

Onomatopoeia in Japanese: a close look at Translation from Japanese into Sinhala

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INTRODUCTION

Onomatopoeia can be described as which imitates the sounds of a thing or a phenomenon. It creates a sound effect that things described making the description more expressive and interesting. Furthermore, they are mimetic words that does not make sound; e.g. the fluttering of a butterfly's wings. There is a large number of Japanese onomatopoeic words when compared with Sinhala.

PURPOSE

As there is a massive number of onomatopoeic words in Japanese compared with Sinhala, students learning Japanese as a foreign language tend to make errors when they translate them in to Sinhala. Thus this paper aims to find the error types when students translate onomatopoeia in Japanese in to Sinhala.

METHODOLOGY

Data were collected by reviewing sixteen cultural translations based on onomatopoeia, translated by sixteen students, reading for the four year Honors Degree in Japanese studies at the University of Kelaniya. There were number of onomatopoeic and onomatopoeia-mimetic words in the source language text and students were asked to translate them into Sinhalese by conveying the source language meaning as it is.

RESULTS

According to the analyzed data two main errors were distinguished as source language understanding errors and finding similar word in Sinhala to use instead of onomatopoeic in Japanese. Source language understanding errors; there were number of words that students did not understand the

meaning of the Japanese word. The sentence サッカーチーム全体が優勝してウキウキしていた. “sakka chimuno zentaiga yuusyou shite uki uki shite ita” (The whole soccer team was on cloud nine after winning the championship) has been translated as පාපන්දු කණ්ඩායම ජයග්‍රහණය කිරීමෙන් සතුටට පත්වුනා “paapandu kandayama jayagrahanaya kiriimen sathutata patwuna” by eleven students and පාපන්දු කණ්ඩායම ජයග්‍රහණය කිරීමෙන් සතුටින් සිටියා. “papandu kandayama jayagrahanaya kierimen satutin sitiya” by five students. The Sinhala translation of Japanese word ウキウキ “uki uki” (on cloud nine) is not correct. It should translate in to Sinhala as wukaodkkaohg m;aj “amandanandayata patwa” (on cloud nine). The sentence 犬が死んだとき彼はオイオイ泣いた.”inu ga shinda toki kareha oioi naita” (when his dog died he cried his heart out) has been translated in to Sinhalese as ඔහුගේ බල්ලා මියගිය විට ඔහු ඉකිබිඳ හැඳුවා “ohuge balla miyagiya wita ohu ikibida heduwa” by six students and ඔහුගේ බල්ලා මියගිය විට ඔහු සුසුම් සැලුවා “ohuge balla miyagiya wita ohu susum seluwa” by ten students. The Sinhalese translation of Japanese word オイオイ “oioi” (cried his heart out) is not correct. It should translate in to Sinhalese as කෑමොර දී හැඳුවා “keemoradi haduwa” (cried his heart out). These types of errors show that the students have not grasped the meaning source language text.

There were number of words that students understand the meaning and try to find a similar word in Sinhalese for Japanese onomatopoeia. As a result of using direct Sinhalese words for Japanese words; the meaning has changed. The sentence 犬が骨をカリカリかじっている.” Inuga honewo kari kari kajitte iru” (The dog bite the bone) has been translated as බල්ලා කර කර ගා මස්කටු කෑවා “balla kara kara gaa maskatu kewa” by seven students and බල්ලා ජරබර ගා මස්කටු කෑවා “balla jarabara gaa maskatu kewa” by nine students. The Sinhalese translation of Japanese word for かりかり “karikari” (bite) has been overgeneralized by the students and therefore it does not convey the original meaning of Japanese word かりかり “karikari” (crunchy). It should translate in to Sinhalese. It

should translate in to Sinhalese as ඉතා ලොල්ව “itaa lolwa” (greedily). These types of errors show that the students try to overgeneralize the words in source language text and as a result of overgeneralization; the meaning of the source language text has changed.

CONCLUSION

It was evident that the majority of students think in first language (L1) and transfer this knowledge to Japanese language when they translate Japanese texts in to Sinhala. Furthermore there is a tendency to find similar words in Sinhala for Japanese Onomatopoeia. Errors are inevitable in the process of foreign language acquisition. A foreign language learner’s errors are not negative or interfering in any way with learning the target language but are a positive factor, evidence of strategies and procedures the learner is employing in his or her discovery of the language. A systematic analysis of errors will tell the teacher how much of the target language the learner knows and consequently, what remains to be learned. Error analysis is also helpful to the learner to help test his hypotheses about the nature of the language he is learning.

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KEYWORDS

Translation, Japanese as a Foreign Language, Sinhala native speakers, onomatopoeia in Japanese, mimetic words

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