THE APPLICATION OF PORTFOLIOS IN TEACHING AND LEARNING TRANSLATION 1 AT FACULTY OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES, HANOI PEDAGOGICAL UNIVERSITY 2

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Abstract: Translation and interpreting have been considered of crucial importance in teaching English-majored students at Vietnam's universities and colleges. There are many factors contributing to the success of teaching and learning translation, including learners' passion, efforts and continuous translation practice. As for the success of teaching and learning translation, portfolios have been employed by many teachers and students translation worldwide. This paper provides a brief overview of the use of portfolios in teaching and learning the course named Translation 1 at Faculty of Foreign Languages (FFL), Hanoi Pedagogical University 2 (HPU2) with main points focused on the current situation, on difficulties students often face, and on its use as an assessment tool in students' learning process and performances. Such three main data collection instruments are used as Survey questionnaires, Interviews and Portfolio collection and analysis.

Key words: translation learning, translation teaching, portfolio

1. Introduction

It is an undeniable fact that teaching translation really began in the 20th century although translation has shaped the world through time. In the 21th century, at a time when there are millions travels around the planet, translation is of ever increasing importance. This leads to a booming interest in teaching translation in a large number of countries, including Vietnam.

In Vietnam, teaching translation has been emerged over past few decades, and it has been further developed in recent years due to the demand of international trade, the expansion of mass media and technology and the recognition of linguistic studies. Many of Vietnam's universities and colleges put translation and interpreting as a major or a subject in their training programs.

In Faculty of Foreign Languages, Hanoi Pedagogical University 2 (FFL, HPU2), translation is taught to the second- and third-year students of English linguistics. As mentioned, Translation 1 is considered the first step that paves the way for the development of advanced translation skills that students are expected to master after their graduation. Hence, teachers of translation in FFL, HPU2 have placed much emphasis on this subject, and then tried to apply different teaching strategies that can foster students' translation skills. Portfolio is primarily chosen with the hope of creating environments for students to have continuous translation practice and review. As a new teacher of translation at FFL, HPU2, I would like to have a better insight on translation teaching and learning at the faculty, and more specifically on the use of portfolios among students.

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2. Literature review

2.1. An overview on translation and translation teaching

2.1.1. Translation

A wide range of definitions of translation is made by experts and linguists. Finlay (1971) describes translation as a process of written communication whose objective is to import knowledge of the original to the foreign reader. Reiss (1977, p. 161) mentions the two terms "source language" (SL) and "target language"(TL) and he defines translation as "a bilingual mediated process" which ordinarily aims at the production of a TL text that is functionally equivalent to a SL text." Houbert (1998) assumes that translation is a process whereby a message expressed in a specific source language is transformed linguistically to be understood by readers of target language.

From these definitions, it can be concluded that translation acts as a communication tool that transfers the meaning of a SL text to the TL one, by means of equivalents between two languages.

2.1.2. The importance of translation and translation teaching

As mentioned before, translation is a means of communication. Not only experts and students in the field of translation, but also non-translators are aware of the vital role of translation these days.

In the modern world, when the globalization and internalization spread across countries, the need of translation is really acute. Jumplet (1923, as cited in Newmark, 1988) points out the twentieth century "the age of translation." This can explain why teaching and learning translation is attracting growing interest. From the educational respects, translation teaching and learning is an integral part of foreign language teaching and learning, which not only gives students practical bilingual ability, but also encourages the attitudes and morality that will allow them to do the best possible translation work after graduation (Mu Lei, 1999).

However, translation teaching and learning is not an easy, but a really demanding job. A translator is expected to possess a great deal of perfect knowledge and skills. Newmark (1988) outlines some qualifications for a good translator such as reading comprehension ability in foreign language, understanding and knowledge about the subject, sensitivity to language and writing competence in target language. In a nutshell, the translator is a master of language, writing skills, critical thinking, subject specifications and cultural knowledge.

2.2. An overview on portfolios and the use of portfolios

2.2.1. Portfolio?

Different people give different interpretations for portfolios and use them for different purposes in educational settings. Mueller (1993) explains that "a portfolio is not the pile of student work that accumulates over a semester or year. Rather, a portfolio contains a purposefully selected subset of student work." It can be seen that most of these definitions only deal with the portfolio products, not the process. Jones and Shelton (2006) defined portfolios as a personalized documentation of students' learning process. From definitions above, we can

simply understand the term portfolios as a purposeful collection of student work that demonstrates the story about their learning process, skills, achievements and accomplishments.

2.2.2. The use of portfolios

Portfolios can be used effectively for a number of purposes in educational programs. Jon Mueller (1993) in Authentic Assessment Toolbox explains that portfolios can be used:

a. to show growth or change over time;

b. to help develop process skills;

c. to identify strengths/weaknesses;

d. to track development of one or more products or performances.

Judging portfolio as an assessment tool, Jones and Shelton (2006) emphasized the five benefits of portfolio development as follows: (1) to empower students to take responsibility for their learning, promote their critical thinking and reignite their intellectual curiosity; (2) to change the mind of learners at education as integrative, ongoing and connected to real life; (3) to encourage meaningful rather than rote learning, invoke their cognitive and affective involvement; (4) to strengthen formal operational thought processes, internalize learning at deeper levels and develop thinking skills; (5) to facilitate awareness and discovery, encourage students to express themselves in meaningful, individualized and creative ways.

According to ElBeheri (2015), the importance of designing a portfolio for a student lies in its capacity to help him achieve the learning process in a complementary way. It also helps the student to shift from a passive learner who receives only to such an interactive learner who can respond to learning situations. Moreover, it can help a learner to be a creative and critical thinker. He adds that in order to acknowledge the importance of a learning portfolio to our students, we should remember the fact that any learning process under the sun has three sides: knowledge, skills and emotions. The traditional learning is considered problematic as it focuses on the first side only, which is the amount of knowledge and information a student receives in his lectures inside the classroom. Students study such knowledge and take their exams and get varied grades according to their understanding and absorption of the given knowledge. A portfolio is different from the traditional methods in the ways it helps students to gain the second side of the learning process, which includes skills as well as the third side of the learning process when they give their reflections in group work or in scientific research and make positive attitudes towards their course and their lecturer.

2.2.3. The use of portfolios in teaching and learning translation

In learning translation, students' autonomous learning plays the decisive role. In other words, students are believed to assume greater responsibility for their own learning, become aware of how they can learn best, internalize quality criteria and set their own goals and priorities.

Meanwhile, the use of portfolios in education, as said above, has become increasingly popular in the last few decades. Varela and Polo (2011) states that the introduction of portfolios in translation course was to transfer greater responsibility to the students and to emphasize the

importance of reflection and critical awareness as components of the translator's competence. As a learning tool, the portfolio was thus to become a well organized and neatly presented repertoire of useful resources and accumulated know-how, together with their own views on the whole learning process of translation.

Varela and Polo (2011) conducted a study on the implementation of the student's portfolio in an undergraduate translation course and the results reveal that portfolio is particularly suitable for translator training. They say:

> "It favors students' acquisition of a series of skills whose importance for the translation profession is widely recognized, such as research, clarity of expression, creativity, observation or self-analysis.... For the vast majority of students, the experience brought about a significant improvement in the quality of their learning and in their final grades."(p. 51)

According to Insai (2013), translation classrooms can enjoy the benefits from the development of students' performance thanks to the use of learning portfolios, adding that using portfolios in translation pedagogy is now a significant learning approach widely accepted among educators and researchers since it not only cultivates or enhances all the skills necessary for translation, but also promotes the students' learning engagement and learning autonomy, which will empower them to continuously develop their translation competence.

3. Methodology

The current paper attempts to seek the answers to the following research questions:

1. What is the current situation of the use of portfolios in learning Translation 1 at FFL, HPU2?

2. What are difficulties faced by students when using portfolios to learn Translation 1 at FFL, HPU2?

3. What are students' and teachers' perceptions of the use of portfolios as a learning strategy and an assessment tool in Translation 1 at FFL, HPU2?

To collect the data for analysis, main instruments employed are questionnaires, interviews and a collection of portfolios samples.

The reasons for the use of questionnaire is that it is said to be the most common instrument used in gathering data for research because of its low cost, flexibility and feasibility. Meanwhile, interviews, as one of methodological tools of qualitative research, are adopted in this paper to seek in depth and to clarify some vague information coming from survey questionnaires. The collection of portfolios is esteemed as most obvious evidence for the responses the researcher receive through questionnaires, and interviews.

Fifty-eight (58) sophomores from class C40 - English Linguistics - at FFL, HPU2 were chosen to be the participants in the study. As majors in English linguistics, these students were supposed to be trained to work as translators and/or interpreters after graduation. Therefore, translation and interpretation were given priority in their training programs. Translation 1, as the first translation practice, was taught in the fourth semester when most students were supposed to

be at the pre-intermediate level in English proficiency and they had a whole semester to undergo Translation Theory.

In addition to collecting the responses from students, the opinions of the teachers on the use of portfolios to learn Translation 1 were also highly appreciated. Three teachers of translation who were then teaching Translation 1 at FFL, HPU2 were invited to take part in the interviews. All of these teachers had a Master's degree of Art in English, and they had been teaching translation at FFL for at least four years. With such English teaching qualifications and experience, these teachers were believed to give reliable responses.

The survey questionnaires include 12 closed-ended questions, divided into two parts. Part 1 consists of the first four questions used to gather information about students' background and their experience in learning English in general. Part 2 includes the next eight questions for investigating the students' use of portfolios in Translation 1 learning. The interviews consist of questions to gather teachers' and students' opinions towards the use of Portfolios in learning Translation 1.

During the tenth week of semester 4, survey questionnaires were delivered to selected students. At the same time, the three teachers and ten students were invited to take part in interviews. All the statements were recorded during the interviews. The students' portfolios were also collected for analysis.

4. Data analysis and discussion

4.1. The current situation of using Portfolios in Translation 1 learning

4.1.1. Findings and discussion from questionnaires

The findings from the questionnaires show that learning translation is of great importance to all the students. When asked about the necessity of the use of Portfolios in learning the subject, 25% the students said that they totally agreed, 70% agreed, 5% quite agreed and none disagreed.

As for the frequency of using portfolios, almost all students revealed that they worked on their portfolios twice a week. A few of them said they designed their portfolios three or four times per week. Only two of them tried to spend time on their portfolios every day. Concerning the length of time spent on portfolios each time, half of them worked from thirty minutes to one hour while 15 students spent from one to two hours. It took 10 students less than thirty minutes to deal with their portfolios. The percentage of students devoting more than two hours to their portfolios accounted for the least, with only 5%.

As far as sources of materials are concerned, the findings reveal that 100% students took the texts from their course-book while over half the students tried to involve their further translation in their portfolios by translating texts or articles from reference books or some websites on the Internet.

4.1.2. Findings and discussion from the portfolios collection

There is also a huge difference in the things to be included in portfolios, which is showed in Table 1:

Table 1. Things to be included in students' portfolios

Texts from the course-book			Texts from supplementary materials		
58/58 (100%)			32/58 (55 %)		
Specialized terms and expressions	First translation draft	Corrected translation draft	Specialized terms and expressions	First translation draft	Corrected translation draft
58/58 (100%)	**35**/58 (60.3%)	**50**/58 (86.2%)	**32**/32 (100%)	**32**/32 (100%)	**8**/32 (25%)

As can be seen from Table 1, the main sources of texts for students' translation practice were from their translation course-book (100%) and from supplementary materials such as reference books or the Internet (55%). These figures agree with what have been revealed in the questionnaires.

To be specific, 100% of the participants chose specialized terms and expressions, or words related to the main topic. About two thirds of the students decided to include their first drafts of these texts and the percentage of students who put in corrected translation drafts accounted for the vast majority. Nearly 90% students included the corrected translations of the texts from their course-book in their portfolios.

With regard to specific items to be included, 100% students gave translations of specialized terms and expressions they took from the course-book. However, there is a big difference in the percentage of students who made the first translation drafts only and that of students who made also the corrected ones: 100% and 25%, respectively.

On how to design and edit the portfolios, a majority of the students (about 80%) tend to be in favor of writing down. All the portfolios collected have the same format and organization; that is, the translations are organized by topic such as education, population, and environment. For each topic, texts from the course-book are put in the initial parts while those from supplementary materials are placed at the end of the portfolio. Each text consists of four main sections (1) specialized words and expressions with their target language equivalents, (2) first translation draft and (3) corrected translation draft if necessary; (4) some tips or their reflections at the end of the text.

In addition, the main activities used in the portfolios are categorizing, numbering, tabling or highlighting. Few students (about 10%) apply mind-maps and graphs to illustrate the translations. Only 3 out of 58 use pictures and articles cut from the newspapers or magazines.

4.1.3. Findings and discussion from the interviews

To explore the differences in the time students spent on their portfolios, the students interviewed said that the different beliefs on the use of portfolios led to great differences in the time they spent. The case was explained by their laziness and their imbalance of time management in their study. It was the fact that they did not have much time to review what they had learnt about translation in class as they focused much more on the other different subjects at home.

When asked for clarification of things included in the portfolios, these students said that words and first translation drafts were what they often prepared for the next lesson each week as their teacher's assignments, so all of them (100%) put these items in their portfolios. Also, they explained that translating words and phrases took little time and effort, so they could do that well. In contrast, the translation of the whole text seemed to be a hard and time-consuming job, which led to the fact that one third of the students refuted to make it because of their laziness, lack of time or insufficient language proficiency. Corrected translations of texts from the course-book were preferred as students thought that these would serve best for their final translation exams.

As for supplementary materials, they investigated students said that the first translation drafts acted as their further practice at home while they had no samples to compare and no one to get comments to have corrected drafts. What's more, they added that they were short of reference books of translation. It seems to be explained by their university's location that is rather far from Hanoi, so it is not easy for them to get access to translation material resources.

They also stated that writing down things helped them to memorize the words and concepts much more easily. The ways to present their translation varied from one to another and they explained that was because of their differences in writing and learning styles.

In general, most second-year students of English Linguistics at FFL, HPU2 said they kept doing translation practice on their portfolios in the hope of improving and developing their translation skills.

In the interviews with teachers, all the interviewees showed strong approval on the use of portfolios in learning translation. Sharing opinions on the reasons for students' differences in the time spent in further translation practice and things to be included in their portfolios, the teachers said that some students were much more interested in learning translation, so they preferred to spend time searching for more texts of the same topic to do more translation after school. Some of them supposed that their in-class translation lessons were not adequate for them to develop their translation skills, which led to their further practice at home. However, translation was not a really practical and appealing subject to some students, so they lost interest in having any other practice except what they did as their compulsory in-class activities.

4.2. Difficulties students face in the use of portfolios in Translation 1 learning

4.2.1. Findings and discussion from questionnaires

About half the students surveyed revealed that they found it hard to find sources of texts for translation. One third had trouble in designing and organizing their portfolios in a logical, easy-to-follow and tasteful way. Additionally, 40% of the students said that they found it hard to understand the texts in authentic language, especially those with some Vietnamese or English words and expressions which conveyed more than one meaning, or sometimes with too long and complicated sentences. Meanwhile, approximately 90% students thought that translating the texts into target language was the most difficult and time-consuming task. Last but not least, one of major challenges all students faced when designing their portfolios was that they lacked comments and feedback on their further translation at home.

4.2.2. Findings and discussion from interviews

When asked about the causes of the difficulties in finding sources of translation, students stated that it was not easy for them to decide which one was best appropriate in terms of topic relevance, degree of difficulty and language styles despite the availability of numerous texts and articles on the Internet.

The insufficient understanding of texts and poor translations were explained to be caused by students' lack of vocabulary and lexical expressions in both languages as well as in cultural discrepancies. Furthermore, students shared that their teachers, due to large class size and limited time, could give feedback to students' homework assignments or some of their further practice only. Therefore, it seemed to be inadequate for those who had great passion for translation and were trying to include as many texts of interest as possible in their portfolios. Some students said they asked for help from their friends or some websites of translation on the Internet.

4.3. The use of portfolios as a learning strategy and an assessment tool

4.3.1. Findings and discussion from questionnaires

As a strategy of learning, 100% of the students agreed that portfolios benefit their translation learning in many ways. Three quarters of them said that they could memorize the specialized terms much more easily with the records of words in their portfolios. All of the participants reflected that using portfolios was an excellent review and consolidation of what they had learned in class and of great help for their final exams. About 30% students found portfolios useful in promoting their translation skills, and over half of them agreed that they could do translation practice continuously and improve their independent learning thanks to working on portfolios on a regular basis. About 20% claimed that portfolios could foster their interest and curiosity on some subject matters of translation and strengthen their love for their future career as a professional translator.

4.3.2. Findings and discussion from interviews

When it came to the use of portfolios as an assessment tool of translation course, all the teachers interviewed said that it is beneficial to them to a large extent. Not only was it a record of students' learning process but it was also a form of authentic assessment that offers an alternative or an addition to traditional methods of grading and high stake exams. It provided evidence of effort and accomplishments students achieved after a course of translation, from which the teacher could have a brief review and feedback on their instructions and teaching methods.

Students interviewed agreed with their teachers in some ways, however, it was surprising that the majority of students did not approve of the use of portfolios as an assessment as they said that many may finish the portfolios as a response to teachers' requirements without any consideration and proofreading. Some of them even made copies from their friends and then made some changes. Some thought that one has own learning styles, and portfolios just act as a way of learning that some students did not choose. Therefore, they supposed portfolios could not show an accurate reflection of students' translation competence and performances.

5. Conclusion

The study manages to seek answers to research questions raised at the beginning of the paper. The findings made by analyzing data collected from survey questionnaires, interviews and portfolios collection show that all students in FFL, HPU2 are in favor of using portfolios in learning Translation 1. It can be said that most students spend some time designing their portfolios on a weekly basis. Their portfolios may contain translations of the texts from the course-book or those they collect from the Internet. The amount of translation practice included and activities to design portfolios vary among the students due to differences in their interest, language proficiency and learning styles. Students still face certain difficulties with their portfolios such as shortage of texts for translation, insufficient vocabulary and lexical expressions in target language and lack of feedback and correction on their further practice. However, it can be concluded that student have positive and favorable attitudes towards the use of portfolios. They recognize that it is helpful and advantageous to their translation learning in terms of memorization of words, development of translation skills and improvement of learners' autonomy. Opinions are divided on one aspect: the teachers agree while students disagree on whether to use portfolios as an assessment tool for Translation 1 course.

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SỬ DỤNG PORTFOLIO TRONG VIỆC DẠY VÀ HỌC
BỘ MÔN BIÊN DỊCH 1 TẠI KHOA NGOẠI NGỮ,
TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC SƯ PHẠM HÀ NỘI 2

Tóm tắt: Dạy và học biên-phiên dịch vốn đã được xem là một bộ phận quan trọng không thể thiếu đối với việc đào tạo sinh viên chuyên ngữ tại khoa Ngoại ngữ, Đại học Sư phạm Hà Nội 2 (ĐHSPHN2). Để làm nên thành công trong giảng dạy và học bộ môn Biên dịch 1, các giảng viên khoa đã lựa chọn đưa Portfolio vào quá trình giảng dạy. Bài viết này phản ánh cái nhìn tổng quan về việc sử dụng Portfolio trong việc dạy và học bộ môn Biên dịch 1 tại khoa Ngoại ngữ, trường ĐHSPHN2, với các nội dung chính về thực trạng và những khó khăn trong việc sử dụng Portfolio như là một công cụ kiểm tra đánh giá quá trình học tập và năng lực của sinh viên.

Từ khóa: dạy và học biên-phiên dịch, portfolio