L1 OVERSUSE AND ITS EFFECTS ON L2 LEARNING: FROM READING WITH TRANSLATION FROM L1 TO WRITING IN L2 ENGLISH STUDENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MASCARA (ALGERIA) AS A CASE STUDY

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Abstract

The present research tries to investigate whether there is any indicative relationship between writing and reading, in English, with translating from L1 to L2. The teaching of foreign languages, especially English, is greatly based on the mother tongue as primary vehicle of instruction feature both in teacher-formation at pedagogical meetings as well as in the Algerian classrooms. This is evidenced by the information obtained though interview to teachers, observation of English students during class sessions and the textbooks prepared by some national authors. This research tries also to examine the effects of the excessive use of Arabic on writing and/or the reading skills of the English Language learners at the University of Mascara (Algeria). To this end, a test including both reading and writing was administered to first year and second year students. The descriptive and inferential statistics confirmed that there is a significant relationship between writing and reading in English since students make constatly reference to their mother tongue with L1 translation. This is maily due to their previous educational experiences which have modeled their learning style. Most learners tend to go toward facility. This practice not only results in some psycholinguistic constraints affecting the accurate and fluent language production, but also originates time consumming on the part of the learners and/or the teachers. The study concludes that L1 role in L2 teaching dilemma in foreign language pedagogy is still far from having been resolved, one thing is clear: excessive translation from and to the native language hampers greatly the outcomes of the instructional process – reading and writing. However, it was observed that writing, rather than reading makes a stronger contribution to L1-L2 translation of the students.

Keywords: Reading, Writing, Translation, Mother tongue, Foreign language, accuracy, fluency.

1 INTRODUCTION

Shifting from L1 to L2 begins with a source language text that has to be read and comprehended, which is an essential and basic requirement for carrying out successful reading in L1 and writing in L2. Newmark (1988) states that translators begin the job by reading the original for two purposes: to understand and to analyze it. Accordingly the first step in translation is comprehension of the source language text Newmark (1988). Moreover, as Shreve et al (1993, P. 9) describe “...some translation scholars have made the implicit assumption that reading is a prerequisite for translation because it is the primary mechanism for gaining access to the meaning of a text”. Pouya (2012, P. 6497) expresses that “translation as a process is a conscious activity through which a massage is reconstructed, represented, recorded, and recreated in the target codes according to the original massage in the original text.” In support of this, Inaba (2009) states that “Translation therefore takes the form of rewriting that is carried out within the framework of the target language, culture and ideology in the service of a control factor wielded by the patron or the receiving system. In this respect, the translator is arewriter of the original text.” According to these statements, after comprehending the writer’s meaning the next step is to transfer and restate the author’s meaning in the target language.

Méndez and Vallejo (2003), on the other hand, believe that reading is important for writing in L2. For them, the former helps the translator to express the ideas of the source language and the latter to comprehend the whole message.

Furthermore, Salas (2000) states that reading and comprehension inability in the L1 are the first problem of translation process. According to these ideas the researcher assumes that those students who read the L1 and do not comprehend the main contents of that text cannot write adequately in L2. “In translation classrooms, most of students come across some other errors which are the effect of
their poor writing abilities” Akbari Pakdaman (2007, P. 5). Based on all these discussions the researcher wants to examine the relationship between the reading comprehension ability, writing ability, and translation quality of translation students in order to understand whether those students who have high abilities in English writing and reading comprehension can provide a high quality of Arabic into English or not.

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Participants

One hundred students majoring in English Language answered the tests and made the real subjects of the study. They were all licence students in the Department of English, Mascara University. Moreover, Three students, judged by the instructors as qualified as the researchers, functioned as the raters of the study. They participated in rater training sessions to learn how to evaluate the participants’ writing and translation tests according to Jacob's et al (1988) model and Khanmohammad and Osanloo’s (2009) rubric, respectively.

2.2 Instruments

Three kinds of tests were manipulated: a Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) chosen from “TOEFL Practice Online (TPO)” book (2013) which was administered, after piloting to assure homogeneity of the subjects. The speaking and listening parts were omitted due to limitations in the administration. Two Arabic passages and two English texts were administered to the students to translate into English and Arabic, respectively. English texts were chosen from Charles Dickens book (2005) “A Tale of Two Cities” and Arabic texts from Ramsey Wood book (2008) “Kalila and Dimna”.

2.3 Procedure

To pilot the TOEFL test, it was, first, administered to 20 students chosen randomly. It took them about 120 minutes to answer. The reading and writing parts were scored separately. The scores of reading part were considered as an evaluation for the subjects’ reading comprehension. Moreover, to score the writing part, two raters were assigned to score them according to Jacob’s et al. (1981) descriptor and the mean of the raters’ scores were regarded as an evaluation for the students’ writing abilities. After making sure of the tests reliabilities, they were administered to the real participants of the study. The translation tests were computed. The translation tests were, then, administered to 100 students. Descriptive and inferential statistics were run to reject or verify the hypotheses of this study

2.4 Results

Piloting the TOEFL test

Descriptive statistics of the scores of Proficiency indicated the total mean of 86 for the proficiency total test and 18.91 for the reading part and 85.56 for the writing section. In order to calculate the reliability of reading scores KR-21 formula was used and it equaled 0.80.

Translation tests were, also, piloted. They were rated by three scorers. Score of each student was decided to be the mean of the three scores. Totally, the mean of the A-P test turned out to be 76.72 and that of A-E to be 73.56. To make sure about the reliability of the scores, correlation among three ratings and between any two ratings were calculated.

To validate the tests, their reliabilities were, also, measured using Cronbach’s Alpha which turned to be 0.97 and 0.96, respectively. Since these values are close to +1 it can be concluded that there are positive relationships among the scores given by 3 raters in above Tests.

3 MAIN PHASE OF THE STUDY

3.1 Proficiency Test

For the purpose of this study combination of reading and writing tests were regarded as an indication of the proficiency of students. As mentioned before, the proficiency test was administered among 100 participants. The descriptive statistics of this test appears below.
The parametric correlation should be run on the participants' scores obtained from the proficiency test. As an assumption of parametric correlation, test of normality was run. For the sake of proficiency test the distribution of data was not normal, i.e. skewness did not fall within the range of +1.96 and -1.96 for this distribution. Thus, Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was run.

3.2 Reading Test
As described before, the reading part of the proficiency test was scored separate from writing. The scores of reading part were considered as an evaluation for subjects' reading comprehension. The descriptive statistics of the test is shown as follows:

The parametric correlation had to be run on the participants' scores obtained from reading test. Tests of normality was run to meet the assumption of the correlation. Since the distribution of reading scores came out not to be normal, Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was run.

3.3 Writing Test
Similar to the RT, writing part of proficiency test was also scored separately and the scores were considered as an evaluation for participants' writing abilities. The descriptive statistics of the Writing Test (WT) appears in the parametric correlation had to be run on the participants' scores obtained from the writing test. Applying test of normality, the distribution came out not to be normal, i.e. skewness did not fall within the range of +1.96 and -1.96 for this distribution. As substitute Kolmogorov-Smirnov was run.

The reliability of scores was, also, calculated using Cronbach's Alpha. Since this value (0.96) was close to +1, it can be concluded that there was constancy among the scores given by three raters.

3.4 Arabic-English Translation Test
Arabic-English test included two English paragraphs administered to 100 English students. Students were allowed to use Dictionaries while translating. Then, the researcher and two other raters scored them based on Khanmohamad and Osanloo’s (2009) rubric.

The parametric correlation had to be run on the participants’ scores obtained from Arabic-English translation test. Normality assumption was not met, i.e. the distribution of data for E- P translation test came out not to be normal and skewness did not fall within the range of +1.96 and -1.96. Therefore, Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was run.

3.5 English-Arabic Translation Test
English-Arabic translation test, including two paragraphs, was also administered to the subjects of study. It took them 55 minutes to translate it into Arabic. Three raters scored the tests based on Khanmohammad and Osanloo’s (2009) rubric.

The parametric correlation had to be run on the participants’ scores obtained from three raters’ corrections. Since the distribution of data for the English-Arabic translation test came out not to be normal, i.e., skewness did not fall within the range of +1.96 and -1.96 (Table 16), test of normality had to be run. Since the first assumption for this correlation was rejected, Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was run.

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).**

The values of correlation (0.000) among three raters' scores were significant at 0.01 level. The reliability value of the scores calculated by Cronbach's Alpha was 0.99 which is close to +1, hence a high rate of reliability for the scoring.

4 INFERENTIAL STATISTICS
To test the hypotheses of the study the correlation estimation of the variables was necessary. Since the assumptions of parametric correlations were rejected and the scores of all tests were not normally distributed, non-parametric equivalent Spearman-Brown correlation was run.
Null Hypothesis 1:

There is no significant relationship between reading comprehension and translation from English-Arabic.

In order to test the first hypothesis, Spearman correlation was run (r= 0.90). Given that the calculated correlation was significant, i.e. the sig value (0.00) is lower than the error level 0.01, it can be concluded that with 95% of confidence, H0 is rejected. In other words, there is a significant relationship between reading comprehension and translating from English-Arabic.

Null Hypothesis 2

There is no significant relationship between reading comprehension and translating from English-Arabic.

As depicted in the correlation between RC and English-Arabic translation turned out to be positive and significant (r= 0.30, p= 0.000<0.01). Therefore, the second null hypothesis is also rejected. Although this correlation is significant, since the r value (0.30) is not in high amount the relationship is interpreted as a weak one.

Null Hypothesis 3

There is no significant relationship between writing in English and translating from English-Arabic.

The correlation coefficient between writing and translating from English to Arabic was 0.24, and the sig value was 0.001<0.01. Based on the significance level in the table (0.01), this relationship is interpreted as significant; hence, null hypothesis can be rejected. On the other hand, since the r value is very low, this relationship is interpreted as a weak correlation.

Null Hypothesis 4

There is no significant relationship between writing in English and translating from Arabic to English.

The correlation coefficient between writing in English and translating from English-Arabic came to be high (0.91). Since the sig value 0.000 is less than the level of 0.01, the correlation is significant. Thus, it was possible to reject the fourth null hypothesis.

Null Hypothesis 5

High scores of writing and reading comprehension of translation students do not significantly predict their high scores in the E-A translations.

By virtue of the Beta sig values (B= 0.90, P= 0.000<0.05) for reading comprehension which was less than 0.05, it is concluded that the independent variable contributed significantly. Therefore, reading comprehension significantly predicts E-A translation, dependent variable, while writing does not (B= 0.41, P= 0.2>0.05).

Null Hypothesis 6

significantly predict their A-E translation scores (reading: B= 0.72, t= 2.32, P= 0.02<0.05). Hence, the null hypothesis of the study was rejected. In other words, high scores of writing and reading comprehension predict their high scores of A-E translation.

5 CONCLUSION

This study examined the relationship among four sets of scores on a writing, reading comprehension, E-A translation, and A-E translation production tests. Based on the results of the study there was a significant and strong relationship between reading in Arabic and translating from Arabic to English, which is supported by the results of Mehrparvar (2002), Molai (2007), and Rahemi et al.’s. (2013) studies.

Regarding the scores obtained from reading comprehension and A-E translation, it is obvious that there was a significant but weak correlation between reading comprehension and translating from Arabic to English. Likely, Newmark, (1988); Shafey, (1985) as cited in Abdellah, (2005); Shereve et al., (1993); and Washbourne, (2012) mentioned the existence of relationship between the reading comprehension ability of students and their abilities of translation.
It was revealed through the data analysis that there existed a significant (but weak) relationship between writing in English and translating from Arabic to English, which was in line with the findings of Abbasi and Shabani’s (2011) studies.

Moreover, the investigation of the relationship between writing and translating from Arabic to English showed that this correlation was significantly positive. Abbasi and Shabani, (2011), and Akbari Pakdaman, (2007); Aksoy, (2001); Inaba, (2009); Lefevere, (1992); Newmark, (1988); and Pouya’s, (2012) studies corroborated the results of the current study.

Furthermore, the analysis of data and the results demonstrate that the independent variable (reading) contributed to the prediction of dependent variable (A-E translation). Therefore, reading was a good predictor of A-E translation in this study, but writing was not.

Finally, the results of the regression also revealed that both writing and reading significantly contributed to the prediction of A-E translation in the regression model. In contrary to reading, writing was a good predictor of L1 to L2. No evidence was found, in the literature about these two findings.

Based on the obtained results it can be concluded that, reading comprehension is one of the skills needed to be worked hard in translation (Abdellah, 2005; Macizo & Bajo, 2004; Newmark, 1988, and Shereve et al, 1993). English students first should read the original text to understand the meaning and use it in shifting from L1 to L2 (Abdellah, 2005; Newmark, 1988, and Pouya, 2012). Students’ reading must enable students to handle any type of text; comprehend it, overcome lapses in comprehension, and understand the writer’s intended meaning. Moreover, the results of the current study indicates the importance of writing as an effective factor in shifting from L1 to L2 (Lefevere, 1992; Mendez & Vallejo, 2003; Newmark, 1988; and Pouya, 2012). After comprehending the original text, students should be able to rewrite and reconstruct the meaning of the text in the target language (Aksoy, 2001; Inaba, 2009; Lefevere, 1992; Newmark, 1988; and Pouya, 2012). Some scholars like Aksoy, 2001; Bassnett and Lefevere, 1990; Lefevere, 1992; and Inaba, 2009 say that translation is a form of writing, and they have emphasized on the relationship between writing and translation.

REFERENCES


