

IMPROVING THAI STUDENTS' ERRORS IN ENGLISH NEWS HEADLINE TRANSLATION THROUGH NOTICING AND CALL

Amporn Sa-ngiamwibool
Krirk University, Bangkok, Thailand
amporn_kai@yahoo.com

Abstract

Insufficient knowledge of English is one of the major problems that Thai students face in translating from Thai into English and the kinds of knowledge individual students lack are different. To deal with this, instructors need tools that can solve the problems each student is facing. Computer-assisted language learning (CALL), which encourages independent learning, was introduced as a tool to facilitate individual students' English language learning of all types, including translation. The main purpose of this study was, therefore, to investigate how CALL could improve the Thai students' translation skill. News headlines convey the gist of the news and have distinctive syntactic properties, newspaper headlines were therefore chosen for this study. The findings reveal that, first; the types of errors that Thai students made in translation were wrong use/translation, omission, and redundant use. In terms of linguistics, they made grammatical, discourse, and lexical errors. Second, noticing in cooperation with CALL can reduce those errors significantly. Third, the students showed their highly positive attitude toward using CALL to improve their translation skills. Fourth, the learner-centered, independent learning method was effective for solving individual students' problems in translation. Finally, the use of CALL not only enhances the students' translation skill but also encourages independent language learning effectively.

Key words: CALL, independent learning, translation skill

Introduction

Insufficient knowledge of English is one of the major problems that Thai students face in translating from Thai into English. However, not all individual students face the same problems. To deal with this effectively, instructors need tools, which can solve the problems each individual student is facing. Computer-assisted language learning (CALL), which encourages independent learning, was introduced as a tool to facilitate individual students' English language learning of all types, including translation.

Translating newspapers is a main focus in this study. Newspapers are one of the major media for the public and are the major source of information that the public read daily in order to update and keep up with what is going on in this world. To be practical, translating newspaper headlines is the focus in this study at least for these reasons. First, news headlines convey the gist of the news. It is necessary to understand the headlines in order to understand the news. Next, it is difficult for average students to understand news headlines since the news headlines contain distinctive syntactic properties that make them a grammatical oddity. Also, in order to attract the newsreaders' attention, the news headlines are always presented in meaningful and attractive ways so the presentation of news headline is unique and different from other texts the students read in a classroom. Lastly, the contents presented in newspapers are drawn from all areas of life and from all parts of world so newspapers are effective tools for enhancing independent and lifelong language learning.

Errors are very common not only to all ESL or EFL learners but also to native speakers of any languages. Positively and significantly, errors indicate learning. They indicate what the learners have learned/acquired, what skills they have practiced/gotten, how much they have improved/progressed, what remains for them to learn, and how far they are from the goal of learning. Also, making errors is a device the learners use in order to learn. From the errors, the instructors know what problems the learners face in learning, what is wrong with the strategies the learners use in order to learn, and what the instructors will do to solve the learners' problems. Error analysis (EA) is, therefore, helpful for facilitating foreign language learning.

When the instructors know what problems the individual learners face in learning, they need to specifically draw the learners' attention to their errors. To do so, researchers in SLA suggest noticing (the condition which draws the learners' attention specifically to the target language) as an effective tool for learning a foreign language. With noticing, the learners are conscious or aware of their errors. The consciousness of errors leads to correction, which equals to understanding or learning. Noticing or consciously perceiving the information when performing tasks is, therefore, a basis of learning as well as independence learning. The review of prior studies (e.g. Van Patten, 1990, 1994, 1996; Schmidt, 1990; Leow, 1997; Alanen, 1995; Ellis, 1994; Jourdenais, 1998) reveals that noticing facilitates language learning effectively.

To verify whether this theoretical model in a Thai context, several studies were conducted to examine the effects of C-R on Thai university students' noticing on various aspects: analytical reading (Sangiamwibool, 2007a), structure and written expressions (Sangiamwibool, 2007b), the language of mass media (Sangiamwibool,

2008a), listening achievement (Sa-ngiamwibool, 2008b), reading for international communication and professions (Sa-ngiamwibool, 2009a), and English for real-life communication (Sa-ngiamwibool, 2009b).

Drawing upon these previous research studies, this present study with a wider and more practical scope focusing on how noticing in cooperation with CALL facilitated the translation of news headline, with the following objectives: (1) Identify errors that students make in translating news headlines from Thai into English, (2) Study how noticing in cooperation with CALL can improve the errors that individual students made in translating news headlines, (3) Explore the students' attitudes toward CALL in improving their translation skill, (4) Explore how a learner-centered and independent learning method can solve individual students' problems in translating from one language to another language, (5) Enhance translation skills and independent language learning in EFL contexts through CALL.

Methods

This study used a pretest-posttest experimental design with one experiment group only to collect data on 8 weeks from March to May, 2009. The subjects were 42 first-year university students majoring in English for Business Communication and enrolling the course BE.1104 Business English Translation. The instruments were drawn the contents of *English Discoveries Program* used as computer-assisted program for teaching General English and as self-access learning center (SALC) for all students. The contents of the instruments provided the knowledge and practice of the target errors that the subjects made, which were noun, verb, preposition, tense, participle, voice, sentence, and vocabulary. Only abbreviation acronyms that the researcher needed to construct the materials since there were no contents of abbreviation acronyms in the program. As the program was designed for self-access learning, it provided a variety of means to specifically draw the learners to the target language such as pictures, sounds, highlights, and colors. With these means, the subjects were able to notice and consciously focus on their errors assigned to work on. Each subject was assigned the tasks suitable for their problems at this self-access learning center under the researcher's supervision. The data collection lasted 10 hours a week and altogether 80 hours.

Since this study used a pretest-posttest experimental design, the data collection followed these procedures. First, all subjects were given a pretest which consisted of 30 news headlines on Business and were assigned to translate the headlines from Thai into English. Below were samples of the news headlines translated from Thai into English for the pretest.

QH optimistic
 B230m for SMEs
 MINT delays issue
 KSL affirmed at A-
 Sugar exports rising
 BBL estimate cut

Then, the researcher analyzed errors the subjects made in order to identify what problems the subjects faced in translating those headlines. The errors fell into three main groups: grammar, discourse, and lexicon.

In details, here were samples of those errors: tense, participle, voice, sentence, and abbreviation acronyms. (All errors the subjects made were presented as the result of research question 1.) Next, the researcher assigned each subject the tasks suitable for their problems at the self-access learning center under the researcher's supervision. The tasks provided the knowledge, which helped them notice, focus on, and correct their errors. After the tasks, they were given a posttest, which consisted of 30 news headlines paralleled with the pretest. (The result of the identification was presented in the result of research question 2.) Below were samples of the news headlines translated from Thai into English for the posttest.

AOT optimistic
 Funding for PTTAR
 Airport Link delayed
 Esso bills rated F1
 Triple T holding
 Steel stocks built

Also, during the tasks at SALC, the subjects were assigned a journal log. Then, all subjects were given a questionnaire to elicit their attitudes toward CALL with this question.

How much did CALL improve your translation skills?

___ Very much ___ Much ___ A little ___ Very little ___ Not at all

Finally, after the completion of the questionnaire, the subjects had an interview with the researcher. The interview asked them to give reasons in what ways CALL improved their translation skills.

For reliability and validity check, the instruments constructed based on the purposes of research study were sent to five judges for content validity check. The contents were then adjusted to their advice. Then, these instruments were tried out with thirty students for construct validity check. Finally, the instruments were tested by Alpha Cronbach

Coefficient for reliability check. The result was 0.860, which indicated a high reliability.

For scoring procedure, counts of pretest and posttest scores on proficiency were compared. 1 point was given every time if the subjects gave the correct answer and 0 if they did not.

For data analysis, this was a triangulation study. The data were then analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. For statistical analysis, in order to answer research question 2, a t-test was performed on the data to compare the differences between the pretest and posttest scores. Percentages were used for the questionnaire. Interviews and journal log were used for qualitative data analysis.

Findings

Research question 1: What errors do students make in translating news headlines from Thai into English?

Based on the results of the pretest, the researcher qualitatively analyzed the errors the subjects made in translating news headlines from Thai into English given to the subjects in the pretest and drew out these major points. The translation errors the subjects made could be divided three main groups: wrong use/translation, omission, and redundant use. The types of linguistic errors that the subjects made consisted of grammar, discourse, and lexicon. In details, these errors consisted of the use of nouns, verbs, prepositions, tenses, participle, voice, sentences, vocabulary, and abbreviations acronyms.

After attending SALC, individual subjects were able to improve their errors successfully as shown in research question 2.

Research question 2: Can noticing in cooperation with CALL improve the errors that individual students made in translating news headlines? The performance assessment of pretest and posttest administered to the subjects before and after the experiment was shown in the following table.

Table 1 Overall Decrease in Error in Translation

	Pretests	Posttests
X	50.5714	22.7619
(SD)	(6.39414)	(2.40740)

Table 1 showed that changes over time from pretest to posttest were analyzed quantitatively with t-test. The posttest scores were significantly lower than the pretest scores, $t(41) = 27.8095$, $p < .05$. This indicated noticing in cooperation with CALL had strong effects on

reducing the subjects' errors. The errors the students made in translating news headlines from Thai into English decreased significantly.

Research question 3: What are the students' attitudes toward CALL in improving their translation skills? The results were shown in the following table.

Table 2 Percentages (and raw scores) of students' attitudes toward CALL

Very much	Much	A little	Very little	Not at all
35 (15)	47 (20)	16 (6)	2 (1)	0.00 (0)

Table 2 showed the responses as follows: very much (35%; $n = 15$), much (47%; $n = 20$), a little (16%; $n = 6$), and very little (2%; $n = 1$) respectively. No subjects showed negative response to CALL. This indicated that the majority (82%) of the subjects had positive attitudes towards CALL.

Research question 4: Can a learner-centered and independent learning method through CALL solve individual students' problems in translating from one language to another language? The students were assigned to respond to the questions through writing, the researcher qualitatively analyzed the responses and drew out the main points. The following was a sample.

"I found that CALL helped me a lot. I learn what I lack. I am more confident in speaking and writing. I am able to translate more fluently than I was. I make fewer mistakes in grammar than I did. I am happier with the translation class"

Research question 5: Can CALL enhance translation skills and independent language learning in EFL contexts effectively? The students were assigned to write their responses in Thai. Then, the researcher qualitatively analyzed the responses and drew out the main points. The following was a sample translated into English.

"CALL allowed me to work more independently and helped me focus more on my errors on my own since the samples in CALL are not boring. I come to SALC more often than I did. I am now less dependent on my instructors. I study and practice on my own with CALL and, of course, without my instructors."

The results revealed five major findings based on the research questions of the study. First, the subjects made the grammatical,

discourse, and lexical errors in translating news headlines from Thai into English. Second, noticing in cooperation with CALL can reduce the errors that the students made in translating news headlines significantly. Third, the students showed their positive attitude toward using CALL to improve their translation skill. Fourth, CALL based on a learner-centered and independent learning method could solve individual students' problems in translating from one language to another language. Finally, CALL was able to enhance translation skills and independent language learning in EFL contexts effectively.

Discussion

The findings of this study were consistent with those of the prior study (VanPatten, 1990, 1994,1996; Schmidt, 1990; Leow, 1997; Alanen, 1995; Ellis, 1994; Jourdenais, 1998) that noticing facilitates language learning (or translation in this study) effectively. As indicated in this study, the greater the level of noticing, the greater the chances of successful learning of a target language.

Also, the findings lent support to those of the prior study that verified the effectiveness of noticing in a Thai context (Sa-ngiamwibool, 2007a, 2007b, 2008a, 2008b, 2009a, 2009b). The findings of this study were consistent with the prior study that noticing was able to facilitate Thai university students' learning on analytical reading (Sa-ngiamwibool, 2007a), structure and written expressions (Sa-ngiamwibool, 2007b), the language of mass media (Sa-ngiamwibool, 2008a) successfully. Also, the findings of this study were consistent with the prior study in a Thai context that noticing in cooperation with CALL was able to facilitate Thai university students' learning on listening achievement (Sa-ngiamwibool, 2008b), reading for international communication and professions (Sa-ngiamwibool, 2009a), and English for real-life communication (Sa-ngiamwibool, 2009b).

Implications

To improve translation skills in an EFL classroom, instructors need to identify the linguistic errors their students made in order to know what problems their students are facing and find solutions to the problems. Since individual students face different problems, the instructors need tools for individual students. CALL can be very helpful for providing the knowledge of English which the individual students lack. With CALL, the individual students are given opportunity to learn more independently which can lead to acquisition finally. To make individual students conscious of their errors, the instructors need to specifically draw the students' attention to the knowledge of English, which can help them improve their errors. Therefore, the material should

allow the students opportunity to notice or consciously focus on the knowledge of English concerned with the errors they made. With this process, the individual students will be able to improve translation from one language to another language successfully.

Closing

This study limits to the translation from Thai into English, the linguistic features and syntactic properties of newspaper news headlines, the profiles of students, and the situational contexts. The future inquiry should replicate the present study with: (1) different subjects, (2) different contents, (3) different language targets with other skills, and (4) different situational contexts in order to verify whether or not noticing generates similar findings.

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