A Fondness for Lexical Teddy Bears: A Contrastive Analysis of Filipino Adjectives and their English Translations by Senior High School Students

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This paper makes a contrastive analysis of high-frequency Filipino adjectives and their English translations made by Grade 11 students of Alaminos Integrated National High School to determine not only their lexical competency but also the factors that may contribute to the difficulties they experience in L2 production about the accuracy and appropriateness of their vocabulary use. The study used an online survey requiring the randomly selected students to translate Filipino sentences into English. Each constructed Filipino sentence contains a target adjective and, by using the classical contrastive procedure to compare the Filipino lexical items and their English translations, three things were revealed: (1) it was observed that there was high inclination for the respondents to rely on high-frequency English words regardless of their appropriacy and relation to their collocates; (2) the semantic flexibility of Filipino adjectives possibly contributes to the lexical dissonance of the translations made by the language learners; and (3) the students' deficiency in both vocabulary breadth and depth can be a direct result of their reluctance to step out of their lexical comfort zones. This paper also discussed the research findings' impact on vocabulary teaching in public schools in the Philippines.

Keywords: *contrastive analysis, lexical dissonance, semantic prosody, translation, vocabulary, vocabulary learning*

Introduction

Background of the Study

Vocabulary knowledge is one major indicator of a learner's literacy development and academic success (Uccelli & Pan, 2013). Coady and Huckin (1997) even assert that vocabulary is at the very center of communicative competence. However, acquisition of a multitude of words does not necessarily equate to language competency in a target second language (L2) because it likewise "necessitates acquiring various types of knowledge regarding each word and creating semantic networks among multiple lexical items" (Kilic, 2019, p. 135). Language competency, then, is highly correlated to learners' lexical knowledge, and a comprehensive understanding of the semantic nuances of words in the target L2 is critical, so learners could construct meaningful and accurate L2 productions in any form of discourse.

According to Gleason and Ratner (2013), "[v]ocabulary is crucial not only because a larger and deeper lexical repertoire allows speakers to express themselves with more preciseness, flexibility, and effectiveness, but also because of the strong association between vocabulary and reading comprehension" (p. 103). They also maintain that it is not enough to just have vocabulary breadth, which refers to the number of words known by the learner, because it is relatively more important to acquire vocabulary depth, which includes awareness of multiple meanings and word associations and the appropriateness of word usage. This view about the importance of vocabulary depth was echoed by Jiang (2004) whose quantitative study among Chinese EFL students showed how the latter struggled to decipher pairs of English words that did not share the same L1 (Chinese) translation as opposed to pairs of English words that shared the same translation in L1. He replicated the study with Korean EFL students and obtained the same results. The results in both his studies led him to conclude that lexical competence must not be regarded as a "monolithic concept" because it is a "multidimensional construct."

Indeed, having a broad lexical knowledge and vocabulary depth that match the academic level of learners is a must if they are expected to succeed in their academic endeavors. This lexical competency is essential most especially for senior high school students who must meet the demands of subjects like *Practical Research, Inquiries, Investigations, and Immersion* (3i), and *English for Academic and Professional Purposes* that will require them to come up with capstone projects such as research papers, position papers, and film or book reviews. The academic demands of the aforementioned subjects rely on the assumption that the learners, upon crossing the border from junior high to senior high school, are already equipped with the necessary vocabulary knowledge that will enable them to express what they mean with a degree of precision and utilize words and sentence structures that complement the context of the writing genre. Cruz (2015) even argues that, since Grade 11 students will be required to take core subjects such as Reading and Writing, they are then expected to have learned basic vocabulary skills from kindergarten to Grade 10, so they will be able to tackle more challenging texts or discourses.

This study aimed to shed light on the lexical knowledge and vocabulary depth of selected Grade 11 students of Alaminos Integrated National High School (AINHS). Using contrastive analysis as a method to compare and analyze the learners' knowledge of both their mother tongue (Filipino) and the target L2 (English), the *lexical dissonance* – a term preferred by Hasselgren (1994) over the word "error" which she believes carries "outright wrongness of meaning" (p.238) – in the respondents' translations provided significant information regarding their lexical proficiency and inappropriate lexical choices in their production of L2. In the course of this study, possible factors that influenced their vocabulary learning were likewise investigated. Furthermore, the need to re-evaluate and innovate vocabulary instruction among Filipino learners was raised, especially in public schools.

Contrastive analysis (CA) assumes that languages can be compared to analyze similarities

and differences (James, 1980; Tajareh, 2015). It upholds the existence of language universals, and this implies that languages have common denominators that establish the foundation for linguistic comparison where valuable information can be gleaned and used to better facilitate language learning and eventually develop course materials that would cater to the proficiency level of the learner (Tajareh, 2015; Zaki, 2015). As a method, contrastive analysis is anchored to the assumption that a learner's first language influences the learning of a second target language (Lado, 1957; Fries, 1945). This is why it is closely associated with the field of translation since the latter essentially requires a comparison between two languages (Sukirmiyadi, 2018). This method of comparison and analysis, with the aid of translation, is not something new anymore. In the past, foreign language teachers already utilized this method to determine students' mistranslations by contrasting their L1 and L2 written performance (Kelly, 1969). According to Sukirmiyadi (2018), contrastive analysis and translation had already been working hand-in-hand during the former's inception when linguists and scholars started comparing languages with the primary aim of helping displaced Europeans after World War II.

It is worth noting that translation is one complex process (Hadi, 2019). Its objective is to interpret and communicate the meaning of a message or information from one language to another (Boustani, 2019). In addition, the translation process goes beyond linguistic matters because it involves other facets of both source language and target language such as socio-cultural aspects, literature, economics, politics, scientific and technological aspects, and even religious factors; thus, translation can be regarded as a bridge that makes cross-cultural communication possible and brings different socio-cultural groups closer (Bharathi, 2014).

Larson (1998) describes translation as a "transferring process of the source text (ST) meaning of the source language (SL) into the target language TL through going from the form of SL into the form of TL taking into account the lexicon, syntactic structures, context of situation and cultural variations of the SL in order to determine its meaning in the TL" (p. 42). The process illustrated by Larson shows how translation initially demands a strong foundation of lexical knowledge to proceed to the next phases that will require constructing grammatical structures that faithfully convey the intended meaning of the source text. Translation starts at the lexico-semantic phase where mapping of the lexical equivalence of the source language to the target language takes place. This has been theorized by Malakoff and Hakuta (1991) who maintain that translation goes through several stages, the first being understanding the vocabulary of the source language. Therefore, if lexical recognition fails at the onset, then a valid and faithful translation cannot be achieved.

Cordero (1984) asserts that translation as an educational activity can be one good assessor of lexical proficiency and a convenient means to assess learner comprehension and accuracy as it further unveils the linguistic idiosyncrasies of the languages being compared. Thus, using contrastive analysis in this study to analyze the respondents' translated sentences in their mother tongue to L2, the lexical dissonance in the L1-L2 translations can be studied and possible causes of mistranslations can be identified. Zeroing in on students' use of L2 vocabulary in translating L1 vocabulary will shed light on how they map out the semantics of target lexical items and, in the process, provide an assessment of learners' lexical aptitude so that necessary interventions and appropriate courses of actions can be considered. "[T]eachers should compare the collocational behaviour in L1 and L2 since learners' awareness of L1-L2 differences should considerably reduce the number of L1 interference errors" (Xiao & McEnery, 2006, as cited in Laufer & Girsai, 2008, p. 700).

Literature Review

In their recent paper about the vocabulary knowledge of senior high school students in the Philippines, Santillan and Daenos (2020) highlight that vocabulary is essential in the development of all primary macro skills and that a rich vocabulary is

crucial to make sense of the language input they receive from the books they read and even from conversations. Unfortunately, their study suggests that vocabulary acquisition by senior high school and even junior high school learners is hampered by factors such as socioeconomic status, lack of exposure to authentic language input, and poor vocabulary instruction.

In a study done by Blas et al. (2018) in a public school in Taytay, Rizal, students were found to have difficulties in all four macro skills, and one of the major reasons was poor vocabulary knowledge. As a consequence of their vocabulary deficiency, students were found struggling with subjects that required them to read long texts in English; in fact, it was observed that English was the most dreaded subject next to Math. In one of their Focus Group Discussions (FGD), one of the respondents even shared how they needed to have stories discussed in class translated from English to Filipino so that they would understand their main idea. From their interviews, they also learned that target grade 11 students had difficulty learning the language because of insufficient exposure to the language, lack of motivation to learn, and the absence of an environment conducive to learning.

This lexical-semantic challenge among learners was also evident in the research conducted by Alico (2020) among 27 senior high school students in the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) strand in a private institution in Marawi City, Lanao del Sur. His study sought to assess the language proficiency of his target respondents by analyzing their translation outputs from Filipino to English. His mixed-method research required his respondents to translate into English three paragraphs lifted from the students' Filipino module, Filipino sa Piling Larangan (Akademik). Results of his study showed that all participants performed poorly in the test while a significant number of students even failed to finish translating the other paragraphs. It was also revealed that participants failed to make accurate and passable translations because of their limited vocabulary and insufficient knowledge of the semantic nuances of both Filipino and English vocabulary.

The aforementioned studies that sought to assess the language proficiency of senior high school students give us a glimpse of the dismal language proficiency of Filipino learners which can be traced to their limited lexical and semantic knowledge. As expressed by Alico (2020) in his paper, these results can be alarming because communicative competence at this stage of Filipino learners' academic life is crucial because they are supposed to be ready for higher education or employment after they graduate from senior high school.

The studies highlight the significance of lexical proficiency in the development of every macro skill and reveal how limited vocabulary knowledge of senior high school students has become a deterrent not just to their general academic performance but also to their L2 acquisition. In this regard, it is necessary to find out why public senior high school students, who have generally been studying English since their preparatory years, still struggle to use it with clarity and accuracy. Although the cited studies emphasized how their below-average lexical proficiency impacted their learning and academic performance and probed into their language learning strategies, none really ventured to explore why learners seemed to reach a point of lexical stagnation by closely examining the crosslinguistic route that led to their L2 production and the reasons why their lexical choices were marked inappropriate. Clearly, empirical evidence shows that there is a disconnect between vocabulary knowledge and skills required to perform well in some SHS subjects and the actual vocabulary proficiency of learners.
By studying the attributes of learners' L1 and the likely factors that influence how learners translate words from their L1 to L2, innovative ideas may be cultivated to help design interventions and course of actions to address this dilemma that does not seem to get sufficient attention. Evidently, there is a dearth of studies investigating the lexical proficiency of senior high school students.

Methodology

Respondents

The respondents in this study were Grade 11 students of Alaminos Integrated National High School (AINHS), a public school in Alaminos, Laguna. Students were randomly selected from a prepared list of students who possessed the means and technical resources to accomplish the online survey. The prepared list was based on the information available in the enrollment survey forms of Grade 11 General Academic Strand students who all belonged to the researcher's list of handled sections. It was noteworthy that the respondents, being in the academic strand, were regarded as the ones who would most likely pursue college after graduating from senior high, so it was interesting to find out if the students were equipped with the vocabulary knowledge they were expected to have to be ready to face the academic demands of senior high school.

Prior to the conduct of the survey, the students were informed about the objectives of the study, and the procedure was explained via Messenger. Since all the respondents were under 18 at the time the study was conducted, parental consent was sought; fortunately, consent was easily provided by the parents or guardians who went to school once a week for the submission of student outputs and retrieval of modules as part of the school's Learning Continuity Plan amid the COVID-19 pandemic. All the respondents relatively belonged to families that fell between the low-income class (but not poor) to lower-middle-income class brackets (Albert et al., 2018).

Test Instrument

The test instrument consisted of four sentences, and students were instructed to translate or express each sentence into English. The Filipino sentences were intentionally made short to tighten the parameters of the possible translations. A modified version of the standardized forward-backward translation procedure (Koller et al., 2012) was done to validate each test item. Five senior high school English teachers from the Division of Laguna were involved in the validation process. The first two teachers were asked to translate the original Filipino sentences into English. Then, their translations were sent to the other two teachers to do the back translation. Finally, the back translations, together with the initial translation and source text, were checked by the last validator for any inconsistencies so that a reconciliation could be made, together with the researcher, regarding the best Filipino words to use for the survey-instrument. It was noteworthy that the primary consideration in the selection of the target Filipino adjectives to be translated was the semantic nuance of the L2 equivalents of the source adjectives; thus, students would have to choose the appropriate L2 equivalent of the L1 source.

The survey-instrument was prepared and sent online via Google Form to 56 randomly selected students from the General Academic Strand of AINHS Senior High School. To answer the instrument, the students needed a computer, tablet, or smartphone that could be hooked online. The online form was accessible for one hour and was sent to all target respondents at the same time. Since the respondents were notified beforehand that a link to the survey would be sent to them at a designated time, one-hour access would be more than enough time for them to accomplish the online test-survey. All respondents reported to have used their mobile phones to access and answer the Google Form, and all 56 respondents were able to accomplish the task. The student-respondents were also informed that they may use a dictionary as a resource.

Follow-up interviews were done virtually to determine who among the respondents used a dictionary and ask how they chose the L2 equivalent provided in the dictionary to translate words in the Filipino sentences. However, not all the respondents could be reached even via Facebook Messenger possibly due to connection issues or mobile data unavailability.

The following were the sentences in the survey. Note that the Filipino adjectives typed in boldface were the target words whose translations would be closely analyzed.

Table 1

List of Filipino Sentences to be Translated

1. **Mahaba** ang pasensya ni Ana.
2. **Napakalawak** ng lupaing pag-aari ni Don Manuel.
3. **Magulo** ang kanyang isipan.
4. **Mataas** ang kanyang pangarap sa buhay.

Treatment

According to Jaszczolt (1995) and Krzeszowski (1990), contrastive analysis is a method of comparing languages and determining the potential errors to isolate the factors that need to be learned and not to be learned in a target L2. Learning theory asserts that a person will utilize prior knowledge in the native language to facilitate the L2 learning process; as such, contrastive analysis considers L2 learning as subduing the effects of the learner's native tongue (Tajareh, 2015). Since this study is primarily concerned with the learners' translation of L1 into L2, the interplay between the learners' knowledge of their L1 and L2 in the process of translation is worth investigating, and contrastive analysis can help unveil significant information and insights.

As a method, a contrastive study follows an investigative process with three fundamental elements: 1) the research problem or hypothesis, 2) data, and 3) data analysis and interpretation. Interpretation of the data, in classical contrastive studies, is based on the intuitive judgments of the researcher who further acts as the bilingual informant responsible for making the decision on what to compare based on his knowledge of the languages to be compared and analyzed in the study (Principles and Trends of Contrastive Linguistics).

Contrastive Analysis was applied in this study where comparison between two sets of data – the set of target lexes or adjectives in the learners' mother tongue and the English translations of these Filipino lexes – was done. Furthermore, the role of L1 influence on the target L2 was considered. The process of comparing the two sets of linguistic input followed the classical contrastive procedure that involved three steps: description, juxtaposition, and comparison (Jaszczolt, 1995; Krzeszowski, 1990).

The responses to the survey served as the pool of data for this study where salient information was gleaned to highlight the notable differences between the English and Filipino lexes and the linguistic characteristics of the language production of the learners in the target language. Furthermore, the *Corpus of Contemporary American English* (COCA) was also utilized to verify the appropriateness and nativeness of the lexical collocations in the students' English translations. At the COCA website, the "list" option under the "search" menu item was selected, then target phrases from the survey results were typed inside the search bar to check if the corpus could provide existing or matching data. Although there are existing debates as to what kind of English should be taught inside the classroom (Bernardo, 2011), especially with the advent of "varieties of English" (Kachru, 1986; 1992), Standard American English is used in this study as a metric to analyze the nativeness of the translations since it is considered as a global lingua franca (Serrani, 2020). And if Filipino students are being prepared to be globally competitive, they need to learn the language utilized in global communication.

The mode was used to measure the central tendency since this study only needed to find out the frequency of occurrences of the various translations made for a target lexical item in a sentence. Moreover, the study utilized a mixed-method design which, according to Creswell (2014), blended qualitative and quantitative data which could provide a stronger understanding of the research problem. L2 teaching and learning is a complicated and multifaceted process (Nassaji, 2015), so this study warranted a wider perspective and drew from different data sources.

Results

As can be seen in the survey data, Grade 11 respondents of Alaminos Integrated National High School used high-frequency words to translate or express the target lexis in each Filipino sentence.

Figure 1

Distribution of Translations of the Target Word ***Mahaba***

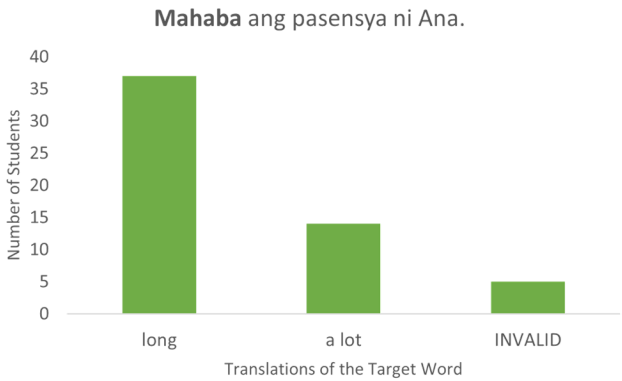

Figure 1 shows the overwhelming number of students who translated the word "*mahaba"* into *"long"* while several students, whose answers were labeled INVALID, failed to incorporate the idea or meaning of the adjective *"mahaba"* in their translation.

Figure 2

Distribution of Translations of the Target Word ***Napakalawak***

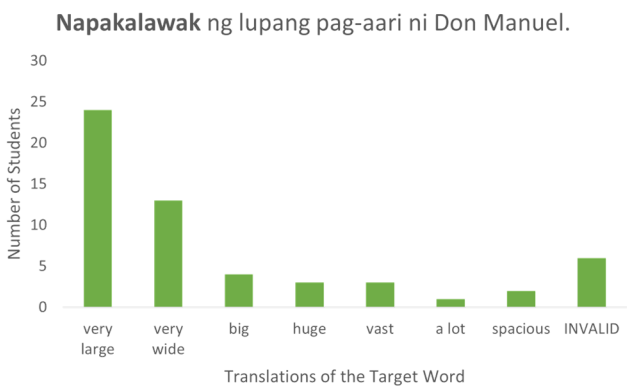

Figure 2 shows how the students have varied translations of the target adjective "*napakalawak."* Most of the students translated the sentence into "Don Manuel owns a very large land" while some tried to deviate by using other near-synonyms of the phrase "very large" (e.g., "…owns a huge land," "…owns a very big land," "…owns a lot of land").

Figure 3

Distribution of Translations of the Target Word ***Magulo***

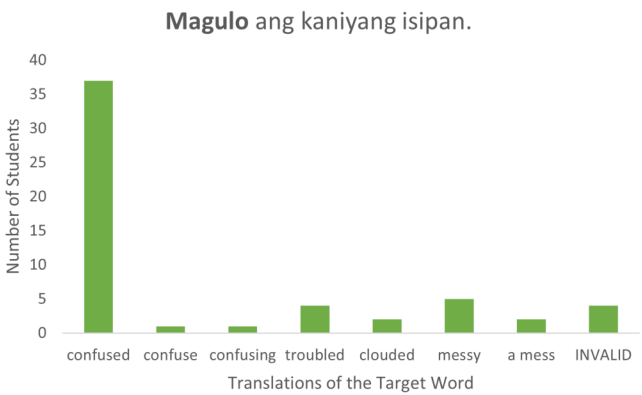

Figure 3 shows a significant number of good translations of the target adjective although some who have provided the correct equivalent lexis still have not been able to use the correct form of the word rendering their sentences ungrammatical (e.g., *"Her mind is confuse."* and *"Her mind is confusing.").*

Figure 4

Distribution of Translations of the Target Word ***Mataas***

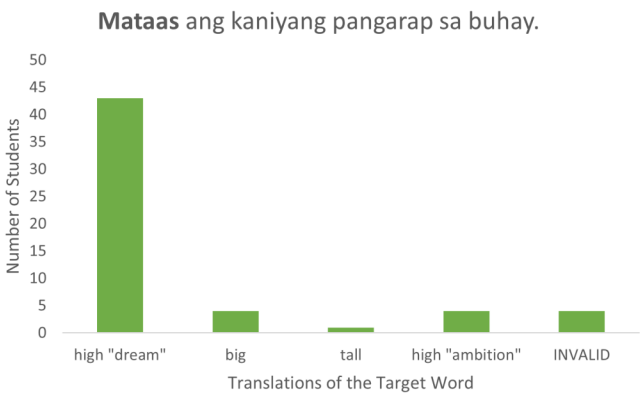

Figure 4 shows how most of the students have translated the word "*mataas*" into a high-frequency English adjective "high." However, only a handful of students have been able to use the word "high" with its appropriate collocate, "ambition," to come up with the acceptable translation: *He / She has a high ambition,* as opposed to most of the translations which collocate the word *"high" with "dream:" He / She has a high dream* or *His / Her dream is high.*

Discussion

The study made a contrastive analysis of the English translations of target Filipino adjectives by Grade 11 students of Alaminos Integrated National High School. As could be observed in the charts in the previous section, it was evident that the Grade 11 respondents mistranslated by assuming that near-synonymous words were collocationally interchangeable, and this was apparent in the variety of words used to translate the target word in each sentence.

Fan (2010) points out how "words are not collocationally interchangeable" (p. 53). He further explains that the word tea is usually described using the adjective strong rather than powerful even though those two words are similar in meaning. This persistent linguistic phenomenon among second language learners happens because using high-frequency words is one strategy that they utilize due to lexical familiarity even though more precise and accurate collocating words would have been better and correctly expressed the true intent of the message or text (Millar, 2016). Similar to what happened to the translations of the Grade 11 respondents, their over-reliance on these high-frequency words or the so-called lexical teddy bears highly impacted their L2 production. According to Millar (2016), lexical teddy bears are "high-frequency, high-utility polysemous words (e.g., good, big, bad, nice etc.) that combine readily where a more precise strongly collocating word could also be selected" (p. 17). He further explains that these words have been documented to be overused by second language learners especially if learners are unaware of more precise words.

Although some may have constructed grammatically-correct structures, the results of the survey showed how the inappropriate collocations of certain words rendered the respondents' sentences faulty by native English standards. It can be inferred from the results that the manifestation of lexical dissonance in the translations may be partly due to their lexical limitations and unawareness of acceptable lexico-grammatical structures.

Stubbs (1996, as cited in Fan, 2010) maintains that there is a direct relationship between semantic prosody – which is defined as the establishment of meaning through a consistent juxtaposition of collocates (Louw, 1993) – and collocation in the choice of lexis because certain words are more liable to collocate with specific words. Inappropriate collocation can be observed in the following sample translations by the students in the survey.

Table 2

A Comparison of Sample Translations by the Students

Sentence Primer	Translations with the highest frequency
Mataas ang kanyang pangarap.	She **has** a high dream.
Malawak ang lupang pag-aari ni Don Manuel.	Don Manuel owns a very **large** land.
Mahaba ang pasensya ni Ana.	Ana has a **long** patience.

In the first example, "She has a high dream," the Corpus of Contemporary American English or COCA does not present any data with the collocation of the adjectives "high" and "dream" to express the Filipino phrase "mataas na pangarap." "Big" together with "dream" would have been acceptable as the corpus has data for the collocation, and some students were able to collocate those words to give a correct translation. The inappropriate collocation of words is also true with the translation, "Ana has a long patience," which reflects the majority of the respondents' answers. The word "patience" does not appropriately collocate with the adjective "long" to express the Filipino phrase "mahaba ang pasensya." The COCA has no data to reflect the

collocations. For the translation "Don Manuel owns a very large land," the lexical dissonance lies in its lack of proper collocating words. Data for both "large" and "land," using the COCA, present those two words functioning as compound adjectives as in "large land area," "large land mammals," or "large land grants."

Through close comparison of the high-frequency Filipino adjectives with the English translations made by the students, it is further observed that the respondents' confusion and difficulty in translation may lie in the versatility of Filipino adjectives in the lexico-grammatical structures of most Filipino sentences. Consider the Filipino adjective "mataas" – written in boldface on the left side – and its corresponding English translation – written in boldface on the right side.

Table 3

English Translations of the Filipino Adjective in Different Semantic Prosodies

Mataas ang kanyang mga pangarap .	He/She has **big** dreams. He/She has **high** ambitions.
Mataas ang mga gusali sa lungsod.	The buildings in the city are **tall**.
Mataas ang kanyang lagnat.	He/She has a **high** fever.
Mataas ang bilang ng mga nasawi dulot ng COVID-19.	COVID 19 brought about a **large** number of casualties.

From the above comparison, it is evident that the Filipino adjective can be utilized to produce various semantic prosodies whereas, when translated into English, the lexical equivalent changes depending on its corresponding collocates – big dreams, tall buildings, high fever, large or huge number of casualties.

Another example is the adjective "*napakalawak*."

Table 4

English Translations of the Filipino Adjective in Different Semantic Prosodies

Napakalawak ng lupang pag-aari ni Don Manuel.	Don Manuel owns a **vast** area of land. Don Manuel owns a **very big plot** of land. Don Manuel owns a **very large** private estate.
Napakalawak ng kanyang imahinasyon.	He/She has a **very wide** imagination.
Napakalawak ng nasalanta ng bagyong Yolanda.	Typhoon Yolanda devastated a **very wide** area.
Napakalawak ng sakop ng tinalakay na paksa sa kasaysayan ng aming guro.	The topic in history discussed by our teacher is very **broad**.

The above comparisons show how the adjective "*napakalawak*" can be used in a variety of semantic prosodies in the Filipino language while the word's corresponding translations into English vary depending on the context and lexicogrammatical structures of the sentence.

This high semantic flexibility of high-frequency Filipino adjectives – such as those used in the test-survey – may contribute to the occurrence of mistranslations by the respondents. The influence of their L1 and their lack of awareness of the semantic nuance of the target words made it difficult for them to properly distinguish the semantic differences of those synonymous words. As a result, the students overgeneralized this flexible linguistic attribute of the Filipino adjectives and assumed that the same rule applies when they used words in the target L2.

In the previously given sample adjectives, "napakalawak" and "mataas," the two adjectives take on different meanings when placed in various semantic environments whereas the English language has a specific word for every semantic nuance. As a consequence of this linguistic phenomenon, a learner who is unaware of these lexical and semantic characteristics of both their L1 and the target L2 would be literally lost in translation. As the results of the study show, they would assume that the literal translation of a Filipino word into a familiar or high-frequency English word would suffice.

This phenomenon is similar to what happened in a study done by Hasselgren (1994) involving Norwegian language learners. In her study, she investigated how the Norwegian learners made lexical choices and how they tried to reflect native speaker-like collocations. Her findings showed that Norwegian students relied heavily on familiar words and phrases that closely resembled their native language and made one-to-one translation equivalents of broken-down English vocabulary structure to mirror their L1. This dependence on lexical teddy bears is also highlighted in an experiment done by Liang and Xu (2018) involving 47 English as a Foreign Language (EFL) graduate students from a Chinese university. The experiment required the Chinese respondents to accomplish an L1-L2 translation task using an electronic dictionary and results showed that students used direct lexical equivalents of words to be translated, paying little attention to collocation.

In the follow-up interviews via Messenger, 27 out of the 56 respondents of this study reported to have used the dictionary and chosen the words that were most familiar to them, similar to the findings of Liang and Xu's (2018) experiment. This aspect of the study further raises another important issue with regard to these students' awareness of the information available in a dictionary, and more importantly, their knowledge and skills to use the information.

It is noteworthy that this over-dependence on lexical-teddy bears may be a significant factor that further hinders students to broaden their vocabulary and improve their language proficiency. Moreover, their lexical limitations can be a direct result of their hesitations to explore the language. Retreating to what is familiar is characteristic of some, especially the conservative language learners who are afraid to utilize unfamiliar structures because of fear of misusing them (Schachter, 1974). As a result, they just move around their lexical comfort zones. Learners revert to words that they feel safe or what Hasselgren (1994) calls cuddling back to their lexical teddy bears.

The contrastive analysis of high-frequency Filipino adjectives in determining their equivalent translations into English only validates Halliday's arguments (1961, 1977, as cited in Peppard, 2014) that "grammar/vocabulary dichotomy is invalid – lexis and grammar are better understood as a single system to convey meaning. Language consists of grammaticalized lexis rather than lexicalized grammar" (p. 81). Learners need to understand that they can only effectively learn and utilize the vocabulary of the target L2 if they are also cognizant of the semantic collocation and nuances of words. This is reminiscent of Gleason and Ratner's (2013) dichotomization of vocabulary breadth and vocabulary depth because the latter directly correlates to a learner's language proficiency by being able to use lexical items with accuracy and appropriacy that mirrors the linguistic characteristics of the language structures used by native speakers. Vocabulary, indeed, is determined by the grammatical and semantic structures of sentences.

Conclusion

This contrastive analysis of the Filipino adjectives and their English translations by the respondents provided significant information on their lexical proficiency and inappropriate lexical choices in their production of L2.
The mistranslations of the target lexis in each sentence with its equivalent word and appropriate collocates in the target L2 were highly indicative of learners' poor grasp of semantics and very limited vocabulary. Furthermore, the findings show that it is most likely that their limited lexical knowledge can be a direct result of their reliance on lexical teddy bears, and this is evidenced by the respondents' tendency to use familiar words when they translate. As a consequence, their opportunity to expand the breadth and depth of their vocabulary is hampered. Furthermore, their reluctance to explore the language is a possible indication of their lack of exposure to and insufficient opportunities to use the target L2 in meaningful and functional ways.

Leonardo (2011) posits that filtering and translating are cognitive tools that learners utilize to process information through their L1. In fact, translation is a key factor to overcome language learning difficulties of Filipino learners (Blas et al., 2018). This only suggests that a learner's capacity to learn new information is dictated by his capacity to process it, in the same way that a learner can only properly translate a text from his native tongue into a second language if he has enough lexical knowledge to decipher it.
Unless proper remediation and interventions are done by either the school or their classroom teachers, the respondents' vocabulary proficiency – aggravated by their hesitancy to step out of their lexical comfort zones – may reach interlanguage fossilization or a learning plateau (Selinker, 1972), and their mistranslations would most likely be replicated in their L2 production in the future.

As the results of the survey show, contrastive and translation studies may prove to be one valuable approach in unveiling the lexical deficiencies of Filipino learners. More importantly, teachers can use the data generated to improve their vocabulary instruction by devising ways to best present the lexical association between an L1 word and its corresponding L2 equivalent/s. In fact, Hasselgren (1994) posits that "[i]f a learner is to be helped in his/her vocabulary usage, an understanding of what makes a word inappropriate in a given context is essential" (p. 239). This also suggests why L1 can be a critical factor in providing learners comprehensible input (Krashen, 2013) through explicit instruction by the teachers.
With the teacher's guidance, students "notice" more the difference between words and how some words, which seem to be synonymous, may not mean the same when placed in different lexico-grammatical contexts. As the Noticing Hypothesis claims: the conscious act of "noticing of forms" and the meanings attached or related to those forms helps convert them into inputs that can be learned (Schmidt 1990, 1994).

The existence of word translations that have been labeled "invalid" because the students may not have the knowledge and capability to translate the text or provide an acceptable translation is also worth mentioning. These translations that have been marked "invalid" show students' hesitance to use the L2. Survey findings show how several students just wrote Filipino comments or remarks about the Filipino sentences instead of translating them. Reached via Messenger, two of the students who failed to translate admitted that they did not write their translations because they did not know the L2 words that could properly express the source Filipino texts in English. These "invalid" cases are even more alarming compared to the mistranslations made by the other respondents because they suggest that there are students in public school who have been allowed to move up to a higher grade level, and who might quite possibly even graduate from senior high school, without really acquiring the language competencies expected of them.

If there is any takeaway from those "invalid" translations, then it would have to be the realization that incorporating innovative strategies which can help improve the lexical proficiency of young Filipino learners must start from the early stages of their education. Jiang (2002, 2004, as cited in Laufer & Girsai, 2008) contends that "the semantic

restructuring that is necessary for acquiring the meaning of words different from L1 is a slow process, which is relatively unaffected by the quantity of input that L2 learners receive in their learning context" (p. 700). As such, vocabulary instruction even at the elementary level must be re-evaluated and strengthened by both teachers and curriculum developers. The integration of innovative vocabulary instruction would be critical especially for public school learners because, like in the case of the respondents of this study, it is highly likely that their school is the only avenue where they learn and use the English language. Through casual interviews with parents and guardians during the weekly distribution and retrieval of modules, some parents do not even consider tertiary education as a priority because they are expecting their child to go to work after finishing senior high school, so it is not surprising that for some, if not most students, the motivation to learn English is low. Indeed, schools and teachers have a vital role in finding ways to show and motivate students that learning English can also be beneficial and may eventually help them in pursuing their chosen fields of endeavor.

Limitations of the Study

This study was conducted during the height of the pandemic, and, since meeting the students in person proved to be an impossibility due to quarantine restrictions, the survey had to be done online and only a handful of Grade 11 students who could access and accomplish the online survey were invited to participate. Further studies may be done involving more senior high school students to cover a much wider scope and gain a more definitive and substantial assessment of the vocabulary deficit of learners in public schools.

Recommendations

For Researchers

A more extensive study of the semantic flexibility of Filipino adjectives vis-à-vis their English translation would be an interesting topic for future research because studies about the linguistic attributes of Filipino words and their semantic prosodies are areas that are not very much explored, and this is also true for contrastive and translation studies between English and Filipino vocabulary. These studies might prove to be valuable and provide relevant insights into the field of second language teaching and learning.

For Teachers

It is apparent that teachers, especially in the public schools, need to revitalize and give more attention to the way they teach vocabulary in the classroom to help improve the lexical competency and fill in the vocabulary deficiencies of Filipino L2 learners. Aside from exposing them to rich authentic language input in various communicative contexts, it is imperative that they also be given a lot of opportunities and venues where they can use vocabulary in meaningful interactions (Viera, 2016). Teachers need to devise ways or strategies that focus on contextualized words, frequency of exposure, and recurrent use of taught words which, according to Uccelli and Pan (2013), are some of the most effective ways to teach vocabulary.

Instead of teaching just words, it would do well to shift the focus to teaching word clusters and use them in context (Fan, 2010). "Teachers can extract and teach clusters that can fully reflect typical collocations, and guide learners to learn words from the aspect of collocation and foster their awareness of collocation" (Fan, 2010, p.63). This approach to vocabulary teaching is supported by Peppard (2014) who maintains that the role of lexicogrammar has gained significant traction in the field of language teaching and that there are already studies supporting the idea that language learners process vocabulary in lexical chunks treated as single units.

As previously mentioned, a bilingual approach in vocabulary instruction may help to strengthen the learners' grasp of the differences and similarities of Filipino and English words and how the former properly translates into the latter. Such an approach would likewise provide a more conducive and non-threatening atmosphere, especially for struggling learners, that can motivate

learners to explore and participate in the learning process of the target L2. Teachers need to re-think if the English-only policy in school and inside the classrooms is effective or detrimental to language learning. According to Paz (2018), there is no scientific basis that requiring students to only speak in L2 does improve learners' language proficiency and fluency. Bernardo (2008) also supports this idea by asserting that there is evidence in scholarly literature which argues the efficacy of the native language as a tool to scaffold the development of English language proficiency in multilingual settings.

Language teachers may also need to revisit and reinforce their lessons about the features of a dictionary. As suggested by the findings of the study, some if not most of the respondents might have been improperly using or are completely unaware of the information and features that a dictionary can provide.

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