

FACILITATING EFL TEACHING AND LEARNING THROUGH TRANSLATION PRACTICE A Case Study of Secondary Schools, Omdurman Locality, Khartoum State, Sudan, 2021

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims at facilitating EFL teaching and learning through using L1 to ease L2 interpretation and identifying EFL Sudanese teachers' attitudes towards using Arabic in EFL classes. The paper adopted the descriptive analytical method. The data for the study was collected by means of a questionnaire which was distributed among (50) of EFL teachers of secondary schools in Omdurman locality and was analyzed by SPSS program. (by means of questionnaire, structured interview, opinionnaire which was distributed to 10,20, 30, etc).The findings of this study have shown that translation can be used in EFL classes to ease the teaching and learning processes, EFL teachers have different attitudes about the use of translation in the classroom, translation enhances EFL learners' interpretation of L2 concepts, practicing translation improves EFL learners' critical thinking skills, through translation, translation improves learners' vocabulary knowledge, translation improves EFL learners' translation skills, and using translation enhances EFL learners' comprehension skills. The study recommended the following: translation should be used in EFL classes to facilitate the teaching and learning process, EFL learners should practice translation for enhancing their comprehension skills.

Keywords: Translation, English as foreign language comprehension skills, Arabic EFL classes, teaching and learning process.

1. Introduction

Translation is considered as an activity to help and facilitate the communication process by interpreting the information received on one language (L1) into another language (L2). The main goal of translation is to transmit a suitable meaning of a word or a sentence linguistically.

Foreign language learners regularly use translation to facilitate language learning and to acquire the new language. Despite the fact that translation has played different roles in various methods of language teaching accommodated for students from different social backgrounds, most educators agree that translation is a powerful tool to help the students more confidently understand foreign words and expressions and express ideas in the target language. (Al-Musawi 2014).

Some teachers persuade learners to use translation in their learning foreign languages where as others do not. Utilizing first language as a mean of instruction is considered effective by the former group whilst the

latter orients towards a communicative approach to language learning where the second language should be regarded as a learning and instructional means. Therefore, in the twentieth century of language teaching methodology, Cook (2001) believed that this opposing approach to L1 was evidently a prevailing factor. Practitioners not only emphasize the function of translation in second and foreign language learning but also consider it a reasonable kind of activity for ESL and EFL learners Laviosa & Zanettin (cited in Taghinezhad 2017).

According to Al- Nofaie (2010) using translation in EFL classes has a positive role to play in EFL teaching. Translation (and the use of the mother tongue in general) came to be regarded as a way of understanding some expressions in L2. Some learners appear to need to relate lexis and structures in the target language to equivalents in their mother tongue. This gives them the opportunity to compare similarities and contrast differences. Put simply, they need the reassurance of their mother tongue in order to make sense of the way the target language operates. In the case of teachers, an ability to translate into the mother tongue of the learners can offer a convenient and efficient way out of a tricky situation. Therefore, this paper aims at facilitating EFL teaching and learning through using L1 to ease L2 interpretation and identifying EFL Sudanese teachers' attitudes towards using Arabic in EFL classes.

2. Literature Review

Many current studies were conducted on this area, for example, McDonough (2002), recently there has been a growing interest in the use of translation in the foreign language classroom and foreign language teachers begin to notice the pedagogical value of using translation along with other traditional language teaching activities; Reading, grammar exercises, translation is in fact perceived by learners to be conducive to learning. Elham (cited in Mohammad 2017) On the other hand, Harbord (1992) provides some justification for not using translation in L2 teaching activities. He believes that the use of translation tasks means a return to Grammar-Translation Method with all of its negative connotations. He also believes that the isolation of lexis from any real context prevents students from gaining insight into the multiple uses and meanings of the word. He further contends that in an informal application, translation creates a situation in which the students contributing to the L2 by enforcing a feeling of inferiority. Duff (1994) reveals further reasons why teachers declined to the use of translation in language classes. He stresses that translation is text-bound and confined only to reading and writing skills. It is not a communicative activity because it does not involve oral interaction.

Nunan (1999) who states that: In some cases it is inevitable that language learners use their dominant languages (L1) as a resource. Indeed it is a kind of individual learning style for some students. They need to be able to relate lexis and structures of target language into their equivalents in their mother tongue. According to Duff (1989), translation can help in developing three characteristics essential for language learning: flexibility, accuracy, and clarity. That is to say, translation trains the learner to search (flexibility) for the most accurate words what is meant clarity. This combination of freedom and constraint allows the students to contribute their own thoughts to a discussion which has a clear focus-the text". Further, Nation (2003) emphasized and encouraged the use of bilingual cards, L1-L2 word pairs and L1 translation as the best ways for increasing vocabulary size.

Lucas and Katz (1994) claimed that, for students with little or no proficiency in English, their native language is the only effective means for providing access to content area development". By discussing content in their native language, students can interact more effectively about more sophisticated content and have greater access to their own knowledge and experience.

There are many theorists and linguists who strongly believe in the importance of using translation in foreign language classes. They believe that there is no reason why translation activities cannot be incorporated into a communicatively based lesson, and, thus, promote different activities that suit the different goals and aims of language learners. Schaffner (1998) claims that the translation and related exercises could be beneficial to foreign language learning in improving verbal ability, expanding students' vocabulary in L2, improving the learners' understanding of how languages work, consolidating L2 structures for active use, and improving the comprehension of L2. Dagilienė (2012) argues that translation in foreign language classes is becoming a form of pedagogical translation, which is viewed as an effective tool in language learning and is evaluated as a way to

enhance learners' competences. Students taught by using pedagogical translation are encouraged to practice reading, writing, vocabulary, grammar, and speaking. It is also argued that Translation heightens language awareness. While students are translating, they focus on identifying differences in vocabulary and structure, Mohammadi, (2017).

Atkinson (1993:53) claims that by raising one's consciousness of the nonparallel nature of languages, the learning process becomes richer; translation not only "allows learners to think comparatively," but it is also "a real life activity" because students who learn English for their jobs will probably need to know something about translation. Similarly, Duff (1989:6) states that translation does not have to be an aimless struggle between the learner and the text. However, many other approaches are possible which introduce purposeful and imaginative use of translation in language learning programs. "If we can find a way to offset the weak points and make the best use of its assets, translation as a teaching technique can be used to help students learn a second language more thoughtfully and effectively".

The two extreme positions of pure translation and forbidding translation in the classroom are unnecessary extremes and instead a balanced approach in which teachers strategically use L1 in order to promote foreign language acquisition seems to be logical. Stibbard (1994) analyzed the use of oral translation as a L2 teaching activity. He suggested that translation may play a valuable role in L2 teaching. Moreover, he asserted that translation should be an integral part of the language learning program. In addition, Levenston (1985) presents an overview of the role of translation in foreign language teaching and learning. He argues that translation is useful for: (1) practicing grammatical structures, (2) explaining vocabulary items, (3) testing at all levels, and (4) developing communicative competence. He recommended translation be taught as a skill in its own right. Contrary to what many might think translation is not a passive activity which lacks communication. According to Duff (1989) translation is a kind of communicative activity which is practiced within a meaningful context. Translation enhances interaction between the teacher and the students and among the students themselves due to the fact that rarely is there any absolute right rendering of the text.

A significant benefit of translation in language teaching is that teachers can use translation as an effective means of explaining particular aspects of language, such as cultural differences, grammatical rules and syntactic structures with which the students have difficulty. In this regard, Chellapan (1982) explains that this way of using translation involves a conscious process of learning. Through translation, a learner can be aware of the distinctiveness of similar structures in the two languages, and also of the different processes used in conveying the same message. Deliberate translation, as he calls it, focuses on lexical items, where the contrasts in the two languages vary; therefore, it should be done in a larger context which will help the students learn the different distributions in the two languages and also shows that the meaning of any item is part of the total environment of the text in the two languages.

2.1 The Practical Activity of Translation

Translation is considered as a way to ensure the students understand the material and also as a significant means to evaluate their comprehension. It can be an important as well as suitable writing exercise. In the EFL learning, however, translating is considered as a practical activity in language classrooms. As translation trainees being aware of theoretical frameworks and having knowledge of theories of translation may affect the quality of the translation product. However, the other momentous factor influencing target language text (TLT) quality is individual differences and characteristics. One of these characteristics is risk taking which is defined as Brown, (2001:150) explains that "eagerness to try something novel and different without putting the primary focus on success or failure regardless of embarrassment in learning". As for the interview question of what factors affect the quality of the translation, the more English words students learned, the higher the quality of translation they could produce. The more 'authentic' English, i.e., the language actually used in English-speaking countries, they had learned, the more nuances they could express in their translations.

2.2 Translation in Sudanese EFL Context.

In Sudanese EFL context, Arabic language is often used for explaining new concepts. There are various aspects of English language that may be totally alien to a certain groups of learners and therefore, an introduction in L2 involving a comparison with L1, can be invaluable for better clarifying what these are and how they work. Further, there are some areas like vocabulary where the mother tongue might actually be quite useful and efficient in explaining words which cannot be explained in the target language, for example some abstract words". Therefore, using L1 helps in saving time and clarity. Duff (1989) as he described: "How translation can help in developing three characteristics essential for language learning: flexibility, accuracy, and clarity". He stated: "Translation trains the learner to search (flexibility) for the most accurate words what is meant (clarity). This combination of freedom and constraint allows the students to contribute their own thoughts to a discussion which has a clear focus-the text". Further, Nation (2003) emphasized and encouraged the use of bilingual cards, L1-L2 word pairs and L1 translation as the best ways for increasing vocabulary size.

A learners' L1 is one of the most important factors in learning L2 vocabulary" (Scmitt and McCarthy 1997). When the use of an L1 translation is combined with the use of word cards for the initial learning of vocabulary, then learners have a very effective strategy for speeding up vocabulary growth. More often, teachers resort to the L1 to explain grammar because they feel that the L2 explanation is too complicated, and may even feel themselves incapable of giving a clear and unambiguous explanation of the structure in question exclusively in English (Harbord: 1992). When it helps to engender security "starting with the L1 gives a sense of security and validates the learner's lived experiences, allowing them to express themselves. The learner is then willing to experiment and take risks with English." (Auerbach, 1993) Mix in a little of the familiar, and a little L1 in the classroom, and you have a confident learner ready for new challenges.

According to Harbord (1992), the idea that using the MT in the classroom is counter-productive. It is claimed that learning (as opposed to acquisition) is not especially helpful, and stressed instead the need for learners to be exposed to as much spoken English 'input' as possible. In fact, if students did not keep making correspondences between foreign language items and mother tongue items, they would never learn foreign languages at all (Swan 1985: 85). In Sudanese FFL learners where no such study has been previously conducted, therefore, this paper is a case study of Secondary Schools of Omdurman Locality, which aims at facilitating EFL teaching and learning through using L1 to ease L2 interpretation and identifying EFL Sudanese teachers' attitudes towards using Arabic in EFL classes.

3. Statement of the Problem

EFL learners' interpretation skills need to be improved. This study aims at enabling learners to develop their comprehension skills through using translation for more interpretation to English language beside their mother tongue and to solve the problems of understanding of the difficult concepts.

4. Objectives of the Study

This study aims at:

- i. Facilitating EFL teaching and learning through using L1 to ease L2 interpretation.
- ii. Identifying EFL Sudanese teachers' attitudes towards using Arabic in EFL classes.

5. Questions of the Study:

This paper attempts to answer the following questions:

- i. What is the role of translation in facilitating EFL teaching and learning?
- ii. What are EFL Sudanese teachers' attitudes towards using Arabic in EFL classes?

6. Hypotheses of the Study

- i. Translation facilitates EFL teaching and learning processes

- ii. EFL Sudanese teachers have different attitudes towards using Arabic in EFL classes.

7. Significance of the Study

This study explains the advantages using translation in EFL classroom. It supports and explains the use of L1 to ease understanding of L2 concepts. . The study will draw the attention of persons in charge and the officials to the importance of student's role in achieving and carrying out effective procedures and techniques translation from English to Arabic for the purposes to create and produce accurate and perfect translation.

8. Research Methodology

The study follows the descriptive analytical method. The data for this study is collected through a questionnaire from secondary school teachers, then, the results are analyzed statistically with SPSS Program.

8.0 Methodology

This study aims at enhancing EFL teaching and learning through translation. The paper aims at facilitating EFL teaching and learning through using L1 to ease L2 interpretation and identifying EFL Sudanese teachers' attitudes towards using Arabic in EFL classes. The participants of the study were (50) EFL teachers of secondary schools, Omdurman Locality, Khartoum State, Sudan. A questionnaire was distributed to the sample, then the results were analyzed statistically with the SPSS program. The results are shown in the following tables:

8.1. Discussion and Findings

Statement (1) Using translation facilitates EFL teaching and learning.

Table. 1: Facilitating teaching and learning process.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	1	2.0	2.0	2.0
	Neutral	2	4.0	4.0	6.0
	Agree	47	94.0	94.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

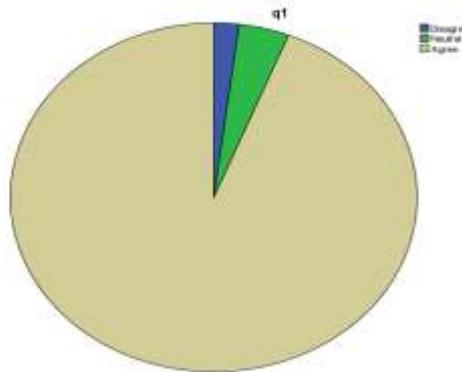


Figure. 1: Facilitating teaching and learning process.

Table (1) reflects that, using translation in EFL classes, eases teaching and learning. (94%) of the sample agree with the statement, (4%) are neutral and (2%) disagree. According to the statistical analysis of statement, it is proved.

Statement (2) through best translation techniques, EFL learners able to understand high frequency words.

Table.2: EFL learners able to understand high frequency words.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	2	4.0	4.0	4.0
	Neutral	3	6.0	6.0	10.0
	Agree	45	90.0	90.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

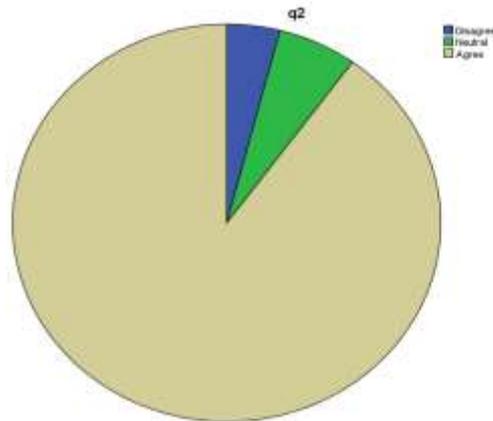


Figure. 2: EFL learners able to understand high frequency words.

According to the statistical analysis of table (2) most respondents (90%) agree, (6%) are neutral and (4%) disagree that, through best translation techniques, EFL learners able to understand high frequency words. Therefore, this statement is justified.

Statement (3) Using translation enhances learners’ critical thinking skills.

Table. 3: Enhancing learners’ critical thinking skills.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Neutral	6	12.0	12.0	12.0
	Agree	44	88.0	88.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

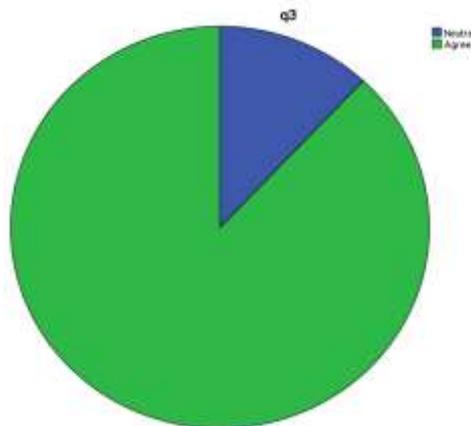


Figure. 3: Enhancing learners’ critical thinking skills

Table (3) shows that, using translation in EFL classes enhances learners’ critical thinking skills. However, most respondents (88%) agree and (1%2) neutral with the statement. So, the statement is accepted.

Statement (4) Practicing translation improves learners’ writing skills.

Table.4: Improving learners’ writing skills.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	3	6.0	6.0	6.0
	Neutral	2	4.0	4.0	10.0
	Agree	45	90.0	90.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

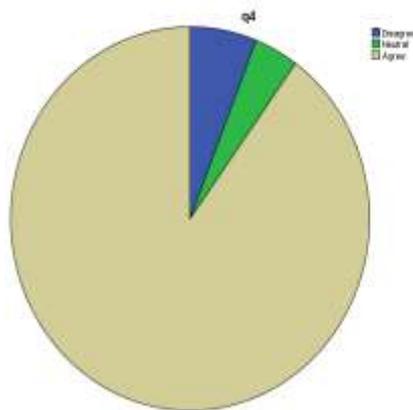


Figure. 4: Improving learners’ writing skills

According to the statistical analysis of table (4), practicing translation improves learners’ writing skills. Again, most of the sample(90%) agree with the statement, (4%) neutral and (6%) disagree. This statement is accepted.

Statement (5) EFL Sudanese teachers have different attitudes towards using Arabic in EFL classes.

Table. 5: Teachers’ attitudes towards using Arabic in EFL classes.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	4	8.0	8.0	8.0
	Neutral	2	4.0	4.0	12.0
	Agree	44	88.0	88.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

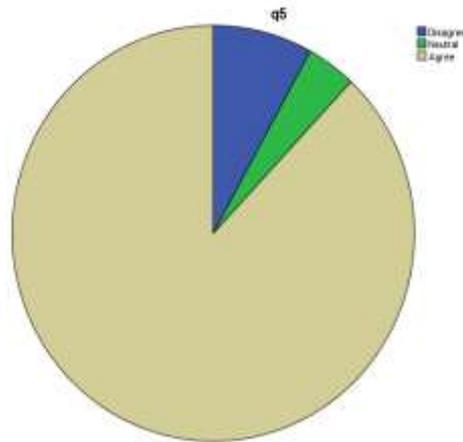


Figure. 5: Teachers’ attitudes towards using Arabic in EFL classes.

Table (5) shows that most respondents (88%) agree that, EFL Sudanese teachers have different attitudes towards using Arabic in EFL classes Only (4%) are neutral with the statement and (8%) disagree with the statement. Thus, this statement is proved.

Statement (6) Translation facilitates the global communication.

Table.6: Facilitating the global communication.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	2	4.0	4.0	4.0
	Neutral	3	6.0	6.0	10.0
	Agree	45	90.0	90.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

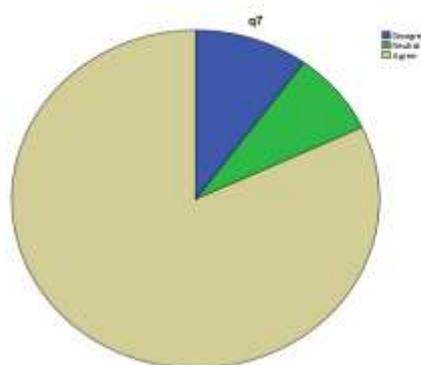


Figure.6: Facilitating the global communication.

Table (6) shows that most of respondents (90%) agree, (6%) are neutral and (4%) of the sample disagree that, translation facilitates the global communication. Therefore, this statement is accepted.

Statement (7) Translation helps EFL learners to compare and contrast global contexts

Table.7: Helping EFL learners to compare and contrast global contexts.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	5	10.0	10.0	10.0
	Neutral	4	8.0	8.0	18.0
	Agree	41	82.0	82.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

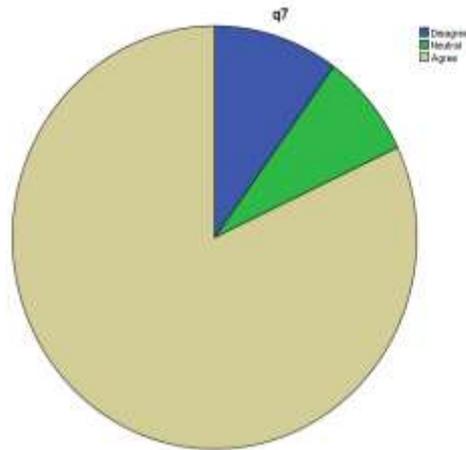


Table.7: Helping EFL learners to compare and contrast global contexts.

Table (7) shows that most respondents (82%) agree with the statement, (8%) neutral and (10%) disagree that, translation helps EFL learners to compare and contrast global contexts. Therefore, the statement is accepted.

Statement (8) Translation improves learners’ vocabulary knowledge.

Table.8: Improving learners’ vocabulary knowledge.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	3	6.0	6.0	6.0
	Neutral	3	6.0	6.0	12.0
	Agree	44	88.0	88.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

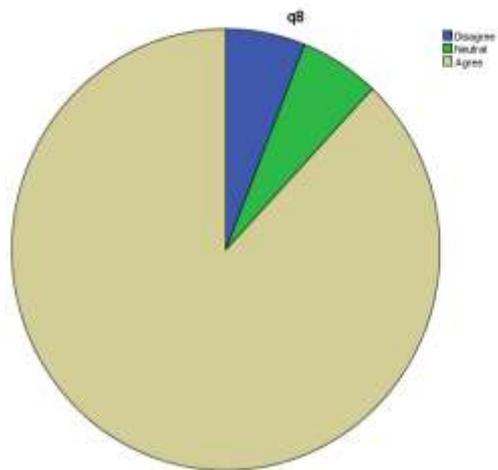


Figure.8: Improving learners’ vocabulary knowledge.

Table (8) shows that, translation improves learners’ vocabulary knowledge. According to the statistical analysis of table (8), (88%) of respondents agree, (6%) of the sample are neutral and (6%) disagree with the statement. Thus, this statement is justified.

Statement (9): Translation enables EFL learners to master the fifth language skill.

Table. 9: Enabling EFL learners to master the fifth language skill

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	2	4.0	4.0	4.0
	Neutral	3	6.0	6.0	10.0
	Agree	45	90.0	90.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

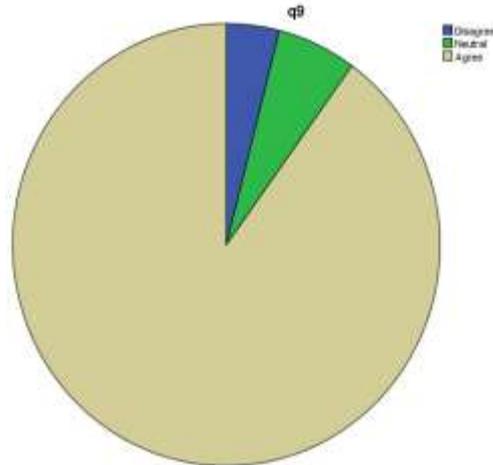


Figure. 9: Enabling EFL learners to master the fifth language skill

According to the statistical analysis of table (9) most respondents (90%) agree, (6%) of the sample are neutral, (4%) disagree that, translation enables EFL learners to master the fifth language skill Therefore, this statement is accepted.

Statement (10) Translation improves EFL learners’ translation skills

Table. 10: Improving EFL learners’ translation skills.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	2	4.0	4.0	4.0
	Neutral	4	8.0	8.0	12.0
	Agree	44	88.0	88.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

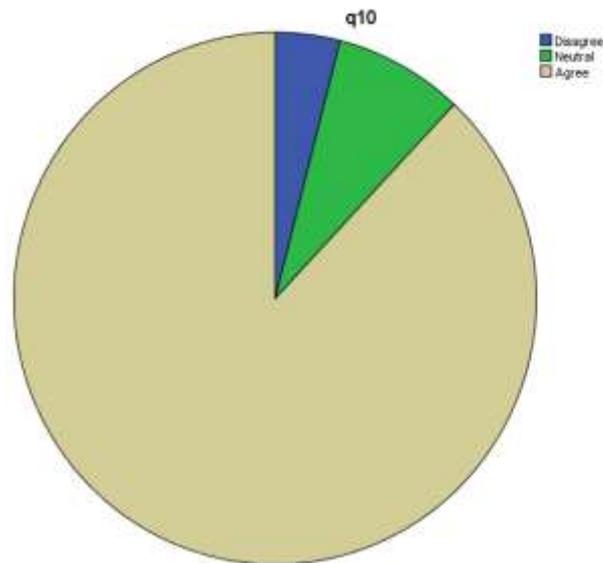


Figure.10: Improving EFL learners' translation skills.

According to the statistical analysis of table (10), (88%) of the sample agree, (8%) are neutral and (4%) disagree that, translation improves EFL learners' translation skills. Thus, this statement is justified.

8.2. Findings and Recommendations

The study came out with the following findings:

- i. Using translation facilitates teaching and learning processes.
- ii. Translation promotes EFL learners' interpretation of L2 concepts.
- iii. Practicing translation improves EFL learners' critical thinking skills.
- iv. Translation improves learners' lexical knowledge.
- v. Translation improves EFL learners' translation skills

8.3. Recommendations

The study recommended the following:

- i. Translation should be used in EFL classes to facilitate the teaching and learning.
- ii. EFL learners should improve their lexical knowledge through translation.
- iii. EFL learners should practice translation for enhancing their comprehension skills.

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