



A LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF THE ERRORS ENCOUNTERED WHEN TRANSLATING TECHNICAL DOCUMENTS FROM ENGLISH TO SINHALA USING GOOGLE TRANSLATOR

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Google translator is an online tool provided by Google for translation to transgress language boundaries. Millions of documents translated by human translators are fed into Google translator and it looks for patterns in millions of documents to help decide on the best translation. Recently, Google translator added Sinhalese as one of the 103 languages that is supported. Since there were errors found in the English to Sinhala translations done by the undergraduates with the assistance of Google translator, this study attempts to conduct a linguistic analysis of the errors encountered when translating technical documents from English to Sinhalese using Google translator. Thus, ten sentences from the activities given to the students were translated into Sinhalese using Google translator and they were compared to their standard Sinhala translations respectively. The sentences quoted from technical documents included the Constitution, government vacancy advertisements, and External Course advertisements. The collected data indicated that when a complex sentence with few clauses are given to translate, due to the structural difference between English (Subject + Verb + Object) and Sinhalese (Subject + Object + Verb), thus, 50% of complex sentences have not been translated structurally correct. In addition, the language style of technical documents are absent in 70% of the Google translated sentences. 45% of the technical terms related to relevant subjects have been correctly translated, while the exact meaning of the original sentence is depicted only in 30% of the translations. Thus, it seems Google translator can produce a correct translation using a compound sentence. However, its reliability is questionable when translating technical documents, since it fails to deliver the translation of technical terms, language style and unambiguity. Thus, it is recommended to feed more standard Sinhala translations with different sentence structures into Google translator to improve the quality of English to Sinhala translations.

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