

***Investigating Procedures for Translating Vietnamese Noodle Dishes Into English:
Application to Language Teaching***

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Abstract

The purpose aims at finding translation procedures for rendering Vietnamese noodles - a world well-known cuisine - into English in order to apply in teaching and learning English language skills in general and Translation in particular for EFL (English as Foreign Language) students at The University of Danang in Vietnam in the current context of integration and cultural communication. The background of study is mainly based on translation procedures stated by Newmark P (1988) and Armstrong N. (2005). Translation procedures such as shift (i.e. structure shift and class shift) and equivalence (e.g. cultural equivalence, descriptive equivalence and functional equivalence) are employed to analyze and find out the result of the study qualitatively. The data with different subtypes of two main kinds of Vietnamese noodles, such as Pho and Bun written in English will be collected from prestigious resources such as Guidebooks by Lonely Planet, Cable News Network (CNN) Travel Guide and some other related material or publication, like dictionaries or textbooks. Then a qualitative as well as quantitative analysis of totally 23 different subtypes of Vietnamese noodles, comprising 11 kinds of pho and 12 types of bun having been appropriately and cautiously collected for the research will be conducted so as to discuss and find the result of the research. The outcomes are expected to be useful and broadly applicable not only for Vietnamese ESL students but also for ESL students from many other countries in association with transforming their own cuisines into English by means of concerned translation procedures.

Keywords: Vietnamese Noodle Cuisines, Translation Procedures, Vietnamese-English Translation of Noodle Cuisines

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Introduction

The rationale of the research aims at finding translation procedures for rendering Vietnamese noodles - the world well-known cuisine - into English in order to apply in teaching and learning English language skills in general and Translation in particular for EFL (English as Foreign Language) students at The University of Danang in Vietnam in the current context of integration and cultural communication. Among the noodle - based dishes, two most famous and popularized ones, i.e. dishes of pho and bun are selected for research. CNN, a well-known Cable News Network in the United State of America, once ranked pho, the noodle-dish as one of the most delicious dishes in the world and bun rieu of Vietnam as one of the most attractive dishes in Asia.” as stated by Linh Nguyen. (2021).

The purpose of the study is to find how the Vietnamese noodles cuisine can be translated in terms of translation procedures and it is hoped to contribute to English language learning in general and to better translation by Vietnamese learners of English in particular. Among noodles cuisine, the study is restricted to the translation procedures of the Vietnamese dishes of pho and bun only.

Literature review and Introduction of dishes

There are some researches that are related to the translation procedures of Vietnamese food or dishes in general, according to Google search, such as “Translation strategies from Vietnamese to English for name of Vietnamese dishes” by Van Anh Luong (2021) or A study on translation of expression used in some Vietnamese dishes into English, by Trang Thi Nguyen (2010). However, the typical study entitled “Investigating Procedures for Translating Vietnamese Noodle Dishes into English: Application to Language Teaching” cannot be seen to my best knowledge.

According to npr.org (2016), top stories in the U.S. and world news, pho is regarded as one of the most traditional dishes and it is considered as central to Vietnamese identity. When we refer to Vietnamese food, that means we refer to the dishes made from rice because in Vietnamese cuisine, rice is always the main dish in comparison with the other food in their daily meal.

In accordance with the news by Alotrip, Vietnam News Travel (2015) states:

Occupying the first position in the list is pho, which is often called as Vietnamese noodles by foreigners. It can be said that pho creates the soul of Vietnamese food. A typical bowl of Vietnamese noodles is made from linguine-shaped rice noodles, hot broth, fresh herbs, and meat, primarily beef or chicken. Everyone setting foot in Vietnam often says that they will never forget the delectable flavors of pho.

In particular, pho in the North or the South of Vietnam or exactly in Hanoi – the capital of Vietnam and Saigon the biggest city is quite different in terms of taste of broth or the choice of greens. In 2013, Business Insider “ranked Vietnamese pho in the first place of the top 40 cuisines you should try once in your life”. International travelers emphasized said that it was the food they thought of first when they visited Vietnam. CNN Staff (2017) also share the idea as follows.

Pho is a Vietnamese noodle soup consisting of broth, linguine-shaped rice noodles called *banh pho*, a few herbs, and meat. It is primarily served with either beef or chicken. Pho is a popular street food in Vietnam and the specialty of a number of restaurant chains around the world. Pho originated in the early 20th century in northern Vietnam. Because pho's origins are poorly documented, there is significant disagreement over the cultural influences that led to its development in Vietnam, as well as the etymology of the word itself.

Pho is most famous internationally but bun is most popularized over the country, especially in the central and southern country.

In association with the news by CNN, pho might be Vietnam's most famous dish, but bun cha is the top choice when it comes to lunchtime in the capital. It is also said that a dish of pho must be tastier in Winter or cold weather; otherwise a dish of bun is better in summer time. It could be the reason why pho is more popular in the North and bun is more favored in the South of Vietnam where weather is warmer or hotter around the year. Bun cha which originates from Hanoi often served with the delicious fried crab spring rolls is the choice of the former US President Barack Obama during his visit Vietnam in 2016. Vietnamnet (2016) also added the following information:

In "10 Vietnamese dishes praised in foreign press", on 08 May 2015, Anthony Bourdain exclaimed that Hue beef rice vermicelli was the most delicious soup in the world. In the episode, Anthony Bourdain took audience to Hue Citadel to try famous Hue beef noodles soup. In Dong Ba Market, Bourdain had an opportunity to taste this dish. After enjoying Hue beef noodles, Bourdain did not hesitate to give the dish a title "The best soup in the world".

In a documentary film about Hanoi carried out by CNN, fresh-water crab noodles soup (*bun rieu cua*) was described as an essence of Asian cuisine. With foreign travelers, crab and fried tofu has created special flavors for the dish. Besides, Vietnamese herbs and vegetables also help the noodles soup become perfect by Dtinews.vn (2019).

Methodology

In terms of research methods, in order to reach the goal of the investigation, both qualitative and quantitative approaches were dealt with to answer the research questions. The qualitative approach was referred to discuss and point out the procedures for rendering the Vietnamese noodle dishes into English on the basis of analyzing syntactic features in the source language as well as in the target one. The quantitative approach was applied to calculate the occurrence frequency of procedures or strategies for translating Vietnamese noodle dishes into the English language. With the aim of achieving the goal put at the beginning of the research, it was impossible to use a single method. Therefore, several methods were employed. First of all, the descriptive method was used in order to give a detail description of the English translational equivalents of Vietnamese noodle dishes. Secondly, the analytic method was also essential for the researcher in order to clarify and justify syntactic features of Vietnamese noodle dishes in the source language as well as the target one. In brief, a number of methods as mentioned above were guidelines in conducting the research. However, depending on the set goals of the paper, qualitative as well as quantitative methods were chosen as the dominant ones, the most frequently used methods in the article.

In association with sampling, first of all with data collection, there are 44 samples of were chosen for the research. Based on theoretical background translation procedures of Vietnamese noodle dishes into English, we picked out and classified them into their syntactic structures. Specifically, the data for the research were collected from prestigious materials, namely Vietnamese-English dictionaries by Dang Chan Lieu et al (2008), A Handbook for The English Language Translator by Huu Ngoc et al (2014), Guide books by Mason Florence & Robert Storey (2011) and especially websites of famous Vietnamese dishes mainly introduced by CNN (Cable News Network in the United States) and some other related material or publication, like dictionaries or textbooks as well. In reference to data analysis, the samples of Vietnamese noodle dishes were investigated according to syntactic features. This is the base for finding the translation procedures of Vietnamese noodle dishes in English. Or in other words, the data analysis was carried out based on syntactic features combined with translation procedures. Thus, data analysis was conducted with the following steps (i) collecting samples of Vietnamese noodle dishes from reliable sources, (ii) identifying and grouping into the categories of their syntactic structures, (iii) analyzing to find out the translation procedures of these Vietnamese noodle dishes in English. (iv) suggesting some implications for teaching and learning translation as well as studying and teaching English.

In response to reliability and validity, the data for research were quoted from reliable resources as mentioned above. No any examples for the research were invented so the data for this study are a totally authentic source. Furthermore, the study of translation procedures of Vietnamese noodle dishes into English were conducted on theoretical backgrounds of prestigious authors of translation theories as well as of linguistics. The study result met the requirements of the research questions. Consequently, the research is reliable and valid.

Discussion and Finding

In our research, there are 11 types of dishes of pho and 12 kinds of bun with different ingredients and taste to be collected for investigation. Among 23 types of noodle dishes, there were 44 samples in which 18 samples of pho and 26 samples of bun were randomly collected from prestigious materials. The samples were conducted both qualitatively and quantitatively in the light of the translation procedures by Newmark P, 1988 and Armstrong N. (2005) and syntactic features by Quirk et al (1980, 1999).

Below are the two tables that illustrate the English translational equivalents to kinds of Vietnamese noodles “pho” and “bun”.

Table 1. English translational equivalents to Vietnamese noodle “pho”

No	Kinds of Vietnamese “pho”	English Equivalents					Samples
		I	II	III	IV	V	
1	Pho	noodle soup	Vietnamese noodle dishes	rice noodle soup with beef	Vietnamese noodle/ Vietnamese noodle soup/ beef noodle soup	Vietnamese noodle soup	7
2	Pho tai	underdone beef noodle soup					1
3	Pho chin	beef noodle soup					1
4	Pho bo		beef noodle soup				1
5	Pho gau	Noodle soup with half-fat- half-lean brisket					1
6	Pho la sach					Noodle with thinly- sliced pig stomach, and flank with cartilage	1
7	Pho sot vang	noodle soup with beef wine sauce					1
8	Pho nam					noodle with beef flank	1
9	Pho gan					noodle with beef tendon	1
10	Pho ga		Chicken soup with rice noodles			noodle soup with chicken	2
11	Pho bo vien					noodle with beef meatballs	1
Total		5	3	1	3	6	18

For the convenience of data analysis in the two tables, the data chosen randomly for research from different sources are coded as the Roman number, viz. “I” that stands for the data collection from Tu dien Viet Nam (Vietnamese- English Dictionary) by Lieu Chan Dang et al (2008), “II” replacing for the data capture from the well-known guide book, i.e. Vietnam by Mason Florence & Robert Storey (2011), “III” as the data from A Handbook for The English Language Translator by Ngoc Huu et al (2014), “IV” for the websites in relation to the two noodle dishes, i.e. pho and bun that are mainly introduced by CNN and “V” used for other resources from different references, such as kinds of dictionaries or textbooks and the like.

In connection with the information in Table 1, in some communicative contexts, the customers in a pho restaurant can order the noodle by just saying “Pho” or “Pho, please” in short, instead of clarifying different kinds of pho. In this situation, the waiters or waitresses can understand what kind of pho the customer implies. It is the reason why the English equivalent of pho in the above table is translated in such a case in different ways by different sources.

Noticeably, pho in Vietnamese cuisine noodle can be translated into English in different ways. For instance, pho is rendered as “Vietnamese noodles” or “Vietnamese noodle soup” or “beef noodle soup” like being shown in the column “IV.1”.

Table 2. English translational equivalents to Vietnamese noodle “bun”

No	Kinds of Vietnamese “bun”	English Equivalents					Samples
		I	II	III	IV	V	
1	Bun	Vermicelli		Rice noodle			2
2	Bun bo	Vermicelli and beef	Rice vermicelli & vegetable served dry, or with beef soup. The dish originated in Hue, where it is called bun bo Hue (Hue beef noodle)	Beef rice noodles	Hue beef rice vermicelli		4
3	Bun cha	Vermicelli and grill chopped meat noodle soup	Rice vermicelli with roasted pork & vegetable, served with mixture of vinegar, chili & sugar		Kebab rice noodles		3
4	bun ca				fish noodle soup		1

5	Bun oc	Vermicelli and shellfish soup		Snail rice noodles			2
6	Bun rieu (cua)	Vermicelli and sour crab soup			Fresh-water crab noodles Soup/ crab noodle soup		3
7	Bun thang	Vermicelli and chicken soup	Riced & shredded chicken with rice egg & prawn on top, served with a broth made by boiling chicken, dried prawn & pig bones	Hot rice noodle soup	Vermicelli and chicken soup		4
8	Bun moc					noodle with steamed lean meat pounded with bits of skin	1
9	Bun nam				Noodle with beef flank	noodle with beef flank	2
10	Bun gan				Noodle with beef tendon	noodle with beef tendon	2
11	Bun xuong					noodle with bone	1
12	Bun chay					noodle with spring roll, mushroom, soybean, peanut, herbs, flavored with soy sauce, broth soup	1
Total		6	3	4	8	5	26

In the table 2, the English equivalent to bun cha is “Kebab rice noodles”. Culturally, Kebab is the borrowing words from English language in order to clarify the meaning of Vietnamese noodle in English, the target language.

Pho can be transferred into English as *noodle*, a single noun or *noodle soup* as a complex noun phrase in which *soup* is a head noun and *noodle* are as premodifier. By contrast, bun can be rendered as *noodle* or *vermicelli*. It could be because of the different shapes of bun and pho.

In terms of meaning, *noodle* or *vermicelli* itself normally refers to “the rice only” not the “dishes themselves”. However, in some situations, they are replaced for the dishes of pho or bun.

In some cases, the different sources have the same English equivalents to the Vietnamese noodle bun; for instance, “bun nam” in Vietnamese noodle cuisine is rendered in English as “noodle with beef flank” by two different resources. That can be seen in the columns “V.9” and “VI.9”.

According to the information from the above two tables, with reference to syntactic features of the two noodle dishes, pho and bun, among the 44 samples there are 42 ones to be constructed as complex nouns, except for “vermicelli” as a single noun formally, the English equivalent of bun as a dish, not the noodle itself (in Table 2, I.1). And the other one (in Table 2, II.2) is structured as a sentence (e.g. *Rice vermicelli & vegetable served dry, or with beef soup. The dish originated in Hue, where it is called bun bo Hue (Hue beef noodle)*).

After the survey of samples in respect of syntactic structure and translation procedures, it can be seen that the most common procedures can be employed to translate the Vietnamese noodle cuisine into English is *shift* in which *structure shift* is more dominant than *class shift*. As regards the occurrence frequency of procedures shown in Vietnamese-English translation of noodle dishes, the highest proportion of 47.7 % is for the *structure shift*. This procedure includes two subtypes, namely the *structure shift* from <Head noun + Post modifier> e.g. (bun bo) in Vietnamese to <Premodifier + Head noun> (Beef rice noodles) and <Head noun + Head noun> e.g. (Vermicelli and beef) in English that equal to 36.4% and 11.3%, respectively. The shift is mostly used because of the differences between the two languages in terms of the syntactic structures of the complex noun phrases in English and Vietnamese. In English, adjective normally functions as pre-modifier to the head noun; otherwise, they are post-modifier to the head noun in Vietnamese. In terms of syntactic features, Quirk et al. (1980: 857-860) stated that complex noun phrase is the one that includes at least one head noun and at least one pre-modifier or post modifier. Furthermore, this translation procedure is identified as *structure shift* by Newmark P (1988:85) because *pho bo* and *bun bo*, which are constructed as head noun *pho* and *bun* postmodified by *bo* (beef) in Vietnamese, are syntactically shifted as head nouns *noodle soup* and *rice noodle* pre-modified by *beef* in English.

The second procedure is *class shift* that accounts for 45.3% of the total. The *class shift* is found because the structure <Head + post modifier> in source language is transferred similarly to the target language as <Head + post modifier>. However, they are different in word class; i.e. <noun + noun> (pho nam) in Vietnamese to be transformed as <noun + ed-participle>, e.g. (noodle soup served with beef flank) in English. It is because English is inflectional language, by contrast Vietnamese is an isolating and analytic one in regard to

morphological features. In accordance with the statement by Newmark P (1988: 84) there are two types of shift, i.e. structure shift and class shift. Structure shift means “source language grammatical structure does not exist in the target language” and “class shift is a translation procedure involving a change in the grammar from source language to target language, e.g. the contrastive positions of adjectives in English and those in French language”.

The lowest percentages are the two procedures *descriptive equivalent* and *paraphrase* that account for (4.7%) and 2.3%) respectively. The procedures *descriptive equivalent* and *paraphrase* are normally used in guide books or websites of Vietnamese top dishes mainly introduced by CNN. The translator in the target language tends to describe when translating cuisines into their language as clearly as possible in order to help English speaking people understand the meaning of the dishes as much as possible. For instance, bun bo is rendered into English as “Vermicelli and beef” by Dang Chan Lieu et al (2006:128), otherwise it is transferred as “Rice vermicelli and vegetable served dry, or with beef soup” by Florence, M. & Storey, R. (2002: 116). In accordance with the statement by Newmark P, (1988: 83, 91) *descriptive equivalent* means “the meaning is explained in several words. Otherwise, *paraphrase* is much more detailed than that of *descriptive equivalent*.” For instance, “Bun bo” is translated as “Hue beef rice vermicelli” by CNN; otherwise, is rendered as “*Rice vermicelli & vegetable served dry, or with beef soup. The dish originated in Hue, where it is called Bun bo Hue (Hue beef noodle)*” by Florence, M. & Storey, R. (2002: 118). Syntactically, *descriptive equivalent* is normally in the form of a phrase and *paraphrase* is constructed as a sentence. It can be confirmed that the translation of Vietnamese cuisines into English in this context replies on the message that the translator wants to send to the people in the target language, or in other words, these are the dissimilarities of language expressions. That is the reason why Vietnamese-English translation of noodle dishes in Vietnamese-English dictionaries differs from that in English guidebooks and the like.

In conjunction with the translation procedure *descriptive equivalent*, Newmark P (1988: 83) confirmed that it is the translation procedure in which the meaning in a source language is explained in several words in a target language; for example “samurai” is described as “the Japanese aristocracy from the eleventh to the nineteenth century”. And the translation procedure *paraphrase* is the translation procedure in which the meaning is much more detailed than that of *descriptive equivalent*, Newmark (1988:91)

The frequencies of procedures for translating Vietnamese noodle cuisines into English can be summarized in the following table.

Table 3. The frequencies of Vietnamese – English translation procedures of noodle dishes

Vietnamese Structures	English Structures	Translation procedures	Quantities	Rates
Head + post modifier	Premodifier + head	Structure shift	16	36.4%
	Head + Head	Structure shift	5	11.3%
	Head + post modifier	Class shift	20	45.3%
	“Complex” noun phrase	Descriptive equivalent	2	4.7%
	Sentence	Paraphrase	1	2.3%

As a result, the concept of complex noun phrases by Quirk et al. (1980: 857-860) as indicated above and also by other English grammarians is really problematic in connection with identifying the syntactic features of Vietnamese noodle dishes in our research. In such a case, a head noun is preceded or followed by a modifier is called complex noun phrases; for

instance, *Vietnamese noodle* (Table 1, IV.1) or *noodle with bone* (Table 2, V.11). However, some noodle dishes with complicated structure can be seen in our research. For example, the English equivalent to *bun thang* as “*Riced & shredded chicken with rice egg & prawn on top, served with a broth made by boiling chicken, dried prawn & pig bones*” extracted from Table 2, II.7 is syntactically named as a complex noun phrase. According to Quirk et al, in this structure of complex noun phrase, *chicken* is the head noun preceded by the pre-modifiers *riced & shredded* and followed by post-modifiers *with rice egg & prawn on top, served with a broth made by boiling chicken, dried prawn & pig bones*. By contrast, in translation procedures or strategies, this structurally complicated term is defined as “descriptive equivalent”. In consequence, in the light of translation procedures, the identification of noodle dishes in English must be more convincing than the term “complex noun phrase” in English syntax.

Conclusion

Beside the findings in terms of the occurrence frequencies of Vietnamese – English translation procedures of the two noodle cuisines we have mentioned above, throughout the research, it can be also seen that *pho bo* and *bun bo* that are translated into English as *beef noodle soup* or *beef rice noodle* respectively and some others may disturb the international tourists because in fact, there are some restaurants serving both dishes. Such translation should be taken into reconsideration because the mistake given in this case can be caused by the translation procedures “literal translation” instead of “communicative translation”. With regard to the point of view by Newmark, P. (1988), literal translation means the source language grammatical constructions are converted to their nearest target language equivalents but the lexical words are again translated singly. By contrast, communicative translation refers to the rendering the exact contextual meaning of the original.

Then the results of the study can be formulated for the translation of other Vietnamese cuisines into English in terms of translation procedures as well. Next, the outcomes are expected to be useful not only for Vietnamese ESL students who study English but also for tourists who can speak English all over the world to be interested in Vietnamese-English translation of the cuisines in general. Furthermore, investigating the translation of Vietnamese noodle cuisines into English by means of translation procedures is the best way to transfer them into the target language not only semantically or culturally but also syntactically, which can be explained by means of the translation procedures. Last but not least, the finding proves that the translation of Vietnamese noodle cuisines into English is syntactically based on the structure of complex noun phrases.

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