

**TEACHING TRANSLATION IN A TERTIARY ENGLISH MAJOR
PROGRAM-INSIGHTS FROM PROFESSIONAL TRANSLATOR TRAINING**

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ABSTRACT

Translation has made a comeback with its positive impact on students' language performance. Nevertheless, the results of the use of translation are still limited compared to other types of language exercises, which should be related to structural and behaviorist approaches to translation. Translation courses are usually part of the Tertiary English Major Curriculum, which aims to improve students' knowledge and skills in English and translation skills. Against the backdrop of limited translation teaching in Vietnam, this report introduces a functional approach to translation in translation teaching and introduces insights from professional translator training to develop students' language and translation competences. The report discusses practical implications in the teaching of language and translation including the adoption of a communicative view of language and translation, text analysis, text selection, translation briefs, process-based and project-based approaches as well as translation evaluation. The adopted approaches will inform translation teaching in the Vietnamese language teaching and other similar contexts.

Key words: translation teaching, functional approach, text analysis, process-oriented

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, there is a trend to reassess the role of translation in language teaching after many decades of neglect as translation presents obvious benefits in language teaching. In a debate of which method is more effective in language teaching, scholars including Cook (2010) suggests a combination of Communicative language teaching (CLT) and grammar-translation method (GTM) in enhancing learners' language competence.

In Vietnam, there have been great efforts to improve the teaching and learning of English. The National Foreign Languages 2020 Project presents innovative language teaching methods among teachers. However, due to their workload and students' need for grammatical knowledge for examinations, teachers still rely on grammar teaching or GTM (Nguyen, Warren, & Fehring, 2014).

At tertiary level, translation courses form part of English programs which aim to develop students' language competence and translation skills. Different studies in Vietnam found obstacles in teaching translation including the adopting of teacher-centred transmissionist approaches, limited time spent on translation courses, lecturers' lack of intensive training in translation studies, error correction, and out-of-date coursebooks (Ho & Bui, 2013; Pham & Tran, 2013). In fact, Ho and Bui (2013) who investigated students' reports on translation teaching methods and curriculum in the Ho Chi Minh City Open University identified students' dissatisfaction about the present translation teaching situation.

There is a global and local demand for translators who are non-native speakers of English to offer translation services (Pham & Tran, 2013) while the Vietnamese translation profession is still primitive and lacking accreditation and standards of practice (Nguyen, 2009). Therefore, the training of translators lies in the responsibility of higher education in Vietnam as its ultimate aim is develop students' skills to prepare them for employment. Tertiary English Major programs need to take it seriously to train students with translation skills at tertiary level. In fact, graduates of English programs in Vietnam who are often expected to engage in professional translation work usually lack the skills and ability to do so (Ho & Bui, 2013). This could be explained by pedagogical concerns. The article presents a brief look at pedagogical problems related to the adopted view of translation in language teaching and the need to redefine translation in language teaching.

2. TRANSLATION IN LANGUAGE TEACHING: LONG-TERM NEGLECT

The Grammar Translation Method (GTM) which was first used to teach languages in the 18th and 19th centuries promotes the students' ability to read classical literature rather than speak the target language (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). After the advent of subsequent language teaching methods, such as the Direct Method, the Audiolingual Method, and the Communicative Approach, it went out of favour due to its excessive reliance on learners' L1,

its neglect of oral language, and its use of artificial sentences to illustrate grammatical points (Leonardi & Salvi, 2016). However, translation has been reinstated in language teaching (House, 2008). At the least, it does no harm to language development and does not interfere with L2 acquisition (Duff, 1989). For example, Duff (1989) maintains that translation enables students to be aware of the L1 influence on L2 and to deal with problems caused by the interference. It enhances learners' linguistic knowledge, and develops their language skills (Kim, 2011). Translation enables students to develop confidence and self-esteem and it is favourably regarded by both students and teachers (Murtisari, 2016).

Even though translation has made a comeback in language teaching, its results and impacts on learners' language competence are still finite. In most studies including Kim (2011) translation has been used as a contrastive analysis activity in which sentences in the first language (L1) and the second language (L2) are compared and contrasted. The purpose of such an activity has been to enable students to learn isolated vocabulary items and grammatical sentential structures rather than focusing on contextual features of a translation tasks or treating translation as skill by itself. Most studies have prioritized students' memory of linguistic items to their functional use of language. The effect of translation on the learner's language knowledge has been finite compared with other language activities. Generally, most of the studies did not focus on the meaningfulness of linguistic items which can only be achieved by placing them in contexts. In other words, the linguistic view of translation is still common in studies supporting translation. In fact, House (2008) claims that a linguistic view of translation is held among who plead against and for the use of translation in language teaching.

Linguistic approaches to translation do not consider the contextual use of words and sentences and they are mainly based on contrastive linguistics which focuses on the comparison and contrast of two language systems. It is important to note that translation is not the same as contrastive linguistics. Emphasizing the need to understand the differences between the two fields, House (2008) explains how "langue" or the language system differs from "parole" or concrete utterances in texts and insists that translation is performed at the level of parole rather than langue. Therefore, translation in language teaching should be defined from the perspective of communication (Leonardi & Salvi, 2016). "Translating means mediating a message between two different linguistic and cultural communities and the same applies to language learning" (Leonardi & Salvi, 2016, p. 336). In other words, both language learning and translation should aim at getting the message across

over linguistic and cultural differences. Leonardi and Salvi (2016) also maintain that a source text (ST) should be translated depending on the function or purpose of translation as proposed by functionalists in translation as discussed below.

3. A FUNCTIONAL APPROACH TO TRANSLATION AND TRANSLATION TEACHING

Functional approaches to translation have marked a transition from the linguistic view of translation towards a view of translation as a communicative intercultural activity. The early functional approach was advocated by Reiss (1981) who introduced a classification of text functions and text types and proposed different translation methods based on text types. Reiss continued advancing the functional approach by introducing the concept of skopos which proposes that translation should be aligned with the purpose of translation or the function of the target text (TT). The functional approach flourished in Nord's (2005) text-oriented translation model which stresses both the skopos and analysis of text features.

4. SKOPOS THEORY

Skopos which means "aim" or "purpose" in Greek was introduced in the 1970s by Vermeer to refer to the purpose of a translating act (Nord 1997, 27). The skopos theory is part of Holz-Mänttari's theory of translatorial action which considers translation as a communicative activity or transaction among professional agents in the commercial field of translation including initiators, commissioners, producers and users of the ST and the TT (Munday, 2016). The action of translation should be negotiated and performed according to the purpose of the translation or the TT in the target culture. In other words, translation should be produced for and received by the target reader with a specific purpose, which is clearly depicted in the following definition

For to translate—means to produce a text in a target setting for a target purpose and target addresses in target circumstances.
(Vermeer 1987, 29)

More precisely, skopos, or function, determines how a translated text is produced. Translation must be fit or adequate for purpose. A text may be translated in several ways depending on the TT purpose which can be assigned by the initiator (a person who requires the translation). The

purpose of a TT can be identical to or different from that of the ST. In case of similar purpose, appropriateness involves the faithful reproduction of linguistic features. In case of function change which is implicitly or explicitly described in the translation brief, the translation should be produced in accordance with what is stipulated in the translation brief. The impact of function on a translation is applicable not only to the whole text but also to single text segments or features. This means that the translation of a single text feature can only be considered adequate if it satisfies the target function.

As the rules are hierarchical, the translator should give priority to the higher rule while translating. In other words, the translator should make sure that the translation satisfies its purpose, then check whether it is coherent within the TT and later ensure its relationship with the ST. As the coherence with the ST is downplayed, skopos theory has been criticised for its “dethroning” (Vermeer’s term) of the ST (Munday, 2016). Nord (1997) deals with this issue by introducing the “function plus loyalty” rule which suggests that there should be the relationship between ST and TT and that this relationship is influenced by the skopos. This principle is incorporated in her influential model presented in the next section.

5. NORD’S TRANSLATION-ORIENTED TEXT ANALYSIS

Nord’s (1997, 2005) model considers the role of various players as well as Reiss and Vermeer’s concept of skopos while giving adequate attention to the ST type, text functions, and language features influenced by Reiss’ text types. The model allows the translator to have a thorough understanding of the ST and enables them to make appropriate decisions with reference to the intended function of the translation. The model has its practical use in translator training as students’ competence in translation can be developed by taking into account the three aspects: the translation brief, ST analysis, and the hierarchy of translation problems (Nord 1997). *The translation brief* enables the translator to establish why a translation is required and by whom, what the clients need, and when, where the TT will be used, and who the TT addressees are.

Text analysis refers to the analysis of both extratextual and intratextual factors of the ST and TT. Extratextual factors include “sender” (text producer or writer), “sender’s intention”, “audience” (reader), “medium” (channel), “place of communication”, “time of communication”, “motive for communication” (why a text is produced), and “text function”. Intratextual

factors include subject matter, content, presupposition, text composition (or structure), non-verbal elements, lexis, sentence structure and suprasegmental features (e.g., italic or bold type). As of translation problems, Nord's classification of translation problems includes pragmatic translation problems (related to differences in the situations of the ST and TT), cultural translation problems (related to cultural differences), linguistic translation problems (related to differences between languages), and text-specific translation problems (e.g. metaphors or puns). Nord (1997, 2005) advocates that the translator should, in the first place, consider pragmatic perspectives in doing translation, giving priority to problems arising from the situations of the ST and the TT and the function of a translation.

6. IMPLICATIONS IN TRANSLATION TEACHING

Functional approaches and Nord's model enable translators to go beyond linguistic approaches and produce adequate translations that meet communicative functions in target communicative situations. Functional approaches are widely applied in teaching translation in language teaching, particularly in English programs. Colina and Lafford (2018) who see translation as both a means and an end in Spanish language teaching illustrate examples of translation activities that focus on the effects of contextual features (e.g., text, author, reader, and function) on understanding and producing texts, which is applicable to both language learning and translating. They include authentic texts and translation briefs so that students can understand how authentic texts are constructed in various genres, fields and contexts, keeping in mind different purposes and readers. Petrocchi (2014) examining the role of translation in teaching English as a foreign language in two universities in Rome, Italy incorporates text analysis and extratextual elements based on Nord's (2005) model in his specific class procedures. The author indicates the need for "training students' minds and making them more flexible (through brainstorming) so that they can acquire the methods necessary to face any text" (pp. 100-101). Like the above-mentioned studies, research by Chen (2010) demonstrates the feasibility of incorporating functional approaches into translation teaching in general and Nord's model in particular in English programs. Chen's study experimented with the text type-oriented functional teaching framework (Nord, 1997) in the English Department of Wuhan University, China. Specifically, the researcher aimed to make students "reali(s)e" and "identify"

text types and text functions and increase students' awareness of textual differences in Chinese and English through pre-translation analysis.

Functional approaches develop students' analytical minds and awareness, the model allows them to consider various text features and translation problems in achieving the communication goal in a translation task. Particularly, the model emphasises the translation process, in which learners are encouraged to analyse the ST, and identify and solve translation problems. This also initiates the tendency to assess students' translation processes along with traditional product-oriented evaluation. Problem-solving process should be subject to the function or the purpose of translation as well as the text type and other text features. The emphasis of the function of translation and other contextual features suggests the inclusion of real-life projects into translation classes. Generally, the trend to use functional approaches in translation in language teaching has begun and further application should be encouraged in different language teaching contexts. This article discusses the application of a functional approach to translation in translation courses in an English language program in Vietnam, focusing on

- Authentic texts and translation briefs
- Project-based approaches
- Focus on the process and consciousness and
- Translation evaluation and forms of assessment

7. AUTHENTIC TEXTS AND TRANSLATION BRIEFS

It is worthy to replace decontextualised texts with authentic texts that contain various information about situational features including author, reader, and place/time of publication. Through the use of authentic texts students' attention will be drawn to various text features to promote students' understanding of STs and their production of TTs. In particular, students' understanding of sociolinguistic aspects will help students divert their focus from isolated linguistic items in translation more communicative purposes of translation.

Authentic texts should be accompanied by translation briefs that provide information about the function of translation and the target reader to facilitate students' decision-making.

Translation briefs provide a framework for making decisions, informing students of hypothetical target reader(s) and particular purpose for which the translation is supposedly intended. Students can be asked questions about the brief and they can be given the opportunity to translate the same text with different briefs: no presuming about readers' backgrounds; assuming readers who are ignorant of the subject matter and need to have everything spelled out; assuming readers as experts. Otherwise, it is possible to have students come up with appropriate briefs and translate accordingly. No brief can be also offered, which is commonly found in real life translation assignments.

8. PROJECT-BASED APPROACHES

Authentic projects allow students to deal with requirements from real clients. The lecturer receives translation tasks from the outside world and asks students to complete the tasks within due dates. This enables students to familiarize with future translation assignments. However, the feasibility of authentic projects in translation class depends on many factors including lecturers' preparedness as well as project time management. Alternatively, in simulated translation scenarios, students can play roles as clients, project managers, terminologists, translators, or reviewers. Through interactions, students learn to develop competences required in fulfilling tasks of a translator, which is aligned with the constructive approach that emphasizes students' learning through interaction. Another project-based approach involves the achievement of a specific project aim, for instance, writing a book on translation. After being introduced the focus of a project, students collaborate to achieve the aim and give oral presentations. They then reflect on their problems, solutions and justifications for their choices and decisions during the project completion.

9. FOCUS ON THE PROCESS AND CONSCIOUSNESS

Translation teaching may focus on students' awareness on the translation process. Students do the text analysis, identify possible translation problems and adopt translation strategies to deal with such problems. They then reflect on whether their translation meets translation requirements. Students may talk or write about these processes, answering questions: How did you solve the problems? Why did you use this strategy, not that one? What effect did the strategy bring? What are the good and

weak points of the translation? Activities range from think-aloud protocols (students' reading aloud their translation process while they are doing the task) to reflective journals (students' writing their journals after a translation task or a class meeting, at the start, middle or end of a course). Achilles' Heel activities allow students to demonstrate their strengths, weaknesses and progresses in learning about translation. In keeping portfolios, students can notice their errors as well as improvements in their translations by comparing their different versions (draft, revised and final translations).

Other activities and tasks include peer edits, E-edits (use of Google docs in translation editing), translation logs (where students share their difficulties and experience in translating), open elections (students vote on the best translation), discussion forums, use of parallel texts (texts of the same text types in the target language), terminology search and corpora use.

10. EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT

Assessment and evaluation in translation teaching may take into account students' translation processes. Testing varies from students' self-, peer-evaluation of translations and their own reflections in both written and oral forms. Students' assessment of their own or peers' translations increases their task awareness, problem identification and solution evaluation (Mellinger, 2019), developing their inner capacity of monitoring their improvement (Normand-Marconnet, 2012). In this way, students are empowered in their own learning, which is aligned with student-centered approaches in education. Portfolios enable lecturers to evaluate what students have learnt about translation by referring to their reflections during the course. According to Galán-Mañas (2016), portfolios encourage learner autonomy, reflective and critical thinking and self-assessment, and they mobilize all the competences required to successfully develop translation competence. Therefore, process-oriented testing can be an option along with traditional product-oriented forms.

11. CONCLUSION

Generally, a functional approach to translation which is based on the principle of professional translator training can benefit translation teaching in translation courses in tertiary English language programs. It broadens students' view of translation which sees translation as a communicative act.

The approach may promote a shift from teacher-centeredness, which is prevalent in translation classes in many contexts including Vietnam, to learner-centeredness in translation classrooms. Students are encouraged to present their justifications to their translations and develop confidence in doing translation tasks. Furthermore, exposing students to translation briefs and authentic projects can increase their awareness of the nature of real-life practice and prepare them for future career as translators. The paper only presents various pedagogical recommendations in translation teaching and further empirical evidence on the use of functional approaches is needed (Total words: 3051 words)

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