

Thai Adults Learn English via Translation

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Abstract—With the approaching full form of ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) in 2015, while some Thais may still keep their traditional way of living, but many others have to be faced with English requirements, especially in the internationally competitive arena of global trade and business. Both the unemployed and the employed have to accordingly adjust themselves to the ongoing change in terms of linguistic competence. Nonetheless, there is rare research delving into how Thai adults learn to translate from Thai to English. This paper thus aims to report the attempt and learning process of a group of employees who tried to upgrade their English proficiency to cope with such significant alteration. Conducted with 18 adult learners, this qualitative research study used a questionnaire, a follow-up informal talk, and a comparison of the participants' final examinations at intermediate and advanced level. The training course was provided at a state-owned telecommunication company in Thailand. At the time of the study, the subjects' average age was 46.6 years. The research findings revealed that translation practices could help these learners to develop a higher degree of English proficiency after the one-and-a-half-year translation course.

Index Terms—Thai-English translation, adult learner, in-house training

I. INTRODUCTION

Despite the ever-increasing need for English demand in global communication at work, especially in international telecommunication companies, there is currently little research on English-Thai translation or proficiency. The forthcoming ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) in 2015 is said to be a dominant force for many Thais, if not all, to learn English in a more meaningful manner as English will be used as the international language in AEC communication and documentation. With the slogan “One Vision, One Identity, One Community,” the skilled labor and professional experts can cross the borders more legally and conveniently, whereby an exchange of personnel appears more smoothly and widely for the affluence of this region (Association of Southeast Asian Nations, 2009, pp. 29-30). One standard that all these labors and professionals have to reach is the English proficiency, though.

A dramatic increase of concern about Thai-English bilingual capability became clear through a steady increase in English programs. According to the report compiled by the Office of the Educational Council (2004), there were 46 international schools (elementary and secondary private schools where only English is used in their curricula) in 1999, 67 in 2002, and 89 in 2003. Likewise, higher education (both private and public) provided by universities, institutions, colleges or other types of institutions had 356 international programs in 1999, 465 in 2002, and 521 in 2003 (p. 149). These figures evidence an increase in demand for high English proficiency in order to cope with the upcoming enforcement of AEC Agreement in 2015.

Another piece of tangible proof is that more and more Thai government agencies and private sectors call for their applicants' score of 550+ TOEIC (Test of English for International Communication) as an essential precondition for job application eligibility. According to the document on Strategy in Production and Developing Workforce of the Nation in the Second Decade of Education Reform from 2009 to 2018 reported by the Office of the Educational Council, Ministry of Education, newly-emerging industries require people with high proficiency in foreign languages with economic significance including English, Chinese, Japanese, or Southeast Asian languages (2011, p. 13). The number does not only represent the growing requirements for high English competence achievement, but also the propensity of Thai society to become more and more Thai-English bilingual rather than Thai monolingual as in the old days. According to Wimolchalao (2000), Thai-English translation is even more salient when being used as a recruitment examination for job applicants for government and/or state-owned enterprise jobs (p. 7). Graduates with honors, but with low English proficiency, may also struggle for well-paid jobs in the current labor market, where high level of English proficiency is determined the top priority.

This paper therefore will begin with a brief overview of adult-learner theories and some viewpoints of the participants in the current study. After that, AEC, as the most important factor which calls for a high level of English proficiency, will be discussed. The author also provides the nature of her translation course as well textbooks and activities offered to her adult students in the methodological section. The final outcomes come last.

II. ADULT LEARNERS

Unlike young learners, adults are exceptional as they will learn only when the materials or lessons mesh together with their real-life experience and expectations (*see* Crandall, 1979; Nunan, 1999; Burt, Peyton, & Adams, 2003). “Adults who need English for access to technical texts or training for employment have a strong motivation to acquire

the language” (Crandall, 1979, p. 7). If the lessons are unfitted for this age group of students’ belief, present concerns, or life experiences, such materials may hamper their learning progress or even impose some negative impact on the learners’ success (Nunan, 1999, p. 15). Based on the questionnaire distributed on July 18, 2013, the same attitude toward English learning is also evidenced by the participants’ viewpoint. Many students in the present study mentioned that they take great pleasure from enrolling in this Thai-English translation course because the course positively affects their jobs in numerous ways, as follows:

— The course provides me with friendship which can become connections at work. Coordination, cooperation and assistance in the team lead to work success. I can apply these experiences to my work and my team.

— Knowledge I gained from this course is a way to teach others to learn by doing. This strategy can be applied to my work and my daily life.

— Looking around me, difficulties and problems—be they minor or major—always arise, but what I learned from the course is that I have to myself handle all obstacles in my life and at work efficiently and happily. I can clear all hurdles in my life. After that, I feel great with myself and my progress. English was once something I hated, but now English taught me to become more confident as I can do something I once couldn’t. English proficiency I gained is not just an academic subject, but a proof for my determination, which can change my negative world to a surprising degree.

— I can speak in front of the public without nervousness any longer. When I was scolded or yelled at by the customers, I would not feel anything any more. I am brave to be faced with anything coming to me—be they rude customers or tough jobs. Ideas got from translation—e.g. systematic cognitive thinking, teamwork, etc.—can be applied to my job and my family life.

— This course taught me to learn from and correct my own mistakes. It made me feel more determined to complete my work routines nicely. I learn to know myself, my capability, and do my best. This is very important to my future. I also gain more confidence in my English writing for my department.

— I learn to know that doing anything can be a good way of self-development. This means that we have to try our best all the time in everything we’re doing—whatever it is. A vast variety of translation texts must be related to my work so that I can apply them to my real-life jobs [July 18, 2013].

All these comments are focused on the significance of relationship between the course content and the participants’ work. Such comments are thus put as the first goal of this translation course. In other words, all texts, activities, and materials must provide these participants good applications to their work. The comments made by the participants in this study are real and clearly conform to gurus in this field.

As mentioned above, Thai education has drastically changed during the past ten years, it is interesting to know how translation can become a way for Thais to become Thai-English bilinguals in the following year—2015.

III. TRANSLATION FROM THAI TO ENGLISH

There are many translation experts, e.g. John Cunnison Catford (1965), Peter Newmark (1981), Woranart Wimolchalao (2000), Supanee Pinmanee (2006), Siribuppa Utarntada (2006), Associate Professor Sunchawee Saibua (2007), and Hui-Chen Wang (2013), among many others. The author started to become a translator 30 years ago. Thirty years has passed and this is the first time of her teaching translation. To prepare herself, the author hence studies these gurus’ way of teaching. Interestingly, these gurus concur with the concept that translation is hard to both translation students and instructors.

Catford defined translation as “the replacement of textual material in one language (SL) by equivalent textual material in another language (TL)” (p. 20). Likewise, Newmark (1987) asserted that “translation is a craft consisting in the attempt to replace a written message and/or statement in one language by the same message and/or statement in another language” (p. 7). Saibua (2007) stated that a good translator should have four characteristics: (1) outstanding ability in source language (SL) and target language (TL), (2) background knowledge of the SL text, (3) ability to replace the SL writer, and (4) writing skills (p.15). Based on these experts’ definitions, the first difficulty translators are faced with is the fact that it is difficult to be balance their bilingual ability in the two languages—SL (Source Language) and TL (Target Language). Utarntada (2006) concurred that good translators should be competent in vocabulary, idiom, grammar, word order, and linguistic culture of the two languages, i.e. SL and TL. The present paper will hence look into these areas of English development gained from learning to translate.

Newman (1981) classified translation into (1) SL emphasis—which tends to be word-for-word or literal translation and (2) TL emphasis—which tends to be freer and more communicative translation. Many translation students always complained why they need to do the SL way first because in reality, they may need to accomplish the TL emphasis more. Wimolchalao (2000) and Pinmanee (2006) proposed that if translation teachers want their students to become good translators, the teachers should teach their students to know the grammar and structure of the TL first. When they become more competent translators, they can do what they want. Wimolchalao (2000) emphasized the importance of translation that it is a subject which enables students to demonstrate this ability directly in their daily life and job. Many workplaces also use translation as a way to measure the applicant’s English proficiency (p. 7). Wang (2013) agreed that translation can help raise her students’ English proficiency and is set as one of Taiwan’s educational goals. Because of such importance, students should be well prepared with good grammar.

More importantly, as Thai and English are dissimilar in countless features, translation teachers should explain such differences to their students at the first place (Wimolchalao, 2000; Pinmanee, 2006; Utarntada, 2006, Saibua, 2007). For more details about differences between Thai and English structures, it would be wise to go and look up in the dissertation produced by Chanseawrassamee (2007). Following Wimolchalao (2000) and Pinmanee (2006), the author paved a strong foundation for her students by providing lessons on English grammar and structure along with their translation practices. The issue of the lessons and materials used in the present course will be discussed in a more detailed manner under Section IV Methodology.

IV. ASEAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY (AEC)

As a State Member, Thailand, where multilingualism or multiculturalism has long been highly lauded, has warmly embraced the new economic requirements in rich varieties of realms, especially employment and education. Although Thailand has never been colonized, English—a *world language*—has been taught to Thais fundamentally for economic and trading reasons (Fasold, 1987, p. 10). In Thailand, at least one foreign language is compulsory for all students (Pufahl, Rhodes, & Christian, 2001) and that language is English. For the time being, AEC has become a new requirement for English proficiency. The National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB) accordingly specified in its Eleventh Plan that Thailand must make some arrangements to conform to such regional unity. “All Thais should realize the significance and potential impact of the AEC. The competitiveness of business should be enhanced and benefit from the AEC. Labor force skills that are in great demand in the AEC market should be developed. Regulations and institutional management should be made to comply with ASEAN’s rules” (Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board, 2013, pp. 18-19). Such stipulation entails the necessity for Thai citizens to be able to use English as a communicative tool in their daily life and at work. Thai-English bilingualism will become the social norm. Currently, it is not unusually surprising to see street vendors, pharmacists, house maids, cleaners, cashiers, and even security guards, speaking English fluently with non-Thai customers. Taxi drivers who wish to serve foreign customers at the airport must at least pass an English test to be licensed as well.

For employment, both government and private sectors have begun assessing and hiring foreign staff from Cambodia, Myanmar, and Viet Nam. Similarly, Thai applicants must have the 650+ TOEIC score. For conglomerates like PTT and its subsidiaries, their employees can move upward the career ladder when they achieve 850+ TOEIC scores. In addition to language requirements for promotion, if existing employees want to apply for the company’s scholarship for higher education abroad, they need very high TOEFL scores. In Japan, the TOEIC score is very important for both employment and admission to a master’s degree. At leading Japanese universities, high TOEFL scores can guarantee a seat for the applicant. Two exemplars of this idea can be found in the works of Wimolchalao (2000) and Chanseawrassamee (2012).

In the current study, the author looks particularly into how a group of employees at a leading telecommunication company become more competent in English via translation. At their average age of 46, it is interesting to know their learning process, materials they use, and the progress they can make. It is also remarkable to discern how they perceive the course in terms of their English development and their career advancement. This is an obvious attempt of a company to endeavor to develop their employees to be on a par with the standard of the current labor market.

V. METHODOLOGY

A. Nature of the Thai-English Translation Course at TOT Academy

The Basic, Intermediate, and Advanced Thai-English Translation (T-ET) courses are a free-of-charge three-course series which is provided to TOT employees. TOT Academy is the training center which belongs to TOT Public Company Limited—a leading state-owned telecommunication under the supervision of the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology (MICT). The entire English translation course takes approximately one and a half years. Each level takes 120 hours. In each course, the class meets once a week for 6 hours per day (from 9 to 16 hrs) for 20 weeks. The course is provided at the company’s training center for the purpose of pulling out the students from their routines. Nevertheless, in an urgent case, students are permitted to go back to work because the training center is about 15-30 minutes far from the headquarters.

The Basic Thai-English Translation course ran from September 1, 2011 to March 8, 2012. This course was interrupted by the mega flood from October to December in 2011; the course was postponed until the following year. Because this is a mixed-ability class, students had to adjust themselves to level first. During the basic course, students’ grammatical foundation was first paved by the book, “Grammar Builder: A grammar guidebook for students of English” (2004) published by Cambridge University Press. The *Grammar Builder* series consists of five books. Books 1 and 2 were used during the basic level. The first book was used in class, while the second was distributed to students to work on during the flood so that they did not forget English when they were away from school. The other topics of lessons include Thai-English transliteration rules, good English readings, writing skills like parallelism, capitalization, punctuation markers, etc. Weekly in-class assignments involved translating newspaper articles, advertisements, brochures, announcements, to mention a few.

The Intermediate Thai-English Translation course ran from May 10 to September 27, 2012. The students went back to the center. As students became familiar with the *Grammar Builder* series, they were assigned to do the drills at home themselves. After they finished each book, they submitted their book and the book was then checked by the instructor—the author in this study. Their grammar gradually progressed. At this level, students learned about English idioms, sentence improvement, vocabulary words, etc. To enlarge the students' vocabulary repository, they were assigned to read four books comprising: (1) *The Present* written by Spencer Johnson (2003, 2004), (2) *Freedom Is Blogging in Your Underwear* by Hugh MacLeod (2012), (3) *Do you want to keep your customers forever?*—The Harvard Business Review Classics series by B. Joseph Pine II, Don Peppers, and Martha Rogers (2009), and (4) *Managing Oneself*—The Harvard Business Review Classics series by Peter F. Drucker (2008). At the end of this intermediate course, students took the finals on September 27, 2012.

The Advanced Thai-English Translation course ran from February 28 to July 25, 2013. To enrich their vocabulary, students were assigned to read the three-book series: *Well Read 1-3* published by Oxford University Press (2008). To formulate their grammatical concepts, students did the drills in the *Grammar Links Levels 1-3* published by Heinle, Cengage Learning (2005). For in-class activities, students translated Thai texts into English, ranging from articles, PowerPoint slides, exhibitions, captions, poems, songs.

In this study, the author acted both as the participatory researcher and the teacher of the translation course. She thus compiled the finals taken on September 27, 2012 and July 25, 2013 to see if there was any significant change or development in her students. A one-page questionnaire was distributed on July 18, 2013—the penultimate week—of the advanced translation class. Students were asked to complete the questionnaire in either Thai or English as they wished, but they all preferred Thai. For the betterment of the course in the future, students were asked to express themselves in terms of benefits or drawback of the course.

B. Nature of the Thai-English Translation Finals

In the finals of the Intermediate Thai-English Translation course, there were 30 items. For the finals of the advanced course, only 10 items plus three extra items were chosen. This study will then look into these 13 items for comparison. During both finals, students were assigned to read and write more along with practicing translation in class. As the first final examination at the basic level was different, no students expected to have a similar examination. After the finals, some could not even remember the finals, while some felt that the finals looked familiar. As a matter of fact, the author made some minor changes, e.g. the proper name as the subject of the subject so that students used their existing proficiency in their translation, without an attempt to reminiscence their performance in the previous text on September 27, 2012. Based on such arrangements, the total of 234 sentences was analyzed and salient examples were presented in the Findings and Discussion section.

C. Participant

The subjects in this study were all employed by a Thai state-owned telecommunication company. There were 29, 22, and 20 students at basic, intermediate, and advanced levels, respectively. To compare the development, these participants had to take the same finals at intermediate level on September 27, 2012 and advanced level on July 25, 2013. As they had a different final examination at basic level; therefore, they did not anticipate the same finals for both intermediate and advanced levels. With such unpredictability, they did not prepare themselves by reviewing their previous exams and their answers could be compared. In the penultimate class of the advanced course (July 18, 2013), 18 questionnaires (male: 5, female: 13) were completed and returned from 20 students (male: 5, female: 15) in the “Advanced Thai-English Translation” course provided at TOT Academy, TOT Public Company Limited, formerly Telephone Organization of Thailand. Two students were absent that day. At the end of the three-course series, the 18 participants ranged in age from 37 to 53 years, with an average of 46.6 years. As they had taken and passed the “Basic Thai-English Translation,” “Intermediate Thai-English Translation,” and “Advanced Thai-English Translation” courses at TOT Academy for a year and a half in total, they are believed to gain some advancement. Unfortunately, due to a small number of participants, the author did not look into the difference in gender term. As adult learner research is infrequent, this current research needs to be conducted, thereby having the value in its own rights.

VI. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section discusses the development of the participants in three areas: vocabulary, grammar, and idiom. The subjects took the similar finals twice—on September 27, 2012 and July 25, 2013. Such an identical test was entirely unexpected; thus, the participants did not review the test beforehand. The word “similar” is used here because some names/pronouns in the finals were changed. The information of the questionnaires was also presented along with each category of development. As many translation experts, e.g. Utarntada (2006), suggested that good translators should be proficient in vocabulary, idiom, and grammar, the author will look specifically in these three issues to see the participants' development.

A. Vocabulary Expansion

Many foreigners have found that non-native students usually said or wrote something around the bush. Still, this was proved later on that the real reason is the lack of vocabulary. This means that when their vocabulary expands, these learners are assumed to become more adept at English understanding, speaking and writing. Therefore, in this research, the author provides some examples of such development.

Ex. 1 Student # 18

Although Ploy is aggressive, the audiences *like* her because she is beautiful and *confidential herself*. [September 27, 2012]

Although Ploy is aggressive, the audiences *love* her because she is beautiful and *self-confident*. [July 25, 2013]

In the above example, Ploy is a proper noun—a nickname of a Thai famous superstar. There are two lexical changes. At first the student chose to use *confidential herself* which is a word-for-word translation instead of *self-confident*. She might have been confused with the words *confidential* and *confident* as well. For the second test, she learned more and could use the correct word in this context. She also replaced the word *like* (*chob* in Thai) with *love* (*rak* in Thai). In this case, such replacement means that even though the English word *like* is exactly equivalent to *chob* in Thai, when the translator become more proficient, she could interpret and use another word which shares the same meaning or conveys the same feeling.

Ex. 2 Student # 15

Although Ploy is *impolite*, *but* the film's audiences like her because she is beautiful and *confident*. [September 27, 2012]

Although Ploy is *aggressive*, the audiences like her because she is beautiful and confident. [July 25, 2013]

This example was translated by another student who made some slight changes from the first examination to the second one to get the exact meaning across. It can be seen that the use of a comma followed by *but* was changed to a comma only. This student may have learned that contrastive markers like *but* and *although* should not be repetitively or redundantly used in the same sentence. It is worth mentioning here again that grammatical concepts are taught along the course. This means that, in a way, the grammar lessons enable this novice translator to become more sensitive with the use of a contrastive markers like *although* and *but*. Also, the word *impolite* (*mai supaab* in Thai) was replaced by the word *aggressive* (*kaw raw* in Thai) which is more precise to the Thai word *kaw raw* in the source text.

Ex. 3 Student # 14

The foreigners who would like to work at Thailand must have a work permit *only*. [September 27, 2012]

The foreigners who want to work in Thailand must have a work permit *with exception*. [July 25, 2013]

This example showed that this student could not think of the work *with any exceptions* at the first time of her translation. For the second time, she could think of the exact words while also correcting herself in the preposition use from *at Thailand* to *in Thailand*. Presumably, this student may have mixed up the use of “work at/for a company” with “work in a country.” Learning a lot can lead to confusions sometimes. When this student became more proficient in English grammar, this problem will diminish. This example is meaningful in the sense that this student could correct herself and also add some more words she learned from reading texts to the finals she retook. At times, novice translators could not think of a word. However, in real-life translation, this problem may not arise very often because dictionaries can help.

In terms of lexical development, students made the following comments at the end of the advanced course.

— The rules of Thai-English transliteration allow me to change the Thai alphabets into Roman ones in a systematic manner. I have learned a great deal of vocabulary when reading textbooks and proof-reading. This course enables me to use vocabulary words appropriate to a particular situation and real use.

— Reading can be a source of vocabulary. Even though we read a little bit a day, we can learn a lot more new words. Some words are unfamiliar or even unknown because I read a little or rarely read even in Thai.

— I gained some new vocabulary words from reading texts provided for translation. I also gained some new ideas for my work and daily life.

— A direct advantage of this course is a large repository of vocabulary. There are a lot of words—be something I know or have not known before. There are also their synonyms with different uses and suit different purposes or situations. Like Thai words, English ones have a lot of definitions. If we use the word in a wrong place, its meaning can be different. The meaning of words can be found from reading a lot of texts.

— Whether the translation version is good or not depends on the knowledge of vocabulary.

— Vocabulary has its own hierarchy like formal, informal, royal, jargon, slang, etc. There are many rules of word usage, so we need to read a lot. Reading-aloud in our classroom also developed my pronunciation and confidence.

B. Grammatical Development

Ex. 4 Student # 11

Although Ploy is *an aggressive*, *but* people like her because she is so beautiful and *self-confidence*. [September 27, 2012]

Although Ploy is *aggressive*, the audiences like her because she is beautiful and *self-confident*. [July 25, 2013]

This student has shown that she became more susceptible about the rules of parallelism. To explain, the use of *self-confidence*—a noun—in the first finals is not parallel with *beautiful*—an adjective. Nevertheless, in her second finals, she automatically changed *self-confidence* into *self-confident* in order to make the word conform to the rules of

parallelism. Likewise, the use of verb to be followed by an article and an adjective (*is an aggressive*) but without a noun in the first finals disappeared, and an adjective is correctly used with verb to be (*is aggressive*) in the second. This example illustrates her grammatical improvement.

Ex. 5 Student # 9

Today, because there wasn't much time the students promised me *to finished* the exams within 2 hours *attended to have fun the farewell party* for the final exam. [September 27, 2012]

Today the examinees don't have much time, but they promised *to finish* the exams in one hour *in order to attend the farewell party* after the finals. [July 25, 2013]

In this instance, this student has rectified her first version by using a complete sentence rather than a word-for-word translation as in the first time of her translation. For example, in the first sentence on September 27, 2012, she used the past form of verbs, e.g., *finished*, with the proposition *to*, where an infinitive should be used. On the contrary, in the second finals, the words are more systematically used and neatly arranged, whereby a complete sentence was presented. The more complex structure like the use of *in order to* was added and the use of *...attend the farewell party...* sounded more comprehensible and grammatically correct.

Ex. 6 Student # 3

My family always *would be dinner* and *your* father likes to talk about *study of her*. [September 27, 2012]

My family always *has dinner* together and *my* father asks about *my study*. [July 25, 2013]

This example includes three major grammatical points: (1) verb to be vs. verb to have, (2) word order of possessive and noun, and (3) a consistent use of possessive adjectives. First, this student has shown grammatical development in the way she used *would be dinner* at the first finals. This is incomprehensible or can even lead to misunderstanding because my family cannot *be* dinner. However, later she changed *would be dinner* into *has dinner*, which makes more sense. This shows that she has developed her understanding of verb to be and verb to have. Second, the word order of *study of her*—which is arranged in the word-for-word translation way—was improved to be grammatically correct into *my study*—where a possessive adjective precedes the noun—in the second finals. The use of possessive word order becomes grammatically correct in the second time. Last of all, the use of *my* varied from *your* and *her*, but finally became consistent in the second finals. All these improvements reveal that this student has gained some more knowledge, thereby expressing herself in English with greater grammatical precision.

In terms of grammatical development, students made the following comments at the end of the advanced course.

— I have learned a lot of grammar since young, but I just learned how to apply those grammar rules into real use today. I can write more fluently. I know that grammar is necessary for writing a good sentence. Even though my translation version is not automatic, but I can write a communicative sentence.

— I have a great chance to see grammatically correct English sentences which foreigners can understand. It's a good opportunity for me to review the grammar rules which are an essential foundation for Thai-English translation.

— Good grammar can improve our translation version. Grammar drills made me practice grammar everyday. The drills help me to learn more and better.

— Grammar lessons are a good review of my grammatical experience and concepts.

C. Idiom Use

Ex. 7 Student # 13

After she replied the letter as soon as after she had read stat carefully. [September 27, 2012]

After she had read the letter carefully, she answered it *as soon as possible*. [July 25, 2013]

In the first sentence, the student made many errors. He may have known something about the idiom *as soon as* but not *as soon as possible*. He also learned about the use of past perfect to show the difference in the past time. In this case, he may have thought of a word but could not recall, thereby producing the meaningless or non-existent word *stat*. When a student learned how to use an idiom correctly, he would like to play with the word and the use of it takes time to be perfectly correct.

Ex. 8 Student # 5

Aliens who desire to work in Thailand must have *license of work permit*. [September 27, 2012]

Forigner [Foreigners] who desire to work in Thailand must have *a work permit without exception*. [July 25, 2013]

In the first sentence, it is clear that the translator did not know the idiom *without exception* in the first final examination. However, in the second one, he learned more and could use it correctly. In addition, on the way to become a fluent translator, he tried to change the word *alien* to *foreigners*, but with incorrect spelling. The use of *license of work permit* shows his word-for-word translation strategy. This is replaced by a more specific terminology *a work permit* in the second finals.

There is no comment about the idiom use. The author thinks that this may be because the students do not use this knowledge in their translation very much. Idiom practices will be an important improvement the author will take into the course (if any) more in the future.

D. Some Drawbacks

Ex. 9 Student # 2

He *has taught* at a university since he *graduated* from *the USA* and moved to stay permanently in Thailand. [September 27, 2012]

He *has touch* [taught] at a university since he *gruduated* [graduated] from the United State[s] of America and moved to stay *permanatly* [permanently] in Thailand. [July 25, 2013]

In the first sentence, this student produced a perfect sentence in terms of grammar and spelling. However, for the second finals, she made many errors, especially in terms of spelling. When asked, she said she just kept writing without caring much about grammar and/or spelling. She just felt that she could do it and this sentence was really easy. She also paid attention to the full form of the USA, but she made typo.

Ex. 10 Student # 6

At 9.00 *p.m.*, she felt asleep; therefore, she *stopped read* a book because of her very *tried*. [September 27, 2012]

She felt very sleepy at 9.00 *a.m.*, so that she *stopped read* the book because she was very *tried*. [July 25, 2013]

As a matter of fact, it is quite clear that this student made some progresses in many places. For example, the use of the transitional marker *because of + noun phrase* is replaced by the *because + clause* correctly in the second finals. However, there are many other places where the translator became confused, e.g. *p.m.* and *a.m.* The time of this context is at night; therefore, *p.m.* is already correct in the first sentence. The use of *stop + read* is incorrect in both finals.

In addition, *therefore* was already used in a grammatically correct way according to the contextual meaning in the first final examination. However, in the second one, it appears that this student made a bold change to *so that*, which entirely alternated the meaning of the whole sentence. The confusion of transitional markers can inevitably happen when students have learned a great deal.

All the mistakes this student has made may not exactly mean that she does not improve her English version. Rather, the author regarded this phenomenon as an in-progress status while becoming proficient in the TL or English language her. Another example is the use of the word *tried*, which should be *tiredness* and *tired* in the first and second sentence, respectively. The word is not revised even though it is a common mistake the author always emphasizes.

Like 5.3, there are not so many unrevised sentences, but some comments are provided by the participants which can best explain this phenomenon, as follows:

— As this course has provided me with knowledge about a lot of fields of study, there are times when I spend too much attention to one thing/rule and ignore another one I used to do correctly. The one I ignore because I think I know usually goes wrong. That made me sad. I love the revision my instructor made because it helps me to move forward.

— I learned a lot from friends. The instructor is mean sometimes and she always scolds us or makes jokes about our mistakes. But, unbelievably, those mistakes made me laugh in class but also made me remember better in the real job and the finals.

— The best way to translate well is to understand the text in the source language (SL) first. Then, we start translating. If not, the TL text can never be good or precise.

— A good translator must be a good reader, a good listener, and a good writer.

— Before attending this course, I thought that I just come to class and translate. I have never known that to be able to become a good translator, I need good grammar and vocabulary. I just enlightened when joining this class.

VII. WHAT DID WE ESL/EFL TEACHERS LEARN FROM THIS STUDY?

This research clearly showed that in spite of 1.5 years' time, students did not achieve the same goals or levels of learning English. While some students are making a dramatic leap in all the three areas of vocabulary, grammar, and idiom; others may be making some slight advancement and the rest are staggering or even backsliding. For some students, it seems extremely difficult to get through the course and earn pleasure from their accomplishment in all these three domains. At times, students may feel miserable because the author is always too heavy-handed in rectifying and revising their masterpieces. She did it on purpose realizing that it is rather difficult for her students to have developed their English thus far, thereby not wanting any person to devastate their self-esteem. Following her teaching philosophy of "Just make it better," the author thus cannot ignore even minor errors like spelling or capitalization. She agrees with the saying, "Practice makes perfect." As a result, the author always pays careful attention to every word her students wrote/used. This may be a cause of their staggering or backsliding. Presumably, the author may not have explained to them explicitly enough about her goals and expectations. In return, the way she has pushed them bit by bit to meet the requirements in this translation three-course series may not fulfill their expectation of learning English.

For her personal career development, the author has learned a precaution for all instructors. That is, we all instructors should not undermine our students' competence. Some students may be good at grammar, but cannot translate well. Some may be not good at speaking, but they have some experiences in their translation, thereby being able to translate well on a particular topic. Even though it is true that some students may get bad grades, they may know some jargons which perfectly fit the context. Strong students may make serious mistakes. Instructors should use everything available—their own knowledge, textbooks and/or materials, and students—to enhance students' language development. Unsurprisingly, such open-mindedness made the author learn something new all the time while driving her novice translators to learn to translate. For the author, at least, she learned how to teach her students to translate, to what degree she should revise, and which item fits the finals, among many others. The problem in her research may not even fit the

items she chose. She also learned to churn her disappointment with their drawbacks into her own lessons to fill those gaps.

Another important thing the author learned from this study is that she has to be more careful with the prompts she has made. When she prepared the items to investigate, the author picked up the first 13 items in the finals at intermediate level simply for her convenience. She did not look specifically into the possibility of producing the idiom as she should have done. As a consequence, plenty of the results fall into the development in the categories of grammar and lexicon rather than idiom. The author should have thought of or created sentences which could draw out the students' ability in idiom usage more appropriately and proportionally. This is an important lesson to be learnt from this big mistake.

The author's last words—when teaching students to translate, instructors should think of the lexical and grammatical foundation of each student first. Based on her experience as an instructor and a translator, these two elements are essential to translation learners' success. It would be nice if all novice translators are well equipped with both capabilities, but this may be true only in fictional classrooms. Instructors should not feel disheartened or depressed. Rather, they should take on board such existent foundation of their students and establish a stronger one for them each along the course. This process may take some time, but we instructors have to believe in our students in the same way as they do in us. Being open-minded to all undertakings, both instructors and learners can become successful at their own pace, in their own track, and to the peak of their own career.

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