

An application of Translation and Back-translation Writing tasks for Learners of Korean as a Foreign Language

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INTRODUCTION

Though we are familiar with the term “Translation”, “Back Translation” has come into effect recently to facilitate the evaluation of the correctness of a translation. In back-translation, a text that has been already translated into a foreign language is translated back to its original language and in comparing the two texts; we could evaluate the accuracy of the translation. This process is now seen as a very important method to ensure the accuracy of the work of the translator.

PURPOSE OR GOAL

The objective of this study is to analyze the errors that exist between the two different writing tasks: translation and back-translation. Another objective is to make the Korean language learner to ascertain the possibility of finding solutions to overcome the problems in L2 writing. In addition, this study aims to investigate a teaching methodology using translation and back-translation to improve students’ comprehension ability in reading and writing.

METHODOLOGY

By classifying and describing errors in translation and back-translation of the L2 writers of the 3rd Year of the University of Kelaniya, typical error patterns in L2 learners are assessed. In doing so, the study identifies causes for the errors and suggests several patterns of translation and back-translation methods to avoid these errors.

Writing outcomes of two writing tasks involving 20 participants in the Korean Language and Literature class of Level 3 of University of Kelaniya

were collected and analyzed. Three times of translation and back-translation writing tasks were imposed upon the participants, and one pre-test and one post-test were held respectively before and after the tasks to evaluate the effectiveness of the writing tasks in the improvement of comprehension. Data analysis of writing outcomes focused on grammatical errors and vocabulary. The result of grammatical error analysis was classified in three categories using particles (markers), using endings (conjunctive endings, closing endings, and others), and using necessary sentence elements. The range of vocabulary and correctness of spelling was managed in the class of vocabulary.

RESULTS

The result of grammatical error analysis is summarized below:

First, in using particles, in translation writing carried out by the students common mistakes related to particles were evident. It was observed that particles are used in unnecessary places, without focusing on grammaticality. The usage of ‘은/는’ and ‘을/를’ particles are some of the examples.

Second, in using endings, sentences are not given the required ending. Especially in translating into Sinhalese, adhering a proper ending marking the tense of the sentence is frequently missed. Furthermore, incorrect using of conjunctive endings describing the semantic relation between two clauses is also commonly observed.

Third, in vocabulary, the range of vocabulary is judged as being insufficient. In back-translation, inserting words that were not used in the source text has been another problem. Further, due to the lack of knowledge in words, distortion of meaning can be seen in many translations.

CONCLUSIONS

The results of pre-tests and post-tests indicate that translation and back-translation writing task was effective to improve reading and comprehension in Korean language classes. There was about 25% of progress between two tests done with 20 participants. With this result this research suggests three types of translation and back-translation writing task models: partially selected translation and back-translation; cross translation and back-translation among students; and delayed translations and back-translation.

KEYWORDS

translation, back-translation, Korean Language Education, reading comprehension, writing

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