

Experienced Translators' Tips and Tricks for Using Online Tools in Thai-English Abstract Translation

Puttachart S. Limsiriruengrai

*Business English Program
Buriram Rajabhat University, Buriram, Thailand
Corresponding author: khruuthai@yahoo.com*

Abstract

The objective of the study was to find out the tips and tricks for using online tools in Thai-English abstract translation of experienced translators. The sample group consisted of 36 experienced translators. They were selected by using the purposive sampling method. An online questionnaire constructed by the researcher was utilized in data collection. The statistics employed in the data analysis were percentage, mean, and standard deviation. The qualitative data were analyzed by using content analysis. The results showed that the majority of the samples were female (77.8%). Most of the samples had 7 or more years of translation experience (52.8%). Regarding tips and tricks for using online tools in Thai-English abstract translation of the experienced translators, it was found that the translators use online dictionaries to find words and check the word usage at the highest level (4.5), followed by they use search engines to find specific names if the names are famous or there are the names on reliable websites (4.47), and they use search engines to check their choice of words and compare with others (4.30), respectively. Other tips and tricks suggested by the samples included that they use online tools to do a back-translation, to find related field of study and background knowledge in translating, to confirm their decision, to find the keyword and to try to translate by context and use online tools for help, to use Google's advanced query techniques in translating, to find the photo or picture of the word they are looking up, to use e-books for getting background knowledge and words to use, to use online thesaurus for checking word choices, and to refer to related abstracts to find reference about language usage for abstracts from different contents and disciplines, etc. These results will be useful for novice translators and new translators.

Keywords: *Tips and tricks, Online tools, Thai-English translation, Abstract, Experienced translators*

Introduction

Technological advancement has always played a major role in second language teaching and acquisition, and they have generally been accepted as valuable tools in the classroom, for autonomous practice, for tutor-learner communication and for research (Groves & Mundt, 2015). Many people use technological advances such as online tools to solve their second language barrier (Garcia & Pena, 2011). So, millions of words are now being translated into different languages by individuals using computers every day, and this number is expected to increase exponentially in the near future (Kumar, 2012). Many researchers reported that many students are now using online tools:

online dictionaries, search engines, Machine Translation (MT), online encyclopedias, online grammar checkers, and so on in their learning (Fujii, 2007; Munpru & Wuttikrikunlaya, 2013; Katephan & Sripetpun, 2016; Chotkarnchanawat, Liangpanit, & Wasuntarasophit, 2017). Many students also use the tools in translation (Fujii, 2007; Munpru & Wuttikrikunlaya, 2013; Katephan & Sripetpun, 2016; Chotkarnchanawat, Liangpanit, & Wasuntarasophit, 2017). Results of many research studies suggested that even though students use MT because of many reasons such as saving time, convenience, and getting a fast translation with better quality when compared with students' own translations; the proper training and practice must be provided (Korošec, 2011; Jolley & Maimone, 2015).

Although, students lack training in the use of the online tools, the students still use them: most students see these tools, especially MT such as Google Translate (GT) as having a positive impact on their language learning and want teachers to cover strategies for effective use (Alhaisoni & Alhaysony, 2017). In translation classes at Buriram Rajabhat University (BRU), most of the students always use these online tools to help them with their Thai-English and English-Thai translation because the students are digital natives. The digital natives refer to the students in universities today whom are born in the digital age where they spend most of their daily lives using digital devices (Prensky, 2001). Technology brings close relationship within itself to these digital natives and it is unavoidable for using online tools among second language students (Munpru & Wuttikrikunlaya, 2013). Teaching how to use these online tools properly including tips and techniques to use the tools is one of the missions that teachers must do. So, the students will be able to make the most of these tools in their translations and also their language learning (Fujii, 2007).

Academic or research abstracts are short, yet important. Abstracts are key parts of reports and research papers and sometimes academic assignments. The abstract is frequently the last item that people write, but the first thing people read when they want to have a quick overview of the whole paper. The brief results of any research studies conducted in Thai language can be presented to the international audience through the Thai-English abstracts. Thai-English translation plays an important role when the researchers would like to show their overview of the whole paper internationally. To create academic network bridge through research, it is a need for correct abstracts as they are the first thing people will learn about each other research studies. Translating correct translation will be the crucial part in this academic network bridge creation since most of research studies conducted in Thailand were written originally in Thai and then were translated into English. Some of researchers today are using online tools in translating their abstracts. It is very useful to know tips and tricks of experienced translators since the researchers will be able to use the tools more effectively. Moreover, in the translation classes at BRU, abstract translation is also focused. Therefore, it is very interesting to conduct a research to find out the tips and tricks for using online tools in Thai-English abstract translation of experienced translators. The results of this study will be useful for the novice translators, new translators, and also students in the translation class because they will be able to use the results of this study as their guidelines when implementing online tools in their abstract translation or other types of translation in the future. Moreover, teachers of translation classes can also learn from the findings and use the findings to prepare the future instruction. It should be noted that no research in the current title has been conducted before.

Methodology

1. Population and Sampling

The population of this study consisted of 40 experienced translators from Facebook's close group of The Translators and Interpreters Association of Thailand (TIAT) who informed that they translate abstracts on regular basis. And the sample group consisted of 36 experienced translators.

They were selected by using the purposive sampling method. The criteria for selecting the sample group were: 1) they are translators, 2) they had translation experience, especially abstract translation more than 1 year, 3) they use online tools on regular basis, and 4) they have tips and tricks in using online tools to translate abstracts from Thai-English. These 36 experienced translators were asked to complete an online questionnaire.

2. Instrumentation

The research tool employed in this study for data collection was an online questionnaire. The online questionnaire consisted of four parts: 1) personal information of the online questionnaire respondents, 2) their tips and tricks for using online tools in Thai-English abstract translation, 3) their other tips and tricks for using online tools in Thai-English abstract translation and 4) additional opinions and suggestions. The first part was constructed as a checklist form. The second part was constructed by using 5 point Likert scale (the lowest, low, moderate, high, the highest). And the last 2 parts were constructed by using an open-ended form. It should be noted that the research tool constructed by the researcher was examined by three experts for approving the content validity and Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) of the tool was between 0.67 and 1.00.

3. Data Collection

The 36 online questionnaire sets were distributed to the samples via Google Forms. The link of this online questionnaire was opened for the responds for two weeks (11-24 April 2018). Before opening the link for receiving the responds from the sample group, the researcher sent messages to the samples for informing and explaining about the research study objective and details of the study.

4. Data Analysis

The statistics used in data analysis were percentage, mean, and standard deviation. The qualitative data were analyzed by utilizing content analysis. The details are as follows: the online questionnaire consisted of four parts. The data collected from the online questionnaire in the first part (personal information of the online questionnaire respondents) were analyzed by using percentage. And the data derived from the second part (their tips and tricks for using online tools in Thai-English abstract translation) were analyzed by using mean, and standard deviation. As for the data obtained from the third and the fourth part of the online questionnaire (their other tips and tricks for using online tools in Thai-English abstract translation and additional opinions and suggestions.), the data were analyzed by utilizing content analysis.

Results

The following results were presented in line with the research objective:

1. Personal information of the questionnaire respondents

The result representing the personal information of the questionnaire respondents was shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Personal information of the questionnaire respondents

No.	Personal Information	Frequency (N=36)	Percentage
1	Gender		
	Male	8	22.2
	Female	28	77.8
	Total	36	100.0
2	Years of Translation Experience	10	

No.	Personal Information	Frequency (N=36)	Percentage
	1-3	7	27.8
	4-6	19	19.4
	7 or more	36	52.8
	Total		100.0

Table 1 revealed that out of 36 samples, the number of females (77.8%) was much greater than that of males (22.2%). And most of the samples had seven or more years of translation experience (52.8%), followed by 1-3 years of translation experience (27.8%), and 4-6 years of translation experience (19.4%), respectively.

2. Tips and tricks for using online tools in Thai-English abstract translation

The result representing the tips and tricks for using online tools in Thai-English abstract translation was shown in Table 2.

Table 2 Tips and tricks for using online tools in Thai-English abstract translation

No.	Tips and Tricks for Using Online Tools in Thai-English Abstract Translation	\bar{X}	SD
1	I use online tools to save my time when translating Thai-English abstracts	3.86	1.40
2	I use search engines to gain background knowledge about the abstracts before translating	4.27	0.85
3	I use search engines to find specific names if the names are famous or there are the names on reliable websites	4.47	0.74
4	I use search engines to check my choice of words and compare with others	4.30	0.92
5	I use online dictionaries to find words and check the word usage	4.5	0.81
6	I use Machine Translation (MT) to translate in word and phrasal level	2.55	1.22
7	I use Machine Translation (MT) to translate the whole paragraph and then edit it	1.94	1.18
8	I use online grammar checkers to make sure if the sentences I translate are correct	2.83	1.21
9	I use online encyclopedia to gain background knowledge about the abstracts before translating	3.72	1.20
10	I use online encyclopedia to find proper words to use in my translation	3.72	1.25
11	I use online academic journals to gain background knowledge about the abstracts before translating	3.86	1.12
12	I use online academic journals to find proper words to use in my translation	4.08	1.08

Table 2 showed that the translators use online dictionaries to find words and check the word usage at the highest level (4.5), followed by they use search engines to find specific names if the names are famous or there are the names on reliable websites (4.47), and they use search engines to check their choice of words and compare with others (4.30), respectively.

3. Other tips and tricks for using online tools in Thai-English abstract translation

Other tips and tricks for using online tools in Thai-English abstract translation suggested by the samples can be summarized that other tips and tricks suggested by the samples included that they use online tools to do a back-translation, to find related field of study and background knowledge in translating, to confirm their decision, to find the keyword and to try to translate by context and use online tools for help, to use Google's advanced query techniques in translating, to find the photo or picture of the word they are looking up, to use e-books for getting background knowledge and words to use, to use online thesaurus for checking word choices, and to refer to related abstracts to find reference about language usage for abstracts from different contents and disciplines, etc.

4. Additional opinions and suggestions

Additional opinions and suggestions were summarized as follows:

When using online tools in Thai-English abstract translation, it was suggested that to use reliable online tools, to use multiple resources to confirm the information that will be used in translation, to read as much as possible from those online tools, and after using the tools, the translators must recheck their translation again and try to make the translation sound natural as much as possible. It was also suggested that the most important aspect to be focused when translating either with or without the online tools was accuracy of the translation.

Discussion

The following points based on the research results were discussed:

1. The results of the study on the tips and tricks for using online tools in Thai-English abstract translation of the experienced translators showed that the translators use online dictionaries to find words and check the word usage at the highest level (4.5), followed by they use search engines to find specific names if the names are famous or there are the names on reliable websites (4.47), and they use search engines to check their choice of words and compare with others (4.30), respectively. This is in line with the study of Fujii (2007), Munpru & Wuttikrikunlaya (2013) and Chotkarnchanawat, Liangpanit, & Wasuntarasophit (2017) that the highest percentage of the use of online tools such as online dictionaries, search engines, and MT such as Google Translate(GT) were for finding words and checking the word usage as well as their meanings. In Fujii (2007), the two online tools were focused: Google search engine and online dictionary. He had found that the two online tools could be used to maximize educational benefits. His study compared and evaluated the effectiveness of traditional dictionary based approach to translation versus the Google based method, participants were required to revise a scientific abstract and the analysis of the two sets of data revealed noticeable improvements in the naturalness and accuracy of the participants' of the abstract. The use of the search engine proved not only valuable in developing the participants; autonomous learning capacity, but also helped overcome difficulties with articles and syntactic number, problems most commonly faced by Japanese students of English. In the study of Munpru & Wuttikrikunlaya (2013), the results revealed that online dictionaries were greatly used (61%) and Thai students tended to deal with L1 and L2 such as translating, checking meaning, and unknown words. It was also found that machine translation, search engines, and encyclopedia are also useful for students in solving and searching for contents in translation (Munpru & Wuttikrikunlaya, 2013). And in the study of Chotkarnchanawat, Liangpanit, & Wasuntarasophit (2017), they found that Thai M.A. students tended to focus on technical words and word selection when using online dictionaries.

2. In terms of other tips and tricks for using online tools in Thai-English abstract translation of the experienced translators besides what have included in the online questionnaire, the experienced translators added that they use online tools to do a back-translation, to find related

field of study and background knowledge in translating, to confirm their decision, to find the keyword and to try to translate by context and use online tools for help, to use Google's advanced query techniques in translating, to find the photo or picture of the word they are looking up, to use e-books for getting background knowledge and words to use, to use online thesaurus for checking word choices, and to refer to related abstracts to find reference about language usage for abstracts from different contents and disciplines, etc. The tips and tricks gained from this part of the online questionnaire are very valuable since these are very authentic and practical. The teacher can learn from the data and will be able to prepare practical training and tech strategies for effective use of online tools to the students since most students see these online tools, especially MT such as Google Translate (GT) as having a positive impact on their language learning and want teachers to cover strategies for effective use (Alhaisoni & Alhaysony, 2017). In the study of Garcia & Pena (2011), it was also suggested that there should be trainings of using online tools such as Machine Translation (MT) in translation classrooms.

3. In additional opinions and suggestions part, the experienced translators viewed that when using online tools in Thai-English abstract translation, translators should use reliable online tools and should use multiple resources to confirm the information that will be used in translation. The translators should read as much as possible from those online tools, and after using the tools, the translators must recheck their translation again and try to make the translation sound natural as much as possible. From the additional opinions and suggestions, it can be seen that choosing the right tools to use is important. This is conforming to the study of Chotkarnchanawat, Liangpanit, & Wasuntarasophit (2017) that Google Translate (GT) was reported that due to its misleading information such as literal translation in some cases, the students should consult or check with many resources to confirm the information. From the study of Munpru & Wuttikrikunlaya (2013), it was found that using of mixed online tools help the students to translate better because they can use the tools to obtain general information through their reading.

Conclusions

This study aimed to find out the tips and tricks for using online tools in Thai-English abstract translation of experienced translators. The results showed that the tips and tricks for using online tools in Thai-English abstract translation of the experienced translators included that the translators use online dictionaries to find words and check the word usage at the highest level (4.5), followed by they use search engines to find specific names if the names are famous or there are the names on reliable websites (4.47), and they use search engines to check their choice of words and compare with others (4.30), respectively. In the study, the samples also suggested their tips and tricks for using online tools in Thai-English abstract translation as follows: they use online tools to do a back-translation, to find related field of study and background knowledge in translating, to confirm their decision, to find the keyword and to try to translate by context and use online tools for help, to use Google's advanced query techniques in translating, to find the photo or picture of the word they are looking up, to use e-books for getting background knowledge and words to use, to use online thesaurus for checking word choices, and to refer to related abstracts to find reference about language usage for abstracts from different contents and disciplines, etc. The results will be useful for the novice translators and new translators: they can use the results of this study as their guidelines when implementing online tools in their abstract translation or other types of translation in the future. Suggestions for further studies: there should be further studies conducted with a larger sample size to obtain more information, to better determine the average values, and to avoid errors from testing the small sample size. Tips and tricks of novice or new translators should be compared with those of experienced translators in the further studies to find out the similarities and differences.

Acknowledgements

My special thanks go to those experienced translators from Facebook's close group of The Translators and Interpreters Association of Thailand (TIAT) and my teaching fellows for their kind support and information and Miss Wasana Incheon for her advice.

References

- Alhaisoni, E., & Alhaysony, M. (2017). An Investigation of Saudi EFL University Students' Attitudes towards the Use of Google Translate. *International Journal of English Language Education*, 5(1), 72-82.
- Chotkarnchanawat, R., Liangpanit, C. & Wasuntarasophit, S. (2017). Graduate students' reflections on The use of online dictionaries for writing a thesis. *Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Prince of Songkla University Pattani Campus*, 13(2), 223-246.
- Fujii, Y. (2007). Making the most of search engines for Japanese to English translation: Benefits and challenges. *Asian EFL Journal*, 23, 41-77.
- Garcia, I., & Pena, M. I. (2011). Machine translation-assisted language learning: writing for beginners. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 24(5), 471-487.
- Groves, M., & Mundt, K. (2015). Friend or foe? Google Translate in language for academic purposes. *English for Specific Purposes*, 37, 112-121.
- Jolley, J. R., & Maimone, L. (2015). Free online machine translation: use and perceptions by Spanish students and instructors. *Learn Language, Explore Cultures, TransformLives*, 181-200.
- Katephan, K. & Sripetpun, W. (2016). Attitudes, behaviors, and problems of English major students in using "Google Translate". *Journal of Liberal Arts Prince of Songkla University Hat Yai*, 8(1), 79-96.
- Korošec, M. K. (2011). Applicability and challenges of using machine translation in translator training. *ELOPE; English Language Overseas Perspectives and Enquiries*, 8(2), 7.
- Kumar, A. (2012). Machine Translation in Arabic-Speaking ELT Classrooms: Applications and Implications. *International Journal of Social Science and Humanity*, 2(6), 442.
- Munpru, S., & Wuttikrikunlaya, P. (2013). A survey of online tools used in English-Thai and Thai-English translation by Thai students. In *3rd International conference on Foreign Language Learning and Teaching (FLLT)*, Bangkok, Thailand.
- Prensky, M. (2001). Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants: part 1. *On the Horizon*, 9(5), 1-6.