language proficiency?

- a) Yes, definitely
- b) Yes, to some extent
- c) No, not really
- d) Not sure

7. How would you rate your abilities in translating from L1 to L2?

- a) Excellent
- b) Good
- c) Average
- d) Below average
- e) Poor

8. How would you rate your abilities in translating from L2 to L1?

- a) Excellent
- b) Good
- c) Average
- d) Below average
- e) Poor

9. When translating from English (L2) to your native language (L1), what challenge do you face the most?

- a) Difficulties with vocabulary
- b) Challenges with grammar structures
- c) Issues translating cultural references/idioms
- d) Problems with style/register
- e) Other (please specify)

10. When translating from your native language (L1) to English (L2), what challenge do you face the most?

- a) Difficulties finding the right words
- b) Challenges rendering complex grammar structures
- c) Issues translating cultural references/idioms
- d) Problems matching the appropriate style/tone
- e) Other (please specify)