English – Vietnamese Request Translation of Duong Tuong and Vu Kim Thu in the Novel “Gone with the wind”

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Abstract This paper investigates how to translate English competitive requests with high levels of face-threats into Vietnamese to clearly see the similarities and differences between the source language and two versions of target language by Duong Tuong and Vu Kim Thu. According to specific criteria of expression forms, the way of shifting each subgroup will be in turn analyzed in details. However, due to the length limit, the writer only focuses on Order subgroup as one of the typical among competitive requests. All examples will be presented in the following order: the source language, the translation of Vu Kim Thu (2nd version) and later the translation of Duong Tuong (1st version). After that, the writer will evaluate the strengths and limitations in the translation of two translators.

Keywords: competitive requests, face-threats, expression forms, similarities, differences, order subgroup

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1. Introduction

The role of translation in global interaction and cross culture is meant as a bridge to break down linguistic and cultural barriers. Translation promotes effective communication, enhances mutual understanding, maintains and develops social relationships. In economic integration, translation, especially English–Vietnamese translation increasingly emphasizes its vital role. However, full equivalence between the source and target language is unachievable. Whether translation is successful or not depends on the translator’s priority in choosing their suitable translation models. Besides, compatible translation methods and procedures and involved socio-cultural factors result in translation quality, especially in literary translation. The greatest difficulty in English–Vietnamese literary translation lies in the way the translators deliver both denotative and connotative meaning of the translated work. This requires not only their linguistic knowledge but also their sensitivity in metaphorical analysis in the historical and cultural circumstances of the work. To clarify this issue, the writer chooses to study English-Vietnamese translation equivalence through the source text of Margaret Mitchell's "Gone with the Wind" (1936) compared with the target text titled “Cuon theo chieu gio” of Duong Tuong (first published in 1987, re-published by the Writers' Association Publishing House in January 2009) and of Vu Kim Thu (first published before 1975, re-published by Literary Publishing House in 2016) to clearly see the similarities and differences in request translation from the original text.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Requests and Request Research

Requests are speech acts which “…express the speaker’s expectation of the hearer with regards to prospective action, verbal or nonverbal” [[1], p.11]. In speech act theory, requests (or directives) belong to a very special group of speech acts. Performing an act of requests dictates that the speaker can affect the hearer’s face – “damage to the hearer” [2] or the potential for “negative face-threating act” [2]. To establish effective communication, the choice of linguistic forms when requesting is a matter of art. The more development of society with complicated relationships entails more frequency of requests in daily communication. Research on linguistic features of requests comes as a necessity. As fully-mentioned in history, request is the central topic to a number of request studies in various languages, especially in Western languages and some varieties of English [3] as well as in non-Western languages such as Japanese, Korean and Thai. However, there is very little research on English-Vietnamese interlanguage, especially from a comparative point of view. In Vietnam, researchers invest time collating English-Vietnamese request translation. [4] investigates “Expressing formulas of English request
refusals compared with Vietnamese” to clarify the similarities and differences of the same act refusals in English and Vietnamese from a linguistic and cultural perspectives. [5] studies “Requests by Vietnamese learners of English”. The results have shed a little light to the study of interlingua language learning that few Vietnamese researchers have ever been interested in. [5] points out some certain difficulties when Vietnamese applies polite English requests in specific situations to increase effective communication. [6] and [7] also research on Politeness strategies in request in the novel “The thorn birds” and A study on politeness strategies in requests by the characters in the novel “Twilight” by Stephenie Meyer. In addition, [8] learns about requests in English (compared to Vietnamese – in terms of politeness). In his study, [8] compared English and Vietnamese Requests in light of linguistic theory to identify the pragmatic problems when Vietnamese making requests in English. The cultural peculiarities in Vietnamese ways contribute to preserving the national language. [9] examined typical Vietnamese requests as parts of speech of Directives; in which some sentences in the form of requests but conveying different pragmatic purposes. This article also follows this trend but specifically exploit direct and indirect competitive requests in English-Vietnamese translation to find similarities and differences between the source and target language.

2.2. The Concept and Some Types of Translation Equivalence

Research on translation equivalence have been investigated by translators and linguists over years. Equivalence is one of the core concepts of translation, and often one of the best places to start when explaining the process of language translation. As Catford points out, "the central problem of translation-practice is that of finding TL equivalents. A central task of translation theory is that of defining the nature and conditions of translation equivalence.” [[10], p.21]. However, the concept of equivalence in translation and its application in translation theory remains controversial. [11] called equivalence in translation to be an illusion and did not believe that translation could be regarded as a merely linguistic process. [12] emphasizes on untranslatability as the property of text or speech for which no equivalent can be found when translated into another language. Limitations in linguistic ability and knowledge of translators result in unsatisfaction of the receiver when comparing the source and target text. Translation equivalence only really becomes a scientific concept when researchers replace literary views with linguistics views and analyze translation as a language activity rather than communication activity.

In order to understand the nature of translation equivalence, it is necessary to deeply analyze the possible relationships and equivalents between the translation units of source and target text. [12] states that among the translation units (source text, target text and their equivalents), there are four basic types of equivalence units including phonetic, grammatical, semantic and pragmatic equivalence. If divided into dipolar pairs in contrast between the forms and functions, phonetic and grammatical equivalence belongs to formal equivalence, while semantic and pragmatic equivalence belongs to functional equivalence. Considering the presence/absence of the 4 basic equivalents mentioned above, the writer agrees with [12], which divides the equivalent relationship among translation units into 2 large groups with 6 types of equivalence units as follows:

| Types of translation equivalence | Some equivalence units |
|----------------------------------|------------------------|
|                                  | Phonetics | Grammar | Semantics | Pragmatics |
| Full                             | Absolute  | +       | +         | +          |
|                                  | Relative  | -       | +         | +          |
| Partial                          | Grammar- | -       | +         | +          |
|                                  | Semantics-| -       | +         | +          |
|                                  | Pragmatic-| -       | -         | +          |
|                                  | Pragmatic | -       | -         | -          |

The writer will survey how to shift direct competitive requests into translation equivalents and analyse from the point of view of [12] in the following content.

2.3. Evaluation Criteria on English Request Translation Equivalence in the Novel

According to analyzed equivalence units, the writer surveys how to translate the requests from the source text into the target text in the novel “Gone with the wind” by the following criteria:

a) Denotative equivalence: Survey whether some requests in the form of order are translated equivalent by illocutionary force of request, or translated into statements with illocutionary force of telling, giving and asking for information.

b) Politeness equivalence: Survey English requests by the scale of politeness according to the Head Act with/without its contributors when shifting equivalents to Vietnamese by the view of [3]. In Cross-Cultural study of Speech Act Realization Patterns (CCSARP), [3] propose the coding scheme in the Coding Manual, in which the following parts might be subsumed in their linguistic structures:

**HEAD ACT (+ alerters) (+supportive moves) (+internal modification).**

If Alerters can be (a), supportive moves/ external modifications can be (b) and internal modifications can be (c), there is a short structure: **Head Act + (a) + (b) + (c).** All (a), (b) and (c) are contributors of Head Act in English requests.

c) Representational equivalence: Survey whether English requests are shifted equivalent in terms of a state of affairs at the representational level by [13] or by “transitivity process” of [14]. [14] divides the system of transitivity or process types into six processes, namely: material, mental, relational, behavioral, verbal, and existential. This paper investigates whether processes are shifted equivalent to their relevant processes, or to a state of affairs and vice versa.

d) Grammatical equivalence: Survey whether English requests are shifted equivalent to Vietnamese Request in the correct form of sentences that are classified according
to the purpose of speech. For example, imperatives can be translated into imperatives or translated into questions and exclamation forms.

As presented above, among presence/absence of 4 basic equivalent units (phonetics, grammar, semantics and pragmatics), there are 6 types of translation equivalence. However, the article studies translation equivalence, so the writer emphasizes more on the equivalence in terms of functions and limits some equivalence criteria in terms of forms. Based on the decreasing importance of 4 criteria a), b), c) and d) presented above, the writer categorizes some types of equivalent translation in the novel as follows:

1) Full translation equivalence: Requests are rated fully equivalent if all 4 criteria a), b), c) and d are met
2) Partial translation equivalence: Requests are only assessed as a partially equivalent if they only meet the following criteria: (a), (b), (d) or (a), (b) or only (a)
3) Translation non-equivalence: Requests are considered not to be equivalent when they do not meet all 4 criteria a), b), c), d because of untranslatability or misunderstanding the original requests.

3. Collation of English – Vietnamese Request Translation of Duong Tuong and Vu Kim Thu

This paper only depicts Order subgroup as one of the typical among direct competitive requests based on equivalence units in translation.

a) Denotative equivalence

The majority of requests in Order group are translated by Duong Tuong and Vu Kim Thu by denotative equivalence with the intention of high or very high level of face-threats to the hearer according to the following structure:

In English: V (Head-Act) + O + (a) + (b) + (c)
In Vietnamese: V+ tiêu tự tình thái + (a) + (b) + (c)

For example:
(1) Get out of here! (VKT, 11)/ Di hết ngay (DT, 15)
(2) Please go, now (195): Bây giờ xin ông về cho. (VKT, 226)/ Bây giờ thì xin ông đi cho. (DT)

However, Duong Tuong translated some requests not equivalent in denotive meaning. In details, some requests are directly translated into indirect ones with illocutionary force of Suggestions that completely reduce the level of threats to hearer’s face and increase the level of politeness. Meanwhile, Vu Kim Thu translated such requests equivalent to the original and maintain the same level of intimidation and reduce politeness in the target text by the following structure:

In English: V (Head-Act) + O + (a) + (b) + (c) (O: Object)
In Vietnamese:
(D2) + V+ tiêu tự tình thái + (a) + (b) + (c)
or (D2) + pomysł + V + (a) + (b) + (c)

For example:
(3) bury him. (416): Scarlet, phải đem nó đi chọn ngay. (VKT, 456)/ Xcarlé, chúng ta phải đưa him ra ngoài mà chọn đi. (DT, 652)

(4) Come 'way frum darr, Miss Scarlet! (523): Đi theo tôi, cô Scarlet (VKT, 38)/ Ta đi khối đáy thôi, cô Xcarlé! (DT, 51)

There is only one request with illocutionary force of Order but in the form of a swearing statement, which is translated by Duong Tuong into a direct request with “đi” at the end. In contrast, Vu Kim Thu translates it into a bare statement with an exclamation mark and strong intonation at the end; however, still reduces the level of impoliteness of the swearing statement.

For example:
(5) Oh, damn your memory and your bad manners (647): Đích cará trì trí nhớ và điều bố thò bi của ông! (VKT, 150)/ ơi, quí bạn cấu trí nhớ và những công cách khá ở của anh dì! (DT, 248)

b. Politeness equivalence

The majority of requests in Order group are shifted by Duong Tuong and Vu Kim Thu with a high or very high level of face-threats and low level of politeness, especially when requests are made right at the time of speaking.

For example:
(1) Get out of here! (6): Dì hết ngay (VKT, 11)/ Cút khỏi đây ngay (DT, 15)
(6) Get up, Prissy! (368): Đàng mâu, Prissy. (VKT, 409)/ Đứng dậy, Price! (DT, 583)

However, the same English requests are shifted by Vu Kim Thu and Duong Tuong with two different levels of politeness. While these requests are shifted by Duong Tuong to become politer in the example (7). In fact, “will – “sẽ” cannot express request meaning in Vietnamese.

Besides, Vu Kim Thu remains loyal to the original translation and maintains the level of threats to hearer’s face and not much equivalence in politeness, even Vu Kim Thu shifts it more politely than the original.

For example:
(7) Get out! (322): Cút ngay! (VKT, 357)/ Tội sẽ đau anh ra cả. (DT, 506)
(8) The lamp, please, Pork, and my prayer-book, Mammy (65): Mang đèn lại đây, Pork, và cuốn kinh của tôi, Mammy (VKT, 79)/ Kể thác đèn uống hào náo, Pork, còn Mammy, lấy cho tôi quên kinh (DT, 105)
(9) Pray go on with your discourse (851): Cứ tiếp tục diễn thuyết đi. (VKT, 348)/ Xin có tiếp tục bài dịu-cua của cô đi (DT, 560)

Some contributors naming (a), (b) and (c) (as mentioned above) also have a great effect on the courtesy of requests. Statistically, most English requests are shifted by Duong Tuong and Vu Kim Thu with no shortage of contributors and maintained the same level of original courtesy.

(10) Please tell me all about it and you can explain what I don’t understand. (560): Ởng vai lòng kể dì và giải thích rõ những gì tôi không hiểu (VKT, 77)/ Xin anh kể hết cho tôi, chỗ nào tôi không hiểu thì anh giải thích (DT, 117)

However, some requests translated by Vu Kim Thu lack more contributors than Duong Tuong and that fact increases the level of face-threats and reduces politeness compared to the translation of Duong Tuong. Example (11) includes (a) in the source text but not in the target text.

Vì dự:
(11) Come off your high horse, Miss. (681): Bỏ cái lối đó đi (VKT, 181)/ Đừng câu lên mặt, cô mương (DT, 299)

In addition, in the example (11), not only Alerter but even Head-act in the original are not translated by Vu Kim
Thu in the target text while Duong Tuong remains all contributors in the source text when shifting.

For example:
(11) you gal, foller me, an' doan you go dappin' dat baby (135): Đừng làm rớt câu nhỏ nghe không! (VKT, 158)/ Cô gái kia, theo ta và đừng có để ngã chủ hé đấy (DT, Chương 8)

Thus, Vu Kim Thu's non-translation of contributors associated with Head – Act in the source text increases the level of threats to hearer's face and reduces relative politeness of requests in the target text. On the contrary, some original requests have no contributors but Vu Kim Thu and Duong Tuong adds them in the process of shifting with the intention of increasing the politeness of requests.

For example:
(12) Come in. (330): Vào đi em. (VKT, 365)/ Chớ vào đây (DT)

“Em”, “Chớ” in this example is relevant to Alerter but not appears in the source text.

c) Representational equivalence

The translators Duong Tuong and Vu Kim Thu shifted representational equivalence of most English requests into Vietnamese. According to statistics, the majority of requests of Vu Kim Thu express a state of affairs.

For example:
(13) Drive on, Toby. (88): Đi thôi, Toby. (VKT, 105)

(14) Rhet! Rhet Butler! Come here! I want you to meet the most hard-hearted girl in Georgia. (92): Rhet! Rhet Butler! Tới đây mau, tới muốn öğreti với anh trái tim cùng ran nhất của Georgia (VKT, 109)/ Ret! Ret Bất lo! Lại đây! Mình muốn öğreti với cô gái có trái tim ran nhất bang Giorgia (Duong Tuong, chương 6: 147)

In the novel, 8 requests of Order group are translated equivalent in terms of transitivity process.

For example:
(15) Think it over, daughter. (33): Nghĩ thiệt kỹ đi con (VKT, 42)/ Nghĩ kỹ xem, con gái a (DT, 123)

(16) Try a hot cake (76): Cô ăn bánh bột lúa mạc

(17) See, look! (36): Xem, xem!

Furthermore, 10 requests which carry both the meaning of a state of affairs and processes are shifted equivalent by Duong Tuong.

For example:
(18) Come off your high horse, Miss. (681): Bỏ cái lối đi, đi, đã, nào, đi chào…imposing and threatening to the hearer.

Based on all above criteria, the writer divides the translation of requests in Order group into the following types:

A) Full translation equivalence

All requests that meet a) b) c) d) belong to Full translation equivalence. These requests with some urgent expressions such as immediately, immediately, immediately, immediately, quickly, now... compel immediate action or attention of the order. Moreover, they are also shifted completely equivalent in both form and functions by Duong Tuong and Vu Kim Thu.

For example:
(21) Please go, now (195): Hãy giữ xin ông về cho. (VKT, 226)/ Hãy giữ thi xin ông đi cho. (DT)

(24) Quick! Melly (244): Đốc mau đi, Melanie! (VKT, 277)/ Xem nhanh lên, Mely (DT)

(25) Now, put on your apron and trot over to Dr Meade. (700): Có ăn bánh bột lúa mạc

(28) Blow your nose, daughter (36): Nín khói! (VKT, 223)/ Nín mũi!

(29) Teach them a lesson they won't soon forget (101): Hãy cho chúng một bài học nhớ đời (DT, chương 7: 307)/ Hãy cho chúng tôi một bài học nhớ đời! (VKT, 119)

B) Partial translation equivalence

Requests in this group can be recognized by some words such as hãy... hãy... putting off your high horse...imposing and threatening to the hearer.

For example:
(27) Well, speak up (32): Hãy mở miệng! (VKT, 40)/ Hãy mở mồm! (DT, 54)

(30) Sit down and smooth your ruffled fur (318): Hãy xuống và đừng xù lông lên thế nữa (VKT, 353)/ Hãy ngồi xuống và đừng xù lông lên thế nữa (DT, 499)

C) Translation non-equivalence

There is only 1 request that both Duong Tuong and Vu Kim Thu apply the free translation method not to shift equivalent in both form and functions. The idiom "come off your high horse" is freely translated to help readers better understand the content of the request, which is more relevant to Vietnamese culture than using literal translation method with high level of face-threats to the hearer.
4. Remarks

a) Strengths

As analyzed, in the translation process of English requests in Order subgroup, in terms of similarities, the majority of English requests are shifted by Duong Tuong and Vu Kim Thu by literal translation methods with word-by-word translation procedures. However, Vu Kim Thu remains loyal to the form of requests in the original more than Duong Tuong. Requests shifted by Duong Tuong reduce the level of face-threats to hearer and increase politeness in comparison with Vu Kim Thu. In terms of differences, two translators apply a variety of different translation methods and procedures in the word unit and sentence unit to shift the partial equivalence. In fact, the level of politeness and face-threats also depends on speaker-hearer relationship and their social status in specific communicative situations.

b) Limitations

Apart from their strengths, limitations in the translation process of English requests into Vietnamese are unavoidable. In details, Duong Tuong transfers requests in the form of Imperative with a question mark at the end of the sentence plus “nhé”. It is theoretically reviewed that Duong Tuong used the wrong question mark for requests. “Nhé” is the sign to recognize direct requests but not a question. Question mark cannot be used in all Vietnamese requests.

For example:

(32) Look, Scarlet. Sit with us at the barbecue in the morning (10): Này, Xcarlét, trong bữa tiêu người trời ban sáng, có người mời bạn ngồi nhỉ? (DT, chương 1: 20)

In addition, “sẽ” with future meaning plus “nhé” is also unacceptable in Vietnamese requests.

For example:

(33) You’ll take care of Melanie, won’t you? (310): Xcarlét sẽ trông nom Meloni nhé. (DT, 485)

(34) You’ll take care of her, won’t you? (377): Xcarlét sẽ chăm sóc M nhé? (DT, 590)

In example (33), if Duong Tuong translates requests by literal methods “Anh sẽ chăm sóc chị ấy, có phải không?”, Vietnamese does not usually say that by way. Although in this case, Duong Tuong shifts more smoothly, but it is not right to add a question mark at the end of the question plus “sẽ” in Vietnamese requests.

Moreover, in example (89), requests at the time of speaking increase the level of face-threats but when shifting, Duong Tuong also adds “sẽ” with future meaning which reduces the level of threats. This is another translation mistake by Duong Tuong because the statement with “sẽ” cannot be a request, which do not grasp all the nuances of meaning of English requests.

For example:

(35) Get out! (322): Tôi sẽ đuổi anh ra cửa (DT, 506)

Like Duong Tuong, Vu Kim Thu also makes some mistakes when using “sẽ” and “sắp” with future meaning to translate English requests into Vietnamese.

For example:

(36) Yes, put you to bed. And give you another drink (389): Con sẽ đưa bà vào giường và đưa ra cho bà uống... bà uống hết bao cũng được (VKT, 428) (Phụ lục 6)

(37) We need more gold and I am asking you for it. (175): Chúng ta cần thêm vàng, dọ là điều mà tôi sắp đổi hỏi ở quý vị (VKT, 203)

In addition, in example (38), Vu Kim Thu removes the Head-act of the request and mis-translates the object of the main verb (they – chúng tôi). In fact, Duong Tuong's translation in this case is more accurate.

For example:

(38) Teach them a lesson they won't soon forget (101): Hãy cho chúng tôi một bài học nhớ đời! (VKT, 119)/ Hãy dạy cho chúng mời bài học nhớ đời (DT, 160)

In short, from the pros and cons of the two translations, it is noticed that Duong Tuong pays attention to language translation meanwhile Vu Kim Thu pays special attention to the meaning of language when translating. In this paper, the writer will not evaluate which one is better or more accurate. Readers can read the translation of Vu Kim Thu to understand literal translation that is close to the original; otherwise, read the translation of Duong Tuong to enjoy literature. The latter translation seems softer and more romantic in spite of his relatively literal translation methods and procedures.

5. Conclusion

All things mentioned above, the paper investigates how to translate different equivalent units in terms of formal and functional equivalence by Duong Tuong and Vu Kim Thu. According to the results, most requests are shifted equivalent by Duong Tuong and Vu Kim Thu in terms of the form and functions apart from some non-equivalent shifts (as analyzed). However, in the translation process, the level of formal and functional equivalence decreases from direct requests to indirect ones. In fact, equivalence and non-equivalence depends on the feeling and intention of each translator and the relationship between characters in specific communicative situations. That fact results in different levels of face-threats and politeness of requests between the speaker and the hearer.

Besides, the writer personally finds out some strengths and limitations in the English-Vietnamese request translation of Duong Tuong and Vu Kim Thu. While Duong Tuong pays attention to language translation, Vu Kim Thu focuses on meaning translation of language. Although their translation methods and procedures are different, the two translators bring successful literal translation and conveys the spirit of the original. English requests are overall translated with a variety of direct and indirect request structures. The results are significant in developing theoretical basis for speech acts, especially requests in English and Vietnamese, then applicable to make reasonable requests in conversations.

6. Recommendations

This paper just takes consideration into Order subgroup as one of the typical among competitive requests. Therefore, it is possible in another paper, both competitive
and sociable requests with each subgroup will be in turn analyzed in details. The results will show different levels of threats to hearer’s face and clear scale of politeness in communicative requests. All things considered maybe helpful for daily successful conversations when making reasonable requests both in English and Vietnamese contexts.

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