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Can Translation Improve EFL Students' Grammatical Accuracy?

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ABSTRACT

This report focuses on research results from a project completed at Trier University in December 2015 that provides insight into whether a monolingual group of learners can improve their grammatical accuracy and reduce interference mistakes in their English via contrastive analysis and translation instruction and activities. Contrastive analysis and translation (CAT) instruction in this setting focusses on comparing grammatical differences between students' dominant language (German) and English, and practice activities where sentences or short texts are translated from German into English. The results of a pre- and post-test administered in the first and final week of a translation class were compared to two other class types: a grammar class which consisted of form-focused instruction but not translation, and a process-approach essay writing class where students received feedback on their written work throughout the semester. The results of our study indicate that with C1 level EAP students, more improvement in grammatical accuracy is seen through teaching with CAT than in explicit grammar instruction or through language feedback on written work alone. These results indicate that CAT does indeed have a place in modern language classes.

Keywords: *Translation in Language Teaching, Contrastive Analysis and Translation, Form-focused Instruction, Advanced Learners, English for Academic Purposes*

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1. Introduction

Translation as a tool for teaching foreign languages is receiving increased attention and is again coming to be seen as a viable method to help learners learn a foreign language (cf. Cook 2010). This has increased the support for the translation teaching done in many different settings, including universities.

We teach within the Department of English Studies at Trier University in Rheinland-Palatine (Germany). The state curriculum of Rhineland-Palatinate requires teaching translation within undergraduate English Studies degree programmes. Our learners have a high level of English (C1) and generally have German as a native language or as one of their dominant languages. The translation requirement is based on the assumption that a group of monolingual learners who have advanced L2 proficiency will improve the accuracy of their English grammar through practising translation. It is thought to be especially useful when these translation tasks specifically look at the language points in which English and, in this case, German

differ from each other, and by further exploring the use of certain aspects of English grammar through contrastive analysis and translation (CAT). The purpose of this study was to explore the validity of this assumption.

2. Background

In recent years, many publications have appeared on the topic of translation in foreign language teaching. Some, such as Hall & Cook (2012), approach the topic from a theoretical point of view, and some provide concrete ideas for classroom activities (Popovic, 2001), while others both explore the theoretical basis for teaching translation and provide concrete pedagogical ideas (Cook, 2010; House, 2009; Leonardi, 2010; Malmkjaer, 1998; Witte, Harden & Harden, 2009). Most of the authors have similar arguments in favour of translation teaching, for example claiming, as House (2009) explains, that it is natural for people to compare a new language to their dominant language, thus translation cannot really be avoided, and if teachers wish to build on what learners already know, then translation enables this within the language



teaching classroom. Further, House and others mention that it can be an economical way to help learners understand new vocabulary, it can increase motivation by taking away the strangeness of the new language, it can, especially in times of growing concern about the dominance of English, show respect to learners' dominant languages, and it can be a communicative activity. Finally, House points out how translation can also help to develop awareness of the similarities and differences between L1 and L2, and can promote cross-cultural understanding (62-65). Developing an understanding of the similarities and differences between German and English, as well as more awareness of culturally specific concepts, is the theoretical justification for translation teaching at Trier University.

Although much of the previous literature is largely theoretical, empirical research has also been undertaken. Some of this has focused on learners' and/or teachers' attitudes towards translation and use of L1 in the classroom (Carreres, 2006; Kelly & Bruen 2015; Machida, 2008) including some which looked specifically at English as the L2 (Calis & Dikilitas, 2012; Druce, 2012 & 2015; Fernandez-Guerra, 2014; Kim, 2011; Mollaei, Taghinezhad & Sadighi 2017; Murtisari, 2016). These studies have generally concluded that teachers and learners see the benefit(s) of using translation activities as one of many language-teaching tools, and that translation is viewed by both learners and teachers as particularly helpful in improving learners' language accuracy. These attitudes echo much of the argument in favour of translation in ELT from the theoretical literature. However, positive attitudes towards translation as a teaching tool do not necessarily demonstrate the effectiveness of this teaching method.

Thus another area of research, to which this study contributes, attempts to test language improvement after an intervention that involves translation activities or contrastive linguistic analysis. This area of research is small and to date many of the results do not clearly indicate a significant benefit of translation in language learning. Two studies with promising results indicating an improvement in learners' grammatical accuracy through translation teaching unfortunately had small sample sizes. Märlein (2009), for example, tested five English learners of German with pre- and post-tests after teaching German word order through word-for-word translations

into English. Learners showed some improvement, however this was not statistically significant. Likewise, França Rocha (2011) analysed translation exercises completed by learners for the occurrence and disappearance of errors over a series of lessons among a group of four adult elementary learners of English in Brazil. The results seemed to point to some improvement in the use of grammatically correct constructions after the translation exercises, but were not statistically significant. With a slightly larger test sample, Khan (2016) carried out a study with 40 speakers of Arabic learning English in a college intensive course. Students were taught vocabulary either through the Arabic translations or through explanations of the words in English. Those taught by translation scored more highly on a vocabulary test which had them give the Arabic translation of the words. However, this study possibly only shows that being taught vocabulary through translation leads to better results when being asked to translate English words, since no free production of language by these students was analysed.

Some studies have not looked directly at using translation activities in the classroom, but rather at teaching involving contrastive linguistic analysis. Examples here are Kupferberg & Olshtain (1996), Ghabanchi & Vosoghi (2006), Laufer & Girsai (2008), He (2016), Ahmadi (2016) and Fatollahi (2016). Kupferberg and Olshtain (1996) tested a group of 137 Hebrew-speaking learners of English at the high school level and were able to show that contrastive input led to better scores on a test involving recognition and production of specific forms, and they therefore concluded that CAT is conducive to learning these forms. They looked particularly at compound nouns and reduced relative clauses, and on the post-intervention exam, the recognition task for compound nouns involved translation. One of the study's limits is that it tested only two aspects of language. Laufer and Girsai (2008) also looked at Hebrew-speaking learners of English at the high school level (their sample size was 75) and showed that learners taught using contrastive analysis and translation (CAT) were able to significantly outperform those who were taught with other methods on vocabulary learning and retention. Their test involved translating words and phrases between Hebrew and English, or explaining English vocabulary in English. However, this study

is similar to Khan in that it may only indicate that teaching using CAT enables students to be better translators.

Focusing more on grammatical accuracy, Ghabanchi and Vosooghi (2006) reported statistically significant higher scores on post-tests of active/passive voice and conditionals with groups of Persian-speaking learners of English at the high school level (sample size 305) who were taught these advanced grammatical structures using contrastive linguistic instruction. Unfortunately, from the results published, it is unclear how the test tasks were structured. It is mentioned that there were recognition tasks where learners were asked to find incorrect forms and a production task which was not explained. Especially as this study tests production, more information on the tasks might make it possible to assess whether the improvement was observed in free production or in a limiting test situation, and whether the study has achieved results by teaching students the specific skills needed for the test tasks or whether students will be able to apply this knowledge outside these set tasks. With a similar focus on grammar, Ahmadi (2016) looked at accurate use of the progressive and perfect aspects among 55 Persian-speaking learners of English and tested them using a grammatical judgement test and translation. However, the results were not statistically significant and in any case seemed to indicate that using contrastive analysis in the classroom only helped learners to improve their translation ability, but not necessarily other skills. That this study failed to have conclusive findings demonstrates the need for more studies in this area.

Considering that translation is often thought to help improve only grammar and vocabulary, some interesting studies in this area have considered the potential for wider application of translation or CAT in teaching foreign languages. For example, He (2016) and Fatollahi's (2016) work explores whether translation may help to improve foreign language skills at a more general discourse level. He (2016) looked at using sentence pattern translation drills to improve writing scores in test situations with a group of 50 Chinese non-English majors. It was, however, only one of many teaching methods used between the two language exams and thus the improvements in student test scores could possibly be attributed to other methods. Thus, although the intent of this study is interesting, it unfortunately does not provide any concrete indications of the

benefits of CAT in language teaching. Fatollahi (2016) examined the use of sight translation tasks to enhance reading comprehension with 70 Iranian undergraduate students. The results indicate that translation may enhance reading comprehension of L2 texts. Nonetheless, before this indication of potential wider application can be developed further, we find it important to collect more solid evidence of the efficacy of teaching through translation for the local-level language features of vocabulary and particularly grammar.

The study most similar in design and focus to our own was conducted by Källkvist (2004 & 2008), and looked at the effectiveness for improvement of L1 to L2 translation exercises versus exercises directly in the L2 with adult Swedish learners of English. The focus was on grammatical structures. Two experimental groups, each of 15 first-year English Studies university students, received explicit grammar instruction, and an additional control group of 14 secondary-school students in their final year had no explicit grammar instruction. The two experimental groups were given different tasks to practise grammar. One practised with translation tasks, the other group tasks only in English. A pre-test with a multiple-choice exercise, a translation task and a written retelling of a story was administered before the intervention, and the same tasks were administered after intervention. Although using the same tasks in both the pre- and post-test could lead to improvement through the memory effect, it was considered unimportant for this study, as the memory effect would influence all groups equally. According to Källkvist's analyses, both experimental groups out-performed the control group. However, the translation group was better at the translation task and on the multiple choice exercise, but the group who received no practice translating was better at the written retelling of a story. The results were, however, not statistically significant, which was attributed to the small number of test items and the small sample size. Nonetheless, we believe this kind of methodology is good on principle and thus warrants replication.

These studies all show the importance of further work with large groups of students which can generate statistically significant data and with test tasks that demonstrate a range of skills and are not reliant on translation to demonstrate whether



translation teaching can achieve more than an improvement in learners' translation ability.

2.1 Research Hypothesis

The published research seems to indicate that CAT can, to some extent, improve learners' accuracy in a foreign language. However, as the research evidence is minimal, we decided to test our assumption that the translation class in our curriculum is beneficial to our students' grammatical accuracy in English, and hopefully shed more light on possible benefits of translation in language teaching overall. Our study investigates the impact contrastive analysis and translation has on our students' accuracy in English grammar.

Participant students, all enrolled on English Studies undergraduate degrees (where English is a foreign language), completed pre- and post-intervention tests after completing a translation class. The results of these pre- and post-tests form the basis of this study, which aimed to test the following null hypothesis:

H_0 = *There will be no difference on average between students' scores on the grammar test exercises completed before after the translation class.*

In order to enable comparisons of the effect of the translation class on students' test scores with the effect of other language classes (here a grammar class and an essay-writing class), further analyses were conducted to test a second null hypothesis:

H_0 = *There will be no difference on average between students' scores on the grammar test exercises completed a) before and after a grammar class, b) before and after an essay writing class or c) before and after a combination of a translation and a grammar class.*

2.3 The Grammar Test

Tim McNamara's book *Language Testing* (2000) was consulted as a basis for constructing the tests for this study. The test needed to focus on areas that would actually be covered, explicitly or implicitly, in the translation class but not involve any translation itself. Although the translation class in our context does practise translating sentences and texts from L1 to L2, i.e. from German into English, it is not a class geared towards training translators, but rather a class which aims to improve students' overall language skills whenever they need to use them. Also, though some previous studies have included translation tasks in their testing, we felt that using translation tasks in the pre- and post-test would only

test whether students had learned how to translate, not whether they had improved their grammatical accuracy through translation. Therefore, it was decided to administer grammar tests in order to collect the data for this study.

The areas covered on the tests were articles, tenses/aspects, modal constructions, prepositions and false friends. The test exercises were taken from EFL textbooks at an appropriate level (advanced or C1). The tasks were made as similar as possible across the pre- and post-tests and with similar numbers of points awarded for each section. An issue with the exercises on modals not being comparable was fixed after the first round of testing.

The articles exercise had a text from which all definite and indefinite articles had been removed. Students needed to add in *the*, *an*, and *a* where appropriate. In the tense/aspect exercise, students had to put verbs in brackets in the appropriate tense/aspect to complete a text. The modal exercises in the pre-intervention test administered to all groups of students in the study required students to choose one modal verb that could be used in three different sentences. In the post-intervention test administered to Set A, students had to rewrite a sentence using an appropriate modal construction. In subsequent post-intervention tests, given to Sets B, C and D, this was changed back to choosing one modal verb that could be used in three different sentences, in order to remove the potential effect of differing task types on our data. The preposition exercise involved filling in a blank with the appropriate preposition. Most prepositions followed verbs or nouns and were thus set verb or noun plus preposition constructions. In these test sections, no answer possibilities were given. In the last exercise on false friends, students filled in the blank with one of the words listed in a box. The box contained the correct variant for each sentence as well as the English false friend to the German word that would be appropriate in the sentence (see appendix 1 for test 1).

Using materials from existing textbooks helped us to create test items at the appropriate level for our students. In the case of the test sections on prepositions and modal constructions, exercises were taken in complete form from these sources (see appendix 2 for a full list of sources). With tenses and articles, texts printed in these sources were adapted for the test. Finally, the false friends test section was our own

work based on our knowledge of common false friend mistakes among German learners of English in general as well as specifically with our students.

Another important point was to be as close to 'real' production as possible in the artificial test format. First considerations involved whether it was possible to prompt certain structures in free writing or speaking activities, but as this seemed too difficult to achieve, we decided on using a more traditional grammar test. Additionally, we decided against overuse of multiple choice answers or recognition tasks, because we did not want our students to recognise and pick the right answer. We wanted them to create an answer with as little outside help as possible. We were able to achieve this especially in the sections on articles, tenses/aspects and prepositions, where only the context of the texts or knowing the rules of English grammar or collocation led them to give the correct answer. We were unable to create a version of the false friend section that did not give a selection of words.

3. Research Method

This study included a total of 235 participants, all of whom were studying for Bachelor's degrees in English Studies at Trier University in Germany. The ages of participants ranged from 19 to 24 years. The data were collected from grammar tests, described above, completed by these students, who were not informed about the study in advance of registering for the classes. All of the classes ran for fourteen-week semesters with two hours of contact time weekly.

The pre-intervention test, given in the first week of class, was explained to the students as a diagnostic test that would not count towards their final class grade, but rather would be used to guide course content. It was only when the post-intervention test was administered in the last or second-to-last lesson of the class that the students were told of the research project and that this second test was also not part of the class grade, but rather a tool for researching the value of teaching translation. We chose to do this to avoid influencing student behaviour. If they had known a second grammar test was going to be administered at the end of term, some students may have felt the need to study grammar throughout the semester. By not informing them of the research project, they were not influenced to stray from what students would normally be doing in their language classes during the semester.

The pre-intervention tests given to each set of students included different texts, example sentences and false friends, though the task types were maintained. This enables us to remove the potential effect of memory on students' results on the post-intervention tests.

At the top of each test, students were required to write their student number, for identification purposes, and their dominant language. For the analysis, data from students who had participated in either a pre-test only or a post-test only were removed before analysis, as well as data from students who self-identified as speaking a language other than German as their dominant language.

The initial data collection involved five translation classes taught by three different instructors (of whom only two were involved in the study). The sample size here, indicating the number of analysed data sets, was N=94. This data was used to test our first null hypothesis: *There will be no difference on average between students' scores on the grammar test exercises completed before after the translation class.*

Subsequently to collecting and analysing the initial data set, henceforth referred to as Set A, we decided to compare the effect of translation teaching on participant students' English grammar to the effect of specific grammar classes, and, as a control group, to the effect of an essay writing class on participant students' English grammar. This further data collection occurred in three more sets:

Set B: the same pre- and post-intervention tests were given to six grammar classes taught by four different instructors (again, two were involved in the study). Here, N=104 / 105.

Set C: as a control group, the same pre- and post-intervention tests were administered to an essay writing class (one class taught by one instructor involved in the study). Here, N=15.

Set D: a new post-intervention test was given to some students from Set B after completion of a translation class the semester after the grammar class (two classes taught by two instructors involved in the study). For this set, the post-intervention score for Set B was used as a pre-intervention score. Here, N=21.

This data was used to test our second null hypothesis: *There will be no difference on average between students' scores on the grammar test exercises completed a) before and after the grammar class, b) before and*



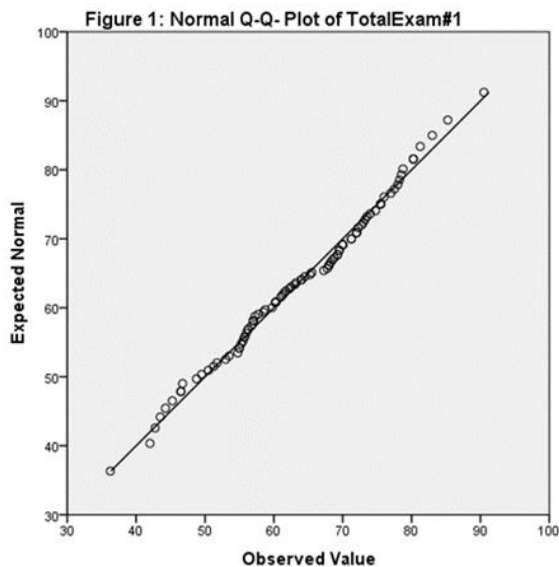
after an essay writing class or c) before and after a combination of a translation and a grammar class.

In our statistical analyses of students' test results, the scores on each test exercise constitute the data for each dependent variable, with the labels #1, #2 and #3 respectively denoting whether the score comes from the test at the beginning of the class (i.e. #1 = pre-test before the intervention) or at the end of the class (i.e. #2 = post-test after the intervention), or, in the case of Set D, after completing both a grammar and then a translation class (#3 = post-test after two interventions). The dependent variables TotalTest#1, TotalTest#2 and TotalTest#3 are calculated from the student's overall score (in percent) on the tests.

4. Results

Set A

The data fulfil the criteria to be classified as parametric. Firstly, the data for each dependent variable are normally distributed, as demonstrated by Q-Q plots in SPSS (see example in Figure 1). Secondly, since the data were collected using a repeated measures design, we can assume relative homogeneity of variance among conditions #1 and #2.



Thus the data were analysed using a dependent *t*-test (also called Matched Pairs *t*-Test). This test is used when the same participants have provided data in all experimental conditions, as is the case here. With samples of this size (N=94), the dependent *t*-test is powerful enough to detect even fairly small effects. The *t*-test aims to compare the average difference between each participant's scores on the various test exercises before and after the intervention. It was used here to test the first null hypothesis:

$H_0 =$ There will be no difference on average between students' scores on the

grammar test exercises completed before and after the translation class.

Table 1 shows the correlations between each pair of dependent variables – in our case between the scores on the test exercises on a language point before or after the translation class. Since the data in each case were collected from the same participant, we expect a certain level of consistency in their scores, i.e. a correlation between #1 and #2. The Pearson's *r* shows the strength of the correlations, which also provide information about effect size – see below.

Table 1: Paired Samples Correlations SET A

	N	Correlation	Significance
Pair 1 Articles#1 & Articles#2	94	.368	.000
Pair 2 Tenses#1 & Tenses#2	94	.560	.000
Pair 3 Modals#1 & Modals#2	94	.017	.871
Pair 4 Prepositions#1 & Prepositions#2	94	.480	.000
Pair 5 FalseFriends#1 & FalseFriends#2	94	.186	.072
Pair 6 TotalExam#1 & TotalExam#2	94	.521	.000

Table 2 shows the most important results of the statistical analysis, pertaining to whether the difference between the conditions (i.e. between scores #1 and scores #2) was large enough not to be due to chance. The standard error mean shows the amount of difference we would expect between conditions due to chance alone. The actual calculated average difference is shown by the *t* statistic. A positive *t* figure means that condition #1 had a higher mean than condition #2, i.e. that the test scores were on average higher before the intervention than after it. This is the case for one pair of dependent variables for Set A, Articles#1 and Articles#2, showing that the student participants achieved lower scores on the exercise testing their use of articles at the end of the class than at the beginning.

Table 2: Paired Samples Test SET A

	Paired Differences					T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std Deviation	Std Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Pair 1 Articles#1 - Articles#2	9.032	20.551	2.120	4.823	13.241	4.261	93	.000
Pair 2 Tenses#1 - Tenses#2	-7.191	12.145	1.253	-9.679	-4.704	-5.741	93	.000
Pair 3 Modals#1 - Modals#2	-2.011	36.741	3.790	-9.536	5.515	-.531	93	.597
Pair 4 Prepositions#1 - Prepositions#2	-20.713	13.036	1.345	-23.383	-18.043	-15.404	93	.000
Pair 5 FalseFriends#1 - FalseFriends#2	-12.287	25.173	2.596	-17.443	-7.131	-4.732	93	.000
Pair 6 TotalExam#1 - TotalExam#2	-6.6340	10.6997	1.1036	-8.8255	-4.4425	-6.011	93	.000

The *t* statistics for the other dependent variables in Set A, however, are all negative, meaning that condition #1 had a lower mean

than condition #2. This shows that students on average performed better on exercises testing their use of tenses and prepositions, and avoiding false friends after the translation class, which also led higher mean overall test scores.

The final column in Table 2 allows us to ascertain whether these *t* statistics showing difference are significant. We use the degrees of freedom (*df* = N-1) to calculate the probability of a *t* statistic being as high as our result due to pure chance. For Set A, apart from the pair Modals#1 and Modals#2, the figures for all of our dependent variables show that the differences between the conditions #1 and #2 are very highly significant to *p* < 0.0001, which means there is a probability of less than 0.1% that a difference in these variables as large as our result could be due to pure chance. Therefore, for all pairs of dependent variables except Modals#1 and Modals#2, the first null hypothesis can be rejected.

The difference between Modals#1 and Modals#2 in Set A is minute, and unsurprisingly not significant. This seems to be due to the high number of students achieving 0% on this exercise on the second test. This was apparently because, as several of them wrote on their test papers, they did not understand what the test question was asking of them. Due to this, the data on the variable Modals#2 was deemed distorted, and so the comparison of Modals#1 and Modals#2 was excluded from the data set, and the variables TotalTest#1 and TotalTest#2 (i.e. the overall test scores for each condition) were recalculated. The new *t*-test, excluding Modals#1 and Modals#2, and with the recalculated TotalTest#1 and TotalTest#2 is shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Paired Samples Test SET A *NEW

	Paired Differences					T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std Deviation	Std Error mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Pair 1 Articles#1 - Articles#2	9.032	20.551	2.120	4.823	13.241	4.261	93	.000
Pair 2 Tenses#1 - Tenses#2	-7.191	12.145	1.253	-9.679	-4.704	-5.741	93	.000
Pair 3 Prepositions#1 - Prepositions#2	-20.713	13.036	1.345	-23.383	-18.043	-15.404	93	.000
Pair 4 FalseFriends#1 - FalseFriends#2	-12.287	25.173	2.596	-17.443	-7.131	-4.732	93	.000
Pair 5 TotalExam#1 - TotalExam#2	-7.7899	8.6857	.8959	-9.5689	-6.0109	-8.695	93	.000

It is also important to look at the estimated size of the effect; although the results are highly significant, we need to question whether the effect is substantive in practical terms. The Pearson's *r* correlation statistic for Set A's analysis, in Table 4, denotes the size of the effect, and the

following benchmarks are generally accepted (based on Field & Hole, 2003):

r = 0.10 – small effect – the effect explains 1% of the total variance

r = 0.30 – medium effect – the effect accounts for 9% of the total variance

r = 0.50 – large effect – the effect accounts for 25% of the variance

According to the *r* statistics from our analysis of Set A, the effects of the intervention on all but one pair of dependent variables (false friends) are medium or large, thus also substantial in real, practical terms.

Table 4: Paired Samples Correlations SET A *NEW*

	N	Correlation <i>r</i>	Significance
Pair 1 Articles#1 & Articles#2	94	.368	.000
Pair 2 Tenses#1 & Tenses#2	94	.560	.000
Pair 3 Prepositions#1 & Prepositions#2	94	.480	.000
Pair 4 FalseFriends#1 & FalseFriends#2	94	.186	.072
Pair 5 TotalExam#1 & TotalExam#2	94	.653	.000

Sets B, C & D

The further data collected were likewise analysed using a dependent *t*-test. With the sample size of N=104/105 in Set B, the dependent *t*-test can discern even comparatively small effects. This was not the case for the control group, Set C (N=16), or for Set D (N=21). Nonetheless, the data fulfil the criteria to be classified as parametric, being both normally distributed and collected using a repeated-measures design, which allows us to assume relative homogeneity of variance between conditions. The *t*-tests were used here to test the following null hypothesis:

H₀ = *There will be no difference on average between students' scores on the grammar test exercises completed a) before and after the grammar class, b) before and after an essay writing class or c) before and after a combination of a translation and a grammar class.*

Tables 5-7 show the most important results of the statistical analyses. These results show us whether the differences between scores #1 and scores #2, (or scores #2 and #3 for Set D) was due to chance or not. A positive *t* figure means that condition #1 had a higher mean than condition #2. For Set B and Set C, the test scores were on average higher before the intervention than after it for the variables Articles #1 and



Articles #2, Tenses #1 and Tenses #2, and False Friends #1 and #2. For Set D, there were no results with a positive *t* statistic. The *t* statistics for the other dependent variables, however, are negative, meaning that students in Sets B and C on average performed better on exercises testing modals and prepositions after the intervention. In Set D, this was the case for articles, tenses, modals, prepositions and false friends.

Table 5: Paired Samples Test SET B

	Paired Differences					T	df	Significance (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Pair 1 Articles#1 - Articles#2	12.400	15.991	1.561	9.305	15.495	7.946	104	.000
Pair 2 Tenses#1 - Tenses#2	8.229	14.430	1.408	5.436	11.021	5.843	104	.000
Pair 3 Modals#1 - Modals#2	-6.962	21.713	2.129	-11.184	-2.739	-3.270	103	.001
Pair 4 Prepositions#1 - Prepositions#2	-20.952	17.700	1.736	-24.394	-17.510	-12.072	103	.000
Pair 5 FalseFriends#1 - FalseFriends#2	4.863	19.890	1.969	.956	8.770	2.469	101	.015
Pair 6 TotalExam#1 - TotalExam#2	-.333	9.243	.915	-2.149	1.482	-.364	101	.716

Again, the final columns of these tables show whether the *t* statistics showing difference are significant. For Set B, false friends and the total test score are not statistically significant, with a high probability (15% and 71% respectively) that results are due to chance. The statistics for articles, tenses and prepositions, though, are highly significant to $p \leq 0.0001$. The results on modals are also statistically significant, with a 1% chance that the results are due to chance. Part a) of the second null hypothesis can therefore be largely rejected. None of the results for the control group in Set C or Set D are statistically significant. Parts b) and c) of the null hypothesis therefore have to be accepted, though this is possibly due to small sample sizes.

Table 6: Paired Samples Test SET C

	Paired Differences					T	df	Significance (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error of Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Pair 1 Articles#1 - Articles#2	12.250	21.038	5.260	1.040	23.460	2.329	15	.034
Pair 2 Tenses#1 - Tenses#2	7.813	13.551	3.388	.592	15.033	2.306	15	.036
Pair 3 Modals#1 - Modals#2	-11.063	21.690	5.423	-22.620	.495	-2.040	15	.059
Pair 4 Prepositions#1 - Prepositions#2	-10.250	17.179	4.295	-19.404	-1.096	-2.387	15	.031
Pair 5 FalseFriends#1 - FalseFriends#2	5.000	28.107	7.027	-9.977	19.977	.712	15	.488
Pair 6 TotalExam#1 - TotalExam#2	3.875	9.401	2.350	-1.135	8.885	1.649	15	.120

Table 7: Paired Samples Test SET D

	Paired Differences					T	df	Significance (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error of Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Pair 1 Articles#2 - Articles#3	-10.85714	14.85357	3.24131	-17.61841	-4.09588	-3.350	20	.003
Pair 2 Tenses#2 - Tenses#3	-6.59524	13.08875	2.85620	-12.55317	-.63731	-2.309	20	.032
Pair 3 Modals#2 - Modals#3	-3.09524	22.70662	4.95499	-13.43117	7.24069	-.625	20	.539
Pair 4 Prepositions#2 - Prepositions#3	-5.00000	9.20733	2.00921	-9.19113	-.80887	-2.489	20	.022
Pair 5 FalseFriends#2 - FalseFriends#3	-2.14286	22.33671	4.87427	-12.31041	8.02469	-.440	20	.665
Pair 6 TotalExam#2 - TotalExam#3	-3.30952	6.74069	1.47094	-6.37785	-.24120	-2.250	20	.036

Again, the Pearson's *r* figure shows the estimated size of the effects in Tables 8-10. For Set B, the effects are all medium or large according to the benchmarks outlined above. Thus the effects of the interventions account for the variance in the dependent variables in real, practical terms. For Set C, the effects are medium or large for all pairs except articles, prepositions and false friends, and for Set D medium or large for all pairs except modals and false friends, though not significant.

Table 8: Paired Samples Correlations SET B

	N	Correlation	Significance
Pair 1 Articles#1 & Articles#2	105	.571	.000
Pair 2 Tenses#1 & Tenses#2	105	.450	.000
Pair 3 Modals#1 & Modals#2	104	.264	.007
Pair 4 Prepositions#1 & Prepositions#2	104	.295	.002
Pair 5 FalseFriends#1 & FalseFriends#2	102	.328	.001
Pair 6 TotalExam#1 & TotalExam#2	102	.673	.000

Table 9: Paired Samples Correlations SET C

	N	Correlation	Significance
Pair 1 Articles#1 & Articles#2	16	.175	.516
Pair 2 Tenses#1 & Tenses#2	16	.407	.118
Pair 3 Modals#1 & Modals#2	16	.425	.101
Pair 4 Prepositions#1 & Prepositions#2	16	-.098	.717
Pair 5 FalseFriends#1 & FalseFriends#2	16	.076	.780
Pair 6 TotalExam#1 & TotalExam#2	16	.552	.027

Table 10: Paired Samples Correlation SET D

		N	Correlation	Significance
Pair 1	Articles#2 & Articles#3	21	.760	.000
Pair 2	Tenses#2 & Tenses#3	21	.404	.069
Pair 3	Modals#2 & Modals#3	21	-.054	.816
Pair 4	Prepositions#2 & Prepositions#3	21	.805	.000
Pair 5	FalseFriends#2 & FalseFriends#3	21	.126	.586
Pair 6	TotalExam#2 & TotalExam#3	21	.848	.000

5. Discussion

The findings here go some way to further increasing support for the translation teaching done in many different ELT settings, including universities. Despite translation not having been considered a valid teaching method for many years, although it was often used in practice, our findings add weight to the renewed interest in using translation in language teaching.

Before discussing our findings in detail and drawing conclusions, though, it is important to note one problematic issue in the study, namely the modals task in the tests for Set A. As mentioned above, we did not realize in advance the problem created by having such a different exercise on the pre- and post-intervention tests. The pre-intervention test asked students to pick a modal verb that would be a correct fit in a gap in three example sentences. The post-intervention test asked students to rewrite sentences using modal constructions. In addition to the validity issues with having different tasks in the pre- and post-intervention tests, it seems that many students confused what modal constructions were, and on the post-intervention test, many reworded the sentences but failed to include a modal, or did not understand the question. Due to this, the results had to be removed to avoid skewing the data. However, subsequent tests fixed this issue by making the task type the same on both tests, allowing us to take the data on modals from all other test sets into account. Thus, the data on modals from Sets B, C and D cannot be compared to Set A.

Moreover, the data on the false friends task may indicate the weakness of using multiple choice for testing. Students' scores on the false friends section of the test did significantly improve in Set A, though insubstantially in real terms. There is no clear pattern in the false friends data from the other sets regarding improvement, but

one immediately notices the overall high scores across all sets. This may indicate that our students can recognize the correct answer in a multiple-choice task although this recognition may not always lead to appropriate, spontaneous use of the correct English word. Conversely, it may indicate that when the exam setting causes students to stop and think about their answers, they are able to avoid false friends, but when they spontaneously produce language, they may still use false friends. We had included this lexical test task as we thought this may be an area specifically improved by translation instruction. However, our results rather lead us to believe that false friends errors are perhaps not made by our students due to a lack of knowledge, which could be rectified by a translation-based class, but instead represent lapses in concentration or recall during spontaneous language production. This assumption is based on our understanding of these results within our context, and would need to be tested empirically before any real conclusions can be drawn.

Despite these difficulties, the results from Set A show that the translation class generated a statistically significant improvement overall in the areas tested. The total test results of Set D, where a third test was administered after students had taken both the grammar and translation class, also showed a certain level of improvement, reinforcing the results of Set A. The overall test results of Set C, although not statistically significant, show to a certain extent that merely being exposed to English and receiving language feedback in the essay writing class, was not enough to help students improve their grammatical accuracy. Additionally, although the grammar class Set B completed did seem to lead to some overall improvement, referring to the total test results only, this was possibly due to chance alone and was minimal in any case. The translation class led to the greatest improvement on overall grammar test scores. Our results thus lend support to using CAT in the classroom, echoing the findings of Kupferberg & Olshtain (1996) and Ghabanchi & Vosooghi (2006).

Specifically tenses and prepositions were much improved among the students in Set A. This seems to indicate that lessons looking specifically at German constructions and how to express the same meaning in English lead to improvement in English accuracy in these areas, even when



completing tasks which do not involve translation. As tenses and prepositions remain common areas of interference among learners of English even at advanced levels, strategies for tackling this weakness are much needed. Especially comparing the results from Set A to the results of Set B, where tenses did not improve after explicit teaching of the grammar rules, and to Set C, where there was no improvement either, seems to indicate that translation offers the best method for students to fully grasp the tense system of English in comparison to their native language. Our Set D raw data also hints at an increase in accuracy after both a grammar class and a translation class, though the results are not significant and the sample is small. Thus translation or CAT may be best used as a method to reinforce rules learned in more traditional grammar classes or other language courses and to help students avoid interference errors in future. Indeed, Kupferberg & Olshtain (1996) also concluded that contrastive input best facilitated noticing and was therefore conducive to acquiring difficult L2 forms and rectifying fossilized errors. More substantial data from an experimental condition like our Set D would be needed to confirm this.

For prepositions, all sets showed an improvement, however Set C and Set D were not statistically significant and both showed less improvement than Set A and Set B. These results indicate, in the case of our control group Set C, that exposure to English and receiving feedback on written work can help students improve their knowledge of prepositions, however the larger gains for Set A and Set B seem to indicate that some form of explicit instruction, either through form-focused instruction or CAT, led to the best improvement. However, it does not seem to play a role which method is used, which is further supported by Set D having only a small improvement between the end of the grammar class and the end of the translation class.

Interestingly, students in Set A achieved lower scores on articles after intervention. This finding could be seen as echoing Källkvist's conclusion that teaching via translation is only helpful for students completing translation tasks, but that this knowledge may not be well transferred to other tasks or language production. However, it was also the case that Set B achieved lower scores on the articles section of the test after completing their grammar

class. Thus it seems that, after the focus laid on articles during the class, regardless of in a CAT setting or explicit grammar instruction, students may have been more likely to overthink their answers on the second test which may have led to increased numbers of incorrect answers. Set D, however, did show improvement on articles. As Set D would have received explicit instruction twice, perhaps this shows that translation activities in conjunction with previous form-focused instruction does lead to improvement, whereas either alone (or neither as with set C) is not sufficient.

6. Conclusion

Returning to our initial research question regarding whether the translation class in our curriculum is beneficial to our students' grammatical accuracy in English, the results collected here show that CAT is a viable and helpful teaching practice in our setting. It would also appear worthwhile for other teachers to trial CAT in their monolingual teaching contexts.

Our translation class brought about improvement in the areas of tenses, prepositions and false friends, which is a sign that translation may have a place in language teaching, although we advocate it as one of many tools of language teaching, as it did not lead to improvement in all areas tested and it is still unclear whether it has an impact on accuracy in learners' spontaneous production of language. Overall, most theories presented in the literature view translation as an addition to other methods and approaches used in language teaching, and indeed the other studies, like our own, look at translation as a tool in helping learners with difficult grammatical structures or vocabulary learning. Therefore, while there is some empirical evidence of the value of translation in these areas, it cannot replace all language-teaching tools, especially those that target communicative skills and fluency.

In this study, we were able to show that translation improved certain aspects of students' grammar ability in a testing situation. The improvement suggested by this data fits the trend of findings from similar studies such as Kupferberg & Olshtain (1996) and Laufer & Girsai (2008), though separate studies designed to test target language in free written or oral production would strengthen the case for translation or CAT in ELT.

Additionally, we feel CAT is best used with advanced learners, as translation seems to particularly target interference mistakes,

and at lower levels of teaching these have not yet fossilized, or mistakes are made because learners are attempting to produce structures they have not yet learned. Thus, the approach would require careful adaptation for learners who have not yet acquired sufficient competence in English grammar and the metalanguage to discuss the languages comparatively. Translation seems to be best geared towards learners who have learned most grammatical aspects classically taught in books or language courses but need to work on the finer points of applying these rules. We also feel that it would be less helpful in a multilingual setting, but rather works best when learners have a common main language and the teacher has a high proficiency in both languages and can comparatively explain aspects of both languages' grammar to the learners.

Despite the limits of this study, it supports the inclusion of translation tasks in language teaching and underlines the benefits of incorporating CAT into syllabi, at least with monolingual groups of advanced learners.

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Appendix 1: Test 1

Student number: _____ Native language(s): _____

Do you speak German at home? _____

Were you born in Germany? _____ If no, how old were you when you came here? _____

A) Add articles (the, a, an) to this text as needed.

World's first heart transplantation was carried out by Christian Barnard in 1967, on 53-year-old Lewis Washkansky. Operation was success; however, medications that were given to patient to prevent his immune system from attacking new heart also suppressed his body's ability to fight off other illnesses and 18 days after operation, Washkansky died of double pneumonia. Since then, scientists have been trying to develop artificial heart that can completely replace functions of human heart. In August 2010, Angelo Tiganio had his failing heart removed and replaced with totally artificial heart after five-hour operation conducted at Heart Transplant Unit at St. Vincent's Hospital in Sydney. This was first case of artificial heart being implanted into living human in southern hemisphere. In many countries, cost of heart transplant is too high for majority of patients, so use of artificial heart could be way of reducing costs involved in such operation.

B) Fill in the blank with the correct verb form (using verb in bracket and any auxiliary or modal verbs needed)

I trained as a lawyer to free my brother

As a Hollywood film of her shocking story is released, Betty Anne Waters tells us what she went through to free her brother from prison.

My brother Kenny and I _____ (to be) best friends growing up. Although I _____ (to be) younger, he always _____ (look up) to me. When he _____ (arrest) for murdering his elderly neighbor, it was a total shock. He _____ (have) an alibi, so we _____ (think) he _____ (come) home. But, although the evidence was fraudulent, he _____ (give) a life sentence. He was twenty-nine.

Shortly after his first appeal _____ (fail), Kenny _____ (try) to commit suicide. I was angry with him, but he said he _____ (not spend) the rest of his life in prison for something he _____ (not do) and that he _____ (not make) it.

I never _____ (doubt) his innocence. He _____ (not start) trouble and _____ (not kill) this woman. We _____ (to be) then he _____ (ask) me to go to law school and _____ (become) his attorney. I was unemployed; I didn't even have a college degree. But I _____ (promise) him I _____ (make) it happen as long as he _____ (promise) to stay alive.

After Kenny _____ (to be) in prison for sixteen years, I _____ (hear) about the Innocence Project, an organization that _____ (work) to free innocent people using DNA-testing. Eighteen years after his conviction, Kenny _____ (release). I _____ (remember) taking him by the hand and _____ (walk) out of the courtroom.

This experience _____ (do) a lot for me. I _____ (grow) in confidence and _____ (be) proud to be involved with the Innocence Project today.

C) Circle the one verb which can complete all three sentences in each set:

- used to / will / would
 - Most days my father _____ get up first and make breakfast.
 - When I was training for the marathon, I _____ run over 100 kilometres a week.
 - We went back to Dublin to see the house where we _____ live in the 1960s.
- should / ought to / must
 - Students _____ be encouraged to type their assignments.
 - 'Whose car is that outside Bill's house?' 'It _____ belong to Bill's sister. I heard that she's staying with him this weekend.'
 - You _____ have some of this cake. It's brilliant.
- needn't / mustn't / don't have to
 - I'll be quite late getting to London, but you change your plans for me.
 - I'm afraid I owe quite a lot of money to the bank – but you _____ worry about it.
 - Next time, read the small print in the document before you sign it. You _____ make the same mistake again.
- must / need to / should
 - People with fair skin _____ be particularly careful when they go out in the sun.
 - The Browns _____ have won the lottery – they've bought another new car!
 - We _____ give at least six months' notice if we want to leave this house.
- May / could / might
 - Ray told me that someone had bought the old house next door. _____ he _____ be right about that, I wondered.
 - The major changes to the timetable _____ cause delay and confusion.
 - I asked in the bookshop about Will Dutton's latest book, but all they _____ tell me was that it would be published before the end of the year.
- Can / could / is or was able to
 - Val had always wanted to go scuba diving and _____ do so last summer.
 - I hope Jim _____ help you tomorrow.
 - She played the piano quite well even before she _____ read music.

D) Fill in the blanks with a preposition

- John had been missing _____ home for two days now, and I was beginning to feel afraid _____ his safety. He had left because I was annoyed _____ his poor exam results and had shouted _____ him.
- When she was at school, Catherine was very keen _____ music and languages. She was involved _____ the school orchestra and I remember that she was responsible _____ setting up the German Society. She was also very popular _____ her fellow pupils.
- It was important _____ me to get home early as Maggie and Colin were coming over for dinner. But when I got to the station I saw that it was crowded _____ people waiting for trains delayed because of the bad weather. Just then, a car pulled up and a man inside shouted _____ me, offering me a lift. My first reaction was to be suspicious _____ him, until I realized that it was Maggie's brother. He said he was going my way and he'd be glad _____ the company on the drive home through the snow.
- Before the interview started, Gill felt confident _____ getting the post. She knew that she was qualified _____ the job, that she was good _____ children, and was interested _____ taking on the challenge that the new job would present. However, the interview panel didn't seem to care _____ her qualifications or teaching experience, but were more concerned _____ her ability to do administrative work.

E) Fill in the blanks with one of the following words:

prize	eventually	critic	remember	takes
drives	needs	sensible	chief	perhaps
cook	review	price	lend	make
remind	boss	goes	sensitive	borrow

- I read a _____ in the newspaper about the new James Bond film.
- What is the _____ of a ticket to the museum?
- It _____ a long time to get to Berlin by train.
- _____ we could come at 7 o'clock.
- Sit down and have some cake. I'll go _____ some coffee.
- You _____ me of my old English teacher.
- My _____ is very nice, but he doesn't like it when we come too late to work.
- He lives in London, but he _____ to New York once a month for work.
- Can I _____ a pen from you? Mine just ran out of ink.
- This cream has no perfume and is all natural, so it's great for _____ skin.

Appendix 2: Sources for Test Questions

Section A Articles

Test 1 Articles 2. In: L. Clandfield & A. Jeffries. (2012). *Global Advanced Coursebook*. Oxford: Macmillan: 145.

Test 2 Branches of the Linguistic Tree. In: A. Manning. (2008). *English for Language and Linguistics in Higher Education Studies*. Course Book Reading, Garnet: 17.

Test 3 CALL, IT, VLEs. In: A. Manning. (2008). *English for Language and Linguistics in Higher Education Studies*. Course Book Reading, Garnet: 33.

Section B Tenses

Test 1 I Trained as a Lawyer to Free My Brother. In: A. Clare & J.J. Wilson. (2012). *Speakout Advanced Students' Book*. Harlow: Pearson: 44.

Test 2 The New Golden Age. In: L. Clandfield & A. Jeffries. (2012). *Global Advanced Coursebook*. Oxford: Macmillan: 72.

Test 3 Sinkholes. In: P. Dummett, J. Hughes & H. Stephenson. (2014). *Life*. Advanced. Andover: National Geographic Learning/Cengage Learning: 95

Section C Modals

Test 1 Modals 4. In: M. Hewings. (1999). *Advanced Grammar in Use*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 271-272.

Test 2a Modals: Language Functions 3. In: L. Clandfield & A. Jeffries. (2012). *Global Advanced Coursebook*. Oxford: Macmillan: 139.

Test 2b & Test 3 Own exercise modelled on M. Hewings (1999) and with reference to Swan, M. & Catherine Walter. (2011). *Oxford English Grammar Course*. Advanced. Oxford, Oxford University Press and Foley, M. & D. Hall. (2012). *My Grammar Lab*. Advanced C1/C2. Harlow: Pearson.

Section D Prepositions

Test 1 Prepositions after Adjectives and Prepositions after Verbs 12. In: M. Hewings. (1999). *Advanced Grammar in Use*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 276-277.

Test 2 Noun/Adjective + Preposition. In: R. Murphy. (2003). *English Grammar in Use*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 300.

Test 3 Check Your Knowledge 1 & 2 In: M. Swan & Catherine Walter. (2011). *Oxford English Grammar Course*. Advanced. Oxford, Oxford University Press: 114.

Section E False Friends

Test 1, 2 & 3 Own exercises.