

DIFFICULTIES IN TRANSLATION FROM ENGLISH INTO VIETNAMESE OF ENGLISH-MAJORED JUNIORS AT TAY DO UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

In the 21st century, English is playing a very important role in almost every field around the globe, gradually developing to become the second official language of the countries in the world. Vietnamese students face many obstacles to understand and translate the second language correctly. Because the translation is still new and strange for their first time learning, most of the English major students still have difficulties in learning this kind of subject, especially English majored studying third-year at Tay Do University. Therefore, the research proposal entitled “**Difficulties in translation from English into Vietnamese of English-majored juniors at Tay Do University**” will be done to find out the student’s difficulties when they begin to learn translation in order to partly help them overcome these obstacles in studying the course 13. The participants in this research are 100 English-majored juniors studying third-year at Tay Do University. Most students are at the age of 19 to 21. The questionnaire will be delivered to collect data in this thesis. In brief, the research finds out some difficulties in translating from English into Vietnamese of English majored juniors at Tay Do University.

Key words: translation, difficulties, English-majored juniors, university

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Rationale

In modern society, language acts as a passport that everyone has to equip themselves to open the door of integration, reaching out to the world. Therefore, the developing countries are always considered to improve foreign language skill that it is indispensable. Especially is English - the most popular language in the global.

Nowadays, most people believe that English is the language of career development. English has many important benefits, it offers the opportunity to get a good job in many fields, an easy opportunity to learn and make friends with other cultures improves the self-value of someone.

Besides, English is also becoming a popular language in Vietnam and there are even countries that use English as a native language. Learning English has become more and more necessary than ever. Many learners do the translation to understand the text. However, they have difficulties in translating from English to Vietnamese, or vice versa even though software applications to assist translation are available. Some learners said that translation is difficult since the materials of translation are not suitable for the need of language learners, the activity of translation is boring, and the learners also lack background knowledge about linguistic. They may do many errors in translating some idioms

and some words which are not familiar with their native language because the culture influences language's expressions.

As it is said by Al-Dawlish (1983), general difficulties in doing translation are no two languages are the same in terms of phonological, morphological, lexical, syntactic, and semantic features. They are divergent in the arrangement of sentences or syntax. That is why students find it difficult in translating English into the target language. Students have been learned four main skills when learning English: listening, speaking, reading, writing. At the same time, students are equipped with knowledge about British and American culture and society. It is an essential foundation for students to be proficient in English. However, they need to have excellent English translation skills or some quality tools to fully acquire this huge amount of knowledge.

For me and my classmate, translation is one of the most difficult skills in English. It includes translation from English into Vietnamese and from Vietnamese into English. Among them, Vietnamese students are having more difficulties in translation from English to Vietnamese. The ability of students' second language translation can be influenced by second language proficiency and translation experiences in both languages. Most students have learned English since primary school and learning more English in private courses, but they have still been encountered many obstacles in translation skills.

In the learning program of English-majored juniors at Tay Do University, Translation Theory subjects are introduced at the end of the second semester and students begin to learn Practice Translation I from the beginning of the first semester and hard levels will increase with each period. Students will translate from a phrase to a sentence to increase translation skills and develop ideas of a sentence into the text from English- Vietnamese or vice versa. However, we think that students have still faced more difficulties in translation from English into Vietnamese.

For that reason, it requires the researchers to conduct the study **“Difficulties in translation from English into Vietnamese of English-majored juniors at Tay Do University”**. It is expected that this research will provide an overview of their translation from English –Vietnamese and make English-majored juniors at Tay Do University can recognize these difficulties effectively as well as helping students can find the right solutions to translate better in English.

1.2. Significance of this thesis

This research helps me find my difficulties and the English-majored juniors at Tay Do University recognize the common problems in translation.

1.3. Organization of this thesis

The research consists of five chapters including:

- Chapter I: Introduction
- Chapter II: Literature review
- Chapter III: Research aims-research questions-hypothesis
- Chapter IV: Research methodology
- Chapter V: Expected outcomes

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Definition of translation

The translation is the transmission of thought in a language to another language. *“Translation is an act through which the content of a text is transferred from the source language into the target language”* (Foster, 1958). The language to be translated is called the source language (SL), whereas the language to be translated into or arrived at is called the target language (TL). The translator needs to have good knowledge of both the source and the target language, in addition to a high linguistic sensitivity as he should transmit the writer's intention, original thoughts, and opinions in the translated version as precisely and faithfully as possible. Generally, it is a process of rendering meaning, ideas, or messages. It is necessary to understand the concept of translation as mentioned by many translation theorists to obtain an overall picture of the translation.

Due to its prominence, translation has been viewed differently. According to Ghazala (1995), “*Translation is generally used to refer to all the process and methods used to convey the meaning of the source language into the target language*” (P.1. Ghazala’s definition focuses on the notion of meaning as an essential element in translation). It is also a bridge to understand knowledge, science, textual material, and others.

The translation is a process and a product. According to Catford (1995), “*Translation is the replacement of textual material in one language by equivalent textual material in another language*”. This definition shows that translation is a process in the sense that is an activity. This activity is done over a while to translate from one language into another different language. The translation is, on the other hand, a product since it provides us with other different cultures, to ancient societies and civilization life when the translated texts reach us (Yowell and Mutfah, 1999).

The translation is a process that is intended to find meaning equivalence in the target text. The translation is the communication of the meaning of a source-language text through an equivalent target-language text.

2.2 The importance of translation

Today, English is the international language globally, and learning English becomes increasingly important in human life. Translation skill may be considered as the most universally accepted solution for surmounting this obstacle language. Thus, “*There is a need for professional translators and interpreters*” (Bui Tien Bao and Dang Xuan Thu, 1997).

The translation is a real-life, natural activity and increasingly necessary in a global environment. When the human language appears, translation becomes necessary and significant. Translation becomes more important when all countries in the world still have used it as the best tool to exchange and cooperate in various aspects like culture, education, business, etc.

To meet the demand of the multilingual world’s development, it is required an appearance of a common language to be used. Nowadays, English has been used as the universal language all over the world.

Besides, English is also one of the indispensable compulsory subjects in the aspect of education in Vietnam. It makes students access more friends, new knowledge, culture, social, etc. Especially, English directly serves study and work.

Moreover, English more and more plays an important role in the economic aspect. It makes many benefits in business when Vietnam is in cooperation with foreign investors, contracts, emails, agreements or conventions, etc by using English. So, it requires that they must have a certain level of English. Consequently, the role of translation was attached importantly to every field in society.

2.3 Difficulties in translation from English into Vietnamese

In learning English, students face many obstacles during translation from English into Vietnamese. Lack of vocabulary, difficulties with grammar structure, background knowledge, and psychology are always the most common.

2.3.1 Vocabulary

When learning any foreign language, vocabulary is a primary concern, because it is essential to learn other skills such as reading, listening, writing, and speaking. Hence, it is very necessary to develop the ability of students in learning vocabulary. We must master vocabulary knowledge, synonym, or word choice to have a certain vocabulary in translation skills. According to Rubin & Thompson (1994), “*Vocabulary learning is at the heart of mastering a foreign language*”. Vocabulary is one of the most popular factors affecting translation skills. Bowen et al (1985) and McCarthy, it is said that “*Vocabulary is the single and biggest component of any language course*”. Vocabulary refers to the knowledge of words as well as the meaning of words. Vocabulary knowledge is more than just citing the definition of a word. It requires that English learners use the word appropriately based upon a given context.

For example:

The word light holds much meaning:

1. *The overhead light was left on in the car.*
2. *The girl wore a light blue dress.*
3. *I felt lightheaded after my workout.*

4. *The mood at the party was light.*
5. *In light of the new information, the jury pronounced the defendant guilty.*
6. *The hiker lifted his light backpack with ease.*
7. *Sam will light a fire in the fireplace this evening.*

The learner with limited understanding of a word in a passage may not be able to grasp the intended meaning. For instance, in Sentence 4 (listed above), a student who understands *light* to mean only “a source of light such as a lamp” will not appropriately interpret the author’s intent. Thus, vocabulary knowledge is important because English learners must be flexible in applying appropriate meaning to the word(s) based upon the context in which it is used.

Besides, using appropriate vocabulary to translate from English into Vietnamese can be a big challenge that students face. The effort to impress words leads to many problems (Do Na Chi, 2018, Problem in Translation Facing Vietnamese EFL College Learners). Choosing appropriate words in particular contexts is also the problem students encounter.

For example:

1. *They had a warm laugh.*
2. *They had a hearty laugh.*

These two sentences give us the same information but the words have different effects: Warm suggests the laugh was friendly. Hearty suggests the laugh was wholesome and passionate.

In short, word choices are also huge obstacles for English learners. Harmer (1991) explains that “*The first to realize about vocabulary items is that they frequently have more than one meaning*”. Students' limited vocabulary is often due to forgetting old words and not updating new words. In addition, most vocabulary items often have synonyms and polymorphic words, so word choice is difficult for students in translation skills.

Moreover, the synonym is words that have the same or equivalent meaning and people often use them interchangeably to avoid repeating words. However, some words that are interchangeable in the same context will change the sentence content.

As a result, English learners often make mistakes in finding the right words for the context.

Example: Her older brother likes playing football. ‘Older’ and ‘elder’ are both comparative forms of the adjective ‘old’, but when it comes to the elder brother or sister in the family we use ‘elder’.

Generally, English is a language that has a wide vocabulary. It is not easy to learn the meaning of words and more difficult to grasp their usage. We need to choose the correct words in translation from English into Vietnamese. It is a complicated process. Many words have a similar meaning. It makes learners have difficulties when choosing the appropriate word for each context. That is the reason make English-majored juniors at Tay Do University often make mistakes when translating.

2.3.2 Grammar structure

Grammar is one of the substantial elements in translation from English into Vietnamese. It provides English learners with the knowledge of syntax and semantics helping students to form a correct sentence to use in translation. The most influential writer of the French Renaissance, Michel de Montaigne, once said, “*The greater parts of the world’s troubles are due to questions of grammar.*” Grammar directly affects the structure and meaning of sentences. However, English learners often make grammatical errors in their translation such as tenses, parts of speech, word order, and preposition.

Firstly, choosing suitable tenses makes clear and coherent in translation. It is essential for students to realizing the tenses in English. Many tenses only use with a particular structure. According to Celce (1999), “*There are 12 tenses in English which have resulted from the combination of both tense and aspect system*”. In English, each has its formula and usage, but due to a lack of knowledge of basic grammar, students often make grammatically wrong sentences. Before another action in the past, they often use the simple past tense, but the past is supposed to be fulfilled.

For example:

The phrase “Before he went out, he locked the door” had to be rewritten: “Before he went out, he had locked the door”.

In addition, students often confuse formulas between tenses.

Example: When he came, we were having dinner. In this sentence, the verb “have” must be changed into “having” because the formula for the continuous past tense is: was/were + V-ing...

English learners find it difficult to remember all grammatical rules because of their diversity and complexity. Therefore, grammatical rules are one of the fundamental aspects of English. It is not simple to applying correct grammatical structures in translation from English into Vietnamese.

Secondly, the passive is a grammatical structure in which the subject does not act but it was influenced by another factor.

Example:

1. “Catrin told me” is an active sentence, and “I was told by Catrin” is passive.

In a passive sentence, the subject is the person or thing affected by the action of the verb.

1. “Was made” is a passive form of the verb “make”.

The function of passive seems to be the same in the two languages, however, passive is used more in English (Jabbari, 2003). Due to the differences in meaning and structure, if the passive structure is kept intact in translating from English into Vietnamese, the expression may become unnatural and lame. It leads to a bad translation. Therefore, English learners are faced with challenging situations in translating passive form.

In brief, grammar structure is considered as the fundamental factor of learning English in translation. Thus, English learners with good grammar structures will have more advantages in the translation process.

2.3.3 Background knowledge

The translation is a kind of activity, which inevitably involves at least two languages and two cultural traditions. Therefore, English learners are permanently faced with the problem of how to treat the cultural aspects implicit in a source text and of finding the most appropriate technique of successfully conveying these aspects in the mother tongue. These two factors are the background knowledge of English learners. It is the principal aspect of linguistic affecting the students’ capability in translation. It is also the lack of grasping the basic knowledge that makes it more difficult for students to translate from English into Vietnamese. So, making mistakes is unavoidable.

The first element of background knowledge is culture. Culture can partly affect the translation process. Misunderstanding of culture can lead to bad translation products and sometimes makes it funny and even insulting to the target language.

The example of “ao dai”- the traditional costume of Vietnamese women can be considered as a good example of this kind of error. It is commonly known that “ao dai” is a traditional costume of Vietnamese women and we can never find any equivalent word in English to translate “ao dai”. However, some translators translate it mechanically into “a dress”, which leads to misunderstanding the symbol of a costume that has two long flaps and has to be worn combining with long trousers.

In this case, the Vietnamese word “ao dai” must be unchanged when being translated into the English version. For example, the Vietnamese sentence “Trang phục truyền thống của người phụ nữ Việt Nam là chiếc áo dài, tượng trưng cho sự duyên dáng.” should be translated into English version as “The traditional costume of the Vietnamese women is “ao dai” which symbolized the grace.”

Culture also influences the naturalness of translation. Henceforth, when translating culture linguistic elements should be related to the cultural context they belong to. For E. Nida (1964: 90) “The person who is engaged in translating from one language into another ought to be constantly aware of the contrast in the entire range of culture represented by the two languages”. Meaning that language is considered as a part of the culture and the society's identity. It is said that people translate to culture and not language. In other words, even great knowledge of two language structures and vocabularies will not help English learners provide an adequate translation. The differences between English and Vietnamese are a huge deal that students have to face in translation skills.

Besides, the mother tongue also affects equally to the background knowledge of English learners.

We often tend to abuse the mother tongue in learning English, especially in translation.

Example:

1. *Students speak to the teacher in the mother tongue as a matter of course, even when they quite capable of expressing what they mean*
2. *Students fail to realize that during many activities in the classroom it is essential that they use only English.*

However, “*It is just this kind of tendency that could lead to the development of an excessive dependency on the students’ mother tongue.*” (Harbord, 1992). Consequently, students lose confidence in their ability to communicate in English. It is easy to see that English-majored juniors often express English ideas in the way of Vietnamese thinking because of limited vocabulary. Moreover, they do not have sufficient knowledge of English culture.

So it is obvious that they will translate word by word rather than using English sentence structures.

These problems may vary from country to country depending on the cultural and linguistic gap between the two languages: English and Vietnamese. Thus, background knowledge is an essential component in learning English because it helps us make sense of new ideas and experiences.

2.3.4 Psychology

The psychological of English learners directly affect their translation process. The term “psychology” may refer to the psychology of a person that is what makes them think or behave in the way that they do. Hence, emotion and attitude are two of the influencing factors to the quality and naturalness of translation significantly that students need to keep in mind. *It can also mean the scientific study of the workings of the human mind through observable behavior* (Bolaños Medina, 2016, p. 59; VandenBos, 2015, p. 860). If English learners have bad emotions or attitudes, we can see clearly that they will not have a good translation. Translation has to natural and appropriate with the context, only then it can be called a successful one. “*Translation is considered as behavior and the focus of analysis is the problem of investigating translator-behavior*” (Bell, 1998:189). Attitude in translation can also express the mood of English learners when translating from English to Vietnamese.

Next, emotion is considered as a strong feeling, which can be defined as a “*momentary, subjectively experienced a state of mind [...] that can be described in terms of feeling good/feeling bad*” (Schwarz 1987:2), has been shown to influence a wide range of aspects of clear relevance to translation. The emotion of English learners is something very personal and is subject to change. However, it is very important to understand how the effects of mood are reflected in our linguistic expressions. Language is also the main media in translating from English into Vietnamese. Thus, the learner’s emotion is often a result of this media in translation.

For example: When describing a social event, people in a positive mood tend to use more abstract linguistic expressions. A negative mood, however, results in a more detail-oriented style with concrete descriptions.

Due to the impact of mood on various aspects of cognition and learner’s behavior, one can provide several different translations of the same text. English learners encountered these problems in translation from English into Vietnamese. Therefore, it is also one of the biggest obstacles of English-majored juniors at Tay Do University.

2.3.5 Previous studies

In the process of learning English, students are affected by many obstacles, especially in translation from English into Vietnamese. The previous studies below will be good evidence for that affirmation.

Kohil (2005) also researched “*Difficulties in finding the equivalent of translating idiomatic phrasal verbs from English into Arabic*”. The purpose of her research was to explore how students’ linguistic competence affects their translation process. In this investigation, twenty-five third-year students of the English department in the Mentouri University of Constantine were chosen randomly to respond to a written translation test. The result of her research shows that the students make more incorrect compared to the correct answer. They also encounter some problems when translating idiomatic phrasal verbs from English into Arabic. These matters are caused by the lack of students’ knowledge due to linguistic competence, literal meaning, linguistic level, and lexical items.

Similarly, the research “*Some common translation problems of English-majored juniors at Tay Do University*” was conducted by Nguyen Le Huyen Tran in 2013 is also a good demonstration. The study aims to investigate the difficulties in translation of the third-year English major at Tay Do University and make the suggestion that can help them deal with the problems. The participants of this study are 50 English-majored juniors in course 13 at Tay Do

University. All of the participants are randomly selected and given a questionnaire and translation test for collecting the data.

Moreover, Ibrahim (2017) has researched an investigation of difficulties in translation faced by Sudanese students in Dongola University, and how to overcome the problems. The data were taken from Dongola University consisted of 30 students. The questionnaire was used to take the data of the study. He reported that Sudanese University students in the College of Education in the second semester must face many difficulties in translating such as grammatical, linguistic level, vocabulary, and some differences between the mother tongue with English.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH AIMS - RESEARCH QUESTIONS – RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

(This chapter consists of Research aims, Research questions and Hypothesis)

3.1 Research aim

This study aims to find out the difficulties of English-majored juniors at Tay Do University facing in translation from English into Vietnamese so that students can find translation solutions effectively. It is also effective for me.

3.2 Research question

The research is conducted to deal with the following question:

“What difficulties do English-majored juniors at Tay Do University face in translation from English into Vietnamese?”

3.3 Hypothesis

Base on the related literature review and research questions, it is hypothesized that English-majored juniors face difficulties in translation from English into Vietnamese in vocabulary, grammar structure, background knowledge and psychological factors.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Design

The research will be analyzed to investigate the difficulties in translation from English into Vietnamese of English-majored juniors at Tay Do University. The questionnaires are given to students to survey their opinions. The research is quantitative because its instrument is the questionnaire. The data of the questionnaire will be analyzed and concluded.

4.2 Participants

The participants in this research are 100 English majored studying third-year at Tay Do University. Most students are at the age of 19 to 21. The reasons for choosing these participants are based on their translation skills in learning, the length of their English learning, their competence in English as a foreign language, and their age. Their ages and learning process are nearly the same, so they might have the same ways of thinking and face some similar difficulties. They will be given questionnaires about their problems in translation skills to collect the data for the research.

4.3 Instrument

To answer the research question in the present study, the researcher measured the participants' difficulties in translation from English into Vietnamese of English-majored juniors at Tay Do University. The instruments used in this research were the questionnaire.

The questionnaire chose as an instrument because it provides an easy and practical way for collecting data from the number of people in a short time. The questionnaire is as follows:

| Group | Summary of question group |
|------------------|---|
| A. From 1 to 6 | Students' personal information. |
| B. From 7 to 10 | Difficulties about vocabulary in translation English –Vietnamese. |
| C. From 11 to 14 | Difficulties about grammar structure in translation English –Vietnamese |
| D. From 15 to 17 | Difficulties about background knowledge in translation English-Vietnamese |
| E. From 18 to 20 | Difficulties about psychology in translation English-Vietnamese |

CHAPTER 5: EXPECTED OUTCOMES

English majored juniors at Tay Do University have faced a lot of troubles in translation from English into Vietnamese, particularly problems in vocabulary, grammar structure, background knowledge, and psychology.

Firstly, lack of vocabulary, word choice, and synonyms are difficulties in this skill. In particular, students cannot express their ideas and feelings fluently because of their limited vocabulary. Students should always read many books to learn more new vocabulary and review old vocabulary when they have free time. Students have to identify the context to use words appropriately and distinguish them effectively.

Secondly, grammar structures are easy to get confused. Students face some difficulties with grammatical structures such as tenses, passive, etc. Students should read more books or newspapers and watch more videos teaching about difficult grammar structures on YouTube Channels. As well as, students should practice translation at home.

Thirdly, background knowledge is also one of the main factors in improving student's English learning and translation skills. English learners need to find out more relevant information about English culture, language, and the native language. Students should also combine these aspects to create the best translation.

Finally, psychological problems directly affect students in translating from English into Vietnamese. English learners should find motivation for themselves to learn and practice translating English every day. Furthermore, they have to keep calm and confident whenever they translate. They are afraid of making mistakes whenever they translate in public. Thus, English learners need to know how to combine emotions and attitudes and practice more so that psychology is not affected by any factors.

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