

Effects of Translation on Reading Practice of English Program Students

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Abstract

The purposes of this classroom research were 1) to study the effects of translation English reading passages to Thai on reading ability of Buriram Rajabhat University English program students, and 2) to find out the Index of Effectiveness of studying English reading through translation method. The samples of this study were 43 freshmen English program students. They were trained basic reading, Introduction to Reading, by employing English to Thai translation to construct the meanings of reading passages. The intervention was 14 weeks, 3 hours each, and the samples' reading ability was evaluated by comparing the students' pretest and posttest scores. The findings were 1) the posttest scores of the samples were significantly different from the pretest scores at .05 level, and 2) the Effectiveness Index of the students' progress was 0.32, or 32 %.

Keywords: Translation, Reading Ability, Effectiveness Index

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1. Introduction

Buriram Rajabhat University (BRU) is located in Buriram Province which is in the lower northeastern part of Thailand. It is one of thirty six universities across the country which was named by King Rama XI. In 2017, BRU was ranked no. 2 of Rajabhat Universities in Thailand (“Ranking web of universities,” 2017) and no. 159 of South East Asia in 2020 (“Ranking web of universities,” 2020). At the beginning, these Rajabhat Universities were teachers’ colleges whose responsibility was producing teachers for all schools in Thailand.

At the present time Rajabhat Universities are universities for their local people. They equip knowledge of different disciplines, 52 programs, under 6 faculties, Education, Humanities & Social Sciences, Agriculture, Sciences, Management, and Nurse to their people (Buriram Rajabhat University, 2018). There are 3 English programs under the 2 faculties: English, and Business English of Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, and English Education of Faculty of Education. English program is for students who intend to be expert in English, Business English program is for students who would like to apply English in their business, and English Education is for students who would like to be teachers of English.

The researcher has been a professor of English under the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences for 25 years. He found that most of English program students are not good at English. The grades of the students in the reading classes taught by the researcher are C and lower (Piyanukool’s grade report, 2015-2019). The students know not much vocabulary, cannot find topics, main ideas, and cannot answer reading comprehension questions. The researcher has tried many strategies and teaching methods to help the students improve their reading but the results are not satisfied. However, the researcher has noticed that most students write the meanings of vocabulary in their book and translate the reading passages into Thai. Therefore, the researcher would like to apply translation in reading practice.

There were some researchers who applied translation in teaching English or other foreign languages and found satisfied results. Leonardi (2011), for example, revealed the advantages of translation from the foreign language or second language to the students’ first language. This researcher posited that translation served as the bridge between the cultures of the learners’ first language (L1) and the second language (L2). It can enhance the students’ speaking ability, increase the students’ knowledge of vocabulary, know how the language works, strengthen their L2, and improve their comprehension. In addition, the three scholars, Lee, Schallert, and Kim (2015) applied two strategies, translation and extensive reading, to EFL adolescent students to see the effects on their grammar and attitude. They found that translation had good impact on all level learners for the attitudes. However, it had more positive effects for students who are in the moderate level for learning grammar. Finally, Quiñones-Guerra (2016) pointed out that translation reading was as beneficial as extensive reading for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students and it enhanced the students’ language learning. With these rationales and the importance of the stated problems, the researcher would like to implement translation in teaching reading for English program students of Buriram Rajabhat University.

2. Objectives

1. To find the effects of translation on reading ability of English program students.
2. To investigate the index of effectiveness (EI) of learning reading by employing translation.

3. Literature Review

Thai students have learned to read English by consulting English-Thai dictionary for a long time. When they find new words, they will look for the meanings in Thai language in their dictionary. Later, the teachers suggest them English-English dictionary since they believe that the latter dictionary provide correct meanings. However, the students found they have to translate the English meanings to Thai meanings again. They pointed out that know the meanings in their language is clearer.

Some researchers and scholars also see the advantages of translation. Odlin (1989) and James (1998), for examples, posited that non-native students think in their first language (L1) when they learn the second language (L2) and when they communicate in the second language. Translation effectively helped them communicate their intended message to each other.

Carreres (2006) stated that teachers can apply translation in communication teaching such as elaborating about rules of the language and giving examples. Even in teaching advanced level students, translating English to their first language is beneficial.

Grace (2002) investigated the effects of first language translations on males and females French students who are studying a computer class. The researcher found that all learners in the translation group demonstrated significantly greater short term and long term retention than those without translations.

Levine (2003) did the study to see the correlation between employing translation in teaching the second language and students' anxiety and motivation. The researcher found that the students' anxiety was decreased when the teacher applied their first language accompanied with the second language in teaching.

Owen (2003) studied the communication of advanced level students and found that they studied the second language and translated into their first language and some of them applied translation in their communication.

Eight year later, Leonardi (2011) revealed the advantages of translation from the foreign language or second language to the students' first language. He posited that translation served as the bridge between the cultures of L1 and L2. It can enhance the students' speaking ability, increase the students' word bank, know how the language works, strengthen their L2, and improve the students' comprehension.

There were 2 researchers, Erdemir and Norton, studied the effects of translation in 2013. Erdemir (2013) investigated the students concerning advantages of translation from English to Persian language in learning the second language. The students replied that translation had more advantages than disadvantages when they learned the languages. They were encouraged to learn and felt good to see and hear their mother tongued language in learning the second language. Norton (2013) also pointed out that translation the L2 to L1 helps the learners be aware of their identity or their language that relates to the second language and others in the global. They were proud of their own language. They can tell about their own culture and country to other people by using the international language and they can learn the other culture through the L2.

Later in the year 2015, Lee, Schallert, and Kim (2015) applied two strategies, extensive reading and translation, to EFL adolescent students to see the effects on grammar and attitude. They found that translation had good impact on all level learners for attitudes. However, it had more positive effects for students who are in the moderate level for learning grammar.

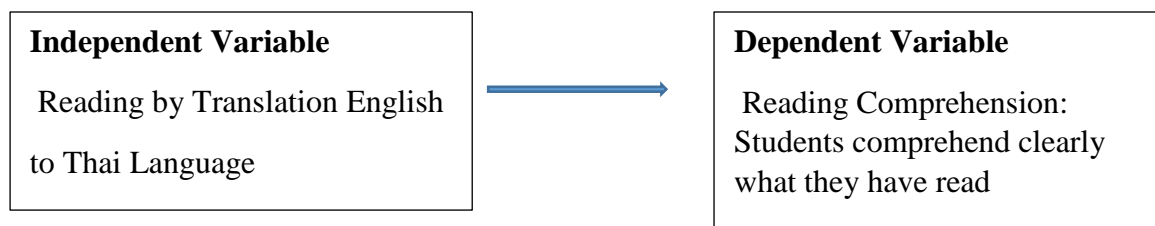
Quiñones-Guerra (2016) pointed out that translation reading was as beneficial as extensive reading for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students and it enhanced the

students' language learning. This findings may be happened to Thai students too because Thais study English as a foreign language.

Finally, Navidinia, Akar, & Hendevalan (2019) studied the advantages and disadvantages of translation for Iranian students. They found that the students like translation and see the advantages of translation from English to Iranian language.

4. Conceptual Framework

This study is based on the following conceptual framework.



5. Research Methodology

1. Research Design

The researcher employed One-Group Pretest-Posttest design for this study.

2. Samples

Forty three freshmen majoring in English of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences were the participants. The students were selected by Simple Random Sampling Method and the researcher taught them reading by himself.

3. Instrument

The researcher had 3 research instruments: 1) lesson plan, 2) reading materials, and 3) pretest and posttest. There was a long- range lesson plan which be approved by the committees of the English program. The reading materials included reading books and reading passages which had also been approved by the program committees. Finally, the pre- and posttest, the researcher made an 80-5- multiple choice questions. Then took the test to be evaluated by the 3 experts and they all agreed that the test was qualified. The researcher took 40 questions for 40 points to be used.

4. Data Collection

The samples were oriented towards doing this study first. Then the researcher pretested their reading ability by the pretest. After that, the intervention had been doing by the researcher set the reading activities followed the lesson plan. The teacher taught them how to translate effectively and had read the passages and translated into Thai. Other reading strategies had been employed like skimming, scanning, or predicting. Finally, the students were assessed their reading ability by the posttest.

5. Data Analysis

The students' pre and posttest scores were analyzed through percentages, means, and standard deviation. For the Index of Effectiveness, the data was analyzed by percentage.

6. Results of the Research Paper

The result revealing the effects of translation on the students' reading ability was shown on the 1st Table 1.

Table 1
Reading Scores of the Samples from the Pretest and Posttest

Number	Pretest(40) X	Posttest(40) X
1	18	31
2	5	15
3	9	23
4	12	18
5	26	33
6	18	22
7	26	30
8	26	32
9	6	16
10	25	32
11	15	29
12	18	25
13	11	25
14	11	24
15	24	25
16	17	15
17	20	26
18	17	24
19	18	30
20	12	22
21	7	12
22	16	27
23	8	15
24	13	24
25	16	20
26	12	21
27	29	35
28	10	15
29	9	20
30	16	25
31	15	17
32	23	23
33	10	19
34	13	15
35	21	25
36	15	24
37	15	19
38	17	30
39	18	25
40	12	23
41	14	14
42	8	22
43	12	27
Total	663	1004
\bar{X}	16.58	23.35
S.D.	5.83	4.75

From the Table 1, the finding showed that the students' posttest mean score was 23.35, and the pretest mean score was 16.58. The posttest score was higher than the pretest score. After this, the researcher had to test these scores with *t*-test dependent to see that whether the scores were statistically significant or not. The hypothesis of this comparison was the posttest score was different (higher) than the pretest score. The comparison was done through Table 2.

Table 2

The Comparison of the Pretest and Posttest Score

Number	Pretest (40) X	Posttest (40) X	Differences (D)	D ²
1	18	31	13	169
2	5	15	10	100
3	9	23	14	196
4	12	18	6	36
5	26	33	7	49
6	18	22	4	16
7	26	30	4	16
8	26	32	6	36
9	6	16	10	100
10	25	32	7	49
11	15	29	14	196
12	18	25	7	49
13	11	25	14	196
14	11	24	13	169
15	24	25	1	1
16	17	15	2	4
17	20	26	6	36
18	17	24	7	49
19	18	30	12	144
20	12	22	10	100
21	7	12	5	25
22	16	27	11	121
23	8	15	7	49
24	13	24	11	121
25	16	20	4	16
26	12	21	9	81
27	29	35	6	36
28	10	15	5	25
29	9	20	11	121
30	16	25	9	81
31	15	17	2	4
32	23	23	0	0
33	10	19	9	81
34	13	15	2	4
35	21	25	4	16
36	15	24	9	81
37	15	19	4	16
38	17	30	13	169
39	18	25	7	49
40	12	23	11	121
41	14	14	0	0
42	8	22	14	196
43	12	27	15	225
Total	663	1004	335	3349
\bar{X}	16.58	23.35		
S.D.	5.83	4.75		

From Table 2, the sum of differences between the pretest and posttest scores was 335, and the sum square of the differences was 3349. The result of t -test dependent was 12.18. This t calculation was higher than the t of the t -Table. Therefore, the posttest score of the students was significantly different at .05 level.

To find the answer of the second objective, the researcher took the data of Table 1 and 2 to analyze the Index of Effectiveness. The finding was 0.32. That means the students had the progress in studying reading by implementing the translation method at 32 percent.

7. Conclusion and Discussion

From the findings, it can be concluded that carrying out translation method for teaching reading is effective. It made the students' reading posttest scores statistically higher than the pretest scores. This finding coincided with other studies like Navidinia, Akar, & Hendevalan (2019) who studied the advantages and disadvantages of translation for Iranian students. They found that the students like translation and see the advantages of translation from English to Iranian language. Quñones-Guerra (2016) pointed out that translation reading was as beneficial as extensive reading for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students and it enhanced the students' language learning. These Thai samples are studying English as a foreign language too. Moreover, the samples stated that translating English to Thai made them more understand the read passages. They felt good about their language and their identity. This was true with the findings of Erdemir (2013) and Norton (2013). Erdemir (2013) investigated the students concerning advantages of translation from English to Persian language in learning the second language. The students replied that translation had more advantages than disadvantages when they learned the languages. They were encouraged to learn and felt good to see and hear their mother tongued language in learning the second language. Norton (2013) also pointed out that translation the L2 to L1 helps the learners be aware of their identity or their language that relates to the second language and others in the global. They were proud of their own language. They can tell about their own culture and country to other people by using the international language and they can learn the other culture through the L2. Finally, this group of students are in moderate level and below average level of learning grammar, however, they found that translation helped them in reading too. This finding is in accordance with the study of Lee, Schallert, and Kim (2015) who applied two strategies, extensive reading and translation, to EFL adolescent students to see the effects on grammar and attitude. They found that translation had good impact on all level learners for attitudes. However, it had more positive effects for students who are in the moderate level for learning grammar.

When taking a look at the second finding, the Index of Effectiveness, the students had only 32 % of learning progress. This may be because their English ability was at average and below (Piyanukool, 2015-2019). They did not have enough English words. Whenever they find the new words, they will consult the dictionary. Nation (2001) posited that learners who know adequate amount of vocabulary can read effectively.

8. Suggestions

The findings of this study suggested the reading teachers or EFL teachers on the following 2 topics.

1. Implications

In teaching, teachers should employ both English and Thai language appropriately, teach them how to translate effectively, effective reading strategies, using dictionary, and how to guess the meanings of vocabulary

2. Further Studies

The teachers should do the experimental research by comparing the reading emphasizing translation and without focusing translation. The qualitative research design like interview should be applied.

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