

# SOME DIFFICULTIES IN TRANSLATION WORD BY WORD FROM ENGLISH - TO VIETNAMESE AND VICE VERSAL

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**Abstract:** *To equip students with the necessary English language proficiency and translation skills to function in multilingual environments, translation and interpretation are significant components of English language studies programs. However, carrying out a successful translation is not a simple undertaking because there are other aspects at play in addition to one's proficiency in the English language. Due to their inadequate language ability and comprehension of translation processes, many Vietnamese English Foreign Language (EFL) college students lack significant expertise in translation and interpretation. Additionally, only those learners are exposed to situations where translation is necessary. They all make major contributions to the outputs' poor translation quality. The purpose of this article is to examine the translation processes used by Vietnamese EFL college students as well as the effectiveness of the translated versions in comparison to the original Vietnamese papers. The results of analyzing 10 translated texts from 10 participants show a significant percentage of inaccurately translated things brought on using a word-by-word translation method and the effect of the Vietnamese language. To assist educators and students in changing the curriculum and teaching strategies, advice is offered.*

**Key words:** *curriculum, interpretation, language ability, multilingual environments, proficiency, translation.*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Since English is the most widely spoken language in this era of globalization, an increasing number of English language learners are looking for jobs in multinational and multilingual contexts. Higher education institutions provide English language programs that enable students to research many facets of the language and enroll in professional courses for their future job pathways because they are very conscious of the requirement for language learning. English Translation and Interpretation is one of the key research areas now, and it teaches students the skills and understanding of the English language necessary for successful translation and interpretation. The university provides four courses in translation and interpretation that give students the chance to learn about translation theories and put those theories into practice.

Despite having plenty of time to immerse themselves in the subject, difficulties with translation and interpretation still arise. Vietnamese EFL college students face a variety of difficulties while studying and performing translation due to their inadequate English ability and lack of expertise. Learning the English language later in life, having little previous knowledge of the topics being translated, and having few opportunities to practice translation in a genuine setting are a few reasons why students struggle with their translation assignments. Additionally, there are some inefficiencies in their institution's teaching and learning processes that hinder students' ability to translate. In this essay, I will study the definitions and components of effective translation practices, as well as the efficacy of

learners' translation outputs, to better understand the learners' present translation practices and their ability to translate.

## **2. THE CONTENTS**

### **2.1. The definition of translation**

Although they are frequently linked, translation and interpretation are not the same. To determine the parallels and differences between the two issues, this section will examine their definitions. It is also important to highlight that this paper solely focuses on the first.

Due to their widespread use, translation and interpretation are well-known to the public, and the two professions have been extensively defined. Translation was described by Heim and Tymowski (2006) as the act of converting a text from one language to another, regardless of the text's format [1]. Since a text can be created in both spoken and written formats, which require distinct translation procedures, this term is broad. Other scholars who have a more in-depth understanding of translation have based their definitions on the many kinds of texts. The two concerns were very simply clarified by Jones (2002) [2] and the European Commission (2009) [3], who said that while both phrases refer to converting messages from one language to another, translation focuses on written language while interpretation is in spoken form. The formats of the texts and communications that individuals convert from one language to another have made the main distinction between translation and interpretation clearer.

The criteria to obtain accurate translation and interpretation are various because of the variations in the text forms. The features of a successful translated work and the standards that translators must meet are illustrated in the section that follows.

### **2.2. Translation and translator's requirements**

Translation, according to Jones (2002) [2], entails more than merely transcribing words from one language into another. Translation ought to be connected to clear communications in the target tongue. The translation should give its audience the impression that it was originally written in the target language rather than being translated. While Paul (2009) [4] [3] and the European Commission (2009) placed more focus on the accuracy of the material, Jones (2002) placed more emphasis on the consistency and continuity of the translation [2]. It is also argued that due to their accuracy in content, translated papers should be given the same legal weight as the original. Therefore, accurate content, consistency, and cohesiveness are necessary for good translation to guarantee the readability and comprehension of the translated documents.

These previously mentioned qualities of good translation have led to the establishment of certain standards for translators. According to Jones (2002) [2], since translation is done in writing, translators should have great writing and editing skills to produce high-quality translated works. Good language abilities alone, however, are insufficient. The European Commission (2009) did a significant amount of work on the characteristics of good translators and exposed some myths about what makes a good translation [3]. To give an example, speaking two or more languages does not automatically make one able to translate between them. A good translator should be able to fully comprehend the messages they are translating. This is especially true in instances of specialized translation (Jones, 2002), where translators work on texts from certain disciplines like nursing, engineering, or sociology and must possess a thorough understanding of the subject to accurately translate the messages [2]. Jones (2002) stipulates that after obtaining translation assignments, translators must hunt for additional information to make sure they fully understand the concepts of the source writings. The criteria to obtain accurate translation and interpretation are various because of the variations in the text forms. The features of a successful translated work and the standards that translators must meet are illustrated in the section that follows [2].

Being a professional translator requires a lot of expertise and work because there are high standards for translation quality. Jones (2002) and Robinson (2007) expanded on this topic by highlighting the professional preparation that aspirants to the field of translation should get through their training programs. A translator may specialize in one field, such as conference, escort, literary,

medical, or judicial translation. Knowing their area of interest can help translators focus their time and energy on learning the language and, more significantly, developing specialized expertise in that area. The efforts to develop a thorough understanding of several disciplines and English language proficiency, including terminology, should be multiplied by those who seek to broaden their translation careers to several disciplines. Another issue is localization, which necessitates that translators become familiar with the contexts of both the original and translated works. This complex guidance attempts to assist translators in completely understanding the information conveyed as well as offer understandable messages to a particular audience. Training programs, as indicated by Robinson (2007), should educate students on translator ethics. As a bridge between speakers of other languages, translators are responsible for preserving the integrity of the original texts in their work. The topic of translator professional involvement was further discussed by Robinson (2007) since there is a belief in lifelong learning and gaining expertise. To put it another way, translators should join a professional organization in their sector to share experiences and get opportunities to practice.

What translator groups or unions we belong to, what translator conferences we attend, what courses we take in the field, and how we network with other translators in our region and language pair are all matters of little to no significance to translation users but of tremendous relevance to translators (s). Sometimes these "involvements" assist translators in improving their translations, which is crucial for users and consequently for the pride we take in trustworthiness. However, more importantly, they improve our confidence in our abilities as translators, which helps us get through tedious, repetitive, and low-paying work since it gives us more motivation.

Given the aforementioned, becoming a skilled translator and attaining good translation are difficult and demanding tasks. The issue is how well-aware of these traits' persons undergoing translation training are, and how these traits are represented in their translation assignments. The abilities of Vietnamese EFL college students to produce quality translation outputs and the motivations underlying their translation are examined in the section that follows.

### **2.3. Research methodology**

I put out the following research questions to find out how Vietnamese EFL college students approach their translation assignments and whether the results match the standards previously mentioned:

- *How do college-aged Vietnamese EFL students approach their translation assignments?*
- *How well are such translation projects carried out?*
- *Why do they translate in the ways that they do?*

Ten English-major students who were juniors at the time of the data collecting stage participated in the study. Due to their success in their training program's Introduction to Translation and Interpretation and Translation 1 courses, those junior students were chosen. Before they participated in this study, it was thought that they had a certain awareness of translation theories and processes. According to the reports, those individuals earned at least a B+ in both their English language competence and translation-related courses, demonstrating their high level of English proficiency and comprehension of translation techniques.

The participants had to translate into English an excerpt from a Vietnamese text that discussed English language instruction at the university level. The piece was chosen from a reputable publication called "Tuoi Tre," and the participants were familiar with the subject.

I asked the instructors of those Translation courses to cross-evaluate the participants' translated texts when the translation was finished. These professors have extensive teaching backgrounds and oversee the Translation and Interpretation courses at the institution under study. At Vietnam National University, Hanoi, they also took part in several training programs in translation and interpretation. Their assessment was valuable and trustworthy because they were knowledgeable and well-trained.

To highlight the inadequacy of the translated items, the translated texts were compared to the Vietnamese source document. I then spoke with those participants in interviews to gain deeper insights

on translation practices.

### 3. Some findings and discussions

#### 3.1. Translated texts

The word-by-word translation method used by the participants and the Vietnamese language's effect, which resulted in improper word choices, demonstrated that the participants' translations still had significant issues. Inaccurate translation was sometimes a result of not understanding the original language's meaning. I gave several illustrative examples of their improper translation in this section of the text.

No	Original words	Participants' Translation	Comments
1	Nỗi ám ảnh	Obsession	Several participants mistranslated this because "the fear" should be understood in this context. However, this incorrect translation resulted from not being able to use the word in the appropriate context.
2	Cựu sinh viên	Old students	Since "the fear" should be understood in this context, numerous participants mistranslated this. The translation was incorrect, though, because the word couldn't be used in the appropriate context.
3	Sụp hố	Stepping into a hole	Another instance of literal translation without consideration of context was this one. In this instance, "sụp hố" implies "feeling depressed or surprised," but the participants' translations changed the phrase's connotation.
4	Chuẩn bị tâm lý	Preparing their psychology	Another illustration of word-by-word translation is this. The phrase "being ready to deal with the challenges" appears in the original text. Nevertheless, the sentence was broken up and each word was translated, for example, "preparing" for "chuẩn bị" and "psychology" for "tâm lý"
5	Người bản xứ	Local people	Being unfamiliar with the Vietnamese phrase was the cause of this inaccurate translation. In this situation, "Người bản xứ" refers to Native English speakers, but the participants gave "local people," which was inappropriate.

Additional samples taken from the participants' translations demonstrated the word-by-word method's inequivalence in translation. In these examples, I used the numbers to show how closely the participants followed the Vietnamese text and employed a word-for-word translation method.

Original text:

Bản thân quá chú trọng ngữ pháp trong khi nghe yếu, nói dở, chỉ có đọc hiểu, viết là khá.

(1)      (2)      (3)      (4)      (5)      (6)      (7)      (8)      (9)

Participant's translation:

Individuals too focus on grammar while listening is weak, speaking is bad, only reading and writing are fair.

(1)      (2)      (3)      (4)      (5)      (6)      (7)      (8)      (9)

Suggested translation: Only the students' reading and writing abilities are actually quite good; they tend to focus more on grammar and disregard their listening and speaking abilities.

This example demonstrates how the participant interpreted each word without considering how to change the sentence's structure to make it flow more naturally. The following is another example of how a word-by-word translation muddled the meaning of the sentence.

Original text:

Để sử dụng tiếng Anh cho một cơ hội nghề nghiệp tốt, môi trường sách vở, lớp học thôi chưa đủ.

(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6)

Participant's translation:

To use English for a good career chance, environment, books, classes are not yet enough.

(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6)

Suggested translation: *Learning from books and classes alone won't prepare students for the workplace or allow them to utilize English successfully.*

Insufficient translation was done, which caused the translated paragraphs to be incoherent and distort the original communications' meaning.

### 3.2. Interviews

This example demonstrates how the participant translated each word without taking sentence structure into account to make the sentence flow naturally. The following line is another illustration of how word-for-word translation muddled the meaning. The interviews also make clear that they were not aware of the original text's intended meaning. Some participants acknowledged that they did not understand the meaning of the Vietnamese sentences, but they did not ask for assistance in getting those points clarified. They just translated those based on their own interpretations, which did not correspond to the original meaning.

Some participants stated that they were unable to perform the translation well due to their low language skills. As an illustration, one participant said that, because to her limited vocabulary, she was unable to translate the original material into English even though she understood it completely. She also acknowledged that she occasionally doubted the accuracy of her word choices.

The time restriction and the level of translation were brought up by another participant. According to him, there shouldn't be great expectations for the quality of the translation because he had a very constrained amount of time to complete it. Iverson (2004), who discovered a relationship between time and quality, is pertinent to this topic. Since translators won't have enough time to revise their work, the desired level of quality might not be achieved.

All participants, according to the literature, did not successfully translate the material related to their field of study, although having completed their translation and language skills courses with satisfactory results. As a result, the participants' ignorance of the original materials prevented the correctness of the content from being guaranteed. They have also chosen to continue with the Vietnamese version and adhere to the word-for-word translation to prevent content distortion due to their inadequate language competence and lack of confidence. However, the meaning of the communications had already been changed or even rendered ambiguous by this word-for-word translation.

### 4. CONCLUSION

A study demonstrates that the participants' attempts at translation are unsuccessful because they lack understanding of the original text's meaning, have poor English language skills, misuse the word-by-word translation method, and lack confidence when changing sentences. As a result, instructors must use a variety of tools to raise the language and background knowledge of their students. Additionally, there must be more chances for translators to put their skills and confidence to the test. Robinson (2007) advised that the institution start translation clubs so that instructors and students would have a place to practice and share experiences. It is also possible to engage seasoned translators to give pupils practical translating practice. Being a professional translation requires hard work and effort rather than comfort. As a result, to increase their ability to translate, both teachers and students need to make the courses more practical with lots of practice chances.

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## MỘT VÀI KHÓ KHĂN TRONG CHUYỂN DỊCH TỪ SANG TỪ – TỪ TIẾNG ANH SANG TIẾNG VIỆT VÀ NGƯỢC LẠI

**Tóm tắt:** Nhằm trang bị cho sinh viên trình độ tiếng Anh và kỹ năng dịch thuật cần thiết trong môi trường đa ngôn ngữ, dịch thuật là một trong những nội dung quan trọng của các chương trình học tiếng Anh. Tuy nhiên, để thực hiện một bản dịch thành công không phải là một công việc đơn giản bởi vì còn có những chịu sự tác động của rất nhiều yếu tố đặc biệt là khả năng sử dụng thành thạo Tiếng Anh. Do trình độ ngoại ngữ và hiểu biết về quá trình dịch thuật chưa cao nên nhiều sinh viên Việt Nam thiếu kỹ năng đáng về dịch thuật từ Tiếng Anh sang Tiếng Việt và ngược lại. Ngoài ra, người học cũng mới tiếp xúc với một số cảnh huống cơ bản nhất trong dịch thuật. Do đó, chúng tôi đã tiến hành khảo sát phân tích 10 văn bản dịch của 10 người tham gia cho thấy một tỷ lệ đáng kể những lỗi dịch không chính xác là do sử dụng phương pháp dịch từng chữ từ Tiếng Anh sang Tiếng Việt và ngược lại. Từ đó, chúng tôi đưa ra một số giải pháp nhằm hỗ trợ cho dịch giả và sinh viên trong quá trình chuyển dịch.

**Từ khóa:** chương trình, phiên dịch, khả năng ngôn ngữ, môi trường đa ngôn ngữ, thành thạo, biên dị