

## Developing writing abilities of the third-year English major students by using translation exercises

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### ABSTRACT

The purposes of this research were 1) to investigate the students' problems in translating Thai to English; 2) to study the translation strategies for academic translation of English major students of Liberal Faculty of a private university in Bangkok; 3) to determine how much the translation exercises affect the students' writing abilities; and 4) to investigate the students attitudes towards teaching translation.

The participants were 12 third-year English majored students of a university in Bangkok in the second semester of the academic year 2021. The instruments were: 1) Pretest and Posttest to test the students' knowledge about using English vocabulary, English Grammar, and translating paragraphs; 2) an experiment tool is comprised of ten Thai to English translation exercises; 3) a questionnaire asking the students' satisfaction towards the practicing of the ten translating exercises. The mean, percentage, standard deviation and a t-test were applied to analyze the data.

The results of the study were as follows:

1. The mean score of the posttest was increasing with the difference of 17.7 marks from the pretest. This means that the translation exercises were helpful in helping the students to gain their abilities of translating.
2. The students' attitude towards the practicing the translation exercises was at high level.
3. The teaching translation Thai to English by using translation exercises affected the students's writing abilities.

4. The students' attitude towards the teaching and using translation exercises were at high level.

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**Keywords:** Thai to English translation; translation exercises; English translation abilities; English writing abilities; English grammar; satisfaction

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## Introduction

Thailand has joined in the Asian Economic Community since 2015. Since then, English language has become an important foreign language. According to the Thai National Scheme of Education Plan (2017-2036), Thai students have practiced English skills both for gaining knowledge for their higher education and for usage in their daily life. The aims of the Thai National Scheme of Education plan are to prepare Thai people to practice English well so that they can communicate with foreigners and can face with the Global change in the 21th century. In addition, Thai education is reformed to be knowledge-based and lifelong learning form. At present, the abilities in communicating English are not only for communicating with foreigners, but also for the basis for the higher education (Wiriyajitra, 2002).

Currently, English skills - listening, speaking, reading and writing - are important

for everyone to use in their daily life, in their business life, and in their career. Since we have more opportunity to communicate to people from other countries who use different languages, but the language for the mean of communication is English. Hence, translation becomes paramount in our present livelihood. Translation skills need the integration knowledge of not only being well in English skills, listening, speaking, reading and writing (Puwong, & Leungnapha, 2019, Srinarach, & Junpaphaeng, 2021), but also well knowledge of syntactics and semantic (Baseel and Naser, 2015).

Translation is the process of translating words or text from one language into other language by means of an equivalent target-language text. It is a complicated skill that the translators have to have insight understanding of the text from one language, and then translate it into another language keeping the meaning, style, and purpose of the

original text. Additionally, translation is the process of transferring meanings and culture from one language to another. The aforementioned ideas are supported by Sriworanart (Sriworanart, 2007) who mentioned that translation is not only translating meanings between languages, but also is a kind of conveying cultures. So, the different cultures in different languages being translated should be thought about. It can be said that the translators are important connectors of those two different cultures. Moreover, the result of the study of Malligamas (2000), confirmed that there are four main factors that affect the translation strategies to translate Thai texts into English. Those factors are perspective factor, verb factor, translator factor, and context factor.

Translation requires the translators to be proficient both in the source language, the original language, and the target language, the language to be translated. In this research, the source language is Thai, the students' mother tongue, and the target language is English, their foreign language. In translation a Thai sentence to an English, the translator writes an English sentence with the same rules of

writing. The translated phrases compose of words according to the rules of writing an English phrases. In the same way, the translated sentences are composed of words phrases the same way as writing sentences. In writing sentences, the writers arrange and put words, as nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs etc., in correct and proper places. Like writing, the translation also arranges words as mentioned in the writing in the correct and proper places as writing does. The common system of translation and writing are using correct words with proper order and agreement of words. Hence in this study, the researcher would like to know if the translation lessons can also help the students' writing abilities.

Liraz Postan (2020) proposed the ideas that support the saying about the system of translation and writing. She said that translation is not just about words and grammar – it's also about the system of writing and the conventions of a written language. She explained that both translation and writing concern with language which is written in correct order and system which is basically composed of the conventions, punctuations, and alphabets.

Translation is a complicated skill for Thai students, especially the skill in translating Thai into English. The most common problems for Thai students are the problems of using proper vocabulary and correct grammatical structure (Wimonchalau, 2000). The different structures of Thai and English cause many problems to Thai students to translate properly and correctly.

EN 347 is the course of translation from Thai into English provided to the third-year English major students of Liberal Arts Faculty at Bangkokthonburi University. The students practiced translating English to Thai when they were in the second-year. In their previous course, EN 345, the Translating English to Thai course, the students found that they had problems with translating noun-phrases because of the different system of word order. The English tenses also cause a lot of problems to the students because in English there are many different tenses that the students have to conjugate verbs according to the different tenses. On the contrary, Thai does not conjugate verbs according to the tense, but we add some words as “แล้ว กำลัง (ทำ) หรือ กำลังจะ (ทำ)” etc..

To help students go over these problems, the different systems of both the Thai language and English language, the researcher gave them more translation exercises with appropriate and useful grammar points.

### Objectives of the study

This study aims to study about knowledge, attitude, and the translation from Thai language to English language of the third-year English majored students of Liberal Arts Faculty of Bangkokthonburi University. The objectives of the study are as the followings:

1. Study the level of the students' knowledge in translation Thai language to English language.
2. Study the students' attitude toward practicing translating from Thai language to English language using
3. Study how much the translating exercises affect the students' writing English abilities.

### Methodology

The study was a kind of quantitative study utilizing pretest and posttest to study the effectiveness of the translating exercises. Ten translating exercises were



employed to the students in ten classes within 2 hours each class.

The participants in this research were 12 third-year English majored students of Liberal Arts Faculty of Bangkokthonburi University who studied EN 347 Translation Thai to English in the second semester of academic year 2021. The objectives of the course are:

1. Translate fiction and non-fiction Thai originals of general context to English texts and naturalness of target texts.
2. Analyze problems in translation and solutions to the problems.

In each translation class, the students practiced translating Thai text with a specific grammar point. There are three phases of practicing in each class.

Phase 1: The class began with the explanation of the grammar point being used in that translating exercise.

Phase 2: The students spent 60 minutes translating each exercise.

Phase 3: The students spent another 60 minutes discussing about the problems of the translation.

#### The instruments used were:

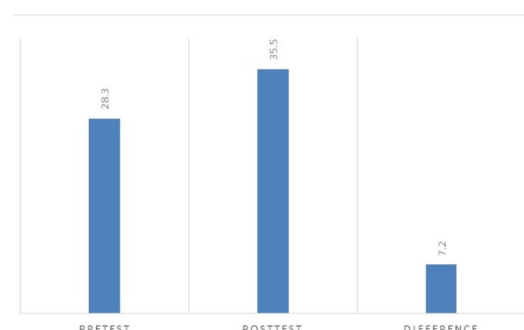
1. Pretest and posttest is composed of 10 items of translating academic vocabulary, 10 items of translating 10

sentences with different grammar points, and a paragraph of an article of about 10 sentences. The scores of the tests were marked according to the correctness of the form of the words and proper choice of using the vocabulary, the correctness of the arrangement of words in the sentences, correct grammatical structure, and finally keep the meaning of the target language the same as the original language.

2. Ten translating exercises.

3. A five-point Likert scale questionnaire was administered to the students after the posttest. The questionnaire investigated the students' attitude about the exercises they had practiced, and the advantages of the translation course. The findings

4. The output of the pretest and posttest.



**Figure 1.** Average scores of pretest and posttest and the difference scores. (N= 12)

According to the pretest and posttest result displayed in figure 1. shows that the average pretest score is 28.3 whereas the average score of the posttest

is 35.5. Comparing these tests score, it is found that the average posttest scores are increasing 7.2.

**Table 1.** The lowest and highest scores, average scores and standard deviation (N= 12)

	The lowest score	The highest score	average	Std. Deviation
Pretest	25.00	31.00	28.33	1.87
Posttest	34.00	38.00	35.50	1.45
Score differences	4.00	11.00	7.17	2.12

The table above tells the lowest and the highest scores with average score and the standard deviation of each test. The third line shows the differences of each slot.

of the posttest score from the pretest score is significance with the T statistic of 11.683. It means that the scores increase significantly and statistical confidence at 99%.

The result from paired sample T-Test (Table 2) shows that the increasing

**Table 2.** Paired sample T-Test of pretest and posttest (N=12)

Paired Samples Statistics				
	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1 posttest	35.5000	12	1.44600	.41742
pretest	28.3333	12	1.87487	.54123
Paired Sample Correlation				
	N	Correlation	Sig.	
Pair 1. Posttest and pretest	12	.201	.531	

Paired Samples Test					
Paired Differences					
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
				lower	upper
Pair 1. Pretest and posttest	7.16667	2.12489	.61340	5.81658	8.51676
Paired Samples Test					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)		
Pair 1. Pretest-posttest	11.683	11	.000		

Looking at the frequency of the pretest scores, the range of the students score is between 25-31 marks (Table3). These ranges of pretest and posttest marks show the basic translation abilities of the students which are able to split the students' translation ability into 3 groups, the high marks group (30-31 marks), the middle marks group (28-29 marks) and the low marks group (25-26 marks)

**Table 3.** The frequency of Pretest scores.

Pretest scores		frequency	percent	Valid percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	25.00	1	8.3	8.3	8.3
	26.00	2	16.7	16.7	26.0
	28.00	3	25.0	25.0	50.0
	29.00	2	16.7	16.7	66.7
	30.00	3	25.0	25.0	91.7
	31.00	1	8.3	8.3	100.0
Total		12	100.0	100.0	

**Table 4** shows the improvement of the low score students. The posttest average score of this group increased from 25.67 marks (in the pretest) to 35.67 marks (in the posttest) with 10 marks increasing from the full score, 50 marks, of each test. The increasing is significant.

Paired Samples Statistics				
	Mean	N	Std.Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1 posttest	35.6667	3	.57735	.33333
pretest	25.6667	3	.57735	.33333
Paired Samples Correlations				
	N	Correlation	Sig.	
Pair 1 posttest & pretest	3	.500	.667	

Table 4. Paired samples t-test of pretest and posttest in low marks group. (N= 3)

**Table 5.** also shows the paired Samples t-test of pretest and posttest low mark students group. The T-Static at 17.321 indicates that the increasing is significance at 99% of confidence.

Paired Samples Test					
	Paired Differences				95% Confidence
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Interval of the	
				Difference	
				Lower	Upper
Pair 1 posttest- pretest	10.00000	1.00000	.57735	7.51586	12.48414

Paired Samples Test			
	t	df	Sig. (2 tailed)
Part 1 posttest-pretest	17.321	2	.003

Table 5 Paired samples T-Test of pretest and posttest in low marks group. (N= 3)

**Table 6** Paired Samples t-test of pretest and posttest in middle marks group (N = 5)

Paired samples Statistics					
	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	
Pair 1 posttest	34.8000	5	1.09545	.48990	
pretest	28.4000	5	.54772	.24495	
Paired Samples Correlations					
	N	Correlation	Sig		
Pair 1 posttest & pretest	5	.167	.789		
Paired Samples Test					
	Paired Differences				
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% confidence Interval of the difference	
				Lower	Upper
Pair 1 posttest- pretest	6.40000	1.14018	.50990	4.98429	7.8571
Paired Samples Test					
	t	df	Sig. (2- tailed)		
Pair 1 posttest - pretest	12.551	4	.000		

Table 6 Paired Samples t-test of pretest and posttest in middle marks group (N = 5) The average scores of the middle marks group is 6.4 marks increasing (in the posttest) from 28.4 marks to 34.8 marks of 50 full scores. (Table 6)

The result of the Paired Samples t-test reveals that the increasing scores of middle marks group is significance. The t-statistic of the comparison of the

pretest and posttest is 12.551, which means that the increasing is significance at the confidence of 99%.

**Table 7.** Examined Paired Sample t-test of the pretest and posttest of high mark students group. (N = 4)

Paired Samples Statistics					
	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	
Pair 1 posttest	36.2500	4	2.06155	1.03078	
pretest	30.2500	4	.50000	.25000	
Paired Samples Correlations					
	N	Correlation	Sig.		
Pair 1 posttest & pretest	4	.566	.434		
Paired Samples Test					
Paired Differences					
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	90% Confidence interval of the Difference	
				Lower	Upper
Pair 1 posttest - pretest	6.00000	1.82574	.91287	3.09484	8.90516
Paired Samples Test					
	t	df.	Sig (2- tailed)		
Pair 1 posttest - pretest	6.573	3	.007		

From the tables above, the average score from posttest of high marks students group increases from 30.25 marks to

36.25 marks of the full scores of 50 marks. The increasing average score is 6.0 marks which is statistical significance. The comparison

of the pretest and posttest score, the t-statistic value is 6.573 and has the statistic confidence at 99%.

The findings from the pretest and posttest were as the following:

1. The mean score of the pretest was 28.3 while the mean score of the posttest was 35.5. When looking at the differences between pretest and posttest scores of each student individually, most of them attained higher marks in their posttest.

2. Looking at the scores of the pretest, the students could be divided into three groups: the low marks group with 25 to 26 marks, the middle marks group with 28 to 29 marks, and the high marks group with 30 to 31 marks (Table 3). It was noticeable that the low mark group attained the most average different score (Tables 4. and 5.) and the middle mark group of students attained higher average different score than the high mark group (Tables 6. and 7).

### **The Result of the study**

1. About the student's satisfaction getting from a questionnaire

1.1. Concerning the advantages of gaining vocabulary knowledge and the

abilities in using them after practicing Thai to English translation exercises, four students defined that their vocabulary knowledge and abilities were improved from low level to middle level while eight students defined that their vocabulary knowledge and abilities were improved from middle level to good level.

1.2. About the advantage of gaining writing abilities after practicing Thai to English translation exercises, six students revealed that their writing abilities were improved from low level to fair level, while 6 students revealed that their writing abilities were improved from fair level to good level.

1.3. The students were satisfied with the course of translation and the translation exercises they practiced during the study in Thai to English translation. 6 students found that the exercises were good and relevant to the aims of the course while six students found the exercises were very good and very much relevant to the aims of the course.

1.4. The students were satisfied with the exercises of translation they practiced in the course of Thai to English translation. Four students accepted that the exercises were very relevant to their level of knowledge

while five students found the most relevant with three students had the idea of fair relevant. Furthermore, nine students found that the exercises were much relevant to their English abilities. Five students said the exercises were much convenient to be usage in their daily life and their education, the other five students found the exercises were the most useful.

1.5. The translation exercises helped the students understand and know much more the techniques of translating, and as the result, the students developed their abilities in translating Thai to English. They dreamed of being a good translator in translation business.

2. Regarding the usefulness of the translation exercises that much affected the writing abilities (information getting from the questionnaire)

2.1. The translation exercises helped students know much more vocabulary and learn more to use the vocabulary correctly in sentences. They could choose the specific vocabulary to use in sentences suitably.

2.2. The exercises helped students write correct sentences in different situations. The students learnt to arrange the sentences correctly.

2.3. The writing abilities the students gained from the translation exercises gave them more enthusiastic to learn more English, to practice writing English more. And lastly, they love writing English more.

### Discussion and Suggestion

From the findings mentioned above, it is clearly defined that the Translation Exercises are very helpful to the course of “Translating Thai into English”. The increasing of both the average marks and individual marks on the posttest scores reveal that the translation exercises are good and suitable for the teaching of “Translating Thai to English”.

From the students’ opinions on the translation exercises and the teaching of “Translating Thai to English” reveal that the students appreciate the exercises, the course and the teaching very much. And the most important in the findings reveal that the translation exercises affected the students’ writing abilities a lot.

Additionally, the researcher is more confident that the translation exercises are helpful to students of



every level. The students need more time to practice their translation exercises both in class and in their free time at home. The more they practice translation, the more they become good translators and good writers.

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