

Vietnamese-English Translation Errors and Pedagogical Implications in the Digital Age: A Case of English Major Students at a University in Vietnam

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Abstract—The current study aims to analyze common translation errors made by students majoring in English at Thu Dau Mot University (TDMU) when translating Vietnamese texts into English. In the current study, a mixed-methods approach was employed, which incorporated document analysis of 200 translation assignments and semi-structured interviews with five lecturers. It discovered that grammatical errors, such as the misuse of passive voice and incorrect use of the determiners, were the most frequent, followed by lexical errors, including inappropriate word selection and spelling mistakes. The study highlighted the impact of linguistic distinctions between Vietnamese and English, as well as cultural variations, on students' translation performance. Moreover, students have limited exposure to authentic English content and practical translation exercises. The study recommends specific interventions such as supplemental grammar instruction, exposure to culturally significant texts, and ongoing practice through translation drills to train students to produce accurate and contextually appropriate translations. The research strives to rectify these issues to enhance translation pedagogy and better prepare students for the demands of professional translation in the digital age.

Index Terms—translation errors, grammatical errors, lexical errors, English-majoring students, digital age

I. INTRODUCTION

In contemporary society, English has become a globally widespread language, particularly in educational and professional contexts, due to the rapid expansion of globalization. As indicated by Nguyen et al. (2022), English is not only a communication tool but also a lingua franca playing a crucial role in promoting international cooperation, accelerating cultural exchange and driving economic growth worldwide. Kesmez (2021) further reinforces this point by stating that English proficiency is increasingly recognized as an indispensable skill in accomplishing social and economic mobility, and bridging the gap between local and global markets. As English is broadly employed in every aspect of life and is one of the primary languages in several nations, becoming fluent in English is a prerequisite for anyone wishing to engage with human civilization. Therefore, learning and mastering this language is the foremost target of non-native English speakers who learn it as a second language from many nations, including Vietnam.

Within this context, translation plays a crucial role in facilitating effective communication across languages and is regarded as a fundamental skill for all foreign language learners. As Vietnam is becoming more integrated internationally, the need for professional translators or interpreters to bridge the gap in tongue and cultural differences has risen. Translation is defined as not only the process that converts words of a written text from one language to another, but it is also about expressing precisely the meanings, context, and cultural aspects of a language. As a result, inaccurate translation can lead to misunderstanding in communication, culture, and financial losses (Pym, 2013).

Regardless of the importance of English proficiency and translation skills, many Vietnamese students, especially English-majoring students, still face particular challenges in mastering the language and developing translation skills.

More specifically, in the study conducted by Do (2018), Vietnamese students mostly struggle with word-by-word translation; in other words, despite being exposed to various translation approaches carefully, students fail to transmit the intended meaning of the text. These errors occur primarily due to their grammar and vocabulary knowledge gaps. In addition, according to Nguyen and Nguyen (2023), the lack of practical translation tasks in academic context, which concentrate primarily on rote and examination-oriented learning has made these issues more serious. Therefore, this leads to the graduation of students with poor translation skills to meet professional demands. Also, resolving these difficulties requires a broader understanding of the causes to translation errors and the application of appropriate teaching and learning methods to enhance translation skills.

The objective of the current study is to contribute efforts to the essential reference source of researching about translation education improvement in Vietnam by examining the common Vietnamese-English translation errors performed by students majoring in English language at Thu Dau Mot University. In addition, the study will focus on identifying types of errors, explore their underlying causes and suggest practical methods to enhance students' translation competence. aims at providing students with the necessary skills to function in the increasingly globalized professional setting. To achieve these goals, the following research questions were developed:

- (i) *What common errors do English-majored students at Thu Dau Mot University commit in translating Vietnamese texts to English ones?*
- (ii) *What are the underlying causes for these errors?*

Addressing these issues, the current study aims to offer concrete recommendations for enhancing students' translation skills, thus benefiting both English learners and educators.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Overview of Translation

The translation is defined as a fundamental tool that allows the transfer of meaning between languages and, thus, between cultures. it is the process involving converting of a text from a source language (SL) to another corresponding text in a target language (TL), while retaining the same meaning, style, and cultural understanding of the work. In addition, Khatibi (2024) points out that translation is not only a linguistic act but also an understanding of cultural, situational, and pragmatic elements spreading the message (Khatibi, 2024).

Furthermore, as highlighted in several studies, the process of translation is indicated as complex and diverse, with strategies of translation including literal translation, adaptation and cultural transposition, which are used to achieve equivalence between texts (Panou, 2013). In general, these diverse requirements highlight the need for specialized knowledge base and skill set specific to the intent and audience of the translation.

Besides all of these considerations, translation has also been characterized as a creative and interpretative act requiring negotiation regarding the source and target languages. The quest for both semantic and stylistic equivalence, as indicated by Bell (1991), was a process trial to acquire the level of correspondence where the target text resembles its source text in both sense and style. Likewise, Robinson (1997) considers translation as a cognitive process that demands creative problem-solving as distinct horizons of meaning and context arise as moving into new languages, cultures and social environments.

Essentially, translation is a complex process of transferring the meaning of a source text to the equivalent text in the target language. This requires a deep understanding of various source language elements such as syntax, semantics, and pragmatics along with ingenuity to make the translated text convey the same intention and message as the original. This process needs to achieve both semantic and stylistic equivalence whilst maintaining the actual intention of the writer. Hence, translation is intellectual but also an art.

B. Translation Machine as a Tool in the Digital Age

In the digital age, Machine translation (MT) has introduced a new dimension to the discussions on translation quality. Next-generation neural machine translation systems, such as Google Translate, Microsoft Translator, and DeepL, have made significant progress but still face challenges in preserving context and cultural elements. To ensure translation quality, the post-editing stage of MT outputs has become critical, particularly for improving the precision of translations, as seen in scientific articles (Akbari & Tengku, 2020).

MT is a valuable tool for translation tasks and has found utility in various scenarios, such as academic and professional translations. However, it remains prone to errors, particularly in maintaining cultural nuances and handling idiomatic expressions. Addressing these issues requires both an understanding of MT systems and the ability to post-edit outputs effectively (Carré et al., 2022).

Bowker and Ciro (2019) emphasize the importance of machine translation literacy, which includes understanding how MT works and recognizing its limitations. For translation students, this involves learning to critically evaluate and refine MT outputs to produce contextually appropriate and accurate translations. Contemporary MT relies on machine learning, particularly deep learning, which necessitates awareness of its potential and constraints.

In educational contexts, teaching students to integrate MT effectively involves fostering skills in post-editing and cultural adaptation, enabling them to combine technological tools with linguistic and cultural knowledge to achieve high-quality translations.

C. *Translation Quality*

Translation quality has been a primary area of concern in translation studies since it is a prerequisite for effective communication across languages and cultures. Translation quality is the degree of equivalence between a translated text and its source text, involving semantic accuracy, stylistic fidelity, and cultural appropriateness. The expertise and qualification of translators are crucial for translating, but the quality of the source text also play an essential role (Orozco & Hurtado, 2004).

Language accuracy, cultural adaptation, and functional equivalency are critical factors that influence translation quality. More specifically, linguistic accuracy ensures the correct exercise of grammar, lexicon, and syntax. Cultural adaptation, on the other hand, relates to the contextual nuances of the target population. Meanwhile, functional equivalency, according to Castilho et al. (2018) involves reconciling the translation's purpose with the original's communicative intent. This component is particularly important for technical and academic translations (Castilho et al., 2018). Additionally, translation errors can be rated in terms of severity, applying frameworks that allow the assigning of a "weight" to each error type, ensuring a systematic approach to quality assessment.

Finally, Translation Quality Assessment (TQA) methodologies allow for rigorous assessments of the translations. These comprise quantitative approaches that count the incidence and severity of errors and qualitative approaches that highlight functional and stylistic components. From the perspective of reliability and validity for real-world TQA, Fabrychna (2022) states that in a learning and skilled profession, many TQA models are considered high significance for effective combination.

Translation quality is conveniently defined by different linguistic, cultural and functional perspectives. The process of producing a high-quality translation requires a deep comprehension of the original text, the use of appropriate translation strategies, and the use of strong assessment frameworks to ensure the target text serves its intended purpose.

D. *Translation Assessment Criteria*

Translation assessment is an important tool in bridging the gap between translation theory and implementation (Newmark, 1995). There have been different models and criteria proposed by researchers for assessing the quality of a translation in which its multifaceted identity is highlighted.

Essential criteria for evaluating a good translation have been indicated by various scholars. Larson (1984) identified three main criteria: accuracy, which judges the precision of the conveyed original meaning of the source language; clarity, which determines the readability and understandability of the text; and naturalness, which emphasizes the flow and native-likeness of the target language.

Massoud (1998) consolidated these criteria, indicating that an effective translation should be able to distinguish between metaphorical and literary meanings as well as reconstruct the cultural and historical settings of the source language. Furthermore, based on content and form criteria, El Zeini (1994) argues in favor of a pragmatic and stylistic model for translation evaluation. The strategy is designed to increase precision, retain the source text's meaning, and enhance the target language's acceptability.

In general, the criteria for translation assessment are numerous yet interdependent. An equally important aim of high-quality translation is a blend of linguistic fidelity, cultural sensitivity and rhetorical fluency. Translators can improve the quality of their translation by using these criteria.

E. *Translation Errors*

Translation errors broadly refer to the errors due to mismatching between the source and the target texts that either produce inaccuracy or failure in the community's linguistic or cultural standards. On the other hand, Hatim and Mason (1997) describe errors as either departing from the meaning of the source text or infracting of the linguistic system of the target language. Koller (1979) further states that translation errors also include deviations that do not fulfill preset quality criteria.

Different kinds of translation errors usually arise from various difficulties in the translation process. Semantic errors occur when the translator does not assign the correct overall meaning to the source text because of language or cultural misunderstandings. These errors are prevalent when translating idiomatic expressions, metaphors, or other culturally specific references that lack direct counterpart in the receiving language (Nida, 1964). In Vietnamese-to-English examples, semantic errors arise from the tonal nature of Vietnamese and its flexible syntax, which vary notably from the firm structure of English. Stylistic errors, by contrast, arise when the source text's tone, register, or stylistic features are not adequately reproduced, which is particularly important in the case of creative work where preserving the author's purpose is crucial.

The causes of these errors are manifold and interconnected. Furthermore, differences in language patterns, such as differences in syntax, vocabulary, or word collocations, make the process of translation more difficult. Furthermore, Baker (1992) indicated in his book, "In fact, differences in lexical and syntactic structure can cause significant problems for the translator who cannot find a comparable expression in the target language." In other words, disparities in lexical and syntactic structure can be underlying causes leading to translation errors of translators when they struggle with choosing appropriate comparable expression in the target language. Cultural differences are also essential, as references in idiomatic expressions and historical figures often have no parallels in other languages.

Furthermore, pragmatic issues can arise due to varied communication styles in different cultures and result in translation mismatches in tone, intention, or emphasis (Nord, 1992). Finally, text-specific complexity in the source text, like ambiguities, specialized terminology, and domain-specific references, heighten the possibility of errors. Such topics are particularly pertinent to the Vietnamese-to-English translation, as specialist terminology frequently needs to be so far to fit inside English idiom. Such errors emphasize the fact that translation from different texts, especially with languages as distant as Vietnamese and English, are from one another linguistically and culturally, and requires more than just dictionary knowledge and grammatical pattern application.

F. Previous Studies

Several recent studies on translation and translation errors have shed light on the barriers to good translations and strategies to improve translations in a formal setting. Relevant linguistic and cultural aspects are highlighted in these studies that impact translation.

Translation errors have been deeply studied in Vietnam. A study by Dang et al. (2023) examined frequent translation mistakes made by first-year English majors at the Foreign Trade University. Researchers utilized assignments as data to understand common problems with grammar, lexicon, and spelling. These errors were attributed to linguistic differences between English and Vietnamese, lack of cultural knowledge, and applying the wrong translation strategy. By highlighting potential areas of concern, this study is an important step toward ensuring that the English language education we provide is effective and culturally sensitive (Dang et al., 2023).

Nguyen et al. (2022) analyzed translation errors from 100 menus (Vietnamese to English). The study discovered four main categories of errors, including syntax errors, semantic errors, pragmatic errors, and translation-specific errors. These findings are valuable for translation training and contribute to cultural tourism in Vietnam (Nguyen et al., 2022).

These studies underscore the complexities of translation processes, the prevalence of errors, and the necessity of including linguistic and cultural factors in translation training. They emphasize the need for customized teaching strategies and practical exercises on matters of accuracy and fluency in the translation field.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Research Design

The current study investigated 200 translation assignments done by 4th year English-majored students at TDMU in the academic year of 2024-2025, focusing on specific categories of translation errors relevant to the context of Vietnamese-English translation. All the errors were identified and categorized in cooperation with the experienced translation lecturers from the faculty. In the scope of the study, the errors were divided into two types: (i) lexical errors and (ii) grammatical errors. Lexical errors are those which are related to incorrect spelling, misuse of word order, incorrect word choice, incorrect idiomatic expressions, or misinterpretation of cultural terms. Grammatical errors are those which are related to incorrect use of passive voice, incorrect use of relative clauses, misuse of tense, incorrect word collocations, or improper use of determiners. To strengthen the data collected, five lecturers responsible for translation courses at TDMU were also invited to participate in interviews to enrich and further the data collected from document analysis.

B. Sampling Methods

In the current study, a total of 200 translation papers from fourth-year English-majored students were analyzed. These papers were submitted as assignments requiring translations from Vietnamese to English and vice versa, as part of the Translation courses at TDMU.

The participants are fourth-year students majoring in English language at TDMU, with English proficiency levels ranging from intermediate to upper-intermediate. They were selected because they were enrolled in English-Vietnamese Translation courses at the university during the study period.

Additionally, five experienced translation lecturers from TDMU were purposefully chosen to participate in the interview. These lecturers have at least six years of experience teaching English translation courses at universities. Due to their experience, the lecturers are almost aware of their students' translation abilities. The interview data were paraphrased and summarized to thoroughly understand the lecturers' perspectives. In conclusion, by analyzing these insights, the significant objective is to enrich the study's overall findings. Each participant was given the following three open-ended questions:

- (i) *What common errors do English-majored students at TDMU commit in translating Vietnamese texts to English ones*
- (ii) *What are the causes of these errors?*
- (iii) *What strategies and resources do you suggest for students to help them minimize or avoid these errors in translation?*

The above questions were used to gain an in-depth understanding of lecturers' perceptions of students' Vietnamese-to-English translation mistakes. This helped to determine the reasons behind the observed phenomenon and to obtain suggestions to enhance student achievements. The interviews also discussed ways to improve translation teaching at the university level.

C. Reliability and Validity

Reliability and validity were vital in ensuring the study's findings were consistent and error-free. Interview-based participation was encouraged to improve the current study's validity and reduce the likelihood of biases. Pilot testing of the interview protocols was conducted to improve the questions and minimize data-collection errors. Additionally, interviews were audio-recorded to secure the reliability of data and prevent data loss. Calculations and descriptive statistical analysis were performed using Microsoft Excel (version 2009). Finally, the data were comprehensively cleaned to exclude inconsistency and converted into text format to correctly interpret the interview responses.

Lastly, data coding and systematic explanation further guaranteed the results' reliability and validity. Triangulation of data from document analysis and interviewing helped strengthen the study's conclusions drawn from the study and provide confidence in addressing the research objectives.

IV. RESULTS

A. Results From Document Analysis

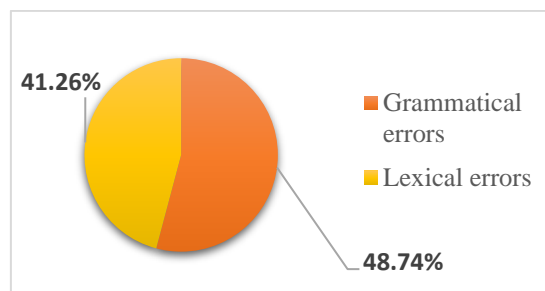


Figure 1. The Frequencies of Translation Errors Performed by the Students

Figure 1 displays the frequencies of translation errors related to grammar and lexicon identified in the analysis of 200 translation assignments performed by students majoring in English. The data reveals that grammatical errors are a higher percentage, 48.74%, and lexical errors are roughly 41.26%.

As can be seen, grammatical errors are the most prevalent among the two types of errors. These errors primarily involve incorrect verb usage, including tenses, passive voice, and relative clauses. The high percentage of grammatical errors implies that students face significant challenges in acquiring the rigid structures of rules in English which are often more static compared to Vietnamese syntax, which is relatively more flexible. This difference illustrates the necessity of focused instruction on grammatical structures to help learners bridge the gaps between the two languages.

While less frequent, lexical errors still remain a significant challenge. These errors are usually associated with inappropriate word choice and order, the improper application of expressions used in idioms, and a misunderstanding of cultural terms between languages. The data indicates that students usually commit these errors due to their imprecise vocabulary choices and the modification of their translations to fit the context of the target language.

In general, the high rate of grammatical errors shows the students' problems in aligning English grammar to Vietnamese sentences. On the other hand, 41.26% of lexical errors exposes gaps in students' vocabulary knowledge and cultural fluency.

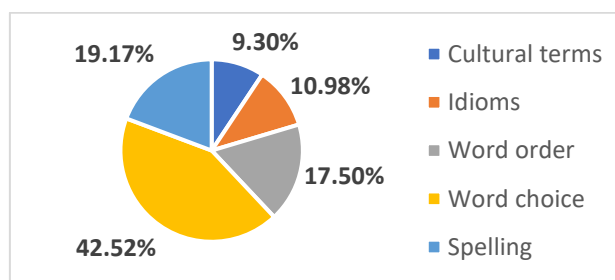


Figure 2. The Frequencies of Lexical Errors Performed by the Students

As illustrated in Figure 2, lexical errors were identified through the statistical analysis of 200 assignments and categorized into five primary types: cultural terms, idioms, word order, word choice, and spelling.

Among these, word choice errors were the most frequent, constituting 42.52% of the total lexical errors. Such errors typically stemmed from confusion between similar grammatical forms or the misuse of vocabulary. For instance, students frequently mistranslated the Vietnamese verb "*quyết định*" into the noun "*decision*" instead of the verb "*decide*." This demonstrates a lack of understanding of morphological rules, which require accurate selection of the appropriate part of speech.

Another example of word choice challenges in translation is the Vietnamese word "*bầu*." Depending on the context, "*bầu*" can mean "*vote*," "*ballot*," or "*gourd*." For example, with the Vietnamese sentence "*Họ cùng bầu trưởng làng*".

Based on the Vietnamese meaning of the word “*bầu*”, it can be translated into the above English words. However, depending on the context where “*bầu*” appears, if a translator picks “*gourd*” or “*ballot*” for the original sentence, the whole translated sentence would not make sense, and means “*The gourd (a plant) village chief*” or “*They ballot the headman of village*”. Therefore, the right choice of word here is “*vote*,” which provides the correct translation of: “*They voted for the village chief.*” This example demonstrates the importance of context in finding the proper equivalent to prevent mistranslation.

Spelling errors, accounting for 19.17% of the total errors, occur when students incorrectly spell the words used in English and may be caused by unfamiliarity with English orthographic norms or phonology. For instance, typo errors could be spelling *accommodation* as *acomondation*, *prevalence* as *prevalance*, etc. or in the wrong use for “*orginal*” instead of “*original*” in translation. For example, students tend to write their names in Vietnamese directly in English based on their sounds, which leads to phonemes in Vietnamese combining to produce spelling errors in English. For example, the Vietnamese word “*phát triển*” (to develop) could be inadvertently written as “*phat trien*”, missing accents, which are essential in conveying the definition of the word in Vietnamese.

Misplacement of words/word groups in context is considered a word order error, making up 17.5% of the lexical errors. Such a method results in translations that either misrepresent the meaning or sound unnatural in the target language. This problem often occurs in Vietnamese-to-English translation due to differences in grammatical features among the two languages.

For example, Vietnamese and English both have subject-verb-object (SVO) ordering in their sentences, but the order of adjectives is placed differently regarding the nouns they modify. In Vietnamese, adjectives come after the noun they describe, while they are before the noun in English. An error in the way a student translates the Vietnamese phrase “*trò chơi thú vị*” (literally “*game interesting*”) into “*game interesting*,” instead of “*interesting game*,” leads to a syntactical error that sounds very unnatural. Also, there are often problems with time expressions. In Vietnamese, temporal markers are used at the start of the sentence, while in English, they are usually mentioned at the end. For instance, the Vietnamese sentence “*Ngày mai tôi đi thăm ông bà*”, which could be literally translated to “*Tomorrow I go to visit grandparents*”, yet, the correct translations were not necessarily the most natural English sentences. The correct translation should be: “*I will visit my grandparents tomorrow*”.

Also, errors related to idiomatic expressions account for 10.98 % of the total. Translating idiomatic expressions is problematic in and of itself since they usually have no equivalent in the target language. For instance, the English proverb “*break a leg*” meaning “*wish you good luck*” would sound meaningless if translated literally into Vietnamese “*gãy chân*”. A proper translation, however, requiring a deeper understanding of the meaning, and finding an equivalent that fit the cultural context, like “*chúc may mắn*” in Vietnamese. This type of error highlights the challenges in expressing non-literal language across cultural and linguistic boundaries.

Finally, the last category of errors is relating cultural terms and cultural differences, comprising 9.3% of the total errors. These are errors in which students fail to translate cultural references or translations of concepts that do not transfer swiftly between English and Vietnamese. A familiar paradox is translating “*Thanksgiving*” directly without context can baffle Vietnamese readers who are not aware of this holiday. In the same vein, rendering “*Tết Trung Thu*” as “*Mid-Autumn Festival*”, or “*Tết*” as “*Chinese New Year*” may miss a more profound significance without adequate cultural context.

Generally, as illustrated in Figure 2, while word choice and spelling errors posed the greatest challenges for students, the other aspects, including word selection, idiomatic expressions, and cultural understanding are also significant in Vietnamese-English translation.

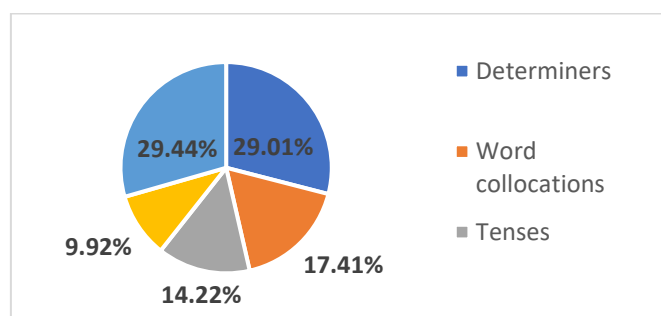


Figure 3. The Frequencies of Grammatical Errors Performed by Students

In the current study, five types of grammatical errors were observed: passive voice, determiners, word collocations, tenses and relative clauses, which have been further classified, as shown in Figure 3.

The most common errors, which account for 29.44% of all grammatical errors, are in passive voice usage. This high frequency is due to the primary distinction between the English and Vietnamese passive voice characteristics in construction. In English, the passive voice uses an auxiliary verb like “*is*” or “*was*” with a past participle. In contrast, Vietnamese passive voice constructions are derived primarily from either direct form without the use of auxiliary verbs, relying on markers such as “*bị*” or “*được*” to express passivity, causing uncertainty for students translating directly between the two languages.

Moreover, as Vietnamese lacks a system of definite and indefinite articles, determiners account for 29.01% of grammatical errors, representing one of the most persistent challenges for learners. For instance, students sometimes rendered “*I saw a cat in the garden*” as “*I saw cat in garden*”, omitting “*a*” or “*the*”. Furthermore, there is very little in common with the English language, which has an article system where nouns require at least an article to describe specificity or generality. For example, if the Vietnamese sentence “*Anh ấy để cuốn sách trên bàn*” is directly translated to English, it can be “*He puts book on table,*” and omit the word “*a*” or “*the*” that standing before “*book*” and “*table.*” in the sentence. These components, like determiners, are important in English because the language relies on them to identify specific and unsure nouns. Therefore, this leads Vietnamese speakers to drop needed articles or misuse them, both leading to translation errors. For example, it should be written as below, “*He puts a book on the table,*” since otherwise it is grammatically untrue and its meaning cannot be understood in English.

In addition, word collocation errors are responsible for 17.41% of the total grammatical errors seen. The equivalent in English is collocations, fixed pairings of words that often go together, like “*take a break*” or “*have a conversation.*” Conversely, Vietnamese is free to combine the words flexibly, resulting in wrong collocations when translated into English. For example, a Vietnamese learner would make the mistake of translating “*ăn bữa ăn*” to “*eat a meal*” when the proper collocational pairing in English would be “*have a meal*”.

The same applies when translating common verb-noun words in Vietnamese, such as “*uống thuốc*”, which might produce errors when directly translating it to “*drink medicine*” in English. In contrast, the correct word would be “*take medicine.*” These English collocations do not have their counterparts in other languages. These word phrases are only learned through memory with context.

Furthermore, many errors are due to tenses, which account for 14.22% of the total, presenting a significant challenge for Vietnamese learners. Unlike many other languages, such as English, which engages an extensive tense system that requires a separate verb form to show action in the past, present, or future, Vietnamese relies largely on context and time markers where the verb does not change but is preceded by “*đã*” for past and “*sẽ*” for future. More specifically, the English sentence “*She went to the zoo last week,*” calls for the past-tense verb “*went.*” On the other hand, the past-tense English phrase “*She went to school yesterday*” and its Vietnamese counterpart “*Cô ấy đã đến trường vào hôm qua*” have the auxiliary marker “*đã*” to reflect the past tense — otherwise the verb “*đến*” would stay the same.

This structural difference frequently causes mistakes in translation, like using the base form of the verb, where English needs a conjugated form. For instance, students might write “*She go to the zoo last week*” instead of “*She went to the zoo last week.*” Likewise, future tense errors happen when students neglect the conjugation, producing something such as: “*He will come tomorrow,*” as “*He come tomorrow*”.

Following common errors are that learners misuse relative clauses, consisting 9.92% of the total grammatical errors, which seems to be a significant challenge for Vietnamese learners. Relative clauses are introduced in English by using specific relative pronouns such as “*who,*” “*which,*” or “*that,*” and serving to provide additional information about a noun (as in “*The house that Jack built is on the hill*”). However, relative clauses often exclude relative pronouns in Vietnamese, in other words, if structural flexibility is going to be speculated, relative clauses are a better candidate than attribute clauses. Therefore, this variation can make learners struggle with constructing relative clauses in English.

For instance, even simple sentences in Vietnamese like “*Cô gái xinh đẹp đang hát là em gái tôi*” which should be translated into: “*The beautiful girl who is singing is my sister,*” could end up being translated too literally: “*The girl beautiful is singing is my sister.*” As a result, the lack of a relative pronoun, in this case, “*who,*” and an incorrect word order make it an unnatural and grammatically incorrect translation.

In conclusion, errors related to relative clauses, passive voice, and determiners underscore the crucial structural differences between English and Vietnamese. These findings highlight the importance of focused instruction on English syntax and grammar that diverge from Vietnamese linguistic patterns. In addition, instructors can assist students in memorizing correct forms through tailored exercises directed towards the proper use of grammar markers such as relative pronouns and word group techniques, and ultimately in producing more concise and literate translations.

B. Findings From Semi-Structured Interviews With Lecturers

To fully comprehend the issues targeted students face in Vietnamese-to-English translation, five lecturers who had taught courses relating to Translation at TDMU were interviewed. More specifically, they answered an updated set of open-ended questions that were intended to elicit more details:

- (i) *What common errors do English-majored students at Thu Dau Mot University commit in translating Vietnamese texts to English ones?*
- (ii) *What are the causes of these errors?*
- (iii) *What strategies and resources do you suggest for students to help them minimize or avoid these errors in translation?*

The lecturers began their response to the first question by identifying common errors in students’ translations. More specifically, grammatical errors are first highlighted by the lecturers. As inferred from the teachers’ response, these errors primarily relate to incorrect verb tenses, subject/verb agreement, passive voice, and relative clauses. The other common translation errors emphasized by the interview participants are lexical errors, including wrong word usage, use of wrong word collocations, and spelling errors. In addition, idiomatic expressions and cultural terms were highlighted as areas of

significant challenge, as students struggled to accurately translate both non-literal language and references specific to particular cultures.

For example, students frequently mistranslate idiomatic expressions when they render them literally. An example is the English idiom *"raining cats and dogs,"* which some students translate into Vietnamese as *"mưa mèo và chó"* instead of the contextually applicable *"mưa rất to."* Another example is the idiom *"Don't judge the book by its cover,"* this idiom is usually translated literally to *"Đừng đánh giá cuốn sách bởi cái bìa của nó"* instead of *"Đừng đánh giá con người qua vẻ bề ngoài"*.

The second question reveals various causes for these errors, classified into subjective, objective, and other explanations. Regarding the subjective causes, the five-lecturer emphasized students' limited comprehension of grammatical structures and vocabulary as the first issue. For example, students often misused articles, verb forms, and prepositions as they relied heavily on literal, word-for-word translations. Also, these errors were magnified with dictionaries without grasping the contextual nuances. In addition, students' ability to accurately convey meaning was hampered by a lack of exposure to the target language's cultural differences.

In terms of objective causes, lecturers pointed out that Vietnamese and English are primarily different in terms of linguistic and cultural systems, it was built-in barriers. For example, Vietnamese does not have tense conjugation, but English has many verb forms whose meaning depends on the time. For example, the word *"Tết"*, which is Vietnamese New Year holiday, is often translated literally to *"Lunar New Year"* instead of remaining the original text. However, this type of translation cannot fully capture the cultural significance of the source language.

Some lecturers have also expressed concerns about students' uncontrolled use of MT, which often results in inaccurate and contextually inappropriate translations. According to instructors' feedback, many students rely excessively on automatic translation tools without reviewing or revising the output, leading to errors in syntax, semantics, and cultural appropriateness. Common mistakes include translating word-for-word without considering the overall sentence structure, using vocabulary that is inconsistent with academic style, and misinterpreting idiomatic or technical expressions. Furthermore, due to a lack of proficiency in post-editing principles, students frequently fail to identify errors in machine-generated translations and do not make necessary adjustments to ensure fluency and accuracy. This overreliance on MT poses a significant challenge to the development of professional translation skills, highlighting the need for instructor guidance to help students use translation technology more effectively.

The third interview question yielded a few suggestions. More specifically, the collected data emphasized that students should spend more time reading various types of source documents such as English-language books, newspapers, or articles to improve their understanding of how the English is used in different cultural contexts. Training on this data would enable students to generate more fluent, natural translations. In addition, students' daily translation practice activities help reinforce their acquisition of regularly practiced grammar knowledge and vocabulary. This would allow them to learn additional vocabulary and understand the distinctions between English and Vietnamese sentence forms.

V. DISCUSSION

Regarding grammatical errors, misuse of the passive voice is the most frequently committed error by students. This aligns with differences between the structures of Vietnamese and English as English passive sentences require past participles and auxiliary verb. In contrast, Vietnamese frequently employ particles like *"bị"* or *"được"* without modifying the verb. Another common type of grammatical errors that students frequently committed is misuse of determiners, emphasizing the absence of determiner system in Vietnamese. Therefore, this leads to students' confusion in Vietnamese-to-English translation. In addition, several other grammatical errors relating tenses, word collocations and relative clauses are highlighted.

Lexical errors were another prominent issue, with word choice errors being the most common frequent error, followed by errors relating spelling, word order, idiomatic misinterpretations, and cultural terms inaccuracies. The frequency of word choice and spelling errors in translation texts emphasizes that students have insufficient vocabulary and orthographic knowledge to translate correctly. On the other hand, the lower frequency of errors in terms of word order, idiom, and cultural terms suggests that students have a better understanding of these components in comparison to the above. For example, translating an English phrase like *"raining cats and dogs"* to Vietnamese as a word-for-word *"mưa mèo và chó"* as opposed to the proper equivalent *"mưa rất to."* shows the difficulty students have with idiomatic translation.

The conclusions indicate that such errors arise due to various causes, such as inadequate exposure to more accurate language resources and poor cultural competence. More specifically, based on the findings, it can be seen that the rigid grammar and precise vocabulary requirements in English generate significant challenges for Vietnamese learners, who have accustomed to a more flexible language framework. Language translation is concerned with the exchange of meaning from one language to another demands a high proficiency within each language and a deep understanding of the cultural contexts. Translation is complicated by the cultural connotations of words, especially in idiom and culture-bound terms. An example is the direct translation of the Vietnamese term *"chung bánh chung"* to English is *"cook square rice cake."* This translation cannot fully transmit the cultural importance of this term in the source language, as it carries a symbolic meaning relating to the Vietnamese New Year celebration. Hence, cultural sensitivity in translation is emphasized, as translation without involving cultural settings can reduce the abundance of the original term.

One of the key factors contributing to students' translation errors is the overreliance on translation aids without proper evaluation and adjustment. Although tools such as Google Translate and DeepL can facilitate rapid translation, they have significant limitations, particularly in preserving context, syntactic structure, and cultural nuances. Findings from the study indicate that many students tend to copy machine-generated translations without engaging in post-editing, resulting in serious errors such as word-for-word translation without regard for overall grammatical accuracy, the use of vocabulary inconsistent with academic style, and misinterpretation of idiomatic expressions. These findings underscore the need for targeted instruction from lecturers to help students develop essential skills in evaluating and refining machine translations rather than depending entirely on technology without critical oversight.

Based on the research findings, several recommendations for enhancing translation skills are expected benefit both educators and students. In terms of approaches for translation teaching, educators can focus on both grammatical and lexical awareness by designing exercises on passive voice, determiners, and tense usage to help students become more aware of these aspects when they translate. Also, consistent exposure and reading of various English-language content would increase the knowledge of vocabulary words and spelling. Simultaneously, exposure to English literature, films, and media allows cultural immersion, which enhances students' understanding of idiomatic expressions and cultural contexts.

Regarding students, figuring out appropriate learning methods is a need for students to improve their translation ability. In addition, they should focus on developing a firm knowledge of grammar and vocabulary through daily practice. Also, forming reading habits, especially reading materials written in both languages, should be considered, as this habit can help broaden students' knowledge of syntax, idiomatic expressions, and cultural nuances.

Last but not least, in this digital age, together with the explosion of information technology nowadays, the presence of technology in every aspect of life is considered an obvious fact, including academic and professional settings. Furthermore, various technological tools are embedded in education to help educators and students improve their learning and teaching. Akbari Motlaq and Tengku Mahadi (2020) further explain that it is an automated process involving converting text from one language to another using computer software and algorithms.

The rise of translation machines has undeniably transformed the landscape of the translation industry, introducing both opportunities and challenges for translation teaching. These machines, driven by sophisticated artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning, have significantly enhanced productivity by providing quick and accessible translations. However, they have also sparked debates about the future role of human translators. While translation machines can handle basic and repetitive tasks, they still struggle with context, cultural nuances, idiomatic expressions, and the subtleties of meaning that human translators navigate with ease. Therefore, machine translations are becoming more popular among translators.

According to He et al. (2021), several modern machine translation systems, including Google Translate, Yandex, or Microsoft Translator, are widely used worldwide, especially by students, due to their ability to translate a large amount of text from one language to another in a few minutes or even seconds. In other words, these tools are widely used because of their convenience, speed, and ability to translate to multiple languages at the same time. Despite its benefits, MT also has a variety of drawbacks that users should be consider. More specifically, as indicated by Akbari Motlaq and Tengku Mahadi (2020), MT mostly struggles with integrating context, idiomatic expressions, or cultural nuances in their translations, which leads to the production of poor translations from this system. Hence, to improve MT's quality output, post-editing action from human translators is essential.

Based on the findings of translation errors and criteria for translation assessment, several recommendations are proposed to help students use machine translation (MT) systems more effectively. Instructors can utilize MT outputs to teach students how to recognize errors and assess the appropriateness of translations in context. This involves not only linguistic accuracy but also a deep understanding of the cultural and contextual factors that may influence meaning. Students should also learn how to provide constructive feedback on MT outputs, which is a valuable skill in both the academic and professional worlds. More specifically, students must be aware of the limitations of MT, and avoid over-relying on these tools, as they may produce errors relating to grammar, context, or cultural meanings. In addition, students should always review and revise all the translations produced by these tools, mainly focusing on correcting grammatical and lexical errors. Finally, paying attention to the context, idiomatic expressions or cultural nuances of both source and target languages is a need for using the MT system. This can help to produce high-quality translations. In addition, the ethical implications of relying on translation machines, such as concerns about data privacy and the potential for reinforcing biases in AI algorithms, highlight the importance of equipping students with a strong ethical foundation in their translation practice. Educators must encourage students to be aware of the limitations and biases inherent in machine translation and to adopt a more responsible approach to using these tools.

VI. CONCLUSION

Findings from the current study highlight the complexity of translation between Vietnamese and English, as elements of language, culture, and education contribute to both grammatical and lexical errors. While mechanical issues, which are grammatical errors dominate, especially passive voice and determiners, lexical issues like word choice or spelling are also a significant barrier. In addition, regarding educators, targeted instruction, cultural immersion, and consistent practice are highlighted for addressing these issues. Also, in terms of students, to produce accurate, fluent, and culturally appropriate translations, they should combine theoretical knowledge with practical translation exercises and cultural

education. Furthermore, in the digital age, the combination of machine translation efficiency and human knowledge can meet the diverse needs of global communication. In general, by providing better resources and a more laid-out process for the students, teachers can assist students in achieving these goals and ensure performance in translating tasks.

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