

The Analysis of Thai-Lao-Vietnamese 1st Order Entity Word using Bi-Directional Translation

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ABSTRACT

The present study aimed to investigate the translation equivalence of 500 word pairs of Thai-Lao-Vietnamese 1st order entity words and to test the translation equivalence of 500 word pairs of Thai-Lao-Vietnamese 1st order entity words using bi-directional translation method. 500 of the 1st order entity English words were selected from Brown Corpus (Word frequency corpus). The selected words were translated to Thai, Lao, and Vietnamese languages by 2 native speakers of each language. They were asked to translate the selected words to words in their native language and vice versa. Translation equivalence of Thai, Lao, and Vietnamese 1st order entity were examined using the bi-directional translation method. The results revealed that from 500 1st order entity words, there are 411 pairs of Thai and Lao translation, 297 pairs of Thai and Vietnamese translation, and 290 pairs of Thai, Lao, and Vietnamese translation pairs, which passed the bi-directional translation method.

Keywords: 1st order entity, Thai, Lao, Vietnamese, bi-directional translation

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1. Introduction

The notion of translation equivalence is focused in the study of translation as Catford (1965), Newmark (1988), and Baker (1992) proposed that the notion of equivalence is one of the most important problematics in the study of translation. According to the translation theories as Vinay and Darbelnet (1958/1989), Nida and Taber (1969), Catford (1965), House (2002), Newmark (1988), Baker (1992), and Pym (2002), the translation equivalence notion is defined, and explained depending on different views of each translation scholars.

According to the cross-language study, there are also different explanations concerning to the translation equivalence and different factors effecting on different degrees of translation equivalence. For example, one of the most important factors which were mentioned in the recent research is cultural factor. This is because most of the present translation theories focused on the influence of culture in the translation. For example, the work of Toury (2002) mentioned that translation is a kind of activity which is involved by at least two languages and two cultural traditions. So, this statement implied that there is the problem of transferring the cultural aspects from a source text (ST) to text in the target language (TL). In addition, Nida (1964) proposed that these cultural aspects will have different degrees of influences to the translation based on the cultural and linguistic gap between different languages.

For the present study, the study of translation equivalence will be examined using 3 languages of ASEAN countries. Thai, Lao, and Vietnamese languages are selected based on the historical relation among the languages. Thai and Lao are from the same language family; whereas, Vietnamese is from the different language family. In addition, the cultural differences among these three languages are varied. Thai and Lao culture are closer than Thai and Vietnamese culture or Lao and Vietnamese culture.

2. Theoretical Background

This section, the topic of translation equivalence and languages of Southeast Asia will be summarized briefly as following.

2.1 Translation equivalence

Translation equivalence is a major concept in Western translation theories. As Catford (1965) mentioned that the main problem of practical translation is to find target language (TL) equivalents. Thus, a task of translation theory is that to define the characteristics of translation equivalence. The translation theories during the 1960s and 1970s proposed that the concept of translation equivalence as source text (henceforth ST) and target text (henceforth TT) sharing some kind of sameness. Furthermore, the different kinds of equivalence were explained by many linguists such as Catford (1965), Nida and Taber (1969), Newmark (1988), Vinay and Darbelnet (1995), and House (2002). For example, Vinay and Darbelnet (1995) propose seven processes of translation equivalence : (1) borrowing, (2) calque, (3) literal translation, (4) transposition, (5) modulation, (6) equivalence, and (7) adaptation. They also considered a necessary condition for equivalent expressions between language pairs to be listed in a bilingual dictionary as full equivalents.

Regarding to House (2002), House presented two types of translation as (1) overt translation and (2) covert translation. An overt translation referred to the target text consisting of elements that it is a translation. Whereas, a covert translation referred to the target text that has the same function with the source text since the translator gives possible effort to communicate cultural differences.

Newmark (1988) presented the major difference between the two types of translation: (1) semantic translation and (2) communicative translation. Semantic translation focuses on meaning; whereas, communicative translation concentrates on effect. However, Newmark (1988) strongly agreed that literal translation is the best approach in both semantic and communicative translation.

For the present study, the translation equivalence was studied on semantical level focusing on semantic translation.

2.2 Languages of Southeast Asia

Southeast Asia is a region of linguistic and geographic diversity where there are various languages, belonging to five different families, are used (Jackson, 1993). The countries in mainland Southeast Asia consist of Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam. The countries located in peninsular and insular Southeast Asia consist of Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Brunei, East Timor and Philippines.

According to the languages, there are five main language families used in Southeast Asia regions (Matisoff, 2003; Blust, A. 2009). The first one is *Mon-Khmer*, which existed in the region for many millennia. This family includes Khmer and Vietnamese languages, which are the national languages of Cambodia and Vietnam; however, most of the others are spoken by small communities scattered in mountainous regions.

The second language family is called *Tibeto-Burman*, which is probably a descendant from a Proto-Sino-Tibetan, which would have been spoken in the Yellow River valley at least 6,000 years ago. Migrations became the Tibetan languages, while others moved into Myanmar, India, and Nepal. Burmese is the national language of Myanmar but the other Tibeto-Burman languages of Southeast Asia are mostly spoken by minority “hill tribes” distributed in northern and eastern Myanmar, in northern Thailand, Laos, and south China. The third family is *Tai-Kadai*, which is originally found in the border area between southern China and northern Vietnam, and extended to east of Myanmar, Thailand, and Laos. *Thai* and *Lao* are neighboring languages in this family and both are national languages; whereas, other members of the family are spoken by smaller numbers of people in the northern regions of Vietnam, Laos and Myanmar.

The fourth language family is *Hmong-Mien*, which was pushed by the expansion of the Han population to north of Vietnam, Laos, and Thailand in the 19th and 20th centuries.

The last language family is *Austronesian* languages, which was extended from the islands of Oceania. Malay, Javanese, and Tagalog are included in this language family. Malay is the national language of Malaysia, Brunei and Indonesia. Javanese are large regional languages of Java and Tagalog is the national language of the Philippines.

From a genetic view, it revealed that the languages in Southeast Asia are varied and they have both some similarities and dissimilarities in phonology, morphology, vocabulary, semantics and language usage.

3. The Aim of the Paper

1. To investigate the translation equivalence of 500 word pairs of Thai-Lao-Vietnamese 1st order entity words.
2. To test the translation equivalence of 500 word pairs of Thai-Lao-Vietnamese 1st order entity words using bi-directional translation method.

4. Research Methodology

The research methodology includes the following procedure as.

4.1 Data Collection

500 of the 1st order entity English words were selected from Brown Corpus (Word frequency corpus). The selected words were translated to Thai, Lao, and Vietnamese languages by 2 native speakers of each language. The 2 native speakers of each language were selected from University lecturers who work in Thailand. They were asked to translate the selected words to words in their native language and vice versa.

4.2 Translation equivalence examination

The study investigated the translation equivalence of 2 language translation pairs as Thai-Lao, Thai-Vietnamese, and Thai-Lao-Vietnamese pairs.

Then, translation equivalence of Thai, Lao, and Vietnamese 1st order entity were examined using the bi-directional translation method.

5. Research Results

The research results will be presented as the following topics.

1. The results of translation equivalence of Thai-Lao 1st order entity pairs.
2. The results of translation equivalence of Thai-Vietnamese 1st order entity pairs.
3. The results of translation equivalence of Thai-Lao- Vietnamese 1st order entity pairs.

5.1 The results of translation equivalence of Thai-Lao 1st order entity pairs.

From 500 Thai and Lao translation pairs, there are 411 pairs passed the bi-directional translation method. The examples of translation equivalence pairs which passed the bi-directional translation method were presented as following.

The examples of Thai and Lao translation pairs, which passed the bi directional translation test.

ภาษาไทย	หิน	ก้อนกรวด
ภาษาลาว	ກ້ອນຫີນ	
ภาษาไทย	หนังสือ	
ภาษาลาว	ປຶ້ມ	

5.2 The results of translation equivalence of Thai-Vietnamese 1st order entity pairs

From 500 Thai and Vietnamese translation pairs, there are 297 pairs passed the bi-directional translation method. The examples of translation equivalence pairs which passed the bi-directional translation method were presented as following.

The examples of Thai and Vietnamese translation pairs, which passed the bi directional translation test.

ภาษาไทย	หิน
ภาษาเวียดนาม	đá
ภาษาไทย	มหาวิทยาลัย
ภาษาเวียดนาม	đại học

5.3 The results of translation equivalence of Thai-Lao- Vietnamese 1st order entity pairs

From 500 Thai, Lao, and Vietnamese translation pairs, there are 290 pairs passed the bi-directional translation method. The examples of translation equivalence pairs which passed the bi-directional translation method were presented as following.

The examples of Thai, Lao, and Vietnamese translation pairs, which passed the bi directional translation test.

ภาษาไทย	หิน	ก้อนกรวด
ภาษาลาว	ກ້ອນຫີນ	
ภาษาเวียดนาม	đá	
ภาษาไทย	หนังสือ	
ภาษาลาว	ປຶ້ມ	
ภาษาเวียดนาม	cuốn sách	

6. Conclusions and Discussions

From the research results, there are 411 Thai- Lao translation pairs passed the bi-directional translation method, 297 Thai- Vietnamese translation pairs passed the bi-directional translation method, and 290 Thai-Lao-Vietnamese translation pairs passed the bi-directional translation method. The results implied that Thai- Lao language and culture are closer than Thai- Vietnamese language and culture. It is represented that language and cultural difference have the influence on translation equivalence. So, the results implied that linguistic and cultural difference or gap among three different languages influencing the degree of translation equivalence. Additionally, modern translation studies should focus on social, cultural, and communicative practices, and the cultural significance of translation.

These results are also supported by Carpenter, K., Compton, C. J., Riddle, E., and Wheatley, J. (2000) in the Journal of Southeast Asian Language Teaching. They proposed that there is no simple one-to-one correspondence between words in two different languages. There are the particular kinds of linguistic

differences between lexical items in English and those in Southeast Asian languages. This was the case for words referring to culturally specific objects or concepts such as artifacts, foods, environmental features, abstract religious or philosophical notions, etc. These concepts can be represented in two or more than two languages; however, the boundaries of the words are different.

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