Students’ use of translation as a strategy to learn English

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ABSTRACT

Teachers usually assume that the most effective way to master English is to learn and think directly in English rather than to use translation, which would interfere with their students’ English acquisition. From the learner’s perspective, however, translation is still widely used in the learning process. Learners often employ translation as a learning strategy to comprehend, remember, and produce English whether or not they are discouraged to do so by their teachers. Students’ learning behavior in using translation seems inconsistent with their teachers’ beliefs. Nevertheless, there is little information available on how learners use translation to learn a foreign language. Thus, the purpose of this study is to investigate Taiwanese students’ use of translation as a learning strategy to learn English. The data collection approach was through qualitative interviews. In order to identify the relationship between learners’ English proficiency level and their use of translation, five successful and five less successful students were chosen. The results show that students used a wide variety of learning strategies related to translation. Both more and less proficient learners recognized that translation played a vital role in their English learning, but they had different understandings of translation and how it should be used in the learning process. This study also hopes to sensitize English teachers in Taiwan to various learning strategies involving translation and to the possible benefits of using translation for English learning reported by the students.

REFERENCES


**APPENDIX**

**Interview Guide**

1. My understanding is that English teachers in Taiwan use both Chinese and English in the classroom. What is the reason for your teachers to use Chinese or English as the medium of instruction? What pattern of language use do you seem to find?
2. Usually, English teachers, parents, or your peers will give you some advice about how to learn English. Have they asked you not to use translation to learn English and to think directly in English when you are learning or using English? If so, what do you think of this advice?
3. Taiwanese learners often use Chinese or translation to help them learn English (for instance, the use of Chinese-English dictionaries). How do you personally do that?
4. How do you feel about using Chinese or translation to learn English?
5. What are the effects of using translation to learn English?
6. What proficiency level can benefit most from using translation? Why?
7. What language skills do you feel can be strengthened the most form using translation? Why?
8. Some people say that English learners can eliminate their habit of using translation gradually as their learning goes on? What are your ideas about how to change this habit?
9. Is there anything you would like to tell me about your experience or your thoughts using translation to learn English?