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Original Article

Exploring the Difficulties Encountered by Translation Teachers in Teaching Translation Courses at Azzaytona University

Kefaya Alhade Abdualkareem Saleh

Translation department, Faculty of languages and translation, Azzaytona University, Libya
Email. *esammh7575@gmail.com*

Abstract
This study explores the difficulties encountered by translation teachers in teaching translation courses at Azzaytona University. It aims to identify the main challenges faced by teachers and examine their suggestions for improving translation education. A qualitative approach was adopted, using semi-structured interviews with eight translation teachers from the Departments of English and Translation. The interview data were analyzed thematically. The findings revealed that, according to the participants, teachers encounter challenges related to students' weak linguistic and translation skills, the balance between translation theory and practice, teaching materials, assessment, technological resources, and curriculum development. The participants emphasized the need to update course content, increase practical translation activities, integrate CAT and AI-assisted translation technologies, improve technological resources, and strengthen links between university training and the professional translation market. The study concludes that continuous curriculum development and improved teaching practices and resources are essential for enhancing the effectiveness of translation education at Azzaytona University.
Keywords. Translation Teaching, Translation Teachers, Translation Education, Curriculum Development.

Introduction

In today's globalized world, the fields of industry, trade, science, and communication have become increasingly interconnected, leading to a growing need for translation services. As a result, there is a growing demand for qualified translators who are capable of responding to diverse communicative and professional requirements. Consequently, universities that offer translation education have an important role in preparing students for the academic and professional competences required for effective translation practice.

Despite its importance, teaching translation at the university level remains a challenging task that has attracted the attention of many researchers and scholars. Previous research has identified a number of difficulties associated with translation teaching and translator education. These difficulties may relate to students' language proficiency, differences in students' abilities and backgrounds, and the availability and suitability of teaching materials. In this context, translation courses are expected to meet students' academic and professional needs and prepare them for the demands of the labor market. Therefore, curriculum designers and translation instructors need to carefully consider several factors during the course planning stage, including social needs, course objectives, learning outcomes, teaching materials, instructional methods, as well as assessment and evaluation procedures.

At Azzaytona University, translation courses are offered in both the Departments of Translation and the Departments of English as part of their language programs. This study focuses on the translation courses taught in both departments. Although teachers in these departments are directly involved in planning and delivering translation courses, limited attention has been given to systematically examining the challenges they encounter in their teaching practices. Consequently, this study employs a qualitative approach to explore the challenges faced by translation teachers while teaching these courses, with the aim of highlighting the difficulties that may affect the effectiveness of translation instruction at the university level.

The Statement of the Problem

This study aims to explore the perspectives of translation teachers on the challenges they encounter when teaching translation courses offered by the Departments of English and Translation at Azzaytona University. Despite the importance of effective translation education, limited attention has been given to examining the challenges encountered by translation teachers when teaching these courses. Translation teachers may encounter several challenges and difficulties in delivering the current translation courses effectively.

Aims of the study

This study aims to explore the challenges encountered by translation instructors when teaching translation courses in the Departments of English and Translation at Azzaytona University. In particular, it seeks to examine instructors' perspectives regarding the teaching of these courses, including the challenges associated with course planning, teaching

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materials, instructional methods, students' learning needs, and assessment practices. By exploring instructors' experiences, the study aims to develop a deeper understanding of the factors that may facilitate or constrain the effective delivery of translation courses at the university.

Research questions

The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What challenges do translation teachers encounter when teaching translation courses in the Departments of English and Translation at Azzaytona University?
2. How do translation teachers perceive the factors that contribute to the challenges they encounter when teaching translation courses?
3. What suggestions do translation teachers offer for improving the teaching and development of translation courses at Azzaytona University?

The definition of the terms

Translation Competence: is described as a summation of two abilities:

- The ability to generate a series of more than one viable TT for a pertinent ST.
- The ability to select only one viable TT from this series quickly and with justified confidence. (Pym, 1993)

Translation Pedagogy: It refers to the acquired knowledge on how to translate.

Pedagogical translation: It refers to the actual process or practice of translation, either in written or spoken form.

Literature Review

Theoretical Review

Translation education has received considerable attention within Translation Studies, particularly with regard to the development of translation competence, the design of translation curricula, instructional approaches, teaching materials, and assessment practices. As a result, effective planning and organization of translation courses become essential. Delisle [1988, p. 21-22] stresses the importance of establishing clear and realistic objectives during the course planning stage. In learner-centered educational environments, instructors must determine the intended learning outcomes and specify the skills students are expected to acquire by the end of the course. According to Kelly[2005, p.22], learning outcomes should focus on what learners are capable of achieving after completing the course.

In the same context, Eser [2014, p.950] argues that defining effective learning outcomes requires identifying the competencies and sub-competencies that translation students need to develop. Similarly, Rezvani and Vakilinejad [2014] maintain that instructors are in the best position to evaluate whether translation curricula successfully achieve their intended objectives and to suggest possible improvements when necessary.

Course content selection is another important aspect of translation teaching. Kelly [2005, p.62-63] explains that the educational context strongly influences the selection of course materials and content. Factors such as the academic or vocational orientation of the course, the students' educational level, specialization, and course duration should all be considered. Likewise, Li [2000, p.297] emphasizes the importance of conducting students' needs analysis when planning translation programs. He argues that aligning course content, teaching materials, and instructional methods with both social and learner needs can increase students' motivation and academic success. These perspectives suggest that selecting appropriate course content is not a straightforward process. Translation teachers may need to balance students' linguistic abilities, educational backgrounds, specialization, course objectives, available teaching time, and the requirements of the translation profession. Consequently, decisions concerning course content may represent an important challenge for teachers and are therefore relevant to the present study.

Similarly, Dagilienė [2012, p. 125] points out that teachers should assess learners' needs before selecting translation texts and materials. She suggests that teaching materials should be carefully chosen to address language structures and aspects that students find particularly difficult.

Concerning the relationship between theory and practice, many scholars advocate integrating translation theory with practical application. Newmark [1989, p.9] explains that translation theory provides guidance regarding the methods and strategies appropriate for different text types, while also offering a broader understanding of the translation process. Moreover, Mackenzie [1998, p.17] argues that theoretical knowledge can increase students' professional awareness, commitment, and self-confidence.

The literature on translation pedagogy also highlights the importance of classroom activities and collaborative learning in developing translation competence. According to Saeed [2014, p.17], translation tasks and activities contribute to the development of several competencies, including instrumental, interpersonal, and systematic competence. In addition, Kiraly [2000] proposes a social constructivist approach to translation teaching in which learners collaborate to

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accomplish tasks collectively rather than simply dividing the work among group members. He emphasizes that true collaborative learning involves shared meaning-making and active participation from all learners [Kiraly,2000, p.36].
Assessment is another essential component of translation teaching. Hatim and Mason [1997, p.166] argue that students' translation abilities can be developed and evaluated through a variety of practical exercises and activities. At the same time, Adab [2000, p.227] stresses that effective assessment in translation education depends largely on the clarity of course objectives and teachers' expectations. She further suggests that providing students with clear assessment criteria and rubrics can help them understand translation as a systematic and analytical process rather than a purely intuitive activity.

The Qualities Required of a Translation Teacher

A translation teacher should ideally possess practical experience in the field of translation and have a professional background as a translator. Brady [1989, p.20-21] emphasizes that an effective translation instructor should be an active and competent translator who is also knowledgeable about translation theory. Likewise, Pym [1993, p.103] supports this view by arguing that translation should be taught by individuals who are themselves professional translators.
In addition, Newmark [1991, p.130] points out that, provided sufficient motivation exists, translation teachers can acquire several essential professional skills. These include sensitivity to language and stylistic variation, extensive knowledge of the native language and its cultural background, strong understanding of lexical, syntactic, stylistic, and socio-cultural aspects of language, as well as broad knowledge of the subject areas being taught. He also highlights the importance of multilingual competence and cultural awareness in translation teaching. Furthermore, Newmark stresses that the effectiveness of a translation course depends to a great extent on the teacher's personality, experience, and professional competence. Based on these scholarly views, it can be concluded that translation teachers should possess both linguistic and professional qualities that enable them to prepare students not only for employment as translators but also for future academic and professional development in the field of translation studies.

Curriculum Content of a Translation Programme

Translation scholars and pedagogists have devoted considerable attention to designing educational programs that aim to prepare competent and professional translators. Among the important contributions in this field is the work of Baker [1992], who developed the well-known coursebook In Other Words. The book primarily focuses on teaching concepts and theories related to translation rather than concentrating solely on the practical process of translating. Baker supports her explanations with examples taken from various languages, including Arabic, Chinese, and Japanese, which broadens learners' understanding of translation across different linguistic and cultural contexts.
Several other translation training courses and textbooks have also been developed to improve translation competence and methodology. For example, Hervey and Higgins [1992] produced Thinking Translation: A Course in Translation Method: French-English, a course that was tested at the University of St Andrews and designed to enhance the quality of translation practice. However, the course mainly focuses on translation into the native language rather than translation into a foreign language. A similar version of the course was later adapted for German-English translation.
In the same area, Kussmaul [995] introduced Training the Translator, which addresses different aspects of translation methodology and teaching practices. The book is mainly intended for translation instructors and discusses effective approaches to teaching translation skills and developing students' competence.
Overall, translation training programs are generally designed to develop a range of linguistic, professional, and academic competencies that are necessary for translators in both educational and professional settings. Nevertheless, determining the appropriate content of a translation curriculum remains a debated issue among scholars, as there is no complete agreement on the exact knowledge, skills, and components that translation programs should include.

Methodology

Sample of the Study

The participants of this study consist of eight teachers from Azzaytona University. They were selected purposively because they have experience in teaching translation courses in the Department of English and Translation / College of Languages and Translation. The participants were therefore able to provide valuable insights and relevant information related to the objectives of the study.

Instrument of the Study

This study adopts a qualitative research approach, in which data were collected through interviews conducted with teachers who have experience in teaching translation in the Department of English and Translation at the Colleges of Languages at Azzaytona University. According to Boyce and Neale [2006, p.3], an interview is a qualitative research tool

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that involves in-depth, individual discussions with a limited number of participants in order to gain insight into their perceptions and experiences regarding a specific issue or phenomenon.

The researcher used semi-structured interviews, a flexible qualitative data collection method that combines predetermined questions with open-ended responses, allowing participants to express their experiences and opinions while enabling the researcher to probe for further clarification and detail when necessary. This approach will help to elicit teachers' perspectives on the nature of the current translation courses, as well as identify their perceived strengths and weaknesses. The overall aim is to gain a deeper understanding of how these courses are implemented and how they may be improved from the instructors' point of view.

Procedure of the Study

In order to achieve the objectives of the interview, the researcher has prepared a set of carefully selected questions to be posed to the participants. These questions address several aspects of the translation courses, including their objectives, as well as their strengths and weaknesses. In addition, the interview explores the challenges encountered by teachers during the process of teaching translation. These challenges are examined in relation to teaching materials and course content, teaching methodologies, assignments and examinations, as well as assessment and evaluation practices. Furthermore, participants are invited to provide suggestions for improving and developing the translation courses. The interview questions are as follows:

Section 1: Teaching-Related Difficulties

1-What are the main difficulties you encounter while teaching translation courses?

Section 2: Student-Related Challenges

2-What difficulties do students commonly face when learning translation?

3-How do these student-related difficulties affect your teaching?

Section 3: Teaching Resources and Methods

4- How do the teaching materials and translation texts used in these courses support or hinder your teaching?

5-What teaching methods or strategies do you usually use to overcome classroom challenges?

Section 4: Assessment

6- What challenges do you encounter when assessing students' translation performance and competence?

Section 5: Institutional and Curriculum Issues

7-To what extent do the current translation courses support effective teaching?

Section 6: Suggested Improvements

8-In your opinion, what changes or improvements would help teachers deliver translation courses more effectively?

To enhance the credibility and content validity of the interview guide, the interview questions were reviewed by a panel of specialists in English Language Teaching (ELT), applied linguistics, and Translation Studies. Their feedback was used to assess the clarity, relevance, and appropriateness of the questions in relation to the research objectives.

Two modes of interviewing are employed with the selected participants: face-to-face interviews and telephone interviews, depending on the availability and convenience of the teachers. All interviews are recorded, transcribed, and then analyzed using thematic analysis in order to identify key themes, patterns, and viewpoints expressed by the participants. Finally, the main findings are summarized and presented in the results section of the study.

Analysis of the Interview Results

The data obtained from the semi-structured interviews with eight translation teachers at Azzaytona University were analyzed using thematic analysis, drawing on the six-phase approach described by Braun and Clarke [2006]: familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. The analysis organized recurring issues in the participants' accounts into six themes. Frequencies are reported descriptively to indicate how many of the eight participants referred to an issue; they are not treated as statistical estimates or evidence of generalizability.

To enhance the trustworthiness of the qualitative analysis, the researcher followed a systematic approach to coding and theme development. The interview transcripts were reviewed carefully, and relevant statements were coded according to their meaning and relevance to the research questions. The codes were then compared and organized into broader categories and themes. To maintain coding consistency, the researcher reviewed the transcripts and codes throughout the analysis process to ensure that similar responses were treated consistently and that the emerging themes accurately reflected the participants' accounts. In addition, the credibility of the study was supported by using semi-structured interviews, recording and transcribing participants' responses, and reviewing the interview guide with specialists in English Language Teaching, Applied Linguistics, and Translation Studies. These procedures helped ensure that the findings were grounded in the participants' experiences and perspectives.

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Theme One: Teaching-Related Challenges

The analysis of the interviews revealed that most translation teachers encounter several challenges while teaching translation courses. Seven of the eight participants identified difficulties associated with teaching translation courses, while one participant did not emphasize major difficulties in this area. The major difficulties identified by the participants include students' inadequate English language proficiency, heavy teaching workloads, the challenge of balancing theoretical knowledge with practical translation skills, and the lack of technological resources. Some teachers highlighted that they often spend considerable time addressing students' linguistic weaknesses rather than focusing on translation theories and strategies. These challenges negatively affect the effectiveness of translation teaching and require additional effort to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

Table 1. Frequency of participants mentioning teaching-related challenges

Category	Number of participants
Mentioned significant challenges	7
Did not emphasize significant challenges	1

Theme Two: Student-Related Challenges

All eight participants reported that students encounter significant difficulties when learning translation. According to the teachers, students commonly struggle with literal translation, weak vocabulary and grammar, limited cultural awareness, and difficulties in understanding source texts and specialized terminology. Furthermore, students often face problems when selecting appropriate translation strategies and producing accurate and natural target-language texts.

The participants emphasized that these challenges directly affect their teaching practices, as they are sometimes unable to achieve all the intended learning outcomes within the allocated class time. Their responses highlight the importance of improving students' linguistic and translation competencies to enhance the quality of translation education and facilitate the achievement of course objectives.

Table 2. Participants referring to student-related challenges

Category	Number of participants
Mentioned student-related challenges	8

Theme Three: Teaching Materials and Instructional Strategies

The interviews revealed mixed perspectives regarding the adequacy of teaching materials and instructional strategies used in translation courses.

Five of the eight participants reported that the current teaching materials generally support translation teaching. Teachers have the freedom to choose different materials, such as texts from different sources and video recordings. This flexibility allows teachers to select materials according to students'needs and, in some cases, according to the requirements of the translation market.

However, the interviews also revealed several limitations.

Two participants expressed reservations about the relationship between theoretical content and practical application. They noted that providing students with theories of translation is beneficial for these courses, but most of the teachers do not clarify in which cases these theories should be used and how students can apply them.

Some participants also discussed the use of technological resources in the classroom. They considered technology and data-based resources potentially useful for translation teaching, but sometimes technical problems affect the smooth progression of lessons. One participant expressed stronger concerns about the available materials. He noted that many of the translation texts are outdated and do not adequately reflect contemporary developments in translation studies and professional translation practice. He also noted that there is no balance between the theoretical content and practice. Moreover, he added that there is no specific method to integrate translation theory with practice. In addition, he reported that the low level of students' linguistic competence affects the teachers' plans to cover the material, since they have to explain the linguistic factors of the sentences in the text and then teach translation.

Table 3. Participants' perspectives on teaching materials and instructional strategies

Perspectives	Number of participants
Generally positive/ adequate	5
Mixed or qualified views	2
Strong concerns about adequacy	1

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Theme Four: Assessment Challenges

Six of the eight participants described assessment as challenging, particularly when evaluating students' translation performance and overall competence. They indicated that the evaluation of students' translations is not always straightforward because students' translations can differ in terms of style, lexical choice, grammatical accuracy, and the strategies used to convey meaning. Participants reported that assessment is sometimes based largely on a holistic approach, while assessment criteria remain insufficiently defined. Participants also pointed out the absence of constructive feedback, which hinders students' ability to identify and learn from their translation errors. Moreover, they observed that assessment practices tend to emphasize grammatical accuracy and vocabulary knowledge rather than evaluating translation competence in its broader sense.

However, two participants expressed satisfaction with the existing translation assessment and evaluation practices and provided several reasons for their positive views. They reported that formative assessment is implemented effectively in translation classes because of the small number of students. They also referred to the use of self-assessment, classroom participation, attendance, and assessment rubrics as practices that can support students' learning.

The findings indicate that translation assessment is one of the most demanding aspects of teaching translation courses, requiring both linguistic and professional judgment.

Table 4. Participants referring to assessment as a challenge

Category	Number of participants
Identified assessment challenges	6
Did not identify major assessment challenges	2

Theme Five: Institutional and Curriculum Issues

Another major theme emerging from the interviews concerned curriculum development and institutional support. Seven of the eight participants indicated that the current translation courses require further development to support effective teaching. They emphasized that the curriculum requires modernization to address the challenges of contemporary translation education. They also highlighted several issues related to curriculum design, including the need for more practical translation activities, updated teaching materials, and improved technological resources.

One participant provided a more positive perspective regarding the adequacy of the curriculum. He acknowledged that the existing translation curriculum provides students with a basic understanding of translation principles and practices.

These findings indicate that curriculum development is essential for enhancing both teaching effectiveness and students' translation competence.

Table 5. Participants referring to the need for curriculum development

Category	Number of participants
Identified a need for further development	7
Provided a more positive/ qualified view	1

Theme Six: Suggested Improvements

The final theme concerned the participants' suggestions for improving translation teaching at Azzaytona University. All eight participants proposed improvements to some aspect of translation education. The participants recommended updating translation course content, increasing practical translation activities, integrating translation technologies such as computer-assisted translation (CAT) tools and AI-assisted translation, improving technological resources, and providing professional development opportunities for translation teachers. Additionally, they suggested establishing stronger links between university translation courses and the requirements of the professional translation market. The participants emphasized that such improvements would contribute significantly to improving students' translation competence and supporting instructors in delivering translation courses more effectively.

Table 6. Participants suggesting improvements to translation teaching

Category	Number of participants
Suggested areas for improvement	8

Discussion of the findings

The thematic analysis of the eight interviews identified six major themes concerning the teaching of translation courses at Azzaytona University. The findings indicate that translation teachers encounter challenges related to teaching practices, students' linguistic and translation abilities, teaching materials and instructional strategies, assessment, curriculum development, and institutional support.

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Among the most prominent issues identified by the participants were students' inadequate language proficiency, difficulties in balancing theoretical and practical components of translation teaching, limitations associated with teaching materials and technological resources, and challenges in assessing translation competence. The participants also emphasized the need to update translation curricula, increase practical translation activities, integrate current translation technologies, improve technological resources, and provide professional development opportunities for instructors. Taken together, the findings suggest that the challenges of teaching translation cannot be attributed to a single factor. Rather, they result from the interaction of student-related, pedagogical, curricular, material, technological, and institutional factors. The instructors' perspectives provide valuable insight into these challenges and highlight several areas that may require attention in the future development of translation courses at Azzaytona University.

Conclusion

This study explored the difficulties encountered by translation teachers at Azzaytona University. The findings revealed that these difficulties are related mainly to students' weak linguistic and translation skills, the balance between theory and practice, teaching materials, assessment, technological resources, and curriculum development. The participants also emphasized the need to update course content, increase practical translation activities, integrate CAT and AI-assisted translation technologies, and strengthen the connection between university training and the professional translation market. Overall, the study concludes that continuous curriculum development and improved teaching resources and practices are essential for enhancing the effectiveness of translation education and developing students' translation competence.

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