

Innovations

Response to the pedagogy of French translation: a case study of the University of Benin (UNIBEN) students

Tonukari, Ufuoma Emmanuel (Ph.D.)

Department of Languages and Linguistics
Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria

Gloria .N. Shuaibu

Department of Foreign Languages, University of Benin
&

Egwa Riliwanu Ighodaro

Department of Languages, Auchu Polytechnic,
Auchi - Edo state.

Corresponding Author: **Tonukari, Ufuoma Emmanuel**

Abstract

French language teaching in Nigerian universities can be dated as far back as the 1970s. The French translation is one of the aspects of learning the language but has not received adequate attention as other aspects such as French literature. From observation and previous studies, it has been observed that most French students tend not to be interested in writing their research projects in translation studies. There are certain reasons and assumptions for this lacuna. For example, French students (undergraduates) have first contact with translation studies as a course in year three, thereby spending minimal time learning and developing an interest in the field. Therefore, using the cross-sectional research design, this study investigated UNIBEN students' response to the pedagogy of French translation. The study used the semi-structured questionnaire as the research instrument to collect data from a population of 282 randomly selected UNIBEN French students. 85% was the response rate. Before the research, a pilot study was conducted to test the reliability of the questionnaire using the Cronbach Alpha formula. Major finding revealed that students' response to the pedagogy of French translation was low. Therefore, the study recommends, amongst others, a better curriculum that encourages the teaching of French translation from year one and a better-equipped laboratory for its teaching and learning in UNIBEN and the Nigerian universities at large.

Keywords: 1.Foreign language, 2.Pedagogy of Translation, 3.second language, 4.Teaching and Learning, 5.Translation Studies

Introduction

The pedagogy of French translation refers to the approach, methods, and techniques used to teach and develop the translation skills of students learning French as a foreign language. This pedagogy encompasses the teaching of language and translation principles, as well as the development of practical skills through active participation, engagement, and real-life situations. The pedagogy of French translation aims to enhance students' proficiency in the language, improve their communication with French-speaking countries, and contribute to their socio-economic development (Omar, 2014).

Translation pedagogy refers to the theories, methods, and practices used to teach and develop the translation skills of students. It encompasses the teaching of language and translation principles, as well as the development of practical skills through active participation, engagement, and real-life situations. Translation pedagogy aims to enhance students' ability to produce translations that are accurate, fluent, and culturally appropriate. It also seeks to promote students' critical thinking, problem-solving, and creativity in the translation process. The ultimate goal of translation pedagogy is to prepare students to become professional translators who can work in various fields, including business, legal, medical, and technical translation (Omar, 2014; Cook, 2010; Leonardi, 2010; House, 2013).

Translation is defined in a variety of ways, including transference from the source language/text (SL/ST) into the target language/text (TL/TT) (Cook, 2010; Leonardi, 2010; House, 2013). Pedagogy is related to the process of teaching and learning (Bassnett&Lefevere, 1998; Toury, 2013). An Overview of the theories and practice of Translations Studies in the field of translation have revealed two distinct approaches to the translation process: the prescriptive approach and the descriptive approach. The translated texts themselves are the focus of the Prescriptive group, whereas the Descriptive group examines the translation process and the factors that influence the translator and the translation output (Omar, 2014; Baker, 2011).

Translators are typically viewed as proficient bilinguals and lifelong learners hence a close relationship between translation and language instruction. However, Leonardi (2010) argues that “the purpose of translating in the classroom is not to produce professional translators but to help students learn the language and become more proficient speakers” (p. 27). Decoding the source text (ST) and encoding it into the target text (TT) correctly is at the heart of translation pedagogy. It is a resource for educators interested in fostering bilingualism in the classroom through the use of translation. Today, it is clear that this is a crucial part of every language course. For instance, Baer and Koby (2003) provide a critical study of translation pedagogy complete with theoretical consideration, sample lessons, and recommendations for educators to follow. They claim that, “during the past quarter-century and a half, behaviorist (Skinner) models of language acquisition have given way to cognitive (Bloom, Piaget, Vygotsky) models, bringing a more realistic representation of the world into classrooms. Teachers, they argued, should look to models of translation pedagogy that emphasize the importance of process and place the focus on the student as the primary agent of learning” (pp. 33-34). This study examines students' response to the pedagogy of French translations at the University of Benin (UNIBEN).

Statement of the problem

In a globalized world where communication is key, the ability to translate languages has become increasingly important. However, the teaching and learning of translation skills in foreign language education has received limited attention, especially in the context of French translation in Nigerian universities. This research aims to address this gap by investigating the response of students to the pedagogy of French translation at the University of Benin (UNIBEN), with a view to enhancing the effectiveness of French translation pedagogy.

Through this study, we seek to understand the challenges faced by students in learning French translation, the teaching approaches employed by instructors, and the effectiveness of these approaches in developing students' translation skills. Additionally, we aim to identify potential strategies to improve the teaching and learning of French translation at UNIBEN and other Nigerian universities. The insights gained from this research could inform the development of more effective and culturally appropriate pedagogical approaches to French translation, ultimately contributing to the socio-economic development of Nigeria and its ability to engage with French-speaking countries.

Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study are as follows:

- To discover students' response to the pedagogy of French translations in UNIBEN.
- To find out the challenges affecting the effectiveness of the pedagogy of French translation on students' performances

French Translation Pedagogy in UNIBEN

The teaching of French Language in the Department of Foreign Languages, UNIBEN can be dated as far back as in the 1960's. According to the National Universities Commission (NUC), Translation Studies is introduced at the 300 level (Adeleke, Adekunle, & Adeyemo, 2016; National Universities Commission, 2017). This information is also noted by Albert (1999) in his chapter on the teaching of Translation Studies in Nigerian universities. Students in UNIBEN therefore, for the first time, have contact with translation studies during their immersion programme. This, according to this study has generated lack of interest in the course as it is believed by the students that they are not well grounded in the course to carry out researches in it.

French is an important international language and a vital tool for European Union members to communicate with one another. Fluent French translators are in high demand in many fields, including commerce, healthcare, law, academia, and diplomacy. Complete fluency in at least one foreign language is a non-negotiable prerequisite for the role of translator, which is often a demanding one. However, the skill-set required by the profession requires far more than just being good at languages.

Pedagogical Challenges in the French Language

Teaching French formal courses has been identified as one of the best methods of making students affluent in French language (Meiners, 2022, p.66). Unfortunately, teaching of French translations may not have achieved the desired goals. Teaching French translations is not without its challenges, and educators of the language encounter a number of problems every day.(Chun et al., 2016) Some of these problems are similar to problems generally faced in education such as those related to students, the classroom, teachers, and the environment(Hong, 2012). This study will examine some of the difficulties that French language teachers face in the classroom.

Interference from mother tongue

Interference from one's mother tongue is a typical problem for language learners everywhere, but it's especially problematic in a nation like Nigeria, where many different languages are spoken.(Onah, 2019) English, Igbo, Hausa, Yoruba, and other national languages, as well as foreign languages like French, German, etc., are all severely hampered by the mother tongue. Although English is the language of instruction and administration, students often prefer to utilize their native tongues when interacting with one another during recess and other non-academic times. Because of this interference from their native language, students of French are unable to reframe their ideas in the target language, French (Cummins, 2023).

Lack of study materials

French textbooks and other instructional materials in the classroom that help learners lay the fundamentals or basic aspects of the target language may use very difficult terminologies or definitions or grammatical rules that are uncommon or outdated, leading to confusion for the learner or sometimes contradicting issues.

There are instances when educators, too, could need training on how to make the most of such resources for their students. The projector, computer(s), laptop(s), educational tablet(s), language laboratory(s), etc

Low technology penetration

As the world and its technology advance, linguistics and the arts must adapt. Everything is quickly transitioning from the analog to the digital age, thanks to the widespread adoption of cutting-edge technologies in our schools. Because a teacher who refuses to embrace the digital trend is left behind in a competitive world like ours, this is one of the obstacles faced by the French language instructor in the classroom, which can have a detrimental effect on learning experiences. If a French classroom doesn't have the necessary technological resources (e.g., a projector, Internet access, educational tablets, an electronic library) or if the French teacher doesn't know how to effectively utilize those resources (e.g., websites for language learning and education, apps for smart phones), then the students may not be able to keep up with the rest of the class

Teaching methods

Issues may arise when a French teacher teaches French. An excellent rapport with the students of French is essential. If the instructor doesn't make the lessons about the students, then the students won't be engaged and won't learn the language as well. When teaching a foreign language, a teacher's lack of professional credentials can be problematic for both students and the instructor. Another problem in language teaching is when teachers aren't passionate about what they're doing; for example, when a university graduate in communication arts takes any work he can get just to pay the bills and winds up teaching English. Having this problem can be extremely detrimental to the classroom instructor, the students, and the school as a whole.

Methodology

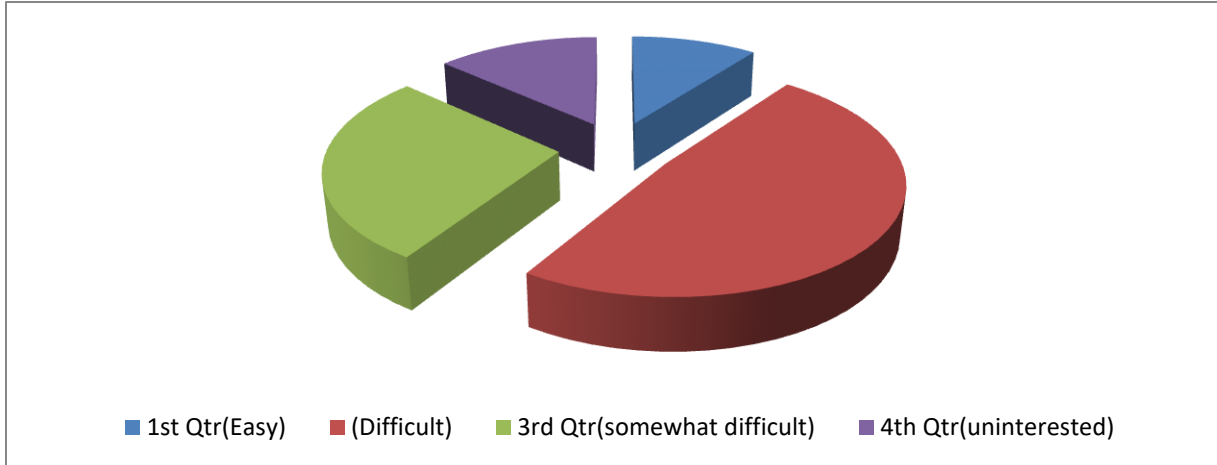
This study is a descriptive research. It is a study aimed at investigating UNIBEN students' response to the pedagogy of French translation. The population of the study consist of 282 students in UNIBEN. No sampling was done considering the small population of the study. The research instrument used in this study was the structured questionnaire. Thus, 282 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to French UIBEN students. However, only 240 copies were considered valid for analysis, which was an 85.1 % response rate. Before the research, a pilot study was conducted to test the reliability of the questionnaire using the Cronbach Alpha formula. A coefficient of 82.3% was derived. This means that the questionnaire was internally consistent. All data gathered were analyzed using simple percentages and presented in tables.

Results Analysis

Students' response to the pedagogy of French translations in UNIBEN

Table 1: Students Likeness for the pedagogy of French Translation

Variable	Easy	Difficult	Somewhat difficult	Uninterested	Total
How did you like the teaching of French translation in UNIBEN	26	116	66	32	240
	10.3%	48.4%	27.5%	13.3%	100%



In table 1 above, 26 students opine that they like the teaching of French translation in UNIBEN. 48.4% of respondents representing 116 students claim that the pedagogy of French Translation is difficult and has failed to catch their interest while 66 students are of the opinion that the teaching is quite difficult. 32 students representing 13.3% of the respondents are uninterested.

Table 2: How teaching French Translations helps students

Variable	Very much	A little	Not at all	Undecided	Total
How much has the teaching of French translation helped you so far in the learning of French language	33	101	36	70	240
	13.8%	42.1%	15%	29.1%	100%

In Table 2, 13.8% of the respondents claim that the pedagogy of French translation has done much in the learning of French as a foreign language while 101 students represented by 42.1% said that the pedagogy of French translation has not helped them much in learning French as a foreign language. 15% of the respondents claim that the pedagogy of French translation has not in any way helped them in the learning of French as a Foreign Language (FFL) and finally 70 students representing 29.1% are undecided.

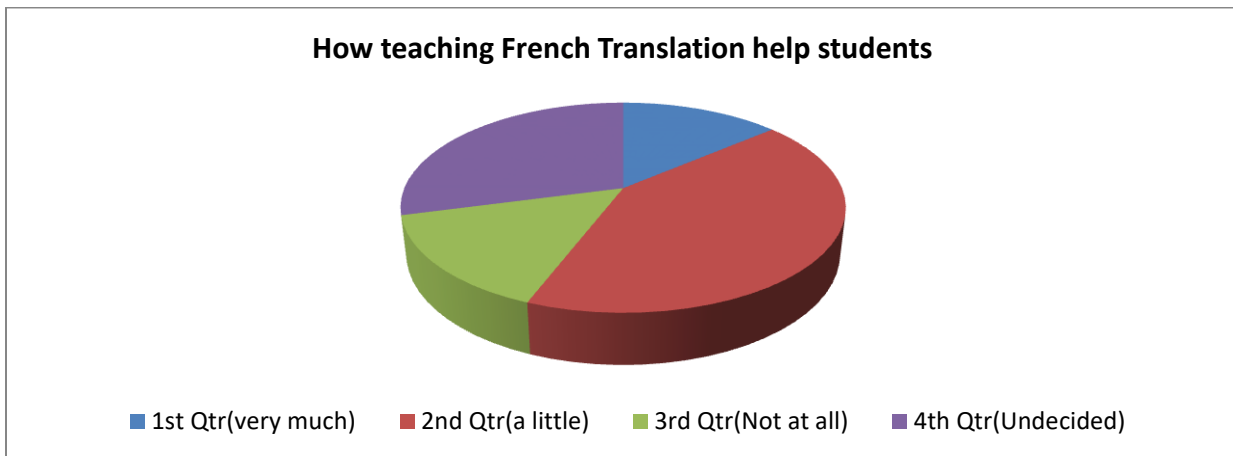


Table 3: Students views on the importance of French Translation pedagogy

Variable	Yes	No	Undecided	Total
Do you find the information you have been learning in French Translation important in your second language acquisition	120	72	48	240
	50%	30%	20%	100%

Table 3 discloses that 120 students representing 50% of the respondents find French translation studies useful in their pursuit of a second language acquisition. 30% of the respondents representing 72 students opine that they find no relevant information that could help their formation in a second language acquisition from the learning of French translation studies in UNIBEN while 20% of the respondents (i.e. 48 students) are undecided.

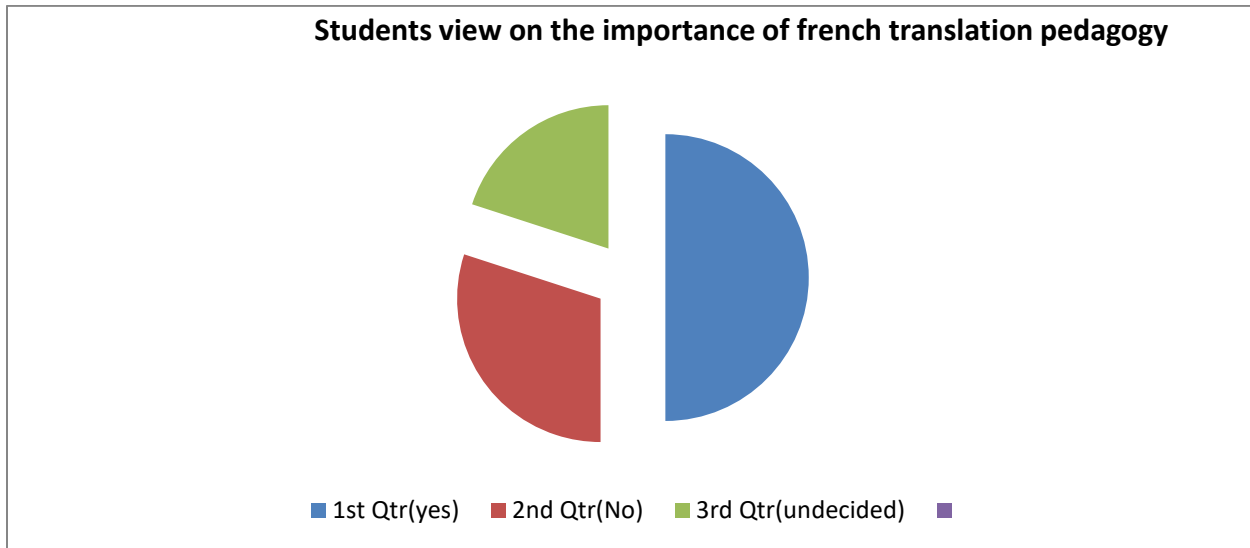
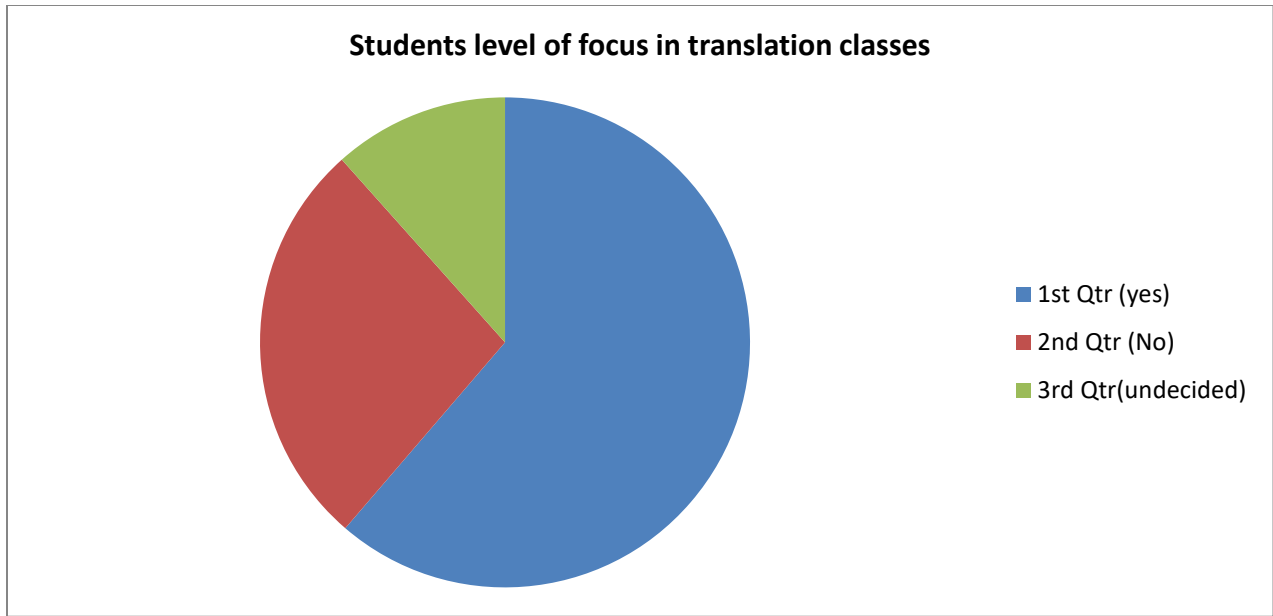


Table 4: Students level of focus in translation classes

Variable	Yes	No	Undecided	Total
Do you stay focused in French Translation classes	147	65	28	240
	61.3%	27.1%	11.6%	100%

Table 4 tests students' level of focus in a translation studies class. This table shows that 147 students represented by 61.3% of the respondents claim that they stay focused in French Translation studies classes. 27.1% of the respondents oppose saying that they do not seem to be focused in such classes while 28 students represented by 11.6% remain undecided.



Challenges affecting the effectiveness of the pedagogy of French translation on students’ performances

Table 5: Time of course study as a challenge

Variable	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Stongly disagree	Total
Learning French Translation towards the end of your programme affects your response to the pedagogy of French Translation in UNIBEN	102	85	44	9	240
	42.5%	35.4%	18.3%	3.8%	100%

Over the years it had been observed that final year students in UNIBEN do not usually carry out their project research work in translation, this factor was one of the aims of this research. Table 5 reveals that 42.5% respondents representing 102 students are of the opinion that they have late contact with translation studies and as such believe that they are not as grounded in it to carry out their research in the course. 85 students represented by 35.4% share the same opinion though not strongly. 44 students represented by 18.3% are in the same category with the other 9 students represented by 3.8% saying that the late contact is not a challenge affecting the effectiveness of the pedagogy of French translation on students’ performances. This challenge is not limited to uniben students. Alkhalil (2014:44) emphasizes the fact that most departments do not have unified curriculum of sufficient credit hours to cover all the content of translation course and its fundamentals that students of translation should be acquainted at different levels.

Table 6: Teaching methods as a challenge of response to the French Translation in UNIBEN

Variable	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
The teaching methods used affects your response to the French Translation in UNIBEN	143	71	21	5	240
	59.6%	29.6%	8.7%	2.1%	100%

The item in table 6 shows that 143 and 71 respondents representing 59.6% and 29.6% respectively opine that the teaching methods used in UNIBEN affects the pedagogy of French translation while 21 and 5 students represented by 8.7% and 2.1% respectively are of the opinion that the teaching methods does not affect the pedagogy of French translation. Akhalil (2014:49) says that the teaching method in a major challenge in the pedagogy of translation as the (translation instructors) do not employ a systematic approach based on theory and practice when teaching translation. They translation instructors do not step smoothly from translating to audio-visual interpreting, without letting students work on theories first and then practicing different kinds of interpreting i.e. dubbing, subtitling, sight translation, and machine translation as they may be needed in their future working situation.

Table 7: Insufficient materials as a challenge

Variable	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
Insufficient study materials affect your response to the pedagogy of French Translation in UNIBEN	151	62	15	12	240
	62.9%	25.8%	6.3%	5.0%	100%

Table 7 indicates that insufficient materials affect students' response to the pedagogy of French translation studies as 151 that is 62.9% suggests it. 25.8% of UNIBEN students believe that even though the materials are not there, it doesn't quite affect the pedagogy of translation studies. 11.3% of the respondents representing 27 students suggests that insufficient materials in not a challenge in the teaching of French translation.

Table 8: Lack of ICT as a challenge

Variable	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
Lack of modern information technologies/ translation tools affect your response to the pedagogy French Translation in UNIBEN	172	64	04	0	240
	71.7%	26.7%	1.6%	0%	100%

In the above table (Table 8) 71.7% of the students representing 172 students claim that lack of information technologies is a major factor challenging the pedagogy of French translation studies while only 1.6% are of the opinion that unavailability of these technologies does not affect the pedagogy of French translation studies. This challenge is not peculiar to UNIBEN. Adebisi(2015:39)opined that since the recent past, Nigerian experts of French essentially in the universities have published books especially novels, with a considerable number being high quality but with many too being of doubtful impact and being unable to stand the test of time. Whatever the case, local production of French books has suffered setback due to insufficient and sometimes inadequate printing facilities, problem of diffusion and that of poor reading cultures of most students. Visual aids have been in use but in insufficient quantity. So also are equipment like the language laboratories but which due to initial cost, cost of maintenance and the know- how of the technical staff to ensure maintenance are scanty and unpopular. Lack of modern information technologies remains one of the major challenges students in UNIBEN encounter the pedagogy of French translation studies.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study has been able to establish students' response to the pedagogy of French translation. It was discovered that students' response to the pedagogy of French translation is low. Even though students find the information they have been learning on French Translation important in second language acquisition, if the challenges affecting the pedagogy of French translation studies are not eliminated, students may not learn the language effectively. Therefore, the following recommendations are made.

- The Federal Government should equip French laboratory with modern Technologies. This will ameliorate the problem of lack of modern technology discovered in UNIBEN.
- A clarion call is made to all French scholars and researchers to write more French textbooks and journal articles. These lecturers and researchers can liaise with reputable publishers to publish their manuscripts as subsidized rates.
- Further studies need to be carried out on the best teaching methods for teaching French Translation in Nigerian universities.

References

1. Adeleke, B. O., Adekunle, A. A., &Adeyemo, I. A. (2016). Curriculum development in translation studies in Nigerian universities: Issues and challenges. *Journal of Translation Studies and Technology*, 2(2), 39-50.
2. Albert, I. O. (1999). The teaching of translation studies in Nigerian universities. In F. Akindele & W. Adebite (Eds.), *The sociology and politics of English in Nigeria* (pp. 153-169). Concept Publications.
3. Baer, B. J., &Koby, G. S. (2003). *Beyond the ivory tower: Rethinking translation pedagogy*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company
4. Chun, D., Kern, R., & Smith, B. (2016). Technology in Language Use, Language Teaching, and Language Learning. *The Modern Language Journal*, 100(S1), 64–80.
5. Cummins, J. (2023). Rethinking monolingual instructional strategies in multilingual classrooms. *Canadian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 10(2), 221–240.
6. Gutierrez, L. P. (2018). Translation in language teaching, pedagogical translation, and code switching; Restructuring the boundaries. *The Language Learning Journal*, 49, 219-239.

7. Hong, J. Y. (2012). *Why do some beginning teachers leave the school, and others stay? Understanding teacher resilience through psychological lenses. Teachers and Teaching, 18(4), 417-440.*
8. Kiraly, D. (2000). *A social constructivist approach to translator education: Empowerment from Theory to practice. Manchester, UK: ST. Jerome.*
9. Laviosa, S. & Gonzalez-Davies, M. (2020). *The routledge handbook of translation and education. London & New York: Routledge*
10. Leonardi, V. (2010). *The role of pedagogical translation in second language acquisition: from Theory to practice: Bern Switzerland: Peter Lang AG*
11. National Universities Commission (NUC). (2017). *Benchmark Minimum Academic Standards (BMAS) for undergraduate programmes in Nigerian Universities:*
12. Omar H.M. (2014). *TESL undergraduate student teachers' view on translation in a rural school. In Journal of Teaching and Teacher Education, 2(1), 61-68.*
13. Vermes, A. (2010). *Translation in foreign language teaching: A brief overview of pros and cons. Eger Journal of English Studies X, 83-93*