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Vietnamese-English translation errors made by the fourth-year English majors: A case study at Bac Lieu University

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Abstract. Having students to produce an error-free piece of translation has always been the life-long dream and the ambition of all Bac Lieu University teachers. The purpose of this study is to explore the translation errors made by the English majors in translating Vietnamese into English. To analyze the data, the researcher used both descriptive qualitative and quantitative research method and used error analysis procedure. The participants of this study consist of 4 English teachers and 46 English majors from the fourth-year in the academic year of 2024 - 2025. The main goal of this research is to find out common errors in Vietnamese-English translation made by students of Bac Lieu University, the teachers' perception as well as students' perception towards the causes of these translation errors. The results from the study indicates that the students make grammatical errors, lexical errors, and spelling errors. Based on the findings and discussion of the result, the researcher concludes that the students still face difficulties in using vocabulary and grammar.

Keywords. translation error, error analysis, grammatical errors, lexical errors, spelling errors

1. Introduction

Translation is an activity of enormous importance in the modern world and it is a subject of interest to linguistics, professional and amateur translators and language teachers. It has been widely thought that translation is a process of substituting words of one language with that of another, followed by adjusting word order and grammatical forms. Some students know the vocabulary, but they do not know how to put them into sentences. Translation is one of the causes of errors. It happens because a student translates his first language sentence or idiomatic expression into the target language word by word. Therefore, translation is one of the important skills in studying a language. Translation is the one of the ways to acquire language as a second or foreign language so that translation skill is much needed in learning English as a second or foreign language. When translating, the translator is expected to produce a translated text that aims at achieving the intended message and effect on the reader of the target language. To improve translation skill, it is necessary to identify students' common errors in translation, the causes of these errors as well as how to deal with them.

However, in reality, Vietnamese-English translation skill is not easy for Vietnamese students to master, so learners cannot often avoid mistakes in their translating practice. According to Huynh (2012), in the final text of Vietnamese-English translation, there was a

phrase: “Đơn xin thị thực” and the large percentage of the students could not understand the meaning of “thị thực”. They thought that it was a thing related to food, so their translated phrases were: “Declaration going food”, “Enter-exit food”, “Form of beg for food”, “Giving food form” while the answer is “Visa Application Form”. In this situation, foreigners will misunderstand, even be not able understand the meaning of the passage when they read. Perhaps, because of the influence of the mother tongue, the differences of syntax, phonology, semantic and cultures or their own limited language ability, Vietnamese students of English in general still have errors in translating Vietnamese texts into English. Therefore, this research that entitle “Vietnamese-English translation errors made by the fourth-year English majors at Bac Lieu University” is purposed to analyze the errors in translation made by students of English majors at Bac Lieu University. It is expected that the research will be a useful reference helping improve translation skill for not only the students majoring in English of Bac Lieu University but also all Vietnamese people who are interested in translation work and really want to become expert translators.

The primary aim of the thesis is to identify the English majors’ errors in translating Vietnamese texts into English. The study also aims at finding causes of these problems and then suggesting some possible strategies to overcome the problems. The targeted subject of this thesis are mainly students; besides, all people who are interested in translation work can consider it as a useful reference for improving their translating skills as well.

This research only observed the errors in the translation text. Base on superficial basis of error classifications from Corder (1981) which are error of omission, error of addition, error of selection, and error of ordering in translation texts of the English majors of Bac Lieu University in the academic year of 2024 - 2025. This research only used the translation texts of the English Department students of Bac Lieu University in the academic year of 2024 - 2025 as object of the research. The participants are 46 English students from one English major class and 4 English teachers. Besides, the research was conducted in short time. One translation test, and an interview for teachers were used to collect data and they were done in class and outside with limited time. Therefore, the result might not reflect completely the students’ ability in translation.

The significance of this study can be professional benefit for three groups: teachers, students and researcher. Firstly, the result of the research can show the students’ progress in learning translation, so it can be used as a reference for the teacher about what technique or strategy that should be applied in teaching English to improve the student’s ability. Secondly, the result of the research can also show to the students about the errors they made, so by reading the analysis they can know their fault and know the right pattern of translation. The researcher hopes it can give insight view of errors in translation texts of English majors at Bac Lieu University. Lastly, the result of the research provides evidence of how language is learned or acquired and the strategies or procedures that used by students. By analyze the study, the researcher can improve the knowledge about the average of students’ ability in mastering English, so the researcher can find the best way to teach translation in the future. This research is also expected to contribute knowledge about the study of grammar in translation text.

To obtain the above stated purposes, the research has to answer the following questions:

1. What common errors are found in translation texts for English majors at Bac Lieu University in the academic year of 2024 - 2025?
2. What can be recommended to avoid such errors in order to make Vietnamese-English translation more effective?

2. Literature review

2.1. Previous studies

The following related research could be categorized into four groups. The first group is the investigation into the English translation. The second group is the study on common errors in writing. The third group is the study on common errors in translation and the last one is the textbook of translation.

Firstly, the investigation into translation consisted of the thesis of investigation into English-Vietnamese translation of euphemism by Phan (2011). This thesis has been done in an effort to investigate how euphemism is translated from English into Vietnamese in translated works as well as to find out what are the main approaches taken by translators in translating euphemism from English into Vietnamese. A collection of samples taken from literary works written in English and their Vietnamese versions have been analyzed to explore ways in which euphemisms are transferred. The research has investigated the reality and practice of translating euphemism from English into Vietnamese as manifested in published translated works. It has shown the importance of culture in translating euphemism so that both teachers and students can recognize it is necessary to teach and learn not only linguistics but also non-linguistics or socio-cultural factors. Najla Abdul-Aziz Al-Fadda (2010) conducted the study on the translation of rhetorical questions in Hadith Arabic into English. The study attempted to investigate the possibility of achieving functional equivalence when translating rhetorical questions in Hadith from Arabic into English. The data analyzed consisted of seventeen rhetorical questions representing seventeen rhetorical meanings. The analysis of these rhetorical questions followed a linguistic approach which was based on Mousa's levels of rhetorical questions (1995): the syntactic, semantic, pragmatic, and aesthetic levels. Each translation of a rhetorical question was examined in terms of these levels and in comparison with the original rhetorical question. To get objective results and to validate the discussion, the readers' responses to the translations were examined. The research attempts to find out whether translators of Hadith are capable of conveying the illocutionary force of Arabic rhetorical questions when translating them into English and discussing the strategies used to do so and it also evaluates the degree of adequacy in the translation of selected rhetorical questions by four translators. The quality of translation is measured by the success or failure of the translators to convey the functions of Arabic rhetorical questions into English.

Said and Syams (2016) studied on error analysis of word order used in writing recount text made by students' at SMK Negeri 1 Pinrang. The objective of this research was to find out the kind of errors that often occurred in the use of the word order in recount text made by student at SMKN 1 Pinrang. The result of the study shows that the most mistake make by students are verb tenses, word order, noun phrase, to be... Errors in teaching learning process in Word Order are something unavoidable. Although it seems natural, students should learn more about grammar to enhance their knowledge and decreased their errors in word order. Also, the key factors that cause the error committed by respondent come from the internal of individual him/herself. So, it is important for the teachers to pay more attention about the ability and interest of students when learning English in order for the students could improve their knowledge and they could use English better. Fitriyani (2013) studies on error of word order used in recount text. The purpose of the research is to analyze the kinds of word order error in sentence and phrase made by students and the factors that cause this error. The research shows that word order holds an important role in creating sentence. If the words in a sentence are in wrong order, the sentence won't make sense. The result of the study reveals some word order errors committed by students either in constructing the element of sentence, omission the component

of sentence or distributing of word in noun phrase. In addition, this study also indicates some factors that cause the errors. Beside the errors was produced, it is also important to know the causes that made students commit with word order error in creating recount text. It becomes the important thing to know in order to both the teacher and respondents can evaluate their ability and they can look for the effective way to elevate their knowledge.

Tandikombong, Atmowardoyo & Weda (2016) studied on grammatical errors in the English translation. This research is aimed at describing the grammatical errors made by the students in translating Indonesian into English. Four objectives are to find out the types of errors that the students make in translating sentences from Indonesian into English; to find out the most frequent errors made by the students of UKI Toraja; to find out the source of error that the students make in translating Indonesian text into English text and; to find out the differences in number of grammatical errors made the students of different levels of UKI Toraja. Based on the result of analysis, the types of error made by the students in translating are varied such as verb, noun, conjunction, pronoun, adjective, adverb, article, and preposition. The results of this research will provide EFL learners with some helpful guidance in order to minimize the number of errors in second or foreign language production. Le Phuong Lan (2006) studied on unnaturalness in English - Vietnamese translation: causes and cures. The purpose of this graduation thesis has primarily been to define and describe mistakes - the translation *unnaturalness* - frequently seen in English - Vietnamese translation which, does not completely ruin the whole work though, may confuse or puzzle readers of the target language. The unnaturalness in English - Vietnamese translations can be considered a classification of common mistakes that may make the translations seem unnatural to Vietnamese (target language) readers. The mistakes can be in the realm of linguistics or culture. Specific examples are taken from personal communication and from previously published books. By the classification and examples cited, the writer attempted to help readers of this thesis, especially would be translators and inexperienced ones to be fully aware of what mistakes they may easily make before seeking ways to avoid them.

The textbooks relating translation are used as theory as well as methodology in the process of making this research such as a textbook of translation by Peter Newmark (1998), approaches to translation by Peter Newmark (1998), a linguistic theory of translation by Catford (1965), error analysis and interlanguage by Corder (1981) and other books relating to the research.

The present study would have two aspects that were different from these above researches. First, the study investigated common error in Vietnamese-English translation by the English majors and how to avoid the errors in order to make Vietnamese-English translating be smoother and more fluent. Second, the participants of the study were the fourth-year English majors and the translation-teaching teachers at Bac Lieu University

2.2. Theoretical background

2.2.1 Definition of translation

Newmark (1988) describes that translation is a craft consisting in the attempt to replace message and/or statement in one language by the same message and/or statement in another language. In addition, Nida & Taber (1982) explain that translating consists in reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source-language message, first in terms of meaning and secondly in terms of style. According to the theorists above, it can be concluded that translation is a process of transferring a text from one language (source) into another (target) with an aim of keeping the meaning and style of the two texts equivalent. Therefore, the translator is required to be good in not only linguistic performance but also in

the subject knowledge. However, keeping the meaning and style of the source text equivalent to the target one is a difficult task because the translator needs to master both languages. And translation itself poses many problems because of inherent linguistic and nonlinguistic factors.

Vietnamese students have difficulties translating Vietnamese to English and vice versa because they do not achieve a good level of language knowledge and cannot apprehend the linguistic differences between English and Vietnamese. Bui and Dang (1997) explain about language that in syntax, there are rules, which tell us how to put the words together, their sequence. I can say in English: I have a red book, but the Vietnamese would say: I have a book red. Every language has its own order of words in the sentence and we must respect that. Once we know a language, we can use the rules; we can make new sentences and phrases. In addition, regional variations of a language are called dialects. New Zealand and Australian and US English can be considered dialects of English. It is very difficult, however, to define a dialect as such, i.e. to decide when two tongues are to be classified as separate languages instead of one being a dialect of the other. There is a rule of thumb, which states that two dialects become different languages when they are mutually unintelligible, when people of one language group can no longer understand members of the other group. Besides, the translators have to master words, idiolect, slang, idioms.

In conclusion, translation is the replacement of a source language text by a target language equivalent text in which the meaning of the text and author's intention is preserved.

2.2.2 Definition of error

In language learning, errors are defined by many experts. According to Corder (1973), errors are breaking the rule, due to lack of competence such as knowledge of the language, which may or may not be conscious. As they are due to lack of competence they tend to be not correctable. Dulay and Burt (1982) states that errors as "the flawed side of learner speech or writing", which "deviates from some selected norm of mature language performance". They further discussed that errors may be distinguished based on the causes: errors caused by factors such as fatigue and inattention are "performance errors", and those caused by lack of knowledge of the rules of the language are called "competence errors. James (1998) defines error is failure of competence which is systematic violation from rules to which the learners have been exposed; error also tells us something about the learner's current knowledge of the language that he has learned. Although there have been various definition of error, this research only studies the error in terms of using language that is not correct with the grammar rule and not suitable in the specific context in comparison with using language of the native speaker.

2.2.3 Translation errors

These errors happen when the students show the inability to render the original meaning of the source text into the target text. In other words, a sentence is considered to have "translation error" when it shows traces of distortions of the source text, although the sentence may be grammatically correct.

Newbert & Shreve (1995) describe a translation error in the following statement:

What rightly appears to be linguistically equivalent may very frequently qualify as "translationally" nonequivalent. And this is so because the complex demands on adequacy in translation involve subject factors and transfer conventions that typically run counter to considerations about "surface" linguistic equivalence.

This statement partially describes the complication and difficulty in defining and identifying translation errors. Translation errors are different from errors that would occur in spontaneous native language production. In translation, working with a source text induces errors under the influence of source language morphology, whereas in spontaneous second

language production, native morphological system of language learner tends to interfere with knowledge of the second language system. In the case of second language learners, identifying translation errors is tricky as translation errors may be mixed up with linguistic errors.

2.2.4 Definition of error analysis

Error analysis is a type of linguistic analysis that focuses on the errors learners make. Said (2014) stated that error analysis involves a set of procedures for identifying, describing and explaining the error in learner language. Error Analysis, a branch of Applied Linguistics emerged in the sixties to reveal that learner errors were not only because of the learner's native language but also they reflected some universal strategies.

Error analysis is as a source of information for the teacher. By the information it can help the teacher, classify and interpret or describe the errors made by the students in speaking or in writing and to correct students' error and also to improve the effectiveness of their teaching.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research participants

The research participants consist of 4 English teachers who were in charge of teaching translation and 46 students studying translation subject.

3.2. Population and sample

According to Sukandarrumidi (2004) cited in Utomo (2016), population is all object of studies that may consist of real object, abstract object, events or phenomena. It is defined two kinds of population based on the units formed data. They are homogenous and heterogeneous populations.

Population in this research was all translation texts of the English majors of Bac Lieu University in the academic year of 2024 - 2025, or 46 texts in total number.

Nasution (2006) in Utomo (2016) defines sample is number of data obtained from population that must be representative. It means that sample which is taken from population can represent population in order to take a conclusion. The researcher only took 20 translation texts of the population of translation texts as a representative sample to be analyzed by purposive sampling method.

3.3. Instruments and procedures

In this research, the researcher used both quantitative and qualitative methods. According to Wyse (2011), quantitative research is used to quantify the problem by way of generating numerical data or data that can be transformed into useable statistics. It is used to quantify attitudes, opinions, behaviors, and other defined variables – and generalize results from a larger sample population. She also stated that qualitative research is primarily exploratory research which is used to gain an understanding of underlying reasons, opinions, and motivations. It provides insights into the problem or helps to develop ideas or hypotheses for potential quantitative research. That is the reason why the researcher decided to use mixed methods to conduct this study.

The qualitative data was the interview questions (Appendix A) which were designed to get more information about the teacher's remarks on the students' common errors in Vietnamese-English translating. The researcher interviewed the teachers who are responsible for teaching translation subject to the students in this academic year as well as who have taught translation and have many experiences in teaching translation subject.

The quantitative data is the researcher asked the students translate the Vietnamese-English texts (Appendix B) which were collected from newspapers. Then the researcher

distributed the test papers to all students. When the students finished their translation, the papers were collected and then the researcher underlined the common errors and then calculated them.

3.4. *Technique of data analysis*

In analyzing the data, the researcher used error analysis method which is an analysis method from Corder (1974). He suggests the steps to organize the error analysis consisting of collection of samples, identification of errors, classification of errors, explanation of errors.

4. Findings and discussion

4.1. *Results collected from the assignment and test papers*

To identify students' errors in Vietnamese-English translation, an assignment and one translation test collected from 40 English majors were used. According to the results of the study in chart 4.7 below, students make three types of translation errors consisting of grammatical errors, lexical errors and spelling errors.

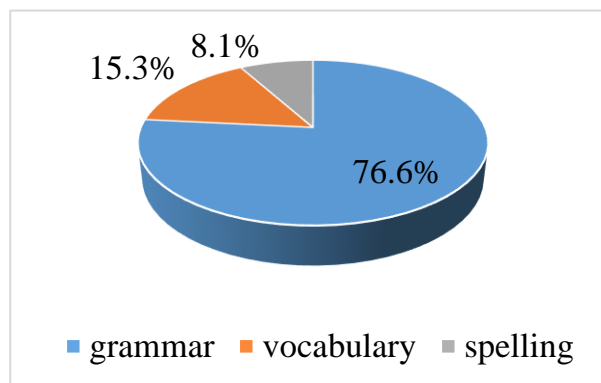


Chart 4.1. Types of translation errors

The total of errors in the assignment and Vietnamese-English translation papers were 1.901 errors. Of all translation error types, grammatical errors appeared frequently most (1.456/1.901) and occupied the highest proportion (76.6%). The second error type that the students usually made was the lexical error (291/1.901, 15.3%). Following this error type was the spelling error (154/1.901, 8.1 %). In next section, each type of errors will be described in detail.

4.1.1 Types of grammatical errors

With the use of percentage calculus in Excel program, the percentage distribution of grammatical errors was indicated. The percentage calculus of each grammatical error type was based on its frequency and percentage of all grammatical error types in the translation test which were counted by the researcher. From the results of the study, students made about 1.456 grammatical errors. These errors occupied the highest proportion (76.6%) of all translation errors. The grammatical error types found in the study were verb errors, errors of tenses, preposition errors, article errors, pronoun errors, noun errors, subject and verb agreement, adjective errors, and adverb errors. These grammatical errors will be illustrated in chart 4.1.

Chart 4.1 described the distribution and percentage of grammatical errors made by students in Vietnamese-English translation. Of all grammatical errors made by students, verb errors appeared frequently most (346/1.456) and occupied the highest proportion (23.8%). The second popular error type that students usually made was the error of tenses (299/1.456, 20.5%). Following this error type were preposition errors (201/1.456, 13.8%), article errors (158/1.456, 10.9%), pronoun errors (149/1.456, 10.2%), noun errors (142/1.456, 9.8%), and subject and

verb agreement (73/1.456, 5%). In the total of the grammatical errors, the error type that occupied the lowest proportion was the adverb error (37/1.456, 2.5%) preceded by the adjective error (51/1.456, 3.5%). In the following sections, each type of grammatical errors will be mentioned in detail.

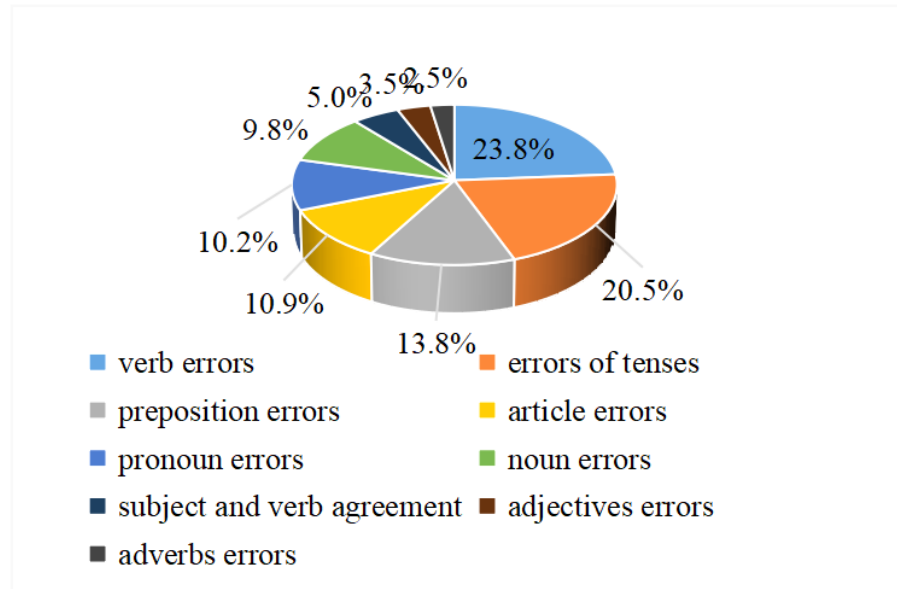


Chart 4.2. Types of grammatical errors

Verb errors: According to the results of the translation test, students frequently made errors in verbs. Of all grammatical errors, verb errors occupied the highest proportion (346/1.456, 23.8%). The verbs errors types found in the study were omission of verb, addition of verb, misuse the verb form, and inappropriate choice of verb voice.

Among the verb errors, misuse the verb forms occupied the highest proportion (112/346, 32.5%). Misuse of the verb forms referred to the use of a verb that was not correct with the word structure. The students frequently misused the verb forms such as “to infinitive”, “bare infinitive”, and “gerund”. Some of students used “gerund” or “bare infinitive” instead of “to infinitive” after some verbs such as “obey”, “refuse” illustrated as follows:

“Ông Bobby Cummings, cảnh sát trưởng thành phố Wilmington, cho hay McDole đã không làm theo yêu cầu của cảnh sát, đồng thời từ chối bỏ vũ khí xuống đất. McDole bị bắn hạ khi anh này có ý định dùng tới khẩu súng của mình.”

The student’s translation: “Mr. Bobby Cummings, a police chief of Wilmington city, said that McDole did not obey commands showing his hands and refused put his weapon down. McDole was shot as he had intention to use his gun.”

While the key is: “Mr. Bobby Cummings, a police chief of Wilmington city, said that McDole did not obey commands to show his hands and refused to put his weapon down. McDole was shot as he had intention to use his gun.”

In contrast, some of them used “to infinitive” and “gerund” instead of “bare infinitive” after a preposition or a phrasal verb. Some of the errors are illustrated as follows:

“Một tiếng súng vang lên, viên cảnh sát tiếp tục yêu cầu người đàn ông “giơ tay lên” và “bỏ súng xuống...”

The student’s translation: “A shot is fired, the police officer goes on to command “Hand up” and “Drop the gun...”

The answer should have been: “A shot is fired, the police officer goes on **commanding** “Hand up” and “Drop the gun...”

It might be inferred that some students forgot these grammar rules when they were translating. In this sense, the cause of misuse of verb form could be students’ insufficient linguistic competence because they were not able to recognize and use appropriate verb forms.

The second common verb error type was inappropriate choice of verb voice occupying (101/346, 29%). This error type happened when the grammar item was used correctly but the specific voice was chosen inappropriately. According to the results of the study, students usually misused between active voice and passive voice. The reason for this error type might be the difference between English and Vietnamese. In fact, the passive voice is quite common in English while the active voice is popular in Vietnamese. As a result, Vietnamese students usually make errors in using verb voice. Another reason of inappropriate choice of verb voice might be the interference of mother tongue which affected students’ translating habits.

Example of errors in the use of active voice instead of passive voice:

“Một tiếng súng vang lên, viên cảnh sát tiếp tục yêu cầu người đàn ông “giơ tay lên” và “bỏ súng xuống...”

The student’s translation: “A shot **fires**, the officer continues his commands “Hands up” and “Drop the gun...”

The answer should have been: “A shot **is fired**, the officer continues his commands “Hands up” and “Drop the gun...”

In this example, it can be said the student confuses between active voice and passive voice. This might be due to the lack of sufficient training and drills on this rule which lead to overgeneralization of the rule.

Addition of verb was also the frequent type of verb errors made by students in Vietnamese-English translation. This error type made up for (81/346, 23.5%). Addition of verb referred to the presence of the verb which must not appear in academic phrases and sentences. In other words, the unnecessary elements are usually added in a sentence, especially in transition text because of the differences of grammatical structure between the source language and target language. Meanwhile, the researcher only finds a few of these grammatical errors in the translation text assignment as the following example:

“McDole bị bắn hạ khi anh này có ý định dùng tới khẩu súng của mình.”

The student’ translation: “McDole was shot as he had intention to **uses** his gun.”

The answer is: “McDole was shot as he had intention to **use** his gun.”

As found in the study, omission of verb was also popular in Vietnamese-English translation. Among verb errors, omission of verb occupied the lowest proportion (52/346, 15%). The omission of verbs was characterized by the absence of a verb that must appear in a correct sentence.

Example of omission of verb: “Tranh cãi quanh vụ cảnh sát Mỹ bắn người da đen ngồi xe lăn.”

The student’s translation: “Controversy over U.S. police shooting a black **sit** in wheelchair.”

The answer should be: “Controversy over U.S. police shooting a black sitting in wheelchair.”

Verb errors found in the study were misuse of verb forms, inappropriate choice of verb voice, addition of verb, and omission of verb. These verb errors might result from students’ forgetting grammar rules, the interference of Vietnamese, and the difference between English and Vietnamese.

Errors of tenses: Tenses have been introduced to Vietnamese learners at an early stage of language program in English. However, they have still seemed to repeat difficulties in using and distinguishing the tenses. They made this error type because they might not understand the crucial function of a verb in a sentence and how carefully a verb tense should be chosen to convey the precise meaning. They might concentrate more on the content of the source text that they wanted to translate than on the appropriate language form that they should use to express the meaning. The results of the study indicated that the error of tenses was the second popular error type of grammatical errors. In the study, students made nearly 300 errors of tenses which accounted for 20.5%. In the assignment and translation test papers, two tenses that were misused by the students were simple past tense and present perfect tense. Present perfect tense could be considered as the first really difficult tense that students might encounter. They seemed misunderstand that event that happened in the past had always to be told in past tense. Thus, they expressed past action by just using simple past tense instead of present perfect tense as required. The second common error type was the confusion between simple past tense and past continuous tense. In general, many students still confused between the simple and progressive aspects especially when there were no clues to help them to distinguish between the two aspects. Besides, misuse between simple present tense and simple past tense came in the third place as errors which were frequently made by students. Last but not least, some students still had problems in recognizing the difference between the simple present tense and the future tense. Common errors are specifically shown in the following examples.

Example 1: “Dịch vụ này **đã** mang lại cho Vietcombank 439.350 đô la Mỹ.”

The student’s translation: “This service **brought** Vietcombank US\$ 439.350 fees of service.”

While the key is: “This service **has brought** Vietcombank US\$ 439.350 fees of service.”

Example 2: “Một đoạn video quay cảnh các nhân viên cảnh sát bắn một người đàn ông da đen ngồi trên xe lăn...”

The student’s translation: “A video footage showing police officers shot a black man who **sat** in wheelchair...”

While the key is: “A video footage showing police officers shot a black man who **was sitting** in wheelchair...”

Example 3: “Đoạn video cho thấy nó không giơ vũ khí lên. Tay nó vẫn để im trên đùi khi họ xả súng”, bà nói.

The student’s translation: “The video shows he **does not raise** his gun and he **has** his hands in his lap as they shoot him”, she **says**.

The answer should be: “The video shows he **did not raise** his gun and he **had** his hands in his lap as they shoot him”, she **said**.

Example 4: “Việc dùng thẻ thanh toán sẽ dần dần thay thế tỉ lệ nói trên.”

The student’ translation: “The use of payment cards gradually **replaces** the above ratio.”

The answer is: “The use of payment cards **will gradually replace** the above ratio.”

To conclude, in Vietnamese-English translation, the students usually misused between simple past tense and present perfect tense, between simple past tense and past continuous tense, between simple present tense and simple past tense, between simple present tense and the future tense. As can be seen in the study, errors of tenses might result from the difference between English and Vietnamese. Actually, English goes by very strict structures while Vietnamese language is much more flexible. In Vietnamese language, the concept of tense does not exist.

There is no change in verb form to indicate the period time. People usually use “đã”, “đang”, or “sẽ” to indicate the action happens at present, in the past, or in the future. For this reason, the difference between English and Vietnamese might be the cause of errors of tenses. In this sense, another reason leading to errors of tenses could be the interference of the mother tongue, Vietnamese.

Preposition errors: According to the results of the study, students also made preposition errors. Among grammatical errors, this error type making up for 13.8% was the third common error type. Preposition errors were divided into three categories such as inappropriate choice of preposition, addition of preposition, and omission of preposition.

Inappropriate choice of preposition was one of the most common preposition errors. This error type occurred when the students knew that it was forced to have a preposition after a verb or a noun. However, they chose the preposition inappropriately. As can be seen in the study, most of students translated word for word since they always translated “về” as “about”, “với” as “with”, “trong” as “in”, and “trước” as “before”. However, these prepositions were not suitable for the context of the sentences.

Example: “Một đoạn video quay cảnh các nhân viên cảnh sát bắn một người đàn ông da đen ngồi trên xe lăn...”

The student’s translation: “A video footage showing police officers shot a black man who was sitting on wheelchair...”

The key is: “A video footage showing police officers shot a black man who was sitting in wheelchair...”

Addition of preposition was also considered as common preposition error type. Addition of preposition was related to the appearance of a preposition that was not required by the previous verb or noun. In the study, some students made this error type because of the interference of Vietnamese.

Students also omitted prepositions when they were translating. Omission of preposition was the absence of a preposition that must appear after the noun and the verb.

Example: “Ít giây sau, nhiều tiếng súng nữa lại phát ra và lần này nạn nhân gục sang một bên, ngã khỏi xe lăn.”

The student’s translation: “A few seconds later, shots are fired out and the man falls out his wheelchair.”

The answer is: “A few seconds later, shots are fired and the man falls out of his wheelchair.”

Preposition errors found in the study were inappropriate choice of preposition, addition of preposition, and omission of preposition. According to the results of the study, it was inferred that the students tended to choose the English prepositions based on Vietnamese meanings without paying attention to their variation. It was also said that the errors resulted from the influence of Vietnamese. They might misunderstand that different word classes of a word was followed by the same preposition or all of them would have no preposition. All these things might indicate that the students lack linguistic competence.

Article errors: As found in the assignment and the translation test, article errors were also made by the students. They made about 158 article errors accounting for 10.9%. These article errors were divided into two groups including omission of article and inappropriate choice of article.

Omission of article referred to the absence of necessity of an article that must appear in the sentences. The cause of this error type might be the interference of Vietnamese since there is no article before the noun in Vietnamese language. Similarly, the difference between

English and Vietnamese was also the cause of this error type. In addition, some students only added the article before the noun. However, they forgot to add the article before an adjective when the adjective was used as a noun. It could be inferred that students' insufficient linguistic competence might lead to omission of article in translation.

Example: “Muốn việc thanh toán thẻ trở thành pháp lệnh thì cần phải có cơ chế chung của Nhà nước.”

The student's translation: “To turn payment by card into decree, there must be the common mechanism of the State.”

The key is: “To turn **the** payment by card into decree, there must be the common mechanism of the State.”

Inappropriate choice of article appeared when the students saw the necessity of using an article, but they chose an inappropriate one. As found in the study, some students chose inappropriately between the article “a” and “an”. Some students used the article “a” before the noun beginning with a vowel, which was incorrect in English. In contrast, some of them used the article “an” before the nouns beginning with a consonant. This error type might result from students' insufficient linguistic competence. Additionally, students' carelessness could be also the cause of inappropriate choice of article.

Example: “Hiệp hội Quốc gia vì Sự Tiến bộ của Người Da màu (NAACP), đề nghị nhà chức trách chỉ định “những công tố viên đặc biệt” mở cuộc điều tra độc lập nhằm làm rõ điều gì đã xảy ra.”

The student's paper: “NAACP called for **a** independent investigation by “a special prosecutor” to discover what actually happened.”

The key is: “**The** NAACP called for **an** independent investigation by “a special prosecutor” to discover what actually happened.”

Students frequently made article errors when they were translating. These article errors included omission of article and inappropriate choice of article. These article errors could result from the difference between Vietnamese and English. In fact, in Vietnamese language, there is no article before the nouns while the article is important in English language. Additionally, the interference of Vietnamese and students' insufficient linguistic competence might also the causes of these errors.

Pronoun errors: Pronoun errors were also frequently made by students in Vietnamese-English translation. In the study, students made about 149 pronoun errors. These pronoun errors made up for 10.2% of all grammatical errors. These errors included omission of relative pronoun and inappropriate choice of relative pronoun.

Omission of relative pronoun was considered as one of the most frequent pronoun errors. This error type might result from the difference between Vietnamese and English. In fact, there is no strict rule for relative pronoun in Vietnamese. Vietnamese people usually use “mà” to begin the relative clause after a noun of time, place, person or thing. In contrast, there are specific rules for using different relative pronouns of time, place, person or thing in English.

Inappropriate choice of relative pronoun was also found in students' test papers and assignments. This error appeared when the students knew that it was necessary to use a relative pronoun, but they chose an inappropriate one. According to the results of the study, inappropriate choice of relative pronoun might result from the difference between English and Vietnamese, and students' carelessness.

Example: “Thanh toán thẻ tín dụng quốc tế là một dịch vụ mang lại hiệu quả kinh tế cao và hầu như không có rủi ro.”

The students' papers: "Payment by international credit cards is a service **brings** high economic efficiency and has almost no risks."

"Payment by international credit cards is a service **whom brings** high economic efficiency and has almost no risks."

The keys should be: "Payment by international credit cards is a service **bringing** high economic efficiency and has almost no risks."

"Payment by international credit cards is a service **which brings** high economic efficiency and has almost no risks."

In short, omission of relative pronoun and inappropriate choice of relative pronoun were found as pronoun errors in translation. Pronoun errors might be caused by the difference between English and Vietnamese. Another cause of pronoun errors could be students' carelessness.

Noun errors: According to the results of the study, noun errors were also found in the students' assignments and translation test papers. The student made about 142 noun errors which accounted for 9.8% of all grammatical errors. These noun errors were omission of plural noun and addition of plural noun.

Students usually omitted plural forms of noun when they were translating. Omission of plural forms of noun might be caused by the difference between English and Vietnamese. Unlike English, in Vietnamese, there is no form of plural nouns such as ending -s or -es. Therefore, when Vietnamese people want to indicate plural nouns, they can use markers like "những", and "các", etc. Additionally, the interference of Vietnamese could cause omission of plural noun form since there was no change of noun to indicate the plural noun.

Addition of plural noun was also found in the study. The error occurred when students use plural form of noun when it was not necessary. In the study, some students added "s" or "es" ending to the uncountable noun, which inferred that they could not distinguish between the countable and uncountable noun. As a result, students' insufficient linguistic competence might be the cause of this error type. The plural noun error in this case might also be the result of students' misunderstanding or carelessness.

Example: "...vài cảnh sát sau đó tiếp cận McDole và không ngừng lặp lại yêu cầu trên..."

The student's paper: "...A number of **police officer** approach and repeat the same commands."

The key is: "...A number of **police officers** approach and repeat the same commands."

Example: "Các vụ bạo lực liên quan đến cảnh sát..."

The student's paper: "Police related **violences**..."

The key is: "Police related **violence**..."

There were two common types of noun errors. They were omission of plural noun form and addition of plural noun form. The causes of these noun errors might be the difference between English and Vietnamese, the interference of Vietnamese, students' insufficient linguistic competence, students' misunderstanding, and students' carelessness.

Subject and verb agreement: Subject-verb agreement is probably one of the most difficult parts of the English language to master for new learners. The key to subject-verb agreement is matching the number of both singular subjects taking singular verb forms and plural subjects taking plural verb forms. Subject-verb agreement can be difficult due to their irregularity of English plural subjects because some of them are not marked with "s" at the end.

Errors of subject and verb agreement were characterized by the mismatch between the subject and the verb. Among grammatical errors found in the study, errors of subject and verb

agreement made up for 5%. Some students used plural verb form for a singular subject. In contrast, in some students' assignments and test papers, the singular verb form was used for a plural subject.

Example: “Mặt khác, từ 1/7/1993 đến nay, Vietcombank bắt đầu phát hành thẻ thanh toán của mình.”

The student's translation: “On the other hand, since 1 July 1993 Vietcombank **have begun** issuing its own payment cards.”

The key should be: “On the other hand, since 1 July 1993 Vietcombank **has begun** issuing its own payment cards.”

Example: “Thống đốc bang Delaware Jack Markell miêu tả đây là một vụ việc “vô cùng đáng lo ngại.”

The student's paper: “The governor of Delaware State, Jack Markell, **describe** this incident as “deeply troubling.”

The key is: “The governor of Delaware State, Jack Markell, **describes** this incident as “deeply troubling.”

The cause leading to errors in subject and verb agreement might be the difference between English and Vietnamese. Actually, English language goes by very strict structures while Vietnamese is much more flexible. In English, the singular subjects must take singular verb forms while the plural subjects must take plural verb forms. In contrast, in Vietnamese, the concept of subject and verb agreement does not exist. Therefore, verb forms do not change to agree with the subjects. In this sense, the interference of Vietnamese might also be the cause of errors of subject and verb agreement.

Adjective errors: In the study, there were about 51 adjective errors accounting for 3.5%. Adjective errors were omission of possessive adjective and misplacement of adjective.

Omission of possessive adjective referred to the absence of an adjective which must appear in the phrase. In the study, some students omitted the possessive adjective in the phrase. This error type might be caused by students' translation strategies because they translated word for word from Vietnamese into English. This error type could also result from the nature of the source text because the possessive adjective was not revealed in the original text.

Example: “...Tay nó vẫn để im trên đùi khi họ xả súng.”

The student's translation: “...He had **hands** on **thigh** as they shot him.”

The key should be: “...He had **his hands** on **his thigh** as they shot him.”

Misplacement of adjective was considered as one of the most popular adjective errors.

This error referred to the placement of adjective in noun phrases that were not in grammatical order. Misplacement of adjective might be due to the influence of Vietnamese on translating or difference between Vietnamese and English. Actually, adjective comes after the noun in Vietnamese. In contrast, adjective always comes before the noun in English. It was also said that the students mainly focused on the structures of the source language, Vietnamese, so they failed to construct the structures of the target language, English. Lack of practice might also be the reason for misplacement of adjective in noun phrase.

Example: “Ngày nay, thẻ tín dụng không còn là một phương thức thanh toán mới lạ đối với các doanh nghiệp Việt Nam, kể cả doanh nghiệp tư nhân.”

The student's translation: “Nowadays, credit cards are no longer new modes of payment to Vietnamese businesses, including even **businesses private**.”

The answer is: “Nowadays, credit cards are no longer new modes of payment to Vietnamese businesses, including even **private businesses**.”

Students made adjective errors including omission of possessive adjective and misplacement of adjective when they were translating. The causes of adjective errors could be the difference between English and Vietnamese, the interference of Vietnamese, lack of practice, and students' carelessness.

Adverb errors: According to the results of the study, adverb errors occupied the lowest proportion (2.5%) of all grammatical errors. These adverb errors could be divided into two categories such as inappropriate choice of adverb and misplacement of adverb.

Inappropriate choice of adverb happened when the students chose the form of adverb inappropriately. The error type might result from the students' habit. They always use adverb after a verb. Some students might make this error type because they lacked of knowledge in adverb.

Example: “Đa dạng hóa hoạt động kinh doanh là một trong những chiến lược của Ngân hàng Ngoại thương Việt Nam.”

The student' translation: “To make **diversely** business activities is one of the strategic objectives of Vietnam Foreign Commerce Bank (Vietcombank).”

The key should be: “To make **diverse** business activities is one of the strategic objectives of Vietnam Foreign Commerce Bank (Vietcombank).”

Misplacement of adverb referred to the placement of an adverb in a sentence that was not in grammatical order. In the study, some students misplaced the position of adverb in the sentence since they usually put the adverb before the verb. It might be considered that this error was attributed to students' misunderstanding or lack of knowledge in the position of adverbs. In other words, it was misunderstood that the adverb always goes before the verb.

Example: “Vì vậy các ngân hàng thương mại, các chi nhánh ngân hàng nước ngoài tại Vietnam đang ráo riết cạnh tranh với Vietcombank.”

The student' paper: “For that reason, commercial banks, foreign bank branches in Vietnam are **harshly** competing with Vietcombank.”

The answer is: “For that reason, commercial banks, foreign bank branches in Vietnam are competing **harshly** with Vietcombank.”

There were two types of adverb errors. They were inappropriate choice of adverb and misplacement of adverb. The causes of these adverb errors might be students' habit, students' insufficient linguistic competence about adverbs and positions of adverbs, and misunderstanding.

4.1.2 Types of lexical errors

With the use of percentage calculus in Excel program, the percentage distribution of lexical errors was indicated. The percentage calculus of each lexical error type was based on its frequency and percentage of all lexical error types in the assignment and the translation test which were counted by the researcher. From the results of this study, students made lexical errors in Vietnamese-English translation. These lexical errors were errors in word choice, errors in word collocation, and misuse of synonyms. These errors will be described in the following chart.

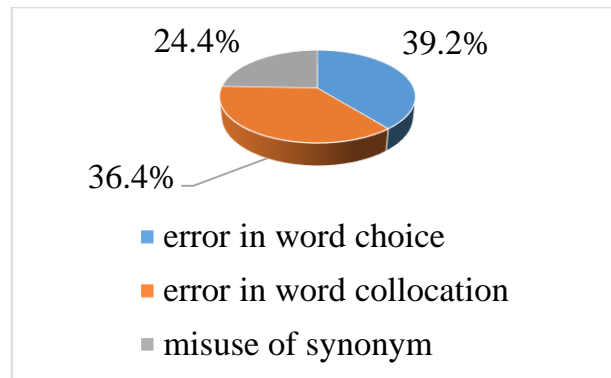


Chart 4.3. Distribution of lexical error types

Chart 4.3 described the distribution and percentage of lexical errors which were made by the students' assignment and translation test. Of all lexical errors, the errors in word choice appeared frequently most (114/291) and occupied the highest proportion (39.2%). The second error type that the students usually made was word collocation (106/291, 36.4%). Following this error type was misuse of synonyms (71/291, 24.4%) that occupied the lowest proportion. In the following sections, each type of lexical errors will be mentioned in detail.

Errors in word choice: According to the results of the study, the errors in word choice appeared frequently most (114/291) and occupied the highest proportion (39.2%). Errors in word choice occurred when students did not use the correct words. In some cases, some students used inappropriate words when they did not know the correct ones in the target language. This error type might result from students' lack of language competence. In the assignment and the test, the students also made errors when they did not use correct words. The following example illustrates this error type.

Some students translated the Vietnamese sentence "... quyết tâm của Vietcombank trong hiện đại hóa công nghiệp ngân hàng để phát triển và phát triển và hòa nhập với thị trường quốc tế." as following:

"... determination of Vietcombank in modernizing **banking industry** to develop and integrate into the word market."

In the above examples, the students did not know the noun "công nghiệp ngân hàng", so they translated it as "banking industry". In this case, the noun should be "banking technology". The Vietnamese sentence should be translated as "... determination of Vietcombank in modernizing **banking technology** to develop and integrate into the word market."

Errors in word collocation: Collocation refers to how words go together. The results of the study indicated that students also frequently made errors in word collocation. They made about 106 errors in word collocation. Among lexical errors, the error type accounted for 36.4%. In the study, some students translated word for word without paying attention to word collocation. It could be inferred from the results of the study that students made errors in word collocation because they lacked of knowledge about word collocation. The following example extracted from the students' assignment illustrates this error type.

"Từ năm 1991 đến nay, Vietcombank đã làm tổng đại lý thanh toán cho các ngân hàng nước ngoài để đưa bốn loại thẻ tín dụng quốc tế thông dụng nhất vào sử dụng ở Việt Nam..."

The student' translation: "Since 1991 Vietcombank has acted as sole agents of payment for foreign banks to **give** the four most common international credit cards into use in Vietnam..."

The sentence should be translated as: “Since 1991 Vietcombank has acted as sole agents of payment for foreign banks to put the four most common international credit cards into use in Vietnam...”

In above examples, some students translated word for word. They translated “đưa” as “give”. However, they did not pay attention to the word collocation.

In general, it might be the mother tongue interference that leads to the mechanic collocation which is unacceptable in target language. In fact, each language has its own principles of word collocation. Neither English nor Vietnamese is an exception. The causes of errors in word collocation might be students’ translation strategies and students’ insufficient linguistic competence.

Misuse of synonyms: It can be seen that a word can have many meanings; and vice versa, one meaning can be expressed by many other words. The misuse of synonyms is unavoidable. In the study, students also misused synonyms when they were translating. There were about 71 errors of synonyms found in the students’ assignment and test papers. This error type made up for 24.4% of all lexical errors. Among lexical errors, this error type was considered as the lowest popular one. This error type occurred when the students depended largely on the meaning in dictionary to choose the word without paying attention to the context of the sentence. The following example illustrates the misuse of synonyms.

“... theo ông Nguyễn Duy Lô, việc phát hành thẻ thanh toán mới chỉ là “quá trình tự làm” của Vietcombank...”

The students did not know the phrase “quá trình tự làm”, so they translated it as “the process of self-made”. However, the sentence should be corrected as “... according to Mr. Nguyen Duy Lo, the issuance of payment cards is merely “the process of self-development” of Vietcombank...”

It can be seen that students frequently made lexical errors including word collocation and misuse of synonyms when they are translating.

4.1.3 Spelling errors

The results of the assignment and the translation test showed that the student participants also made spelling errors when they were translating. The following examples extracted from the students’ paper illustrate spelling errors.

“... including even private businesses.”

“... by intentional credit cards...”

“... Vietcombank will issue more cards to foreigners for their convenience.”

Spelling errors occurred when students did not have much time to reread and check their translation products before submitting. Students’ carelessness could also be one common cause of spelling errors. Besides, the misuse of two similar words in written form may also lead to spelling errors. Another major source of spelling errors might be word distortion. This happened when students failed to memorize the spelling words. This kind of errors showed in different ways their inexperience with letters. Some students mainly relied on their ability to remember the pronunciations in words. Then, they wrote the spelling of words by an uncertain knowledge of the complete range of sound-letter correspondences.

4.2. Results from the English teachers’ interview

In order to make the research more reliable, the researcher interviewed the teachers who are responsible for teaching translation subject to the students in the academic year of 2024-2025 as well as who have many experiences in teaching translation subject. Here are the questions used in the research.

1. What kinds of errors that your students frequently make in Vietnamese-English translation?

2. What are the causes of these errors?

3. What is your advice to help students avoid errors in translation?

4.2.1. Students' common errors in Vietnamese-English translation

Based on the teachers' perception, the interview aimed to find out the common errors in students' Vietnamese-English translation. As found in the research, grammatical and lexical errors in Vietnamese-English translation were the most popular errors made by students at Bac Lieu University. All teachers also said that students frequently made grammatical and lexical errors in Vietnamese-English translation. And they complained about students' spelling errors.

4.2.2. The causes of students' errors in Vietnamese-English translation

Firstly, the teachers said that their students lacked of general knowledge about usages of grammar and limitation of vocabulary. The tenses they used were unsuitable with the context and even the structures or forms of verb tenses they used incorrectly. They also didn't know the way to use subject-verb agreement, singular-plural forms of nouns, articles, prepositions correctly. During translation, they always used dictionaries and just transferred word by word without reading the whole text to understand the true meaning of the text. In addition, lack of cultural background knowledge was also the cause of making errors in translation. The teacher commented that their mother tongue-Vietnamese- and aspects in the society are limited. They even did not master Vietnamese culture well. Moreover, lack of knowledge about English culture in language also affect their translation.

Secondly, the differences between Vietnamese and English culture were also the reasons leading to students' translation errors. The teachers said that translation was not only a linguistic transformation of texts but also a rendering process of culture concepts from one language to another. For example, it is commonly known that "ao dai" is a traditional costume of the Vietnamese women and we never find an equivalent word in English to translate it. It is funny when translating mechanically "ao dai" into "a dress". It had better write down "ao dai" to express the culture feature and not to make foreign people misunderstand "ao dai" as "a dress".

Lastly, according to the teachers' opinion, self-study was very important while students' attitude towards self-study translation was not positive as the teachers expected. Many students have not taken the chance of self-study seriously. Therefore, students' translation skill was not improved.

4.2.3. How to avoid errors in translation

In order to avoid translation errors as well as to improve translation skill, the teachers advised that the students should manage time to read books, newspapers, articles in English, learn more about English and American culture in using language, and especially improve their mother tongue in order that they are able to know obviously the differences between the two languages in using language. Then, the students should self-practice grammar, learn vocabulary through translating every day that help them learn new words and find differences between English-Vietnamese structures of sentences. Therefore, it would make their translation appear smoother and more fluent.

The above findings reply to the research questions of the study

1. What common errors are found in translation texts for English majors at Bac Lieu University?

According to the results of the current study, students' common errors in translation text were divided into three groups, grammatical errors, lexical errors and spelling errors.

First, grammatical errors consisted of nine items such as verb errors, error of tenses, preposition, article, pronoun, noun, subject and verb agreement, adverb and adjective. The most prominent grammatical errors were verb errors including misuse of verb form, auxiliary, inappropriate choice of verb voice, omission and addition of verb. The next common error type was the errors in tenses. They could not identify the appropriate tenses in the context. The inappropriate choice, omission and addition of preposition and article were the regular errors in the tests. Thus, errors in subject and verb agreement were also common in translation. Some students used singular verb form for a plural subject and vice versa. The adjective and adverb errors appeared irregularly which occupied the lowest proportion in the papers.

The three items of lexical errors appearing frequently were word choice, word collocation and misuse of synonyms.

Lastly, the students also made spelling errors when translating although the error did not occupy the high proportion from the result of the research.

2. What can be recommended to avoid such errors in order to make Vietnamese-English translation more effective?

Through the interview to the teacher participants and the result of the study, the researcher found out that in order to avoid the errors in translation, the students should set up time to read many kinds of books, magazines, articles in English. Besides, self-practice translation is a significant task that helps student avoid errors in translation and make translating be smoother and more fluent.

5. Conclusions

The results of the present study showed that the English majors at Bac Lieu University frequently made three types of errors in translation. They were grammatical errors, lexical errors and spelling errors. These errors might result from the difference between English and Vietnamese, inadequate culture background, students' insufficient linguistic competence in English and Vietnamese, lack of cultural background knowledge, students' inappropriate translation strategies, interference of Vietnamese, misunderstanding, and students' carelessness. Through the research, the students could recognize their mistakes and the way to avoid errors in translation.

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