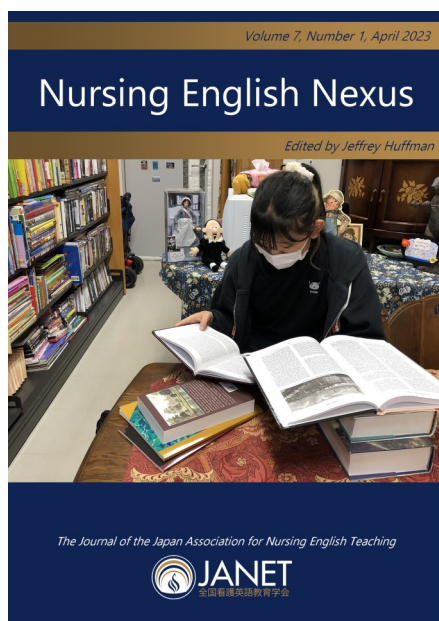


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Nursing Students' Usage of Translation Software for English Writing Assignments

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Abstract: *Investigating how Japanese university nursing students use Japanese-to-English translation software in an EFL setting was the goal of this study. Thirty-two nursing students were given a simple survey in closed-response format to ascertain their use of and feelings about translation software. The results of the survey show that a majority of the respondents felt that using translation software is acceptable, that it is superior to their own English writing ability, and that a paper they wrote in Japanese and translated into English using translation software can be regarded as their own original work.*

Keywords: translation software, nursing students, academic writing

Technology has advanced at an astonishing rate, and English language teachers have been quick to adopt technology in the classroom. Along with computers and the Internet have come a vast array of computer-assisted language learning (CALL) tools. CALL has become instrumental in EFL teaching, and various universities, schools, and institutions have implemented CALL into their English language programs. While the advantages and benefits of CALL in language classrooms are overwhelmingly positive, the use of translation software (TS) is debatable. Although many EFL teachers are quick to adopt CALL in their classes, some may hesitate to use or allow TS in academic writing classes. One reason may be that in the past TS struggled to produce translations free of inaccuracies and unnatural nuances. However, TS has advanced to such a level that it can turn large amounts of text from one language into a grammatically correct version in another language with the click of a button. TS is turning the skill of writing, which would normally take years of study, into a task that can be performed by anyone at no or very little cost. Major search engines such as Yahoo and Google have free TS applications available that do not require the user to download them first, making them instantaneously accessible.

With neural translation software (NTS) demonstrating remarkable improvement over

phrase-based translation software (PTS), TS is starting to produce accurate translations (Tsai, 2019). In fact, the grammatical accuracy of some current TS is superior to that of intermediate-level EFL students (Lee, 2020). Understandably, TS is used more frequently by EFL students who are at the beginner level in terms of their English ability compared to high-level EFL students (Valijärvi & Tarsoly, 2019).

Even though TS software has its uses, many teachers agree that students should not overuse it. Perhaps this is because academic writing is a learned skill that basically involves two steps: step one is organizing and planning ideas, and step two is putting these ideas into writing. It would be unfortunate if students saw TS as capable of producing perfectly written English papers without proper organizing and planning. While the motivated English learner will continue to see the advantages of learning the writing process, other learners may see TS as offering an easy alternative to the writing process.

Method

This study examined how Japanese nursing students use TS for writing English papers and how they view such usage. The participants were second-year university nursing students enrolled in an elective English communication class. The class consisted of 35 students grouped into an intermediate-level class. At the end of the fifteen-

week semester, the students were given an anonymous five-question bilingual questionnaire to ascertain their opinions and usage of TS (Appendix A). At the time of the survey, TS had not been mentioned or discussed in any of the previous classes, thereby minimizing any possible influence from the teacher. In addition, the students' assignments had already been graded and returned to them before distributing the survey, eliminating any pressure to not answer the questions honestly.

The survey was given in the last 10 minutes of the final class of the semester. The teacher left the room after explaining the survey was for research purposes, completely anonymous, and voluntary. Two random students were asked to distribute the surveys after the teacher had left the room. After the survey was completed, the students were asked to put the surveys in a box that was left at the front of the classroom, which the teacher collected at the end of the day. Of the 35 students present on the day of the survey, 32 students responded to the survey. .

Results and Discussion

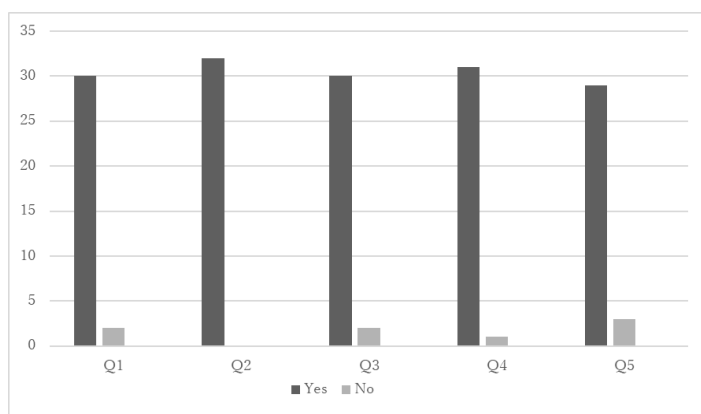
The questionnaire results are shown in Figure 1. A total of 30 of the 32 students (93.75%) who responded to the survey said they used TS to write a paper in this particular course. Given that even somewhat unskilled Internet users can easily gain access to free TS on smartphones and computers, it is not surprising that this many students in the class took advantage of TS. In addition, because the use of TS was not discussed

at all in any of the classes during the semester, the students may have felt that it was fine to use it.

All 32 of the respondents (100%) said that using TS produces a better paper than they could produce themselves. This indicates that the students felt their English writing ability was not as good as the TS. It is therefore understandable that they use it for translating the Japanese version of a graded paper.

In this class, the students had to submit two writing assignments, both of which were graded. Each assignment was a two-paragraph paper that they wrote outside of class on their own time. The results show that 30 of the 32 students (93.75%) said that they wrote a paper in Japanese first and then translated it into English. Although English language teaching in Japanese schools is now focused more on a communicative language teaching (CLT) approach, the grammar-translation method is still widely adopted by many secondary school teachers (Mitchell, 2017). Therefore, it not surprising that Japanese students often use translation methods when writing. In addition, at the college where this research took place, the students need to maintain a certain GPA level to be able to apply for specialized courses such as public health nursing and an international study trip. Therefore, many of the nursing students at this university try hard to get the best grade they can, even in elective classes, because these classes still affect their GPA. If the students feel that TS is superior to their English writing ability, they will most likely take advantage of it to get the best grade they can.

The question of whether using translation software is morally acceptable or not needs to be addressed. In most English writing classes, as students work to improve their papers, they take advantage of available resources such as dictionaries. From the perspective of the teacher, using a dictionary—traditional or online—to translate words here and there is an important part of the writing process, and many teachers



therefore encourage it. However, issues arise when students use TS to translate complete sentences and paragraphs. In most EFL writing classrooms, writing is considered to be a process that starts with the creation of ideas which are then arranged and worked into longer segments of writing. Students are often discouraged from writing an essay in their L1 and then translating it; however, according to the results of Question 4, 31 of the students (96.9%) thought that using TS to translate into English a paper they first wrote in Japanese is acceptable.

The results from Question 5 show that 29 students (90.6%) thought that a paper that has been translated from Japanese into English with TS can be labeled as the student's own work. In this class, due to unavoidable time constraints, prewriting planning and feedback sessions were unable to be utilized, and only the paper itself was graded. Although feedback and revision sessions offer students the opportunity to improve their writing and get a grasp of the importance of the writing process, it is often not feasible to do so because of scheduling limitations and large class sizes (Tsai, 2019). The students in this study, therefore, did not experience the writing process, which may have been influential in them seeing the finished product as the goal, not the writing process itself. This may be why so many students answered Yes to this question. When students are given a writing assignment as a take-home task, it is understandable that they think the final draft is the priority.

Conclusion

The results of this study indicate that the majority of the students in this class are comfortable using TS and that they utilized it for translating Japanese assignments into English. All the students indicated that they can write better English papers with the help of TS than they are capable of on their own. In addition, most of the students felt that an English TS version of their

original Japanese papers can be considered their own work.

This study included several limitations. One limitation was the small sample size from which the data was collected. Therefore, the results cannot be applied universally to Japanese university students. Another limitation was that the closed question format did not shed light onto the reasons why the students answered the way they did.

One key takeaway from the results is that the majority of those polled here felt that using TS is not morally wrong. This may raise questions in the minds of EFL instructors regarding the use of TS as a tool. As long as instructors continue to grade the final product and not the writing process itself, it is very likely that Japanese students will continue to use TS. For beginner and intermediate students, penalizing grammatical errors, incorrect vocabulary, and surface errors may itself push them to use TS, as they believe it can produce a more grammatically accurate essay than they can write by themselves.

One way to educate students on the use of the TS may be taking them through the prewriting stage of planning and having them submit their pre-writing plans, word maps, and other materials used in the pre-writing stages in English. This may encourage the students to write directly in English without using TS. Another way—although difficult to implement due to time constraints—may be for the actual writing to be done in class under the instruction of the teacher, who could supervise the way students use resources such as online dictionaries and TS. The use of TS can be advantageous for EFL learning; however, teachers need to provide proper instruction to the students for it to be beneficial (Lee, 2020). Because most students will undoubtedly use TS, whether it be during their time as university students or later, simply banning TS may not be the correct choice. Teachers must provide clear guidelines and instruction on how TS can be used effectively for

English language learning.

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Appendix A

Questionnaire:

All responses are anonymous, voluntary, and private, and will not be used for anything other than statistical analysis for research purposes. Please circle **Yes** or **No**.

1: Did you use translation software to write a paper in this class?

Yes No

2: Do you think you can write better English papers using translation software?

Yes No

3: When writing an English paper in this class, did you write it in Japanese first?

Yes No

4: Do you think using translation software to translate a paper you wrote in Japanese into English is acceptable?

Yes No

5: Do you think a paper that you wrote in Japanese and then used translation software to translate into English is your own work?

Yes No

すべての回答は匿名、任意、非公開であり、研究目的のための統計分析以外に使用されることはありません。「はい」「いいえ」に○をつけてください。

1: この授業では、翻訳ソフトを使って論文を書きましたか？

はい いいえ

2: 翻訳ソフトを使えば、より良い英語論文が書けるとおもいますか？

はい いいえ

3: このクラスで英語の論文を書くときは、まず日本語で書いたのですか？

はい いいえ

4: 日本語で書いた論文を翻訳ソフトを使って英語に翻訳することは問題ないとおもいますか？

はい いいえ

5: 日本語で書いた論文を翻訳ソフトで英語に翻訳したものは、自分の作品だとおもいますか？

はい いいえ