



# Challenges and Suggested Solutions of Teaching Translation at Gaza Strip Universities (Palestine)

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**Abstract:** This article focuses on the problems of teaching translation that Gaza strip universities that students face. There is no doubt on the important role of translation in human communication, around the world from ancient time up until now. There have been debates about translation methods; some scholars preferred word- for- word whereas others prefer sense-for- sense. This study discusses the learning outcomes of teaching translation in the English departments at Gaza local universities. It is believed that translation courses are taught simply because they have traditionally been part of the English curriculum of bachelor degree. This paper clarifies that translation courses in these universities have only had academic rather than professional goals. To improve the level of these translation courses the paper proposes new solutions to improve teaching translation at university level.

**Keywords:** Translation Problems, Proposes New Solutions, Translation Theories, Professional Translation

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## 1. Introduction

Every translation activity has one or more specific purposes. However, universities are interested mainly in the courses of translation just to train and graduate competent and efficient translators, since; mistakes in this field may be disastrous. That is, translation errors on the job may very well lead to disasters. In chemical texts, they can cause fatal poisoning or terrible explosion. In legal translation, they can unlawfully make a defendant lose a crazily expensive lawsuit. In aeronautics, they may bring a plane down from the sky on people's heads. The poor performance of an interpreter can spoil the proceedings of a whole international conference. The universities in Gaza strip have never dealt with such nasty realities, but they are very real! The theory of this paper is that the translation courses at the university are and should be academic rather than professional (Colina 2002). Hence, the university ought to be geared to improve student's language skills. Here I propose new solution for teaching/learning translation that may return the process of translation to its right track. The teaching of translation at Palestinian universities in Gaza strip has never been controlled by a unified outlook or strategy. This paper has been designed to look into the

course outline given in different places of Gaza strip universities to check the objectives of teaching translation. There are some specific problems in the translation process in Gaza strip universities: problems of ambiguity, problems that create from structural and lexical differences among languages. a further problem would be the grammar because there are many structures of grammar poorly understood, in the sense that it isn't clear how they should be represented, or what rules should be used to describe them.

Description of the current situation of teaching translation at Gaza strip universities.

A number of features distinguishes the current situation of teaching translation at the undergraduate level in Gaza strip universities.

All departments of English offer translation courses at the undergraduate level as obligatory courses, but what is really offered is quite arbitrary and depends almost totally on personal initiatives on the part of tutors. Most of tutors who teach translation at Gaza universities are not qualified enough to teach this module. Lots of them are holders of postgraduate degrees in English literature or Education from the local or external universities. Therefore, any tutor in the departments of English who shows interest in teaching Translation may be assigned the course. There are no requirements whatever. Therefore, the trainers are at best

merely interested rather than specialized in translation. Most translation teachers have not received any kind of training in teaching translation. The absence of continuous training programs for university translation tutors has contributed to the current status. Teachers may very well take personal initiatives and train themselves.

### **1.1. Purpose of the Study**

This study aims to achieve the following objectives; Investigate whether teachers have received formal training in translation, to found out content of translation course in Gaza strip is sufficient enough for students, exploring teaching methodology for teachers and students and propose new methodology, examine whether translation courses meet the student objectives to become professional or not, to clear the reasons behind teachers' preference Arabic translation. To achieve these purposes, the present researcher distributed questionnaires among 115 students and 7 instructors from Gaza universities.

### **1.2. Research Questions**

The researcher wishes to investigate the possible answers to all these research questions by conducting a study on this topic. The questions are as Follows:

1. Do the teachers have received any formal training in translation in Gaza Universities?
2. Does the content of translation course in Gaza strip is sufficient for students?
3. Does the translation course at Gaza strip universities meet the objectives of graduating professional translators?
4. Why do teachers prefer to translate from Arabic into English not versa?

### **1.3. Significance of the Study**

The researcher during his study in learning the course of translation at Gaza Strip Universities noticed that students face some difficulties and problems in learning translation.

The importance of such study lies in the following points:

- 1-The research formulates a list of useful techniques and procedures for translation to Overcome such problems.
- 2-The study will upgrade the level of teaching translation by adopting suitable techniques and procedures for accurate translation.
- 3-Translation courses should give the students the skills that they need to get translation jobs.
- 4-The research seek to draw the attention of translation teachers to new techniques for making translation classes in these universities more professional rather than academic.

## **2. Literature Review**

Numerous researchers wrote about difficulties and problems that face the students in the translation process from the source language to the target language (English to Arabic) and their solutions. Emery (2000) in his paper

“Introduction to translation theory and contrastive textology in Arab university translation classes”, found that in almost all courses the rationale is seldom made explicit. However; Critchley et. al. (1996) says, some people believe that translation courses could be more directed to developing professional translation skills, while others believe that teaching translation courses is neither realistic no relevant to the work of a professional translator. Gerding-Salas (2000) says that consequences of wrong translations can be catastrophic-especially if done by laypersons. Rami Al-Hamdallah (1996) the paper presents the reader with practical examples of translation problems facing Arabic-speaking translator trainees at the college level. So, there are two approaches to translation (and many compromises between them): (1) you start translating sentence by sentence, for say the first paragraph or chapter, to get the feel and the feeling tone of the text, and then you deliberately sit back, review the position, and read the rest of the SL text; (2) Read the whole text two or three times, and find the intention, register, tone, mark the difficult words and passages and start translating only when you have taken your bearings. A few of researchers think that translation courses need principled theoretical background that is not found in the courses taught at Gaza universities. In a classical translation class, the teacher usually hands out students a 200-300 word passage to translate, followed by a lot of recommendation with plenty of dos and don'ts.

Jonathan Stoddart (2000) says there is a great deal of theory behind the different concepts of translation. I will now consider some of the issues central to the translation process. It is worthwhile looking at these issues since I can confirm that the problems they give rise to are all apparent in my learners' production. The errors they commit in speaking and writing are all unquestionably due to translating (often unconsciously) directly from their L1.

However, Peter Newmark (1986) mentioned in his book that, you begin the job by reading the original for two purposes: first, to understand what it is about; second, to analyze it from a 'translator's point of view, which is not the same as a linguist's or a literary critics. You have to determine its intention and the way it is written for the purpose of selecting a suitable translation method and identifying particular and recurrent problems, many writers favoured some kind of Tree1 translation: the spirit, not the letter; the sense not the words; the message rather than the form: the matter not the manner- This was the often revolutionary slogan of writers who wanted the truth to be read and understood. Menck (1991: 108), says Scholars on teaching translation seem to agree on two things: firstly that there is a difference between translation in foreign-language teaching and translation teaching for professional purposes and secondly that a functional approach to translation should be adopted. Mackenzie (1998: 18) translation students has to work in groups only during the first half of their translation course since teamwork seems to be the norm in a translation company environment. She reports very useful results, especially when translating into the L2.

### 2.1. Objectives of the Study

The focal objectives of this study of difficulties that students face in the translation process from Arabic into English and their solutions are.

Urge students to learn linguistics and translation skills. Looking for the recent theories in translation, approaches and adopting appropriate translation strategies for different kinds of translation, for instance; Professional translation, Academic translation. Also, adopting new methodology for teaching translation and Stopping teachers' on using their own methods in teaching translation. Help student to understand and apply translation models in order to upgrade their level. Enrich reading comprehension ability between students in a foreign language to improve their translation.

### 2.2. Limitations of the Study

The generalization of results is limited only to the samples that were selected by the researcher.

The study limits itself by investigating the possible problems of teaching translation from the points of view of teachers.

### 2.3. Site of Research

The Gaza Strip lies on the southern side of the occupied 'Palestine state' on the Eastern coast of the Mediterranean

### 3.2. Participants

*Table 1. Participants information (Students & Teachers) involved in the study.*

Name of University	Student's Level	T's Educational Qualification	T's years of Experience	No. of T	No. of S	S's Proficiency Level
Al Aqsa U				3	40	
Islamic U. G	Undergraduate	Master of Education, Literature.	5 – 15	2	45	Intermediate
Al Azhar U				2	30	
Total				7	115	

To achieve reliable results of investigating student's difficulties in Translation teaching, three types of educational environments or settings were selected to participate in this study. Three universities were included, Al AQSA University, the ISLAMIC University of GAZA, Al AZHAR University. The reason behind the selection is to find out the scenario of student's difficulties in teaching translation that takes place in various types of academic system in Gaza strip (Palestine). A total of 115 students of undergraduate level of intermediate proficiency were implicated in this study. Which, 40 students are from Al AQSA U, 45 students are from Islamic U. G, 30 students from Al AZHAR University. The students were required to answer the questionnaire questions. In addition, 7 teachers from the 3 universities participated for the questionnaire; Majority of the teachers have at least Master educational qualification and also have experience about 5 to 15 years in teaching English.

### 3.3. Methods and Instruments

Student's Questionnaire

Question 2 and 3 was asked in the questionnaire to ensure

Sea. The Strip borders Egypt on the southwest and Saudi Arabia on the east and Lebanon on north. It is about 41 kilometres long, and between 6 and 12 kilometres wide, with a total area of 360 square kilometres. The territory takes its name from Gaza, its main city; Gaza City is the Strip's biggest population centre and has about 400,000 inhabitants. As in other towns in Gaza, there are high levels of poverty, deprivation and unemployment in Gaza City. The Gaza strip is home to more than 1.8 million people.

Gaza strip has more than five universities such as The ISLAMIC University of GAZA, ALAQSA University, ALAZHAR University, PALESTINE University, ALUMAH University, Most of these universities do not offer Master's degree program in Translation due to lack of availability of qualified teachers, authorized to provide such programs.

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1. Data Collection

7 teachers and 115 students were selected randomly from 3 universities to be conducted in the Questionnaires that applied during translation course, the researcher design 2 questionnaires for both teachers and students alike, to attain authentic result, the researcher get the data by online chatting with his friends of doctors and lecturer in that universities.

the existence of student's difficulties in universities and does the students satisfied or not with the method of teaching translation syllabus, while question 1 and 4 were questioned to explore why student performance in translation tests indicates that they hardly upgrade their language proficiency and examining translation obstacles. Finally, the data managed to answer the research questions.

Teacher's Questionnaire

The questionnaire involved a total of 7 teachers were selected from 3 universities to attain the purpose of the questionnaire, in specific 2 teachers from Al Aqsa U, 3 teachers from The ISLAMIC University of GAZA, 2 teachers from Al Azhar U. This questionnaire was conducted with the teachers to elicit more information about the methods used of teaching this course and students satisfaction on the course, did the teachers received any formal training in translation or not. This method helps to clear the underlying reasons of the student's difficulties in translation.

## 4. Findings

In order to get valid result in the questionnaire, the

researcher employs the same questions that used in the research questions.

Student's questionnaire

Q1) Do you face any problems in cultural differences during translation courses?

Yes	No
75	40

For the first question, 75 students agreed that they face difficulties in cultural differences during translation classes pertaining to teaching methods adopted, beside; 40 students voted that they do not.

Q2) How often your teachers use their own methodology in teaching translation?

Always	75
Sometimes	35
Rarely	5
Never	0

75 students agreed that their teachers always use their own methodology in teaching, 35 students voted for sometimes, 5 voted for rarely but none for never.

Q3) Are you satisfy with the teaching methodology that teachers use in translation class?

Yes	No
15	100

For this question, 100 students agreed that they are not satisfied with teaching method used during the class. Only 15 students voted they are satisfied.

Q4) Do you face problems in misunderstanding of the translating process?

Yes	No
85	30

All 85 students confirmed that they encounter problems in misunderstanding of the translating process during their classes; while; 30 students voted that, they did not face any problems in misunderstanding of the translating process.

Q5) Do you think English teachers who are not specialized in translation are qualified to teach this course?

Yes	No
30	85

Answering this question, all 85 students agreed that their English teachers who are not specialized in translation are not eligible to teach this course, nevertheless; only 30 students vote that their English teachers can teach translation course based on their experience.

Teacher's questionnaire

Q1) Did you feel that your students face problems regarding to the cultural differences during translation course?

Yes	No
4	3

4 teachers agreed that their students face problems in cultural differences during translation courses, whereas; 3 teachers voted no they don't.

Q2) why do you prefer to translate from Arabic into English not versa?

I'm knowledgeable in Arabic, easy can get the meaning	5
To be friendly and get closer with the students	3
Arabic language is more flexible than English	2
To give clearer instruction to the students	6
To explain the meaning of difficult words\ vocabulary	7

For this question, 7 teachers answered that they prefer to translate from Arabic into English during classes 'to explain the meaning of difficult words or vocabulary' fairly number of them, a total of 6 teachers stated that 'to give clearer instruction to the students', 5 teachers voted for 'I'm knowledgeable in Arabic, easy can get the meaning', 3 teachers said 'To be friendly with the students', and only 2 teachers agreed with 'Arabic language is more flexible than English'.

Q3) Did you received any formal training in translation?

Yes	No
0	7

All 7 teachers from 3 universities agreed that they had not received any formal training in translation.

Q4) Do you likes working alone or as part of a team in translation department?

Alone	Part of team
4	3

All 4 teachers confirm that they dislike working as part of team, except for 3 teachers voted to work as a part of team; they provided reasons for why they dislike. The reasons are:

- a) They do not like to take orders from any one, they like control-free.
- b) They prefer freelancing work, "everything I do is mine".
- c) It is the easiest way to challenge yourself without outsiders help.
- d) Working alone is more comfortable. You can work whenever & wherever you wish to.

Q5) Do you believes that translation courses at Gaza universities meet the objectives of graduating professional translators?

Yes	No
0	7

All seven teachers agreed that translation courses at these universities do not meet the objectives of graduating professional translators, due to lack of teachers experience in this field, using their own methods of teaching.

## 5. Results & Discussions

All the questions and data collected from the teachers and students questionnaires were to investigate the student's

difficulties in teaching translation during the translation course, for more detailed analysis, the data collected from both questionnaires will be discussed in relation to the research questions provided.

The students' questionnaire has provided evidences for student's difficulties in translation. This data is further enriched by Q1 from the students' questionnaire as well as Q1 from the teachers' questionnaire.

In addition to that, data from Q2 from both questionnaires also show that both students and teachers encounter problems in translation. This further confirms the preference of teachers to commence translation with Arabic rather than English during the course.

Based on the data from Q3 from student questionnaires, it was discovered that the majority of students do not satisfied with the teaching methodology used in translation class. On the other side; Q3 from teachers questionnaires, it was detected that all teachers voted they did not received any formal training in translation.

The result from students questionnaire, clears that some students face problems in misunderstanding of the translating process, also there is a consensus among all students that they misunderstand their teachers. Q3 from teachers questionnaires; the majority of teachers said that they dislikes to work as part of a team in translation department, except some those who likes, there is a consensus among all teachers that working as a teamwork benefits the teachers and students alike and help them to improve their learning.

Data from Q4 from students questionnaire, display that most of students confirm that their English teachers whose are not specialized in translation not suitable to teach this course. Similarity; the result from Q4 from teachers questionnaire, explore that all teachers agreed that translation courses at Gaza universities did not meet the objectives of graduating professional translators. Some teachers said; 'here in the university we teach academic not professional translation, If any student looking for professionalism, he should join to private institute.

Data from Q 1, 2, 4 from students' questionnaire, unearth some of students' difficulties in translation related to research questions; Problems of cultural differences, problem of lacking the linguistic competence, problem of teachers' using their own methodology of teaching, problem of preferences their teachers to translate from Arabic into English not versa, problems of misunderstanding translation process,, problem of lack of new knowledge and experience.

Most of these problems were conducted in the questionnaires; one of the problems that both students and teachers face is.

For students.

How often your teachers use their own methods in teaching?

(Majority of student 75 votes always, 35 votes sometimes) some teachers justify that by saying; usually I feel students understood when I apply my method better than other method.

For teachers.

Why do you prefer to translate from Arabic into English not versa during the class?

7 teachers vote to explains the meaning of difficult words\ vocabulary, to give clearer instruction to the students, some teachers found this easiest way to express about what in their minds.

Through my study as student of one of translation courses in these universities, I have realized that there is a widespread consensus among teachers of translation that students' performance is markedly poor. Due to teachers end up correcting language errors rather than translation obstacles.

## 6. Suggested Solutions

From Teacher's and student's answers, the study can come up with a new method of teaching translation: (1) you should start translating sentence by sentence, for say the first paragraph or chapter, to get the feel and the feeling tone of the text, and then you deliberately sit back, review the position, and read the rest of the SL text; (2) you read the whole text two or three times, and find the intention, register, tone, mark the difficult words and passages and start translating only when you have taken your bearings, Newmark (1988). The teacher more or less imposes a fair copy, which is a 'model' of his own English rather than proposing a version for discussion and criticism by students, some of whom will be brighter than he is.

Virtually, all definitions of translation clarify that translation might be both a science and craft. Newmark (1988) describes translation as "a craft consisting of the attempt to replace a written message and/or statement in one language by the same message and/or statement in another language." Since Gaza students are learners of English as a foreign language, translation tutors should be aware that they are teaching two different things: English language and the craft of translation. They should be fully aware that these are two different types; translation at the university, like any other discipline, is academic rather than professional, therefore most pedagogical energy should be invested in upgrading students' proficiency in the source and target language. Teaching the craft of translation at this point, should be left to specialized establishments' where training is professional rather than academic. Universities should teach translation professionally by having professional a diploma program at least at their continuous education and community service units as the Islamic university of Gaza has recently done.

Suggested objectives:

Translation courses in Gaza universities should have the following objectives:

- 1- Knowledge of pragmatic and semantic differences between the SL culture and the TL culture.
- 2- Knowledge of typographical differences between the SL and the TL and transfer competence.
- 3- Knowledge of syntactic and stylistic differences between the SL and the TL.

- 4- Knowledge of lexical differences between the SL and the TL.
- 5- Understanding of the cognitive process of translation theory.
- 6- Expert writing and composition skills in the TL.
- 7- Expert reading skills of the SL.

## 7. Conclusion

This research has looked into the status of teaching translation at the Gaza strip universities. The problems in teaching translation at these universities are similar to problems seen in other Arab universities. It can be concluded that translation needs to be studied in connection with power and ideology. Translation studies from ideological aspect offer a new angle of view for us. In recent years, translation studies have moved on from endless debates about "equivalence" to broader issues of society, history and culture. Results show that teachers claim they base their teaching on theory, but students are not sure if theory was important. In a word, there remains a lot of research to be done in this field.

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