

## Self-corrections of Genre-related Errors in Japanese-to-English Translation Drafts

Shoji Miyanaga

*Kinki University*  
*shomiyanaga@kindai.ac.jp*

### **Abstract**

Difficulties with Japanese-to-English translation faced by native Japanese-speaking translators can be roughly categorized into linguistic difficulties and difficulties that are related to the genre of the translation job. Therefore, they need to acquire skills to identify such genre-specific features. This study compared the first and final drafts prepared by five translator trainees to investigate which genre-related features they could improve/correct. The genre dealt with was the press release. Among the five genre-related features of press releases examined, two features, ordering of the title and subtitle and the verb tense in the first sentence of the lead, were very likely to be self-corrected. The use of the third person to refer to the company that issued the press release was unlikely to be self-corrected. The results also suggested that students' awareness of genre-related features did not differ depending on the duration of enrollment in the translation course.

*Key words:* self-correction, genre features, ESP, translation, press release

### **I. Introduction**

Roughly speaking, native Japanese-speaking translators face two types of difficulties with J-E translation: linguistic difficulties and difficulties that are related to the genre of the translation job, which involve the rhetorical structure, and words and collocations that are frequently used in the genre of the translation text. Therefore, J-E translators need to acquire skills to identify such genre-specific features, in addition to general English skills.

Translation always involves revision and editing. Thus, when teaching translation, it is important to examine not only the students' first drafts but also their final drafts. Comparison of the first and final drafts should provide information on the errors that were corrected and those that were not. However, evaluation of students' drafts is a difficult and time-consuming task for teachers.

In the case of Japanese students training to be J-E translators, the situation in many respects is similar to that of error correction in second language writing, where much research has been done. Lee (2004) points out that error correction is a complicated process and part of the evaluation of writing, but that teachers are not always competent enough to correct errors, and that inaccurate error correction feedback may be misleading. There is also a controversy as to whether error correction feedback is effective or not. Results of meta-analysis by Truscott (2007) suggest that error correction feedback is ineffective and can even be harmful. However, as some feedback is necessary, teachers need to know what types of errors learners make and what kind of feedback would be effective.

The present study was done to examine genre-related errors and self-corrections found in Japanese-to-English translations drafted by native Japanese-speaking translator trainees at a language institution in Japan. Errors associated with the characteristics of genre were identified, and analyses as to whether or not such errors found in the students' first translation drafts were corrected in their second drafts were conducted. Examination of self-correction of genre-related errors should reveal whether or not the students' awareness of genre had increased through the classwork.

For these purposes, the study dealt with the following research questions.

1. Which types of genre-related errors are more likely to be produced, self-corrected, or remain uncorrected?
2. How does students' awareness of genre differ according to the duration of enrollment in the translation course?

## **II. Methodology**

### **A. Approach to J-E Translation**

The Japanese-to-English translation course usually meets once a week for a total of 18 times during a six-month term. The approach to J-E translation taken in this course is based on the PAIL viewpoint (Noguchi, 1997) and the OCHA approach (Noguchi, 2003). Noguchi proposes identifying the purpose, audience, information, and language features of a genre text to observe its genre features, classifying the observed genre features, hypothesizing their use in one's own writing/translation, and applying their use.

Before translating an assignment text on their own, students find reference articles in English that are in the same genre or field as the assignment text. They compare genre features in the source text and the reference articles to make them aware of differences in genre features between Japanese and English. They submit their first draft translations one week before the day of the class.

In class, the instructor does not provide students with direct feedback on errors in the first drafts but may describe the types of errors that were frequently found. Each class starts with identification of the PAIL of the source text, followed by indirect feedback based on frequently occurring errors, discussion on what students found about genre features of the source text and their reference articles, difficulties they faced in doing the translation, questions and comments turned in with their first drafts, and examination of genre features of two or three reference articles in English provided by the instructor.

After class, the students individually revise their own translation drafts based on the discussion in class and subsequent work and submit their second drafts within two weeks. When producing the first and second drafts, students are encouraged to examine the rhetorical structure of genre texts using move analysis as well as the words and collocations using corpus linguistic analysis.

### **B. Data Collection and Participants**

The data for this study were obtained from the first and second translation drafts produced by five students for one assignment. The Japanese source text for the assignment was a press release issued by the Japanese affiliate of a Swiss pharmaceutical company that markets diagnostic reagents. The topic was the launch of two new reagents for cancer diagnosis.

### **C. Corpus of Press Releases**

To evaluate students' translations, a corpus of 20 English press releases issued by pharmaceutical companies was created.

- Two press releases from 10 pharmaceutical companies chosen from a list of "The world's top 50 companies by their total R&D investment in the 2012 Scoreboard" in The 2012 EU Industrial R&D Investment Scoreboard (Scoreboard, E. U. R. D., 2012)
- Topics: Launch of a new product, receiving approval to market a new product, development of a new product, development plans, and publication of studies

### **D. Genre Features Examined**

Among the features of press releases, this study focused on the following.

- 1) The place of the dateline, i.e., the place of the dateline city and the date
- 2) The order of the title and subtitle(s)
- 3) The use of the words "announced" and "today" in the 1st sentence of the lead
- 4) The verb tense in the 1<sup>st</sup> sentence of the lead
- 5) The use of third person to refer to the company that issued the press release

### **E. Analysis**

The students' first and second draft translations were analyzed for appropriateness with regard to the five genre features listed above, and the findings for the first and second drafts were compared. Judgment of appropriateness was based on the corpus of press releases created for this study. Table II shows the criteria assessment of self-corrections.

### III. Results

#### A. Criteria of Assessment

The self-corrections made by each student were evaluated using numerical scores that represent a change from the first draft to the second draft. For example, if the translation that involved a genre feature was appropriate in the first draft and was further improved in the second draft, the score for the change was 3, and if the translation was appropriate in the first draft and was not changed in the second draft, the score was 2. Table I summarizes the criteria. Note that these numerical scores do not represent the students' performance but the degree of likelihood that a genre feature was learned by the students. This is because the present study examined only five genre features of press releases, and there are some more features that have not been examined.

Table II summarizes how well each genre feature was learned by each student.

Table 1

*Criteria of Assessment of Self-corrections*

1 <sup>st</sup> draft	2 <sup>nd</sup> draft	Score
Appropriate	More appropriate	3
Appropriate	Not changed	2
Inappropriate	Appropriate	1
Inappropriate	Not changed	-1
Appropriate	Inappropriate	-2

Table 2

*Scores of Likelihood of Genre Features to be Learned*

Genre feature	Students					Total
	A	B	C	D	E	
	F	F	M	M	F	
Place of dateline	3	2	2	3	2	12
Order of title and subtitle	1	2	1	2	-1	5
Use of "announce" and "today" in 1 <sup>st</sup> sentence	1	-1	-1	-1	2	0
Verb tense in 1 <sup>st</sup> sentence	2	1	-1	1	2	5
Use of third person to represent the company	-2	-1	-1	-1	-1	-6
Total score for each student	5	3	0	4	4	

#### B. Place of Dateline

Placing the dateline either at the top of the lead or above the title was assessed as appropriate. Although the dateline is located at the top of the lead in 14 press releases in the corpus, it is often located somewhere else.

- AF moved the dateline from the top of the text to the top of the lead.
- DM relocated the dateline from the top of the text to between the subtitle and the lead.
- BF, CM, and EF did not change the appropriate placement of the dateline, above the title, in their second drafts.

#### C. Order of Title and Subtitle

The Japanese source text had two titles in two lines, one in each line. These were indicated in the same way in terms of formatting, and the second one seemed to be the main title. In the corpus, all of the titles summarize the

## Proceedings of the 2nd International Symposium on Innovative Teaching and Research in ESP, IGTEE UEC Tokyo 2015

main topics that are explained in the first sentences of the leads. Therefore, in translation to English, the order of the first title and second one needs to be the opposite of the Japanese source text.

- AF and CM changed the order of the first and second title appropriately in their second drafts.
- BF and DM had already changed the order of the two titles in their first drafts.
- EF did not change the order of the two titles either in her first or second draft.

### D. Use of “announce” and “today” in 1st Sentence of Lead

In 19 of the 20 press releases, the verb “announce” was used in the past tense along with the word “today” in the first sentence of the lead.

- AF used “announced” with a that-clause in her first draft and added “today” between “announced” and “that” in her second draft.
- BF used the word “announced” without “today” and with a noun phrase in both the first and second drafts.
- CM did not use the word “announced” but used “will launch” in both his first and second drafts.
- DF used the word without “today” and with a that-clause in both the first and second drafts.
- EF used the word “announced today” with a that-clause in both the first and second drafts.

### E. Verb Tense in 1st Sentence of Lead

The verb in the 1<sup>st</sup> sentence of the lead was “announced,” i.e., the past tense, in 19 of the 20 press releases.

- AF and EF used the tense appropriately both in their first and second drafts.
- BF changed the tense of the verb “announce” from present to past in her second draft.
- CM used the phrase “will launch” in both the first and second drafts.
- DM initially used the phrase “will launch” but changed it to “announced that” in his second draft.

### F. Use of Third Person to Represent the Company

The company that issues the press release is not referred to as “we,” “our,” or “us” in press releases, except in the case of a direct quote or in the section of company information that follows the main text of the press release. Errors were made by all participants with regard to this genre feature.

- AF used the actual company name in her first draft but changed it to “our” in her second draft.
- BF, CM, DM, and EF used “our” to refer to the company or the analyzer manufactured by the company.

## IV. Conclusion

As to Research Question 1, the results suggest that the students were aware of the appropriate location of the dateline even at the time they wrote the first draft. This is partly because the place of the dateline is relatively flexible. In their second drafts, however, two students improved their translation with respect to this genre feature.

The ordering of the title and subtitle was also easy to learn. Two students had already grasped this genre feature by the time they produced their first drafts. Two others recognized this genre feature when writing their second drafts. One student failed to correctly render this genre feature in both her first and second drafts.

For the students, it might be difficult to notice that in the first sentence of the lead, the word “announced” is typically used with the word “today.” Only one student recognized this genre feature before or while producing her first draft. One student added “today” when writing her second draft.

The correct verb tense in the 1<sup>st</sup> sentence of the lead was also very likely to be learned quickly by the students. Two students used the past tense in both their first and second drafts. Two others changed the tense to the past in their second drafts. One failed to do so.

The results suggest that the most difficult genre feature to grasp is the use of third person when referring to the company that issues the press release. All students except AF failed to use third person in both their first and second drafts. AF used the third person in her first draft but changed it to the first person in her second draft.

As to Research Question 2, the total scores for each student in Table II indicate that there was no obvious difference depending on the duration of enrollment in the translation course. However, the results could actually differ, because these total scores indicate only the likelihood that the genre features dealt with in this study were learned; other genre features were not dealt with in this study.

For further research, other genre features of press releases should be examined so that the students’ performance can be assessed in more detail. For that purpose, it is also necessary to collect more press releases in English issued

**Proceedings of the 2nd International Symposium on  
Innovative Teaching and Research in ESP, IGTEE UEC Tokyo 2015**

by the same companies on topics other than those covered by the press releases in the current corpus. In the present study, the variation in the length of the participants' course enrollment was examined to determine its influence on the awareness of genre features. Further work should be done, for example, in a longitudinal manner using a small number of students, to examine their growth in terms of awareness of genre features.

**References**

- Lee, I. (2004). Error correction in L2 secondary writing classrooms: The case of Hong Kong. *Journal of Second Language Writing, 13*(4), 285-312.
- Noguchi, J. (1997). Materials development for English for specific purposes: Applying genre analysis to EFL pedagogy. *English Teaching 52*(3), 303-318.
- Noguchi, J. (2003, September). Teaching ESP writing: OCHA in a CALL class Cybermedia Forum, 4. Retrieved from <http://www.cmc.osaka-u.ac.jp/j/publication/for-2003/index.html>
- Scoreboard, E. U. R. D. (2012). The 2012 EU Industrial R&D Investment Scoreboard.
- Truscott, J. (2007). The effect of error correction on learners' ability to write accurately. *Journal of Second Language Writing, 16*(4), 255-272.