

# The Impact of Translation Strategies on Second Language Writing<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract** This paper seeks to demonstrate the importance of translation strategies as informed by Translation Studies in the foreign language (FL) classroom. The current study aims to map how translation, as perceived in Translation Studies, can be beneficial for students' writing skills in the FL classroom. It focuses on undergraduate students in three French Composition classes: a control class in fall 2014, a second control class in fall 2015, and an experimental class in spring 2016, and explores how the students' writing in the latter class improved after being exposed to translation strategies, such as explicitation, amplification, modulation, and approaches, such as Skopos theory. To determine whether translation strategies enable students to improve naturalness in L2 writing, their compositions and summaries were error coded using Kobayashi/Rinnert's (1992) method of awkward form and wrong lexical choice, McCarthy's (1988) collocation search, and Owen's (1988) native speaker input. Statistical analyses were also performed. Results show that translation strategies are a useful tool to help students to understand the foreign language and write more naturally.

**Keywords** interdisciplinarity, naturalness, second language acquisition, second language writing, translation strategies, translation studies

## 1 Introduction

### *1.1 Research problem*

In the literature, some studies have shown that students writing in their L2 depend on the L1, for example, at the draft stage when they are looking for ideas (Hayes et al. 2001, Zhai 2008). In the L2 control writing class French Composition and French Composition Extended at Kent State University — Fall 2015, it was noticeable that students relied on their mother tongue (English), but not isolated to the draft stage. In fact, some students wrote in the L2 (French) while using the syntax of their L1, which resulted in incoherent sentences in the L2. The cause behind this issue is that students translate mentally while writing in the L2, as demonstrated in Kobayashi and Rinnert's study (1992). If students translate mentally word for word, one solution would be to help them think in the L2, and to do so by introducing them to translation strategies that would prevent them from translating word for word mentally, and thus achieve more fluent writing. Translation strategies are methods used by translators when they encoun-

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ter a translation problem, such as translating an idiom. These can be conscious or unconscious procedures: the level of awareness depends on the level of expertise of the translator; for example, an expert, unlike a novice, will use those strategies automatically (Kaiser-Cooke 1994).

Different translation strategies will be presented below, but as a brief example we can consider transposition, which is a shift in the grammatical category from one language to the other: *Dès son lever* (noun) → *As soon as he gets up* (verb) (Vinay/Darbelnet 1984: 50). Those translation strategies authorize students to move away from a word for word translation.

The present study will address the following research questions:

1. Does the introduction of translation strategies improve students' L2 writing?
2. If so, in what way? Specifically, is students' L2 writing more natural after the introduction of translation strategies?

The goal of the study is to answer these questions via analysis of the work of students in three sections of a French composition class with different cohorts: a control class 1 (fall 2014 — no translation strategy introduced), a control class 2 (fall 2015 — one translation strategy introduced), and an experimental class (spring 2016 — several translation strategies introduced).

### *1.2 Significance of the study*

The literature is lacking examples of studies that closely link Translation Studies and foreign language acquisition, especially foreign language writing. There are in fact two schools of thought: scholars who think that translation might hinder the improvement of students' L2 writing, and scholars who think that translation can improve it. These two groups include scholars from second language acquisition (SLA), who perceive translation as “pedagogical translation” with mechanical exercises, as well as scholars from Translation Studies, who perceive translation from a Translation Studies perspective as an integral part of communication (Jakobson 1959). In both disciplines, there are mixed opinions as to whether translation should be used in the foreign language classroom.

#### *1.2.1 Scholars who are for the use of translation in FL classrooms*

Machida (2011) points out that translation can be a beneficial tool in the L2 classroom to help improve form, and meaning, allowing students to transfer a message correctly. The act of translating enables learners to understand errors, and address them at a higher cognitive level, instead of eliminating them in their language output, as in the AudioLingual method for example (Machida 2011). Moreover, in their study, which included writing in the L2 (direct composition) as well as writing in the L1 and then translation into the L2, Kobayashi and Rinert (1992) demonstrate that students use their L1 profitably while writing in the L2, especially to generate ideas.

For Károly (2014), a functional approach, and some aspects of translation as taught for professional purposes, can be useful in the language classroom: “source text analysis, text comprehension, specific translation problems and translation strategies (grammatical and lexical transfer operations), specialized vocabulary, cohesion, the use of resources, revision (self or peer revision), EU-related background knowledge or the analysis of authentic target texts” (Károly 2014: 103). In *The Translator as Writer* (2006), Bassnett and Bush argue that translation can help students learn how to write, as translating pushes the translator to speak differ-

ent voices, as one translates different authors, and in that manner is more likely to then find one's own voice (Bassnett/Bush 2006).

### *1.2.2 Scholars who are against the use of translation in FL classrooms*

However, Kobayashi and Rinnert (1992) also found that relying too much on the L1 could hinder improvement in L2 writing. According to them, students should write for the L2 audience, but using too much translation can inhibit second-language writing fluency and prevent the students from developing an awareness of the second language audience's expectations (Kobayashi/Rinnert 1992). For Schöffner (1998), translation used in language classrooms and translation used in the industry are two different entities: translation used for language purposes is a reproduction of the meaning of the source text while concentrating on grammatical forms, whereas translation for professional purposes is the production of text for a specific goal.

This is where the present study comes in. Students translate mentally, so why not offer them tools to do so properly? Why not see translation, as it is presented in Translation Studies, as a means to communicate meaning to a target audience? Writing and translating are similar, for instance, in that one should consider the audience when translating and when writing (Cumming 1989).

The present study will try to test some of these scholars' assertions, and to refocus tasks toward functional ends, as well as show that translation in the language classroom can not only be used in a similar way as when taught in translator training and education, but also that translation can help enhance L2 learners' writing.

### *1.2.3 What the study brings*

Identifying if or in what way translation strategies can improve second language writing would not only facilitate the idea of re-introducing translation in the language classroom, but also presenting it as a tool to improve students' writing in another perspective than when translation was used during the grammar method period, and to encourage colleagues to use it more in class. Translation would be a means to help students develop their second language writing skills, as well as their cultural knowledge, as it broadens the perspective of students being cultural communicators and mediators (Katan 2009).

## **2 Conceptual framework**

### *2.1 Teaching L2 writing in the foreign language classroom*

Quite a lot has been written on how to teach second language writing, and the debate is still going on as to what the best method would be. There are mainly three theoretical orientations that govern the methods of teaching writing: text-focused, process-focused, and sociocultural methods (Barkaoui 2007). Text-oriented research focuses on the features of the text produced by the learners. Process-oriented research concentrates on planning, as well as content, form, and syntax (Cumming 2001). For instance, according to Roca De Lario, Murphy, and Marin (2007: 27), writers have to acquire these behaviors:

The ability to manage complex mental representations, the ability to construct rhetorical and organizational goals and hold them in mind while composing, the efficient use of problem-solving procedures in order to formulate their texts, the ability to distinguish between editing and revision as two different operations distributed in different stages of the composition process, and the adoption of a flexible attitude toward the use of rhetorical devices.

Sociocultural research focuses on genres, values and practices of the target audience (Barkaoui 2007). In Translation Studies, the translator needs to know for whom he or she is translating, and know the *skopos* or the purpose of the translation (Reiss/Vermeer 2014).

In the foreign language classroom, process modeling can be used to show students how a process is performed. It gives examples to students of ‘how to.’ Text modeling, in text-focused and sociocultural orientations, which are used to teach students explicitly about L2 target texts, is a method that consists of concentrating on the purpose of the text, and the audience. It is a mix of both text forms (grammar, vocabulary) and a broader view of context and purpose. The reason a text is written, and how, can be explored in the foreign language class with reading activities. Consistent with this view, data from this study are based on students’ thorough reading of Pierre Loti’s *Pêcheur d’Islande* (1886): analysis of discourse, work on questions about the form and content of the text. Hyland (2002) (as cited in Barkaoui 2007: 35), suggests that analysis of target texts can familiarize students with rhetorical conventions. The idea of text-analysis and focus on the audience are relevant for this study, as they echo text analysis as it is theorized and practiced in Translation Studies.

## *2.2 Methods used in translator training and education*

Indeed, these theoretical orientations and methods can very well be compared to what is also used in translator training and education. There are many similarities. As regards text-focused and sociocultural methods for example, text types are used in translator training to help determine not only the tone of the text, but also the audience (Nord/Sparrow 1991). Similarly to what can happen in SLA training, translator trainers focus analytical competence activities on the target audience, as the target text might need some adjustments depending on the norms, customs, and ethics of the target audience. The text has a purpose for this audience, and it needs to be determined in order for its message to be understood by the target audience as well as possible. A certain text type has a purpose (Nord/Sparrow 1991), which is called the ‘*skopos*’ — Greek word for ‘aim’ or ‘purpose’ — and stems from the *Skopos Theory* in Translation Studies by Vermeer and Reiss (2014).

When tasked with deciding on their target audience, translation students in an introductory translation class usually have a hard time thinking of it and remembering that there is an audience that needs attention. That is why it is useful to have the learners perform a pre-task during which they answer questions before they start translating. Once they have read the source text to translate, they can try to answer questions such as: What type of text is it (informative, expressive, operative)? What is its purpose? What is the register used? For whom are they translating? Students can reflect on these questions, and decide what tone to give their translation, which register to use, and which translation strategies to use. In an introductory class, these questions must be answered every time the learners translate a text. The question “Who are you translating for?” can be answered as a personal answer if the students decide

who their audience is. However, the question can also be answered according to the brief — or instructions given, usually by the client in the translation industry. In class, the professor can give a translation brief that orientates the students toward their audience, and translations can be commissioned for actual clients/readers.

Of course, in translation, the starting point is a text that is already available, whereas in SLA, when students write, they create their text from scratch: there is no primary physical text to which they can refer. The text students refer to is inscribed in their heads, it is a mental representation of ideas, which they think about in English most of the time. In direct composition, the notion of intercultural text transfer is not present, but the notion of intercultural communication definitely is, which includes communicating in another language keeping in mind the cultural background such as customs and expectations of the target audience, as student writers need to communicate their ideas in another language in the foreign language class (Popescu 2013).

In Translation Studies, process-oriented research is concentrating on how translators translate. Attempts to capture how it happens are often made with Think Aloud Protocols (TAPs), as they enable researchers to discover what the translator might be thinking while translating. The translation process in Translation Studies can also be analyzed while looking at the translation strategies used by the translator such as explicitation, transposition, or modulation, for example (Lörscher 2002).

Translation strategies exist under different names: procedures, techniques, or shifts, for example (Pym/Torres-Simón 2014). The literature shows that it has been difficult to define translation strategies in Translation Studies, and some of the strategies have been criticized because they are considered too complicated or confusing (Jääskeläinen 2010). Some of them are also specific to certain language pairs and are not universal (Pym/Torres-Simón 2014). In his article “The Pedagogical Value of Translation Types” (2014), Pym compares two types of translation strategies: those from Vinay and Darbelnet (1958/1972, as cited in Pym 2014), from a French background, and those from Loh (1958, as cited in Pym 2014), grounded in Chinese language teaching and translation. Pym discovered that students translating English-French preferred Vinay and Darbelnet’s (1958/1972) strategies, and the students translating Chinese-English preferred Loh’s strategies. He also concluded that those strategies need to be accompanied by practice for them to be fully understood. Declarative knowledge of strategies does not help students understand how those strategies are used.

In the literature, translation strategies have been divided in different categories, by different scholars. As already mentioned, several terms are used to describe the means used to translate: techniques, strategies, methods, procedures, tactics, rules, plans. Scholars also decide on the level of intervention of the so-called methods or strategies used: they usually concentrate on the macro-level of the text to then focus on the micro-level. However, there is no standardization in how the terms are used. They depend on the scholars’ choices. Jääskeläinen (2010) gives a summary of how some scholars perceive those procedures.

For instance, there are textual and procedural strategies. For example, Englund Dimitrova (2005) and Kearns (2008) distinguish both: textual strategies happen outside the text, for instance domestication (adaptation of the translated text to the target audience) or foreignization (keeping elements of the source culture in the target text) (Venuti 1998); procedural strategies refer to what happens during the translation process, and can be observed in translators’ verbalizations (Jääskeläinen 2010). For other scholars like Venuti (1998), there are more general strategies that are followed by more specific strategies: product-related strategies are related

to the text, and they then call for methods of translating that text. Chesterman (1997) and Lörscher (1991) have similar views on the strategies: Chesterman presents three categories: syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic strategies. For Lörscher, there are general strategies that can be followed by other methods, which will be used to deal with the individual problem. For example, if foreignizing is used as a global approach, then culture-bound items will be transferred to the target text. These can be called global and local strategies. For Lörscher (1991: 78), “a translation strategy is a potentially conscious procedure for the solution of a problem which an individual is faced with when translating a text segment from one language into another”. Lörscher takes a psycholinguistic approach to the translation process. For him, strategies are goal-oriented, they are individual, and methods (direct transfer, calque, omission) are supra-individual. Jääskeläinen (2010: 384) also suggests that translation strategies can be divided into global and local strategies, and she presents a map of the different strategies that can come into play while translating. She builds on Krings’ (1986) view that strategies are plans representing mental action while solving a translation problem (Jääskeläinen 2010).

According to Levý (1989: 38):

Translating is a DECISION PROCESS: a series of a certain number of consecutive situations – moves, as in a game – situations imposing on the translator the necessity of choosing among a certain (and very often exactly definable) number of alternatives.

Hönig and Kußmaul (1982) also favor a general approach strategy followed by decisions at the syntactic and lexical levels.

*2.3 Similarities: How all of these methods can be used together  
(the methods as well as translation strategies) for common goals,  
which are naturalness in L2 writing*

Similarities are found in how writing is approached in SLA and how translating is approached in Translation Studies (TS). Text modeling, in text-focused and sociocultural orientations, can be used in SLA as well as in translator training. When translation is used in the foreign language classroom, modelling can be very effective in showing students the differences between source and target text syntax for example.

### 3 Research hypotheses

In this study, the independent variable is the use of the first language (L1) by the students while writing. The dependent variable is the students’ writing or their syntax.

The research hypotheses can be stated as follows:

- Translation strategies improve students’ writing skills in the L2. The improvement will be measured in fewer lexical errors and awkward forms, the number of words that collocate with instances found in a Canadian Corpus, as well as the number of sentences found to be natural by two native speakers of French.
- Translation strategies enable students to improve their syntax and the naturalness of their writing in the L2 (sentences sound more natural).

#### 4 Methodology

There were three fifteen-week French Composition classes considered for this study: three sections of different cohorts. One from the fall of 2014: no translation strategies interventions have been introduced, in other words, students did not use translation strategies in multiple translation tasks during the semester in that class. The second class is the French Composition class from the fall of 2015 in which one translation strategy was introduced. And the third one was spring of 2016, or the experimental class. In that class, translation strategies were introduced formally with a handout, and with translation tasks, after students wrote a first summary of the novel they had to read. They then wrote a second summary.

There are two types of comparison made regarding the students' writing: a comparison between the three classes, and a comparison within each group with data points coming from the beginning and the end of the semester and also before and after the introduction of translation strategies for the courses in which those strategies were included. For Control class 1 (2014) and Control class 2 (2015), the compositions at the beginning and at the end of the semester were considered. For the experimental class (2016), summaries of the novel were considered before and after the translation strategies interventions.

This research focuses on how translation strategies impact the students' writing: did their syntax improve, does their writing sound more natural in French compared to non-translated French writing or writing performed by a French native speaker (Kobayashi/Rinnert 1992), after they have been introduced to those techniques? Naturalness will be operationally defined for this study as well-formedness or rather well-formed sentences in text, as opposed to grammatical well-formedness, as defined below (Sinclair 1984).

According to Sinclair, naturalness of a sentence can be determined from the context in which the sentence is found. One must look at the whole text to determine naturalness as opposed to well-formedness at the sentence level, as a sentence can be grammatically well-formed, but still sound unnatural:

If we accept that the requirements of coherence and communicative effectiveness shape a text in many subtle ways, the term naturalness is simply a cover term for the constraints that determine the precise relationship of any fragment of text with the surrounding text. (Sinclair 1991: 6)

Sinclair divides those constraints into three parameters at the sentence level: neutrality, isolation, idiomacity; each of which can be accounted for by three variables: supporters, range-finders, and allowables. A neutral sentence can be one that has no support in the surrounding context. An isolated sentence has no rangefinders or allowables. A 'rangefinder' is a related item in the co-text or context. 'Allowables', which are pronouns in the sentence, depend on the context to be defined, but they do not interfere with the sentence's well-formedness. The naturalness of a sentence can be decided according to these variables, which make its presence acceptable or not among the text (Murphy 2002). Two other authors are interested in naturalness in writing and help define the term: Owen (1988) and McCarthy (1988). For Owen (1988), naturalness depends on what a native speaker finds acceptable or not. Naturalness is not a question of syntactic or semantic faultiness. McCarthy (1988) takes a corpus linguistics approach and focuses on occurrences of verbs in the Birmingham corpus of English language, the Bank of English (BoE). His conclusion is that there are preferred ways of arranging words in languages (Murphy 2002).

In this study, students’ syntax and naturalness in writing will be evaluated via two types of errors, which, according to Kobayashi and Rinnert (1992) hinder message comprehension for a native speaker: lexical choice (wrong word for the context, gender of articles, verb forms), and awkward form (phrases that are grammatically or semantically deviant). The two types of errors will be counted in the students’ compositions at the beginning and at the end of the semester for the two control classes. They will also be counted in the summaries of the experimental class before, and after the translation strategies were formally introduced (March 11, 2016) and other interventions pertaining to translation were performed (February to April 2016).

The second method used follows McCarthy’s (1988) collocation-based research. The use of a Canadian corpus of the French newspaper *Le Monde* enables to look at which instances collocate with a certain verb, for example. If at least one instance from the corpus collocates with the verb tested, for instance in the student’s sentence, then the sentence is considered natural.

Example 1: “... *marier une femme*” (‘marry a woman’) (cf. Figure 1)

The screenshot shows a concordance search interface. At the top, it says 'Home > Concordancers > French Input [eBack]'. Below that, it indicates 'Concordance for equals marier in Fr\_le\_monde.txt sorted 1 wd right of key'. There are several dropdown menus and buttons for search options, including 'Dictionnaire', 'Fren\_Eng', 'Speak', and 'Fr-Fr'. The search results are displayed in a table with columns for 'equals', 'marier', and 'Le Monde (1998) 1 110 392'. The results are sorted by '1 wd' on the 'right' side. The first result is '001.  raïs d'une famille à New Delhi. Jatin vient de se marier avec Sita, une jeune femme qui aspire à un

Figure 1: Collocations for the verb “se marier”

There are no instances in the corpus that correspond to the example given. The right expression in French is to use “with”: *se marier avec une femme*, and the first instance displayed in Figure 1 shows such a usage.

The third method follows Owen’s (1988) method: a second reader and native speaker is asked to determine which sentences are natural.

#### 4.1 Participants

There are twenty-four participants total, and all are undergraduate students in an American midwestern university attending a French Composition class. They all have been studying French for more than four semesters. The students are attending a French Composition class that is divided in two: French Composition, and French Composition Extended. Both classes are taught back to back, and they involve the same students, and the same material. Students read a novel — *Pêcheur d’Islande* (‘An Iceland Fisherman’) — and they are taught how to reflect on the author’s ideas, or writing, by expressing their views in compositions. In this class, students also write summaries, and they are graded according to a holistic grading scale.

## 4.2 Method

### 4.2.1 Class activities

During the fifteen-week semesters, students are taught French grammar (detailed review of grammar points seen in previous French classes), French culture, French vocabulary, French syntax. In the experimental class, some translation strategies from English to French that could be useful to them while writing in their second language (French) have also been introduced in the middle of the semester. Translation strategies, for instance transposition (shift in grammatical category), modulation (shift in point of view), equivalence (the same situation exists in both languages, but it is expressed with different phrases, such as idioms), amplification (the L2 uses more signifiers than the L1, to cover gaps in syntax or vocabulary), and explicitation (information is added in the L2 that is implicit in the L1 to enhance semantic clarity), are meant to help students understand the cultural intricacies of the French text (novel) they are reading for the class, and enlighten differences between the French and the English syntax.

In the 2015 class, in November, after many grammar-driven exercises that did not seem to help students improve, the instructor introduced them to transposition to show them how a translation strategy can help improving communication in the foreign language. Students had to reuse in their writing the expressions they worked on using transposition. In the experimental class (2016), the second summary was written after formal translation strategies interventions that consisted of the introduction of transposition followed by exercises asking the students to use transposition in several sentences in relation to the novel they are reading (February 26–29). Other translation strategies developed by Vinay/Darbelnet in 1958 (Pym 2014) such as modulation, transposition, explicitation were then introduced via a handout (March 11).

In a task in class, to be able to use those translation strategies, and understand them, students read a translation from an extract of the first chapter of the novel studied in class and had to recognize translation strategies used by the translator (March 14). As a second task, the same day, students wrote their own translation of the extract in English; they edited a translation from a peer, later in the semester (April 4); they back-translated from the translation of their peer (English back into French) to see how the communication went through or changed (April 6). This back-translation exercise, while focusing on the message rather than the sign itself, was beneficial in the sense that it opened discussions with the students that enabled them to become aware of their own language, and then realize the different processes used to reach different products. Reflecting on the L1 is a preliminary stage of awareness of how the L2 functions (linguistically, and culturally).

As an observation of those translation tasks in class, some of the students had strong reactions, and were even bewildered that the idea communicated had changed from the original text, depending on how their peers had translated the paragraph. As they were listening to their peers' feedback on their translations and back-translations, students understood the importance of being humble and accepting, but also that there are different ways to convey ideas to the target audience. There is no such idea as one and only possible translation. Students realized how creative translation can be. They understood that sometimes even if the sign chosen is correct, the sentence can be unnatural. They realized that they have to step back from the sign and look at the text as a whole. Students were also asked to think of those translation strategies while they were writing in French.

#### 4.2.2 Collection of data

The students' writing was coded, and the breakdown of the coding and the data analysis is as follows:

##### 1. Errors

- Coding

For wrong lexical choice: #1 (wrong word for the context, gender of articles, verb forms)

For awkward form: #2 (grammatically or semantically deviant sentences)

##### 2. Naturalness

- Coding

NG: Natural and grammatically correct

NG: Natural, grammatically incorrect

GN: Not natural, grammatically incorrect

L1M: Literally translated from English (structural parallelism is obvious); unnatural but grammatically correct

- Collocation search

Collocation search with the Canadian corpus Concordancier-corpus français <https://lexutor.ca/conc/fr/> and Google.fr searches when no match was found in the concordancer (of course only reliable instances were considered coming from books and reliable websites)

- Statistical analysis

Statistics were used to compare groups and each student's progress in writing at the beginning and at the end of the semester for the two control classes (2014 and 2015) and for the pre-test and post-test of the 2016 spring class. The researcher ran three repeated measures ANOVAs, one for each dependent variable: wrong lexical/grammatical choice, deviant sentences, and natural sentences with a between-subjects factor to see differences between groups. Then One-tailed post-hoc paired sample t-tests were run with a Bonferroni correction (to maintain an overall confidence coefficient) to see if there was any improvement in each group separately for each dependent variable.

The corpus had 28,043 words and 1,712 sentences total.

### 5 Results and discussion

Results from the sentence coding in the 2014 and 2015 classes showed that there were more wrong lexical/grammatical choice errors after compared to before, there were more deviant sentences after compared to before. There were more natural sentences after than before.

In the experimental class, there were less wrong lexical/grammatical choice errors after compared to before. There were more deviant sentences and more natural sentences after than before. Approximately ten sentences were hard to classify. Six of them were also checked in the concordancer even when considered unnatural by one of the native speakers. A match was found for five of them in the concordancer. One sentence did not have a match, but the other native speaker decided it sounded natural. For the results from the concordance search, units of meaning in the sentences marked as natural by the native speakers had a match either in the concordancer or in Google.fr searches.

For the statistical analysis, the results of the three repeated measures ANOVAs showed that there was a main effect for time. So as expected, students improved over time. However,

there was no main effect for group and no interaction effect between group and time, which means there is no group that performed better than the other for wrong lexical/grammatical choice, deviant sentences, and natural sentences.

The results from the three repeated measures ANOVAs were as follows, with significant effects highlighted in bold script:

Table 1: Repeated measures ANOVA results / Between groups differences

	Wrong lexical/grammatical choice	Deviant sentences	Natural sentences
Time	<b>F (1, 21) = 26.933, p &lt; .001</b>	<b>F(1,21) = 8.79, p = .007</b>	<b>F(1, 21) = 10.87, p = .003</b>
Group	F (2, 21) = 0.27, p = .76	F(2, 21) = .704, p = .506	F(2, 21) = .778, p = .472
Group & time	F (2, 21) = 3.13, p = .065	F(2, 21) = 1.48, p = .250	F(2, 21) = 1.303, p = .293

As there was a main effect for time, it was important to concentrate on each group and look at the results for each of them with the post-hoc paired sample t-tests.

With the Bonferroni correction to maintain an overall confidence coefficient, the significance level or p value was set at  $\alpha/n$  or  $.05/3 = .016$ . The results were as follows:

Table 2: One-tailed paired sample t-test results for each group

	Fall 2014	Fall 2015	Spring 2016
Wrong lexical/grammatical choice	t(7) = .996, p (1-tail) = .177	<b>t(7) = 3.827,</b> <b>p (1-tail) = .003</b>	<b>t(7) = 4.699,</b> <b>p (1-tail) = .001</b>
Deviant sentences	t(7) = .665, p (1-tail) = .262	t(7) = 1.402, p (1-tail) = .102	<b>t(7) = 3.379,</b> <b>p (1-tail) = .006</b>
Natural sentences	t(7) = -.707, p (1-tail) = .251	t(7) = -2.236, p (1-tail) = .03	<b>t(7) = -2.783,</b> <b>p (1-tail) = .0135</b>

Those tests showed that the 2014 class did not improve throughout time. In the Fall 2015 class, there was a significant decrease before and after for wrong lexical/grammatical choice, no significant decrease for deviant sentences, and no significant increase for natural sentences. In the Spring 2016 experimental class, there was a significant decrease before and after for wrong lexical/grammatical choice and deviant sentences, and a significant increase in natural sentences.

Naturalness is not an easy concept to define and remains quite subjective as shown in this study. The fact of using a concordancer to check some sentences limited those sentences to the grammatically correct ones, but it helped confirm the naturalness of some sentences when native speakers were in doubt. In the end though, the ultimate choice was for native speakers to make to decide about the naturalness status of the sentences that were grammatically incorrect. There were not many of these sentences occurring in students' writings, but they occurred in the experimental class and after the translation interventions. The presence of these sentences could be explained by the impact of the use of translation strategies in that class.

The fact that there was no significant difference before and after in the 2014 class (which does not mean that students did not make any progress at all in the class, they still were able to improve their writing after the instructor gave them feedback and they all passed the course)

and that there were differences for the 2015 and 2016 classes suggest that those two were at an advantage compared to the 2014 one. The significant decrease for wrong lexical/grammatical choice for the 2015 class could mean that after being introduced to translation, students had a better understanding of lexical/grammatical choice and improve their use of pronouns, verbs, and articles. They improved their naturalness in text (Sinclair 1984). In the experimental class, students improved in the three categories of lexical/grammatical choice, deviant sentences and natural sentences. In other words, translation strategies were beneficial for the students in those two classes. In the 2015 class, the use of transposition helped students realize that they could not transfer the sentences they had in their heads in L1 directly into their L2. As for the 2016 class, the use of several translation strategies helped students experience the differences between their L1 and L2; it also helped them visualize their audience and their goal while translating and while writing in the L2.

## 6 Limits

Both classes were very heterogeneous. This could not be controlled; the students' background — if they spent some time abroad for example, if they already took an L1 writing class — did certainly determine their ability and openness to understand how translation strategies work. Students were asked to self-reflect on their summaries, in a screen recording: they did this task for the first summary, and for the second summary. For the first summary or pre-test, students did not have any translation strategies in mind; they created a summary with the linguistic background they had at the beginning of the semester. They were then tasked with analyzing their writing in a reflection (self-reflection on their string of thought while they were writing the summary). For the second summary, this task came after the students studied the translation strategies in class; they wrote their summaries with the translation activities, as well as the audience, in mind. In a prompt, students were asked to address each of their sentences, and comment on their thinking process while they were building their sentences. It was expected that students understood, remembered, and applied what has been learned, and that should show in the reflection after the second summary. However, students were not used to this exercise, which did not yield results that are highly reliable. Additionally, this is a very demanding class; students are asked to read and to produce many essays and other assignments; follow-up interviews would have been too much for the students to handle given all the work they already produced. It was also noticed that students who were the least proficient in the language tended to be frustrated by translation until they became used to it.

The novel used in class, assigned by the coordinator, is quite old (1886) with vocabulary that is sometimes obsolete, specific to the Brittany region of France, and written in a formal register. The students would thus have a hard time modelling this text, or in other words re-using its vocabulary and its syntax, even though reading in the target language always helps building their reading and their production competence in the target language.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> This study should be carried out with even more students, perhaps at the graduate level, at which students are more mature, and more able to reflect on their own work. In his paper "Translator Training and Intercultural Competence", Katan mentions the different stages of students' maturity for cultural understanding, for example. The Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity shows how translators' beliefs about the task of translating for another culture changes over time (cited in Katan 2009). Cultural understanding and language learning go hand in hand, and translation can help develop this compe-

## 7 Conclusion

Even if translation is still viewed by some as a tool that should be avoided in the language classroom, this study enables us to see how important it can be for students in a French composition class. Translation as perceived in Translation Studies – a communication tool – should be introduced at early stages of foreign language learning, so that students can get used to their role as communicators, and intercultural mediators. It will also help learners to perceive the second language as a whole, with its similarities and differences compared to their mother tongue. For example, using translation even in the elementary stages of second language learning enables the learners to look at the similarities first and then at the differences with their L1, and thus get a feeling of reassurance, as the new language is being linked to their familiar mother tongue (Nation 2003). Translation Studies, a discipline that acquires its theory from many others such as Linguistics, Comparative Literature, and Corpus Studies, not only borrows, but can also contribute to other disciplines such as second language writing.

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tence. A similar study could compare the progress of students who attend both a translation practice class and a writing class simultaneously to students who attend a writing class only. In the same way, corpora could be used in the classroom to enhance students' vision of translation, while using parallel corpora displaying source texts and their translations.

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