Equivalence in the Vietnamese Translation of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*

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ABSTRACT

Equivalence has been the central concern in Translation Studies and always challenges the translator's abilities. Equivalence is also the factor determining the closeness of target text (TT) to the source text (ST). By applying the theories suggested by Vinay and Darbelnet, Nida and Taber, Catford, Baker, House and Pym, as well as the qualitative method to describe the semantic features of the ST and the TT, this study has investigated and compared the Shakespeare's English and the Vietnamese translation of *Romeo and Juliet* by Dang The Binh to find out the levels of equivalence in regards to semantic features. It has been found that both objective and subjective factors, in which language differences, culture and the translator's ability are the keys affecting the orientation of choosing equivalents of the translator. It is, therefore, no unique type of equivalence in the Vietnamese translation, but the mixture of *dynamic equivalence* and *formal equivalence*. As a result, the translation is partly covert and also partly overt.

1. Introduction

In translation practice, equivalence plays the central concern of translators. In fact, according to Catford (1965, p.21), as a principle concept in Western translation theory, translation equivalence primarily requires the central task of defining its nature and condition. Despite the efforts of translation theorists through the years, translation equivalence and its validity and necessity are sometimes ignored or distorted (Yinhua, 2011). In addition, quality of equivalence is the crucial factor influencing the semantic features of a translation. Differences in terms of linguistic structure between the source language (SL) and the target language (TL), and between the source culture (SC) and

target culture (TC) are the challenges to translators. The study, by applying the theory of equivalence suggested by Vinay and Darbelnet (1995), Nida and Taber (1982), Catford (1965), House (1997), Baker (1992) and Pym (2014), has compared and contrasted the whole texts of both the Shakespeare's English and the Vietnamese translation by Dang The Binh with more than 63,330 words to find out the semantic features that affect the quality of equivalence as well as the understanding of readers and audiences. The following discussion with the analysis on the quality of equivalence in the Vietnamese translation of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* translated by Dang The Binh will seek the answer for the research question: What types of equivalence were used in the translation process when translating Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* into Vietnamese?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Defining term 'equivalence'

Firstly, how the term *equivalence* has been developed in translation theory should be discussed. Over the last 150 years, according to Snell-Hornby (1988, p.17), this word was used in some specific sciences to refer to some typical phenomena or processes. For example, in Mathematics, *equivalent* is mentioned as the relationship of absolute equality. In English general vocabulary, *equivalent* is explained in the meaning of 'similar significance'. Therefore, it is abnormal to take the scientific meaning of *equivalent* for use in translation theory. Alternatively, the common sense was originally used. Of the same opinion, Nida (1986) expresses that no two things are completely similar to each other.

In regard to languages, it is impossible to see two absolute synonyms within one language. In other words, there is no completely identical meaning of two words in any two languages. Because languages possess their own peculiarities in vocabulary, grammar, phonology, and cultural differences, translation is always faced with a certain degree of loss or distortion of meaning of the ST. It means that to discover absolute identity between the SL and the TL is like an impossible mission. Traditionally, functioning as a bridge helping people who do not know a foreign language to access the ST, translation needs to bring the closest meaning of the source message to the receptors. Translators are required to produce the most equivalent target message so that the readers can understand fully the meaning conveyed in the ST. Catford (1965) points out that if equivalence is omitted from the essence of translation as a means of communication, it causes the limitations of translatability. Within equivalence, the ST is translatable and achievable in the TT. Once again, the essential role of equivalence is remarked on the constitutive feature or guiding principle of translation which decides the success of translators in giving the ST to TL readers. In a general form, equivalence requires a quality X (such as: form, style, function, or content) in the ST to be maintained or at least as far as possible in the TT (Koller, 1989). It is necessary to find the connotative aspects, in finding the equivalence, by analyzing features and structural elements of the ST then matching them to the connotative dimensions of the TT. Actually, how to achieve the connotative equivalence is the most difficult task of translators.

Steiner (1975, p.460) defines that 'equivalence is sought by means of substitution of equal verbal signs for those in the original'. The 'equal verbal signs' are

clarified by Baker (1992,p.77) who introduces the terms *referential* or *denotative equivalence* which is to refer to the same thing in real world, and *connotative equivalence* that describes the same thing or image in the minds of speakers of both the SL and the TL. Baker's equivalence is a wider explanation of Koller's theory (1998, pp.187-191) in which Koller also suggests the term *text-normative equivalence* or *pragmatic equivalence* that describes the words in both SL and TL having the same effects on readers of the two languages. The classification of typologies of equivalence is enriched by Popovic (cited in Bassnett 1998,p.32) with his four types of translation equivalence: *linguistic equivalence* focuses on the homogeneous feature of the linguistic level in the ST and the TT; *paradigmatic equivalence* describes the higher category than lexical, for example grammar; *stylistic equivalence* aims at setting the functional equivalents for the purpose of maintaining the original identity of meaning; and *textual (syntagmatic) equivalence* is to describe the equivalents in the category of form and shape of the language's syntagmatic structure of a text. In fact, the more common features the two languages in the two texts (ST and TT) share, the higher the frequency of equivalence. Hann (cited in Baker 1992,p.78) suggests four different categories of equivalence on the word level: *One-to-one equivalence* is the kind of single expression in the TL parallel with a similar single unit in the SL; *One-to-part-of-one equivalence* is to emphasise the case when a TL expression can convey a part of the concept in the SL expression; *One-to-many equivalence* is to point the situation in which more than one TL expression for a single SL expression, for example, *uncle*

can be *chú* (father's brother) or *cụ* (an old man) in Vietnamese; *Many-to-one equivalence* is reversed by using a single expression in the TL for many expressions or lexical items in the SL; *Nil or zero equivalence* shows that there is no equivalence in the TL for an expression in the SL. This case leads to the phenomenon of borrowing foreign words.

In general, studying equivalence should investigate the understanding of similarity or approximation, not only the machenical procedure in translation. Within the meaning of the impossibility in giving a full equivalence to a given text, how far the TT can go depends on the establishment of the translator in terms of linguistic and cultural levels, to produce a successful translation of the ST. Therefore, standing in the centre of translation, equivalence is completely necessary and basic in translation theory.

2.2 Types of equivalence

Over the last 50 years, as the key point in translation theories, many different concepts of equivalence have been introduced in the heated controversy discussed by some innovative theorists, such as: Nida and Taber, Catford, House, Newmark, Baker, Vinay and Darbelnet, and Jakobson. Despite different approaches, they have planted fruitful achievements in this field of study. Some theorists (Vinay and Darbelnet, 1995; Jakobson, 1959) mainly focus on the linguistic aspect of translation and omit the cultural features that translators face when transferring from the ST to the TT. Other translation scholars (Nida, 1964; House, 1997, and Baker, 1992) pay attention to the effects of culture by setting their studies in the function-oriented approach in terms of widening the influences of semantic or pragmatic features in the process of transferring from

the SC to the TC. Out of these two groups, some other scholars, standing in the middle, believe that 'equivalence is used for the sake of convenience – because most translators are used to it rather than because it has any theoretical status' (Kenny 1988, p.77).

The followings are typical theories about equivalence of some significant translation scholars.

2.2.1. Equivalence in translation of Vinay and Darbelnet

From the point of view of Vinay and Darbelnet, equivalence-oriented translation is considered as a procedure which reflects the same situation as the original while different wording is used completely (Vinay and Darbelnet, 1995). They continue arguing that during the translation process, if this procedure is applied, the stylistic manner of the ST could be maintained in the TT. As a result, when dealing with problems, such as proverbs, idioms, clichés, phrases of nouns or adjectives and the words reflecting sounds of animal, 'equivalence' is the ideal method of any translator to find out the best TT to the ST.

Vinay and Darbelnet used to believe in a 'full equivalents' when they focus on the equivalent expressions between language pairs which are acceptable as long as they are performed in a bilingual dictionary. Later on, these two scholars claim that glossaries and collections of expressions of idioms or proverbs 'can never be exhaustive' (1995, p.255). It is the situation in the ST that requires particular attention to creating equivalences which then lead to a task of finding a solution actually in the ST. They confirm that the dictionary or glossaries would never be enough for a guarantee of a full and successful equivalent in translation. For example, a

communicative situation might decide which equivalent should be used in this case (1995, p.256):

English: Take one
French: Prenez-enun

The French phrase could be the best equivalent to the English one but the translator needs to examine whether the notice is shown as a sign beside boxes of free newspapers or samples in a supermarket, because different context will bring different understanding to the reader.

2.2.2. Formal correspondence and dynamic equivalence of Nida and Taber

In 1964 Nida contributed his two new terms in the theory of equivalence: *formal equivalence* (later called *formal correspondence* in her second edition 1982 with Taber) and *dynamic equivalence*. Particularly, Nida (1964, p.159) defines *formal equivalence* as 'Formal equivalence focuses attention on the message itself, in both form and content. In such a translation one is concerned with such correspondences as poetry to poetry, sentence to sentence, and concept to concept. Viewed from this formal orientation, one is concerned that the message in the receptor language should match as closely as possible the different elements in the SL. This means, for example, that the message in the receptor culture is constantly compared with the message in the SC to determine the standards of accuracy and correctness'. Nida believes that this kind of equivalence allows the reader 'to identify himself as fully as possible with a person in the source-language context, and to understand as much as he can of the customs, manner of thought, and means of expression'. According to Nida and Taber (1982,p.201) *formal equivalence* is 'quality of a translation in which the features of the form

of the ST have been mechanically reproduced in the receptor language'. Despite its 'mechanical' limitations, Shuttleworth and Cowie (1997) agree that this kind of equivalence is in some cases the most suitable strategy to follow because it is, on the one hand different from literal translation which normally 'tends to preserve formal features almost by default (i.e. with little or no regard for context, meaning or what is implied by a given utterance), and on the other hand 'almost always contextually motivated: formal features are preserved only if they carry contextual values that become part of overall text meaning' (Hatim and Munday, 2004,p.41).

Moreover, the formal equivalents might cause significant influences in the TT because the reader of this second language cannot understand easily (Fawcett, 1997). In the second edition, Nida and Taber add new ideas to this point of view that 'typically, *formal correspondence* distorts the grammatical and stylistic patterns of the receptor language, and hence distorts the message, so as to cause the receptor to misunderstand or to labor unduly hard' (Nida 1964,p.201).

Dynamic equivalence, functioning as a translation principle, encourages translators to find out the words carrying the meaning that is not only familiar with the TC readers but also creates the same response as the SC readers behave to the ST. Within *dynamic equivalence*, 'the message of the ST has been so transposed into the receptor language that the response of the receptor is essentially like that or the original receptors' (Nida and Taber 1982, p.200). The two scholars claim that 'frequently, the form of the ST is changed; but as long as the change follows the rules of back transformation in the SL, of contextual consistency in the transfer, and of transformation in the receptor language, the message is preserved and the translation is faithful' (Nida and Taber 1982,p.200).

2.2.3. Catford and his Translation shifts

Differing from the point of view of Nida and Taber, who mainly focus on the semantic and cultural features of text in setting equivalence, Catford, whose translation approach is close to the linguistic writings of Firth and Halliday, introduces his linguistic-oriented approaches to translation with different types of shifts in his *A Linguistic Theory of Translation* in 1965. He comes to translation with broad categories in three groups:

Extent: Full translation and Partial translation

Levels: Total translation and Restricted translation

Ranks: Rank-bound translation and Unbounded translation

The typical examples of rank-bound translation are the selections of equivalents in the hierarchy of grammatical units, or in the same rank, such as: word-to-word or morpheme-to-morpheme equivalences. Rank-bound translation, however, is also considered as 'bad' translation because 'it involves using TL equivalents which are not appropriate to their location in the TL text, and which are not justified by the interchangeability of the SL and the TL texts in one and the same situation' (Catford 1965,p.25). In contrast, unbounded translation allows to shift equivalences freely up and down on the rank scale.

Being considered as an empirical phenomenon, translation equivalence for Catford includes two types: *formal correspondence* and *textual equivalence*. According to Catford, if the two languages share the same ranks of grammatical units

(for example: English and French appear to have five ranks: sentence, clause, group, word, and morpheme), the formal correspondence between two hierarchies is confirmed (Catford 1965, p.32). Nevertheless, the weak point of formal correspondence is the level of relevance when assessing translation equivalence between the ST and the TT. To fulfill this weak point, Catford introduces *textual equivalence* which appears whenever a TL text or portion of text is 'observed on a particular occasion… to be the equivalent of an SL text or portion of text' (Catford 1965, p.27).

In his concern for translation equivalence, the theorist suggests two main kinds of translation shifts which are defined as 'departures from formal correspondence in the process of going from the SL to the TL' (Catford 1965, p.76). The first one is *level shifts* in which the equivalent of SL item is set in a different rank in the TL item, for instance: grammar to lexis. The second one is *category shifts* with four sub-types (Catford 1965, p.75-78):

Structure-shifts, which involve a grammatical change between the structure of the ST and that of the TT;

Class-shifts, when an SL item is translated with a TL item which belongs to a different grammatical class, i.e. a verb may be translated with a noun;

Unit-shifts, which involve changes in rank;

Intra-system shifts, which occur when the SL and the TL possess systems which approximately correspond formally as to their constitution, but when translation involves selection of a non-corresponding term in the TL system. For instance, when the SL singular becomes a TL plural.

2.2.4.. House – overt and covert translation

Function is the key term that House (1997) who contended for semantic and pragmatic equivalence, suggests to match the ST and the TT in translation by determining the *situational dimensions* in the ST. According to House, every text possesses in itself situational context which challenges translators to recognise and provide for a functional equivalent which does not only express the original meaning of the text but also describe the relevant meaning in context. She claims that 'a translation text should not only match its ST in function, but employ equivalent situational-dimensional means to achieve that function' (1997, p.49). On the evaluation of translation, she agrees about the decrease of quality if ST and TT do not match each other on situational features, which mean there is no functional equivalent.

The major contribution of House is the introduction of the two new terms: *overt* and *covert translation*. According to her, there is no need to have a 'second original' version of the ST in overt translation which does not address the TT audience and 'must overtly be a translation' (1997, p.189). Overt translation that is intentionally recognised as translation, concentrates on being consistent with the ST's culture. In contrast, despite not specially addressing the TC audience, covert translation introduces its product which is functionally equivalent to the ST. In other words, covert translation is considered as an ST addressing to the TC with pragmatically equal concerns for ST's and TT's readers. She analyzes many examples in full text, such as an academic article which, in her opinion, is different from any features specific to the SC; or a political speech which, in her analysis, is a typical instance of covert translation because the functional

equivalence here is not maintained, to see if they are suitable to fit the functional features.

2.2.5. Mona Baker and her translation equivalence

Baker (1992) fertilises the land of equivalence by combining linguistic and communicative approaches and examining equivalence on different levels, with significant conditions on defining each concept in relation to translation process.

According to her, equivalence occurs on both word and above word levels when translating from the ST to the TT. She continues that if using a bottom-up translation approach, the first thing translators pay attention to is the word for which s/he immediately finds the direct equivalent term in the TL as well as some factors related to the word, such as gender, tense, or number (1992,pp.11-22). Grammar between languages might change differently, which causes difficulties for translators in finding grammatical equivalents. Baker argues that the difference of grammar could lead to the missing or adding of information in the translated message, depending on how many grammatical devices, such as number, tense, voice, person, or gender in the TL the translator can manage. Textual equivalence is used when referring to the aspects of information and cohesion of text in translation. The theorist discusses the importance of textual equivalence in guiding comprehension and analysis in the ST from which translators have the right to choose how close to keep in producing a cohesive and coherent TT to the TC audience. Baker mentions three main factors influencing the decision of translators: target audience, the purpose of translation, and text types.

In conclusion, equivalence has been a heated and controversial problem in translation theories. Although many discussions, suggestions, terms, and debates about it have occurred on the argument by initial theorists, equivalence is continuing in its universal concern in translation studies.

2.2.6. Pym's directional and natural equivalence

The discussions on equivalence have recently been re-heated by the suggestions of Anthony Pym in his 2014-published-book *Exploring Translation Theories*. Pym makes the very interesting move of dividing equivalence theories into two kinds: theories of *natural equivalence* and theories of *directional equivalence*. In the first of these 'sub-paradigms', equivalents are seen as existing prior to the act of translation; they are discovered, not created, by the translator. Pym illustrates that, to translate the road sign SLOW into French, one asks (according to Vinay & Darbelnet) what word is used in France to make drivers slow down, and one translates with that word (not the adjective LENT but rather the verb RALENTIR, slow down). Thus the source determines the translation. Therefore, in any couplet provided, it is possible to go from language A to B and back from B to A without disturbing the equivalence. For Pym, this sub-paradigm was a response to structuralism, which argued translation that was impossible since every language was considered inherently different from another. *Directional equivalence* is just the one-way interlingual communication. *Natural equivalence*, on the other hand, claims the opposite and assumes that languages can express a reality that exists outside language in ways that are equal to each other in terms of value. On criticisms of *natural equivalence*, Pym mentions that

new information (that is, new to the TL-speaking society) cannot be natural; there will not be any already existing way of talking about the concepts in the ST if, for example, missionaries are introducing a new religion through translation. Pym concludes with an argument that the notion of pre-existing equivalence can only arise in the historical conditions of print culture and standard vernacular languages. He points out that before the Renaissance, different languages were not seen as having equal value. There was a hierarchy with several levels, 'divine' languages like Hebrew and Arabic at the top and local patois at the bottom. Translation was seen as a way of enriching a 'lower' language, which had no already available equivalents. Also, before printing, there were no stable texts to which the translation could be equivalent.

Pym suggests that natural equivalence is actually a bit of an illusion. The archetypal natural equivalents - SL/TL pairs of technical terms - are often the result of fiats by terminology standardization committees. One could, he claims, probably find a social history behind any SL/TL 'natural' pair: behind the pair English 'Friday' and Spanish 'viernes' lies the spread of the 7-day week, so there was a directionality from languages of the Middle East (where the notion of the week originated) to others. This claim of Pym's does seem a bit exaggerated; it's not obvious what historical process would lie behind pairs like water/agua or blood/sangre. The idea underlying directional equivalence theories is that translators actively create equivalence (rather than finding it ready-made) by choosing an approach that is usually expressed in some version of the literal versus free dichotomy. So both a literal and a free translation of a passage can be seen

as equivalent to it; the source does not determine the translation.

3. Methodology

This study is carried out with a considerable concentration on qualitative method, descriptive method and contrastive analysis.

Qualitative method, according to Silverman (2001), can present the insights behind the numbers and facts to clarify different layers of meaning conveyed by the speaker. In linguistics, applying qualitative method tends to be the most appropriate choice of language researchers, who use it as the tool to encounter the multiple meanings as well as the value patterns that quantitative method cannot express (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). The qualitative method in this study is expressed in analyzing the semantic changes due to the translation process between the English and Vietnamese translation of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*.

Qualitative method always goes with descriptive method that is neutrally used when comparing the ST and the translated text (Toury, 1995). The descriptive method in the study is firstly used to describe the semantic features of English and Vietnamese translation of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* when comparing equivalents.

According to Johansson and Hofland (1994), contrastive analysis is objectively used together with qualitative method and descriptive method when comparing two or more languages. The contrastive method in this study is expressed in comparing the similarities and differences, in terms of semantic features of equivalence between the English and Vietnamese translation of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*.

4. Analysis and Discussion

Equivalence is the central concern in translation studies because of its broad meaning with different scholars with different approaches to the translation process giving different definitions and analyses. Vinay and Darbelnet (1995, p.255) primarily thought that equivalence was just the replacement of the same situation as in the ST in order to maintain the stylistics in the TT. They, however, later agree that it is not enough to use a dictionary only because cultural context, for example, hides the pragmatic, semantic or functional message of the ST that the translator need, to clarify for his/her audiences who may be disturbed if the equivalents in the translated text are excessively far from their daily language or cultural perspective, no matter how much they are close to the original situation of the ST.

Philosophical theories in translation studies focus on the central concern about the *closest natural equivalent* which aims at delivering a translation with expressions natural to the target audience (Steiner, 1975). Naturalness, according to Newmark (1988), requires two conditions that support each other: the translation is natural in terms of reading, and the translation still keeps the stylistic characteristics of the ST. Lacking one of these conditions, Newmark asserts, the translation is not considered as a successful product. Equivalence is to choose the relevance between the TT and the ST but those two types of texts often appear in different historical times and cultures. Seeking equivalence to maintain the meaning conveyed in the ST, therefore, should cover an investigation into the social and historical context (Davis, 2004; Venuti, 1992).

The Vietnamese translation of *Romeo and Juliet* was introduced in an exceedingly special historical context in that the war with the Americans involved in fierce battles; all aspects of life from language to culture were still influenced by feudalism, even though the country's politics changed to socialism. Those factors affected the way the translator chose equivalence in his translation of *Romeo and Juliet*.

According to Nida and Taber (1982), formal equivalence is the crucial tool to maintain the message in both form and content of the ST. In addition, Nida (1964,p.159) states that a translation is considered as a formal equivalent one to the ST if it corresponds to sentence by sentence, poetry by poetry, and concept by concept. Based on this perception, it can be seen that formal equivalence is used at three points in the Vietnamese translation of *Romeo and Juliet*. As equal to the iambic pentameters in the ST, the translation sets the formal equivalence from poetry to poetry in the Prologue of Act 1 and 2. Although the iambic pentameter and sonnet poetic form are not translated, the translator flexibly uses Vietnamese 6-8 poetic form and rhythmic syllables (for the Prologue).

Besides, Nida and Taber (1982) also discuss *dynamic equivalence* as an essential strategy along with *formal equivalence* in the translation process. This type of equivalence focuses on the TC by finding words to help the target audience receive the text as the same way as the reader of the ST. In other words, dynamic equivalence is to produce a target-culture-oriented translation. In fact, dynamic equivalence is popularly used in the Vietnamese translation of *Romeo and Juliet* through the choosing of personal pronouns.

Unlike English, the Vietnamese language has a variety of personal pronouns which make it difficult for the translator to choose the best equivalents

of the English pronouns in order to maintain the original context, culture as well as make it familiar to the Vietnamese audience. Translating personal pronouns is a typical issue in this translation of *Romeo and Juliet* because in some cases the equivalents are suitable for the ST, but in other circumstances, the equivalents break the flow of the translated language with old words that are no longer used in present days and illogical in terms of the TC. For example, the following line:

SAMPSON

A dog of the house of Montague moves me.

XAMXƠN - Cứ thấy một thằng chó nhà Montaghiu là tao ngứa ngáy chân tay.

Vietnamese

Cứ thấy một thằng chó nhà Montaghiu là tao ngứa ngáy chân tay.

Back translation to English

Just see a doggy Montegue's guy makes my hands and **feet** itchy.

The translator changes the language effectively by choosing the expressions that Vietnamese often use in daily communication. Firstly, *A dog* normally has its Vietnamese equivalent *con chó*, but in this case the phrase *thằngchó (*thằng = man; chó = dog) conveys fully the hidden meaning in the ST. Secondly, *me* has many Vietnamese equivalents: *tôi, tớ, mình*, etc. which are different from each other in terms of formal or informal situations. In this context, the translator uses *tao* – a pronoun that often appears among gangsters, mafias, or street-urchins, as the equivalent for *me*. Thirdly, the phrase *ngứa ngáy chân tay* (as the equivalent for *moves*) has two meanings: one is the itch on arms and legs, the other is used to describe the person who

is ready for fighting. Those three equivalent expressions describe the English original meaning in a quite Vietnamese way of daily communication. Blum-Kulka (1986,p.19) suggests that 'explicitation is viewed here as inherent in the process of translation'. Klaudy and Károly (2005) clarify that explicitation occurs when the translator uses a more specific expression to replace the ST's general meaning. In fact, the translation in this case is much more specific than the ST, which creates high effect on the TT audience, who find that dynamic equivalent (Nida, 1964) familiar and easy to understand.

Dynamic equivalence is the preferred choice when dealing with cultural aspects in which the socio-context will bring the target audience to the time and space of the original story (Nida, 1964). In the following examples, the translator uses the pronoun that suits the feudal society both in the Shakespearean period and the year 1963 in Vietnamese culture. In this line:

PRINCE

Rebellious subjects, enemies to peace,

...

One more, on pain of death, all men depart.

VƯƠNG CHỦ

- Quân làm loạn, lũ phá rối trị an kia!

...

Một lần nữa, ta truyền tất cả phải lui ngay, kẻ nào trái lệnh sẽ phải tội chết.

Because of his high status and honour in Verona, the sayings of the Prince are added pronoun *ta = I* which is often used to communicate between the king and high social status people in old Vietnamese feudalism. The distinction in terms of social status is also expressed in the way that the translator mentions the Montagues' and Capulets' servants with the pronouns *Quân = troop* – used to describe enemies with negative expressive meaning (for example: *a troop of thieves = quân ăn*

cắp/quân trộm cắp); *lũ = flock/pack –* used to talk about animals (for example: *a pack of dogs =lũ chó*).

In the following line, the equivalent of the Personal pronoun *she* in the translation *tiểu thư* refers to the royal environment with rich families and strict rules. This word choice *tiểu thư* which originated from Kanji-Vietnamese with *tiểu = small, thư = girl/lady* that is used to refer to daughter of a rich or high social status family in the past, has translated the Verona society to the period of Vietnamese ancient feudalism.

> **PARIS**
> Younger than she are happy mothers made.

> PARIT - Nhiều người còn ít tuổi hơn tiểu thư mà đã là những bà mẹ đầy hạnh phúc rồi.

In the following cases, however, the limitation of dynamic equivalence shows that if the word used in the TL is just the slang of a region or of a minority ethnic group, people coming from different areas have difficulty in understanding it. The following line, for example,

> **JULIET**
> And stint thou too, I pray thee, Nurse, say I.

> JULIET - Thôi, u ơi, tôi cũng xin u im đi cho.

The equivalent for *thee* in the translation is not relevant to the original as well as making the audience confused because *u* in the Vietnamese language refers to *mother* which is popularly used in North Vietnam while the Nurse as a babysitter, one of the servants in the Capulets' family is equivalent to *vú*. The pronoun *u* makes the audience think that Juliet is asking her mum not to talk anymore. The translator, however, makes the equivalent pronoun in the translation of the line below

illogical to the way of using personal pronoun in the above line.

> **NURSE**
> An honor! Were not I thine only nurse,
> I would say thou hadst sucked wisdom from thy teat.

> **NHŨ MẪU**
> Vinh hạnh!... Nếu không chỉ có mình u là vú nuôi em thôi thì u đã tưởng em bú được sữa người khôn rồi đó!

The Nurse refers to herself as *u = mother* (u làvú = mum is babysitter) then calls Juliet *em* which is only used among brothers and sisters (the older call the younger) while in the previous line, the Nurse uses *tiểu thư* to call Juliet. This change will unsettle the Vietnamese audience who are not familiar with that kind of naming in Vietnamese culture. It shows that there is an irregular way of using personal pronouns by the translator, which again repeats in this line,

> **TYBALT**
> It fits when such a villain is a guest.
> I'll not endure him.

> TIBÂN - Bộ mặt ấy thích hợp lắm nếu có thằng khốn ấy là khách. Tôi quyết không để cho nó yên.

The way the translator chooses the pronoun *Tôi* as the equivalent for *I* in this case is not relevant to the context because Tybalt is Capulet's nephew who must use polite language to communicate with his uncle - Capulet - while *Tôi* in Vietnamese is used between friends or people of same age. Besides, while the previous line uses Cháu to refer to Tybalt, this line suddenly changes to *Tôi*. This is a abundantly impolite communication in Vietnamese culture. This type of equivalent choice for pronouns *I* and *Thee* also appears in the following line:

> **JULIET**
> Well, do not swear. Although I joy in thee,
> ...
> Come to thy heart as that within my breast.

> **JULIET**
>
> - Nhưng thôi chàng ôi, đừng thề thốt nữa.
>
> ...
>
> Em cầu cho sự thanh thản êm đềm của lòng em cũng sẽ đến với trái tim chàng.

At the beginning, the translator uses *em (= I)* and *chàng (= thee)* which are most popular in communications between royalty or people in feudalistic society in the past or in literature. This kind of equivalent makes the language so romantic for the love between Romeo and Juliet. In the middle of this translation, however, the translator suddenly changes *sweet* - a lovely way to call a lover - to *Bạnyêuquý = dear friend* which suddenly makes that sweet love become a friendship. In some cases, irrelevance in the choosing of equivalent personal pronouns changes the attitude of speakers in the ST to a more impolite way.

ROMEO	RÔMÊÔ - Nhũ mẫu ơi, nhũ mẫu hãy nói tốt cho
Nurse, commend me to thy lady and mistress. I protest unto thee—	ta với tiểu thư, với nữ chủ nhân của mụ. Ta xin thề với mụ...
ROMEO Bid her devise Some means to come to shrift this afternoon. And there she shall at Friar Lawrence' cell Be shrived and married. *(gives her coins)* Here is for thy pains.	RÔMÊÔ - Mụ hãy thưa cùng tiểu thư là tiểu thư hãy tìm cách chiều nay đi xưng tội. Tiểu thư sẽ xưng tội và làm lễ cưới tại tu phòng tu sĩ Lôrân. Đây gọi là một chút để đền công mụ.
ROMEO Warrant thee, my man's as true as steel.	RÔMÊÔ - Mụ cứ yên tâm. Tên hầu của ta vững như thép luyện.

The way the translator uses the pronoun *mụ* as the equivalent for *thee* (the Nurse) in this translation is not compatible with the context because *mụ* is used to describe an exceptionally old woman with negative expressive meaning (old, ugly, dirty, beggar…) while in this case, the conversation between Romeo and the Nurse is highly polite. Right at the beginning, Romeo calls the Nurse Nhũ mẫu which shows the gentlemanly and honourable behaviour of Romeo as well as to describe him '*like a portly gentleman, And, to say truth, Verona brags of him To be a virtuous and well-governed youth*'. The translator, nevertheless, destroys Romeo's image when translating mụ as the equivalent of *thee (the Nurse)*. The way of using personal pronouns in daily communication even in old feudal society or at present in Vietnam illustrates the social hierarchy between the old and the young as well as the social status of speakers. The translator, therefore, should be aware of this aspect so as to not only introduce the most exact equivalent but also to maintain the original social relationships of the characters in the ST. The following line, for example, is the typical instance of the loss in choosing equivalent of personal pronoun.

> **PARIS**
>
> My lord, I would that Thursday were tomorrow.

> PARIT - Thưa tướng công, tiểu tử chi mong rằng ngày mai đã là thứ năm rồi.

The equivalent pronouns used in this line are not relevant to the whole text because the translator uses old language to set equivalent for *I* = tiểu tử in which tiểu = small, tử = son and *My lord* = tướng công which means the officer in the feudal society. The language makes the conversation uncanny because Paris, as a noble earl with respect of many people in Verona including the Capulets, suddenly lowers himself in the conversation with Capulet.

In terms of *formal equivalence* (Nida, 1964)*,* while the poetic form is translated by using a synonymous Vietnamese structure of poetry the original meaning is still omitted in some parts. For example, this line:
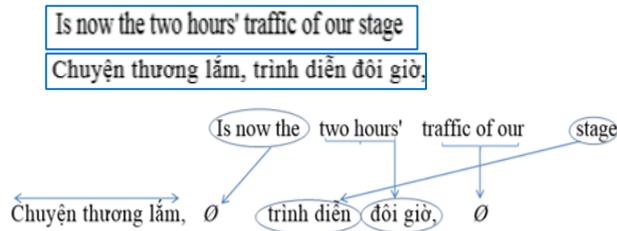
The first impression in the translation is the addition with unrelated words *Chuyện thương lắm* = such a pitiful story which, as an exclamation phrase, expresses as well as transfers the emotion and feeling to the audience. The story, thanks to this addition, receives sympathy from the audience for the tragedy. Besides the two omissions (is now the, traffic of our) in which traffic with the meaning of communication, intercourse or business might be embedded in the word *trình diễn* = perform. *đôi giờ* is the only point that the translator keeps the correct equivalent for two hours. Omission and addition are like supportive parts of each other to compensate the original message in order to maintain in some way the original meaning. In the following line,

(BT: Please you patient consider)

By adding the Verb *Xin* = *please*, using formal word *quý vị* = *you* (*you* can have many different equivalents in Vietnamese both in informal or formal references), and choosing *chiếu cố* = *deign* as the equivalent of *attend,* the translator expresses appreciation of the audience, which is not illustrated in the ST. This switch also draws out the difference in cultural perception because the word *chiếu cố* in Vietnamese context normally describes the

behaviour of rich or high social class people to the poor or labours. Besides the two omissions, the translator also uses his cultural background to change the language from *patient ears* (*ears* are the parts of human body) to *kiên tâm* (*kiên* = *patient*, *tâm* = *soul*). The translator, in the next line, however, misinterprets all the original meaning.

(BT: Tiny ability, we will try to perform)

There is no equivalent between the TT and the ST. Firstly, the translator uses unrelated words *Sức mọn tài hèn* = *Tiny ability and bad talent* (this is the way that Vietnamese people avoid bias) to set the equivalent for *What here shall miss,* which implies the detailed story that has not been mentioned since the beginning. Secondly, the Vietnamese translation omits the key information in the phrase *our toil* (it is *toil*) because only the word *our* has its equivalent *chúng tôi* = *we*. Thirdly, by comparing the phrase *shall strive to mend* and its translation *xin gắng trổ*, the translator again uses unrelated words that do not meet the original meaning. Except the word *strive* = *gắng*, *Xin* = *please* does not appear in the English and *trổ* has its English equivalent *perform* while *mend* supports the *miss* in the previous phrase.

In terms of *dynamic equivalence*, Nida and Taber (1982, p.25) pay attention to the 'correct communication of information'. Translation, however, is not simply the transmittion between two languages but also two cultures. The differences in terms of language might cause difficulties for the TT audience in understanding a cultural factor in the ST. Hervey and Higgins

(1986,p.29) suggest that the translator can apply transplantation to find out the cultural connotation that is familiar to the TT audience, instead of pursuing the foreignisation (Baker, 1992). Although the translator has shifted the cultural context from the Elizabethean period to Vietnamese feudal society, the language he uses, as analysed above, sometimes misinterpretes the ST's referential meaning (Nida and Taber, 1982). In this translation of *Romeo and Juliet,* the translator uses many North Vietnamese slang words that make it difficult for people from other areas of Vietnam to understand even in a Vietnamese context.

5. Conclusion

In terms of equivalence, this study has found the following key points of the Vietnamese translation of *Romeo and Juliet*. Firstly, dynamic equivalence (Nida, 1964) is partly applied in the translation, which helps the translator deal with the cultural features, because the social context of the ST is about feudalism in the Elizabethan period, which shares some similarities with the feudal society in Vietnam in the past. The language used in the TT, therefore, should be that used in feudal times. For example, the translator adds the pronoun *ta* as the equivalent of the first personal pronoun *I*; or the third personal pronoun *She* has the Vietnamese equivalent *tiểu thư* with *tiểu = small, thư = girl/lady*. Dynamic equivalence in choosing personal pronouns, in some cases is not appropriate for the whole text because the translator made his translation confusing and ambiguous for the Vietnamese audience. For example, the Nurse is sometimes called *U = mother*, some other times called *vú = babysitter*,

and in other cases called *mụ = old ugly and dirty beggar*. Secondly, formal equivalence can be recognised in the way the translator chooses Vietnamese poetic forms to translate the iambic pentameter in the ST (See the two Prologues). Thirdly, the language used in the Vietnamese translation of *Romeo and Juliet* seems to be suitable for and familiar to the Northern audience because the translator used many slang words that are popular for the Northern people but quite mysterious for Vietnamese in other areas. Besides, this is a text-based translation without the priporty of stage performance. It is possible to conclude that the Vietnamese translation of *Romeo and Juliet* is a mixture of *overt* and *covert translation* (House, 1977). The translation is overt because it still keeps the ST's context and language without any explanation (eg. translating allusive proper names). The translation is also considered as a covert text because at many points the translator applies domestication and cultural transplantation . This study has opened up possibilities for further research into equivalence in Shakespeare's plays and sonnets from English into Vietnamese.

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