

Translation Norms for Korean and English: Factors Affecting Translation Ambiguity

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[Abstract]

This study examines translation norms obtained for Korean-English word pairs and examines factors that play a role in translation ambiguity. 32 Korean-English bilinguals participated in a translation norming task where they provided English translations for mono-syllabic Korean nouns that were semantically ambiguous or unambiguous. Translation ambiguity was found to be prevalent in the norming data, including three items in the unambiguous condition which had carefully been pre-selected by Korean native speakers to have a single translation. 9 of the 19 items that obtained more than one translation in the semantically ambiguous condition showed synonym translation ambiguity as well as semantic translation ambiguity. Concreteness was a factor that contributed to translation ambiguity: words with a single translation had a higher probability of being concrete and more imageable compared to semantically ambiguous words. For ambiguous words with both concrete and abstract translations, the concrete translation had a higher probability of being the dominant translation. Participants with lower L2 proficiency showed a tendency to

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provide less frequent translations compared to participants with higher proficiency. The findings of this study emphasize the significance of translation ambiguity as a factor affecting bilingual word recognition and discuss implications for norming procedures in future studies.

Key Words: norming studies, translation ambiguity, translation probability, concreteness, L2 proficiency

1. Introduction

Translating a word from one language to another does not always result in a one-to-one mapping between translation equivalents. In fact, it is often the case that a word in the source language may be translated to multiple words in the target language. This one-to-many mapping is referred to as translation ambiguity. Although translation ambiguity is highly prevalent, most previous studies of bilingual word recognition have often employed translation tasks with lexical stimuli that were assumed to have a single translation.

In a seminal study, Tokowicz, Kroll, de Groot, and van Hell (2002) conducted a norming test with Dutch-English translation equivalents that had been used in previous experimental studies. Although these items had been carefully chosen to have only a single translation by the original researchers, Tokowicz et al. (2002) found that 25% of the translation equivalents were given more than one translation in either direction in their norming study. In a similar norming study with Spanish and English, Prior, MacWhinney, and Kroll (2007) obtained more than one translation for almost 50% of the Spanish words and 60% of the English words.

The prevalence of translation ambiguity poses a problem for theoretical models developed on the basis of previous studies using translation equivalents assumed to have a single translation. Translation ambiguity may cause competition between the multiple meanings, which in turn will lead to different patterns of processing compared to items without translation ambiguity. Therefore, results of studies which employed both translation-ambiguous and unambiguous items without distinguishing the two are likely to have decreased reliability. Further research on translation ambiguity is required to extend our understanding and to provide a database with which to aid future researchers in their construction of experimental stimuli.

With the aim of expanding the existing pool of research on translation norms to different-script languages, this paper presents the results of a preliminary norming study investigating translation ambiguity in Korean and English that aims to examine various factors that may play a role in translation ambiguity. The main research goals are to examine whether synonym translation ambiguity is found in the English translations of semantically ambiguous and unambiguous Korean words and to investigate the role of concreteness, L2 proficiency, and frequency in translation ambiguity and translation probability.

2. Literature Review

A one-to-many mapping between translation equivalents may occur due to various reasons. One cause of translation ambiguity is synonymy in the target language. For example, the Spanish word *sofá* may be translated into the English word *sofa* or *couch*. This type of ambiguity is referred to as ‘synonym translation ambiguity’ (Eddington & Tokowicz, 2013). Translation ambiguity may also occur due to

semantic ambiguity within the source language. For example, the English word *glass* has two distinct meanings: a container for drinking liquids or a type of transparent material. Each of these meanings are translated into a different word in Spanish: *vaso* for the first meaning and *vidrio* for the second. This type of ambiguity is referred to as ‘meaning translation ambiguity’ or ‘semantic translation ambiguity.’ A third type of ambiguity is found when ambiguity in the source language results in multiple translation equivalents in the target language that belong to different word categories, such as the English word *cook*, which translates into the Spanish word *cocinero* (noun) or *cocinar* (verb). Finally, there are instances where translation ambiguity arises due to a different conceptual-lexical mapping across the target and source languages. For example, there are two Spanish translation equivalents for the English word *know*: *saber* and *conocer*. *Saber* is used for knowing languages or facts, whereas the verb *conocer* is used for knowing people. Both concepts are covered by the same verb *know* in English.

The many-to-one mapping found in translation ambiguity is similar to the many-to-one mapping in meaning found for partial cognates. In psycholinguistic research, words that share spelling, sound, and meaning across languages, such as the word *piano* in English and Spanish are referred to as full cognates. On the other hand, partial cognates also share spelling, sound, and meaning across languages, but differ from full cognates in that they have an additional meaning in one language that is not found in the other language. For example, the word *grave* is a cognate word that means ‘serious’ in both English and Spanish, but the English word *grave* has an additional meaning ‘burial place’ which does not exist for the Spanish word.

Previous studies on bilingual word recognition of partial cognates have reported additional processing costs caused by the imperfect overlap in meaning across languages. Using a lexical decision task in English, Sunderman and Schwartz (2008)

found that Spanish-English bilinguals processed partial cognates more slowly and less accurately compared to full cognates. The processing costs found for partial cognates were attributed to the many-to-one mapping in meaning across languages, which caused competition between the multiple meanings in one language and led to slower and less accurate lexical retrieval. If partial cognates were more difficult to process compared to full cognates due to competition between the different meanings in one language, it is predicted that the many-to-one mapping in meaning for translation-ambiguous words may also cause processing difficulty compared to words with a single translation equivalent. However, most previous studies that have employed translation equivalents as experimental stimuli have selected words assumed to have a single translation without considering the possibility that translation ambiguity might be present for some of the items (de Groot & Nas, 1991; Gollan, Forster, & Frost, 1997; Kim & Davis, 2003; Voga & Grainger, 2007). Therefore, the practice of constructing experimental stimuli without prior norming tests with the objective of confirming that the translation equivalents indeed have a single translation may have led to misleading conclusions regarding the processes underlying bilingual lexical retrieval.

Based on findings reported by Tokowicz et al. (2002) and Prior et al. (2007) which demonstrated that translation ambiguity was prevalent even in experimental stimuli which had been assumed to be translation-unambiguous, a post-hoc examination was conducted on the Korean-English prime-target pairs in the noncognate translation condition in a series of experiments by Kim and Davis (2003). Although the prime-target pairs in the noncognate condition were designed to be Korean-English translation equivalents with a one-to-one mapping, the post-hoc examination revealed that eight out of the 24 Korean words used as the prime had more than one meaning, leading to semantic translation ambiguity.¹⁾ One example of

a Korean prime word with semantic translation ambiguity was the word 밤 [bam] which can be translated into either *night* or *chestnut* in English. However, the stimuli was not previously normed for translation ambiguity, and the English translation equivalent used as the target was *night*. If the prime word 밤 activates both meanings *night* and *chestnut*, competition in activation between the two meanings is predicted to result in a reduced priming effect compared to translation equivalents with a one-to-one mapping. Furthermore, the proportion of Korean-English word pairs with translation ambiguity in the stimuli is likely to increase even more if possible cases of synonym translation ambiguity are also taken into account. For example, the Korean word 길 [gil] may be translated into English as either *road*, *path*, or *way*.

Despite the prevalence of translation ambiguity in the bilingual lexicon, it is only recently that psycholinguistic studies have started to take interest in translation ambiguity as a factor that may affect bilingual lexical retrieval. Recent studies have shown that the number of translations significantly affects performance in bilingual word recognition and production. Words with more than one translation equivalent were recognized and translated more slowly and less accurately compared to single-translation items (Eddington & Tokowicz, 2013; Laxén & Levaur, 2010; Tokowicz & Kroll, 2007). Translation ambiguity has also been found to play a role in adult second language acquisition. English native speakers showed longer reaction times and lower accuracy for translation-ambiguous words in a series of translation tasks in Dutch and German vocabulary (Bracken, Degani, Eddington, & Tokowicz, 2013; Degani & Tokowicz, 2013, Tokowicz & Tamar, 2010). Learning disadvantages associated with translation ambiguity were found regardless of whether the source of translation ambiguity was the first or second language.

In a study that collected translation norms from English-Spanish bilinguals, Prior et al. (2007) investigated the role of various lexical variables in negotiating

translation ambiguity. Their findings indicate that for words with more than one translation equivalent, word frequency and imageability are significantly correlated with translation probability. More frequent words and words that are more imageable tended to be chosen more often by the bilingual participants as the translation of choice. Word class was also a factor found to play a role in translation ambiguity: verbs were more likely to have multiple translations compared to nouns. Finally, a reliable effect of L2 proficiency was also found in forward (L1 to L2) translation, but not in backward (L2 to L1) translation. Less proficient bilinguals were more likely to produce translations of low probability compared to bilinguals with higher proficiency.

The results of translation norming studies such as Prior et al. (2007) enable researchers to identify factors that influence bilinguals' translation of ambiguous words and investigate how they result in systematic relations between these factors and translation ambiguity. However, few studies to date have examined translation norms for bilingual populations, and the few existing studies have been centered on languages sharing the same script, e.g., English-Spanish, English-Dutch. Previous studies from same-script languages have found that orthographic form overlap between translation equivalents was positively correlated with translation probability (Tokowicz et al., 2002; Prior et al., 2007). Therefore, research on languages that do not share the same script, such as Korean and English is required to investigate whether translation ambiguity is also prevalent in different-script languages. The present study is expected to contribute to the existing research on translation ambiguity in that it is the first to collect translation norms for different-script languages and investigate which factors play a role in translation ambiguity.

3. Research Method

3.1. Participants

36 unbalanced Korean-English bilinguals (average age = 23.82, SD = 2.18) who were native speakers of Korean and learning English as a second language were recruited from a university in Korea. Participants who had spent more than two years in an English-speaking country or were fluent in a language other than Korean or English did not take part in the main task in order to maintain homogeneity in terms of exposure to language input (Dussias & Sagarra, 2007). Based on their answers to a language background survey, four participants were excluded according to this criteria, leaving 32 participants who completed the main task. The participants were divided into two groups based on a median split according to their recent self-reported TOEIC scores, with 16 participants in each group: the high proficiency group ($M = 922$, $SD = 33.10$) and the intermediate proficiency group ($M = 724.44$, $SD = 50.15$). The difference between the two proficiency groups was statistically significant ($t = 13.15$, $p < .0001$). All participants signed an informed consent form insuring confidentiality and right to withdraw prior to the main task and received monetary compensation for their participation upon completion of the experiment.

3.2. Experimental Materials

The experimental stimuli were chosen from a pool of 80 Korean mono-syllabic nouns that were pre-selected as candidates. 40 of the Korean nouns were homographic homophones with semantic translation ambiguity, such as the Korean word 눈 [*nun*] which can be translated into either *snow* or *eye* in English. The remaining 40 words

were monosyllabic Korean nouns that have a single translation equivalent in English, such as 꽃 [kkot], translated into *flower* in English. Two native speakers of Korean categorized the list of 80 Korean nouns in terms of semantic ambiguity. Nouns were categorized as semantically ambiguous if both raters came up with more than two semantically distinct translations for the Korean noun. Based on the categorization of the nouns into ambiguous nouns vs. unambiguous nouns, only items that received the same categorization from both native Korean raters were selected as experimental stimuli for the main task. The final list of materials included 48 items: 24 nouns for the ambiguous condition 24 nouns for the unambiguous condition which were randomized. The list of nouns is presented below in Table 1.

Ambiguous nouns				Unambiguous nouns			
달	시	반	양	집	손	책	법
병	팔	금	배	물	길	별	개
화	신	목	남	벽	딸	총	답
성	차	눈	열	왕	꿈	봄	새
산	천	굴	면	돌	숨	비	꽃
초	구	풀		잎	콩	폐	용

Table 1. Nouns used as experimental stimuli

3.3. Experimental Procedure

Participants completed the norming task individually with a laptop computer in a sound-attenuated room. The experiment began with instructions from the experimenter. The participants were instructed to read each Korean noun as it appeared on the screen and respond with the first English translation that came to mind. A practice session of five Korean words which were not included in the main

experiment was conducted to familiarize the participants with the task. Additional instructions were provided upon request, but feedback was not given for any of the practice items. For the main experiment, each Korean word was presented in the center of the computer screen one at a time, and the participant was instructed to type in the English translation. Response times were not restrained, but the participants were instructed to answer as quickly and accurately as possible, and the experimenter was present during the entire process to ensure that the participants were attentive to the task.

4. Results

The data were first coded for accuracy. Singular/plural forms of a noun were both accepted as correct answers, e.g., *hand/hands* for the Korean word 손 [son], but not counted as distinct translations. The total percentage of accurate translations across participants and conditions was 98.87%. Out of 736 translations collected for the ambiguous condition, 11 incorrect answers were found, accounting for 1.49% of the data. Five of the incorrect answers were provided by the high proficiency group and six were given by the intermediate proficiency group.²⁾ For the unambiguous condition, six incorrect translations from a total of 768 translations answers were found, accounting for 0.78% of the data. All six incorrect answers were from participants belonging to the intermediate group.

Next, the number of items from each condition that obtained more than one translation in English were calculated by counting the number of distinct English translations per noun. 19 out of 23 Korean nouns (82.61%) in the semantically ambiguous condition received more than one translation. The mean number of

translations for each item in the ambiguous condition was 2.83 ($SD = 1.70$), and the mean number of translations with distinct meanings, implying semantic translation ambiguity, was 2 ($SD = 0.60$). 9 of the 19 items (47.37%) that received more than one English translation had multiple translations belonging to both semantic and synonym translation ambiguity, and the remaining 10 items received only translations with different meanings that were categorized as semantic translation ambiguity. For example, the Korean noun ‘양’ in the ambiguous condition had three translations: *sheep*, *amount*, and *quantity*. *Amount* and *quantity* are synonym translations with similar meanings, whereas *sheep* is a semantically distinct translation.

For items in the unambiguous condition, 3 out of 24 Korean nouns (12.5%) received more than one translation, and all of the multiple translations for these 3 items were categorized as synonym translation ambiguity. The mean number of translations per item was 1.29 ($SD = 0.69$), and the mean number of meanings was 1 ($SD=0$), as none of the translations for the same Korean word in the unambiguous condition had different meanings. The high proportion of synonym translation ambiguity in the ambiguous condition resulted in a higher number of mean translations compared to items in the unambiguous condition (2.83 vs. 1.29) which turned out to be statistically significant ($t = 4.09$, $p < .0005$). A summary of this data is presented in Figure 1.

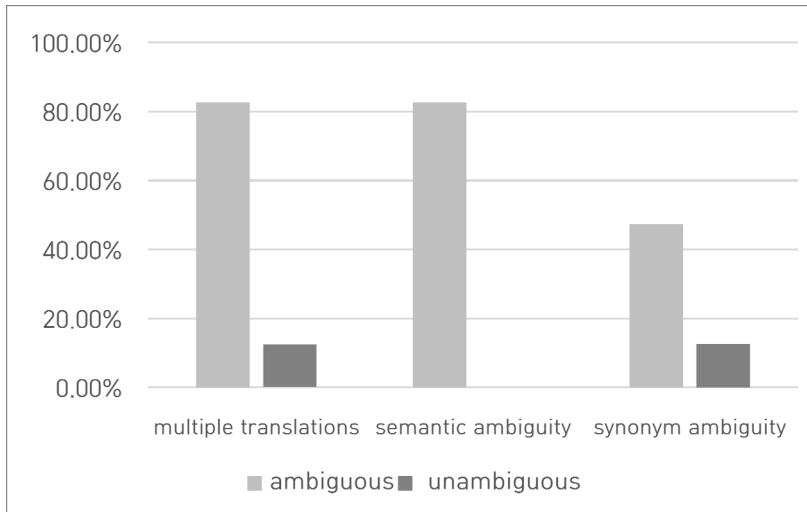


Figure 1. Summary of translation data by condition

The English translations were then coded for the lexical factor of concreteness. Concreteness was determined by the same native Korean raters who selected the final list of stimuli. A noun was determined to be concrete if it was imageable. For items in the semantically ambiguous condition, 10 Korean words (43.48%) resulted in English translations that were all concrete nouns. Five words yielded translations that were all abstract, and eight words obtained translations that included both concrete and abstract nouns. For items in the unambiguous condition, English translations for 19 of the Korean words (79.17%) were concrete nouns and translations for the remaining five Korean words (20.83%) were abstract nouns.

In order to investigate whether L2 proficiency had a relation to the particular English translation provided by the bilingual participants, the less frequent translations for items in both the ambiguous and unambiguous conditions were analyzed separately. According to Garnsey, Pearlmutter, Myers and Lotocky's (1997)

relative method of determining bias, an item was classified as having non-equi-bias translations if the more frequent translation occurred at least twice as many times as the less frequent translation. For items in the semantically ambiguous condition, 12 of the 19 items (63.16%) with more than one translation were non-equi-biased, yielding 72 tokens of less frequent translations. 24 of the 72 less frequent translations (33.33%) were provided by participants in the high proficiency group, and 48 less frequent translations were provided by participants in the intermediate proficiency group. For items in the unambiguous condition, only three items (12.5%) produced more than one translation, resulting in 27 tokens of less frequent translations. Seven of the less frequent translations were provided by the high-proficiency group, and 20 were provided by the intermediate proficiency group. 66.67% of the less frequent translations in the ambiguous condition and 74.07% of the less frequent translations in the unambiguous condition were provided by the lower proficiency group.

Next, with the aim of examining whether the frequency of the English translations was a factor contributing to translation probability, a correlation analysis was conducted with the two factors of frequency of each English translation and its probability of translation for each Korean item. The frequency of each noun was based on the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA). Neither of the two correlation analyses for the ambiguous condition nor the unambiguous condition were significant (all $ps > .73$), suggesting that the frequency of the English translations did not affect the probability that a translation was produced.

Finally, the frequency for the multiple translations of each noun were compared with the order in which the multiple English definitions were given for each Korean word in the most-widely used online NAVER Korean-English dictionary in order to determine whether definition order in the online dictionary was an additional factor that may have influenced the translation probability. The order of definition

presentation for words with multiple translations in the online dictionary were consistent with 15 out of the 22 items (68.18%) which received more than one translation, accounting for 68.18% of the data. For the 19 Korean words in the semantically ambiguous condition which received more than one translation, the multiple translations for 13 words were consistent with the order of the English translations provided in the online dictionary. For words in the unambiguous condition, two out of the three Korean words with more than one translation had translations that were consistent with the order in which they were presented in the online Korean-English dictionary.

5. Discussion

This article reports the results of Korean-English translation norms collected from Korean-English bilinguals with high and intermediate English proficiency. The items used in the norming task consisted of two types of Korean monosyllabic nouns: nouns with more than one meaning which were predicted to show semantic translation ambiguity and unambiguous nouns which were pre-selected to have only one translation equivalent in English. The high rate of correct translations (98.87%) suggests that the items for the translation task were selected at an appropriate level that was not too difficult for the bilingual participants, leading to higher reliability of the data.

Two types of translation ambiguity were investigated in the present study: The first is semantic translation ambiguity, which is found when a word in the source language has two distinct meanings, such as 달 [dal] meaning *moon* or *month*. The second is synonym translation ambiguity, which occurs when a word in the source

language can be translated into two or more words which are synonyms of each other in the target language, such as 길 [gil], which can be translated into English as *road*, *path*, or *way*. The main goals of the present study were to examine whether translation ambiguity was prevalent in Korean-English translation norms and to identify factors that may play a role in translation ambiguity and translation probability. In order to answer these questions, monosyllabic Korean nouns were pre-selected and categorized into the semantically ambiguous condition and the unambiguous condition.

Consistent with the findings of previous norming studies by Tokowicz et al. (2002) for Dutch and English and Prior et al. (2007) for Spanish and English, the norming data collected in the present study show that translation ambiguity is also prevalent for translation equivalents in Korean and English. These results support the claim that pre-experimental norming tests, and not experimenters' native intuition should be the basis of categorizing and constructing experimental materials for future research in the bilingual lexicon.

The Korean stimuli in the present norming task were carefully pre-selected and categorized by two native speakers of Korean as semantically ambiguous and unambiguous in terms of translation ambiguity. However, despite this pre-experimental screening process, three of the items pre-selected to have only one translation equivalent obtained more than one translation in English, and four of the items in the semantically ambiguous condition resulted in only one translation. One example of the latter condition is the Korean word 달 [dal], which has two distinct meanings and can be translated into either *moon* or *month* in English. In the norming data, however, all 32 participants answered with the English translation *moon*. These results indicate that the Korean word 달 is a non-equi-biased ambiguous word (Duffy, Morris, & Rayner, 1988), for which the two meanings differ in frequency

with *moon* as the dominant, more frequent meaning and *month* as the subordinate meaning. As the instructions for the norming task explicitly asked the participants to provide only one translation that first came to mind, the participants opted to answer with the more familiar dominant meaning *moon* instead of *month*.

These results suggest that there may be significant consequences if experimental stimuli are constructed without consulting norming data. For example, if an experimenter selected *달-month* as translation equivalents in a translation priming task without having conducted a norming test, attenuated priming effects may be obtained if the Korean word *달* activates the English translation *moon* more strongly than it activates the word *month*, which may lead to inaccurate results. In fact, when applying the relative criteria for determining translation bias, where a word is considered non-equi-bias if the more dominant meaning is at least two times as frequent as the subordinate meaning(s), only seven of the 23 items in the ambiguous condition were equi-bias. The remaining 16 items were non-equi-bias with a preferred dominant translation and a less preferred subordinate translation.

A similar observation was made for the English translations obtained for the Korean items in the unambiguous condition. Although the majority of the items (21 out of 24) yielded a single translation equivalent, three items were found to have more than one translation: 길 (*road, way, path*), 집 (*house, home*), and 돌 (*stone, rock*). All three cases belonged to synonym translation ambiguity. These results underscore the claim that native intuition is not sufficient to guarantee whether a certain pair of translation equivalents will have a one-to-one or a many-to-one mapping and highlights the critical role that pre-experimental norming should occupy in bilingual translation studies.

The second goal was to investigate whether words with semantic translation ambiguity had a higher probability of having synonym translation ambiguity as well

compared to words with only one translation equivalent. Results showed that this was indeed the case: nine of the 23 items pre-selected for semantic translation ambiguity also showed synonym translation ambiguity compared to only three items in the unambiguous condition. These results led to a higher number of mean translations per item for the ambiguous condition compared to items in the unambiguous condition (2.83 vs. 1.29) which was statistically significant. These results not only demonstrate the prevalence of translation ambiguity, but also show that more than one type of translation ambiguity may be present for the same item, which again highlights the significance of pre-experimental norming.

Additional analyses conducted to investigate additional factors that may play a role in translation ambiguity found that concrete nouns had a higher probability of having a one-to-one mapping between translation equivalents compared to abstract nouns. Translations for 18 of the 24 nouns in the unambiguous condition were concrete nouns, compared to only nine nouns with concrete translations in the semantically ambiguous condition. These results are consistent with the findings of Prior et al. (2007) who found that higher imageability was negatively correlated with the number of translations, and suggest that translations tend to converge on a single translation equivalent more easily for concrete words compared to abstract words, for which the conceptual range may be more varied from individual to individual.

Proficiency in the second language also seemed to be a factor that influenced translation probability for translation-ambiguous words. For non-equi-bias words in the semantically ambiguous condition, bilingual participants in the intermediate proficiency group provided less frequent translations at least twice as often compared to bilinguals in the high proficiency group. These findings are also consistent with the findings of Prior et al. (2007), who reported that Spanish-English bilinguals with lower L2 proficiency tended to produce low probability translations in the forward

(L1 to L2) direction. These disparities found between bilinguals of low and high proficiency were suggested to be one of the underlying reasons that cause less proficient speakers to produce speech that is marked as sounding non-native-like. Furthermore, the tendency of less proficient bilinguals to produce less frequent translations may also be a potential factor that leads to difficulty in their ability to process rapid input in the L2, due to the difficulty of rapidly activating forms that are less familiar to them.

Contrary to the findings of Prior et al. (2007) who reported that frequency was a factor that was positively correlated with translation probability, the present study did not find a reliable correlation between frequency and probability of the English translations. However, as the present study was a preliminary descriptive study, further research with a larger set of data will be required to investigate whether frequency may also be a factor affecting translation probability in languages that do not share the same writing system.

The final factor investigated in the present study was whether translation probability was reflected in the order in which definitions of translation-ambiguous words were presented in the widely used NAVER online Korean-English dictionary. The order of definitions correctly predicted translation probability for a large proportion (68.18%) of the translation-ambiguous items, suggesting that there may be a possibility that bilinguals' preference for a specific translation may have been influenced by searching for translation-ambiguous lexical items in the dictionary in the early stages of acquisition.

The present research was a preliminary study which included a relatively small number of items. Therefore, at this stage, it is difficult to generalize the results to all lexical items in general. Further research with a greater number of experimental items and various grammatical categories is called for in order to uncover additional

factors that may lead bilinguals to prefer a specific translation equivalent over others, including probabilistic frequencies of different meanings in the linguistic input and teaching methods for translation-ambiguous words in the L2 classroom.

6. Conclusion

This study was the first to collect translation norms from Korean-English bilinguals in an attempt to investigate translation ambiguity in different-script languages and uncover factors that may affect translation ambiguity and translation probability. The results of the translation norming task show that translation ambiguity is prevalent in Korean and English, similar to the results reported by previous studies with languages sharing the same script. The translation norms collected in the present study strongly support the claim that pre-experimental translation norming should be considered a mandatory procedure in future experiments investigating bilingual lexical retrieval.

Concreteness and L2 proficiency, along with the order of definitions in the online dictionary were factors that were found to play a role in translation ambiguity and translation probability. The present study is a preliminary study whose main goals were to show that translation ambiguity is prevalent even in different-script languages, underscore the importance of translation norming data, and uncover possible avenues for future research in translation ambiguity. Future research collecting larger sets of data including words from different grammatical categories will help obtain a more accurate picture of how the factors of L2 proficiency, L2 exposure, frequency, and teaching methods may affect translation ambiguity.

- 1) The distinct meanings for each word were confirmed by the Standard Korean Language Dictionary published by the National Institute of Korean Language.
- 2) Due to a technical presentation error, one item from the ambiguous condition was excluded from the final analysis.

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국문초록

한국어-영어 번역상에 대한 규범화 연구:
번역 중의성에 영향을 미치는 요인 분석

김 지 현

단독 / 한국외대

본 연구는 한국어-영어 단어 쌍에 대한 번역 규범을 조사하고, 번역 중의성에 영향을 미치는 요인들을 살펴보았다. 32명의 한국어-영어 이중언어 화자들이 번역 규범화 과제에 참여하여 의미적 중의성이 있는 단어들과 중의성이 없는 단음절 한국어 명사에 대한 영어 번역어를 제시하였다. 번역 중의성은 데이터 전반에서 광범위하게 나타났으며, 원어민 화자들에 의해 단일 번역어가 있는 단어로 신중히 선별된 시료 중 3개의 단어에서도 관찰되었다. 중의성 조건에서는 19개 단어가 복수의 번역상으로 번역되었으며, 이 중 9개의 단어는 의미적 번역 중의성과 동의어 번역 중의성을 모두 포함하고 있었다. 번역 중의성에 영향을 미치는 요인 중 하나로 구체성이 확인되었는데, 단일 번역어를 가진 단어들이 더 구체적이고 심상성이 높은 경향을 보였다. 구체적 번역어와 추상적 번역어를 모두 포함한 중의적 단어의 경우, 구체적인 번역어가 더 자주 사용이 되는 경향이 있었다. 영어 능숙도가 낮은 피험자들이 상대적으로 빈도가 낮은 번역어로 답변할 가능성이 크다는 결과도 확인되었다. 본 연구의 결과는 번역 중의성이 이중언어 화자의 단어처리에 영향을 미치는 중요한 요인임을 강조하며, 향후 연구에서의 시료 구상 및 실험 과정에 대한 함의를 논의한다.

주제어: 번역 규범화 연구, 번역 중의성, 번역어 확률, 구체성, 제2 언어 능숙도

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