

Knowledge of Word Connotations in the Translation of Culture-specific Lexis: Findings from a Pilot Study*

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ABSTRACT

This paper looks at the knowledge of word connotations possessed by participants in Korean into English translation tasks which involved culture-specific lexis (CSL). Students learning Korean into English translation were given pre and post-translation tasks containing culture-specific lexis, and a taught session with discussions was held in between. Pre and post interviews were also conducted. The recorded data was transcribed and coded using NVivo software. Presenting data from the study, this paper looks at what prior knowledge of culture-specific lexis was possessed by the learners, and how translation tasks involving such culture-specific words require consideration of connotations in both L1 and L2 words. Results show that while in most cases L1 speakers may have knowledge of connotations in CSL, when translating from their L1 into L2 it is important to find ways to convey such meanings in translation into the target text. For L2 speakers of the source text, translating CSL from L2 into L1 requires the learning and understanding of any unknown CSL for efficient translation into the target text. The paper also highlights the importance of CSL in translation tasks, and considers pedagogical implications for teachers and trainers of translation studies.

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KEYWORDS

culture-specific lexis, word knowledge, word connotations, L1 into L2, L2 into L1

1. Introduction

Today's globalised world means an ever increasing importance for communicative competence. As pointed out by Hatim and Mason (1990), the translator's communicative competence is attuned to what is communicatively appropriate in both source language (SL) and target language (TL) communities (Hatim and Mason 1990: 33). Working with two languages, the translator plays an important role in facilitating and ensuring effective communication between the cultures of their working languages.

Culture-specific words are omnipresent: they exist in our daily lives, and members of a society or culture often have a shared knowledge of such references. We can encounter such lexis in the news and media we come into contact with, and cultural references can appear in the most everyday of conversations between two members of a given society. However, such lexis usually carry connotations which go beyond the word's denotative meaning, and as translators, there is the need to be aware of the connotations contained within both L1 (first language) and L2 (second language) words and be able to communicate these in translation from the source text into the target text.

The goal of this paper is to examine the knowledge of source text word connotations possessed by L1 and L2 speakers. It presents data from a pilot study conducted in January 2014 on five learners of Korean into English translation. Students learning Korean into

English translation were given pre and post-translation tasks containing culture-specific lexis, and a taught session with discussions was held in between. Pre and post interviews were also conducted. The recorded data was transcribed and coded using NVivo software. Presenting data from the study, this paper looks at what prior knowledge of culture-specific lexis was possessed by the learners, and how translation tasks involving such culture-specific words have the potential to enable learners to acquire new knowledge of such words and their connotations, thus enabling second language learners to develop their intercultural mediating roles.

The paper will first discuss the literature relevant to the study in the areas of culture-specific lexis and its translation. Next, it will present the research questions and the methodology section will follow. Findings and excerpts from the data will then be discussed.

2. Background

2.1 Culture-specific Lexis and Vocabulary

Translation decisions taken often serve to reinforce and perpetuate stereotypical constructions of the source culture, thus preventing, rather than furthering, intercultural understanding (Kelly 1998). As such, the way such culture-specific lexis are handled is an important factor in the translation process as it directly affects the finished translation product and can either hinder or aid intercultural communication.

Culture-specific lexis (CSL) refers to items in a text which are deemed to be unique to a particular culture, and may pose problems for translation from the source text (ST) into target text (TT). An

important area in translation studies, such culture-specific content has been investigated by many (Baker 1992; Davies 2003; Newmark 2010; Nord 1997). Nord defines such culture-specific content to be those which are present in culture X but not in culture Y (Nord 1997), and according to Aixela, such items can be “recognized only with indication to a certain source text (Aixela 1997: 57). The reason such items attract such profound attention as the way these are dealt with directly affects the finished product – potential problems could be for example, what Venuti (1998) calls the ‘foreignization’, when the characteristics of a text unique to the source text culture are preserved as much as possible at the sake of readability, or on the opposite side, ‘domestication’ of a text. A problem translators face is the question of how to deal with cultural aspects which are contained in a source text, and finding the most appropriate way to successfully convey these in the target text. The definition of CSL includes both (CRs) cultural references which may be part of a culture’s daily life, within the society of which that culture’s members share a set of values, beliefs, ideas and knowledge, and which they have direct access to. As members of a culture or society, we may encounter such CRs in everyday life – for instance, one could do their grocery shopping at Marks and Spencer, or live in Camden in the UK. An individual living in Busan, South Korea could go to Jagalchi Market (or *Jagalchi sicang*) for some fresh raw fish. The definition of CSL also includes those lexical items which are specific to a culture’s language, and which carry certain connotations for the L1 users of that language. Examples would be the British English word ‘posh’ or the Korean word ‘*ceng*’, which can embody a complex mixture of connotations related to ‘sentiment’, ‘love’ or ‘friendship’, or ‘*seywel*’, which means ‘time’ on a basic level but when heard by Korean L1 speakers it carries a deeper meaning of which a translation into ‘time’

may not be satisfying for the translator.

The relationship between translation and culture, and the way of transferring signs of the source culture into the target text, is viewed as an integrative process which comprises two aspects: the recognition of the aim of using cultural references and the way of responding to that aim in translation (Savic and Cutura 2011). The translating of such culture-specific lexis requires processing of the word from source text language into target text language, and requires the ability to surpass the denotation of a word and to know, and have the ability to, convey any connotations the word may contain and which may be challenging to translate into the target language. For instance, if one does not have first-hand experience of the CRs which are encountered in daily life, would they be able to know the difference between shopping for one's groceries at Marks and Spencer as opposed to Asda, for instance? Would they know what kind of place Camden is – what kind of atmosphere does it have, what kind of people frequent it? Or would they be able to describe the feel of Jagalchi Market?

Knowledge of word connotations and translation of such connotations from L1 into L2 is strongly related to L2 vocabulary acquisition. Various studies have looked into vocabulary acquisition. It has been explored through reading (Chen and Truscott 2010), reading and writing (Pichette, De Serres and Lafontaine, 2011), and through contrastive analysis and translation (Laufer and Girsai 2008). De Groot and Poot's (1997) study examined the relationship between the translation process of bilinguals with different proficiency levels and found that conceptual memory representations were exploited "at least most of the time" (De Groot and Poot 1997: 253-254). According to Laufer and Girsai (2008), learners draw upon L1 conceptual knowledge when making assumptions about L2 words and

connections between them, and their study found that incorporating contrastive analysis and translation activities into a text-based communicative lesson impacted on the acquisition of new vocabulary.

Goundareva (2011) looked at the effect of translation practice on the reception and production of L2 vocabulary, and found that subjects who performed a translation task performed better in vocabulary production, which serves as proof that there is an important link between translation and vocabulary. Cook (2008) defines knowing a word to be knowing “its spoken and written forms, its grammatical properties and lexical properties and its meaning” (Cook 2008: 52). Schmitt (2000) looks at the core and encyclopedic meanings of words; core meanings of words are those which are independent of context, while encyclopedic knowledge depends on each individual’s experiences and personal beliefs. Knowing about the meaning of a lexical unit does not necessarily mean that one knows its meaning nor does it imply that element has been fully integrated into the semantic network it belongs to or that one has understood all its connotations (Bogaards 2000: 492).

As existing literature shows, there is obviously an important link between vocabulary knowledge, vocabulary acquisition and translation. However, to date, there have been relatively few studies on learner knowledge of connotations in Korean and English words in translation. As pointed out, the type of word knowledge embodied in a definition is too abstract and parsimonious to provide sufficient information about a word’s actual usage (Kang 1995); there is a need for research exploring Korean learners’ knowledge of word connotations. Translating words from one’s L1 into their L2 will require the ability to know and produce the correct vocabulary in the target language, and in instances where the learner does not know the target language word, the learning and acquisition of new

vocabulary may take place during the translation process through the negotiating of words and concepts of the source and text cultures. Exploring how to translate words containing connotations in their L1 into their L2 will enable L2 vocabulary acquisition, which is important for learners dealing with translation in enabling efficient communication in translation.

2.2 The Translation of Culture-Specific Lexis

Research in translation studies has explored various techniques or methods to deal with the challenging problem of translating culture-specific content in texts. Literature has mostly distinguished between two opposing text procedures, 'domestication' or 'foreignization'. Newmark (1988) presented fourteen methods for translating culture-specific items: transference, naturalization, cultural equivalent, functional equivalent, descriptive equivalent, componential analysis, synonymy, through-translation, shift, modulation, accepted standard translation, compensation, paraphrase notes and couplets (or triplets, quadruplets), which refers to the combining of two or more different procedures for dealing with one problem. In his 2012 study, Olk builds on existing literature and presents four text procedures which are an intermediate approach to foreignization and domestication, exoticism ('transference' and 'transference + explicitation'), explained exoticism ('transference + explicitation', 'transference + explanation' and 'TL expression referring to the source culture'), neutralization ('TL expression referring to the source culture', 'neutral explanation' and 'omission') and cultural transplantation ('omission', 'neutral explanation' and 'cultural substitution') (Olk 2012).

Various studies have explored how CRs have been translated in

various texts, such as in literature and news articles in the form of comparative analysis (Matthews, Nicolle and Rountree 2010) and discourse analysis (Olk 2012). Maasoum and Davtalab (2011) point out that some concepts which exist in one language may not exist in another, and give the example of new words in Persian which are common among young people, and some religious words which do not have the same concepts in the target text. Santamaria (2010) looks at the translation of cultural referents in subtitles for a TV sitcom, and presents models which show how cultural referents become mental representations. While the study does not propose strategies for dealing with the translation of cultural referents, it supports the fact that culturally specific items in translation require greater effort for the target audience to understand. The author also points out that while the decision lies with the translator, certain techniques such as using calques and loans would increase the cognitive effort of the target audience (Santamaria 2010).

Olk's studies have been based on empirical research into how English and German undergraduate students translate culture-specific lexis (2001a, 2001b, 2002a, 2002b, 2003, 2009, 2012). His 2002b study looked at the mediating involvement in the translation process, and found that students may not be conscious of certain lexical choices conformed to common stereotypes of Britain. Another study (Olk 2002a) explored the processes of language students when dealing with culture specific lexis, and found that students tended to fixate on questionable word-level parameters than text-level processes. Olk (2009) revealed the surprising result that students seemed to lack familiarity with some native culture concepts and had difficulty rendering them for target readers. The study found that roughly one fifth of the cultural references in the text caused overt or covert comprehension problems for the British students for example 26% of

the students were uncertain about the meaning of “Oxbridge” or misinterpreted the item. In some cases, students who had comprehension problems appeared to have come across the cultural reference for the first time. In one instance, a student even declared she had never heard of a cultural reference. Others reported that they had no idea what the term referred to, indicating the absence of even a vague concept. This complete absence of knowledge did not only occur for relatively rare and complex expressions, but also for items which were believed to be more well-known.

Translation involving culture-specific lexis from learners’ L1 into their L2 will enable them to consider such native culture concepts and explore how to render these for the target readers. For instance, when L1 speakers of a particular culture hear a culture-specific word, what connotations are evoked? These could be perhaps a particular image, concept or even emotion which members of the same society or culture may share.

Olk’s doctoral thesis (2001a) involved an empirical study of two groups of students, British and German, and their translation of cultural references. It was found that the consideration of CR translation and cultural perspective had been relatively poor at both of the universities he had carried out his study, as indicated by students’ coursework and model translations. A source-oriented approach of exact reproduction resulted in renderings which would have been communicatively problematic in the target culture. Accurate translations of source texts about the source cultures, such as a German newspaper article about higher education in Germany, tended to result in texts which tended to be under explicit for the target culture audience. According to Olk, translation practice tended to not be contextualised in terms of readership or purpose, and such a non-communicative format furthered an approach of exact

source-text reproduction, resulting in communicatively problematic texts. This was seen to be partly responsible for the source-oriented processing of the students and for the apparent lack of target-culture and target-text oriented processes (Olk 2001a).

In Olk's 2009 study, there were cases when students believed they had an understanding of a cultural reference but their translation was in fact based on a wrong understanding. Olk points out that in such instances the students "on almost no occasion seemed to be concerned about the fact that the assumed meaning made little sense in the given text" (Olk, 2009: 7). Further, it was observed that students did not seem to notice clashes or connections between concepts, indicating the fact that perhaps context played "a limited role in the comprehension and translation process of the students" (Olk, 2009: 7). According to Olk, the students in his study approached CRs not as an included part of a text, but as "isolated language items" which they dealt with on an individual basis. As the translator is "first and foremost a mediator between the producer of a source text and whoever are its TL receivers" (Hatim and Mason 1990: 223), the role they play in translating culture-specific lexis, which can serve to hinder or aid communication, is of utmost importance.

Such previous studies have set a solid foundation for further investigation into the translation of culture-specific lexis. There is a need for a study which builds on such existing research to make further inquiry into learners' roles, decision-making and perspectives in such translation tasks. In particular, there is a need for research which looks at the translation of such lexis from or into non-European languages. Olk (2009) points out that intercultural competence can depend as much on one's native culture and how it is linguistically represented in the foreign language as it does on an understanding of the foreign culture. The current study will enable an

investigation into learners' knowledge of culture-specific lexis in their native culture and how they render such connotations, concepts and emotions into the target culture text to communicate effectively as translators.

Building on the literature, the current paper aims to answer the following questions:

1) What knowledge of source text word connotations in culture-specific lexis (CSL) did students learning Korean into English translation possess?

2) What knowledge of such CSL and their connotations was lacking?

3. Methodology

3.1 Setting and Participants

The pilot study was conducted in January 2014 on five BA, MA and MPhil students from a Readings in Korean Literature class at SOAS, University of London. The pilot study participants were of differing nationalities: British, German, Norwegian and South Korean. While they were all familiar with Korean culture, they were all students from different courses and were a combination of BA, MA and MPhil students.

3.2 Materials

Korean news articles about education in South Korea were selected for the study. As all the participants were from different

majors and courses, I wanted to use a text based on a topic they could all relate to. While the text contained culture-specific lexis, no deliberate emphasis was made on these parts of the text.

The text for the individual pre and post tasks was from The Dong-A Ilbo and included various culture-specific lexis related to education, such as “prestigious university”, “In Seoul (universities)” and “SKY”, as well as geographical terms e.g. “Kangnam”. For the group sessions, parts of the text from a Kyunghyang Shinmun news article were selected. Again, the article contained various culture-specific lexis related to education, such as “In Seoul (universities)” and “SKY”.

3.3 The Study

The study consisted of three sessions: session 1 included a pre-task and interview. The pre-task involved the translating of a part of the text from Korean into English while thinking aloud. As the participants were not familiar with thinking-aloud, practice time was given before starting the translation.

After all the participants had done the individual translation task and interview, the taught sessions were scheduled according to participants’ available times. Originally, I had intended to schedule a two-hour taught session which all five participants could attend together. However, due to timetable differences in the end this was not possible. Therefore, I arranged two separate sessions, one with three participants and the other with two.

The session looked at the notions of ‘communication’ and ‘concept’, derived from Gutt’s relevance theoretic approach to translation. The first part of the session highlighted the background, touching upon first the relevance theory (Sperber and Wilson 1986),

and 'communication' and 'context'. Next, implicit information in translation was discussed. Examples were given for both the relevance theory and the translation of implicit information. Discussion was held regarding the issues of communicating implicit information in translation and contextual relevance when communicating from source text to target text. Participants were then given time to discuss with each other the question "Thinking of the issues of 'communication' and 'contextual relevance', discussed today, to what extent should implicit information be made explicit?" Such discussion enabled the participants to share their ideas and also enabled me to check their understanding. While implicit information in translation was discussed, no intentional emphasis was made on CSL, although students sometimes discussed these on their own accord.

Once participants had had sufficient time to discuss and express their opinions, they were asked to individually translate a Korean sentence into English. When they had finished, one of the participants was asked to read the group their translation, and we discussed what the students thought of the translation. Originally, I had considered doing the "demonstration" myself, but as I was taking on the role of a "teacher" for the taught sessions, I did not want the participants to feel constrained or obliged to follow a certain method or choice of translation.

Another discussion then took place, based on the questions: 1) How did you translate the sentence? 2) Would you translate the sentence differently after the demonstration and discussion? This enabled the participants to think more about the way they translated, based on what had been covered and discussed in the session up to that point.

Participants were then given a second small translation task, which was another Korean sentence taken from the same article.

When they had all finished, we then talked again about how they had rendered the sentence this time.

The discussions enabled the participants to express their own opinions about the topics discussed and share their translations, as well as hear other participants' views and translations.

Post translation tasks and interviews were then scheduled and carried out individually. These also involved a think-aloud translation task in the Korean into English direction, and an interview.

3.4 Data Collection and Analysis

The pre and post tasks and interviews were recorded, as were the taught sessions. The pre and post translation tasks had participants translate a short Korean text into English while thinking aloud. Prior to the task, participants were given practice time for the think-aloud protocol, so that they could become comfortable with the method. The recorded data was later transcribed verbatim and coded with NVivo software. Nodes were created as the coding was carried out, and not pre-designated. This was to enable coding with an inductive approach based on grounded theory, which focuses on creating conceptual frameworks through the building of inductive analysis from the data (Charmaz 2006). The translated texts were also collected for triangulation purposes.

4. Results

This section will present results for the nodes 'Knowledge of source text CSL' and 'Lack of source text CSL knowledge'. Coding was done for the nodes when participants demonstrated knowledge or a

lack of knowledge of Korean (source text) CSL. It was found that for the node of knowledge of source text CSL, both L1 and L2 speakers demonstrated knowledge at given instances. For the lack of source text CSL knowledge node, instances were coded mostly for L2 speakers of the source text language, although there is one instance of this node being coded for a Korean L1 speaker. Table 1 shows examples of coding.

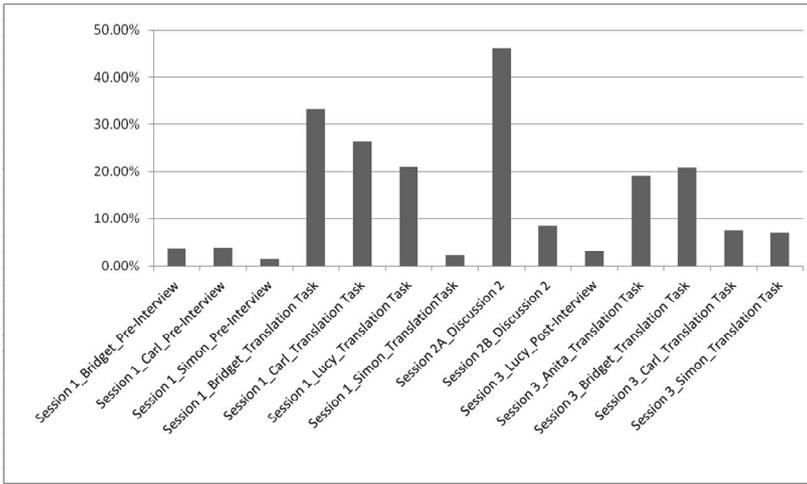
Figures 1 and 2 below show the percentage of instances coded when a student showed or demonstrated either knowledge of a lack of knowledge of the source text CSL. The horizontal axis indicates the session the data is for, and the vertical axis the percentage of source text CSL-related knowledge.

TABLE 1. Examples of coding

Node	
Knowledge of source text CSL	Reference 1 - 1.82% Coverage so the vocabulary is quite familiar firstly and then because I knew this story about Mencius' mother, so that provided a clue.
	Reference 1 - 1.49% Coverage Erm...but also some things I knew, like I knew about 'SKY'. 'SKY' means the top three universities
	Reference 1 - 8.55% Coverage B: Actually, as I said, 'yecheneung'... I'm not sure if I have the right idea about it, but people tend to have sort of a negative image of 'yecheneung' that they don't need to be very academic. They only need to focus on their special skills like 'yeseul'. For example like a student is into arts, then the student doesn't need to go to all these titled, like brand-name schools.

	<p>Reference 1 - 4.13% Coverage</p> <p>hanuluy pyelttaki means something like ‘to pick a star from the sky’ which is an idiom for something extremely unlikely or out of reach.</p>
<p>Lack of source text CSL knowledge</p>	<p>Reference 3 - 1.86% Coverage</p> <p>Well that I didn’t know about this, first of all. I didn’t know about the context. It was my first time to hear about maengmo.</p> <p>Reference 1 - 14.50% Coverage</p> <p>C: I would definitely translate it differently, because I didn’t know what ‘In Seoul’ meant. If I had looked it up in the first place, if I had had the opportunity, then yeah.</p> <p>Reference 1 - 6.79% Coverage</p> <p>P: First I think I’m going to look up this hanca-originated expression. ‘mayng mo sam chen ci kyo’. I’m guessing the ‘mo’ is as in ‘mother’, ‘maternal’. And ‘sam’ three. ‘chen’ ‘thousand’ perhaps? ‘ci’ I’m not sure... ‘kyo’...I think it’s related to education. So I need to find that. (searches internet) sam ... chen ... ci ... kyo ...</p> <p>Reference 2 - 5.97% Coverage</p> <p>And then kangnam phalhakkwunun mayngmotuluy ansikcheyessta... ... kangnam phalhakkwunun... phalhakkwunun...I know that kwun can relate to ‘military’ or ‘soldier’. But it could also be something after a male’s name...or I’m not sure. I’m going to check that. ‘hakkwun’..okay ‘school district’. Okay so the eighth school district of Kangnam.</p>

FIGURE 1. Knowledge of source text CSL



As the data shows, references were coded for all participants for the individual tasks, although the percentage coverage varies, from 1.49% to 33.35%.

FIGURE 2. Lack of source text CSL knowledge

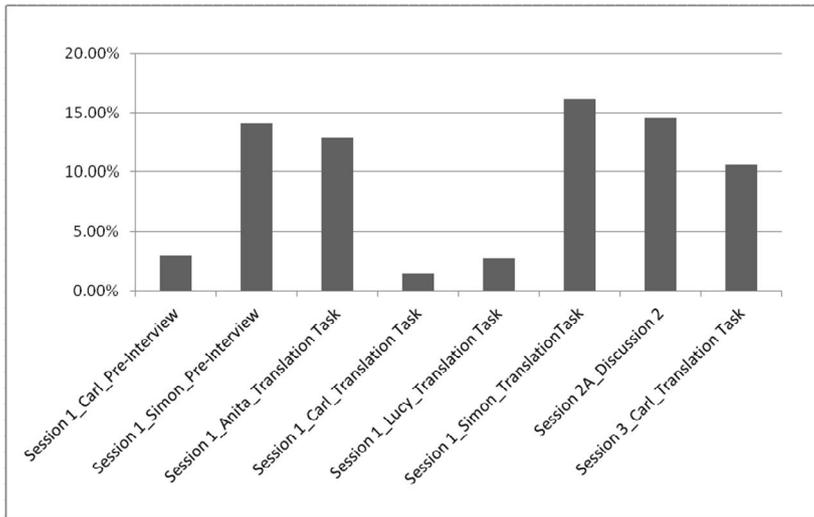


Table 2 shows the node coded for mostly L2 speakers of the source text language, Korean, although one case was coded for one of the two L1 Korean speakers. The percentage coverage ranges from 1.46% to 16.18% for the individual tasks.

As we can see from the charts, the lack of CSL knowledge decreased during the three sessions. While instances of participants demonstrating a lack of CSL knowledge was coded quite frequently in sessions 1 and 2, coded instances are noticeably fewer for session 3.

5. Discussion

This section will present excerpts from the data for in-depth discussion. All participants have been given pseudonyms to preserve anonymity. Bridget and Lucy are L1 Korean speakers, while Anita, Carl and Simon are all L2 speakers of Korean with L1s of Norwegian, German and British English respectively.

5.1 Knowledge of source text CSL

Excerpt 1

Erm...it was interesting, cos erm... especially for the fact that there is this like Chinese saying, *maengmo samcheonjigyo*, which is quite famous, quite well-known in Korea as well, for mothers, like for Korean mothers who are very eager for their children's education, to get like the best education that they could get. (Bridget, session 1, pre-interview).

In excerpt 1, Bridget, who is a Korean L1 speaker, demonstrates consideration and knowledge of the CSL *maengmo samcheonjigyo*. She

explains the meaning of this CSL and comments that the translation task involving this lexis was “interesting”. As a Korean L1 speaker, Bridget has knowledge of the CSL which she says is “quite famous, quite well-known”. In this case, Bridget has knowledge of the meanings contained within, and the question is how she will communicate such meanings into the target text, into her L2, English.

Carl, an L2 speaker of Korean, also had some prior knowledge of the background to the CSL:

Excerpt 2

...so the vocabulary is quite familiar firstly and then because I knew this story about Mencius’ mother, so that provided a clue. (Carl, session 1, pre-interview).

Although Carl may not have known the exact meaning of *maengmo samcheonjigyo*, the fact he knew the story about Mencius’ mother helped him to grasp the meaning. As we can see in excerpt 3, this prior knowledge is put to use during the translation process:

Excerpt 3

So *maengmo samcheonjigyo* ...So I think I already know...so the mother of *maengja*. In Korean class I heard a story. She was moving around so her son could have the best education or something. (Carl, session 1, translation task).

Excerpts 1-3 show how the translation text involving the CSL *maengmo samcheonjigyo* enabled two participants, one L1 Korean speaker and the other an L2 speaker of Korean, to consider the

meaning and connotations the CSL contains. Although in these excerpts, both L1 and L2 speakers of Korean had prior knowledge of the CSL, the translation task required them to consider how to communicate this to the target reader.

Excerpt 4

B: Actually, as I said, *yecheneung*... I'm not sure if I have the right idea about it, but people tend to have sort of a negative image of *yecheneung* that they don't need to be very academic. They only need to focus on their special skills like *yeseul*. For example like a student is into arts, then the student doesn't need to go to all these titled, like brand-name schools. (Bridget, session 2, translation practice 2 & discussion).

In excerpt 4, Bridget is again contemplating the connotations contained within a culture-specific word. While she explicitly mentions she is 'not sure if she has the right idea about it', she explores the connotations contained within during the group discussion in session 2 of the study.

While it is more likely that L1 speakers have knowledge of the word connotations contained within CSL, one challenge for such L1 speakers is how to convey these very same connotations:

Excerpt 5

P: There were some words like *mobeomsaeng* and *haneului byeol ttaki*. These words were tricky for me because these are commonly used in Korea but it was hard for me to find the exact words so I just translated them into very simple words. (Lucy, session 3, post-interview).

Lucy, another Korean L1 speaker, contemplated the CSL *mobeomsaeng* and the idiom *haneului byeol ttaki*. She mentions that it was difficult for her to find the correct words for such CSL in the target text, and so in the end decides to use ‘simple words’ to translate them.

This section has presented excerpts from the data, showing the knowledge of word connotations possessed by both Korean L1 and L2 speaker participants. As the excerpts have shown, although the participants had knowledge of the words and connotations, it posed a challenge for them—the translation of CSL required them to consider the connotations and decide how to convey them in translation into the target language.

5.2 Lack of source text CSL knowledge

While the previous section showed how participants possessed prior knowledge of source text CSL and how they applied such knowledge to the translation task, this section will highlight parts from the data which shows participants’ lack of source text CSL knowledge.

Excerpt 1

...and I think essentially in this sentence *kangnam palhakkun*...and I didn’t know the last word at all. (Carl, session 1, pre-interview).

The CSL *kangnam palhakkun* refers to eight school districts in Kangnam (an area south of Seoul) which is popular among parents of school age children as it is perceived attending schools within those districts will guarantee a path to renowned universities. It can be said that *kangnam palhakkun* is a type of cultural reference which

contains connotations that perhaps only those who have direct access to the culture and society of the language which it comes from are able to have awareness of. As such, although it is a term which Korean L1 speakers, or L2 speakers who have high degrees of exposure to the language and its culture and society, may be familiar with, other L2 speakers may not have the same knowledge and familiarity. Simon, another L2 speaker of Korean, also lacks knowledge of this particular CSL:

Excerpt 2

And then *kangnam palhakkun maengmodeului ansikcheoyeossda...* ... *kangnam palhakkuneun... palhakkuneun...* I know that *kun* can relate to 'military' or 'soldier'. But it could also be something after a male's name...or I'm not sure. I'm going to check that. '*hakkun*'..okay 'school district'. Okay so the eighth school district of Kangnam. (Simon, session 1, translation task).

Through an internet dictionary search, Simon eventually finds out the denotative meaning of the term. However, the question remains as to whether he is aware of the connotations contained within.

For Anita, another L2 Korean speaker, the CSL '*maengmo*' is also unfamiliar:

Excerpt 3

How to translate *maengmo*. So I search for *maengmo*, and it comes up as...nothing. (Anita, session 1, translation task).

Likewise, for Simon, the old saying based on Chinese characters poses to be a challenge:

Excerpt 4

I didn't know this expression from the Chinese *maengmo samcheonjigyo*. So first of all I had to research what this was. I could guess what a couple of the characters were, but without the research I wouldn't have been able to understand. (Simon, session 1, pre-interview).

Again, through internet research he was able to find out the meaning, and hence translate the saying without any major problems.

While excerpts 1-4 show how L2 speakers of the source text language found CSL challenging as they had little or no prior knowledge, the next excerpt shows an instance where the L1 speaker of the language experienced doubts:

Excerpt 5

pal hakkuneul eotteoke beonyeokeul haeyadoeneunji. pal hakkun...keu jiyeokeyeul malhaneun geoyeyo?

'How to translate *phal hakkwun*. *phal hakkwunul*...is it referring to the area?' (Lucy, session 1, translation task).

Although Lucy is an L1 speaker of Korean, we can see how she is double-checking the CSL *pal hakkun*. While it is highly probable she has heard of, or been in contact with, this CSL, when she comes across it in a translation task she finds herself checking the meaning it is referring to.

The discussion section has served to show us what kind of knowledge the study participants, both L1 and L2 speakers of the source text language, possessed of CSL and the connotations contained within. While it is highly probable that L1 speakers of the source text language possess knowledge of CSL and any connotations

contained within, the excerpts have shown instances where L1 Korean speakers questioned the exact meanings, or were not one hundred percent sure whether the knowledge they possessed was accurate. While more instances were coded for L2 speakers for the node of lack of CSL knowledge, the study showed that L2 participants were able to research, explore and learn the meaning of the words. However, while they were able to do this, there remains the question as to whether they were able to understand or pick up the connotations sufficiently to convey the meanings.

As this paper shows, CSL is a very important area for translation, as it can either aid or hinder effective communication. When translating from one's L1 into L2, it is important to be able to convey any connotations contained within source text CSL; when translating from L2 into L1, an understanding and knowledge of the source text CSL is important, as a lack of proper knowledge likely to hinder effective translation into the target text.

Considering the importance of CSL in translation, it is important for translator trainers and teachers to maximize exposure to such lexis, which will open doors for an optimum learning experience, as well as encourage students to contemplate the methods which can be employed for effective communication of culture-specific elements in translation. This is important for translation between all language pairs, but perhaps even more important for language pairs such as Korean and English, which are linguistically and culturally very different. By incorporating translation tasks which involve culture-specific lexis, teachers and trainers can encourage students to think about such linguistic and cultural differences, and explore ways to deal with them.

6. Conclusion

This paper has shown how the task of translating CSL requires knowledge which goes beyond knowledge of a word at denotative level. As we can see, words which are specific to a culture embody connotations which L1 speakers are likely to have a shared access or exposure to, and as such may be more likely to have knowledge of such lexis. L2 speakers of the same language, on the other hand, may obviously lack knowledge of such culture-specific words or find them challenging to understand.

The paper has presented excerpts from the data to show what kind of knowledge of word connotations was possessed by the study participants, and also what knowledge they lacked. While it may be assumed that L1 speakers of a language should have knowledge or awareness of L1 CSL, the study has shown that this may not always be the case. For L1 speakers who do have knowledge of the connotations, it is important to find ways to convey such meanings in translation into the target text. For L2 speakers of the source text, translating CSL from L2 into L1 would require the learning and understanding of any unknown CSL for efficient translation into the target text.

It is hoped this paper has served to highlight the importance of CSL in translation tasks, and how it requires knowledge of words going beyond the denotative level, to the connotations contained within. While it has its limitations in that the study was of a small scale, it is hoped that the paper serves its role in encouraging the consideration of pedagogical implications while at the same time opening up doors for future research into the translation of CSL, either through larger scale studies or with different language pairs.

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