

# **The Use of a Functional Approach to Translation in Enhancing Students' Translation Process -the Case of a Vietnamese Foreign Language Program**

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## **ABSTRACT**

In several contexts, including Vietnam, where professional translator training is lacking, translation courses in language teaching programs fall short of meeting the demand for proficient translators. Particularly, students' analytical ability and translation process seem to be de-emphasized. Drawing on a functional approach to Translation, this pedagogical study investigates how this approach enhances English major students' translation process. The effectiveness of the innovation was assessed by conducting a comparative analysis, which involved qualitative examination of 30 students' written and spoken reflections on the translation tasks and their translation solutions, both before and following the workshops. The results of the study show that the functional approach to translation help enhances students' translation process in terms of their more frequent mentions of non-linguistic translation problems, their broadened repertoire of translation strategies, and their reflections on the notions of "accuracy" and/or a "good" translation from a functional perspective. The workshops generally positively impacted their decision-making process, even given their limited linguistic and extralinguistic knowledge. The functional approach to Translation enhances students' translation process and cultivates their awareness of the real-life practice, leading to improved skills and confidence in Translation. This pedagogical approach holds potential benefits for translation teaching in the context of an English program under s and similar programs in Vietnam and beyond.

**Keywords:** functional approaches to Translation, translation teaching, translation process, text analysis, translation strategies, Vietnam.



## **Introduction**

There is a growing need for trainee translators who are non-native speakers of English in situations of intercultural communication (House, 2015; Taviano, 2013). Like other ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) countries, Vietnam has witnessed this increased demand for translation services since the country implemented the open-door policy in 1986 and welcomed numerous opportunities for international and regional exchanges in different fields from business and trade to education and culture (Do, 2018, 2019, 2020; Pham & Tran, 2013). Despite the booming translation market, some authors, including Chan and Liu (2013), Hoang (2020), and Le (2021), point out that the translation profession is underdeveloped in Vietnam and other ASEAN countries due to inadequate accreditation and standards of practice. The pressures caused by the increased global and local demand for translation services and the lack of professional translator training in Vietnam are directed to translation courses in foreign language programs at the tertiary level, which is expected to train graduates with adequate skills for employment. Nevertheless, graduates of English programs in Vietnam who are often expected to engage in professional translation work usually lack the skills and ability to do so (Do, 2018, 2019, 2020; Ho & Bui, 2013; Le, 2021; Nguyen & Nguyen, 2012). One of the various constraints to skill development in higher education is the lack of efficient pedagogy (Do, 2018, 2019, 2020; Nguyen & Nguyen, 2012; Tran, 2013).

Translation teaching at the tertiary level in Vietnam, which is usually part of language programs, has been problematic, as substantiated in many studies of translation teaching and student attitudes towards translation teaching in English programs (Ho & Bui, 2013; Hoang, 2020; Nguyen & Nguyen, 2012; Pham & Tran, 2013). In most of these studies, the respondents reported their translation ability to be limited. The students had “difficulties in using exact and suitable words in translation or did not understand meanings of all words in source texts (STs)” (Ho & Bui 2013, p. 74). This seems to be linked with students expressing dissatisfaction over boring class procedures in which they were not asked to do anything other than translate. There is a lack of focus on the translation process and elements of the translation process in translation teaching. Many researchers, including Chen (2010), Lu & Xu (2023), and Wongranu (2017), who reviewed Translation teaching in countries including China and Thailand, reported similar findings. For example, in Thailand, Translation is mainly seen as a means to study English, and translation classes adopt “read and translate” procedures. The anxiety and lack of confidence that students experience in translating can be attributed to outdated procedures in traditional translation classes (Wongranu, 2017).

Numerous studies (Colina & Lafford, 2018; Chen, 2010; Károly, 2014; Mediouni, 2016; Nguyen, 2023; Petrocchi, 2014) have aimed to address obstacles in translation teaching by introducing functional approaches to Translation in tertiary-level classes. While the adoption of functional approaches highlights a shift towards focusing on students’ translation processes, limited knowledge exists regarding its impact on the actual translation process of students.

This study was conducted in the English program at the University of foreign languages in Vietnam (UFL), where Translation teaching closely aligned with the description mentioned above. The researcher, who also served as the teacher, implemented the functional approach to Translation in the curriculum and classroom pedagogy to enhance students' translation process. The primary aim of this study is to investigate the impact of employing the functional approach to Translation on students' translation process by addressing the following question: How does the functional approach to translation influence students' translation process?

## **Literature Review**

### **The Focus of Translation Process in Translation Teaching**

In recent years, several innovative process-oriented translation methods have been introduced in language teaching contexts. Some authors inform their translation teaching frameworks with knowledge from various approaches to Translation. Kokkinidou and Spanou (2013) have devised a model for using Translation in foreign language teaching based on the text-linguistic approach by Hatim and Mason (1997) and Baker (2011). This model also focuses on parameters (i.e., textual factors and the target reader) in the translation process: before, during, and after Translation. Beecroft (2013) proposes a pedagogy based on Fillmore's (1997) "scenes-and-frames model" in English teaching in Germany. According to the model, the learner discusses the different "scenes" that occur in their minds when reading the STs (frames) and identifies which scene would be appropriate to the contexts of the texts in producing the target frame or target text (TT) that is intended for the target reader. The model, which focuses on the "functional, communicative, inter- and transcultural process" (Beecroft, 2013, p. 169), encourages students to make informed decisions in Translation based on their reflections of the scenes and frames. Leonardi (2010) and Dagilienė (2012) flexibly incorporate language skills in pre-translation, Translation, and post-translation activities. They advocate careful selection of authentic texts, pre-translation (reading, summarising articles, and explaining vocabulary and grammar), and post-translation activities (revision and back Translation). A study by Lee and Gyogi (2018) allows students to reflect on their Translation of cultural words in terms of oral reflections on Translation and written journals about their problems in translating cultural words, their translation strategies, and the success of their translations.

The brief overview of studies on teaching Translation in language classes above demonstrates a tendency to focus on students' ability to make informed translation decisions in the translation process by incorporating stages of the translation process in translation teaching. In the broad sense, the translation process refers to the context of a translation assignment which includes every operation and agent from the time of receiving the translation assignment from the client or commissioning party to delivering the final product of Translation to the reader (Muñoz Martín, 2010). In the narrow sense, the translation process refers to the mental operations of the translator during the translating activity (Muñoz Martín, 2010; Zabalbeascoa, 2000). The process commences when the translator analyzes the text and continues until they find the appropriate TT segment (Zabalbeascoa, 2000).

In this study, the translation process is understood in a narrow sense. The author also refers to Gile's (2009) sequential model of Translation with a two-phase operation: comprehension of the ST and reformulation or production of the TT. The translator formulates the "meaning hypothesis" (or understanding of the meaning) of a translation unit or text segment (word, phrase, paragraph, or text) based on their linguistic and extralinguistic knowledge and ad hoc knowledge (or knowledge of a specific field or situation). If the meaning hypothesis is plausible, they proceed to formulate the meaning hypothesis in the TT. During this phase, the translator produces the provisional TT segment and determines whether it meets the requirements of the "fidelity test" (accuracy) or the "acceptability test" (i.e., it is acceptable to the TT readers) by drawing on their linguistic and extralinguistic knowledge. When the tests for the first segment or translation unit

yield satisfactory results, the same process for the next segment begins.

Gile explains that the process involves the translator reading the whole ST to identify problems and their attempt to solve them; therefore, the translation process can refer to problem-identifying and problem-solving. It is possible to propose a definition of the translation problem at this stage. A translation problem refers to a text segment (verbal or non-verbal) that is either at a micro level (i.e., a text segment) or at a macro level (i.e., at the text level) and that requires the translator to consciously apply a justified translation strategy (González-Davies & Scott-Tennent, 2005). This definition indicates the interrelated counterparts of problems and strategies. In translating, problems and difficulties can be identified in both phases: comprehending the ST and producing the TT. Translation strategies then solve the problems and difficulties. Translation strategies are classified into comprehension and production/translation strategies (Chesterman, 1997). After adopting translation strategies or producing the Translation, the translator decides whether the Translation is accurate or/and acceptable. This study views the translation or problem-solving process as a general term incorporating problem identification, translation strategies, and reflection on the Translation (TT production phase).

There are encouraging indications that several language teaching methods for Translation have emphasized the translation process. The following section explores the incorporation of functional approaches in teaching translation, further contributing to this trend. Functionalism provides the groundwork for innovative pedagogical Translation approaches in various language teaching contexts, including the one examined in this study.

### **Functional Approaches to Translation and the Notion of Translation Process**

Functionalists propose that Translation is influenced by *skopos*, which means “aim” or “purpose” in Greek (Nord, 1997). The action of Translation should be negotiated and performed according to the purpose of the Translation or the TT in the target culture. The approach flourished in Nord’s (2005) text-oriented translation model, which stresses the *skopos* and analysis of text features. The model allows the translator to have a thorough understanding of the ST and enables them to make appropriate decisions concerning the intended function of the Translation. The model has its practical use in translator training as students’ competence in Translation can be developed by taking into account the three aspects: the translation brief, ST analysis, and the hierarchy of translation problems (Nord, 1997). *The brief lets the translator* establish why a translation is required, by whom, what the clients need, when, where the TT will be used, and who the TT addresses are.

Text analysis refers to the extratextual and intratextual factors of ST and TT. Extratextual factors include “sender” (text producer or writer), “sender’s intention”, “audience” (reader), “medium” (channel), “place of communication”, “time of communication”, “motive for communication” (why a text is produced), and “text function”. Intratextual factors include subject matter, content, presupposition, text composition (or structure), non-verbal elements, lexis, sentence structure, and suprasegmental features (e.g., italic or bold type). As for translation problems, Nord’s classification of translation problems includes pragmatic translation problems (related to differences in the situations of the ST and TT), cultural translation problems (related to cultural differences), linguistic translation problems (related to differences between languages), and text-specific translation problems (e.g., metaphors or puns). Nord (1997, 2005) advocates that the

translator should, in the first place, consider pragmatic perspectives in doing Translation, prioritizing problems arising from the situations of the ST and the TT and the function of a translation.

While Nord (1997, 2005) does not put forth specific translation strategies or techniques, the author highlights that the choice between documentary (source text-oriented) or instrumental (target-oriented) translation depends on its skopos or purpose. The selection of translation type is closely linked to the function of the source text (ST) and the target text (TT) within their respective linguistic and cultural contexts. Additionally, according to the "coherence rule," a translation is intended to convey information that should maintain internal textual coherence in the target text (TT), ensuring that it is understandable to the readers or recipients of the TT. The "fidelity rule" (the external textual coherence with the ST) maintains that a translation should be coherent or have a relationship with its ST regarding the ST information transmitted to TT readers. Unlike the Skopos rule, Nord's concepts of coherence and fidelity rules align well with Gile's requirements for a translation.

Many studies have proposed the incorporation of functionalist insights, particularly those of Nord, into translation teaching in language programs. Petrocchi (2014) incorporates text analysis and extratextual elements based on Nord's (2005) model in his specific class procedures because text analysis provides hints to understanding the translator's strategies and solutions. Colina and Lafford (2018) illustrate examples of translation activities that focus on the effects of contextual features (e.g., text, author, reader, and function) on understanding and producing texts. They include authentic texts and translation briefs so students can understand how authentic texts are constructed in various genres, fields, and contexts, considering different purposes and readers. Specifically, to assist students in their translation processes, the authors introduce top-down and bottom-up genre-based approaches to text analysis where different elements of texts are considered. Károly (2014) and Chen (2010) implemented the functional theoretical framework and Nord's text analysis model into foreign language programs to develop students' translation competence. These studies focused on students' translation problems and difficulties (based on Nord's category of problems). In problem-solving, students adopted various strategies to deal with problems translating an ST item (i.e., metaphors).

Other various scholars have recognized the potential of the functionalist approach to Translation in foreign language classrooms. Mediouni (2016) implemented functional approaches to Translation in Arabic-English legal text translation and introduced a teaching method consisting of three phases: pre-translation (text analysis and parallel text examination), Translation, and post-translation (revision and reflection). Although the study provided empirical evidence on using the functional approach in translation teaching, it primarily focused on the pre-translation stage utilizing parallel texts or comparable corpora. Similarly, Yu, Lapteva, and Sonyem (2018) refer to the Communicative-Functional Approach to Translation Teaching, which emphasizes linguistic aspects and the analysis of linguistic features. Skopečková (2018) suggests, albeit without providing empirical evidence, that students' creativity can be enhanced when they reassess previous steps in the translation process, including identifying target text function and comprehension of the source text. While several studies support the importance of focusing on the translation process through the lens of the functional approach, these studies have been limited in scale and often concentrated on specific aspects of the translation process rather than the process as a whole. Consequently, further empirical research is necessary to substantiate and reinforce this

emerging trend in Translation within language education.

In their consciousness-raising workshops on Translation, Nguyen (2023) adopts the functional approach to explore the integration of consciousness-raising (CR), a proven effective teaching method in language instruction, into translation education. The study highlights the importance of CR in enhancing students' understanding of various aspects of the translation process. This study aims to replicate Nguyen's (2023) work, focusing on a detailed examination of the functional approach to Translation concerning students' translation processes. It is expected that certain findings regarding the effectiveness of CR and/or the functional approach to Translation on students' translation processes may overlap. The discussion of the data below will acknowledge and address this potential overlap (in terms of translation strategies).

## **Research Design**

The study aims to investigate the influence of the functional approach to Translation on students' translation process, prioritizing this aspect over their translation test results. Qualitative research is deemed the most appropriate methodology to capture the rich diversity of experiences among a limited number of individuals. Qualitative research delves into participants' unique perspectives, allowing them to express their ideas and interpretations, effectively “fashioning meaning out of events and phenomena” (Schwandt, 1994, p. 118). Similarly, Merriam (2002) highlights that qualitative research enables participants to construct and interpret their reality (pp. 3-4). Thus, qualitative research is expected to provide a comprehensive insight into how students construct and engage with the methodological approach in translation teaching. This study can effectively portray students' responses to the pedagogy regarding their evolving translation processes, changes in translation production, and personal perceptions of progress by employing qualitative research.

## **Participants**

This study randomly recruited thirty female Vietnamese students from a foreign language university enrolled in the introductory translation course Translation 1. Translation 1 is part of the English language program and one of the three main translation courses. Its objective is to enhance students' language proficiency and translation abilities. Before enrolling in Translation 1, students who had not taken any translation courses previously were required to complete integrated English skills courses, which aimed to help them reach level B2 (upper-intermediate level) according to the Council of Europe's Language Policy Division (2009) by the end of their second year. Students at this English proficiency level will likely have minimal difficulties comprehending English texts for Translation since the texts are thoughtfully selected to ensure students' understanding. Additionally, any improvements observed following the intervention should not be conflated with the outcomes of students' involvement in previous translation courses.

## **The Research Procedure**

This study occurred during the first week of the Translation 1 course, outside the students' regular schedule. Students from various classes of the Translation 1 course voluntarily participated after attending a briefing session explaining the research objectives, procedures, and the voluntary nature of their involvement. These students had not received prior instruction on expressing their translation difficulties. Initially, 30 third-year students completed Translation Task 1, translating two texts and documenting their challenges. Fifteen of these students (labeled 1 to 30) voluntarily

attended individual interviews (Interview 1/Int.1) after completing Translation Task 1. During the interviews, which lasted 10 minutes each, students elaborated on their translation difficulties after having 10 minutes to review their translation task papers. The next step involved the participation of all 30 students in three consecutive days of workshops immediately following Translation Task 1. Finally, one day after Workshop 3, all 30 students completed Translation Task 2, similar to Translation Task 1. A follow-up interview (Int.2) was arranged for those who had participated in the previous interviews. The study obtained ethical approval from the University of Queensland's School of Languages and Cultures (Ethical Clearance Application Number: 15-13). The research procedure can be summarised in Figure 1 below:



Figure 1: Data Collection Procedure

### The Translation Workshops

The translation workshops introduced to the students' elements of the translation process, such as text analysis, translation strategies, and reflection on Translation as guided by functional approaches to Translation.

Table 1: Workshop Contents

Workshops	Contents
<b>Workshop 1</b>	“Good” Translation Workshop 1A: Introduction: What is a “good” translation Workshop 1B: Definition of Translation and the Role of the Translator Workshop 1 C: Variety of texts
<b>Workshop 2</b>	Understanding texts Workshop 2A: Text analysis Workshop 2B: Text Analysis II Workshop 2C: Text Analysis III
<b>Workshop 3</b>	The notion of “accuracy” Workshop 3A: Translation strategies Workshop 3B: Omissions, additions, and Substitutions Workshop 3C: What is “accuracy”?

Table 1, provided above, summarizes the three workshops, each lasting 150 minutes and divided into three 50-minute sections. During Workshop 1, students engaged in discussions that aimed to redirect their focus toward understanding the concept of a good translation. These discussions involved exploring their initial assumptions about Translation and their overall understanding of the translator's responsibilities, ethical considerations, and the various types of texts they encounter.

Workshop 2 emphasized text analysis, a crucial aspect of the translation process. Students were introduced to various elements within texts that must be considered when undertaking a translation task, alongside the identification of text types. These features were explained using deductive metalinguistic descriptions. Conversely, the role of the translation brief in a translation task was presented inductively during Workshop 2C. Specifically, students were allowed to translate a passage both with and without the translation brief and then asked to identify differences in their translations. This activity aimed to cultivate students' awareness of how the translation brief facilitates informed decision-making throughout the translation process.

During Workshop 3, students were introduced to translation strategies, specifically domestication, and foreignisation. They were tasked with identifying these strategies in published Vietnamese translations and engaging in discussions about their appropriateness. The students analyzed the employed strategies, explored the reasons behind their usage, and considered the potential impacts these strategies might have on different types of readers. This exercise aimed to enhance students' understanding that text characteristics and brief Translation influence the choice of translation strategy. In the concluding segment of the workshop, students were encouraged to reflect on their criteria for accuracy and what they considered a good translation.

### **Translation Tasks**

Before and after the translation workshops, students were given comparable translation tasks to complete. Each task comprised two smaller tasks: Task 1a (67 words) and Task 1b (68 words) were conducted before the workshops, while Task 2a (60 words) and Task 2b (75 words) were performed after the workshops. Each task sheet included a text (e.g., Text 1a in Task 1a) for the students to translate, followed by a section where they could comment on the problems and difficulties they encountered during the translation process. The translation tasks maintain uniformity in structure, reference tools, time allocation, text length, translation direction (English to Vietnamese), text type, topics, text complexity, text features, and translation briefs (or instructions). This approach ensured that the translation tasks were suitable for students' English proficiency level, facilitating their comprehension and enabling them to perform well within their capabilities. Simultaneously, these considerations allowed for optimal exploration of students' translation process by providing a consistent framework for analysis.

Following each task, students were instructed to document at least five problems and difficulties while performing the Translation. They were asked to record their challenges and translation choices before and after the workshops, labeled as Writ.1 (written comments before the workshops) and Writ.2 (written comments after the workshops). As Gile (2004) suggests, students' notes can offer valuable insights into their thought process during the Translation, shedding light on individual and collective problems and their employed translation strategies (p. 2).

### **Interviews**

To delve deeper into students' written comments regarding their translation problems, interviews (Int.1–interviews before the workshops; Int. 2–interviews after the workshops) were conducted as part of this study. These interviews allowed students to elaborate on their comments and provide additional information that they may have been unable to include in the translation tasks due to time constraints or limited English proficiency. Moreover, to ensure data richness, participants could express themselves in English or Vietnamese during the interviews, enabling them to use the most comfortable language (Saldanha and O'Brien, 2013). Any potential bias was minimized



by employing open and neutral questions that did not focus on specific translation-related aspects (such as text features). For instance, a question like “Can you explain your written comment?” was utilized. Ultimately, verbal thoughts expressed during the interviews offered valuable insights into participants’ perspectives on various elements of the translation process (Saldanha and O’Brien, 2013).

### **Data Analysis Method**

The study presents the results of changes in the students’ identification of translation problems, their translation strategies, their reflection on what constitutes a good translation, their translation solutions, and their perceptions of progress after the workshops. *Translation problems* range from difficulties related to extratextual features and general style conventions to those related to vocabulary and sentence structure. *Translation strategies* involve those adopted in the comprehension stage (comprehension strategies) and TT production stage (stylistic strategies and strategies to deal with vocabulary and sentence structure problems).

*Students reflect on a good translation* composed of functional appropriateness, stylistic appropriateness, expression, and accuracy. Functional appropriateness involved the students’ reflections on whether their translations met the requirements of the translation brief (i.e., the Translation should be appropriate to its function and the target reader). The category of stylistic appropriateness in this analysis referred to the students’ comments on their translations in terms of how adequately they conveyed general stylistic features of the ST. The category of *expression* referred to the student’s comments on the target language or the language of their translations, referring to the readability or comprehensibility of translations. The category of *accuracy* was concerned with the student’s comments on whether or not their translations accurately rendered the content of the ST without any unjustified omissions, additions, or changes or whether the meanings of words, phrases, and sentences had been rendered adequately.

The translation process is close to students’ translation or translation solutions. This article is limited to analyzing students’ translation solutions to the ST item “green cleaning” (part of the title of Text 2a). *Perception of progress* covered the students’ reflections on their difficulties, translation processes, and improved translation ability or skill, which showed their increasing confidence in performing translation tasks.

The primary focus of the research question, “How does the use of the functional approach to translation affect students’ translation process?” can be primarily addressed through the students’ self-reported problem identification, adoption of translation strategies, reflections on what constitutes a “good” translation, and their translations. Students’ perceptions of their progress contribute to their psycho-physiological competence, including self-confidence (Kelly, 2005).

### **Findings and Discussion**

The students’ translation process changed, marked by increased attention to non-linguistic translation issues (as evidenced by written comments), adopting a wider range of strategies, and a greater reflection on achieving optimal translations (as reflected in interview data). Concurrently, their translation skills showed signs of improvement, aligning with the growth of their confidence levels.

### Focus Shifted to Non-Linguistic Translation Problems

Table 2: Total Numbers of Translation Problems and Difficulties Raised in Written Comments

	Types of problems	Written comment 1 (before the workshops)	Written comment 2 (after the workshops)
<b>1</b>	Difficulties related to extratextual features		
	Author	3	8
	Reader	2	19
	Text function	1	5
	Subtotal	<b>6</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>2</b>	Difficulties related to general style conventions	<b>6</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>3</b>	Difficulties related to vocabulary and expressions		
	ST comprehension	34	20
	TT production*	28	25
	Both ST comprehension and TT production	2	1
	Unspecified difficulty**	18	24
	Sub-total	<b>82</b>	<b>70</b>
<b>4</b>	Difficulties related to sentences and sentence structures		
	ST comprehension	3	2
	TT production*	9	6
	Both ST comprehension and TT production	0	1
	Unspecified difficulty**	1	9
	Sub-total	<b>13</b>	<b>18</b>
Total		<b>107</b>	<b>136</b>

\* *TT production*: the difficulty in producing the provisional TT segment.

\*\* *Unspecified difficulty*: The difficulty that cannot be classified due to the lack of relevant information

The students (30) were asked to write about five translation problems and difficulties they experienced in the two tasks. The data demonstrated a moderate change in their elaboration on translation problems and difficulties from 107 to 137 items. Most of the commentary was devoted to linguistic problems with vocabulary and expressions in both translation tasks (82 items before and 70 items after). The students were mostly concerned about “new”, “strange,” or “difficult” words and phrases. A lack of grammatical knowledge can also be a problem. Student 25 noted: “Subject “it”- “it was as silent as the grave”. I don’t know if “it” refers to the house or refers to the atmosphere of the house [Text 1b]” (Student 25, Writ. 1). Focusing on linguistic problems appears to be common among foreign language learners when they translate regardless of their communicative language teaching or structural language programs as evidenced in many studies including those by Lörcher (2005) and Tirkkonen-Condit (2005).

After the workshops, the students began to shift their focus from linguistic problems to non-linguistic ones, as demonstrated by the slight decrease in identified problems with vocabulary structures and the surge in those with extratextual features (from 6 to 32) and general style conventions (from 6 to 16). Even though some students briefly referred to the author, text function, or text type in Written Comment 1, they had vague ideas about the role of these features. Take text function, for example. Student 28 was concerned about how to target readers would comprehend their Translation, only briefly noting “the purpose of this text” without elaborating on it. However, after the workshops, some students had a clearer idea of extratextual features that affected their translations. For instance, Student 22 raised the problem of their Translation’s informative function (“My translation doesn’t give information clearly”, Writ. 2).

One reason for the decline in the students' identified linguistic problems could be that after the workshops, they found linguistic problems self-evident at their levels and that these problems were not worth noting. Meanwhile, students' attention to problems related to extratextual features has been attributable to the workshop's focus on extratextual features, including author, reader, and text function, which can potentially cause pragmatic translation difficulties.

Fernández and Zabalbeascoa (2012) have indicated that students who reported more non-linguistic problems (or those with general style conventions) performed better in Translation than those who did not. In this study, the students diverted their attention from linguistic problems to non-linguistic problems. They considered text features presented in the workshops, including extratextual and intratextual features (particularly non-linguistic extratextual ones) part of text analysis, an essential principle of the functionalist approach to Translation.

After attending the workshops, the students started incorporating considerations of contextualized or pragmatic meanings determined by extratextual features into their translation problem identification. This suggests that students can expand their focus beyond purely linguistic issues when equipped with a deeper understanding of text features that impact source text comprehension and target text production. To deal with translation problems, they also adopted a wider range of translation strategies.

### **Broadened Repertoire of Strategies**

Table 3: The students' Strategies Raised in Interviews Before and After the Workshops

	<b>Interview 1</b>	<b>Interview 2</b>
<b>1. Comprehension strategies</b>		
Use of general reading strategies	4	11
Use of dictionary	12	6
<b>2. Stylistic strategies</b>		
Reflection on the style of the ST	6	7
Choice of the appropriate target language in consideration of extratextual features	4	14
Consideration of emotive meanings	0	5
<b>3. Strategies to deal with vocabulary problems</b>		
Use of dictionary	7	5
Consideration of the general context	12	6
Focus on the message of the ST	1	4
Consider translation variants	6	12
Word-for-word Translation	6	5
<b>4. Strategies to deal with sentence structure problems</b>		
Word-for-word Translation	2	3
Word order rearrangement	2	0
Consideration of the length of the sentence	2	0

The results showed that after the workshops, the students were more thoughtful during the ST comprehension and TT production stages, as evidenced by their increased reporting about general reading strategies (comprehension strategies), choosing appropriate target language in consideration of extratextual features, and considering translation variants (translation strategies).

In dealing with comprehension problems, the students tended to use general reading strategies more frequently and were less dependent on dictionary use after the workshops compared with previously. Before the workshops, only students 5, 6, and 10 referred to the surrounding words and phrases to understand the context, and most students mainly resorted to dictionary check-ups.

After the workshops, a number of the students (11 students) diversified their reported comprehension strategies and referred to more text features that assisted their comprehension. Student 1, for instance, explained that the picture enabled her to understand the subject matter of the text: “I looked at the text [Task 2a], and the picture provided implied cleaning using natural substances rather than chemical products, and cleaning involving a manual method rather than machines” (Student 1, Int. 2). When students made good use of general reading strategies and consideration of the general context, they might not have had to check dictionaries for vocabulary comprehension. Directing attention to situational features derived from text analysis enables students to enhance their text comprehension while translating.

In terms of stylistic strategies, even though the same proportion of students referred to the strategy of reflecting the style of the ST in both interviews, in Interview 2, more students had concrete ideas of how the text type influences word choices based on their awareness of the different types of Translation (e.g., novel Translation or scientific Translation). For instance, Student 9 proposed using academic language in this context to suit the “scientific and instructional” text type.

Furthermore, before the workshops, four students considered the choice of language, but they rarely described the language they used or should have used in any detail. After the workshops, 14 out of 15 students referred to the strategy of choosing an appropriate target language considering extratextual features, and they elaborated further on the strategy. They described the influence of text function (e.g., compelling) and the reader on the choice of language. For example, student 7 maintained that the language should be appealing to attract the reader or “communicating to people about cleaning or promulgating environmental protection among people to maintain their social responsibility” (Int.2).

Consideration of emotive language, which was unfamiliar to the students before the workshops, was referred to by one-third of the students (Students 3, 4, 6, 10, and 13) after the workshops. The five students considered the connotative aspects of the words and personal pronouns in choosing the words appropriate for Translation, considering the text content, the relationship of the characters in the story, and the type of character (Task 2b). For instance, Student 4 considered choosing between “strong”, “serious”, and “mild” Vietnamese personal pronouns depending on the content of the story (“the story was about hatred or dislike”). They found that “‘Anh ta’ [a neutral Vietnamese pronoun for “he”] was not suited to the story because the pronoun seemed “light” while “hắn” [a negative Vietnamese personal pronoun] seemed more serious”.

Vocabulary and expressions remained the focus of their translation problems and difficulties, and even though a third of the students still adopted dictionary use and word-for-word Translation after the workshops, they were more judicious in their choice of dictionary definitions. They opted to avoid word-for-word Translation if they could. They justified their choices by referring to a variety of text features. For example, Student 13 referred to other text features (content and text type) in producing what they called a “better” (word-for-word) translation: “I just used word-for-word translation. But thanks to your help, I could produce a better translation after going through all the content of this advertisement” (Int. 2).

Some students focused on the message of the ST, although the number of students mentioning this strategy was still low after the workshops. Interestingly, more students were cautious in choosing the appropriate target equivalents among different translation variants after the workshops. Some other students (Students 3, 9, and 11) made their decisions among the translation variants for “cleaning” or “green cleaning” based on the subject matter (the environment), non-verbal

elements, and translation briefs in Task 2a.

At first, I used literal Translation with which “green” meant “màu xanh lá” [the color of leaves] ... But later, when I looked at the pictures and the requirements of the task<sup>1</sup>, I thought of the words “dọn dẹp dùng những chất thân thiện với môi trường” [BT: cleaning using environmentally friendly substances. (Student 9, Int. 2)

The students exhibited a certain level of autonomy and creativity in their decision-making process, as they could revisit earlier steps, such as text analysis and problem identification, and reassess any of the proposed solutions. This finding aligns with Skopečková's research (2018).

Generally, the students broadened their use of translation strategies. They adopted more effective translation strategies (except those used to deal with sentences), which were not limited to what they formally presented in the workshops. According to Nguyen (2023), the student's utilization of translation strategies can be attributed to the principles of CR, which enables them to adopt and adapt these strategies flexibly. This article presents a functional approach to Translation, facilitating students in considering the features of both the source text (ST) and target text (TT) and empowering them to transcend the presented material through their creative decision-making process.

### Students' Reflection on a Good Translation

Table 4: Reflection on a good translation in interviews before and after the workshops

	Interview 1	Interview 2
1. Functional appropriateness	2	9
2. Stylistic appropriateness	7	10
3. Expression	13	15
4. Accuracy	13	14

*Functional appropriateness* was a relatively unknown concept before the workshops, as only two students briefly referred to the target reader's interest, feelings, and comprehension. In contrast, nearly two-thirds of the students were aware of functional appropriateness after the workshops, showing a deeper understanding of the issue. For example, some students thought that the Translation should maintain the readers' interest and that the readers were expected to behave in the intended way as indicated by the function of the text. For some, a persuasive translation of an advertisement or promulgation should persuade the reader to act in the intended way—“turn to natural cleaning” (Student 1, Task 2a) or “choose those products” (Student 8, Task 2a).

The author intends to persuade people to turn to natural cleaning, but my Translation does not sound persuasive...Our style should show that natural cleaning is effective. I find that my Translation produced such an effect, but the effect was not high. (Student 1, Int. 2)

The students referred to *stylistic appropriateness* at the level of text type in both interviews (7 students in the first interview and ten students in the second), with the students in the second interview able to provide further elaboration. A few students in the first interview were unclear about the features of a translation concerning the text type. For example, Student 4 said that the

<sup>1</sup> The student referred to the translation brief of Task 2a. The students used the term “requirements of the task” in the final workshop when they reflected on what they had learned.

story (Text 1b) should be “logical,” but they did not explain the logic further. In the second interview, two-thirds of the students discussed stylistic appropriateness, demonstrating a clearer idea of the type of Translation and the features of Translation. They noted there were different types of translations, such as novel Translation, Scientific Translation, or poetry translation.

I did not know whether my Translation was good or appropriate to the style of novel Translation. (Student 3, Int. 2)

Though almost all students reflected on their *expression* or the language of their translations in both interviews (13 students in Interview 1 and 15 students in Interview 2), more students indicated the impact of various features on expression in Interview 2. In the first interview, many of the 13 students made subjective comments about the language of their translations, and they rarely justified them. Some students (1, 2, 5, 6, and 13) used general evaluative terms, such as “smooth”, “flowing”, “flowery”, “better”, and “natural” to refer to a good translation in translating Task 1a. These students did not present further explanations for their comments. A different picture can be seen in Interview 2, where the students used fewer general evaluative terms and commented on the language of Translation concerning different text features. For example, some students commented on textual features that influenced their word choice, including the purpose and target reader. Students 4 and 7, for instance, explicitly mentioned the text function (e.g., “promulgating environmental protection among people to maintain their social responsibility”, Task 2a) and the target reader (e.g., “children” in Task 2b). Student 13 could mention a combination of text features:

For example, as this text was an advertisement, our expression should be attractive to people. I needed to translate it in a way that could appeal to people [Task 2a]. (Student 13, Int. 2)

Regarding *accuracy*, even though most students referred to what they called “fidelity” to the ST before the workshops, they were mainly concerned about reflecting the meanings of ST words, phrases, and sentences. This indicated their attention to fidelity at lower levels of text (“Even though I could understand the word, I could not choose the correct word for translation”—Student 3, Int. 1). After the workshops. However, some students still equated accuracy with being faithful to the original meanings of words, phrases, and sentences. Several others considered the meanings of these linguistic items concerning the content, the text type, the author’s intention, the text function, and the target reader. For instance, some students who considered the text function and the requirements of the target reader thought that accurate Translation might involve maintaining the original ST form (Students 4, 6, and 9), adding information, or changing sentence structures (Student 11).

Our translated sentences may be completely different. They are not completely different, but the original meanings should be kept. I should completely change structures so that children can have a better understanding. (Student 11, Int. 2)

Generally, even though the workshops did not explicitly present the concepts of functional appropriateness, stylistic appropriateness, expression, and accuracy, the students developed their new awareness of the notion of a good translation from a functional perspective owing to their increased awareness of the role of a variety of text features presented in the workshops. The students’ translation process was influenced by the text function or skopos, guiding their decision-making in creating their Translation. Additionally, they considered the text type to ensure stylistic appropriateness. By drawing upon their linguistic and extralinguistic knowledge, the students prioritized both accuracy and expression, aligning with Gile’s “fidelity test” and “acceptability

test” as well as Nord’s “fidelity” and “coherence” rules. Remarkably, these two rules were integrated within the pervasive influence of the skopos, which guided every step of the translation process.

Generally, after the workshops, students’ translation process was informed with more non-linguistic problems, more diverse translation strategies, and detailed judgment of their Translation. Students informed translation process also seems to have affected their translation solutions. The next section presents students’ translation solution to the ST item “green cleaning” after the workshops.

### **Word Choice and Functional Appropriateness**

After the workshops, one-third of the students presented more appropriate word choices and avoided word-for-word Translation, as shown by the analysis of their translation solutions to ST item “green cleaning” (Task 2a). Many students produced functionally appropriate Translation for “green cleaning” because they were concerned about their target reader’s comprehension, text function, and subject matter. Some students (5, 8, 23, 28, 29, and 30) produced the literal Vietnamese Translation or kept the ST English form in their translations. Some of them possibly thought that Vietnamese readers would understand this English phrase. Students 4 and 19 commented that they retained the English ST “green cleaning” in their Vietnamese translations because Vietnamese communities in Australia might understand it (despite this, Student 19 used a sense-oriented translation solution in their Translation).

Rather than being constrained by word-for-word Translation, more than one-third of the 30 students conveyed the sense of “green cleaning” and related “green cleaning” to “the environment” in their translations. Students 11, 15, and 25 related the phrase to be “environmentally friendly.” In contrast, Student 7 relied on a common Vietnamese expression used to indicate a clean environment (“xanh sạch đẹp” [BT: green, clean, and beautiful]). Student 16 related “green cleaning” to “safe cleaning”.

Dọn dẹp một cách thân thiện với môi trường thật dễ dàng—Hãy tạo thiên đường của riêng bạn [BT: Easy environmentally friendly cleaning—Create your own heaven]. (Student 11, Title 2a)

Dọn dẹp dễ dàng và an toàn [BT: Easy safe cleaning]. (Student 16, Title 2a)

Their idiomatic Translation, literal Translation, as well as ST form retention in translating “green cleaning” were certainly the end product of the translation processes in which a decision to translate the term was made in consideration of extratextual features of the ST and TT (i.e., at the more global levels).

### **Perception of progress: Increased confidence and independence**

Data from Interview 2 after the workshops showed that the students felt more confident while translating. Some students (including Students 7, 9, and 15) commented that the translation task was less difficult than before the workshops and that they found that their translations had improved. Student 9 said, “I noticed that compared with the first translation task, I could do better this time. I have made some improvements. For example, to guess word meanings, I read the task requirements and look at the pictures”. This confidence certainly resulted from the student’s increased focus on text features. The knowledge obtained from the text at hand forms part of extratextual or extralinguistic knowledge (in addition to background knowledge, specialized knowledge, and knowledge of the subject matter) (Tirkkonen-Condit 1992). According to Kim

(2006), students' extralinguistic knowledge can compensate for the lack of linguistic knowledge, enabling students to infer the meanings of ST items. Generally, the study results showed that the students' better-informed translation process, along with justified translation solutions and word choices, demonstrated engagement in their learning.

## **Conclusion**

### **Summary**

The study was to investigate how the use of the functional approach to Translation affects students' translation process. The study results obtained from the qualitative analysis of translation tasks and interviews before and after the workshops indicated that the pedagogical innovation students generally enhanced the translation process.

After the workshops, the students' translation process generally improved. They began to pay attention to translation problems and difficulties related to extratextual features and adopted a more diverse range of strategies considering various text features. Further, the students demonstrated a better understanding of accuracy, which does not always mean retaining ST meanings. They knew accuracy also involved adding information and/or sentence structure change. Accordingly, they endeavored to produce informed and functionally appropriate translations and generally demonstrated confidence and independence in Translation and learning.

The study suggests that a functional approach to Translation empowers students to enrich their translation process through informed steps such as problem identification, translation strategies, and reflection on Translation.

### **Implications**

Given the demonstrated value of the functional approach to Translation in fostering the growth of students' translation skills, language programs should integrate elements of this approach into their translation courses. The activities conducted during the workshops can particularly be beneficial in the initial stages of translation teaching, aiding students in comprehending the intricacies of the translation process. Particularly, the functional approach to Translation promotes students' awareness of the nature of real-life practice and their greater skills and confidence in the burgeoning translation markets. This pedagogical approach must be implemented and further developed within the English program at UFL, similar programs in Vietnam, and other contexts.

### **Suggestions for Future Studies**

This is a small-scale study conducted briefly involving a limited number of participants. Future studies could investigate the use of functional approaches to Translation on a larger scale and in lengthened periods to dictate its impact on students' translation ability. The validity of the teaching approach could be enhanced if students' translation solutions to other ST items and/or whole texts can be well-presented to show potential links between the translation process and translation product. The study findings may also have been influenced by applying the consciousness-raising principle employed during the workshops (Nguyen, 2023). Nevertheless, disentangling the impact of the functional approach to Translation from that of consciousness-raising presents a challenge.



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