TRANSLATION AS A MEANS OF LEARNING AND SELF-LEARNING
IN STUDYING ARABIC AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

Annegret M. Gross *(annegret.gross[at]ymail.com)*

Abstract:

Using translation in foreign language teaching has been a rather controversial topic in recent times. While translation was generally accepted as a regular teaching method up to the 18[th] century, the trend slowly reversed to a merely monolingual approach during the 19[th] century. In the last two decades, however, the bilingual approach is again given more attention and possibilities of combination are increasingly being discussed.

This paper aims at demonstrating how integrating translation into L2 learning by the example of Arabic can help learners to better learn the language, master its particularities and grasp a better understanding of the language right from the beginning, especially when it comes to syntax, grammar, and phraseology. For autonomous learning, relevant motivation theories in teaching and learning are highlighted and a strategy in order to benefit from translation in self-learning is being suggested.

Key Words: Arabic, autonomous learning, pedagogical translation, second language acquisition, SLA

Introduction:

Growing Demand of Arabic Language Speakers

The number of students studying Arabic as a foreign language has been dramatically increasing during the last decade throughout the entire world. Alone in the United States for example, the interest in the Arabic language has been skyrocketing since 9/11. According to the Modern Language Association of America, the current number of qualified instructors can hardly satisfy the demand for courses. The only other language that might be experiencing an as magnificent growth in popularity is Chinese (Yahalom, 2007). Middle Eastern study-abroad programs have become the fastest growing exchange programs for American college students and from 2006 to 2007, the number of American students studying in Arab countries rose by about sixty percent (Conlin, 2010).

This development is not astounding, regarding that Arabic is the most widely spoken language in the world with a steadily growing population of about three hundred million native speakers (Procházka, 2006). Arabic is thus to be considered an international language and certainly one of the most important and influential ones. With the Middle East having a total G.D.P. of 600 billion US-Dollars and more and more foreign companies investing in that part of the world, Arabic learners hope for better career opportunities in the future, whether they desire to work in trade, international relations, journalism, linguistics, anthropology, history, or for one of the numerous NGOs or peace-keeping organizations located in this area (Conlin, 2010). Another reason to learn Arabic is quite evidently driven by religious motivation: the desire to be able to understand the language of the Quran.

Educational institutions have since long recognized the need for Arabic language education and many universities worldwide offer full-pledged Arabic language programs. Most recently a US-American public elementary school - Hamilton Heights in Manhattan, New York - included Arabic language courses for its second to fifth graders. Having identified Arabic as a critical-need language for the students' future careers, Arabic will become a school requirement in September this year (Ford, 2012).

Modern Standard Arabic and its Difficulties

Arabic is a diglossic language. Beside a standard written variant – the so called Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), a form of "Fusha" – many different regional forms of a colloquial Arabic exist throughout the countries where Arabic is spoken. These dialects constitute the everyday language of a specific country or region and can differ from one another considerably. Modern Standard Arabic is the variant of the language that is understood in all Arab countries and used in newspapers, radio and television, speeches and formal occasions. Thus, MSA is the form that is usually taught in class to foreign learners (Fakhri, 1995) and is also taken as the basis for the present paper.

With this diglossia and other linguistic aspects, Arabic is considered to be one of the most difficult languages in the world and ranks level 3 in the US-State Department categorization of languages – the highest level of the difficulty on a scale from 1 to 3 – along with Japanese, Chinese, and Korean. It is hence the only Semitic language rated at this level of difficulty.

Mastering the non-roman script of the Arabic language, which is written from right to left, along with other orthographical difficulties (e.g. only long vowels are written, whereas short

vowels usually remain invisible) can be accomplished within a relatively short period of training. A by far greater challenge is the vocabulary learning. As Arabic has few cognates with English and other Indo-European languages, it takes time to internalize new words – especially at the beginning of the learning process. The structural and conceptual particularities of the language are another aspect learners have to struggle with (Ryding, 2003). This includes broken plural forms for nouns and adjectives, the existence of a "dual", the highly different syntax and other grammatical phenomena.

Purpose of this Paper

This paper aims at taking up the topic of using translation in teaching and learning. It takes Arabic – a Semitic language which is commonly considered to be one of the most complex living languages to learn – as example to demonstrate how translation can help foreign students to better learn the language, master its particularities and grasp a better understanding of the language right from the beginning, especially when it comes to sentence structure, grammar, and phraseology. For this purpose, the most relevant theories relating to the use of translation and the learners' first language (L1) in teaching a second language (L2) will be opposed to tenets supporting merely the use of the target language.

Recent examples of practical research carried out in different Middle Eastern countries concerning translation, the use of L1 and transfer errors made by Arab students studying English will be provided.

Therefore, a certain basic knowledge of the Arabic language is being presumed, as well as the reader's familiarity with the Arabic writing system.

As this paper suggests translation as a means of self-study, factors of motivation in teaching and learning will be outlined. Cognitive skills required to make use of translation exercises in foreign language learning will be discussed. The paper then concludes by suggesting a strategy of how translation can be incorporated in an autonomous learning process.

Translation in Second Language Acquisition

The use of translation and L1 in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) has been a matter of controversial debate in more recent decades. The approach of applying translation as an integral part in L2 teaching is still not uniformly adopted nor rejected. Both proponent and opponent theories have their strengths and both can find their place in SLA. Compared to other fields in the area of Applied Linguistics, relatively little research has been done as far as the use of L1 with regard to focused translation is useful to support, improve and accelerate the acquisition process of the second language to be learned.

However, many aspects may play a role when deciding whether to use translation within SLA and may determine upon the benefit that can be drawn from translation exercises: native and foreign language are of course main aspects, further on age, educational and intellectual background as well as previous experiences in acquiring a foreign language and in translation. Finally, method, quality, and quantity of the translation exercises used for L2 learning are crucial and might decide upon success or failure.

The Monolingual Approach

Throughout history, the tenets of using L1 in teaching L2 have been underlying a periodic change (Auerbach, 1999). Several hundred years ago, bilingual teaching, including translation, was the standard method used in foreign language teaching and was almost universally accepted. The method that was most largely used at that time is known as the Grammar Translation Method. The Grammar Translation Method has been harshly criticized by proponents of the monolingual approach, as it uses decontextualized artificial example sentences which are translated almost word for word into native or target language, mainly focusing on grammatical phenomena and lexical items. Hence, the main points of criticism aims at the out-of-context approach of this method and the merely written form hindering a situationalized realistic acquisition of the language and its communicative use (Vermes, 2010).

However, in the 19th century, the trend slowly started to reverse towards a monolingual approach, that was further reinforced during the 20th century and eventually completely banned translation as a teaching and learning method. The reasons for this trend reversion lay partly in the shift from the former emphasis on the written word to the emphasis on the spoken word in more recent decades. Colonialism and mass migration of people to other countries

contributed their part to the uprise of the monolingual approach, as learning now took place in environments with numerous first languages instead of one single one and L2 – which was mostly English - was considered superior over the learners' L1 (Hawks, 2001). Consequently, the monolingual approach also implies that the native teacher is the ideal teacher. On the other hand, the bilingual approach, which will be discussed in the subsequent paragraph, assumes that a teacher who masters the students' native language has more advantages over a monolingual one.

A main supporter of the monolingual approach is Krashen (1985), who forwards the argument that the amount of exposure to the target language stands in a direct relationship with the learners' proficiency in the L2. Krashen postulates that a lesson should be held in L2 only or as much as possible in L2 and suggests that the reason why learners are not always successful in acquiring an L2 is because they still have access to their L1 – either in class or outside of it. This approach comes along with the hypothesis that second language acquisition follows the same principles as first language acquisition (Phillipson, 1992) – a hypothesis that in return further strengthened the monolingual concept. The Direct Method (Harbord, 1992) and the Communicative Approach (Pennycook, 1994) then directed the general tenet towards the belief that the best way to learn a language was through authentic communication in L2, i.e. mainly oral interaction and little grammatical analysis. Bilingual education was considered to be unnatural and inefficient. Hence, also translation was banned as one of the bilingual second language learning strategies. Pacek (2003), another communicative researcher, assumes that using L1 interferes with L2 learning, promotes an "error transference" and hinders the learning process. She concludes that translating from the native language into the second language and vice versa misguides learners to believe that there is always a direct equivalent in the respectively other language. Some researchers even go as far as to say that L2 should be the sole medium to be used in the acquisition process, for all purposes regardless of whether instructions, explanations of grammar or new words are concerned (Wringe, 1989).

The Bilingual Approach

However, what the monolingual approach considers to be an obstacle to L2 acquisition – the error transfer concept – is viewed as an advantage in the bilingual approach. Supporters argue that SLA is always a conscious process, especially in case of adult learners, and that the targeted focus on the differences between two languages will reduce first language interference. Starting from this approach, the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (CAH) evolved

in the 1960s. CAH concentrates on the differences and similarities between L1 and L2. A transfer from L1 to L2 is considered to be positive if the same structure exits in both languages. On the other hand, a transfer can lead to a production of incorrect language in L2 if a certain structure does not exist in L1 or is very different (Saville-Troike, 2006). Shiyab and Abdullateef (2001) point out that translation is immensely helpful when it comes to grammar and lexis. Stibbard (1998) refers to a learner's first language as a "valuable resource" and considers translation to be the "fifth skill alongside the four other skills" of language learning (listening, speaking, reading and writing), which also helps develop communicative competence, oral fluency and the learner's ability to use the L2 in a creative way. Creativity in this context refers to the possibility of expressing the same thing in the numerous different ways that every language offers, such as using paraphrases, different syntaxes, lexemes or synonyms.

Andermann (1998) adds that translation is a means to improve linguistic proficiency, to help understand L2 constructions and use them actively as well as to monitor and improve the comprehension of L2. This conforms to the translation monitor theory that this paper introduces and schematizes later on showing how translation is able to help learners figure out initial misunderstandings of L2 when translating into L1 and/or back into L2.

When the discussion touches the use of translation in lower levels, opponents tend to argue that translation is a rather difficult task and complex cognitive process, in which both linguistic and cultural phenomena need to be considered. However, translation as it is used in foreign language acquisition as a means of learning differs considerably from professional translation in its purpose and degree of difficulty. In compliance with my own experience in learning Arabic, I can only confirm that translation can be used right from the beginning and does not only help overcome linguistic difficulties that the beginning learner will face, but also contributes to internalize the cultural-specific use of the language. This personal observation is further strengthened by three additional arguments: as Harris (1978) states, *natural translation* is always there, which means that the learner automatically translates back into his L1 when learning a foreign language. Auerbach (1993) found that the exclusion of L1 can lead to a higher drop-out rate, and Burden (2000) reports that increasing the amount of L2, especially in case of struggling lower-level students, is likely to have a negative effect and add to the students' frustration.

Another supportive theory for this approach comes from Deller and Rinvolucri (2002) stating that students learning a second bring along language – quite naturally – their native language

and their cultural heritage which cannot be assumed away or ignored during the L2 learning process. Deller and Rinvolucri consider the mother tongue a powerful resource that can enhance L2 acquisition. Butzkamm (2003) adds another important point to the advantages of using L1 in L2 acquisition by stressing that all newly-acquired foreign language items first of all have to sink roots in the mind before they can finally function independently of the speaker's first language.

According to my experience, this statement can only be confirmed, as establishing a direct connection between L1 and L2 helps gain a better command of the new language and more secureness in dealing with vocabulary, grammar, structure and expressions. This personal experience is once again strengthened by Prince (1996) stating that new L2 words are more effectively memorized when they are linked to their L1 equivalent and that the same can seemingly be applied to grammar and morphology.

Equivalency in this context, however, is not to be understood that there is always a 1:1 translation possible on a word- or sentence-level. On the contrary, translating rather illustrates that expressing the same sememe can sometimes differ considerably within two languages.

Considering these arguments and knowing that translation is an analytical process that requires a certain degree of cognitive skills as well as awareness about the language, one can conclude that translation is especially adequate and helpful for teenage to adult learners, who come "loaden" with their L1 and learn L2 in a rather conscious way. In compliance with that, Schäffner (1998) considers translation exercises beneficial in order to:

- improve verbal agility;
- expand students' vocabulary in L2;
- develop the style;
- improve the understanding of how languages work;
- consolidate L2 structures for active use;
- monitor and improve the comprehension of L2.

One can add that translation also helps to:

- avoid negative transfer by comparing between L1 and L2;
- understand the correct contextual use and subtleties of vocabulary;
- accelerate the internalization of L2 grammar and vocabulary;
- handle cultural linguistic differences and foster the correct use of idioms.

Practical Research into Arab Speakers learning English

As it is the state of the art, not much research has so far been done into non-Arab speakers studying Arabic as a foreign language, which is perhaps due to the fact that Arabic is experiencing its boom in popularity in the Western world since the 2000s only. On the other hand, however, quite many recent studies into transfer errors and contrastive linguistics relating to Arab students learning English as well as the use of translation in the EFL classroom have been conducted in the Arab world during the past two decades. As a consequence of these studies, translation and contrastive linguistics are approaches which are being professionally implemented into EFL learning in Arab countries in order to enable students to achieve better and faster results in acquiring the language.

The following is a chronological selection of recent practical studies on translation and L1 interference in EFL carried out in different countries throughout the Middle East. The author of this paper cites bilingual examples given in the respective studies and sometimes supports them with personal examples in order to further illustrate the background of the research.

Abu-Jarad (1986) investigated the formation of relative clauses and the use of verb tenses of Palestinian students studying English at the Islamic University of Gaza. The findings show that the Palestinian learners transferred the aspectual system of their Palestinian Arabic to the English tense system. They used the English past and present tense to mark Palestinian perfective and imperfective aspects. However, his studies also revealed that 90% of the formed relative clauses were independent of the respective Palestinian Arabic structuring of a relative clause. In this case, the negative transfer occurred only in the English tense system but not in the English syntax system.

Lakkis and Malak (2000) analyzed the transfer of Arabic prepositions to English and found both positive and negative transfer. They came to the conclusion that in particular an English teacher whose native language is Arabic is very beneficial for the learners as he can use his native language to point out similarities and differences in prepositional usage in the two languages.

Prepositional usage constitutes a problem for learners in almost all languages as each language has its particular prepositional nexus – and many times there are no rules or logical relations; the right prepositions just need to be memorized by the L2 learner. A contrastive comparison is especially useful to highlight such prepositional particularities where they differ considerably within two languages or even allow more than one option. The following

examples given by the author of this paper shall illustrate some divergences in the locational and verbal prepositional usage in English and Arabic:

في الـمـطـار	**at** the airport [literally: **in** the airport]
في الـطـائـرة / **في** الـبـاص	**on** the airplane / **on** the bus [literally: **in** the airplane / **in** the bus]
هذا المكان بعيد **عن** الـجـامعة.	This place is far **from** the university. [literally: This place is far **about the** university.]
هذا المكان قريب **من** الـجـامعة.	This place is close **to** the university. [This place is close **from the** university.]
أنا أبحث **عن** سـاعـتـي.	I'm looking **for** my watch. [literally: I'm looking **about** my watch.]
1. أنا وصلت **إلى** الرياض أمس. 2. أنا وصلت الـرياض أمس.	I arrived in Riadh yesterday. [literally: I arrived **to** Riadh yesterday.] [literally: I arrived **Ø** Riadh yesterday.]

Few studies touch on idiomatic expressions as a source of transfer errors for students studying English as a foreign language. One reason for the small number of studies dealing with the translation of idioms might be the fact that students need to have reached an advanced level of proficiency in the foreign language before they can fully understand and correctly produce idiomatic speech. Mahmoud (2002) is one of these few researchers who investigated the influence of the native language when transferring idiomatic expressions from Arabic into English. He found that out of the total of idioms used only 20% were grammatically, lexically and contextually correct.

Arabic is a language rich in idioms, figurative and religious expressions, which are widely used throughout every day communication, too. Therefore, it is recommended to train the understanding and production of such idiomatic expressions right from the start of the language learning process. In the following sections, the author of this paper draws on a few idiomatic examples commonly found in daily life:

The standard expression, for instance, to say "bon appétit" before a meal or to say "bless you" when somebody has sneezed or coughed – yes, in the Arab world it is a custom to say blessings after a cough, too – is " صحة " (health). Instead of replying with a simple "thank you" ("شكراًَ") the usual response in this case is "قلبك على" – literally: "upon your heart". This saying is rooted in the common belief that the heart shortly stops beating when someone sneezes or coughs and is therefore to be understood as a greeting to the person whose heart has just 'come back to life'.

Likewise, when an Arab speaker of any age is being asked about his well-being when being greeted by a person, his instantaneous and sometimes sole reply to the question would be "praise Allah". This use of religious idiomatic speech is not only typical for Muslim Arab speakers, as one might think, Christian Arab speakers, for instance, would refer to the same expression as they also refer to the Christian God as the ONE God – إله.

كيف حالك؟ ـ الحمد لله.	How are you? – Praise Allah.

Or let us assume a situation where a person learns from another person, his friend is sick and has just gotten to hospital. While the English speaker in this case would say something like "I hope he is going to be better soon", an Arab speaker would most certainly include God ("Allah") in his well-wishing, e.g.:

شفاه الله. / الله يشفيه.	May Allah heal him.

Bataineh (2005) researched into errors occurring with indefinite articles made by Jordanian undergraduate EFL students and discovered that ungrammatical structures were produced due to the differences between English and the students' L1 Arabic. She further explains that "the fact that Arabic does not have a distinct marker for indefiniteness the way English does is probably the cause of learners' deviation from the target language rule" (11).

The following examples further illustrate this phenomenon:

قلم	can mean both: "pen" or "a pen"
كتاب	likewise: "book" or "a book"

In cases of compound nouns, Arabic uses an article on the second word component only to make it definite, while the article is completely omitted in case of indefiniteness:

Indefinite: Definite:

غرفة نوم   (a) bedroom   غرفة **النوم**   the bedroom

فرشاة أسنان   (a) toothbrush   فرشاة **الأسنان**   the toothbrush

This construction is, however, also a common source of clerical mistakes as it might tempt L2 Arabic learners to use the definite article on both compound words. This even more due to the fact that definite noun-adjective constructions indeed have articles on both compounds such as:

القلم الأحمر   **the** red pen

الكتاب الجديد   **the** new book

Looking at learners with an advanced level of L2 competence, Raddawi (2005) reports about an experiment she conducted with colleagues at the American University of Sharjah (UAE), which aimed at testing a new software program using translation for medical doctors to help them acquire medical terminology and phraseological collocations in L2. The software works with continuous and repetitive translation from L1 into L2 and has already achieved satisfying results among the participating doctors.

On a lower proficiency level, Raddawi likewise reports about experiments using translation in EFL, which led to a success rate of up to 80% in error avoidance compared to the reference group. In these experiments, students were given statements in L1 and asked to translate them into L2 and vice versa. Raddawi observed that this method was beneficial especially when it comes to syntax, morphology, vocabulary, and figures of speech. Following the experiments, she also comes to the conclusion that "the 'shift' to thinking and writing in L2 does not occur automatically over a certain period of time but needs hard work and drilling in L1 vs. L2 translations" (4). The following examples shall elucidate the benefits of the translation method:

Giving an example for syntax, the Arabic language usually does not make use of the auxiliary verbs *to have* and *to be* in present tense. Therefore, Arab learners tend to omit these verbs in English sentences, a result of negative transfer.

For instance, instead of saying *I am ten years old*, lower level Arab speakers tend to say *I ten years old* or *I have ten years old*, an error obviously due to the Arabic syntax:

سني عشر سنوات   [literally: My age ten years.]

The same applies to a sentence like *My name is John*, often erroneously rendered as *My name John* by Arab learners.

اسمي جون.   [literally: My name John.]

One of the morphological differences between Arabic and English is that the English language knows a perfect and a progressive present and past tense, whereas Arabic uses only the present or past. Raddawi brings in that the Arabic sentence يأكل جون الفاصولياء والرز can in English both mean "John eats beans with rice" and "John is eating beans with rice". Another interesting aspect that is revealed by contrasting the two sentences is the definiteness of both nouns in the Arabic statement as well as the use of the word "and" (و) instead of "with" as it is used in the English sentence.

As part of her practical work, Raddawi makes use of the following type of translation exercises to clarify the use of tenses to Arab learners:

يأكل جون الفاصولياء والرز.	John is eating beans with rice. *(Simple Present Progressive = action currently taking place)*
يأكل جون الفاصولياء والرز على الغداء.	John eats beans with rice for lunch. *(Simple Present = habit / recurring action)*
أكل جون الفاصولياء والرز من قبل.	John has eaten beans with rice before. *(Simple Perfect = result of action the past still important in the future)*

أكل جون الفاصولياء والرز على الغداء.

John ate beans with rice for lunch.
(Simple Past = action finished in the past)

Translation is equally useful in case of all other simple and progressive tenses, such as future simple and progressive, and to show the difference between the present perfect and the present perfect progressive:

سيعمل جون على أطروحته غداً.

John will work on his thesis tomorrow.
(Future Simple = intended future action)

سيعمل جون على أطروحته, الشهرين

John will be working on his thesis for the next two months. *(Future Progressive = action in progress at a time in the future)*

عمل جون على أطروحته منذ الأسبوع الماضي.

John has been working on his thesis since last week. *(Present Perfect Progressive = action starting in the past and still ongoing in the present)*

In the above given examples, the variants of English present and progressive tenses clearly outnumber the availability of directly corresponding forms in Arabic, in expressing different aspects in the past, however, the Semitic language has its inherent ways, which do thus not exist in English:

صلى محمود كل ليلة ركعتين نافلتين.

Mahmoud prayed two voluntary Rakaat prayers every night.
(= general action in the past)

كان محمود يصلي كل ليلة ركعتين نافلتين.

Mahmoud was praying two voluntary Rakaat prayers every night.
(= action in the past emphasizing its continuity)

يصلي محمود كل ليلة ركعتين نافلتين.

Mahmoud has been praying two voluntary Rakaat prayers every night *[… is still doing so and will be doing so in the future.]*

(= action started in the past continuing in the present and intended to be pursued in the future)

While the first two examples might be easy to apprehend for a foreign learner, the last construction requires particular attention. Although the sentence is written in present tense, it implies that the action has started in the past, is going on in the present and intended to be continued on in the future.

Another aspect mentioned by Raddawi where translation into L1 is very beneficial to learners is when it comes to imparting the meaning of figures of speech resp. idioms in L2. The first group of idioms that can be easily acquired through translation are idioms that pertain to the same semantic field in L1 and L2 and have the same word form:

كذبة بيضاء	white lie
لائحة سوداء	black list
حبة دواء مُرَّة	bitter pill
ضوء أخضر	green light

The second group of idioms, where translation is equally helpful but which are comparably harder to learn, are idioms that do not pertain to the same semantic field. Not only is it challenging for L2 learners to grasp the exact meaning of the idiom but also to avoid mistakes relating to syntax, order of words or punctuation as a result of L1 interference.

هذا الشبل من ذاك الأسد.	Like father, like son.
	[literally: This lion cub from that lion.]

While not only the way of expression differs in the two languages, punctuation and the absence of the verb might be possible sources of errors here for L2 learners of both languages. Other examples are:

انتظر بفارغ الصبر.	He waited on pins and needles. *(≈ he waited impatiently or nervously)* [literally: He waited with empty patience.]
انقلب السحر على الساحر.	He dug his own grave. *(≈ his evil turned against him)* [literally: The magic turned against the magician.]

Special attention needs to be paid when certain idioms are relatively similar in both languages but not completely identical.

ابن مبارح	born yesterday *(≈ somebody inexperienced, incompetent)* [literally: son of yesterday]
إيدي وأيدك	hand in hand [literally: my hand and your hand]

Altakhaineh (2010) raises again – like Raddawi further above – the issue of Arab students often omitting the verb "to be" in English sentences, as the Arab language rarely uses it in present tense. In this case, the Arab learner wrongly applies his L1 structure to English resulting in the production of incorrect L2 output:

هذا الكتاب لي.	This book is mine. [literally: This book for me.]

As a counterexample where transfer can result in correct L2 production, Altakhaineh mentions the position of object pronouns, which both in English and Arabic are placed after the verb:

هو يعرفني.	He knows **me**.

While the position of the object pronouns is quite unproblematic for learners of both the Arabic and English language, it might constitute a problem for native speakers of French learning Arabic and vice versa, as for instance in French the object pronoun precedes the verb:

Il **me** connaît.   [literally: He **me** knows.]

Further on, Altakhaineh draws the attention to a lexical difference likely to be a pitfall for Arab students: the Arab language does not distinguish between the model verbs "to want" and "to need", thus Arab students have difficulties understanding their role in a sentence and beginners avoid using more complex constructions such as "could I have…?" or "I would like…".

When going to a library, the English speaker would probably politely say "I would like to have this book" when talking to the librarian, instead of "I want this book", which sounds much more impolite in English. Acceptable would be also to say "I need this book", expressing more a *necessity* or *urgency* of having this book instead the *desire* to have it. However, Arabic can cover all these options with the same expression, which does not distinguish between urgency and wish or between a higher or lower degree of politeness: " من أريد هذا الكتاب فضلك".

Motivational and Cognitive Factors

As this paper does not only talk about translation as a means of learning but also as a means of self-study, let us shed some light on the principles of what is also called autonomous learning, particularly with regard to acquiring a foreign language.

Self-Learning

Self-learning is part and parcel of modern learning theory. It is based on humanistic and cognitive psychology and a great topic of interest in current applied linguistics research. Just as any other learner ability, learner autonomy is also considered a skill that can be acquired. Beside defining learning goals and a learning plan, it requires appropriate learning methods that allow the autonomous learner to monitor and evaluate the learning process (Johnson, 2002).

The main psychological component required for self-learning is – quite naturally – motivation. Motivation is the initial force to start learning and the long-time factor to keep up the learning process.

But what is the driving force to keep your motivation alive over a mid- and long-term period of learning? The answer to this question is apparent: success. Visible and measurable success, immediate and long-term positive results that consistently re-nourish your motivation.

Motivation in Second Language Acquisition

Numerous studies have been investigating the issue of motivation in the field of teaching and learning a second language. Two motivation types are being distinguished – *intrinsic* and *extrinsic* motivation, whereof intrinsic motivation is defined as the motivation that arises within the individual and is driven by interest and enjoyment and is therefore considered the more important element in persistent and efficient autonomous learning. Extrinsic motivation, on the other hand, is driven by outside factors such as rewards like grades, money and esteem, or threat of punishment.

Lepper and Hodell (1989) suggest that intrinsic motivation is based on the following four main factors: challenge, curiosity, control and fantasy.

In accordance with that, Vockell (2001) assumes that learners get intrinsically motivated through challenge if the following conditions are fulfilled:

    (a)   the learners themselves set and try to achieve clearly defined goals;
    (b)   the goals are neither extremely hard nor extremely easy;
    (c)   learners receive constructive and encouraging feedback about their progress, and
    (d)   learners feel confident and competent after completion of the task.

Another component Vockell points out to be essential to fuel motivation is a certain degree of control over the learning activities from the side of the learner. Understanding the relevance of the learning activities and the ability to freely choose them will endow the learner with a stronger sense of being in control.

Basically, translation as a pedagogical means is perfectly able to satisfy these points and when used as a method of self-study, it endows the learner with the greatest possible amount of freedom and control over his own learning process.

Pedagogical translation – do I need special skills to translate?

Professional translation is a competence which has been acquired through a developmental process and which is possessed by professional translators. However, it is not controversial in the translation theory that every individual has an innate predisposition to translate. The difference between professional translation and non-professional translation, namely translation as a means of foreign language teaching and learning, is that the so-called non-professional pedagogical translation is mainly sign-oriented while professional translation is mainly sense-oriented. Sign-oriented refers to a rather literal translation, though not a word-for-word translation, while sense-oriented describes a rather free and adaptive translation, whose main goal is to replicate the contents and function of a source text in another language.

The reason why L2 learners translate mainly sign-oriented is because this allows them to keep the cognitive load low, in particular at the beginning of the L2 acquisition process. Sign-oriented translation is a much easier mental process than sense-oriented translation, which is more abstract and therefore requires a much higher level of cognitive processing (Krings, 1986). As a baseline, professional translation focuses on the content of language and linguistic problems are of subordinate importance. Pedagogical translation, in contrast, focuses on the language itself (Gile, 1995). The main purpose of pedagogical translation is to recognize similarities and dissimilarities between the foreign language and the learner's mother tongue, to get used to different L2 sentence structures and expressions, to be able to understand L2 content and to produce correct output in L2 as well as to learn and revise vocabulary. Klaudy (2003) considers pedagogical translation as an instrument to improve the learner's proficiency in the foreign language, to raise consciousness, practice the language or test the acquired language skills. Hence, the goal of pedagogical translation is to improve language proficiency with the text translated as the tool to do so, while in professional translation the translated text is the goal of the process. With that in mind, a mainly sign-oriented approach in pedagogical translation can be considered sufficient, in particular in the lower levels.

As already mentioned earlier in this essay, Harris and Sherwood (1978) use to speak of a "natural translation" which is "done by bilinguals in everyday circumstances and without special training for it" (Harris 1977, 99). The authors believe that every bilingual possesses a third competence beside their linguistic competences in the two languages and that competence is the ability to translate between the two languages. According to Harris and Sherwood, this translation competence develops parallel to the bilingualism and increases with the development of the individual's command of the two languages. Lörscher (2003)

speaks of "an innate rudimentary ability to mediate" between two languages and to realize elementary translations. This ability, that endows every human with basic translation skills, is made up of two universal skills of the human intellect: the ability of categorizing and the ability of comparing and differentiating. According to Lörscher, these two skills allow the individual to express sense and signs and their connections in different ways. Transferring this to language learning, every human is able to express the same content (sense) in different ways, referring to lexical, syntactical and grammatical constructions etc. (signs) in his mother tongue and to connect these sense and signs to a second language. Ringbom (1985) found that when learning a new L2, foreign learners make use of all previous knowledge they consider to be relevant in order to acquire the new language more easily. This includes their previous knowledge about the L2 as well as the knowledge of their L1 and possible other foreign languages learned. When learning a foreign language, learners constantly filter and translate information through their L1 - a natural process that occurs automatically and cannot be stopped or avoided. In this form, translation can be considered as a rather unconscious process, because the learner is not focusing on the translation process deliberately. Therefore, even if the second language is entirely taught through the L2, learners are still using translation into their L1 as one cognitive process to decode the information.

Now that we have seen that mental translation is a naturally-occurring cognitive process, it seems to be rather useful to carry out this activity consciously and to teach the learners how to translate correctly in order to help them avoid translation mistakes, which happen naturally anyway even if translation is not used as a classroom activity.

Pedagogical Translation Model: Interdependence of Motivation and Success

The author of this paper holds the view that translation being used in its pedagogical form in foreign language acquisition is a very effective method of study and self-study that can provide the learner with success, freedom and control over his learning activity, which is necessary to maintain motivation and keep alive the learning process, even throughout tedious phases of learning.

The following model is meant to illustrate how the translation process can be carried out in order to give the learner a high degree of freedom and control over his learning activity and how motivation and success can interfunction when using translation as a means of study:
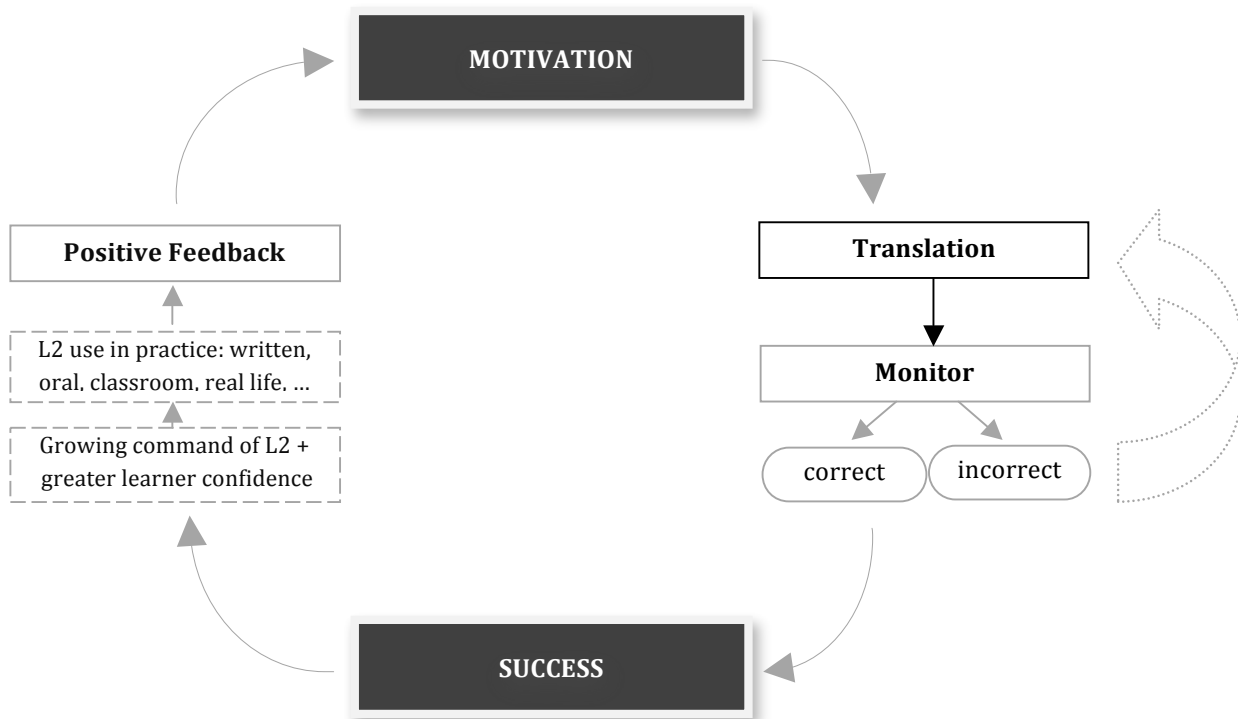
Ill. 1: Interdependence model of motivation and success when using translation as a means of (self-)study in second language acquisition

Let us assume a learner who wants to learn a foreign language. His/her starting point is – most ideally - motivation. During his/her learning process, s/he uses translation as a means of study. One option is that the learner takes a source text in L2, that s/he has already worked on and which s/he is sure to understand, and translates this text into his/her mother tongue. While translating, the learner monitors his/her comprehension of the L2 text, might figure out initial slight misunderstandings of the source content and notice differences in the way of expressing the same meaning in his/her L1. Also, the learner will become aware of the always multiple options his/her L1 offers him/her to render the corresponding L2 content; that is what was further above referred to as a creative way to use a language. As a matter of fact, new and old vocabulary is also being revised during that process.

An aid to get familiar with L2 peculiarities that differ from L1 in a way the beginning learner might not be able to handle them at this point, is to transfer the relevant part of a sentence

(almost) literally or to make an insertion in parentheses in case of a highly divergent L1 structure as a mnemonic aid for the subsequent back-translation. This is for the sole purpose of helping the learner get used to such interlinguistic differences. Once they have been successfully internalized by the learner, this does not need to be done any more.

What this can look like in practice shall be illustrated by the following Arabic sentences, each exemplifying a construction which remarkably differs, for instance, from any Germanic, Romance or Slavonic language:

دخل المكتبة المدير ورجل آخر لا أعرفه قبل قليل.

Entered the library the director and another man - I don't know him – before shortly.

ذهبت إلى مكتب البريد لآخذ البرقية التي جاءتني من أبي.

I went to the post office to (for) take the telegraph which came (to) me from my father.

أرجو أن تشتري لي هذا الكتاب عندما تذهب إلى الهند في عطلة الصيف.

I ask that you buy for me this book when you go to India in the summer vacation.

ما هو الأمر الذي لم تفهمه في الدرس؟

What (is he) the issue which you didn't understand (him) in the lesson?

من المفارقات أيضاً, أن المعلم لم يكن يطلب أجراً على عمله في الماضي.

From the differences too, that the teacher didn't ask a compensation (on) his work in the past.

Back to the translation process: after having translated a certain text passage from L2 into L1, the learner leaves the translation aside for a while in order to later resume it and translate back into L2, which will be the more demanding and also the more efficient learning task. What might sound like an easy job to the non-expert reader, must not be underestimated. Most certainly, an L2 learner will never be able to re-translate the text entirely correctly. Errors in grammar, syntax, spelling, punctuation or due to not memorized vocabulary are most likely bound to occur. During this re-translation process, the learner will most importantly practice L2 syntax, grammar and expressions and thus considerably develop his/her style competences in the foreign language. The process will equally help accelerate the internalization of the L2 syntax structures, grammatical and expressional patterns. Again, vocabulary is being practiced

and the brain in now trained to connect L1 and L2 equivalents in the respectively opposite direction.

As a third step, the learner counterchecks his/her translation against the source text. This step is referred to as "The Monitor" in the above illustration – a means endowing the learner with an easy way of self-control.
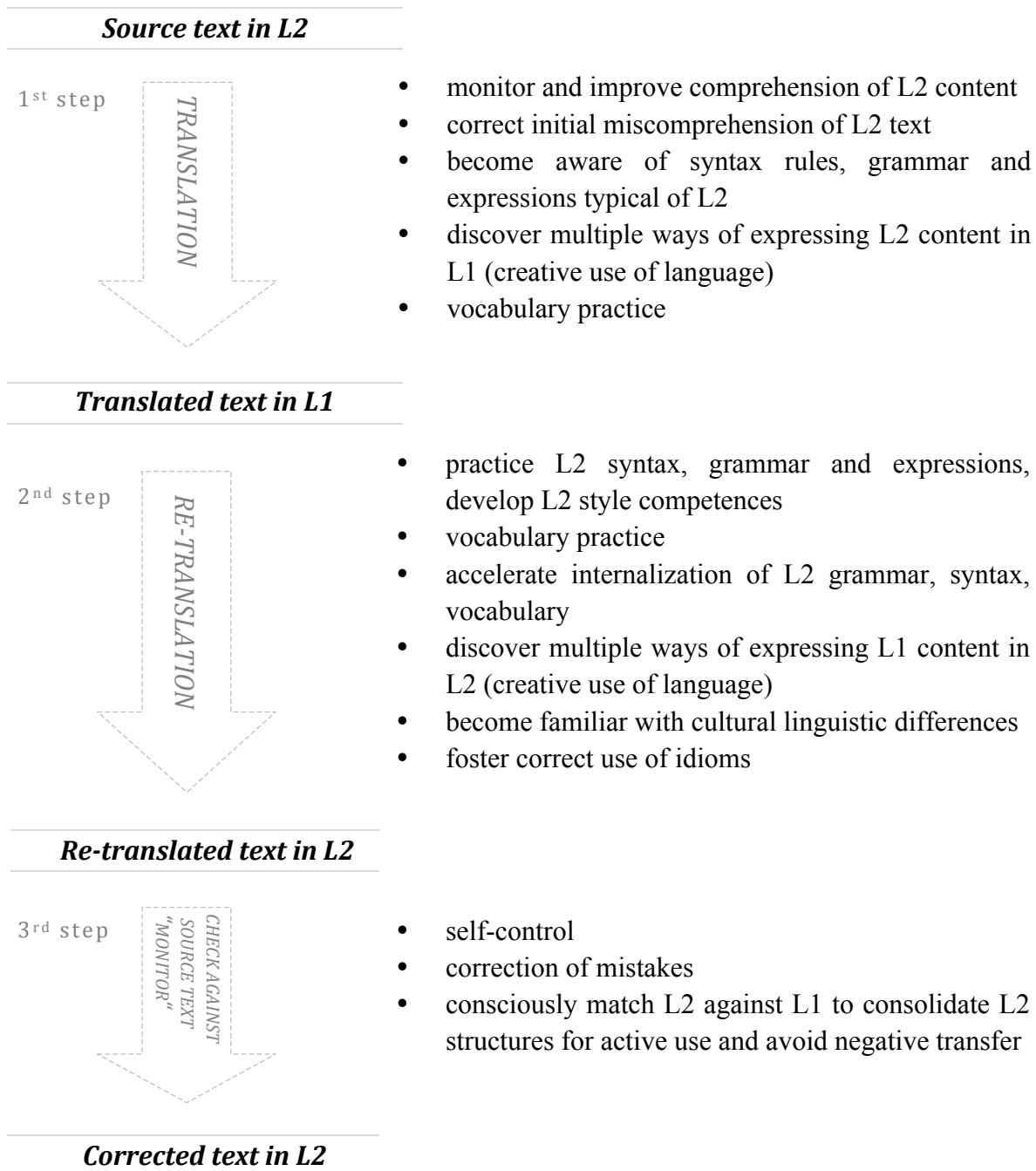
If the learner was able to express the content in L1 and to do this mostly correctly, the exercise constitutes an experience of success. In case of a mistake in his/her translation, the learner will figure out what kind of mistake s/he made (lexis, morphology, grammar, syntax, interference, etc.), contrast with his L1, note similarity or dissimilarity, translate again properly and memorize the correct version in order to avoid the mistake in the future. The second time the learner comes across an identical linguistic phenomenon, s/he will most likely be able to use the correct form.

Checking the translation against the source text and finding it correct produces an immediately visible success and awards the student with a sense of achievement, which in return will boost his/her motivation. A higher motivation will lead to more study, which will consequently lead to more success and thus the circle can go on and on. We can now assume that regular translation will endow the learner with a better proficiency in L2 and thus also strengthen his confidence when using the language in practice, may it be in written or oral form, in the classroom or in real life situations. As the learner is acquiring a good command of the language, s/he is likely to get positive feedback from his/her environment, which will once again add to his/her motivation.

As described above, translation is an easy-to-implement self-learning method that gives the learner the necessary autonomy concerning freedom of choice and control over the learning activity. Practice will allow the learner to become successful in decoding the system of the foreign language by his/her own, i.e., independently grasp syntax rules and grammatical phenomena typical of the L2. Translation constitutes a supplementary means of repetition and training in addition to the regular SLA exercises, as well as a way of context-oriented revision of vocabulary, instead of bilingual vocabulary glossaries. Using texts which correspond to the respectively achieved language level of the learner allows to easily ensure a progression with the translation exercises.

Conclusion

With that said, we can now summarize and illustrate the pedagogical translation process as it can be used in foreign language classes as well as a means of self-study as a 3-step process, from which the learner can draw the following benefits:

Source text in L2

1st step — *TRANSLATION*

- monitor and improve comprehension of L2 content
- correct initial miscomprehension of L2 text
- become aware of syntax rules, grammar and expressions typical of L2
- discover multiple ways of expressing L2 content in L1 (creative use of language)
- vocabulary practice

Translated text in L1

2nd step — *RE-TRANSLATION*

- practice L2 syntax, grammar and expressions, develop L2 style competences
- vocabulary practice
- accelerate internalization of L2 grammar, syntax, vocabulary
- discover multiple ways of expressing L1 content in L2 (creative use of language)
- become familiar with cultural linguistic differences
- foster correct use of idioms

Re-translated text in L2

3rd step — *CHECK AGAINST SOURCE TEXT "MONITOR"*

- self-control
- correction of mistakes
- consciously match L2 against L1 to consolidate L2 structures for active use and avoid negative transfer

Corrected text in L2

Ill. 2: 3-steps pedagogical translation process displaying the learner's benefits in each step.

References:

Abu-Jarad, H. A. (1986). *English Interlanguage of Palestinian University Students in Gaza Strip: An Analysis of Relative Clauses and Verb Tense*. Muncie, IN: Ball State University.

Altakhaineh, A. R. (2010, December 24). The main theories in Second Language Acquisition (SLA). Retrieved from http://www.articlesbase.com/languages-articles/the-main-theories-in-second-language-acquisition-sla-3912299.html

Anderman, G. (1998). Finding the Right Words: Translation and language Teaching. In K. Malmkjaer (Ed.), *Translation and Language Teaching* (pp. 39-48). Manchester, UK: St.Jerome, 1998.

Auerbach, E. (1993). Reexamining English Only in the ESL Classroom. *TESOL Quarterly, 27*(1), 9-32.

Bataineh, R. F. (2005). Jordanian Undergraduate EFL Students' Errors in the Use of the Indefinite Article. *Asian EFL Journal, 7*(1), 56-76.

Burden, P. (2000). The Use of the Students' Mother Tongue in Monolingual English "Conversation" Classes at Japanese Universities. *The Language Teacher, 24*(6), 5-10.

Butzkamm, W. (2003). We only learn language once. The role of the mother tongue in EFL classrooms: Death of a dogma. *Language Learning Journal, 28*(1), 29-39.

Conlin, J. (2010, August 6). For American Students, Life Lessons in the Mideast. *New York Times*. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2010/08/08/fashion/08Abroad.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0

Deller, S., & Rinvolucri, M. (2002). *Using the Mother Tongue – making the most of the learner's language* (1st ed.). London, UK: Delta Publishing.

Dulay, H., Burt M., & Krashen, S. (1982). *Language Two*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Ellis, R. (1994). *The Study of Second Language Acquisition*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Fakhri, A. (1995). Arabic as a Foreign Language: Bringing Diglossia into the Classroom. In M. A. Haggstrom, L. Z. Morgan & J. A. Wieczorek (Eds.), *The Foreign Language Classroom: Bridging Theory and Practice* (p. 135). New York, NY: Garland.

Ford, S. (2012, May 24). Arabic mandatory at city public school. *New York Post*. Retrieved from http://www.nypost.com/p/news/local/manhattan/arabic_mandatory_at_city_public_UdLomjO OnZNfjDfs6YQrUN#ixzz1wRsHPw4C

Gile, D. (1995). *Basic Concepts and Models for Interpreter and Translator Training*. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Harbord, J. (1992). The Use of the Mother Tongue in the Classroom. *ELT Journal, 46*(4), 30-55.

Harris, B. (1977). The importance of natural translation. *Working Papers on Bilingualism, 12,* 96-114.

Harris, B., & Sherwood, B. (1978). Translation as an innate skill. In D. Gerver & H. W. Sinaiko (Eds.), *Language interpretation and communication* (pp. 155-170).

Hawks, P. (2001). Making Distinctions: A Discussion of the Mother Tongue in the Foreign Language Classroom. *Hwa Kang Journal of TEFL, 7,* 47-55.

Johnson, K. (2002*). An Introduction to Foreign Language Learning and Teaching.* Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press.

Klaudy, K. (2003). *Languages in Translation*. Budapest: Scholastica.

Krings, H. P. (1986). *Was in den Köpfen von Übersetzern vorgeht. Eine empirische Untersuchung der Struktur des Übersetzungsprozesses an fortgeschrittenen Französischlernern*. Tübingen, Germany: Narr

Lakkis, K., & Malak, M. A. (2000). Understanding the Transfer of Prepositions. *FORUM 38*(3). Retrieved from http://www.languageinindia.com/april2010/mahendrandissertation.pdf

Lepper M., & Hodell M. (1989). Intrinsic motivation in the classroom. In C. Ames & R. Ames (Eds.), *Research on motivation in education: goals and cognitions* (pp. 73-105). San Diego, CA: Academic Press.

Lörscher, W. (2003). Process Analytical Approach to Translation and Implications for Translations Teaching. *Ilha do Desterro, 44*, 83-99.

Mahmoud , A. (2002). *The interlingual errors of Arab students: A coursebook for for education English majors*. Sultan Qaboos University. Unpublished manuscript.

Pacek, D. (2003). *Should EFL Give Up on Translation?* Talk Given at the 11th Annual Korea TESOL International Conference, October 18th, 2003, Seoul.

Pennycook, A. (1994). *The Cultural Politics of English as an International Language.* London, UK: Longman.

Phillipson, R. (1992). *Linguistic Imperialism.* Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Prince, P. (1996). Second language vocabulary learning: The role of context versus translations as a function of proficiency. *The Modern Language Journal, 80*(4), 478-493.

Procházka, S. (2006). Arabic. In K. Brown (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of language and linguistics* (2nd ed.). Amsterdam, the Netherlands: Elsevier Ltd.

Raddawi, R. (2005). Translation: A Multidimensional Task. *K@ta, 7*(2), 69-84.

Ringbom, H. (1985). *Foreign Language Learning and Bilingualism*. Turku, Finland: Åbo akademi.

Ryding, K. C. (2003). Some Key Issues in Learning Arabic as a Foreign Language. *Arabic & Islamic Studies, Georgetown University*. Retrieved from http://arabic.georgetown.edu/about/aboutarabic/afl/

Saville-Troike, M. (2006). *Introducing Second Language Acquisition*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Schäffner, C. (1998). Qualification for professional translators. Translation in language teaching versus teaching translation. In K. Malmkjaer (Ed.), *Translation and Language Teaching* (pp. 117-134). Manchester, UK: St. Jerome Publishing.

Shiyab, S., & Mohammad A. (2001). Translation and Foreign Language Teaching. *Journal of King Saud University: Language and Translation, 13*, 1-9.

Stibbard, R. (1998). The Principled Use of Translation in Foreign Language Teaching. In K. Malmkjaer (Ed.), *Translation and Language Teaching*. Manchester, UK: St. Jerome.

Vermes, A. (2010). Translation in Foreign Language Teaching: A Brief Overview of Pros and Cons. *Eger Journal of English Studies, 10*, 83-93.

Vockell, E. (2001). *Educational psychology: a practical approach*. Calumet, IN: Purdue University. Retrieved from http://education.purduecal.edu/Vockell/EdPsyBook/

Wringe, C. (1989). *The Effective Teaching of Modern Languages*. London, UK: Longman.

Yahalom, T. (2007, September 4). Surge in students studying Arabic outstrips supply of teachers. *USA Today*. Retrieved from http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/education/2007-09-04-arabic-teachers_N.htm