

**THE UNIVERSITY OF DANANG  
UNIVERSITY OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE STUDIES**

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**AN INVESTIGATION INTO LOSS AND GAIN IN THE  
VIETNAMESE TRANSLATION AUTOBIOGRAPHY “MY  
LIFE” BY BILL CLINTON**

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 RATIONALE**

“Translation is the expression in another language (target language) of what has been expressed in one language (source language), preserving semantic and stylistic equivalencies” (Bell, 1991). Translation is a bridge to connect everyone in this world. Thanks to translation, people come from all over the world are able to understand each other, understand every writing texts, every conversations even though they do not use the same language. It is also an effective tool for people to expand their knowledge and understanding on many aspects of other countries such as Culture, Economic Strategies, Information & Technology Development...

To create a beautiful, elegant and accurate translating version, translators have to take into consideration both linguistic and non-linguistic factors which affect the quality of the translation including differences in grammar, syntax, lexis, culture and so on. Moreover, the process of translating is not simply just a process of conveying a text from one language to another. In fact, it can be considered as one of the most complicated mental processes to human in the attempt of finding the exact or closest meaning embedded behind the words, the concrete ideas of the speaker or writer are also needed to be revealed in the translating version. Getting a closer look at the two different languages, we have to admit that each of them has unique complexity and literary value that sometimes make translators confused or even stuck when trying to re-express some concepts

Translation is always required to convey the messages from source language (SL) to the equivalent target language (TL). Nevertheless, it goes without saying that languages vary and are extremely complicated since “the sameness cannot exist between two languages”. Thus, a lot of methods of translating were applied to create the Vietnamese translated version by Tran Ha Nguyen published in 2007

And, obviously, in the translation, loss and gain occurred numerous times

What are the loss and gain occurring in the Vietnamese translation of the autobiography? The researcher tried to find the answers to the questions through the study entitled “AN INVESTIGATION INTO LOSS AND GAIN IN THE VIETNAMESE TRANSLATION AUTOBIOGRAPHY “MY LIFE” BY BILL CLINTON” It is hoped that this investigation will bring out a closer look on how loss and gain affect the translating process.

## **1.2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

### **1.2.1. Aims of the Study**

This thesis is aimed to study in detail about loss and gain phenomena in translation in the autobiography “My Life” by Bill Clinton, and (ii) find out the explanation to the problem of loss and gain to enhance the quality of translating literary works.

### **1.2.2. Objectives of the Study**

- Investigate and identify the loss and gain phenomena occurred typically in the Vietnamese translational version of the autobiography “My Life” by Bill Clinton.
- Classify these cases in terms of syntax, lexis and meaning.

- Suggest some implications for translation studies as well as language teaching and learning.

### **1.3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

1. How did the gain phenomena occur in the Vietnamese translation of the first four Chapters of the autobiography “My Life” in terms of syntax, lexis and meaning?

2. How did the loss phenomena occur in the Vietnamese translation of the first four Chapters of the autobiography “My Life” in terms of syntax, lexis and meaning?

3. What are the implications for the phenomena of loss and gain in the Vietnamese translation?

### **1.4. SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

My Life by Bill Clinton has 1008 pages and only the first chapter is chosen to be analyzed in detail to suit with the time limitation. Besides, a lot of phenomena occurred during the process of translating a text and it is obvious that all of them can hardly be analysed due to the inability of the researcher. Consequently, this research will focus mainly on loss and gain in translation of metaphors used in the first four chapters of the autobiography including 143 samples extracted from the text.

### **1.5. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

The investigation into loss and gain in the process of translating the autobiography “My Life” by Bill Clinton into Vietnamese is hoped to contribute partly to some fields such as English language teaching and learning, translation studies and researches. It is also carried out in order to help readers have a better understanding the source text as well as have the closest feeling and evaluation that the writer intends to express to everyone. Moreover,

loss and gain phenomena are taken into consideration to be analysed based on the differences found between the source text and the target text. In addition, the solution to the problem of loss and gain to enhance the quality of translating literary works will also be discussed. The study will hopefully make sense for those who love languages, teaching languages and literature.

## **1.6. ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY**

**Chapter 1, Introduction**, made a general introduction to the research which presented the rationale, aims, objectives, the scope, the significance and the organization of the study. The research questions were also included in this chapter.

**Chapter 2, Review of Literature and Theoretical Background**, provided a summary of the previous studies of English and Vietnamese researchers and some theoretical background related to the research.

**Chapter 3, Research Design and Methodology**, presented the methods and research procedures, the description of samples and the way to collect and analyse data, the reliability and validity were presented as well.

**Chapter 4, Findings and Discussions**, discussed the results of the data analysis. This chapter described, analyzed, compared and discussed the loss and gain phenomena occurring in the first four chapters of the autobiography

**Chapter 5, Conclusions and Implications**, included the conclusion, the implications, the limitations and suggestions for further research.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

#### **2.1. PREVIOUS STUDIES RELATED TO THE TOPIC**

There have been a number of studies related to this. My (2015) stated in her thesis “*An investigation into loss and gain in English – Vietnamese translational versions of subtitles of Oscar winning movies from 2010 to 2014*” that “ Loss and Gain in translation may be one of the most common phenomenon that deserves much attention. It is advisable for translators to choose and make use of appropriate translational technique and/or methodology so as to gain significant translational version. In this sense, the translators are requires to have not olnly good language competence but also have good knowledge on cultural aspects which can be used as instruments to obtain successful translation version”

According to Miên (2016) in “*An investigation into loss and gain in the translation of conceptual metaphor expressing “self-identity” in Trinh Cong Son’s songs into English*”, “loss is influenced by linguistic distance” between the two languages. Loss is also a result of disparate cultures of the two languages. Apart from linguistic and cultural barrier, loss is also attributed to the failure by the translators to render an element of meaning such as expressiveness where the impact, spirit and vividness of the text is easily lost during the translation process”

In addition, Loss and Gain is also considered a wide area of study as Võ Phan Hải Quỳnh mentioned “some of the original meaning can be lost or gained because of the differences of the languages. Therefore, loss and gain in meaning is such a vast

category because it relates to many factors in terms of lexical and structure.

## **2.2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

### **2.2.1. Concept of translation**

#### **2.2.2. Translation methods**

Word-for-word translation

Literal translation

Faithful translation

Semantic translation

Adaptation

Free translation

Idiomatic translation

Communicative translation

#### **2.2.3. Strategies of Translation**

- a. Translation by a more general word
- b. Translation by a more specific word
- c. Translation by cultural substitution
- d. Translation by a loan word or loan word plus explanation
- e. Translation by paraphrase
- f. Translation by omission

#### **2.2.4. Loss and Gain in Translation**

- a. Structural Metaphors
- b. Orientational Metaphors
- c. Ontological Metaphors
- d. Conduit Metaphors

#### **2.2.5. The Principles of Translation**

#### **2.2.6. The Analysis of Meaning**

#### **2.2.7. Naturalness**

**2.2.8. Definition of Words, Phrases and Clauses**

**2.2.9. Definiton of terms**

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1. RESEARCH METHODS**

Descriptive method

Synthetic and contrastive analysis method

#### **3.2. SAMPLING**

In this study, 143 examples of loss and gain in Vietnamese translation were collected from the book translated by Tran Ha Nguyen.

Samples are the words, phrases or sentences with the loss or gain phenomena occurring in the first four chapters in the Vietnamese translation of the autobiography.

#### **3.3. DATA COLLECTION**

In this study, 143 examples of loss and gain in Vietnamese translation were collected from the book translated by Tran Ha Nguyen.

Samples are the words, phrases or sentences with the loss or gain phenomena occurring in the first four chapters in the Vietnamese translation of the autobiography.

#### **3.4. DATA ANALYSIS**

The data collected will be qualitatively and quantitatively processed to investigate how loss and gain occurred in translating metaphors used in the autobiography. Here are the specific stages:

Firstly, the data will be grouped into loss phenomena and gain phenomena

Secondly, the classification of data will be based on loss and gain in syntax, lexis and meaning

Finally, the frequency of loss and gain phenomena occurred in the target text will be counted

### **3.5. RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY**

In order to ensure the quality of the data collected, reliability and validity need to be taken into consideration. The data must be reliable, consistent and accurate.

In terms of reliability, all the data in the thesis are presented with specific references including authors' names, years of publication and publishers. This could be a concrete verification for the literature foundation of this thesis.

Regarding validity, data collection must be done with the help of authentic sources and valid theoretical background which was shown in Chapter Two. Thus the process of collecting and analyzing data is undoubtedly valid

Moreover, the researcher strictly followed the research methods and procedures to ensure the reliability and validity of the thesis.

## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.1. DESCRIPTION OF GAIN IN VIETNAMESE TRANSLATION OF THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY

##### 4.1.1. Gain in syntax

During the translation process, the orders of the words may be changed and sometimes, translators can add a clause to bring out the better reference to readers

- (4.1) As we headed for the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of **D-day**

(Clinton, 2004, p. 8)

Khi chúng tôi chuẩn bị kỷ niệm lần thứ 50 **ngày quân Đồng minh đổ bộ Normandy**

(Trần Hà Nguyên, 2007, trang 18)

In this extract, we can see there is a clause with a noun phrase acts as a subject “**quân Đồng minh**” and a verb phrase “**đổ bộ Normandy**” which was added to modify the full meaning of an important **day** of the country. There is hardly someone in Vietnam who knows about this historical event and with just D-day, Vietnamese readers may find them vague. The effect of providing more specific information in the translating was undeniable.

##### 4.1.2. Gain in lexis

Let us take a look at the increase of words in translation through the following examples.

- (4.22) You're Bill Blythe's son. You look **just like him**.

Cậu là con của Bill Blythe. Cậu trông giống cha **như đúc**.

In this case, the words “như đúc” were added in the translation without changing the meaning of the original sentence. Instead they helped to support the intention of the speaker with applying Vietnamese culture. It is a common saying in Vietnam of “giống như đúc” (like coming from the same mold).

#### 4.1.3. Gain in meaning

During the process of translating, the circumstances of losing some part of the original meaning or author’s intention could sometimes occur.

(4.63) I used to joke with Hillary that if my father hadn’t lost his life on that **rainy** Missouri highway,...

Tôi thường đùa với Hillary rằng nếu cha tôi không mất mạng trên xa lộ **trơn trượt** ở Missouri...

It is obvious that the author didn’t mention any adjective related to the slip. He only drew out a scene of a highway on a rainy day and the translator added the adjective “trơn trượt” (slippery) to create a clearer imaginative effect.

## 4.2. DESCRIPTION OF LOSS IN VIETNAMESE TRANSLATION OF THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY

### 4.2.1. Loss in syntax

The most common loss could be found is about tenses. In the source text, the author used mainly past tenses because his writing is an autobiography. However, In the translation the word “đã” which is used to show past tense in Vietnamese was cut down many times to keep the sentences fluent and natural.

(4.71) Two months later, they **were** married and he **was** off to war.

Hai tháng sau, họ lấy nhau và ông ra trận.

#### 4.2.2. Loss in lexis

Generally, most loss phenomena arising in the text come up with the function of avoiding repetition in writing. The majority of cases had brought up a noun in the first clause or sentence and when the noun need to appear in the second clause or sentence, it will often be eliminated to avoid the duplication.

(4.91) Though **he** weighed about 150 pounds, my grandfather carried ice blocks that weighed up to a hundred pounds...

Dù chỉ nặng khoảng 75 kg, nhưng ông tôi có thể vác những súc đá nặng 50kg...

So, this sentence has two words that refer to the same person “he” and “grandfather” . The Vietnamese translation shows the elimination of the word “he” which can cause repetition.

#### 4.2.3. Loss in meaning

Apart from loss in syntax and lexis, sometimes during the translation process, a part of meaning or author’s intention was lost when translators try to make the sentence smoother and more natural in Vietnamese.

(4.109) Next to the garage was a brick block that contained a grocery, a Laundromat, and Stubby’s, a **small family-run** barbeque restaurant

Bên cạnh gara là một dãy nhà gạch, bên trong có một tiệm tạp hóa, một tiệm giặt tự động và nhà hàng thịt nướng Stubby.

Here, there is an aspect of meaning which was ignored in the process of translation. It is the adjective to describe the restaurant.

It's small and run by members of a family. This wasn't translated into Vietnamese.

### **4.3. SOME OTHER CHANGES DURING THE PROCESS OF TRANSLATION OF THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY**

#### **4.3.1. Changes caused by differences in culture**

Manifestly, the very first difference between two countries is the measuring units. While American use pound and ounce for weight, mile for length, feet for height, Vietnamese use gram for weight and meter for length and height. Therefore, it is compulsory to convey these units from the source language into target language.

(1.119) ... weighing at a respectable six **pounds** eight **ounces**, on a twenty-one-**inch** frame.

...nặng khoảng 3,2 **kg**, cao hơn 6 **tấc**

#### **4.3.2. Changes caused by differences in grammar rules**

There is no doubt that language distinction can be found between English and Vietnamese due to different grammar systems and habits of using them in speaking and writing.

One of the remarkable difference could be found is the tendency of using active voice and passive voice. While American often use passive voice in their writing to enhance the objectivity, Vietnamese people tend to utilize active voice.

(1.133) I was born under a clear sky after a violent summer storm to a widowed mother...

Mẹ tôi – lúc ấy đã là góa phụ - sinh ra tôi vào một ngày trời trong sau cơn bão mùa hè dữ dội...

Basically, translation is all about studying and understanding lexis, syntax, context and cultural base of both source language and

target language. To get a qualified translation, the translation has to analyze the above components to get the meaning of the source text and then express it naturally on the platform of the target language to make sure readers have no difficulty in reading, understanding and feeling the work. The main task of translation is to deal with meaning and intention, lexis and grammatical orders of the source language could be changed to match with the target language. In the process of translation, these issues need to be taken into consideration: Differences in grammar and word in use, culture, purpose of the text, multiple-meaning words, denotative and connotative meaning.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS**

#### **5.1. SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS**

This thesis has completed the goal of finding, analyzing and contrasting the loss and gain phenomena occurring in the Vietnamese translation of the first four chapters of the autobiography “My Life”.

It goes without saying that loss and gain phenomena are unavoidable during the translation process. This can be explained thanks to the differences found in culture, grammar, context and word choice. Obviously, these phenomena could be considered as a natural issue in the process of transferring content and intention to help readers get a more cohesive, coherent and comprehensible text.

In the thesis, loss and gain phenomena have been elicited in terms of syntax, lexis and meaning. The structure of a sentence, grammar rules, phrases, words may be changed during the translation process to ensure the naturalness of the conveyed text. Moreover, the meaning sometimes could be changed to make the sentences or phrases become more beautifully. However, the changes occurred mostly on the unimportant parts which do not decide the main meaning of the whole sentences.

The findings in this thesis are hoped to provide some valuable insights and to help language learners and teachers on their ways of mastering English.

#### **5.2. IMPLICATIONS**

##### **5.2.1. For language teaching and learning**

It is necessary for English teachers to stimulate their students to find out about the phenomena of loss and gain in translation to enhance their ability of adapting and using English.

Moreover, learners should be aware of loss and gain phenomena to avoid misunderstanding the author's ideas and intention. Many differences could be found during the process of translation. Thus, we need to understand and accept that there is no absolute sameness between two languages. Vietnamese equivalence is accepted to carry the main meaning mostly and we can not avoid the changes in structure, word choice, part of speech and even in meaning.

In addition, the reasons of loss and gain phenomena should also be presented to help learners have a better understanding. Both linguistic and non-linguistic features can result in the variation of the source text and the target text.

### **5.2.2. For translators and literature researchers**

Obviously, translators carry the mission of connecting people from different countries with different languages, cultures and insights. Thus, they have to master not only the grammatical rules and structures of both the source language and target language but also the cultures and styles. Loss and Gain in translation is unavoidable to make the translation natural and acceptable.

Apart from this, studying loss and gain phenomena in translation is also a good chance for translators and researchers to discover the beauty of two languages, two cultures, two styles. Especially for who are interested in literature, understanding loss and gain could give them better approaching and adaptation into this amazing field.

### **5.3. LIMITATION OF THE THESIS**

The thesis focuses on studying the loss and gain in the four first chapters of the autobiography “My Life” by Bill Clinton and their Vietnamese translations. Due to the time and knowledge limitation of the researcher, syntactic, lexical and meaning features are discussed. Beside, this research only examines Vietnamese translational version of Mr. Tran Ha Nguyen which is already published. Some of the conclusion from the findings are still general. However, this thesis is hoped to be beneficial to translators, language learners and teachers.

### **5.4. SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

Whatever effort has been made during the process of carrying out the research, there are a number of issues relating to this field that need to be explored. In the researcher’s opinion, further researches should be focused on loss and gain of stylistic devices.