A Practical Example of a Japanese Translation Module for Undergraduate Students at a British University

-Characteristics and challenges-

Martin Ward, University of Leeds
Kazuki Morimoto, University of Leeds
Mika Takewa, University of Leeds

In recent years, there has been a re-examination of the significance of translation activities within the sphere of language education (Cook, 2010). In many instances of Japanese language education in the UK, translation is only lightly touched upon within the wider context of classes focussing on writing and reading comprehension, with independent modules teaching basic translation theory and skills being extremely rare. With this in mind, this presentation provides a practical example of a specialised module on Japanese-English bi-directional translation offered to undergraduate students at the university to which the authors are affiliated.

As part of the reform of the final year curriculum of Japanese language studies at the university in question, a new module in translation has been offered as an optional module as of the 2017-18 academic year, in addition to the compulsory core Japanese language course based on the 4 skills. Increasing students’ employability and motivation are amongst the aims of further refining their practical Japanese language skills through this module.

In this presentation we shall firstly provide a summary of the module and its features, outlining the significance of bi-directional translation, as well as creating awareness of areas such as text genre, function and target readers, and also evaluation methods. Notably, translation making use of AV material was one of the new features introduced and evaluated favourably by the students. We shall then report feedback from the lecturers responsible for the Japanese to English and English to Japanese translation directions respectively, discussing the successes as well as areas requiring improvement. In addition, with reference to feedback regarding this new learning experience received from students who took the module, we shall conclude with a summary of areas in need of improvement and reassessment.

Through sharing this practical example, in addition to investigating the possibilities for Japanese translation modules for undergraduates at British universities, we also offer a model for cooperation between lecturers in different disciplines having different mother tongues.

References