

運用視譯技巧於英語閱讀教學之初探式研究

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摘要

即使過去文獻證實翻譯在英語教學(English Language Teaching; ELT)與第二外語習得(Second Language Acquisition; SLA)中扮演重要的角色,相關視譯技巧與學生英語學習的交互關係仍需更多的實證研究的貢獻,本研究即為相關主題之初探式研究。實驗對象共 14 位,目的在於探討視譯技巧對於學生學習節果的潛在效果,透過實驗對象的視譯錄音,在 2 份不同類型的文本進行實驗對象出現模糊現象的頻率統計,以及其中特殊現象的探討。本研究的結果顯示視譯技巧能提升學生的英語閱讀理解力,結論部份提及統計結果的意涵與未來研究方向的建議。

關鍵字：ELT、SLA、視譯、閱讀理解力

A Preliminary Study of Applying Interpreting Skills to Teaching English Reading

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I. Introduction:

Due to the pressure of facilitating internationalization, English education has been one of the focus areas for Taiwan Government. To increase students' global competitiveness, many tertiary schools impose English proficiency requirements on their students as one of the graduation thresholds. According to the Ministry of Education (MOE), there are currently 1,336,592 students majoring in various fields in tertiary education in Taiwan until 2010. Among them, English major students are 47,974 which accounts for 3.59% in total (Department of Statistics, 2010). Thus, it is assumed that most college students are non-English major ones who probably need to pay extra attentions on English learning.

Students' needs for English bring out the discussion of appropriate pedagogy in the classrooms. Few centuries ago, Grammar Translation Method (GTM) used to be the most widely adopted pedagogy in English education. Under the guidance of GTM, students were required to transfer L2 language into L1 in order to study the sentence patterns. Most teaching materials under GTM were literary pieces, and students tried to find parallel meanings for words or expressions with the help of dictionaries. However, it always ended up with so-called "literal translation" or "word-to-word translation". Accordingly, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which enhances students' English competences by eliminating translation as much as possible in both English teaching and learning, rose up and has been influencing ELT in Taiwan. The dogma of CLT, which is to uphold the principle of using no other languages but

English, has been enshrined in many English learners' minds.

However, as Newmark (1991) indicates, translation has been developed into a functional and dynamic way instead of unilateral and rigid one, that is to say a possible combination of CLT and translation. Furthermore, translation has been recognized as one of the learning strategies (Chamot et al., 1987; O'Malley et al., 1985a; O'Malley et al., 1985b; Oxford, 1990). It is assumed that if translation can be properly utilized, students can benefit from it (Liao, 2003; 2006). Unfortunately, there are not many studies (Chan, 2000; Hsieh, 2000; Huang, 2003; Liao, 2002, 2003, 2006) emphasizing on applying translation to ELT or SLA.

Considering that the possible developments of CLT and translation have not thoroughly studied yet, this paper is going to discuss with the possibility and efficacy of using translation in teaching English reading. The purpose of this study is to conduct a preliminary and experimental research and find out whether interpreting skills, or maybe some other written translating skills, can be contributed to a better English learning performance or, even further, a self-diagnostic skill for learners. In the present study, all the participants are divided into control and experiment group and two English articles are selected as the teaching materials.

The research questions are as followings:

1. In control and experiment group, what are the frequencies of ambiguity?
2. What are the significant features in control and experiment group?

II. Literature Review:

In this part, a brief history of GTM abandonment and CLT replacement will be discussed. Furthermore, under the context of English as a lingua franca (ELF) and

Language Imperialism, a natural and dynamic bonding between translating and SLA will be studied.

The rise and fall of GTM:

GTM is referred to Grammar Translation Method. It can be dated back to the 16th century when many foreign languages, such as Italian, English and French, were learned by people from different parts of the world because of the reforms of political structures in some countries. At that time, learners studied their target languages by translating vocabulary and sentence patterns, in which learners tried to find lexically and syntactically parallel expressions (Howatt, 1984). In the 18th century, the basic concept of GTM was that students had to understand the grammar of their L1s in order to learn the particular L2s through translating, paraphrasing and dictating. GTM became the major language teaching pedagogy in Europe and North America for a century from 1840s to 1940s (Foto, 2005).

Due to GTM's focuses on memorizing grammatical rules and practicing with isolated sentences, it was criticized that students' communicative competence was overlooked. The major problem of GTM was that students were more likely to have literal translation (direct translation) when practicing translating isolated sentences. The sentence as a whole is strange and unnatural and would never be spoken in normal discourse. Accordingly, the Direct Method was formally upheld and adopted by France, Germany, and the U.S. Under the instruction of Direct Method, the students were required to speak the target language only, and grammar rules were presented inductively. Reading and writing were based on oral practice, and correct pronunciation was emphasized. However, it was found that the complexity of grammar and the variety of vocabulary meanings were hard to be taught in the L2

only context. Students usually felt that learning foreign languages was a tedious and sometimes stressful process under the instructions of the Direct Method.

The Current Dominance and Tension Brought by CLT

Because of the rigid teaching style and the difficulty of finding qualified native speakers to be the teachers under the dogma of the Direct Method, CLT becomes a prevailing English pedagogy in many EFL (English as a foreign language) countries, such as Japan, Taiwan and South Korea. In these Asian contexts, CLT is widely adopted in both private and public English educational institutions. However, CLT has severe problems in its application to Asian English classrooms, including the lack of understandings about the usage of CLT among English teachers and the influential washback effect of exam-oriented teaching objectives in local educational contexts (see, e.g., Canagarajah, 1999; Lamie, 2000; Li, 1998; Yu, 2001). Despite many scholars are questioning the efficacy of CLT and challenging its dominance, some local governments in Taiwan, e.g. New Taipei City Government, Kaohsiung City Governments, and cram schools are overwhelmingly implementing or adopting "all-English" policies which are in favor of CLT approach.

The Revival of Using Translation in English Teaching

Many public or private English educational institutions are being supportive to CLT approaches, whereas many teachers at school are adopting translation methods in their English teachings due to exam-oriented and purpose-driven curriculums, the size of the class, and the stressful time limit. This phenomenon can be referred to "washback effect" which denotes the influences of exam-oriented policies on teachings. As a result, all the trainings and lessons learned by students are the purpose-driven products, that is to say, the preparations for future tests (Alderson &

Wall, 1993; McEwen, 1995:42; Hughes, 1993:117). Those exam-oriented policies, huge number of students assigned to teachers, and time limit for every English course make many English educators utilize translation method in English language teachings (Choi, 2003; Al-Jamal & Ghadi, 2008).

Furthermore, translation is, in essence, a cognitive process. It is natural and inevitable especially for those non-English major or English low achievers being involved in translating process while acquiring their foreign languages (Liao, 2006; Husain, 1995; O'Malley et al., 1985a & 1985b). Some researchers in Taiwan even found that students' English proficiency is indeed improved if using translation-assisted method in English teaching (Chan, 2000; Huang, 2003; Hsieh, 2000; Liao, 2002). For example, Huang (2003) contents that cross translation can be contributed to better perceptions of English idioms for students. In addition, some psycholinguistic and Second Language Acquisition (SLA) researchers recognize the involvement of translation in English language teaching (Bialystok, 1998; Deignan, Gabry, & Solska, 1997; Duff, 1989; Eadie, 1999; Ellis, 1992; Kovecses & Szabo 1996; Lazar, 1996; Ponterotto, 1994). Also there are researchers speaking for translation being used as a tool for arousing awareness in language learning because the process of translation is, after all, an inevitable and unconscious cognitive process for foreign language learners (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990: 127; Atkinson, 1993:17; Widdowson, 2003:150 & 151; Harris and Sherwood, 1978). Furthermore, it has been proposed that translation-assisted foreign language teaching and learning approaches such as, critical-functional translation (CFT) proposed by Katabi (2010), can solve the inherent problems in the application of CLT to ELT. (Katabi, 2010; Weschler, 1997).

III. Methodology:

In this part, this study is going to explain the specific methods and steps in analyzing the data. It includes the backgrounds of the participants, the sources of the texts, and both the qualitative and quantitative applications involved in this study.

Participant background:

There are totally 14 participants who are divided into 2 groups: control and experimental group. In the control group, the participants are non-English major postgraduate students who were taking the course of "English Academic Reading" in the semester year of 2010 at a private college in Taiwan. This was a required course in which students were asked to show their sufficient capabilities of reading academic references in English. Therefore, they have forthcoming needs of English reading skills especially when dealing with academic research in the near future. It is worth noticing that all of the participants passed the admission examinations for postgraduate school, which means their English proficiency is at or close to postgraduate level.

In the experimental group, the participants were the members from an English training program sponsored by Taiwan's Ministry of Education. All the members who are eligible for enrolling in this program must be employment expectants with college degree. Despite their urgent needs for English, they were only assigned for one English course of 16 hours in which the content must involve four skills, that is to say that reading was assigned for 4 hours. All of the participants in experimental group are non-English major, and they finished their tertiary education in Taiwan. In this sense, it is understandable that the participants have limited English proficiency.

The participants in the experiment group were not allowed to check out the meanings of words from dictionaries, while those in control group were permitted to do so. However, the lecturer would give some of the background information regarding the texts and invite the participants in experiment group to have some group discussions. On the contrary, the participants of control group, given their English proficiency is higher, were merely received the traditional grammar and vocabulary lecturing in English, and dictionary was permitted to use in their class.

Text source:

There are two different genres of texts chosen in this study. One is an academic text from "In Company" (Clarke, 2010), discussing about business in U.K.; therefore, it is written in British English. The other one is the speech transcript retrieved from the on-line archive of *Vital Speeches of the Day*. This is the script from one of U.S. President Barack Obama's speeches. Therefore, it is written in American English and is comparatively a more colloquial text than the former one.

Analysis process:

All the participants in control and experimental group were required to sight-translate the texts mentioned above. All the recordings were transcribed so as to conduct both quantitative and qualitative analyses. Firstly, this study adopted WinAlign in Trados for dividing the analysis units. A full stop was considered as the end of each unit in this study; therefore, 12 analysis units were collected in the source texts, and 168 analysis units were collected from the transcriptions of students' sight-translations. There are 8 variables: subject, pronoun, preposition, relative pronoun, conjunction, tense (verb), possessive, noun, in which this study analyzed and counted the frequencies of ambiguity, mistranslation, and those parts which have been

skipped over based on the transcriptions of the students' sight-translations. Secondly, SPSS was adopted to conduct mean score analysis and Independent Sample T-test.

IV. Results and discussions

In this part, this study is going to answer the two research questions with the statistical data and examples and conclude by elaborating possible implication for future English pedagogy and research areas.

Research question 1:

In control and experiment group, what are the frequencies of ambiguity?

Through SPSS mean score analysis and Independent Sample T-test, there are some differences between the control and experimental group. The ambiguity frequencies of subject and pronoun are the two highest variables in the control group, while preposition and noun variable are the two highest ones in the experiment group. In the mean score analysis, control group is labeled as 1 and the experimental as 2. It is found that the mean scores of subject and noun variable drop from 3.28 to 0.85 and from 5.28 to 3 respectively. In the Independent Sample T-test, the 2 tailed p values of subject variable in control and experimental group are 0.001 and 0.001 respectively, and the 2 tailed p value of noun variable are 0.021 and 0.025 respectively, which further indicates that the results are shown to be significant (< p=0.05).

| | | t-test for Equality of Means | | | | | | |
|---------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|-------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------------|---|-------|
| | | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | |
| | | | | | | | Lower | Upper |
| Subject | Equal variances assumed | 4.49 | 12.00 | 0.001 | 2.43 | 0.54 | 1.25 | 3.61 |
| | Equal variances not assumed | 4.49 | 11.50 | 0.001 | 2.43 | 0.54 | 1.24 | 3.61 |

| | | | | | | | | |
|------|-----------------------------|------|-------|--------------|------|------|-------|------|
| Noun | Equal variances assumed | 1.18 | 12.00 | 0.262 | 0.86 | 0.73 | -0.73 | 2.44 |
| | Equal variances not assumed | 2.64 | 9.67 | 0.025 | 2.29 | 0.87 | 0.35 | 4.22 |

Table 1: The results of Independent Sample T-test on subject and noun variables

| Mean score analysis | Group | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|---------------------|------------|---|---------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Subject | Control | 7 | 3.2857 | 1.11270 | 0.42056 |
| | Experiment | 7 | 0.8571 | 0.89974 | 0.34007 |
| Noun | Control | 7 | 5.2857 | 1.97605 | 0.74688 |
| | Experiment | 7 | 3.0000 | 1.15470 | 0.43644 |

Table 2: The results of SPSS mean score analysis on subject and noun variables

Research question 2:

What are the significant features in control and experiment group?

As shown in the Independent Sample T-test, the 2 tailed p values of subject and noun variables are indicated as significant ($p < 0.05$), which means the mean scores of ambiguity in control and experimental group are indeed different. If one looks at the mean score analysis, one can realize that the mean scores of different variables in the experimental group are less than the ones in control group. It obviously shows that adopting sight-translating skills in teaching English reading can, to some extent, lower the possibility of ambiguity or even mistake and improve the students' reading comprehension. Among all the variables, the decreases in the subject and noun variable show the greatest improvements (shown in Table 2).

By asking students in experiment group to use the sentence dividing skill of sight-translating in their readings, the students divide the meaning units based on different functions of the words, such as subjects, verbs, adverbs etc. It is found that

the students in experiment make fewer mistakes and are more certain about their reading comprehension than those in control group.

For example:

Original text:

The average cost of this absence per employee is £434.

Control group---participant A:

每一位員工平均需給，需每天浪費，浪費四百三十四，四百三十四英鎊。

Experimental group---participant B:

每一個雇員請假的平均成本，相當於英鎊四百三十四元。

The meaning translation for participant A's Chinese is that "Each employee averagely wastes £434 every day." From A's Chinese translation, it can be realized that the subject of this sentence is not perceptible for the participant who did not receive any sight-translating skills. The vagueness of subject in this sentence also leads to some misunderstandings in the following parts of the sentence. However, in the experiment group, participant B received 4 to 8 hours of sight-translating training. The sentence was divided into 4 meaning units and marked numbers by the participant B as following:

③ ② ①

The average cost / of this absence / per employee / is £434.

One of the tactics in sentence dividing is to make a meaning unit prior to the possessive "of" and translate the meaning units reversely. Through this tactic, participant B accurately perceived the subject of this sentence; therefore, the following sentences were correctly translated.

Another finding is that the participants in the experiment group made fewer mistakes in perceiving the omission of relative pronoun, that is to say, the present or past participle. The participants were also taught to make a meaning unit prior to a relative pronoun. However, if it is omitted in the text, a meaning unit shall be placed prior to a present participle or past participle.

For example:

Original text:

President Barak Obama: “*And we’ve got students tuning in from all across America, kindergarten through twelfth grade.*”

Control group---participant A:

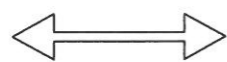
全國各地也從幼稚園到高三的眾多學生們，都出席在這個地方。

Experimental group---participant B:

我們有很多的學生，透過廣播，從美國的各地透過廣播加入我們，包括幼稚園的學生，到高中生十二年級，高三生。

The meaning translation for participant A’s Chinese is that “the students from all across America, kindergarten through twelfth grade, come to here for attending this event.” On the one hand, from participant A’s translation, it reveals that participant A did not understand “tuning in” is actually a present participle describing the noun, “students”, prior to it. On the other hand, participant B, by contrast, received the sight-interpreting training in which the participants were taught to make a meaning unit prior to relative pronouns or present and past participles.

Participant B divided the sentence into:



And / we’ve got students / tuning in / from all across America, / kindergarten through twelfth grade.

Through sentence dividing, participant B realized that “tuning in from all across America” is the noun phrase describing the “students” prior to it, and the relative pronoun is omitted.

Implication

The participants in the experiment group heavily rely on the English-to-Chinese dictionary when they were reading the texts despite their higher English proficiency. In this sense, learners are involved in a translation-assisted English learning process whatsoever. It is suggested that future study can look into questions such as “In which stage and under what circumstances are the English learners willing to use English-to-English dictionary?” and “How is the relationship between English-to-Chinese dictionary and the degree of uncertainty for non-English major students?” In addition, translation is proven to be efficient and helpful in English acquisition in the present study. Relevant topics such as the efficacies of using back translation in students’ English writing practice and the adoption of shadowing in students’ pronunciation practice can be further addressed. At last, translation is actually a cognitive process. If English educators can use translating skills probably in the teaching, it can map out the learners’ learning problems and promote teaching efficiency and efficacy.

Appendix:

Sight-translating texts:

1. The President: Hello everyone—how’s everybody doing today? I’m here with students at Wakefield High School in Arlington, Virginia. And we’ve got students tuning in from all across America, kindergarten through twelfth grade. I’m glad

you all could join us today. I know that for many of you, today is the first day of school. And for those of you in kindergarten, or starting middle or high school, it's your first day in a new school, so it's understandable if you're a little nervous. I imagine there are some seniors out there who are feeling pretty good right now, with just one more year to go. And no matter what grade you're in, some of you are probably wishing it were still summer, and you could've stayed in bed just a little longer this morning. (Sep. 8, 2009, Wakefield High School, Arlington, Virginia)

2. According to a recent survey, British employees had an average of 7.8 days off work for illness last year. This is total of 192 million days or 3.4 per cent of total working time. The average cost of this absence per employee is £434. For the whole workforce, this represents a total of £ 10.7 billion for British business. (Clarke, 2010:102)

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