

THE INTEGRATION OF AFFECTIVE DOMAINS IN FRENCH LANGUAGE LEARNING: TRANSLATING MOLIÈRE INTO MALAY

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ABSTRACT

Translation is the communication of meaning by converting the source language to the target language. The discipline requires excellent mastery and control of both source and target language, as well as their affective values as in the cultures of both languages. As translation includes the high order thinking skills, the teaching of learning of translation is normally conducted using a traditional method. Hence, this research evaluates the effectiveness of theatre-based task in the learning of French-Malay translation. The respondents for the study were 54 French Language Studies students at Universiti Putra Malaysia. The translation theater project involves four phases, which are the translation of the Molière theater script *Fourberries de Scapin* to Malay, the selection of characters for the theater play, the management of the play, and the insertion of the script into the theater video. It was found that the theater task was well received by the respondents and effective as to enhance their team management skills (TS), creative thinking problem solving (CTPS), psychomotor (P6), communication skills (CS) as well as their cognitive skills (C5). Subsequently, the respondents reported putting their theoretical learning of the translation strategies into practice by performing the translation and the theater task.

Keywords: Translation; French-Malay; task-based; theater

Introduction

“Tell me, and I'll forget. Show me, and I may not remember. Involve me, and I'll understand” (An Old Native American Proverb).

French is not a new third or foreign language in Malaysia. French is taught in secondary schools as an elective subject and in some higher learning institutions as either an elective or major subject. In 2019, more than 15,000 students were learning French in Malaysian public schools offered by 101 public schools, while around 6,000 students were taking French in the higher institution (<https://my.ambafrance.org/>).

In higher education – similar to other university courses – cognitive, psychomotor, and affective domains are the compulsory elements of French language learning outcome, in line with the requirement of the Malaysian Qualification Framework. Students are expected to not only master the knowledge, but to excel in the *savoir-faire* – the social tactfulness – in the content of their field of study. The *savoir-faire* is evaluated as part of the affective domain, one of the learning domains in the Malaysian Qualifications Framework. These learning domains are represented in the learning outcomes to clarify the demands and complexities of learning by each level (Malaysian Qualifications Agency, 2019). The five clusters of learning outcomes include knowledge and understanding, cognitive skills, functional work skills comprise of practical skills, interpersonal skills, communication skills, digital skills, numeracy skills, leadership skills, personal and entrepreneurial skills and ethics and professionalism (Malaysian Qualifications Agency, 2019).

Industry surveys of employers' preferences within potential recruits have consistently evaluated several desirable affective attributes in new graduates, among which are excellent time management skills, dynamic team player, ability to make decision and to resolute conflict, and strong communication skills. Nevertheless, Sitzmann et al. (2010) pointed out that most curriculum designs still concentrate on knowledge transfer, which mostly emphasises the cognitive and psychomotor domains and disregards the affective domain.

The study aimed to investigate the effectiveness of theatre-based task in the learning of French-Malay translation. The research questions for this research are as follows:

1. What are French learners' perceptions towards the effectiveness of learning French through theatre?
2. What are French learners' perceptions towards integrating theatre in French language translation class?
3. What are the skills French learners perceived that they have acquired through the translation of theatre process?
4. What are the challenges faced by French learners throughout the translation lesson through theatre class?

Review of literature

Affection and cognition are interdependent and cannot be developed distinctly during the learning process. Kraiger et al. (1993) stated that cognitive aptitude is foundational to affective learning, which is critical to behavioural performance and hands-on skills. Subsequently, teaching the affective domain efficiently can assist learners to review their value selections and methods, reflect on their value beliefs, and later, fashion their own styles for innovation and creativity. One of the recognised methods for affection and cognition teaching is experiential learning, through role plays, projects, and other activities to assess the achievement of learners' affective level.

Experience-based learning is a learning model that describes the cycle that learners undertake throughout the experiential learning process (Ismail et al., 2021). Abdul Rahim et al. (2017), for instance, focused on the use of e-story to develop writing skills among second language Korean learners. Their samples were 21 Malay language learners at one of the universities in South Korea. The respondents were exposed to e-story for two hours a week in a 14-week period. At the end of the 14th week, the participants were asked to rewrite the story that they learnt. The result showed that the majority of the respondents could rewrite the e-story. The respondents also demonstrated their enthusiasm in learning through e-story as they attested that it was a different and interesting approach compared to their normal learning style. Similarly, Abdul Rahim et al. (2014) conducted a study to identify the moral values in a Malay cartoon, *Upin and Ipin*. The respondents of the study consisted of 10 Malay language proficiency students at one of the universities in Korea. The subjects viewed eight episodes of *Upin and Ipin* for one hour a week for eight weeks and were interviewed on their views about the cartoon. The results showed that the respondents managed to identify the moral values of each episode of the cartoon, which were respect, hard work, care, love, and other values.

Another method of language learning is through theatre or role-play. Theatre is a highly investigational art, not only for the spectators, but also for the performers during the set-up of the play. Hence, theatre is a constructivist art in nature (Barris, 2013) as performers need to use affective skills collectively in the preparation phase and during the play. Acting provides learners with the imitation of actual, authentic, and meaningful language communication surroundings indispensable for the language acquisition (Herrera & Murry, 2016). Both theatre and foreign language learning share the goal of communicating skilfully and effectively (Busà, 2015). In the same manner, theatre and language learning have been linked (Bernal, 2007; Gardner, 1983; Gill, 2013). Theatre is seen as a means to improve the development of language skills such as reading fluency and comprehension of texts (Chou, 2013) as well as cultural understanding (Sobral, 2011). The teaching and learning of foreign languages and theatre are said to equally implicate various kinds of intelligences (Bernal, 2007).

Theatre has been used as an instrument to inspire people (Skeiker, 2015) and also to motivate learners to learn a foreign language (Tindall, 2012). In view of the affective domain, both learning exercises incorporate culture elements and heighten cultural understanding

(Essif, 2011). Additionally, theatre is known to integrate dynamic and responsive language skills (Gill, 2013). Thus, the use of drama as a teaching tool for a new language is not new; the practice, in fact, can be traced to the 19th century (Schewe, 2007).

With the emergence of communicative approach in the 1970's, the method has been seen as a fundamental part of foreign language teaching and learning. Bolton (1979) classified drama into three main categories, namely, exercise, dramatic play, and theatre. The theatre activities involve performing a version of a story to an audience, improvising a theme, or playing out a script. In a foreign language class, theatre or drama is "any activity which asks the student to portray himself in an imaginary situation or another person in an imaginary situation" (Holden, 1981, p. 1). Thus, drama activities combine physical activities with emotional attachment which can encourage the memorisation of language syntax and vocabulary (Sambanis, 2013). To produce more convincing characters, learners may use props and costumes to envision the story. Verriour (1994) stated that dramatic playing is manifested by an extraordinary level of spontaneity as the learners struggle together to build a make-believe world in which they assume characters to "explore issues that are of concern to them" (p. 7).

The beauty of theatre activities is that it encompasses not only communication skills, but other affective domains such as lifelong learning through the thorough research before the practice and the act, leadership skills through the direction of the play, teamwork through the practicing acting part, and other social skills as well. Moreover, theatre also offers environments for multiple language happenstances and promotes real-life conversations (Kao & O'Neill, 1998).

Gualdrón and Castillo (2018) conducted a qualitative study based on a long-term application of a theatre content-based methodology for second language (L2) learning. The data were collected through a longitudinal semi-structured survey, interviews of the participants of the event, and a focus group. Their study found that throughout the theatre practice, the respondents let down their affective filters. They also gained benefits in their production and grasp of L2 skills, their intercultural aptitude, and their cognitive processing of the language. Gualdrón and Castillo (2018) conclude that both theatre and language learning share the same communicative objective, that is, to achieve successful and smooth communication between involved parties.

The making of theatre plays of which the story and plot originate from foreign languages imposes the translation of the original script to the actors' mother tongue or second language. This is to render the script more coherent, hence making the acting more lifelike. Therefore, theatre play can be incorporated as a part of translation class. The process of translating dialogues from one language to another challenges learners' mastery in both linguistics and culture as well as their ability to manage elements of untranslatability by finding the equivalence in the source language.

For the education community, the incorporation of translation-based learning activities in language classes has been debated since the last two decades. Many scholars consider translation as beneficial to be incorporated and applied in language classes, although there is no well-established approach to consider it as a didactic tool (Conacher, 1996; Ur, 1996). Studies have shown that teaching translation to students in

non-translation class may be overwhelming. Larson (1986) remarked that those who are learning the target language encounter two major issues when it comes to translation: firstly, learning to cope with translation-related problems is not the same as learning the language itself, although they go hand-in-hand, and secondly, it is vital to decide which translation method should be adopted for optimum teaching and learning outcomes. Vermes (2010) argued that an essential requirement to consider translation a valid didactic tool is to distinguish pedagogical from real translation in terms of their function, the object being dealt with, and the addressee. Function-wise, pedagogical translation is basically instrumental insofar as the translated text is a mere tool to improve students' L2 proficiency.

Due to the difficulty of incorporating translation and theatre, teachers need to guide learners to ensure their commitment and motivation. Further, teachers and learners need to have ample discussion on the play and furnish reflections of their thoughts on the task after the performance (O'Neill & Lambert, 1982). Abdul Halim et al. (2016) asserted that it is imperative to gauge learners' perceptions of the utilised learning methods; if the methods can enhance their motivation to learn, these would provide a plus factor contributing to their success in acquiring a particular language. It is important for teachers to bear in mind that when learning, learners have diverse views on the suitability of course content and objectives, its difficulty level, and the role of the teacher (Flórez, et al., 2012).

Shrum and Glisan (2009) further added that acquisition will only occur the moment learners obtain optimal, eloquent, and stimulating input that is slightly higher than their competency level and not grammatically sequenced, yet logical by using linguistics and contextual background, and by adding other extralinguistic cues. Hence, curriculum makers or teachers should take their learners' perceptions into consideration when planning the curriculum and instructions (Abdul Halim et al., 2016).

In terms of research on French translation class in Malaysia, Abdul Halim and Ang (2015) emphasised that for learners acquiring a new foreign language, translation can be a valuable tool. Abdul Halim et al. (2016) reported that using the translation approach, foreign language learners declared that they could understand a concept, a situation, or a text in French. The result of this study was supported by Shahrom et al. (2018). The researchers conducted a perception study on 100 French language students from Universiti Putra Malaysia on their beliefs of using translation strategy in French language learning. Their results showed that most of their respondents believed that translation strategies were beneficial for their French language learning as the strategies made them understand the learning process and the language better.

Methodology

The respondents consisted of 54 third year Bachelor's Degree students majoring in French at Universiti Putra Malaysia. All 54 were students were undergoing translation classes of French-English-Malay that comprises 72 learning hours (14 weeks) in a semester.

The respondents were divided into two groups to enable all of them to fully participate in the play. Each group was asked to organise a theatre play on 10 scenes of the whole act of a play. The research was divided into a few phases: The Emergence Phase, the Production or the Preparation Phase, and the Performance and Reflection phase. At the end of the Reflection Phase, the participants were given questionnaires to assess their opinions on the efficiency of the tested learning method.

The questionnaires contained four closed-ended parts scored on a five-point Likert-scale. The four parts contained perceived French proficiency level before and after the play (6 items), perceptions on theatre in French language learning (8 items), perceptions on theatre in translation class (8 items), and perceptions on the task-based content (7 items). The analysis of the close-ended questions was performed with SPSS. In addition to the closed-ended parts, five open-ended questions were asked to gauge respondents' opinions on the effectiveness, usefulness, and challenges of the theatre task. For the open-ended questions, respondents' answers were coded as R1 for Respondent 1, R2 for Respondent 2, and so on. The data of the open-ended questions were sorted according to the research objectives and the theme of their responses, and analysed qualitatively.

Apart from the questionnaires, respondents were also given a pre-test before the commencement of the activities. The test encompassed multiple proficiency questions from CEFR A1 to B2 level. The purpose of the pre-test was to gauge respondents' French level before the activities. At the end of the activities, during the Reflection Phase, the respondents were given a post-test to find out whether there was any improvement after the activities.

Phase I: The Emergence Phase

The Emergence phase involved three weeks of the respondents' total learning week. This phase involves the general understanding on the original version of the theatre *Les Fourberies de Scapin* by Molière. The respondents were given the script consisting in total 20 scenes that they had to read and understand. Since this is a literature script, the respondents were asked to watch the play by *Malin Plaisir* in YouTube (<https://youtu.be/C7aWIGHxpyQ>) in order for them to have an overall picture of the script. The respondents were also asked to write a brief summary of the play. They were also asked to discuss the plots, characters, and the theme of the play.

The Emergence Phase also comprises the translation of the modified script by the respondents from the book *Fourberies de Scapin (Molière)* from French into Malay or English. This is to test whether they fully understood the original French script. The

respondents were divided into 18 sub-groups with three members per group for the translation and they were asked to translate three to four scenes each.

Phase II: The Preparation Phase

The Preparation Phase involved eight weeks of rehearsals, making brochures for the audiences, and planning the costumes and the flow of the play. This is an important stage and the biggest challenge for the respondents to practise the language and “coordinate their pronunciation, intonation and volume while using gestures and body movements for the acts to look as natural as possible” (Ronke, 2005, p. 264). The length of the rehearsals increased gradually as the respondents approached the final play. Throughout the rehearsal period, the lecturers monitored the progress and advised the respondents on their acts and props.

Phase III: Performance and Reflection Phase

The Performance and Reflection Phase involved acting in front of an audience and a panel of jury consisting of four French lecturers. The respondents were assessed based on a set of rubrics that has been explained to them beforehand. Their performance was graded on the language part (pronunciation, intonation, and clarity), the acting part (gestures, mimics, body movements) and the support system (use of stage, props, sound system, supporting brochures). The Reflection Phase occurred right after the play, during which the respondents filled in the Perception on Theatre Production Questionnaire online survey via Google Form.

Results and Discussion

French learners’ perceptions towards the effectiveness of learning French through theatre

Overall, it was found that the respondents admitted the theatre task boosted their oral and writing skills in French as well as their confidence in the language itself. The results are as indicated in Figure 1.

For speaking skills for example, the respondents perceived themselves to be less proficient before the theatre task, with the majority claiming their level to be poor (37%) and moderate (44%), as compared to after the theatre task, with the majority claiming to be in the satisfactory (62%) and very good level (22%). The same result was observed for the writing skills, in which the respondents claimed to have poor (37%) and moderate (44%) levels before the theatre task.

Figure 1

Pre-test results of the perception on respondents' communicative skills and confidence in using French language (N=54)

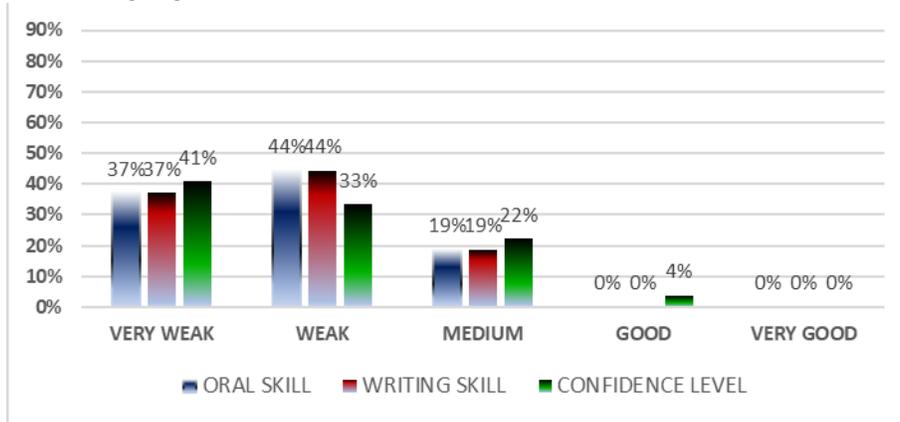
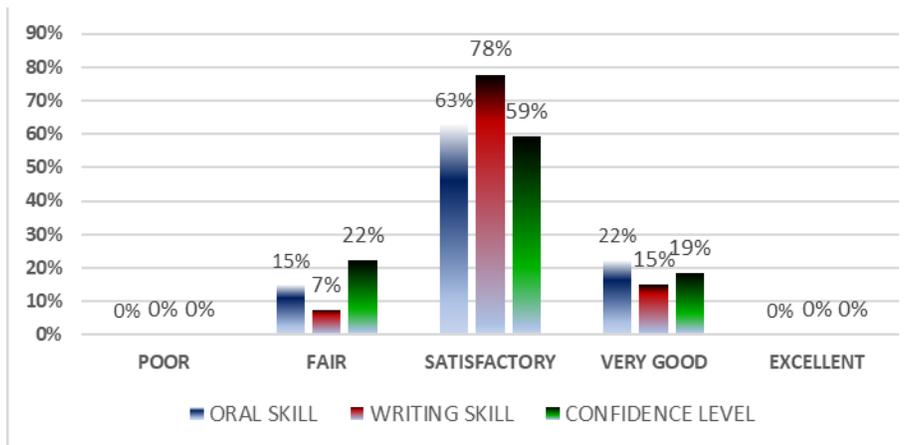


Figure 2

Post-test results of the perception on respondents' communicative skills and confidence in using French language (N=54)



After the completion of their theatre task, the respondents perceived themselves to be at the satisfactory (78%) and very good level (15%). The result was in tandem with the boost in their confidence level in using French, where 74% of the respondents claimed to have low confidence before the task, while after the task, the respondents' confidence level was at satisfactory (59%) and very good level (19%).

Table 1
Respondents' Achievement Level (Pre- and Post-test)

PRE- TEST		POST-TEST	
CEFR level		CEFR level	
A1	10 (18.5%)	A1	2 (3.7%)
A2	36 (66.7%)	A2	24 (44.4%)
B1	7 (13%)	B1	24 (44.4%)
B2	1 (1.8%)	B2	4 (7.5%)

The comparison of results from the pre and post-tests indicated that the theatre task has boosted respondents' achievement level. From Table 1, we can see that for the pre-test, majority of the respondents were at A2 level (66.7%), and 18.5% were at the low level (CEFR A1). At the end of the session, for the post-test, it was found that the results have improved for all levels. Most of the respondents were at A2 and B1 levels and the number of respondents at B2 level had multiplied by four. The number of low achievers (CEFR A1) has been equally reduced from 10 respondents to two respondents for the post-test. It should be noted that the conclusion on the improvement was solely based on the questions given, and not on the overall CEFR assessments for French (for example DELF evaluations).

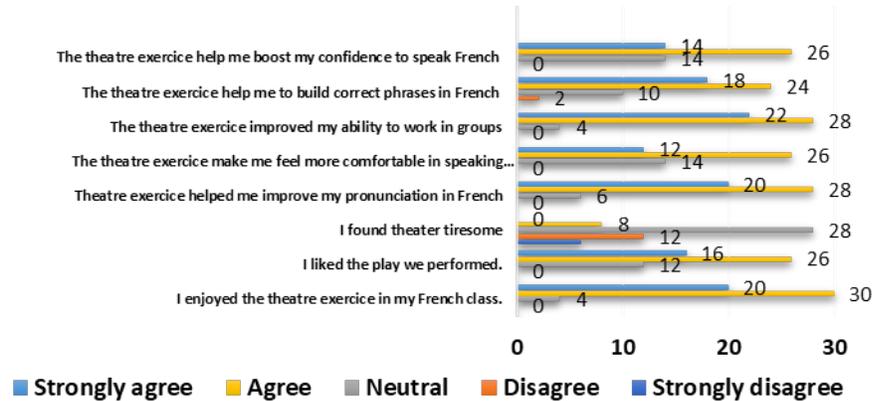
French learners' perceptions towards integrating theatre in FL translation class

The respondents were also asked about their perceptions on learning translation through theatre. Through the open-ended questions, majority of the respondents described the theatre experience as "tiring but fun" (R10, R13 and R14), "enjoyable" (R3, R6 and R7), "exciting though challenging" (R11, R15, R20). These statements corroborated the findings in Figure 3, where 55.5% (n=30) agreed that they enjoyed theatre activities in French class, while 37% (n=20) strongly agreed to the statement. The findings supported Shammass' (2021) findings on experiential learning. Similarly, this study also found that the respondents agreed that theatre-based task was a better way to understand translation concept compared to the traditional way. They admitted that although the task was not "conventional" (R32, R50), the simulation helped them to "comprehend the translation process in a better manner" (R44).

Most of the respondents also admitted that the theatre exercise augmented their confidence in speaking French (80% for "strongly agree" and "agree"). A majority of the respondents (88.8%) admitted that the exercise helped them in "improving French pronunciation and skills in delivering each dialogue" (R26 and R54). 77.7% of the respondents also agreed that the theatre task worked as their "ways to perfecting their French syntax through the translation and repetition of the dialogues" (R33).

Figure 3

Respondents' perceptions on learning translation through theatre (N=54)



From Figure 3, although most respondents found the theatre task tiresome, almost all respondents (92.6%) found that the task heightened the ability to work as team. Based on the responses, the time spent for the rehearsal and the group discussions during play “allow them to participate fully as a team player” (R6, R44 and R50) and “challenge themselves to work as a team” (R1, R39 and R51). The results of the research supported the findings by Shammass (2021) that found respondents responded greatly to experiential learning and found the experience enjoyable and beneficial to their language acquisition.

Translation skills and course content that learners perceived to have acquired through the process of theatre translation

The respondents were also asked about the translation skills that they perceived they have acquired through the process of theatre translation. As shown in Figure 4, the majority of the respondents perceived that the theatre task helped them to better comprehend their translation of literary texts and French culture (70.4% for “strongly agree” and “agree”). The respondents admitted that the “theatre storyline was hard to comprehend and translate” (R1, R45), as “the language used is very traditional” (R1, R45), but it managed to make them “understand the process of translating French literature and culture to Malay and English” (R30, R52). Additionally, the research revealed that 66.7% of the respondents believed that theatre helped them improve their understanding of their translation process.

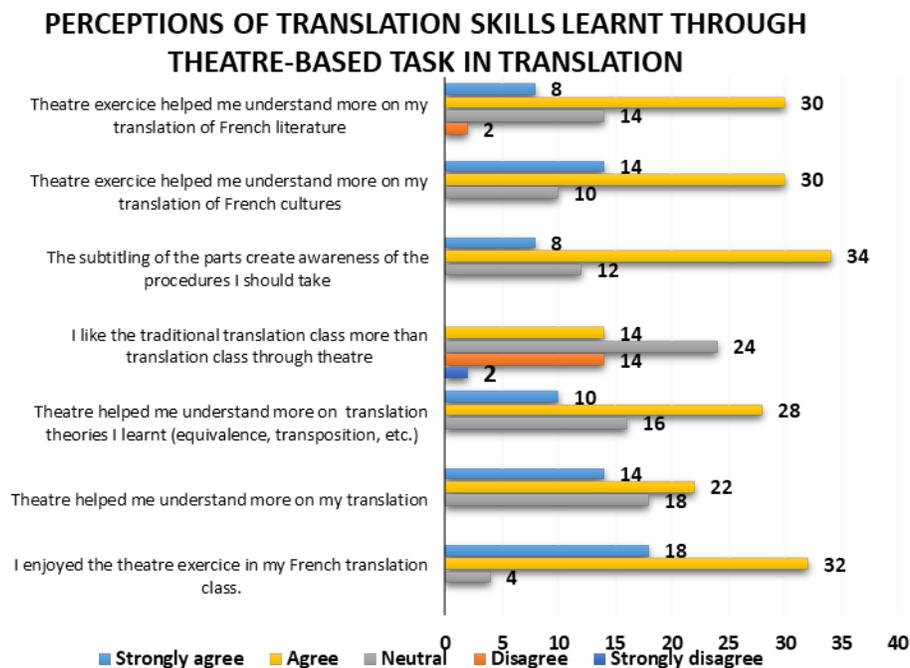
Figure 4 also illustrates that the majority of the respondents (74.1%) agreed that the theatre task benefitted them in comprehending translation theories that they should apply. Moreover, they agreed that the task helped them to better understand the translation theories they studied. 77.7% of the respondents perceived that the

subtitling process during the theatre task created awareness on the translation procedures that they needed to utilise.

Even though the results pertaining to the skills gained through theatre translation were generally positive, the respondents had mixed responses when it came to their preference of learning translation. Only 29.6% stated that they preferred using the theatre task. An almost similar percentage (25.9%), preferred to use traditional methods, while 44.4% chose to be neutral.

Figure 4

Respondents' perceptions of skills learnt through theatre-based task in translation (N=54)

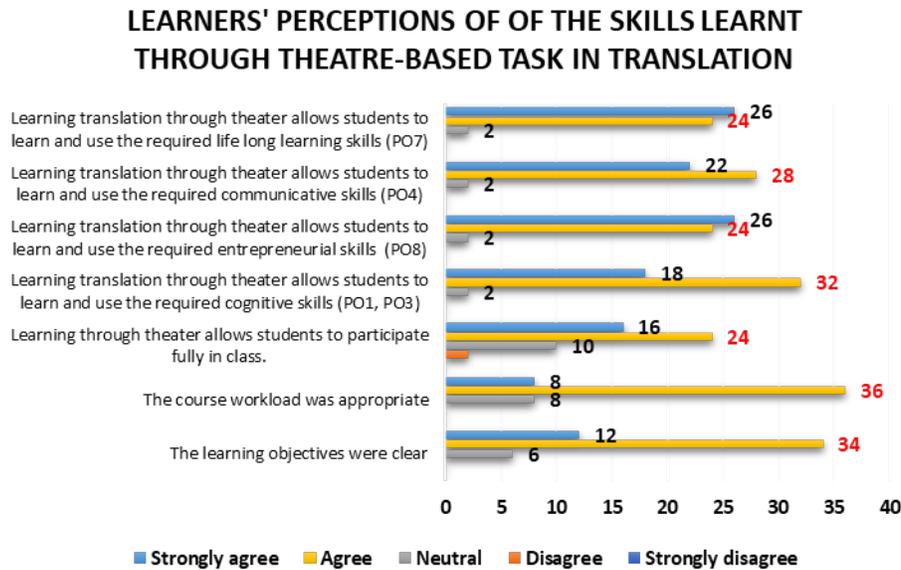


Apart from translation skills, it was also found that the theatre-based task has helped the respondents in the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. As shown in Figure 5, the respondents stated that the learning objectives were clear to them (63% agreed and 22% strongly agreed). They also agreed that although they spent long hours in executing the theatre, 66.7% of them (n=36) agreed the course workload was appropriate, while 14.8% (n=8) strongly agreed.

It was found that 59.2% (n=32) of the respondents agreed that theatre task allowed them to use their cognitive and higher order thinking skills (PO1 and PO3), while the other 37% (n=20) strongly agreed. As for the other skills, 52 out of 54 respondents

perceived that the task helped them in the lifelong learning skills (PO7), communication skills (PO4), and entrepreneurial skills (PO8).

Figure 5
Respondents’ perceptions of skills learnt through theatre-based task in translation (N=54)



Challenges faced by the respondents in learning translation through theatre-based task

When asked about their challenges, the respondents admitted that the main challenge for them was time management. Some of the suggestions given by the respondents were:

- “To increase the duration of practicing the theatre and a more interesting literature piece for the students to perform and learn.” (R48)
- “In the future, maybe should lengthen the duration of the practice” (R22)
- “More time should be allocated in preparing the theatre because we have other assignment to submit too” (R17).

In addition to time management, the respondents also commented on the theatre selection. A majority of the respondents stated that they would prefer to be involved in a modern theatre, something that they could relate to in their daily lives. Among the comments from the respondents were as follows:

“For me, maybe it would have been better if in future the students are able to play a modern theatre, or maybe a theatre on which the language is easier and understandable.” (R23)

“... presenting la theatre that have some or a little bit connection to students life.” (R35)

“Increase the duration of practicing the theatre and a more interesting modern literature piece for the students to perform and learn.” (R46)

From the result of the close-ended questions, it can be seen that though the respondents admitted to benefitting from the theatre task, they preferred to have a theatre task which they can relate to, rather than a classical theatre such as Molière. A modern storyline would help them to better appreciate the task. The duration of the task in translation exercises incorporating theatre-based activities should also be carefully considered.

Conclusion

The study showed that theatre-based task appears to be a pedagogy that can be used beneficially in translation classes. This study demonstrates that experiential learning is a pedagogy that respondents respond well to and one that creates a more enjoyable setting compared to the traditional method. Even though the study sample was not large, the results corroborate key findings in the field, lending support to the effectiveness of using theatre as a task in language learning. Through theatre-based tasks, respondents reported that they have improved their French oral and writing skills as well as their confidence in using the language. The study also revealed that respondents found their motivation in learning through the activities which they described as fun, enjoyable, and exciting, albeit challenging. The study, therefore, provides evidence that translation, specifically translation of a play, is a fun and interactive strategy for foreign language learning. Future investigation could expand to participants from other foreign languages or include those who are taking French as a minor or elective subject and also include methods such as interviews and longitudinal observation to triangulate the findings.

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