Chapter 1
Introduction

1.1 CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

1.1.1 Institutional context of the study

This study looks at the translation errors made by Vietnamese students of English-as-a-
Foreign-Language (EFL).

The context of teaching English in Vietnam is as follows: (a) natural bilingualism in
Vietnamese and English is a rare exception, and (b) opportunities for a language-year abroad
are rather rare, but there is increasing exposure to English-language media. EFL teaching
and teaching foreign languages in general at university level covers a four-year period. The
underlying philosophy of the curriculum is both to develop the students’ second-language
proficiency and to offer content consisting of literature, linguistics and cultural history,
where the language of instruction is a mixture of Vietnamese and English. Regarding the
teaching of translation as a skill, translation training (excluding short-term vocational
training courses for specialists in other disciplines) is often run by language departments and
is organised as a 540-hour course spread over two-and-a-half years, starting from the second
semester of Year 3 and ending at Year 4. The theory underpinning these training programs
will be examined in Chapter 2, where the specific context of Language and Translation
Teaching in Vietnam is discussed.

At present, there is no separate course or degree for translation in Vietnamese
universities, such as a Bachelor of or Masters in Translation. In most cases, those who
practice as professional interpreters or translators often have backgrounds in linguistics or at
least are trained in two languages, from where they then enter the fields and train
themselves. Before 1986, students were taught mostly linguistics subjects and translation
was a subject in the curriculum for language teaching. Only recently has it been considered
as an essential skill to acquire and received a more prominent place in the curriculum.

In this thesis, the discussion focuses on the situation in Vietnam and reference is made to
Vietnamese translation in the classroom, where students normally would be required to
translate specialised text types.
1.1.2 Theoretical background

Working with Vietnamese students of English pursuing a degree in English studies at the Vietnam National University - Ho Chi Minh has brought to my attention a number of the errors typical of Vietnamese-English language contact in Vietnamese-English translation. It has been observed that in some Vietnamese sentence types, the Subject, in terms of the obligatory Subject-Predicate structure in English, is not obvious to the students. They find it difficult to locate the subject because Vietnamese sentences do not require a grammatical subject if it can be inferred from the context. Besides, what appears at the beginning of a sentence in Vietnamese is often the Topic, which can be the Subject, Object or Adjunct of the Predicate. For example, the following sentences are quite common in Vietnamese (the bold letter e stands for the dropped subject in Vietnamese sentence):

1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cái nhà này</th>
<th>mua</th>
<th>bây giờ</th>
<th>không lời.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This house</td>
<td>buy</td>
<td>now</td>
<td>unprofitable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOPIC** | **COMMENT** |

**OBJECT of VERB** | **PREDICATE** |

*It is unprofitable to buy that house now.*

2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chuyên này</th>
<th>không</th>
<th>khó</th>
<th>giải quyết</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This problem</td>
<td>not</td>
<td>hard</td>
<td>to solve</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOPIC** | **COMMENT** |

**OBJECT of VERB** | **PREDICATE** |

*It is not hard to solve that problem.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>nhưng</th>
<th>(we)</th>
<th>cần phải</th>
<th>có</th>
<th>nhiều kiên nhẫn.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>but</td>
<td>need</td>
<td>to have</td>
<td>much patience</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NULL TOPIC** | **COMMENT** |

**NULL SUBJECT** | **PREDICATE** |

*but we need to have much patience.*

These sentences may place a burden on Vietnamese students/translators. In sentence (1) and the first clause of sentence (2), what appears at the beginning of the sentence – the Subject position in English – is not the structural subject of the predicate. Rather, it is the object of the verb. Therefore, the students/translators must go beyond the word level to make sense of
the ‘Comment’ in the Topic-Comment structure, and correctly identify the grammatical relationship between the predicate of the sentence and the existing Topic, which functions as the object of the verb, and then express it as an object in a Subject-Predicate structure. Besides, as there is no Subject in the two examples above, when translating into English, the students/translator have to predict from the context which is the exact subject to convert; otherwise, they have to put the sentences in the passive. As Vietnamese is a null-subject language, there is no need for a clause to have a subject if it is predictable from the context or if its meaning is empty. Accordingly, in sentence (1) and the first clause of sentence (2), the dummy subject ‘It’ is chosen when the sentences are rendered into English. In the second clause of sentence (2), there is neither Topic nor Subject, but the context tells a Vietnamese translator that the subject can be ‘we’ when s/he needs to locate an equivalent in English.

A further complication occurs when the Topic-Comment sequential order of Vietnamese does not coincide with the Subject-Predicate order in English syntax, and there is more than one ‘subject’ in the sentence. For example:

(3)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Con của ông Ba</th>
<th>đứa lớn nhất</th>
<th>học</th>
<th>trung học</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Ba’s sons</em></td>
<td>the eldest</td>
<td>learn</td>
<td>high school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOPIC</strong></td>
<td><strong>COMMENT</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As for Ba’s sons, the eldest is in high school.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>đứa nhỏ nhất</th>
<th>học</th>
<th>mẫu giáo.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>the youngest</td>
<td>learn</td>
<td>kinder-garten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>COMMENT</strong></td>
<td><strong>SUBJECT</strong></td>
<td><strong>PREDICATE</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>while the youngest is in kindergarten.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cuộc họa hoàn áy</th>
<th>các lĩnh chú lửa</th>
<th>đến</th>
<th>sớm</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>That fire</td>
<td>the fire-brigade</td>
<td>arrive</td>
<td>Early</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOPIC</strong></td>
<td><strong>COMMENT</strong></td>
<td><strong>SUBJECT</strong></td>
<td><strong>PREDICATE</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As for that fire, the fire brigade arrived early.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Similarly, regarding the sentence type in (3) and (4) above, often called ‘double subject’ constructions (Li & Thompson, 1976:468) or ‘double nominative’ constructions (Jin, 1994:103), the Subjects do not coincide with the Topics, or the nominal topic lies outside the verbal role frame. The first nominative is used as the topic and the second as a subject. The topic and the subject in double nominative constructions can be co-referential, as in Example (3) or non-referential as in Example (4). In such cases, students will encounter problems in identifying which part of the original Vietnamese sentence should be chosen to be the potential subject or adjunct when they have to express it in English.

In view of the foregoing, it is hypothesised that Vietnamese students will have problems in translating some Vietnamese sentence types into English. Vietnamese students will make errors in the sentences when the Topic-Comment structure of Vietnamese is not identical with the Subject-Predicate order of English, or when the Topic-Comment structure in the Vietnamese sentence is prominent.

A pilot study was carried out in January 2003 to test this hypothesis. Five different extracts from five Vietnamese newspaper articles were distributed to 40 students and they were asked to identify which Vietnamese sentences they thought would be syntactically problematic if they had to translate them into English. The results of the pilot study showed that most of the Vietnamese sentences that were found to be challenging for students were those in which the Topic-Comment structure of Vietnamese was not identical with the Subject-Predicate structure of English. That pilot study led to the present research which, accordingly, was undertaken to confirm whether in a task of translation the students would indeed make these errors.

1.2 AIMS OF THE STUDY

Firstly, this study is undertaken to confirm the hypothesis that Vietnamese students are prone to making errors when translating into English sentence types in which the Topic-Comment structure does not coincide with the Subject-Predicate structure.

Secondly, the study hopes to identify whether the errors are attributable to the difference in Subject-Predicate structure between English and Vietnamese, as claimed by Vietnamese functionalists (Hao, 1991, 2001; Anh, 2000), or to other reasons. It then aims to establish if certain categories of errors when translating these sentence types are made under the
influence of the source or the target language, in order to provide for the development of better instructional materials and classroom techniques. Its aim is to assist in the design of the teaching syllabus for translation classes in the program leading to the degree of Bachelor of Arts in English Philology at the Department of English Languages and Literature at the University of Social Sciences and Humanities in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.

Finally, it discusses the pedagogical implications for teaching translation into English to students in Vietnam, how students’ attention can be drawn to these identified problems, and how they may be helped to keep the two languages apart when translating these basic structures. The pedagogical implications are intended for students in the specific context of Vietnam, where in the English-major curriculum students learn translation together with other linguistics subjects.

This thesis does not try to prove that Vietnamese is a topic-prominent language through translation data. It is more a practical study than a theoretical one. Other authors have mentioned or acknowledged that Vietnamese is a topic-prominent language (Emeneau, 1951; Thompson, 1987; Hao, 1991; Rosén, 1998). This thesis reviews the literature by these authors as a background to the study. It holds rigidly that Vietnamese is a topic-prominent language, but its main task is to see whether this typological difference between English and Vietnamese influences the process of rendering some sentences from Vietnamese into English. That is why error analysis is chosen as the main tool of data analysis, to see whether Vietnamese students are prone to making more errors of those syntactic characteristics that Li and Thompson (1976) claim are basic for topic-prominent languages.

1.3 SCOPE OF THE STUDY
Nord (1992) mentions that there are four main problems facing a person who attempts the task of translation: pragmatic translation problems, cultural translation problems, linguistic translation problems, and text-specific translation problems. According to Nord (1992:46), linguistic problems occur when there are ‘structural differences between two languages in lexis, sentence structure and suprasegmental features which give rise to certain translation problems’. These problems occur in every translation involving this pair of languages (English & Vietnamese), no matter which of the two serves as source or target language. This present study investigates whether the typological difference between these two
languages is a linguistic problem for students. If this problem exists across the four groups of students from four different years (Year 1, Year 2, Year 3 and Year 4), regardless of their differences in competence in English, it is worth considering systemically for teaching techniques, especially in the very early stages of translation training in Vietnam. The question of whether these errors can be attributed to the difference between the underlying structures of Vietnamese and English could be explored in depth in another study, but if a certain error pattern continues to exist in a large population of students across four years, it could show some level of influence due to the typological difference between Vietnamese and English.

In the literature, Error Analysis (EA) is often criticised because (a) it is based on the subjective judgment or the error taxonomy of the author, and (b) its result can only be used by teachers whose native language is the language being taught, as a foreign teacher cannot understand the non-error cases to see the ‘whole picture’ of the ‘idiosyncratic system’ of the learners. Nevertheless, EA is still utilised as the main method in this thesis, because it is the only available means to detect both Translation and Linguistic Errors. The author believes that an error taxonomy built from this study may be a useful tool for both the teacher and the student when dealing with translation techniques and skills. At the same time, it may help students acknowledge the linguistic items and translation skills they must master. This thesis tries to avoid some previous drawbacks of EA by utilising a more objective approach in the way errors are judged. The drawbacks and strengths of EA in Second Language Acquisition and in Translation are discussed further in Chapters 4 and 5.

Additional criticisms of EA in the field of Second Language Acquisition concern errors in translation, particularly errors into a second language which are more challenging and receive heavier criticism. Firstly, in translation, a particular error may not be just a simple linguistic error; it may be the result of a lack of competence in the following fields: comprehension, linguistic competence, pragmatic competence and translation skills. Secondly, second-language students generally do not master the foreign language as well as their mother tongue, thus they are more likely to make errors.

To address these controversial issues of the competence of students in translating into a second language, Röhl (1983:22) cites Michea on the one-stage translation process of the bilingual individual: ‘One does not transpose from one language to the other; one plays two
different keyboards. One has two collections of models and patterns at one’s disposal and in order to compose one’s sentences, one must sometimes refer to one collection and sometimes to the other’. Many other translation scholars, including the Ecole du Sens led by Seleskovich (1976, 1980, 1981), also agree that there is no a priori difference between translation into and out of one’s mother tongue. Gleason (1990) also expresses doubt about whether first language (L1) to second language (L2) translation is really all that different from second language (L2) to first language (L1) translation. In his view, both activities involve language comprehension and production, and similar cognitive processes. In short, translating from the native language into the second language is not always more problematic than translating the foreign language into the native language. This point is discussed in more detail in Chapters 2 and 3.

Keeping in mind these criticisms against translation into the second language, this study suggests a model for analysing all types of errors in translation tasks, including comprehension errors, linguistic errors, and translation errors. This model of analysis aims to give a better idea of the different kinds of errors that a translation student may make during a translation task. The frequency of linguistic errors against translation errors is also calculated. In the context of Vietnam, where translation training is carried out together with language teaching, this kind of distinction between translation errors and linguistic errors can help the teacher know in which area of language competence the students may need more instruction and in which area of translation they may need to improve their skills.

Kiraly (1995) claims that students’ translation problems (even those of advanced-level students majoring in English, but still novice translators) should not be used to understand the problems of professional translators. However, while focusing on the problems revealed by translation students, or novice translators, not professional translators, the author tries to locate specifically the problems translation students or language learners may face in a translation task. Furthermore, although the errors by professional translators are more recognised as ‘real’ translation errors, as professional translators tend to make fewer errors in the second language given their higher level of English competence, translation training and experience, these errors of professional translators cannot help predict the possible difficulties for novice translators, who need more training than professionals. On the other hand, if some error patterns can be found in the work of professional translators, these errors
would not necessarily be useful for didactic purposes. It may be argued that understanding errors by professional translators could help novice students; but novice students, having limited linguistic competence, may be prone to more errors than professional translators. That justifies the choice of translation students as subjects for this study.

Besides, if translations by second language learners are criticised, it does not necessarily follow that there should be no studies done in this field. What matters is how translation into L2 courses can overcome the stigma of unprofessionalism often attached to this type of translation. The first step is to identify which problems (i.e., linguistic problems in this study) translation students face, that is, which problems make it difficult for them to translate from L1 to L2 and vice versa. According to Honig (1990), both novice and professional translators exhibit the same level of automatic intuitive processing\(^1\). However, the difference between novice and professional translators lies in three tasks: (a) knowing how best to resolve a problem, (b) knowing when a problem exists, and (c) evaluating a tentative solution to a problem. Based on this difference, Kiraly (1995:110) suggests that to develop the techniques for recognising, evaluating and resolving translation problems to find solutions for teaching in the translation classroom, we must study professional translators whose translations are clearly of high quality. This is suggested by Kiraly as the first step to fill the pedagogical gap in translation training. However, before any translation solutions can be researched, we need to identify the problems posed by translation. The second step recommended by Kiraly (1995:111) is to rely on error analysis as a significant teaching resource. He states that:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{The relationship between the intuitive workspace and the conscious processing} \\
\text{centre suggests that error analysis might be a significant teaching resource. It} \\
\text{should indicate the broad distribution of problems in a student population and} \\
\text{identify the areas of competency that need to be strengthened. Second-language} \\
\text{competence provides a basis for intuitive processing in the translation trainee, but} \\
\text{translation competence and second-language competence are not coextensive.} \\
\text{Error analysis should help translation teachers understand the problems (linguistic,}
\end{align*}
\]

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\(^1\) A term used by Kiraly to refer to the hidden, subconscious processes in the translator’s mind, which is often applied automatically during the process of translating, and derived from experience - an intuitive ‘feel for the languages’.
cultural, textual, comprehension, production) that occur during the progress of a
translator’s training. An analysis of the kinds of errors made by translation students
may outline the divergence of second-language competence from greater
translation competence and should indicate the kinds of problems recognition, and
resolution and evaluation strategies required.

In other words, to identify the problems occurring during the translation task, we should do
an error analysis of students’ translations to identify the areas that need to be a focus for
teaching. After the students’ problems have been identified, we can study the translation of
professionals to see what strategies they use to recognise, evaluate and solve these problems.
Kiraly further states that when teachers can understand what kinds of errors are occurring
and isolate the affected competencies or at least make students more aware, then translation
teachers can provide guided practice as well as conscious strategies\(^2\) for problem resolution
and the production of translation alternatives and thereby improve the acquisition of
intuitive skills as methods.

This thesis aims to show the specific linguistic problems Vietnamese learners of English
and translation face when no professional training is provided. The fact is that in the context
of Vietnam, where all translation students are at the same time language learners, then even
professional translators may make the same errors as learners.

Although the students’ errors cannot be considered strictly translation errors, despite
specialising in translation, since the students receive no official training in translation in
their four-year course, nevertheless they are errors made during the course of studying
translation. Therefore, any similarities found in these errors can help both teaching-material
designers and teachers choose appropriate methods for their teaching.

This thesis reviews studies that consider the type of foreign language teaching program
as ‘unofficial’ where translation is simply taught as one isolated subject. The attacks on the
use of Translation in Language Teaching are acknowledged. However, the focus of this
thesis is still on the intersection of Translation and Language Teaching. It is necessary to
stress that Translation is not intended to be a testing device for second language competence
in these classes, it aims to train students in those basic translation skills which the current

\(^2\) A term used by Kiraly (1995:111) to refer to the primarily overt and conscious applications of learned
techniques or strategies.
administrators think necessary for graduates to enter any potential translation-related jobs. Even though translation is only taught as one subject at universities and cannot be considered ‘official and professional training’, the aim of the course is still to train students in translation, rather than test their language competence. Translation in these classes should be regarded as a kind of Vocational Training through which Vietnamese universities hope to provide students with some very basic translation skills.

In conclusion, this thesis does not attempt to prove any underlying grammatical structure of Vietnamese revealed through students’ translation errors. Secondly, the thesis does not try to pinpoint whether the errors are attributable to language transfer or not. In this thesis, error analysis is not used as it is in second language acquisition. Instead, the thesis relies on the error corpus as a research tool for examining whether the topic-prominence of Vietnamese is one of the possible hindrances causing difficulty for students in their translation tasks.

For the present study, translation theories are relevant to the extent that they provide insights into the processes of translation, which can inform language learning. In other words, this thesis is interested in the intersection of translation studies and language learning. It does not want to go back to the Grammar-Translation period, where translation was used as a means for second language instruction. In this thesis, the author tries to identify the possible problems faced by translation trainees and provide a pedagogy suited to those contexts where translation is taught neither as a means for second language learning nor as a discipline in itself. These pedagogical implications are suitable for the present situation in Vietnam, where translation is still taught as one type of vocational training within the curriculum of the languages program.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study seeks to find answers to the following questions:

1. Which error category accounts for the majority of errors?

2. What are the most common and consistent syntactic errors that Vietnamese students majoring in English usually make when translating Vietnamese sentences into English?
3. Do Vietnamese students have problems when translating Vietnamese sentence types in which the Topic-Comment structure is not identical with the Subject-Predicate structure?

4. To what extent do the type and quantity of errors differ in groups of differing levels of L2 competence?

5. What pedagogical implications can be drawn for teachers to help students deal with such errors, in terms of transforming these structures into the ones that best suit the process of translation into English?

1.5 CONTRIBUTION OF THE THESIS
Although many studies have been carried out on error analysis and contrastive analysis in second language learning, language teaching, and materials development, not much research has been done in the Vietnamese context with Vietnamese university students as informants. Even fewer studies have been carried out to analyse Vietnamese students’ errors in translation. To illustrate, in a comprehensive bibliography by Spillner in the field of error analysis (1991), of the 2% (108) of studies focusing on translation out of a total of 5,398, none looked at syntactic errors in Vietnamese-English translation. Even though the difference in syntactic structures was found to constitute a major difficulty in first language and second language acquisition, there is a lack of research on syntactic errors. This study aims to fill this gap in the field of error analysis, especially syntactic errors in Vietnamese-English translation.

The dominant teaching method in Vietnam is the grammar-translation method and translation plays an important part in this method. Other approaches have been introduced, but, due to the large class sizes and the lack of competent English-speaking teachers, translation still plays a very important role in teaching. Under these circumstances, it is very opportune to investigate some of the linguistic and pedagogical aspects of Vietnamese-English translations.

Another significance of undertaking this study is the possibility of implementing its findings. From a pedagogical point of view, the results of the study — the possible error
patterns of Vietnamese students when translating some sentence types — may provide information relevant for instruction at an advanced level.

This study will help to partially design the translation module for the Department of English Language and Literature, University of Social Sciences and Humanities of Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. A part of the EFL curriculum at this department includes English-Vietnamese and Vietnamese-English Translation, integrated with other modules, such as integrated skills and composition writing. The Translation module covers 540 teaching hours during the last three years of the whole training program. At the end of each semester, the translation module ends with a written translation examination, both for English-Vietnamese and Vietnamese-English Translation. There is no separate training program for Interpretation and Translation. In other words, these two subjects are taught in the same module; for example, English-Vietnamese Interpretation and Translation or Vietnamese-English Interpretation and Translation.

1.6 STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS
Chapter One introduces the background, aim, motivation and structure of the thesis. Chapter Two explores the issue of translation and language teaching and translation into the second language. This chapter reviews the interrelation between translation and language teaching. It discusses the reality of language teaching, translation teaching, and translator training in Vietnam. The chapter also reviews studies of translation into the second language and second language learners as translators. It mentions the relationship between linguistic competence and translation competence.

Chapter Three reviews contrastive analysis, error analysis and its application in translation. It presents the significance of the learners’ errors in second language acquisition, language teaching and learning, L2 writing, and L1-to-L2 translation. The chapter also explores the significance of error analysis in translation and in learners’ errors in L1-to-L2 translation. This chapter discusses the relevance of error analysis and the use of learner translation corpora as research tools in translation.

Chapter Four looks at some recent studies on Vietnamese sentence types and the topic-comment structures of the Vietnamese language. The chapter reviews many approaches to analysing different types of Vietnamese sentences, from the Transformational-Generativist
perspective to a Systemic Functional approach. It also deals with the relevance of Topic-Comment structures in Vietnamese. This chapter reviews different perspectives on defining Topic and Comment, different kinds of topic construction, and the appearance of empty elements in Vietnamese.

Chapters Five to Eight deal with the error analysis of 95 translations by students. Chapter Five describes the methods used in this study. This chapter describes the model used for analysing data and the justification for using such methods.

Chapter Six analyses all the examples of errors from the error corpus of the 95 students. A taxonomy of errors is set up and different errors are explained using real examples from the corpus.

Chapter Seven calculates the total number of errors in general, syntactic errors in particular, and specific types of errors in the handling of subjects and empty elements in Vietnamese. All those students’ translations of sentences with the presence of empty elements, either in the subject or object position, will be examined and discussed to see the general trend of students in handling a typical topic-comment structure in Vietnamese. This chapter also analyses and discusses the questionnaire completed by and interviews of the students to find out the possible causes of these errors.

Chapter Eight gives a summary and conclusion of the whole study, relating the findings to the fields of both translation teaching and language education. It also suggests the pedagogical implications for teaching Vietnamese-English Translation in the context of Vietnamese universities and suggests some ways of handling the topic-comment structures of Vietnamese language in translation.
Chapter 2
Translation and Language Teaching
Translation into the Second Language

2.1 TRANSLATION AND LANGUAGE TEACHING

2.1.1 Translation in Foreign Language Teaching

In Foreign Language Teaching, translation has often been mentioned as a major component of the Grammar Translation Method of Language Teaching (Howatt, 1984). However, due to the early Reform Movement\(^3\) in the 1960s and 1970s and the appearance of new methods of language teaching known variously as Direct Method, Natural Method and Communicative Approach, the Grammar Translation Method lost its popularity (Howatt, 1984). Translation was criticised as a language teaching method because of the belief that the first language may ‘interfere’ with the second language during translation (Krashen, 1981). Accordingly, many researchers would exclude translation from language teaching classes (Chaudron, 1988; Dulay, Burt and Krashen, 1982; Ellis, 1988; Krashen, 1981; and Terrell, 1977). However, there is still some recognition of the role of translation in second language learning from some linguists (Duff, 1989; Gerloff, 1987; Hornby, et al., 1982; Titford & Hieke, 1985; Tudor, 1987; Uzawa, 1997; Weymouth, 1984).

Firstly, House (1981) states that the three main objectives of using translation tasks in language teaching are to illustrate and explain grammatical points and drill certain constructions specially designed for this purpose, to help the teacher in controlling whether students understand properly often contextless linguistic units, and to provide the teacher with a handy means of large-scale testing of a variety of types of knowledge and skills.

Tudor (cited in Uzawa, 1997) claims that translation expands students’ second language resources. Titford (1985:74) states that translation is an activity ‘usefully engaged in after the basic L2 communicative skills have been taught’. In the field of reading skills, Basnett (1998:111) believes that ‘translation offers a crucial lesson in how to read, since it is a

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\(^3\) The reform movement at the turn of the 20th century resulted in the development of principles of foreign language teaching, which provided the theoretical foundation for a principled approach to the study of language teaching and learning.
critical way into the text’. Butzkamm (cited in Uzawa, 1997:2) stresses formal translation equivalents as an ‘elegant and economical way’ to help the learner see through unaccustomed foreign language structures. Translation also helps students understand and manipulate second language structures (Sorphus cited in Uzawa, 1997).

According to Biçer (2002:69), translation is still necessary for students in either language or translation classes. With translation tasks, students are required to revise the grammar, vocabulary, style, and writing rules of both the source text and target language. They must pay attention to the characteristics of the language used in translation. Besides, translation tasks provide some knowledge of intercultural communication, that is, of other cultures and civilisations. They are also taught how to define the similarities and differences between the languages and cultures, how to pay attention to the style and essence of the text, and to try to make it comprehensible but still faithful to the source text. And translation can provide students the opportunity to evaluate the relationships among languages and learn more about the source language and target language (Benjamin cited in Barbe, 1996).

Muskat-Tabakowska (1973:130-139) discusses the function of translation in foreign language teaching. He suggests (1973:137) that ‘translation equivalents, used at advanced levels of language teaching as an ad hoc device, can prove helpful in systematising some working contrastive rules at which the learners themselves arrive by automatic induction’. Besides Muskat-Tabakowska, many other authors (e.g. Valette, 1967; Bennett, 1968) also recognise the place of translation tests in advanced teaching. Translation can be used to test vocabulary and especially words in context, that is, conventional usage. When they involve no vocabulary problems, translation tests can also serve to test grammatical structures.

However, Muskat-Tabakowska also notes that when using translation as a test, it is chiefly the ability to translate that is tested and not any of the basic linguistic skills. The shortcomings of using advanced translation tests lie in the facts that these tests are extremely difficult to set and perform. Firstly, the number of possible translation equivalents grows with the learner’s degree of sophistication, due both to ambiguity of various types and the language varieties involved. Secondly, inadequate knowledge on the part of the learners can lead to relative untranslatability caused by various contextual factors.

Therefore, when using translation as a proficiency of achievement test, Muskat-Tabakowska recommends that the text chosen should (a) require factual and not literary
rendering, that is, all semantic equivalents are functional equivalents, and (b) avoid all types of ambiguity and untranslatability. Once the teacher fulfils these requirements, translation into L2 (i.e., contrary to translation for instruction) proves more informative, because the elements of guessing are eliminated.

2.1.2 Translation in University Second Language Classrooms
Danchev (1983) compared the teaching of translation within an ESL curriculum to a medicine which can have a beneficial effect only when properly administered and in the right dosage. And according to Ivanova (1998:92), ‘finding the right dose in designing a translation course requires a fine balance between what is practically possible and theoretically advisable, based on an informed understanding of the nature of the translation task and its processing requirements on one hand, and the assessment of the linguistic competence and motivation of the learner, on the other’.

Snell-Hornby (1985) finds that the majority of reasons for university students attending an optional translation course are either related to vocabulary acquisition (33%) or grammar-based contrastive analysis (20%). That is to say, translation is considered by these students to be an effective tool for practicing language exercises.

Buhler (1986) makes some remarks about the role of translation in the language classroom. According to him, in the foreign language classroom, translation is used to achieve various didactic ends, such as for foreign language learning (by demonstrating language in contrast), or in testing text comprehension, or for the active or productive knowledge of a foreign language. Translation is carried out at all levels of proficiency and in both directions – from the mother tongue into the foreign language and vice versa. In most cases, the translation process seems to consist of a more or less automated transcoding of certain linguistic items (e.g., words, phrases) from source language to target language, with occasional paraphrasing to meet target language syntactic constraints.

One of the most recent works discussing the relationship between Second Language Acquisition (SLA), Language Teaching, and Translation Studies is that of Colina (2002). In her paper, she examines the similarities and differences in the goals and objects of study of the three above-mentioned disciplines, the legacy of language teaching in translator training, and that of translation in language teaching. One contribution by this article is Colina’s
proposal that the mutual alienation between language teaching, translator training and SLA
does not result from the disconnection between fields of study, but in misinformed notions
about translation studies and language teaching and the history and overreaching effects of
certain research paradigms.

In his article trying to establish a suitable model for a translation course for French-
speaking students, Harvey (1996:56ff) argues for and against the use of translation as a
teaching method, given the fact that the use of translation in the grammar-teaching method is
no longer favoured. According to him, when the basic knowledge of a language has been
acquired in a learning program, translation then can serve as an effective means for teaching
vocabulary, especially when the teacher needs to rely on the first language (L1) to explain
some concepts such as ‘false cognates’ or words that have several possible renderings and
colloctions. Translation also can be used to analyse and teach syntax and alert students to
their own errors in the second language (L2) arising from imposing L1 structures onto L2. In
these processes of discovering their own errors, these learners may not only improve their
knowledge of the second language (L2) but also may analyse and gain more insight into
their own language. Another practical reason why translation should be used in language
teaching is that it can function as a ‘rational analysis of how the language works … by
pointing out the main differences with L1’4 in the context that the learners have very little
ideal environment to pick up their L2 as naturally as they did with their L1. Strauss
(1987:30) suggests that translation is a flexible way of studying and requires more analysing
ability from the learners. From this perspective, translation can help learners develop and
formalise the process of ‘mental translation’, which can be apprehended as a translation
phenomenon, but is taking place in the mind of the translator or the L2 learner.

The most important reason to continue to use translation in university teaching,
according to Harvey (1996), is that it can help shorten the gap between the learning world
and the working world and can be used in some non-academic careers. The fact that
translation courses are developed in the form of vocational courses containing some other
training in linguistic skills and subject matter, shows that specialised translation can
stimulate teaching and research in the field. Besides, although L1 interference is not a good

4 Cf. Adamczewski & Galiban (1992). This book illustrates the contrastive approach to grammar and analyses
how learners rely on their native language as a tool to learn, before they learn new structures in the foreign
language.
effect for translation as a teaching method, it cannot be avoided when speaking or writing in L2 (Villegas, 1987:48-49).

2.1.3 Objections to Translation in Foreign Language Teaching

Most of the objections of the use of Translation in Language Teaching are rooted in the opposition towards the so-called ‘Grammar-Translation Method’. In this method, foreign language study is seen as a mental discipline and its basic approach is to analyse, study the grammatical rules of the language, and practise manipulating grammatical structures through the means of translation, both into and from the mother tongue. The criticism of this method is that translation becomes an academic exercise, rather than one that would actually help learners to use a language, and an overt focus on the formal grammar of the target language may not help in learning to speak it.

However, it is undeniable that the Grammar-Translation Method has had remarkable success. To illustrate this, in the former Soviet Union, many people have successfully learnt foreign languages to a high degree of proficiency without any contact with native speakers of the language. Also, there are certain types of learners who respond positively to a grammatical syllabus, as it can give them a set of clear objectives and a sense of achievement, or learners who need the security of the mother tongue and the opportunity to relate grammatical structures to mother tongue equivalents.

Halliday (1964) expressed doubts about the use of the grammar-translation method in language teaching. In spite of the fact that the role of translation in language teaching neither presupposes nor supposes the teaching of grammar, many teachers still alternate translation activities with formal grammar as the main activity in language classrooms using the Grammar-Translation method. Halliday’s argument (1964:266) is that giving a translation task to students in the early stages of learning a language could confuse them with ‘an ungraded mixture of problems in grammar, lexis and orthography’. In other words, in trying to produce an acceptable translation, the learner ‘has to learn the whole new technique of question answering at the same time as he is trying to learn the language’. Also, in this method, isolated sentences lacking any linguistic or situational context are often given for

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5 See more discussion of this in the article ‘What is the Grammar Translation Method?’ on the website http://www.onestopenglish.com/News/Magazine/Archive/whatgrammar.htm

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the translation exercise instead of providing an artificial context. The translation process then turns out to be a ‘meaningless’ linguistic activity and ‘leads to a concentration on formal equivalence at the expense of contextual equivalence’ (1964:266). According to Halliday, the impediments arising from using translation for language teaching do not stop at the early stage of learning language, but continue as the course progresses. When the difficulty of the course is increased over time, the translation task becomes more challenging than felicitous for learners, firstly because the learners have more options to choose from for suitable equivalents, secondly because the learners need to struggle to decide what to do with the increasing level of difficulty of the language. In other words, both in the early stages and later stages of language teaching and learning, translation is not considered a beneficial activity. In sum, Halliday’s opinion about the use of translation is that:

Translation is, in fact, an extremely complicated and difficult task. It is far from being the simple, obvious exercise it is sometimes described to be. In its usual form it is appropriate more to the advanced stages of a university special degree course, when literary and historical styles are being studied, than to the early stages of acquiring practical skills in a foreign language (1964:268).

Newson (1998:63-64) and Stoddart (2001:4) have reviewed some of the main arguments against the use of translation in language teaching. The disadvantages of using translation as a teaching and testing tool in an EFL situation from these authors can be summarised as follows:

1. Translation focuses on two skills only: reading and writing (Stoddart, 2001).
2. It deprives teachers and learners of the opportunity to benefit from accruing the advantages of working within one language (Newson 1998).
3. It is an unnatural process, as ‘no two languages are ever sufficiently similar to be considered as representing the same social reality’ (Stoddart, 2001)
4. It encourages thinking in one language and transference into another, with accompanying interference (Newson, 1998).
5. It gives false credence to the naive view that there is such a thing as simple word-to-word equivalence between languages (Newson, 1998).
6. It is usually product-focused, while students can only benefit from translation if it is mentioned as a process (Stoddart 2001).

7. It requires not only linguistic knowledge, but also deep knowledge of the source and target cultures. However, students may not be provided with much knowledge of either source or target cultures in their linguistics classes (Stoddart 2001).

8. It does not allow the emphasis on initial fluency in spoken language (Newson, 1998). Translation places emphasis on accuracy, but it is very hard to say exactly what is correct and incorrect in translation because evaluation is very subjective (Stoddart, 2001).

9. It does not facilitate the attention to the controlled introduction of selected and graded structures (60’s style) or communicative competence strategies (90’s style) (Newson, 1998).

10. It does not facilitate the attention to controlled introduction of and mastery of selected and graded lexical items (Newson, 1998).

11. It does not allow the use of situationalised, contextualised language (Newson, 1998). Many translation texts used are decontextualised and gradation is often ignored. The consequence is that students may cope on a linguistic level, but still have problems decoding and recoding messages\(^6\) between source and target texts (Stoddart, 2001).

12. It prevents communicative language use, learner-centred language learning and an observable learning effect, either of new vocabulary or structural items (Newson, 1998).

13. Students risk being over-reliant on translation and will be unable to acquire fully a new language until they have translated it (Stoddart 2001).

14. The teacher must be highly competent in the students’ language (Stoddart 2001).

15. Translation can only be used in limited situations. It can be useful for practicing a certain linguistic structure, or for language evaluation, but not for presenting a new language (Stoddart 2001).

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\(^6\) These two terms were coined by Nida (in Bassnett-McGuire, 1991) in his model describing the process of translating from one language to another. In this process, the learners have to decode the signs of the source text first, analyse the message for meaning and then transpose the contents into the target language and reformulate the message using the signs of the target language.
2.1.4 Other Objections to Teaching Translation in Language Programs

Apart from the above-mentioned drawbacks of the use of translation in foreign language teaching, many recent translation method books also show opposition towards the teaching of translation in academic settings on the grounds that the academic setting of translation training is quite different from the real professional translation world. Hervey and Higgins (1992:173) argue that:

A real translation, as distinct from translation as an academic exercise, is always produced in response to the specific demands of an audience, a publisher, or whoever is paying for the translation.

Dollerup & Lingaard (1994:125) describes how grammar classes at secondary schools and universities that use translation exercises have given students the impressions that ‘translation is a kind of disguised grammar drill, and accordingly, that the main point is to figure out where the teacher set the traps’. In his view, translation in these classes is understood as word-for-word renderings. Consequently, when language students attend a real translation class, they ‘suddenly realise that they do not fully understand simple communicative acts and are therefore unable to create the target text which would provoke the closest communicative response in a target language audience’ (Krouglov, 1996:81).

By adopting the point of view that translation is not an innate ability, Honig (1988) notes that the task of translation often seen in ESL curricula in many second-language programs and institutions is not real translation, because it does not involve the real act of interlingual communication. This task only serves as a testing tool for language knowledge and only serves the didactic function of teaching. This perspective leads to his view that second language learners cannot really translate because they have not acquired an understanding of translation as one form of communication. They do not understand the situational factors in the task of translation nor the necessary strategies. They merely transcode from one language to another.

Colina (2001) generalises that the attitude of translation professionals and translator trainers is often negative toward language teaching and language students because of the influence and behaviours that these language students bring from their language classes. For
example, they tend to stick to sentence-level approaches (Bowen, 1989:52, Klein-Bradley & Franklin 1998:60), prefer one-to-one correspondence (Lorscheir, 1991&1992; König, 1987), or tend to be very loyal to the structures of the source texts without remembering that they are in the process of creating a text for a new group of target readers.

In her article describing the present situation of teaching translation in German, Klein-Bradley (1995) pinpoints some shortcomings of using translation as a testing device in German universities. According to her, translation examinations are not reliable because there are negative correlation coefficients between different translation tests; to be exact, one student who performs well on one translation test may do very badly on the second (Klein-Bradley, 1987). Also, the translation tests are ‘bidimensional’ (1996:20) in the sense that they not only test language proficiency, but also test skills in translating. She concludes:

Thus there is no reason to assume that translation into the foreign language is the best available test of high-level language proficiency. It is even less valid as a test of real-life translation (cf. Hopkins and Klein-Bradley, 1985; Klein-Bradley 1991), since real-life translators do not normally translate into their foreign language for the obvious reason that even very advanced and proficient language learners with a wide vocabulary still make mistakes in grammar and syntax. (1995:20)

2.1.5 Reasons to continue Translation in Language Teaching
Despite all the above-mentioned criticisms against the use of translation in language teaching, there are still voices from opposing schools of thought, which favour the teaching of translation in the department of languages and linguistics. To start with, in response to her own question ‘should we still teach translation skills to students, if translation examinations are unsuitable tests of high-level command of a language?’, Klein-Bradley (1995:21) argues that we should, on condition that the focus of teaching must be changed from preparation for the test to preparation for possible vocational use. She also stresses that in these vocational programs it is translation skill, not language, that is being taught. In her understanding, these programs in German do not aim to compete with the schools of translation or try to train translators or interpreters. Rather, these programs aim to offer students basic
techniques of translation skills to ‘enable all-round professionals to tackle translation themselves for in-house and informal purposes, and also—and importantly—to supervise the translation of texts for publishing and formal purposes’ (Klein-Bradley 1995:24). This statement of Klein-Bradley’s very much reflects the situation in Vietnam and the expectation of the training program in those Vietnamese universities where the present author is working. To support her suggestion for a new training program in German, Klein-Bradley provides some recommendations regarding the choice of text-types, the curricular elements, and the examination procedure that best suits the new purpose of the training program.

In feedback to the claim that translation should not be included in training programs because translation, as a professional activity, is different from translation in the classroom, Fraser (1996:123) argues that

Rather than bolstering the divide, however, such comments are being made in the context of greater reflection on teaching methodology, and I believe they signal the start of a welcome recognition that ‘real’ translation, and the constraints under which it is carried out, have something to offer the academic methodologists. … The fact that, at undergraduate level, we are not giving a vocational training in translation does not mean that the way translation is carried out successfully in a professional setting has no relevance to its teaching in an academic setting.

In the introduction to their book Teaching Translation in Universities, Sewell and Higgins (1996) state two reasons for their investigation into current practices of translation teaching. In addition to the stress put on translating into the first language, which can be taught as an end in itself, the book focuses on translation not as an end in itself, but as a way of learning a second language. They are of the view that, even though communicative theory has suggested that the practice of translation (both ways) in the classroom is not beneficial to second language learners, ‘many learners at every level still find translation very helpful’ (1996:9). Because of this reality, the purpose of the book is to not deny the existence of
translation in language classes, but, instead, to locate translation appropriately in the curriculum and to best use translation in the classroom.

To reject the objections to the use of Translation in Language Teaching, Malmkjær (1998) gives responses to each argument included in a list of what are considered the disadvantages of using translation in language teaching. He reviews five activities that a translation task engages: (a) anticipation, (b) resource exploitation, (c) co-operation, (d) revision, and (e) translating. According to him, as these five activities ‘subsume other activities which are commonly considered wholly acceptable, in fact often sine qua non language learning activities’ (1998:7), a good knowledge of four skills (reading, speaking, listening, and writing) is essential for students if they wish to translate acceptably. Thus, translation should be considered as inclusive of and dependent upon the other four skills, rather than independent of them. Given such a condition where all four skills and many activities must be used to produce an acceptable translation, there is no reason why translation should be rejected or considered a ‘time waster’ in language-teaching classes. As translation does not seem to develop in tandem with competence in a second language, translation ability could be considered to be a ‘natural language skill’ by itself in the context where most of the world’s population is bi- or tri-lingual (1998:8). Besides, he believes that if applied appropriately, translation will ‘provide as natural a focus for practice as any other classroom activity’ and ‘draw together most or all of the skills normally considered essential in classroom practice’ (1998:8).

To respond to the argument that translation can mislead students into thinking that expressions in two languages correspond one-to-one, Malmkjær suggests using a real-life translation in the classroom so that awareness can be raised and a focus on thinking in both languages can be practised. Accepting the fact that translation may produce interference, Malmkjær argues that translation can also help bilinguals to be more aware and in more control of the possible interference. Since Villegas (1987) suggested that although L1 interference is not a good effect when using translation as a teaching method, however, it cannot be avoided when speaking or writing in L2. On the grounds that producing a good translation requires many activities and skills, then an exam using translation as a testing method may help test all other language skills.
Regarding the question that translation should be left as a main task for translator training rather than for language classes, Malmkjær quotes Vienne (1998) and Klein-Bradley and Franklin (1998) to state that teaching translation to second language learners may be useful in two ways. Firstly, many language learners or language specialists may also enter some professions requiring some basic knowledge of translation. Secondly, language students may also take up some other jobs, such as translating, rather than remain in an occupation in direct accord with their original university major. These last two practical reasons that Malmkjær proposes for the reapplication of Translation to Language Teaching reflect the precise reality of the job market in Vietnam and the job prospects of those graduates majoring in English.

Furthermore, Anderman (1998b) suggests in a recent survey of teaching translation at British universities, nineteen of twenty-one institutions responded that translation was taught ‘as a way of improving students’ linguistic proficiency’ (Sewell 1996:137). For practical reasons, it was not easy to change this practice. Colina (2002:5) argues that ‘although audio-lingual methodology and grammar translation may be long gone from the curriculum, their effects are often present in students’ views of and misconceived approaches to translation, specific notions of translation are often deeply ingrained in a particular culture and may be difficult to eradicate, even when students have been exposed to communicative methodologies.’

2.2 LANGUAGE TEACHING, TRANSLATION TEACHING AND TRANSLATOR TRAINING IN VIETNAM

2.2.1 The Use of English in Teaching in Vietnam

English was introduced into Vietnam after the French colonised Vietnam and became very popular during the American War. From 1975 to 1986 English was taught as one foreign language, but was not as popular as Russian. From 1986 until now, the need to learn English has increased. However, English is still a foreign language in Vietnam. In other words, except in some international schools for children of Vietnam-based foreigners and the single Vietnam-based Australian university (RMIT) where English is used as the medium of instruction, Vietnamese is still the main language of instruction in all educational institutions. In universities of social sciences and humanities where majors in English
Language and Literature or English Philology are offered for Bachelor degrees, most subjects are taught in English. However, even in these classes, sometimes the first language is still used by teachers to facilitate students’ comprehension. English is not used for instruction in most secondary schools, even though it is taught as one obligatory subject in the curriculum. Since English has become a very popular foreign language with Vietnam’s adoption of an open-market economy, there has been more pressure from parents eager to see their children learn the ‘international’ language.

**2.2.2 Translation Practice in Vietnam**

From 1975 to 1986, most Vietnamese translators were concentrated in two fields: literary translation, especially of world-famous literature, and legal documentation for public notary offices. As soon as Vietnam adopted its ‘open door and reform’ policy in 1986, many multinational companies arrived and encouraged a new focus for translation. There is now a strong demand for translators and interpreters. Translation has become an interesting part-time job for most language teachers, language students, or those whose knowledge of English is good enough to attain a certain quality of translation. Literary translation is no longer a dominant part of translation practice: there are more translations of documents for international trade, foreign affairs, technology, information science, etc. However, in the context that the learning of foreign languages (except Russian) had not been encouraged between 1975 and 1986, there are few Vietnamese who can use English competently, not to mention translate at the level of professional translators and interpreters. During the period from 1986 until now, most translators and interpreters come from the same source: they are either language teachers, or professionals who have worked for foreign-owned companies and therefore have a high level of fluency in English. There is no strict assessment or qualification required by the government to regulate the practice of translators and interpreters. In some cases, competent students from Departments of English Language and Literature form ‘teams’ of translators and interpreters. However, as there are no institutions in Vietnam providing professional translation and interpretation training, those who enter the job simply train themselves through experience, apart from relying on their existing knowledge of the two languages. Therefore, it could be said that the quality of translation practice is not guaranteed.
2.2.3 Translation and Language Teaching in Vietnam

There are three ways in which translation is used to assist language teaching in Vietnam: (a) as a component in the Grammar-Translation Method used in teaching English as a Foreign Language in secondary schools and universities, (b) as a testing device for language proficiency in secondary schools and in other universities where English is taught as a subject not part of a major, and/or (c) as one subject and an optional skill in the training of language teachers at most of the Departments of English Language and Literature in Vietnamese universities.

In general, in the present context of language teaching in Vietnam, translation does not serve any communicative purpose, rather it is used to achieve various didactic ends, such as in demonstrating languages in contrast or testing text comprehension. It is carried out on all levels of proficiency and in both directions. The translation process, therefore, is just an automated transcoding of certain linguistic items (words, phrases) from source language to target language, with occasional paraphrasing to avoid target language syntactic constraints (Buhler, 1986:106).

In the universities where a major in English is offered in the Department of English Language and Literature, translation is used in different ways. Given the fact that their language proficiency is still far from that of near-native or native speakers, teachers who teach subjects in the four skills of English (speaking, listening, reading, writing) or subjects relating to English language and culture sometimes rely on translation to deliver their lessons. Teachers in English-Vietnamese translation or Vietnamese-English translation classes still follow a traditional, academically orientated approach to teaching English translation (see section below for detailed discussion of translation teaching). In this case, the main task of the instructor in translation is to provide practice in translation without contradicting the general aims of informed EFL teaching and learning. The Translation class includes a final examination assessing translation into English or Vietnamese. In conclusion, translation serves as a means of instruction, as a testing device, and as an optional skill in the language teacher training program, rather than as an independent discipline.
2.2.4 The Current Situation of the Training of Translators and Translation Teaching in Vietnam

From 1996, translation courses occasionally have been provided by the special training sections of Fulbright organisations in Vietnam or by some professional interpreters working for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs who have experience in interpreting and translating at diplomatic meetings. But as these short-term translation courses function more like ‘on-the-job training’, they are only intended for those already in the profession, not for students who want to learn to become professional translators. In short, most of the professional translators in Vietnam, in one way or another, do not receive sufficient training from any official institutions. They largely train themselves if they have a good command of English and are interested in becoming a professional translator.

From 1986, the urgent need for qualified translators and interpreters prompted higher education institutions with foreign language departments or foreign language educational institutions to establish translation as a specialised field in their curriculum for majors. In the second stage of the training program for a BA in English Philology, English Language and Literature, or Applied Linguistics, Translation is provided as one sub-major besides Teaching and Literature. In these programs, translation is not simply used as a tool or an objective method of testing grammar and vocabulary. The curricula for these programs indicate that translation is taught as one vocational or skill training for students proceeding towards their last two years of study. Although these translation courses do not aim to replace schools of translation and interpreting or provide all the necessary knowledge for a professional translator, they are intended to provide some basic techniques and skills of translation for language students, just in case these students are employed later in an occupation involving general translation tasks. These courses, therefore, should be considered to involve translational exercises at an advanced but non-professional level.

In these translation courses, students are provided with (a) a basic theoretical knowledge of translation, (b) a very brief contrastive study of Vietnamese-English, (c) some translating techniques, and (d) real-life tests of translation. The Translation course often begins with an obligatory theoretical translation session, typically named ‘Introduction to General Translation Theory’. Students are provided with a theory of
translation and practice the theory on sample translations of difficult texts from different genres and different source texts.

The main method most teachers use in these translation classes is still a traditional approach. The problem is that, while using the same traditional approach, different teachers have their own ways of understanding the purpose of translation and delivering their Translation class. Some use the class as a means of improving ‘style’ or ‘register’ in the target language, with their own definition of that style. Other teachers use it as a means of increasing vocabulary (synonyms, lexical sets, terminology, idioms) and flexibility in grammatical shifts. Others simply consider it to be a place to exercise virtually literal translation, or to expose the mechanics of the foreign language. Some of the specific problems that teachers usually focus on in these Translation class are mostly semantic or syntactic: usage of unusual collocations, words used in a special sense, peculiar sentence-lengths, and grammatical constructions. The method that most teachers still utilise is to have their students translate a certain text, then have their students read or write their answers, and then comment on the students’ work. The texts chosen tend to be extracts from literary texts or newspapers, and students are often asked to prepare their own version at home. In Franklin and Klein-Bradley’s (1991:1) words,

the ‘author’ of the texts is, in a sense, the teacher or examiner: he chooses them, he may adapt or abridge them for teaching or examination purposes; and sometimes might even write them himself. The ‘addressee’ of the ‘translation’ is the very same person who selected or wrote the text in the first place, namely the teacher or examiner, who does not ‘use’ the text but evaluates it.

The point of any discussion in class between teachers and students is often concerned with the correct language use, and this, of course, depends very much on the text selected. This practice produces one dangerous consequence: some important issues of grammar may be ignored if they do not happen to appear in the selected texts. Besides, in these discussions, the pragmatic and discoursal problems are often ignored or emphasised less than those
grammatical ones found in the specific texts. Also, as Franklin and Klein-Bradley admonish, this way of choosing texts for translation teaching does not benefit students because the text may neither serve to communicate the message of a text to everyone, nor develop the language competence of students, nor teach the students to translate.

As texts are used to illustrate or demonstrate a certain point in translation theory, they should be carefully and systematically chosen. However, the observation by the present author is that the selection of material is still very much up to the individual preference of the teacher, who relies very much on his/her intuition. Some teachers choose a topic as a framework for selecting texts and for setting tests, for example, economics, arts, education, etc. Furthermore, examination questions also are posed very much intuitively. Most of the translation tests do not include questions to test the theoretical knowledge of the students. The marking of these students’ papers is often done by only one teacher-in-charge, which reduces objectivity in evaluation.

Apart from the problem of choosing the texts, the method of teaching is another issue of concern. Simply delivering a text and commenting on it is not objective because it is based on the teacher’s own judgment. Secondly, it gives the students the feeling that the teacher’s translation is the only correct one, while there are often no completely logical or standard answers in translation. Thirdly, this quite individualistic way of teaching makes it difficult for practitioners to compare teaching experiences.

The theoretical assumption underlying these translation classes appears to be that advanced learners of a language should be able to translate as a natural result of their competence in two languages. This assumption is similar to the ‘unnaturalism’ theory of Harris (1977) which claims that translation competence is something that bilingual children develop as they carry out ‘natural translation’ and that the linguistics of bilingualism might also be the linguistics of translation (Harris, 1977; Harris & Sherwood, 1978). The same viewpoint is advanced also by Ballard (1984:17) who says that the heart of teaching translation is in ‘the use of two languages at the same time’, and by Koller (1979:40) who defines translation competence as the ability to ‘put together the linguistic competencies gained in two languages’. However, this viewpoint has not been favoured recently by those
who seek institutional and curricular independence and a more specialised place for teaching translation.

2.3 TRANSLATION INTO THE SECOND LANGUAGE
Although translation into a second language is a regular and accepted practice in many parts of the world, it is a relatively less-explored area in the field of applied linguistics. Furthermore, in many translation studies, the issue of language development of translators/second language learners has been ignored as they are often assumed to be perfectly bilingual. The reality is, as Campbell (1998:1) puts it, ‘in very many cases an individual translating into a second language is still acquiring that language, so that it makes sense to think of learning to translate as a special variety of learning a second language.’ Therefore, one way of investigating the translation competence of second language learners is to examine their interlanguage.

Campbell’s (1998) model of ‘translation competence’ is one of the rare translation studies dealing exclusively with translation into the second language. Based on an analysis of translation data collected from examinations and translation exercises, Campbell proposes a model of translation competence with three parts:

1. Textual competence: Translators have good textual competence when the target texts they write ‘have the structural features of formal, written English’ (Campbell, 1998:73). The structures used for evaluation are nominalisations, type/token ratios, word length, passives, prepositional phrases, etc.

2. Disposition: In terms of the strategies for choosing words in constructing target texts, Campbell develops two parameters for describing translators’ behaviours—persistent versus capitulating and prudent versus risk-taking.

3. Monitoring competence: There are two facets to this part—self-awareness and editing. Campbell finds that better translators have a higher awareness of the quality of their own output as well as more effective editing strategies.

Campbell’s model offers a good account of how translation competence can be decomposed into manageable linguistic features. Besides, it serves very effectively for studies that have pedagogical aims. The aim of Campbell’s book is ‘to produce a model of translation
competence that will serve a pedagogical purpose’ (1998:18). However, Campbell’s model gives the feeling that it is customised to the dataset he has collected and the analysis he was able to conduct based on his data (Shei, 2001). Furthermore, the non-trivial aspect of source text to target text correspondence is not investigated, whether from the structural, semantic, pragmatic or cultural level.

In his paper, ‘Critical Structures in the Evaluation of Translations from Arabic into English as a Second Language’, Campbell (2002) argues that the output of translators working into English as a second language can be evaluated by means of examining their ability to translate certain critical structures. He also argues that in timed translation into English as a second language, certain critical structures can provide important data, which can assist in evaluating translation students and in syllabus design. The paper begins with a discussion of the relevance and distinctiveness of translation into English as a second language (TRESL). A sketch of the underpinning theory is presented, followed by a study of translations by Arabic-English student translators. The paper ends with a discussion of the usefulness of critical structures in evaluating cross-phrase processing and cognitive style in translators working into English as a second language. This paper provides useful discussion on the way timed translation into English as a second language can be used to assist translation teaching and syllabus design.

To discuss the role of translation for language teaching and professional purposes with particular reference to German, Newmark (1991) reviews the role of translation into the second language. Newmark thinks that at the elementary stage translation into L2 ‘may be useful as a form of control and consolidation of basic grammar and vocabulary’. At the advanced stage of language teaching, translation from L1 to L2 and L2 to L1 can be considered as the fifth skill and the most important social skill since it promotes communication and understanding between strangers. However, Newmark stresses that translation into L2 is usually ‘imperfect, approximate and essential in many situations’ (1991:62).

Talking about the issue of translation into the second language, Kiraly (1995) suggests that it should not be done in a context where students’ second language communicative competence cannot reach a level that would allow them to translate competently. The reason for this claim is derived from Kiraly’s observation in one of his case studies that ‘neither
professionals nor nonprofessionals have the L2 communicative confidence and translator competence to translate adequately the text into English’ (1995:109). This, according to Kiraly, is due to the gap in translation training and the traditional way of teaching translation. Some recommendations Kiraly (1995:110) made to improve the situation include:

1. to determine an adequate level of L2 communicative competence, which can allow students to translate as competently as a trained native speaker of L2.
2. to improve L2 communicative competence by focusing on certain subcompetencies, i.e., textual and discourse competence, the skills to read and use parallel texts.
3. to establish curricula to compensate for incompletely developed L2 communicative competence.
4. to modify the expected outcome of the educational program and individual translation skill courses, if eventually the students’ L2 communicative competence cannot reach a level that would allow them to translate competently into the L2.
5. to encourage students to learn to accept their L2 deficiencies and teach them ways to identify flaws in their rough drafts.
6. to require students to work with L2 native speakers or with other translation schools in L2-speaking countries.

Klein-Bradley (1995), when summarising the present practice of using translation in German universities, states that a translation test is neither valid as a test of language proficiency nor as a test of real-life translation for the obvious reason that ‘even very advanced and proficient language learners with a wide vocabulary still make mistakes in grammar and syntax’ (1995:20). In spite of this, one important observation she makes is that for didactic purposes, we should still teach students to translate in both directions to ‘prepare them for what they may meet in later professional life precisely as non-professional translators’ (Klein-Bradley, 1995:21). This claim justifies the existence the significance of translation into the second language.
2.4 SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNERS AS TRANSLATORS

2.4.1 Why ‘Translators as Second Language Learners’?

The following claim of Anderman (1998b) can roughly describe the theoretical position among translation schools and researchers about the relationship between language teaching and translation teaching:

Attempting to develop translation competence in students, not yet linguistically proficient or sufficiently culturally and socially aware, may be a case of trying to make them run before they can walk (Anderman 1998b:5).

In defense of her theoretical position in designing a translation program at undergraduate level, Schaffner (2000:145) argued that the above-mentioned metaphor of ‘running before walking’ is not correct. Firstly, if students finish their first degree in languages, their perception about ‘translation’ has already been formed based on the experience they had in the language programs at undergraduate level, where translation is simply a language testing and language teaching device, rather than a professional training. Consequently, they need to ‘unlearn’ these perceptions in order to have a more proper attitude about learning translation.

Schaffner argues that if Anderman’s metaphor is correct, the students are expected to continue to walk (to continue developing their linguistic competence) until they are able to have the ability to run. But the fact is that when continuing and completing the walking process to move into the ‘running’ process, the students may ‘find themselves stumbling at the first hurdle’, or they may not know which direction to take at the crossroads where they have to change from ‘walking’ to ‘running’

Schaffner states that this analogy can only be applied if linguistic competence is the only prerequisite for translation competence. However, the truth is that translation competence is not just an enhanced linguistic competence. It includes more than a linguistic competence. Therefore, it is possible to initiate some programs to develop initial translation competence can be before the students are fully competent in their two languages. In other words, other competencies included in translation competence can still to be taught and developed
together with the linguistic competence. It follows therefore that translator training can be taught in a language learning.

Even though the general trend among many translation and interpreting schools is that students must acquire a good command of language before they start learning translation (Gile, 1995:209), the practice of teaching translation while the students are at the same time needing to improve their language competence is still very prevalent. According to Gile (1995:210), even in major interpreting schools in the West, where the border between language schools and interpreting schools is clearly set, students do not always meet the linguistic prerequisite, especially of the active languages\(^8\) (Caroll, 1978:12 quoted in Gile). In addition, their insufficient command in their working languages may even cause them to fail their final professional exam (Keiser, 1978:13-18). A similar situation is found in Spain. Trying to work out a suitable model for graduate programs in translating and interpreting, Pym (1992a:280) stated about translation training in Spain that

A conclusion requiring that students have a perfect command of foreign languages before learning about translation may be justified by as many facts and figures as you like, but it will not be adopted in Spain simply because it would mean teaching translation to virtually empty classes.

Pym’s quotation reflects the reality of translation training in Vietnam. Given that translation is a special language skill and should be learnt only after the students have a perfect command of foreign language (Seleskovitch, 1981), in Vietnam, where only a small proportion of Vietnamese have near-native ability in English and Vietnamese learners of English also have different levels of proficiency, the reality is that the translation training happens simultaneously with foreign language teaching. Although translation into the first language is a more felicitous way of translating, translation into the second language is still solicited in many branches of human activities and many professional translators’ work is done into their second language (Campbell, 1998; Shei, 2002; Weatherby, 1998). It is therefore a matter of fact that we have to deal with translators as learners of the target language. The issue is not trying to refuse or criticise the practice of translation into the

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\(^8\) The working language of the translator or interpreter (Gile, 1995:209)
second language, but to find a way to educate the translator in both translation skills and the language itself.

2.4.2 Studies of Second Language Learners as Translators
Many studies have been conducted not only with professional translators but also with advanced language learners as subjects. Dechert and Sandrock (1984) provided the first study in the field, trying to use introspective data with advanced language learners (university students of English philology) as subjects. In this study, the students were asked to translate from English within fifteen minutes with the free use of a dictionary. The students’ verbalisation about the production of their translation and each translation unit were recorded. Dechert and Sandrock (1984) reach the following conclusions:

1. The sentence was the basic unit of translation.
2. Once a solution had been found for the translation of a source text unit, subjects tended to keep their initial solution.
3. There was a strong tendency to retain the syntactic structure of the source text despite variations from the norms of usage of the target language.
4. There was a tendency to translate at the lowest (word) level and to move to the next translation unit level when the initial attempt failed.

Although similar conclusions are reached by Krings (1986a), she criticised this study on the grounds that the chosen text for the elicitation task was too easy and failed to provide any processing data. Krings’ argument is that subjects tend not to verbalise when dealing with easy translation units, and this seems to account for the relative low number of translation problems in Dechert and Sandrock’s study.

Another study was carried out by Krings (1986a:260-262), who had her students (Germany university students who were going to complete their master’s level teaching degrees in English) translate a text that included many potential problems with the hope that such a text will produce more processing data. The aim of her research was to explore the different strategies students use at three stages (comprehension, translation and evaluation)
of their translation process. She found that at the comprehension stage, students have massive recourse to dictionaries. At the translation stage, the students often associate only one target equivalent with the source unit, and in most cases solve the problem if finding an equivalent at no higher level than the word level (1986:399). At the evaluation and decision-making stage, two strategies are utilised by the subjects: (a) ‘playing-it-safe’ reduction strategy, where the students sacrifice some part of the meaning from the source text to be ‘safe’ and (b) ‘risk-taking’ strategy where the students try to produce a full translation closest to the meaning of the source text. Krings’ data analysis provided 117 translation strategies and came up with two models explaining translation processing, one to describe L1 to L2 translation and the other from L2 to L1. The results of the study showed that although the main strategy categories were basically the same in both language directions, the order of application of the strategies depended on the language direction.

Gerloff (1987) carried out a study with five American students of French, using the think-aloud protocols while translating a text from French into English. He set up a system with five categories for identifying linguistic levels of the source text at which individual translation strategies operate: morpheme, word, group, clause, and sentence. This system not only allowed Gerloff to look at the amount and proportion of processing done at each linguistic level, but also permitted the comparison of analyses across subjects to see whether professional translators process their texts in larger translation units compared to the novices. Gerloff failed to define the term translation strategy and therefore her study could not distinguish between strategic (controlled) and non-strategic (automatic) aspects of text processing. She also did not differentiate between (a) comprehension problem, (b) combined comprehension and expression problem and (c) expression problems. The main criticism of Gerloff’s study is that it just concentrates on comprehension and production in the second-language, rather than providing an investigation into the professional translation processes.

Lörscher (1991) carried out a study using talk-aloud data to find out the translation strategies students use. The subjects of Lörscher’s study were not professional translators, but students who were training to be English teachers. The result of Lörscher’s study tentatively suggests that students pay more attention to the formal linguistic sign, rather than to the sense of the message. They seem to be attracted to the one-to-one association between the source and the target language and are not often aware of the nonsense in their
translations, because they rarely check their translations to make sure that they make sense (1991:271-273). The direction of translation in the study was German-English, which is not often considered as the best practice in the world of professional translation. The use of advanced language learners as subjects also means that they have to encounter certain kinds of problems that professional translators do not have to deal with, that is to say, the gap in linguistic and cultural knowledge required to translate the text. Nevertheless, these students did not have to face the problems that a professional translator may face, that is to say, carrying out research and receiving customer requirements. Lörscher’s studies tell us more about language learning needs than about translation strategies (Fawcett 1997:141).

According to Kiraly (1995:47), among all these studies using the think-aloud protocol as a research method, only Krings’ can ‘draw conclusions from his data relevant to the teaching of translation skills to future translators’. The reason is because all of these studies used subjects who were neither professional translators nor translator trainees: most of the subjects in these studies were either second-language learners at secondary school level, philology students, or secondary school teachers in training. Kiraly therefore urges ‘the development of the discipline of translation studies for investigating the cognitive processes involved in translation’ (1995:47). In his opinion, these studies (Dechert and Sandrock, 1984; Krings, 1986a; Gerloff, 1987; Lörsche, 1991) cannot be considered as contributions to translation studies. Because ‘professional translation is not a simple transcoding process and translator competence is not coextensive with second-language competence’, the results of data collected from nontranslators are not valid and trustworthy. He also argues that the expectations and understandings of a nontranslator instructed to ‘translate’ for research purposes is not similar to a professional’s understanding of the process. Although he protests the use of nontranslators as subjects, Kiraly acknowledges the use of data-collection and analysis in these studies and suggests using them for professional translators and translation trainees to see how these three groups converge in their translation process.
2.5 TRANSLATION COMPETENCE AND SECOND LANGUAGE COMPETENCE

2.5.1 Translation Competence and Second Language Competence

Translation studies, as well as translation training, is based on the basic concept of Translation Competence. However, there are different ideas and theories put forward for a definition of translation competence. In general, according to Pym (2002), translation competence has been viewed from four main viewpoints: (a) as a mode of bilingualism, open to linguistic analysis, (b) as a question of market demands, in accordance with historical and social change, (c) as a multicomponent competence, involving sets of skills that are linguistic, cultural, technological and professional, and (d) as a supercompetence.

The first school of thought defines translation competence as a summation of linguistic competencies (see Wilss, 1982; Harris, 1977; Harris & Sherwood, 1978; Ballard, 1984). This school of thought is derived from Harris’s early work, which considers competence as something that bilingual children develop as they carry out ‘natural translation’. Therefore, any bilingual has a potential of becoming a translator and the linguistics of bilingualism may also become the linguistics of translation. According to Pym, the advantage of this idea of translation competence lies in its underlying naturalism (Harris’s natural translation), which ‘would inform later models drawing on cognitive linguistics’ (2002: 3).

The second school of thought develops the concept of translation competence in accordance with historical and social change. In 1988 Wilss introduced the concept of summation of declarative knowledge and ‘knowledge of translation processes’ to define translation competence from the perspective of psycholinguistics. Shreve (1997:130) says that language competence is ‘mapping abilities’ which translators can use in their translation tasks. This method of translation competence is a process in which the translator can ‘map mappings’17. Schaffner and Adab (2000) accept that translation competence involves many kinds of other competencies and the concept itself is ‘a cover term and summative concept for the overall performance ability which seem so difficult to define’ (2000). The main issue with the term ‘translation competence’ is that it is defined in so many different ways, from many different perspectives, from sociolinguistics, cognitive linguistics to psycholinguistics. The problem of this kind of defining ‘translation competence’, which is closely attached with one branch of linguistics, is that the concept of translation competence has to keep up with the development of linguistics itself, and may change constantly.
The third school of thought views translation competence as a combination of different skills, including linguistic, cultural, technological and professional skills. Mention could be made of Bell (1991) who includes target-language competence, text-type knowledge, source-language knowledge, subject area (real-world) knowledge, contrastive knowledge, decoding and encoding skills (communicative competence), which include grammar, sociolinguistics and discourse.

Nord (1991:165-166) distinguishes between the competence of a translator and the competence that translation practice develops in the language class, but she still accepts these two kinds of ‘competence’. Neubert (1994:412) introduces three components in the notion of translation competence: language competence, subject competence and transfer competence. Melis and Albir (2001:280), among a group of researchers to explore the Process of the Acquisition of Translation Competence (PACTE), define translation competence as ‘the underlying system of knowledge aptitudes and skills necessary in order to be able to translate’ and it consists of the following six skills:

1. Communicative competence in both languages.
2. Extralinguistic competence (e.g., the knowledge of the theory of translation).
3. Transfer competence: The ability to perform the entire process of transfer from the original text to the final text.
4. Instrumental-professional competence: Knowledge and skills relating to professional translation practice.
5. Psycho-physiological competence: The ability to apply all kinds of psychomotor, cognitive and attitudinal resources and skills in reading and writing.
6. Strategic competence: Conscious and sub-conscious, verbal and non-verbal individual procedures used to solve problems encountered during translation process.

Roberts (1984; cited in Delisle 1992:42) suggests a model of translational competence consisting of the five following components (adapted from Delisle).

1. Linguistic competence: The ability to understand the source language and produce acceptable target language expressions.
2. Translation competence: The ability to comprehend the meaning of the source text and express it in the target text without undue changes in form and to avoid interference.

3. Methodological competence: The ability to research a particular subject and to select appropriate terminology.

4. Disciplinary competence: The ability to translate texts in some basic disciplines such as economics, information science, law, etc.

5. Technical competence: The ability to use aids to translation such as word processors, data bases, dictaphones, etc.

To support her decision to implement translation training at the same time with language teaching at United Kingdom universities, Schaffner (2000:146) designed a model of defining translation competence similar to that of Roberts (discussed above). Schaffner’s reasoning is that we should focus on training these competencies right from the start of the program and teach students to translate while they are training in other competencies. The following competencies are included in Schaffner’s model:

1. Linguistic competence.

2. Cultural competence, i.e., general knowledge about historical, political, economic cultural, etc aspects in the target countries.

3. Textual competence, i.e., knowledge of regularities and conventions of texts, genres, text types.

4. Domain/subject specific competence, i.e., knowledge of the relevant subject, the area of expertise.

5. Research competence, i.e., a general strategy competence, whose aim is the ability to resolve problems specific to the cross-cultural transfer of texts.

6. Transfer competence, i.e., ability to produce target texts that satisfy the demands of the translation task.

This way of defining translation competence, which considers translation competence as consisting of many other small competencies requires much effort from linguists and translation researchers. It demands of linguists and researchers a neat and unified
classification of other competencies, such as linguistic competence, communicative competence, etc. However there is no agreement and consistency on this matter.

Jakobovits (1960, quoted in Savignon, 1983:23) is the first linguist to draw a distinction between linguistic competence and comprehension competence. According to him, ‘the distinction between linguistic competence and communicative competence is either not explicitly considered in most foreign language courses or it is tacitly assumed that the former must precede the latter, so that a certain high level of linguistic competence must be present before attempting the functional use of the foreign language’. Canale and Swain (1980) suggested the basic concept of communication competence include within it four competencies: (a) grammatical competence (linguistic competence in a strict sense), (b) sociolinguistic competence (using language appropriately in situation), (c) discourse competence (understanding and using texts) and (d) strategic competence (the ability to keep communication channels open, especially when other competencies are insufficiently developed).

The concept of linguistic competence, as seen above, can be variously defined and there is still debate regarding this in the applied linguistics tradition. The main question regarding this concept is whether ‘competence’ refers to ‘the knowledge of the language’ or ‘the ability to use the language’. If second language competence is just defined as ‘pure knowledge’ of the language, the objection is that it should also subsume the skill to apply that knowledge to actual usage. On the other hand, if competence is considered as the ability to use language, then the objection is that this kind of definition of ‘competence’ will involve so many aspects of language that it will become complex and confusing.

As seen from above, the model of the third school of thought which defines translation as a multicomponent competence also has many drawbacks. Firstly, because it is multicomponential, we cannot set the limit to the number of components. How many components are enough to describe translation competence? Secondly, as translation competence itself is defined to consist of many smaller competencies, a satisfactory definition will entail further definition of other sub-components. Thirdly, as the definition of translation seems to relate to ‘ideal’ competence, it would be incomplete without a model of the learning process (Waddington, 2000:135).
The fourth school of thought considers translation competence as only one skill, under the term of supercompetence. Wilss (1982:52) describes translation competence as the union of (a) source language receptive competence and (b) target language reproductive competence within (c) a supercompetence reflecting the ability to transfer messages between the two languages. Wilss’ idea is that the supercompetence is intertextual and not purely interlinguistic, which means that an individual who is fluent in a foreign language is not necessarily an effective translator. He also states that because translation competence is partially an interlinguial competence, it is clearly marked off from the four traditional monolingual skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Because translation competence is a super-competence, it requires not only a comprehensive syntactic, lexical, morphological knowledge of the respective source and target languages but a complete stylistic (textual) knowledge of the respective source and target language text worlds as well. Finally, the supercompetence implies the ability to synchronise these two (source and target) monolingual knowledge areas and bring about a communicative effective interlingual and intertextual transfer (1976: 120)

From the way Wilss describes the supercompetence, some components of translation competence are considered to be similar to those of bilinguals, but others, especially the skill to deal with textual style, are not.

Staying away from all these models of definition, Pym (1992a:281) suggests a minimalist definition of translation competence. According to him, translator training deals with two main abilities:

1. The ability to generate a series of more than one viable text (TT1, TT2 … TTn) for a pertinent source text (ST).
2. The ability to select only one viable TT from this series, quickly and with justified confidence.

The main advantage of this definition, according to Pym, is that it stays away from linguistic competencies or other related competencies. Instead, it just involves the translation process
and nothing but translation. Translation competence itself is like a process of generation and selection, a problem-solving process or a process of choosing between viable alternatives.

In this thesis, the definition of translation competence adopted will be that of Roberts (1984; cited in Delisle 1992:42) and Schaffner (2000). Roberts suggests five sub-competences under the umbrella term of ‘translation competence’. The two sub-competencies which are relevant to my studies are: (a) linguistic competence, which is defined as ‘the ability to understand the source language and produce acceptable target language expressions’, and (b) translation competence, which is defined as ‘the ability to comprehend the meaning of the source text and express it in the target text without undue changes in form and avoid interference’. This definition of translation competence is also similar to what is meant by the term ‘transfer competence’ (Schaffner 2000), which refers to the ability to produce target texts that satisfy the demands of the translation task.

This type of definition is chosen in this thesis for two reasons. Firstly, it has the advantage of separating linguistic competence and translation competence, although it still acknowledges that linguistic competence is an essential part. Using this type of definition, we can identify the two different types of possible problems facing students from two perspectives: linguistic and translational, while still being able to show students that translation does not only mean the ability to use two languages alone. The second reason for choosing this multi-component definition of translation competence is because of its relation to the activities and specific context of translator training in Vietnam, where language teaching and translation teaching occur simultaneously. It is rather difficult to separate translation competence from linguistic competence in Vietnam. Bassnett (1998b) states that the crucial difference between Translation Studies and Translation, as taught within a language learning programme, lies in the fact that while ‘the emphasis of the former is on the process, the focus of the latter is primarily on the product, since it is by comparing the product with the SL text that language competence can be assessed’ (1998b:111). As this thesis is to serve the translation taught within a language training program, the focus is on students’ translation as a product. Consequently, the definition of translation competence, which takes into account linguistic competence in the source language and the target language, can help us clearly define what kind of competence students lack. Other models of defining translation competence can be more efficient, but they pay more attention to
translation as a process, and have more to do with Translation Studies than Translation in a language learning context.

2.5.2 Language Competence

Bachman (1990) suggests a framework to describe language competence, which includes two main components: organisational competence and pragmatic competence (Figure 3.1). Organisational competence consists of grammatical competence and textual competence. Pragmatic competence includes not only sociolinguistic competence, but also the abilities related to the functions that are performed through language use. These components can interact with each other and with the features of language use situation.

![Diagram of Language Competence](image)

*Figure 3.1. Components of Language Competence (Bachman 1990).*

The shortcomings of Bachman’s framework, is that it seems not to cover the ability to use collocations and other prefabricated units of word combinations, which seem subsumed neither by the grammatical competence nor the textual competence (Shei, 2002). Therefore, Shei (2002) suggests changing the grammatical competence into lexical-grammatical competence to show the equal status between lexis and grammar in language competence.

2.5.3 The relation of Second Language Competence to Translation Competence

Wilss (1982) defines translation competence as one which consists of three partial competencies: source language competence, target language competence and super-competence. It follows that the competence dealing with the first and second language must be emphasised to develop translation competence. Even though translators are often
expected to be readily equipped with these competencies to deal with the source and target languages, these competencies may be incompletely developed. This necessitates the need to integrate translation skills instruction into foreign language teaching, so that translation students can develop translation competence and linguistic competence simultaneously. As Kiraly (1995:26) suggests ‘Language teaching can clarify the nature of the L1 and L2 competences that a professional translator must possess and use when translating’.

2.5.4 Competence in Translating into Second Language

With the purpose of knowing what constitutes the competence that a second language learner needs to have in order to do translation into that language, Shei (2002) builds up a model of competence, specifically for translators as second language learners. This model is the intersection where some linguistic and translation competencies overlap. Shei notes that from a second language perspective, he would not probe too deeply into abstract linguistic systems, and would investigate the pedagogically tangible, since competence is intermingled with performance. This way, it is still safe to claim that we are dealing with linguistic competence at a certain level.

To get some features of second language competence, Shei conflates the models of Canale (1983) and Bachman (1990). To obtain the features of translation competence, Shei combines the model of Campbell (1998) and Sofer (1998) in Table 2.1.
Table 2. 1

Features of Translation Competence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Second Language Competence</th>
<th>Translation Competence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Lexical-grammatical competence (from both Canale’s and Bachman’s grammatical competence)</td>
<td>1. Textual competence (Campbell)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Textual competence (Bachman’s subsuming Canale’s discourse competence)</td>
<td>2. Lexical competence (Campbell’s disposition)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Illocutionary competence (Bachman’s)</td>
<td>3. Monitoring competence (Campbell)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Sociolinguistic competence (Bachman’s and Canale’s)</td>
<td>4. Cultural competence (Sofer)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Strategic competence (Canale’s)</td>
<td>5. Self-updating competence (Sofer)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>6. Content-knowledge competence (Sofer)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>7. Velocity competence (Sofer)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>8. Research competence (Sofer)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>9. Hi-tech competence (Sofer)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The intersection of these two lists, one from Canale (1983) and Bachman (1990) and the other from Campbell (1998) and Sofer (1998), produces the following competences for a translator as a second language learner:

1. Lexical-grammatical competence
2. Textual competence
3. Sociocultural competence.

Shei does not focus on Canale’s strategic competence because it seems to deal with spoken interactions, rather than written language. One competence which is included in the language model, but not in the translation model, is also ignored by Shei. Campbell’s monitoring competence is not considered as important because Shei claims that it ‘seems more like an editing skill, rather than an inherent competence’. Other criteria of Sofer, self-updating, content-knowledge, research and hi-tech competence, are also excluded because they are not relevant to language competence. Therefore, all these competencies are treated as ‘peripheral’ competencies in Shei’s model (see Figure 3.2).
Figure 3.2. A Model of Translation Competence for Second Language Learners.18

Shei’s aim through this model is to explain that two kinds of learning activities, learning the second language and learning to translate into the second language, need to be combined at the same time. Although there are two main sets of competencies, one for the second language required for the second language learner, and one for translation as the translation competence of a fully bilingual translator, the boundary between these two sets is not clear cut from the model. Shei argues that these two subsets are interrelated, because a helpful pedagogical model should be beneficial to the acquisition of the second language while at the same time directly related to translation. A good learning pedagogy can also use translating into the second language as an effective means to enhance second language competence among learners. This explication of Shei seems to be in line with new perspectives of looking at translation, which no longer believe that any individual with knowledge of a foreign language can translate and that translating skills cannot be taught.

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18 From the model of Chi-Chiang Shei’s (2000) Ph.D thesis. The peripheral components of this model largely follow Sofer (1998), which is a practical guide for would-be translators. This reflects the application-oriented nature of the model. In this sense, the peripheral components are changeable following the most current trends in the practice of translation.
2.6 LINGUISTIC PROBLEMS OF SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNERS AS TRANSLATORS

2.6.1 General problems for translators

Nord (1992) suggests that translators usually encounter four main problems:

1. Pragmatic translation problems: arising from the particular transfer situation with its specific contrast of Source Language versus Target Language recipients, Source Language versus Target Language medium, Source Language versus Target Language function, etc.

2. Cultural translation problems: the result of the differences in culture-specific (verbal) habits, expectations, norms and conventions concerning verbal and other behaviours, such as text-type conventions, general norms of style, norms of measuring, formal conventions of marking certain elements in a text.

3. Linguistic translation problems: the structural differences between two languages in lexis, sentence structure and suprasegmental features give rise to certain translation problems, which occur in every translation involving a certain pair of languages, no matter which of the two serves as source and which serves as target language.

4. Text-specific translation problems: Any problems arising in a particular text specimen, which cannot be classified as pragmatic, cultural or linguistic, have to be classified as ‘text-specific’ translation problems, which means that their occurrence in a particular text is a special case. Figures of speech, metaphors, individual word creation or puns are examples of such problems. Since these problems do not fall under any one general heading, they should be avoided in the basic phase of translation teaching.

According to Nord, three main problems that should be mentioned in the translation process include pragmatic translation problems, cultural translation problems and linguistic translation problems. The present study aims to explore the third problem, which deals with the difficulty that Vietnamese ESL learners (who take up translation in their university class as a vocational training) usually have when rendering some structures from Vietnamese into English, as a result of the structural differences between the two languages.

Campbell and Hale (1999) explore the question of source text difficulty in translation. The authors are interested in finding out if translators working into different languages are
confronted with similar levels of difficulty. As there were English source text difficulties common to three unrelated languages (Arabic, Spanish and Vietnamese) the study takes into consideration comprehension and production skills. They hypothesise that there are two loci of difficulty. The first locus is comprehension, which is likely to be universal. Regarding the second locus, production, there may be different levels of difficulty depending on the lexis and grammar of the target language.

According to Nida (1964) one of the most serious problems that face a translator is to properly match the stylistic levels of two different languages. Translating involves more than finding corresponding words between two languages. Words are only minor elements in the total linguistic discourse. More important than that, the style of the language, the particular tone of the passage, may have more impact on the audience than each individual word. If the aim of the source language text is only to convey a piece of information to the reader, the referential meaning of words becomes quite significant, and the effect of style and/or tone diminishes. But if the aim of a source language text is not to convey a message, but to produce a certain impact on the reader through the use of a particular style, the translation of such a stylistic effect is then an essential part of the very act of translating. As Zaky (2001:2) put it, translation in such situation is ‘not just as an ornament that would bestow beauty upon the translated version, but an indispensable aspect of it, without which the translation ceases to be a translation in the full sense of the word’.

Wilss (1996) argues that the main task of translation is to establish correspondence between the source text (ST) and the target text (TT), thus taking into account the ST author’s intentions and at the same time trying to produce a translation in accordance with the TT reader’s expectations. All these attempts must aim at maintaining a minimum level of acceptability. Wilss (1996) also adds that translation is essentially a ‘derived’ linguistic activity in the sense that the purpose of translation is not the creation of an authentic text, but the transformation of a primary text into a secondary text, a sort of ‘writing without composing’ (Kaplan, 1983). In the process of translation, translators are assumed to be faced with two main kinds of problems: macrocontext and microcontext problems. By mentioning ‘macrocontextual problems’, Wills (1996) wants to imply the difficulty that translators face when they need to figure out what the content of the ST implies, what its communicative purpose is, and what readership the TT is intended for. But these macrocontextual situations
only raise minor problems. The major problem lies with microcontext, particularly, the handling of specific problems of the source texts. In other words, some microcontextual problems which seem to be singular phenomena, such as semantic vagueness, syntactic complexity, intricate text strategies (rhetorical strategies), theme/rheme distribution, central vs. peripheral information, metaphorical expressions, wordplay, ironic text elements, distorted or non-transparent formulations, morphological idiosyncrasies or innovation, adjective/noun collocations, prepositional phrases, string compounds, lexical gaps, and so forth, often necessitate time-consuming efforts.

Dodds (1999:57) mentions another aspect of translation difficulty when translating from L1 to L2 in the Italian context. According to him, in this direction of translation, the main problem does not lie in the choice of whether the translation should be free or literal or the approach should be communicative or semantic (Newmark, 1981a), but simply in the basic task ‘getting language right’; that is to say, to ensure the correct grammar, lexis and the idiom of English language, which is described as ‘an ever-present and ever-increasing problem even when students translate into their mother tongue’. In other words, as the key purpose of the teaching of translation and the training of translators is for teaching language, translation theory or discussions about methodology may still be needed, but they should not considered as the indispensable element.

2.6.2 Theme/rheme and functional sentence perspective in Translation
There are two ways through which we can approach a sentence meaning. Firstly, we can have access to the meaning by way of generative grammar, from the grammatical structure of the sentence and the function of its components. Secondly, the sentence can also be created by its conceptual structure, which is often called ‘theme-rheme’ organisation or ‘functional sentence perspective’.

Fawcett (1997:85) is one of the authors who mention the relationship between theme/rheme structure and translation. He does not go into detail in describing different perspectives of defining the term ‘theme’ and ‘rheme’; rather, he tries to give different examples of ‘theme/rheme’ in different languages to observe how translators handle these. His general approach is ‘we call whatever comes in first position in the sentence the theme’ and ‘whatever follows that is the rheme’. Themes are classified according to the nature of
the linguistic constituent in the first position, and when the linguistic constituent in the position is not the norm, it is a ‘marked theme’ (Egging 1994: 274ff). Fawcett says that theme-rheme has also been explained as Topic (what we are talking about) and Comment (what we are saying about it). According to Fawcett, this way of naming theme/rheme as Topic/Comment has to do with the way Egging defined the term ‘topical Theme’: the theme part of the sentence is not just the first word or phrase, but extends to include the first properly ‘topical’ item. That is to say, functional grammar acknowledges the ‘real’ topic in the sentence, but will give the theme a different name depending on what linguistic item comes first (topical, interpersonal, textual).

Fawcett cites Hawkins’ (1986:47) conclusion about the complicated phenomenon of theme/rheme. Hawkins recognises that the information structure of the sentence is ‘a more subtle phenomenon’ than imagined, and he points out that ‘there appear to be other pragmatic functions performed by word order variants which (if they have been discussed at all) have been lumped together under a simplifying theme-rheme rubric. Therefore, Fawcett advances the following advice on the translating of theme/rheme structure:

So rather than seeing sentence structure simply in terms of theme-rheme, given-new or topic-comment, translators need to be aware of a hierarchy of semantic weighting of information in and between sentences and the function it serves. They need to know what the ‘normal’ order of words is, in so far as there is one, and then to assess the meaning of any changes to that, since in language we convey meaning by doing what is less expected (Fawcett, 1997:88).

Fawcett also mentions the influence of unmarked and marked theme on the task of translation. The problem lies in the fact that ‘what is considered as marked theme and unmarked theme varies between languages’ (1997:88), and ‘not all languages organise theme-rheme in the same way and indeed may not even have a theme-rheme structure’ (1997:89). According to Fawcett, many unskilled translators may produce clumsy translations by unthinkingly reproducing source-language thematic structures. However, the reality of handling theme/rheme structure is ‘probably one area where seasoned translators in particular feel free to shift things around to their heart’s content without regard to any
Theoriser (1997:90). Gallagher (1993:152) also comes to a similar conclusion that ‘it is misleading to suggest … that the theme-rheme organisation of the source text must be preserved at all costs’. Fawcett concludes:

In summary, then, although the concepts of theme and rheme are useful to translators, more useful still is being able to interpret the reasons why things are put where they are in the sentence (focus, emphasis, contrast, presupposed knowledge, narrative presentation, sentence rhythm, etc.) and the various means for achieving those effects in the target language. Equally useful is the ability to decide whether or not, in a given translation situation, such things are worth attention. (Fawcett, 1997:90)

2.7 CONCLUSION
This chapter began by reviewing some basic issues and debates relating to the relationship between Translation Studies and Language Teaching. Both supporting opinions for and objections to the application of translation to language teaching were presented. Then it was argued that Translation should still be used in language teaching because it still appears to be effective in the context of some countries. The second section of the chapter depicted the reality of language teaching and translation training in Vietnam. The chapter examines the intersection where translation can inform the study of language teaching and second language acquisition. For practical purposes, this thesis limited itself to the point where translation and language teaching meet, rather than deeply researching Translation Studies. This chapter also reviewed most of the current studies in the field of translation into the second language. It pointed out the practical demand from the translation market to explain why translation into second language should still be explored and researched in spite of the possible criticisms from many translation scholars. It explicated why the thesis chooses second language learners as the subjects and relates to previous studies which also use second language learners as translators. Finally, the chapter briefly described some linguistic problems that second language learners may face as translators. This last part of the chapter reviewed those most directly related to the thesis, with specific reference to the theme/rheme and functional sentence perspective in Translation.
Chapter 3
Error Analysis and Contrastive Analysis

Error Analysis in Translation and Learner Translation Corpora

3.1 CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS HYPOTHESIS (CAH)
A question that is very well-explored in the literature of research in second language acquisition is whether the first language affects the acquisition of a second language. From the 1950s to the 1990s, the typical answer provided for this question was that ‘the individual tends to transfer the forms and meanings and the distribution of forms and meanings of their native language and culture to the foreign language and culture’ (Lado, 1957:2). As a result of this school of thought, the assumption underlying teaching methods then was that we could contrast the system of one language with the system of a second language in order to predict the difficulties the speaker of the second language will have in learning a first language.

3.1.1 The strong version of Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis
In the literature, CAH is classified into two versions. The first version, called the strong version, claims that (a) interference from the learner’s native language is the main obstacle to second language learning, (b) the greater the difference between the native language and the target language, the greater the difficulty is, (c) these difficulties can be predicted with the help of a systematic and scientific analysis, and (d) the result of contrastive analysis can be used as a reliable source in the preparation of teaching materials, course planning and the improvement of classroom techniques. The second version, called the weak version, suggests that linguists are able to use the best linguistic knowledge available to them in order to account for the observed difficulties in second language learning.

According to Oller (1972), the strength of the strong version of CAH is that it has validity as a device for predicting some of the errors a second language learner will make. Thus it provides a promising basis for investigating general properties of the mind and
seems to be a uniquely appropriate methodology for further study of the fundamental processes of transfer and interference in learning tasks (both verbal and nonverbal).

This version of CAH has a number of shortcomings which have been well documented since the early 1970s. The major criticism is the argument that CAH is strongly associated with behaviourism, which gradually lost credibility since the appearance of Noam Chomsky’s classic review of Skinner’s Verbal Behaviour (Chomsky, 1959). The flaws of CAH and its supposed ability to predict errors were also challenged by many studies (Peck, 1978, Schumann, 1978). These studies have shown that many errors predicted to cause learning difficulties for students do not pose any problems. The reason for this failure, according to Banathy and Madaras (1969), is because the continuum of same-similar-different is not necessarily parallel with the continuum of no problem-easy-difficult; rather, they form a matrix. In other words, the assumption that whatever is similar is easy, or whatever is different is difficult, proved to be erroneous (Banathy & Madaras, 1969). In a study of the errors of students learning French as a second language, Buteau (1970) indicates that the French sentences that correspond literally to their English equivalents are not necessarily the easiest to learn and that the probability of errors could not be assessed only from the degree of divergence of the two linguistic structures, and consequently other factors of difficulty must be hypothesized.

Odlin (1989) concluded that the major reason for the failure of CAH theory lies in the fact that structural similarities and dissimilarities between two linguistic systems and the processing of linguistic means in actual production and comprehension are two quite different things. Contrastive linguistics is concerned with the former, while acquisition has to do with the latter. Thus, a learner with a given first language background may find it easy to learn a specific second language structure, but hard to produce that structure because his ability of producing that structure does not necessarily depend on his ability of comprehending it. Consequently, this structure has no uniform effect on the learner’s acquisition capacity. Sharing the same point of view as Odlin, Long and Sato (1984) also pointed out that one could not depend upon the analysis of a linguistic product to yield meaningful insight into a psycholinguistic process.

Another consideration of the possibilities and limitations of CAH has been put forward by Sciarone (1970). In his paper, Sciarone argues that it is too simplistic to have the
supposition that the difficulties of a foreign language can be predicted and some corresponding structures are easy while different structures are difficult. Apart from pinpointing the limitations of CAH, Sciarone proposes that CAH is able ‘to give a linguistic analysis of the problematic language material, revealing the cause of the difficulty, and making possible attempted solutions of these problems, of which we have discovered the possible linguistic cause’ (1970:127).

Also referring to the lack of success in predicting learners’ difficulties to explain CAH’s loss of popularity, Hughes (1980) refers to three main elements of the learning environment: the learner, what has to be learned, and the way in which what has to be learned is presented to the learner. He argues that CAH has undervalued the contribution of the learner, failed to recognize fully the nature of what has to be learned, and did not take into account the way the L2 is presented to the learner.

The validity of contrastive analysis is even more seriously challenged when a number of errors do not appear to be due to native language influence. To illustrate this, a survey of 8 experimental studies (Ellis, 1985:29) shows that the percentage of errors deemed to be due to L1 interference could vary from 3% (Dulay & Burt, 1973) to 50% (Tran Chi Chau, 1974; Lott, 1983), with 3 studies reporting a figure between 30 and 33% (Grauberg, 1971; Flick, 1980; George, 1972). Ellis points out that some errors attributed to language transfer could be developmental errors. Taylor’s (1975) study also confirms the weakness of an interlingual transfer-based theory of errors in his study on the use of overgeneralisation and transfer learning strategies by elementary and intermediate students of English as a Second Language (ESL). Taylor’s study indicates that elementary students’ reliance on the transfer strategy was significantly higher than that of intermediate students. On the other hand, intermediate students’ reliance on over-generalization was significantly higher than that of elementary students.

In order to gain more academic legitimacy, the strong version of CAH needs more research from linguists, who could provide firmly-established theoretical premises. Firstly, it requires linguists to establish a set of linguistic universals formulated within a comprehensive linguistic theory, which deals with syntax, semantics and phonology. Secondly, linguists have to advocate a theory of contrastive linguistics in which they can describe two languages to be compared. These two procedures, however, are not feasible, as,
according to Wardhaugh (1974), they are ‘pseudo-procedures’—procedures which linguists claim they could only follow if there were enough time.

A complete rejection of CAH for pedagogical purposes is to be found in Ritchie (1967), who points out that a course that concentrates on the main trouble spots, without due attention to the structure of the foreign language as a whole, will leave the learner with ‘a patchwork of unfruitful, partial generalizations’ and a consequent ‘lack of confidence in his intuitive grasp of the foreign language’ (Ritchie, 1967:129).

The conclusion of all this criticism against CAH is that, as Oller (1972:97) asserted, ‘We should be careful not to underestimate its importance as a research tool but we should note that as a basis for a total foreign language program, CA is decidedly inappropriate’. The idea being put forward here is largely in agreement with Nickel (1971) who has noted that, as a basis for a total language teaching program, CAH by itself is quite inadequate. To propose CAH as the basis of organizing a total instructional program (or even as the central component of such a program) is to misunderstand the very nature of the language teacher’s task.

In the following two decades the potential role of CAH in language teaching and learning was further undermined by numerous studies, which concluded that negative transfer was the cause of a relatively small proportion of errors in language learning (cf. Delay & Burt, 1972; George, 1972; Krashen & Pon, 1975; Richards, 1971). It was the findings of such studies that Duly, Burt and Krashen (1982:5) used to justify the following position:

Learners’ first languages are no longer believed to interfere with their attempts to acquire a second language grammar, and language teachers no longer need to create special grammar lessons for students from each language background.

3.1.2 The weak version of Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis

As an attempt to ‘make up for’ all of the flaws of the strong version often criticized to be too intuitive, Wardhaugh (1970) advocated a weak version for CAH in which the emphasis of the hypothesis was shifted from the predictive power of the relative difficulty to the explanatory power of the observable errors (Wardhaugh, 1970:126). In other words, it is
Indeed necessary to have a comparison between two language systems to predict some learning difficulties, but these predictions can only become useful after they are empirically checked with actual data of learners’ errors. This version has later been developed into Error Analysis (EA). While CA follows a deductive approach, EA adopts an inductive one; that is, it aims to draw inferences about difficult areas from studying actual errors. The starting point of this approach is provided by real evidence from such phenomena as faulty translation, learning difficulties and residual foreign accent. It is the real data from the learners’ performance that makes EA more descriptive than CA and therefore, more acceptable. Besides, EA is also more plausible, as it makes fewer demands of contrastive theory than the strong version. However, like any other approach, EA has advantages, as well as weaknesses.

3.2 ERROR ANALYSIS

3.2.1 What Is Meant by ‘Error’

Before the 1960s, when the behaviouristic viewpoint of language was the dominant one, learner errors were considered as something undesirable, and making an error could be undesirable to proper language learning processes. According to this school of thought, errors are due to the inadequacy in teaching methods. With a ‘perfect’ teaching method, errors would never be committed. As a ‘perfect’ methodology is nothing but an illusion, this way of thinking is obviously naive. With the appearance of the concept of ‘Universal Grammar’, proposed by Chomsky (1957), and his rationalistic claim that human beings have an innate capacity which can guide them through a vast number of sentence generation possibilities, many language teachers gradually moved away from the behaviouristic language learning style and emphasized the cognitive approach. The largest contribution of this new linguistic theory of Chomsky is the interest it raised from researchers into learners’ errors, as a means of hypothesis formation.

Accordingly, a more favourable attitude has developed for EA during the 1970s and 1980s. Corder (1967) was the first to advocate the importance of errors in the language learning process. He suggested that by classifying the errors that learners made, researchers could learn a great deal about the second language acquisition process by inferring the strategies that second language learners were using. For learners themselves, errors are
‘indispensable’, since making errors can be regarded as a device the learners use in order to learn (Selinker 1992:150). Selinker (1992) pointed out two highly significant contributions that Corder made in the field of second language acquisition: ‘that the errors of a learner, whether adult or child, are (a) not random, but are in fact systematic, and are (b) not ‘negative’ or ‘interfering’ in any way with learning a target language, but are on the contrary a necessary positive factor, indicative of testing hypotheses’.

Researchers are interested in errors because errors are believed to contain valuable information on the strategies people use to acquire a language (Richards, 1974; Taylor, 1975; Dulay & Burt 1974). Different definitions of the concept of ‘error’ have been developed from different perspectives in the error analysis literature.

According to Corder’s definition (1967), which is partially traced back to the Chomskian dichotomy between ‘competence’ and ‘performance’, mistakes are adventitious, random errors in performance due to memory lapses or physical state; but errors, on the other hand, are systematic and reflect a defect in knowledge (i.e., linguistic competence). According to this definition, while a mistake refers to a performance error that is either a random guess or a slip, errors refer to idiosyncrasies in the interlanguage of the learner, which are direct manifestations of a system within which a learner is operating at the time. Put another way, an error is a noticeable deviation from the adult grammar of a native speaker, reflecting the interlanguage of the learner.

Another definition of errors is suggested by Dulay, Burt & Krashen (1982) who claimed that the term ‘error’ can be used to ‘refer to any deviation from a selected norm of language performance, no matter what the characteristics or causes of the deviation might be’. Another definition of ‘errors’, is put forward by Lennon (1991:182): ‘a linguistic form or combination of forms which, in the same context and under similar conditions of production, would, in all likelihood, not be produced by the speakers’ native speaker counterparts.’

3.2.2 The classification of errors
Besides the problems of definition, the classification of errors also draws a lot of attention from researchers. Burt and Kiparsky (1974:73) distinguish between global errors and local errors. A global error is one which involves ‘the overall structure of a sentence’ and a local error is one which affects ‘a particular constituent’. On the global level, errors are classified
by Corder (1973:277) into four main categories: omission of some required element, addition of some unnecessary or incorrect element, selection of an incorrect element, and misordering of elements. Levels of language can be considered within each category: phonology, morphology, lexicon, syntax and discourse.

Using the source as the standard for categorising, errors can be categorised into interlingual errors and intralingual errors (Richards, 1971). Errors found to be traceable to first language interference are termed interlingual. A large number of similar errors, however, are found to be committed by second language learners regardless of their first language. These are termed intralingual errors. They are often analysed to see what sorts of strategies are being used by the learners. Intralingual errors include: overgeneralisation, simplification, communication-based and induced errors.

Taylor (1975) has a different way of defining overgeneralisation errors; he considers overgeneralisation errors as ‘any error which can be attributed to the application of a rule of English in an inappropriate situation’. Transfer errors, in Taylor’s taxonomy, are classified as any error in target language which can be attributed to the structure of the native language. According to him, translation errors are ones which change the desired response in a significant way. Errors of this kind involve simple substitutions of one syntactically correct structure for another equally syntactically correct, but semantically incorrect, alternative. According to Taylor (1975), most translation errors can be attributed to simple forgetting or lapses of attention, and are, in this respect, comparable to Chomsky’s ‘performance errors’ (1965). When an error cannot be accounted for in terms of overgeneralisation, transfer, or translation strategies, it is classified as an error of indeterminate origin (Taylor, 1975).

The three other kinds of errors, which are adapted from Selinker (1972), are simplification, communication-based errors, and teaching-induced errors. Simplification errors occur when the learners tend to reduce the target language to a simpler system. When the learner incorrectly labels the object, but successfully communicates a desired concept, this kind of error is named communication-based error (also see Tarone, 1980). The last type of error, teaching-induced error, happens as a result of inappropriate training, the over-emphasising of drilling technique on a certain linguistic item (Stenson, 1974).
3.2.3 Interlanguage Theory

Errors are no longer considered undesirable, but indispensable devices learners use to test their hypotheses. Indeed, the appearance of Copper’s ‘hypothesis testing’ theory (1970), Selinker’s ‘interlanguage’ (1972) and Nemser’s ‘approximate language’ (1971) and Corder’s concept of ‘idiosyncratic dialect’ (1967) suggest the existence of ‘a separate linguistic system based on the observable output which results from a learner’s attempted production of a target language norm’ (Selinker, 1972:35). Copper (1970:306) notes that ‘second language deviations are not random but systematic and reflect implicit hypotheses as to the nature of the language being learnt.’ In light of these new concepts, a number of articles have been written to show how error analysis can contribute to the notion of interlanguage by pinpointing those areas in which target language rules have been internalized.

To illustrate this, Azevedo (1980) carried out research on the interlanguage of advanced learners of Spanish. In his study, Azevedo discovered that although these students had internalized a large number of rules of Spanish, their command of these rules was not entirely accurate. Although they could apply these rules in isolation or in situations requiring a combination of only a few of these rules at a time, they seemed to have difficulty in bringing a large number of rules into play at the same time, in order to build sentences with multiple embeddings. Another conclusion of Azevedo (1980) is that the interlanguage of these Spanish students, when compared with the target language, reveals gaps noticeable at the morphological, syntactical, semantic, and stylistic levels, which are filled by rules of their mother tongue. By recognizing some cases in which Spanish rules coexist and alternate in performance with English rules, Azevedo suggests that the study of interlanguage should take into account not only errors of different types, but also ‘non-errors’; that is, correct constructions, which might have contained the same errors. This method, according to Azevedo, would not only create a more accurate description of the interlanguage considered, but also provide instructors with useful knowledge about areas of the target language that have been mastered, and which need further work. Though the analysis of a small corpus is too limited to yield much information on the interlanguage of each individual, Azevedo’s study enables us to advance a few general conclusions about their collective état de langue, which may be representative of a certain class of advanced learners.
To make a clear distinction between CA and EA, interlanguage is often cited as the essential parameter. The study of interlanguage is concerned with describing learner language, prior to explaining it. Interlanguage can be explained in terms of referring to L1 and L2 comparatively. While predictive CA deals with some features of learners’ interlanguage by comparing L1 with L2, EA operates on the basis of comparing interlanguage with L2.

3.2.4 Strengths and weaknesses of Error Analysis

According to Buteau (1970:144), EA is important in that ‘error-based analyses are not only fruitful but also necessary to work out and test hypotheses concerning factors that set degrees of difficulty in second language learning at the intermediate level’. Brown (1980) also believes that error analysis can easily supersed contrastive analysis, as only some of the errors a learner makes are attributable to the mother tongue, that learners do not actually make all the errors that contrastive analysis predicts they should, and learners from disparate language backgrounds tend to make similar errors in learning the same target language. However, Brown draws our attention to one danger of error analysis: it may overemphasize the importance of production data. Many researchers pay attention to production data, but comprehension data is equally important in developing an understanding of the process of second language acquisition.

Halliday (1964) states that it is useful to construct a purely descriptive framework for the analysis and notation of errors, which takes into account the level of language and the various categories involved. After the errors have been collected, the error diagnosis can be done in two ways: descriptively or comparatively. The descriptive method is more preferred because it yields a simpler correction and can be used in language classes with students from different backgrounds. If the teacher believes that the only cause of the error is due to interference, the error can also be explained ‘comparatively’, as if it comes from the interference of the native language. But this second way of error diagnosis is rather limited as it can only be used in classes with students with the same native language background.

However, in the 1980s, EA gradually lost its popularity as more and more criticism was made against its approach and method. According to Chau (1975:122), the most serious of these is a lack of objectivity in its procedures of analysis, of defining and categorizing
errors. Another limitation of EA is its lack of explanatory function, as most error analyses just classify lists of categories of errors according to their frequency of occurrence, rather than giving an explanation. In terms of categorisation, Strevens (1969:6) claims that ‘some errors are obvious, but many are either multiple errors (in the sense that they are partly grammatical and partly lexical) or are difficult to categorise in any linguistic way’. Another major criticism, made by Schachter (1974), is that most of the error analysis just focuses on errors and does not deal with avoidance. A learner who, for one reason or another, avoids a particular sound, word, structure or discourse category may be assumed incorrectly to have no difficulty therewith. For example, Schachter found that it was misleading to draw conclusions about relative-clause errors among certain learners of English. Native speakers of Japanese were largely avoiding that structure and thus not manifesting nearly as many errors as some native Persian speakers. Furthermore, EA did not deal with what students were doing that caused them to succeed; that is, it did not deal with what led to learning.

Recognising these weaknesses of EA, Duskova (1969) attempts to find the answer to the question whether contrastive analysis of the source and the target language can be replaced by error analysis. Utilising a corpus of written papers of 50 Czech postgraduate students, he summarises all sources of errors in foreign language learning. His conclusion is that the value of contrastive analysis cannot be underestimated, both as a means of preventing and remedying errors. He adds that the teaching materials based on contrastive analysis will be much improved if they can include the most common errors predicted by contrastive analysis alone. Duskova also found that categories that exist in both languages but display differences in their functions and distribution, although giving rise to many errors, do not seem to be the most potent source of errors.

Dulay, Burt & Krashen (1982) sum up the three major conceptual weaknesses of EA as follows: (a) the confusion of description of errors with error explanation (the process and product aspects of error analysis), (b) the lack of precision and specificity in the definition of error categories, and (c) simplistic categorisation of the causes of learners’ errors.

3.2.5 The resilience of Contrastive Analysis and Error Analysis
In the seventies, studies of language transfer, shaped at that time by the behaviourist paradigm, went into temporary eclipse due to the rise of cognitive psychology and
Chomskian linguistics (e.g., Dulay & Burt, 1974, 1975). However, since the existence of cross-linguistic influences is undeniable, the reconceptualisation of language transfer as a process within a cognitivist paradigm soon followed, and during the last few years of the eighties cross-linguistic phenomena received increasing attention (e.g., Gass & Selinker, 1983; Kellerman, 1979, 1986; Kellerman & Sharwood-Smith, 1986; McClure & Bransfiled, 1990; McLaughlin, 1987; Odlin, 1989). To confirm the return of CA in the study of second language acquisition process, Gass and Selinker (1983:7) stated, ‘we feel, however, that there is overwhelming evidence that language transfer is indeed a real and central phenomenon that must be considered in any full account of the second language acquisition process.’

Further evidence of the rehabilitation of CA came in the form of two volumes published in the latter part of the eighties by Kellerman and Sharwood-Smith (1986) and Odlin (1989). A striking aspect of these two volumes is their focus on research on the role of negative transfer, or cross-linguistic influence, as it is now called, in the language acquisition process and the almost complete neglect of the pedagogical implications of the various findings. This reappearance of the interest into the field of CA in the late 1990s confirms Nehls’ statement (1975:61) that ‘even if all the just mentioned reasons for the explanation of errors are taken into account, contrastive analysis remains an important factor in error analysis’ for “learners” mother tongue will always be present as a factor or interference or support in the teaching process’ (Fried, 1968:38). In 1996, Sheen demonstrated the renewed interest in CA. Sheen showed that CA was rejected in the seventies, because of its close association with the stigmatised structural method, not from a demonstration of its inappropriateness on the basis of empirical evidence. Sheen’s studies also demonstrated that a deductive approach exploiting CA input is more effective in minimizing error rates than an inductive approach that does not take it into account. Sheen also stresses that although the nature of the linguistic phenomenon of language transfer still remains inconclusive, decisions on language pedagogy cannot wait for such research, in order to attempt to provide definite answers to major problems. He suggests that

If cross-linguistic influence plays a crucial role in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and, by extension, language learning in the formal classroom, it is
plausible that teaching materials and methods should take it into account. In the present climate of inductive approaches and communicative methodology, it is largely ignored. There is, therefore, a need for multiple, replicatory classroom-based studies to evaluate the efficacy of materials and teaching which attempt to exploit CA input in a variety of ways. (1996:187)

Another reevaluation of the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis during the late nineties is that of Hayati (1997). In his review, Hayati attributes the temporary disappearance of CAH during the 70s and 80s to three problems: (a) the vagueness of its definition, (b) the vagueness of the two versions and (c) the basic assumptions underlying the hypothesis. Hayati has therefore tried to reformulate the CAH with reference to the observations made by many linguists, and the fact that not all errors are a result of interlingual interference. His argument is that even though it has been proved through many contrastive studies that not all errors are as a result of interlingual interference, this does not imply that ‘interference’ has no effect on the process of language learning (c.f. James, 1980; Fisiak, 1981; Broselow, 1984; Sajavaara, 1984; Bot, 1986; Odlin, 1989; Leather & James, 1991; Vroman, 1990; Hayati, 1995, among others). Hayati carried out a contrastive analysis of English and Persian stress, incorporating error analysis and claimed that ‘it is possible to predict in general that there will be difficulties in learning a second language in certain conditions. But, it is not so easy to predict the type and source of error without experimental verification’ (1997:51).

To sum up, Carl James (1994:196) remarked on the present status of CA and EA as follows:

There is still a great deal to be said and a great deal of work to be done in CA and EA. They are vital components of the applied linguistic and language teaching enterprise. In English, one talks of something being ‘as dead as the dodo’, the extinct bird of Mauritius. If CA/EA is a dodo, then there is no point floging a dead horse: if alive and well, as is certainly the case, she deserves to be studied for her rich plumage.
3.2.6 Most recent research in CA and EA

Faghih’s (1997) study is noticeable in terms of language transfer errors. In his study, he undertakes an overview of language transfer and a renewal of interest in contrastive analysis as a suitable testing ground for language transfer. Focusing on Iranian students’ difficulty in learning the English definite article ‘the’, CA shows that in Persian, there is no single word corresponding exactly to the English definite article. Another study which also deals with language transfer errors is Koizumi’s (1998). In his study, Koizumi observes and analyses Japanese high school students’ errors due to language transfer. The study focuses on written language and is based on classroom research. It provides possible ways of explaining second-language acquisition. Two other studies investigating errors in writing are those of Olsen (1999) and Calvez (2000), who used error analysis as a research tool to detect the number and nature of language problems encountered by Norwegian and French students in writing English.

In the field of syntax, recent studies are those of Noor (1996), Kim (1998) and Miyao (1999). While Kim presents a rationale for analysing errors and syntactic maturity to better understand strategies employed by students when writing in a second language, Noor’s study is a review of the most common syntactic errors made by native speakers of Arabic learning English as a second language. The significant discovery of Noor’s study is that the most common source of error is the influence of the native language, and that in processing English syntactic structures, native speakers of Arabic adopt certain strategies similar to those of first-language learners, including simplification and overgeneralisation. However, Noor’s study, is more a review of all previous studies in error analysis than an error analysis in itself.

Apart from syntactic errors, grammatical errors are another field that has recently attracted researchers’ interest. Reima’s study (2000) is very much related to the present research as it tries to understand learners’ transfer competence, the difficulties they face in L1/L2 translation. Reima’s study focuses on errors in the system of grammatical agreement. The results of her study show that 62% of the errors of grammatical agreement are interlingual and 38% intralingual. Nevertheless, her study only covers errors of grammatical agreement from three sources: interlingual, intralingual and performance errors.
Furthermore, it focuses more on pedagogical implications and does not try to provide an explanation for the errors.

After two decades of temporary eclipse, since the late 1990s, besides its traditional role, EA came back in a new form with the assistance of computer-aided error analysis (Dagneaux, Denness & Granger, 1998). With this new technique of error analysis, large corpora of English written by students can be analysed and lists of all the different types of errors and error counts can be obtained in a matter of seconds. It is hoped that this new approach of error analysis will give new impetus to error analysis research and reestablish it as an important area of study.

3.3 ERROR ANALYSIS IN TRANSLATION

3.3.1 Translation Errors

Firstly, even excellent translators make mistakes in translations. Secondly, some errors are almost unavoidable, given the fact that translators and interpreters inevitably have vocabulary and knowledge gaps. Neubert (1995) describes a translation error as:

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. (1995:415)

This statement partially describes the complication and difficulty in defining and identifying translation errors. Translation errors are interesting because they may be different from errors that would occur in spontaneous native language production. In translation, working with a source text induces errors under the influence of the morphology of source language, whereas in spontaneous second language production, the native morphological system of the language learner tends to interfere with the knowledge of the second language system.

In the case of second language learners, identifying translation errors is harder, as translation errors may be mixed up with linguistic errors. When the translators are also the second language learners, the model of analysing errors
and translation assessment must be based on the learning model, which is a combination of training in linguistics at the same time as training in translation.

Sager (1983) agrees that the most serious errors are those resulting from the incompetence in a second language. He also claims that in the field of written translation, errors resulting from misinterpretation of the text are one of the two major concerns of quality assessment.

Albir (1995) suggests a list of possible errors in translations as follows (Albir, cited in Waddington 2001b):

1. Inappropriate renderings, which affect the understanding of the source text. These are divided into eight categories: count sense, faux sense, nonsense, addition, omission, unresolved extralinguistic references, loss of meaning and inappropriate linguistic variation (register, style, dialect, etc.).
2. Inappropriate renderings, which affect expression in the target language. These are divided into five categories: spelling, grammar, lexical items, text and style.
3. Inadequate renderings, which affect the transmission of either the main function or secondary function of the source text.

Errors in translation influence the quality of the final product and the degree of miscomprehension from the reader. Accordingly, translation errors are often judged based on their importance and frequency. According to Nord (1995), the most serious error in translation is pragmatic. Larose (1989) thinks that the textual level where the errors occur (superstructure, macrostructure, microstructure) will decide the seriousness of the error, i.e., if the error occurs on a higher level of text, it is considered more serious. Honig (1988) and Gouadec (1989), on the other hand, suggest that it is the extent to which the error infringes on the effectiveness of the target text that decides its seriousness. However, Newmark (1988:189) simply divides most of the ‘mistakes’ into two types: referential and linguistic. In his categorisation, referential mistakes refer to all mistakes relating to facts or information in the real world. Linguistic mistakes, on the other hand, result from the translator’s lack of proficiency in the foreign language. Linguistic mistakes include words, collocations, and idioms.
Seguinot (1990) gives some comments about comprehension errors in translation. According to him, errors not only tell us something about the quality of a translation, but they are also ‘windows’ into the translating process itself. In the field of linguistics, error analysis has been used to provide evidence about the organisation of mental grammars (for example Cutler (1982) and Fromkin (1980)) and to postulate intermediate grammars or interlanguage in the language learner. Translation errors provide two kinds of information: an indication of how information about language might be organized in the brain and an insight into the developmental process that takes place in translator training. The ability to translate is clearly not simply a case of developing automatic connections between items and structures in two sentences. The likelihood of there being interference from the source language may vary according to the positioning of the items information in a sentence.

Dodds (1999:58) also discusses the errors made in translating from Italian into English. He stresses the usefulness of using errors as an ‘authoritative reconstruction’, a term coined by Corder (1973:274), because through translation, students can show their ability to cope with target language problems that could be avoided in free expression exercises like composition or précis writing. As a result, a restricted form of expression like translation has the advantage of exposing students to problematic expressions in the source text, because students cannot always avoid these expressions. In Dodds’ opinion, errors in translation should be welcomed as they ‘form part of the student’s learning experience, suggesting that they are actively trying out and experimenting with linguistic structures in the foreign language’. In this sense, the error is an extraordinarily useful indicator of students’ progress and performance.

The course guide of the subject Translation Theory and Practice at the School of Humanities, Sussex University Language Institute (Yves Le Juen, 2003-04) defines that there are three kinds of errors in translation: slip, system and skills. Slips occur when the students can repair the errors when they are pointed out to them. In other words, these errors just reflect the bad performance of students, rather than a true expression of their own competence. The second type of errors is called system errors, in the sense that they are in the ‘language system’, (i.e., the surface sentence-grammar, the linguistic code) and ‘systematic’ in the same piece of the students’ writing. This second type of errors, similar to Corder’s definition of ‘errors’, are systematic, reflect a defect in knowledge (i.e., linguistic
competence) and are direct manifestations of a system within which a learner is operating at the time. The third type of errors involves the skill or ability to use the language, rather than the knowledge of language. The possible reason for these errors is that the language learner has not learned that aspect of grammar yet, or the use of idioms is not culturally appropriate.

Taylor (1975), who has carried out a study on errors of French learners, built a taxonomy of five different types of errors. Although this error taxonomy is set up in a context where students’ translations are used as an elicitation task and therefore has little to do with translation, it is worth mentioning the definition of ‘translation error’. In Taylor’s definition, translation errors are any errors which change the desired response in a significant way. These errors occur when there are simple substitutions of one syntactically correct structure for another which is equally syntactically correct, albeit semantically incorrect. In this sense, these ‘translation errors’ can be compared to the translation errors defined in this thesis.

In his analysis of translation errors carried out at English Language Teaching (ELT) Department of Trakya University, Coşkun (1997:45) explored whether knowledge of deep structure was enough for a good translation. The result of his study showed that students made errors both in comprehension and production, due to miscomprehension of the source text. As the students only used the one-to-one method to translate, they started to translate the first sentence and kept going until the last sentence of the source text. Furthermore, students only translated the surface structure (Coskun, 1997). This study demonstrates that a majority of students, especially linguistics students, still depend on surface structure to translate, and it is necessary to instruct them to pay attention to the deep structure before beginning their translation.

3.3.2 Models of Error Analysis in Translation

There is no unified framework to classify translation errors. One list suggested by the American Translation Association (ATA), is intended for standard error marking and explanation of work done by professional translators. In this framework, there are 22 types of errors which should be used as criteria for error marking and grading:

1) Incomplete passage, 2) Illegible handwriting, 3) Misunderstanding of the original text, 4) Mistranslation into target language, 5) Addition or omission, 6) Terminology, word choice, 7) Register, 8) Too freely translated, 9) Too literal, word-for-word translation, 10)

Although this list tries to include all different types of possible errors coming up from error corpus of translators, the problem of using this list for error marking is that it seems to focus more on the linguistic aspect of the translation tasks. It focuses more on sentence-level errors, rather than text-level errors. This list, therefore, should be used only in the context where translators are language learners, who tend to focus more on the linguistic aspect of the task. As for professional translators or translators who receive professional training, this list fails to reflect a certain level of their skill, as it does not take other kinds of errors, i.e., discoursal and text-level, into discount. Koby and Baer (2004:2), attempted to adapt ATA error marking system for the classroom and to pinpoint the weakness of this grading system:

The scale was designed to evaluate translation as a product, while translator training for the most part concentrates on translation as process, with the goal of fostering in novice translators the self-awareness and self-monitoring necessary for success as a professional. Second, the scale assumes rather small units of translation. ... Most of the error categories assume units of translation at the level of word, phrase and sentence while translator training today attempts to focus student attention to higher, more global units of translation, on translation as text. The scale also failed to address other related skill sets, i.e. the ability to defend translation decisions, to carry out effective translation-related research and to use translation-related tools.

Given the fact that translating involves the skill of handling text and the combination of different sentences, this list needs to be improved in order to be a sufficient model in error grading. Koby and Baer (2004) suggested some ways to improve the ATA error marking. Firstly, the system should be adapted for use as a tool of formative not summative assessment, by letting students offer suggestions for revising the scales or suggesting additional or alternative errors. Furthermore, the marker could provide a translation brief
with every assignment. Koby and Baer also suggests that errors should be coded to facilitate the error marking.

Another marking system which also deals with translation errors is the one used by the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters in Australia (NAATI). The NAATI marking system is based on the following criteria

1. Mistranslation
2. Inappropriate vocabulary
3. Incorrect punctuation
4. Incorrect grammar
5. Incorrect spelling
6. Distortion of meaning
7. Unidiomatic usage
8. Stylistic infelicities

Gentile (1997) is the only scholar who gives comment on this system of assessment. He claims that evaluation criteria are usually vague and the specific meanings are often left to the interpretation of each individual. He also comments further on the difficulty of achieving standardisation across language pairs.

Discussing the issue of translation evaluation and translation errors, Kussmaul (1995:128) states two main opposing views: the typical foreign language teacher’s view and the professional translator’s view. The perspective of a language teacher evaluates the translation from the point of view of language competence; accordingly, word or phrase as an isolated unit within each sentence (not the whole text) and the student as a language learner (not the receptor) will be centred on in the evaluation process. As a result, errors resulting from the ignorance of grammatical rules, etc. are considered serious errors, whereas the communicative function of words and phrases within texts and culture are often ignored. The professional translator’s view, however, assesses the translation from the point of view of its communicative function. That is to say, errors or any kind of meaning distortion will be assessed in the context of the whole text, and its possible influence on the target reader/receptor.

Kussmaul (1995:279ff) also supports the notion of Pym’s non-binary errors. In Kussmaul’s opinion, the notion of non-binary errors and the maxim of the necessary degree
of precision in translation are part of a communicative approach to the evaluation of translations. Translation errors should be typically non-binary and have to be graded along a scale. He also cited Honig (1988), House (1981), Kupsch-Losereit (1985), Nord (1993), Pym (1992a) and Sager (1983) as the specialists who support this communicative approach to translation evaluation. His argument is that the communicative approach provides the assessors more objective standards than the binary language teaching approach, which often considers the proficiency level of students and the error gravity from a pedagogical perspective. The communicative approach only focuses on the effect the error has on the target reader, rather than on the process happening inside the students’ mind.

Gile (1994:108ff) suggests a process-oriented approach in translation training, which also benefits error analysis. This sequential model of translation consists of two main stages: ‘comprehension’ and ‘reformulation phase’. The students, on reading a source text, come up with a meaning hypothesis; they can use their own linguistic and extra-linguistic knowledge to check for the plausibility of this meaning hypothesis. If the hypothesis sounds logical, they carry on with the reformulation phase. In this second phase, the students produce the first target language text for the translation and then recheck it for fidelity and linguistic acceptability. If the first target text is acceptable, the translation continues. So, within the applicability of this model, some of the errors commonly found in translation can be found. According to Gile, a grammatical error is a signal of a poor or absent acceptability test. If the translation is illogical, it shows something wrong with the ‘plausibility test’ in the ‘comprehension phase’, or a ‘fidelity test’ in the ‘reformulation phase’. The value of the model lies in the fact that it helps the teacher with error diagnosis and points out the approximate phase where a translation error may occur, as it may be a combination of many types of errors of different competencies at the same time. Therefore errors can be prevented by reminding students to recheck their hypothesis in the analysis of the source text and in the production of the target text. However, as Gile also acknowledges in the conclusion of his paper, this process-oriented approach is definitely not a sufficient teaching tool for students whose linguistic skills in the target language are still poor. This method is not suitable for these students, because it cannot provide solutions for specific linguistic cases in students’ errors. Rather it is suitable for experienced translators, who have reached a high
level of linguistic competence and aim to improve their translation methods rather than their basic expertise in linguistics.

3.3.3 Translation Quality Assessment

According to Waddington (2001b) some of the popular frameworks through which translation quality assessment is carried out include (adapted from Waddington 2001b:16):

1. Establishing the criteria for a ‘good translation’ (Dabelnet, 1977; Newmark. 1991)
2. The nature of translation errors:
   b. Drawing up a catalogue of possible translation errors (Gouadec, 1989).
   c. Establishing the relative, as opposed to absolute, nature of translation errors (Gouadec, 1989; William, 1989; Pym, 1992a; Kussmaul, 1995).
   d. The need to assess quality not only at the linguistic, but also the pragmatic level (Sager, 1983; Williams, 1989; Hewson, 1995; Nord, 1996; Hatim & Mason, 1997).
4. Establishing various textual levels on a hierarchical basis and linking the importance of mistakes to these levels (Dancette, 1989; Larose, 1989).
6. Attempts to elaborate scales to describe different levels of translation competence (Mahn, 1989; Stansfield, et al., 1992).

In the same way that the development of translation training relies on the concept of translation competence, the key point of translation assessment lies in the task of defining the translation problem and translation errors. Nord (1995:151) considers the translation problem as ‘an objective problem which every translator has to solve during a particular translation task’.
In their article discussing the research needs in translation assessment, Melis and Albird (2001) review the available typology of errors. In their view, some essential questions that need attention in translation error classification include:

1. The difference between errors relating to the source text (opposite sense, wrong sense, nonsense, addition and suppression) and errors relating to the target text (spelling, vocabulary, syntax, coherence and cohesion; Kupsch-Losereit, 1985; Delisle, 1993; Albird, 1995, 1999).

2. The difference between functional errors and absolute errors. Functional errors have to do with the transgression of certain functional aspects of translation, whereas absolute errors are independent of the specific translation task and involve an unjustified infringement of the cultural or linguistic rules, or use of a given language (Gouadec, 1989; Nord, 1996).

3. The difference in individual translators between systematic errors (recurrent) and random errors (isolated; see Spilka’s distinction (1984, 1989) between error and mistake).

4. The difference between errors in the product and errors in the process.

In her article ‘Translation Quality Assessment: Linguistic Description versus Social Evaluation’, House (2001) reviews three approaches to translation evaluation, which are based on three different views of meaning. In the first school of thought, translation can be evaluated from a mentalist point of view (or subjective-intuitive approach) in which translation is regarded as an individual creative act. The weakness of this evaluation approach is that it does not take the text into account. Instead, it just accentuates the role of the writers.

The second school of thought adopts a behaviouristic view to emphasise the response from potential readers, that a ‘good’ translation should elicit a response equivalent to the response to its original (Nida, 1964). Alternatively, this school of thought adopts a functionalistic, skopos-related approach to stress the purpose or the ‘skopos’ of the translation (cf. Reiss & Vermeer, 1984). However, House believes that the response from the target readers cannot be measured without any effective way to do that. Also, the
‘skopos’ model is not operationalised in any satisfactory way, because the notion of ‘function’ is not made explicit.

The third school of thought prefers text and discourse-based approach, which focuses mainly on the translation text, not the original text (cf. Toury, 1995). The linguistically oriented approach which focuses on text and discourse includes Catford (1965), Reiss (1971), Wilss (1974), Koller (1979) and recently Baker (1992), Doherty (1993), Hatim and Mason (1997), Hickey (1998), Gerzymisch-Arbogast and Muderbach (1998). These authors have, one way or another, widened the scope of translation into the field of linguistics, pragmatics, sociolinguistics and discourse analysis. However, House remarks ‘these linguistic approaches differ in their capacity to provide detailed procedures for analysis and evaluation’ and that accounts for the appearance of her functional-pragmatic approach. House’s criticism is that this method of evaluation fails to provide us with criteria to distinguish whether a text is a translation and the other one is not, and to judge the strength and weakness of a translation.

House (1981, 1997) proposes a pragmatic approach to translation assessment, based on Halliday’s systemic-functional theory and also on the Prague school, speech act theory, pragmatics, discourse analysis and corpus-based distinctions between spoken and written language. This approach provides the analysis and comparison of an original and its translation on three different levels: the levels of Language/Text, Register (Field, Mode and Tenor) and Genre. Her model is based on the belief that ‘equivalence cannot be linked to formal, syntactic and lexical similarities alone because any linguistic items in two different languages are multiply ambiguous, and because language cuts up reality in different ways’ (House, 2001). In her model, the functional, pragmatic equivalence is the type of equivalence regarded as most appropriate for the relationship between the original and translation. In House’s work, the translation itself is a recontextualisation of a text in L1 by a semantically and pragmatically equivalent text in L2.
Figure 5.1. House’s scheme for analysing and comparing source text and target text (House 2001b, 139).

This way of using register-based equivalence for translation assessment is also picked up by other Hallidayan linguists like Newmark (1991), Marco (2001), Hatim and Mason (1990, 1997) and Baker (1992). However, House’s model as well as other register-based models have been criticised by Munday (2001:101) in that they are ‘over-completed in [their] categorisation of grammar and [their] apparently inflexible one-to-one matching of structure and meaning’. Their second flaw is that as these models are English-language oriented in nature, they cannot be used with other languages, especially in the analysis of thematic and informational structures. House’s model is also criticised in the point that it can only work once the authorial intention and source text function from register analysis can be recovered, which cannot always be done successfully (Gutt, 1991:46-49).

Kussmaul (1995) claims that to evaluate a translation from a communicative point of view, in addition to House’s criteria, these following factors must be taken into account: cultural adequacy, situational adequacy, speech acts, meaning of words, language errors. Kussmaul suggests that each criticism and each error should be graded according to its communicative effect on its receptor or reader. Kussmaul (1995) also adds that in the traditional way of language teaching, arguments in marking students’ translations should be avoided. For some inappropriate translation, the comment should be ‘it is not completely inappropriate but it could still be improved’. Kussmaul places a special emphasis on the
translating of the title. According to him, the title gives an idea of what a text is about and it refers to very large textual units. Thus an error in translating the title, which might have looked like a ‘mere slip’, can have serious effects on the communication between the translator and the reader.

Among five criteria to judge translation errors, Kussmaul also mentions the language errors, but he stresses that the way of evaluating must be different from that used in language teaching. In other words, we have to consider the effect these errors have on the communicative effect on the target reader, i.e., errors of tense, word order, idioms, collocations.

In this thesis, House’s model will be used as reference in the analysis of pragmatic errors under the section of translation errors, but not as the main model. The reason is because House’s model seems to be effective only for the translations of expert translators, for whom linguistic errors can be least expected. Also, with the large number of subjects as in the present study, it is difficult to do a detailed analysis as suggested by House.

Gile (1992) suggested three causes of errors in translation: (a) lack of knowledge (extralinguistic, in the source and the target language), (b) lack of methodology, and (c) lack of motivation. However, in Melis and Albir’s (2001) opinion, the two main causes of errors are the lack of knowledge and the inadequate application or assimilation of the principles governing translation. They also stressed that the second cause concerning methodology is essential as it is related to the translation process rather than translation product.

Furthermore, in Melis and Albir’s opinion, errors also have pedagogical implications. Albir (1994, 1995) proposes an error-based teaching comprising the following five principles:

1. Diagnosis of the causes in order to establish the appropriate remedial measures.
2. Individual treatment and diagnosis (since not all students make the same errors) and encouragement for self-assessment.
3. Learning from the error, encouraging self-assessment, so that the student is aware of, the kinds of errors s/he makes, their causes and how to avoid them.
4. Recognition of the fact that each type of error must be treated differently, as regards the remedial measures and grading.
5. Establishment of a progressive application of the correcting criteria, according to the level of learning.

Melis and Albir (2001) also review some basic principles to which a translation assessor should adhere to guarantee an objective translation assessment:

1. The evaluator should adhere to some specific criteria and the evaluatee should be aware of them (particularly in the case of translation teaching).
2. The assessment criteria depend on the assessment context (published translations, professional translation, translation teaching) and its function (summative, diagnostic, formative). The assessor should also consider why, for what purpose and for whom the assessment is being carried out.
3. The object of assessment must be clearly defined, as well as the level at which it is being carried out. The evaluator should also consider what he should and what he can evaluate.
4. The evaluator should consider which indicators enable him/her to observe whether or not and to what extent the evaluatee possesses the competencies being evaluated.

Melis and Albir stress that ‘it is indispensable that the assessment criteria be directly related to the learning objectives’ (Albir, 1999). In terms of translation assessment, Melis and Albir suggest that it should (a) use objective criteria which define error types (scales), (b) establish the seriousness of the error on the basis of functionalist criteria without ascribing fixed coefficients to the errors, (c) also take into account the good solutions in the translation, and (d) adopt a flexible view of assessment, allowing partial assessments to be carried out as necessary. Melis and Albir have summarised the various factors relating to the assessment in translation in the following table.
Table 3.2

*Assessment in Translation (Adapted from Melis 1997:156)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OBJECT</th>
<th>PUBLISHED TRANSLATION</th>
<th>PROFESSIONAL TRANSLATION</th>
<th>TRANSLATION TEACHING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>translation of literary and</td>
<td>translator competence</td>
<td>student translator competence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sacred texts</td>
<td></td>
<td>study plans programs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TYPE</td>
<td>product assessment</td>
<td>product assessment</td>
<td>product assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>qualitative assessment</td>
<td>quantitative assessment</td>
<td>process assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>quantitative assessment</td>
<td>procedure assessment</td>
<td>qualitative assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FUNCTION</td>
<td>summative</td>
<td>summative summative formative</td>
<td>diagnostic formative summative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIM</td>
<td>informative advertising</td>
<td>economic-professional</td>
<td>academic pedagogical speculative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>speculative</td>
<td>speculative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEANS</td>
<td>evaluation criteria</td>
<td>non-literary translation</td>
<td>translations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>evaluation criteria</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>correcting scales</td>
<td>correcting criteria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>grading scales, tests, etc.</td>
<td>grading scales, tests, exercises questionnaires, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As can be observed from Table 3.2, in translation teaching, the object of study is the student translator’s competence, as well as the study plan and program. The assessment is concerned with either the product of each student, the procedure of translation or the quality (or the performance) of the product. The first function of assessment is diagnostic because it brings to light the student’s abilities and shortcomings, and it is performed before a learning process begins. It is also diagnostic because it can be used to ascertain the cause of deficiencies in the student’s learning process (Melis & Albir, 2001). The assessment can also be formative, (since it can be used to determine the end results and judge the knowledge acquired, or determine whether the teaching objectives have been achieved) and formative (since it helps to provide information to the translation training). The means of assessment may be translations, evaluation criteria, correcting criteria, grading scales tests, exercise and questionnaires. The aim of assessment may be academic (since it fulfils the need for selection required by institution concerned), pedagogical (since it forms part of the training process) and speculative (because all conscious assessment may have consequences for theory).
3.4 LEARNER TRANSLATION CORPORAs AND ERROR ANALYSIS

3.4.1 What is Learner Corpora?

Learner corpora are textual databases of the language produced by foreign language learners (e.g., Granger, 1993, 1998). They have been used in studies relating to foreign language teaching. Learner corpora can serve to find out the pattern of errors and problems that students may face, as well as identify the various features of text produced by language learners. According to Bowker and Bennison (2003:103), as student translators can also be regarded as a ‘specialised type of language learner/user’, a corpus should also be compiled using translation students as the providers to serve didactic and research purposes. If corpora of language learners can help locate the errors and problems students face in language learning, corpora of translation students can yield results relating to areas of difficulties, whether linguistic, cultural or pragmatic, to students during their translation tasks. These identified areas can then be integrated into the curriculum and discussed in class.

Baker (1995, 1996) and Laviosa (1998) have shown that corpora are useful tools in researching professional translated texts. Baker mentions three types of corpora which can be useful for translation studies: parallel corpora, multilingual corpora and comparable corpora. Learner corpora can be considered as one type of comparable corpora. According to Baker, the advantage of comparable corpora is that they could show us the patterns which are either restricted to translated text or occur with a significantly higher or lower frequency in translated text than they do in originals. The significance of comparable corpora, which makes it useful for translation training, is that these patterns are quite ‘local’ in the sense that ‘they are specific to a particular linguistic feature in a particular language’ (Baker, 1995:235). Baker also claims that these ‘local’ patterns, even though specific to a certain language, may tell us something about the nature of translated text in general and the translation process.

Using a computational approach to combine translation into second language and second language learning, Shei (2002) analysed learner corpora—a composition corpus and a translation corpus and claimed that the purpose of analysing these corpora is ‘to uncover some of the learners’ weaknesses in their interlanguage, which is valuable information for designing instructional goals, methods, means, materials and activities’. Shei’s study is meaningful, as it suggests a feasible pedagogical model conducted within the environment
of computers, which can deal with the teaching of a foreign language together with the training of translation into the foreign language.

In describing the International Corpus of Learner English (ICLE), Granger (1996) also mentions the role of the learner corpora as a tool to help detect the possible error patterns in the students’ texts. The main objectives of the project are to uncover the factors of non-nativeness or foreign soundingness in advanced learner writing and distinguish between L1-dependent features and crosslinguistic invariants’. The result of the project indicates that advanced learners of English as a Foreign Language often have more problems in the choice of words and collocation in their writing, than in grammar. The second objective of the project is to find out whether the reasons for the unnaturalness of these students’ writing are due to mother tongue influence or a universal inclination to make these errors.

3.4.2 Learner Translation Corpora

Kenny (1998) distinguished between a parallel corpus used in bilingual lexicography and machine translation research, and a translation corpus. A parallel corpus is essential for translation studies and computer-aided training, because it can help us explore norms of translating in specific socio-cultural and historical contexts (see Toury, 1978 and Baker, 1993a for an explanation and examples of the concept of ‘norms’). The examples of source texts and the corresponding target texts in the corpus can be good examples of translations to set up the rule or formulation for machine translation. However, when the corpus is formed with the work of translation students who are second language learners, the corpus can no longer function as a good example of translation regarding the translational strategies or norms of translating being used. The corpus turns out to be an error corpus (also see Dodds, 1999) which shows bad examples of translations. These bad examples, however, are ‘effective’ in the sense that they can help us uncover weaknesses in the interlanguage of the students, possible linguistic problems that they may have during the translation tasks, and the gap in their linguistic competence that needs to be filled. A learner translation corpus, therefore, has the merit of offering different translation versions for the same source text, which is useful for discovering different translation strategies or the error patterns in translation. Shei (2002) pinpoints that the advantage of a learner translation corpus is that it
can ‘offer different translation versions for the same source text, which is good for
discovering different translation capacities, styles and strategies’.

Based on the above, this thesis will build up a ‘manual’ error corpus to detect the error
patterns in Vietnamese EFL students’ translations and discover the variety in their
translation strategies. It is important to stress that the error corpus in this thesis is rather
small and built up manually.

3.5 CONCLUSION

This section has presented the role and and development of error analysis (EA) in the
field of second language acquisition (SLA) and language teaching. It summarised why EA
stagnated in the 1980s and 1990s and confirmed the reason why EA would still be an
effective research tool in the field of linguistics. The reason why EA is reviewed in this
section is to look back at how EA developed, with all of its strengths and drawbacks, in
order to use it more effectively as a research tool. This thesis did not investigate the topic of
EA in SLA further as it is not the focus; rather, the following section will focus on the
intersection between EA and translation quality assessment. It established the link between
EA and translation and explored how EA can be used in this field of translation.
The later sections of the chapter discussed three main issues: the application of error
analysis in translation, translation assessment and the use of learner translation corpora. It
examined different ways of defining a translation error and what features differentiate a
translation error from a linguistic error. In 3.3.2 some models of analysing translation have
been explored. Among these models are those of House, Kussmaul, Pym and Gile. To
provide a theoretical background for identifying translation errors, the chapter also reviewed
most of the recent studies on translation quality assessment in 3.3.3. Section 3.4.1 explained
what learner corpora are and 3.4.2 described the significance of using a learner translation
corpus for research in translation and translation training.
Chapter 4
Vietnamese Sentence Types
Topic-Comment Structure in Vietnamese

4.1 VIETNAMESE SENTENCE TYPES
4.1.1 Analysis of Vietnamese from Transformational-Generativist Perspective

Although the transformational-generative theory dominated the study of language in many parts of the world during the 1970s and 1990s, it seemed to have very little influence on the study of Vietnamese. Within the available literature, the only grammar that has been based on this theory is *Vietnamese Grammar: A Combined Tagmemic and Transformational Approach* by Nguyen Dang Liem (1967). Liem carried out a contrastive grammatical and phonological analysis of English and Vietnamese to see which structures could pose problems for Vietnamese speakers learning English as a foreign language. In Liem’s classification, Vietnamese major sentence types can be classified into: (a) one-clause sentences (Simple Sentence Types), (b) those sentences containing two or more independent clauses, which may be coordinated or not (Compound Sentence Types), and (c) those sentences whose internal structure is a pyramidal structure of clause within clause (Complex Sentence Type). Using the strong version of Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis as a working hypothesis, Liem (1967) stated that some characteristics of Vietnamese syntax in contrast to English syntax are:

1. **Law of Indeterminacy**: Vietnamese sentences, both minor and major sentence types, are not necessarily self-sufficient units, but can, and usually do, rely on larger linguistic, or extra-linguistic matrices which explain or complete their meaning.

2. **Law of Simplicity**: Vietnamese is said to be governed by the law of simplicity because, instead of using pyramidal structures of constructions within constructions, it tends to use lengthy, but simple coordinate successive constructions.

Due to these differences between English and Vietnamese, Liem predicted that Vietnamese students may face problems in acquiring some English syntactic structures.
Some of these English sentence types, which may or may not cause difficulty to Vietnamese students, were specified by Liem as follows:

1. **Compound Major Independent Sentence Type**
   (1) He went there and then he went back.
       Nó đi đến rồi nó về.
Liem proposes that the combining of Independent Clauses into Compound Sentences in English is in itself *not* a problem for Vietnamese speakers because it also exists in Vietnamese.

2. **Complex Major Independent Sentence Type**
   (2) He likes whatever has a blue colour.
       Nó thích bắt cụ cái gì có màu xanh.
It is predicted that English Complex Sentence Types do *not* cause teaching and learning problems grammatically speaking, because there are equivalent sentence types in Vietnamese.

3. **Complex Major Independent Suppositional Sentence Type**
   (3) If he had time, he would see you.
       Nếu nó có thời gian, nó sẽ gặp anh.
As the English Independent Suppositional Sentence Type has three alternate division-subclasses which can express three different meanings depending on the tense it uses, Vietnamese students will have problems using tenses in this sentence type.

4. **Independent Declarative Clause Type: Passive Single Transitive Declarative Clause Type**
   (4) He was rewarded by them.
       Anh ta được họ thưởng
Since there are no Passive Transitive Clause Types in Vietnamese, this English Passive Single Transitive Clause Type can be a problem for Vietnamese students.

Although this contrastive analysis is carefully done, with an accompanying suggested drill after each problematic structure, it aims more to serve pedagogical purposes, especially
for the then dominant audio-lingual method, rather than to find an explanation for these errors. Moreover, the predictions made in Liem’s study have never been tested. Another drawback of Liem’s study, like those of Ly (1948), Chinh & Le (1963), Ban (1987), Thin (2001), is that his categorisation and description of sentence types is strongly influenced by European structuralism (see Hao, 1991; Van, 1997). According to Hao, these scholars tried to force Vietnamese grammar into the Subject-Predicate pattern of some Western/European languages, while the basic structure of Vietnamese is Topic-Comment. Therefore, it is not difficult to observe that most of the examples given to illustrate Liem’s categorisation are often intentionally chosen to correspond to English/European sentence pattern to facilitate the comparison. Although there are such sentences in Vietnamese, they make up a too small percentage of the total number of Vietnamese sentences to be considered representative of authentic Vietnamese.

Furthermore, Liem’s Law of Indeterminacy does not provide a very language-specific description for Vietnamese syntax. By claiming that Vietnamese sentences are usually contextually dependent sentences, Liem seems not to be able to highlight the most prominent feature of Vietnamese language. As not only Vietnamese, but also many other languages, base their sentence meaning on the context, this feature is not typical enough to constitute a law in Vietnamese. Liem even claimed that this law could account for the optional appearance of subject tagmeme\(^\text{19}\) in Vietnamese. That is to say, as some Vietnamese sentence types do not clearly show the subject tagmeme, Vietnamese is considered as ‘indeterminate’. However, this argument does not stand up well to analysis, since claiming that a language having no subject tagmeme is indeterminate entails that all other languages with obvious subject tagmemes are more determinate. There is no research in linguistics or in typology confirming this. Liem also stated that though Vietnamese is subjectless, many Vietnamese speakers can rely on larger linguistic devices to understand the message. To illustrate the popularity of subjectless sentences in Vietnamese, Liem used the example of the answer to the question ‘When did you buy this book?’ in English in

\(^{19}\) A basic unit of grammar, consisting of a functional slot and a list of the mutually substitutable items that fill the slot. This concept first appeared in Kenneth L. Pike’s *Language in Relation to a Unified Theory of the Structure of Human Behaviour*, Part I, 1954, and Part II, 1955. The tagmeme is also defined as ‘the correlation of a grammatical function, or slot, with the class of mutually substitutable items that fill that slot’ (Elson & Pickett, 1962:57). It is not merely a form unit, as in other grammatical models, but a composite of function and form (Cook, 1969:15).
contrast to Vietnamese. The answer in English is ‘I bought it yesterday’, while the possible answer in Vietnamese could be ‘Mua hôm qua’ literally ‘buy yesterday’. However, this evidence is not very persuasive as an illustrative example, as we can find in English, and other languages as well, another way of answering this question; for example ‘Yesterday’, rather than repeating the subject and other elements in the predicate.

Similarly, the Law of Simplicity does not reflect the true nature of Vietnamese. Firstly, in order to claim that Vietnamese tends to use simple constructions, Liem must provide the readers with the definition or some basic properties of these ‘simple constructions’ as opposed to ‘complex constructions’. He fails to do this. How simple are ‘simple constructions’? What are the basic properties of ‘simple constructions’ in contrast to ‘complex ones’? According to Liem, the simplicity of Vietnamese is shown in the fact that Vietnamese tends to use lengthy but simple coordinate successive constructions, instead of using pyramidal structures within constructions. Instead of finding an explanation for this linguistic phenomenon through some basic features of Vietnamese, Liem just superficially describes the language and attaches the rule of ‘simplicity’ to his description. He even claims that Complex sentences are used only when there is strong pressure for precision.

To some extent, Liem’s study made a contribution, as it was one of the first studies ever comparing the differences and similarities between Vietnamese and English. However, the study does not present a complete picture of the Vietnamese language. In other words, in order to have a precise contrastive analysis between English and Vietnamese sentence types, Liem needs to provide a genuine classification of Vietnamese sentence types. What Liem did, however, is only describe some Vietnamese sentence types which neatly fit into the Subject-Verb-Object pattern of European languages. Accordingly, many typical sentence types of authentic Vietnamese are not taken into account in his analysis.

The failure to give a comprehensive definition and a thorough classification of Vietnamese sentence types is observed not only in Liem’s study, but also in many other studies on Vietnamese grammar. Van’s study (1997) confirms this statement and a sentence provides as an example which has been analysed into four different types by different scholars (Lan, 1956; Tố Ngôn Ngữ Học, 1964; Lang, 1970; Ngọc & Duong, 1983):
(5) Họ vừa đi vừa cười và hát

They meanwhile walk meanwhile laugh meanwhile sing

They are walking, laughing and singing.

Firstly, this sentence was classified as a simple sentence with one main predicator (Lan, 1956). It was also considered a complex sentence with three predicators: walking, singing, laughing by Tô Ngọc Ngữ Học (1964). Lang (1970) classified it as a simple sentence with a complex predicator, while Ngoc and Duong (1983) took it as a one-clause sentence with three predictions.

Tu (2002) is of the view that there is an undeniable inconsistency in the classification and definitions of different types of Vietnamese sentences among Vietnamese scholars. According to him, there is no unified definition of what can be identified as a sentence, a simple sentence, a compound or a complex sentence, as each Vietnamese scholar has his/her own classification of sentence types in Vietnamese. With such variety in the classification of Vietnamese sentence types, it has not been possible to come up with an exhaustive and coherent application of a particular linguistic model to the description of Vietnamese.

If language is viewed as an instrument of social interaction between human beings, it is obvious from Liem’s analysis and other studies on Vietnamese grammar that the communicative aspect of Vietnamese language has almost been ignored, as most of these studies based their criteria of classifying sentence types on their grammatical structure, rather than their communicative function.

4.1.2 Cao Xuan Hao’s analysis of Vietnamese Sentences

Recently, many scholars who had previously adhered to the formal paradigm have been showing greater interest in studying the language from a functional perspective. The same situation is also observed in Vietnam. The publication of Tiếng Việt: So Thạo Ngữ Pháp Chức Năng (Vietnamese: An Outline of Functional Grammar, volume 1) by Cao Xuan Hao (1991) is the result of this interest. In his study, Hao rejects the idea popular amongst most scholars of the formal paradigm that Vietnamese is a Subject-Predicate language. He explicitly states that Topic-Comment is the basic structure. According to Hao (1991), the
way the Vietnamese express themselves is that ‘when uttering a sentence, the speaker produces a topic and says something about that topic or within the range of that topic’ (1991:79). That is to say, when re-organizing the reflected reality, thought divides it into two parts by choosing a point of departure for establishing the relationship between these two. He assumes that the part that is chosen as the point of departure functions as topic and the remainder as comment (1991:33-4). In his opinion, the Topic-Comment structure in the sentence is a phenomenon which belongs to what he refers to as the ‘logico-discursive domain’.

In support of his claim that Topic-Comment is the dominant structure of Vietnamese, Hao provides two reasons. His first reason is derived from the result of a study by Li and Thompson (1976), who claimed that there are four main types of languages: (a) languages that are subject-prominent (e.g., Indo-European, Niger-Congo, Fino-Ugric, etc.), (b) languages that are topic-prominent (e.g., Chinese, Lahu, Lisu etc.), (c) languages that are both subject-prominent and topic-prominent (e.g., Japanese, Korean, etc.), and (d) languages that are neither subject-prominent nor topic-prominent (e.g., Tagalog, Ilocano etc.). Hao claims that like Chinese, Vietnamese belongs to category (b). His second reason comes from his data. According to Hao’s calculations, only 30% of Vietnamese sentences are of Subject-Predicate type, while about 70% are of Topic-Comment type.

Contrary to other authors of formal paradigms who use the Subject-Predicate structure as the criteria to differentiate simple sentences from complex or compound sentences, Hao classifies sentences into one-level, two-level or three-level sentences depending on how many Topic-Comment structures they possess. He confirms the role of ‘thì’ and ‘là’ as the optional morphological markers for Topic in Vietnamese and introduced the concept of No-Topic sentences and Compound sentences. He also distinguishes between external and internal themes in Vietnamese.

To confirm the dominance of Topic-Comment structure and the absence of grammatical subject in Vietnamese, Hao, in another book ‘Tiếng Việt, Văn Việt, Người Việt’ [Vietnamese Language, Literature, and People] (2001) showed that it is Topic, not Subject, which decides the number (singular/plural) of the verb in Vietnamese. He gives these four examples to argue his point (PLU. MAR: plural marker):
Grammatically acceptable Vietnamese sentence:

(6) Ảo cụ quần cụ bà ta dêu mua tất
Clothes old trouser old she PLU. MAR buy all
TOPIC (plural) COMMENT (plural)
subject (singular) PREDICATE (plural)

She buys old clothes and trousers

Grammatically acceptable Vietnamese sentence:

(7) Ảo cụ quần cụ dêu dùng được
Clothes old trouser old PLU. MAR use manage
TOPIC (plural) COMMENT (plural)
SUBJECT (plural) PREDICATE (plural)

All old clothes and trousers can be used.

Grammatically unacceptable Vietnamese sentence:

(8) Bà ta đêu mua áo cụ quần cụ.
She PLU. MAR buy clothes old trousers old
TOPIC (singular) COMMENT (plural)
SUBJECT (singular) PREDICATE (plural)

She buys old clothes and trousers

Grammatically unacceptable Vietnamese sentence:

(9) Cái áo này dêu dùng được
Shirt this PLU. MAR use manage
TOPIC (singular) COMMENT (plural)
SUBJECT (singular) PREDICATE (plural)

This shirt can be used.

Hao’s argument is that if Vietnamese were indeed a subject-prominent language, it would be the subject that would agree with the finite verb and select the number of the verb, as observed in other subject-prominent languages (Li & Thompson, 1976). In other words, if this assumption were correct, the plural marker for the verb ‘dêu’ would appear in Vietnamese when the subject is plural, not when the topic is plural. However, through the four above examples (6) (7) (8) and (9), it is shown that in Vietnamese, it is the topic, not the subject, which selects the number of the verb. To illustrate, in examples (6) and (7) when the noun phrases functioning as Topic are in the plural form, regardless of the number of the
Subject, the verbs are plural with the modification of the plural marker `đève’; nevertheless, examples (8) and (9) are unacceptable in Vietnamese, because the verbs are plural even though the topics, which coincide with the subjects, are singular. This proves that in Vietnamese, the constituent that selects the plural marker for the verb is the topic, not the subject, as is the case in subject-prominent languages. This argument of Hao goes against that of Li and Thompson’s (1976), according to which Topic does not show a close relation with the verb. Nevertheless, it points out that Subject-Predicate is not really the obligatory category in Vietnamese as often observed in European languages.

Hao’s publication has been highly appreciated by most Vietnamese linguists (cf. Duc, 1993). Le (1993) summarises some of the contributions that Hao made to Vietnamese. Firstly, it is the first one to introduce in a relatively systematic way the main ideas of some major functional views of language in relation to Vietnamese. Secondly, it is also an attempt to apply functional methods to the description and interpretation of Vietnamese sentences. More importantly, it generates issues and ideas for many debates and discussions among Vietnamese scholars, who often looked at Vietnamese sentences as Subject-Predicate structures, under the influence of European structuralists.

However, Le (1993) pointed out that Hao’s approach to Topic-Comment is inconsistent and that his distinction between internal and external topics is unclear. His distinction between frame topic\(^{20}\) and adverbial phrases is not clear either. Le (1993:52) quotes the following examples as a challenging question to Hao’s argument.

\[(10) \quad \begin{array}{ll} 
\text{Cuốn sách này phòng tôi đã đọc nó rồi.} & \text{Book this tense marker read it already} \\
\text{EXTERNAL TOPIC COMMENT} & \\
\text{As for this book, I have already read it.} 
\end{array} \]

\[(11) \quad \begin{array}{ll} 
\text{Trong cái bình này nhiệt độ lên đến 39 độ.} & \text{In classifier bottle this temperature go up to 39 degree} \\
\text{FRAME TOPIC COMMENT} & \\
\text{The temperature inside this bottle goes up to 39 degree.} 
\end{array} \]

\(^{20}\) English translation for Hao’s term ‘khung đève’
(12) Cái bình này nhiệt độ lên đến 39 độ.
Classifier bottle this temperature go up to 39 degree
TOPICAL TOPIC COMMENT

As for this bottle, its temperature goes up to 39 degree.

(13) Vì trời mưa, cháu không đi nhà trẻ được.
Because sky rain I not go kindergarten able

Because it rains, I cannot go to kindergarten.

According to Hao’s classification, all these sentences are treated as simple sentences. The structure of sentence (10) is external topic-comment, sentence (11) is frame topic-comment, sentence (12) is topical topic-comment. Le raises the question of how the first part before the comma in sentence (13) should be classified. In Hao’s definition, the first part ‘Vì trời mưa’ must be classified as an adverbial clause and not as a frame topic. If the first part is a frame topic and the second part is a comment, the sentence makes sense when we insert the topic marker ‘thì’. However, because we cannot insert the topic marker ‘thì’ between the first part and the second part, the first part is clearly an adverbial clause. According to Le, if this first part is an adverbial clause, the structure of sentence (13) is adverbial clause-topic-comment, because Hao did not accept the existence of subject-predicate construction in Vietnamese. If sentence (13) conforms to the structure adverbial clause-topic-comment, then all of Hao’s previous classifications of Vietnamese simple sentences is wrong, and all examples 10, 11, 12 can be classified as adverbial clause-topic-comment structures.

Because of these weaknesses, Le concluded that some of Hao’s analyses were too complex and inappropriate (Le 1993:52-3).

It is perhaps still premature to give a definite and reasonable answer as to whether Vietnamese is a topic-prominent or a subject-prominent language. However, given the literature on the topic, the existence of Topic-Comment in Vietnamese sentence types can be assumed to exist, even though it may be labelled differently by different scholars.

4.1.3 Thai Minh Duc’s Analysis of Vietnamese Sentences
Another scholar who also analysed Vietnamese Sentences from a functional perspective, but with a different approach to that of Hao, is Duc (1998). When Hao tries to rely on functional
grammar to explain some basic structures of Vietnamese that formal paradigm seems not to be able to help, Duc chooses the opposite way and quotes examples from Vietnamese to fit the Theme-Rheme structure of functional grammar.

In his PhD dissertation, Duc (1998) interpreted Vietnamese grammar with a systemic-functionalist approach. Focusing on the metafunctional profile of Vietnamese clause grammar, he defines the theme as ‘a resource for organising the interpersonal and ideational meanings of each clause in the text in the form of a message’ and particularly in Vietnamese, ‘Theme is realised by initial position and Rheme is realised by non-initial position’ (1998:11). He claims that unlike English, Vietnamese and some other languages like Chinese, Japanese and Tagalog do not show a close relationship between the textual metafunction and interpersonal metafunction. In other words, Vietnamese does not orient the theme to Mood like English where the unmarked theme is determined by the mood (declarative: Subject, Wh-interrogative: the Wh-element, yes-no interrogative: Finite-Subject, and in imperative: Predicator) (Matthiessen, 1994). Duc’s second claim is that the passive option in Vietnamese is not often taken up, although Vietnamese shows a certain relationship between the textual metafunction and the ideational one and has a system of Voice which assigns different textual statuses to participants like English does.

Using a discourse-based approach, Duc looks at different texts to give evidence for his interpretation of the system of themes in Vietnamese. According to him, ‘Theme is a textual resource at clause rank for presenting the clause as a message in the unfolding text, specifying a point of departure for the addressee in his/her interpretation of the clause’ (Duc, 1998:53). In this definition, the theme is the point of departure of clause as and the rheme is where the presentation moves after the point of departure; what is presented in the local context set up by Theme.

The definition given leads to the impression that the theme, according to Duc’s interpretation, is somehow identical to the topic as suggested by Hao (1991). However, Duc seems not to recognise the presence of the theme marker in Vietnamese. He states that

The claim that Theme is what comes first in the clause is insufficient to account for how far Theme extends in Vietnamese, as there is no overt Theme Marker in the language (1998:58).
Duc also quotes Halliday in his comment about the recognition of Themes in English and uses the same criteria for Vietnamese ‘Since a participant in the thematic function corresponds fairly closely to what is called the “topic” in a topic-comment analysis, we refer to the experiential element in the Theme as the topical Theme’ (Halliday, 1994:52). The sequential order of Themes typically found in Vietnamese, as Duc suggests is:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Textual</th>
<th>interpersonal</th>
<th>topical (experiential)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(optional)</td>
<td>(optional)</td>
<td>(obligatory)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Duc found that in Vietnamese, a clause may have a single Theme (which contains only a topical Theme) or multiple Themes which have additional interpersonal or textual phases, as illustrated in the figure below:

![Diagram of Themes in Vietnamese sentences](image)

*Figure 6.1. Themes in Vietnamese sentences (Duc 1998).*

A topical or ideational theme, in Duc’s definition, consists of elements or an element that represents a process, a participant in the process or a circumstance. It may be a nominal group, a nominal group with nominal Head and clause as Modifier or a prepositional phrase. However, Duc does not mention the case where a verb phrase and a clause can also function as a topical Theme (or Topic according to Rosén (1998) and Hao (1991)), as seen in the following examples quoted from Rosén (1998):
(14) Nói, thì bà Ba nói rất nhiều.
Talk, Topic Marker Mrs Ba talk very much.

As far as talking is concerned, Mrs Ba talks a lot.

(15) Đi Sài Gòn, thì tôi đi mỗi tuần ba lần.
go Saigon Topic Marker I go each week three times.

As for going to Saigon, I go three times every week.

Duc also analyses the theme in existential clauses and meteorological clauses. He explains that because existential clauses in Vietnamese typically begin with ‘Có’ (have), ‘Có’ is taken to be the topical Theme of the existential clause by the definition of topical Theme, as in his examples:

(16) Có một con sáo nói được tiếng người.
Have one mapgie speak language human.

There was once a mapgie who could speak human language.

Duc also differentiates the subject ‘There’ in English and ‘Co’ in Vietnamese. Whilst the subject ‘There’ in English is an unmarked topical theme not serving a participant role\(^{21}\), and the subject does not confl ate with a transitivity role\(^{22}\), ‘Có’ in Vietnamese is the unmarked topical theme serving a transitivity role (process role) and introducing the existent into the discourse. Therefore, Duc concludes that the organisation of the existential clause in Vietnamese is textually motivated and serves as a ‘presentative’ strategy (Duc, 1998:26).

One of Duc’s controversial claims is that there is no subject in Vietnamese existential clauses. He states that ‘if there is no Location or circumstantial elements in initial position, the process precedes the clause and realises the feature ‘existential’ by bringing about the Existent—a new discourse referent’ (Duc, 1998:69). Duc formulates the existential grammar as follows:

\(^{21}\) Participant role: the role of the participant in the process. Participant is one of the three components (the process itself, participant and circumstances associated with a process) of a process (Halliday, 1994:101).

\(^{22}\) Transitivity role: transitivity specifies the different types of processes that are recognised in the language, and the structure by which they are expressed (Halliday, 1994:101).
Duc has a brief but interesting section in which he mentions ‘the thematic continuity within the clause complex’. In this section, he touches upon one of the most typical characteristics of Vietnamese that has been explored and widely debated by many Vietnamese linguists: the predicate of Vietnamese sentences is likely to develop in a long-winded way without the need to repeat the subject. From the perspective of functional grammar, Duc points out that:

If the Subject of the first clause in a paratactic clause complex (clauses through co-ordination) serves as unmarked topical Theme and continues to do so in the continuing clause of the clause complex, it may be ellipsed but Theme will be understood to be retrieved from the preceding discourse (1998:74).

The example Duc gives to illustrate this is as follows:

(17) Gia đình tôi làm bánh bao năm nay
Family I make cake plural marker year now

và ______ làm khá nhiều loại.
and ______ made fairly many kind.

My family have made cakes for many years now and _____ made many kinds.

Duc did not give any further explanation regarding this linguistic phenomenon in Vietnamese, but his interpretation to some extent recognises the existence of empty elements and ellipsis in Vietnamese, which has also been mentioned by other linguists (Liem, 1967; Ban, 1987; Than, 1997; Thin, 2001) perspectives. Hao also tries to find an explanation for
this linguistic phenomenon through his argument about the topic-prominence of Vietnamese, rather than trying to explain it from a perspective of structuralism as other linguists used to do. His argument is similar to that of Hao (1991) that when a Vietnamese says something, they continue developing their argument until the end of the sentence.

One of the basic differences between Hao’s and Duc’s points of view is the way they distinguish marked and unmarked themes in their research. According to Duc (1998:80), when topical theme is mapped onto the subject, we have a marked theme, and when a theme is mapped onto something other than the subject-like Adjuncts/Circumstance (the clausal elements that contribute additional but non-essential information to the clause) or complements, we have a marked theme. Duc gave the following examples to illustrate the marked theme (in bold italics) in Vietnamese. In the first two examples, the theme is mapped onto adjuncts/circumstance, and in the last two, the theme is mapped onto complement (CLA: classifier, PLU. MAR: plural marker, NEG. MAR: negative marker):

(18) Ông một ngồi lang xa xôi, có một cái giếng thần. In one village faraway have one CLA well magic THEME (ADJUNCT)

In a faraway village, there was a magic well. (Duc, 1998:81)

(19) Thiếu nó, các tế bào trong cơ thể không sống được. Without it PLU. MAR cell in body no live NEG.MAR THEME (ADJUNCT)

Without it, the cells in the body cannot exist. (Duc, 1998:81)

(20) Bài ca ấy năm xưa mẹ hát cho con nghe. Song that year old mother sing for me hear THEME (COMPLEMENT)

That song you (mother) sang to me long ago. (Duc, 1998:81)

(21) Ön cứuucher của não chúng con chẳng hề quên. Redemption of you we never forget THEME (COMPLEMENT)

Your redemption we shall never forget. (Duc, 1998:81)
Duc concludes that the marked theme is typically the subject in declaratives and polar interrogatives. In elemental interrogatives, the theme is conflated with the subject or circumstantial Adjunct in initial position. In an imperative, the unmarked theme is the Predicator/Process. Marked topical themes can be conflated with any circumstance or participant role other than the subject-participant. Duc uses the following figure (Figure 6.3) to show the choice of marked and unmarked theme in Vietnamese.

![Figure 6.3. Theme selection in Vietnamese (Duc, 1998:90).](image)

In general, Duc focuses on the ideational, textual and interpersonal metafunctions of Vietnamese clause grammar, but not on the different configurations of the topic-comment structure in Vietnamese sentences. Although his study provides illustrative examples of the system of themes in Vietnamese language, it fails to highlight the degree of importance of the topic-comment structures and the frequent absence of subjects in Vietnamese language.

### 4.2 Definition of Topic-Comment

The term Topic is the equivalent of the term Theme, which was coined by the Prague School of functional linguistics, following Mathesius (1975), Firbas (1969), and Danes (1974). According to Reinhart (1987:57), since any part of the same sentence can serve as a topic in different contexts of utterance, topic is a term that cannot be defined directly on the basis of syntactic structures or semantic relation. Rather, it is a pragmatic relation.
Different definitions of topic and comment exist, such as presupposition and focus (Chomsky, 1971; Jackendoff, 1972), theme and rheme (Firbas, 1972), topic and comment (Gundel, 1974, 1978), open proposition and focus (Ward, 1985; Prince, 1986), and ground and focus (Vallduví, 1990). Despite the differences in the details of these various descriptions, in general the concepts of topic and comment are based on the intuitions that the utterances we produce are ‘about’ something (topic), linking up with information the speaker assumes the hearer is aware of, and that utterances contain information the speaker is presenting as new relative to this topic (comment).

The topic of a sentence is basically what the sentence is about. It always appears near the very beginning of the sentence, and refers to something that the speaker assumes the listener has some knowledge of. The topic is not the subject of a sentence, in that a subject must always have a direct semantic relationship with the verb, as the one that performs the action or exists in the state indicated by the verb, but a topic need not. The topic can be followed by a pause in speech or a comma in writing, showing what is being talked about is apart from the rest of the sentence.

The topic is often defined in terms of its linguistic manifestation, either syntactic or phonetic. It has been defined in terms of linear order—as the first expression of the sentence (e.g., Halliday, 1967), in grammatical terms—as the subject (Gundel, 1974) and in intonational terms—as the non-stressed expression (Chomsky, 1971). However, the shortcomings of these definitions lie in their inability to answer the question related to the discourse conditions under which a given expression would count as topic. In addition to this approach, the topic is also described in psychological terms as the speakers’ intention and interests. For example, in Schachter (1973) and Garcia (1975), topic is described under a different label as the expression representing the centre, or focus, of the speaker’s attention. However, it turns out that the same psychological notions describe just as successfully the complement of the topic expression—that part of the sentence which is ‘dominant’ or provides new information about the topic.

Gundel (1988:210) defined topic-comment as a pragmatic relation that holds relative to a discourse context. According to him, an entity $E$ is the topic of a sentence $S$, if in using $S$ the speaker intends to increase the addressee’s knowledge about, request information about, or otherwise get the addressee to act with respect to $E$. A predicate, $P$, on the other hand, is the
comment of a sentence $S$, if in using $S$, the speaker intends $P$ to be assessed relative to the topic of $S$. Gundel also made the distinction between syntactic topic and pragmatic topic. A syntactic topic is used to refer to an expression which occupies the syntactic position reserved for topic. A pragmatic topic, however, does not necessarily have an overt expression in the sentence. In both cases, the comment must always be overtly expressed.

Fuller and Gundel (1987) attempted to look at the initial ‘topic-comment’ (pragmatically driven) stage of L2 acquisition by studying L1 speakers of Arabic, Farsi, Spanish (subject prominent), Chinese, Japanese, and Korean (topic-prominent), looking for features common to topic prominent languages in early interlanguage. Fuller and Gundel claimed that they found evidence of a stage intermediate between topic-prominent structures, somewhat supporting the idea that L2 acquisition invariably starts with a topic-prominent stage. However, Fuller and Gundel’s study made only a very superficial categorisation of languages into topic-prominent and subject-prominent (ignoring the issue of pro-drop), and it is not clear that subject-prominent vs. topic-prominent is really a binary parameter along which languages vary.

This thesis adopts the definition of topic as put forward by Hockett (1958), who made a distinction between topic and comment in a sentence, according to which ‘the speaker announces a topic and then says something about it. In English and languages of Europe, topics are usually also subjects and comments are predicates’ (1958:201). Hockett also discusses a point that this thesis aims to illustrate: that ‘sentential topic’ may or may not coincide with the grammatical subject, as shown in the following examples:

(1) John / ran away
(2) That new book by Thomas Guernsey/ I haven’t read yet.

In example (1), ‘John’ functions both as the topic of the sentence and the subject of the verb ‘ran away’. However, in example (2) the topic of the whole sentence is ‘that new book by Thomas Guernsey’ while the subject of the verb is ‘I’. In the second example, the sentential topic is not identical with the subject of the verb.
In their seminal article, ‘Subject and Topic: a New Typology of Language’, Li and Thompson set up many criteria to distinguish the notion of subject and topic. The main difference, according to them, lies in the idea that while topic is a discourse-related notion, subject is more integrated into the syntax of the sentence. They also argued that the topic should be treated as a basic, rather than a derived category. The treatment of topic as one basic category will entail the classification of language into two different types: Subject-prominent language and Topic-prominent language.

Topic-prominent languages, as defined by Li and Thompson (1976), are languages in which the grammatical relation topic-comment plays a major role. However, this does not imply that subjects cannot be identified in topic-prominent languages; in other words, topic-prominence and subject-prominence are not thought of as mutually exclusive properties (as shown in the classification below). In claiming that a certain language is a topic-prominent language, we take the notion of topic as more basic than the notion of subject, as a lot of structural phenomena of that language can only be explained, if we analyse the basic structure of the sentence as topic-comment. Li and Thompson (1976:459) classify languages into four main types on the basis of the relative prominence of the notion of topic and subject:

(i) languages that are subject-prominent (a term introduced by Keenan 1976);
(ii) languages that are topic-prominent; (iii) languages that are both subject-prominent and topic-prominent; (iv) languages that are neither subject-prominent nor topic-prominent. In subject-prominent (Sp) languages, the structure of sentences favours a description in which the grammatical relation subject-predicate plays a major role; in topic-prominent (Tp) languages, the basic structure of sentences favours a description in which the grammatical relation topic-comment plays a major role. In type (iii) languages, there are two equally important distinctions between sentence constructions; in type (iv) languages, the subject and the topic have merged and are no longer distinguishable in all sentence types.

By suggesting a new typology of languages based on the concept of topic-prominence and subject-prominence, Li and Thompson attempt to amend what they call the traditional bias
toward analysing all languages in terms of subject and predicate. They point out that it is
difficult to use reference grammars to determine whether languages are subject-prominent or
topic-prominent, because these grammars are often biased toward the more traditional
subject-predicate analysis. Besides, there is still a very common assumption that subject,
object and verb are basic terms in the description of sentence structure in all languages
(1976:461). The important point they want to make is that it does not matter whether such an
analysis may be motivated for English, but whether it can be argued to be universally valid.

4.3 CHARACTERISTICS OF TOPIC-PROMINENT LANGUAGES BY LI AND
THOMPSON (1976)

According to Li and Thompson (1976), there are some important differences between the
topic and the subject, which involve the noun-verb relations and grammatical processes. The
essential factor that differentiates the topic from the subject is that the topic ‘need not have a
selectional relation with any verb in a sentence’, whereas the subject ‘always has a
selectional relation with some predicate in the sentence’ (1976:461-2). They quote the
following examples\(^\text{24}\) to prove this claim:

(3) Nei-chang huo xingkui xiaofang-dui lai de kuai.
    That-CLA fire fortunate fire brigade come adverbial particle quick.
    That fire (topic), fortunately the fire brigade came quickly.

(4) John appears to be angry.

In the first example, the topic *nei-chang huo* ‘that fire’ does not have any selectional
relation with the verb *lai* ‘come’, because it is not a semantic argument of this predicate. On
the contrary, in the second example, ‘John’, as a subject, has a selectional relation with one
of the verbs in the predication. And this second example supports Li and Thompson’s claim
that the subject must be selectionally related to some predicate in the sentence. As the
subject is more dependent on the syntax of the sentence than topic, Li and Thompson
observe that the obligatory subject-verb agreement is very common, whereas the topic-

\(^{24}\) All the translations in these examples are from Li and Thompson (1976).
predicate agreement is rare. It also follows that some grammatical processes such as ‘reflexivisation, passivisation, Equi-NP deletion, verb serialisation, and imperialisation’ (1976:465) require reference solely to the subject. In other words, because the topic does not need to have any selectional relationship to the verb, it is more independent of its comment than the subject is of its verb. One grammatical characteristic that is also observed as related to topic-prominence and subject-prominence is the passive construction. Since passive involves non-agentive subjects, it follows that passive construction is seen more in subject-prominent than topic-prominent languages. Two other grammatical phenomena, which are closely linked to the obligatory appearance of the subject in a sentence, dummy subject and subject-raising constructions, therefore, only occur in subject-prominent languages, rather than topic-prominent ones. Moreover, the criteria that make topic-prominent languages different from subject-prominent languages lie in ‘the extent to which the topic-comment sentence can be considered to be part of the repertoire of basic sentence types in the former but not in the latter’ (Li and Thompson, 1976:471). The fact that topic-comment sentences cannot be derived from any other sentence type can be observed in topic-comment sentences in which there is only a semantic relationship of ‘aboutness’ between the topic and the comment. Some examples Li and Thompson (1976:479)\(^{25}\) quote from Chinese to illustrate this point are:

(5)  Huang -se de tu-di dafen zui heshi.  
Yellow-color relative soil manure most suitable  

The yellow soil (topic), manure is most suitable.

(6)  Nei-zuo fangzi xingkui qu-nian mei xiaxue.  
That-classifier house fortunate last-year not snow.  

That house (topic), fortunately it didn’t snow last year.

Li and Thompson also quote Korean, Japanese in the following examples:

(7)  Siban-in hakkjo-ga manso.  
Now-topic marker school-subject marker many.  

The present time (topic), there are many schools.

\(^{25}\) All the translations in these examples are from Li and Thompson (1976).
(8) Gakkoo-wa boku-ga isogasi-kat-ta.
School-topic marker I-nominative marker busy-past tense

School (topic) I was busy.

(9) Onsen wa kimoti-ga ii.
Hot spa topic marker feeling-nominative marker good.

A hot spa (topic) is such that one feels good.

These examples, in Rosén’s opinion (1998), explain why there should not be any
derivational analysis for the topic-comment sentence type. The main reason is because there
is very loose syntactic connection between the topic and the comment, and the topic is not
always related to any constituent in the rest of the sentence.

Another characteristic considered typical for topic-prominent languages is the presence
of the double subject construction. Li and Thompson say that this construction is very
popular in Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Lisu and Lahu (1976:480) and they give some
eamples as follows:

(10) Nei-ke shu yezi hen da.
That-CLA tree leaf very big

That tree, (its) leaves are very big.

(11) Xiang bizi chang.
Elephant nose long

Elephants have long noses.

(12) Wu-ge pingguo liang-ge huai le.
Five-CLA apple two-CLA spoil currently relevant state.

(Of) the five apples, two are spoiled.

(13) Zhei-ban xuesheng ta zui congming.
This-class student 3rd singular most intelligent.

(In) that class of students, he/she is the most intelligent.

Chao (1968) first suggested the name ‘double subject’ for this kind of construction. He used
the term because he does not differentiate between the topic and the subject as grammatical
functions but analyses Chinese in terms of subject-predicate. Hence, this type of sentence is considered as consisting of one subject-predicate structure, embedded within another, which explains the term ‘double subject’. For example, in sentence (10), neike shu ‘that tree’ is analysed as the main subject and yezi ‘leaf’ is the minor subject (Li and Thompson 1981:94). Chao mentions the notion of topic, but only as one kind of meaning included within the subject-predicate construction:

The grammatical meaning of subject and predicate in a Chinese sentence is topic and comment, rather than actor and action. Actor and action can apply as a particular case of topic and comment. … The subject is literally the subject matter to talk about, and the predicate is what the speaker comments on when a subject is presented to be talked about (Chao 1968:69-70)

Using this definition, what Chao names as subject-predicate can be considered topic-comment in Chinese. As a consequence, Li and Thompson analyse ‘double subject’ constructions as topic-comment structures, which have embedded subject-predicate structures in their comments.

This ‘double subject’ construction is also seen in Japanese, quoted by Shibatani (1990). However, as Japanese has a very clear topic marker wa and subject marker ga, the relationship between the first and the second subject is clearly drawn: the first noun phrase ending with wa is the topic and the second ending with ga is the subject. These following examples26 show ‘double subject’ constructions in Japanese (NOM. MAR: nominative marker, ACCU: accusative):

(14) Zoo wa hana ga nagai.
     Elephant topic marker nose NOM. MAR long.
     An elephant is such that its trunk is long.

(15) Sakana wa tai ga itchiban ii.
     Fish topic marker seabream NOM. MAR first good.

26 All the translations in these examples are from Shibatani (1990).
A fish is such that a seabream is the best.

(16) Tori wa mesu ga tamago o umu.
Bird topic marker female NOM. MAR egg accusative lay

A bird is such that a female (bird) lays eggs.

Shibatani (1990) states that the ‘subject of the predicate structure … must be something intimately related to the topic’. In her view, the usual relationship between the subject and topic of these sentences consists of two types: the whole-part relationship as in (14), the inclusion relation as in (15) and the possessor-possessed relationship (Shibatani, 1990: 275).

Li and Thompson attempt one derivational analysis for this ‘double subject’ construction. They argue that example (11) can be derived from example (17), where there is only one initial noun phrase, rather than two (1976:481). (Teng, 1974:458) suggests that de can be deleted from sentence (17) in its surface structure to lead to sentence (11)

(11) Xiang bizi chang.
Elephant nose long

Elephants have long noses.

(17) Xiang de bizi chang
elephant genitive nose long

Elephant have long noses.

However, using Dyvik’s counter-example in Vietnamese, Rosén (1998) argued that this analysis is not justifiable.

(18) Voi cua voi dai
trunk of elephant long

The elephant’s trunk is long.

(19) Voi voi dai
trunk elephant long

The elephant’s trunk is long

(20) Voi voi dai
elephant trunk long

As for the elephant, it has a long trunk.
If the derivational analysis of Li and Thompson is correct, sentence (19) is considered as derived from sentence (18) as cûa in Vietnamese is considered functionally similar to de in Chinese. However, sentence (19) is clearly not a topic-comment structure like sentence (20); rather, it is a simple noun phrase in which the attribute ‘elephant’ follows the head noun ‘trunk’. Therefore, the only cross-linguistic generalisation Rosén (1998:41) makes is that these ‘double subject’ constructions involve topic-comment constructions, with embedded subject-predicate constructions. According to her, ‘the topic and the subject refer to entities which must be related in some way, but the exact nature of this relationship is difficult to pin down. Often it is possessive, partitive, or inclusive, but in other cases it can only be characterised as an ‘aboutness’ relation’ (1998:42).

However, some of Li and Thompson’s concepts have been put into questions. The first criticism against Li and Thompson’s study is their characterisation of topic function. Li and Thompson claim that the functional role of the topic is ‘constant across sentences’ (1976:464) and they quote Chafe’s characterisation of the function of the topic:

What the topic appears to do is to limit the applicability of the main predication to a certain restricted domain within … the topic sets a spatial, temporal, or individual framework within which the main predication holds (Chafe, 1976:50).

From this definition by Chafe, Li and Thompson draw the conclusion that

Clearly this function of specifying the domain within which the predication holds is related to the structure of the discourse in which the sentence is found. The topic is the ‘center of attention’, it announces the theme of the discourse. (Li & Thompson, 1976:464)

Rosén (1998) thoroughly reviewed the literature on the notion of topic from the grammatical and pragmatic approaches and analysed the Vietnamese topic with the lexical function grammar (LFG) approach. Regarding the function of the topic suggested above by Li and Thompson, Rosén agrees that the choice of the topic is related to the discourse, rather than
the choice of subject. However, she disagrees with the claim that the topic’s function of specifying the domain for the predication is related to the structure of the discourse. She states that even though the topic specifies the domain for the predication in the rest of the sentence, it does not necessarily announce the theme of the discourse. The example she quotes to explain her counter-argument is as follows (e_J and e_I symbolise the empty elements of the Vietnamese sentence):

(21) Ong Ba đã tăng công nhân nhiều đồ hôm qua.
Mr Ba gave the employees many things yesterday.

Cô Lan thì e_J tăng e_I một bó hoa hồng.
Miss Lan TM give one bunch flower pink.

As for Miss Lan, (he) gave (her) a bunch of roses.

According to Rosén (1998:33), in the second sentence, ‘Cô Lan’ (Miss Lan) is the grammatical topic, which specifies the domain for which the predication in the rest of the sentence holds. However, it does not announce the theme of the discourse, because Miss Lan is not mentioned before this sentence and she will not be necessarily mentioned again in the discourse. It is therefore hard to conclude that ‘Miss Lan’ introduces the theme of the discourse.

The second criticism against Li and Thompson’s distinction between topic and subject lies in their claim that the topic must be definite, whereas the subjects do not need to be. Rosén (1998:34) used the following examples from Dyvik (1984:8) to show that definiteness is not so strict a demand on the topic:

(22) A: Do you sell spirits and tobacco here?

B: Spirit we are not allowed to sell here, unfortunately. As for tobacco, we only stock cigars.

(23) A: How about a swim and a game of tennis?

B: A game of tennis I might consider; but as for a swim, I don’t feel quite up to it this morning.
In (22) *spirit* and *tobacco* can be considered generic in the way Li and Thompson define the generic noun: ‘A generic noun is definite because its referent is the class of items named by the noun phrase, which the hearer can be assumed to know about if he knows the meaning of that noun phrase (Li and Thompson, 1976:461). However, in the second example *a game of tennis* and *a swim* are indefinite noun phrases in topic position. This example rejects Li and Thompson’s claim that the topic must be definite.

The third criticism against Li and Thompson’s work is that they did not provide a clear definition of topic-prominence and subject-prominence. Their classification is limited to the extent of emphasising the two concepts of ‘subject’ and ‘topic’, rather than pinpointing what is meant exactly by ‘topic-prominence’ and ‘subject-prominence’. Besides, in their classification, Li and Thompson seem not to pay much attention to type (iii) languages that are both subject-prominent and topic-prominent, and type (iv) languages that are neither subject-prominent nor topic-prominent.

### 4.4 TOPIC-COMMENT STRUCTURES IN VIETNAMESE SENTENCES
The previous section elaborated on the work of Hao (1991). In this section, works by some non-Vietnamese authors who have discussed the presence of topic-comment structures in Vietnamese will be reviewed.

Thompson (1965) noticed that there is a lack of ‘grammatical subject’ (in the English sense) for predication in Vietnamese, and the opposition of subject and object—so important in English—is simply not part of the Vietnamese system. In Vietnamese, however, what is very noticeable is the common appearance of a constituent which he named Focal Element (or Focal Complement). In Thompson’s definition (1965:240), Focal Elements establish for their predicates points of reference in terms of the specific person, thing or concept, the exact place, the point in time, the precise quantity, and the distinctive manner. In the following example, what appears initially in the sentence in bold letters is the Focal Element of the sentence:

(27) **Những gì** trong **thùng** tôi **không muốn** khui ra
What in the container I don’t want to unpack
I don’t want to unpack what is inside the container.

Thompson (1965:255) concluded that the most common Focal Complements are those in topic position. He stressed that although in most cases these Focal Complements resemble the subjects of sentences in English and other Western European languages, the relationship between the Focal Complement and its predicate head is fundamentally different from the relationship between subjects and their predicates in English, as can be observed in the following example:

(28) **Hai thằng trộm** với ra bord ruộng và khiêng chum vàng về
Two thief hasten edge field and carry pot gold back

nhà, nhưng vàng chả thấy đâu chỉ thấy toàn là rắn độc.
home but gold not see where only see all snake poisonous

The two thieves hastened out to the edge of the rice field and carried the pot of gold back home, but gold [they] saw nowhere - [they] only saw that [it] was entirely [full of] poisonous snakes.

Thompson, however, did not conclude that these Focal Complements should be definitely classified as Topic, as in many cases the context justifies no such clear distinction and the categorisation of Focal Complements as Topic would be artificial. He went further in his argument to predict that it is only the need arising in English translation, which forces a decision to treat an element as similar to English subject or an English adverbial modifier of some sort.

Hao (1991:146-7) argues that Thompson’s hesitation to name these Focal Elements as Topic failed to highlight the basic difference between Focal Element-Predicate structure (in Thompson’s categorisation) and Subject-Predicate of other Western languages. In addition, Thompson’s categorisation cannot account for the existence of the Vietnamese sentences in which three Focal Elements co-exist, as in this one:

(29) **Chúng nó đưa nào tay cùng cầm gậy**
They everyone hand all hold a cane.

All of them are holding canes in their hands.
Hao (1991) nevertheless confirms that Thompson’s study was ‘surprisingly smart’ as he had touched on the essence of Vietnamese syntax. He further states that if we just amend some of Thompson’s ideas, rename the constituent Focal Complement as Topic and provide a very clear definition of Topic, we will have a sufficient account of basic syntactic structure of Vietnamese sentences.

Another study that also touches on this topic is that of Dyvik. Dyvik (1984) investigated all the central properties of Topic-Comment construction in Vietnamese to find out whether Vietnamese can be said to have a category called ‘subject’, given a reasonable explanation of this concept. Dyvik based his tentative definitions of ‘topic’ and ‘subject’ on the distinction between ‘subject prominence’ and ‘topic prominence’ of Li and Thompson (1976) and the work of Keenan (1976). However, he does not completely accept this dichotomy as ‘several of the topic and subject properties listed by Li, Thompson, and Keenan are obviously more natural as empirical hypotheses about topics and subjects than as criteria for identifying them’ (Dyvik, 1984:7). Their studies also raise certain methodological problems. In Dyvik’s studies, the constituent under question is named ‘Topic/Subject’ (TSs), which corresponds closely to the ‘Focal Complement’ discussed by Thompson (1965:239). According to him, it is obvious that since a subject by definition is a nominal constituent, the question of subjunctivity can only be raised for nominal TSs, of which he distinguished two types: nominal Ts outside and nominal TSs inside the role frame of the verb. Nominal TSs outside the role frame of the verb can be categorised as Topic, as they are not assigned a semantic role, while nominal TSs inside the role frame of the verb can be considered as Subjects, as they are assigned a semantic role by the verbal centre of the Complement/Predicate. Dyvik discovered that constructions with nominal topics outside the verbal role frame, which are quite typical of topic-prominent languages, are common in Vietnamese. In conclusion, he stated that even if we recognise ‘subject’ as a grammatical category in Vietnamese, we would want to say that it is less ‘firmly established’ than in European languages. The point being that the grammatical properties that allow us to isolate the subject are more abstract. Therefore, if a binary distinction between topic prominent and subject prominent languages must be drawn, Vietnamese should probably be classified as topic prominent.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vé câu ngoại đề (External Topic)</th>
<th>a. Ong Năm ấy mà, ông ấy tốt lắm. (As for Mr Nam, he is very kind.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chữ đề (Topical Topic)</td>
<td>b. Mẹ đi Hà Nội rồi. (Our mum has gone to Hanoi)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khung đề (Frame Topic)</td>
<td>c. Cuốn sách ấy đọc được đấy. (As for that book, it is interesting to read)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Đề (tình thái) (Theme/Topic)</td>
<td>d. Bao giờ thì anh về? (When will you come back?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thi/là/mã (Topic Marker)</td>
<td>e. Ở đây đặt rộng người thừa. (Here the land is spacious and the population is scarce.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f. Bác bảo đi là đi. (If he says to go, it means we must go.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>g. Theo tôi thì nên làm ngay. (In my opinion, it should be done right away.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>h. Tôi nghĩ là việc này thế nào cũng xong. (This problem, I think, will be solved by all means.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>i. Thời giờ là vang bạc. (Time is gold)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>j. Gây ra chuyển này không phải là tôi. (It is not me who did this.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>k. Máy bay cắt cánh là vào lúc 6 giờ. (It is at 6 o’clock that the plane will take off)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>l. Họ gặp nhau lần cuối là ở Yên Bái. (Yen Bai thhet they met the last time.).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>m. Vào một buổi chiều hè, Anh ra sông. (In one summer afternoon, Anh went to the river.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n. Tay ốm chốn sách, Nam bước vào phòng. (Holding a pile of books in his hand, Anh enters the room.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o. Tuy còn yếu, chị đã trở lại làm việc. (Although she is weak, she returns to work.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vé câu than goi (exclamatory topic)</td>
<td>p. Vàng, tôi biết, chẳng nên buồn đâu anh ạ. (Yes, I know, I should not be sad.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vé câu phụ chủ (additional)</td>
<td>q. Thăn ơi, thơ oanh liệt nay còn đâu. (Oh my God, my golden age is gone.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.5 DIFFERENT TOPIC CONSTRUCTIONS IN VIETNAMESE

Rosén (1998) has provided a categorisation of different types of topics in Vietnamese sentences. According to Rosén’s categorisation, Vietnamese has the following kinds of topics: Apparent Long-Distance Dependencies, Noun Phrase Topics with Coreferential Noun Phrases in Comment Clauses, Noun Phrase Topics with Semantically Related Noun Phrases in Comment Clauses, Noun Phrase Topics with No Related Noun Phrases in Comment Clauses, Verb Phrases and Clausal Topics, and Embedded Topic Constructions. In the following section, some examples of these topic constructions that Rosén has analysed will be presented. This categorisation of different topic constructions will be used for the analysis of the topic-comment structures of the 18 sentences of the source text in this thesis.

1. Apparent Long-Distance Dependencies. These sentences have a gap in the comment which is understood as being filled by the topic. This structure is similar to the ‘topicalisation’ phenomenon in English where a noun phrase is moved to the initial position of the sentence. It leaves only an empty position in the rest of the sentence. The topic is either coreferential with the missing subject as in examples (30) to (33), with an empty direct object as in (34) to (36), or indirect object as in (37). All of the examples are quoted from Rosén’s work (the topic is in bold letter, the gaps are represented by a bold face e coindexed with the noun phrase which is the understood filler, and in the translation the pronoun put in parenthesis is coreferential missing subject).

(30) Tôi thì e không ngủ được.
I topic marker not sleep manage
As for me, (I) couldn’t sleep. (Emeneau, 1951:54)

(31) Tôi, thì e chỉ muốn về Việt nam.
I topic marker only wish return Vietnam
As for me, (I) only want to go back to Vietnam.

(32) Ông Ba, thì e hay đi Đà Lạt làm.
Mr. Ba topic marker often go Dalat very
As for Mr Ba, (he) often goes to Dalat.

(33) **Con bò ẩy,** thì e ăn ít cơ lắm.
CLA cow that topic marker eat few grass very

As for that cow, (it) eats very little grass.

(34) **Quyền truyện** độ, tôi đọc e rồi.
Book story that I read already

That novel I’ve already read. (Binh, 1971:213)

(35) **Cuốn sách ẩy,** tôi bỏ e vào vali lớn.
Volumebook that I put enter suitcase big.

That book I’ll put in the big suitcase. (Emeneau, 1951:54)

(36) **Việc ẩy,** Giáp không dám làm e đâu.
Work this Giap not dare do not at all.

This work Giap does not dare to do. (Chinh, 1970:101)

(37) **Cô Lan,** thì ông Ba tặng e một bó hoa hồng
Ms Lan topic marker Mr. Ba gave (her) one bunch rose

- hôm no.
- ngày other.

As for Ms Lan, Mr Ba gave (her) a bunch of roses the other day.

Rosén (1998:85) did not regard these sentences as topicalisation as the relation between the topic and the gap in the comment clause is not grammatical dependency. Because gaps in these sentences do not depend on a preposed constituent, Rosén just analyses these gaps as empty pronouns.

2. **Noun Phrase Topics with Coreferential Noun Phrase in Comment Clause.** This type of topic corresponds to a coreferential noun phrase or pronoun, which can be an overt subject or an overt object in the comment. Examples (38) and (39) are cases where the topic corresponds to an overt subject and examples (40), (41) the topic corresponds to an overt
object. In these examples, the topic is related to an overt constituent in the comment clause as it is coreferential with a noun phrase in the comment.

(38) **Tôi,** thì tôi chỉ muốn về Việt nam.
I topic marker I only wish return Vietnam

As for me, I only want to go back to Vietnam. (Binh, 1971: 212)

(39) **Ong Ba** ông ấy hay đi Đà Lạt làm.
Mr. Ba Mr that often go Dalat very

As for Mr Ba, he often goes to Dalat. (Binh, 1971: 213)

(40) **Quyền truyện đó,** tôi đọc nó rồi.
Book story that I read it already

That novel I’ve already read. (Binh, 1971:213)

(41) **Giáp,** nó không dám làm việc ấy đâu.
Giap he not dare do work that not at all

As for Giap, he doesn’t dare to do this work. (Chinh, 1970; 102)

3. **Noun Phrase with Semantically Related Noun Phrase in Comment Clause.** This construction type is considered by Rosén as very common in Vietnamese. This construction is similar to what is called by Li and Thompson as ‘double subject’ construction. In these constructions, the subject-predicate is embedded in another subject-predicate construction (in Chao’s point of view), or the subject-predicate construction is embedded in topic-comment sentences (in Li and Thompson’s analysis, 1981:94). Rosén named this ‘semantically related’ because she is believed that the relationship between the noun phrase topic and the noun phrase in the comment clause is non-grammatical, even though sometimes the topic fills the gap in the comment. In other words, the mere coreferentiality is not enough to establish the grammatical dependency between the filler and the gap. Rather it is some kind of semantic relationship, whether possessive, partitive, or inclusive relation to each other, as we can observe in the following examples:
(42) Cái cửa, thì e thường dong.
Classifier door topic marker often closed

As for this door, (it) is usually closed.

(43) Cái phòng thì cửa thường đóng.
Classifier office topic marker door usually closed

As for this office, the door is usually closed.

(44) Học tủ ấy thì tôi đã làm mất chìa khóa.
Drawer that TM I anterior lose key.

As for that drawer, I have lost the key.

Hao (2001) suggests that these constructions are very common in Vietnamese. This phenomenon happens when we insert one more Topic into an existing Topic-Comment structure to have a leftward extension. In these cases, the Topic or Comment itself is another embedded Topic-Comment structure. The possible result is the sentence may have up to three initial noun phrases. This way of Hao’s analysis is similar to that of Li and Thompson’s (1981). In the sense of the term suggested by Chao (1968), Vietnamese sentences may have not only ‘double subjects’ but even ‘triple subjects’, as in the example and its topic-comment analysis given by Hao (2001:430):

(45) Giá là năm ngàn.
Price be five thousand

The price is five thousand.

```
\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
\node (a) at (0,0) {Topic};
\node (b) at (1,0) {Price};
\node (c) at (0,-1) {Comment};
\node (d) at (1,-1) {five thousand};
\draw[->] (a) -- (b);
\draw[->] (c) -- (b);
\end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}
```
(46) Môt cái giá năm ngàn.
Each price five thousand.

The price of each is five thousand.

(47) Máy này một cái giá năm ngàn.
Machine this each price five thousand.

As for this machine, the price of each is five thousand.

The reason why this construction attracts the most attention, according to Rosén (1998), is because in SVO languages two initial noun phrases are otherwise not possible.

4. **Noun Phrase Topics with No Related Noun Phrase in Comment Clause.** In this kind of topic construction, the Noun Phrase topic may not be related to any constituent either empty or overt in the comment. Here are some examples of this kind of topic:

(47) **Sức,** thì hai người ngang nhau.
Strength topic marker two people equal together

As far as strength is concerned, these two people are equal. (Chinh, 1970:102)

(48) **Thú vật,** tôi thích con mèo.
Animal I like classifier cat

As far as animals are concerned, I like cats.
(49) **Diệu gì** Giáp cũng biết.
Matter any Giap also know

Giap knows everything. (Chinh, 1970:107)

(50) **Các bài học ở trường,** tôi không có giờ.
All homework be-at school I not exist time

As for homework, I don’t have time.

Rosén did make some comment regarding translation of such constructions into English. In most of the cases, the topic is periphрастically marked. The example (49) is an exception which is difficult to translate the topic as one separate expression at the beginning of the sentence. She also noted that in these examples, there is hardly any syntactic relationship between the topic and the comment. In terms of semantic relationship, the comment can be considered a predication for the referent of the topic (Rosén, 1998:90).

5. **Verb Phrase and Clausal Topic.** Not only can a Noun Phrase function as a Topic in Vietnamese, but also a verb phrase as well. Sometimes the topic consists of only a one-word verb and it is repeated in the comment clause, as we shall see in examples (51) and (52), or the topic consists of a verb phrase, only one word of which is repeated in the comment clause, as in example (53). Also sometimes both the verb and the verb phrase are not repeated in the comment (examples 54 and 55).

(51) **Nói,** thì bà Ba nói rất nhiều.
Talk topic marker Mrs. Ba talk very much

As far as talking is concerned, Mrs. Ba talks a lot. (Binh, 1971:213)

(52) **Ăn,** thì ông Ba ăn khỏe lắm.
Eat topic marker Mr. Ba eat healthy very

As far as eating is concerned, Mr Ba has an enormous appetite. (Binh, 1971:213)

(53) **Di Sài Gòn,** thì tôi đi mỗi tuần ba lần.
Go Saigon topic marker I go each week three time

As for going to Saigon, I go three times every week. (Thompson 1965:290)
(54) **Đỗ đến**, tôi sẽ đến đây.
Be-red light I subsequent come here

When the lights glow [i.e., in the evening] I’ll come here. (Thompson 1965:243)

(55) **Di xe**, cũng được.
go car also possible

(You) can go by car, too.

It is noted that the topic can be a full clause by itself, which can be introduced by a subordinating conjunction marking the topic as temporal or conditional (examples 56).

(56) **Hế mà anh ấy mở sâm banh, thì chúng ta chỉ còn cái chai không thời.**
Whenever he open champagne Topic marker we only have left classifier bottle empty that’s all

If he opens champagne, we are sure to have left only an empty bottle. (Emeneau, 1951:58)

4.6 EMPTY PRONOUNS IN VIETNAMESE

Although empty pronouns are common in Vietnamese sentences, these grammatical phenomena are not recognised in most of the traditional grammar books of Vietnamese. The main reason is that these books are from the structuralists who did not acknowledge any missing elements or empty elements. Even the most often quoted book of Vietnamese grammar written by Thompson, *A Vietnam Reference Grammar*, avoids mentioning the presence by the argument that ‘if we were to allow missing elements there would be no end of them and we would very shortly have projected the prejudice of a foreign grammar onto the language’ (Thompson, 1987:227). Despite this, Rosén (1998) admits the presence of empty pronouns as an undeniable characteristic of Vietnamese languages based on two facts. Firstly, not accepting the existence of empty pronouns would ‘make it impossible to use any of the current grammatical frameworks for analysing Vietnamese’ (1998:144). Also we cannot explain the native speaker reaction to sentences with empty pronouns. If the empty pronouns are presented out of context, the native speakers usually do not understand or
accept it and they will explore more information by asking for the missing argument. If the context gives clues to the missing argument, the sentence will be understood and accepted by the Vietnamese native. In other words, the missing part will be understood if it is provided with appropriate context.

Rosén (1998) has divided the empty pronouns into three kinds: Empty Pronouns in Simple Sentences, Empty Pronouns in Embedded Clauses, Empty Pronouns in Consecutive Clauses. She provided the following examples.

1. **Empty Pronouns in Simple Sentences.** In these sentences, the empty pronouns may be in the role of subject as in example (57) and (58), direct object as in example (59) or indirect object as in example (60).

(57) eKhông ngủ được.
    Not sleep manage
    (I) couldn’t sleep.

(58) eChỉ muốn về Việt Nam.
    Only wish return Vietnam
    (I) only want to go back to Vietnam.

(59) Tôi đọc e rồi
    I read already
    I’ve already read (it).

(60) Ông Ba tặng e một bó hoa hồng hôm nọ.
    Mr Ba give one bunch flower pink day other
    Mr Ba gave (her) a bunch of roses the other day.

2. **Empty Pronouns in Embedded Clauses.** In this case, empty pronouns appear in the subordinate clauses of the sentences. The subordinate clause can be the topic of the sentence or in the final position of the main clause.

(61) e Gặp lại vợ con, anh Trương mừng lắm.
    Meet again wife child Mr. Truong happy very
    When he again saw his wife and child, Mr Truong was very happy.
(62) Khi e đi, tôi không cho nhà tôi hay.
Time go I not give house I know

When (I) went, I didn’t inform my wife.

(63) Nếu ông Ba có tiền, thì e đã mua cái nhà đó.
If Mr Ba exist money TM ANT buy CL house that

If Mr. Ba had money, (he) would buy that house.

3. **Empty Pronouns in Consecutive Clauses.** To introduce this third type of empty pronouns in Vietnamese, Rosén (1998) reviewed the concept of ‘topic chain’, which was introduced by Li and Thompson (1976). Li and Thompson described the topic chain as a series of clauses in which subsequent clauses use the empty pronoun to refer to the same referent established in the first clause. In the following examples which are very common in Vietnamese, the overt subjects in the first clauses are coreferential with the empty subjects in the following clauses.

(64) Người dân bà đáng thương đó ra bỏ bèn e ngồi
cry finish jump go down ocean commit suicide.

This poor woman went down to the beach, sat and cried, and then threw herself into the ocean and committed suicide.

In this case, it is quite easy for the readers to access and decipher the meaning of the empty pronouns as they all refer to the main subject in the first clause. However, in Vietnamese it is quite common that the empty pronouns in the following clauses are coreferential with the one in the first sentence. The following is an example from Rosén:

(65) e Chưa bao nhiêu thuốc, e mỗi bao nhiêu thầy,
treat many medicine invite many doctors

mà mũi Văn cứ mỗi ngày một dài thêm, e
but nose continue every day one long further
gần chạm đất, e không làm sao được nữa.

nearly reach earth not do star manage more

(They) used many medicines, (they) invited many doctors, but (their) noses continued to grow longer every day, (they) reached almost to the ground, (they) couldn’t do anything more about it.

4.7 CONCLUSION

The first section of this chapter reviewed different types of analyses of Vietnamese sentence types. It started with Liem (1967) the Vietnamese-English contrastive analysis. Then studies by two different scholars using functional perspectives were referred to: Duc (1998) and Hao (1991, 2001). Duc (1998) tries to find examples from Vietnamese to give evidence for his interpretation of the system of Themes in Vietnamese. On the other hand, Hao emphasises more the dominance and prevalence of the topic in Vietnamese sentences. This section provides a reference point for the more elaborate discussion of the Topic-Comment structure of Vietnamese in the next section. In the following sections of the chapter various definitions and approaches of topic-comment structures have been considered. In 4.2, different ways of defining topic-comment structures have been reviewed. Section 4.3 discusses basic characteristics of a topic-prominent language as suggested by Li and Thompson (1976). This section also presents criticism of Li and Thomson’s studies and provides the explanation for the term ‘double subject construction’. In 4.4 and 4.5, the topic-comment structures are analysed from the perspective of Rosén’s model (1998) and Hao (1991). While Hao focuses more on both the topic and the comment and the embedded Topic-Comment structure, Rosén is more interested in topic constructions. Section 4.6 mentions the appearance of empty pronouns in Vietnamese, which many authors have never touched on.
Chapter 5
Research Methodology

5.1 DATA COLLECTION

5.1.1 SUBJECTS:
Four groups of students totaling 95 (Year 1: 15, Year 2: 27, Year 3: 36, Year 4: 17) from the Department of English Languages and Literature of University of Social Sciences and Humanities of Ho Chi Minh City, with fairly similar socio-cultural and educational backgrounds from four different years, were chosen to be the subjects of this study. All of the students major in English Language and Literature and have to attend a four-year course to obtain a Bachelor of Arts in Applied Linguistics. They are referred to as Group I, II, III and IV after their respective years. The study is cross-sectional in design and the subjects were selected randomly. The author approached all classes in Year 1, 2, 3 and 4 at the university and explained the study to the students. Those who accepted to participate were set a date for the Elicitation Task. The purpose of choosing the subjects from four different years is to identify the error patterns, if any, over a large sample of students. The study does not try to explain the interrelation of the differences in error pattern and the differences in language competence of each group.

The general socio-linguistic profile of the subjects in these four groups is as follows:

Table 5.1
Socio-Linguistic Background of the 95 Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Group 1: 15 (first year)</th>
<th>Group 2: 27 (second year)</th>
<th>Group 3: 36 (third year)</th>
<th>Group 4: 17 (four year)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>18-23</td>
<td>19-24</td>
<td>20-25</td>
<td>21-25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English competence</td>
<td>Intermediate level</td>
<td>Upper-intermediate level</td>
<td>Upper-intermediate level</td>
<td>Advanced level</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most of the students had studied English for seven years from Year 6 to Year 12. The dominant teaching method at the schools is the Grammar-Translation method and the
translation aspect plays an important part. At the time of the test, the students of Group 1 and 2 had not yet begun the obligatory course in translation, the students of Group 3 had finished two obligatory modules (90 periods or 4050 minutes) and the students of Group 4 had finished four obligatory modules (180 periods or 8100 minutes) in Vietnamese-English translation. For the detailed syllabus of each year, please refer to Appendix K.

5.1.2 DATA COLLECTION
The data to be used in this study is of three types: Vietnamese-English translations of an authentic text, responses to questionnaires and interview data.

5.1.2.1 Step 1: Translation Elicitation Task
Purpose: Corder’s elicitation procedure, which requires direct translation from the native language to the target language, was used. The advantage of this method is that, in Corder’s (1981:61) words, it can be used to ‘find out something specific about the learner’s language’, not just to get him/her to express himself/herself freely. Under the constraints put on the informant, he/she is forced to make a choice within a severely restricted area of his/her phonological, lexical or syntactic competence.

Procedure: The study was approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of University of Western Sydney, Australia. All participants were informed about the purpose, the nature and the author of the study and were asked to sign consent forms, if they were willing to participate in the study. The subjects were asked to translate a 250-word text from Vietnamese into English in 180 minutes. They were not told which structure was being tested. The Vietnamese text is an extract from an article named ‘Mê Thào-thời vang vọng’ of Tuổi Trẻ (The Youth), a fairly well-known newspaper in Vietnam. The text was chosen because of its richness in sentence types: many different types of ‘authentic’ Vietnamese sentences can be found in the text, including minor sentences, i.e., elliptical sentences, sentences without either Topic or Comment, sentences in which the Topic is identical with the Subject, sentences in which the Topic is not identical with the Subject, sentences in which the Topic or Comment itself is another Topic-Comment structure. The text promised to be a good environment for the author to discover what the most problematic structures are
for the subjects when translating from Vietnamese to English. The text was also chosen,
because it contains traces of the topic-prominence of Vietnamese languages, which is
hypothesised to pose a number of translation problems for students.

Words that were considered new were explained and provided on a separate sheet.
Furthermore, the subjects had access to four dictionaries, which they were advised to bring
with them before the test: a Vietnamese dictionary, an English dictionary, an English-
Vietnamese dictionary and a Vietnamese-English dictionary.

The students were told that both the spelling and vocabulary in the text were not
important. The test took place in a classroom. The time to complete the translation (180
minutes) was generous to ensure that all students could complete the test and to ensure that
they did not make errors under the pressure of time. Moreover, as the translation task was
intended as an elicitation task to identify the real problems of students, rather than to test
their linguistic proficiency, the time span needed to be fairly generous. It is acknowledged
that this practice cannot prevent students from making errors, but at least it can give students
sufficient time to do all the research with the help of the dictionary. Before the test was
administered, the author explained the function of the source text and the potential
readership to the students. This is because translation given in an academic setting is
different from real-life translation activities, and because translators need to be aware of
their potential readership. The present author was present in the room to make sure that the
students did their translations individually, and to offer help with the dictionary use and the
provided vocabulary list, should these be needed by the students. When the students actually
translated the selected texts, they were permitted to use dictionaries, but they were requested
not to seek an English native speaker's advice on their English output.

Right after the translation elicitation task, the students were asked to do one test in
Vietnamese comprehension skills. The Vietnamese comprehension competence test
comprised 14 Vietnamese sentences extracted from the source text (see Appendix J). For
each sentence, the students were provided with 4 options (in Vietnamese) and asked to
choose the option that best suited the original. The function of the test was to see whether
the students could understand the source text, especially the sentences where subjects are
omitted. With the test, the present author hoped to find whether some errors could be
attributed to (a) lack of competence in Vietnamese, (b) lack of competence in English, or (c) lack of translation competence.

5.1.2.2 Step 2: Questionnaire

**Purpose:** Error analysis can serve to discover the strategies the learners use in order to learn (Selinker, 1992), but in very few studies in the field of EA have researchers taken into consideration the explanation of the learners about their own errors. When researchers base their analysis on their own judgment of the learner’s errors, and do not match them with the students’ comments, the result of the analysis may be distorted by the subjective opinions of the researchers. Corder (1967) has also mentioned this problem when he said that ‘we identify or detect his error by comparing what he actually said with what he ought to have said to express what he intended to express’. That is to say, to ensure a comprehensive error analysis, we must elicit from the learner what s/he intended to express through his/her errors. This study, therefore, chooses to verify the students’ mistakes with them, in order to gain an insight into the students’ processes.

Obtaining information from learners themselves concerning the language they have produced adds another dimension to the task of describing the errors. It was hoped that the students’ explanations in the questionnaire would reveal a number of factors to help account for the process of making errors from the perspective of a learner and overcome the often-cited lack of objectivity in the process of analysis. The questionnaire was also used as an attempt to gain more insight into the students’ explanations about their own errors.

Although this kind of method has been criticised by a number of researchers (Nisbett & Wilson, 1977) on the grounds that the gap between the event and the reporting will lead to unreliable data, it was utilised in the present study, because it is simply not feasible or desirable to collect data from subjects during the task. In other words, students cannot make errors and at the same time reflect on these errors. Ericsson and Simon (1984) argue that the reliability of the data can be enhanced by ensuring that the data is collected as soon as possible after the task or event has taken place. Thus, after the elicitation task, students were given their papers back as soon as possible, right after the tests were assessed. Also, with the purpose of ensuring the reliability of the data, informants were not informed that they would be required to reflect on their work until after they had completed the test.
**Procedure:** About two weeks after the translation elicitation task (to provide enough time for the author to analyse the errors), the students were given back their original test papers with all of their errors circled and numbered. Lexical errors were ignored. Among all the syntactic errors that were circled and numbered, only some specific errors that showed evidence of the influence of topic-prominence of Vietnamese, raised the interest of the present author in terms of students’ interlanguage, or suspected to be attributable to the difference between Vietnamese and English, were highlighted for use in the questionnaire. Only these highlighted errors were re-examined in the administration of the questionnaire, as they needed more confirmation from the students about the source or causes of errors.

The students were also given, apart from their test papers, a questionnaire consisting of two parts. The questionnaire was in English. The first part of the questionnaire was designed to obtain information about the students’ backgrounds of learning English, as well as their translation training and experience. In the second part of the questionnaire, the students were asked to indicate the factors that caused them to make errors by checking the appropriate box on a provided list (see Appendix H). For each of the specific errors, which were highlighted in the test paper, there was one corresponding question in the questionnaire: *What caused you to make this error?* Even though the individual questionnaire may differ in the number of questions from one student to another depending on how many errors they made and how many errors are doubtful in terms of source, the questionnaire was basically the same in content. Each question comprises 9 close-ended options and 1 open-ended option for the students to choose from. The students were asked to refer back to their errors (which were numbered and highlighted) and tick the box that best described their opinion.

As the main function of the questionnaire was to elicit the students’ responses, rather than force them to provide predetermined answers, the students were offered the opportunity to express their own ideas at the last open-ended option of every question. The opinions in the last option are especially attended to in this study. The list of suggested answers to the question ‘what caused you to make this error’ was as follows:

1. It is similar to the Vietnamese structure.
2. It is different from Vietnamese syntactic structures.
3. I know the rule well, but occasionally make errors of this type, because of the lack of practice.
4. The teacher’s explanations were not clear.
5. I think the rule is shared by all cases, I don’t think the error I made is an exception.
6. I forgot the rule.
7. I know the grammatical rule, but I just have a problem rendering the structure from Vietnamese into English.
8. I don’t remember the reason.
9. The structure has not been taught yet.
10. List in the space below any factors other than those above that you think are the causes of this particular error.

Since the questionnaire was written in English, the author was present to clarify points in the questionnaire, if the students were not sure about how they should fill in the information. The detailed questionnaire can be found in Appendix H.

5.1.2.3 Step 3: Interview

Purpose: The interview was designed to gain more insight into the students’ account of their own process of making errors, by allowing them to express themselves freely.

Procedure: When the students had completed the questionnaires, they were given a 15-minute break. After that, a subset of the subjects, 20 students, were interviewed one after the other by the author. The interviews were conducted using the same questions as the questionnaire, focusing mainly on why the students made errors (the students were provided with their test papers to activate their memory). The students had already answered the same questions in the questionnaire. However, in the interviews, they were encouraged to explain more about the same errors.

All the interviews were conducted in Vietnamese and tape-recorded. The recordings were later transcribed for data analysis. No special transcription conventions were used as the focus was on the information given by the students, not the phonological features of their speech.

The interviews mainly focused on three questions:
1. What are the causes for making the error? (The interviewer explained to them the error to see whether they recognised it as such).
2. What are the three sentences they found most difficult to translate and why?
3. Supposing they were provided with all the semantic equivalents and all types of reference materials, what specific problems (in terms of syntax and grammar) did they face in translation from Vietnamese into English?

The data from the interviews were transcribed and recorded into a table. The transcribed and translated interviews are all in Appendix I. As the data provided the students’ explanation of the source of the error, the information from the interviews was also included in Table 2 Error Source in Appendix B.

5.1.3 THE ELICITATION TEST
The text of the Elicitation Test was extracted from the article ‘Từ Chùa Đàn Đến Mẹ Thảo-thời vang bóng’ which appeared in the movie section of a well-known Vietnamese newspaper Tuổi Trẻ (The Youth). The original text comprises 25 sentences but only 18 sentences were used for the test. The reason for this is because some sentences with Topic-Comment constructions were repeated. It was judged that 250 words were sufficient. Seven sentences were cut out of the context without harming the overall meaning and context of the text. The Topic-Comment structural configurations of the 18 sentences in the text are included in Appendix G.

The text is a film review. However, instead of either using critical tone to judge the film or pretending not to offer any direct comments like other film reviewers, the writer mirrors his own thoughts, perception and feelings for the whole process of waiting and watching the film. He narrates his emotions and feelings to the readers in the hope of persuading the audience to watch the film and experience the same feelings. Although the text is in written mode, the tone of the writing is fairly informal and colloquial and resembles spoken Vietnamese. The way the author addresses himself is ‘tôi’, a rather neutral term of address in Vietnamese, which shows his position as neither lower nor higher than the target readers’.

To achieve his persuasive purpose, the author uses the following linguistic means in the text:
1. The use of first person singular pronoun ‘tôi’ to show his position as the narrator.
2. The use of dropped subjects ‘Lai mê mẩn với những nhân vật có tên và không tên.’
3. The use of elliptical short sentences, consecutively, following each other to create an emphasising effect: ‘Mộ hồi cầu ý nghĩ’, ‘Mộ hồi cầu sự đi tìm. ‘Mộ hồi dân dưng’.
4. The repetition of sentences with similar syntactic structures for emphasis: ‘Cảnh đốt bàn ghế, tiếng nổ của đờ Đặc và phát súng bắn vào con búp bê khiến người xem lành gay’, ‘Cảnh nong tằm ngoe dõi ấn và bàn chán giấm nát những con tằm làm ta sồn gai ốc’.
5. The use of appositional and parenthetical structures inside the main clause, to create an impression of lack of premeditation, typical of the spoken mode (House, 1977): ‘Là kẻ từng chăm dồi theo cuộc ‘hành trình thai sản’ cầu bợ phim, tôi mê mẩn với Mê Thảo-thơi vang bồng (giả chỉ đặt tên phim là Mê Thảo thời thì nghe gian đi họn và ‘dâ’ họn).
7. The use of adjectives, showing the nature of the text as a comment ‘ông bổ giả rất sinh động và cảm động’, ‘Nhận vật chính nào cũng mới người một vẻ, đọc dao, dạy thân phận, được diễn tả tự nhiên và sâu sắc làm sao’.

To sum up, the author’s intention is to express his impression and feelings toward the film and wants to persuade the readers to agree with him and watch the film. The text is not just a simple film review, it is more emotionally involved than a normal film review. This is reflected through the frequent use of figurative language, adjectives in many noun phrases and idiomatic expressions. He tries to personalise the experience of watching the film, so that it can reach the potential readers (and also potential audience).

In the analysis of the Topic-Comment configurations of the 18 sentences in the text (see Appendix G), the following terms will be used:
**TOPIC**: a part that always appears near the very beginning of a sentence, referring to something that the speaker assumes the listener would have some knowledge of. It may or may not coincide with the grammatical subject.

**NULL TOPIC**: the position which should have been filled by a topic in Vietnamese syntax, but is omitted.

**FRAME TOPIC**: frame topic is the part of the sentence which states all the conditions setting up a frame of location and/or time for what is discussed in the Comment.

**COMMENT**: a part of a sentence that makes a statement or discusses what is mentioned in the topic of the sentence.

**SUBJECT**: a noun, noun phrase or pronoun representing the person or thing that performs the action of the verb (*I in *I sat down*), about which something is stated (*the house in *The house is very old*) or, in a passive sentence, that is affected by the action of the verb (*the tree in *The tree was blown down in the storm*).

**NULL SUBJECT**: the position which should have been filled by a subject in English syntax, but omitted in Vietnamese.

**PREDICATE**: a part of a sentence containing a verb that makes a statement about the subject of the verb, such as *went home* in *John went home*.

Li and Thompson (1976) suggested that in topic-prominent languages, the topic should be considered as a basic category and that topic-comment sentences may be most insightfully escribed by treating them as a basic, rather than derived sentence type.

In the Elicitation Task of this study (see Appendix D and G for numbered sentences in the text and the analysis of topic-comment constructions 18 sentences), Sentence 1 has the empty pronoun in embedded clauses. The explanatory sentence at the end of Sentence 1 (inside the bracket), sentences 14, 15 and 16 are examples of empty pronouns in consecutive clauses. Sentences 2 and 13 are examples of empty pronouns in simple sentences. Sentence 5 is an example of a sentence where the topic is semantically related to a specific constituent in the comment (the topic is the object of the verb mentioned in the comment). Sentence 6 is an example where the topic is not related to any constituents, empty or overt, in the comment (the topic is the adverb of the comment). Sentences 7, 8, 9 and 10 are elliptical sentences. Sentence 17 consists of two comments: the first is an embedded topic-comment
structure (leading to the so-called ‘double-subject construction’), the NP topic of which is coreferential with the main topic. The second comment of sentence 17 is also an embedded topic-comment structure, the topic of which is semantically related to the main topic of the sentence. Sentence 18 also has two comments: the comment is an embedded topic-comment structure, while the second is also an embedded one but with a gap within the second comment which the main topic of the sentence fills up.

5.2 DATA ANALYSIS

Of the three types of data used in this study, the performance data from the elicitation translation task was the primary data. The other two kinds of data obtained from the questionnaire and the interviews were used as ‘back-up’ or confirmation data.

The data analysis consists of 2 steps: analysis of the performance data and analysis of the questionnaire and interviews. In the first step, the learners’ translation corpus was collected from the performance data of the students and analysed. Errors were classified in terms of their possible sources. This error analysis yielded the types of errors and their possible causes from the perspective of the author. To confirm these results, the second step analysed the information obtained from the questionnaire and the interviews to find out the possible causes of errors from the students’ perspective.

5.2.1 Analysis of the Elicitation Test

5.2.1.1 Justification for using error analysis in the data analysis

In research based on his PhD thesis, Waddington (2001a) compares the reliability of two methods - error analysis and the holistic approach often used by teachers of translation in European universities to evaluate student’s translation into the foreign language. The result shows that methods of assessment based on error analysis are more reliable and valid than holistic methods. Also, error analysis is often appreciated by students because it provides a clear justification of the mark reached. However the method of using error analysis also shows two drawbacks (2001:24) as acknowledged by the author of the study himself:

1. Error Analysis may not be very objective. A translation error is not so much a question of right or wrong as of degrees of adequacy for the communicative context
surrounding a particular communicative act. This means that the identification of an error is inevitably subjective to a certain extent; the choice between what is appropriate and what is inappropriate depends at least in part on the analyst’s personal judgement.

2. Error Analysis only measures the defects in a translation, but does not measure the positive aspects. There may be two translations with the same number of errors, but which vary in terms of overall quality.

Waddington (2001a) concludes that although error analysis is better than the holistic approach, it has its limitations. Waddington therefore suggests combining both error analysis and the holistic approach.

5.2.1.2 Suggested model for analysing the errors

Justification for the model. Errors may indicate the following problems:

1. The interference of the source language in the target language.
2. The lack of comprehension of the source text.
3. The lack of communicative competence or linguistic competence in the target language.

Therefore, the possible types of errors in translation might be the result of the following situations:

- Situation 1) Correct comprehension of the source language + incorrect production of that comprehension (manifested in grammatical, syntactic, lexical errors and style).
- Situation 2) Incorrect comprehension of the source text + incorrect production of that comprehension (manifesting in grammatical, syntactic, lexical errors and style).
- Situation 3) Incorrect comprehension of the source text + correct production of that comprehension (manifested in translation errors).

In situations (1) (2) and (3), syntactic and grammatical errors are likely to be observed in the first two cases, where students do not have sufficient competence in English to express what they understand from the source text. The third case occurs when the sentence, though looking perfectly correct in terms of grammar, displays a mismatch with the implied meaning of the source text due to the incorrect comprehension of the translation students.
The following model will help to trace whether the errors are due to the lack of comprehension of the source text or the lack of competence in the second language.

![ERROR CORPUS Diagram](image)

*Figure 8.2. Suggested model of analysis of translation errors (Na Pham, 2005)*

**5.2.1.3 Procedure of error analysis**

Adab (2000) lists three different purposes of evaluating a target text which include ‘to assess the suitability of the text for its intended reader and use; to evaluate language competence (usually L2), to determine levels of intercultural awareness; or to identify levels and types of translation competence (2000:215-216). In this thesis, the target text was chosen for similar purposes: (a) to evaluate the language competence of students through their linguistic errors, (b) to identify levels and types of translation competence through translation errors and (c) to locate the problem areas of students in a Vietnamese-English translation task.
It is claimed that translation consists of three stages namely (a) analysis of the source text, (b) transfer and (c) synthesis of the target text (Nida, 1982; Nord, 1992). We assume the process the Vietnamese native speakers follow, in order to produce English translation, is this three-stage translation process. In order to go though this translation process successfully, the translator needs to have a high-level competence in the following three areas: (a) linguistic and comprehension competence in the source language, (b) transfer competence and (c) cultural and linguistic competence in the target language. It goes without saying that the first competence is required for completing the first stage of the translation process, the second competence for the second stage and the third competence for the last stage of translation.

Since the three translation stages along with the necessary competencies adapted from Nida (1982) have been established, it is possible to analyse the errors found in the English translations in relation to these competencies at each stage. Comprehension errors are expected to be found at stage 1, linguistic errors are expected at stage 2, and translation errors (which can be more adequately named ‘transfer errors’) are expected at stage 3. As a consequence, in the suggested model of error analysis in this thesis, all the errors are divided into three main types: comprehension errors, linguistic errors and translation errors. However, these errors are not as clear-cut as they appear to be because translation is a circular process and there are a number of loops between these steps (Nord, 1992). There are cases where it is difficult to see which stage is associated with specific errors, because these errors themselves are the results of the 'circular movements'.

The error analysis in this thesis adopted the procedures suggested by Corder (1974) as a baseline, with minor modifications added as necessary, namely: (a) data-collection, (b) identification of errors, (c) classification of the errors identified, (d) attempted explanation of the causes of the errors, and (e) evaluation of the errors. Although adopting Corder’s notion of the distinction between errors and mistakes, this study does not utilise his definition of linguistic errors in the data analysis. Instead, the concept of error used is a combination of the two perspectives suggested by Lennon (1991) and Duy, Burt & Krashen (1982), which have been discussed in the literature review of Error Analysis in Chapter 3. An error is ‘a linguistic form or a combination of forms which, in the same context and under similar conditions of production, would, in all likelihood, not be produced
by the speakers’ native speaker counterparts.’ (Lennon, 1991: 182) and it ‘refers to any
development from a selected norm of language performance, no matter what the characteristics
or causes of the deviation might be’ (Dulay, Burt & Krashen, 1982).

Three teachers, including one native speaker of English and two Vietnamese ESL
teachers, were invited to participate together with the author in identifying the errors in the
students’ tests. First of all, ninety-five written translations from the students were examined
by a U.S. born academic (Professor of History at the National University of Singapore) who
is highly competent in Vietnamese. He can use Vietnamese to teach Vietnamese history and
he also teaches English as a second language at Vietnamese universities. After that, the
author and two other Vietnamese ESL teachers rechecked the error identifications of the
native English speaker to ensure that it was appropriate. As a Vietnamese, the author has the
advantage of being aware of the errors that Vietnamese typically make as a result of
language transfer. However, the role of the native English speaker who is highly competent
in Vietnamese was to ensure that the translation was correct, and the role of the other two
ESL teachers and the author was to check whether his corrections were always
grammatically correct and acceptable. The sample translation used for the error
identification was done by the American academic, and re-examined by the present author
(who is currently NAATI accredited translator). One Vietnamese NAATI translator was also
invited to provide another translation of the source text (see Appendix H). However, the
translation by this NAATI accredited translator is mainly used for comparison, rather than as
the main reference material for error marking. In the context of this thesis, errors were
enumerated without being graded. The reason is because the purpose of the translational
assessment is not to qualify the translators or use the assessment to classify the level of
translators, but only to locate the problematic areas that the second language learners have.

After the identifying of errors, the coding, systematising and classifying of errors were
done only by the present author. As the focus of the research is on syntactic structures, the
error analysis disregarded punctuation and spelling errors. All the errors were corrected and
noted down directly on the test paper of the students, so that the students could refer to them
when they answered the questionnaires. In the test paper, the students’ attention was directed
to their own syntactic errors, collocation and some errors in lexicon. But as lexical errors
were not the focus of the study, they were only marked if they were so grave as to seriously
affect the translation.

The learners’ translation corpus was built up using the 95 written translation texts. The
data were recorded into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet by the present author, instead of
using professional software to scan all the translations into a corpus. The reasons for using
the error corpus and the principles of detecting the error from an error corpus used in this
thesis are still the same as those of a computer-assisted error corpus. The corpus was re-
analysed, with the help of the Office 2000 Grammar checker\(^2\), to sort out the grammatical
errors. These errors were verified against the errors which had been detected manually.
However, as the grammar checker was unable to sort out the structural errors supposed to
result from language transfer, the present author ran the corpus through the computer and
then examined different translations of the same source sentence by sentence. This way, the
present author could look at all different ways of converting one Vietnamese sentence into
English, to see different ways of making errors over the same Vietnamese sentence and start
identifying the possible causes of the errors, as well as their frequency.

5.2.2 Analysis of Error Corpus
After the errors were identified, they were recorded in a learner error corpus in the form of
three tables in Microsoft Excel. The first pages of these three tables, Tables 1, 2, and 3, are
included in Appendices A, B and C. The three tables with the complete learner error corpus
and the instruction for sorting out the errors can be found on the attached CD-Rom. Table 1,
Error Identification and Categorisation, presents all details of the errors the students made,
including the error types, the parts of speech where the error happens, and the nature of the
error. Table 2, Error Source, lists the source of the error, based on the author’s judgment, as
well as the answers of the students in the questionnaires. There are 2 types of data from the
questionnaire: (a) quantitative data from the close-ended questions and (b) qualitative data
from the open-ended questions, which were analysed based on the content of the answers
provided by the students. Table 3, Translation Error Source, attempts to show whether a
certain error is due to (a) lack of Comprehension Competence (b) lack of Linguistic

\(^{2}\) It is stressed that the checking of errors by Office 2000 Grammar checker is just a minor aid or a rough way
of identifying errors.
Competence, or (c) lack of Translation Competence. The data processed is intended to help the author find the following:

1. the percentage and distribution of different kinds of syntactic errors in each of the four years.
2. the percentage and distribution of different kinds of syntactic errors over the total number of errors made by students.
3. the mean percentage of syntactic errors of each student of each year (to see whether the fourth year students, with higher linguistic competence, commit fewer errors).
4. the mean percentage of syntactic errors committed in each sentence (to see whether students tend to make more errors in sentence 1, 5, 17, 18, where the Vietnamese sentence structure shows a very clear manifestation of Topic-Comment Structure).
5. the mean percentage of syntactic errors of each student in each sentence, to see whether students in Year 3 tend to make more syntactic errors than their counterparts in Year 4 in a certain sentence, when the structure is a very clear manifestation of Topic-Comment Structure.

**Explanation of Table 1, Error Identification and Categorisation.**

The following picture is the full-screen interface of a Microsoft Excel Spreadsheet where the corpus with the translations of 95 students is presented. On the default screen, all the students’ translations are listed randomly in the order of the year, from Year 1 to Year 4, not by the order of the sentence or the type of error. When selecting each column and using the function of ‘Filter’ then ‘Auto Filter’ from the Data menu, the user of the corpus can sort all the translations by year, sentence or the error type and count the total number of each kind of error (see the instruction of using the corpus from the Instruction Sheet of the attached CD-Roms).

Table 1 in Microsoft Excel includes 6 columns: (1) Year, (2) Student Number and their Sentence, (3) Number of the sentence, (4) Error Type, (5) Part of Speech, (6) Nature of Error, as shown below (also see the typed version of this sample page of Table 1 on Appendix A).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Student Number</th>
<th>Sentence</th>
<th>Sent No</th>
<th>Error Type</th>
<th>Part of Speech</th>
<th>Nature of Error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>a person who &lt;b&gt;failed&lt;/b&gt; to carry out the preparation of the film was identified by Mr. Thaw</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>GRAMERROR</td>
<td>VERB</td>
<td>INAPPROPRIATE CHOICE OF TENSE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>The scene of burning fabrics, the detonation of fuselages and the gush of shells (shooting) a defile made an audience (audience) mixed run cold</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>MORERROR</td>
<td>VERB</td>
<td>INAPPROPRIATE VERB CONSTRUCTION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>The scene of burning fabrics, the detonation of fuselages and the gush of shells (shooting) a defile made an audience (audience) mixed run cold</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>SYNERRO</td>
<td>PREPOSITION</td>
<td>OMISSION OF PREPOSITION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>The scene of burning fabrics, the detonation of fuselages and the gush of shells (shooting) a defile made an audience (audience) mixed run cold</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>GRAMERROR</td>
<td>ARTICLE</td>
<td>OMISSION OF ARTICLE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>The scene of burning fabrics, the detonation of fuselages and the gush of shells (shooting) a defile made an audience (audience) mixed run cold</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>MORERROR</td>
<td>NOUN</td>
<td>MISUSE OF POSITIVE CASE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>The scene of burning fabrics, the detonation of fuselages and the gush of shells (shooting) a defile made an audience (audience) mixed run cold</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>SYNERRO</td>
<td>PHRASE</td>
<td>ADJUNCT OF UNNECESSARY PHRASE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>The scene of burning fabrics, the detonation of fuselages and the gush of shells (shooting) a defile made an audience (audience) mixed run cold</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>MORERROR</td>
<td>VERB</td>
<td>OMISSION OF 3RD PERSONAL 'S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>The scene of burning fabrics, the detonation of fuselages and the gush of shells (shooting) a defile made an audience (audience) mixed run cold</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>SYNERRO</td>
<td>CLAUSE</td>
<td>MISORDERING</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>The scene of burning fabrics, the detonation of fuselages and the gush of shells (shooting) a defile made an audience (audience) mixed run cold</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>SYNERRO</td>
<td>SENTENCE</td>
<td>NO LOGICAL CONNECTION BETWEEN SUBJECT AND VERB</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Year refers to the year that the student is in.
Student Number - Sentence is a special numeric code used to refer to students without using their names. For example, 3-4 refers to a student in Year 3 with the code number 4.
Sentence Number (Sent. No) refers to the order of the sentence in the source text.
Error Type is based on the linguistic categories of each error, categorising whether the error is grammatical, syntactic, translational, morphological, collocational or word form.
Part of Speech identifies the structural classification of the error, in terms of where the error is located in the overall system of the TL. For example, ‘verb’ implies that the error pertains to a verb.
Nature of Error will explain the reason why this linguistic item is considered an error. The Nature of error was narrowed to the use of the following terms: Omissions, Additions, Inappropriate Combination, Inappropriate Construction, Inappropriate Choice, Misordering, Misuse or Misplacement.

**Function of Table 1.** The table helped the author find out the following:

1. The total number of each type of error. This answers the research question 1: *Which error category accounts for the majority of errors?*
2. The total number of each type of error in each year. This answers the research question 4: *To what extent do the type and quantity of errors differ in groups of differing competence?*
3. The total number of each type of syntactic error (by first clicking the option SYNTACTIC ERROR in cell ERROR TYPE, and then clicking the option in cell PART OF SPEECH). This answers research question 2: *What are the most common and consistent syntactic errors that Vietnamese students majoring in English usually make when translating Vietnamese sentences into English?*

4. The total number of errors, especially syntactic errors made in each sentence. This shows whether the students tend to make more errors in the sentences where the Topic-Comment structure of Vietnamese is more prominent than the Subject-Predicate structure of English. This answers research question 3: *Do Vietnamese students have problems in translating Vietnamese sentence types in which the Topic-Comment structure is not identical with the Subject-Predicate structure?*

**Explanation of Table 2, Error Source.** Table 2 analysed the data obtained from the questionnaire. This table helped the author find out the causes or sources of the errors. Not all the errors had a corresponding explanation from students. Only errors relevant to the study were numbered and mentioned in Table 2. Table 2 (as shown below) includes 7 columns: (1) Year (2) Student Number and their Sentence (3) Sentence Number (4) Error Code (5) Error Type (6) Student Explanation
Year refers to the year that the student is in.
Student Number - Sentence is a special numeric code used to refer to students without using their name.
Sentence Number refers to the order of the sentence in the source text.
Error Code is a specific number that the author assigned to a certain error the student made in the elicitation task.
Error Type is the type of error the student made.
Student Explanation is the students’ answers to the open-ended option.
Answer Chosen in the Questionnaire is represented in numeric form, referring to the option the student chose from the questionnaire, to explain the cause of his/her error.

**Function of Table 2.** The table helped the author find out:

1. The source of each error. The decision for the cause of the errors was based on the author’s experience as an ESL teacher. However, for specific errors where the author is not sure of the cause of the error, the decision was based on the students’ explanation about their own errors.
2. The explanation of the students about their own errors.
3. The percentage and distribution of different causes for errors based on the answer from the questionnaire.
**Explanation of Table 3, Translation Error Source.** Table 3 (sample shown below) includes 7 columns: (1) Year (2) Student Number - Sentence (3) Number of Sentence (4) Error Type (5) Incorrect Comprehension (6) Lack of Linguistic Competence (7) Lack of Translation Competence.

When the error was assumed to result from the Lack of Comprehension Competence, the Lack of Linguistic Competence or from the Lack of Translation Competence, the corresponding column was ticked.

**Function of Table 3.** The present study focuses on studying the errors students made in their translation as language learners. The justification for this choice comes from Gile’s (1994:108) statement that, although the translation task may not resemble a real-life translation task, the target language text serves ‘as a looking - glass revealing their methods, insofar as their problems are generally symptoms of methodological weaknesses’. Although the subjects of this study are not students translating texts into L1, Gile’s observation is
useful, as it suggests that the errors and texts from the students can reveal weaknesses in their comprehension skills, linguistic problems or deficiency in translation competence.

With that purpose in mind, Table 3 categorises errors as

1. correct comprehension of the source language + incorrect production of that correct comprehension (expressed in grammatical error, syntactic error, lexical error, style..)
2. incorrect comprehension of the source text + incorrect production of that incorrect comprehension (expressed in grammatical error, syntactic error, lexical error, style).
3. incorrect comprehension of the source text + correct production of that incorrect comprehension.

The table therefore helped to answer research question 5: *What pedagogical implications can be drawn for teachers to help students deal with such errors, in terms of transforming these structures into the ones that best suit the process of translation into English?*

5.2.3 Description of the error taxonomy

5.2.3.1 Justification for not including lexical errors as a category of error

James (1998:146) states that ‘the claim has been made that native speakers cannot make errors, as they know their language perfectly. This seems to be true for syntax, but is not true for lexis. Native speakers can be ignorant of some of the lexical stock of their native language, which they continue to accumulate throughout their lives’. If this is the case, and taking into account the definition of error as suggested by Lennon (1991:182)\(^\text{29}\), lexical errors are not an adequate basis for comparing the competence of native speakers and language learners. In other words, grammatical and syntactic errors can better reflect the interlanguage and the most representative error pattern of language learners.

5.2.3.2 Error Taxonomy

The taxonomy used in this thesis includes not only Syntactic Errors, but also some other types of errors such as: Comprehension Errors, Morphological Errors, Grammatical

\(^{29}\) Error is ‘a linguistic form or combination of forms which, in the same context and under similar conditions of production, would, in all likelihood, not be produced by the speakers’ native speaker counterparts’
Errors, Collocation Errors, Inappropriate Word Forms, Translation Errors, Pragmatic Errors. Meticulous descriptions of the different types of errors with examples found in the data are given in Chapter 6. All errors in the present study are divided into 3 types: comprehension errors, linguistic errors and translation errors.

1. **Comprehension errors.** These errors occur when the learners misunderstand the syntax of a sentence in the source text, or misread a word and their translation is based on a misunderstood source text.

2. **Linguistic errors.** Under the umbrella term of ‘linguistic errors’ are the following specific types of errors: morphological errors, grammatical errors, syntactic errors, collocational errors, inappropriate word form.

   2.1 *Morphological errors*: are errors which involve a failure to comply with the norm in building word structure. For example, *six book*, *aboli*shment… are noun morphology errors; *brinded, was drink*en are verb morphology errors. (James 1998)

   2.2 *Grammatical errors*: Errors that occur in the handling of word structure, including lack of agreement between subject and verb, incorrect verb tenses or verb forms, incorrect case of noun, pronouns, adjectives, and the use of an adjective when a verb is needed.

   2.3 *Syntactic errors*: Errors made when learners have to handle any structures larger than words. Errors in this category occur when students have problems with the building of a phrase, a clause or a sentence.

   2.4 *Collocational errors*: Errors made in the idiomatic usage of the target language.

   2.5 *Inappropriate word form* refers to cases where the *word form* is not correctly chosen, i.e., the learner uses a noun instead of an adjective. The root of the word may be correct, but the wrong form is used. This kind of error is classified as a linguistic error, not a translation error.
3. Translation errors. These are errors which show the inability of the students in expressing the meaning of the source text in the target text, or some distortion of the source text, even though the sentences may be grammatically correct. Translation errors in this thesis include a) pragmatic errors, b) the omission of something essential to the meaning of the source text, c) the addition of an unnecessary part which is not expressed in the original text, d) inaccurate renditions of individual lexical items in the source text, e) the distortion or change at a level of meaning of the source text, f) too literal translation, g) too free translation, h) wrong lexical choice and i) wrong focus of attention.

Pragmatic errors refer to errors which occur when learners produce a grammatically and semantically correct phrase/sentence, but the use of the phrase/sentence is not appropriate for the communicative situation. Examples of pragmatic errors include using technical or informal terms for the translation of a journalistic style, or using culturally inappropriate expressions. In other words, if the register of the source text is not preserved in a certain chunk or item of the translation, that chunk or item is considered a pragmatic error.

Although additions and omissions are deemed as useful and necessary translation strategies by many translation scholars, in this study they are regarded as types of translation errors, when the addition or omission severely influence the meaning of the source text and impede the comprehension of the readers. A translated item is an error of ‘addition’, if it is inserted when it was not clearly expressed in the original text. An item is an error of ‘omission’, if something essential to the meaning is left out.

Translation errors also include translation versions that are too free or too literal. Nord (1992) defines a translation error as a deviation from a selected (or prescribed) model of action by the translator or a frustration of the recipient’s expectations concerning a certain action. Translation errors are also wrong lexical choices. This type of error may impair the comprehension of the readers. The author did not use the term Lexical Error, because the students were provided with dictionaries and suggested vocabulary.

This study considers all errors under the general term ‘translational error’, in the sense that they happen during the process of translation. However, by classifying a certain error as ‘translation error’, but not ‘comprehension error’ or ‘linguistic error’, the present author wants to refer to the error occurring in the process of transferring one sentence from the source text into the target text when the grammar of the sentence is acceptable. In other
words, these ‘translation errors’ are more related the ‘transfer competence’. Accordingly, they can be called as ‘transfer errors’. However, to avoid confusion between ‘language transfer errors’ in second language acquisition and errors made in the ‘transfer process’ of translation, the term ‘translation error’ is used.

5.2.4 Analysis of Data from the Questionnaire and Interview
The students were asked to select the most important from 9 given options to identify the reasons for making errors. The options selected by the greatest number of students were considered to be the view most widely held and were indicated as a percentage.

The results of the answers to each question were summarised in a table in which the percentage and rankings are clearly presented. To facilitate the comparison, the three highest percentages and rankings are presented in bold underlined figures, while the percentages of the other options are also shown in the table for reference. For example, the responses of the students regarding types of errors are categorised in the following table. Table 5.3 below is only illustrative and does not contain any data. Table 7.23 in Chapter 10 presents the real data.

The data obtained from the interviews were transcribed and used as confirmation data. In other words, the author referred to the interviews to see whether the types of errors and possible causes of errors found in the first step of the data analysis match those of the students.
Table 5.3

*Percentage of Distribution of Causes of Errors*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question No</th>
<th>Options</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Ranking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>It is similar to a Vietnamese structure.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>It is different from a Vietnamese structure.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I know the rule well, but occasionally make errors of this type because of lack of practice.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The teacher’s explanations were not clear.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>I think the rule is shared by all cases, I don’t think that the error I made is an exception.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>I forgot the rule</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>I know the grammatical rule, but I just have problems with translation skills.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>I don’t remember the reason.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>The structure has not been taught yet.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Other (open-ended question)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.3 CONCLUSION

Chapter 5 describes the procedure and the method of collection and analysis of data. Section 5.1 describes the three components of the data collection: the subjects of the study (5.1.1); the three steps of the data collection: Elicitation Translation Task, Questionnaire and Interviews (5.1.2) and the analysis of the Elicitation Test (5.1.3). In 5.2 all the details of the data analysis are discussed. Firstly, 5.2.1 describes the analysis of the Elicitation Test; 5.2.1.1 states the reason why error analysis is chosen as the main method of data analysis; the model for analysing the errors is presented in 5.2.1.2. Section 5.2.1.3 shows how the errors are identified, recorded them and the error corpus is built up. The analysis of error corpus is described in 5.2.2 and error taxonomy used in the thesis is discussed in the last section, 5.2.3.
Chapter 6

Analysis of Examples of Errors

In the analysis of errors, all types of linguistic errors are examined first, that is to say, all the linguistic errors, including those that can seriously impair or slightly influence the readers’ comprehension, are examined and described in the section on Linguistic Errors. After all the linguistic errors are detected, the corpus is reexamined to detect translation errors, which are then classified into two sub-types: (a) those that are due to the lack of comprehension of the source text, classified under the category of Comprehension Errors, and (b) those that are due to the inability to render the meaning of the original message into the target language classified under the category of Translation Errors. The same error can be classified under both types, because it may be attributable to many reasons, depending on its nature and its impact on the translation. Although the study tries to define clear lines between these three main types of errors, this is not always possible. To illustrate, a linguistic error can also be a translation error, if it seriously impairs the reader’s comprehension. But if the error is a serious one in terms of syntax and grammar, it is better to treat it as a linguistic error, based on the assumption that the translation should only be carried out once a certain minimum degree of linguistic competence is achieved. Translation errors can only be applied to cases when the sentences are understandable in terms of syntax, but fail to match the intended message of the source text.

All types of errors are provided with examples and are discussed, except the grammatical errors as they are not the focus of the study and they are more relevant to a study in language teaching than the field of translation. The correct translations suggested by a native speaker and a NAATI accredited translator are included in Appendices E and F. All the erroneous translations of the students are in Appendix A and the Table 1 of the attached CD-Rom. In each subheading presenting one type or sub-type of error, the total number and the percentage of errors made by students is put in the parentheses and all the examples are erroneous translations from the students. Chapter 6 focuses only on the description and analysis of the examples of different types of errors from the error corpus. The detailed quantitative analysis of the errors from 4 different groups of students is discussed in Chapter 7.
Section 6.1 provides the definition and illustration of linguistic errors, which include morphological errors, grammatical errors, syntactic errors, collocation errors and inappropriate word form. Section 6.2 discusses comprehension errors. All types of translation errors are elaborated in Section 6.3. There are 9 types of them: pragmatic errors, omissions of some parts of the source text, additions, inaccurate renditions of individual lexical items, distorted meaning of the source text, too literal translation, too free translation, wrong lexical choice and wrong focus of attention.

The analysis of the data extracted from three tables in Microsoft Excel Spreadsheet (see Tables 1, 2 and 3 in the attached CD-Rom) yields the following types of errors:

6.1. LINGUISTIC ERRORS
In this section, linguistic errors are divided into the following subclasses: morphological errors (in 9.1.1), grammatical errors (in 9.1.2), syntactic errors (in 9.1.3), collocational errors (9.1.4) and inappropriate word form (in 9.1.5). All of the linguistic definitions for each part of speech are adapted from the Oxford English Dictionary. Bold fonts are used to indicate an erroneous word and the word appearing in parentheses is the suggested correction (if there is one). There can be many errors in one sentence. However, only the error in focus is in bold font and other errors are still in normal font. The ✓ symbol is used to refer to a missing word or constituent in the sentence.

6.1.1 Morphological Errors
Morphological errors are divided into two subcategories: noun and verb. There were 145 morphological errors made in the noun word class, which were divided into 4 subtypes and 153 morphological errors made in the verb word class, which were divided into 3 subtypes. All 7 types of morphological errors are discussed with examples from the corpus.

6.1.1.1 Noun
1. Addition of plural marker (30/145=20.6%). The first type of morphological error happens when students add the plural marker ‘s’ to a singular noun or a collective noun which is considered to be singular. This type of error happens mostly in sentence 6 (9/30) of the Source Text and sentence 15 (8/30). In sentence 6 (example (1) below), the word ‘mò
hôi’ (sweat) in the original message is written without any numerals, quantifiers or plural markers preceding it. Accordingly, some students thought that ‘mò hôi’ could be translated as a plural noun and added the plural morpheme –s after the noun.

(1) Every scenery has **sweats** (sweat).

According to Hung (2000:9), in Vietnamese, when the determiner specifying the plural/singular and definiteness/indefiniteness is absent and the noun is mentioned without any article before it, the noun is considered to be preceded by a Zero-Article, which has two features [+definiteness, +singular]. In this sense, the word ‘mò hôi’ (sweat) is singular. However, the students who did not notice this feature of Vietnamese grammar added the plural morpheme ‘s’ at the end of the word. The cause of this error may also be attributable to the lack of English competence as the students cannot distinguish the countability and uncountability of the noun ‘sweat’ in English.

In sentence 15 (example (2) below), although the noun is preceded by ‘each’ or ‘every’, 9 students still added the plural morpheme -s to the noun.

(2) Each leading **characters** (character), with his/her own appearance, is original, dramatic and portrayed naturally and profoundly.

**2. Omission of plural marker (91/145=62.75%).** This type of error happens when the students omit the plural marker –s at the end of a plural noun, as found in examples (3) and (4) below. There are 91 errors of this type in the corpus. Noticeably, 59 out of 91 (40.68%) errors of this kind were made in sentence 17 with the translation of the word ‘cửu chỉ’ (gestures), as shown in example (4) below.

(3) I am also fascinated by the **character** (characters) named and nameless.

(4) ... her **gesture** (gestures) was (were) very suitable to the mood.

This error pattern indicates that the error is not simply related to the noun formation; rather, it is a reflection of the comprehension of the source text. Clearly, Vietnamese students have difficulty identifying the number of the noun when it is not preceded by any quantifier or
article (a situation which is often observed in Vietnamese grammar). In sentence 17, it is not the case that students cannot distinguish between the uses of the singular and plural forms of the word. The problem is they cannot identify whether the word of the original message is singular or plural, without any quantifier or numeral before it. Based on the context, the word should be considered as plural, because this sentence is among the last three sentences in the paragraph to summarise the basic features and the performance of the three main characters. That is to say, Tam is described as an excellent moon-shaped-guitar player, and in general, all of his gestures and manners exactly match his moods. Given that the sentence does not mention which gesture among all the scenes of the film, the word ‘củ chi’ (gestures) can be understood as mentioning all of the gestures made by the character Tam throughout the whole film. However, seeing no numerals before the word, most students (59/91=64.3%) decided to use the singular, instead of the plural.

3. Misuse of singular/plural form (20/145=13.79%). The third type of error occurs when the students incorrectly used the plural for the singular form of the noun, especially when the plural form is irregular, as shown in examples (5) and (6) below.

(5) The sight of silkworms wriggling to be fed and ✓ feet trampling upon silkworms make (makes) our flesh creep.

In example (5), the reason why the plural form is used may be that the students have misunderstood the source text. While the text’s author means only one foot by saying ‘bàn chân’, the students believed that many feet are being described and they chose the plural form ‘feet’ for the translation. The error is therefore more than a morphological error; it is a comprehension error. The choice of the plural noun is wrong, because the comprehension of the source text is wrong, but the rendering from that incorrect comprehension is grammatically correct.

Example (6) below is one example which seems to go in the opposite direction from most of the errors.
(6) The scene of broad flat drying baskets in which silkworms wriggle and ask for food, the scene that (where) some foot tramples upon silkworms make our flesh creep.

In example (6), the student translated ‘bàn chân’ as ‘some foot’ instead of ‘some feet’. This shows clearly that the error is both a comprehension and a linguistic error. First, the student misunderstood that many feet are being mentioned and decided to use the quantifier ‘some’. Then s/he used the plural form of the noun; however, s/he failed to distinguish the plural form of ‘foot’ from its singular form and provided the wrong form.

4. Incorrect use of possessive case (4/145=2.75%). The fourth type of morphological error is the incorrect use of the possessive case. There are not many errors of this type in the corpus (4/145). When the students make the correct decision to use the possessive case for the noun, but fail to use the correct rule, the error is counted as a morphological error. For example, they did not drop the ‘s’ morpheme after the apostrophe with a plural noun, as shown in the example (7) below. In (7), the students made errors in both the addition of the plural marker and the formation of the possessive case. First, they incorrectly added the plural morpheme -s to the collective noun ‘audience’. Then they incorrectly used the rule of adding a possessive case morpheme to the plural noun.

(7) The scene of burning furniture, the bang of exploding furnishings and the gunshot fired at a doll make ✓ viewers’s blood run cold.

However, if the students incorrectly choose to use the possessive after a noun, in the situation where the possessive should not or cannot be used, that error is counted as a syntactic error at the level of phrase structure, and termed ‘misuse of the possessive’. Example (8) below is an illustration of such a case.

(8) The scene of furniture burning, the explode (explosion) of belongings and the gunshot at the doll make (makes) the audiences’s blood run cold.
6.1.1.2 Verb

1. Inappropriate verb construction (53/153=34.64%). Errors of ‘inappropriate verb construction’ occur when students are unable to provide the correct form for the word class they are using. For example, in examples (9) and (10) below, the correct form of the past participle the students should have used is ‘shot’ or ‘fired’, but they used ‘shoted’ instead. Clearly, this error was the result of the transfer of a rule from English into Vietnamese: the students applied the rule of adding the suffix –ed at the end of a regular verb in past tense.

(9) The time when the furniture was burnt, the explosion of furnishings and the gunshot shoted (shot/fired) at the doll make the viewers’ blood run cold

(10) The sight of silkworms wriggling to cried for food and the foot trampling upon the silkworm (silkworms) made human’s flesh creep.

What really counts is the influence of these morphological errors on the syntactic structure of the sentence. In some cases, the error in the inappropriate verb construction can lead to a serious deviation in syntactic structure, as can be observed in the following example:

(11) Scenes of silkworms on broad flat basket wriggle to ask for food and steps trample upon them make our flesh creep.

Because the verb ‘wriggle’ and ‘trample’ adds extra clauses to the sentence, this error is not only a morphological error. It changes the sentence structure and hinders the readers’ comprehension. It is also classified as a syntactic error at the level of sentence structure and listed in the syntactic error section.

2. Omission of third person ‘s’ (54/153=35.29%). Most of the errors of omission of 3rd person ‘s’ occur in sentence 3 (18/54=33.33%) and 4 (28/54=51.85%). In these two sentences, the students mistook the subject of the sentence, which is ‘one scene’ consisting of many details, such as the explosion of the furnishings, the gunshot fired at the doll, etc., for a combination of several scenes. The students used the plural form of the verb for the
plural subject and omitted the third person morpheme at the end of the verb. Example (12) below illustrates this type of error that students often made in sentences 3 and 4.

(12) The scene of burning furniture, the explosion of furnishing and the gunshot fired at the doll make (makes) the audience's flesh creep.

3. Subject/Verb agreement (46/153=30.06%). There is a separate classification for morphological errors in which the subject/verb agreement is not correct, but does not involve the omission of third person ‘s’. This kind of error is called ‘subject/verb agreement’, which occurs when the students fail to correctly conjugate the two verbs ‘to be’ or ‘to have’. Although these errors are spread over most of the sentences from the source text, most of the ‘subject/verb agreement’ errors are concentrated in sentence 12 (17/46=36.95%), when students translated the existential structure ‘cực có phim nào ở nước Việt ta được thực hiện công phu và đạt chuẩn như vậy’ (no Vietnamese film has ever been produced as elaborately and perfectly/literally there has never been any Vietnamese film made as elaborate and perfect as this one). The students seemed to be puzzled by the structure ‘there is/ there has been’ and forgot that the verb has to agree with the following noun phrase. Example (13) illustrates this type of error.

(13) To my remembrance, there have (has) never been any film which was made in such an elaborate and perfect operation in our country.

This type of morphological error represents 30.06% (46/153) of morphological errors of the verb word class and represents 15.43% (46/298) of all morphological errors.

6.1.2. Grammatical Errors
The list of grammatical errors is adapted from the system used for error marking of the American Translation Association (ATA). There are 836 grammatical errors (836/2609=32%) found in the corpus, occurring in 14 word classes: adjective, adverb, article, conjunction, determiner, indefinite determiner, indefinite pronoun, negative
determiner, preposition, pronoun, reflexive pronoun, relative pronoun, verb, present participle. The deviations are classified in five ways:

1. Misuse: when the word class should not be used
2. Omission: when the word class is omitted
3. Addition: when the word class is added
4. Inappropriate Choice: when the word class is used correctly but the specific form is chosen inappropriately
5. Misplacement: when the word class is placed in the wrong position.

Below is a list of all 38 types of grammatical errors which occurred in 14 word classes from the corpus:

**Adjective**

1. Adjective—Misuse of Adjective

   (14) To, a singer whose beauty brings misfortunes, is *drifted* but dignified, amorous and loyal, not only seductive but also serious, petite and not insignificant.

2. Adjective—Misuse of Adjective/Adverb

   (15) If only it were named Me Thao, it would be heard (sound) more *simply* (simple) and more *interestingly* (interesting).

3. Adjective—Misuse of Adjective/Noun

   (16) ✓ Be fascinated again by ✓ *name* (named) and nameless characters.

4. Adjective—Misuse of Possessive Adjective

   (17) Every leading character has *its* (his/her/their) own appearance, original, dramatic and how naturally and profoundly they are portrayed.
5. Adjective - Omission of Possessive Adjective

(18) Tam, a desperate and mysterious player of the moon shaped guitar, has gesture (gestures) which goes well with ✓ (his) mood.

Adverb
6. Adverb—Omission of Adverb

(19) In my memory, it was the first Vietnamese film which had been made ✓ (so) elaborately and perfectly like that (redundant)

7. Adverb—Misuse of Adverb

(20) All of the leading characters are ‘one man one look’, original, dramatic and are portrayed how (so) naturally and profoundly.

8. Adverb—Addition of Adverb (Redundancy)

(21) Each part is all (redundant) permeated with ✓ Vietnamese soul.

9. Adverb—Misplacement of Adverb

(22) Nguyen really is a chivalrous, generous and peculiar frustrated, rather crazy landowner.

10. Adverb—Misuse of Adjective/ Adverb

(23) And how natural (naturally) and profound (profoundly) they are portrayed!

Article
11. Article—Misuse of Article
(24) Among many successful supporting characters, an (the) old servant is very lively and moving, deserves ✓ to be nominated as the most excellent supporting character.

12. Article—Omission of Article

(25) I was fascinated by both ✓ named and nameless characters.

13. Article—Addition of Article

(26) The scene of burning furniture, the explosive sound of furnishing and the gunshot firing (fired) at the doll seems to be carried out only by the (redundant) magic.

Conjunction
14. Conjunction—Addition of Conjunction

(27) What made our blood run cold was that the scene of burning furniture, the sound of exploding furniture and a gunshot firing at a doll.

15. Conjunction—Misuse of Conjunction

(28) Supposed (supposing) that it was (were) named MT, ✓ sounds (it would sound) candid and more unique.

16. Conjunction—Omission of Conjunction

(29) There hasn’t been a Vietnamese film which is (redundant) made ✓ (as) elaborately and perfectly like this (redundant).

Determiner

159
17. Determiner—Addition of Determiner

(30) Nguyen is chivalrous, generous, openly peculiar, what such a frustrated, dotty landowner he is.

18. Determiner—Inappropriate Choice of Determiner

(31) Tam, so (such) a (an) admirable player of the moon shaped guitar that (who) tends to be desperate, is mysterious, frustrated but giving, exact gesture with mood.

19. Determiner—Misuse of Determiner

(32) There has never been, if I remember correctly, such a movie that was ✓ (so) elaborate and up to the standard.

Indefinite Determiner

20. Indefinite Determiner—Addition of Indefinite Determiner

(33) Almost all (redundant) subject was permeated with ✓ Viet’s soul.

21. Indefinite Determiner—Inappropriate Choice of Indefinite Determiner

(34) Sweat can be seen at any (every) scene.

22. Indefinite Determiner—Omission of Indefinite Determiner

(35) Almost ✓ (every) topic were (was) permeated with the Vietnamese soul.

Indefinite Pronoun

23. Indefinite Pronoun—Misuse of Indefinite Pronoun
(36) As the one (someone) who used to follow the preparation of 'MT-once the golden
time' attentively, I am fascinated by MT.

**Negative Determiner**

24. Negative Determiner—Inappropriate Choice of Negative Determiner

(37) As I can remember, none of (no) Vietnamese films (film) have (has) been ✓
elaborately and perfectly produced.

**Preposition**

25. Preposition—Inappropriate Choice of Preposition

(38) In (Among) many of the successful supporting characters, the old servant is very
vivid and touching.

26. Preposition—Omission of Preposition

(39) He was worthy of nominating (being nominated) ✓ the best supporting character.

27. Preposition—Addition of Preposition

(40) Among of many successful supporting characters, the old servant is very vivid and
touching, worth to be nominate the most excellent one.

**Pronoun**

28. Pronoun—Addition of Pronoun

(41) The scene of silkworms wriggling and demanding eating (food) on broad flat drying
baskets and of feet trampling upon the silkworms make (makes) us ✓ viewer's
(viewers’) flesh creep.

29. Pronoun—Misuse of Pronoun

(42) Tam, a player of the moon shaped guitar is so wonderful that it (he) is desperate,
mysterious, frustrated whose giving and gesture is accurate with mood.
**Reflexive Pronoun**

30. Reflexive Pronoun—Inappropriate Choice of Reflexive Pronoun

   (43) Nguyen is chivalrous, generous, show *oneself* peculiarly.

**Relative Pronoun**

31. Rel. Pronoun—Inappropriate Choice of Rel. Pronoun

   (44) It seems as if it were (only) magic *who* (that) could have made such a scene of dropping

32. Rel. Pronoun—Omission of Rel. Pronoun

   (45) Perhaps there won’t be any other actress *(who)* play the role as well as Thuy Nga.

33. Rel. Pronoun—Addition of Rel. Pronoun

   (46) No one but Thuy Nga *who* (redundant) could have played such a role, which is supported by golden tone Thanh Hoai and poet Van Le’s lyrics.

**Verb**

34. Verb—Inappropriate Choice of Auxiliary

   (47) Hardly *does* (could) anyone play the role better than Thuy Nga (with Thanh Hoai golden voice and the lyrics written by Van Le poet).

35. Verb—Inappropriate Choice of Tense

   (48) As a man who *followed* (has followed) attentively to the preparation for the film, I was fascinated by Me Thao.

36. Verb—Inappropriate Agreement of Tenses

   (49) If only the film *was named* Me Thao, it *sounded* more simple and exciting.

37. Verb—Misplacement of Auxiliary
(50) If only was the film (were) named Me Thao, it looks (would sound) more simple and more fascinating.

38. Verb—Inappropriate Verb Voice

(51) They portrayed (were portrayed) naturally and profoundly.

Verb (Present Participle)
39. Verb (Present Participle)—Inappropriate Choice of Tense

(53) Following (Having followed) attentively the film’s preparation, I was fascinated by Me Thao.

6.1.3 Syntactic Errors

Below is a table enumerating all the various types of syntactic errors in the students’ translations, which are made at three levels: phrase, clause and sentence. In this thesis, the definition of phrase, clause and sentence is as adapted from Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, http://www.m-w.com.

The total number of each error type at each level is provided in the corresponding column of the table, depending on what level of sentence that type of error appears. Following the table is the discussion of representative examples of syntactic error types enumerated in the list. Syntactic errors in a phrase are examined first, then the syntactic errors in clause structure and in sentence structure. Syntactic errors with the frequency of less than 9 times in the corpus are underlined in blue in Table 6.

Although syntactic errors appearing less than 9 times are considered insignificant, they are still discussed in this section, as some of them are directly related to the task of translating subjects and handling the topic-comment structure of Vietnamese.

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Sentence: a word, clause, or phrase or a group of clauses or phrases forming a syntactic unit which expresses an assertion, a question, a command, a wish, an exclamation, or the performance of an action, that in writing usually begins with a capital letter and concludes with appropriate end punctuation.

Clause: a group of words containing a subject and predicate and functioning as a member of a complex or compound sentence.

Phrase: a word or group of words forming a syntactic constituent with a single grammatical function.
Table 6. List of Syntactic Errors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Error type</th>
<th>Sentence</th>
<th>Clause</th>
<th>Phrase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Addition of clause</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Addition of unnecessary word/phrase</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Addition of verb</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Addition of subject</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Inappropriate choice of subject</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Inappropriate combination of subject and passive verb</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Inappropriate combination of two clauses</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Inappropriate phrase construction</td>
<td></td>
<td>35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Inappropriate verb phrase construction</td>
<td></td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Inappropriate noun phrase construction</td>
<td></td>
<td>74</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Inappropriate clause construction</td>
<td></td>
<td>26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Inappropriate sentence construction</td>
<td>71</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Incorrect use of possessive case</td>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Incomplete phrase</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Incomplete clause</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Incomplete sentence</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Lack of coordinating conjunction</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Misordering</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Misordering of relative clause</td>
<td>20</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Misuse of relative clause</td>
<td>26</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. No logical connection between subject and predicate</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Non-Parallel combination</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Omission of main clause</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Omission of main verb</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Omission of possessive marker</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Omission of relative pronoun</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. Omission of subject</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. Repetition of subject</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>371</strong></td>
<td><strong>101</strong></td>
<td><strong>186</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6.1.3.1 Phrase Structure

There are a total of 186 syntactic errors, divided into 9 subtypes, at the level of the phrase. They are discussed below with examples from the corpus.

1. **Addition of unnecessary words (7/186=3.76%).** In the first type ‘addition of unnecessary phrase’, students add an extra word without which the phrase sounds better, as can be seen in the following example:

   (54) The scene of a broad flat drying basket of silkworms wriggling for food **requirement** (redundant) and the feet trampling upon the silkworms make (makes) our flesh creep

   In this example, the word ‘requirement’ is not considered as a wrong insertion, it is redundant; therefore, it is listed as ‘unnecessary word’.

2. **Inappropriate noun phrase construction (74/186=39.78%).** The second type is an ‘inappropriate noun phrase construction’, which is used to refer to instances where

   1. Students insert one finite verb into a noun phrase:

   (55) The explosion of furnishings and the gunshot **fires** (fired) at the doll made audience’s blood run cold.

   2. A head noun is missing at the end of the phrase:

   (56) To, **a beautiful but unlucky, homeless but dignified, amorous but loyal, seductive but serious and petite but ✓ unimportant ✓**, was played the role best by Thuy Nga.

   3. A preposition is missing at the beginning of a prepositional phrase modifying a noun:

   (57) **The scene ✓ dropping the lanterns ✓** as if only magic could do.

   4. An adjective phrase follows the head noun in an incorrect way without any preposition:
(58) First, it is the being fascinated by images ‘full of film’s language’.

5. An adjective or noun follows a noun when it is supposed to precede it:

(59) I was also fascinated by characters named and nameless.

6. An adjective phrase precedes a head noun when it is supposed to follow:

(60) Firstly, I am fascinated by ✓ ‘very language of motion picture’ images.

7. The noun is too compact:

(61) Burning furniture’s scene, the explosion of furnishings and gunshot on the doll made viewers blood run cold.

8. The order of the adjective and noun is mixed up.

(62) To, a beautiful woman ill fate singer, ✓ (was) wandering but dignified, amorous but loyal, not only seductive but also serious, petite without insignificant.

3. Inappropriate verb phrase construction (30/186=16.12%). The third type of error at the phrase level is in verb phrase construction. The following examples are considered to be errors of this type:

1. A finite verb is used at the beginning of a present participle phrase:

(63) Among a lot of successful supporting characters, the old servant, who was vivid and touching, deserve being nominated to be (as) the most excellent supporting part.

2. The form of the verb is not appropriate for the function of the verb phrase, e.g., a present participle is used is used instead of infinitive verb:

(64) Among many successful character (characters), the character of the old servant was lively and touching, he deserves being nominated (to be nominated) as the most successful supporting character.

3. The main auxiliary is missing from the whole verb phrase:
(65) One of some successful anti heroes is the old servant who was so lively and moving that ✓ worth being voted the most excellent anti-hero.

4. A present participle is redundantly added to a past participle phrase:

(66) In my memory, there is no Vietnamese film being (redundant) made elaborately and perfectly like that.

5. ‘To be’ is missing in a verb phrase:

(67) The scene of floating lantern seems ✓ made only by magic.

6. A construction resembling a past participle phrase is used but incorrectly:

(68) Used to be a person watching the gestation of the film, I was fascinated Me Thao…

7. An inappropriate verb form is inside a noun phrase (the finite form is used instead of the participle):

(69) The burning furniture scene, the furnishings detonation and the gunshot fire (fired) at the doll to make viewers’s blood run cold.

8. There is no ‘to’ separating the two verbs in a verb phrase:

(70) The scene stretch silkworms wriggles demand to eat and feet trample upon silkworms makes us flesh creep.

4. Inappropriate phrase construction (35/186=18.81%). The fourth type of error is ‘inappropriate phrase construction’, dealing with other kinds of phrases (prepositional phrase, adjectival phrase, adverb phrase, participle phrase). The error may occur when

1. An adjective is used instead of a noun in a prepositional phrase:

(71) Tam, the player of the moon shaped guitar, is perfect to desperate (the point of desperation), mysterious, frustrated but always has a disposition to do good, his gestures are so suitable to his mood.
2. A prepositional phrase is used in the wrong case, where a participle verb phrase should be used:

(72) As a person with attention to ✓ preparation of the film, I am fascinated by Me Thao - golden age.

3. The construction of a phrase is incorrect with one or two extra words:

(73) As having follow the gestation of the film attentively, I was fascinated by Me Thao.

4. An adverb is placed after an adjective in an adjectival phrase:

(74) Being a frustrated landowner, Nguyen is chivalrous, generous and openly peculiar madly.

5. An adjective is used after a preposition instead of a noun or gerund:

(75) To, an unhappy singer, ✓ drifted (drifting) but dignified, was amorous but loyal, seductive and serious, petite without ✓ insignificant.

5. Incomplete phrase (6/186=3.22%). ‘Incomplete phrase’ is the fifth type of error within the phrase. These errors occur when the students cannot complete the phrase or leave it unfinished. Here are three examples from the corpus.

(76) In my memory (As far as I can remember), never has a film of VN had been elaborately made and reached such a perfect ✓.

(77) To, a beautiful singer who often has tragedy in her life, wander (wanders) from place to place but ✓ (is) dignified, amorous but loyal, seductive and serious, petite but ✓ (not) significant.

(78) The leading characters have their own original, dramatic ✓ portrayed naturally and profoundly.
With this definition, some errors in the category of inappropriate noun phrase can also be classified as ‘incomplete phrase’.

6. Misordering (13/186=6.98%). ‘Misordering’ errors occur when the correct order of the words inside a phrase is not adhered to. In the above-mentioned examples of ‘inappropriate construction of noun phase or verb phrase’, we already observed some cases in which the word order is changed, leading to the wrong formation of the phrase. However, in this category, the misordering of the phrase is more serious and cannot be listed under the category of noun or verb phrase. When the head noun is put in front of the adjectives without a comma, instead of following it, the error is treated as ‘inappropriate noun phrase construction’. However, when the adjective is put after the noun with a colon, comma or conjunction, the error is treated as ‘misordering’ as shown in examples (79), (80) and (81).

(79) Leading characters have their own characteristic (characteristics): original, dramatic.

(80) All leading characters had their own beauty, original, dramatic, which were naturally and profoundly portrayed.

(81) Nguyen, who was chivalrous, generous, externally peculiar, showed ✓ to be really a frustrated landowner and very mad.

Misordering also happens when the adverb is incorrectly put in the middle of a verb phrase, when it is supposed to be located at another place of that phrase, as in (82).

(82) In my memory, there has been not yet any films of Vietnam which were fulfilled elaborately and as perfect (perfectly) as this film.

7. Non parallel combination (3/186=1.61%). ‘Non parallel combination’ refers to cases where the parts within a phrase are not parallel. There are only 3 cases of unparallel combination at the phrase level; most such cases occur in clauses or sentences. In example (83) below, after the preposition ‘with’, the noun phrase ‘such an elaboration’ connected with another prepositional phrase ‘up to standard’ creates an imbalance in the phrase.
(83) In my memory, there have (has) never been a film of our Vietnamese nation with such an elaboration and up to standard like that of MT.

(84) To, the fairs’ precarious destiny singer, ✓ drift but dignified, amorous but loyal, also seductive and serious…

8. Inappropriate use of possessive case (14/186=7.52%) and 9. Omission of possessive marker (4/186=2.15%). These two types of errors include all those involving possessive case. The errors called ‘inappropriate use of possessive case’ concern instances in which the possessive case is used when it should not have been, while ‘Omission of possessive marker’ cases are the opposite. These two types of errors are evaluated as syntactic, rather than morphological (which also relates to the omission of the possessive), because the effects of the errors are significant, extending to the phrase structure. Examples (85), (86), (87) show the inappropriate choice of possessive case, when it is not justified by the context, and example (88) illustrates the omission of the possessive marker, when it is supposed to be present.

In example (85) below, instead of saying “the ‘sweat’ of arrangement”, “the sweat of rehearsing and acting”, the students wanted to be more ‘creative’ and used the possessive case for these noun phrases. However, the possessive cannot be used in this case, when the possessor is an abstract noun. Four students chose to translate this sentence with the possessive case. This example of error has shown that the students may not be linguistically incompetent, but this is just one of their attempts to productively apply the grammatical rule of English. They were not wrong in applying the rule, but their decision to use the possessive case was inappropriate.

(85) Arrangement's sweat. Rehearsing and acting's sweat also.

In examples (86) and (87) below, students incorrectly used the possessive case in situations where the noun functioning as a possessor is not an animate. The error lies not in the way the students applied the rule to the actual words (by adding an apostrophe and ‘s’), but in their choice of the possessive case when it could not be applied.
(86) The scene of a silkworms’ basket (basket of silkworms) wriggling to ask for feeding ...

(87) ✓ (The scene of) Burning and destroying furniture’s sight, furnishings’s burning sound and a gunshot shot at a doll, all make ✓ viewers’s blood run cold.

In example (87), the possessor is ‘burning and destroying furniture’ and ‘furnishings’. The possible reason for this error is that the students misunderstood that any noun phrase linked by ‘of’ can be replaced by the possessive case. That is to say, the noun phrase ‘the sight of burning and destroying furniture’ can be changed to ‘burning and destroying’s sight’ and the noun phrase ‘the sound of burning of the furnishings’ can be changed to ‘furnishings’s burning sound’. There are two things to note in the example of ‘furnishings’s burning sound’. Firstly, the students not only incorrectly used the possessive case, but also applied the rule incorrectly, by retaining the –s after the noun ‘furnishings’. Secondly, when faced with the choice of two cases where the possessive could be used, the students chose the noun ‘furnishing’. The possible reason for this is that this word appears last in the Vietnamese phrase ‘tiếng nổ cửa đó đặc’, and with the knowledge of English, the students’ first reaction was to render the last component of the Vietnamese phrase into the first component in English with the possessive case.

In the following example, the possessor is ‘silkworms’ and the possessed is ‘basket’ while the relationship between them is container-content. Although we can say ‘the table’s leg’ in English, the case of ‘silkworm’s basket’ is not semantically justified.

(88) The burning furniture scene, the explosive sound of furnishings and the gunshot toward doll to shoot, all make viewers ✓ blood run cold.

6.1.3.2 Clause Structure
There are a total of 101 syntactic errors at the clause level, which are divided into 11 subtypes, as discussed below.

1. Addition of subject (1/101=0.99%). There is only one case in the error corpus where the subject is extraneously added to the relative clause, immediately after the relative pronoun
‘that’. Although there is no appearance of such a pronoun, or an empty pronoun in the sentence from the source text, the student inserted the pronoun ‘it’ as the subject of the sentence in his translation. This can be due to the lack of English competence, or the influence of the topic-comment structure in Vietnamese.

(89) In my mind, there is (has been) no Vietnamese film that it was worked out elaborate and perfect like that.

2. Addition of unnecessary phrase (93/101=92.07%). This error occurs when the students add one extraneous word to the phrase. In the following example, the students repeat the word ‘this’, when it is already implied in the relative pronoun ‘which’, replacing the whole previous clause.

(90) The scene of dropping sky lantern, which seems that magic only can do this.

3. Addition of verb (9/101=8.91%). This is the case in which one more verb is added to the clause (not the sentence). The added verb can repeat the meaning of another verb, as in examples (91), (92) or just be added to the structure of the clause, because of the influence of language transfer from Vietnamese (as in example (93)).

(91) The scenes of burning furniture, bursting furnishings, firing the gunshot aimed to (at) the doll made viewers’ blood run cold.

(92) if it were just named MT, I would find it sound more simple and fairer.

(93) If we only name the film is MT, it would sound simple and more active

4. Inappropriate clause construction (26/101=25.74%). This is a term used to refer to cases in which the students opt for a construction that does not fit the standard syntax of the English clause. This kind of error has two varieties: (a) the students may choose a structure which does not match the intended original message (although the word order of the
structure is correct), or (b) the students decide to use the correct structure, but apply the wrong word order within the sentence.

(94) if only ✓ named with MT, it sounds simpler and more interesting.

(95) Tam, ✓ player of the moon shaped guitar, was so wonderful that ✓ leads to the desperation, mystery and frustration but giving, gesture (gestures) show the mood so exactly

(96) It would sound simpler and better having been named (if it were named) MT.

(97) .. there’s hardly anyone to play (who could play) the role better than Thuy Nga.

(98) Tam, so a (such an) admirable player of the moon shaped guitar that (who) tends to be desperate, is mysterious, frustrated but giving, exact gesture with mood.

(99) Tam, a wonderful player of the moon shaped guitar to the extent (or degree) that ✓ desperate, mysterious, frustrated but giving,…

5. Inappropriate combination of subject and passive verb (1/101=0.99%). There is only one case in the corpus where the combination of the subject and the passive verb was not semantically appropriate and the sentence’s meaning was disrupted:

(100) It would be more simple and pleasure if Me Thao is named only.

This error is not due to a lack of linguistic competence. If we examine the original sentence ‘Giá chỉ đạt tên phim là Mê Thảo thì bộ phim sẽ nghe giảng đi và dánh hơn’ (if the film had been named simply Mê Thảo, it would have been simpler and more pleasant to the ears), we can see that the error reflects a strategy that the student used to translate. Realising that the first clause of the sentence does not have an explicit subject, the student was faced with two choices: retrieving the subject of the sentence to translate it into English or avoiding this step by attempting a participle phrase or the passive voice. The student finally chose the option to translate with the passive voice. However, the main cause of the error lies in the way the
student chose the subject. Instead of saying ‘If the film was named Me Thao’ (to avoid saying ‘If we/film makers named the film Me Thao’) the student’s translation turns out to be ‘If Me Thao is named only’. This error significantly impedes the comprehension of the readers. It is also worth noting that this is the only case of this kind in the corpus. Other students often chose the correct use of the passive voice to translate ‘If the film was named Me Thao’, and the other strategy they often drew on was to omit the main verb or shorten the clause ‘If the film was named Me Thao’ into a participle phrase ‘If named Me Thao only’.

There is only one example of this type of error at the phrase level. Most of the errors of this type, which are related to the inappropriate combination of subject and passive verb in sentence 18, occur at the sentence level and are discussed later.

6. Incomplete clause (4/101=3.96%). A clause is considered to be incomplete when it is lacking a certain part of speech, e.g., a reflexive pronoun as in (101), past participle verb as in (102), or a combination of relative pronoun and verb as in (103).

(101) Nguyen, who was chivalrous, generous, externally peculiar, showed ✓ to be really a frustrated landowner and very mad.
(102) The drop (dropping) of ✓ lantern is thought to be ✓ magic (to be made by magic).
(103) The leading characters have their own original, dramatic ✓ ✓ portrayed naturally and profoundly.

In (103), the students made two syntactic errors. The first is the omission of the head noun in the noun phrase ‘their own original, dramatic ✓’ and the second is the decision to use a past participle phrase, instead of a relative clause after that incomplete noun phrase. More specifically, the students should have translated the source text phrase ‘được diễn tả tự nhiên và sầu sắc làm sao’ with a relative clause ‘which is portrayed so naturally and profoundly’. It is quite acceptable in English to use a past participle phrase ‘portrayed so naturally and profoundly’ to replace a relative pronoun. However, as the author of the original text wants to emphasise his/her opinion that these leading characters are portrayed
naturally and profoundly, apart from the fact that they are dramatic and original, s/he uses a comma to separate the sentence into two parts. Accordingly, the past participle phrase is not suitable and a relative pronoun should be used. The clause is therefore treated as incomplete, because of the absence of the relative pronoun and the verb.

7. Misordering (7/101=6.93%). The following sentences are examples of misordering within a phrase, where the word order of the clause is ruptured. The majority of errors of this kind led to a change in the sentence type, specifically

1. When an adverb is moved to the beginning of the sentence, as in (104).

   (104) There hasn’t had (been) any Vietnamese film which well elaborate carries out and up to the standard like this.

2. When the order of the subject and verb is changed, as in (105).

   (105) Nguyen, being chivalrous, generous, obviously peculiar, clearly is he frustrated.

3. When the sentence is changed from a declarative sentence to an interrogative, as in (106) and (107).

   (106) If only was the film named MT, it looks (would sound) more simple and more fascinating.

   (107) Every leading character, who with his own specialty, was original, dramatic and how naturally and profoundly were they portrayed.

In some cases, as can be seen in (106), it seems that the students were set to use an inversion with the adjective to create a special effect in the sentence. However, their attempt to test their hypothesis failed as it does not match the acceptable norms of English grammar. This kind of misordering errors has a serious effect on the translation, as it can hinder comprehension.
8. **Non parallel combination** (3/101=2.97%). This error occurs when some constituents inside a clause are not parallel. In example (108), the predicate consists of two parts, ‘is beautiful’ and ‘precarious destiny’, the second part not only lacks the main verb, but is also not in accordance with the first verb phrase.

(108) To, the singer, **is beautiful but ✓ precarious destiny**, wandered (wandering) but dignified, amorous but loyal.

In example (109), the adverb ‘elaborately’ does not go with the phrase ‘up to standard’ in the relative clause ‘which was made ✓ elaborately and ✓ up to the standard’.

(109) there has ever (never) been such a Vietnamese film which was made ✓ elaborately and ✓ up to the standard.

Example (110) shows another case where the combination within the relative clause is not parallel.

(110) Any (Every) leading character who **also has his/her own characteristics** and is original, dramatic is portrayed naturally and profoundly.

9. **Omission of the main verb** (23/101=22.77%). Compared to other types of syntactic errors at the level of the clause, this type of error, which is related to the omission of the main verbs, occupies a large proportion (22.77%). This type of error is worth investigating, as a large proportion of such errors range over all 4 years of students. There are different cases where the verbs are ignored or forgotten. Firstly, the omission may be due to the influence of the source text, as shown in example (111).

(111) Every leading character ✓ with typical characteristic, original, dramatic, how naturally and profoundly they are portrayed.

When the students adhered to the clause of the source text, which shows no trace of the verb, they also stuck to the word order of that clause. The consequence is the absence of a main
verb in the target text. Similarly, the error shown in example (112) is repeated when the students translate sentence 18.

(112) To, a singer—a fair’s precarious destiny—drifted away but wasn’t dignified, ✓ amorous but loyal, both seductive and serious, petite but not unimportant.

This error is understandable, considering the structure of that sentence, with many adjectival phrases on top of one another and no main verb. There are two possible explanations for this: (a) the students’ concentration was weakening after two hours of translating a long text and (b) trying to be faithful to the original source text, the students forgot the job of adding the main verb to the clause. In example (113), the original sentence shows the structure of subject and adjective, rather than subject and verb as in English. So students sticking to the source text would translate it without a verb.

(113) … gestures ✓ suitable to mood.

The second type of omission occurs when the auxiliary verb in a passive voice verb phrase is skipped (example 114). This error seems to be a ‘mistake’ more than an error, as most students realised the deviation by themselves, when they were asked to look at the text later.

(114) In my memory, there has never been any films (film) of our country which ✓ elaborately and perfectly made like that.

It is worth noting that most errors of this type are made by students in Years 2 and 3, which suggests that the linguistic competence is not necessarily the decisive factor influencing the tendency to make errors.

Another type of omission occurs within the relative clause, when the whole verb phrase is omitted after a conjunction starting a new clause (example 115), or when the main verb of the sentence is missing before another relative clause starts, as in (116).

(115) Tam, a player of moon shaped guitar which (who) is perfect and desperate, mysterious, frustrated though ✓ (she is) giving, gestures suitable to mood.

(116) The scene of dropping God Lantern, ✓ which it is possibly done by magic.
10. **Omission of the relative pronoun (5/101=4.95%).** This error occurs when students fail to supply a relative pronoun following a noun within a clause. The corpus shows 5 instances of this error, mainly in sentence 1, where students had to translate the passage that ‘the author is a person who has followed the film closely’ within the first clause. Examples of omission of relative pronouns are also found in the corpus, but mostly at the sentence, rather than the clause level.

   (117) As a person ✓ (who) used to follow closely the preparation of the film, I'm fascinated by MT.

   (118) The scene ✓ (where) the silkworms wriggle to eat and the feet (foot) trample upon them make (makes) the viewers’ blood run cold

11. **Omission of the subject (19/101=18.81%).** One of the most common syntactic errors at the level of the clause is the omission of the subject. Most of the omissions of subjects within a clause occurred in sentences 1 (11/19=57.89%) and 17 (7/19=36.8%)

   (119) If only ✓ name the film MT, it will be more simple and more satiable.

   (120) if only the film ✓ named MT, ✓ is more simple and better to hear.

   (121) supposed (supposing) that it was (were) named MT, ✓ sounds (it would sound) candid and more unique.

   (122) Tam, the player of the moon shaped guitar, was so superexcellent that ✓ desperate, mysterious, frustrated but giving.

In the explanatory sentence in brackets at the end of sentence 1, the subject is omitted. This reflects a very common feature of Vietnamese grammar, whereby empty pronouns exist in sentences in various contexts, formal and informal. As Rosén writes (1998:144)

   Not allowing any missing elements at any levels of the grammar to represent empty pronouns would, however, mean abandoning any kind of subcategorisation for Vietnamese verbs. .... It would make it impossible to use any of the current
grammatical frameworks for analysing Vietnamese …. In the second place, it would be difficult to account for native speaker reactions to sentences with empty pronouns. If such sentences are presented out of context, they will often be considered unacceptable, the informants will ‘ask for’ the missing argument. If the missing argument is provided by an appropriate context, the informant will accept the sentence. This shows that there is nothing wrong with the sentence, but that each argument of the verb must be provided either in the sentence itself or in the context.

A Vietnamese student with enough general knowledge of Vietnamese and common sense would have the intuition to interpret the empty pronoun or the dropped subject in a sentence. In sentence 1 (‘If only name the film MT, it will be more simple and more satiable’) the dropped subject can be understood as ‘the film makers, the director or the one who has the right to name the film’. However, the author’s decision to drop the subject may not completely be explained by the Vietnamese practice of using empty pronouns. It is also caused by the author’s emphasis on the effect of changing the name of the film rather than who has the right to name it. With this sentence, there are two approaches students can use to translate: use the passive voice to avoid identifying the subject or figure out the subject and translate it into English. However, 11 out of 95 students (11.57%) translated this sentence without a subject or the passive voice. The students often chose to put the passage in the past participle as ‘if named Me Thao, the film would sound better and more satisfactory’.

In the second clause, the only interpretation of the dropped subject is ‘the film’. However, some students ignored this dropped subject and did not locate the subject. Four out of 95 students (4.21%) did not locate the subject and started the second clause without a subject. This percentage is too small to allow us to conclude that Vietnamese students cannot locate the subject in their translation.

6.1.3.3 Sentence Structure
There were 371 syntactic errors, divided into 22 subtypes, found at the level of sentence structure. These are discussed below with examples from the corpus.
1. Addition of clause (9/371=2.42%). This error occurs in two instances:

1. A new clause is added to a sentence:

   (123) I find that (redundant) there is no film from Vietnam ✓ (as) elaborately done and up to the standard but (as) this one.

Example (123) is a case when an extra clause is added to the sentence. This error is also related to translation, because it results from the translator’s intention to interpret the original sentence in the source text to make it clearer to the reader.

2. A clause is used in a position where a phrase would be more grammatically appropriate:

   (124) The scene of silkworms wriggle to ask for eating and the feet trample upon them make (makes) us (our) flesh creep.

There are many similar cases to that of example (124) in the corpus, where students inappropriately used a clause, instead of a phrase. The clause is therefore considered to be extraneous.

2. Addition of unnecessary phrase (23/371=6.19%). A phrase added to a sentence is considered as unnecessary if

1. It does not serve the syntax of the sentence:

   (125) To, the beautiful yet unfortunate singer, is drifty as well as she is dignified, amorous as well as loyal, seductive as well as serious, petite as well as she is not unimportant.

In example (125) the correct syntax of the sentence should be ‘To, the beautiful yet unfortunate singer, is drifty as well as dignified…’. However, the students repeated the part ‘she is’, which is an unnecessary insertion into the sentence.
(126) … there hasn’t been a Vietnamese film which is (redundant) made ✓ (as) elaborately and perfectly like this (redundant)

In example (126) the phrase ‘which is’ is inserted when the past participle ‘made’ could have built up a complete sentence in English. The addition of the phrase ‘which is’ is not necessarily wrong, but it is redundant.

2. It is a semantic repetition:

(127) In my mind, never is (has) such (redundant) a film ✓ (been) made so elaborately and up to the standard like that (redundant) in our country.

Example (127) illustrates the case when the repetition happens not only with the syntax but also with the semantic of a certain part of the sentence. In this sentence, three words are used to express the same meaning of one word from the source text: ‘such’, ‘so’ and ‘like that’.

3. It adds extra meaning to the source text:

(128) Every scene is made with full of (redundant) sweat.

The structure of sentence (128) could have been complete if the predicate is either ‘is made with sweat’ or ‘is full of sweat’. However, in order to emphasise the hard work devoted to the making of the film, the students had the translation ‘made with full of sweat’. This addition is considered not only a syntactical error but also a translation error, because it adds extra meaning to the original sentence in the source text.

3. Addition of verb (10/371=2.69%). When the addition of another verb distorts the structure of the sentence, there is an error of ‘addition of verb’ and ‘addition of clause’. It is necessary to distinguish between these two kinds of errors. In the case of the addition of a verb, the verb added to the structure often shared the same subject with the sentence or picked up the preceding word as its subject.

An ‘addition of clause’ error is identified, when a complete clause is added to a sentence, or when the semantic border between the added clause and the original sentence can be
spotted, although the added clause is not syntactically correct (e.g., because it lacks a relative pronoun).

The extraneous verb can also be a normal verb as in example (129), a modal verb as in example (130), or a finite verb as in example (131).

(129) Perhaps there won’t be any other actress ✓ play the role as well as Thuy Nga.

(130) There are not many people can play the role better than TN.

(131) Tam ✓ player of the moon-shaped guitar was too excellent led to desperate, mysterious, frustrated but the giving and gesture (gestures) was too exact and was near to the mood.

The extraneous verb can also be an auxiliary in an inversion structure, when the students forgot and repeated the word as in the following example.

(132) In my memory, never has a film of VN had been elaborately made and up to the standard like this.

4. Inappropriate choice of subject (7/371=1.88%). In translation, as the translators are allowed a certain degree of latitude, error analysis does not require that all the subjects of the sentence from the students’ translation in the corpus be exactly the same. That is to say, variation in the choice of sentence subject is expected. However, when the chosen subject of a certain sentence was completely irrelevant to the source text or even to its predicate, the students were considered to have committed the error of ‘inappropriate choice of subject’. If the chosen subject just slightly deviates from the intended meaning of the source text, it can be classified into the category of ‘wrong focus of attention’. However, if it is completely out of context and may seriously break down the communication between the author and the reader, the subject is considered ‘an inappropriate choice’. Here are some examples of inappropriate choice of subject from the corpus.

(133) First, it is the being fascinated by images ‘full of film’s language’.
(134) The first thing is ✓ being fascinated by the images of language of motion picture altogether.

(135) Seeing that silkworms were wriggling to be fed and the feet were trampling upon them made our flesh creep.

5. Inappropriate combination of subject and passive verb (5/371=1.34%).

(136) To, a (redundant) beautiful but unlucky, homeless but dignified, amorous but loyal, seductive but serious and petite but ✓ unimportant, was played the role best by Thuy Nga.

6. Inappropriate combination of two clauses (25/371=6.73%). All of the sentences considered to have this kind of error share the same characteristic, namely, there is little or no degree of semantic connection between the two clauses of the sentence. The degree of mismatch is reflected in the following points:

1. Mismatch in the subject of the clauses:

   (137) If ✓ naming the film Me Thao, it’s simple and more wonderful

2. The relationship between the first and the second clause is not justified, because the first clause is the implied part of the predicate of the second clause:

   (138) The scene of dropping sky lantern looks as if just magic can do.

3. The shift of one word from its original place in the first clause to another clause creates a change in semantic coherence between the two clauses (this is also a comprehension error):

   (139) Tam is a wonderful player of the moon shaped guitar but desperate, frustrated one, yet giving and gesture reflect the mood exactly.

4. The semantic connection between the two clauses is not built up:
(140) Every leading character, who with his own *speciality*, was original, dramatic and 
how naturally and profoundly were they portrayed.

5. The conjunction ‘that’ is used, but it does not function either as a relative pronoun or as 
a conjunction in *so + adjective + that* structure:

(141) To, the fairs’ precarious destiny singer, lives a vagabond but dignified life, is 
amorous and loyal, not only seductive but also serious, even petite not 
unimportant … *that no one can play this role better than Thuy Nga.*

6. A relative clause is used inappropriately to link the first and second clauses:

(142) To, a beautiful singer with bad luck, was unsettled but dignified, amorous but 
loyal, not only/ both seductive but also/ and serious, petite but significant … *of 
which hardly anybody but Thuy Nga could play the role.*

7. **Inappropriate sentence construction (71/371=19.14%).** This error has the highest 
percentage (19.14%) of syntactic errors made in sentence structure. As reflected by its name, 
this type of error is made, because the sentence is not appropriately constructed. The 
following error patterns are common (The illustrative example follows the description of 
each type of error):

1. The verb ‘to have’ is used instead of the verb ‘to be’ in an existential sentence:

(143) There has* n’t had* (been) any Vietnamese film which well elaborate carries out and 
up to the standard like this.

2. The sentence lacks a main verb:

(144) The sight of dropping lanterns is considered that can be only carried out by magic.

3. The type of sentence is changed from declarative to exclamatory:

(145) How profound and natural each leading one who performs his appearance, original 
and dramatic role beautifully.
4. The word order is changed, leading to a change in sentence type (from exclamatory to a question):

(146) *What is* a frustrated landowner.

5. A restrictive clause is used instead of a non-restrictive one:

(147) That's the image a foot trampling upon silkworms wriggling to be fed *which makes our flesh creep.*

6. The wrong structure is used (‘*It is ... which*’ is used instead of ‘*It’s … that*’, ‘too…to’ is used instead of ‘so … that’):

(148) *It's also the scene of large winnowing basket of silkworms wriggling to ask* ✓
food and the foot tramples (trampling) upon silkworms which makes our flesh
creep. (It’s … that)

7. Negative markers are repeated in the same sentence:

(149) To was a nice singer but unhappy fate , wandered but dignified, amorous but loyal,
    seductive and serious, petite but not insignificant… *no one can’t play* the role
    better than Thuy Nga.

8. A participle phrase is used when a phrase would be better:

(150) It would sound simpler and better *having been named* (if it were named) Me
    Thao.

9. There is a mismatch in subject between the two clauses:

(151) Tam, a player of the moon shaped guitar is so wonderful that *it* is desperate,
mysterious, frustrated whose giving and gesture is accurate with mood.

8. **Incomplete sentence (12/371=3.23%)**. When the main verb and other parts of speech in
the sentence are omitted, but not the subject, we have an incomplete sentence. These
sentences can also be classified as translation errors, because they fail to completely convey
the author’s message. All the errors in which the verb is omitted may be ranked as
‘incomplete sentence’ and ‘omission of main verbs’ errors. Errors of ‘incomplete sentence’
happen in the following instances (In the description of each type of error, one example
from the corpus is quoted):

1. The predicate of the main clause is omitted:

   (152) And To, a singer, who was beautiful but unhappy ✓.

2. The predicate is omitted:

   (153) Every leading character, every characteristics ✓. How originally, dramatically and
   profoundly did he portray!

3. The main verb is omitted:

   (154) To—the singer who is beautiful but unhappy, ✓ drifted but dignified, sentimental
   but loyal, both seductive and serious, petite without being insignificant.

4. The present participle is used instead of verb:

   (155) The scene of a silkworms’ basket (basket of silkworms) wriggling to ask for
   feeding and foot tramples (trampling) upon the silkworms, making (make) our
   flesh creep.

9. Lack of coordinating conjunction (16/371=4.31%). The coordinating conjunction ‘and’
is missing between two clauses or two parts in a predicate. In English, a coordinating
conjunction is not always obligatory. It can be replaced by a comma and, therefore, it is
rather tricky to judge whether an error of this kind occurs. However, a sentence is regarded
as having such an error if the absence of a coordinating conjunction can produce a disruption
in the understanding of the translation.

   (156) Each of the leading character (characters) had their own typical, original, dramatic
   show ✓ portrayed profoundly and naturally.
(157) Tam, a great player of the moon shaped guitar seemed to be desperate, mysterious, frustrated but giving, ✓ (and) had a true gesture (gestures) to the mood.

(158) In (Among) many successful supporting characters, the old servant was very vivid and touching, ✓ worth nominating the best supporting character.

10. Misordering (8/371=2.16%). This kind of error can be considered as one of the factors contributing to the inappropriate sentence construction. Nevertheless, a separate category is set up for this kind of error, as the misordering of words in a sentence can lead to severe comprehension problems for the readers. Therefore, this type of error needs special treatment.

(159) Each of ✓ leading characters showing her (his/her) appearance which is original, dramatic, is portrayed naturally and profoundly.

(160) How profoundly and naturally are ✓ leading characters performed, each character has its own feature, original and dramatic.

(161) One hardly can play this role so (as) well as Thuy Nga. (Hardly can anyone play this role so well as Thuy Nga)

(162) … never ever before in Vietnam ✓ a film has been made in such elaborate and perfect way.

11. Misordering of relative clause (20/371=5.39%). In these sentences, the relative clauses are incorrectly placed. In the corpus, there are about 20 sentences (5.39%) containing this type of error. Instead of being placed immediately after their antecedents, most of the relative pronouns are put after another part of speech or far away from their normal position. These errors are serious in terms of comprehension, as the alternation in position of the relative clause can seriously impair the author’s message. It temporarily interrupts the reader’s understanding until s/he catches up with the relative pronoun and if possible, tries to find the connection between that relative clause and the ‘missing’ antecedent. Errors of this kind were detected largely in sentences 14, 15 and 17 of the translation text.
(163) Every leading character had his own characteristic, being original and dramatic, which was portrayed naturally and profoundly.

(164) All the leading character (characters) have original and dramatic look which was portrayed naturally and profoundly. (no comma)

(165) Mr Tam’s gesture (gestures) is absolutely fixing his mood which is of the player of the moon-shaped guitar who plays so wonderful (wonderfully) to be desperate, mysterious, frustrated but giving.

(166) Among ✓ many successful supporting characters, the character of the old servant is performed vividly and movingly, who deserves the nomination of the best supporting character.

12. Misuse of relative clause (26/371=7%). In these instances, relative clauses should not have been used, or another type of relative pronoun should have been utilised. Like the errors of misordering of relative pronoun, this syntactic error suspends the flow of readers’ comprehension.

(167) If only people named it MT which seemed to be simple and better (it would sound simple and better).

(168) Mr Tam’s gesture (gestures) is absolutely fixing his mood which is of the player of the moon-shaped guitar who plays so wonderful (wonderfully) to be desperate, mysterious, frustrated but giving.

(169) Tam, who was such an excellent player of the moon shaped guitar that he seemed to be desperate, mysterious, frustrated but his giving and gesture (gestures) was (were) really suitable with the mood.

(170) To, a beautiful singer with bad luck, was unsettled but dignified, amorous but loyal, not only / both seductive but also / and serious, petite but significant … of which hardly anybody but Thuy Nga could play the role.
13. **No logical connection between subject and predicate (17/371=4.58%).** All of the errors of this kind are found in the translations of sentence 5 ‘Cảnh thả đèn trời tưởng như chỉ có ma thuật mới làm nổi.’ The literal translation of this sentence should be ‘The scene of dropping the lantern that we/one may think can only happen by magic’. If analysing the sentence using Topic-Comment as a criterion, we should have ‘Cảnh thả đèn trời’ as the Topic of the sentence. Based on the context, the dropped subject can be understood in many ways, as ‘we’, ‘one’ or ‘audience’. The predicate ‘think can only happen by magic’ goes well with the dropped subject, but it does not semantically match the topic ‘the scene of dropping the lantern’ as the scene is not an animate object which can ‘think’. Therefore, students who can identify the dropped subject and the relationship between the topic/subject/predicate choose the topic ‘the scene of dropping lanterns’ as the subject to go with the predicate. The first consequence is that the sentence may be a sequence of words, which does not obey any syntactic rule; a sentence without a main verb or an incomplete sentence. In terms of semantics, there is no logical connection between the subject and predicate in the English sentence, as illustrated in the following example:

(171) The sight of dropping lanterns seems that only magic could make it.

14. **Non parallel combination (26/371=7%).** Like this type of errors at the level of the clause, this error at the sentence level reflects the instances in which some components in the sentences are not parallel.

(172) To, the singer is beautiful but ✓ precarious destiny, wandered (wandering)
but dignified, amorous but loyal.

In example (172), the two verb phrases making up the predicate are not parallel. Whilst the first one is the linking verb to be, used with a predicate adjective, the second one is a missing verb, which is supposed to be used with the predicate noun phrase ‘precarious destiny’.
(173) **The time when the furniture was burnt, the explosion of furnishings and the gunshot shoted (shot/fired) at the doll** make the viewers’ blood run cold

In example (173), the three elements of the subject are quite different in grammatical structure. Whilst the first has a relative pronoun, the second is a noun phrase and the third is modified by a past participle phrase.

(174) Nguyen is chivalrous, generous, peculiar overtly, **really frustrated landowner,** very clotty.

Example (174) is very messy, in the sense that the student packed a lot of adjectives in front of the noun ‘landowner’, and then ended the sentence with another adjective. As for the four adjectives preceding the noun ‘landowner’, they are not parallel, as the third one ‘peculiar overtly’ is not correct.

(175) To, the beautiful yet unfortunate singer, is drifty as well as she is dignified, amorous as well as loyal, seductive as well as serious, **petite as well as she is not unimportant.**

In the last example (175), the students try to make a parallel combination between the two adjectives in each phrase separated by one comma. However, in the last phrase, ‘petite as well as she is not unimportant’, the parallelism between the two adjectives is broken as the students insert the clause ‘she is’. The way of linking the adjective by using ‘as well as’ is also not correct; the students should have used ‘amorous but loyal, seductive but serious, petite but unimportant’.

15. **Omission of main clause** (2/371=0.54%). Only two sentences in the corpus have this error.

(176) Being a person who used to follow (has followed) ‘the journey of gestation’ of the film closely ✓. I was fascinated by MT (1 sentence is broken into 2).

(177) If only people named it MT which seemed to be simple and better ✓ (it would sound simple and better).
In the first case, the students make the error because of carelessness, rather than their ignorance of the rule that the sentence needs to be continued. In the second case, the students misuse a relative clause, when a simple clause is more appropriate.

16. Omission of main verb (49/371=13.20%). These errors are mainly concentrated in sentences 2, 5, 17 and 18. These are the examples of this type of error:

(178) First, ✓ fascinated by ‘the real film language images’.

Example (178) is found in the translations of sentence 2. Four students made the error of translating word-for-word from the source text, with the result that they omitted both the subject and the main verb of the sentence. This shows the limited knowledge of these students in both Vietnamese and English. Firstly, they may not have known that Vietnamese grammar allows the dropping of a subject, and secondly, they ignored the English syntax which requires a subject at the beginning of the sentence.

(179) The sight of dropping lantern ✓ as if it appeared in magic.

Sentence 5, ‘Cảnh thà đền trời tương như chỉ có ma thuật mới làm nổi’, (The scene of dropping the lantern that we/one may think can only happen by magic) also shows 13 out of 49 instances in which the main verbs of the sentence are omitted. The cause of the errors in this sentence may be from the word ‘tương như’, which can be translated into English by a verb ‘think’ or conjunction ‘as if’. Some students chose to translate it with ‘as if’, but forgot to insert the verb ‘look’, and some students used the relative pronoun immediately after the noun phrase ‘the scene of dropping lantern’ without a main verb to finish the sentence. This error shows the difficulty students had in handling the structure in which the grammatical subject of the sentence is not the semantic subject of the verb. Looking at Vietnamese from the perspective of topic-comment structure, the topic in sentence 5 is the object of the verb in the comment clause, whilst the subject of the verb in the comment is dropped. This dropped subject misled students and caused them difficulty in translation.
(180) To, a beautiful singer but meeting much tragedy in her life, drifts but
✓ dignified, amorous but loyal, seductive as well as serious, petite but not
insignificant…

(181) It was Nguyen with chivalrous, generous, peculiar characteristics ✓ (that was) also
a frustrated landowner.

(182) How profound and natural each leading one ✓ who performs his appearance,
original and dramatic role beautifully.

(183) In my memory, not yet a film of our country ✓ which is realised elaborate and
perfect like that.

(184) ✓ hard to find someone else to play the role better than Thuy Nga

17. Omission of relative pronoun (11/371=2.96%). The relative pronoun was skipped in
sentences 12, 16, 17, 18 of the source text. This is understandable, because these sentences
are rather long, with many predicates and adjectives, and the relative pronoun is the possible
linguistic means that students should and can make use of to expand their sentence and
express the idea of the source text. Given that there are so many adjectives to be expressed,
it is very hard to fit all these adjectives in front of the noun and, therefore, relative pronouns
are very useful. However, some students made errors of this kind and omitted the relative
pronoun.

(185) I have never seen a more elaborate and precise film ✓ (which) was made in our
country like that.

(186) … and there was hardly an actress ✓ (who) played the role better than TN.

(187) It was Nguyen with chivalrous, generous, peculiar characteristics ✓ (that was)
also a frustrated landowner.

(188) The second one is Tam, the player of the moon shaped guitar, ✓ (who) played
wonderfully to desperately (the point of desperation).
18. Omission of subject (17/371=4.58%). In the translations of sentences 2, 13 and 18, the subjects are omitted. Clearly, due to the influence of the source language, together with insufficient knowledge of the English syntax, the students seemed to ignore the need to locate and translate the subjects in these three sentences. The first example is (189), which is the translation of sentence 2 in the source text.

(189) First, ✓ fascinated by ‘the real film language images’.

In example (189) above, the subject is completely omitted, but thanks to the context, the students could deduce that it is the author, who is fascinated by the authentic language of the movie industry. However, either because the students purposefully stuck to the original, or because they forgot that the subject must not be dropped in English sentences, they started the sentence with ‘fascinated’. Six students made this error in this sentence and five of them were from Year 3.

In the same way, sentence 13 of the source text once more drops the subject at the beginning, showing a very popular tendency in Vietnamese to omit the subject. Ten out of 95 students (10.52%) made the error of omitting the subject when translating sentence 13.

(190) ✓ Being fascinated by named and nameless characters again. (sentence 13)

Even though it is also possible in English to omit the subject, the omission cannot always be made and, sometimes, the dropping of the subject can produce odd results. For example, the following exchange is not acceptable in English, but is quite acceptable in Vietnamese

A: Who does this book belong to?

B: It belongs to me

To me.

Me.

? Belongs to me.

According to Rosén (1998:146), in independent sentences where the subject is dropped, several translations are possible. For instance, the subject can be ‘I/you/he/she/we/they’. It is
the context that helps the translator/reader decipher what should be the subject of the sentence. However, the students’ errors in sentence 13, as shown in example (190), show that they fail to realise the importance of translating the subject.

Example (191) below shows another case of subject omission (sentence 18), which is attributable not to the existence of an empty pronoun in Vietnamese, but to the practice of word-for-word translation. As the original sentence does not show a subject for the action ‘find an actress’ the students need to use the dummy subject ‘it’ to translate this sentence. The appropriate translation should be: ‘It would be hard to find someone who could play the role better than Thúy Nga’. However, as the sentence starts with ‘khó’ in Vietnamese (difficult), which is an adjective, some students translated it as ‘hard to find someone else to play the role’. Only one student made an error of this kind.

(191) ✓ hard to find someone else to play the role better than Thuy Nga.

(192) If ✓ naming the film Me Thao, it’s simple and more wonderful.

19. Repetition of subject (17/371=4.58%). In the following examples, the subject is repeated as either a coreferential pronoun, an indefinite pronoun ‘all’, or an appositive.

(193) Almost each topic, it’s permeated with the soul of Vietnamese.

(194) All leading characters, everyone to his look, are original and dramatic, how naturally and profoundly they are portrayed.

Examples (193) and (194) show the very clear effect of Vietnamese topic-comment structure on the translation. ‘It’ is used to replace ‘each topic’ in example (193) and ‘everyone’ is used to replace ‘all leading characters’ in example (194).

In example (195) below, the students make two errors. Firstly, they misinterpret ‘the scene of burning furniture, the explosive sound of furnishings, the scene of a gunshot firing at the doll’ as three separate scenes of the film and treat them as a combination of scenes. Then they use the pronoun ‘all of them’ as a coreferential pronoun to refer to all of these scenes.
(195) The scene of burning furniture, the explosive sound of furnishings, the scene of a gunshot firing at the doll, all of them make viewer’s blood run cold

Example (196) is very special, as the students repeat the pronoun ‘he’, not after the topic ‘To’, but after the appositive. This indicates that the error is not necessarily caused by the context.

(196) Tam, the player of the moon shaped guitar, he is too wonderful to such an extent that he is desperate, mysterious, frustrated, whereas his giving and gesture exactly suit the mood

As for example (197), it is representative of many errors in the corpus, in which the students started the sentence with ‘To’ or ‘Tam’, and then continued describing them with ‘a singer is ......’ or ‘a moon-shaped guitar is…’. This error suggests two things: firstly, that students still rely heavily on the source text and employ the exact structure it uses; secondly, that they seem not to remember that, in English, only one subject is allowed to go with the main verb. If further explanation is required, the only two linguistic devices to be used are appositives or relative clauses, and these students use neither.

(197) To, a singer is beautiful but ill fate, wandering but dignified, amorous but loyal, seductive and serious, petite but not insignificant.

It is very difficult to find any reason for these errors. They may be due to the Vietnamese habit of mentioning both topic and subject in one sentence in the so-called ‘double subject construction’. After mentioning the topic of the sentence, the students may feel it ‘natural’ to repeat the topic in order to emphasise or clarify the sentence.

6.1.4 Collocation Errors

Errors in this section cover only lexical collocations and not grammatical collocational errors. Collocation is observed between lexical items, when arranged in texts. When the meaning relation between individual lexical items and those that habitually co-occur with them in the language is broken, we call them ‘collocational errors’. Collocation has the
following configurations: free combinations (as in run a risk/ business), restricted combinations (as in shrug shoulders, totally unaware), multi-word expressions which include irreversible binominals (as in leaps and bounds), phrasal verbs (as in pull out) and idioms (as in make ends meet) (Howert, 1996; Carter, 1987). Here are some examples of collocational errors from the corpus.

(198) **Being** a person who used to attentively follow the gestation of the film, I am fascinated by Me Thao.

From a grammatical point of view, ‘being’ in example (198) is not wrong, but would probably not be used there. ‘As’ sounds better. ‘Being’ sounds better, if we are talking about a characteristic, preference, taste, etc. For example, people would often say ‘Being someone who hates rock music’, ‘Being a person who prefers to live alone’, rather than ‘Being a person who used to attentively follow the gestation of the film’. As a result, although the expression is not wrong, it does not work that well in this sentence.

(199) **At first** (First), I was interested in the images that are full of ✓ language of motion picture.

The collocation error in example (199) is brought about by the difference between two expressions ‘first’ and ‘at first’. While ‘at first’ means ‘at the beginning’ or ‘at the outset’, referring to the perception or impression of a speaker of a certain event, rather than the time order, and implies a contrast with a later situation, ‘first’ is used to introduce the time order, the step taken or a sequence of action. If we put this sentence into the context of the previous and following sentences, especially in comparison with the word ‘lại’ in sentence 13: ‘Lại mê mẩn với những nhân vật có tên và không tên’, the phrase ‘trước hết’ should be understood as the first thing that happens in a sequence of steps taken. Therefore, ‘first’ should be used rather than ‘at first’. Moreover, if we use the phrase ‘at first’, it may imply the contrast with a later situation, which means the author is no longer interested in these images in the next times. In fact, his interest still remains, so ‘first’ has a better implication. To some extent, this error can also be considered a pragmatic error.
Examples (200), (201) and (202) below are three examples taken from the error corpus, in which the students made errors, because they could not remember the whole collocation precisely.

(200) The sight of silkworms wriggling to show that they want to be fed in the broad flat drying basket and of someone’s feet trampling upon them bring (make) our flesh creep.

(201) Those are the sense of burning furniture, the explosion of furnishings and the gunshot firing at the doll, which make viewers’ hair ✓ on end.

(202) The sight of silkworms which wriggled (wriggling) to ask for to be fed and the foot which trampled (trampling) upon silkworms made our flesh upon.

The errors in (200), (201) and (202) were due more to the carelessness of students, rather than the limitations in their knowledge of English. The collocations in question were supplied in the list of suggested equivalents distributed to students for their reference. However, they still made mistakes in the process of using the collocations in their own translation.

In example (203) below, the students made two errors: one, a comprehension error with the word ‘giving’, and the other, an error with the collocation ‘create a giving’. ‘Giving’ can only be an adjective, and should have been translated to match the meaning of the source text. However, the students made it a noun, and combined the word ‘giving’ as a direct object of the verb ‘create’.

(203) Tam, a wonderful player of the moon shaped guitar, not only plays so mysterious, desperate and frustrated but can also create a giving, gesture that suits to his mood.

The largest percentage of collocation errors comes from the transitional phrase ‘Trong trí nhỏ tôi’ (As far as I can remember) in sentence 12 ‘Trong trí nhỏ tôi, chưa có một phim nào của nước Việt ta được thực hiện công phu và đạt chuẩn như vậy’ (As far as I can remember, no Vietnamese film has ever been produced as elaborately and perfectly).
students translate this expression, most of them use the expression ‘in my memory’, as this expression sounds grammatically correct and matches the original message. However, from the context of the original message, what the author aims to say is ‘I cannot guarantee 100% that the information is correct, but if I try to recollect all of the films that I have watched, that film is the most elaborate’. The phrase ‘in my memory’ is not wrong, but it is more often used in sentences like ‘That image is engraved in my memory’. Therefore, the correct collocation should be ‘As far as I can remember’, instead of ‘In my memory’ as is shown in example (204) below.

(204) **In my memory**, there haven’t been any Vietnamese films which were carried out (made/done) so elaborately and perfectly.

Example (205) illustrates an interesting case of collocational error and demonstrates the unpredictability of collocations. While the original message is ‘diễn viên phụ xuất sắc nhất’ (the best supporting role) most students choose to express the idea as ‘the most excellent supporting character’. Besides the fact that ‘excellent’ is normally not used with the superlative ‘most’, it is also not the expression generally used by English native speakers to refer to the nominated title of a supporting character in the movie industry. Rather, the film reviewer would use the term ‘the best supporting role/character’.

(205) Among successful supporting characters, the lively and moving servant deserved to be nominated to **the most excellent supporting character**.

### 6.1.5 Inappropriate Word Form

When the students made this error, they usually confused different words of the same family; that is, the root of the word is correct, but the wrong form is used. The most common error of this kind in the corpus occurred when the students needed to choose between past and present participle. Four out of 15 errors of this kind (26.67%) are made with the pair ‘satisfied’ and ‘satisfying’ in sentence 1 (example 206) and 3 out of 15 errors (20%) are made with the pair ‘drifted’, ‘drifting’ in sentence 18 (example 207). (The past participle ‘drifted’ does not exist in predicative position, only in the attributive, as in the expression ‘the drifted snow’).
In example (206), instead of using the present participle ‘satisfying’ to match the subject of the sentence which is ‘the film’, the students chose the word ‘satisfied’ which should only be used for ‘the audience’, which is the receiver of the action. Possibly, the students were misled by the Vietnamese message ‘thì nghe giân đi và dâ hơn’. In Vietnamese, the word ‘nghe’ can be used in two contexts (a) Tôi nghe nhạc (I listen to music) or (b) Bài hát ấy nghe hay (That song sounds great). This verb, combined with the absence of the subject in the sentence, may have given the students the impression that the implied subject here refers to ‘the audience’ and therefore the audience may feel ‘satisfied’ with the new title of the film once it is changed. Another possible explanation for this error is that the students did not pay attention to the grammatical difference between the two words ‘satisfied’ and ‘satisfying’.

(206) It would be more satisfied (satisfying) and simple if the title were only MT.

(207) To a beautiful but unhappy singer, is drifted (drifting) but dignified, amorous but loyal, is both seductive and serious, petite but not insignificant.

Example (208) below is another instance in which the students had the wrong word form. However, in this case, the cause of the error is not because the students did not have a good command of English syntax. Rather, they wanted to be creative and a little bit adventurous, when they changed the verb ‘to wriggle’ into what they believed to be the adverb ‘wriggilly’ (in English ‘wriggilly’ is an adjective, not an adverb). The result is the erroneous phrase ‘wriggilly cry’ instead of ‘wriggling to cry for food’. This is one example of the students trying a hypothesis knowing that the result may be wrong.

(208) The scene of silkworms wiggly (wriggling to) cry for food and the feet trample (trampling) upon the silkworms make our flesh creep.

Examples (209) and (210) below are representative of other types of word form errors in the corpus (33.33%), when the students used an adjective where a noun is called for and vice versa.
(209) Tam, a player of the moon shaped guitar, is wonderful to the point of desperate (desperation).

(210) In many succeed supporting characters, the servant was very lively and moving, to be worthy to nominate the most outstanding supporting character.

6.2. COMPREHENSION ERRORS
Comprehension errors occur when the translation is grammatically correct, but back translation from the target language text shows that the students have misread a word or misunderstood the syntax of a sentence in the source text. That is to say, the translation is wrong, not because of the students’ lack of linguistic competence, but because of their carelessness or inability to decipher the meaning of one word or one sentence in the source text.

In the data, the sentence that shows the highest percentage of comprehension errors (78/121 or 64.46%) is sentence 17 ‘Tam, cây dàn nguyệt tuyệt vời tới mức tuyệt vọng, u uẩn, bể tắc mà nghiêm khí, cử chỉ thật chính xác với tâm trạng’. The reason for misunderstanding this sentence is attributable not only to the incompetence or carelessness of the students, but also to its challenging syntax. It is noticeable that the highest percentage of students who made this error is from Year 4 (16/78 or 20.51%), which is quite contradictory to the prediction that fourth-year students may have a higher level of world knowledge, analytical and comprehension skills.

The original message in this sentence is ‘Tam, cây dàn nguyệt tuyệt vời tới mức tuyệt vọng, u uẩn, bể tắc mà nghiêm khí, cử chỉ thật chính xác với tâm trạng.’ (Tam, a player of the moon-shaped guitar, is so excellent that he appears desperate and mysterious, frustrated but still giving. His gestures reflect his mood precisely.) The tricky part of this sentence, which may have misled the students, lies in the words ‘nghĩa khí’ and ‘cử chỉ’ that stand next to each other, separated by a comma. The first word is an adjective, which falls at the end of a series of adjectives ‘u uẩn, bể tắc mà nghiêm khí’ (mysterious, frustrated, but giving) to emphasise the contrast between the contradictory traits of the leading character. The second word ‘cử chỉ’ (gestures) is the subject of the next clause. However, as the word
‘nghĩa khí’ can also be understood as a noun and its semantic equivalent in English ends with –ING (giving) and resembles a noun, many students misunderstood ‘nghĩa khí’ as a noun. Hence, they assumed that ‘nghĩa khí’ agrees with the second set of words ‘cử chỉ’ and thus incorporated them all together as the main subject of the next sentence. Most students translated this sentence as: ‘Tam, the player of the moon shaped guitar, is wonderful to such an extent that he is desperate, mysterious, frustrated, whereas his giving and gesture exactly suit the mood’. The correct translation is ‘Tam, the player of the moon-shaped guitar, is so excellent that he appears desperate and mysterious, frustrated but still giving. His gestures reflect his mood precisely.’ The comprehension of sentence 17 can be attributed to a lack of knowledge of Vietnamese words and grammar more than a lack of extralinguistic knowledge.

The other two sentences that are the source of a majority of comprehension errors among students are sentence 3 (8/121 or 6.61%) and sentence 4 (20/121 or 16.52%).

(3) Cạnh đặt bàn ghế, tiếng nổ của đỗ đặc và phát sung bắn vào con búp bê khiến người xem lạnh gáy.

(4) Cạnh nóng tâm nỗi对照 ăn và bàn chân giẫm nát những con tăm làm ta sồn gai ốc.

Both of these sentences start with the word ‘Cạnh’, which can be translated as ‘the sight’ or ‘scene’. However, the cause of miscomprehension lies in the use of the Zero-Article in Vietnamese, as mentioned previously with the word ‘mờ hôi’, in the section on morphological errors. Without an article preceding it, the word ‘Cạnh’ in sentences 3 and 4 can be considered singular. Also from the context, we understand that in each sentence the author is mentioning a scene of the film that he finds impressive. In sentence 3, he mentions the scene of the film where furniture is burnt and explodes and, at the same time, the doll is shot, which makes the audience’s blood run cold. In sentence 4, the scene of the silkworms asking for food and the foot trampling on the silkworms (in the same scene) also scares the audience. However, most of the students who made comprehension errors in this sentence seemed to misunderstand that there are three different scenes happening at three different
points of time in the film and they used the plural morpheme -s for the subject ‘the scenes’. What is meant by the author is only one scene which includes the three actions. Although the error involves only the addition of the plural morpheme -s and thus may look like a morphological error, it is actually due to a misunderstanding of the word ‘Cánh’ in the source text, which possibly results from the lack of knowledge of Vietnamese grammar.

In addition to the major comprehension errors observed in sentences 3, 4 and 17, the misunderstanding of the source text leading to inaccurate translation is also observed in other examples of errors, at the level of the word, the whole phrase or just an implied part of the source text. The following sentences are examples of comprehension errors from the corpus.

(211) If only the film is (were) just named Me Thao, the sound would be more simple and exciting.

In example (211), the deduction of the students is that ‘the sound of the title’ would be better if the film was given a shorter name. However, what the author means is that the film (or the name of the film) would sound simpler, not ‘the sound of the film’, as translated by the students.

Sometimes the misunderstanding lies in a very subtle sense of the word or sentence. First, the feeling is that the students seem to understand the text, but a more detailed investigation shows that they do not.

The first reading of the translation in (212) gives the impression that it is correct. However, as the reader approaches the second clause, the contradiction in meaning appears. Even though it is acceptable to say that ‘the image of the old servant was vivid, touching’, it is semantically illogical to say that ‘the image of that old servant is worthy of being nominated for the best supporting character’. The word ‘image of that old servant’ is not semantically related to the action of ‘being nominated for the best supporting character’. This is one instance where the student incorrectly deduced the meaning of the word, because it is not written, but implied in the context.
(212) Among the successful supporting characters, the image of the old servant was vivid, touching and worth (worthy) to nominate (be nominated) ✓ the best supporting actor.

In the following translation, Tam is the player of the moon-shaped guitar, and he is also the one who appears desperate, mysterious, frustrated and giving. However, the students incorrectly understood that Tam plays the moon-shaped guitar so well, that the sound of the guitar sounds desperate. The deductive logic of the students was correct, but it did not suit the intended message of the author. Although this way of interpreting showed that the students were careful in analysing the original message and locating the subject of the predicate, they failed to understand that the dropped subject in the second clause is also the one mentioned in the first clause.

(213) Tam plays the moon shaped guitar so wonderfully that the sound of the guitar sounds desperate, mysterious, frustrated and giving, whose gesture is suitable for his mood.

In example (214), what is meant in the original message is that if the film had been named Me Thao, it would sound simpler and more interesting. As can be seen in other film reviews, the author does not specify who names the film, the director or the film producer. The author wants to emphasise that the title of the film would be better with another name, without mentioning directly whether this is his opinion or anyone else’s opinion. Although it is clear that this is the opinion of the author, there is no message such as ‘I would have felt that’ and this addition should be treated as an addition error in translation or a comprehension error. If only the author feels that way, this error is treated as an addition error, because the author does not specifically mention it (although he may think that way). If the author is not the only one who had such a thought, then this is a case of comprehension error.

(214) If only it had been named MT, I would have felt that it was simpler and more interesting.
In example (215), what is meant by the original message is that in every scene of the film, the audience can see the hard work of the filmmakers, which is expressed metaphorically through the word ‘sweat’. However, the students wrongly understood that these scenes make the filmmakers sweat. This error can be considered either as a comprehension error or translation error, because the meaning of the original message is distorted.

(215) All of these scenes make the film makers sweat.

6.3. TRANSLATION ERRORS

The following description summarises the main types of errors found in the corpus, although the present author cannot show all the different variations of examples associated with each category of errors. The categorisation of translation errors is restricted in the way that examples differing in some respects may be included in the same category, provided they can reflect different ‘types’ of errors. The classification may be subjective, as it is based on the judgment of the present author (though in consultation with some qualified people, as mentioned in Chapter 5), in terms of the way errors are located within a given category and the actual examples chosen.

6.3.1 Pragmatic errors

Stalinker (1973:38) defines pragmatics as ‘the study of purposes for which sentences are used, of the real-world conditions under which a sentence may be appropriately used and alternated.’ Consequently, the meaning of a single expression may vary in accordance with the purposes behind it, and the conditions surrounding the communicative act. This meaning also relates to what Widdowson (1973:69) refers to as ‘the communicative use of sentences in the performing of social actions.’ Leech (1974:141) uses the term 'connotative meaning' to refer to the same type of meaning. To him, the connotation of an expression is the ‘communicative value an expression has ... over and above its purely conceptual meaning.’

In contrast to the linguistic meaning, which can be extracted from the grammatical relations within a given text, the pragmatic meaning can only be analysed by referring to its cultural and/or linguistic context. Accordingly, to discover pragmatic errors in translation, it is essential to focus on the immediate cultural context or situation of the source text and match it with that of the target language, so as to understand all the possible areas of shift
when the translator tries to convey the same message into the target language. The analysis should, therefore, take into consideration factors such as the intentions of the writer or speaker, his expectations, the time of utterance, the truth value of the propositions expressed, other speech acts being performed in the same situation, and so on. In other words, all major functions of language as a means of communication in a social setting should be taken into consideration.

Because languages employ different formal devices for realising similar speech acts, including both lexical and syntactic means, the linguistic realization of these acts and the rules of their performance in one language "do not necessarily have exact equivalents in another language, and raise a lot of questions related to the theory of translation" (Enkvist, 1973:57). Moreover, the context which imposes the performance of particular acts differs considerably from one culture to another. The implication of this statement for the phenomenon of shift is self-evident: one needs to account for all these differences, in order to point out the shifts possible within this particular area. Another requirement for this analysis is to identify in each language which formal devices are used for particular speech acts.

In order to find the pragmatic errors in the translation, the analysis in this thesis compares the linguistic devices the author of the original text uses to express his thinking and persuade the readers with the ways his expressions are rendered into English by the students. The thesis does not aim to use pragmatics as the main approach to the evaluation of errors, as suggested by House, as this approach is neither practical nor suitable for the evaluation of large numbers of subjects (see McAlester, 2000:33). By pragmatic errors, the present author wants to emphasise the importance of context in determining and evaluating the meaning of the words translated. The focus in this thesis is to see whether the Topic-Comment structure triggers any problems. It is necessary to observe the students’ performance at the levels of the clause and the sentence. In other words, it would be rather hard to examine the students’ translation, if the evaluation were based only on the levels of text and register alone.

Here are some errors which arose as a result of contextual negligence from the students, and could have been avoided had they paid more attention to the context. The most common pragmatic error found in the 95 translations is in sentence 13 ‘lại mè mấn với những nhân
vật có tên và không tên’ (I was then fascinated with the named and nameless characters). The expression ‘lại’ can have different implications and be translated in different ways, depending on different contexts. In many instances, it can be translated as ‘again’, to show a repeated action that bothers other people. However, in the context provided by the source text, the expression ‘lại’ does not refer to the repetition of the author’s action of ‘being fascinated by the named or nameless characters’. It highlights the continuity of the author’s fascination, but not the continuity of fascination created by the named and nameless characters. Firstly, the author is charmed by some fantastic scenes of the film, then he continues being fascinated by another factor, the named and nameless characters, but he was never fascinated by these characters at any time before. Therefore, the choice of the word ‘again’ by many students was not pragmatically appropriate. Twenty-one students (21/48 or 43.75%) have this translation, where ‘again’ is used as an equivalent for the lexical item ‘lại’ in the source text ‘Again I was fascinated by named and nameless characters’. The word ‘again’ triggers the conventional implicature that the author of the text has been fascinated by the named and nameless characters at least once before. Since this is the first time the text’s author was impressed by these named and nameless characters, the students did not need to use the word ‘again’.

Another example in which conventional implicature was not much paid attention to can be found in the translation of the same sentence by 7 students (7/48 or 14.58%): ‘I’m still fascinated by the named and nameless characters’. In the definition of Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary31, ‘still’ is defined as ‘a function word to indicate the continuance of an action or condition’. By using this word, the students created the implicature that the author continues to be fascinated by the named and nameless characters who had attracted him before. Nevertheless, there is nothing in the source text to justify this use of the adverb ‘still’. The use of this word is similar to the case of ‘again’. It created a situation where the meaning of the source text was distorted.

Another pragmatic error, which can be associated with Vietnamese culture and the Vietnamese habit of using pronouns in conversation, is the translation of the noun phrase ‘nước Việt ta’. The pronoun ‘we’ is often used, when Vietnamese speakers wish to identify

31 http://www.m-w.com/
with some group of people being discussed. The common phrase is 'Vietnamese, we' which is also rooted in Vietnamese culture for emphasising community life, rather than individualism. This tendency is also found when a text in Vietnamese is translated into English. In sentence 12 ‘Trọng trí nhớ tôi, chưa có một phim nào của nước Việt ta được thực hiện công phu và đạt chuẩn như vậy’, the modifier of the noun phrase is ‘nước Việt ta’ (our country – Vietnam), and it was translated into English as 'our country' by 5 students, ‘our Vietnam’ by 1 student, ‘our Vietnam country’ by 2 students and ‘our Vietnamese film’ by 1 student. These terms are correct semantic equivalents of the phrase ‘nước Việt ta’.

However, these terms are not pragmatically appropriate, because they cannot have the same effect on the readers, given that they are not Vietnamese and may not know what ‘our country’ refers to. The translations of these students show that they have a good command of English, but they still could not disassociate themselves from the Vietnamese people in general in the text they translated. This error seems to have its roots in cultural rather than linguistic difference.

6.3.2 Omissions of some parts of the source text (29/526=5.51%)
Huhtala (1995:153) listed some reasons that can cause translators to have translation shifts, i.e., omissions and additions in the text: a) to make the text more reader-friendly by clarifying it, b) to simplify its linguistic structure, or c) to alleviate the translation process with change. However, sometimes, these translation shifts cannot achieve the expected outcome. Translation errors occur in these cases. Calling the following errors ‘omission of some parts of the source text’, the present author does not include examples where omissions are used for stylistic effect. In other words, it is acceptable to shorten the ponderous modes of expression that are common in some source texts, so long as the meaning does not suffer. The following errors occur:

1. The students completely forget to translate a certain part of the source text (skipping omission) as in example (216).
2. The students fail to comprehend or are unable to interpret part of the text (comprehension omission), as in example (217).
3. The students cannot find the appropriate word and intentionally skip a word in their translation, as in example (218).

In example (216) below, the omission of ‘có ai’ (anyone else) from the source text can impair the readers’ comprehension, since the previous part of the sentence is about To, the character in the film. Thuy Nga (the actress) is suddenly mentioned in the second part of the sentence. Therefore, the context does not facilitate the readers’ comprehension, which accounts for the need to have the two words ‘có ai’. These two words help to highlight the fact that Thuy Nga is such an excellent player that ‘no one else’ can be her rival. Accordingly, the omission of this part blurs the talent and the incomparability of Thuy Nga, the actress. The students might have thought that this part is not important and chose to translate the predicate without mentioning the two words ‘có ai’. But the omission is serious, because it changes the meaning of the sentence completely.

(216) ... khó có ai nhập vai hay hơn Thuỷ Nga.

Translation: It hard to play the role as well as Thuy Nga.

Possible translation: It is hard to find anyone else who could play the role as well as Thuy Nga.

In the following example, apart from the error of repeating the subject due to the possible influence of the Vietnamese ‘double-subject construction’, the students also omitted the negative marker ‘mà không’ (but not/without). Although the omitted part is just one word, it is more serious than the error in example (216) above, as it can change the meaning of the source text. This sentence has a series of adjectives, separated by commas; the first word always contradicts the following word, to show the contradictory nature of singer To. Accordingly, the logical flow of the translation should be ‘petite but NOT insignificant’. However, possibly because the students were in a hurry to finish the translation at the end of the text, they seemed not to pay attention to this detail, and their omission of the negative marker badly distorted the meaning of the sentence.
(217) Tôi, cô dào hát họng nhan bác phân, phiếu đặt mà cao sang, đa tình mà chung tình, vừa quyền rụ vừa nghiêm trang, nhỏ nhỏ mà không hèn mọn.

Translation: To, the singer is dramatic, wandered (wandering) but dignified, amorous but loyal, both seductive and serious, petite but \checkmark\ unimportant ....

Possible Translation: To, a beautiful singer who has known many ups and downs in life, is a romantic libertine but still very dignified, amorous but serious, petite but not insignificant.

In example (218), the omission happened, because the students were unable to find the equivalent for the words in the source text. Instead of using an avoidance strategy or paraphrasing, they chose not to translate these parts of the source text.

(218) ... Tôi, cô dào hát họng nhan bác phân, phiếu đặt mà cao sang, đa tình mà chung tình, vừa quyền rụ vừa nghiêm trang, nhỏ nhỏ mà không hèn mọn.

Translation: To, the beautiful but \checkmark\ singer is a one of who is \checkmark\ but dignified, amorous but loyal, both seductive and serious, petite but not insignificant

Possible translation: To, a beautiful singer who has known many ups and downs in life, is a romantic libertine but still very dignified, amorous but serious, petite but not insignificant.

In addition to these omissions, there are some other kinds of omissions, which can be observed from the corpus in Appendix A and the CD-Rom, but are not mentioned in detail here, because they do not form an error pattern. These omission errors include: (a) omission of one word in a noun phrase from the source text, and (b) omission of the relative pronoun ‘where’ or ‘which’. These omissions may alter the syntactic construction of the sentence, but they result in minimal loss of meaning. This explains why these instances are listed under the section ‘omission’ errors, rather than ‘distorted meaning of the source text’.

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6.3.3 Additions (27/526=5.13%)

Additions happen when the students add new elements which are not in the source text. Additions may change the message in an undesirable way or bring new implications into the source text, as can be observed in the following examples. The corpus shows that errors made by the addition of words do not necessarily hinder comprehension like other types of translation errors. However, they make the translation clumsy and unnatural.

Example (219) below is called ‘elaboration addition’ or ‘addition in the form of elaboration or other straight addition to the text’ (Barik, 1994:125). In order to make the source text clearer and emphasise the author’s interest in the process of following this film (conveyed through the Vietnamese word in the source text ‘dởi theo’), the students used the two verbs ‘followed’ and ‘searched’. However, this addition did not achieve the desired effect, because the order of the two verbs made the flow of the thought unnatural. The correct logic in this sentence should be ‘searched for the preparation of the film’ and then ‘followed’, but not the other way around.

(219) Là kẻ từng chăm chú dởi theo cuộc ‘hành trình thái sản’ của bộ phim, tôi mê mẩn với Mẹ Thảo.

Translation: Used to be the one who attentively followed and searched for the preparation of the film, I am fascinated by Me Thao - the famous period.

Possible Translation: As someone who closely followed the birthing of the film, I am fascinated by Me Thao - thợi vang lòng.

In Example (220), the students added two extra words (‘now and then’). The motivation of this intentional addition of two words was to highlight the inconsistent temperament of Nguyen. In their understanding, describing Nguyen as ‘a frustrated and silly landowner’ may be too strong a statement. Therefore, they wanted to lighten the statement with the idiomatic expression ‘now and then’. However, this addition did not necessarily facilitate comprehension.
(220) Nguyễn hào hoa, hào hiệp, lập dập ra mặt, rõ là anh diễm chủ bất đặc chí, khách khủng.

Translation: Nguyen was chivalrous, generous, really peculiar, now then he was ✓ frustrated and crazy landowner.

Possible Translation: Nguyen, a chivalrous, generous, obviously peculiar man, proves to be a frustrated and silly landowner.

The second type of additions of words occurred when the students had problems handling the syntactic structure to convey the meaning of the source text, as shown in (221) below. The addition is not ‘lexical’, but ‘syntactic’. However this error is also a translation error, under the category of ‘addition of words’, because it partially affects the flow of expression.

(221) Lại mê mẩn với những nhân vật có tên và không tên

Translation: I was also fascinated by not only the named characters but the anonymous ones as well.

Possible Translation: I was then fascinated with the named and nameless characters.

Example (220) and (221) above are the examples in which the addition really distorts the meaning of the source text. In example (222) below, firstly, the students made a comprehension error with ‘bàn chân’ (foot) as a plural noun. Secondly, there is an error of ‘addition’. Although the source text does not have any word showing that the foot is cold, the students freely added the word ‘cold’ in front of the noun ‘the foot’, possibly to give a greater impression of sharpness to the scene in the film. However, the translation turned out to be incorrect, because, at best, it could hinder the readers’ comprehension, as they may not understand why the information about ‘coldness’ of the feet must be mentioned here. At worst, it could possibly mislead the readers as the reference to ‘cold feet’ may cause them to expect something else to happen in the following sentences.
(222) Cạnh nong tấm ngoe đói ăn và bàn chăn giảm nạt những con tấm làm ta sọn gai ốc.

Translation: The sight of silkworms wriggling for need of eating and then ✓ trampled upon by cold feet makes our flesh creep.

Possible Translation: The scene of silkworms wriggling in the basket and the foot trampling upon the silkworms makes the audience’s flesh creep.

In example (223) below, the students deliberately insert the phrase ‘makes me wonder’, which is not mentioned at all in the source text. The incorrectness of this inserttion lies in the fact that the sight makes not only the author wonder, but also many in the audience.

Consequently, the inserted phrase ‘makes me wonder’ can change the meaning of the source text.

(223) Cạnh thả đèn trời tưởng như chỉ có ma thuật mới làm nổi.

Translation: The sight (scene) when ✓ lantern is dropped makes me wonder if it was made by the hand of magic.

Possible Translation: The scene of dropping the lantern that we/ one may think can only happen by magic.

6.3.4 Inaccurate Renditions of Individual Lexical Items (69/526=13.11%)

This error occurs when the students fail to correctly render one lexical item from the source text into the target text. The lexical item can be just one word as in example (224) or a phrase as in examples (225) and (226) below. This error may be attributed not to the wrong choice of lexical equivalents (which will be discussed in section 6.3.7 on Wrong Lexical Choice), but to the inability to preserve the meaning of the source text item when doing a translation shift in structure. In some cases, the error occurs as the students attempt to paraphrase the text and make it easier to understand.

(224) khó có ai nhập vai hay hơn Thuỳ Nga
Translation: no one can (could) play the role better than Thuy Nga.

Possible Translation: no one could play the role better than Thuy Nga.

There are 12 out of 69 instances (17.39%) of this error in the corpus. The students chose to translate ‘khó có ai nhấp vai’ with the modal verb in the present tense ‘can play’ or the past tense ‘played’ instead of the past tense modal ‘could play’. This error is understandable, as the source text does not provide any hint of whether the past or present tense is better, as the Vietnamese language does not have tense markers or clear distinctions between tenses. It is therefore up to the students to choose the most appropriate tense. However, the present tense of the modal verb fails to express the fact that in the past the role could not be played better by anyone but Thuy Nga. This is one example where a particular lexical item from the source text was not translated accurately. However, the reason for the error is not the students’ inability to find a lexical equivalent, but rather their carelessness and confusion in identifying the grammar and tense of the sentence.

Example (225) below is related to a larger unit than just a word. The error is more serious than that in example (224), because it greatly impairs the communicative force of the sentence. Instead of using the word ‘move’ in the clause ‘the old servant acted very lively and moved us’, the students used the phrase ‘made us moving’. In terms of grammar, the use of the verb ‘make’ followed by an object and an adjective is very popular when the students cannot or do not wish to retrieve an appropriate verb. For example, ‘make someone angry’ can be used to replace ‘irritate’. Unfortunately, the option to ‘make us moving’ produces an adverse effect and creates ambiguity, as ‘move’ in this context not only means ‘affect a person with emotion’, but also can be understood as ‘to change position physically’. Therefore, this error is significant, as it obviously can mislead the readers.

(225) Trong nhiều nhân vật phụ thành công, ông bố già rất sinh động và cảm động, xứng đáng được bầu là vai phụ xuất sắc nhất.

Translation: Among the successful supporting characters, the old man servant acted very lively and he made us moving (moved us)
Possible Translation: Among the many successful supporting characters, [that of] the old servant is very vivid and touching and worthy to be nominated for the most successful supporting actor.

In example (226) below, to translate the phrase ‘cô dào hát hòng nhan backers phân’ (a beautiful singer with many ups and downs in life), which is an idiomatic expression in Vietnamese, the students did not use the relative clause after the noun ‘singer’; instead, they translated it with a clause placed before the noun - ‘a pretty face dies young singer. This assertion was not only incorrect grammatically, but also failed to have the desirable effect on the readers.

(226) Tôi, cô dào hát hòng nhan backers phân, phiêu đãt mà cao sang, đa tình mà Chung tính, vừa quyền hữu vừa nghiêm trang, nhỏ nhoi mà không hèn mọn

Translation: To, a pretty face dies young singer who drifts away and is dignified, amorous and loyal, seductive and serious, petite but insignificant.

Possible Translation: To, a beautiful singer who has known many ups and downs in life, is a romantic libertine but still very dignified, amorous but serious, petite but not insignificant.

6.3.5 Distorted meaning of the source text (98/526=18.63%)

Compared to other errors, this type of error is more serious, as it dramatically changes the intended meaning of the source text and can impede the reader’s comprehension. Whilst the ‘inaccurate renditions of a lexical item’ can produce the wrong version in the target text, they do not necessarily harm the original message. However, the errors under this category of ‘distorted meaning of the source text’ may produce a completely different version from what the author means in the source text and cause severe misunderstanding. Here are some examples from the corpus:

In the following sentence (227), the object which is supposed to go with the verb ‘performs’ is ‘his/her role’. Even though the translation ‘How profoundly and naturally each leading character performs his/her role, which is quite original and dramatic’ is not very
desirable and changes the focus of the text’s author, it is still much better than when the object ‘appearance’ is used. In other contexts, ‘appearance’ is not a word which has a high probability of co-occurrence with ‘to perform’. Accordingly, in the translation, this combination of ‘to perform’ and ‘appearance’ distorts the meaning of the sentence and misleads the readers.

(227) Nhân vật chính nào cũng mọi người một về, đọc đáo, đầy thân phận, được diễn tả tự nhiên và sâu sắc làm sao.

Translation: How profound and natural each leading one who performs his appearance, original and dramatic role beautifully.

Possible Translation: Each of the leading characters is authentic in his/her own role - original, dramatic, and they are all portrayed very naturally and profoundly in the film.

In example (228) below, instead of using the adjectives ‘chivalrous, generous and peculiar’ to describe Nguyen’s characteristics, the students used the phrase ‘peculiar to show himself’. This error leads to the misunderstanding that Nguyen is not chivalrous, generous and peculiar, but his manner of presenting himself in life is chivalrous, generous and peculiar.

(228) Nguyễn hào hoa, hào hiệp, lập đi ra mặt, rõ là anh diện chứ bất đặc chí, khắc khổng.

Translation: Nguyen was chivalrous, generous, peculiar to show himself, he was clear to be a frustrated landowner, it’s crazy!

Possible Translation: Nguyen, a chivalrous, generous, obviously peculiar man proves to be a frustrated and silly landowner.

In example (229), instead of using the structure ‘so … that’ or ‘to the extent that’ to translate the structure ‘tuyệt vời tôi mục tuyệt vọng’, the students used the structure ‘too … to’.

However, it seems that they did not pay attention to the fact that this structure implies a
negative meaning, resulting in a translation which has the opposite meaning from the source text.

(229) Tam, cây đàn nguyệt **tuyệt với tôi mục** tuyệt vòng, u uẩn, bế tắc mà nghĩa khí, cử chỉ thật chính xác với tâm trạng.

Translation: Tam, a player of ✅ moon shaped guitar, is too wonderful to be **desparated**, mysterious and frustrated.

Possible Translation: Tam, the player of the moon-shaped guitar, is so excellent that he appears desperate and mysterious, frustrated but still giving. His gestures reflect his mood precisely.

The cause of the distorted meaning in example (230) results from the passive voice the students used. At the beginning, the students intended to translate the sentence in the passive voice with ‘the sweat’ as the subject. However, in the process of translating, they chose the wrong subject and the sentence became ‘Any scene was also found the sweat’ instead of ‘The sweat is found in every scene’.

(230) … Cạnh quay nào cũng thấy mồ hôi.

Translation: Any scene was also found the sweat.

Possible Translation: We/You/One can see the sweat behind every scene.

6.3.6 Too literal translation (32/526=6.08%)
The students tended to focus only on the surface structure and translated each word or sentence from the source text. Most students in Year 4 did not make many errors of this type. Possibly, their linguistic competence, albeit not high enough to allow them to be good translators, is good enough to prevent them from the bad habit of word-for-word translation. However, many errors of this type (12/22 or 54.54%) were made in sentence 6 ‘Cạnh quay nào cũng thấy mồ hôi’ (You/we/one can see the sweat behind every scene), which is quite a challenge. This sentence is a challenge because the students can neither translate the word
‘mồ hôi’ literally as ‘sweat’ nor translate it metaphorically as ‘hard work’ or ‘effort’. If the students decide to translate at the word level and render it as ‘sweat’, the sentence is unnatural, as can be seen in the following translations:

(231) Cạnh quay nào cũng thấy mồ hôi’

Translation 1: Every view was full of sweat.

Translation 2: All of the scenes have sweat.

Possible Translation: You/we/one can see the sweat behind every scene.

However, if the students choose to paraphrase the word ‘mồ hôi’, according to their understanding and translate at the discourse level, the translated version is not better, because this way of interpreting the word ‘sweat’ as ‘attempt’ and ‘hard work’ loses the originality of the source text. In the source text, the author of the text wants to use the word ‘mồ hôi’ as a metaphor, in order to emphasise the attempt of the film-making staff. Therefore, if translated as ‘hard work’, the word sounds overly obvious and even forced, especially if put in the whole phrase ‘hard work of thought’. But if translated exactly as from the source text, the word ‘sweat’ may mislead the readers, because it gives them the impression that real drops of sweat are pictured, not ‘sweat’ in the metaphorical sense. One possible option to translate this sentence is to retain the word ‘sweat’ as the translated version, but it should be put in inverted commas, so that the readers can understand its metaphoric use.

6.3.7 Too free translation (22/526=4.18%)
The students made these types of errors when they tried to rewrite or improve the original message in too ‘creative’ a way. If this creative version leads to a change in meaning, it is considered an error. It can (a) destroy the flow, (b) change the emphasis of the sentence, or (c) obscure the author’s intent. The students were too ‘creative’ in the way they chose the words or phrase to express the source text items, as observed in examples (232) and (233), or in the way they comprehended and paraphrased what they had comprehended, as in examples (234) and (235).
In the following example (232), the students roughly translated the phrase ‘mỗi người một vẻ’ as ‘one man one look’. Even though the translation showed traces of word-for-word translation, it was not put into the category of ‘too literal translation’, because in other sentences, these students did not show themselves as relying on word-for-word translation as a strategy. Rather, they seemed to try to translate this phrase as ‘one man one look’ with the hope that it may be accepted as a ‘creative’ version of the adjective in English. This error can be considered as an attempt by the students to really test their hypotheses, rather than as a reflection of a lack of linguistic competence. It also shows that students made an effort to solve a problem in translating, rather than using an ‘avoidance strategy’.

(232) Nhân vật chính nào cùng mỗi người một vẻ, đọc đạo, đầy thân phận, được diễn tả tự nhiên và sâu sắc làm sao.

Translation: All of the leading characters are ‘one man one look’, original, dramatic and are portrayed how (so) naturally and profoundly.

Possible Translation: Each of the leading characters/every leading character is authentic in his/her own role - original, dramatic, and they are all portrayed very naturally and profoundly in the film.

In example (233), the students also used the same strategy as in example (232). They translated the verb phrase ‘ngo ngoe doi an’ as ‘hunger-for-food’, a ‘creative’ adjective they had often seen in the newspaper. In so doing, they tried to experiment with a new way of translating, knowing that it may be wrong. The error does not show that they have a limited level of linguistic competence. Conversely, it shows that they have read a lot of newspapers in English and tried to apply this new expression to their translation.

(233) Cạnh nong tấm ngo ngoe doi an và bàn chặn giảm nát những con tấm làm ta sồn gai ốc.

Translation: Their flesh creeps are also made with the image of hunger-for-food silkworms being trampled.
Possible Translation: The sight of silkworms wriggling for food in the drying basket and the foot trampling upon the silkworms makes the audience’s flesh creep.

In example (234) below, the students attempted to do more than just transpose words, they interpreted and conveyed the meaning. However, they allowed themselves too much latitude in adding more of their opinion into the phrase ‘as people said’. Although it is true that this collocation ‘beautiful women often have tragedy’ is a popular saying, the addition has caused the students to over-emphasise the message, beyond what was intended by the author of the text.

(234) Tô, có dào hát hòn nhan bác phận, phiếu đặt mà cao sang, đa tình mà chung tình, vừa quyền rủ vừa nghiêm trang, nhỏ nhoi mà không hến môn
Translation: To, as people said ‘beautiful women often have tragedy’, is a singer who is drifted (drifting) but dignified, amorous but loyal, petite but never insignificant, either seductive or serious.

Possible Translation: To, a beautiful singer who has known many ups and downs in life, is a romantic libertine but still very dignified, amorous but loyal, seductive but serious, petite but not insignificant/unimportant.

The students translated freely in both sentences in example (235) below. Even though their free translations did not distort the meaning of the sentence, they dramatically changed the focus of the text’s author. In the source text, the author wants to emphasise all the impressive scenes in the film: the scene of burning furniture, the exploding furnishings and other scenes. However, this translation from the students gave the impression that the focus of attention is the action of the audience being scared by the scene, or their action of watching the film, not the scene itself. This kind of error can also be considered as belonging to the category ‘wrong focus of attention’.

(235) Cảnh đốt bàn ghế, tiếng nổ của đờ đặc và phát sung bạn vào con búp bê khiến người xem lạnh gáy. Cảnh nóng ấm nỗi đời ăn và bàn chân giảm nát những con tâm làm ta son gai ốc.
Translation: What made our blood run cold is the scene of burning furniture, the sound of exploding furnishings and a gunshot firing at the doll. Seeing that the wriggling silkworms asking for food and the trampling feet upon them made our flesh creep.

Possible Translation: The sight of burning furniture, the exploding furnishings with the gunshot fired at the doll makes the audience’s blood run cold. The sight of silkworms wriggling in the drying basket and the foot trampling upon the silkworms makes the audience’s flesh creep.

6.3.8 Wrong lexical choice (142/526 = 26.99%)

The error, ‘wrong lexical choice’, involves the selection of words in translating. Even though the students had full use of the dictionary and were supplied with a list of suggested equivalents, they still had problems selecting the most appropriate words among several with similar (but not identical) meanings. Wrong lexical choice has been specified as inaccuracy in the choice of a lexical item that slightly distorts the intended meaning. In examples (236) and (237) below, the inaccuracy is limited to the problematic expression without influencing the rest of the sentence. This occurs in the following cases:

1. When the students had to choose one among many synonyms or words of similar meaning (examples 236, 237, 23).

(236) Nguyễn hào hoa, hào Hiệp, lập dĩ ra mặt, rõ là anh điểm chủ bất đặc chí, khát khửng.

Translation: The overtly chivalrous, generous and peculiar Nguyen came as a frustrated landowner.

Possible Translation: Nguyen—a chivalrous, generous, obviously peculiar man—proves to be a frustrated and silly landowner.
(237) Cạnh nong tấm ngor ngoe đói ăn và bận chănเกาะ nát những con tấm làm ta sơn gai ốc.

Translation: The sight of silkworms wriggling to cried for food and the foot trampling upon the silkworm made human’s flesh creep.

Possible Translation: The sight of silkworms wriggling in the drying basket and the foot trampling upon the silkworms makes the audience’s flesh creep.

(238) Tôi, có đạo hát hòng nhân bậc phán, phiêu dạt mà cao sang, đa tình mà chung tỉnh, vưa quyền ộ rất nghiêm trang, nhỏ nhói mà không hèn mon
Translation: To, a beautiful singer but meeting much tragedy in her life, drifts but dignified, amorous but loyal, seductive as well as serious, petite but not insignificant.

Possible Translation: To, a beautiful singer who has known many ups and downs in life, is a romantic libertine but still very dignified, amorous but loyal, seductive but serious, petite but not insignificant/unimportant.

2. When the students chose a hyponym.

(239) với ‘giọng ca vàng’ Thanh Hoài và lời bài hát chuẩn vần do nhà thơ Văn Lê viết
Translation: with ‘golden tone’ (voice) Thanh Hoai and the chant sung for a trance’s lyrics written by the poet Van Le

Possible Translation: with Thanh Hoài’s golden voice/the golden voice Thanh Hoai and the song lyrics written by the poet Văn Lê.

3. When the order of a compound noun or noun phrase is changed: (examples 240, 241):
In (240), the order of the noun phrase ‘the basket of silkworms’ is changed. Instead of saying ‘the basket of silkworms’, the students creatively located the word ‘silkworms’ in front of the word ‘basket’. However, in this case, the compound noun ‘silkworms baskets’
did not sound inappropriate, not to mention the fact that the students used the wrong form of noun when they put the noun ‘silkworms’ in the plural form.

(240) Cành nong tâm ngoại đè ấn và bàn chân giẫm nát những con tâm làm ta sơn gai ốc.

Translation: The view (scene) of silkworms baskets (the basket of silkworms) wriggling to be fed and legs (the foot) trampling upon the silkworms made our flesh creep.

Possible Translation: The sight of silkworms wriggling in the drying basket and the foot trampling upon the silkworms makes the audience’s flesh creep.

(241) Hầu như mỗi đoạn phim đều đậm đà tâm hồn Việt.

Translation: Almost of every section film is permeated with Vietnamese mind.

Possible Translation: Almost every part of the film is permeated with the Vietnamese soul

4. When two words have similar spelling in English (example 242).

(242) Trong nhiều nhân vật phụ thành công, ông bố già rất sinh động và cảm động, xứng đáng được bầu là vai phụ xuất sắc nhất.

Translation: In (many) successful supporting character, the old servant was likely (lively) and moving.

Possible Translation: Among the many successful supporting characters, [that of] the old servant is very vivid and touching and worthy to be nominated for most successful supporting actor.

5. When the students tried to elaborate on the word, in the way they understood it (example 243).
(243) Cạnh quay nào cũng thấy mồ hôi.

Translation: Every scene is made of hard-working

Possible Translation: You/we/one can see the sweat behind every scene.

6.3.9 Wrong focus of attention (59/526=11.22%)
The emphasis and focus of attention from the original text should be preserved in the translation. If the students tried to change the word order so much that it changed what the author intended to say, this was counted as a ‘wrong focus of attention’. Some instances of this kind of error include:

1. Transforming the main idea in the predicate of the source text into an adverb (example 244).

   (244) ông bố già rất sinh động và cảm động, xứng đáng được bầu là vai phự xuất sắc nhất.

   Translation: He is nominated the most excellent one deservedly.

   Possible Translation: [that of] the old servant is very vivid and touching and worthy to be nominated for most successful supporting actor.

In (244), the student broke the original message into two sentences to translate ‘Among successful supporting characters, the old servant is lively and moving. He is nominated the most excellent one deservedly’. This translation does not harm the intended meaning of the author of the text. However, it shifts the focus of attention of the original sentence, from the ‘worthiness’ of the supporting character when he received the title, to the fact that ‘he is nominated to be the excellent one’.

2. Transforming an active sentence into a passive sentence when the active is more natural (example 245).
(245) Tôi, có đạo hát Hồng nhan bậc phán, phiếu đất mà cao sang, đa tình mà chung tình, vừa quyền rũ vừa nghiêm trang, nhỏ nhoi mà không hận mơn.

Translation: The role of To—a beautiful but unfortunate, roving but noble, amorous but loyal, seductive but decent, petite but not humble singer - is hardly played more excellently by anyone else than Thuy Nga.

Possible Translation: To, a beautiful singer who has known many ups and downs in life, is a romantic libertine but still very dignified, amorous but loyal, seductive but serious, petite but not insignificant. It would be hard to find someone who could play the role better than Thúy Nga.

Example (245) is an example of structural change where the students wanted to incorporate two sentences from the original message into one sentence. Actually, they tried their best to combine the two sentences syntactically into one by using the passive voice in the second sentence. However, the new sentence seems to focus more on the actress who plays the role of Thuy Nga, than on the image of To in the film itself. Also, this kind of translation is unnatural, because the predicate of the sentence is separated and too far from the subject.

3. Transforming a statement into an exclamatory sentence (example 246).

(246) Nhân vật chính này cũng mỗi người một vẻ, độc đáo, đầy thân phận, được diễn tấu tự nhiên và sầu sắc làm sao.

Translation: How profound and natural each leading one who performs his appearance, original and dramatic role beautifully.

Possible Translation: Each of the leading characters/every leading character is authentic in his/her own role - original, dramatic, and they are all portrayed very naturally and profoundly in the film.

Regarding example (246), the original message includes two clauses. The first is a declarative, discussing the features of the leading characters. The second talks about how
these characters are portrayed. The trick of the original message lies in the word ‘lắm sao’ (how), which is often seen only in the exclamatory sentence. However, in this context, this word can be understood as an intensifier for the two adverbs ‘tự nhiên và sầu sắc’ (naturally and profoundly). Therefore, the best translation of this word is ‘so’, rather than an exclamatory sentence. Even if the students used the exclamatory in the second phrase, it was still acceptable. However, when they tried to put the exclamatory in initial position, thus changing the whole sentence into an exclamatory one, its focus changed and affected the influence of the original message on the reader.

4. Altering the cause-effect relationship between the main clause and the subordinate clause (example 247).

(247) Là kẻ từng chăm chú dỗ theo cuộc ‘hành trình thái sần’ của bộ phim, tôi mê mẩn với Mê Thảo

Translation: I was really fascinated by Me Thao since I was the one who ✔ followed the preparation closely.

Possible Translation: As someone who has closely followed the gestation/birthing of the film, I am fascinated by Mê Thảo-thời vang bóng (supposing the film had been named simply Mê Thảo, it would have been pleasant to the ears).

In example (247), the students wrongly chose the conjunction ‘since’ to express the relationship between the first and second clauses. In the original message, the function of the first clause is to express the role/function of the subject in the second clause, rather than pinpoint the cause-effect relationship. However, the students wrongly identified this relationship, leading to the decision to convert the second clause of the original message into the first clause and vice versa. This action is not beneficial to the text as a whole, given that this is the initial sentence of the whole text.

5. Changing between the main clause and the relative clause (example 248).
(248) Trong nhiều nhân vật phụ thành công, ông bố già rất sinh động và cảm động, xứng đáng được bầu là vai phụ xuất sắc nhất.

Translation: Among the supporting characters created successfully, the old servant who are (is) worthy of being nominated as the best one, is very lively and touching

Possible Translation: Among the many successful supporting characters, [that of] the old servant is very vivid and touching and worthy to be nominated for most successful supporting actor.

The students changed the sequence of this sentence. In the original text, the intended meaning is that the character of the old servant is worthy of being nominated the best supporting character, because he is lively and touching in his performance. However, in the translation, the impression the reader gets is two separate sets of information, which do not seem to be related: the old servant is worthy of being nominated the best supporting character, and he is lively and touching.

6.4 CONCLUSION
Chapter 6 chose the most representative examples from the students’ error corpus to illustrate different types of errors. Although the focus of the study is on the topic-comment structure and the study starts with the hypothesis that students tend to make more errors in the identifying and handling of the subject, the study is more data driven with the intention to observe all kinds of errors happen in the translations. All types of errors are provided with examples and are discussed, except grammatical errors, because they are not the focus of the study. Section 6.1 provides the definition and illustration of linguistic errors, which include morphological errors, grammatical errors, syntactic errors, collocation errors and inappropriate word form. Section 6.2 discusses comprehension errors. All types of translation errors are discussed in section 6.3.
Chapter 7
Quantitative Analysis

7.1 CATEGORISATION OF PROBLEM AREAS
The quantitative analysis\(^{33}\) of the data includes two main sections: Analysis of the Elicitation Task and Analysis of the Questionnaire and Interview Data.

Analysis of the Elicitation Task is divided into two main parts:

1. The quantity of all the errors made by the students, to find out what error category accounts for the majority of errors, and to what extent the type and quantity of these errors differ. The reason for analysing and observing all errors, before focusing on syntactic errors, is to see whether the students have more problems with the syntactic structure, or other areas such as grammar, comprehension or translation. To avoid subjectivity in the data analysis, an error may be considered as both grammatical and syntactic.

2. Of all types of errors, syntactic errors are the focus of analysis, in order to see what kind of specific errors Vietnamese students make. The quantitative analysis illustrates whether students have more problems handling empty pronouns, subjects, sentence formation and combination, or whether they find it more difficult to deal with other syntactic areas such as verb conjugation, sentence building, etc. The reason for this choice is because the topic-comment structure is a syntactic phenomenon, rather than a lexical or grammatical one. Accordingly, syntactic errors and translation errors are the only possible types that may be directly influenced by the difference in topic-comment structures, between Vietnamese and English. Other types of errors may occur, which may be due to the lack of competence in English.

In this section, the comprehension and translations of 18 sentences from 95 students will be discussed to see what strategies the students used to translate the dropped subject and empty elements in the Elicitation Task.

\(^{33}\) It is important to stress at the beginning that the analysis of error is based on the assumption that the students’ translations are semantic translations, rather than communicative ones (Newmark 1991)
It is worth noting that the frequency count of errors is not intended for judging the gravity of the error. It is not being used to estimate the influence of each type of error on the translation either. The possible effect of errors on the translation has been discussed in the chapter on Qualitative Analysis (Chapter 6). In this chapter, the quantitative analysis gives the percentage of errors from the real error corpus of students, in order to (a) see which areas show the largest number of errors, (b) provide insight into problematic areas in the knowledge of language (either L1 or L2) that may keep students from producing an acceptable translation in the first place and (c) emphasise language errors by analysing syntactic errors and their relation with the Vietnamese Topic-comment structure. The type of most common errors is not necessarily the most serious in terms of translation. The seriousness of errors will not be discussed in detail, as this is more related to translation quality assessment for accreditation or marking purposes, rather than for predictive purposes.

7.2 ANALYSIS OF THE ELICITATION TASK

7.2.1 Frequency Count and Graphic Presentation of the Findings
Section 7.2.1.1 reviews the distribution of all types of errors across 4 years and 18 sentences, to see the proportion of syntactic errors in the total number of errors. Section 7.2.1.2 elaborates all the syntactic errors across 4 years and 18 sentences. Because the focus of the thesis is on topic-comment structures and empty elements in Vietnamese, section 7.2.1.3 is devoted to analysing the errors made only in the translating of sentence subjects and empty elements. Section 7.2.1.4 describes the four main types of syntactic errors that the students are more inclined to make across the 18 sentences.

7.2.1.1 All Types of Errors
The various types of errors, including morphological, grammatical, syntactic, word form, collocation, comprehension and translation errors are taken from the data and recorded in the following sections. Tables are built to count the following: 1) the frequency of occurrence and percentage of the total number of errors across the four years, 2) the average mean of errors made by each student in general, 3) the average mean of errors made by each
1. The **average number of errors made by each student in Years 1, 2, 3 and 4**

Table 7.3 shows the average number of errors per student in each year. In this table, the second column shows the total number of errors (morphological, grammatical, syntactic, collocation, word from, comprehension and translation errors) in each year. The third column shows the number of students in each year participating in the study. The average number of errors of each student in each year appears at the last column. As the number of students is different across four years, it is inappropriate to compare the total number of errors made in each year. Instead, the average number of error per head of each student is needed, in order to have a correct comparison. The mean of errors made per student regardless of year, which is at the bottom of the table, is 27.46 errors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of errors</th>
<th>Number of students</th>
<th>Mean= Number of errors in each year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Number of students in each year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>425 (16.3%)</td>
<td>15 (15.8%)</td>
<td>28.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>723 (27.7%)</td>
<td>27 (28.4%)</td>
<td>26.77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1046 (40.15)</td>
<td>36 (37.9%)</td>
<td>29.05%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>415 (15.9%)</td>
<td>17 (17.9%)</td>
<td>24.41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>2609 (100%)</td>
<td>95 (100%)</td>
<td><strong>27.46%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On average, one Year 3 student seemed to make more errors (29.05%) compared to their counterpart in Year 1, 2 and 4. Year 1 also displayed a fairly high average number of errors.
per student (28.33%). Year 2 made fewer errors (26.77%) than the total average of all 4 years (27.46%) but put together and Year 4 students made the fewest errors of all (24.41%).

This calculation of percentage shows that differences in linguistic competence do not necessarily lead to differences in error making. Although Year 3 students are supposed to have obtained a more advanced level of English competence, the above table shows that, on average, Year 3 students made more errors than Year 1 or Year 2 students.

2. The frequency and percentage of different types of errors in general.
Table 7.4 shows the distribution of different types of errors in general. Firstly, the kinds of errors which account for the largest proportion of all errors are grammatical (32%). This shows that lack of linguistic competence or inability to use the target language properly (without taking into consideration the ability to use the target language in an appropriate context) is really a major hindrance to students. Syntactic errors occupy the second highest percentage (25.2%), followed by the categories of translation errors (20.2%) and morphological errors (11.4%). The three kinds of errors constituting the lowest proportion are related to collocation errors (5.9%), comprehension errors (4.6%) and inappropriate word form (0.6%).

Table 7.4
Distribution and Percentage of Different Types of Errors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Error Type</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Morphological Errors</td>
<td>298</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Grammar Errors</td>
<td>836</td>
<td>32.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Syntactic Errors</td>
<td>658</td>
<td>25.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Collocation Errors</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5 Inappropriate Word Form</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Comprehension Errors</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Translation Errors</td>
<td>526</td>
<td>20.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2609</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This calculation, which shows a relatively small number of comprehension errors compared to an enormous number of grammatical and syntactic errors, suggests that the students have more difficulty in the second and third phases of the translating process (i.e., ‘transfer’ and ‘restructuring’) than in the ‘analysis’ phase\(^\text{34}\) when they try to comprehend the text. However, interviews and questionnaires with students reveal that, although comprehension errors constitute only a modest proportion of the total, they cause problems to students both in analysing and transferring the text. Many students said that they were even unsure, after they finished the translation, as to whether their comprehension of the Vietnamese source text was correct. Once the students were not sure about their translation, they lost confidence in transferring the text, and became stuck on the basic units of the sentence.

One of the possible explanations for the small number of comprehension errors may be due to the way these errors are calculated. While one simple error of omission of third person -s can be counted as an example of morphological error, a wrongly translated sentence caused by miscomprehension of the source text is also regarded as one error. Consequently, one sentence may have up to 10 or 11 syntactic errors, but the largest number of comprehension errors included in one sentence can only be 1 or 2. However, as mentioned above in section 6.1, the seriousness of the errors is not always reflected through the percentage of errors. Although comprehension errors do not account for a high percentage, they possibly lead to more serious errors, as they can be the source of misunderstanding to the readers of the translation.

3. The frequency and percentage of different types of errors across the four years

\(^{34}\) Nida (1982:33) suggests that translation process consists of three stages, namely, (a) analysis of the source text, (b) transfer, and (c) synthesis of the target text. The synthesis of the target text can be considered as the ‘restructuring phase’.
Table 7.5

Distribution and Percentage of Different Types of Errors Across the 4 Years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Error Type</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Morphological Errors</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>298</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10.4%</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
<td><strong>12.5%</strong></td>
<td>11.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Grammar Errors</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>325</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>836</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>29.2%</td>
<td>31.8%</td>
<td>31.1%</td>
<td><strong>37.8%</strong></td>
<td>32.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Syntactic Errors</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>283</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>658</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>28.2%</strong></td>
<td>23.9%</td>
<td>27.1%</td>
<td>19.8%</td>
<td>25.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Collocation Errors</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
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Table 7.5 shows the proportion of different types of errors within the total number of errors in each year. The percentage of morphological errors over all types of errors made by Year 4 students is 12.5%; their grammatical errors represent 37.8% and their comprehension represent 5.1%. In Year 4, morphological, grammatical, and comprehension errors accounted for the highest percentage of the total number of errors compared to Years 1, 2 and 3. Year 3 students displayed the highest percentage of word form errors (8% of all the errors of Year 3). Year 2 students had more translation errors in the process of rendering sentences from Vietnamese into English, while Year 1 students had more errors in collocation handling and syntax.

The results show that linguistic competence is not always the essential factor in making errors. The fact that grammatical errors represent the largest percentage of the total number of errors of Year 4 students does not necessarily mean that their linguistic competence is lower than other groups. It may simply mean that they focused more on retaining the context meaning, rather than on the processing of each individual sentence. Consequently, they ignored the rule of maintaining the accuracy of each item in a sentence. Nevertheless,
they made fewer errors in syntax and collocations, compared to students in other years. This is quite understandable, as Year 4 is the last year of the training course. The students master collocations better and show better skills in dealing with complicated structures than other years. Knowing that word-for-word translation is not the favoured method, they tended to concentrate more on the task of maintaining the general meaning of the text and the author, rather than on ensuring the correctness of each linguistic item. In other words, they tended to focus more on the ‘transferring’ phase than on the ‘restructuring’ phase. That also explains the high percentage of morphological errors they make. Year 4 students also had a high percentage of comprehension errors, probably because they had great confidence in their comprehension ability in Vietnamese and therefore took little notice of the morphological aspect of the language.

It is understandable that Year 1 students made more syntactic errors and collocation errors. They usually do not have a high degree of linguistic competence. And this hinders them from transferring the complex syntactic structure of Vietnamese sentences to fit the subject-predicate structures of English. Also they usually have rather limited knowledge of collocation and they tend to make errors in this field. They knew that their linguistic competence is limited and tended to be more careful in reading and comprehending the text as well as in translating each individual sentence. Year 2 students made more errors in the process of transferring sentences from Vietnamese into English, not in the process of comprehending/analysing the text or restructuring the sentence. Possibly because Year 2 is the first time students are taught translation as a subject at the university, they want to attempt more strategies in their translation. However, their still limited knowledge prevents them from formulating a precise translation strategy.

4. The frequency and percentage distribution of different types of errors in each of the 18 sentences

Table 7.6 shows the distribution of different types of errors (morphological errors, grammar errors, syntactic errors, collocation errors, inappropriate word form,
comprehension errors, and translation errors respectively) across the 18 sentences. The table is intended to find out which kinds of errors are likely to occur at a certain sentence in a text. The rows represent the sentences and the columns the types of errors. Each number appearing in a box shows the corresponding percentage of one specific type of error in that sentence. The percentage in each row is calculated by the frequency of errors in each sentence, divided by the overall number of errors of the same type. To illustrate, in sentence 1, there are 293 errors of all kinds, which represent 11.2% of all errors in the corpus. Out of these 293 errors, there are 6 morphological errors, which represent 2% of all the morphological errors in the corpus. Sentence 1 has 148 grammatical errors, which represent 17.7% of all the grammatical errors in the corps.

The two highest percentages of each type of errors (across the row) are underlined in red bold font. Then the comparison is made (across the column) between the percentages of different types of errors in the same sentence.

Among all the 18 sentences, the morphological errors have the highest frequency and proportion in sentence 17 (23.2%) and sentence 4 (22.1%). The highest percentages of grammatical errors across the 18 sentences are seen in sentence 1 (17.7%) and sentence 11 (11.6%). Among the 18 sentences, syntactic errors appear with the highest frequency and percentage distribution in sentences 18 (14.3%) and 17 (12.8%). Collocation errors appear with the largest percentage in sentences 12 (54.8%) and 14 (21.9%). Students had the greatest problems with word formation in sentences 18 (26.7%) and 1 (33.3%). The largest distribution of comprehension errors is seen in sentences 17 (64.5%) and 4 (16.4%). Translation errors have a rather even distribution in the 18 sentences. This shows that although students may have certain text-specific or linguistic-specific problems due to some syntactic structure, collocation or comprehension points in some sentences, translation skills are still problematic for them. Translation errors are the most dominant in two sentences: sentence 18 (11.7%) and sentence 6 (8.6%).

234
Table 7.6

*Distribution and Percentage of all Types of Errors Across the 18 Sentences*

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1.1 Morphological Errors, 1.2 Grammar Errors, 1.3 Syntactic Errors, 1.4 Collocation Errors, 1.5 Inappropriate Word Form, 2. Comprehension Errors, 3. Translation Errors
5. The frequency and percentage distribution of each type of error across the 18 sentences

Table 7.7 shows the percentage of different types of errors within each sentence in the text. That is to say, the percentage of each type of errors (syntactic, grammatical, etc.) in one sentence is calculated and compared to the percentage other error types (translation errors, comprehension errors, etc.) in the same sentence. For example, sentence 1 has 6 morphological errors, which represent 2% of all errors (293 errors) in the same sentence. Similarly, 148 grammatical errors represent 50.5% of all errors in sentence 1. The type of error with the highest percentage in each sentence (in each row) will be underlined in red bold font.

It is observed from the column of morphological error (1.1) that sentence 4 has the highest percentage of morphological errors, compared to all other sentences. In sentence 4, morphological errors represent 29.7% of all the errors in the same sentence. In sentences 1, 3, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13 and 14, grammatical errors are the more dominant compared to other types. Grammar is still the area in which the students need to make a lot of improvement. In sentences 5, 15, 17 and 18, syntactic errors are the error type that occur most frequently (49.3%, 36.6%, 26.3% and 43.9% respectively). This is predictable, as these sentences show a relatively complicated topic-comment structure in the source text, and therefore may challenge students in their management of phrase, clause and sentence structures. Translation errors are the most frequent compared to other types in sentences 2 (36.7%), 6 (42.9%) and 16 (50%). Three other types of errors - word form, collocation and comprehension - are less frequently represented in the 18 sentences.

Table 7.7 helps us find which types of errors are more common across the 18 sentences and which types of errors are more prominent in each sentence. The table shows that morphological errors are dominant in sentence 4, grammatical errors are often found in sentences 1, 3, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13 and 14, syntactic errors are more popular in sentences 5, 15, 17 and 18, while translation errors are seen more frequently in sentences 2, 6 and 16.
Table 7.7

*Distribution and Percentage of all Types of Errors Within Each Sentence*

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<td>24.5%</td>
<td>11.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
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<td>51</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>214</td>
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<td>1.9%</td>
<td>23.8%</td>
<td>43.9%</td>
<td>.0%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>.0%</td>
<td>28.5%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>836</td>
<td>658</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>526</td>
<td>2609</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11.4%</td>
<td>32.0%</td>
<td>25.2%</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>.6%</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
<td>20.2%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.1 Morphological Errors, 1.2 Grammar Errors, 1.3 Syntactic Errors, 1.4 Collocation Errors, 1.5 Inappropriate Word Form, 2 Comprehension Errors, 3 Translation Errors
7.2.1.2 Syntactic Errors

1. Distribution of Syntactic Errors Across the Four Years

Table 7.8a below shows the percentage of syntactic errors across the four years. The percentage is calculated by dividing the number of syntactic errors made in each year to the total number of syntactic errors of four groups (658 errors). The table reports the percentage distribution of errors in each year, regardless of the difference in the number of students in each year, because the table is intended to provide the general description of the distribution of syntactic errors before more elaborate calculation is made in the following section. The average number of errors made by each student of each year will be reported in following tables of this section. In Table 7.8a, Year 1 students made 18.2% of all syntactic errors. Students in the second, third and fourth years made 26.3%, 43% and 12.5% of all syntactic errors respectively.

Table 7.8a

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>26.3%</td>
<td>44.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>283</td>
<td>43.0%</td>
<td>87.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>658</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7.8b below compares the distribution of participating subjects with the distribution of syntactic errors in each year. The table has 3 columns, the first column is the year of the participating students, the second column reports the percentage of students in that year participating in the study and the third column reports the percentage of errors made by that percentage of students in the same year. For example, in the first row, Year 1 students occupy 15.8% of all the participating students and the number of syntactic errors they made represent 18.2% of all the syntactic errors made by four groups of students.
The percentage of syntactic errors made by Year 3 students is much higher than the percentage of their participating subjects. Although more detailed analyses on the average number of syntactic errors by each student needed to be made in the following section to reach a conclusion, Table 7.8b suggests that Year 3 students tended to make more errors than other years. Although Year 3 students represented 37.9% of the number of subjects, they made 43% of all the errors. Year 1 students represented 15.8% of the total number of subjects participating in the study and made 18.2% of the syntactic errors. Students in years 2 and 4 tended to make fewer syntactic errors. Year 2 students made 26.3% of all syntactic errors, although they constituted 28.4% of the 95 subjects. Students in Year 4 made only 12.4% of all syntactic errors, although they represented 17.9% of all subjects.

Table 7.8b

Comparison of Distribution of Participating Subjects and Distribution of Syntactic Errors in Each Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Percentage of number of students of each year participating in the study</th>
<th>Percentage of syntactic errors of each year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>28.4%</td>
<td>26.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>37.9%</td>
<td>43.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>17.9%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Distribution of Syntactic Errors at Three Levels

Table 7.9 shows the distribution of all syntactic errors across phrase, clause and sentence level made by 4 years. Of all syntactic errors, 56.4% were made at the level of sentence structure, where students wrote sentence structure which was inappropriate or not well-formed. Apart from syntactic errors at the level of sentence structure, 15.3% of the syntactic errors were made at clause level and 28.3% occurred at phrase structure level. Comparing phrase and clause structures, the phrase formation seemed to pose more problems than the clause formation. This supports Campbell and Hale’s (1999) claim that some areas of
translation difficulty include complex noun phrases, abstractness, official terms and passive verbs.

Table 7.9

*Distribution and Percentage of Three Types of Syntactic Errors*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of syntactic errors</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phrase Structure</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>28.3%</td>
<td>28.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clause Structure</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
<td>43.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sentence Structure</td>
<td>371</td>
<td>56.4%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>658</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Distribution of Syntactic Errors at Three Levels in Each Year

Table 7.10 shows the distribution of syntactic errors of the four groups of students at the level of phrase, clause and sentence. The percentage of syntactic errors made at the level of phrase, clause and sentence were calculated over total number of syntactic errors made in each year. To illustrate, the errors made at the phrase level occupies 37.5% of all the syntactic errors made by Year 1 students. Then, the percentage of syntactic errors made at the phrase level by Year 1 students (37.5%) were compared with that of Year 2 (25.4%), Year 3 (24%) and 4 (35.4%). The comparison from Table 1.10 shows that compared to all other years, Year 1 students made the largest number of syntactic errors at the phrase level (37.5%), Year 2 students made the most syntactic errors at clause level (17.3%), while Year 3 students made the most errors at sentence level (60.1%). This result seems to contradict the prediction that Year 3 students with higher linguistic competence will have fewer problems dealing with sentence structure than Year 1 and 2 students.

All four groups made the most syntactic errors at the sentence level, rather than at the phrase or clause levels: respectively 49.2%, 57.2%, 60.1% and 52.4% from Year 1 to Year 4. The second highest percentage was at phrase level: 37.2%, 25.4%, 24%, and 35.4% respectively, from Year 1 to Year 4. The lowest percentage occurred at the level of clause structure.
Table 7.10

*Distribution and Percentage of Syntactic Errors at Three Levels Across Four Years*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Types of syntactic errors</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Phrase</td>
<td>Clause</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>45</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>37.5%</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25.4%</td>
<td>17.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>24.0%</td>
<td>15.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>35.4%</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>28.3%</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Distribution of Three Types of Syntactic Errors in each of the 18 Sentences

In the following section, Table 7.11 shows the distribution of 3 types of syntactic errors (phrase structure, clause structure and sentence structure) in each of the 18 sentences. That is to say, the frequency and percentage in each row represent the number of syntactic errors at the level of phrase, clause and sentence of that sentence. For example, in sentence 1, there are 23 syntactic errors made at the phrase level, which is 32.9% of all the syntactic errors made in that sentence. Also in sentence 1, the number of syntactic errors made at the phrase level is 36, which represents 51.4% of all the syntactic error of that sentence. The type of syntactic error with the highest percentage in each sentence (each row) is underlined in red bold font.

Table 7.11 is intended to help find out in which sentences of the source text the students are more likely to make syntactic errors at the phrase level, in which sentences they tend to make more syntactic errors at the clause level and similarly with syntactic errors at the sentence level. It is expected that in the sentences where topic-comment structure of Vietnamese is not identical with the subject-predicate of English, the syntactic errors at the sentence level are higher, because the students may have problems handling the sentence structure.

The table shows that syntactic errors at the level of the sentence are the most dominant in sentences 2, 5, 6, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17 and 18. Building up phrases is more difficult in sentences 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11. In each of the 18 sentences, the percentage of syntactic errors made at the clause level is often lower than the ones made at the phrase or sentence level. Sentence 1 is the only sentence which shows the highest percentage of syntactic errors made at the clause level (51.4%), compared to the other two kinds of syntactic errors.
Table 7.11

Distribution and Percentage of Types of Syntactic Errors Across the 18 Sentences

<table>
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<td>Clause</td>
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<td>51.4%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>42.9%</td>
<td>.0%</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
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<td>50.0%</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>.0%</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
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<td>18</td>
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<td>19.1%</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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<td>101</td>
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<tr>
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<td>28.3%</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

243
5. Distribution of Three Types of Syntactic Errors Across the 18 sentences

Table 7.12 shows the distribution of syntactic errors of at the level of phrase, clause and sentence across the 18 sentences. The percentage in each row is calculated by dividing the number of syntactic errors at each level of each sentence to all syntactic errors of the same level of the whole text (which appear at the last row of each column). To illustrate, out of 186 syntactic errors made at the level of phrase of the whole text, there are 23 errors made at sentence 1, which represents 12.4% of all syntactic errors at the phrase level. Similarly, 12 syntactic errors are made at the level of phrase in sentence 2, which represents 6.5% of all syntactic errors at the same level. The three highest percentages at each level are underlined in red bold font.

The table is intended to help investigate the three sentences where the syntactic errors are most likely to occur at each level - phrase, clause or sentence. Three sentences that show the highest percentage of syntactic errors at the phrase level are sentences 4 (14.5%), 1 (12.4%) and 18 (9.7%). Syntactic errors at the clause levels are the most common in sentences 1 (35.6%), 17 (25.7%) and 5 (7.9%). At the sentence level, the highest percentage of syntactic errors is in sentences 18 (18.6%), 17 (11.6%) and 5 (14.8%).

In general, sentences 17 and 5 seem to be challenging to students at the clause and sentence levels. Sentence 1 is difficult in terms of both phrase construction and clause construction. Sentence 18 sees more syntactic errors in phrase construction and sentence building.
### Table 7.12

*Distribution and Percentage of Syntactic Errors of Three Types Across the 18 Sentences*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sentence Number</th>
<th>Types of syntactic errors</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Phrase</td>
<td>Clause</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12.4%</td>
<td>35.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>6.5%</td>
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<td></td>
<td>9.1%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>27</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>2.7%</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8.1%</td>
<td>25.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9.7%</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

100.0% 100.0% 100.0% 100.0%
6. Distribution of Syntactic Errors across the 18 sentences

Table 7.13 shows the percentage distribution of syntactic errors over the 18 sentences. The percentage is calculated by dividing the number of syntactic errors made at each sentence to the total number of syntactic errors of the whole text. For example, out of 658 syntactic errors made in the whole text, there are 70 errors made at sentence 1, which represents 10.6% of all the syntactic errors. Sentence 1 is ranked at 3 in ‘Ranking’ column because their percentage distribution of syntactic errors (10.6%) is the third highest among 18 sentences. The three sentences in which the highest proportion of syntactic errors is displayed are sentences 18 (14.3%, \textit{Ranking}=1), 17 (12.8%, \textit{Ranking}=2) and 1 (10.6%, \textit{Ranking}=3) respectively. Other high proportions of syntactic errors occur in sentences 5 (10.3%, \textit{Ranking}=4), 12 (9.3%, \textit{Ranking}=5) and 15 (8.5%, \textit{Ranking}=6).

Looking back at the analysis of the topic-comment structure of these sentences, it can be seen that in each case it is rather complicated. Sentence 18 is a long sentence which comprises two topic-comment structures sharing the same sentence topic. In the first part of sentence 18, the comment itself is another embedded topic-comment construction. In the second part, there is a gap within the comment, which is to be filled by the main topic of the sentence. Sentence 17 also has two topic-comment structures: the first comment is an embedded topic-comment structure, the topic of which is coreferential with the main topic (the so-called ‘double subject construction’); the second comment is also an embedded topic-comment structure, whose topic is semantically related to the main topic of the sentence. Sentence 1 illustrates the intricacy of the operation of empty elements in Vietnamese. The high percentage of errors in sentence 1 is thus understandable, as this sentence is a combination of two smaller sentences, both of which have embedded topic-comment structure and empty elements. Adding to the complexity of the topic-comment structure is the verb system in Vietnamese, which does not often distinguish between the passive voice, the active voice and the simple, perfect or continuous tenses as in English. Sentence 5 also seems to pose problems for students, as the topic is not identical with the subject. In this sentence, the topic is semantically related to a specific constituent in the comment: it is the object of the verb in the comment. The real subject of that verb is an empty pronoun. As a consequence, the students find it hard to locate and translate the real subject of the sentence.
Table 7.13

*Distribution and Percentage of Syntactic Errors across the 18 Sentences*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sentence Number</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Ranking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>70</td>
<td><strong>10.6%</strong></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>84</td>
<td><strong>12.8%</strong></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>94</td>
<td><strong>14.3%</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>658</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7. Distribution of Errors of the Four Years across the 18 sentences

In the last part of this section, Table 7.14 shows the distribution of percentage of errors across the four years in the 18 sentences. The frequency and percentage is calculated by dividing the number of syntactic errors of each year made at a certain sentence to the total number of syntactic errors made by that year. It is important to stress that, in Table 7.14, the percentage is calculated based on the total number of syntactic errors made by each year, not on the total number of syntactic errors made by four years. To illustrate, Year 1 students made 120 syntactic errors across 18 sentences. In sentence 1, Year 1 students made 9 syntactic errors, which represents 7.5% of all the syntactic errors (120 errors) made by Year 1 students. Accordingly, the percentage of syntactic errors appearing at the cell of Year 1 and sentence 1 is 7.5%. Similarly, Year 2 students made 16 syntactic errors in sentence 2, which represents 9.2% of all the syntactic errors made by Year 2 students.

The comparison is made between all the percentages in different rows of the same column. That is to say, the percentage of syntactic errors by Year 1 students in sentence 1 is compared to that of sentence 2 and other sentences. The two highest percentages among all these 18 sentences are highlighted in red bold fonts.

The table suggests that Year 1 students were more likely to make errors in sentences 17 (14.2%) and 12 (12.5%). Year 2 students made more errors in sentences 17 (15%) and 5 (12.1%). Two sentences that generate more errors for Year 3 students are sentences 1 (12.4%) and 18 (15.2%). Year 4 students had problems with sentences 18 (19.5%) and 15 (13.4%). In general, sentences 17 and 18 are likely to cause more syntactic errors than other sentences. Both Year 1 and Year 2 students have the highest number of syntactic errors made at sentence 17. Year 3 and Year 4 students also made the most of their syntactic errors at sentence 18.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sentence Number</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8.3%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11.7%</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.0%</td>
<td>.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.0%</td>
<td>.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.0%</td>
<td>.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.0%</td>
<td>.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.8%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.2%</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14.2%</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10.8%</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7.2.1.3 Errors in the Translating of Subjects and Empty Elements

This section analyses the errors in the handling of subjects and empty elements. This linguistic phenomenon receives special attention, because the presence or absence of the grammatical subject is the first manifestation of the difference between topic-prominent and subject-prominent languages. As discussed in the Literature Review, in topic-prominent languages, the topic is raised at the beginning of the sentence, not the subject, but in English, the unmarked case is when the subject is located before the verb. This section explores how students carry out this special task and analyse their errors to determine whether they have a problem in this area. Table 7.15 shows the number of instances of errors in each year in the five main types of errors made in the specific task of identifying and translating subjects and empty elements, namely: omission of subject, repetition of subject, inappropriate choice of subject, building a sentence without a logical semantic connection between subject and predicate, and building a sentence with an inappropriate semantic connection between subject and passive verb. The last type of error was found in passive sentences. Table 7.15 lists the number of errors regardless of the difference between the numbers of students in each year. The table is not intended to compare the number of errors made in each year, instead, it aims to indicate which type of error is the most common among 4 years in the translating of subject.

Table 7.15

Frequency of Errors Relating to the Translation of Subjects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Students</th>
<th>Year 1 15 (15.8%)</th>
<th>Year 2 27 (28.4%)</th>
<th>Year 3 36 (37.9%)</th>
<th>Year 4 17 (17.9%)</th>
<th>Total 95 (100%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Errors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omission of Subject</td>
<td>2 (5.12%)</td>
<td>13 (33.33%)</td>
<td>23 (58.98%)</td>
<td>1 (2.56%)</td>
<td>39 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repetition of Subject</td>
<td>1 (5.88%)</td>
<td>5 (29.41%)</td>
<td>10 (58.82%)</td>
<td>1 (5.88%)</td>
<td>17 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inappropriate Choice of Subject</td>
<td>1 (14.28%)</td>
<td>5 (71.43%)</td>
<td>1 (14.28%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>7 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Logical Connection Between Subject and Predicate</td>
<td>3 (17.65%)</td>
<td>5 (29.41%)</td>
<td>7 (41.17%)</td>
<td>2 (11.76%)</td>
<td>17 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inappropriate Connection Between Subject and Passive Verb</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>5 (83.33%)</td>
<td>1 (16.66%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>6 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As shown in Table 7.15, ‘omitting the subject’ is the most frequent type of error among all the errors relating to translating subjects. Although most Vietnamese understand the empty pronoun or dropped subject when they read a text, they do not always correctly identify the referent of the missing subject, once they transfer these sentences into English. This is shown through the high percentage of comprehension errors. The omission of the subjects may be traced to two reasons: the students were not able to figure out the referent of the missing subject, or they did not know that it is necessary to find the missing subject and render it into English. Apart from this type of error, the students also made inappropriate choices of subject, repeated the subject, or wrote sentences in which the subjects do not semantically match the predicate of the sentences, or the passive verbs. These errors are discussed in detail below. Tables 10.16 to 10.20 show sample sentences of the 5 error types mentioned above, with the distribution of each.

Table 7.16

‘Omission of Subject’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Sample Sentences</th>
<th>Distribution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>✓ Being fascinated by named and nameless characters again.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Also, ✓ being fascinated by the named characters and nameless ones.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>✓ Still fascinated by named and anonymous characters.</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Supposed (supposing) that it was (were) named MT, ✓ sounds (it would sound) candid and more unique.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 7.17
‘Repetition of Subject’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Sample Sentences</th>
<th>Distribution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Almost each topic, it’s permeated with the soul of Vietnamese</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>To, the singer is dramatic, wandered (wandering) but dignified, amorous but loyal, both seductive and serious, petite but ✓ unimportant ….</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The scene of burning furniture, the explosive sound of furnishings, the scene of a gunshot firing at the doll, all of them make ✓, viewer’s blood run cold.</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Tam, a player of the moon shaped guitar was so wonderful that he was desperate, frustrated but giving, the gesture (gestures) totally suited the mood.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7.18
‘Inappropriate Choice of Subject’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Sample Sentences</th>
<th>Distribution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>First, it is the being fascinated by images ‘full of film’s language’</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Among successful supporting characters, the old servant is so vivid and moving and that (he) is worthy to be nominated as the best supporting character</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The first is fascinated by all language of motion picture images.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 7.19
‘No Logical Connection between Subject and Predicate’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Sample Sentences</th>
<th>Distribution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The scene of dropping ✓ outside lantern is made (can happen) only by charm.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The sight of dropping lanterns is considered that can be only carried out by magic.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The sight of dropping lanterns seems that only magic could make it.</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The scene of dropping lantern is believed that only magic can do it.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7.20
‘Inappropriate Connection Between Subject and Passive Verb’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Sample Sentence</th>
<th>Distribution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Miss To, who is beautiful but miserable, vagabond but dignified, amorous but loyal, both seductive and serious, petite but not important is played the role best by no one except Thuy Nga.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>It would be more simple and pleasure if MT is named only</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7.21 describes the distribution of five types of errors in the translation of subjects across the 18 sentences. Each type of error and its cause are discussed at length in the Qualitative Analysis (Chapter 6). There are no errors relating to the translation of subjects in sentences 7, 8, 9, 10, 12 and 16, probably because sentences 7, 8 and 9 are all elliptical sentences, expressed in the form of noun phrases. Sentence 12 requires the existential structure ‘there has never been …’ and sentence 16 does not show any empty pronouns or ‘double subject constructions’. Consequently, there are no errors made in these sentences relating to the task of locating and translating the subject.
Table 7.21
*Frequency of Errors Relating to Translating Subjects in the 18 Sentences*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sentence Number</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>11</th>
<th>13</th>
<th>14</th>
<th>15</th>
<th>17</th>
<th>18</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Omission of Subject</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repetition of Subject</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inappropriate Choice of Subject</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Logical Connection Between Subject and Predicate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inappropriate Combination Between Subject and Passive Verb</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sentences 1 and 13 show the highest percentages of translations in which subjects were omitted. In these two sentences, the subject is dropped and the students need to refer to the context to decipher the subject, which is ‘I’, and is mentioned in the first sentence of the paragraph. In sentences 3, 15, 17 and 18, there are instances of errors in which sentence subjects are repeated. These sentences show complex structures, with embedded topic-comment constructions. Therefore, students who stick to the literal meaning of the text and the surface structure of the source text are more likely to make this type of error. Five students made the wrong choice of subject in Sentence 2 (71.43%), which shows they failed to make a careful analysis of the text before starting their translation. The missing subject of sentence 2 is ‘I’. However, these students chose ‘Trước hết’, a transitional adverb, to be the subject of the sentence. In sentence 5, 16 cases of errors occur when the subjects do not match the predicate, because in Sentence 5, the topic ‘Cảnh thà dèn trời’ is the object of the verb ‘lẩm’ used in the comment. The dropped subject of the verb ‘tướng như’ in the comment clause has the referent ‘người ta’ or ‘người xem’. To translate this sentence, the students are required to identify the empty pronoun. However, many of them chose the wrong subject, because they chose the topic of the sentence ‘Cảnh thà dèn trời’, an inanimate referent, as the subject of the verb ‘tướng như’. This led to numerous errors in
this sentence. The last type of error is the mismatch in meaning between the subject and the passive verb. This happened most frequently in sentence 18.

The different types of errors across the 18 sentences and their distribution among students of Year 1, 2, 3 and 4 have been described from Table 7.15 to Table 7.21. Now the reasons for these errors will be traced by comparing the instances of errors and the instances of miscomprehension to see whether the errors in translating subjects are due to miscomprehension, carelessness or a lack of competence in translation.

**7.2.1.4 Analysis of dropped subjects in sentences 1, 2, 5, 6, 13, 14, 15 and 16**

The following sections describe different ways in which students interpreted and comprehended the empty pronouns of sentences 1, 2, 5, 6, 13, 14, 15 and 16, where the interpretation of the empty elements is crucial to the translation. The different strategies that the students utilised to translate the empty pronouns (from their comprehension) are also analysed. Although 95 students took part in the Elicitation Task, only 82 students participated in the Vietnamese comprehension test.

In the examples below, there are two tables for each sentence examined. The first table presented shows the result of the Vietnamese comprehension test. The first column of the table lists all of the possible referents in Vietnamese for the empty element(s) in that sentence, and the second column shows the number of students who chose that option. The second table, the content of which is drawn from the students’ translations of the Elicitation Task, represents different ways and strategies the students used to render the sentence. The erroneous translations are in italics. In the discussion of the students’ translation, the term ‘the most frequently chosen translation’ refers to the one which is chosen by the greatest number of students from the corpus. That is to say, even if only 20% of the students chose a certain way of translation, it is still considered as ‘the most frequently translation’, because it is chosen by the greatest number of the students in the corpus, compared to all other ways of translation.
Sentence 1

Giá (người ta/nhà làm phim) chỉ đặt tên phim là MêThào thôi

Table 7.22

Students’ Comprehension of The Empty Element(s) in Sentence 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Referent(s) of the empty element(s)</th>
<th>Number of cases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clause 1. Người ta (People)</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nhà làm phim (Film makers)</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clause 2. Bộ phim (The film)</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The students found this sentence hard to comprehend, as empty pronouns are present in both clauses. There is no clue from the previous sentence, because sentence 1 is the first sentence of the text. Furthermore, the dropped subjects in the two clauses are different: whilst the first empty pronoun refers to the filmmakers who can rename the film, the second one refers to the film itself. Regarding the first empty pronoun of this sentence, none of the students had any problems comprehending it. Among 82 students, 54 students (65.85%) interpreted the empty pronoun as ‘nhà làm phim’ (film makers), based on the context. As this is the first sentence of the Elicitation Task, the only clue the students could rely on was the context of the movie industry and their common perception, rather than previous sentences in the text: only the film maker and nobody else can name the film. There are 28 other students (34.15%), who were not quite sure of the referent, as it is not mentioned before, so they referred to ‘người ta’ (one, anyone) as an indefinite referent. Although ‘nhà làm phim’ sounds like a better option than ‘người ta’, both of these referents are acceptable.
Table 7.23

Translation of Sentence 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Translation</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>If they/ film makers had named the film Me Thao, it would have been/</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>would be simpler and more interesting.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>If the film had been named/ was named/ is named/ could be named Me</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thao, it would have been ……</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>If the name/ title were Me Thao only, it would be …</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>If just named Me Thao, it would sound more simple and…</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>It would sound simpler and better having been named Me Thao.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>If only the film named Me Thao, it hears simpler ...</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>If being only named Me Thao, it would be more simple …</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>If only named is Me Thao, it would be more simple…</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>If we only name the film is Me Thao, it would sound simple …</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Supposing to name just Me Thao, ✔ was more simplier and satisfier</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>If naming the film Me Thao, it’s simple and more wonderful.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>If Me Thao is named only, ....</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>worth just to name the film is Me Thao, ✔ hear more simple and interesting</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>If only the film is just named Me Thao, the sound could be more simple and</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>exciting.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Having no errors in comprehension, the students offered the above-mentioned options, when they rendered the empty subjects into English (The sentences in italics are the erroneous ones). Most of the students (55/95=57.89%) preferred the passive voice, when they translated this sentence into English. While the source text version shows the first clause in the active voice with ‘film makers’ as the dropped subject, the target text of 56 students (57.89%) indicates that they preferred ‘the film’ as the subject in a passive-voice sentence. This strategy shows that the students knew how to rely on an alternative method to avoid identifying and locating the subject from the source text. Although the comprehension test shows that they did understand and could correctly process the intended referent of the empty pronoun, they still avoided locating an exact subject to translate. Out of 95 translations, only 7 students (7.36%) chose the English pronoun ‘they’
or ‘filmmakers’ to translate the dropped subject and 1 student (1.05%) translated this empty pronoun as ‘we’, although he had a correct understanding of this pronoun in his comprehension test. Three students (3.16%) stuck to the version of the source text and conveyed the sentence in the active voice; however, they made errors by not locating any subject, and the sentence in the target text comes out as ‘If naming the film Me Thao, it’s simple and more wonderful’.

Ten students (10/95=10.53%) chose to translate the sentence by paraphrasing. They chose the subject as ‘the name/the title’. Other fourteen students (14/95=14.73%) (nine of whom had grammatically correct translations) clearly avoided locating the subject and remained faithful to the source text by starting the sentence with a past participle phrase ‘If named Me Thao, the film could have sounded simpler and more interesting’, ‘It would sound simpler and better having been named Me Thao.’ or ‘If being only named Me Thao, it would be more simple…’ This shows that even when students understand the dropped subject, they are still reluctant to select the corresponding pronoun to translate the dropped subject in English, especially given the alternative of translating with the passive voice.

**Sentence 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FRAME TOPIC</th>
<th>NULL TOPIC</th>
<th>COMMENT</th>
<th>PREDICATE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First of all</td>
<td>(I)</td>
<td>(tôi)</td>
<td>mé mẫn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NULL SUBJECT</td>
<td>with classifier</td>
<td>với những</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>images</td>
<td>hình ảnh</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

‘rất ngon ngửi’  diện ảnh’.  
typical language  movie industry

Table 7.24

**Students’ Comprehension of The Empty Element(s) in Sentence 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Referent(s) of the empty element(s)</th>
<th>Number of cases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tôi (I)</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khán giả (The audience)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nhà làm phim (Film makers)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Most of the students (78/82=95.12%) had a correct interpretation of the empty pronoun in this sentence. The missing subject is coreferential with the subject of sentence 1, ‘Tôi’. However, three students (3/82=3.65%) mistook the missing subject as ‘Khán giã’ (viewer, audience). This misunderstanding is reasonable, given that in Vietnamese, the missing subject can be deduced from the predicate and the context, not from the preceding sentence. If the students just relied on the meaning of the predicate ‘be charmed with the film language’, the general knowledge, or the main idea of the text as a film review and they did not rely on the preceding sentence, the empty subject seems to make sense with the meaning ‘Khán giã’.

One student (1.05%) had problems interpreting this sentence, thinking that the missing subject refers to the filmmaker. This understanding of the text is not persuasive even in a normal situation, because it is not worth mentioning such information in a film review: the filmmakers are the ones who produce the film, so they must be interested in their own products. Despite this misunderstanding, the student chose the correct subject in his/her translation. Therefore, the misunderstanding can be interpreted as his/her mistake in doing the Vietnamese comprehension text.
Table 7.25
Translation of Sentence 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I’m fascinated/attracted by the images ‘nothing but movie industry language’.</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>As a close spectator to the birthing of the film, I am fascinated by Me Thao, especially at the first image of the real motion picture language.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The first attraction is that of entire motion picture language.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The very first enchantment is its images of ‘sheer-movie language’.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Images that is completely the language of motion picture is the first fascination.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Firstly, it is the images of fully film-language that charm me.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>It is the fascination of ‘absolutely film language’ images that comes first.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Firstly, it’s the fascination with the image of ‘film language’.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>The first thing is the fascination of images very like motion picture language.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>First, it is the being fascinated by images ‘full of film’s language’.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Firstly, being fascinated by ‘completely motion picture language’ images.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Firstly, fascinated by the ‘real film language’.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>First and foremost is fascinated by images ‘have nothing but motion picture film’.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>The first is fascinated by all languages of motion picture images.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>The first thing makes me fascinated is the specific language of motion picture altogether.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>The first thing is being fascinated by the images of language of motion picture altogether.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The students seemed to have more confidence in choosing and translating the dropped subject in this sentence. Out of 82 students, 78 students (78/82=95.12%) had a correct understanding shown through their comprehension test. In their translations, 77 out of 95 students (81.05%) chose ‘I’ as the subject in their English translation. Out of these 77 students, one student joined the first and the second sentence into a compound sentence. Therefore, the subject ‘I’ is omitted in the second clause. Although this translation is rather lengthy, it shows that the student was able to locate and identify the subject as ‘I’, but omitted it in the second clause as this omission is allowed in English syntax. In
general, the majority of students (77/95=81.05%) could identify the subject in this sentence. Firstly, the structure of this sentence is quite clear. Although the subject is dropped, the meaning of the verb helps students to easily identify the referent. Only ‘I’ or ‘the audience’ can be understood as the referent of the predicate ‘to be fascinated by the film’. As sentence 2 immediately follows the first sentence, which strongly introduces the author’s feeling, the author is the only possible missing referent of this sentence. Most students remained faithful to the original structure of the Vietnamese source text by choosing ‘I’ as the subject of the active voice sentence. The fact that students still chose ‘I’ as the subject of the English sentence, despite the lack of a formal subject in the source text, shows that the majority of students (81.05%) knew that a subject is obligatory in English.

Eleven students (11/95=11.58%) made an inappropriate translation, as there were no subjects or incorrect subjects in their translations. The reason is either because they did not understand what the subject’s referent was, or they forgot to identify and locate the subject in the process of translating. Among these 11 students, only 6 (6/95=6.31%) omitted the subject. The other five (5.26%) used various subjects other than ‘I’ and started the sentence with either ‘The first thing’ or ‘It’. It is not obligatory for the subject to be ‘I’ in the English sentence; it can be ‘it’ or ‘the first attraction’. However, the point is that the nominated subject has to agree the predicate in terms of meaning. These five students chose a subject which did not match the predicate, and therefore they made an ‘Inappropriate choice of subject’.

Seven students (7/95=7.37%) applied various strategies to handle this sentence: they either used the emphasising structure ‘It … that …’ or made a syntactic shift by changing the predicate of the Vietnamese sentence (‘mê mân’) into a nominal group ‘the first enchantment’ or ‘the first attraction’ to start the target sentence. Out of these seven students, one (1/95=1.05%) chose ‘images that is completely the language of motion picture’ as the subject of the sentence. It can be seen that the students did not try a new method or strategy to translate. They stuck to the structure of the source text.
Sentence 5

Cảnh thất đenkins trời (tôi/người ta/người xem) tưởng như chỉ có ma thuật

Table 7.26

Students’ Comprehension of The Empty Element(s) in Sentence 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Referent(s) of the empty element(s)</th>
<th>Number of cases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Người ta (People)</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Người xem (The viewers)</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tôi (I)</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nhà làm phim (Film makers)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This sentence is an illustration of the difference between the topic-comment structure of Vietnamese and the subject-predicate structure of English. The relationship between the first component of the sentence ‘Cảnh thất đenkins trời’ (the scene of dropping lanterns) and the following verb ‘tưởng’ (believe/think) is obviously not the relationship between subject and verb, as ‘the scene’ cannot think. Only a human subject can do so. The noun phrase ‘Cảnh thất đenkins trời’ (the scene of dropping lanterns) is, therefore, not the logical subject of the verb ‘tưởng’ (believe/think). It only functions as the topic of the sentence, which is the focus of the speaker’s attention, and to which the speaker wants to direct the reader’s attention. If we take the meaning of the topic into consideration, it can be regarded as the object of the verb ‘làm nổi’ (can do/carry out) at the end of the comment. Sentence 5 is an example in which the topic is semantically related to a specific constituent in the comment: the topic is the object of the verb used in the comment. According to Thanh (2003:113), the real subject in this kind of sentence is in the semantic role of Tác thể (Agent) or the person

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who exerts an action on something. However, this dropped subject, which is in the
semantic role of the Agent of the action conveyed in the verb, is not often displayed in
Vietnamese as this role is not considered as important for the expression of the sentence
meaning. Thanh also confirms that the absence of subject in this sentence structure is a
typical feature of Vietnamese and very common in the language.

Apart from this linguistic feature, the sentence is more complicated, because the logical
subject of the verb ‘tưởng’ is an empty pronoun, which gives the students more chance to
misinterpret the topic ‘Cảnh ta’dèn trời’ as the subject of the sentence. Supposing the
original sentence was ‘Cảnh ta’dèn trời tôi tưởng như chỉ có ma thuật mọi làm nổi’, the
students might have had less misunderstanding and would have been able to identify the
topic as the object of the verb, because the pronoun ‘tôi’ (I) would make it very clear that
the subject of the verb is ‘tôi’ (I). However, in this case, the empty element poses greater
difficulties for the students in identifying the logical subject of the verb.

In the preceding sentence (sentence 4), the object of the verb is ‘ta’ (me/us), which
refers to the text’s author or a group of people, including the text’s author. Therefore, in
this sentence, the empty pronoun in the subject position can either be interpreted as
referring to the text’s author, who thinks the scene can only be done by magic, or
understood as alluding to anyone (indefinite referent) who has watched that scene. Based
on the knowledge provided by the context, this feeling and impression may be objectively
shared by any viewers who have watched the film. However, it sounds more persuasive to
indicate the intended referent of this dropped subject as ‘tôi’ (I), as this sentence is part of
the flow of thought and narration of the text’s author, who is describing his emotions and
feelings after enjoying the film. There is one case of miscomprehension (1.21%) where the
student interpreted the empty pronoun as ‘nhà làm phim’ (film-maker).
Table 7.27  
*Translation of Sentence 5*

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The scene of dropping lantern is made / is produced / can be done (by no other way than) magic.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The scene of dropping lantern must have been thought / is thought / was thought to be done / created by charm / magic.</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The scene of dropping lanterns is considered / is thought that only magic can have enough ability to do / can only be carried out by magic.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The scene of dropping God’s lanterns seemed (to me) that only magic could have done that.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The scene of dropping lantern seems / is assumed to be done by magic.</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. The scene of dropping sky lantern, which seems that only magic can do this / which is considered that no one can do, apart from magic / that looks as if only magic could create.</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. The scene of dropping lantern looks as if just magic can do / it could only be done by magic / it were magic which could do that.</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. The scene of dropping lanterns looked like / is like one that can only be done with magic / only magic could do.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. The sight of dropping lanterns as if it appeared in magic.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. The scene of flying lanterns to the sky is like / seemed like a magic / could only be seen in magic / seemed being mixed with the magic / seems to be possible in magic.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Only magic could produce such scene of dropping sky lanterns.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Only when magical techniques were used could people create the scene of dropping the lanterns.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. A magic is thrown into lantern’s dropping.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. It seems that only magic power can drop lanterns.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. It seems as if it were magic who could have made such a scene of dropping.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. It seems that the sight of dropping lanterns into the sky is possibly done by magic.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
17. The sight of dropping lanterns made **audience / viewers / us** think that only charm / magic can do / manage that.

18. The sight when lantern is dropped makes **me** wander if it was made by the hand of magic.

19. The dropping lantern scene that **I think** was created just by magic.

20. That is also the scene of dropping lantern which is so wonderful as if it were supported from magic.

21. The sight of dropping sky lanterns seems to be so wonderful that it is thought that only magic can do it.

22. The sight drop sun lantern imagine as new magical make float (word-for-word translation)

23. The scene is that sky lanterns are dropped, which is thought only to be done by magic.

Sentence 5 is very typical of Vietnamese topic-comment structure. The topic does not coincide with the subject and the real subject is dropped. The students translated the sentence in 23 ways. It can be observed from their translations that most of them avoided locating the subject in their translation. Although they could understand the empty element and interpreted it as either the text’s author or the audience, they still avoided the decision of pinpointing and directly choosing one subject to convey their idea. Only six students out of 95 (6.31%) chose to directly translate the empty elements with ‘I’, ‘me’, ‘us’, ‘the viewers’ or ‘people’.

The most frequently chosen rendering of this sentence (21/95=22.1%), among all other ways of translation, is ‘The scene of dropping lantern seems / is assumed to be done by magic’. This translation is the most acceptable as the English version sounds relatively natural, while remaining close to the Vietnamese.
Sentence 6

Cảnh quay nào (người ta/người xem) cũng thấy mồ hôi.

Scene any (people/audience) also see sweat

Table 7.28

Students’ Comprehension of The Empty Element(s) in Sentence 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Referent(s) of the empty element(s)</th>
<th>Number of cases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Người ta (People)</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Người xem (The viewers)</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tôi (I)</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nhà làm phim (The film makers)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The lexical item ‘Cảnh quay nào’ (Any scene) at the beginning of the sentence, is the topic not the subject of the sentence. Like sentence 5, the subject of the verb in sentence 6 is also dropped. The verb of this sentence ‘thấy’ requires a human subject, and can be deduced that ‘Cảnh quay nào’ (Any scene) cannot be the logical subject of the verb. This linguistic phenomenon in Vietnamese, whereby the item in the subject position is not the logical subject of the verb, is mentioned by Thompson (1965). He states that

An important way in which Vietnamese verbs differ from English verbs is that they do not in themselves imply a clear notion of ‘voice’ in the grammatical sense. In English a ‘transitive verb must be either active or passive. No such distinction is necessary in Vietnamese. As a matter of fact, the actor and the goal or object of Vietnamese verbs are regularly not marked; these relationships are generally clear from the context, and if they are not, there are ways in which they can be made clear; the point is that they need not be, and in the vast majority of Vietnamese sentences such clarifying devices are not used (1965: 217).
Most Vietnamese can understand this linguistic feature in normal conversations and they usually do not try to investigate the empty subject in normal conversation as it is often not important information. Even when translating from English into Vietnamese, this feature seems not to cause many problems for students as English sentences have subjects. The difficulty arises when translating from Vietnamese into English. As English syntax requires that a sentence have both subject and verb, it is obligatory to figure out the logical subject of the verb. Students find it hard when they have to make a decision to search for one precise subject to match the Subject-Predicate structure of English because this position is often left out in Vietnamese. They have to read between the lines and analyse the structure of the Vietnamese sentence.

In sentence 6, the topic fills a gap in the comment, but not as the object of the verb; instead, it is the adverb which is used to show where the viewers/audience can see the effort of the filmmakers. The empty pronoun in subject position can be understood as either 'Người ta' (People), 'Người xem' (The viewers), or 'Tôi' (I). Out of 82 students, 31 students (37.8%) chose the last alternative; 27 students (32.92%) understood the empty pronoun as ‘Người xem' (The viewers), possibly because this referent is more relevant to the context of a film reviewer than the referent ‘Người ta’ (People).

Six students (6/95=7.31%) incorrectly interpreted the empty pronoun as referring to the filmmakers. Although this still makes sense in that the filmmakers can see a lot of their own effort in many scenes of the film, this referent cannot be the one intended by the text’s author, as this fact is not new information.
Table 7.29
Translation of Sentence 6

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. <strong>We</strong> can see the sweat of hard-working in every scene.</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Any scene has sweat (hard work).</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Sweat can be seen in every scene.</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. There’s sweat in every scene.</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Every scene is made with / is full of / is with / is made of / is imbued with / is soaked with sweat / hard work / efforts.</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Every ✓ of the scenes cost / needs sweat.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Each scene has behind it a lot of sweat.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. All of the scenes make the film-makers sweat.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. In each scene, the viewer can easily imagine how much workers had to sweat.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Any scenes are hard-work / Each scene is a hard work.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. <strong>Sweat is all over the scene</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Any scene sees sweat.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Any scene is also see sweat.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Every scene was every sweat.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Every scene is worth a lot of sweat.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Any scene was also found the sweat.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. All of the scenes are result of sweat.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. No scene lacks sweat.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Not a scene is completed without perspiration (sweat).</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sentence 6 ‘Cảnh quay nào cũng thấy mồ hôi’ shows the difference between the Subject-Predicate structure of English and the Topic-Comment structure of Vietnamese. In the lists of 3 Reference Frames of Vietnamese declarative sentences, Thanh (2003) introduces the type of sentence in which the ‘Khung dê’ (Frame Topic) stands in Topic position, followed by the Comment. That is to say, the Frame Topic at the beginning of the sentence sets up the conditions regarding time, space, location, etc. and the following Comment discusses
anything happening within that framework. This structure is very normal and popular in Vietnamese and is considered an unmarked case. However, in English, where the adverb of time, location, etc. is moved to the beginning of the sentence, the sentence becomes a marked case. This difference creates potential confusion for the Vietnamese students as they sometimes can not distinguish whether the constituent appearing in Topic position is the subject of or the adverb in the sentence, as can be observed in the case of this sentence.

In their translations, the students preferred not to locate the real subject of the action ‘thấy’, although they showed correct comprehension of the intended meaning of the source text. Out of the 95 students, only 12 (12/95=12.63%) chose to translate the subject as ‘we’ or ‘the viewers’ at the beginning ‘We can see the sweat in every scene’. This kind of translation is evidence that these 12 students had understood the semantic role of the dropped subject, as well as the topic of the sentence, which can be considered semantically as an adverb. Their rendering suggests that they knew the difference between Vietnamese and English sentence structure and transferred this understanding to their translations by nominating the subject ‘we’ to fill in for the dropped subject in Vietnamese.

The translation that is chosen most frequently (19/95=20%), compared to all other translations in the corpus, is ‘Every scene is made with / is full of / is with / is made of / is imbued with / is soaked with sweat / hard work / efforts.’ The students had different versions, but all the translations using the same strategy are listed under the same type. This shows that many students felt that ‘Cảnh quay nào’ (every scene) was the subject of the English sentence.

The second most frequent option (18/95=18.95%) is the use of passive voice ‘Sweat can be seen in every scene.’ This allows them to avoid the decision of locating the subject, in order to focus on the two factors considered important in the source text: the scene and the sweat of hard work. This seems to be more acceptable as the passive voice is preferable in English syntax than in Vietnamese.

The other two renderings chosen by the students are ‘Any scene has sweat’ (13/95=13.68%) or ‘There’s sweat in every scene’ (11/95=11.57%). Here the action of the subject was avoided again and the translations were a kind of interpretation of the source text, rather than a faithful equivalent. However, these two ways of translating are brief and can create a misunderstanding, because the readers may not understand that the ‘sweat’ is a metaphorical
expression used by the text’s author to refer to the ‘effort’ or ‘hard work’. The reader may get the impression that the sweat refers to the physical sweat of an action film.

**Sentence 13**

(Tới) lại mê mẩn với những nhân vật có tên
(1) again be charmed with plural marker character have name

NULL TOPIC COMMENT
NULL SUBJECT PREDICATE

và không tên.
and no name.

**Table 7.30**

*Students’ Comprehension of The Empty Element(s) in Sentence 13*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Referent(s) of the empty element(s)</th>
<th>Number of cases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tới (I)</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Người xem (The viewers)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khách giả (The audience)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Seventy out of 82 students (70/82=85.37%) had a correct understanding of this sentence, while the other 12 (12/82=14.63%) thought that the empty pronoun in subject position refers to the audience or the viewers. Even though the context and meaning of the predicate allow this interpretation, it is not completely correct, given that the author is narrating his own thinking after watching the film and seeks to articulate his feelings.

One of the possible reasons for interpreting the dropped subject as ‘the viewers / audience’ is that this sentence begins a new paragraph, which may deprive students of a context to access the referent. In English, the translator may go back to the previous paragraph or somewhere in the context to find the referent. However, this may not always be the case in Vietnamese. In Vietnamese sentences, empty pronouns in consecutive clauses are not always co-referential, and it is quite possible that two gaps in the same sentence or the same paragraph refer to two different things. The students found it easier to rely on the meaning of the verb and their general knowledge to access the referent and, accordingly, interpreted it as ‘the audience/ the viewers’.
Table 7.31

*Translation of Sentence 13*

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I was fascinated by both the named and nameless characters.</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I keep being fascinated by the named and nameless characters.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The named and nameless characters attracted me so much.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Named and nameless characters continue to appeal me so much.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Let’s plunge into the fascination brought about by the named</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and nameless characters.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Next is the fascination of named and nameless characters of</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the film.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Being fascinated by named and nameless characters again.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Fascinated by named and nameless characters.</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the comprehension test, 70 out of 82 students (85.37%) interpreted the empty pronoun in subject position as ‘I’, while the other 12 students (14.63%) interpreted it as ‘the audience’ or ‘the viewers’. In the translation, 81 out of 95 students (85.26%) translated the sentence with the active voice, where ‘I’ functions as the subject. Only two students (2.1%) used the structure in which ‘the named and nameless characters’ became the subject of an active sentence and ‘me’ was chosen as the object. This shows that the students only risked translating the subjects when the structure was clear and simple, and when it facilitated their translation. In particular, there was one case when the student attempted to be creative; the translation was ‘Let’s plunge into the fascination brought about by the named and nameless characters’. This student translated the sentence as if it were a suggestion for a group of viewers to join him/her and share the fascination and enjoyment. This implies that the student interpreted the dropped subject as ‘we’ or an audience including the text’s author.

The other 11 students (11.57%) made errors when they omitted the subject (10/95=10.53%) or used the wrong subject (1/95=1.05%) in their translations. This shows that even though the students may have the impression that they understood the meaning of the sentence and the dropped subject, they forgot to translate the subject.
Table 7.32

*Students’ Comprehension of The Empty Element(s) in Sentence 13*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Referent(s) of the empty element(s)</th>
<th>Number of cases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ông</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ông bỗ già (the old servant)</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Những nhân vật phụ (the supporting characters)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is not hard for the students to interpret this sentence, as the structure is quite clear. The sentence has two clauses. The subject of the second clause is dropped; the dropped subject of the consecutive clause also refers to the matrix subject (subject of the head clause).

However, this is not always the case for Vietnamese, as the subject of the consecutive clause may also refer to something relevant to the matrix subject, but not necessarily to the matrix subject itself. In this sentence, the meaning of the predicate ‘xứng đáng được bầu là vai phụ xuất sắc nhất’ (deserve to be nominated as the best supporting role) also helps the comprehension of the dropped subject. Most students (80/82=97.56%) had a correct understanding of the empty pronoun in this sentence. Only two (2.43%) thought that the referent of the dropped subject is ‘Những nhân vật phụ (the supporting characters), which is clearly unacceptable, because it is semantically illogical.
### Table 7.33

**Translation of Sentence 14**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sentence</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Among many successful supporting characters, the old servant is very</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lively and moving, deserves to be nominated as the most excellent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>supporting characters.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Among the successful supporting characters, the old servant is very</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vivid and moving, deserving to be nominated as the most excellent one.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Among a lot of successful supporting characters, the old servant, who</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>was vivid and touching, deserved being nominated to be as the most</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>excellent supporting character.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Among the successful supporting characters, the old servant who is</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>very vivid and moving, is deserving to be nominated as the most</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>excellent supporting actor.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Among the successful supporting characters, the servant was very</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vivid and touching, he was worth / worthed / deserved to be nominated</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the best supporting character.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Among the successful supporting characters, the old servant is very</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lively, touching and is worthy to be nominated the best one.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Among the successful supporting characters, the old servant is very</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vivid and touching, (and) worth / worthy to be nominated / of the</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nomination of the most excellent one.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Among the successful supporting characters, the old servant is very</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lively and moving, to be worthy to nominate the most outstanding</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>supporting character.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Among the many winning supporting characters, the servant, being</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>acted vividly and touchingly, is worthy nominated the most</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>exceptional supporting character.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Among many successful supporting characters, the old servant, whose</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>acting is quite vivid and touching, is deservedly nominated as the</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bets one / deserves to be nominated as the best.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Among many successful supporting characters, the old servant (the</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>actor taking the role of the old servant) who is lively and</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>touching, is worthy nominating the</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
best supporting character.

12. Among many successful supporting characters, the old servant is very vivid and touching, who is worth (deserves) being nominated to be the most excellent supporting character.

13. Among many successful supporting characters, the old servant is really lively and moving. He deserved to be / is worth being nominated the most excellent one/ He is nominated the most excellent one deservedly.

14. Compared with many supporting characters, the servant is so vivid and moving that he is nominated for the best supporters’ role.

15. Among many successful supporting characters, that of the old servant was really vivid and touching, this deserved to be nominated the most excellent one.

16. Among many successful supporting characters, the roleplay of the old servant / the servant is very vivid and touching, which deserves to be nominated as the most excellent supporting character.

17. Among those successful supporting characters, the old servant is very vivid and touching, it’s worthy to nominate him as the best.

18. One of the successful supporting characters is the old servant, who is very lively and touching, worthy ✓ nominated the most excellent supporting character.

19. Among the successful supporting characters is the vivid and touching servant who is worth nominating as the best supporting role.

20. One of some successful antiheroes is the old servant who was so lively and moving that ✓ worth being voted the most excellent anti-hero.

21. Of many supporting characters, the vivid and touching servant deserves / is worthy of the nomination as the best supporting actor / to be nominated as the best supporting character.

22. Among the supporting characters created successfully, the old servant, who are worthy of being nominated as the best one, is very lively and touching.

23. Among the successful supporting characters, the old man servant acted very lively and he made us moving.

24. Of many successful supporting characters, the old servant is very vivid that is
worthy to be nominated the best supporting character.

25. Among many of the (the many) successful supporting characters, the old servant that was cast in such a moving and vivid manner that it deserved the nomination for the best supporting one. 1

26. Among the successful supporting roles, the old servant is depicted vivid and touching and the actor deserves well a nomination for best supporting actor. 1

27. With the lively and touching acting, he is appreciated to be nominated for the position of the most excellent supporting character. 1

28. Among many successful supporting characters, the old servant is very vivid and touching, he is meritorious to be nominating the best supporting character. 1

29. Among many successful supporting ones, the old servant who is very lively and touching is the most appropriate choice for being regarded as the best one. 1

In sentence 14, although two students (2/82=2.43%) misunderstood the dropped subject in the second clause as ‘những nhân vật phụ thành công’, they still had the correct translations. Among these two students, one (1/95=1.05%) translated the sentence as ‘Of many supporting characters, the vivid and touching servant deserves the nomination as the best supporting actor.’ This translation shows that the student really understood that the dropped subject refers to the character of the old servant. The other student, among the two who have misunderstood the text, treated the dropped subject as ‘the acting/performance of the actor who plays the role of the old servant’ while s/he translated the sentence as ‘Among many of the successful supporting characters, the old servant that was cast in such a moving and vivid manner that it deserved the nomination for the best supporting one’.

Five students (5/82=6.09%) who did not interpret the dropped subject as ‘the character of the servant’; instead, they translated it as ‘the fact that the image of the old servant is performed in a vivid and moving way’. The students translated the second clause as a relative clause starting with ‘which’, or as a second independent clause starting with ‘this’. One student used the structure ‘it’s worthy to nominate him as the best supporting character’.
Table 7.34
Students’ Comprehension of The Empty Element(s) in Sentence 15

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Referent(s) of the empty element(s)</th>
<th>Number of cases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Những nhân vật này (These characters)</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Những nhân vật chính này (These leading characters)</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Họ (They)</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cô ta/Anh ta (She/he)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The dropped subject of the second clause refers to the matrix subject in the first clause. In this sentence, the topic coincides with the subject as ‘Nhân vật chính nào’ (Any main characters). Most of the students (81/82 = 98.78%) had the correct understanding, 42/82 students (52.21%) interpreted this empty element as ‘Những nhân vật chính này’ (These leading characters), 20 students (24.39%) as ‘Những nhân vật này (These characters) and the other 18 students (21.95%) as ‘Họ’(They). Although these three versions are different in appearance, they actually refer to the same thing. Only one student (1.21%) misunderstood this empty element as a third person singular pronoun ‘he/she’.
Table 7.35

Translation of Sentence 15

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Sentence</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Each leading character has his own characteristic, being original and</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>dramatic, which was portrayed naturally and profoundly.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Every leading character has every original, dramatic feature which is</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>portrayed naturally and profoundly.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Each of leading characters showing her appearance which is original,</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>dramatic, is portrayed naturally and profoundly.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Every main character has its own beauty; which is original, dramatic and</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>is portrayed so naturally and profoundly.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Each main role has its own characteristics and all are original, dramatic,</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>which was portrayed naturally and profoundly.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Any leading characters have their own acting, which is original, dramatic,</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>peculiar and they were portrayed naturally and profoundly.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Leading characters have their own characteristics: original, dramatic.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>They are portrayed very naturally and profoundly.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Each leading character was special, original and dramatic. They were</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>portrayed naturally and profoundly.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Each leading character has a look, original, dramatic; all are portrayed</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>naturally and profoundly.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Each leading character had his own characteristics. Each was portrayed</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>originally, dramatically, naturally and profoundly.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Each leading character has its own appearance, original, dramatic and</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>how naturally and profoundly they are portrayed.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Each leading characters has his/her own characteristics. How naturally</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and profoundly they acted!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Whatever the leading characters are, they have their own features which</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>are original and dramatic. How naturally and profoundly they are portrayed.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>How naturally and profoundly the leading characters were portrayed in</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>variety of original and dramatic appearances.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Every leading character is every character (???). They are all original</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Every leading character is original, dramatic, portrayed naturally and profoundly.</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Each leading character has his own feature, original, dramatic, naturally and profoundly portrayed.</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>Each leading character, with his own style/characteristic, is original, dramatic and is portrayed naturally and profoundly.</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>The original and dramatic leading characters are portrayed naturally and profoundly.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>Each leading character who has their own feature is original, dramatic, naturally and profoundly portrayed.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>Every leading character (who) is different from their characteristic, original, dramatic, naturally and profoundly portrayed</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>Any leading character is also each person have appearance, original, dramatic, get to portray what’s naturally and profoundly.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>Every leading character, a characteristic of each such as the originality and the dramatics, are portrayed naturally and profoundly.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>And leading characters were variously manifested, which are very original and dramatic, they were not only naturally but also profoundly portrayed.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although the comprehension test shows that most students (81/82=98.78%) understood the dropped subject in the second clause as referring to the matrix subject, this comprehension was not always reflected in their translations. Twenty-six students (26/95=27.36%) chose to translate the first clause of the sentence with ‘nhan vat chinh nho’ (every leading character) as the sentence subject and ‘moi nguoi mot ve’ (have original, dramatic feature/air) as the predicate. In the second clause, these students used the relative pronoun ‘which’ to modify the whole previous clause. In this case, the students did not treat the empty element as ‘they’ or ‘the leading characters’; rather, they considered it as referring to the whole fact that ‘every leading character has his/her own dramatic and original
characteristics’ and referred to this whole fact with the relative pronoun ‘which’ in the second clause.

Three students (3/95=3.15%) translated the empty elements as ‘all’ in the second clause. Their typical translation was ‘Each main role has its own characteristics and all are original, dramatic, naturally and profoundly portrayed’. Only one student (1/95=1.05%) referred to this empty element as ‘each’ in his/her translation: ‘Each leading character had his own characteristics. Each was portrayed originally, dramatically, naturally and profoundly’.

Twenty-five students (25/95=26.31%) identified the subject as ‘they’ in their translations, in the second clause or second sentence. Six of them (6/95=6.31%) chose to break the sentence into two parts and started the second part as a new sentence. In the new sentence, the students had to locate the subject as ‘They’. However, if these students had chosen to translate the second clause of the original sentence just as a clause, they would not have had to locate the subject.

Forty other students (42.1%) simply avoided the task of repeating the subject ‘they’ in their translations. Maybe they thought that it is acceptable in English for the subject of the second clause to be omitted, if it is coreferential with the matrix subject.

**Sentence 16**

Nguyễn  hào hoa,  hào hiếu,  lập dị  ra mắt,
Nguyen  chivalrous  generous  eccentric  overtly
**TOPIC**  **COMMENT 1**
**SUBJECT**  **PREDICATE 1**

(anh)  rô là  anh điển chử  bất đặc chí,  khắt khắc.
(he)  really  landowner  frustrated  silly
**NULL TOPIC 2**  **COMMENT 2**
**NULL SUBJECT**  **PREDICATE 2**
Table 7.36

*Students’ Comprehension of The Empty Element(s) in Sentence 16*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Referent(s) of the empty element(s)</th>
<th>Number of cases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anh (He)</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ong ta (He)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Người ta (people)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sentence 16 is another example in which the dropped subject of the second clause is identical with the matrix subject. This coincidence seems to facilitate the students’ task, as the case is similar in both English and Vietnamese. Both the context and their general knowledge can help them figure out that the dropped subject refers to the character Nguyen and not to anyone else. Three students completely misunderstood the subject and interpreted it as an indefinite referent ‘Người ta’ (people). However, in the process of translating, they chose the correct pronoun to render this empty element.

Table 7.37

*Translation of Sentence 16*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Translation</th>
<th>Number of cases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Nguyen, who is chivalrous, generous and peculiar, is a frustrated landowner.</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Nguyen was/is chivalrous, generous, peculiar, was really a frustrated and rather mad landowner.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Nguyen, being chivalrous, generous and extremely peculiar, is/was clearly a frustrated landowner.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Nguyen, a chivalrous, generous, peculiar person, is obviously a frustrated and mad landowner.</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Nguyen is chivalrous, generous, peculiar, obviously a frustrated landowner.</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Nguyen was chivalrous, generous, really peculiar, he was (clear to be) frustrated and crazy landowner.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Nguyen (is) chivalrous, generous, peculiar. He’s clearly a frustrated landowner.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Nguyen was chivalrous, generous and peculiar, it was obvious / clear / there</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
was no doubt that he was a frustrated landowner.

9. Nguyen is chivalrous, generous, peculiar. How crazy and frustrated landowner (What a crazy and frustrated landowner…) he is!

10. Nguyen proves himself to be a frustrated landowner through his being chivalrous, generous and peculiar.

11. It was Nguyen with the chivalrous, generous, and very peculiar that was a frustrated landowner.

12. The overtly chivalrous, generous and peculiar Nguyen came as a frustrated landowner.

13. Nguyen, chivalrous, generous, peculiar, is really a frustrated landowner.

14. Nguyen is chivalrous, generous and overtly peculiar, clearly that’s a frustrated landowner.

15. Being a frustrated landowner, Nguyen is chivalrous, generous and openly peculiar madly.

16. Nguyen was chivalrous, generous and extremely peculiar as a landowner being frustrated and very mad.

17. Nguyen, with his being chivalrous, generous, peculiar proves himself a frustrated landowner.

18. Nguyen is chivalrous, generous, peculiar and he makes us imagine of a frustrated and … landowner.

19. Nguyen is undoubtedly such a frustrated but a giving person with coincidence between gestures and mood.

20. Nguyen is chivalrous, generous, yet extremely peculiar, who obviously is a frustrated landowner.

21. Nguyen is chivalrous, generous and peculiar as he is showing himself, which really denotes a crazy and frustrated landowner.

22. Nguyen was shown to be chivalrous, generous, peculiar and viewers saw him a frustrated young landowner.

23. Nguyen was chivalrous, generous, peculiar overtly to grasp that is a frustrated and stupid landowner truly.

24. Nguyen appears to be a real frustrated landowner.
Among all different ways of translation, the translation which is chosen by the largest number of students (18/95=18.94%), is ‘Nguyen is chivalrous, generous, peculiar, obviously a frustrated landowner.’ With this translation, the students did not repeat the dropped subject as ‘Nguyen’ or ‘he’ in the second clause. This strategy of dropping the matrix subject in the second clause is acceptable in English. They simply added the noun phrase ‘obviously a frustrated landowner’ as a subject predicate after the first predicate ‘is chivalrous, generous, peculiar’. The second most popular way (15/95=15.78%), which is not grammatically acceptable, is ‘Nguyen, chivalrous, generous, peculiar, is really a frustrated landowner’. These students just translated word-for-word from the Vietnamese source text, as the original Vietnamese sentence shows no verb predicate, but only an adjectival predicate. However, although there is no verb between the subject and the first groups of adjectives ‘chivalrous, generous, peculiar’, the verb ‘is’ is inserted in the second predicate. The adverb ‘rõ là’, which sets up the border between the dropped subject and its second predicate, suggests to students that this is the main predicate of the sentence and they therefore treated the first groups of adjectives ‘chivalrous, generous, peculiar’ not as the first group of predicate, but as an appositive.

**Translation of Sentences 17 and 18**

As revealed by the students in the interviews, these two sentences are the most difficult of the 18 sentences of the Elicitation Task. Sentence 17 consists of two comments: the first is itself an embedded topic-comment structure (leading to the so-called ‘double-subject construction’\(^{38}\)), the noun phrase topic of which is coreferential with the main topic. The second comment of sentence 17 is also an embedded topic-comment structure, whose topic is semantically related to the main topic of the sentence. Sentence 18 also has two comments: the first is an embedded topic-comment structure, whilst the second is an embedded one, with a gap within the comment that the main topic of the sentence fills.

Also, the predicates of sentences 17 and 18 show a very high frequency of adjectives, which is a typical feature of Vietnamese predicates. This increases the difficulty posed to
the students, as they not only struggled to locate the subject, but also had to identify the verb, the adjectives and the relationship between the subject and the verb.

7.2.1.5 Four Main Types of Syntactic Errors Across the 18 sentences
Section 7.2.1.2 discussed the syntactic errors distributed across four years, across 18 sentences and across three levels of sentence. Section 7.2.1.3 focused on the errors made only in translating subjects and empty elements in sentences 1, 2, 5, 6, 13, 14, 15 and 16 and briefly discussed the translation of sentences 17 and 18. This section will summarise the four most common types of syntactic errors in 18 sentences.

Table 7.38 below lists all the syntactic errors (at the sentence level) found in the translations of 18 sentences. In the table, the four types of errors with highest frequency and percentages are in red bold font. The four main types of errors that account for the highest percentage of errors across the 18 sentences are: Omission of The Main Verb, Misuse of The Relative Clause, Inappropriate Sentence Construction and Non-Parallel Combination. All four types of errors can be attributed to differences in the way a sentence is constructed in Vietnamese and in English.
Table 7.38

List and Frequency of Syntactic Errors Across 18 Sentences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Error Type</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Addition of Clause</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2.42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addition of Unnecessary Phrase</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addition of Verb</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2.69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inappropriate Choice of Subject</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inappropriate Combination of Subject &amp; Passive Verb</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inappropriate Combination of Two Clauses</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>6.74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inappropriate Sentence Construction</strong></td>
<td><strong>71</strong></td>
<td><strong>19.14%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incomplete Sentence</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3.23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Coordinating Conjunction</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4.31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Misordering</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Misordering of Relative Clause</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>5.39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Misuse of Relative Clause</strong></td>
<td><strong>26</strong></td>
<td><strong>7.01%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No logical connection between Subject &amp; Predicate</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4.58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-Parallel Combination</strong></td>
<td><strong>26</strong></td>
<td><strong>7.01%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omission of Main Clause</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Omission of Main Verb</strong></td>
<td><strong>49</strong></td>
<td><strong>13.2%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omission of Relative Pronoun</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2.96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omission of Subject</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4.58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repetition of Subject</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4.58%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Vietnamese, a sentence is constructed through the topic-comment structure. Therefore, a verb predicate is not always necessary, because an adjective or adjectival phrase can function as a comment. Scholars who do not analyse Vietnamese from a functional perspective and choose the subject-predicate as the main structure of Vietnamese syntax still acknowledge the presence of a subjectless sentence and adjective as one form of predicative (Hoa, 1997).
Hao (1998) analyses the sentence from a different approach, and in his viewpoint, topic-comment is not the basic structure of Vietnamese sentence types. However, his study pinpoints one important fact: verbs in Vietnamese sentences are not always present or easily identified. When the sentence belongs to the type of ‘double subject’ construction, the difficulty is increased when students find it hard to locate the verb and its corresponding subject. This partially explains the frequent occurrence of the ‘Omission of Main Verb’ error in the study. Although the students may have learned this syntactic characteristic in English, they forgot this in the process of translating. Many students forgot to insert the verb in the formation of the sentence. Further discussion and examples of this kind can be found in the section on Qualitative Analysis (Chapter 6).

In English, the word order requires that a sentence have a subject followed by a verb (except in elliptical sentences). Therefore, any added verb must be followed by another clause, whether relative or subordinate. However, this is not the case in Vietnamese, where the subject or the object can be dropped, provided that the context is comprehensible. It is not necessary for a verb to be preceded by a subject in Vietnamese sentences. The construction of sentences based on topic-comment structures allows the sentence to be extended to the right, without any restrictions in terms of verbs. That means the border between different clauses is sometimes not clear, if analysed from a structuralist point of view. This accounts for the fact that students are often confused when they have to analyse a Vietnamese complex sentence into separate clauses, before translating it into English. It is even harder for students to ensure these clauses are parallel.

The error ‘Misuse of Relative Clause’ also reflects confusion in handling the Vietnamese topic-sentence structure. In these errors, students used a relative clause, when they should not have; or else, they used the wrong type of relative pronoun. However, the large number of errors of this type shows that the students found it hard to determine the relationship between the subject and its following verb. The first example is sentence 5, which can be treated as either a phrase or a sentence. The problem is, even when the students set out to translate with a phrase, they still used the relative clause to modify the noun antecedent. In some other cases, they got lost between the subject-predicate structure of Vietnamese and wrote sentences with one relative clause, but without any main clause to finish it.
7.2.2 Summary of Findings and Discussion

Finding 1. The number of errors that the students made in each year characterises poor translators, as opposed to good translators. Syntactic errors are the clearest sign. Students with poor linguistic competence often had problems with the processing of individual words in each clause, phrase or clause. Students with a high level of linguistic competence were more successful in handling each individual item of the sentence and combining clauses into a sentence. The high number of syntactic and grammatical errors indicates that the students focused on accessing words, rather than the sentence. Errors in comprehension, word form and translation indicated limited comprehension of the source language, as well as limited vocabulary.

Finding 2. Among all types of errors, grammatical errors are the highest (32%). Next come errors of syntax (25.2%), translation (20.2%), comprehension (4.6%) collocation (5.9%) and word form (0.6%). Although comprehension errors account for only a small proportion (4.6%), they seem to have serious consequences as they lead to mistranslation and thus misunderstanding.

Finding 3. On average, Year 4 students made the smallest number of errors. The average number of errors made by one Year 4 student (24.41%) is also lower than the average number of errors made by one random student, regardless of their year (27.46%).

Finding 4. Among the 18 sentences, morphological errors show the highest percentage in sentences 17 (23.2%) and 4 (22.1%), while syntactic errors are seen the most in sentences 18 (14.3%) and 17 (12.8%). Collocation errors are the most frequent in sentences 12 (54.8%) and 14 (21.9%), and word form errors are mainly in sentences 18 (26.7%) and 1 (33.3%). Translation errors are not concentrated in any of the 18 sentences. This confirms that, although students may make more errors, because of some text-specific problems derived from the typical topic-
comment structure of Vietnamese, they all made translation errors, no matter whether the sentence shows a similar structure to the subject-predicate structure of English or represents the topic-comment structure of Vietnamese.

**Finding 5.** As for syntactic errors, more of them were made at the level of sentence structure (56.4%). More errors were made with phrase formation (28.3%) than with clause formation (15.3%). In each year, the number of errors made at the phrase and clause level were compared with the number of errors made at the sentence clause (see Table 7.10). Year 1 students had the largest proportion of syntactic errors at the phrase level (37.5%) than at the clause or sentence level. Year 2 students made the most syntactic errors at clause level (17.3%) and Year 3 had the highest number of syntactic errors at sentence level (60.1%). This suggests that Year 3 students did not necessarily have greater linguistic competence than their juniors.

**Finding 6.** The four main types of syntactic errors that account for the highest percentage at the level of sentence structure are Inappropriate Sentence Construction (19.14%), Omission of Main Verb (13.2%), Misuse of Relative Clause (7.01%), and Non-Parallel Combination (7.01%).

**Finding 7.** Syntactic errors were observed in the specific task of translating subjects. The aim was to see whether students could handle the subject in the context where the initial constituent at the beginning of each sentence is always the topic, which may or may not coincide with the subject. Five types of syntactic errors occurred in this task of locating and rendering the subject into the target text: Omission of Subject (39/86 or 45.34%), Repetition of Subject (17/86 or 19.76%), Inappropriate Choice of Subject (7/86 or 8.14%), No Logical Connection Between Subject and Predicate (17/86 or 19.76%), Inappropriate Connection Between Subject and Passive Verb (6/86 or 6.97%). It appears that ‘omitting the subject’ is the most frequent type of error (45.34%), followed by Repetition of Subject (19.76%) and No Logical Connection Between Subject...
and Predicate (19.76%). However, it is worth noting that these errors are not the most frequent among the various kinds of syntactic errors in this study.

Finding 8. In short, in sentences whose topic-comment structure is different from the subject-predicate structure, students did have problems in locating the subject. They made the five types of errors: Omission of Subject, Repetition of Subject, Inappropriate Choice of Subject, No Logical Connection Between Subject and Predicate, Inappropriate Connection Between Subject and Passive Verb. However, they seemed to have more problems in the task of handling the relationship between the subject and the verb. They found it hard to recognise the difference between verbal predicates (in the form of a verb) and substantival predicates (in the form of an adjective) in Vietnamese, and often omitted the verbs in the target texts. They also had difficulty in handling relative clauses in sentences having two topic-comment structures and in constructing the sentence in an appropriate way.

7.3 ANALYSIS OF QUESTIONNAIRE AND INTERVIEWS

7.3.1 Questionnaire
After the questionnaire was collected, the students’ choices were recorded. However, not every error in the Elicitation Task had a corresponding explanation from the students, and not all errors dealt with the omission of subjects or empty elements. Only some specific errors that attracted the researcher’s interest were numbered, highlighted and coded for the students to comment on. These errors range from syntactic, grammatical to collocationsal errors. Out of 2,609 errors recorded from the 95 translations, only 741 errors were selected for inclusion in the questionnaire. The present author has grouped the answers to find the frequencies and the ranking.

7.3.1.1 Analysis of close-ended answers
Because only 741 answers were collected, explaining around one-fourth of all the errors, they are not used as concluding data. The main explanation is still essentially based on the analysis of the Elicitation Task. The answers from the questionnaire are just used as
supporting. Therefore, the analysis provided here is mainly for reference. The three answers that represent the three most popular choices of the students are highlighted in red.

Table 7.39

_Distribution of Causes of Errors_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Number</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Ranking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>It is similar to the Vietnamese structure</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>It is different from Vietnamese syntactic structures</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I know the rule well but occasionally make errors of this type, because of a lack of practice</td>
<td>164</td>
<td><strong>22.1%</strong></td>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The teacher’s explanation is not clear.</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>I think the rule is shared by all cases, I don’t expect that the error I made is an exception.</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>I forgot the rule</td>
<td>143</td>
<td><strong>19.3%</strong></td>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>I know the grammatical rule, but I just have problems rendering the structure from Vietnamese into English.</td>
<td>99</td>
<td><strong>13.4%</strong></td>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>I don’t remember the reason.</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>The structure has not been taught yet.</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Other (open-ended question)</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>741</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The answer that accounted for the highest percentage (22.1%) is choice 3: ‘I know the rule well, but occasionally make errors of this type, because of lack of practice’. This suggests the errors detected do not always reflect a gap in students’ knowledge. The students seemed to understand the nature of the errors, when they saw the corrections and said that ‘I know the rule well’. The answer with the second highest choice (19.3%) was ‘I forgot the rule’, which also shows that the errors are caused by lapse of memory or lack of practice, leading to the deviations. The third most popular answer (13.4%) was ‘I know the grammatical rule, but I just have problems rendering the structure from Vietnamese into English’. This means that although students might be well-equipped with the linguistic knowledge of
English, they seemed to have problems in applying their knowledge to the actual task of translation. The answer that ranks fourth (13%) was ‘It is similar to the Vietnamese structure’. This percentage suggests that influence from the first language in the task of translation does exist. Open-ended answers are ranked fifth in Table 7.23. The sixth choice (7.4%) in the questionnaire was the answer ‘It is different from Vietnamese syntactic structures’, which shows that the difference between the two languages is still a problem for students, albeit not the main one.

7.3.1.2 Analysis of open-ended answers
Apart from the close-ended answers, students were given a blank space in the answer section for every question, so that they could voice their own opinions. These answers were called ‘open-ended’ and located at the end of the answer section. The open-ended answers aimed at eliciting students’ explanations of their own errors, if they could not find any appropriate answers in the closed-ended answers provided. Open-ended answers of students account for 11.5% of all the answers. The content analysis of all 85 open-ended answers allowed the present author to group them into 6 most common reasons:

1. Almost half of the answers (frequency (f) =42, 49.5 %) show that the errors were caused by carelessness, or that the students did not check the translation carefully before submitting it. The answers indicated that these instances of deviation may not be completely treated as ‘errors’, according to Corder’s definition\(^{40}\). Because these students realised their own problems after they were shown the test, and that it was just a matter of carelessness, the errors cannot be evidence of their lack of linguistic competence. However, they may indicate that the students are not very good at translating.

2. Twenty-two students (f=22, 25.9%) showed a lack of language competence in English through their answers. They were often confused or misled by the words or structures that look similar to each other, and finally chose the word that does not

\(^{40}\) Mistakes are adventitious, random errors in performance due to memory lapses or physical state, but errors are systematic and reflect a defect in knowledge (i.e., linguistic competence)
convey the meaning of the source text. In some cases, they did not understand what was wrong with their choices. Even when the errors were circled and pointed out to them, they could not figure out the problem. For example, one student explained ‘I don’t understand why I can’t use ‘wandered’ here but ‘dignified’ is acceptable’. The answer points to the student’s inability to distinguish between the use of the past participle phrase and the present participle phrase even though the error was pointed out to him/her.

3. In two instances, the students revealed that they had never been corrected before, when they used the same structure. Consequently, they thought that the choice was correct. This answer suggests that in language study or in translation training, students’ errors may need a more suitable method of correction from the teachers. The students can also be trained to detect their own errors and correct their own deficiencies.

4. Five students (f=5, 5.9%) made errors, because of the influence from English. These errors can be considered as overgeneralisation errors. Some students in this category wanted to attempt their own hypothesis, knowing that word-for-word translation is not the appropriate way. However, sometimes they went beyond the permitted latitude, and errors occurred. A student stated ‘I didn’t translate this sentence word-for-word’. Another student said ‘I want to emphasise’. One student explained his attempt to shorten a relative clause into a participle phrase by saying ‘I made this error, because I reduced the structure ‘the foot which trampled upon those silkworms’ into ‘the foot trampled upon…’. Despite their attempts, their limited knowledge of English hampered their achieving a grammatically acceptable translation.

5. The last 13 answers (f=13 or 15.3%) dealt with errors due to problems with the source text. Eight answers (f=8 or 9.4%) showed a limited knowledge of Vietnamese language or a failure to analyse Vietnamese sentences appropriately. Most of their answers began with ‘I think that …’. A wrong assumption was made
about a certain feature of Vietnamese in the source text, and produced a wrong rendering. Five students (f=5 or 5.9%) misunderstood the source text.

7.3.2 Interviews
A subset of participants, 21 students from the 4 years (1 from Year 1, 8 from Year 2, 7 from Year 3 and 5 from Year 4), were interviewed. The interviews were meant to investigate three main issues: (a) the cause of certain errors based on the students’ own explanation, (b) the problems these students encountered when they translated the elicitation text (where full access to the lexicon was provided) and (c) the three most difficult sentences to translate. The students could choose to be interviewed and answer the questionnaire in Vietnamese or English. Some students preferred to carry out the interview in English and some in Vietnamese. Here is the discussion of the interviews regarding the three main issues just mentioned.

1. The cause of making errors. All the students interviewed were asked to refer back to the test and the present author asked them why they had made the errors. The present author tried to find whether the errors were due to a lack of linguistic competence, forgetfulness, lack of practice or inability to apply the knowledge of English grammar when translating. The interviews did not focus on every error the students made. Rather, it focused on certain specific errors about which the present author was curious. The interviews yielded the following information.

   Each student was asked to pinpoint the cause of five or six errors in their translation. The 21 students interviewed made a total of 123 errors. The following table shows different types of errors.
Table 7.40

*Distribution of Causes of Errors Ascertained in the Interviews*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cause of errors</th>
<th>Number of errors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Mistake/ Carelessness</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Lack of Linguistic Competence</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Miscomprehension/ Inability to comprehend of the source text</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The influence of the Vietnamese source text and Vietnamese language</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Inability to apply the knowledge of English when translating the text</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Lack of practice (although the students know the rule well)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Attempt to try a new way of translating (for emphasising or to escape</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the source text)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Recollection from memory, the only option that came to mind at the time</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(having read it somewhere but unsure about its use)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Eighteen answers (14.63%) revealed that the errors were caused by carelessness. Therefore, these instances should not be treated as typical ‘errors’, as they do not reflect deviations from either linguistic competence or translation competence. About a quarter of the errors (31 or 25.2%) occurred because the students were not very competent or confident in their knowledge of English grammar. Out of these 31 answers, 10 (8.13%) showed that the students had problems with certain aspects of English. The remaining 21 answers (17.07%) indicated that the students remembered all of the rules. They just could not apply them correctly during the translation. These students were not really ‘incompetent’ in the sense that they did know the rules, but made errors in their performance, as they did not know how to apply them in the actual context of writing in English. Although it is hard to say whether the cause of the errors is purely linguistic or translational, it can be observed from the students’ answers that they did have problems in transferring their knowledge of English into the target text, partially because they did not fully understand what the author of the source text wanted to convey. Some students said that they could do very well in grammar classes, but when they translated, they could not
completely concentrate on the process of monitoring their own grammatical and syntactic errors.

Three answers (2.43%) revealed that the students made errors because of a lack of practice, although they knew the grammatical rules very well. They had no problem recognising their own mistakes, when the present author pointed these out to them. Seven answers (5.69%) showed that students had a vague memory of the grammatical point in question, and picked the erroneous option because it was the only option that came to mind at the time. This kind of error can be attributed to a lack of linguistic competence.

Seventeen answers (13.82%) revealed that they had problems in translating, although the syntactic rule on which they made the error was not difficult for them to master. The frequent answer was ‘I know this point of syntax, but I just have problems when I translate into English’. Twenty answers (16.26%) indicated that the students made certain errors because of the way they understood the text. This relatively large number of errors implies that a more detailed investigation into all errors may reveal that a higher number was caused by misunderstanding of the source text. Nineteen answers (15.45%) showed that the students made certain errors because they wanted to stick closely to the Vietnamese source text. It may be that the difference between Vietnamese and English reflected in the source text caused the students to make the errors. Some students said that they believed the closer the translation is to the source text, the better it is. Eight answers (6.5%) showed that the students attempted an innovative way of translating, by moving away from the source text. However, they went so far that they made errors in the syntactic structure or the focus of the source text. Fourteen of 123 answers (11.38%) in the interviews involved the issue of omitting the article ‘the’, before a noun in the target text. In their answers, the students showed their incompetence in handling the article. This topic is discussed in detail below.

2. **What is the problem you usually encountered when translating this text?** When asked to state the essential problems of translating this text from Vietnamese into English, the students singled out three main problems: (a) inability to fully comprehend the Vietnamese source text, (b) failure to choose the words which are most pragmatically suitable for the target text, (c) difficulty in handling certain syntactic structures in the target text.
The first hurdle for most students is to understand the meaning of the source text. Obstacles may come from the meaning of one specific word, or the complicated syntactic structure, or the inability of the students to fully understand the intention of the author of the source text. It is observed that even Year 3 and 4 students, who were believed to have higher linguistic knowledge, as well as knowledge of the world, had problems interpreting the implied meaning of the source text. Some of the explanations of the students are as follows (Key sentences are printed in bold font; responses given only in English were written by the student in that language).

1. Year 2 (TBN): The first problem is when I have to analyse the structure of the Vietnamese sentence. In sentence Tam, cây dàn nguyệt …. I did mistake when I wrongly analyse it, so I made a mistake. Sometimes I understand the meaning but I want to change the sentence into another way to make it more meaningful or smoother, more interesting, because of we follow the original version, it could be very boring, not good at all.

2. Year 2 (BT): When translating from Vietnamese into English, I… because the Vietnamese structure is very complicated, I have to find out the subject, the verb and I have to understand the whole sentence, so I can render it all into English. And especially with this piece of translation, because it is not a scientific writing or academic writing. It is literature writing so the composer wrote this in … I have the impression that he writes it just like what are his emotions. Logically I mean he is not very … So it’s very hard for me to understand and to find the exact word and structure to translate his writing. And one more thing is the use of word, the word choice. I... I cannot understand fully Vietnamese words so I don’t know how to translate it into English.

3. Year 2 (TT): Dạ thừa cò theo em nghỉ vấn đề khó khăn nhất theo em là hiểu tiếng Việt một cách chính xác rồi chuyển sang tiếng Anh, bởi vì tiếng Anh nhìn vào thì mình có thể hiểu chính xác cá câu, còn câu tiếng Việt thì rất là khó để mà hiểu chính xác được, cho nên một câu tiếng Việt mình có thể
I think the first problem for me is how to understand Vietnamese properly before rendering them into English, if we read the structure of one English sentence, we may understand it exactly, but one Vietnamese sentence can be interpreted in many different ways. We have to choose the most exact meaning of that Vietnamese sentence to translate; I think it is the most difficult thing. In terms of handling the grammar and syntax of the English sentence, I am more confident because at the second-year level, we have been provided with the basic sentence patterns/structures of English sentences.


[I haven’t watched the film so I find it a little bit hard to completely understand the Vietnamese version. The way the author uses the words is also very special so I don’t complete understand the meaning. Even I myself don’t quite understand the source text, so I’m really afraid with my translation that readers who are native speakers of English may not quite understand what I want to say.]

5. Year 4 (NV): Khi dịch bài này thì em cảm thấy là em cảm thấy khó chuyển sang tiếng Anh ở những chỗ ví dụ như là ... khi đọc tiếng Việt thì nghe hay những khi chuyển sang tiếng Anh thì em không biết chuyển thế nào cho phù hợp, ví dụ như là tác giả dùng từ đa hơn hoặc là rất , rất ngắn ngữ diện ảnh.
[When we read in Vietnamese, it sounds very interesting but it is really
difficult to translate into English. For example, some words such as ‘dă’,
‘răt’.

As can be seen in the third excerpt above, the students had problems, because of the
complicated syntactic structure of the source text, rather than the individual words. They
also found it hard to choose among many possible ways that a Vietnamese sentence may be
translated. According to the students, comprehension was hard as they did not see the film.
In the processing of Vietnamese sentences, the students also attributed their
miscomprehension of the source text to the fact that Vietnamese structures are too
complicated, too long, ‘piling up’ on each other and written like a list. The students
expressed their perception that the predicates of the Vietnamese sentences are basically a
combination of adjectives or a chunk of adjectives. They also noted that while the English
relative clause is often clearly signaled by a relative pronoun, the relative clause in
Vietnamese (or the linguistic item that they believed was a relative clause) did not have any
linguistic marker. This perception of the Vietnamese language is understandable, since
these students are not very well trained in Vietnamese grammar. This answer from the
students, to some extent, explains the nature of their errors and shows that they are more
likely to make errors with sentences, which comprise embedded topic-comment structures.

1. Year 2 (KT): I can tell you the three specific problems I have when translating
from Vietnamese into English. First of all, the Vietnamese don’t have the habit
of using articles but English they use articles all the time. Second, Vietnamese
sentences don’t usually have subject. And the last problem is the structure.
Vietnamese sentences don’t have definite structures like simple, complex
sentences; they combine all the phrases and clauses into one sentence.

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41 In the training program for Bachelor of Arts, there are introductory courses on Vietnamese culture and
General Linguistics, but no training for Vietnamese grammar.
2. Year 3 (NTT): Trong thực tế dịch từ Việt sang Anh, thì có những đoạn, những câu tiếng Việt rất phức tạp, và nó dài, câu cấu trúc nó đã ... nó chồng chéo lên nhau ... và thậm chí câu tiếng Việt mình cũng không thể hiểu hết được cho nên mình muốn chuyển sang tiếng Anh mình cũng phải lựa chọn cụ pháp và chuyển làm sao để cho nó chất chứa, nó đúng với cấu trúc ngữ pháp của tiếng Anh.

[In the process of translating from Vietnamese into English, there are some clauses, some sentences which are very complicated, they are very long, and they ‘pile up’ on each other. Sometimes I don’t quite completely understand some of the Vietnamese sentences, so I find it hard to transfer into English in such a way that the translation matches the strict word order of English ...]

3. Year 4 (HP): Ở trong bài dịch này thì em thấy nó có rất là nhiều khó khăn, tại vị thử nhất, tác giả viết bài này, sử dụng tiếng Việt một cách quá ... tiếng Việt một cách quá là đặc tiếng Việt di, do đó mà đã kết nối các câu với nhau, nó làm cho biên tiếng Anh nó khó mà dịch, ví dụ như là những cái relative clause thì tiếng Anh nó còn có những cái móc để mà tạo nên những cái relative clause chứ không phải là cú việt vồ thì và như là tiếng Việt, nghĩa là cú kết nối những cái tính từ vô với nhau rồi cú việt mà không chú ý đến cấu trúc chuẩn xác nào cả, viết theo cái kiểu là liệt kê những cái tính từ này nọ, cái đặc điểm của những cái người này và cái nữa là những cái câu nó quá ambiguous như vậy, ví dụ như là mở hối, cảnh nào cũng thấy mở hối, thì theo tiếng Anh thì câu này nó không phải là cảnh thấy mở hối, mà là cảnh quay nào người ta cũng thấy mở hối trong đó, thì những câu này là nó quá đặc trưng cho tiếng Việt do đó nó rất là khó khăn cho người dịch tiếng Anh chuyển sang câu trúc đặc thù của tiếng Anh.

[I have many problems in translating this text. Firstly, the Vietnamese language that the author uses in this text is so typically Vietnamese. It links
many clauses together and makes it challenging to translate into English. In English when we write relative clause, they have very clear separation and signals to show the border of the relative clause. But in Vietnamese the writer can write in a very ‘free’ order and just extend the sentence by piling up more adjectives into the previous adjectives without any logic. They write in the way of listing or enumerating things. Besides there are some sentences which are ambiguous. Take the example of the sentence ‘in every scene we can see the sweat’. This sentence does not mean the ‘scene’ is the one who see the sweat, but in this scene viewers can see the sweat. This sentence is too typically Vietnamese and it really causes problems for the translators.

Another difficulty may lie in the lengthy structure of Vietnamese, which prevented the students from shortening the sentence to write a neat English sentence (as stated by the third student in the following extracts). The difficulty also lies in the fact that it is hard for students to locate the subject and the verb of the Vietnamese sentences in the source text to transfer them into English (as pointed out by the second student in the extract below). There are so many ‘parallel clauses’ in each Vietnamese sentence, separated by commas, that students were confused when they needed to arrange these clauses in the correct order in the English sentence. Also, the students did not know where to locate the verb among the series of adjectives in the Vietnamese sentence, as in Vietnamese an adjective or adjectival phrase can function as a predicate without a verb. One Year 3 student mentioned the difficulty of choosing the appropriate form to translate, and whether a declarative or exclamatory form is more suitable. In Vietnamese, the marker of the exclamatory form ‘làm sao’ is normally used at the end of the sentence. However, in English exclamatory sentences, the whole sentence structure must be changed and the sentence is often shortened.

1. Year 1 (HT): Nếu em có đủ tự và em được dùng từ điển thì khó khăn của em thứ nhất là em không biết 1 số câu trúc ngữ pháp học là cách dùng giới từ, thứ hai là trả lời từ cua cải bận tiếng Việt. Giả sử bạn tiếng Việt là tôi đi học thì em ghép vò la tôi là 1, đi là go và đi học là to school, nhưng mà trong bài

[Even if I was provided with all vocabulary and the dictionary, I don’t know how to use some structures or how to use prepositions. Also the word order of Vietnamese from the Vietnamese source text also caused some problems for me. For example, if the source text is Tối đi học, when I translate, I just try to match the word, i.e. Tôi can be translated as I, đi is to go, đi học is to school and then I put all the words into the sentence I go to school, but in Vietnamese this order may be changed, so you need to figure it out and rearrange it. We must try to understand the meaning of the Vietnamese version so that we can translate]

2. Year 2 (BT): When translating from Vietnamese into English, I… because the Vietnamese structure is very complicated, I have to find out the subject, the verb and I have to understand the whole sentence, so I can render it all into English. And especially with this piece of translation, because it is not a scientific writing or academic writing.

3. Year 3 (NTHN): … và lại trong tiếng Việt thì nó rất là dài, mà chuyển sang tiếng Anh mà nếu cũng viết dãy như thế thì cái cấu trúc của mình sẽ làm cho người đọc không hiểu được. Ví dụ có những câu rất là dài như là Tôi có đạo hát hống nhan bậc phân, phiếu đất âm cao sang, đa tình mà chung tình cho đến chỗ Thúy Nga, thì nó quá dài di, khi mà chuyển sang đây thì mình sẽ không làm nó gọn được, không biết cách nào để mà làm cho nó gọn.

[Also, sentences in Vietnamese are often very long; when we translate these sentences into English, if we also retain the same structure of these long sentences and translate, the readers may not understand. For example the sentence Tôi có dao hát hống nhan bậc phân, phiếu đất âm cao sang, đa tình mà chung tình, khó có ai có thể dòng vai này hay hơn Thúy Nga. This sentence]
is far too long, it is nearly impossible to make it shorter. I don’t know how to make these sentences shorter.]

4. Year 3 (VTT): Thưa cô trong bài văn này câu tiếng Việt của nó có nhiều về song song với nhau, mỗi vẻ thường phải nén khi em dịch thì em thấy nó... mình không biết là nên sắp xếp như thế nào, cái đồng tử nó nên đặt ra làm sao, nhất là những câu tả tâm trạng như vậy thì... em không biết là có nên dịch nó ở dạng cảm thân hay không hay là vẫn để như vậy.

   [In this text, there are many clauses which are parallel to each other and separated by many commas. When I translate I don’t know how to arrange them, where to put the verb, especially for sentences which express feelings and emotions, I don’t know whether I should put them in the exclamative form or just put them in the declarative form.]

5. Year 3 (BN): Khi chuyển dịch từ tiếng Việt sang tiếng Anh trong câu tiếng Việt thì thường không có chủ ngữ, còn trong câu tiếng Anh thì những câu mà không có chủ ngữ thực tế là mình phải dịch sang passive, nhưng phần lớn là em cũng như các bạn sinh viên Việt Nam thì thường chuyển dịch những câu đó theo dạng active, là điểm thử nhất.

   [The Vietnamese sentence often doesn’t have a subject, but in English the subjects are omitted only in passive sentences... But most of my friends and I prefer to translate in active form. That is the first problem.]

6. Year 4 (NV): Cái khó khăn thứ hai là trong bài gốc tác giả đúng rất là nhiều câu, rất là nhiều câu nhưng mà mỗi câu... Cái khó khăn thứ hai là tác giả đúng 1 số câu mà thực ra những câu này chỉ là một cái ngữ trong đó không có xác định, dịch sang tiếng Anh thì không xác định rõ chủ ngữ đồng từ hay là tên ngữ bổ ngữ chỗ nào cho nên khi dịch sang tiếng Anh em cảm thấy những câu này rất là khó dịch.
[The second difficulty is that the author uses many sentences, and in some sentences they are … Some sentences are actually just phrases, and when we translate into English we can’t distinguish which part is the subject, object complement to transfer them into English.]

One of the concerns of the students is the lexicon to be used to accurately render the pragmatic and semantic meaning of the source text. They also said that even though the vocabulary was provided, they still had a lot of problems choosing the word with the most suitable connotation. The students’ understanding was limited, because they were not specifically trained in Vietnamese grammar and all their perceptions were just based on what they gathered from the source text. This can be seen in the following statements:

1. Year 2 (TBN): The second problem is when there are some certain phrases, in English, there must be a certain phrase for such a sentence like ... Chúta có một phim nào ở Việt nam được thực hiện công phu và đạt chuẩn đến vậy. There is some, a fixed phrase that is standard in English, and the shortage is that we have to read much to get used to that phrase, so that when you translate, that phrase came to your mind when you read the … when you rephrase … you need to translate the phrase, the English, the equivalent English phrase come to your mind so you … you just write down. But I think because we don’t read enough, much enough so sometimes I know that the structure has such a fixed phrase to express in English but I don’t know how to use it, so I just make a sentence of my own and create it. Of course I make mistakes.

2. Year 2 (BT): …. And especially in some Vietnamese writers often use subordinate clauses without … because they want to put some kind of impression on the readers, but when we translate it just like the same into English, the readers, English readers cannot have the same impression, because in English they don’t have that structure so I don’t know how to … to still keep that impression in this way.
3. Year 3 (NTHN): Em thấy khi mà dịch từ tiếng Việt sang tiếng Anh thì tiếng Anh nó sẽ không nói lên được những cái ... những cái ý nghĩa, những từ giọng như trong đây, từ giả như chỉ đất tên phim là Mẹ Thảo thời thì nghe gián đi hơn và đã hơn. Em nói đây là về mặt từ vựng cỏ, mặt từ vựng mình không chuyển tài được cái ý từ tiếng Việt sang tiếng Anh được.

[When I translate from Vietnamese into English, it’s hard to find words in English which can express the same meaning as we can see in the Vietnamese context. I’m talking about the lexicon, sometimes it is really hard to completely convey it from Vietnamese into English.]


Đó là điều em cần thấy khó khăn nhất em cảm thấy khi bắt đầu viết.

[Regarding the syntactic structure, the difference between Vietnamese and English structure is very sharp. When translating from Vietnamese into English, in a situation where the vocabulary is provided, I don’t know how to make the translation natural so that English readers can fully understand my translation. This is due to differences between the culture, languages of two countries. This was the biggest difficulty for me when I started translating.]
One of the grammatical aspects the students also found difficult to handle is the use of articles, which is simpler in Vietnamese grammar than in English.

1. Year 2 (BT): ... And the use of articles in some cases ... 

2. Year 3 (NTT): Cái khó khám phá hai là mình thấy vẻ vẫn đề mạo từ, chẳng hạn như mạo từ the, như trong bài dịch vừa nay em mắc một lỗi. [The second difficulty is with the use of articles, particularly the article the.]

3. Year 3 (BN): Điểm ngứa pháp thứ hai là em thường xuyên thiếu mạo từ, đặc biệt là mạo từ the khi dí với danh từ, thiếu hầu hết là thiếu... cái thứ ba nữa là việc kết hợp dựa vào động từ như thế nào cho nó hợp với nhau và nghe có vẻ như rất là tiếng Anh, tiếng Anh chuẩn, chứ không phải nghe mà tiếng Việt và tiếng Anh. Ví dụ như là trong câu thứ hai, Trước hết là mệ mản với những hình ảnh rất ngôn ngữ điện ảnh, thì khi em dịch chữ rất ngôn ngữ điện ảnh thì không thể tìm từ nào trong tiếng Anh em nghĩ nó có nghĩa như chữ rất cá. [The second problem is that I often forget to use articles. The third problem is how to link and restructure the words so that they sound natural in English, not the Vietnamese English. For example, when I translate the word ‘rất’ I don’t know what to do.]

Fourteen out of 21 students (66.66%) were questioned about the errors of omitting the article before nouns. The students’ answers show that they had very little confidence and competence in using the article in writing English. Some of them (20%) believed that when a word in Vietnamese is an abstract noun, they do not need to use the definite article ‘the’. Some said that they knew the rule well, but when they actually translated, they forgot the article due to lack of practice. Many students relied on the Vietnamese source text to choose the article or the numeral preceding a noun, when translating an expression from the source text. For example, one Year 1 student, when asked why he used ‘magic tricks’ and not ‘a magic trick’ to translate ‘ma thuật’, answered that it was because the Vietnamese source
text did not show the word ‘một’, which is a numeral, to signal that the noun is a singular one.

The differences in verb tenses between Vietnamese and English presented another challenge for the students. Kim (2002:2) mentions the uniqueness of Vietnamese by noting that verb forms in Vietnamese lack subject-verb agreement, tense markers, and conjugations of verbs such as the copula “be”, and the auxiliary verbs “do” and “have”. Dan (1998) also claims that Vietnamese is tenseless. He states, ‘Trong Tiếng Việt không có phạm trừ thi’ (There is no concept of tense in Vietnamese; 1998:116). Dan implies that in Vietnamese the marking of temporal and aspectual distinctions by using specific tense and aspect morphemes is optional. When it is necessary to indicate tense, the form of the verb stays constant and expressions like yesterday (hôm qua), last night (tớí hôm qua), tomorrow (ngày mai) are used. Because of this phenomenon, Vietnamese students may find it hard to translate into English, as English has many more tenses than Vietnamese.

Year 2 (TBN): The third aspect, the problem is that when we use … in terms of grammar .. for the same sentence, some people will think that we should use the past tense for example I use who used to attentively follow, but the other person think that we should use the word has followed, so it belongs to the own perception of each person that how … when they read the text, it will come to their mind what sentence they should use, so I think that create a variation in the translation text, because some will use the … many people will use different tenses, so I really don’t know what is wrong and what is right according to the standard English.

3. The three most difficult sentences for students to translate.
When the interviews raised the question ‘What are the most three difficult questions to translate in this text?’ the 21 students responded as reported in the following table:
Table 7.41

*The Three Most Difficult Sentences to Translate Across 4 Years*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sent. No</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7, 8, 9</th>
<th>11</th>
<th>12</th>
<th>13</th>
<th>14</th>
<th>15</th>
<th>16</th>
<th>17</th>
<th>18</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Year 2</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The sentences that seem to create most problems for the students are sentences 17, 18, 16, 12, 5 and 6. The stated reasons of the difficulties in these sentences can be summarised as follows (the sentences with the most difficulty are listed first):

**Sentences 16, 17 and 18**

1. Sentences 17 and 18 are rather long with complicated structures, so when the students translate, they do not know which structure they should use; when they actually use it, they find it very difficult or use the wrong tense.
2. Sentences 17 and 18 have so many phrases and adjectives ‘piling up’ on each other; therefore, students cannot distinguish the main clauses from the subordinate clauses and ‘find it hard to put them in the correct order’.
3. There are many types of structures in sentence 17 of the source text. First a series of adjectives are listed; then one clause is added. So it is hard for the students, because they had to try a structure shift to combine all these adjectives and clauses into one sentence in which all parts are parallel to each other.
4. Sentence 18 has many adjectives which are semantically opposite to each other, so the students found it hard to find the exact words to translate.
5. Sentence 17 is a combination of affirmative and exclamative forms. So, some students found it hard to combine these two forms in one sentence. The problem they reported in handling this structure is that ‘I want to translate the whole sentence with exclamative, this sentence in the Vietnamese source text is rather long, but exclamative sentences in English are not that long’.  

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6. Students did not know where to locate the subject in sentence 18.

7. One of the structures that students found hard to translate in sentence 18 is the existential clause beginning with ‘khó có ai’.

8. It is hard to find the verbs in these sentences. They have many adjectives, and in some cases the students could not tell whether the word should be translated as an adjective or a noun.

9. One of the words the students found difficult to translate in sentence 16 is ‘khắt khủng’. The whole structure ‘rõ là anh diền chú bất đặc chí khắt khủng’ also poses problem, because they did not know whether to translate this as an exclamative sentence or a sentence with a subject. Some students were not sure about the intent of the author of the text in this expression.

**Sentence 12**

1. It was not easy for the students to identify the tense of the Vietnamese sentences, in order to translate them into English.

2. The collocation ‘Trong trí nhỏ tôi’ is one difficulty to the students. Most of them (89.47%) chose to translate this collocation as ‘In my memory’ although they are not sure that it is correct.

3. Some students did not know where the subject of this sentence was.

4. The phrase ‘đạt chuẩn như vậy’ looks like an exclamation, so the student did not know whether they should have translated it as a normal phrase or as an exclamative sentence.

**Sentences 5, 6**

1. The students found it hard to identify the subject of the verbs ‘thấy’ in sentence 5 and ‘tưởng như’ in sentence 6.

Apart from the examples just mentioned, the students also had difficulty with other sentences:

**Sentence 1.** According to one Year 3 student, this sentence is ambiguous even in Vietnamese. The word ‘đã’ is tricky and poses pragmatic problems, because it is slang. The
student stated that even when s/he checked the dictionary to find the equivalent, s/he still could not find one that really matched the word used in the source text. S/he translated the word as ‘dramatic’, but was not happy with this rendering.

**Sentence 2.** Some students found the word ‘rất’ too idiomatic.

**Sentence 4.** The student, who singled out this sentence as a difficult one, had more problems with his/her comprehension, and this seemed to be a personal perception, rather than a general difficulty with the text or the translation. S/he said, ‘I find it hard to understand this sentence, because I can’t understand the implication of the writer. As I don’t see any scary thing in the scene of silkworms wriggling asking for food, I don’t understand why the writer says the scene made the viewer’s flesh creep.’

**Sentences 7, 8 and 9.** This series of sentences poses problems to the students, because they are elliptical. The reason stated by a student was ‘I understand the Vietnamese sentence, but the English sentence requires us to have a subject, verb, etc to make a complete sentence. These sentences in the source text only have the subject and no verb or object. So I don’t know how to translate them into English’.

**Sentence 13.** One student in Year 1 had problems with this sentence, because she could not clearly identify the subject.

**Sentence 14.** A student was confused because s/he was not sure whether it was the servant, a character in the film, who was worthy of being nominated as the best supporting character, or whether it was his performance which was worth nominating.

### 7.3.3. Summary of Findings and Discussion

1. Analysis of the closed-ended answers to the questionnaires indicates that the four most common reasons why students made errors include:

   a. The lack of practice of certain linguistic structures, which keeps students from writing the grammatically correct English sentences, although they may know the rule very well.

   b. The inability of students to recollect certain suitable linguistic structures to translate the text.

   c. The inability of students to apply to the translation process the knowledge of English they have been taught in grammar or syntax classes.
d. The influence of the source text and Vietnamese language.

2. In the open-ended answers of the questionnaires, the students had more opportunity to express themselves. Analysis of these responses reveals the following observations:
   a. Nearly half of the open-ended answers (49.5%) show that the errors are just ‘mistakes’ or are due to carelessness, since the students could recognise their errors immediately after receiving the correction of their incorrect translation.
   b. Nearly a quarter of open-ended answers (25.9%) indicate that the errors are made due to a lack of linguistic competence (when students could not distinguish between similar words or structures in English).
   c. 15.3% of all the open-ended answers show errors due to problems with the source text, because the students failed to properly analyse the Vietnamese source text or understand the intention of the text’s author.
   d. 5.9% of the open-ended answers reveal that students made overgeneralisation errors, when they attempted their own way of translating.

3. Interviews with a subset of students confirm the following reasons as the main causes for errors:
   a. A lack of linguistic competence, showing that the students do not have the ability to apply their knowledge of English to writing.
   b. The inability to fully comprehend the source text or the intent of the text’s author.
   c. The influence of Vietnamese language and the Vietnamese source text.

4. The interviews also showed that sentences 17, 18, 16, 12, 5 and 6 were the most difficult to translate. The analysis of the Vietnamese comprehension test and the comparison of this test with the actual translations by students shows that the locating and identifying of the subject was not really a problem. Although some students were puzzled about having to identify the subject to transfer it into English and came up with the wrong interpretation of some cases of the dropped subject, the task of translating the subject by itself was not really a major hindrance for them, especially those in Years 3 and 4, who knew how to use different strategies to avoid the task of locating the subject.
5. The major problem for most of the students was how to handle the structure of Vietnamese sentences, especially those with one embedded topic-comment structure, or with two or more topic-comment structures as seen in sentences 16, 17 and 18. In sentences with an embedded topic-comment structure (as sentence 17), the students seemed to have problems using the relative clause in their translation: some did not know how to use relative clauses appropriately, and some knew they had to use them, but could not use them in an appropriate way. In sentences with two topic-comment structures, students had problems maintaining the parallel combination between the different parts of speech in the sentence, especially given that Vietnamese sentences are often long and include many adjectival phrases piling up on one another.

6. The analysis of the translations of the 95 students shows that the habit of mentioning the topic first in Vietnamese sentences causes problems for students, especially when the topic is not identical with the subject. In the Elicitation Task, in sentences where the topic is not identical with the subject, but is semantically related to a specific constituent in the comment (as in sentence 5), or in those where the topic is not related to any constituents, empty or overt, in the comment (the topic is the adverb of the comment), the students displayed more options and more strategies in their translation. They also tended to make more errors in these sentences than when the topic-comment structure was identical with the subject-predicate structure. In other sentences where the topic is identical with the subject, even if the subject is dropped, the students still had fewer problems and made fewer errors in their translation.

7.4 CONCLUSION
Chapter 7 is divided into 4 main parts. Section 7.1 introduces the problem areas the chapter touches on. Section 7.2 analyses the Elicitation Task and yields the frequency and percentage distribution of all kinds of errors in 7.2.1.1 and syntactic errors in 7.2.1.2. As the thesis focuses on the topic-comment structures and empty elements of Vietnamese language, one section in the data analysis (Section 7.2.1.3) analyses the specific errors made in the translating of subjects and empty elements. In this section, the translations of
sentences 1, 2, 5, 6, 13, 14, 15 and 16 are examined with reference to the analysis of the topic-comment structure and the possible referent(s) of the empty element(s) of each sentence to observe how the students handle the specific task of identifying the empty elements and translating them. Section 7.2.1.4 lists and discusses four main types of syntactic errors that students are inclined to make the most from the real quantity analysis of the error corpus, as raised in the research questions. The problem with students in translating topic-comment structure is not to identify the dropped subjects and empty elements (although there are instances of misunderstanding), but to handle the subject-verb structure when the Vietnamese source sentences are rendered into English. The four main types of errors include Omission of Main Verb, Misuse of Relative Clause, Inappropriate Sentence Construction and Non-Parallel Combination. Section 7.3.1 analyses the questionnaires answered by the students and Section 7.3.2 analyses the interviews to yield confirming data to those obtained from the Elicitation Translation Task. It was demonstrated from the questionnaires and interviews that the three main reasons why students make errors are 1) lack of linguistic competence and the ability to apply their knowledge of English to writing, 2) the inability to fully comprehend the source text or the author’s intent and 3) the influence of Vietnamese language and the Vietnamese source text.
Chapter 8
Conclusions and Pedagogical Implications

8.1 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY
This study attempted to answer five questions
1. Which error category accounts for the majority of errors?
2. What are the most common and consistent syntactic errors that Vietnamese students majoring in English usually make when translating Vietnamese sentences into English?
3. Do Vietnamese students have problems in translating Vietnamese sentence types in which the Topic-Comment structure is not identical with the Subject-Predicate structure?
4. To what extent do the type and quantity of errors differ among groups of different competence levels?
5. What pedagogical implications can be drawn for teachers to help students deal with such errors, in terms of transforming these structures into the ones that best suit the process of translating from Vietnamese into English?

In order to answer these questions, the study has examined the translations of 95 students from 4 different years and their answers to a comprehension test of the source text. Three weeks after the Elicitation Task, all the students were provided with the correction of their errors and a questionnaire designed to elicit the main reasons for their errors. Only 85 students participated in this second exercise. A subset of students (25) were also interviewed, in order to find the reasons for their making errors, and the sentences they found most difficult to translate. The study listed, systematised and recorded all of the errors into a ‘manual’ error corpus on 2 tables in Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. The errors were divided into three main types: comprehension errors, linguistic errors and translation errors. All the examples of errors, except grammatical errors are analysed in Chapter 6.

42 By ‘manual’ error corpus, the present author means the corpus which does not use any software or computer-assisted device. The corpus is accumulated by manual typing of all of the students’ errors into a file in Microsoft Excel.
Translations of sentences 1, 2, 5, 6, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17 and 18\textsuperscript{43} from 95 students are presented and discussed in Chapter 10 to see how the students handle empty pronouns and instances where the topic of the sentence is not identical with the subject. Some pedagogical implications are drawn for translating topic-comment structures of Vietnamese and also for teaching students how to translate the different configurations of this structure.

8.2 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The study yields the following results:

**Finding 1.** Among all types of errors, grammatical errors are the highest (32%). Next come errors of syntax (25.2%), translation (20.2%), comprehension (4.6%) collocation (5.9%) and word form (0.6%). Although comprehension errors account for only a small proportion (4.6%), they seem to have serious consequences as they lead to mistranslation and thus misunderstanding.

**Finding 2.** Among all types of syntactic errors, the four main types that account for the highest percentage at the level of sentence structure are Inappropriate Sentence Construction (19.14%), Omission of Main Verb (13.2%), Misuse of Relative Clause (7.01%), and Non-Parallel Combination (7.01%). Most of the syntactic errors are made at the level of the sentence structure (56.4%). More errors are made with phrase formation (28.3%) than with clause formation (15.3%). Year 1 students have the largest proportion of syntactic errors at the phrase level (37.5%), while Year 2 students make most of the syntactic errors at the clause level (17.3%) and Year 3 students have the highest number of syntactic errors at the sentence level (60.1%), suggesting that Year 3 students do not necessarily have greater linguistic competence than Year 2 and Year 1.

**Finding 3** In sentences whose topic-comment structure is remarkably different from the subject-predicate structure, students had problems in locating the subject. Five types of syntactic errors occur in this task of locating and rendering the subject

\textsuperscript{43} Sentences 3 and 4 are not analysed, because the topics of these sentences are identical with the subject. There are no empty pronouns in sentences 3 and 4. Sentences 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 are not discussed, as there are no empty pronouns in these sentences.
into the target text: Omission of Subject (39/86 or 45.34%), Repetition of Subject (17/86 or 19.76%), Inappropriate Choice of Subject (7/86 or 8.14%), No Logical Connection Between Subject and Predicate (17/86 or 19.76%), Inappropriate Connection Between Subject and Passive Verb (6/86 or 6.97%). Omission of Subject is the most frequent type of error (45.34%), followed by Repetition of Subject (19.76%) and No Logical Connection Between Subject and Predicate (19.76%). However, it is worth noting that these errors are not the most frequent among the various kinds of syntactic errors in this study. The students had more problems handling the relationship between the subject and the verb. They found it hard to recognise the difference between verbal predicates (in the form of a verb) and substantival predicates (in the form of an adjective) in Vietnamese, and often omitted the verbs in the target texts. They also had difficulty handling relative clauses in sentences having two topic-comment structures, and in constructing sentences in an appropriate way.

**Finding 4.** On average, Year 4 students make the smallest number of errors. The figure for this group (24.41%) is also lower than the average number of errors across the four years (27.46%).

In many cases, the errors resulted from the inability of students to apply their knowledge of English grammar to their performance. That is to say, most students made errors, not because of lack of knowledge, but because of their lack of practice, lack of application or pressure of time. Sometimes, the students showed good knowledge of English (which is shown through the fact that they can recognise their errors when pointed out to them), but they could not appropriately apply this to the process of translating. In other words, there is a difference between declarative knowledge and procedural knowledge or ‘knowing that’ and ‘knowing how’. Accordingly, the results of the questionnaire show that there are three main reasons leading to this situation: (a) the students forgot the rules, (b) the students did not practise very often, (c) the students knew the English grammatical rule, but failed to apply this knowledge when rendering the structure from Vietnamese into English.
The inability to translate the text properly partially resulted from the students’ inability to understand the source text. This misunderstanding was often caused by three factors: (a) failure to thoroughly read the text between the lines and understand the context, (b) complex structure of Vietnamese, (c) lack of general knowledge, which can add to contextual understanding.

The interviews showed that these difficulties only appeared when the students got to the point of putting the translation into words. When the students read the text, they felt that they understood it. However, when faced with the task of putting the comprehension into words, they had to decide on many things: the subject of the sentence, the plural markers of nouns, verb tenses, etc., which are not present in the Vietnamese grammatical system, before carrying out the transfer into English. It is at this point that any gap in the comprehension of the source text appears.

The students focused on the words, rather than the logical and pragmatic meaning of the passage. As a consequence, they only paid attention to the linguistic meaning and not the sense. This may be caused by the traditional and unsystematic mode of translation teaching in Vietnam. In different classes, students may be trained by different teachers who are not always consistent in the degree of latitude they allow students to have in the translation. Year 3 and Year 4 students seem to be more aware of the fact that word-for-word translation is not encouraged, but are still reluctant to attempt a translation which may be too distant from the source text.

8.3 CONTRIBUTION OF THE THESIS TO EFL TEACHING IN VIETNAM
The results of this study can provide a theoretical background for the design of a translation module for the Department of English Languages and Literature at the University of Social Sciences and Humanities of Ho Chi Minh City, as well as for other universities in Vietnam.

This study examines the syntactic structures and linguistic items that are supposed to be challenging for students, especially those who have to translate into a second language, and suggests some strategies to improve the training of Vietnamese-English translations. It suggests a framework for analysing errors in the translation of students who aim to improve their translation skills whilst learning English. It provides an insight into the way students translate typical topic-comment structures of Vietnamese language and highlights the
importance of using the students’ translations to build up a ‘manual’ corpus, which can be used as a learners’ corpus, to help students learn from their own errors in acquiring their translation and language skills.

This study focuses on the topic-comment structures, as they are believed to be the core syntactic structure of Vietnamese language. It is essential in this process to point out to students which errors are linguistic and which ones are translational, and help them improve in both areas. Hence, this study highlights the importance of integrating the different strategies in Vietnamese-English translation in general, and in teaching the translation of topic-comment structures of Vietnamese in particular. Section 8.4.1 makes recommendations of some choices when translating different types of topic-comment structures of Vietnamese and Section 8.4.2 suggests some methods of teaching Vietnamese - English Translation.

8.4 PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS
Danchev (1983) compared the teaching of translation within an ESL syllabus to a medicine which will have a beneficial effect only when properly administered and in the right dose. And according to Ivanova (1998:106), ‘finding the right dose in designing a translation course requires a fine balance between what is practically possible and theoretically advisable, based on an informed understanding of the nature of the translation task and its processing requirements on one hand, and the assessment of the linguistic competence and motivation of the learner, on the other’.

For didactic purposes, it is hard for translator trainers to design an appropriate syllabus and teaching materials, without knowing which linguistic elements or syntactic structures could pose problems to students. With the help of contrastive linguistics, the systems of the two languages can be compared, and some generalisation can be drawn with respect to the possible problematic area in language learning. However, whether these problems really cause any difficulty in language learning can never be proved without the actual examination of students’ works. The problems that may impede students in the process of language learning may not be problems for them during the translation tasks. That necessitates the application of error analysis in the field of second language teaching. Similarly, in the field of translation training, there is also the need of finding the error
patterns and the areas of difficulties for translation students in order to raise their awareness.

8.4.1 Some key notes in translating topic-comment structures from Vietnamese into English:
When teaching Vietnamese students how to translate the topic-comment structures of Vietnamese into English, some specific contents should be emphasised to students. Three main issues which should be addressed include: 1) the omission of pronoun in subject and object position in Vietnamese, 2) how to handle the predicate adjectives of Vietnamese sentence in Vietnamese-English translation, and 3) how to translate different types of topic-comment structures of Vietnamese. In each issue, the author will explain briefly the nature of the difficulty and the practical guidelines will be given on how to translate the structure effectively.

8.4.1.1. The omission of pronoun in Vietnamese: (subject, object position)
Rosén (1998:144) states that the Vietnamese system for pronominal reference is quite complicated. She concludes that empty pronouns are possible as subjects, direct objects and indirect objects, but never as objects of prepositions. In English, the deletion of anaphoric pronouns is also possible, when a special effect is sought or when the pronoun in the first clause has been located, for example, ‘I like fish, but not cats’. The empty pronoun is even allowed in the first clause of the first sentence, especially when it refers to the speaker.

Pedagogical Implications: This feature has to be highlighted for students as they must be aware that to correctly translate into English, they must be able to interpret and locate the omitted subjects and direct or indirect objects from the Vietnamese source text. In order to do this, they need to carefully analyse the text and comprehend it. Team work or group discussion may help in getting the correct interpretation of the dropped subject.
8.4.1.2 Translating adjectives functioning as predicate in Vietnamese

As can be observed from the 95 translations of the subjects in this study, in sentence 14\(^{44}\) most of the students remembered to insert the linking verb TO BE between the topic/subject ‘ông bố già’ and the adjective functioning as stative verb ‘rất sinh động và cảm động’ (vivid and touching). However, problems appeared in the second clause of the same sentence, when students have to link the first predicate with the second predicate. In the first clause of sentence 16\(^{45}\), 15 out of 95 students did not insert the verb ‘to be’ after the subject ‘Nguyen’, because in Vietnamese source text there is no overt appearance of the verb ‘là/thì’, which is often assumed as a semantic equivalent of ‘to be’. However, in the second clause of the same sentence, it is interesting that there is no instance where students forget to insert the verb ‘to be’. This is possibly because the verb ‘rõ là’ (obviously to be) is clearly mentioned and marked in the Vietnamese source text. The fact that 80 out of 95 students did have the verb ‘to be’ in their translation shows that this structure is not really hard for them and their linguistic competence is good enough to be aware of this. Nevertheless, the difference in the numbers of errors between sentence 14 (0 instances) and sentence 16 (15 instances) shows that when the sentence has an embedded clause, a complicated or long predicate with many adjectives, the students have a higher chance of getting confused and may forget the verb ‘to be’ before the adjectives.

**Pedagogial Implications.** When teaching students to translate Vietnamese sentences which have many predicate adjectives, teachers should emphasise that although the copula verbs ‘là/thì’ may not always be present in Vietnamese, they must be present in English translation. The important thing is that students must get used to telling the difference between a verb and an adjective in Vietnamese to translate correctly.

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\(^{44}\) Sentence 14. Trong nhiều nhân vật phụ thành công, ông bố già rất sinh động và cảm động, xung đột bầu là và phượt xuất sắc nhất. [Among the many successful supporting characters, [that of] the old servant is very vivid and touching and worthy to be nominated for most successful supporting actor.]

\(^{45}\) Sentence 16. Nguyễn hào hóa, hào hiệp, lập dị ra mặt, rõ là anh diễm chư bất đặc chỉ, khát kứng’ [Nguyen - a chivalrous, generous, obviously peculiar man - proves to be a frustrated and silly landowner.]
8.4.1.3 Translating topic-comment structures of Vietnamese
As mentioned in Chapter 4, there are five types of topic-comment constructions in Vietnamese:

1. The topic may be understood as filling a gap in the comment.
2. The topic may be coreferential with a noun phrase or pronoun in the comment.
3. The topic may be semantically related to any specific constituent in the comment, its referent is simply what the comment is about.
4. The topic may not be related to any constituents, empty or overt, in the comment.
5. The topic may be a verb phrase, a clause or an embedded topic-comment construction.

These 5 structures can be classified into 2 types: sentences with ‘double subject’ constructions and sentences without ‘double subject’ constructions. Types 1 and 2 belong to the type where the topic is also the sentence subject. Type 3, 4 and 5 are ‘double subject’ constructions in which the topic of the sentence is not the subject of the main verb in the sentence.

1. Types 3, 4, and 5. These are sentences with ‘double subject’ constructions of Vietnamese. In these three sentence types, the topic is not identical with the subject. The relationship between the topic and the subject can be possessive, partitive or inclusive, or ‘aboutness’ relation. There are four instances where the topic can appear: (1) The topic can be possessor while the subject is the possessee, (2) the topic is the direct object of the verb in the comment clause, (3) the topic is the adverb or adverbial clause of the verb in the comment clause, and (4) the topic may also be the indirect object of the verb in the comment clause.

Pedagogical Implications. To translate this kind of sentence, the student must, first of all, identify the relationship between the subject and the topic or the ‘aboutness’ relation.

To demonstrate the suitable translations for these three sentence types, sentences 5\textsuperscript{46}, 6\textsuperscript{47}, 17\textsuperscript{48}, 18\textsuperscript{49} from the Elicitation Task should be used as illustrative examples to teach.

\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{46} Sentence 5. Cạnh thể đến trời tương như chỉ có ma thuật mới làm nổi.
students how to translate the ‘double subject’ constructions in which the topic is not identical with the topic.

1.1 The relationship between topic and subject is possessor-possessee. This is the structure of sentence 17. It is the combination of two smaller topic-comment structures and can be divided into two smaller sentences as follows.

(1) Tam, cây đàn nguyệt tuyệt vời tới mức tuyệt vọng
Tam, the moonshaped guitar excellent to the extent desperate

(2) Tam, cử chỉ thật chính xác với tâm trạng.
Tam gestures so exact with mood.

The first topic-comment structure is ‘Tam, cây đàn nguyệt tuyệt vời tới mức tuyệt vọng, u uẩn, bế tắc’ and the second one is ‘nghĩa khí, cử chỉ thật chính xác với tâm trạng’. In the first topic-comment, the topic is identical with the subject. In the second topic-comment structure ‘Tam, cử chỉ thật chính xác với tâm trạng’, the topic ‘Tam’ is not identical with the subject ‘cử chỉ’ (gestures); the relationship between them is one of possessor-possessee.

Pedagogical Implications. There are three suggested ways to translate this type of ‘double subject’ construction. The first way is to use a noun phrase with possessive case ‘Tam’s gestures’ or a noun phrase ‘his gestures’. The second way is to use the phrase ‘As for’ for the topic ‘Tam’ and the subject of the embedded subject-predicate constructions ‘cử chỉ’ is retained as the main subject in the English sentence. The third way is to choose ‘Tam’ as the subject of the sentence and express the possessor-possessive relationship through the verb ‘have’ and the subject of the subject-predicate construction becomes the object of the verb ‘have’. So we have the following:

1. Tam’s gestures reflect his mood accurately.
2. As for Tam, his gestures reflect his mood accurately.

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47 Sentence 6. Cạnh quay nào cũng thấy mò hói.
48 Sentence 15. Tam, cây đàn nguyệt tuyệt vời tới mức tuyệt vọng, u uẩn, bế tắc mà nghĩa khí, cử chỉ thật chính xác với tâm trạng.
49 Sentence 18. Tổ, cô đào hát hồng nhan bậc phán, phiếu đất mà cao sang, da tình mà chung tình, vừa quyền ru vừa nghiêm trang, nhỏ nhoi mà không hờn mon ... khó có ai hạp vai hay hơn Thúy Nga (với ‘giọng ca vàng’ Thanh Hoài và lời bài hát châu văn do nhà thơ Văn Lê viết).
3. Tam has gestures which reflect his mood accurately.

1.2 The topic is the direct object of the verb in the comment clause. The relationship of the topic and the subject of the comment clause is not always possessor-possessee. In the Elicitation Task, the example illustrating this type is sentence 5 (example 3 below).

(3) Cánh thẳm đêm trời tưởng như chỉ có mà thuật mới
Scene drop light sky think only magic new do
- làm nổi
-manage

We/You/One may think that only magic could do such a scene of dropping lanterns.
(The scene of dropping the lantern that we/one may think can only happen by magic)

Pedagogical implications. When the topic is the object of the verb in the comment clause, there often are two possibilities. First, just start the English translation with the subject of the comment clause and put the topic ‘Cánh thẳm đêm trời’ into a position of object. Alternatively, the topic may be separated out in a phrase and put at the beginning of the sentence: ‘As for the scene of dropping the sky lanterns, the viewers may think only magic could do that’.

However, in sentences where the topic is the object of the verb in the comment clause, but the main verb refers to perception processes such as ‘look’, ‘seem’, ‘sound’, ‘taste’, there is no need to locate a new subject for the sentence. As English syntax allows structures such as ‘The scene seems to be done by magic’ or ‘The scene looks as if it can only be done by magic’, the topic can be retained to be the subject of the sentence, with these verbs as predicate. To illustrate, in example 3, the main verb is ‘seem’, the topic ‘Cánh thẳm đêm trời’ can be retained as the subject in the English translation.

These are four possible ways of translating this type of topic-comment structure:
1. We/You/One may think that only magic could do such a scene of dropping lanterns.
2. The scene of dropping the lantern that we/one may think can only happen by magic.
3. The scene seems to be done only by magic.

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4. As for the scene of dropping the sky lanterns, the viewers may think only magic could do that.

1.3 The topic is the adverb or adverbial clause of the verb in the comment clause. The referent of the topic can also be the adverb or adverbial clause to modify the verb in the comment clause. An example from the Elicitation Task is sentence 6. In this sentence the topic functions as the adverbial clause of place of the verb in the comment clause.

(4) Cạnh quay nào (…) cũng thấy mồ hôi.
Scene any (…) also see sweat
You/we/one can see the sweat behind every scene

Pedagogical Implications. In this case, the topic of the sentence is not identical with the subject of the verb, the topic is the adverb (or sometimes adverbial clause) of the verb in the comment clause. This structure can be translated in two steps. Firstly, the subject of the comment clause has to be identified and located in the position of the subject in the English sentence. Secondly, the topic which is the adverb phrase of the comment clause in the Vietnamese source text is put at the beginning or the end of the English sentence, depending on what the focus of the sentence is.

As there are many kinds of adverbs in English, the semantic roles of the noun phrase functioning as topic are also varied. They can be adverbs of time, manner, place, etc. To have the correct translation, it is necessary that students should be able to identify what kind of adverb the topic is, whether it is an adverb of time or manner, before they translate into English. The semantic subject of the sentence must also be found to guarantee a correct translation. Otherwise, students may mistake the topic, which is actually the adverb, for the subject of the sentence.

1.4 The topic may be the indirect object of the verb in the comment clause. Apart from the three above-mentioned semantic relationships between the topic and the subject, the topic may also function as the indirect object of the verb in the comment clause. There is
no example of this kind in the Elicitation Task, so most of the examples will be taken from the Vietnamese language in general.

(5) Người lạ thì tôi không biết nhưng bạn thì tôi tặng.
Strangers I do not offer but friends

As for the strangers, I don’t give (it) to them for free but as for my friends, I will give (it) as a present.

[I give don’t give (it) to the strangers for free but I will give it as presents for my friends]

(6) Cha mẹ thì cô gửi thiệp chúc Tết.
Parents she send postcards congratulate New Year

con anh em thì cô gửi email.
As for brothers she sends email

[She sends the postcards to her parents but she sends emails to her brothers]

(7) Bạn gái thì tôi tặng hoa,
Friend female I offer flowers

bạn trai thì tôi tặng áo.
male friends I offer shirts

[The sentence is the same as before, but we can change the order of the verbs to make it more natural]

Pedagogical Implications. There are two suggested translation methods for this kind of sentence. First, the sentence can start with the phrase ‘As for’ with the topic and this phrase will appear at the beginning of the sentence (as we can observe in the above examples). Alternatively, we just put them back to the normal position of an indirect object in English sentence. However, using the normal position of an indirect object may change the focus of the sentence. That is to say, when the topic appears at the beginning after the phrase ‘As for’, it attracts the emphasis and attention of the readers, but when it is located in the unmarked or normal position of an indirect object after the main verb, it loses its value of attracting readers’ attention.
2. **Type 1 and 2 Sentences.** These are sentences without ‘double subject’ construction of Vietnamese, or the topic is identical with the subject of the embedded subject-predicate construction. In these types of sentences, the topic is also the subject of the verb in the comment. The example from the Elicitation Task is the first topic-comment clause of sentence 17.

(8) Tam, cây đàn nguyệt tuyệt vời tối mức tuyệt vọng
Tam, the moonshaped guitar excellent to the extent desperate

In this example, the topic of the sentence ‘Tam’ is semantically identical with the subject ‘cây đàn nguyệt’, which is actually a noun phrase, to illustrate the identity of the topic ‘Tam’.

**Pedagogical Implications.** In the sentences where the subject is a repetition or an appositive of the topic, there are many possible ways of translating this structure. The first way is shown in (1), where the topic is singled out at the beginning of the sentence with the phrase ‘As for’ and the subject is a pronoun replacing the noun introduced in the phrase ‘As for’. Alternatively, the topic of the Vietnamese sentence can be the subject in the English translation and consequently, the subject of Vietnamese sentences becomes the appositive in the English translation (as shown in (2) below). The third way of translating this sentence is to retain the topic of the Vietnamese sentence as the subject in the English translation and translate the subject as a relative clause placed after the antecedent ‘Tam’.

1. As for Tam, he is a great moon-shaped guitar player who is so excellent to the extent of desperation.
2. Tam, the player of the moon shaped guitar, is so excellent to the extent of desperation.
3. Tam, who is the player of the moon shaped guitar, is so excellent to the extent of desperation.
8.4.2 General Applications in Teaching Vietnamese-English Translation

Section 8.4.1 suggested techniques that can be used in translating some sentences which manifest topic-comment structures of Vietnamese. This section recommends some of the teaching methods that should be used in the translation class, in order to improve the quality of translation training, which at the same time are suitable for the Vietnamese context.

1. The Discussion Work or Team Work should be initiated and encouraged more in the Translation class, in both directions.

   If Team Work is implemented in class and the students are instructed to work in groups on their projects, they can practice their own translation skills, and at the same time find out and discuss the other options or versions of the expressions they want to use with their peers. They can, hopefully, correct each other’s errors. This method also helps students to exchange and learn new methods of translating without feeling obliged to follow one option or the teacher’s option.

   Students should be given more chance to approach as many different versions of the draft translation of the same original as possible, before they come to the last version of their translation. When they have a chance to participate in group discussion, students can exchange different versions of the source text and approach different degrees of latitude. They can learn from peers what degree of latitude is most acceptable. Working in groups is therefore one of the effective ways to help students.

   Students should be given opportunities to work on their own translation in small groups. In these groups, they can exchange ideas and ‘verbalise’ their processing, refine their decision making after receiving feedback from their peers. When confronted with different alternatives, student translators are often confused and cannot decide, especially if they are not trained to make fast decisions (Wills, 1996:188). As a consequence, they may abstain from decision-making and stick to any version which comes to their mind first. Therefore, the process of exchanging ideas through the team work or discussions can help students review different choices and can widen the possibility of their translation options.
2. Error analysis exercises should also be used in translation classes. The students should be provided with some well-defined strategies for translation, especially strategies for translating the passive voice and topic-comment structures in Vietnamese. A table systematising all possible and familiar sentence patterns with topic-comment structure should be constructed, with suggested translations. Some wrong translations of the same source text could be distributed to the students for discussion and analysis. This can be done in two ways. The teacher can use different translations of the same source text from different students as a data bank, and then exchange them between students and ask the students to correct them. Alternatively, the teachers can pick up the wrong translations of some other students/translators to ask students to comment on.

3. A data bank of typical structures of Vietnamese should be established. Snell-Hornby (1985) found that the main reasons for university students to attend an optional translation course were related to vocabulary acquisition (33%) or grammar-based contrastive analysis (20%). That is to say, translation, to some extent, is considered by these students as an effective tool to practise language and learn more vocabulary. To help students in this task, a data bank of some selected texts or typical Vietnamese sentence structures should be constructed. In these texts, the vocabulary and syntax are not isolated, chance examples, but must be representative examples of the topic-comment structures of Vietnamese sentences. With this data bank, it is possible to design a syllabus to teach students through topic-comment structures and prepare them when they meet these structures again in their translation practice.

4. ‘Simultaneous translation’ target language structure-oriented pattern practice should be introduced to students. In this kind of practice, a structure in Vietnamese is spoken by the teacher and the students then give the translation immediately. All the sentences used for translation should be ‘structure-oriented’, that is to say, they should be representative of certain specific sentence types of the Vietnamese language. At present, some teachers of Vietnamese-English translation apply this method, they just do it randomly without any planning. This practice should be used as an alternative to working exclusively with the written word. It should focus on selected systematic translation operations (word order in
questions, relative clauses, sentences in English using dummy subjects, existential structures, etc.). During the training, the teacher should also read out the source language statements with the sample correct statements, so that students can be exposed to some good examples of the pattern under consideration. For a better effect, some syntactic patterns typical of English or Vietnamese should be rehearsed with this simultaneous translation practice. To illustrate, Vietnamese sentences without subjects should be read by the teachers for students to translate, so that they can recognise this difference between Vietnamese and English, and how to familiarise themselves not only with the task of translating, but most importantly with the ability to comprehend the missing subject and empty elements of Vietnamese sentences. Also, Vietnamese existential sentences or structures should be used as examples for practice, so that students know how to translate these structures.

5. To really help students improve their vocabulary and the translation skills, the texts in the translation module should share the same theme and topics with other elements in the ESL teaching syllabus in terms of vocabulary, grammar teaching. This way, students can apply the structures they have learned to the translation process. In year 3 and year 4, most of the students have been taught Literature, Public Speaking and Business English. So such common topics as business, advertisement, commerce, general social news should form the basis of topics for their translations. Texts should be selected based on certain linguistic requirements, such as vocabulary development, discourse-level awareness and a choice of grammatical structures for contrastive analysis, such as pre-modification in phrase structure, passive voice, indirect speech and elliptical sentences. These texts should not be complex and tricky, because the students are language learners.

7. The translation tasks given to the students have to take into account their linguistic competence. As a translation task may be embedded in many kinds of contexts—interlinguistic, intercultural, communicative and professional—it entails many complex language processing requirements, including selection, co-ordination and monitoring of information at different levels: orthographic, semantic, syntactic and discoursal. Therefore, it is suggested that cognitive complexity of the translation tasks should also be taken into
consideration in the designing of different curriculum objectives in translator training and ESL training. If the focus of the training program is more on ESL than on translation, the task should not be so complicated in terms of translation skills and it should have some clear ‘goal’ structures for students to be trained in, taking into account the fact that they are using their interlanguage to translate. Such approach can entail the following gains: (a) highly analysed knowledge at the lexical, grammatical and discourse levels, (b) improved control of processing at these levels, and (c) development of the learner’s translation processing strategies.

8. More effort should be put on improving teaching methods and approaches for both translation and writing. The aspect of writing is emphasized, because students cannot translate properly if their writing in English and their knowledge of different writing styles and different genres is lacking. Firstly, there should be more concentration on the process instead of the product. In other words, students should be guided toward the process of translations rather than the word-for-word translation. Secondly, parallel texts and discourse analysis should be used in the area of writing to give students some ideas of the discoursal features of different text-types (Campbell, 1990). The role of teachers’ feedback on students’ translation should also be taken into consideration (Dollerup, 1992). However, the appropriate feedback should not be the traditional style of feedback, where the teachers just focus on the linguistic errors of students. The suggested alternative way is that teachers help students to recognise the errors themselves.

8.5 RECOMMENDATION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Further research may include work in the following directions:

1. The difference in performance before and after the students have been trained and made alert of the differences between English structure and Vietnamese structure, especially regarding topic-comment structures.

2. How to improve Vietnamese students’ skills in comprehending the Vietnamese source text in Vietnamese-English Translation.

3. A more thorough study of the strategies Vietnamese students use in translating typical topic-comment constructions in Vietnamese language.
4. A more thorough study of Vietnamese topic-comment constructions to build up a complete data bank for teaching Vietnamese-English translation.

5. The difference in performance between the second language learners and professional translators in translating Vietnamese topic-comment structure.
# Appendix A

## Table 1 Error Identification and Categorisation

(Sample of the first page of Table 1, the following pages are included in the CD-Rom)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>STUDENT NUMBER - SENTENCE</th>
<th>SENT. NO</th>
<th>ERROR TYPE</th>
<th>PART OF SPEECH</th>
<th>NATURE OF ERROR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>6 First, I have been fascinated by ✓ absolute images of motion picture’s language.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>GRAM.ERROR</td>
<td>ARTICLE</td>
<td>OMISSION OF ARTICLE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>11 At first (First), I was interested in the images that are full of ✓ language of motion picture</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>GRAM.ERROR</td>
<td>ARTICLE</td>
<td>OMISSION OF ARTICLE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>21 Firstly, it’s the fascination with ✓ the images of ‘film language’</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>GRAM.ERROR</td>
<td>PRONOUN</td>
<td>MISUSE OF PRONOUN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>27 Firstly, I was attracted by ✓ images typical of movie industry’s language.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>GRAM.ERROR</td>
<td>ARTICLE</td>
<td>OMISSION OF ARTICLE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>4 First, I’m fascinated with ✓ images fully specialised in ✓ language of movie industry.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>GRAM.ERROR</td>
<td>ARTICLE</td>
<td>OMISSION OF ARTICLE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>4 First, I’m fascinated with ✓ images fully specialised in ✓ language of movie industry.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>GRAM.ERROR</td>
<td>ARTICLE</td>
<td>OMISSION OF ARTICLE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>7 First, I am fascinated by ✓ images which are ‘full of film language’.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>GRAM.ERROR</td>
<td>ARTICLE</td>
<td>OMISSION OF ARTICLE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>16 To begin with, I am fascinated by ✓ images with ‘pure motion picture’s language’.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>GRAM.ERROR</td>
<td>ARTICLE</td>
<td>OMISSION OF ARTICLE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>19 At first, I was fascinated by ✓ images ‘specific motion picture’.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>GRAM.ERROR</td>
<td>ARTICLE</td>
<td>OMISSION OF ARTICLE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>20 The first attraction is that of ✓ entire motion picture language</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>GRAM.ERROR</td>
<td>ARTICLE</td>
<td>OMISSION OF ARTICLE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>25 Firstly, I am fascinated by ✓ images of ‘pure movie language’</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>GRAM.ERROR</td>
<td>ARTICLE</td>
<td>OMISSION OF ARTICLE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>27 Firstly, it is about (redundant) ✓ images of fully film language that charm me.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>GRAM.ERROR</td>
<td>ADVERB</td>
<td>ADDITION OF ADVERB (REDUNDANCY)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix B

#### Table 2 Error Source

(Sample of the first page of Table 2, the following pages are included in the CD-Rom)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>STUDENT NUMBER - SENTENCE</th>
<th>SENT. NO</th>
<th>ERROR TYPE</th>
<th>ERROR CODE</th>
<th>STUDENT EXPLANATION</th>
<th>ANSWER CHOSEN IN QUESTIONNAIRE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I Being a person who ✓ <strong>followed</strong> closely the preparation of this film,…</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>GRAM.ERROR</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I The scene of burning furniture, the detonation of furnishings and the gunshot <strong>shoots</strong> (shooting) ✓ a doll make ✓ <strong>audiences’</strong> (audience’s) blood run cold.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>MOR.ERROR</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I The scene of burning furniture, the detonation of furnishings and the gunshot <strong>shoots</strong> (shooting) ✓ a doll ✓ <strong>audiences’</strong> (audience’s) blood run cold.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>SYN.ERROR</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I The scene of burning furniture, the detonation of furnishings and the gunshot <strong>shoots</strong> (shooting) ✓ a doll make ✓ <strong>audiences’</strong> (audience’s) blood run cold.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>GRAM.ERROR</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I The scene of burning furniture, the detonation of furnishings and the gunshot <strong>shoots</strong> (shooting) ✓ a doll make ✓ <strong>audiences’</strong> (audience’s) blood run cold.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>GRAM.ERROR</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I The scene of burning furniture, the detonation of furnishings and the gunshot <strong>shoots</strong> (shooting) ✓ a doll make ✓ <strong>audiences’</strong> (audience’s) blood run cold.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>MOR.ERROR</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I The scene of burning furniture, the detonation of furnishings and the gunshot <strong>shoots</strong> (shooting) ✓ a doll make ✓ <strong>audiences’</strong> (audience’s) blood run cold.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>MOR.ERROR</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I The scene of a broad flat drying basket of silkworms wriggling for food <strong>requirement</strong> (redundant) and the feet trampling upon the silkworms <strong>make</strong> (makes) our flesh creep.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>SYN.ERROR</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix C

**Table 3 Translation Error**

(Sample of the first page of Table 3, the following pages are included in the CD-Rom)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>STUDENT NUMBER - SENTENCE</th>
<th>SENT. NO</th>
<th>ERROR TYPE</th>
<th>INCORRECT COMPREHENSION</th>
<th>LACK OF LINGUISTIC COMPETENCE</th>
<th>LACK OF TRANSLATION COMPETENCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Being a person who ✓<strong>followed</strong> closely the preparation of this film, I am fascinated by 'Me Thao'.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>GRAM.ERROR</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The scene of burning furniture, the detonation of furnishings and the gunshot <strong>shoots</strong> (shooting) ✓ a doll make ✓ <strong>audiences’</strong> (audience’s) blood run cold.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>MOR.ERROR</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The scene of burning furniture, the detonation of furnishings and the gunshot <strong>shoots</strong> (shooting) ✓ a doll make ✓ <strong>audiences’</strong> (audience’s) blood run cold.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>SYN.ERROR</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The scene of burning furniture, the detonation of furnishings and the gunshot <strong>shoots</strong> (shooting) ✓ a doll make ✓ <strong>audiences’</strong> (audience’s) blood run cold.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>GRAM.ERROR</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The scene of burning furniture, the detonation of furnishings and the gunshot <strong>shoots</strong> (shooting) ✓ a doll make ✓ <strong>audiences’</strong> (audience’s) blood run cold.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>GRAM.ERROR</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The scene of burning furniture, the detonation of furnishings and the gunshot <strong>shoots</strong> (shooting) ✓ a doll make ✓ <strong>audiences’</strong> (audience’s) blood run cold.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>MOR.ERROR</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The scene of a broad flat drying basket of silkworms wriggling for food <strong>requirement</strong> (redundant) and the feet trampling upon the silkworms <strong>make</strong> (makes) our flesh creep.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>SYN.ERROR</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Appendix D
Elicitation Translation Task

Translate the following passages into English:


(13) Lại mè mainter với những nhân vật có tên và không tên. (14) Trong nhiều nhân vật phụ thành công, ông bố già rất sinh động và cảm động, xung đột được bấu lại vai phụ xuất sắc nhất. (15) Nhân vật chính nào cũng mỗi người một vẻ, độc đáo, đầy thần phản, được diễn tạ tự nhiên và sâu sắc làm sao. (16) Nguyên hóa hoa, hóa hiệp, lập di ra mặt, rõ là anh diễn chưa bất đặc chỉ, kháb khoảng. (17) Tam, cây dàn nguyên tuyệt với tôi mức tuyệt vọng, u uẩn, bể tắc mà nghĩa khí, cứ chỉ nhất chính xác với tâm trạng. (18) Tốt, có dạo hát Hồng nhan bạc phận, phiền dat mà cao sang, da tinh mà chung tình, vừa quyền ưu vừa nghiêm trang, nhờ nhoi mà không hồn mơn... khó có ai nhập vai hay hơn Thủy Nga (với ‘giong ca vàng’ Thanh Hoài và lời bài hát chào văn do nhà thơ Văn Lê viết).

Title: Từ Chùa Đàn đến Mê Thảo - thời vang bóng

Author: Nguyễn Duy

Source: Tuổi Trẻ (The Youth Number 38-2002 Date 29-9-2002)
Appendix E
Translation of ‘Mê Thảo-Thời Vang Bóng’

1. Là kẻ từng chăm chú dõi theo cuộc ‘hành trình thai sản’ của bộ phim, tôi mến mến với Mê Thảo-thời vang bông (giả chi đặt tên phim là Mê Thảo thời thì nghe Gian đi hơn và ‘dả’ hơn).

As someone who has closely followed the gestation/birthing of the film, I am fascinated by Mê Thảo-thời vang bông (supposing the film had been named simply Mê Thảo, it would have been pleasant to the ears.

2. Trước hết là mến mến với những hình ảnh ‘rất ngôn ngữ điện ảnh’.

Firstly, I am fascinated by the images [which are] entirely typical of motion picture/film language.

3. Cảnh đồng bèn ghế, tiếng nổ của đò đắc và phát súng bắn vào con búp bé khiến người xem lạnh giáy.

The burning furniture, the explosion of / exploding furnishings and the gunshot fired at the doll / the doll hit by a bullet make the audience’s blood run cold.

4. Cảnh nóng tanh ngòe đôi ăn và bàn chân giám sát những con tấm làm ta sồn gai ốc.

The sight of silkworms wriggling in the drying basket and the foot trampling upon the silkworms makes the audience’s flesh creep.

5. Cảnh thả đền trời tường nhu hư chỉ có ma thuật mới làm nổi

The scene of dropping the lantern that we/ one may think can only happen by magic.

6. Cảnh quay nào cũng thấy mồ hôi.

You/we/one can see the sweat behind every scene.

7. Mồ hôi của ý nghĩ.

The sweat of thought.
8. Mở hội của sự tìm.
Searching/the search.
9. Mở hội dàn dựng
Arrangement(s)
10. Mở hội tập luyện và diễn xuất.
The sweat of practicing and performing. (Rehearsing/ rehearsals and performing/ performance.)
11. Hầu như mỗi đoạn phim đều thấm đượm tâm hồn Việt.
Almost every part of the film is permeated with the Vietnamese soul
12. Trong trí nhớ tôi, chưa có một phim nào của nước Việt ta được thực hiện công phu và đạt chuẩn như vậy.
As far as I can remember/ To the best of my knowledge, no Vietnamese film has ever been produced as elaborately and perfectly/ our country has never produced as elaborate and perfect a film as this one.
13. Lại mê mẩn với những nhân vật có tên và không tên.
I was then fascinated with the named and anonymous/ nameless characters.
14. Trong nhiều nhân vật phụ thành công, ông bố già rất sinh động và cảm động, xứng đáng được bầu là vai phụ xuất sắc nhất.
Among the many successful supporting characters, [that of] the old servant is very vivid and touching and worthy to be nominated for most successful supporting actor.
15. Nhân vật chính này cũng mỗi người một vẻ, độc đáo, đầy thân phận, được diễn tả tự nhiên và sâu sắc làm sao.
Each of the leading characters/every leading character is authentic in his/her own role - original, dramatic, and they are all portrayed very naturally and profoundly in the film.
Nguyen - a chivalrous, generous, obviously peculiar man - proves to be a frustrated and silly landowner.
17. Tam, cây đàn nguyệt tuyệt với tôi mức tuyệt vọng, u uẩn, bề tắc mà nghĩa khí, cụ chỉ thật chính xác với tâm trạng.

Tam, a player of the moon-shaped guitar, is so excellent that he appears desperate and mysterious, frustrated but still giving. His gestures reflect his mood precisely.

18. Tôi, cô đào hát Hồng nhan bạch phân, phiếu đất mà cao sang, da tình mà chung tình, vừa quyền rút vừa nghiêm trang, nhỏ nhỏ mà không hèn mọn ... khó có ai nhập vai hay hơn Thuỳ Nga (với ‘giọng ca vàng’ Thanh Hoài và lời bài hát chưa vấn do nhà thơ Văn Lê viết).

Tôi, a beautiful singer who has known many ups and downs in life, is a romantic libertine but still very dignified, amorous but loyal, seductive but serious, petite but not insignificant/unimportant. Undoubtedly there is no one that can/I It would be hard to find someone who could play the role better than Tịnh Nga (with Thanh Hồi’s golden voice / the golden voice Thanh Hoai and the song lyrics written by the poet Văn Lê).
Appendix F
Suggested Translation from a NAATI Translator

(1) Being the one who used to watch with concentration “the pregnant journey” of the movie, I was bewitched by Me Thao (If the movie had been named only Me Thao, it would sound more simple and “satisfactory”).

(2) Firstly I was bewitched by the images with “entire movie languages”.

(3) The scene of burning tables and chairs, the sound of exploded furniture and of the shot shooting at the doll make the viewers cold with fear.

(4) The scenes of stretching the silkworms which were wriggling to find food and of the foot crushing the silkworms make us flesh creep.

(5) The scene of releasing lanterns from the sky was thought as if only could magic do it.

(6) Every scene looks sweating.

(7) The sweat of meanings.

(8) The sweat of making a search.

(9) The sweat of arrangement.

(10) The sweat of practicing and acting.

(11) Almost every scene is full of Vietnamese spirit.

(12) In my memory, there has never been any Vietnamese movie that is carried out in such meticulousness and good standard.

(13) Then I was bewitched by named and nameless characters.

(14) Among many successful supporting characters, the old servant was very lively and moved, worthy of being voted the most excellent supporting character.

(15) All of main characters have their own appearances that are unique, full of conditions, performed naturally and very profoundly.

(16) Nguyen is gallant and chivalrous, eccentric openly, clearly a silly and unsatisfied landowner.
(17) Tam, a moon-shaped lute musician, is so wonderful that he is hopeless, mysterious, impassive but noble; his manners are very accurate in accordance with his mood.

(18) To, a beautiful actress with ill fate, is wandering but gentle, amorous but faithful, both attractive and serious, small but not humble … There is hardly anyone who lives his / her part better than Thuy Nga (with “a golden voice” of Thanh Hoai and the chant written by poet Van Le).
Appendix G

Structural Configuration of 18 Sentences in the Elicitation Task

* Words in italics and brackets are used to refer to dropped subject or null topic (which are empty pronouns).
* In case there are three capitalized lines, the first two capitalized lines are the analysis of Topic-Comment structure of each sentence (combining Hao 2001 and Rosén 1998’s model). The first line is the analysis of Topic-Comment structure of the whole sentence, the second line is the analysis of Topic-Comment of the Embedded Clause.
* The last capitalized line is the analysis of Subject-Predicate structure of each sentence (using structuralist approach).
* The last line is the suggested translation of the whole sentence.

(1) (Tôi) Là kẻ từng chăm chú dỗ theo cuộc ‘hành trình thai sản’ của bộ phim,
(I) As one tense marker attentively follow itinerary gestation of film,
As someone who has closely followed the gestation/birthing of the film,

tôi mè mẩn với Mẹ Thảo,
I be charmed with Me Thao

TOPIC COMMENT
SUBJECT PREDICATE

I am fascinated by Mẹ Thảo-thời vang bóng

[giá (người ta/dạo diễn) chỉ đặt tên phim là Mẹ Thảo thời
if (people/film director) only name film to be Me Thao only

TOPIC
NULL TOPIC 1 COMMENT 1
NULL SUBJECT 1 PREDICATE 1

(supposing the film had been named simply Mẹ Thảo,
it would have been pleasant to the ears.)

Firstly, I am fascinated by the images [which are] entirely typical of motion picture/film language.

The scene of burning furniture, exploding furnishings and the gunshot fired at the doll
khăn người xem lạnh gáy.
make audience cold

COMMENT
PREDICATE
makes the audience’s blood run cold.

(4) Cánh nong tầm ngòe ngòe đối ăn và bàn chân giảm nát
Scene basket silkworms wriggle demand eat and foot tread crushed
- những con tầm
- silkworms

TOPIC
SUBJECT
The sight of silkworms wriggling in the drying basket and the foot trampling upon the silkworms

lăm ta sesión gai ốc.
make pronoun creep goose-flesh

COMMENT
PREDICATE
makes the audience’s flesh creep.

(5) Cánh thả đèn trời (người ta/ người xem..) tương như chỉ có ma thuật mới làm nổi
scene drop light sky (people/audience) seem only magic in order to do

TOPIC
COMMENT
OBJECT OF VERB 2 NULL SUBJECT 1 VERB 1 SUBJECT 2 VERB 2
OF THE CLAUSAL COMMENT

The scene of dropping the lantern that we/ one may think can only happen by magic.
(6) Cạnh quay nào (người ta/người xem) cùng thấy mồ hôi.
Scene any (people/audience) also see sweat
TOPIC COMMENT
TOPICALISED ADVERB
OF CLAUSAL COMMENT NULL SUBJECT VERB OBJECT OF VERB
You/we/one can see the sweat behind every scene.

(7) Mồ hôi của ý nghĩ.
Sweat of thought
TOPIC (NO COMMENT)
The sweat of thought.

(12) Trong trí nhớ tôi chưa có một phim nào của nước Việt ta
In memory I not yet have one film any of Vietnam pronoun
FRAME TOPIC TOPIC (EXISTENTIAL CLAUSE)
EXISTENTIAL CLAUSE (THERE ...)
được thực hiện công phu và đạt chuẩn như vậy
be/get carry out elaborate and obtain standard like that.
As far as I can remember, no Vietnamese film has ever been produced as elaborately and perfectly as elaborate
and perfect a film as this one.

(13) (Tôi) Lại mê mẩn với những nhân vật có tên và không tên.
(I ) again be charmed with plural marker character have name and no name.
NULL TOPIC COMMENT
NULL SUBJECT PREDICATE
I was then fascinated with the named and anonymous/ nameless characters.
Among the many successful supporting characters, [that of] the old servant is very vivid and touching.

(ông) xứng đáng được bầu là vai phụ xuất sắc nhất

(he) deserving be/get nominate be character secondary excellent best

and worthy to be nominated for most successful supporting actor.

Each of the leading characters/every leading character is authentic in his/her own role - original, dramatic,

(doho) được diễn tả tự nhiên và sâu sắc làm sao

(they) manage describe natural and deep how

and they are all portrayed very naturally and profoundly in the film.
(16) Nguyễn hào hoa, hào hiệp, lập đi ra mặt, (anh) rô là anh diễm chử bất đặc chí, -khất khùng.

-bright, chivalrous, generous, eccentric overtly (he) really landowner frustrated
-silly

TOPIC COMMENT 1 NULL TOPIC 2 COMMENT 2
SUBJECT PREDICATE 1 NULL SUBJECT PREDICATE 2

Nguyen - a chivalrous, generous, obviously peculiar man - proves to be a frustrated and silly landowner.

(17) Tam, cây dân nguyệt tuyệt vọng tới mức tuyệt vọng, u uẩn, bế tắc mà nghiêm khí,

Tam moon-shaped guitar excellent to degree disappointed hidden deadlock but noble

TOPIC COMMENT TOPIC 1 COMMENT 1
SUBJECT 1 APPOSITION PREDICATE 1

Tam, a player of the moon-shaped guitar, is so excellent that he appears desperate and mysterious, frustrated but still giving.

cụi chỉ thật chính xác với tâm trạng.
gesture very accurate with state of mind.

TOPIC 2 COMMENT 2
SUBJECT 2 PREDICATE 2

His gestures reflect his mood precisely.
To, a beautiful singer who has known many ups and downs in life, is a romantic libertine but still very dignified, both attractive and serious petite but not lowly amorous but loyal, seductive but serious, petite but not insignificant/unimportant.

It would be hard to find someone who could play the role better than Thủy Nga
Appendix H

Questionnaire

Part One:
Please answer the following questions:
1. Name: ..............................................................................................................
2. Gender: 1 - Male ( ) 2 - Female ( )
3. Age: ............
4. How long have you been learning English? ..................................................
5. Which year are you in? 1- First year ( ) 2-Second year ( ) 3-Third year ( ) 4-Fourth year ( )

Part Two:
Please refer to all the errors from your own translation on the previous page, which have been identified, circled and numbered. State your reason of making each error in the following questions by ticking into the appropriate option:

Error 1: Which of the followings is the cause of your making this error?
( ) It is similar to the Vietnamese structure.
( ) It is different from Vietnamese syntactic structures.
( ) I know the rule well, but occasionally make errors of this type, because of lack of practice.
( ) The teacher’s explanations were not clear.
( ) I think the rule is shared by all cases, I don’t expect that the error I made is an exception
( ) I forgot the rule.
( ) I know the grammatical rule, but I just have problem rendering the structure from Vietnamese into English.
( ) I don’t remember the reason.
( ) The structure has not been taught yet.
( ) List in the space below any factors other than those above that you think are the causes of this particular error

..............................................................................................................................................

Error 2: Which of the followings is the cause of your making this error?
( ) It is similar to the Vietnamese structure.
( ) It is different from Vietnamese syntactic structures.
( ) I know the rule well, but occasionally make errors of this type, because of lack of practice.
( ) The teacher’s explanations were not clear.
( ) I think the rule is shared by all cases, I don’t expect that the error I made is an exception
( ) I forgot the rule.
( ) I know the grammatical rule, but I just have problem rendering the structure from Vietnamese into English.
( ) I don’t remember the reason.
( ) The structure has not been taught yet.
( ) List in the space below any factors other than those above that you think are the causes of this particular error

Error 3: Which of the followings is the cause of your making this error?
( ) It is similar to the Vietnamese structure.
( ) It is different from Vietnamese syntactic structures.
( ) I know the rule well, but occasionally make errors of this type, because of lack of practice.
( ) The teacher’s explanations were not clear.
( ) I think the rule is shared by all cases, I don’t expect that the error I made is an exception
( ) I forgot the rule.
( ) I know the grammatical rule, but I just have problem rendering the structure from Vietnamese into English.
( ) I don’t remember the reason.
( ) The structure has not been taught yet.
( ) List in the space below any factors other than those above that you think are the causes of this particular error

Error 4: Which of the followings is the cause of your making this error?
( ) It is similar to the Vietnamese structure.
( ) It is different from Vietnamese syntactic structures.
( ) I know the rule well, but occasionally make errors of this type, because of lack of practice.
( ) The teacher’s explanations were not clear.
( ) I think the rule is shared by all cases, I don’t expect that the error I made is an exception
( ) I forgot the rule.
( ) I know the grammatical rule, but I just have problem rendering the structure from Vietnamese into English.
( ) I don’t remember the reason.
( ) The structure has not been taught yet.
( ) List in the space below any factors other than those above that you think are the causes of this particular error

Error 5: Which of the followings is the cause of your making this error?
( ) It is similar to the Vietnamese structure.
( ) It is different from Vietnamese syntactic structures.
( ) I know the rule well, but occasionally make errors of this type, because of lack of practice.
( ) The teacher’s explanations were not clear.
( ) I think the rule is shared by all cases, I don’t expect that the error I made is an exception
( ) I forgot the rule.
( ) I know the grammatical rule, but I just have problem rendering the structure from Vietnamese into English.
( ) I don’t remember the reason.
( ) The structure has not been taught yet.
( ) List in the space below any factors other than those above that you think are the causes of this particular error

Error 6: Which of the followings is the cause of your making this error?
( ) It is similar to the Vietnamese structure.
( ) It is different from Vietnamese syntactic structures.
( ) I know the rule well, but occasionally make errors of this type, because of lack of practice.
( ) The teacher’s explanations were not clear.
( ) I think the rule is shared by all cases, I don’t expect that the error I made is an exception
( ) I forgot the rule.
( ) I know the grammatical rule, but I just have problem rendering the structure from Vietnamese into English.
( ) I don’t remember the reason.
( ) The structure has not been taught yet.
( ) List in the space below any factors other than those above that you think are the causes of this particular error

Error 7: Which of the followings is the cause of your making this error?
( ) It is similar to the Vietnamese structure.
( ) It is different from Vietnamese syntactic structures.
( ) I know the rule well, but occasionally make errors of this type, because of lack of practice.
( ) The teacher’s explanations were not clear.
( ) I think the rule is shared by all cases, I don’t expect that the error I made is an exception
( ) I forgot the rule.
( ) I know the grammatical rule, but I just have problem rendering the structure from Vietnamese into English.
( ) I don’t remember the reason.
( ) The structure has not been taught yet.
( ) List in the space below any factors other than those above that you think are the causes of this particular error

Error 8: Which of the followings is the cause of your making this error?
( ) It is similar to the Vietnamese structure.
( ) It is different from Vietnamese syntactic structures.
( ) I know the rule well, but occasionally make errors of this type, because of lack of practice.
( ) The teacher’s explanations were not clear.
( ) I think the rule is shared by all cases, I don’t expect that the error I made is an exception
( ) I forgot the rule.
( ) I know the grammatical rule, but I just have problem rendering the structure from Vietnamese into English.
( ) I don’t remember the reason.
( ) The structure has not been taught yet.
( ) List in the space below any factors other than those above that you think are the causes of this particular error

Error 9: Which of the followings is the cause of your making this error?
( ) It is similar to the Vietnamese structure.
( ) It is different from Vietnamese syntactic structures.
( ) I know the rule well, but occasionally make errors of this type, because of lack of practice.
( ) The teacher’s explanations were not clear.
( ) I think the rule is shared by all cases, I don’t expect that the error I made is an exception
( ) I forgot the rule.
( ) I know the grammatical rule, but I just have problem rendering the structure from Vietnamese into English.
( ) I don’t remember the reason.
( ) The structure has not been taught yet.
( ) List in the space below any factors other than those above that you think are the causes of this particular error
Appendix I

Interview Transcript

(Samples of the first interview transcript, the transcript of other 20 interviews are included in the CD-Rom)

I: Interviewer,
VTBN: Student’s name

I: Chào Bích Ngọc, có có muốn hỏi em một số câu hỏi về bài làm của em, ở câu đầu tiên Là kể theo dõi cuộc hành trình thái sản của bộ phim thì em đã dịch là Watching attentively the gestation of Me Thao – the golden time, thì thật ra là đề diễn tả một việc mà nó đã từng diễn ra và bây giờ finished trước khi mà cái bài viết này được ra đời thì lẽ ra em phải dùng hình thức là having watched thì em lại dùng là Watching. Em có thể cho có biết lý do vì sao em chọn cách dịch là Watching thay vì having watched hay là không?

[Good morning Bich Ngoc, I want to ask you some questions regarding your translation. In the first sentence, your translation is, ‘Watching attentively the gestation of Me Thao – the golden time.’ Actually, to express an action which has happened and finished before this film review appears, you should have used the past participle, ‘having watched’, but you used ‘watching’ instead. Can you explain this to me?]

VTBN: Thưa cô, lúc đầu thì em cũng dùng Having watched giống như cô nhưng mà em nhớ có lần thấy nói là khi mình kể về 1 cái gì đó thì thi hiện tại thì nó sẽ làm cho người đọc ... làm cho bản dịch đó nó gần gũi hơn, cái tình huống nó diễn ra gần hơn, do đó em sửa lại là Watching.

[At the beginning, I also intended to use ‘Having watched’, as you told me, ... but then I remembered that one time in the past one teacher told me that using a present participle phrase can make the reader feel familiar with the context of the translation text and to relate it to what happened in the text, therefore, I changed the translation and to make it ‘Watching’.]

I: Tiếp theo là phân dịch ở trong ngoặc đơn Giá chỉ đặt tên phim là Mê Thảo thì nghe giãn dị và đã hồn thì em dịch là ‘supposedly just named Me Thao, it might sound simpler and more enjoyably’, thì ở trong câu này em có 2 lỗi, có 2 cái được coi như là lỗi , thứ nhất là đường như em không có subject, em không có chủ ngữ ở phân đầu tiên supposedly just named Me Thao, thì em có thể cho có biết lý do vì sao em chọn dịch như vậy hay là em chỉ muốn đặt nó ở dạng là past participle phrase, và có một lỗi thứ hai nữa là more enjoyably, tức là thay vì em phải nói là it might sound simpler and more
enjoyable thì em lại dịch là more enjoyably, thì em có thể cho có biết nguyên do của cách dịch như vậy hay không?

[Regarding the text inside the bracket of sentence one, your translation is ‘supposingly just named Me Thao, it might sound simpler and more enjoyably.’ In this sentence, you have two errors. Firstly, there is no subject in the sentence ‘supposingly just named Me Thao.’ Can you tell me the reason why you made this translation? Or did you intend to put the translation in the form of a past participle phrase? The second error is with the phrase ‘more enjoyably’. Instead of saying, ‘it might sound simpler and more enjoyable’, your translation is, ‘more enjoyably’. Can you tell me the reason for this?

VTBN: Cái đầu tiên về chủ ngữ thì em muốn dùng past participle, cái điểm này nghệ giống Việt nam hơn. Cái thứ hai là enjoyably thì em nghĩ là sound là 1 cái động từ thường cho nên em dùng trạng từ.

[Regarding the first error, I want to use the past participle so that the translation is closer to the Vietnamese version, as there is no subject in the Vietnamese target text. As for the second error, with ‘more enjoyably’ I thought that ‘sound’ was a verb, therefore, the word modifying it must be an adverb and I used the adverb ‘enjoyably’.

I: Bây giờ em đã hiểu về sao không được dùng trạng từ hay là không? Tức là dùng ra là em dùng more enjoyable thay vì dùng enjoyably, vì sound là 1 trong những linking verb. Ó câu văn là Cảnh đốt bàn ghế, tiếng nổ cua đốc đắc và phát sáng bắn vào con búp bê khiến cho người xem lạnh gai cùng như cấu tiếp theo Cảnh tiếp theo là cảnh nóng tạm nghiêm đối ổn và bàn chấn giảm nat những con tầm lầm ta sơn gai ốc, ở những đoạn này, ở 2 câu em đều lặp, em đều dịch ra chủ ngữ rất là dài, sau đó em lại có 1 câu phụ và dùng cái conjunction là that, ví dụ như là ‘The scene of furniture and explosive sound of furnishings and the gunshot shooting at the doll, that makes viewers’ blood run cold’ và câu tiếp theo thì em cũng dịch chữ that. Thế em có thể cho có biết lý do vì sao em dùng chữ that sau 1 chủ ngữ dài như vậy không?

[Now do you really understand why we cannot use adverb ‘enjoyably’ in this case? You need to say ‘more enjoyable’, rather than ‘more enjoyably’, because ‘sound’ is a linking verb. In the sentence Cảnh đốt bàn ghế, tiếng nổ cua đốc đắc và phát sáng bắn vào con búp bê khiến cho người xem lạnh gai cùng như cấu tiếp theo là cảnh nóng tạm nghiêm đối ổn và bàn chấn giảm nat những con tầm lầm ta sơn gai ốc, you always use a very long subject for your translation, and after that you used a comma and the word ‘that’. For example, your translation is, ‘The scene of furniture and explosive sound of furnishings and the gunshot shooting at the doll, that makes viewers’ blood run cold’, and in the next sentence you also did the same thing with the word ‘that’. Can you explain why you inserted the word ‘that’ after a long subject in this sentence?]

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VTBN: Em cử nghị là sau một chút ng_buf dãy thì mình có thêm một cái that và ... và cái phrase nói còn một cái dòng tự. Còn cái lý do thứ hai ... khi mình đọc cái câu đó lên em thấy nó gắn gũi với tiếng Việt, chắc anh hùng của tiếng Việt khi mà chuyển dịch qua tiếng Anh.
[I just thought that after a long subject we need to insert the word ‘that’. Also, when I use that translation of mine, I found it more familiar to the Vietnamese structure. Maybe I am influenced by the sentence in the Vietnamese source text.]

I: Như vậy em cho rằng ở 2 câu này cái lý do mà em dùng chỉ that là vì em muốn dùng cái tự để thay thế lại chữ ngữ đang trước ...
[So, in your opinion, the reason you used ‘that’ was to replace the long subject at the beginning of the sentence?]

VTBN: Đa dụng. [Yes.]

I: ...và vì nó tương tự với tiếng Việt cho nên em làm như vậy [and because you are influenced by the Vietnamese structure?]

VTBN: Đa dụng [Yes].

I: Bây giờ có thể nói qua cái lơi là ở phần dịch là Trong trí nhớ của tôi, thì là em dịch là In my mind, thì có một cách dịch khác tốt hơn là As far as I can remember, thì em có thể cho có biết lý do vì sao em chọn dịch là In my mind, vì nó quen, vì em dịch như vậy hay là vì em đọc trước đây hay như thế nào thì em có thể cho có biết lý do?
[Your translation of the phrase, ‘Trong trí nhớ của tôi’, is, ‘In my mind’. There is another better option for this phrase, which is, ‘As far as I can remember’. Can you tell me why you translated this phrase as ‘In my mind’. Is it because you are more familiar with this structure or because this is a structure that you have read somewhere before?]

VTBN: Thứ nhất là em cũng không nhớ, em nhớ là em đã đọc, đọc đọc ở đâu rồi, cũng lâu lắm rồi. Cái thứ hai là do em hay nói trong tiếng Anh, khi mà em nói bằng tiếng Anh thì em sử dụng câu In my mind nhiều, cho nên em dịch thì nó có thể theo thói quen mà viết.
[I don’t really remember where I read this structure. Also, in English, when I need to express a similar idea, I always use the phrase, ‘In my mind’, and I just follow that habit when translating.]

I: Ở câu tiếp theo mà có quan tâm la câu số 12 Trong trí nhớ tôi, chưa có phim nào ưu nước Việt ta được thực hiện công phu và đạt chuẩn như vậy, thì em đã dịch là up to now Vietnamese films have not been done elaborately and perfectly as Me Thao- the golden time, thì câu hỏi của có lẽ có thể cho có biết lý do vì sao em làm như vậy hay không?
[Your translation of sentence 12, Trong trí nhớ tôi, chú ta phim nào ưa nước Việt ta được thực hiện công phu và đạt chuẩn như vậy, is, ‘up to now Vietnamese films have not been done elaborately and perfectly as Me Thao- the golden time.’ Can you explain this translation?]

**VTBN:** Lúc em dịch câu này thì em nghĩ đến cái hành động khi mà làm nên bộ phim đó, do đó em muốn phủ định cái động từ, em chỉ muốn nhấn mạnh cái hành động nhiều hơn là cái chủ ngữ.

[When I translated this sentence, I wanted to emphasise the action. I wanted to emphasise the verb more than the subject of the sentence.]

**I:** Cuối cùng là trong bài dịch này có một câu là tôi, tôi bị mệt mỏi bởi, tôi bị mệt mỏi bởi các nhân vật có tên và không tên thì em dịch là I continue being fascinated by named and anonymous characters, thì nó thiếu một cái mạo từ the ở trước named, thì em có thể cho có biết lý do vì sao không có mạo từ ở đây không?

[Your translation of the sentence, tôi bị mệt mỏi bởi, tôi bị mệt mỏi bởi các nhân vật có tên và không tên, is, ‘I continue being fascinated by named and anonymous characters.’ It seems that you forgot to use the definite article ‘the’ in front of the words ‘named and anonymous characters’. Can you explain this lack of an article in this noun phrase?]

**VTBN:** Em không để mạo từ the ở đây là do em quean

[just forgot].

**I:** Như vậy thì em có thể cho có biết là khi chuyển dịch bài này từ tiếng Việt sang tiếng Anh, thì giả sử như em được cho sẵn từ vựng, em được tra từ điển hết thì em thấy là bài dịch này nó có những khó khăn gì đối với em, về mặt ngữ pháp khi em chuyển dịch từ tiếng Việt sang tiếng Anh?

[When you translated this text from Vietnamese into English, supposing you were given all the lexical equivalents of each word in the text, and you had full access to a dictionary to find the words’ meaning, what could be your difficulties in the fields of grammar or syntax when translating?]

**VTBN:** Khi chuyển dịch từ tiếng Việt sang tiếng Anh trong câu tiếng Việt thì thường không có chủ ngữ, còn trong câu tiếng Anh thì những câu mà không có chủ ngữ thực tế là minh phải dịch sang passive, nhưng phần lớn là em cũng như các bạn sinh viên Việt nam thì thường chuyển dịch những câu đó theo dạng active, là điểm thử nhất. Điểm ngữ pháp thứ hai là em thường xuyên thiếu mạo từ, đặc biệt là mạo từ the khi di với danh từ, thiếu dấu hết là thiếu ... cái thứ ba nữa là việc kết hợp đưa vào động từ như thể nào cho nó hợp với nhau và nghe có vẻ như rất là tiếng Anh, tiếng Anh chuẩn, chủ ngữ không phải nghe mà tiếng Việt và tiếng Anh. Vì dự như là trong câu thứ hai, Trước hết là mè mẩn
với những hình ảnh rất ngôn ngữ điện ảnh, thì khi em dịch chữ rất ngôn ngữ điện ảnh thì
không thể tìm từ nào trong tiếng Anh em nghị nó có nghĩa như chữ rất câu.
[When translating from Vietnamese into English, the problem is that Vietnamese
sentences do not often have subjects. In English, most sentences without subjects can be
put in the form of the passive voice. So a suitable way to translate Vietnamese into
English is in the form of a passive sentence. But most Vietnamese students often have
the habit of translating into the active voice. That is the first difficulty. The second
problem is the lack of articles. And the third problem is how to combine the words so
that they sound like natural English and not a combination of Vietnamese and English.
For example, in sentence 2, Trước hết là mê mẩn với những hình ảnh rất ngôn ngữ điện
ảnh, thì khi em dịch chữ rất ngôn ngữ điện ảnh, tôi không tìm thấy bất kỳ từ nào trong tiếng Anh,
đó đúng về mặt ngữ pháp mà nó không bịa sai đi nghĩa của tiếng Việt, thì em
dốc cho có biết 3 câu đấy?

I: Bây giờ cơ muốn hỏi thêm 1 câu hỏi nữa là thật ra là khi em chuyển dịch cái bản văn
này, thì em thấy 3 câu nào là em cảm thấy khó khăn nhất khi xử lý về mặt ngữ pháp, tức
là khi em đã biết tất cả từ vụng những mà em cảm thấy khó khăn khi mạch chuyển nó sang
tiếng Anh, nó đúng về mặt ngữ pháp mà nó không bị sai đi nghĩa của tiếng Việt, thì em
dốc cho có biết 3 câu đấy?

VTBN: Câu đầu tiên là câu số... Trong trí nhớ tôi, chưa có phim nào của nước Việt ta
dược thực hiện công phu và đạt chuẩn như vậy. Cái thứ nhất là trong trí nhớ tôi thì cái
thành ngữ, cái cụm từ mà hay dùng quen nhất đó là ‘In my memory’, em không nghĩ là
dùng cái cụm từ đó as far as I can remember, và cái điểm thứ hai đó là em không, em chỉ
dùng, em chỉ nhận mảnh văn cống dỗ, hành động người ta làm bố phim dỗ chủ em
không nghĩ là tác giả muốn nói vẫn chưa có một bố phim nào của nước Việt, tức là
không phải chỉ toàn bộ các bộ phim của Việt Nam là công phu và đạt chuẩn. Câu số 18
hầu như mỗi đoạn phim đều thảm đinh tâm hồn Việt, em dịch là ‘each subject’, em
nghi là từng đối tượng đó nó thể hiện được con người Việt Nam và... chủ em không nghĩ
là cái phân của Việt Nam, ở đây subject tức là từng cái cảnh từng cái nhân vật, không
nghi là cứ 1 cái phân của bộ phim, bởi vì mỗi nhân vật thì cách ăn mặc, cách di động
cách nói chuyển đều thảm đinh tâm hồn Việt do đó em dịch là each subject. Khi
chuyển ra rất là khó, như có thể ý đó là dùng như là Almost every part of the film
Appendix J
Vietnamese Comprehension Test

Name:..............................................
Class:..............................................

Hãy đọc lại toàn bài dịch và lựa chọn câu trả lời sát nghĩa nhất với câu văn được gạch dưới:

Là vẻ tüm chấm chú dời theo cuộc ‘hành trình thai sản’ của bộ phim, tôi mê mẩn với Mẹ Thảo-thời vang bong (giả chữ đặt tên phim là Mẹ Thảo thời thì nghe gần đi hơn và ‘dặ’ hơn).

a. giả người ta chỉ đặt tên phim là Mẹ Thảo thời thì tên phim nghe gần đi hơn và ‘dặ’ hơn.
b. giả người ta chỉ đặt tên phim là Mẹ Thảo thời thì người ta nghe gần đi hơn và ‘dặ’ hơn.
c. giả người ta chỉ đặt tên phim là Mẹ Thảo thời thì bộ phim nghe gần đi hơn và ‘dặ’ hơn.
d. giả nhà làm phim chỉ đặt tên phim là Mẹ Thảo thời thì tên phim nghe gần đi hơn và ‘dặ’ hơn.

Trước hết là mê mẩn với những hình ảnh ‘rất ngôn ngữ đền ảnh’.

a. Trước hết tất cả mê mẩn với những hình ảnh ‘rất ngôn ngữ đền ảnh’.
b. Trước hết là khán giả mê mẩn với những hình ảnh ‘rất ngôn ngữ đền ảnh’.
c. Trước hết là nhà làm phim mê mẩn với những hình ảnh ‘rất ngôn ngữ đền ảnh’.
d. Trước hết là chúng tôi mê mẫn với những hình ảnh ‘rất ngôn ngữ đền ảnh’.

Cảnh đánh cây gãy đầu hoa sang sống.

a. Cảnh chuyển cây gãy đầu hoa sang sống.
b. Cảnh đánh ngã cây gãy đầu hoa sang sống.
c. Cảnh đốn ngã cây gãy đầu hoa sang sống.
d. Cảnh chuyển chỗ cây gãy đầu hoa sang sống.

Cảnh thả đến trở người như chị có ma thuật mọi làm nơi.

a. Cảnh thả đến trở người ta tưởng như chị có ma thuật mọi làm nơi.
b. Cảnh thả đến trở người xem tưởng như chị có ma thuật mọi làm nơi.
c. Cảnh thả đến trở tối tưởng như chị có ma thuật mọi làm nơi.
d. Cạnh thừa đến tôi, nhà làm phim tương như chỉ có ma thuật mỗi làm nổi.

**Cảnh quay nào cùng thấy mò hỏi.**

a. Cảnh quay nào người ta cùng thấy mò hỏi.
b. Cảnh quay nào người xem cùng thấy mò hỏi.
c. Cảnh quay nào tôi cùng thấy mò hỏi.
d. Cảnh quay nào nhà làm phim cùng thấy mò hỏi.

Lái mê mẩn với những nhân vật có tên và không tên.

a. Tôi lại mê mẩn với những nhân vật có tên và không tên.
b. Người xem lại mê mẩn với những nhân vật có tên và không tên.
c. Khán giả lại mê mẩn với những nhân vật có tên và không tên.
d. Họ lại mê mẩn với những nhân vật có tên và không tên.

Trong nhiều nhân vật phụ thành công, ông bố rất sinh động và cảm động, xứng đáng được bấu là vai phụ xuất sắc nhất.

a. ông xứng đáng được bấu là vai phụ xuất sắc nhất
b. ông bố già xứng đáng được bấu là vai phụ xuất sắc nhất
c. những nhân vật phụ này xứng đáng được bấu là vai phụ xuất sắc nhất
d. họ xứng đáng được bấu là vai phụ xuất sắc nhất.

Nhân vật chính nào cùng một vẻ, độc đáo, đầy thần phán, được diễn tả tự nhiên và sâu sắc lắm sao.

a. những nhân vật này được diễn tả tự nhiên và sâu sắc lắm sao.
b. những nhân vật chính này được diễn tả tự nhiên và sâu sắc lắm sao.
c. họ được diễn tả tự nhiên và sâu sắc lắm sao
d. có ta/ anh ta được diễn tả tự nhiên và sâu sắc lắm sao

Nguyễn hào hoa, hào hiệp, lapse di ra mắt, rỡ là anh diễn chế bất đặc biệt, khát khích.

a. Nguyễn hào hoa, hào hiệp, lapse di ra mắt, anh rỡ là anh diễn chế bất đặc biệt, khát khích.
b. Nguyễn hào hoa, hào hiệp, lapse di ra mắt, ông ta rỡ là anh diễn chế bất đặc biệt, khát khích.
c. Nguyễn hào hoa, hào hiệp, lapse di ra mắt, họ rỡ là anh diễn chế bất đặc biệt, khát khích.
d. Nguyễn hào hoa, hào hiệp, lapse di ra mắt, người ta rỡ là anh diễn chế bất đặc biệt, khát khích.

**Tam, cây dân nguyệt tuyệt với tôi mực tuyệt vọng, u uẩn, bể tắc mà nghĩa khí, cụ chỉ thất chính xác với tâm trạng.**
a. Tam, người chơi cày dàn ngay hết tuyệt vời tôi mức tuyệt vọng, u uân, bè tả mà nghĩa khí, cự chỉ của anh thật chính xác với tâm trạng
b. Tam, cày dàn nguyệt tuyệt với tôi mức tuyệt vọng, u uân, bè tả mà nghĩa khí, cự chỉ của anh thật chính xác với tâm trạng
c. Tam, người chơi cày dàn nguyệt tuyệt với tôi mức tuyệt vọng, u uân, bè tả mà nghĩa khí, cự chỉ thật chính xác với tâm trạng.
d. Tam, nghị sẽ chơi cày dàn nguyệt tuyệt với tôi mức tuyệt vọng, u uân, bè tả mà nghĩa khí, cự chỉ thật chính xác với tâm trạng.

Tôi, có dâo hát hòn nhân bạc phấn, phieu dat mà cao sang, da tính mà chung tinh, vũ quay nên rụ vua nghiêm trang, nhở nhơ mà không hên mơn.... khốc có ai nhập vai hay hón Thuy Nga (vội ‘giọng ca vàng’ Thanh Hoài và lời bài hát chuẩn van do nhà thơ Vạn Lê viết).
   a. khốc tìm được ai nhập vai Tôi hay hón Thuy Nga.
   b. khốc có ai nhập mời vai diễn hay hón Thuy Nga.
   c. khốc tìm được ai nhập vai diễn có dâo hát Tôi hay hón Thuy Nga.
   d. khốc ai có thể nhập vai Tôi hay hón Thuy Nga.

Bất ngời nhất là Cam (Minh Trang -từ quang mặt, ánh mặt, bàn tay, bàn chân đến cả thân hình cứ như là tôi cô), có gái cảm không có trong truyện Chùa Đàn, xuyên suốt phim như quý hiền, như ma ám, như là cái bồng của kiếp người, cái triệt lý vò ngôn mà nói được nhiều điều hơn tất cả.
   a. từ quang mặt, ánh mặt, bàn tay, bàn chân đến cả thân hình của cô cứ như là tôi cô.
   b. từ quang mặt, ánh mặt, bàn tay, bàn chân đến cả thân hình của Minh Trang cứ như là tôi cô.
   c. từ quang mặt, ánh mặt, bàn tay, bàn chân đến cả thân hình của họ cứ như là tôi cô.
   d. từ quang mặt, ánh mặt, bàn tay, bàn chân đến cả thân hình mọi người cứ như là tôi cô.

Bất ngời nhất là Cam (Minh Trang -từ quang mặt, ánh mặt, bàn tay, bàn chân đến cả thân hình cứ như là tôi cô), có gái cảm không có trong truyện Chùa Đàn, xuyên suốt phim như quý hiền, như ma ám, như là cái bồng của kiếp người, cái triệt lý vò ngôn mà nói được nhiều điều hơn tất cả.
   a. có gái cảm xuyên suốt phim như quý hiền, như ma ám, như là cái bồng của kiếp người, cái triệt lý vò ngôn mà nói được nhiều điều hơn tất cả.
   b. Minh Trang xuyên suốt phim như quý hiền, như ma ám, như là cái bồng của kiếp người, cái triệt lý vò ngôn mà nói được nhiều điều hơn tất cả.
   c. họ xuyên suốt phim như quý hiền, như ma ám, như là cái bồng của kiếp người, cái triệt lý vò ngôn mà nói được nhiều điều hơn tất cả.
Cảnh làng quê Bắc Bộ đầu thế kỷ 20, áp Mê Thảo, mái đình, bèn nước, con đường đất, công lang, đun rom, nếp rạ, chum, vải, nom, gió ... cú pháp phổ hồn via ngày xưa.

Theo cách hiểu của bạn, cúm từ gần nghĩa nhất với cụm từ ‘phát phổ hồn via’ được gạch dưới ở câu vần trên là:

........................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................
Appendix K
Teaching Syllabus
Department Of English Language And Literature -University Of Social Sciences And Humanities - Ho Chi Minh City
(applied from school year 2000-2004)

SEMESTER I

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<td>375</td>
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Appendix L

Participant’s Information Sheet

Error Analysis in Vietnamese-English Translation:
Pedagogical Implications

Dear research participant,

This is a study conducted by Pham Phu Quynh Na, a PhD student at the School of
Languages & Linguistics, College of Arts, Education & Social Sciences, University of
Western Sydney, Australia.

The study aims to devise a classification of types of errors Vietnamese university students
often make when translating some syntactic structures from Vietnamese into English. The
benefit of this study will be to suggest some pedagogical implications for teaching
Vietnamese-English translation, specifically translating some syntactic structures.

You will be given a passage to translate from Vietnamese into English. The test will take
about one hour. After that, all the errors in your translation (if there are any) will be
corrected, circled and numbered. Your translation will be returned to you, which you can
use in the second part of the test. In the second part, you will answer a questionnaire to
state the reason why you made errors in the translation test. In the third part of the study,
your voluntary participation in an interview will be needed. Ten students are needed to take
part in an interview, in which you will be asked to scrutinise on the reasons why you make
a certain error with reference to your test.

Your participation is voluntary, and non-participation will not affect your study in any
case.
Your participation will be highly appreciated.

Should you have any question regarding this study, please do not hesitate to contact me. I
can be reached at the address: Pham Phu Quynh Na, 451/4 Huynh Van Banh, Phu Nhuan
District, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. My home phone number is 84-8-9911808.

NOTE:
This study has been approved by the University of Western Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee in
Australia. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may
contact the Ethics Committee through the Research Ethics Officers (Tel: 02 4570 1136; Email:
k.buckley@uws.edu.au). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you
will be informed of the outcome.

Yours sincerely,
Pham Phu Quynh Na
School of Languages & Linguistics, College of Arts, Education & Social Sciences,
University of Western Sydney

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Appendix M
Consent Form

Error Analysis in Vietnamese-English Translation: Pedagogical Implications

I, .............................................................., have read and understood the information about the research, and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that my participation is voluntary and I agree to participate in this research, knowing that I can withdraw at any time. I understand that the information I provide will not be identified as coming from me or identify me in any way and that the information I provide will be part of Pham Phu Quynh Na’s thesis. I have been given a copy of this form to keep.

Participant’s Name: ..............................................................
Participant’s Signature: ............................................Date............
Investigator’s Name: Pham Phu Quynh Na
Investigator’s Signature: .............................................Date............

NOTE:
This study has been approved by the University of Western Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee in Australia. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Ethics Committee through the Research Ethics Officers (Tel: 02 4570 1136, Email: k.buckley@uws.edu.au). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.
Appendix N

Instructions to students for answering questionnaires

Dear research participant,

Thank you very much for your very willing participation into the first part of my research, in which you have translated from Vietnamese into English a short text of about 300 words.

In this second step of the research, your translation will be returned to you with all of your structural, syntactical and grammatical errors, not lexical errors, (if there are any) being corrected. Please note that the text given back to you is only the copy of the correction of your translation. The original translation has been kept by the researcher. Here is the interpretation of the correction from the examiner:

str: structural error
✓: omission error (one word has been omitted)

In case one word is morphologically wrong and another word is better, the examiner will write the alternative word above your suggested translation.

You will also find on your translation some errors which are corrected, highlighted and numbered at the same time. Please refer only to these errors to answer the questionnaire. Please ignore other errors which are only corrected without being highlighted and numbered. The questionnaire will ask you to state the possible reason(s) why you made errors in the translation test. You can tick into the provided options in the questionnaire or you can give your own explanation either in Vietnamese or English.

I also enclose with this letter the suggested translation of the Vietnamese text in the first part of the research.

I will not be able to carry out my research without your help. I want to express my heartfelt thank to each of you who has spent your time participating my research.

Best regards,
Pham Phu Quynh Na
Bạn thân mến,

Rất cảm ơn bạn đã nhiệt tình tham gia vào phần đầu tiên trong chương trình nghiên cứu, bạn đã thực hiện việc dịch một đoạn văn ngắn khoảng 300 từ tiếng Việt sang tiếng Anh.

Trong phần thứ hai của chương trình nghiên cứu, bài dịch của bạn sẽ được hoàn trả cho bạn cùng với tất cả các lỗi cấu trúc, cú pháp và lỗi ngữ pháp, nếu có (không bao gồm lỗi từ vựng) đã được chỉnh sửa. Lưu ý rằng bài đang được phán cho bạn chỉ là bản sao của bài sửa. Bài sửa trên bạn dịch gốc sẽ do tác giả chương trình nghiên cứu giả định. Dưới đây là cách hiểu một số ký hiệu của giáo viên sửa bài:
str: lỗi về cấu trúc câu
✓: một hay nhiều từ đã bị bỏ sót.

Trong trường hợp một từ bị sai, giáo viên sửa bài sẽ viết từ thay thế tốt hơn trên từ mà bạn đã dùng.


Tôi sẽ không thể nào thực hiện được tài nếu không có sự giúp đỡ của các bạn. Tôi chân thành cảm ơn các bạn đã dành thời gian tham gia nghiên cứu của tôi.

Chào thân ái,
Phạm Phú Quỳnh Na
Appendix O
Instructions on using the CD-ROM

1. Minimum configuration for this CD-Rom

PC: Pentium 166-16 Mo RAM, Window 95 or +, CD-Rom drive 8X

Mac: PowerMac with Systeme 7.1 or +, 32 Mo RAM, CD-Rom drive 8X

2. List of folders in the CD-Rom.

Folder 1: (Microsoft Excel - 2003)
Appendix A – Table 1
Appendix B – Table 2
Appendix C – Table 3

Folder 2: (Microsoft Word - 2003)
21 Transcripts of Students’ Interviews

3. Instruction on how to use the Corpus

1. On Microsoft Excel, open the file named Table 1 – Error Identification and Categorisation (or Table 2 or 3)
2. From the Data menu, point to Filter, and then click on Show All to observe all the errors in the corpus.

4. How to filter a range to find a certain type of error.

You can apply filter to only one range of the worksheet at a time.

1. Click on a cell in the range you want to filter.
2. On the Data menu, point to Filter, and then click on AutoFilter. The arrow will appear on the right of each column of the range you want to filter.
3. Click on the arrow, different choices will appear in the small window. Select the option you want to filter, i.e. Year 1, or Translation Error, the corpus will filter the data for you. The number appearing at the bottom left corner of the screen is the total number of that kind of error.
For example, if you want to find out the total number of translation errors of four groups of students, the following steps are needed:

1. From the **Data** menu, point to **Filter**, and then click on **Show All** to observe all the errors in the corpus.

2. On the **Data** menu, point to **Filter**, and then click on **AutoFilter**. The arrow will appear on each column of the range you want to filter.

3. Click on the arrow on the right of the cell named ERROR TYPES. All types of errors will appear in the small window under the cell name. Select the option you want to filter, i.e. Translation Error. All the translation errors (of four groups of students) will appear on the screen.

If you want to find out the Translation Errors made by Year 1 students, do all the above steps from 1 to 3, then click on the arrow on the right of the cell named YEAR from the screen of step 3. Select the option you want to filter, eg. Year 1. All the translation errors from Year 1 will appear.
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ERROR ANALYSIS IN VIETNAMESE – ENGLISH TRANSLATION: PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

By

PHAM Phu Quynh Na

A thesis submitted to the
School of Humanities and Languages of
The University of Western Sydney
in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

December, 2005

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STATEMENT OF AUTHENTICATION

The work presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original, except as acknowledged in the text. I hereby declare that I have not submitted this material, either in whole or in part, for a degree at this or any other institution.

PHAM PHU QUYNH NA

Date:........................................
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to the University of Western Sydney for granting me an International Postgraduate Research Scholarship, which gave me the golden opportunity to carry out this study.

I would like to express my special gratitude to my supervisors, Associate Professor Paulin Djité, Professor Stuart Campbell, Associate Professor Sandra Hale from the School of Humanities and Languages, University of Western Sydney, for their patient support, constructive criticisms, detailed comments, devoted guidance, and precious time, without which my study might not have been completed.

I am grateful to Dr Bruce Lockhart from the National University of Singapore for his help in examining all the translations of the students in this thesis. I am thankful to Dr Victoria Rosen for sending me her published Ph.D thesis, which helped me in the literature review of this thesis.

My gratitude is also expressed to Dr Kelvin McQueen for his help in editing the first few chapters of this thesis.

I also thank the University of Western Sydney, in particular the School of Humanities and Languages and staff for supporting this thesis.

Special thanks are due to the Department of English Language and Literature, University of Social Sciences and Humanities of Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam for their permission to conduct the study.

I would like to thank all my colleagues and students who gave up their time to participate in this study and complete the questionnaires and interviews. I am grateful to all my friends, Dr Abbas Brashi, Dr Micheal Kennedy, Dr Ramin Mohajeri, Ms Nguyen Pham Giang Thy, Ms To Minh Thanh, Ms Kim Thu, Ms Vo Thi Nu Anh, Mr Vo Thanh Long for all their mental support, encouragement and help during the time this study was done.

I owe great gratitude to Dr Ho Si Mau Thuc, for always believing in me and giving me the best of his support before the research for this thesis.

And Mum, this is for you.
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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to investigate the extent to which the typological differences between Vietnamese and English influence the process of translating authentic Vietnamese sentences into English through an error analysis of the Vietnamese-English translations by Vietnamese EFL students. It starts with the assumption that Vietnamese is a topic-prominent language and the basic structure of Vietnamese manifests a topic-comment relation, rather than a subject-predicate relation (Thompson, 1987; Dyvik, 1984; Hao, 1991; Rosén, 1998), and tries to find out whether the students are more likely to make more errors when the topic of the sentence is not identical with the grammatical subject.

This study also investigates the most common types of errors Vietnamese students make when translating topic-comment structures from Vietnamese into English. The analysis focuses on the errors made when translating the dropped subject and empty elements of Vietnamese. This is important, given the fact that the grammatical subject is always required in English, but not in Vietnamese. The data was collected from 95 students of English translation classes in their first, second, third, and fourth years in the Department of English Language and Literature at the University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.

Using an error analysis technique often adopted in studying the deviated forms produced by second language learners (James, 1998; Richards, 1974; Corder, 1974), the study constructs an error corpus in the form of a Microsoft Excel Spreadsheet and classifies all the errors
based on the categories they belong to (linguistic, comprehension or translational) and the kind of deviation they are (addition, omission, misordering or misselection, etc). The study establishes a taxonomy of errors, which includes three main categories: linguistic errors, comprehension errors and translation errors.

The results of the study suggest a number of potential errors students are prone to making when translating the topic-comment structure of Vietnamese into English, and provides some practical guidelines for teachers, so that they can help students deal with these types of errors in Vietnamese-English translations.

**Key words:** translation error, error analysis, topic-comment structure, language learners