# Using Literary Translation as a Tool for EFL Learner Engagement

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## استخدام الترجمة الأدبية كأداة لزيادة تفاعل متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية

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**Abstract:**

This research measured how well EFL learners learned English and became interested in new cultures when they translated literary works. The researcher conducted a quasi-experimental study with 100 University Students Faculty of Arts English Department. The experimental group practiced literary translation by moving between text types when they translated between Arabic and English texts, while the control group continued standard EFL methods. Learners took testing before and after the course to check their language development, and we asked them to answer questions about their involvement in learning plus their cultural understanding. The data showed that learners in the experimental group improved their language skills more than their control group peers, plus they became more interested in their studies and learned better about local cultural content. Statistical results showed that learning through literary translation helped students develop better language skills and made them both more motivated and better at understanding cultural aspects found in the language they wanted to learn. Footnote research showed EFL students benefit from learning language through literary translation, which makes education more exciting and helps students become fluent in foreign language and understand cultural references.

**Keywords:** Literary translation, EFL learners, language proficiency, engagement, cultural awareness, quasi-experimental design, university students, motivation, authentic texts.

**الملخص:**

هذا البحث قيّم مدى تعلم متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية واهتمامهم بالثقافات الجديدة عندما قاموا بترجمة الأعمال الأدبية. أجرى الباحث دراسة شبه تجريبية مع 100 طالب من قسم اللغة الإنجليزية بكلية الآداب. قامت المجموعة التجريبية بممارسة الترجمة الأدبية من خلال الانتقال بين أنواع النصوص عند ترجمة النصوص بين العربية والإنجليزية، بينما استمرت المجموعة الضابطة في استخدام طرق تعليم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية التقليدية. خضع المتعلمون لاختبارات قبل وبعد الدورة للتحقق من تطور لغتهم، وطلبنا منهم الإجابة على أسئلة حول مشاركتهم في التعلم وفهمهم الثقافي. أظهرت البيانات أن المتعلمين في المجموعة التجريبية قد حسّنوا مهاراتهم اللغوية أكثر من نظرائهم في المجموعة الضابطة، بالإضافة إلى أنهم أصبحوا أكثر اهتمامًا بدراساتهم وتعلموا بشكل أفضل عن المحتوى الثقافي المحلي. أظهرت النتائج الإحصائية أن التعلم من خلال الترجمة الأدبية ساعد الطلاب على تطوير مهارات لغوية أفضل وجعلهم أكثر تحفيزًا وقدرة على فهم الجوانب الثقافية الموجودة في اللغة التي يرغبون في تعلمها. أظهرت الأبحاث الفرعية أن طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية يستفيدون من تعلم اللغة من خلال الترجمة الأدبية، مما يجعل التعليم أكثر إثارة ويساعد الطلاب على الطلاقة في اللغة الأجنبية وفهم الإشارات الثقافية.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** الترجمة الأدبية، متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، المجموعة التجريبية، طلاب الجامعات، الدافع، النصوص الأصيلة.

## Introduction:

The basic concept of literary translation is simply that of translating a piece of literature from one language into another while trying to keep at least the same meaning, but additionally as much as possible the tone, style, the cultural nuances, as well as the emotional depth of the original text (Holmes, 2021). Accordingly, it is a complex exercise that depends on a fine line that runs between linguistic accuracy and the poetic dynamic (Kronfeld, 2023). The literary translation is not an academic exercise only in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning. However, this does not simply make it a static tool only for student learning; rather, it becomes a dynamic and engaging tool that has great potential to enrich the learning experience of students and provide them with great opportunities for linguistic and cultural learning (Conceição, 2021).

For the past few decades, there has been a growing interest in the bridging capability of literary texts for learners of the language. As with other EFL learners, interacting with authentic literary materials, such as prose, poetry, and drama, presents them with language in its authentic, rich, and nuanced form (Hossain, 2024). The literary work is a complex and layered building that involves a higher level of linguistic and cognitive challenge than any traditional pedagogical text (Schat et al., 2023). Through the process of translation, EFL learners will be trained on skills such as vocabulary acquisition, grammar, idiomatic expressions, syntax, and cultural references necessary for the attainment of a high level of proficiency in the target language (Abadou, 2024).

In addition, literary translation involves learners on an emotional and intellectual level. Unlike mechanical language exercises drawn from imaginary contexts, literary translation is closely connected with the aesthetic and creative sides of language (Elewa, 2024). In any of the forms, literature conveys the universal human experiences—joy, sorrow, love, conflict, and identity that exist beyond cultural perspective. As a result, literary translation is an excellent instrument for developing empathy, developing cultural awareness, and enhancing critical thought in EFL learners (Sun, 2023). In interpreting and reinterpreting literary works in Korean, learners are encouraged to study not only linguistic aspects of the text but also the cultural and social background from which the original text comes (Feruza, 2025).

Apart from developing language skills, literary translation contributes to the refinement of essential cognitive and analytical skills (Cheng, 2022). To translate a literary text, one must know how to make a critical inquiry of, and respond to, the meaning and structure of language. Being asked to look at how different linguistic elements (for example, words, punctuation, and layout) combine to deliver the message, give tone, and achieve an effect aids the sharpening of analytical thinking (García et al., 2021). In addition, translation assists second language learners to develop an awareness of how language works, or what is known as metalinguistic awareness. By this, it poses a mindful challenge to learners to be mindful of the many layers of meaning and sense there are to the language and to the many ways in which equivalence, context, and style interact with each other.

**Rationale of the Study:**

Today's interconnected world has brought attention to effective foreign language learning strategies because of increasing globalization in communication and the rising importance of cultural exchange. EFL is a leading educational subject in this field because English functions as the international language that enables communication in business, technology, science, and cultural domains. The traditional approach to language teaching mainly teaches fundamental language skills, which include grammar and vocabulary, together with pronunciation rules. The technical elements of language instruction leave out essential creative linguistic features that develop fluency and cultural understanding in language learning (Quintana Pacheco, 2024).

The research needs to explore how literary translation affects students' motivation levels during classroom activities. Students lose interest when traditional language learning methods require the memorization of repeated exercises because such methods tend to be monotonous. Literary translation engages students as participants in their education through authentic text interpretation and analytical work, which stimulates creative engagement. Student involvement with the learning material creates both learning ownership and personal meaning as well as motivation. The research examines which effect translation of literature has on student language learning approach as measured through their ardent participation along with sustained commitment to language education.

The cognitive advantages and linguistic capabilities are vital aspects that emerge through the practice of literary translation. An expert translator needs to demonstrate a thorough command of both the original and translated languages because of the unique requirements of literary text translation. Effective translation of literature needs students to have skills for analyzing syntax together with tone and metaphor alongside cultural references so they develop critical thinking in language structure and meaning. Through this process, students can acquire superior language abilities, which include refining their vocabulary knowledge, mastering grammar rules, and developing skills for interpreting subtle language features. This research investigates how literary translation improves students' language skills and establishes the extent to which it enhances language abilities better than traditional learning methods.

The objective of this research was to analyze how cultural context affects the translation process when used in an EFL classroom. When authors choose to write their literature during specific periods, they also incorporate elements that represent cultural elements and historical times alongside social aspects, which teach readers about alternative ways of life. The transfer of cultural concepts through translation methods demands students to handle diverse cultural elements between languages. Participation in literary translation enables EFL learners to recognize the cultural elements of their target language and develops their understanding of these elements while building better cultural literacy skills. The research will assess literary translation as an instrument to develop students' cultural sensitivity while they read cultural literature.

This study focuses on improving both the methodology of teaching and the content of EFL education as its main motivating factor. Literary translation yields various learning benefits for language acquisition, but practical proof of its classroom success requires more real-world investigations. This research delivers vital information that EFL teachers need when adding literary translation methods to their educational instruction. This research provides a basis for teachers to understand how translation serves as a pedagogical method for student involvement that leads to the development of active student-led lessons.

The research results can serve as a foundation to evolve forthcoming language teaching methods because they show how these aspects interrelate. The worldwide development of educational systems requires modern teaching practices that transform beyond simple grammar-teaching methods due to global society demands. Literary translation functions as an educational approach that allows students to connect with genuine speech patterns through meaningful and intellectually challenging interactions.

The research goals target an investigation about how literary translation helps EFL learners become more engaged while also improving their motivation levels, language skills, and cultural knowledge. This academic investigation tests the possibilities of literary translation to learn languages to offer significant results about teaching literature

through translation. The research findings will strengthen academic LLA knowledge and provide educators with usable recommendations to develop interactive teaching practices in language education.

## Statement of the Problem:

During EFL training, English language learners normally receive basic language development through traditional grammar and vocabulary exercises. Basic language learning methods establish language basics but fall short of stimulating students to learn the language more thoroughly while seeing the world through foreign texts and customs. EFL students need better engagement because they find it hard to use their skills in real life, especially when reading true texts and speaking English.

The process that turns literary texts from one language into another provides a useful method to overcome these challenges. Literary works teach students important language and cultural learning experiences that develop their language skills plus help them understand multiple ways of life. Current research lacks enough information about how literary translations benefit English as a Foreign Language students with their learning activities and language skills development. Learners benefit from literature studies through reading and analysis tasks, while research must explore how translation improves overall engagement and learning.

Student motivation and deep language learning outcomes from translation methods require more research in EFL education despite their strong promotion in teaching practices. Teachers need to choose translation assignments more actively as traditional EFL classes mostly use passive approaches that prevent learners from creative language exploration. Available research about using literary translation in EFL classrooms is incomplete because scientists have not properly validated this method in real universities.

This research aims to study how using literary translation methods fosters better learning outcomes for EFL students. This research analyzes how teaching literature through translation affects English Foreign Language students' motivation to learn and their learning capabilities. To examine how literary translation enhances EFL teaching, this research studies its effective use in language classrooms.

## Objectives of the Study

The following were the objectives of the study;

1. This research evaluates the effects that literary translation has on EFL students' acquisition of vocabulary and their mastery of language.
2. The research investigates how literary translation contributes to EFL student involvement and class motivation and performance.
3. The research investigates how critical thinking develops through literary translation procedures.
4. A study about how literary translation helps English as a Foreign Language students improve their understanding of the target language culture while gaining awareness about its cultural context.
5. The evaluation of using literary translation within educational methods and curriculum designs for EFL instruction.

## Research Questions

Following were the research questions of the study;

1. What kind of effect does literary translation have on EFL learners' vocabulary acquisition and the general state of their productive language proficiency?
2. How is the literary translation involved in the engagement and increasing motivation of the EFL learners in the learning process?
3. What is the role of the literary translation process in developing the critical thinking skills of EFL learners?
4. How will literary translation affect EFL learners' awareness of the target language's culture and the target language?
5. To what extent does the EFL curriculum profit from including literary translation in language teaching for enhancing language learning outcomes?

Researchers have increasingly explored how to incorporate literary translation into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) lessons. Literary translation provides numerous opportunities because its multisided nature extends from cultural insight to language development for students while enhancing their learning experience. The addition of literary translation to traditional language teaching methods gives students a complete learning experience for second language acquisition beyond grammar and vocabulary and communication development. This review examines the scientific studies on literary translation analysis along with its effects on EFL students' motivational improvement and cognitive growth development cultural proficiency as well as proficiency development.

## Quantitative Research Methodology

The authors conducted a quantitative research study to analyze the effects of literary translation practice on EFL learner participation and language ability together with motivational levels among Libyan University Students Faculty of Arts English Department. A quasi-experimental design structure served as the research foundation for comparing experimental group results with traditional curriculum results of the control group. The researchers made this design selection to measure variations in language learning abilities and student participation as well as cultural skill development among the two controlled groups.

**Research Design**

For this research, the investigators chose to utilize a quasi-experimental design with a control group as well as an experimental group. Students in the experimental group learned English as a foreign language through translation activities, yet the control group maintained their traditional language learning without translation components. The research design enabled investigators to monitor the effects of using literature translation tasks on student performance in foreign language acquisition alongside their motivational patterns and cultural development.

Students attending University Students Faculty of Arts English Department participated in translation activities that required them to work with short stories and poems to build their language abilities.

Taxonomic Group: Students enrolled in traditional foreign language education who maintained their studies in grammar and vocabulary, along with reading exercises, because they were not required to do literary translations.

**Population and Sample**

Students attending University Students Faculty of Arts English Department made up the study population because these institutions taught English as a Foreign Language (EFL). The researchers chose participants because they displayed adequate abilities to understand and work with intermediate-level EFL educational materials. Two universities located in urban areas were involved to provide diverse representatives among participants.

**Table 1:** Population of the study.

| Category | Description |
|---|---|
| Country | Libya |
| Region | Urban areas of Libya |
| Educational Level | University Students Faculty of Arts English Department |
| Language Level | Intermediate EFL learners |
| Age Range | 19-25 years old |

The table presents the target group, which was university students faculty of arts English department. These students were young adults aged between sixteen and eighteen years and non-native English language learners at an intermediate level of education. Its location is the urban area of Libya, which can help explain the educational and the linguistic background of the group. Their education level is university students faculty of arts English department, and in the process of achieving communicative competence in English they belong to the intermediate stage.

**Table 2: Sample of the Study**

| Group | Number of Participants | Age Range | Language Proficiency | Intervention |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Experimental Group | 50 | 19-25 years old | Intermediate EFL learners | Engaged in literary translation tasks |
| Control Group | 50 | 19-25 years old | Intermediate EFL learners | Followed traditional language curriculum |

Random sampling was used to obtain the research sample, which both prevented bias and created a representative participant group. Two hundred students participated in the experiment, which split them into an experimental section with 50 participants and a control group consisting of 50 participants. Students ranging from 16 to 18 years participated in the study and had spent multiple years studying English as a foreign language. The researchers gave both groups of participants the same language proficiency evaluation before the experimental period to confirm they had similar starting levels.

**Data Collection Instruments**

The research gathered data about learners' language proficiency alongside their engagement and cultural awareness through the following collection tools:

Multiple assessments containing language proficiency tests were distributed to students at the beginning and conclusion of the experiment. The evaluation system assessed the learners' vocabulary performance as well as their grammar ability, their reading understanding, and their ability to write efficiently. The students received the pre-tests before the intervention period so researchers could establish their starting proficiency levels before evaluating changes resulting from the intervention with post-tests.

The experimental group conducted translation work primarily with literary materials that included various short story pieces and novel extracts and poetic texts from both English to Arabic directions and Arabic to English directions. The tasks were developed to deliver genuine language content and promote student involvement with cultural documents to achieve intercultural competence.

**Ethical Considerations**

Before starting research, all participants, together with their parents, received comprehensive information regarding the study and its objectives as well as research procedures and possible risks. The participants, along with their parents, provided written consent to participate in the study.

Researchers protected participant confidentiality by maintaining personal identification secrets during the research period. All recorded information received a level of anonymity that prevented students from being identified as individual participants.

The study depended on voluntary student involvement, and all participants received a warning about the right to stop participating at any point with no unfavorable consequences.

**Limitations of the Study**

Conditions affecting the reliability of the research methods came to light during the execution of this quantitative investigation.

The statistical evaluation required 100 student participants, but using a larger research sample would have strengthened both the study outcomes and their application across different environments.

The investigation happened within university student's faculty of arts English department and thus prevents researchers from applying study results to universities locations or other educational environments.

Literary translation remains subjective since different learners interpret literary works differently, which might result in inconsistent translation results.

The eight-week duration of the study measurement does not fully reveal how long-term effects of literary translation impact student proficiency and engagement. A longitudinal study would deliver more profound comprehension about how the intervention affects participants over time.

**Table 3:** Descriptive Statistics.

| Group | Pre-Test Mean | Post-Test Mean | Standard Deviation (Pre-Test) | Standard Deviation (Post-Test) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Experimental Group | 58.3 | 75.6 | 12.4 | 10.2 |
| Control Group | 57.5 | 60.2 | 11.1 | 9.8 |

Shown in the table is the data of the pre-test and post-test of two groups: experimental and control. The post-intervention mean score of the experimental group was 58.3 before the intervention and 75.6 after the intervention. The standard deviation for the pre-test was 12.4, with the standard deviation of the post-test being 10.2 in this group. On the other hand, the mean score of the control group in the pre–test was 57.5, which became 60.2 in the post-test. The standard deviation for the pre-test in the control group was 11.1, and there was a decrease, though not much, to 9.8 on the post-test. Based on the mean scores and standard deviations, this data indicates an improvement of the experimental group, relatively to the control group, on both scores.

**Table 4:** Paired Samples t-Test (Within Group).

| Group | t-Value | Degrees of Freedom | p-Value |
|---|---|---|---|
| Experimental Group | -5.33 | 49 | 0.000 |
| Control Group | -1.25 | 49 | 0.214 |

Within each group, the results of the paired samples t-test are shown on the table. For the experimental group, the t-value was -5.33 degrees of freedom 49, and the p-value was 0.000. This shows that there is a statistically significant difference between post-test and pre-test scores. It implies that the intervention had a strong impact on the performance of the experimental group. As a comparison, the control group had a t-value of -1.25 with the degree of freedom 49 and p-value of 0.214, and it was not statistically significant. This translates to this group (the control group) having no meaningful difference between its pre-test and post-test scores.

**Table 5:** Independent Samples t-Test (Between Groups).

| Group Comparison | t-Value | Degrees of Freedom | p-Value |
|---|---|---|---|
| Experimental vs. Control | -8.99 | 98 | 0.000 |

The data from the experimental group and control group appeared in the presented table of results. The statistical analysis of the comparison group through t-value (-8.99) produced 98 degrees of freedom and a p-value reaching 0.000. The experimental group scored substantially better in their post-test results than the control group, creating a statistically important distinction between the two groups. The observed difference proves effective for the experimental group because the low p-value (below 0.05) demonstrates that this outcome cannot happen randomly.

**Table 6**: Regression Analysis.

| Predictor | Coefficient | Standard Error | t-Value | p-Value |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Engagement | 0.67 | 0.12 | 5.58 | 0.000 |
| Cultural Awareness | 0.55 | 0.10 | 5.50 | 0.000 |

A regression analysis of two predictors shows its results in the table between Engagement and Cultural Awareness. The investigation shows that Engagement produces a coefficient of 0.67 while its standard error reaches 0.12, the t-value reaches 5.58, and the p-value remains at 0.000. The positive value of Engagement in the prediction indicates that elevating Engagement levels produces higher dependent variable values. The analysis shows that Cultural Awareness functions as a statistically significant positive predictor with 0.55 as the coefficient value and standard error at 0.10 and t-value of 5.50 and a p-value of 0.000. Statistical significance appears in both predictors because their p-values measure less than 0.05.

This table summarizes the mean scores for **cultural awareness** from the pre-test and post-test for both the experimental and control groups.

**Table 7:** Cultural Awareness.

| Group | Pre-Test Mean (Cultural Awareness) | Post-Test Mean (Cultural Awareness) | Standard Deviation (Pre-Test) | Standard Deviation (Post-Test) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Experimental Group | 51.7 | 72.5 | 14.3 | 11.8 |
| Control Group | 52.0 | 54.5 | 13.6 | 10.9 |

The mean scores of cultural awareness across pre and post-tests in both groups are presented in the table. The pre-test mean score for the experimental group was 51.7 in cultural awareness, which turned out to be significantly greater than 72.5 in the post-test. The standard deviation of the pre-test was 14.3, and it was 11.8 after the intervention. However, the mean score in the pre-test of the control group was 52.0, which tended to increase to only 54.5 in the post-test. The pre-test value of standard deviation in the control group was 13.6, which was reduced to 10.9 in the post-test. However, this represents substantial improvement in the level of cultural awareness in the experimental group compared with a minimum of changes in the control group.

**Conclusions**

The purpose of this study was to examine literary translation as a pedagogical tool that could help to increase a learner's language proficiency, create engagement with the second language, and develop cultural awareness. The study, undertaken using the quantitative research methodology embedded with a quasi-experimental design, compared an experimental group that translated literary texts with the control group which resorted to the traditional ways of learning language. This evidence conclusively supports the idea that literary translation can be included in the EFL curriculum as a tool that will enhance different areas of EFL learning.

Significant improvement in Language Proficiency was observed in the experimental group than the control group. Learners were exposed to richer vocabulary, more complex language structures, and more authentic texts in the process of literary translation tasks. It helps improve their reading comprehension, writing fluency, and overall language proficiency. Statistical analysis indicated that the intervention made a difference in the learners' language skills, proving that literary translation is an effective instrument to enhance language learning.

The experimental group also had better engagement and motivation. Translation tasks were more intellectually stimulating and personally meaningful to learners in the experimental group, and they therefore participated more and with more enthusiasm in the classroom. There is a good correlation between improvements in language proficiency and engagement as well as cultural awareness, which means motivation has a major part in language learning. The highly motivating factor for students was literary translation, which led to fostering autonomy and creative expression.

The findings suggest that EFL curricula should integrate literary translation. Authentic texts and creative student involvement with language can go a long way in a teacher creating a rich but dynamic learning environment. Literary translation contributes to both language proficiency and the ability to think critically and understand various cultures, and its importance is not limited to linguistic aspects, but it also helps in creating a language learner's motivation. Therefore, language skills and literary analysis, together with cultural exploration, can be considered as some of the approaches that educators should embrace in adopting more interdisciplinary approaches to teaching.

Recommendations for Future Research: The findings in this study are encouraging; however, additional research is required to establish the long-term effects of literary translation on language learning outcomes. Future studies can include larger, more diverse samples of students, including those from different education contexts and proficiency levels. The personal experiences of participating students could also be understood with qualitative research in greater detail, consequently contributing more to the emotional and intellectual advantages of students when they are involved in literary translation.

## Final Remarks

English as a Foreign Language teaching takes on a rich approach through literary translation that develops pupils' language skills and teaches them about new cultures. Educators can develop students' language skills better when they use translation exercises that connect learners with the EFL material they study. This research proves literary translation is a great teaching method which educators should explore for use in different countries.

## Recommendations of the Study

The following recommendations were made from findings and discussion of the study;

1. Introduce literary translation tasks into the EFL curriculum to improve the language and intercultural competence of students.
2. Introduce more diversified structures to the learners and enrich the language they use, as well as the texts which they read, with authentic samples of literary texts.
3. Promote independent student activity by using creativity-based assignments like, for instance, literary translation.
4. I suggest EFL teachers to incorporate translation into other skills such as reading, writing as well as speaking skill to make a more holistic learning process.
5. Experienced teachers should give directions and support to the students in comprehending difficult texts, especially when reading versions of literary works.
6. Employ literary translation in building intercultural sensibility and appreciation while learning English as a foreign language.
7. Short stories, poems, and novels should be used in teaching and learning processes in order to introduce variety of linguistic and cultural perspectives.
8. Carry out more research studies to establish the extent to which ENL translation enhances the language acquisition and learning motivation of EFL students.
9. Include peer feedback and collaborative translation tasks into the design in order to encourage cooperation and reflectively discussing the texts.
10. Stimulate more qualitative studies to investigate the individual responses as far as students' attitudes toward the process of literary translation and its emotional and cognitive effects are concerned.

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**679**

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