TRANSLATING THE WASH-BACK EFFECT IN TRANSLATION TRAINING SETTING: DESCRIPTIVE IMPRESSIONS AND PROSPECTS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

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ABSTRACT: *At the end of each series of workshops of WeTranslate Initiative (WTI), blind and visually impaired trainees have to pass a test where their performance is assessed and issued a competency report by the volunteering trainers who have good experience in translation. This study examines the impact of washback effects of the final test and the study material on the performances of trainees and trainers (participants) enrolled in the WTI series. This also entails investigating if the performances (learning strategies) of the students and trainers are in line with the objectives of the WTI. For this purpose, weekly interviews with trainers and separate interviews with trainees were held throughout the duration of the training. Interviews were recorded and analyzed during and after the conclusion of the workshops. Results showed that despite the Alternative Translation Solution and Incremental Feedback (ATSIF) being the core of the study material content administration and assessment strategy, trainers were influenced by expectations of the final competency test. The competency test clearly had a negative washback effect on the performances of both trainers and trainees, while it had a positive impact on trainees' strategy of alternative translation solutions (ATS) towards the end of the workshop series. The washback effect has been given little attention by translation researchers, hence any contribution to this end can be useful for platforms providing translation training, teachers as well as designers of translation curricula.*
Keywords: translation training, washback effect, ATSIF, WTI.

INTRODUCTION

At the first sight, entering the dark end of the room, Howard looked pale, ill-tempered, glowering . .
'Good morning,' said Crawford, 'do sit down.'
Howard stood still, undecided where he should go, although there was only the one chair vacant in front of him . . .
Polite, active, Dawson-Hill jumped up and guided Howard into the chair . . .
Then he had gone off to Scotland to do research under Palairet? Why?
'I was interested in the subject.'
'Did you know him?'
'No.'
'You knew his name and reputation?'
'But of course, I did.'
It would be fair to say that he had been impressed by Palairet's reputation and work? I had to force him. Just as young men are when they are looking for someone to do their research under? Was that fair? I had to press it. Reluctantly and sullenly, he said yes.
'When you arrived in his laboratory, who suggested your actual field of work?'
'I don't remember.'[1]
In the extract above, anxiety was a typical reaction by the examinee. Although it has gone too far, this is something academics are familiar with, and have for the best or the worst developed mechanisms to overcome I t with varying results of success. In this study, an attempt will be made to describe similar situations, yet with much lower intensity, and within the field of translation training. A group of volunteers has launched the initiative of We Translate to train blind and low vision holders of English on translating texts of several genres. It took us three months, as our plan goes, to conclude the workshop series, and our findings seem to be promising so far both in theory and practice.
We Translate Initiative (WTI) provides translation training for holders of degrees in English for low vision and blind people. The four trainers are volunteers who have wide

experience in the field. The initiative was launched in March 2022 and concluded in June of the same year, and has received wide participation from nearly 32 participants of both genders. The study material consisted of a vast selection of topics and was agreed by all trainers to be comprehensive and constructed from the start to the end with varying levels of difficulty. Participants' feedback during and after the workshop series was very positive, and some of them had a better chance to find a job as freelance translators. During the three-month workshop series, participants were very active and involved in widening their knowledge about translation, the majority were enthusiastic about the better job opportunities the translation workshop series may make available. The teaching and progress monitoring strategy followed in the workshop series was based on alternative translation solutions and incremental feedback (ATSIF), which seeks to engage students in providing various versions of their translations and then deciding which version is to be submitted for the incremental feedback which is provided by trainers both in writing and in one-to-one interviews.
Throughout the workshop series, we observed the wash-back effect from the start to the end, and it has been noted that it plays a crucial role in the way trainees think of the series and prepare for the final competency exam. Participants were informed about the purpose of the workshop series which is, in the first place, to provide them with theoretical and practical knowledge about translation hence offering them better chances to find jobs they may utilize their translation knowledge within, and second to understand the impact of the wash-back effect on their performances as well as their instructors, and eventually to propose recommendations to curricula designers, teachers, teaching platforms and other academic institutions and educational authorities on how this impact can be tackled to gain best results out of it.
Translation workshops stand as an indispensable approach through which expertise in the field meets the needs of other participants to acquire more translation knowledge. Experiences may be shared and knowledge increased while

maintaining the pedagogical setting. Many translation researchers have delved into the benefits of translation workshops and the desired outcome experienced by all participants. One approach was to examine how anxiety can be tackled in translation by training within groups, or workshops, and evidence shows so positive results [2; 3].

MATERIAL AND METHOD

In this section, a brief overview of the literature on the wash-back effect will be provided. The short overview does leave a lot to be mentioned about the wash-back effect, yet a decision has been made in this study to offer a brief outline of research on the subject. This decision is based on the idea that the instruments of researching the wash-back effect in the field of language teaching and acquisition can be so distant from proper application in translation training. Language teaching and acquisition researchers are mainly interested in phenomena that might be exclusive to acquiring or learning a new language. Hence, what follows is a brief outline of the literature on the wash-back effect.

The wash-back effect refers to the situation where the learning and teaching processes are impacted by exams. It is not always negative, however, the impact of exams on trainees. Bachman and Palmer [4] argue that the impact of the wash-back effect may be damaging or beneficial This means that the wash-back effect can take a useful or negative direction based on the tasks included in the exam as well as the overall exam nature. Not only do the tasks of the exam and the design of it play a major role in the outcome of the wash-back effect, but also the ability of participants going in for the exam to adapt their learning behaviors to the demands of the exam may decide the direction of the wash-back effect. In light of this, we may argue that:

Exam designers decide the forms of learning and teaching methods for the instruction.

The direction of the wash-back effect can (A) promote these forms which entails that the wash-back effect has a positive impact, or it may (B) discourages teaching and learning forms, which obviously means that the impact of the wash-back effect is a negative one.

In each educational setting, and where training is intended to achieve specific goals, purposes, and judgments made by participants, exam designers, teachers, and even assessors may also decide the direction of the wash-back effect [5]. Still, it is mainly the trainees/learners who are the most important party researched in such studies for the direct impact the wash-back effect has on them.

Literature on the wash-back effect, or alternatively test impact, is rich and interdisciplinary. Various educational contexts are still considered in research, particularly high-stakes exams, and the scope of the research is expanding further to other areas. In this section, the focus will be made on mainly three areas, as the horizon of research on the wash-back effect, or test impact is very wide and too complex to be covered in a single study. The three areas are first the nature of the impact of the test (positive, negative, or a mix of both), second the intricate yet overlapping links between participants of the test while considering the impact of the

wash-back, and third the design and nature of the teaching content and possible influence of the test.

Findings of literature on the wash-back effect reveal varying results. Some researchers highlight the strong positive impact of the wash-back effect on the performances of learners [6]. In the same vein, Gokturk Saglam [7] reports the positive and negative wash-back effects of high-stakes exams on participants in Turkey. The strongly negative impact is also highlighted in various studies (see for example Akpinar & Cakildere, [8]). Literature on the wash-back effect also highlights the overlapping links among perceptions on the design of tests, views, and values of teachers, students, and test designers, expectations, and the experienced significance and possibility of difficulty of the test (see for example Bailey)9]). Clearly, this specific area of interest of the wash-back effect involves underlying, first, social differences and, second, variation based on individual differences. This means a specific test context may originate varying reactions among the participants based on the above two factors. However, in the context of translation training, studies on the wash-back effect are scarce and almost inexistent.

Other related studies have explored the various ways through which test impact can be observed in the design of the teaching content which can be seen in the way the content of the teaching simulates the test (See for example Sudrajat & Astuti, [9]; Hendro et al., [10]). However, one clear fact is that the best way to describe the relationship between the teaching content and the test as far as the impact of the test is involved is that the relationship is reciprocal. The teaching content, as well as the test, are both utilized to serve the purpose of ensuring the learner's ability to put the knowledge acquired into practice.

However, context is what characterizes studies on the wash-back effect. Based on this, a myriad of theoretical models has been proposed by researchers to investigate the response of learners/trainees and teachers to the change of behavior as a demand of exam. Literature on the wash-back effect addresses mainly three areas of interest; participants, processes, and product [11]. The above three queries of the present study attempt to investigate the processes and participants. The product of the WTI in our context is excluded from the investigation due to the complexities it may rise. The product of translation can be under examination of separate, dedicated study.

For the context of the present study, WTI competency test wash-back can be defined as the influence of the test on training content, teaching and learning methods, and possibly the final results of participants. We highlighted before that it would go beyond the scope of the present study that the translations(or the product of the translation process, can be included in a study about the wash-back effect for the plethora of underlying factors that would decide the final shape of the target text. This definition might be extended to cover a wider area within the context of translation training and the impact of competency tests on trainees.

Translation Studies (TS) needs to address issues of translation training material and potential effects on trainees, trainers, learning processes, and methodology followed in a specific translation training setting. To this end, the significance of

this study comes to, mainly, highlight the importance of the wash-back effect in a translation training program which can be made available by seeking to achieve three objectives:

1. Focusing on the possible effect the WTI exam may have on the way the initiative's trainers train and implement the teaching of the training content.

2. Investigating if the WTI competency exam and the training content are in line with the objectives of the initiative and mutually compatible to support each other toward the alternative translation solution and incremental feedback (ATSIF) of training and learning about translation in the WTI translation training setting.

3. Investigating if the wash-back effect may have an influential impact to modify trainees' methods of learning and preparing for the WTI exam and what direction this impact has.

The three objectives of the present study are driven and given their significance by three study questions:

1. What are the views of the trainers on the WTI competency test? And what impact it has had on them?

2. Are the WTI competency exam and the training content in line with each other to support the objectives of the initiative and are both together compatible with the alternative translation solutions and incremental feedback (ATSIF) which stands as the main training method?

3. What impact does the wash-back effect have on the trainees' methods of learning and preparing for the WTI exam and what direction does this impact have?

As mentioned before, research on the wash-back effect seeks to answer queries regarding the impact of the wash-back effect on three elements: performances of the trainees/students (positive, negative, or both); impact on links among participants including trainees and trainers; impact on the design and nature of the teaching content. This study will make effort to bring the research of the wash-back effect into translation training, more specifically to answer queries regarding the impact on the performance of trainees, the impact on the connections among trainers and trainees, and the impact on the teaching content.

The sample of the present study consisted of 32 participants, 19 females and 13 males. Participants are native speakers of Arabic, and the training was in both English-Arabic and Arabic-English directions. All participants are holders of degrees in English. Ages were from 24 to 41. Trainers have received a degree in translation from academic institutions in Jordan, and have working experience for at least three years. Since the ultimate purpose of the present study is explorative with little attention to statistical data analysis. So the analyses and the subsequent discussion are descriptive in nature. The trainers were informed and educated about the best ways to deliver their teaching content to the participants who were blind and visually impaired. They were familiarized with the technology the sample uses and the challenges that may arise from using content that can be inaccessible to the participants.

The researcher led an early discussion with the trainers that consisted of general instructions and details of training, design of workshop series, objectives sought, and an in-depth review of the teaching content. Right before the start of the workshop series, a brief introduction and orientation were provided to the trainers to ensure they perceive the requirements and expectations of the initiative and the subsequent research. Trainers were also provided with the necessary support in case there is a need for adapting content to the needs of the participants. Table 1 gives further details about participants' and trainers' years of experience and age groups. Trainers have not received any form of payment for their contribution to the initiative, also participants were self-motivated to take part in the workshop series. All participants including trainers and trainees were required to sign a consent form where they were informed of the purpose of the initiative and what will come out of it in form of a study within the field of translation training. All participants showed commitment in submitting assignments, attending workshops and sitting for the final competency exam. There were no dropouts from all participants.

Table 1: Details of Participants

Participants (32)
Number
Age (23 to 41)
Trainers (4)
Number
Age
Years of Experience
Males
~~13~~
27 years average
Males
~~2~~
31 years average
7 average
Females
~~19~~
29 years average
Females
~~2~~
27 years average
4 years average
Blind
~~21~~
Freelancers
~~2~~
Low Vision
~~11~~
Full-time employees
~~1~~

Research Design, Instruments, and Procedure

The WeTranslate Initiative (WTI) was planned to extend to three months, or twelve weeks (starting from March 2022 through June 2022). Meetings were assigned on fixed intervals starting from Sunday through Wednesday for two hours. The four trainees were assigned eight trainees. Participants did not have the choice to select their team members or trainer. The total of training sessions was 48 (96 hours). Table 2 provides the layout of each week's sessions in detail.

Table 2: Workshop Weekly Layout
Week
Time Allocation
Subjects

Objectives
Assignment

1
4 days (8 hours)
Theory of Translation (process, product, and discipline) general concepts;
discipline history
Submitting one-page reflection on summary of week's discussion and asking relevant questions

2
1 day (2 hours) subject 1, 3 days (6 hours) subject 2
Viewing the selection of trainees' reflection pages and answering questions
Introducing English-Arabic translation
Highlighting common misconceptions about translation
Introducing the basics of English-Arabic translation
Revising the one-page reflection
Translating a 40-word paragraph (text 1)into Arabic

3
1 day (2 hours) subject 1, 3 days (6 hours) subject 2
Viewing the selection of translations
Discussion of strategies, problems, and solutions encountered in translating text 1
Providing supplementary material selected by trainers and introducing alternative translation solutions
Translating Text 2 (160 words) into Arabic

4
2 days (4 hours) subject 1, 2 days (4 hours) subject 2
Viewing the selection of translations
Discussion of strategies, problems, and solutions encountered in translating text 2
Providing supplementary material selected by trainers and introducing incremental feedback
Translating Text 3 (190 words) into Arabic

5
2 days (4 hours) subject 1, 2 days (4 hours) subject 2
Viewing the selection of translations
Discussion of strategies, problems, and solutions encountered in translating text 3
Providing supplementary material and incremental feedback reports
Translating the extended project (900 words) into Arabic

6
4 days (8 hours)
Analysis and review for translations of the extended projects
Providing incremental feedback reports
Recap and provide comprehensive incremental feedback reports

7
1 day (2 hours) subject 1, 3 days (6 hours) subject 2
Introducing the basics of Arabic-English translation
Teamwork translation (in-class)
Providing supplementary material and incremental feedback reports
Translating text 1 into English (100 words)

8
1 day (2 hours) subject 1, 3 days (6 hours) subject 2
Viewing some translations
Teamwork translations (in-class)
Providing supplementary material and incremental feedback reports
Translating text 2 into English (160 words)

9
1 day (2 hours) subject 1, 3 days (6 hours) subject 2
Viewing some translations
Teamwork translations (in-class)
Providing supplementary material and incremental feedback reports
Translating text 3 into English (200 words)

10
1 day (2 hours) subject 1, 3 days (6 hours) subject 2
Viewing some translations
Teamwork translations (in-class)
Providing supplementary material and incremental feedback reports
Translating extended project into English (900 words)

11
1 day (2 hours) subject 1, 3 days (6 hours) subject 2
Viewing some translations
Recap
Providing final competency exam supplementary materials and incremental feedback reports
Open discussion and Q&A

12
4 days (8 hours)
Recap and several in-class translations into Arabic and into English
Further open discussions and Q&A
Viewing example tests

As shown above, the supplementary material was administered to the trainees in week 3. The time of introducing the supplementary material was carefully chosen to make sure that the trainees have adapted their learning strategies and are ready to receive more content related to the objectives of the workshop series. They were intended to boost the knowledge of the trainees and to engage them with a work of comparison of texts and proposing solutions that were not covered in the training sessions. Also the time of the starting the administration of the supplementary material was simultaneous to the start of implementing incremental feedback. The selection of the supplementary material was left to the trainers and checked and archived by the researcher for reference and analysis. Under no circumstance, a trainer was notified of not committing to the briefing and orientation given early before the start of the workshop series in relevance to the restrictions on the undesirable early implementation of the supplementary material, alternative translation solutions, and incremental feedback. Only under cases of failing to adapt the material to the needs of the blind and low vision trainees and not providing content in a timely manner, the researcher asked trainees to commit to the instructions provided in the briefing and orientation. Alternative translation solutions and incremental feedback were advised to be administered in week 4, yet the discussion of the results would reveal that trainers have not committed to the planned time for introducing these two procedures. Further on this later in the study.

Two more instruments are implemented in the present study, one is the alternative translation solutions. Literature on alternative translation solutions is limited and exclusively investigated within translation process research (TPR), specifically in making decisions in translation. Borg [12]; [13] has an excellent implementation of ATS in written and literary contexts, still within the scope of examining and making translation decisions. Borg [12] points out the fact that selections of translations over the other were not only because of the better quality but also for strategic decisions.

Incremental feedback is another instrument that has not yet been considered by translation scholars. Buechler [14] found evidence for enhanced performance of students by the use of the incremental feedback reports in online training workshops which is a setting that is very similar, in principle, to the context of the present study. Incremental feedback shares essence with other labels still with differences in application [15]. The incremental feedback reporting procedure in the present study is a way of reporting frequent errors in translations of trainees, then offering suggestions to trainees on how to overcome them. The errors are saved as a reference point by trainers to be checked if they still exist in later translations of trainees. If found again, trainees highlight the same errors and provide further incremental instructions to trainees on how to address such problems. For example, if the trainee has fixed patterns of repeating errors in word collocations, they are monitored for cases of repetitions of such mistakes. Instructions increase in time and details to reach a stage the trainee is required to submit translations from the supplementary material that shows improvement in the use of the same error category. Trainees have not been required to look for certain error categories, they were required to list common issues in the translations and share them with other trainers so they can all decide if these are actually fixed error patterns. Generally, the most common fixed error patterns were in word choice, accuracy, communicativeness, spelling, and grammar.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

Supplementary material was chosen by trainers that simulate the text's nature of the final WTI competency test. It was not advised to the trainers to select texts that are similar to the texts of the final WTI test. This indicates the probability of wash-back. The researcher advised not to implement the incremental feedback earlier than week 3. However, trainers have in one way or another implemented incremental feedback much earlier than expected.

Interestingly enough, the trainees have not implemented alternative translation solutions to trainees earlier than planned and were briefed on the instruction before the start of the workshop series while they were much early in the implementation of the supplementary material. Towards the time of the final competency exam, trainers have increased the number of supplementary materials as well as the time of discussion of these materials. This also indicates the potential impact of the wash-back on trainers.

It does not seem to be easy to decide if the wash-back impact on trainees has originated by the behaviors of the trainers or it is inherently existent in any setting of training where an exam is assigned towards the end of the workshop series.

ATS for the context of the present study is a way of ranking translations by trainees and deciding what translation is the best in terms of adhering to the training received as well as following feedback in the incremental reports.

A positive impact in the selection of the best translation with the approach of the final competency exam was observed. Borg [12] highlights the underlying reasons for the selection of translation over the others and finds out that the decision was made based on strategic underpinnings in the first place. For our context, the selection of alternative translations over the others was made based on quality according to our trainees as revealed in the recorded interviews. However, as found in the archived translations of trainees, the selections made were not always the best choice. Sometimes trainees have picked a translation that is not the best. This means that there is still a lot to be desired from translation training workshops to make sure that trainees have really acquired the knowledge required to qualify them to enroll in the translation industry.

Findings also highlight the need for further research that feeds on the selection of translations over some others in contexts where alternative translation solutions strategy is available. Natural to translation is the way translators produce their translations with so many versions that range from tiny pieces of translation units up to large volumes of text that they translate and then they had a second thought of their own work. In our context, a concerning question was about the selection of certain translations over the others by our trainees. For the purpose of our study, all translations were required to be submitted in a portfolio to the researcher and that has to be done by all trainees. Interestingly, reviewing the selections trainees made regarding the choice of their best translations has revealed that they did not always pick the best translation. However, this has improved with the approach of the final competency exam, which means that the wash-back effect has also a positive impact on trainees.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Finding that the present study has given answers to its main questions, we move ahead with one further query that goes beyond the objectives of the present study. Seeing that the performance of the trainees, for the context of this study, or learners for language acquisition and EFL setting, which can be two significant fields that may benefit from such findings, has been impacted by the wash-back effect in a positive or negative direction, then the query of future research should also engage itself with the question of what factors may lead to a certain direction but not the other. This is to ask what can make the performances of the learners/trainees bad or good. For the context of this study, the factors are diverse and might be too many to list or investigate in one research, as the factors may be the result of and originate from further complexities such as the multitude of data and sub-consequent difficulties of providing solid ground of analysis for them. For our context in this study, people who participated and underwent rigorous training and examination for the wash-back effect are blind and visually impaired, who use various methods to access training content such as screen readers, embossed papers with braille alphabet, or braille displays. The study did not try to see if there is any

distinctive differences in the impact of the wash-back effect on the trainees based on the use of certain tools, as this is beyond its scope. The factors impacting the performances of learners/trainees in similar settings are naturally diverse and distributed across various fields, some might be psychological cognitive, emotional, or even sociolinguistic. We recommend that future research should consider these factors as such an attempt would actually mean going deeper and more critical in identifying what makes a learner's performance good or bad.

Future research may contribute to, first, the recognition and the understanding of the behaviors of the participants in translation training programs, and second identifying underlying reasons for participants' good or bad performances.

Translation Studies on the impact of tests on trainees should consider all the participants in a training workshop or in an academic context. Tests such as the WTI competency test in various scenarios and contexts may impact other areas in translation research that have not been examined. That is, traditionally research on the subject would entail assessing trainees' methods of learning and training and their final assessment results. A more generous attempt would also involve assessing trainees' translations while borrowing theoretical and empirical analyses from the field of, for example, error analysis. Tests can be a deciding factor in the level of motivation and emotional response by participants. HUBSCHER-DAVIDSON, 2020) has a great up-to-date overview of similar situations. It is crucial, however, that the findings of the research on the wash-back effect in the translation training context should feed into the teaching content, teaching and learning methods, and ways of assessment and evaluation of performances.

The direction of research into the impact of the test starts with the tests and their influence on participants and methods within the context of learning, teaching, or training, yet the other side of the equation has received little to no attention. That is, a research query might be what impact do participants, teaching content, and teaching and learning methods have on tests? Tests are designed to verify students' or trainees' knowledge acquired, yet some tests themselves depart from the teaching content. This situation does not seem to demonstrate itself as ideal, yet with cases where more coordination is required by the participants in the testing environment, it is possible that correspondence between teaching content and tests is at its lowest level. Compatibility among all factors should be sought. Such compatibility, and curricular alignment in an educational setting, entail correspondence between tests and the nature and essence of teaching content [16].

Highlighting again the reciprocality discussed before in the study with regard to the question of does the test impact the teaching content or it is the teaching content that dictates the nature of the final test, the same case of reciprocality exhibits itself in the question of is the wash-back effect an inherent aspect in workshop series that concludes with exam or it is the exam that generates the wash-back effect on participants, particularly trainees/students? Future research may delve into a such attempt to answer this query, which naturally involves the analyses of the various psychological, emotional or cognitive conditions that participants may experience, which is worth examining in future studies.

To conclude, researching translation training should progress further in many areas, we are left with theoretical questions that have to find answers from empirical research. Also, trainees who have special needs like blind and low vision have to receive further attention from researchers in the field of Translation Studies, as incorporating further data into the already rich reservoir of translation analysis and comparison may yield further answers to questions that we have long sought answers for. *-DAVIDSON [17] has contributed to this field in one of the latest literature available on the subject. However, research is still making further queries with relevance to the impact of tests on participants* [18-21].

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