

Undergraduate Translation Majors' Performance: A Contrastive Study of Translation from Korean into English

Yom, Haeng-Il
(Kyung Hee University)

1. Introduction

Since translation involves various operations such as message decoding and encoding that must be done almost at the same time, it is assumed that such tasks would demand highly developed capacities on the part of the translator. It is necessary to conduct in a systematic manner a contrastive study of Korean with other languages such as English if one wants to develop appropriate pedagogical approaches in educating Korean translators. One source of language variation is known to be related to English learners' length of residence in an English-speaking country. ESL learners who have not lived in an English-speaking country may have somewhat more different social values and norms than learners who have lived in countries like the United States for a certain period of time. This different set of values and norms may lead to specific differences in translation skills. It may be possible that different groups

of learners follow somewhat different paths on their way to becoming competent in translation, particularly from Korean into English.¹⁾²⁾

The purpose of this study is to investigate to what extent a translator's length of residence in an English-speaking country will affect the quality of translation from Korean into English. More specifically, the study will focus on how Korean-speaking translators express Korean (their source language) structures in English (their target language), given the typological contrast between the two languages. The investigation will describe the errors arising from translation across groups and compare different aspects of performance, and will consequently help develop new techniques which may facilitate the education of translators.

2. The Study

This study is built around two populations. The subjects consisted of two groups of five individuals respectively: students who lived in an English-speaking country for more than three years (hereafter referred to as RS) and students who have never lived in an English-speaking country (hereafter referred to as NS). The two groups represented currently-enrolled third-year students majoring in interpretation and translation at the School of English at a university located in Seoul, Korea. Thus, the participants can be summarized in the following:

Group	Number
1. Residence Students (RS)	5
2. Non-Residence Students (NS)	5

This study consists of two parts: an analysis of the morpho-syntactic errors and

1) The Yale system is used for the Romanization of Korean.

2) Refer to the abbreviations chart for the abbreviations used in this paper.

an analysis of translation disruptions made by the two groups. The participants were asked to do a 50-minute timed translation of a daily newspaper column concerning college life in Korea. As a preliminary step for analysis, the translation samples were analyzed. All the errors and omissions were counted and coded for the categories in focus for this study: sentence fragments, incorrect relative clause, and lexical misuse. The participants did a 50-minute timed translation for this study.

3. Factors to be Considered for Translation

This section discusses various factors involved which should be carefully considered in the process of translation. These factors include the typological differences, particularly structural differences between Korean and English, and diverse properties of translation and interpretation.

3.1. Structural Differences between Korean and English

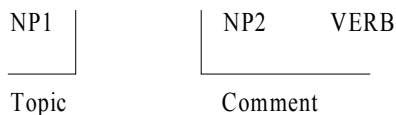
The structural properties of English are different from those of Korean, which is best characterized as a topic-oriented language.³⁾ Thus, the linguistic description of Korean structures does not correspond to that of their English counterparts. It is assumed that these typological differences will influence the processes of both interpretation and translation. It is necessary, therefore, to conduct in a systematic manner a contrastive analysis of the two languages if one wants to develop appropriate pedagogical approaches in educating Korean interpreters and translators. In the following, three categories of the Korean sentences are discussed to demonstrate the structural differences: Adverbial and

3) Korean is viewed as having a basic sentence construction of topic and comment while English is regarded as having a basic sentence construction of subject and predicate.

Embedded, along with the differences in word order.⁴⁾

3.1.1. Adverbial Category

In the Adverbial Category, the topic is detached from the rest of the sentence.⁵⁾ The basic sentence type of this category looks like the following form:



The topic and the subject both occur and can thus be distinguished easily as is shown in the following example:

- (1) kyengcey-nun Dr. Kim-i taum taythonglyeng
 economy-TM Dr. Kim-SM next president
- eykey calyo-lul ceychulhay yahap-nita
 to data-AM submit must Decl

‘As for the economic area, Dr. Kim must submit data to the next president.’

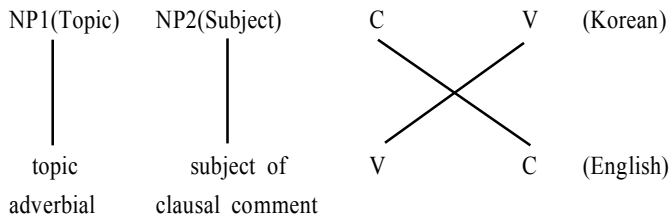
The first nominative (or the topic) has no semantic relations with the second nominative (or the subject of the clausal comment). The first NP assumes no grammatical relations and functions as an adverbial. Therefore, the adverbial category has the following syntactic configuration in Korean and English

4) Yom (1993) presents six categories as the basic sentential patterns of Korean, including Single Topic, Adverbial, Genitive, Moved Argument, Embedded Element, and Cleft.

5) This is often called ‘Periphrastic’.

counterpart:

FIGURE 1 Structural Configuration of Adverbial Category



3.1.2. Embedded Category

Included in the Embedded Category are relative clauses and other embedded elements, i.e., sentences or sentence-like strings where complementizers are attached.⁶⁾ The following is the word order of clauses embedded between NP1 and the matrix verb in Korean and the word order of its English equivalent:

Korean: NP1 + NP2 + VP2 + VP1 (Korean)

English: NP1 + VP1 + NP2 + VP2 (English)

An example of this category is given below:

(2) na-nun	wuli-ka	90nyen	kkacinun	sencinkwuk
I-TM	we-SM	90 year	by	advanced country
chelem	sal	swuissta-ko		popnita

6) Although strictly adverbial clauses may be viewed as a sub-category of embedded clauses, they will be excluded from consideration because they normally do not come between the matrix topic and comment, as illustrated in the following example:

(3) wuli-ka	mwungchinta	myen	mos	haynayl
we-TM	unite	Conj. (if)	cannot	to do
il-i	amwukesto	epsupnita		
thing-TM	nothing	not exist		

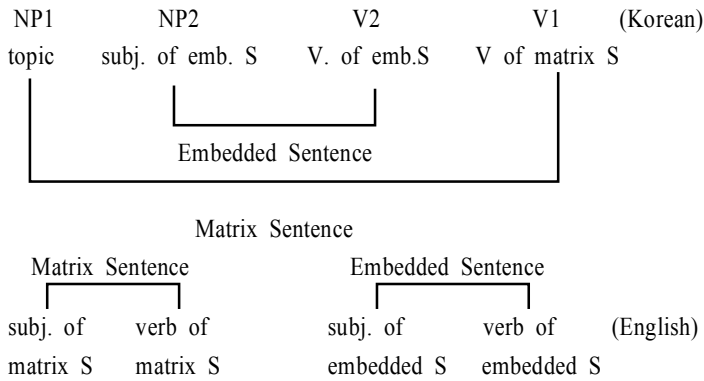
‘If we unite, nothing exists that cannot be done.’

like live can-Comp think

‘I think that by 1990 we can live like an advanced country.’

Therefore, this category has the following configuration and English counterpart:

FIGURE 2 Structural Configuration of Embedded Category



3.2. Differences between Interpretation and Translation

This section examines the distinguishing features between interpretation and translation, together with the advantages and disadvantages.

3.2.1. Interpretation

Interpretation can be largely classified as consecutive and simultaneous. According to Longley(1977), the interpreter’s notes for consecutive interpretation can be made up of signs and vocabulary items in the source, target, or third language. The interpreter can use anything in his notes that will bring back or trigger his short-term memory as to the original message. It is

also recommended that the interpreter take his notes in a vertical manner rather than in a horizontal fashion in order for him to be able to identify the ideas at a glance. Simultaneous interpretation is not just a mechanical process. It is quite different from written translation. The interpreter performs different operations simultaneously such as expressing the idea of the speaker in another language and listening carefully to the utterance of the speaker before putting it into the target language. Instantaneousness is the major advantage of simultaneous interpretation. However, there can be no literal instantaneousness because the interpreter can not begin his interpretation the moment the speaker makes a speech. As a matter of course, the speaker starts his speech and after a few seconds the interpreter performs to deliver the idea of the speaker's message in another language. Degueldre & Lichtenberg (1985) state that a time lag exists between the original speech and the interpreter's rendition.

3.2.2. Translation

It has been recognized that the differences between interpretation and translation generally correspond to the common properties between oral and literate styles of communication. Chafe and Danielewics (1987) suggest that some cognitive effort is required in translation to make good lexical choices. In other words, simultaneous interpretation is performed on the fly, whereas translation, according to Chafe and Danielewics, is done with little pressure of time and the possibility of revision. Unlike the translator who has multiple options in his/her lexical choices, the interpreter may have a tendency to operate with a narrow range of alternatives. Therefore, the interpreter often has to take the initial option that comes across his/her mind. The natural corollary of this may be that variety is quite limited in the vocabulary that the interpreter employs. In interpretation, the interpreter always has to make a rapid production of words. But, in translation, with or without revision, the translator always has more time to choose a better alternative.

4. Results and Discussion

This chapter presents a discussion of the research results. To provide a synthetic view of the data for all the results, tables are provided to give the total number and proportion of errors and translation disruptions regarding each of the different categories involved.

4.1. Analysis of Errors

There were a total of 250 sentences used in these corpora. Table 1 shows the distribution of morpho-syntactic errors for each of the categories across groups.

Table 1. Analysis of Errors

Categories/Groups	RS	NS
Sentence Fragments(9)	0	9
Relative Clauses(30)	3	27
Lexical Transfer(21)	3	18
Total(60)	6	54

As can be seen in Table 1, RS's generally did better in most of the categories than NS's. But the difference between the two groups is not as significant as was expected. In the following section, the distribution of errors will be examined with exemplification by category across groups.

4.1.1. Sentence Fragments

As the table shows, there were some fragmentary sentential elements in the corpus. A sentence fragment refers to a word, phrase, or clause lacking the grammatical completeness and independence of a full sentence. Let us observe

the following example (an interpretation performed by NS2).

(4) Original Version:

“I saw a student running away because he didn't win the first prize in an English contest.”

Translator's Version:

“I see student ran away, for not receive best prize in English contest.”

In the translation, the translator used the conjunctive ‘for’, which is supposed to be accompanied by a subject-verb structure, thus leaving the sentence dysfunctional.

4.1.2. Relative Clause

As the data indicates, the translators could not handle relative clauses properly. The position of the relative clause is correlated in Korean with SOV sentence structure, and thus the relative clause is usually placed before the head noun, while in English the position of the relative clause construction is correlated with SVO sentence structure, and thus the relative clause is placed after the head noun. In Korean, the relative clause is neither preceded nor followed by any form that might be referred to as a relative pronoun.; instead the relativized noun and the particle attached to it are deleted (Tagashira, 1972; Comrie, 1981). In English, however, a relative clause is typically initiated by a relative pronoun. In this study, the translator misused the relative structure, as observed in the translation disruption in the following example(BS1):

(5) Original Version:

(5-a) “wuli kyoyuk ceyto-wa saho phyenkyen-i mantuleno-un
 our education system-and society bias-TM made-RCM

philyencekin kyelkwa-lul poass-ta.”
inevitable result-AM see(pt)-Decl

“I saw the inevitable consequences which our educational system and social bias have brought about.”

Translator’s Version:

(5-b) “I could see natural results which our education system and social prejudice made (them).”

In (5-b), the relative clause is initiated by the relative pronoun ‘which’. However, the accusative case ‘them’ placed as the object of the verb ‘made’ after the relative pronoun is subject to deletion to preserve the grammaticality of the sentence, as the complement “them” is coreferential to the head noun “results”.

4.1.3. Lexical Transfer

The data showed that the frequency of errors was much higher with NSs. In this category, lexical transfer means wrong word, incorrect word forms, or word-for-word translations. It is generally believed that ESL learners who have acquired Anglo-American values are considered better writers of English than ESL learners who are not accustomed to such values. According to Kaplan (1966), rhetorical organization is closely connected to cultural thought patterns. It was found in this study that the participants’ first language, Korean, was transferred into English, their second language, as illustrated in the following translation done by NS3:

(6) Original Version:

“chicik sihem-kwa kosi kongpyucwunpicangso-lo
employment test-and higher civil service exam study preparation place-to

cenlakhan wuli tayhak-tul-eynun nangman-i epta.
reduced our university-pl-at romance-TM not exist

“There is nothing romantic at our universities which have been reduced to be preparatory places for job tests and higher civil service examinations.

Translator's Version:

‘Our university has no romance because of prepare for job test and high test.’

The translator apparently failed to find the right equivalent for “kosi” or “a higher civil service exam”. Instead, he resorted to a literal translation of the Sino-Korean letters, putting ‘high’ for ‘ko’ and ‘test’ for ‘si’. It has been reported by researchers that a student acquires rhetorical proficiency culturally (Connor & Kaplan, 1987 ; Ricento, 1987). Perkins and Scarcella (1986) state that permanent residents tend to write English just like native speakers of English, as compared with international students.

4.2. Translation Disruptions

Translation disruptions are in general characterized as errors and omissions. As an index of performance quality, these two types of translation departures are combined into one general measure of deviations. When this is done with respect to total numbers of both omissions and errors, the emerging pattern is rather more consistent with what may be expected. Table 2 presents the distribution of translation disruptions.

Part of the reason for the absence of meaningful results relative to the errors data may be found from the fact that the incidence of errors is not an independent event, since it is linked to the degree of omissions. The data shows that NS's trail RS's in terms of the speed and accuracy of translation.

Table 2. Distribution of Translation Disruptions

Category\Group	RT	NT
Sentence Fragments(9)	0(0%)	9(100%)
Relative Clauses(30)	3(10%)	27(90%)
Lexical Misuse(21)	3(14%)	18(86%)
Omissions(38)	6(16%)	32(84%)
Total(98)	12(12%)	86(88%)

The effect which the length of residence has on L2 writing production has been investigated in different studies. For example, Ahrens (1984) and Phillips (1984) report that recent arrivals to the United States get lower scores on writing exams than ESL students who have lived in the United States for over 3 years. Therefore, it is inferred that RS's have a greater control of varied and more accurate use of words, perhaps from exposure to different lexical items appropriate for a diversity of contexts.

5. Conclusion

This paper has so far attempted to discuss various phenomena in relation to Korean-into-English translations done by two groups of Korean participants. More specifically, we compared the translations of Korean-born university translation majors who had lived in the United States for more than 3 years with the translations of their peers who had never lived in an English-speaking country. The major findings of this study are as follows:

- (1) As is to be expected, the data generally show that, for the RS's, the average proportion of disruptions is considerably lower, while, for NS's, there is a relatively higher rate of syntactic errors in the categories of sentence fragments and relative clause than RS's. However, there was

not much of a difference in some areas such as quantifiers, pronoun reference, and subject/verb agreement.

- (2) With respect to the lexical transfer category, NSs made a higher rate of errors. It can be inferred from this that ESL learners who have lived in English-speaking countries and acquired Anglo-American values are thought of as better translators of English than ESL learners who have not acquired them.
- (3) As a whole, NS's also made a higher frequency of translation disruptions than RS's, as translation disruptions are in general characterized as errors and omissions. The incidence of errors is not an independent event, since it is linked to the degree of omissions

The findings of this study suggest that RS's and NS's may be in different morpho-syntactic, lexical, and rhetorical stages. It appears that even a short period of residence in an English-speaking country during the elementary or secondary school years has a positive influence on the general levels of English proficiency. From the results of this research, one may draw the important pedagogical implication that attention should be paid to strategies of teaching student translators how to handle various Korean sentence structures in the education of translation.

In sum, it may be desirable to introduce a text composed of simple structures (which appear the easiest to process) first and more complicated structures (which appear the most difficult to process) last in training, by providing the students with plenty of examples. By doing so, the students will be able to handle Korean sentences in a speedier and more accurate manner.

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Abbreviations

AM	accusative marker	COMP	complementizer
Conj	conjunction	Decl	declarative
NP	noun phrase	VP	verb phrase
pl	plural	pt	past tense
RCM	relative clause marker	SM	subject marker
TM	topic marker	V	verb

K C I

학부 번역전공자의 번역실기: 한영번역의 대조연구

염 행 일
(경희대학교)

본 논문은 학부 통역번역 전공학생들의 한영번역 실기능력을 측정하였다.

구체적으로 말해서 미국, 영국 등과 같은 영어권 국가에서 3년이상 초·중등 교육과정을 수료한 학생(RS)과 국내에서 초중등 교육과정을 수료한 학생(NS)들의 한영번역의 실기능력을 비교하고 다양한 현상을 기술하였다. 자료의 분석은 미완성 문장, 관계절, 어휘오류 등 세가지 범주를 대상으로 하였으며 본 연구에서 도출된 주요 내용은 다음과 같다. 첫째, 예상했던 대로 미완성 문장 및 관계절 범주에서 RS보다는 NS의 오류율이 높았다. 그러나, 양수사, 대명사, 주어-동사의 일치같은 요소에는 현저한 차이는 없었다. 둘째, 어휘의 오류 범주에도 역시 RS보다는 NS의 오류율이 높았다. 이러한 결과에서 NS와는 대조적으로 RS는 해당 언어권에서 거주 및 교육을 통하여 언어능력 뿐만 아니라 문화적 가치관을 습득함으로써 번역과정에서 다양한 어휘에 대한 정확하고 신속한 구사력을 발휘하고 있다는 추론이 가능하다. 셋째, 번역에 있어서의 오류분석은 통역과 마찬가지로 원문번역에 대한 생략의 분포도 포함되어야 한다. 두 그룹사이의 전체적인 수치를 분석한 결과 RS와 NS간에 상당한 격차가 있었다. 이러한 결과는 NS가 RS보다 번역의 속도면에서 뒤떨어진다는 것을 의미한다. 이러한 속도는 번역사의 언어능력과 밀접한 관계가 있는 것 같다. 본 연구에서 도출되는 현실적이고 효율적인 교육방법은 우선 화제-평언의 한국어 문장구조와 주어-동사의 영어 문장구조의 분석을 통하여 비교적 용이한 문장형태부터 번역실기를 학습하고 단계적으로 내포문이나 분열문같은 보다 고난도의 문장형태의 번역으로 진전시키는 것이 바람직한 학습방법이라고 판단된다. 이러한 방법으로 보다 신속하고 정확한 번역실기가 이루어 질 수 있다고 사료된다.