Assessing Students' Translation Result

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ABSTRACT

A common problem in teaching translation is assessing students' translation result. This is caused by the standard of translation competence and instruments for assessing translation result. This study is aimed at presenting a method for assessing students' translation result by reconstruct the translation competence criteria then relate it with two assessment methods; rubric and assessment grading. These methods have been applied to university students of English education department when they take to Translation subject. In doing so, the peer assessment is devised to help the students see the results of other students' translation result and find out the feedback.

KEYWORDS: assessment, translation result, translation competence, rubric, assessment grading

INTRODUCTION

As a skill that functions as an intermediary in the use of two languages, learners should perform qualified translation. The basic concept of Translation is to change the word from the source language to the target language. In addition, translation activities are more complex, because they not only to imply the meaning of language but also to preserve the original meaning without adding or distorting the meaning in the source language. In Teaching Translation for learners of English as foreign language, evaluation and assessment should have been done for a numerous of purposes; among others are to know the quality of the acquired knowledge of translation.

As Translation as part of pedagogy, there is an ordinary problem which seemed to be a general problem. This is seen that translation evaluation and assessment are done on a-systematic basis (Colina, 2003, p. 128) in which that there are few studies recently regarded error evaluation and grading assessment. Like other evaluation and assessment, the problem is still evolved in validity and reliability of assessing translation result. Since translation pedagogy has a role as a process and outcome (Cao, 1996), therefore both are assessed. To carry out valid and reliable procedures for measuring translation can be started by asking important questions about the procedure (Cohen 1994: 6) such as: for whom the test is written, what are the test steps, who receives the test results, how the results are used. The answer to the question about the test procedure becomes a clear guide to what should be measured. This is reflected in the construction of the test. Angelelli (2009) mentions that there are several steps to defining the translation test construct, namely by asking some relevant questions to investigate the construct of "translation ability" and the use of rubrics to measure this construct. This construct will be a guide to measuring the translation skills of EFL learners. However, defining the construct must also begin with what must be achieved in translation competence. There are several model regarding translation competence. Among them are those directed by Cao (1996) and Hatim and Mason (1997). Model of translation competence by Cao (1996) is applicable to this study in that it reflects the component of communicative language as described by Bachman (1990) which covers language competence, strategic competence, and knowledge structures. In more detail, Cao (1996) directs translational language competence that consisted of organizational competence and pragmatic competence. Organizational competence includes grammatical competence (the knowledge of vocabulary, morphology, syntax, and grapheme) and textual competence (the knowledge of cohesive and rhetorical organization). While, pragmatic competence includes illocutionary competence (the knowledge of idealistic, manipulative heuristic and imaginative functions) and sociolinguistic competence (the knowledge of dialectal, regional, and national varieties and also cultural references and figures of speech).

A construct can be defined as a clear picture of what the test maker must understand which includes evaluated capabilities (Angelelli, 2009, p. 22). It is meant that if you are going to test your ability to translate, it is important to define exactly what must be measured. To bear in mind that for students of English as foreign language learners, translation competence should cover aspects as mentioned by Cao. However, for those students, its aspect coverage is more specific to capabilities that are focused on student operational tasks in the English department. Therefore, to cover those operational task the defined construct for translation competence covers grammatical competence, textual competence and pragmatic competence. In the next discussion, details of each construct will be presented according to their respective competencies.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Subjects in this study were undergraduate students, 8th semester English language education study programs who were taking courses in Translation and Interpretation. The number of students is 115 from 4 classes. After participating in learning 6 times (6 weeks), a learning outcome test was conducted. The test conducted is a test of translating English text into Indonesian and translating Indonesian into English. The test instrument is one paragraph of text in English consisting of 186 words and 1 paragraph of Indonesian text consisting of 134 words. The total words translated each into these two languages are 320 words. The time provided is 60 minutes. Translation tools are only manual dictionaries. Electronic dictionaries and machine translators are not allowed to use. The technique of evaluating the results of translation is done in a peer assessment where each student becomes an assessor to assess the work of other students. If there are doubts about the assessment, always consult with the researcher. While the assessment validation was carried out by the second assessor. To determine the evaluation, the researcher prepare assessment rubric based on the construct taken from translational competence which is adopted from Angelelli (2009) as described below.

Table 1. Construct based on grammatical competence (Angelelli, 2009)

Grade	Competence
5	T shows mastery of TL in grammar, spelling, and punctuation. Very few or no error
4	T shows proficiency of TL in grammar, spelling, and punctuation. Occasional errors
3	T shows weak of TL in grammar, spelling, and punctuation. Frequent errors
2	T shows lack of TL in grammar, spelling, and punctuation. Numerous errors
1	T shows poor of TL in grammar, spelling, and punctuation. Serious and frequent errors

T: translation result, TL: target language

Table 2. Construct based on textual competence (Angelelli, 2009)

Grade	Competence
5	T is very well organized into paragraphs and consistent to TL texts. It flows together flawlessly and forms a natural whole.
4	T is very well organized into paragraphs and consistent to TL texts. It flows together well and forms a coherent whole.
3	T is organized into paragraphs and consistent to TL texts. T style maybe inconsistent. There are occasional awkward or oddly placed elements.
2	T is disorganized and lack divisions into coherent style. It does not flow together. It is frequent awkward and oddly placed statements.
1	T is disorganized and lack of divisions into coherent paragraph. T does not flow together. It is awkward. Sentences and ideas seem unrelated.

T: translation result, TL: target language

Table 3. Construct based on pragmatic competence (Angelelli, 2009)

Grade	Competence
5	T shows a masterful ability to the intended TL audience.
4	T shows a proficiency ability to the intended TL audience.
3	T shows good ability to the intended TL audience.
2	T shows weak ability to the intended TL audience.
1	T shows inability to the intended TL audience.

T: translation result, TL: target language

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The assessment that has been carried out on the results of student translation by using rubric can be seen from Table 4 below.

Table 4. Rubric for Translational Competence

Grading	Competence					
	Grammatical		Textual		Pragmatic	
	∑	Percentage	∑	Percentage	∑	Percentage
5	15	13%	10	9%	8	7%
4	33	29%	27	23%	26	22%
3	51	44%	31	27%	43	37%
2	12	10%	28	24%	25	22%
1	4	3%	19	19%	13	11%
	115	100%	115	100%	115	100%

From the aspect of grammatical competence, as many as 44% of the students in the translation reached Grade 3, as many as 13% of students reached Grade 5 and there were still 3% of students having the lowest grade. If students' translation competency shows mostly in Grade 3, this means that students have average competence, in particular that the students shows average in controlling vocabularies (the words of a language), morphology (the way that smaller parts combine to form words), syntax (the way that words combine to form phrases and sentences).

When viewed from the aspect of textual competence, there are almost the same numbers in Grades 2, 3 and 4, which are 24%, 27% and 23% of students show the results of the translation. In this textual competency, it turns out that as many as 19% of students are at the lowest level. This means that students have a low ability on textual competence for translation competencies. This competence is important in that it relies on the understanding the rules of rhetoric and cohesion in both source language and target language well enough to know what meanings are conveyed (Angelelli, 2009). As translation is important intermediary for EFL learners, the low mastery of textual competence affects in interpreting the language that is translated. In practice, the textual competence of the students usually come along with their grammatical competence since both are close connection. From the percentage result for grammatical competence and textual competence, the percentage shows common similarity in that the students' high percentage for both competence is on Grade 3.

For pragmatic competence, the ability of students is shown in the highest percentage in Grade 3 which is 37%. There are still many students who show the lowest pragmatic abilities, namely those who occupy Grade 1 by 11%. For this competence, the students show common achievement as in previous competences. Pragmatic competence, in this sense, is important that it relates the translation result to its readers. It communicates the meaning from the source text to its target readers. If the students' translator has low pragmatic competence, the interpretation of the meaning from the source text to the target readers might not be successfully transferred.

CONCLUSION

In assessing translation result for the students of English as foreign language, a systematic evaluation using standard is needed. Using standard for assessment can be specified as a construct. For specific subject like Translation, defining construct can be started by defining the competence in translation. Translation competence covers many aspects such as language competence, strategic competence, and knowledge structures. Translation test may not cover them all. It should be directed to the level of competence of the students.

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