

Korean-English Language Translational Action of K-Pop Social Media Content: A Case Study on Bangtan Sonyeondan's (BTS) Official Twitter

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ABSTRACT

K-pop fans face language barriers on a daily basis when searching for their favourite K-Pop group related news. The translators' role in mediating information between the international fans with the K-Pop artists is central in delivering the necessary information to its fans around the globe. This study has been motivated by the scarcity of research on the progress of translation in social media microblogging such as Twitter. It was aimed at analysing translation progress occurring in social media, namely the Twitter account, where communication discourse activities actively occurred. Big Hit Entertainment's Twitter account (@BigHitEnt) was selected as the primary data sample because of the outstanding reputation of Bangtan Sonyeondan (BTS), a K-Pop idol group under the company's label, in terms of social media engagement. This research employed the Social Media Translational Action (SoMTA) analytical framework, a new research methodology adapted from the Translational Action framework, for its data analysis. The content of the news feed in Twitter's timeline is mostly written in the Korean language which might not be understood by the international fans who do not speak Korean. Thus, this research investigated the translation progress when @BigHitEnt created new timelines on their account, particularly those related to their promotion of new albums beginning with the "Love Yourself" series. It is hoped that this research would provide fresh insights into the current state of the translation world within this cyber age era using the new translation analysis.

Keywords: K-Pop; Bangtan Sonyeondan (BTS); translation; Korean language; Twitter

INTRODUCTION

J-Pop, which is abbreviated from the Japanese music culture, has been widely used among the East Asian population. Nowadays, this terminology has been transferred into different cultures such as K-Pop which refers to South Korea's (henceforth called Korea) popular music and culture (Stevens 2008). "Hanryu/ Hallyu" or in English, the Korean wave effect, is penetrating the global market on a large scale. SM, YG, and JYP entertainment were among the first three big entertainment companies in Korea that have adopted the United States (US) and Japanese music culture by repackaging these elements into the Korean music industry (Jung 2011, p. 78). To gain wider audiences, these companies also emphasised that artists under their label should be fluent in English, Japanese or Chinese language (Jung 2011, p. 78). Since 2006, BoA and Rain were among the K-Pop artists that have been trained to sing a few songs in Japanese as a way of boosting their popularity outside of Korea.

Currently, other K-pop artists have also followed the same marketing strategies and succeeded in gaining Japanese audience's recognition. As an example, the K-Pop idol group Bangtan Sonyeondan's (BTS) has been ranked at number 1 in the Japanese Oricon Weekly Music Chart (オリコン週間シングルランキング) with their 4th Japanese single album "FOR YOU" which included a few songs written in Japanese such as ホルモン戦争 (War of Hormone) (BTS Japan Official Club 2017). In Japan, single album usually consists of a few

songs similar to a mini album. Their effort in reducing the language gap in their music for fans by singing in Japanese and by organizing fan meeting concerts (an event where K-pop artists interact with fans which includes a series of game shows between the group members and fans) where they partially converse in the Japanese language with the assistance of Japanese language translators has resulted in fruitful outcomes in promoting themselves to the Japanese fans. However, despite having some of their music content translated and written in the Japanese language for the Japanese market, most of their music and means of communication via the SNS (social networking site) platform are written and delivered in the Korean language. Thus, the importance of the Korean language interpreters' cooperation in translating all the media content related to K-Pop artists for the fans cannot be taken lightly.

Other than Japanese fans, global fans also face issues of language barrier when searching to gather information and news of their favourite groups online. Despite the existence of communication gap between BTS and their fans, BTS on 21st May 2017 won 'The 2017 Billboard Music Awards Top Social Artist', surpassing well-known American artist Justin Bieber who has dominated the award category for six years in a row (Billboard 2017). Thus, the selection of BTS as the primary data sample in this research is based on their outstanding achievements and their active participation with fans through the social media platform. BTS is the first Asian artist to win the Billboard Music Awards Top Social Artist category and the winning has put the Korean music industry in the spotlight. Artists who received these awards have established that they have lively social interactions with their fans as these awards are merely based on the fan voting system. BTS won this category with 300,000,000 votes leaving other nominees such as Justin Bieber, Selena Gomez and Ariana Grande far behind (www.billboardmusicawards.com). The voting system requires the fans to vote through the official website of the Billboard awards (<https://www.billboardmusicawards.com/vote/>); additionally, they can also use their Twitter account with the hashtag #BTSBBMAs to participate in the voting.

Clearly, BTS's active involvement in social media has also contributed to their success. As the receiver of the prestigious 2017 Billboard Award, BTS's fan base which is called 'ARMY' has proven to be the biggest fandom in the global music industry. BTS's frequent appearance in Vlive (Korean online broadcast application), Twitter, and fan cafe has helped form a series of constant communication with their fans. This research was aimed at analysing the translation progress when BigHit Entertainment (@BigHitEnt), BTS's label company, uploaded information of the group's activities. The translation process involving interpreting the social media contexts, particularly Twitter application, where the discourse type is in the written form was carried out in this research. Hence, this research objective is to answer the question on how the Korean language tweet's content was translated to English language. All the twitter postings in this account were mostly written in the Korean language which cannot be comprehended by non-Korean speakers. Therefore, this research observed fans' role in overcoming obstacles of the language gap in their attempt to understand the posted contents.

Comments and messages (tweets' replies) left by the users were observed to understand the translation and interpretation processes that took place within this social media hub. The observation period began when BigHit Entertainment started the promotion of BTS's new mini album (Love Yourself) series by tweeting the information in their account which has 3.5 million followers (as of September 2017). Fans would be communicating with each other through the tweeted message columns. Communication flow among ARMY (BTS's fans) was observed and fans' behaviour in other Twitter accounts that provided translation of BTS's related posting was also analysed. This research would provide academics insights on the translation progress and fans' behaviour when communication occurs in a language, which is foreign to the speakers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In overcoming language barriers, translation is vital to help audiences comprehend the content of a discourse. Translators are expected to be able to perform “translation equivalence” from the original scripts to the language of the targeted audience (Halliday 2001, Fakharzadeh & Mahdavi 2017). From machine translation (Halliday 1962), to corpus based translation (Baker 1993, p. 232) and Firthian translation method (Király 1995), clearly the translation method has been widely discussed. Previous studies carried out in digital media translation were mostly related to website translations (Pym 2003, 2004). The consideration of localization in translating websites has also been discussed where technical elements such as the date format, time and address are grouped as non-translatable whereas other contents in the website or software can be translated and localized according to the targeted text (Esselink 2000, pp. 59-69).

However, the translators’ role has vastly expanded nowadays with the help of cutting edge technology. The emergence of social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and Instagram has rapidly changed the communication style, and these social media can be considered as a one-stop hub in connecting the cyber world. As many people from all around the globe communicate in the same platform, the translators’ role in translating certain contents posted in these social media pages also has become even more important.

Current social media platforms are usually embedded with message bars or comment boxes in order for the account users and followers to communicate with each other non-verbally. The comments or messages typed in these discourses can be considered as a dialogue form of discourse because the interaction between the account users and their followers forms a series of chats, similar to verbal communication patterns. Therefore, the translators’ role in these social media platforms is more challenging as it is an impromptu translation which is somewhat akin to an interpreter’s role. According to Otto Kade (1968) in Pöchhacker (2009), interpreting is a part of translation where the source-text cannot be altered or replayed. In addition, the target language is also translated under pressure of time where there is little room for adjustment and correction. In the context of social media communication, the source text posted can be edited as it is in digital written form of text, so long as it is not yet uploaded. However, in the interface of the Twitter application, once the tweet is uploaded there is no room for correction unless the tweets are deleted and uploaded again. Unlike verbal communication where the communication among participants cannot be replayed, the tweet’s reply interface in Twitter is in the digital format of the written form; therefore, it can be read multiple times once uploaded. Nonetheless, translating certain posts in social media requires faster translation process as many users are waiting for the translated text.

When it comes to the platform of digital medium, the traditional translation and interpreting process has evolved in many ways. Progress of translation within the social media scenario usually involves turn taking while communicating, similar to verbal communication but in written form (chatting). Translators are expected to be able to perform “translation equivalence” from the original scripts to the targeted audience’s language (Halliday 2001) where the translation text must clearly reflect the meaning of the source text. However, in the case of social media, the users are from various linguistic and cultural backgrounds; thus, the resulting translation output is a bit different from the source text meaning. The cultural gap existing between the source text and the targeted culture could lead to translation mismatch rather than linguistic errors (Nida 2001, Sulaiman 2014). For example, the usage of negative response is sometimes considered inappropriate in some

cultures which forbid the speaker from using it when declining a request even though the translation is linguistically correct.

Therefore, in the case of social media translation, more than one user can act as the interpreter because the social media platform is an open discussion forum which involves global social media users. Translation activities within the scope of social media can be considered as interlingual translation where translational action is performed from the source text. According to Munday (2001 and 2012), translational action was previously defined by Holz-Mäntttäri (1984, pp. 109-11) as a process of communication which involves the presence of roles and players. The focal point of the translational action (TA) framework is based on the purpose of the translation while considering the participants' interactions in producing the targeted text's translation outcome. The "message-transmitter compounds" of Holz-Mäntttäri's framework has discussed intercultural translation process of transferring the source text (ST) to the targeted text (TT) in detailed (Munday 2001). Munday (2001) elaborated that Holz-Mäntttäri had carefully broken down the roles and actions of players in the verbal communication's translation process into these terms:

- Initiator: A person or company that requires the translation;
- Commissioner: the individual who contacts the translator;
- ST producer: the individual who writes the ST
- TT producer: the translator
- TT user: the parties or person who utilised the TT

Previous translation studies have mainly focused on translation strategies through verbal communication and were mainly discussed within the contexts of conference or settings of meetings (Roy 2000, pp. 53-67, Holz-Mäntttäri 1984). Nowadays, the method of communication has also evolved whereby it does not necessarily only involve oral communication; it also involves written communication. Nevertheless, studies which focus on social media context are still scarce and the translation progress performed in these applications is also not widely discussed.

In explaining the translation activities revolving around social media communication pattern, the conversation participant role in the TA framework developed by Holz-Mäntttäri (1984) can be used as guideline. In terms of social media platform translation studies, the author suggests that the adopted TA framework should be redefined as Social Media Translational Action (SoMTA) framework. It is hoped that the application of this new TA framework, which will be elaborated in the research findings, would be able to answer the research question on how the translation process from the source text (Korean language) to the targeted text (English language) takes place in the social media communication environment. This research finding would be able to explain the rapid growth of K-Pop despite the different language usage among the artists and their fans. The Twitter account of the K-Pop idol, i.e. BTS, under Big Hit Entertainment was used as the primary data sample in explaining the translation progress within the social media platform. Furthermore, real-time monitoring and observation of the translation process is still scarce and needs to be explored in depth as these findings can contribute to better understanding of the behaviour of K-Pop consumers who are not familiar with the Korean language.

BACKGROUND PROFILE OF BANGTAN SONYEONDAN (BTS)

The BTS idol group debuted as a rookie group (a term used for a newly established K-pop artist/group) under the Big Hit Entertainment company on 13 June 2013 with the single "2 COOL 4 SKOOL" (BTS Japan Official Club 2017). Big Hit Entertainment is a mediocre label company in the Korean entertainment industry compared to the three iconic companies,

namely SM, YG and JYP Entertainment which have dominated the K-Pop industry over the last few decades. This K-Pop group band consists of seven male members: Kim Nam Joon (Rap Monster), Kim Seok Jin (Jin), Min Yoon Gi (Suga), Jung Ho Seok (J-Hope), Park Ji Min (Jimin), Kim Tae Hyung (V) and Jeon Jeong-guk (Jungkook). The name in the brackets indicates their stage name (BTS Japan Official Club 2017) and is used in this research analysis. In October 2016, BTS WINGS album climbed up to the 26th place in the Billboard Music Charts (Billboard Music Charts History 2017) and became the first Asian artist in terms of album selling achievement to be enlisted in that ranking. Their accomplishment made the headlines for the Billboard news titled “*How Korean Boy Band BTS Broke a U.S. K-pop Chart Record – Without Any Songs in English*” (Billboard News 20 August 2016). Following their success in album sales, their world concert tour in 17 cities around the world comprising of North America, South America, Asia and Oceania regions were all sold out. After the successful Wings album promotions and sales, BTS announced their comeback (a term for K-Pop artists who have produced a new album or carry out promotions) with Love Yourself (Her) album series which was scheduled to take place on 18 September 2017. Currently, BTS has launched pre-order requests of their album through selected agencies including Amazon to cater to their international fans. The units of pre-ordered album from the Korean domestic market alone accelerated to 1,015,460 million copies from 25 August to 31 August 2017 (within six days); thus, subsequently making BTS the first Korean group/artist to achieve this overwhelming sales figure (Naver Entertainment 2017).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In promoting the launch of BTS’s new album “Love Yourself (Her)”, Big Hit Entertainment executed a new project called “Love Yourself” series where they posted a few drama-like posters and music videos (MV) for their anticipated fans via Big Hit Entertainment Twitter account and their official YouTube Channel. This drama like storyline series will be continued throughout 2017 until 2018. This research focused on the first four days of this project. This particular project was selected as the primary data for this research because it is the first large scale project carried out by Big Hit Entertainment after the group won the Billboard award in May 2017. The data sample of this research was the comments left by the followers under each posted tweet via message box available below each news feed in Twitter. This research employed qualitative analysis where descriptive analysis of comments that are related to linguistic barriers, translation difficulty and other linguistic aspects were monitored and recorded using the print screen function in the mobile phone. The chronology of the Big Hit Entertainment Twitter news feed that was relevant to this study is summarized as follows:

TABLE 1. BTS “Love Yourself” series poster released (@BigHitEnt Twitter account)

Released Date	Released Time	Content	Retweet Counts (15min)	Messages Counts (15min)
11 August 2017	00:00 a.m.	Poster (Jungkook)	44.6K	15.5K
	19:00 p.m.	Poster (Suga)	42.4K	12.3K
	20:00 p.m.	Poster (Jimin)	44.3K	13.5K
	21:00 p.m.	Poster (Rap Monster)	45.8K	16.4K
	22:00 p.m.	Poster (V)	106.0K	21.6K
	23:00 p.m.	Poster (J-Hope)	102.0K	21.1K
12 August 2017	00:00 a.m.	Poster (Jin)	105.0K 83.6K	29.2K
	21:00 p.m.	Poster (Jungkook & Suga)		19.4K
	22:00 p.m.	Poster (J-Hope & Jimin)	109.0K	17.5K
	23:00 p.m.	Poster (Rap Monster & V)	109.0K	22.2K
13 August 2017	00:00 a.m.	Poster (Jin)	106.8K	25.3K
14 August 2017	00:00 a.m.	Poster (Diary Notes)	50.5K	20.4K

The poster of each member was released officially on Big Hit Entertainment Twitter account (@BigHitEnt) starting from 11 August 2017 at 00:00 a.m. The posters were uploaded first with Jungkook's pictures, followed by Suga, Jimin, Rap Monster, V, J-Hope and Jin. Each poster has the "Love Yourself" caption and a short text message written in Hangeul (Korean writing script). The next day, Big Hit Entertainment dropped a new poster portraying two members in each poster except for Jin's poster. Finally, on 14 August 2017, another poster consisting of a long Hangeul written diary note was uploaded. Each tweet was monitored in real-time where the count of message amount was recorded 15 minutes after the tweets were posted. This duration was chosen based on the researcher's previous observation of Big Hit Entertainment's Twitter update whereby below the 15 minutes duration, the Twitter account followers may not realize the tweets' update notification; hence, taking the duration below the 15 minutes point may affect the results of this study. The retweet and message count figures are crucial in showcasing BTS fans' reactions towards their favourite artists' update and how their tweets virtually spread around the globe within a short period of time. The data collected that are relevant to the translational action operation are explained and analysed within the new invented conceptual framework suggested in this research (SoMTA framework) which is adapted based on Holz-Mänttari's (1984) theoretical translation framework. The discourse participants in the conversation were labelled based on their role in delivering the translation outcome and this comprised of Initiator, Commissioner, ST producer, TT producer, TT user and TT receiver. The application of this framework is crucial in explaining how the translation process occurred in this case study.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The first news feed on 11 August 2017 related to the "Love Yourself" series by Big Hit Entertainment's Twitter account was the Jungkook poster. Jungkook was sitting on a wheelchair while smiling, holding a flower and looking in an upwards direction. Above Jungkook, there were short messages written in Hangeul. The Twitter account followers immediately responded to this news feed by commenting in the news feed message box. This message function allows the followers to leave their comments. Furthermore, this platform can also act as an environment for chatting where the account users react to each other and take turns to participate in the conversation.

As many international fans did not comprehend the Korean language, the tweets' reply column was flooded with translation requests. The fans began to communicate among themselves in order to interpret the meaning behind the posted poster. After a few seconds of the poster's release, there were a few comments which included picture memes showing how shocked the fans were because the poster was akin to a drama promotion picture. After 15 minutes, the total number of replied tweets under this newsfeed was 15.5 K. Below are the excerpts of some of the replied tweets sent by the account followers:

Excerpt 1

(11 August 2017) Jungkook's poster news feed discourse:

User A: Omg but WHY THE WHEELCHAIR??? It's related to the theory so something will happen to Jungkook?

User B: It's says love yourself, which is meant to be comeback concept...? TF BigHit

User C: Yes, it has started, the new era has started.

User D: What does this mean?

(the user cropped the print screen of short messages from the poster which written in Hangeul and tweeted it)

User E: @User C "The direction my heart is yearning towards, the day I want to run to that place" *inserted crying emoji icon*

User C: THANK YOU *inserted love emoji icon*

In these excerpts of tweets, the fans were mainly discussing about the semiotic elements in this poster and trying to interpret the meaning of the poster's concept. User A for instance demanded an answer for what was going on by using "Omg" which is the short form for 'Oh my God'. User B and C took turns to explain the possible theory behind the uploaded poster. User E asked for the translation of the short message written in the poster while User C acted as the interpreter explaining the meaning to User E. The translation operation in this discourse excerpt can be explained theoretically with the new TA framework suggested by the author which is the SoMTA framework. The application of the original TA framework needs to be altered as the discourse setting used the platform of the discussion forum via digital media. The participants in social media platform discussions can be labelled into different roles as follows:

- Initiator: Users who initiate the effort of interpreting the textual meaning their own in the initial stage of the text interpretation discussion
- Commissioner: Account users who directly requests for the translation of the texts
- ST producer: Owner of the social media account
- TT producer: Account users that acted as the translator
- TT end user: Users and followers who read the TT

Originally in the TA framework, the Initiator is referred to as a person or company that requires the translation. However, in the context of the SoMTA framework, the Initiator's role can be redefined as individuals who initiate the effort of interpreting the textual meaning on their own in the initial stage of the discussion (User A, B and C). Additionally, the Commissioner in the original TA framework refers to a person who contacts the translator. However, in social media discourse, the Commissioner can be redefined as a person (account user) who requests or raises open-ended questions to get the translation of the text (i.e. User D). In the original TA framework, the ST producer is the person who writes the ST. In the SoMTA framework, which was proposed in this study to examine translation progress in the context of Twitter application, the ST producer is the Twitter account owner, and specifically in this case study, it is @BigHitEnt. The TT producer, who is the translator, is the account user that acted as the provider of the translation to the audience in the replied boxes (i.e. User E). In the context of social media like Twitter, the TT user and TT receiver will have the same role because the interpreted text will have been most likely read and browsed by the users and other participants of the conversation. The users and receivers involved in the social media discourse might not necessarily appear in the thread of the discussion as they can be silent readers who merely follow the Tweeter's timeline and read the comments left by other Twitterers. Therefore, in the new invented SoMTA conceptual framework, the TA users and receivers have been combined as TA end users.

Excerpt 2

(11 August 2017) Suga's poster news feed discourse:

User F: Can't handle this surprises!

User G: BUT U SAID AT 12 KST BIG HIT
HAJIMAAAA.

User H: Bruh I need a translation for this
(the user cropped the print screen of the short messages from the poster which
were written in Hangul and tweeted them)

User I: don't come closer, you'll become unhappy

...

User J: <Trans> don't come close to me, you will become unfortunate.

...

User K : 불행해질 거야, 다가오지마

It will feel unhappy, do not come closer.

These excerpts of tweets (Excerpt 2) were collected based on its relevance to the data analysis. The “...” symbol in the above discourse refers to a series of replied tweets that were posted between each of the mentioned usernames’ message above. The replies may consist of memes, or texts written in other languages, which are not related to the analysis as this study, only focused on English translation output.

On 11 August 2017 at 9:00 p.m., @BigHitEnt (ST producer) posted a new poster featuring Suga, who was posing while sitting down and bending his knees with his hands wrapped around his knees. His facial expression portrayed a look of sadness. In this discourse pattern, the findings showed that a few minutes after the news feed was uploaded, the first few messages under the news feed thread mostly showed surprised reaction due to the sudden posting from @BigHitEnt. Previously, @BigHitEnt released the new album teaser at midnight. However, on that day the release time was different than previously. Therefore, the followers expressed their surprised reaction with messages such as the ones by User F and G (Initiators). User G also inserted the Korean phrase “*Hajima*” with extra lexical “a” to strengthen his shocked reaction in his comment. “*Hajima*” is informal language 단말 (*banmal*) which means “*stop it/ don’t*” in the Korean language. User G is an international fan who is non-Korean and resides in France. After a few seconds, there was a comment asking for the translation of the short quotation displayed in the poster (Commissioners). User H started the question with “*Bruh I need a translation for this*”. User H employed a short form of lexical “brother” in addressing the audience of the news feed thread. Within just one minute, a few users started to interpret the meaning of the short quote to others by helping to give different styles of translation (TT producers). Overall, these translations have the same meaning; however, the lexical choice and the syntax pattern are different. For example, User I and User J put the meaning of the phrase “*다가지마 (dagaojima/ do not come closer)*” in front of the sentences while user K translated the text according to the original structures “*불행해질 거야, 다가지마 (bulhaenghaejil geoya, dagaojima/ It will feel unhappy, do not come closer)*”. User J added the personal pronoun “me” and combined it with the preposition “to” in the final output of the translated sentences for better understanding of the translated text.

Excerpt 3

(11 August 2017) Jimin’s poster news feed discourse

User L: Forever and always ~~ my King *crown emoji icon*

...

User M: HOW CAN SOMEONE BE SO PERFECT

...

User N: I LOVE BEING ATTACKED BY BEAUTY

...

User O: My heartu

...

User P: Translation cheeeeeebal

...

User Q: Translate...please.

...

User R: so i got this theory after seeing jimin’s poster. the text in jimin’s poster says “i lied because they can’t love those like me”

User R: btw, i know what the hangul means because i saw armys who can speak korean and english translate it. so please correct me if im wrong.

In these discussion threads, the first few messages were mainly comments praising how beautiful and good looking Jimin was reflected in this poster (for instance, User L, M and N’s comments). After a long series of tweet replies (around 25 comment threads) that mainly focused on appraising Jimin’s appearance, User P and Q started to initiate questions, asking for the translation of the text that appeared in the poster (Initiators). User P who

requested the translation utilized the Korean language of “please” which was “*chebal*” with an extra letter of “e” to emphasis his/her desperation in finding the translation of the text. After a total of eight comments, a user finally gave the translation of the text (TT producer: User R). However, he/she was not the one who translated it; he/she stated that he/she got to know about the translation from the Twitter account of other ARMY and asked others to help him/her if the translation was wrong. User R typed his comments by neglecting the usage of capital letters for certain nouns such as “Korean and English”, after the full stop and the “I” pronoun. This type of writing style is much faster when typing as there is less concern about the formal writing rules.

Excerpt 4

(11 August 2017) Rap Monster’s poster news feed discourse:

User S: PERFECT BOY

...

User T: MONNIE you have my support because you are incredible. YOU ARE A GREAT MAN AND ARTIST. Please don’t let anything or anyone make you feel bad *love emoji*

...

User U: Namjoon, *heart emoji* hello from Europe, Switzerland *Switzerland flag emoji* I wish you could notice me, that I can say to you, how much I worry about you!

...

User V: Rapmon oppa *sad emoji* youre so handsome *love emoji*

User W: Saranghaeyo oppa!

...

User X: MY HEARTEU!!! No...No...No!!! Monie! Nope my heart can’t handle this!!

After scrolling down around 100 comments, there was no user request for translation. All the comments were mostly about his talent and how handsome he was in the poster (for instance, User S and User V). The rest of the comments were mainly about showing their love and concern for Rap Monster as he is the leader of the BTS group and therefore has many responsibilities. In addition, some of the users addressed Rap Monster as Namjoon (User U), Monnie (User T), Rapmon (User V) and oppa (User W). The nicknames used by the fans showed how well they know Rap Monster since all these nicknames were used frequently by BTS members and other fans. The discourse under this news feed timeline is interesting because there was no one asking for translation of the short messages in the poster. Therefore, the SoMTA framework analysis in determining the translation progress cannot be applied. Nevertheless, most of the comments were related to their concern and worries for Rap Monster as if they understood the meaning of the poster. Previously, in Jimin’s poster news feed comments (Excerpt 3), there was a user who said that he/she understood the text written in the poster from a different Twitter account that provided the Korean-English translation related to BTS news. It is hypothesized that no one asked for the translation since they had already found out about it in other Twitter accounts.

Further investigations revealed that there are a few Twitter accounts such as @peachisoda and @Bulletproof_SG which translate BTS news to the international fans. Hence, based on the SoMTA framework, these account owners can be considered as TT producers. These Twitter accounts were organized by fans to provide any translation for free whenever BTS posted something in the BTS official group account (@bts_twt) or the company’s Twitter account (@BigHitEnt). As the translation was performed separately within these two TT producers’ accounts, the outputs of the targeted translation in both tweets have different styles of English translation.

뒷모습만바라본다

- (i) @peachisoda’s translation:
I only watch you from behind, because now is not the time
- (ii) @Bulletproof_SG’s translation:
I can only look at you from behind, as now’s not the right moment

In the poster, Rap Monster seems to be gazing out of the window of the bus gloomily while sitting at the back seat of the bus. Furthermore, previously before the release of the poster, Rap Monster did a Vlog (Video log) on Vlive (Korean live video streaming) expressing his worries on the production of the new album. Therefore, a lot of comments showing their love and concern for Rap Monster can be seen from the fans (for instance, Users T, U and W).

A few Korean phrases which were used by the international fans can be detected among these comments such as “*oppa*” (used by a female when addressing a man who is older than her) and “*saranghaeyo*” (love you). They were also followers using Korean accent when pronouncing English terms like “*hearteu*” which is originally “heart” in English (User X).

The next posters uploaded, which consisted of pictures of other BTS group members, had no requests for translation (after scrolling down 100 tweet replies). The followers (TT end users) may have found alternative translation services in other Twitter accounts. After analysing other posters, significant tweets regarding translation activities were found in Jin’s poster on 13 August 2017.

Excerpt 5

(13 August 2017) Jin’s poster news feed discourse

User Y: <TRANS> Return from the sea, by our own.
User Y: Or/ We are alone when returned from the sea.
User Z: Thank you so much. You’re a life saver.
User AA: komawoo~ :-))
User AB: OK~~

User Y (TT producer) took the initiative to translate the phrases in Jin’s poster and gave other possible translations too. This translation post was then followed by replies of gratitude for her effort from TT end users. User AA was thanking User Y by saying in *banmal* Korean language “*komawoo*” which is often used between close friends. They were also other appreciation tweets for the translators who worked hard to translate all the BTS related content where many tweets like that can be found in the diary note posters uploaded later by @BigHitEnt.

On 14 August 2017, @BigHitEnt posted a timeline with a poster designed in a diary-like form of writing with the title “*Hwa Yang Yeon Hwa*” (The Most Beautiful Moment in Life) and there was “THE NOTES” phrase written below the title. *Hwa Yang Yeon Hwa* (HYH) is the name of their previous album. The note was written in a diary-like form with Jin’s real name and date typed at the head of the note. The diary note was five paragraphs long and was all written in the Korean language. Due to the length of the content, and fans’ eagerness to find out the meaning of the contents, many of the fans gave encouragement to the translators who voluntarily translated the content for them.

Excerpt 6

(14 August 2017) Diary (The notes)’s poster news feed discourse

User AC: Waiting for the subs. any volunteers?
insert BTS members’ memes pictures with thinking poses
User AD: Can someone translate this? *insert crying emoji*
User AE: *insert a screen captured of translation text*
User AE: I used google translate to translate not sure if it is correct.
...
User AF: err this wasn’t what I expected
User AG: yooohoooo looking for the Translators
User AH: Translators m after seeing the long @ss passage
insert Jungkook memes’ picture with choking expression
User AI: Omg

insert print screen of rough translation taken from other Twitter's account

...
User AJ: Omg I'm crying thank you!
User AI: no problem! *shining love emoji*
User AL: THIS IS THE QUICKEST TURN AROUND IVE EVER SEEN BTS IS
TURNING ARMY INTO TRANSLATION WIZARDS OR SOMETHING.
User AM: OKAY TRANSLATOR ARMYS WE ARE COUNTING ON YOU
HWAITING!!!
User AN: FROM THE LOOKS OF IT THIS SEEMS TO BE THE PLOT OR
DESCRIPTION OF THE LOVE YOURSELF SERIES.
User AO: REASON 47294829 WHY I NEED TO BE FLUENT IN KOREAN.
...
User AP: someone quickly translate bc I'm so confused "12 June YEAR 22"?? are y'all
in the future? What's happening?
...
User AQ: *insert a print screen of the translation*
User AR: Unnie!!! Thank you!! I love how your translation still captures the flow of the
words! It is pretty to read even in english!!!
User AQ: Thank you! I tried not to lose the flow~
User AR: You did so well!!! It still very poetic, it wasn't lost in translation at all!!! I'm
so impressed!!!
User AQ: *insert smiley emoji* Thank you!!

The communication flow under these tweets' timeline indicated a strong connection and reliance on the translators. Many followers were asking and hoping that there was someone who would be willing to translate the content of the long passages (for instance, the tweets by Users AC, AD and AG who acted as the Commissioners). User AM used a form of cheering phrase in the Korean language "*hwaiting*" which is "good luck/ do your best" in English. Eight minutes after the poster was uploaded, there were already a few rough translations appearing. However, these rough translations were performed using machine translation such as Google translate which was not able to capture the meaning accurately as mentioned by other Twitterers in their replied messages. Thus, the followers asked for better quality translation as mentioned by User AP. Finally, after 10 minutes, User AQ (@UnnieARMY), an ARMY who mainly translates BTS related content and then tweeted or uploaded them in her YouTube channel, came out with a more accurate translation.

CONCLUSION

In this research, TA in digital discourse is redefined using the SoMTA conceptual framework. The application and elaboration of the use of this framework has contributed to a more appropriate explanation of the translation process of Korean-English text that took place in social media communication. This case study research has successfully explained the Korean-English translation progress within the Big Hit Entertainment's Twitter news feed activities by observing communication discourse among @BigHitEnt Twitter followers. The communication among the translators (TT producers) and the international fans (Initiators, Commissioners and TT end users) has shown the importance of fan based translators in the K-Pop entertainment industry as most of the related tweets about BTS were carried out entirely in the Korean language. As shown in this research, the definition of traditional translation may have to be amended when it comes to the genre of social media translation which can also be considered as one of the activities of interpreting even though it is not performed orally. The existence of fan-based translators has helped many international fans to overcome language barrier issues when it comes to K-Pop related news. However, ARMY has cooperated well among themselves in their effort to provide translation of the texts in Korean into other languages, in this case the English language. In this research, the fans have

revealed a few strategies, which they have adopted from learning a foreign language within the social media context, as a means for them to comprehend the meaning of the Korean scripted text. Every user has their role in contributing to the results of the translation output. The Commissioners have utilised the questioning method in their attempt to understand the content of the text such as “Can someone translate this?” or a request “Waiting for the subs. any volunteers?”, “Translate...please” and many others.

There were also comments that urged the fans to study the Korean language in order for them to understand the news tweeted, as seen in User AO’s case. Research findings also highlighted the cognitive process of foreign language learning as the followers managed to find alternative ways to obtain the translated text from different Twitter accounts as described in the observational analysis of Jimin’s poster news feed replied messages (Excerpt 3). They were also attempts to translate the short messages scripted in the posters by using machine translation, similar to what User AE had done.

The development of advanced translation technology provided by certain translation engines has supported the translation progress in the K-Pop digital world. Nonetheless, the translations provided were only a rough translation, and the requirement for manual translation to achieve accurate translation is still highly in demand. This phenomenon can be seen from the Diary’s (The Notes) poster news feed replied messages (Excerpt 6) as written by User AP. The followers (TT end users) even conveyed their gratitude to the translators by saying “Thank you so much. You’re a life saver (User Z)”, “Omg I’m crying thank you! (User AJ)” and “Unnie!!! Thank you!! I love how your translation still captures the flow of the words! It is pretty to read even in english!!! (User AR)”. The appreciations delivered by the followers can be seen from their feedback. Hence, the translators hold a crucial role in connecting K-Pop artists to their international fans.

Translators are required to perform “translation equivalence” (Halliday 2001, pp. 13-18). However, in the social media context, as the discourse is ongoing communication, the translators can give a few translation choices for the users so that they could pick the meaning closest to the source text, as can be viewed in the results of the analysis of Suga’s poster (Excerpt 2) news feed replied messages. Different translators also present different styles of translation. In the case of this study, it was observed that the translation progress was a result of good team work between a few translators and other followers in interpreting the translation of the messages in the posters. They tried to find correlation between the translated texts provided and the image in the posters. Evidently, these group translations have somewhat decreased the language barriers faced by the international fans.

Usage of short Korean phrases by the international fans was also detected in this study. Written comments in English were blended with Korean phrases like “*hwaiting*”, “*saranghaeo*”, “*oppa*”, and “*cheeba!*”. This result also showed that K-Pop fans are influenced by Korean expressions and greetings in their communication. Most of the expressions found in the collected data of this study are in the *banmal* style.

One of the research findings revealed that the usage of emoji was tremendously applied. The emoji was sometimes used to replace expressions of certain phrases; an example is the one performed by User U below:

“Rapmon oppa *sad emoji* youre so handsome *love emoji*”

User U selected the sad emoji to indicate his/her sad feelings when looking at Rap Monster’s poster and he/she finished her text with the love emoji to show his/her love to Rap Monster as if to show that he/she supported him. The utilisation of emoji icons has shortened messages into a simple ideogram. Apart from that, they were countless meme pictures of BTS members which were edited and replaced with funny headlines and comments that were

tweeted instead of using normal text messaging which employed the written script. The usage of abbreviated forms of phrases like “bruh (brother)”, “rn (right now)”, “OK (okay)” and “OMG (Oh My God)” was widely seen in the data. They also used capital letters and extra letters (such as, *cheeeeeebal*) in emphasising the expression that they wanted to deliver. The Graphics Interchange Format (GIF) picture was also frequently used in the data. Prominently, the communication realm in microblogging platforms such as Twitter has changed the current generation’s discourse at many levels.

The translation process taking place in social media of trending events like BTS’s “Love Yourself” promotion, demonstrated the uniqueness of the translation progress happening in real time situation. These research findings can provide new insights to translation studies. Social media communication discourse has been expanding day by day and so too has the communication style. The SoMTA framework developed in this research can be a useful tool in explaining translation activities in social media networks. The Twitter page layout and its message functions have also helped to shape a new generation of communication discourse. Features like embedded emoji, pictures and GIF videos have also changed the way people communicate and convey their messages to others.

RESEARCH LIMITATION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

In terms of the limitation of social media translation research, the ability of the translator and the personal background of the tweets’ participant is difficult to determine. Most of the time, the information about the nationality or translation qualification of the owner of the Twitter account is absent and not available; thus, the accuracy of the translated text is unknown to the TT end users. However, TT end users may have many translation output choices that can be found either in other TT producers’ Twitter account or the TT producer himself/herself who provides a few translation suggestions as shown in the data collected for this case study. For future research, the author would like to see more studies on other social media translation activities using the SoMTA framework.

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