

## Teachers' Insights on the Role of Pedagogical Translation in Developing Language Skills in French as a Foreign Language among Secondary-Level Students in Algeria: A Quantitative Study

BOUKEF Zahia<sup>1</sup>

National Institute for Research in Education, Algeria

[zahiaboukef@yahoo.fr](mailto:zahiaboukef@yahoo.fr)

 <https://orcid.org/0009-0000-1299-8734>

BOUZERIA Iman<sup>2</sup>

National Institute for Research in Education, Algeria

[imenyafa@yahoo.fr](mailto:imenyafa@yahoo.fr)

 <https://orcid.org/0009-0006-3846-2608>

GACEMI Abdelhak<sup>3</sup>

National Institute for Research in Education, Algeria

[abdelhakg@gmail.com](mailto:abdelhakg@gmail.com)

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3723-8755>

ZERGUI Aicha<sup>4</sup>

National Institute for Research in Education, Algeria

[fayrouzepsy@gmail.com](mailto:fayrouzepsy@gmail.com)

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0317-7744>

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### Abstract

This study investigates the insights of French as a Foreign Language (FFL) teachers regarding the efficacy of pedagogical translation in developing linguistic skills among secondary-level students in Algeria. The research aims at providing empirical data on teachers' insights concerning the effectiveness of pedagogical translation in French language instruction at the secondary level in Algeria. Applying a quantitative approach, a questionnaire was distributed to 849 FFL teachers across 60 Algerian education directorates. The survey instrument, designed with a 5-point Likert scale, explored various aspects of translation's effectiveness in language acquisition, including its role in skill development, student engagement, and cultural understanding. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS software, with descriptive statistics calculated to determine means and standard deviations. Results revealed an overall positive insight of translation's effectiveness in enhancing linguistic competencies, with a global mean of 3.92.

**Keywords;** French; Foreign language; Language Skills; Pedagogical translation; Teaching/learning.

<sup>1</sup> Corresponding author: BOUKEF Zahia/ [zahiaboukef@yahoo.fr](mailto:zahiaboukef@yahoo.fr)

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## **Introduction**

The persistent challenges in teaching French as a Foreign Language (FFL) in Algeria have prompted educators to explore various methodologies, including the frequent use of translation in classrooms. Numerous empirical studies have highlighted the difficulties encountered by Algerian learners in acquiring French proficiency (Hanieche, 2022; Gacemi, 2021; Sadouni, 2018; Bouthiba, 2018; Khaldi & Bellatreche, 2017; Chaif, 2015; Bouanani, 2008; Sebane, 2011; Amara, 2001). These findings underscore the necessity of adopting novel teaching methodologies tailored to the needs and competencies of Algerian learners.

In response to these challenges, the Ministry of National Education issued an official bulletin N°. 77 on July 4, 2010, encouraging foreign language teachers to utilize pedagogical translation exercises. Pedagogical translation, defined as "an interlinguistic transfer exercise practised in language didactics with the aim of acquiring a language" (Delisle, 2005, p. 49), represents a promising approach for developing learners' linguistic competencies. These exercises range from translating keywords, sentences, or short passages between the source and target languages for pedagogical purposes.

This study aims to explore teachers' insights regarding the effectiveness of using pedagogical translation in French language instruction at the secondary level. Specifically, we seek to address the following research question: What are teachers' insights of the efficacy of pedagogical translation in developing various linguistic competencies among learners of French as a Foreign Language at the secondary level?

In the Algerian context, despite the frequent use of translation in FFL teaching and the official instructions since 2010, there is a lack, according to the current literature, of empirical data specifically addressing teachers' insights of translation's efficacy in developing comprehension and production skills at the secondary level. This study aims to fill this gap by providing empirical data on teachers' views, which may inform future teaching practices.

To contextualize our research, we will first review the evolution of translation's status in foreign language teaching. We will then examine how translation has regained its position in language instruction, supported by current research that highlights its contribution to the acquisition of linguistic competencies in various aspects.

Until the 20th century, the grammar-translation method dominated foreign language instruction, with translation serving as the primary means of language acquisition (Arroyo, 2008, p. 84). This approach, as Stoean (2006, p. 9) notes, emphasized the theoretical teaching of grammatical rules. However, its effectiveness was called into question due to its failure to develop practical language skills in learners, despite prolonged periods of instruction. Stoean further critiques the method's capacity to facilitate the internalization of the foreign language's grammatical structures. The inherent limitations of this approach are evident in its reliance on decontextualized activities, which Benelhadj Djelloul and Neddar (2017, p. 163) argue failed to enhance learners' communicative abilities in the foreign language. This critique underscores the method's inability to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and functional language use, highlighting the need for more effective language teaching methodologies.

With the emergence of new teaching methodologies such as the direct method, the audio-lingual method, and the audiovisual method, translation was proscribed from foreign language instruction due to its association with the grammar-translation method. These novel approaches rejected any recourse to the mother tongue in an effort to avoid interference (Lavault, 1998). However, as Malmkjær (1998, p. 8) astutely observes, "It is clearly true that translation produces interference [...]. However, bilinguals at whatever level experience interference of one kind or another, and translation practice encourages awareness and control of interference". Rather than prohibiting translation outright, it would be more efficacious to instruct learners in its proper utilization, minimizing interference while fostering awareness that word-for-word correspondence between languages is not always feasible (Leonardi, 2011, 18).

The advent of communicative and cognitive approaches led to a reevaluation of translation, restoring its legitimacy as a valuable pedagogical tool in language instruction. Grellet (1991) posits that the communicative approach emphasizes reflective activities and acknowledges the significance of translation in foreign language acquisition.

Contemporary research in translation and language didactics increasingly corroborates the contribution of translation to the development of linguistic competencies. In this context, translation serves as a pedagogical lever, enabling learners to actively construct their knowledge (Lavault, 1998).

Schäffner (1998) contends that translation can effectively stimulate target language learning through multiple mechanisms:

1. Promoting verbal communication in the target language
2. Encouraging students to expand their lexicon in the language under study
3. Fostering the evolution of learners' individual style
4. Facilitating a deeper understanding of the mechanisms governing various languages
5. Enabling the integration of target language structures for active use
6. Enhancing comprehension of the target language

According to Lan (2008), translating from the mother tongue (L1) to a second language (L2) allows learners to put into practice what they have previously learned, such as vocabulary and sentence structure. In other words, translation in teaching is a tool that extends far beyond a simple linguistic exercise. It facilitates the application of knowledge in a specific context, thus reinforcing learners' communication skills and linguistic judgement.

Lopriore (2006) further elucidates that pedagogical translation not only heightens learners' awareness of interlingual similarities and differences but also deepens their comprehension of their first language. This dual benefit contributes to the enhancement of communicative skills in both languages. Leonardi (2011) corroborates this view, asserting that when translation exercises are judiciously integrated into teaching practices, learners can develop a diverse array of competencies, including linguistic, communicative, cognitive, and intercultural skills.

According to Durieux (2006), translation plays a crucial role in foreign language acquisition at various levels. Firstly, it highlights the lexical and syntactic structural disparities between languages, thereby facilitating the learning of the target language. Subsequently, it serves as an activity for applying and evaluating acquired lexical and grammatical skills. When performing a translation, students demonstrate their knowledge of the vocabulary and rules studied. Translation also provides educators with valuable feedback on the effectiveness of their instruction.

González-Davies (2020) introduces the concept of pedagogical translation, also termed "translation for other learning contexts", as a fundamental component within a language teaching approach that embraces plurilingualism. This form of translation enables learners to cultivate linguistic and intercultural competencies beyond the scope of professional translator training. Situated on a continuum spanning from rudimentary language acquisition to advanced linguistic services, pedagogical translation fosters connections between learners' existing and emerging linguistic repertoires. It equips them with the capacity for 'translinguistic conceptualization', defined as the ability to express and interconnect identical concepts across multiple languages.

Moreover, González-Davies (2020) posits that pedagogical translation constitutes a key competence and strategy for developing linguistic mediation skills within a plurilingual framework. This approach transcends the limitations of traditional monolingual methodologies, offering a more comprehensive and integrated approach to language learning. By incorporating pedagogical translation into language instruction, educators can foster a more holistic understanding of language systems and their interrelationships, thereby enhancing learners' overall linguistic proficiency and intercultural awareness.

Recent research in the field of language didactics has contributed significantly to repositioning translation as a valuable pedagogical instrument, distancing it from previous criticisms that had reduced it to a mere grammatical exercise separated from communicative realities. These studies have additionally demonstrated the advantages of pedagogical translation in fostering learners' linguistic, communicative, cognitive, and intercultural competencies.

While the literature review has highlighted the contributions of pedagogical translation to language instruction, it is crucial to investigate the insights of French as a Foreign Language (FLE) teachers at the secondary level regarding the efficacy of this method. The findings of this study, clarified in subsequent sections, will illuminate how secondary-level FLE teachers perceive the effectiveness of pedagogical translation following its practical implementation in the classroom setting.

## **1. Methods and Materials**

### ***1.1. Research Procedures***

This study is part of a broader research project conducted by our research team exploring various aspects of pedagogical translation in the context of teaching French as a Foreign Language in Algeria. Within this framework, we developed a four-section questionnaire, focusing respectively on: the profile of teachers, the effect of pedagogical translation on learners' linguistic skills, difficulties encountered when applying pedagogical translation in the classroom, and the effectiveness of pedagogical translation as a didactic tool. Teachers were asked to express their level of agreement or disagreement with statements related to these themes using a 5-point Likert scale. In this article, we are particularly interested in the data from a single section of the questionnaire, which is related to our research problem concerning the insight of the effectiveness of pedagogical translation on the development of learners' linguistic skills. We will not address the other sections of the questionnaire, which are not relevant to the objective of this scientific publication.

A preliminary version of the questionnaire was pre-tested with a limited sample of 80 teachers to ensure the clarity of the items. Subsequently, we distributed the questionnaire to all teachers across the national territory.

Once the questionnaires were collected, data from the relevant section were extracted and statistically analyzed using SPSS software. Descriptive analyses were used to calculate percentages, means, and standard deviations of the different variables.

### ***1.2. Population and Sample***

In Algeria, according to the most recent official statistics from the Ministry of National Education for the 2023-2024 academic year, there are 11,387 French language teachers at the secondary education level. To select the sample for this study, we employed a simple random sampling method, utilizing Thompson's equation to ensure that our sample size was appropriately calculated based on the total number of teachers. In order to obtain a representative sample, we distributed the questionnaire to French language teachers across all 60 education directorates nationwide. We received 849 responses, which ensures the representativeness of the sample.

### ***1.3. Validity***

To establish content validity, the questionnaire was submitted to four specialists in educational sciences. These experts examined the relevance and clarity of the proposed items. Based on their feedback, several items were subsequently modified to enhance the instrument's validity.

### 1.4. Reliability

To assess the internal consistency of the 12 items comprising the questionnaire axis used in this study, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated. The analysis yielded a value of 0.94, indicating high internal consistency among the items within this axis. This result suggests that the instrument demonstrates satisfactory psychometric properties in terms of reliability.

**Table 1: Reliability Statistics**

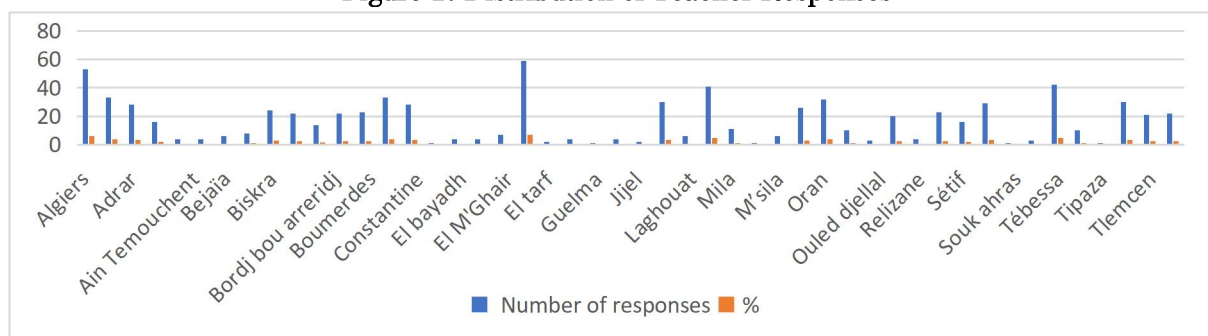
Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items
0,945	12

Source: data analyzed using SPSS software.

## 2. Results and discussion

### 2.1. Distribution of Teacher Responses by Wilaya

**Figure 1: Distribution of Teacher Responses**



Source: Data analyzed using Excel.

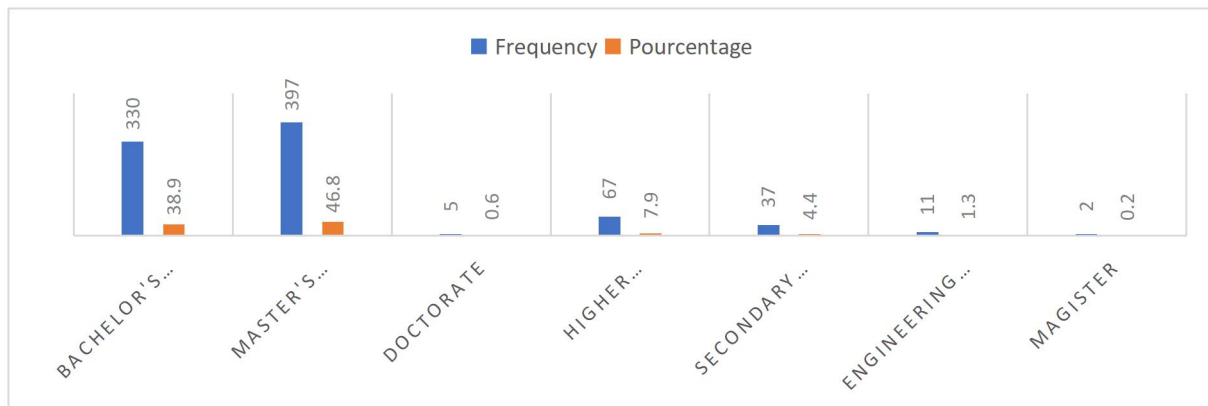
The analysis of participation rates across the wilayas of Algeria reveals a diverse and representative sample of 849 French language teachers, providing a comprehensive understanding of their insights on pedagogical translation. El Oued emerged as the wilaya with the highest response rate, contributing 59 responses, which constitutes approximately 7% of the total sample. High participation from other wilayas, including Algiers Centre (6.24%), Tébessa (4.95%), Médéa (4.83%), and Algiers West (4.36%), further supports the robustness of our findings.

The distribution of responses indicates a relatively consistent engagement across various regions, with moderate participation from wilayas such as Naâma (3.06%), Oran (3.77%), Chlef (3.89%), Constantine (3.3%), Khenchela (3.53%), and Tizi Ouzou (3.53%). Although a subset of twelve wilayas recorded only a single response each, equating to 0.12% of the total sample, the overall representation from the remaining regions enhances the validity of the results.

This broad engagement from teachers ensures that a wide array of experiences and viewpoints is captured in the study. The substantial number of responses allows for generalization of the findings to the wider population of French language teachers in Algeria, reinforcing the relevance of the insights gathered regarding the effectiveness of pedagogical translation in language instruction.

## 2.2. University Degrees of Teachers

Figure 2: university Degrees of Teachers

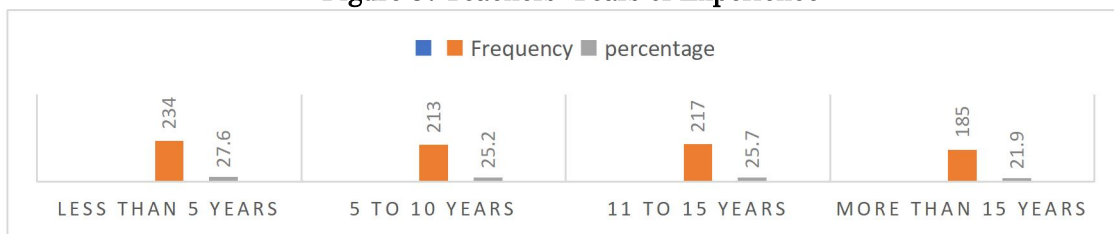


Source: data analyzed using Excel.

The data indicate that 46.8% of participants report holding a Master's degree, which represents nearly half of the participants. 38.9% possess a Bachelor's degree, while 7.1% have obtained a degree from the Higher Normal School. Furthermore, 4.4% hold a Secondary Education Teacher qualification. 1.3 of the participants are engineers, 0.2% have a magister degree and 0.6% have a doctorate. The diverse educational backgrounds of the participants suggest a wealth of knowledge and experience, which likely enriches their perspectives on pedagogical translation. This variety ensures that the findings of the study are informed by a well-rounded understanding of language teaching practices.

## 2.3. Teachers' Years of Experience

Figure 3: Teachers' Years of Experience



Source: data analyzed using Excel.

An examination of the data regarding the participants' years of experience reveals a relatively uniform distribution across the different categories. 27.6% of the participants have less than 5 years of experience, representing the largest segment of the sample. 25.7% have between 11 and 15 years of experience. 25.2% have between 5 and 10 years of experience. Finally, 21.9% of the participants have more than 15 years of experience. This diverse distribution highlights the richness of experiences within the sample and underscores the importance of considering varying levels of experience when analyzing insights related to FFL.

## 2.4. Effectiveness of pedagogical translation in teaching French as a Foreign Language

In order to study teachers' degree of agreement or disagreement about the effectiveness of pedagogical translation in teaching French as a foreign language, we chose to create the questionnaire using the 5-point Likert scale.

The categories of the Likert scale were defined as follows:

**Table 2: Likert scale**

Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4	5

*Source: conducted based on a 5-point Likert scale.*

To analyze the results, we used a mean scale ranging from 1 to 5. The values of the means were interpreted as follows:

- Between 1 and 1.80: indicates a very low degree of agreement.
- Between 1.80 and 2.60: indicates a low degree of agreement.
- Between 2.60 and 3.40: indicates a moderate degree of agreement.
- Between 3.40 and 4.20: indicates a high degree of agreement.
- Between 4.20 and 5: indicates a very high degree of agreement.

**Table 3: Effectiveness of Pedagogical Translation**

Items	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Pedagogical translation has a positive impact on learners.	849	1	5	4.06	1.118
Pedagogical translation allows for the identification of learners' gaps in French as a foreign language.	849	1	5	3.78	1.236
Pedagogical translation contributes to resolving linguistic interferences among learners of French as a foreign language.	849	1	5	3.89	1.149
Pedagogical translation helps develop learners' comprehension skills.	849	1	5	4.09	1.090
Pedagogical translation helps develop learners' expression skills.	849	1	5	3.91	1.159
Pedagogical translation makes students more interactive.	849	1	5	4.16	1.016
Pedagogical translation allows the teacher to better assess students' understanding.	849	1	5	3.81	1.248
Pedagogical translation helps learners understand cultural differences and communicate effectively with people from different cultures.	849	1	5	4.01	1.113
Pedagogical translation allows learners to familiarize themselves with	849	1	5	3.51	1.298

French grammatical structures.					
Pedagogical translation allows learners to familiarize themselves with French vocabulary.	849	1	5	3.89	1.174
Pedagogical translation allows learners to familiarize themselves with French idiomatic expressions.	849	1	5	3.76	1.194
Translation in class sparks students' interest.	849	1	5	4.22	1.031
Global index of the effectiveness of pedagogical translation.	849	1	5	3.9247	0.91235
Valid N	849				

*Source: Data derived from an analysis conducted using SPSS software.*

The results demonstrate an overall positive insight of the effectiveness of pedagogical translation in the learning of various linguistic skills, with an overall mean of 3.92, representing a moderate to high level of agreement. Furthermore, the relatively low standard deviation indicates a high degree of consensus among teachers on these issues.

Analyzing the different statements, it is notable that teachers particularly perceive pedagogical translation as a means to make students more interactive, with a mean of 4.16, and to spark their interest, with a mean of 4.22. They also consider it to have a positive impact on learners, with a mean of 4.06, and to develop their comprehension skills, with a mean of 4.09.

The results also revealed that teachers generally agree that pedagogical translation is an effective method for identifying learners' gaps in French as a foreign language, with a moderate to high mean of 3.78, and for resolving linguistic interference issues, with a moderate to high mean of 3.89.

Moreover, teachers perceive pedagogical translation as a means to develop learners' comprehension and expression skills. It allows teachers to better assess learners' understanding, to help learners understand cultural differences and communicate effectively with people from different cultures, and to enable learners to familiarize themselves with French vocabulary and idiomatic expressions, with moderate to high means ranging from 3.76 to 4.01.

Lastly, the mean of 3.51 with a standard deviation of 1.29 indicates that teachers moderately agree that pedagogical translation is effective in allowing learners to familiarize themselves with French grammatical structures.

The standard deviations around 1 indicate a certain dispersion in teachers' responses for most of the statements.

The findings reveal that teachers positively perceive the efficacy of translation on comprehension and expression skills. This insight demonstrates their full awareness of the preeminence that the introduction of the translation method holds in their practices, with the aim of facilitating the acquisition of linguistic competencies in French. This aligns with the objectives of the official French program, which precisely aims at acquiring language mastery allowing for the comprehension of varied messages as well as the production of written and oral discourse.

This positive insight of pedagogical translation by teachers constitutes a major result of our study. It underlines the growing importance given to this method in language teaching, particularly French. This observation paves the way for a more in-depth reflection on the



systematic integration of translation into language teaching programs. Therefore, integrating translation activities systematically into French language curricula will enhance comprehension and expression skills. This large majority of teachers favorable to the use of pedagogical translation corroborates the conclusions of several previous studies (Alaboud, 2022; Haddad, 2022; Negari, 2011; Qotb, 2019; Rushwan, 2017). In particular, this observation confirms the findings of Laviosa (2014), demonstrating that learners' involvement in translation activities promotes the development of their written and oral comprehension skills. Indeed, to faithfully render a source text in another language, they must analyze its content, grasp nuances of meaning, and relate elements to the global context. Whether in writing or orally, these tasks lead them to finely apprehend the original message to re-express it precisely in the target language. Thus, by requiring in-depth understanding, translation constitutes a conducive tool for sharpening receptive skills. The translanguaging approach illustrated by the TRANSLATE project also demonstrates how translation leads to an in-depth deconstruction of meaning and lexical structure of L2 texts, allowing for the construction of precise comprehension (David et al., 2019, 253-254). This insight also aligns with Leonardi's (2011) position, who states that "translation becomes an effective bilingual teaching tool for [...] improving writing, speaking, and comprehension skills."

Translation indeed constitutes a primary vector for learners' lexical enrichment while allowing for a substantial reinforcement of their writing aptitudes (Alshaikhi, 2022; Djelloul & Neddar, 2017). When learners engage in translation activities, they are exposed to a variety of words, expressions, and linguistic contexts. This immersion promotes the acquisition of new terms and strengthens their ability to express themselves precisely in the target language. To maximize this lexical enrichment, it is recommended to develop a systematic vocabulary acquisition program integrated with translation activities. This program should include thematic word lists, contextual translation exercises, and activities that require students to use newly acquired vocabulary in both translation and original composition tasks.

The results also indicate that teachers believe pedagogical translation is effective for learners' motivation, interaction, and engagement. They think it has a positive impact on them and sparks their interest because, by doing translation exercises, learners can quickly access meaning in the target language, which maintains their involvement. For learners, being able to rely on their previous linguistic knowledge constitutes a genuine access ramp towards the target language (Leonardi, 2011). This reassures and facilitates the progressive construction of new knowledge by establishing bridges with their existing baggage. Implementing regular reflection sessions where learners discuss their translation processes, challenges, and strategies will enhance metalinguistic awareness.

According to the surveyed teachers, pedagogical translation allows for identifying learners' gaps and evaluating their comprehension. By analyzing the produced translations, the teacher can precisely discover concepts and rules that have not yet been fully assimilated by their learners. In this context, Durieux (2005, p.37) indicates that the teacher can use translation as a formative assessment tool. By examining translations performed by students, the teacher can identify well-understood concepts and those requiring improvement. This gives them the possibility to adjust their teaching and verify its effectiveness with students.

Regarding cultural aspects, the results reveal that teachers believe translation promotes learners' acquisition of essential intercultural competencies. On one hand, it helps them grasp the

true meaning of idiomatic expressions, linked to cultural referents of the target language. On the other hand, it helps them communicate effectively with people from different cultures. As an inherently cultural activity, translation promotes the development of intercultural competence, a crucial element of language acquisition (Ahmadi, 2018, p. 33-34). As Leonardi (2011) also explains: "Translation could [...] help learners develop and further strengthen their linguistic, cultural and communicative competences in a foreign language." To effectively enhance intercultural competence through translation, we propose developing a program that integrates translating culturally significant texts, comparing idiomatic expressions, and analyzing culture-specific concept translations into the curriculum. This program aims to deepen learners' understanding of diverse cultural values while improving their linguistic skills and critical thinking and create opportunities for students to cultivate an understanding of both their own culture and that of the target language, ultimately promoting effective and sensitive communication in diverse cultural settings.

Teachers also believe that pedagogical translation plays an important role in resolving linguistic interferences among learners. According to Ahmadi (2018, p.31): "translation, as an operation bringing two languages into presence, unquestionably raises the level of linguistic knowledge of the learner and contributes to reducing cases of interference, if not erasing them". Malmkjær (1998, p.8) also explains that it is undeniable that translation generates interferences [...]. However, bilinguals, regardless of their level, undergo interferences in one way or another. And the practice of translation promotes awareness and control of these interferences.

Pedagogical translation is also positively perceived by teachers as a means facilitating learners' familiarization with French grammatical structures. This result corroborates the observations of Petrocchi (2006) and Shiyab and Abdullattef (2001) who highlighted the usefulness of translation for developing mastery of grammar and linguistic systems in both the source and target languages. To maximize the grammatical benefits of translation, A series of grammar-focused translation workbooks should be developed, progressing from simple to complex grammatical structures. These workbooks would utilize translation exercises to illustrate grammatical rules and their applications effectively.

### **3. Limitations of the study**

This study, while offering valuable insights into teachers' insights of pedagogical translation in French as a Foreign Language (FFL) instruction in Algeria, has several limitations that must be acknowledged to provide a comprehensive understanding of the findings.

Firstly, while the sample size of 849 teachers is considerable, it may not fully represent the diverse teaching contexts across Algeria, as regional variations in pedagogical practices could influence insights of pedagogical translation's effectiveness. Secondly, the reliance on self-reported data through questionnaires introduces potential biases, as teachers may overestimate their views on the efficacy of translation due to social desirability or personal beliefs. Additionally, this research captures teachers' insights at a single point in time, which does not account for changes in insights or practices over time; a longitudinal study could yield deeper insights into how attitudes towards pedagogical translation evolve. Lastly, focusing solely on teachers' perspectives may overlook students' experiences and outcomes related to pedagogical translation, suggesting that future research should adopt a more holistic approach that includes student feedback and performance metrics.

## **Conclusion**

This quantitative study aimed to figure out the insights of French as a Foreign Language (FFL) teachers at the secondary school level in Algeria regarding the effectiveness of pedagogical translation in developing learners' linguistic skills. The results, derived from a substantial sample of 849 teachers, reveal a largely positive insight of this method.

Teachers consider pedagogical translation an effective tool for enhancing FFL learners' comprehension and expression skills. Specifically, they believe it aids in identifying learners' gaps, resolving linguistic interferences, and acquiring vocabulary and idiomatic expressions. Furthermore, pedagogical translation is perceived as a means to foster motivation and engagement among students while promoting the development of intercultural competencies.

These findings align with previous research that highlights the numerous benefits of integrating translation into foreign language teaching. The data indicate that pedagogical translation can significantly optimize the acquisition of linguistic skills in FFL instruction at the Algerian secondary level.

Particular methods for incorporating instructional translation into FFL programs are crucial to maximizing the usefulness of these findings. Developing structured training modules for teachers would equip them with effective methods for implementing translation exercises in their classrooms, providing a clear framework to maximize the potential of this approach. Moreover, establishing a comprehensive, research-based framework for incorporating pedagogical translation into the French language curriculum is crucial. Forming a national working group comprising language teachers, researchers, and policymakers would facilitate the oversight of this framework's implementation and continuous evaluation. This collaborative effort would ensure its effectiveness and allow for ongoing improvements based on practical outcomes and emerging research insights.

To further advance this field of research, it is essential that future studies build upon the limitations identified in this work. Investigating how pedagogical translation can be effectively integrated into FFL programs will be crucial. Additionally, understanding the challenges teachers face when applying this method in diverse educational contexts will provide deeper insights into its practical implementation. Exploring students' perspectives on the effectiveness of translation will also enrich our understanding of its impact on language learning.

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