AN EVALUATION ON THE COURSE-BOOK OF TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETATION 1

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ABSTRACT

Course-book is seen as a vital source of providing teachers and students with content and activities for the training process. However, it is important to evaluate a course-book to investigate whether it meets students' needs and interests. This study attempted to explore students' evaluation on the course-book "Translation and Intepretation1" designed and developed to train second-year students in the field. Data were collected from 163 students of 6 classes who responded to the questionnaire. The study reveals that most of the students showed highly positive attitudes towards the course-book in terms of both content and teaching activities. This makes a good start for the Faculty of Foreign Languages to make an innovation for renewing the materials for the translation and interpretation training.

Keywords: course-book/textbook, Translation and Interpretation, content, teaching activities.

TÓM TẮT

Đánh giá sách giáo trình luyện dịch 1

Sách giáo trình là một nguồn tài liệu quan trọng, cung cấp cho giáo viên và sinh viên nội dung và hoạt động trong quá trình đào tạo. Tuy nhiên, việc đánh giá giáo trình về mức độ đáp ứng nhu cầu và tạo hứng thú cho sinh viên của giáo trình là rất quan trọng. Bài nghiên cứu này xem xét sự đánh giá của sinh viên về giáo trình Luyện dịch 1, được thiết kế và phát triển cho sinh viên chuyên ngành năm hai. Dữ liệu được thu thập từ câu trả lời khảo sát của 163 sinh viên từ 6 lớp. Bài nghiên cứu cho thấy: hầu hết sinh viên đều có thái độ tích cực đối với nội dung và hoạt động giảng dạy của sách giáo trình Luyện dịch 1. Đây là một khởi đầu lạc quan để Khoa Ngoại ngữ cải thiện và làm mới tài liệu môn biên phiên dịch.

Từ khoá: sách giáo khoa/ giáo trình, biên dịch, phiên dịch, nội dung, hoạt động giảng dạy.

1. Introduction

When it comes to course-book or textbook design, scholars often mention Cunningsworth and Tomlinson's (1984) idea that no course-book or textbook in this world is completely suitable to a particular teaching situation. Different subjects of study from different cultures have different needs and interests.

Therefore, teaching content or activities of a course-book or textbook might not be appropriate for all cultures. In Vietnam, using "Western" course-book seems too costly for Vietnamese students. Besides, the content of reading texts or activities for language practice in foreign course-book are mostly "strange" to the Vietnamese culture. Hence, it is hard for both teachers

and students to apply them in the teaching and learning processes.

A course-book is deemed to be effective as it provides various activities for promoting students' discussion and engagement. According to Tudor (1993), learning will be more effective if methodology and textbook designs are prepared to meet students' needs and interests. These two factors play important roles in language teaching and learning processes (Richards, 1990). However, not all language book can be effectively used as course-books. Previous authors at HCMC Open University (HCMC OU) often designed the translation and interpretation course-books by compiling texts from different sources. Then, these textbooks were used to instruct the students without specific guidelines or methods. This made both lecturers and students feel difficult in their teaching and learning process. This kind of course-books might not as effective as expected. According to Richards and Rodgers (2003), course-books should provide learners with activities for communication, interpretation, and negotiation so that they could self-study. Richards and Rodgers also added that course-books should provide learners with relevant and interesting information for mutual exchange instead of only focusing on grammatical structures. Different types of texts and different media tools (e.g. audio or video files) of a course-book will help learners better develop their competence (Richards and Rodgers, 2003). Also, Cunningsworth (1995) emphasized vital roles of course-books in the learning process. These roles include providing teaching activities, promoting interaction among students, providing students with good vocabulary and grammar, and creating students' autonomy in their learning. Findings from previous research have given the authors valuable principles for designing the Translation and Interpretation-1 course-book and set some light on how to conduct this research to evaluate this course-book at the Faculty of Foreign Languages (FFL) at HCMC OU.

So far, few research has been conducted at HCMC OU, particularly at the FFL, to evaluate course-books or textbooks used for training. Pham Vu Phi Ho and Nguyen Thi Hoai Minh (2014) conducted a study to evaluate the course-book "Steps to conduct your research" at the Faculty of Foreign languages at HCMC Open University. The study used semi-structured interviews and 11-item questionnaire developed by Tomlinson (2011) to collect the data. The findings reveal that the course-book was designed based on cognitive and social-cultural learning theories, and thus helped students more engaged in the learning process through learning-by-doing activities such as discussion or project preparation.

This study aims to assess the Translation and Interpretation-1 course-book by attempting to answer the following two research questions. Texts and activities of the course-book would be evaluated by the learners.

1. To what extent are the content/texts of the course-book used for teaching translation and interpretation helpful to the students?

2. To what extent do the teaching activities of the course-book benefit the students?

2. Research methodology

Research context and participants

All English-major students at the Faculty of Foreign Languages of HCMC Open University (HCMC OU) need to take at least two translation and interpretation courses in their study. Due to HCMC OU's policy in material innovation, the new Translation and Interpretation-1 textbook was designed and employed to train the students. Since it was the first course using the new material for teaching, it is necessary to explore students' evaluation about the course-book. 163 students of 6 classes in semester 2 of the academic year 2015-2016 responded to the questionnaire.

Design of the textbook

The textbook was designed using four major sources: (1) VOA Special English's Education reports, (2) VOA Technology reports (with audio and video files); (3) short stories and (4) reading texts from "Chicken soup for the soul" series (Santa Barbara: Chicken Soup for the Soul Publishing). Most of the reports were published from November 2015 to December 2016 on Youtube website, which were freely provided for educational purposes. These VOA reports were selected based on a research result by Pham Vu Phi Ho (2015) that the use of these reports was highly appreciated by students because it helped enhance their vocabulary and update their knowledge of science. In addition, short stories and reading texts from the "Chicken Soup for the Soul" series would not only help enhance students' knowledge of English structures, vocabulary and culture but also help them learn useful moral lessons.

As for teaching activities, each lesson generally begins with a discussion to introduce students what knowledge they might learn in the new lesson. This section aimed to activate students' schema knowledge of related fields. Then, students were asked to skim and scan for difficult words, phrases or sentences. Next, in the pre-translation or pre-interpretation sections, cultural issues were introduced to students. These activities gave them insight about the texts and get well prepared before doing any translation or interpretation. Most activities were designed in form of group-work to help students learn from one another. All instructions included some strategies on how to conduct activities effectively to help students improve their translated work. For homework session, students needed to form a group of three or four to do translation outside the class. Lecturer's comments mainly focused on teaching and learning activities. This was themed along the concept "learning by doing" using action research approach. The theme was that students learn from what they are doing and being evaluated by the lecturer.

Data collection

During semester 2 of the academic year 2015-2016, the researcher often met with teachers using Translation and Interpretation-1 course-book in their lessons to make sure that activities in the course-book were employed to teach the students. Teachers were also encouraged to listen to students' reaction to provide them with proper and timely instructions. Discussion with teachers also helped to make sure that they could utilize all activities and texts given in the course-book to train the students. Then, at the end of the course, the researcher sent the questionnaire to 6 lecturers who used the

course-book so that they could administer the questionnaire to the students. Two lecturers did not use all activities and texts provided to train the students; so the questionnaire was not given to the students in those classes. There were totally 163 students of 6 classes responding to the questionnaire. Data collected from the questionnaire were then analyzed to try to answer the research questions (as shown below). Cronbach' Alpha for all items in the questionnaire was 0.853.

3. Findings and discussion

Research question 1 - To what extent are the content/texts of the course-book used for teaching translation and interpretation helpful to the students?

The answer to this question is based on students' evaluation on questions 1-11 of the questionnaire. The questions cover the texts of the course-book including VOA education and technology reports, stories from the literature and "Chicken Soup for the Soul" to train students how to do translation and interpretation. The textbook design was also evaluated by 163 students of 6 translation/interpretation-1classes enrolled in semester 2 of 2015-2016. The Likert scale would be ranked as follows.

Low evaluation: 1 – 2.66
Medium evaluation: 2.67 – 4.33
High evaluation: 4.34 – 6

Table 1 presents students' evaluation on the content/texts used in the course-book.

Table 1: Evaluation on the content/text used in the course-book Descriptive Statistics

No.	Evaluation on the content	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	The texts used in the course-book are appropriate to your English proficiency level.	163	4.90	0.811
2	The content of the Education and Technology reports used in the course-book help you learn a lot of updated knowledge.	163	5.13	0.721
3	The texts in the course-book attached with Video clip files help you learn and enhance your pronunciation skills.	163	5.06	0.911
4	The texts in the course-book attached with Video clip files provide you with chances to practice interpretation activities at home.	163	4.75	0.994
5	The stories employed in the course-book convey appropriate themes for the educational purposes.	163	5.06	0.877
6	The stories employed in the course-book have interesting themes which inspire you to learn translating those stories.	163	4.72	0.925
7	The themes of those stories provide you with chances to learn really meaningful lessons for your life.	163	5.05	0.928
8	The distribution of the texts in each unit is appropriate.	163	4.58	1.036
9	Number of English-into-Vietnamese translation activities offer you opportunities to learn various English sentence	163	5.02	0.871

No.	Evaluation on the content	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
	structures.			
10	Number of English-into-Vietnamese translation activities help enhance your vocabulary.	163	5.29	0.759
11	Number of English-into-Vietnamese translation activities help you learn new words and sentence structures used in authentic contexts.	163	5.08	0.831
	Average of evaluation on the content used in the course-book	163	4.97	0.551
	Valid N (listwise)	163		

Table 1 summarizes the students' evaluation on the content/texts and the design of course-book/textbook used for the Translation/Interpretation-1 course. As revealed in table 1, on average, the students highly evaluated the content/texts in the course-book (M = 4.97; SD = 0.55). This indicates that most selected texts in the course-book were appropriate to students of the Translation/Interpretation-1 course. Tomlinson (2011) claims that the texts in a course-book should be meaningful to the target learners. For Education and Technology reports (item 1), most of the students agreed that the selected texts were appropriate to their English proficiency level (M = 4.90; SD = 0.81). In other words, the texts used in the course-book were neither too easy nor difficult for the students to learn translation. Answers to item 2 shows that most students agreed that the content of the Education and Technology reports used in the course-book help them learn various updated knowledge (M = 5.13; SD = 0.72). This finding was consistent with the results from previous study by Pham Vu Phi Ho and Phu Thi Kieu Bui (2013) showing that the class materials at that time were outdated.

This seems that the innovation was successful. Pronunciation is an important skill to help students create a good translated/interpreted work. Replies to item 3 reveals that most students believed the texts attached with video files helped enhance their pronunciation skills (M = 5.06; SD = 0.91). Pham Vu Phi Ho and Phu Thi Kieu Bui's (2013) found that when unsatisfactory with their pronunciation, students often lacked confidence in translation/interpretation activities. This course-book, therefore, attempted to give a solution to this problem. Besides, the students also agreed that the texts attached with video files offered them opportunities to practice interpretation activities at home (item 4) (M = 4.75; SD = 0.99). This indicates that the textbook goes beyond the boundary of the classroom to help students practice their interpretation with native Voice of America (VOA). At this point, the textbook also plays the role of a home-teacher.

As for stories used in the textbook, most of the students agreed that these stories conveyed appropriate themes for educational purposes (item 5) (M = 5.06; SD = 0.88). Significantly, such stories

were highly appreciated by most students as an inspiration to encourage them to translate literature stories (item 6) (M = 4.73; SD = 0.92). This indicates that the stories used in the textbook motivated them to learn translation and interpretation. According to Tomlinson (2011), the texts used in the textbook should meet learners' interests to best help students in their learning process. This finding helped to solve the problem found in previous study by Pham and Phu (2013) that material selection and teaching methods could demotivate translation/ interpretation learning in the classroom. Moreover, student's answers to item 7 showed that the story themes helped them learn meaningful moral lessons in life (M = 5.05; SD = 0.93). Not only do educators provide students with knowledge and information, but they also teach them how to become a good citizen in society. This is one of the key functions of education.

As for the design of the course-book, most students agreed that the distribution of the texts in each unit was appropriate (item 8) (M = 4.58; SD = 1.04). Moreover, they also agreed that the number of English-into-Vietnamese translation activities offered them chances to learn various English sentence structures (item 9) (M = 5.02; SD = 0.87). In this textbook, each unit included an Education report, a Technology report and a story followed by instructions for carrying out activities. This outline aimed to help both lecturers and students organize their teaching and learning process. This finding was different from that of previous research conducted by Nguyen Quang Nhat (2016) that the translation/interpretation textbooks often did not provide activities for the

teaching process and texts were mainly to enhance listening skills other than interpretation. Nguyen Thi Nhu Ngoc, Nguyen Thi Kieu Thu and Le Thi Ngoc Anh (2016) also found that textbooks currently used for teaching translation/interpretation across Vietnam were limited and inconsistent to any general standards. In other words, until now, there have been no common models for designing a translation/interpretation course-book in Vietnam.

In translation and interpretation, vocabulary played an important role to help translators/interpreters to do a good work. Answers to item 10 showed that most students highly agreed the number of English-into-Vietnamese translation activities of the textbook helped them enrich their vocabulary (M = 5.29; SD = .76). Also, they all agreed that the number of English-into-Vietnamese translation activities helped them learn new words and sentence structures used in authentic contexts (item 11) (M = 5.08; SD = 0.83). These findings correspond to Tomlinson's (2011) suggestion that the textbook should give learners exposure to authentic English and creates chances for them to discover how English is used. In addition, this study bolstered Cunningsworth's (1995) that the course-book should serve as a source of vocabulary and grammatical structures for students to learn. In short, most of the students in the current study highly evaluated the texts and unit design of the textbook aiming to help them do better in translation and interpretation. The research findings helped solve some limitations of textbook and teaching activities stated in previous research by Nguyen Quang Nhat

(2016); Nguyen Thi Nhu Ngoc, et al. (2016); and Pham Vu Phi Ho and Phu Thi Kieu Bui, (2013).

Research question 2 - To what extent do the teaching activities of the course-book benefit the students?

Questions 12-20 from the questionnaire were analyzed to respond to this research question. Different from the first section, this second group of questions attempted to explore students' evaluation on the activities of the course-book to make the learning process more efficiently. Table 2 presents the students' evaluation on the teaching activities provided in the course-book.

Table 2: Evaluation on the teaching activities of the course-book

Descriptive Statistics

Evaluation on the teaching activities	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
12 Discussion sections about lesson theme helps you get well prepared for translating the related texts in the new lesson.	163	4.54	0.795
13 The search for proper information followed by group discussion help you better understand the text meaning before doing translation.	163	4.80	0.792
14 Group discussion activities for phrase and sentence translating help you better understand text and better do the translation.	163	4.83	0.828
15 Interpretation activities help improve your listening for main ideas and keywords to better interpret the texts.	163	4.75	0.854
16 Interpretation activities help enhance the motivation for the translation and interpretation classroom.	163	4.83	0.870
17 Activities such as summary writing and translating used in the stories of "A father's confession" and "Who you are makes a difference" help you learn how to write summaries of the main ideas for translation.	163	4.58	0.901
18 Summary writing also helps you to learn another method of translation by "transferring the language" in translating activities.	163	4.55	0.931
19 The activities for "acting and interpreting in a play" help make the classroom more active and interesting.	163	4.75	1.139
20 The homework instructions at the end of each lesson help you better prepared for the coming lesson.	163	4.99	0.451
Average of evaluation on the teaching activities	163	4.74	0.726
Valid N (listwise)	163		

Table 2 describes the students' evaluation on the activities given in the textbook to help the lecturer and students work well in the teaching and learning process. On a whole, the majority of students highly evaluated activities of the textbook (M = 4.74; SD = 0.73). In terms of cognitive learning, most students agreed that the discussion sections about lesson theme helped them be well prepared for the translating the related texts in the new lesson (item 12) (M = 4.54; SD = 0.80). In other words, the discussion section at the beginning of each lesson helped to active students' schema knowledge of the topic they would learn. Tomlinson (2011) also suggested that the teaching activities should cognitively engage learners in the learning process. Most students agreed that activities for searching proper information followed by group discussion help them better understand the text meaning before translating (item 13) (M = 4.80; SD = 0.79). They also agreed that group discussion for translating phrases and sentences help them better understand the text and better do the translation (item 14) (M = 4.83; SD = 0.83). This indicates that the activities of this course-book engaged students in cognitive learning process to create a good translated work. This research findings correspond to suggestion by Richards and Rodgers (2003) that the textbook should focus on the communicative abilities of interpretation, expression and negotiation. Also, Cunningsworth (1995) states that course-books are an effective resource for self-directed learning.

As for interpretation activities, most students agreed that interpretation activities helped improve their listening for main ideas and keywords to better interpret the texts (item 15) (M = 4.75; SD = .85). Responses to item 16 showed that interpretation activities help enhance the motivation for the translation and interpretation classroom (M = 4.83; SD = 0.87). According to Richards and Rodgers' (ibid), textbooks should emphasize on understandable, relevant, and interesting exchanges of information other than on the presentation of grammatical forms. In fact, interpretation activity is not easy for both lecturers and students due to its complication. This research findings suggest that the Translation and Interpretation-1 textbook can benefit students in various ways.

Summary writing is another activity added to the value of this textbook. In this activity, after group discussing the story theme, students were asked to write a summary of the story and translated it into the target language to ensure their full comprehension of the story theme and memorize the moral lessons conveyed by the authors. Answers to item 17 revealed that most students believed this activity helped them improve summary writing skills (M = 4.58; SD = 0.90). Summarizing the main points for either translation or interpretation was an important skill for practitioners. This activity helps them focus on the main ideas to remember all important information in the translation process. Also, the students agreed that this activity helped them learn to translate by "transferring the language" as a useful translation method (item 18) (M = 4.55; SD = 0.93) when they wrote the summary and translated it. Besides summary writing, most of the students agreed that "acting and interpreting in a play" helps make the

classroom more active and interesting (item 19) (M = 4.75; SD = 1.14).

The last activity of the textbook was homework instruction. In this textbook, most homework was designed in a way to help students get well prepared for their next lesson. In reply to item 20, most students stated that homework instructions at the end of each lesson helped them better prepare for the coming lesson (M = 4.99; SD = 0.45). This finding was consistent with Cunningsworth's (1995) claim that course-books could help improve learners' autonomy. The aim of a homework assignment was to review what had been taught to help learners solve problems related to the current lesson or prepare for their next lesson.

In short, most activities of the textbook were highly evaluated by the students. The results of this study indicate that this textbook is appropriate for use as a course-book to train students both in translation/interpretation and in the target language. According to Tomlinson (2011), the activities given in a textbook should give students opportunities for meaningful use of English. Language practice in course-books helps promote students interaction and motivation in the classroom (Richards, 2007).

4. Conclusion

This study aimed at evaluating the content and activities given in the Translation and Interpretation-1 course-book. In terms of content, most of the students confirmed that the course-book was appropriate to their English proficiency level, provided them with updated knowledge and helped broaden their vocabulary and grammatical structures. It also offered students chances to practice pronunciation and interpretation skills outside the classroom. In terms of evaluation on the teaching activities of the course-book, most of the students agreed that the activities in the course-book enhanced their motivation in the learning processes and gave them good strategies to better do their translation and interpretation. Moreover, the course-book gave them opportunities for collaborative learning and becoming autonomous learners when they prepared the lessons beyond the boundary of the classroom. Cunningsworth (1995) and Richards and Rodgers (2002) claimed that the ultimate role of a course-book is to promote students' autonomy. According to (Zohrabi, 2011), the course-book was a decisive factor for classroom activities and influenced teachers' teaching methods and students' role in the learning process. On the one hand, this research findings met the so-called "plan for teaching" introduced by Richards (2007). It helped lecturers get well prepared for their training processes. The success of a course-book is to provide lecturers with a sequence of activities for their teaching (Hedge, 2002). On the other hand, this course-book helped students improve their learning in various ways. As mentioned by Hutchinson and Waters (1989), the ultimate role of a course-book is to facilitate students' learning process.

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