

Ability to Translate and Writing Skill: A Correlational Study

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ABSTRACT

This report was a finished piece of research which was aimed to find out the correlation between students' mastery to translate and their ability to write. It was hypothesized that the students with better mastery to translate can produce a better writing product. There were two test administered in this study. First test was translation test in which the students should translate text provided by the researcher. They should show their ability to translate from Indonesian into English. The second test was a writing test. In this test, the students should write a descriptive text. They should show how they write in acceptable English. From 24 students of the first semester of English Department STKIP PGRI Tulungagung, the coefficient of the correlation of Kendal Tau's analysis was .552. It can be interpreted that there was a positive medium correlation between the variables. To sum it up, the translation mastery, according to this study, correlate well to the ability of writing. Students who have better mastery in writing usually have better ability to write. Therefore, we can assume that this study gives a new insight on the theories of translation mastery and writing ability.

Keywords: translation mastery, writing ability, correlation

INTRODUCTION

Learning a language means learning to use it to communicate in either spoken or written way. In many aspects and based on some considerations, teachers consider writing skill as the most important skill yet the most difficult to teach among three other language skills; listening, speaking and reading. An ability to write appropriately and effectively has become the goal of language teaching, both in learners' mother tongue and in any other languages they may wish to learn. According to Alderson and Bachman (2002:x) writing has become an essential tool for people of all walks of life in today's global community. Whether used in reporting analysis of current events for newspapers or web pages, composing academic essays, business reports, letters, or e-mail messages, the ability to write effectively allows individuals from different cultures and backgrounds to communicate.

English writing skill is also considered as the most difficult skill among others skills (Naidu, 2007). Because to have good English writing skill, students are required to master many languages components, such as, having large vocabularies, grammatical rules, punctuations, word choice, etc. beside those all mentioned, they have to be able to have the ideas what to write and organize them in proper order for organizing them in good writing product.

For the beginners of language learners somehow, it is hard for them to have all required components in being good writers, especially for Indonesian students who learn English as foreign language (Septiana, et al, 2016). They try many ways to train themselves to be accustomed to write writing product in correct order.

The central idea plays very important role in writing classroom process. The students' idea in writing will lead and direct them to use all their mastery of vocabulary, their knowledge of the grammar, and their understanding of how things are best expressed in written expression. Without having the idea, the process of writing is meaningless and ended. So, lack of the idea in writing process can be fatal factor which causes the failure of writing process in the classroom.

Imitative strategy in writing classroom is intended to give the idea and framework for the students in how should an idea be written, expressed and developed to be good organization of sentences and how should they be constructed in good paragraph organization.

Imitation material can be obtained many sources, from the students' mother tongue materials or from any other languages. For the beginners of language learners, translating the essay of the mother language (L1) is sometime used to stimulate them in writing class, to practice or start the writing activity. This activity is intended to give imagery and the example of how the English sentences should be constructed, the idea should be expressed and how the paragraph should be developed.

Translation is a rendering process of one language into the other. In teaching and learning language context, it is the students' activity to change the source language into the target language. Translation

exercises in language teaching were especially related to comparison of L1/L2 syntactic structures, vocabulary learning, raising inter lingual and intercultural awareness, developing communicative competence and language learning strategies, and enhancing pragmatic skills (Druce, 2012). Most teachers who believe that translation is very important in language learning were likely to devote much of their teaching to translation, while endorsing other language learning strategies that are commonly associated with communicative approaches.

There have been few empirical studies so far that focus specifically on learners' belief the use of translation in foreign language teaching and learning. However, students could be expected to have widely varied perspectives on this issue. Teachers have often encouraged students to think in the target language. Thus, some students may think that it is unfavorable to depend on their native language while learning and using the target language (Liao, 2006). Nevertheless, most of them supported the positive role of translation in language learning, and reported frequent use of translation in learning vocabulary, grammar, reading, writing, listening and speaking. Previous study also revealed positive beliefs about the use of translation as language learning strategy, specifically as a means to make useful comparisons between languages (Juarez and Oxbrow, 2008).

This research is intended to investigate the correlation between students' translation mastery and the ability to write. The research is going to test whether the students with better translation mastery will also have better ability to write.

METHOD

Research is a process of steps used to collect and analyze information to increase our understanding of a topic or issue. At a general level, research consists of three steps: pose a question, collect data to answer the question, present an answer to the question. It means that the research can develop the result that help to answer the question and to gain a deeper understanding of the problem. In order to answer the question of this research, a correlation research design was used to measure the relationship between

students' mastery in translation and their writing ability. A correlational research design was suitable for this study since it made use of all the levels of variables measured that is in line with what was stated by Borg, et al. (1993) in Latief (2011).

a. Participant

There were twenty four students of first semester of English Department STKIP PGRI Tulungagung who were taken as the participant of this study. In this study, all of the students were going to the same class with the same lecturer. They were in the Writing 1 course in which the study was conducted. Therefore, it was assumed that students have nearly the same level of proficiency in the beginning of this study.

b. Research Procedures

To know the correlation between the two variables, in this study, there were two tests that should be followed by the students. The first test was the translation test. This test was aimed at ranking students' mastery of translation.

The second test to be followed by the students was the writing test. In the writing test, there were five aspects to be written. They are content, organization, grammar, vocabulary and mechanics. All of them defined the students' ability to write. They had to mind their writing using acceptable English to convey their ideas. The test items developed were in the form of writing prompt that enabled the students to write an essay in which they have to perform their skills in writing a descriptive text.

c. Instruments

1) Translation test

The first test to be done by the students was the translation test. It was administered to rank the level of the translation mastery from high to low or vice versa. In this test, the students should translate a descriptive paragraph from Indonesian into English. They supposed to translate the Indonesian version into acceptable English version. Therefore, it should follow some criteria such as 1) the contents should not be changed; 2) the accuracy of the grammar used; 3) the vocabulary choice to translate from

Indonesian into English; 3) spelling and mechanics. In this study, the researcher provide a descriptive text to be translated by the students. The descriptive text provided was entitled “*IBUKU*”.

2) Writing Test

The text used in the writing test was descriptive text. In this writing text, the students should show how they deal with the content, organization, language use , grammar and mechanic in acceptable English. To make it easier, the researcher provided a certain topic to be written by the students. The students should write a descriptive text with ‘family’. In preparing the test instruction, time allotment, scoring procedures, and the length of the text were really considered as the information will influence the students’ strategy in doing the test so that they will be able to perform well and get good scores.

3) Scoring Rubric

Since the research was conducted to investigate the correlation between students’ translation mastery and their writing ability, the scoring rubric used in this students consist of two scoring rubric. The first scoring rubric was the scoring rubric for the translation test. It was adapted from Waddington (2001). The second rubric was the scoring rubric for the writing test. It was focused on the aspects of the writing ability including content, organization, grammar, language use, vocabulary and mechanic.

RESULTS

After administering the translation test, the students’ mastery in translation can be seen from the score obtained in the test. In the other hand, the score of the translation test reflected the students’ level of mastery in translation. The summary of the result of the students’ translation test can be seen in the table 1.

Table 1 Score Summary of the Translation test

N	Mean	Median	Mode	Minimum	Maximum
24	76.67	77.50	85	60	90

The score obtained in translation test was the total score of each criterion in the scoring rubric. From the table above, it is known that the maximum score of the students was 90 while the minimum score of the students was 60. While from 24 students, the average score or the mean score 76.67.

As the follow up of conducting the translation test, a writing test was administered. Here, the students should write a descriptive text consisting of minimally 250 words. It was assumed that the result of the writing test showed the students' ability in writing. The summary of the result of the writing test can be seen in table 2.

Table 2 Score Summary of the Writing Test

N	Mean	Median	Mode	Minimal	Maximal
24	73.71	75.00	60	55	95

The score of the writing test was obtained from the sum up of the each criterion including content, organization, language use, grammar and mechanic. On the table 2, it is shown that the minimal score was 55. While for the maximal score, the score shown was 95. Further, the average score or the mean score of the writing test was 73.71.

The next step in analyzing the data statistically is to analyze the correlation between the two variables used in this study. Since in this study the variables used are the mastery to translate and the ability to write, non-parametric statistical analysis was administered. Kendal Tau's statistical analysis was used since the subject was below 30. Therefore, it was assumed that the statistical analysis used was the non-parametric. To know the correlation between the two variable, it can be seen in the table 3.

Table 3. The Correlation between Students' Mastery to Translate and their Writing Ability

Correlations			translation	writing
Kendall's tau_b	translation	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.552**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.001
		N	24	24
	writing	Correlation Coefficient	.552**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.

N	24	24
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** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

From the table above, it is known that the coefficient of the correlation was .552. Therefore, the correlation can be interpreted as a positive medium correlation. It means that the higher mastery to translate the students have, the better they can write descriptive text. In the other words, the hypothesis that the students with better mastery to translate also have better ability to write was verified. Yet, the strength of the two variables, mastery to translate and ability to write, was in positive medium correlation. So, to sum it up, the result of the correlational statistical analysis can be used to predict the strength of the relationships between the two variables of mastery to translate and the ability to write.

DISCUSSION

This research was aimed to investigate the relationship between students' mastery to translate and their ability to write. In conducting the research, the researcher administered two kinds of test, that is, translation test and writing test. The translation test was aimed to test the level of mastery of the students to translate. While the writing test, in the other hand, was aimed to test the students' ability to write.

To verify the hypothesis on the correlation between the mastery to translate and the ability to write, the correlation statistical analysis was done. The result of this study showed that the coefficient of the correlation was .552. To make it clear, the correlation between the two variables was in a positive medium correlation. It means that the students who got better score in translation tend to have better ability in writing. In the other hand, the students who got lower score in translation test tend to have difficulty in writing.

This findings, further, support the theories of Dagiliene (2012) and Kim (2011). They found that translation was a useful tool in learning a new language, especially in writing. Moreover, translation gave students the opportunity to increase awareness of vocabulary, grammar, style and language transfer (Kavaliauskene and Kamiskiene, 2007). The four language component are known to be very important in

learning of writing. It can be denied that in writing, writer should follow the rule of acceptable English in order to be able to be understood by the reader. In line with that, translation also needs an attention on the rule of the target language so that it will not change the meaning from the source language. An appropriate training of translation and writing will come to a better result of how the students deal with the writing as communication tools.

Therefore, it can be assumed that the translation mastery affect the ability to write. As a matter of fact, this study gives a new insight on the theories in language learning. However, it can be seen that this was a preliminary study. Therefore, to verify the new theory that is found, a long-scale is needed in order to support the findings of the study.

CONCLUSION

The result of the computation of the correlation analysis found that the students' mastery to translate and the ability to write have a medium positive correlation. The result of this study shows that the students who got better score in translation test tend to have better score in writing descriptive text. In the other hand, they who got lower score in translation test also tend to have lower score in writing descriptive text.

To sum it up, this research has been proved the relationship between mastery to translate and the ability to write. The findings of this study also has been verified the working hypothesis of this study. Therefore, it can be assumed that the translation mastery affect the ability to write. As a matter of fact, this study gives a new insight on the theories in language learning. However, it can be seen that this was a preliminary study. Therefore, to verify the new theory that is found, a long-scale is needed in order to support the findings of the study.

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