

Adoption of Google Translator to Promote Reading Literature in Foreign Languages

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Abstract

Most of the libraries in Sri Lanka do not contain publications from different languages. Mostly the text is limited to Sinhala, Tamil, and English. The closest reason for this lacuna is the low literacy of foreign languages among library staff and the patrons. There are donated foreign text materials in the libraries, and the library staff is facing a lot of difficulties while accessioning, cataloguing, and classifying them. There is also a demand from foreign students who are willing to read the text in the Sinhala language. Thus, the objective of this study is to bridge this literacy barrier and promote reading foreign literature. The study investigates the ability of the Google Translate app to translate foreign texts in Unicode. A section from a paragraph with ten sentences was selected from English, Tamil, Hindi, Sanskrit, and German languages. All these languages were translated to the Sinhala language and compared with a valid translation to record how far the languages are translated with a meaningful sense. This was replicated five times for different paragraphs from different publications. The average percentage of translating to Sinhala in a meaningful sentence among replicates per language showed 98.4% for English, 98.4% for Tamil, 95% for Hindi, 98.4%, and 98% for German. Google translator did not support Sanskrit. It was evident that the translator is poorly responding when the sentences are too long, indirectly written, contain idioms, and with different punctuations. Google Translator works offline, provides a range of mobile platform compatibility. It supports 109 world languages, and the translated text can be saved and exported to be used later or for any other word processing platform. The app also narrates the translated content in a preferred language by extending the translator support to visually impaired readers as well. It has a character limit of 3900 at a time. However, it can be concluded that Google Translator provides considerable support to understand foreign literature.

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