

Student and Instructor Perceptions of Online Translators

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TALGS Conference

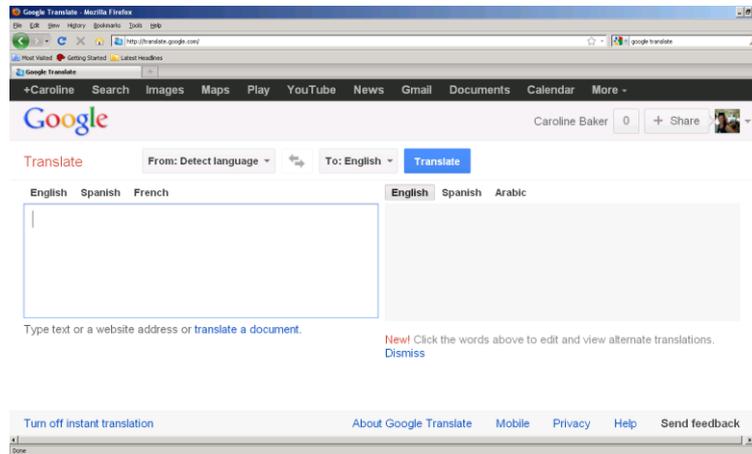
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Second language writers in Composition

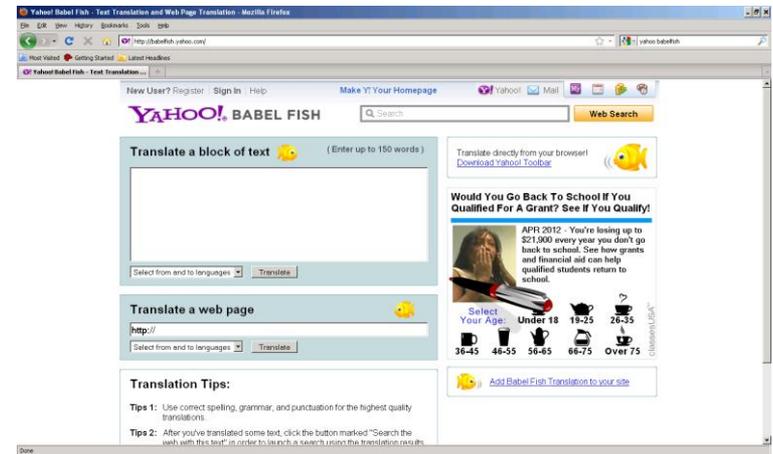
- Matsuda (2006)
 - “Strategies for linguistic containment”
 - Myth of linguistic homogeneity
- Tardy (2011) encourages composition programs to have written statements informed by the actual practices of students and instructors at a particular institution.
- Nam and Beckett (2011) found second language writers were often reluctant to utilize peers or other people as a resource due to their “their cultural and their linguistic insecurity.”

What are online translators?

Google Translate



Babel Fish



Second language writers in Composition

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Online translators

- Useful learning tool
 - Garcia & Pena, 2011
 - Niño, 2009
 - Williams, 2006
- Plagiarism
 - Harris, 2011
 - Somers, Gaspari, & Niño 2005

Research questions

- What motivates second language writers to utilize online translators for composition?
- How do students and instructors talk about the use of online translators?
- What are the ideologies that underlie this talk?

Student participants

Participant	First language	ESL section?	Years at MSU	Composition courses taken	Languages
Magnolia	Korean	ESL	1	Comp. 1	Korean, English
Amanda	Punjabi	No	2	Basic, Comp. 1, Comp. 2	English, Hindi, Punjabi
Kate Kim	Korean	ESL	1	Comp. 1	Korean, English
Helena Cox	Flemish	ESL	1	Comp. 1	Flemish, English, French, Latin, German, Spanish

Instructor participants

Participant	Position	Years of Experience	Languages
Anne Craig	Lecturer	4	English, limited French
Livvie	Lecturer	7	English, Moderate Spanish
Ellen	Teaching Assistant	1	English, Basic French and Spanish

Semi-structured interviews

- Student topics included
 - the writing process
 - use of the first language during writing
 - perceptions of online translators
 - descriptions of how they use online translators
 - opinions on the permissibility of online translators

Semi-structured interviews

- Instructor topics
 - past experiences with second language writers
 - recommended resources for second language writers
 - opinions on the permissibility of online translation
 - perceptions of how they believe students use online translators

Coding-student

- Stories about use
 - By the participant
 - By participants' peers
- Talk of the permissibility of online translators

Coding-instructor

- Examples of policies
- Justification of policies
- Stories about students' using online translators

Students

- Students presented use of online translators by peers
- Presented their own use
- How they related their use to policies or authority

Students constructing the other: “I really laugh at him”

- 1 Kate Kim: And then some people are **not really good at English** -they just using
2 Google Translator in Korean essay first first and then they translate it in-
3 Caroline: The whole essay??
4 Kate Kim: Yeah they just submit it and <laughs> **and of course professor angry**
5 **because they're really messy**
6 Caroline: Yeah
7 Kate Kim: Has that happened at Mississippi State?
8 No of course not in Korea
9 Caroline: In Korea that happened?
10 Kate Kim: In Korea uh it's not a really credit subject
11 Caroline: Yeah
12 Kate Kim: it's not really credit lecture but if they took some kind of class?
13 And they- I **saw some guy using that one but I really laugh at him**

Students constructing the other: “I didn’t approve of that”

- 1 Caroline: Do you know other people who use it [translators]?
- 2 Helena Cox: **We all do it** in- in like um I remember when um uh we have to take
3 French anyway in Belgium because it's one of the m- uh the languages in
4 our nation.
- 5 Caroline: Right.
- 6 Helena Cox: And um the- the **scientists** uh in our class because we had a class of lots of
7 people- science people,
8 Uh they **they aren't that fond of French** and they would just- just type the-
9 the Flemish uh text in it and they would just translate it to French by uh
10 using Google Translate <laughs>.
- 11 Caroline: And they would turn that in as their homework?
- 12 Helena Cox: Well some of them did.
- 13 And that was- I- **I didn't approve of that** but it's- it's their choice. <laughs>

Students representing their own use: using online translators to read

- 1 Amanda: When I'm **reading** and it doesn't make sense to me,
2 **And even I put it in dictionary and I can't understand what it**
3 **means,**
- 4 Caroline: Right.
- 5 Amanda: And that time Google Translate helps me.
6 **It can pop up with my-my mother tongue.**

Students representing their own use : manipulating the text

Kate Kim:

- 1 Oh yeah I **have to change it a little bit** because <laughs> sometimes it
- 2 show up really a **make sense sentence.**

Helena Cox:

- 1 Helena Cox: Yeah I mean sometimes it does but if you- if you want to trust it for
- 2 complex sentence it's- it's better **to just translate the words itself,**
- 3 Caroline: Right.
- 4 Helena Cox: And then- **do it yourself.**

Student use & authority: plagiarism

- 1 Caroline: Do you think here teachers- what do you think teachers here would
2 Think about it?
3 At Mississippi Stat-
4 Helena: I don't think they would approve of it because I noticed uh, the
5 Focus on **plagiarism**,
6 It's: **tremendous**.
- 1 Helena: Uh **the punishments that you can get**,
2 **It's scaring me**.
3 Caroline: Yes.
4 Helena: I don't want to do anything wrong so.

Student use & authority: she will not trust it

- 1 Caroline: Um so what do you think your comp teacher- how do you think she feels
2 about-
3 Google Translate or
4 Kate Kim: Oh: maybe she will not believe that,
5 right?
6 Caroline: She will not what??
7 Kate Kim: **She will not trust it.**
8 She will not trust it?..
9 Caroline: Would she be ok with it if you did?
10 Kate Kim: Oh: Mm:
11 **I'm not sure about Americans can . check is it from Google Translator or**
12 not.

Student use & authority: words versus thoughts

- 1 Magnolia: Because when I write- when I use the Google Translation?
2 It's just like using **whole sentence from the internet**,
3 Caroline: yeah.
4 Magnolia: So it doesn't really- **is my own words or sentence**.
5 Caroline: I-yeah.

- 1 Amanda: I told her that I wrote paper but my English is not that much clear so I
2 used that Google Translate and other stuff,
3 Caroline: And she said that's good?
4 Amanda: She was **like yeah if it's helping you** that's good.
5 Caroline: Yeah.
6 Amanda: Yeah.
7 Caroline: Yeah.
8 Amanda: It's-it's-she was like as far **as you're using your thoughts** it's good.

Instructor themes

- ▣ discussions about the instructor's inexperience or lack of preparation to work with second language writers in general
- ▣ a willingness to work with students who do engage in this literacy practice through out-of-class discussions and permitting limited use
- ▣ negative attitudes surrounding the latter

Instructors: lack of preparation

Anne Craig:

- 1 I've also had one student who asked me if it was ok to run through it
- 2 And ... <sighs> I have to remember the policy—
- 3 This **was the first semester I taught so I wasn't sure what to do exactly.**

Ellen:

- 1 Caroline: Um so did you feel prepared to deal with second language writers,
- 2 Did you know about language acquisition?
- 3 Ellen: **No. I wasn't .. I definitely wasn't** with my first uh my basic student
- 4 prepared.

Examples of policies

Excerpt 1

- 1 Caroline: So when you think about these services like Google Translate,
2 just off the top of your head where would you think that would fit into this
3 writing process?
4 Anne Craig: The writing process?
5 I could see ... maybe typing up your first draft, putting it into Google
6 Translate, kinda like what I did with my /??/?/ student,
7 Translating it into that language make sure everything translated to your
8 language- to your ideas.
9 Caroline: Yes.
10 Anne Craig: And then **moving back and forth**.
11 Caroline: Ok.

Excerpt 2

- 1 Caroline: So it's kinda like maybe editing the output,
2 Anne Craig: Yes.
3 C: What comes out,
4 Anne Craig: Yes,
5 [they can use it to-
6 Caroline: [and that makes it more] acceptable?
7 Anne Craig: Yes the um the analogy would be **like they're using that to build the bones**,
8 Caroline: Right,
9 Anne Craig: And **polishing it up the skin**,
10 Caroline: Yes,
11 Anne Craig: With **their editing abilities**.

Examples of policies: Qualifying use

Excerpt 1- Livvie

- 1 But I think once they are integrated into like a Comp. 1 or Comp. 2 class
2 **I don't feel like they should be relying on those.**

Excerpt 2

- 1 Caroline: Um so is there a type of ... if somebody did it would you have
2 problem with it-
3 Would it- you know?
4 Livvie: No I don't think I would have a problem with it,
5 Caroline: You just wouldn't recommend ?
6 Livvie: **I would recommend tutoring.**

Examples of policies: translating instructions

- 1 Caroline: Um do you think there's an appropriate time that second
2 language writers could use these services?
- 3 Ellen: I think so I think um in particular **maybe translating assignments?**
4 Just to-
- 5 Caroline: Like the instructions?
- 6 Ellen: The instructions and even if they're having trouble um maybe
7 With certain concepts.
- 8 Caroline: Ok ok.
- 9 Ellen: **But it's never appropriate to use it for a whole assignment.**

Language of prohibition: “it’s not reflecting their knowledge”

- 1 Anne Craig: Because then it doesn't sound like the student's voice,
- 2 Caroline: Ok.
- 3 Anne Craig: It doesn't sound like them.
- 4 It doesn't reflect their knowledge of the issue.
- 5 Caroline: Ok,
- 6 Anne Craig: Just like an ESL student.
- 7 Caroline: Right.
- 8 Anne Craig: **Where if they used translator but don't smooth things out or if words**
- 9 **are different it's not reflecting their knowledge of the English**
- 10 **language.**

Language of prohibition: “do it the right way”

1 Livvie:

Um but most of the time with ESL students what I find is

2

That they wanna take that extra time to **do it the right way-**

3 Caroline:

Right.

4 Livvie:

So I feel like a lot of times they're trying to **use English instead of**

5

translating.

Language of prohibition: “it does feel like cheating”

- 1 Anne Craig: Because you do have that option of like **feeling like you're cheating,**
- 2 Caroline: Yeah,
- 3 Anne Craig: Almost,
- 4 And-and on **some levels it would be.**
- 5 Caroline: Yeah.
- 6 Anne Craig: Definitely,
- 7 If you're supposed to be doing it with your own ideas then it **does feel**
- 8 **Like cheating if you're translating or something.**

Recommendations

- Conversation
 - Teacher to teacher
 - Student to teacher
- Classroom discussion of digital composing practices
- Classroom contract

Conclusion and implications

- ▣ Online translators as a private and less risky form of language socialization
- ▣ Students socializing instructors

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