ENHANCING ENGLISH- VIETNAMESE TRANSLATION SKILLS VIA STUDENT TEAMS-ACHIEVEMENT DIVISIONS TECHNIQUE: ACTION RESEARCH AT HANOI OPEN UNIVERSITY

Nguyen The Hoa[*]

Abstract: *With an aim to improve the translation skills of the second-degree English major students at Hanoi Open University, the Classroom Action Research was done with the use of Student Teams-Achievement Divisions (STAD) technique. 24 Students in class were divided into six groups. The Classroom Action Research consisted of two cycles. The data collected were all the results of the pretests, the post-tests, observation sheets and the worksheets. The research revealed that in the pre-test the average grades were not good enough (58,33). The average grades of the whole class in the post-test of the first cycle were a little better (66,46). There were not many changes in the grade level. In the cycle 2, the average grades of the post- test were better with (77,96). The Student Teams-Achievement Divisions (STAD) technique proved that it was effective for teaching translation skills. The research helps enrich the background for translation methodologies and for the practice of the translation skills.*

Keywords: *Action research, STAD technique, translation skills, second-degree English majors, translation 1.*

I. Introduction

Doing the translation is really hard for English major students and it is even harder for the second-degree English major students at Hanoi Open University. Translation requires students a lot of skills to complete their tasks. In class, many students fail to do their translations. Due to many reasons, both subjectively and objectively, their scores are not good.

As a matter of fact, a good student may not be good at doing the translation. Teachers need to do something to improve student's skills in translation. In response to the movement of doing scientific research initiated by Faculty of English, Hanoi Open University, the research was done with an aim to enhance the English- Vietnamese translation skills for the second-degree English major

[*] Faculty of English - Hanoi Open University

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students at Hanoi Open University via Student Teams-Achievement Divisions (STAD) technique which is a student-centered teaching- learning process. It is a type of cooperative learning to achieve the final goal. It is necessary to refer to. Theoretically, the research will help enrich the background for translation theories in general and the translation skills in particular. The research will also help make clear the useful applications of different approaches or strategies in translation, such as; Word for word translation, Literal translation, Faithful translation, Gist translation, Semantic translation, Communicative translation, Free translation, Adaptative translation, Idiomatic translation and Transposition. The researcher will try to find out the better changes of student's skills in doing the translation using Classroom Action Research. The main aims of the study are to find out the answers to the two research questions: 1. Will (STAD) technique improve the skills/ methods of teaching English- Vietnamese translation skills to the second-degree English major students at the Faculty of English, Hanoi Open University? 2. What is the effectiveness of (STAD) technique for students to promote their translation skills?

II. Literature review

2.1. Definitions of translation

There have been a lot of definitions by different translators and researchers, relying on the way they view translation and language. The aim of translation is to find the equivalent meaning of the source language expression in the target language (Newmark, 2016). According to Baker,

M. (1992) translation is a process moving from a written source language text to an equivalent target language text and it needs the semantic, syntactic, pragmatic, and stylistic comprehension of the translators. Whereas Nida and Taber (1982: 12) say that translating is the reproducing the closest natural equivalent of the source- language message in the receptor language, with both meaning and style. Catford (1965: 20) states that translation is the replacement of textual material in one language (SL) by equivalent textual material in another language (TL). Larson (1984: 3) says that translation transfers the meaning of the source language into the receptor language, in terms of meaning structure and form of the languages. The meaning must be held constant and only the form changes.

2.2. Translation theories

Basing on dynamic equivalence, Newmark (1988) put an emphasis on eight practical translation methods, such as Word for word, Literal, Faithful, Sermantic, Adaptation, Free, Idiomatic, and Communicative translation. Among them the communicative and semantic translations are the two major methods. Catford (1965) mentions several kinds of translation, such as Full vs Partial translation in the aspects of the extent of submission of SL text to the process of translation, Total vs Restricted translation for the language levels, and Rank of Translation related to the rank in a grammatical hierarchy. Jakobson (2004) classifies the different ways of translating a sign. 1. Intralingual translation (rewording): the interpretation of signs using other signs of the same

language. 2. Interlingual translation (translation proper): the interpretation of signs using some other language. 3. Intersemiotic translation (transmutation): the interpretation of signs using signs of nonverbal sign system.

2.3. *Student Teams-Achievement Divisions*

According to Slavin, (1995), the STAD technique should be carried out in the following steps: Class presentation, Formation of study groups, Provision of test/ quiz, Individual test and Award group (Team recognition). Yusuf (2009) revealed that there were many advantages of using STAD cooparative technique. Students work together in achieving their objectives. They actively motivate each other. They act as peer tutors. Interaction helps promote abilities to argue. Individual test is given to each student to see the improvement. Wang (2009) agreed that students could experience learning motivation, interpersonal relation, and collaboration so as to reach their goals. Majoka (2010) proved that STAD cooparative technique could only be done in small groups and it was suitable for the teams of high, average, and low performing students.

III. Methods

3.1. *Context of the study:*

The second-degree English major students are allowed to study 2,5 periods for studying translation practice weekly. They have 12 weeks to complete the subject. In class teachers only have a little time to introduce the needed translation skills to students. Students do not have much time to practice translation skills. Translation

errors and mistakes are inevitable. The translation materials consist of many interesting topics, but students find it hard to cover all of them. The matter is that the second-degree English major students have more of other concerns. Translation skills are not the only interest. Some of them can do the translating well, but other can't.

3.2. *Participants*

There were 24 second-degree English major students in class (only 07 male students). They were taking part in the subject- Translation 1 (the sixth term) at the Faculty of English of Hanoi Open University. They were divided into six small groups. They had completed the subject- Basics of Translation in which they had been equiped with some basic skills of translation but all that was not much. They needed some more to complete their abilities. They were of different abilities, genders, and ages. They had a lot of difficulties, being students of English. Old ages could be the big obstruction to them. They had only experience in life and their profesional jobs but skills in translation or knowledge in linguistics.

3.3. *Methods of the study*

Action research has been used widely in educational field. Hassen (2016) indicated that "action research is a term referring to a practical way of looking at your own work to check that it is as you would like it to be". Burns (2000) pointed out that "action research is regarded as an essential tool for school and classroom investigation." Séverine (2008) asserted that action research was useful in teaching translation skills and

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encouraged translation studies trainers to engage in continual reflection on their practice. The lecturer made use of the Classroom Action Research stated in Arikunto et al. (2010, p.42) to collect the data and to find out parts of the answers to the two research questions. The research was divided into two cycles and each one consisted of four phases. They are "Planning, Action (Implementing), Observation and Reflection". The whole time for the research was about 12 weeks. Each cycle needed 6 weeks to complete.

Figure 1: The two cycles of Classroom Action Research
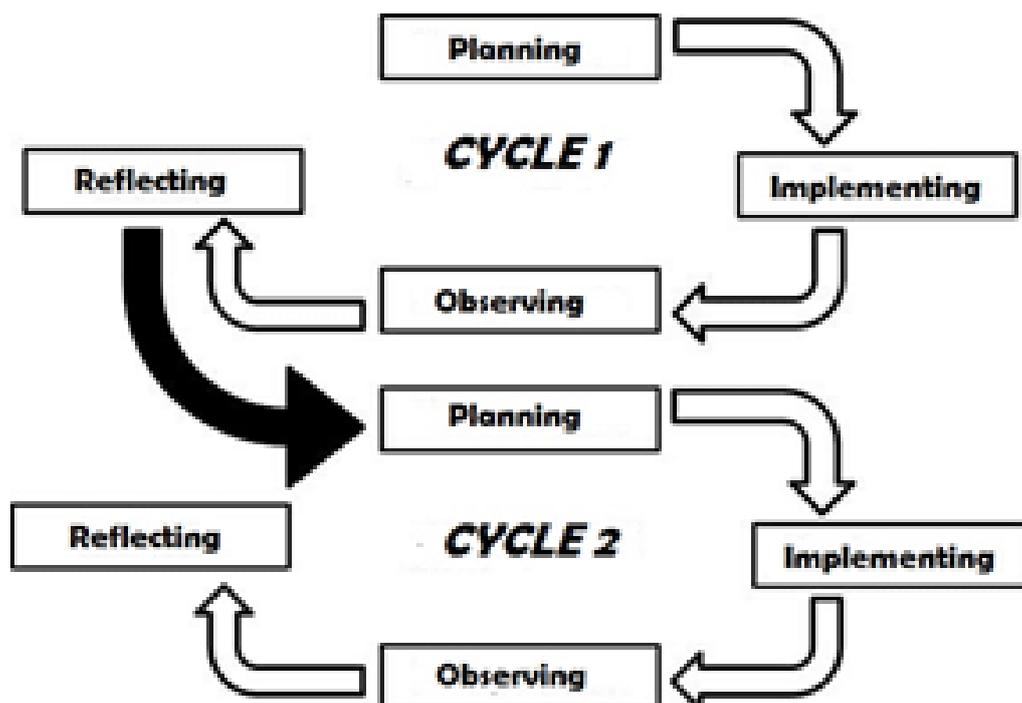
In the **Cycle I**, **Planning phase** consists of the way the researcher prepared for the steps of the Student Teams-Achievement Divisions (STAD) technique. A four-step cycle was carried out: (i) teach, (ii) team study, (iii) test and (iv) recognition. It is a cooperative learning technique and the students are divided into six small groups or teams. The researcher set up the learning environment, prepared the observation sheets, developed the worksheets for students and designed the translation tests. In the **Action phase**, the researcher introduced/ taught different techniques and skills in transaltion steps. In each worksheet in class, students had to read the source texts for 5 or 10 minutes, identifying the translation matters, answering, or responding to the lecturer's or teammate's questions, suggestions. They practised transfering ideas from the source text to the target text. The students take individual tests on the transaltion skills at which they may not help each other. Their scores are contrasted with their own past averages and points are rewarded based on the degree to which they met or exceeded their own earlier performance. In the **Observation phase**, the researcher identified and noted down student's activities. In class, the

researcher observed student's rersponses, active or inactive participations and cooperation. In this phase, the researcher also identified student's improvement in translation through several worksheets. Students also were given a chance to raise their voices on performing the translation skills. In the **Reflection phase**, the researcher analyzed the collected data, inferring the subjective and the objective causes. The researcher evaluated the teaching and the learning process. The researcher reflected himself by seeing the results of the observation and of the pre-test and post test. When the first plan was not as good as expected, the second plan would be made to get better rersults.

In the **Cycle II**, the researcher had to **replan** what should be done next with the same steps of the Student Teams -Achievement Divisions (STAD) technique. The researcher made another lesson plan more carefully basing on the adjustment on all the shortcomings in the previous plan. The condition of learning process had to be reconsidered. The pre-test and post- tests had to be redesigned to be suitable with the new requirements on translation skills in the aspects of contents, contexts, and styles. In the **Action phase**, The procedures were the same as those in the first cycle, but the lecturer put an emphasis on the skills of analysis and pragmatics on the target text. In the **Observation phase**, the researcher observed and compared the student's activities, responses, participation with all the things that were based on the previous observation sheets. Especially, student's improvement had to be noted down. In the **Reflection phase** of the second Cycle,

the researcher did the reflection by seeing the results of the observation sheets and evaluated the teaching and the learing process. Together with the results of the post-test designed for the practice of translation skills, the researcher could draw the conclusion. With the team recognition, depending on the average scores of each team, each team will receive recognition awards.

3.4. Instruments for collecting data

The criteria for collecting data are of the grammatical points, word choice, word equivalence, genre, writing styles (register), and translation shifts (additions, omissions, and substitutions) used to grade students' translations. The first instrument is the lesson plan in which the researcher prepared the worksheets for students and answer sheets for students to complete. In the lecture, the teacher must present materials with the introduction of translation skills suitable with discussion format. Students are told what it is they are going to learn and how important it is.

The second instrument is test. There are pre-test and post tests. Each test is designed with different requirements of translation skills that students must be completed. Each student individually takes a test. The reasearcher grades the test and notes down the current scores and the improvement over previous tests.

The next one is observation sheet. There are six groups of students so there are six observation sheets. There are different aspects related to teamwork and translation skills to be observed on each sheet.

3.5. Data collection and analysis

The criteria for analyzing the data are based on the levels of difficulty of the source text, the translation tasks completed/ performances/ participations being noted in the observation sheets, the time, the usage of language in the translation, the changes in the test- types and scores of the pre-test and post-test, the changes in the number of translation errors/ skills or the combination of skills, subject, knowledge, reading comprehension.

The researcher compared the results of the pre-test and the –post test and tried to distinguish the changes in the scores. The researcher obtained data from the two plans with statistics on the student's worksheets about their understandings and performances on translation skills and matters in class. All the data were inferred and analyzed in the aspects of student's active participation, responses, and comprehension. Basing on these, the researcher could find out the tendency of student's translation activities corresponding to certain skills. The researcher also compared the results of the six observation sheets. The data analysis from observation sheets was briefly relied on the countings and calculation of the average teamwork activities and the translation skills, corresponding to the answers to the two research questions.

IV. Major findings and discussion:

4.1. Major findings and discussion from the worksheets and answersheets

In the worksheets, the researcher made a list of the translating skills-related questions under the source text for discussion:

1, What is the message of the text?

2, How do you identify the context?

3, What is the setting of the text?

4, What is the purpose of the text?

5, What is the form/ the function of the text?

6, What things are used to relate ideas?

7, What are the key words in the text?

8, What is the register in the text?

9, How do you identify the participants?

10, What is the style of language in the text?

11, What is the mode of language?

12, How do you infer the contents?

13, What is the text structure?

14, How do you identify the readers?

15, What are the kinds of meaning?

16, How do you identify the naturalness?

17, What should you revise in the text?

18, Do you use "back translation"?

19, Do you need to identify parts of speech?

20, Do you need proof-reading?

21, How do you know the event?

22, What translation methods do you use?

23, In what way do you transfer ideas?

24, Do you use the strategies of skimming and scanning?

The researcher relied on the answers to get the data. The statistics revealed that 84% of the sudents could not identify the main ideas for the first weeks, but after classes of discussion in the following weeks, they matser the skills of finding the main ideas. In the aspect of tracking the context, 81% of the students got confused. Thanks to peer consultancy, they could know the skill to identify the context. Idea or message inference is the most difficult skill. 93% of them could not infer the indirect meaning of the contents. In the final weeks of the second Cycle, 82 % of the students could know how to obtain the message. 78% of them could do the transferring properly. 93% of them could form the habit of following the process of translation. 83% of them managed the skill of revising the translated text. 89% of them got used to combining translation strategies.

4.2. Major findings and discussion from the pre-test and post-tests

4.2.1. Major findings and discussion from the pre-test

Table 1. Grades of pre-test for Individual Student before Implementing STAD Technique

No	Student's name	Pre-test grades
1	Student A	65
2	Student B	52
3	Student C	56
4	Student D	45
5	Student E	58
6	Student F	79
7	Student G	33
8	Student H	42
9	Student I	45
10	Student J	79
11	Student K	80
12	Student L	57
13	Student M	68
14	Student N	90
15	Student O	35
16	Student P	65
17	Student Q	63
18	Student V	55
19	Student W	38
20	Student X1	92
21	Student X2	45
22	Student Y1	71
23	Student Y2	44
24	Student Z	43
	Total	**1400**
	Average	**58.33**

As you can see the scores of pre-tests in the Table 1, half of the class got low grades. Only one third of the students got high grades. A little over one third of the student got normal grades. The whole class accounted for the average grades of 58,33.

4.2.2. Major findings and discussion from the post-tests

Table 2. Grades of post- test for Individual Student after Implementing STAD Technique, Cycle I

No	Student's name	Post-test grades (Cycle I)
1	Student A	50
2	Student B	72
3	Student C	54
4	Student D	75
5	Student E	64
6	Student F	76
7	Student G	63
8	Student H	64
9	Student I	68
10	Student J	63
11	Student K	54
12	Student L	66
13	Student M	71
14	Student N	62
15	Student O	54
16	Student P	60

17	Student Q	65
18	Student V	80
19	Student W	75
20	Student X1	67
21	Student X2	62
22	Student Y1	74
23	Student Y2	77
24	Student Z	79
Total		**1595**
Average		**66.46**

At the end of the Cycle I, the Table 2 showed that the grades of post- test for Individual Student after Implementing STAD Technique were better, but it was not as good as expected. The average grades of the whole class were 66,46. There was not much change in the grade level. It was a little better. It was a must to continue the Cycle II.

Table 3. Grades of Post-test for Individual Student, after Implementing STAD Technique, Cycle II

No	Student's name	Post-test grades (Cycle II)
1	Student A	75
2	Student B	80
3	Student C	77
4	Student D	75
5	Student E	81
6	Student F	68

7	Student G	90
8	Student H	86
9	Student I	77
10	Student J	68
11	Student K	73
12	Student L	88
13	Student M	72
14	Student N	81
15	Student O	73
16	Student P	65
17	Student Q	80
18	Student V	86
19	Student W	79
20	Student X1	73
21	Student X2	78
22	Student Y1	85
23	Student Y2	86
24	Student Z	75
Total		**1871**
Average		**77.96**

After 11 weeks of practising translation skills in the teamwork (STAD) with the whole-hearted instructions from the lecturer, the results of the grades for the post-test in the Table 3 were better. The average grades of the whole class were 77,96. Compared with the results of the pre-test, the final post-test results were much better. The STAD technique proved efficient for the second-degree English major students at Hanoi Open University.

4.3. Major findings and discussion from the Observation sheets

Table 4. A sample of Observation sheet for group I in the Cycle I

No	Aspects observed	Measurement			
		1	2	3	4
1	They learnt cooperatively, attentively, and happily.			x	
2	They developed their tolerance.			x	
3	They discussed the contents, styles, context.				x
4	They helped one another.		x		
5	They knew how to manage their time.		x		
6	They handled all tasks assigned by the team leader.		x		
7	They were searching in different dictionaries.			x	
8	They shared ideas.			x	

Explanation for the measurement:

1. Not implemented yet

2. Implemented but not perfect yet

3. Almost perfectly implemented

4. Perfectly implemented

In the Observation sheets for the Cycle I, the researcher oversaw the six groups/ teams's activities in class. In the first weeks, student's cooperations were not smooth. Some of them still hesitated. Some felt shy. Their discussions were not active. Some translation matters were not dealt with properly. Actually, students did not get used to the teamwork.

Table 5. A sample of Observation sheet for group I in the Cycle II

No	Aspects observed	Measurement			
		1	2	3	4
1	They learnt cooperatively, attentively and happily.			x	
2	They developed their tolerance.				x
3	They discussed the contents, styles, context.				x
4	They helped one another.			x	
5	They knew how to manage their time.		x		
6	They handled all tasks assigned by the team leader.		x		
7	They were searching in different dictionaries.			x	
8	They shared ideas.				x
9	They knew how to promote each other's strengths.				x
10	They forced the lazy members to join.			x	

In the Cycle II, with the help from lecturer and classmates, there were a lot of improvements. Students cooperated with each other in a friendly manner. They were eager to raise their voices. The open atmosphere gave them the enthusiasm to help each other. The member duties were completed one by one. No one was left behind. Students knew how to work in a group. Cooperation helped create the movement and atmosphere of learning. It made weak and shy students brave enough to put forward their translating solutions in different translation skills. They supported each other in finding the indirect/ contextual meanings of the text. Teamwork helped them to make use of suitable translation skills and do the translation faster and more acurately.

IV. Conclusion

The research will help lecturers reconsider their methodologies to match with the orientation of the Faculty of English, Hanoi Open University, and student's needs. Practically, the research will help make a great contribution to the trend of student-centered teaching in general and the skills for the subject Translation 1 in particular. The research is a chance for lecturers to look into their methodologies specifically and carefully. The second-degree English major students at Hanoi Open University also have a chance to experience different skills or techniques to do their translation sufficiently and effectively in class. The Student Teams-Achievement Divisions (STAD) technique is a suitable one for both lecturers and students in training transaltion skills because it is a student-centered teaching- learning process which most educational institutions put an emphasis on. The classroom action research was done just to improve that the (STAD) technique was very useful and effective especially for the second-degree English major students at Hanoi

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Open University. Teamwork brings many benefits. It does not require much time on preparations. It is easy for lecturers to carry out in classes with students of various background knowledge, gender, personalities, and ages. The researcher hopes that the (STAD) technique will be applied to the teachings of other subjects or skills.

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Author address: Faculty of English, Hanoi Open University

Email: hoadhm71@hou.edu.vn