

FOREIGN LANGUAGES AND VIETNAMESE

**FACTORS INFLUENCING THE QUALITY
OF INTERPRETING OF ENGLISH MAJORS
AT BAC LIEU UNIVERSITY****VO THI NGOC HUYEN***

ABSTRACT: Interpreting plays a crucial role in bridging language and cultural barriers, making it essential for students to develop high-quality interpreting skills to ensure accurate and effective communication. This study, therefore, aims to explore the factors influencing the interpreting quality of senior English-major students at Bac Lieu University. A questionnaire, adapted from previous studies, was administered to 27 students enrolled in the Interpretation module during the 2023-2024 academic year. It covered three areas: (1) teachers' instructional methods, (2) students' interpreting performance, and (3) their attitudes toward interpretation quality. The findings highlight key factors influencing interpreting quality, including instructional methods, language proficiency, topic knowledge, cultural understanding, memory skills, and confidence. The findings suggest the teachers' need of additional practice opportunities for their students and students' need of language competence improvement and cultural awareness.

KEY WORDS: interpreting, English majors, interpreting quality.

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1. Introduction

In the international intergration era, the demand for more interconnection among people in different countries is increasing than ever. However, it is fact that the discrepancies of languages are the great obstacles for international communication. Meanwhile, interpretation considered to be an interlingual mediation in human communication can tackle that problem, (Gentile et al., 1996; Harto, 2014). Consequently, apart from teaching foreign languages, more and more educational institutions pay their attention to train students translation and interpretation skills. Particularly, at Bac Lieu University English majors are trained in interpretation as part of their curriculum. While students receive theoretical knowledge and practical exercises, their interpretation quality varies significantly. Some students demonstrate strong proficiency, while others struggle with fluency, accuracy, and confidence. These challenges may stem from various factors such as insufficient language proficiency, ineffective teaching strategies, lack of cultural knowledge, and low confidence levels. If these issues are not addressed, students may struggle in real-world interpreting scenarios.

With existing issues mentioned above, this study aims to explore the factors influencing the quality of Vietnamese - English interpreting among English majors at Bac Lieu University. By identifying these factors, the research seeks to provide insights that can enhance interpreter training and support students in improving their skills with two following research questions: 1/What factors affect interpretation quality of English learners at Bac Lieu University?;2/ What are students' attitudes towards interpretation quality?

2. Literature review

Language interpretation is an activity of orally rephrasing source language in target language (Danks et al., 1997). It is a process in which the information is orally transferred into another linguistic and cultural system" (Hu, 2006). According to (Nolan, 2005), interpretation can be useful in the way that speakers' meaning is best expressed in their mother tongue but it can be best understood in the languages of the listeners. In other words, an interpreter listens to a spoken message in the source language and converts it orally, consecutively or simultaneously, into the target language. Particularly, in consecutive interpretation, the interpreter listens, takes notes, then

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reproduces the messages in target language, whereas, the simultaneous interpreter often sits in soundproof booth, listens to speaker through earphones, then, via a microphone reproduces the speech in target language at the same time with the source language (Nolan, 2005).

The quality of interpreting can be proved that the interpreter provides a complete and accurate rendition of the original without distorting the original message. (Mercer, 1996) Interpreting quality can be showed through the achievement of interpreting standards (Kurz, 2001) and actions for communication purposes (Garzone, 2003).

Moreover, the role of instructors is pivotal in shaping students' interpreting abilities. According to Gile (2009), effective interpreting training requires a combination of theoretical knowledge and practical experience. Teaching methods such as role-playing, shadowing, and sight translation have been found to enhance students' cognitive and linguistic skills (Pöschhacker, 2016). Students' interpreting performance also plays key role in the interpreting quality which is influenced by multiple factors, including linguistic competence, memory capacity, and note-taking strategies. Christoffels and de Groot (2004) highlight that working memory plays a crucial role in simultaneous and consecutive interpreting, as interpreters must process, store, and produce information in real-time. Furthermore, Setton and Dawrant (2016) emphasize that proficiency in both source and target languages directly impacts interpretation accuracy and fluency. Effective note-taking techniques, such as symbolization and abbreviation, can also improve information retention and retrieval, leading to higher-quality interpretations (Gillies, 2017).

In addition to linguistic and cognitive factors, students' motivation, confidence, and perception of interpreting as a profession significantly affect their learning outcomes. Gardner's (1985) socio-educational model of motivation suggests that students with high integrative and instrumental motivation perform better in language-related tasks, including interpreting. Additionally, positive attitudes towards interpreting training encourage active participation and self-improvement (Moser-Mercer, 2008).

There have been several studies related to this issue the factors to consecutive interpretation quality. Nguyen Thi Thu Thao and Nguyen Thi Huyen (2023) conducted a study about the factors affecting to consecutive interpretation quality of English majored students at multi-media rooms in school of Languages and Tourism, Hanoi University of Industry. The study explored several elements impacting students' performance such as language competence, interpretation techniques, and psychological elements. In the researcher's context, despite the extensive research on interpreting quality providing valuable guidance for enhancing interpreter training at the school, several challenges and gaps remain in understanding the specific challenges faced by English majors at Bac Lieu University which need to be explore.

3. Methodology

This study employed a quantitative method of data analysis to explore the factors affecting the interpreting quality of senior English-major students at Bac Lieu University and their attitudes toward interpretation quality.

A questionnaire was administered to 27 senior English-major students enrolled in the Interpretation module at Bac Lieu University during the second semester of the 2023–2024 academic year. The questionnaire, adapted from the studies of Pham Vu Phi Ho and Phu Thi Kieu Bui (2013) and Tran Thi Thu Trang (2019), consisted of 15 questions divided into three main sections: (1) teachers' instructional methods, (2) students' interpreting performance quality, and (3) students' attitudes toward interpretation quality.

The data collected from the questionnaire responses were analyzed by Descriptive Statistics of SPSS software to identify key factors influencing the interpreting performance of senior English-major students at Bac Lieu University. The result was described through mean score and standard deviation

The mean scores for analysing the quantitative data were in the following scales:

Table 1. Mean scores for analyzing the quantitative data

Mean	Levels of Agreement
1.00 - 1.80	Strongly disagreed
1.81 - 2.60	Disagreed
2.61 - 3.40	(Neutral) Neither agreed nor disagreed
3.41 - 4.20	Agreed
4.21 - 5.00	Strongly agreed

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Factors Affecting Interpretation Quality of English students

The analysis of students' responses indicates that several factors influence their interpretation quality, including teachers' instructional methods, students' language proficiency, topic knowledge, cultural understanding, memory skills, and confidence levels.

Table 2. Teacher's teaching process and methods

No	Part 1: Teacher's teaching process and methods	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev
1	The teacher provided the materials and syllabus of the course	27	3	5	4.22	.847
2	The teacher clearly instructed the strategies of interpreting in the classroom	27	2	5	4.11	.974
3	The teacher clearly instructed the techniques of interpreting in the classroom	27	3	5	4.15	.864
4	The teacher provided vocabulary according to the interpreting topics	27	3	5	4.11	.847
5	The teacher used a variety of activities during their teaching process	27	2	5	4.11	.847

The table 2 shows that The role of teachers in interpreter training was rated highly by students. The highest-rated factor was *"The teacher provided the materials and syllabus of the course"* (M = 4.22, SD = 0.847), followed by *"The teacher clearly instructed the techniques of interpreting in the classroom"* (M = 4.15, SD = 0.864). These results suggest that students recognize well-structured materials and effective teaching strategies as essential for developing their interpreting skills. However, while students generally rated their teachers positively, variations in responses (as indicated by standard deviation values) suggest that some students may require more personalized guidance or additional practice opportunities.

Table 3. Students' interpreting performance quality

No	Part 2: Students' interpreting performance quality	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev
6	My English listening and speaking skills are good.	27	2	5	3.56	.801
7	My English grammar and vocabulary are good.	27	2	5	3.56	.801
8	I have enough knowledge on various topics.	27	2	5	3.22	.892
9	I can understand the cultural aspects when practicing interpreting.	27	2	5	3.26	.813
10	I can perform different topics fluently in Vietnamese.	27	2	5	3.26	1.023

Table 3 reveals that students' English listening and speaking skills received a moderate rating (M = 3.56, SD = 0.801), as did their grammar and vocabulary knowledge (M = 3.56, SD = 0.801). This indicates that while students believe they have a reasonable command of English, they may not feel fully confident in their ability to interpret accurately. This finding is crucial because previous studies

(e.g., Tran Thi Thu Trang, 2019) suggest that strong linguistic skills are the foundation of high-quality interpreting. If students struggle with vocabulary, pronunciation, or comprehension, their ability to convey messages accurately will be affected.

In addition, the ability to interpret effectively depends not only on language skills but also on background knowledge and cultural awareness. However, students' ratings in these areas were relatively lower: "*I have enough knowledge on various topics*" ($M = 3.22$, $SD = 0.892$) and "*I can understand the cultural aspects when practicing interpreting*" ($M = 3.26$, $SD = 0.813$). These results indicate that limited exposure to diverse subjects and cultures may hinder students' ability to interpret accurately. Without sufficient topic knowledge, students may struggle to grasp key terms or concepts during interpretation.

4.2. Students' Attitudes Towards Interpretation Quality

The second research question explores students' perceptions of their own interpreting abilities and their emotional responses toward interpreting. The findings reveal mixed attitudes, with concerns about confidence and anxiety levels.

Table 4. *Students' attitudes towards quality of interpreting*

No	Part 3: Students' attitudes towards quality of interpreting	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev
11	I feel confident when practicing interpreting so I can concentrate on what speaker is saying.	27	2	4	2.96	.706
12	I can memorize what speaker says well	27	2	4	3.00	.555
13	I apply interpreting strategies and techniques well during my interpreting process.	27	2	5	3.26	.656
14	I don't worry about the mistakes I made when practicing interpreting.	27	2	4	2.81	.681
15	I satisfy with my teachers' teaching methods and materials	27	2	5	3.63	.792

As can be seen in Table 4, one of the most significant findings is that students reported low confidence levels in their interpreting performance. The item "*I feel confident when practicing interpreting so I can concentrate on what the speaker is saying*" had a mean score of 2.96 ($SD = 0.706$), indicating that many students struggle with self-assurance during interpretation tasks.

Furthermore, their response to "*I don't worry about the mistakes I made when practicing interpreting*" received the lowest rating ($M = 2.81$, $SD = 0.681$), suggesting that students experience high levels of anxiety about making errors. This is consistent with previous studies showing that fear of mistakes can negatively impact interpreting performance by increasing cognitive load and reducing fluency. These findings suggest that building students' confidence through more practice, constructive feedback, and stress-management techniques could help improve their performance.

Despite their concerns about confidence, students still expressed moderate satisfaction with their teachers' guidance. The statement "*I am satisfied with my teachers' teaching methods and materials*" had a mean score of 3.63 ($SD = 0.792$). This suggests that while students appreciate their instructors' efforts, they still face significant personal challenges in mastering interpretation skills.

5. Conclusion

The findings of this study highlight key factors influencing the quality of interpreting among English majors at Bac Lieu University. The role of teachers in interpreter training was rated highly, with structured materials and clear instruction on interpreting techniques being particularly valued by students. However, variations in students' responses suggest that some learners may benefit from more personalized guidance or additional practice opportunities.

Students' self-assessment of their interpreting performance indicates moderate proficiency in listening, speaking, grammar, and vocabulary, suggesting room for improvement in their linguistic

competence. Moreover, lower ratings for topic knowledge and cultural understanding reveal that limited exposure to diverse subjects and cultural contexts may hinder their interpreting accuracy. These findings underscore the need for a more comprehensive approach to interpreter training—one that not only strengthens language skills but also broadens students' knowledge base and cultural awareness.

To enhance interpretation quality, future efforts should focus on diversifying teaching strategies, incorporating more real-world interpreting practice, and providing students with opportunities to engage with various topics and cultural perspectives. By addressing these areas, educators can better equip students with the necessary skills and confidence to succeed in interpretation.

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Các yếu tố ảnh hưởng đến chất lượng phiên dịch của sinh viên chuyên ngành tiếng Anh tại Trường Đại học Bạc Liêu

Tóm tắt: Phiên dịch đóng vai trò quan trọng trong việc thu hẹp các rào cản về ngôn ngữ và văn hóa. Do đó, việc sinh viên phát triển các kỹ năng phiên dịch chất lượng cao là cực kỳ cần thiết để đảm bảo giao tiếp chính xác và hiệu quả. Nghiên cứu này nhằm mục đích khám phá các yếu tố ảnh hưởng đến chất lượng phiên dịch của sinh viên năm cuối chuyên ngành tiếng Anh tại Đại học Bạc Liêu. 27 sinh viên học học phần Phiên dịch trong năm học 2023–2024 đã tham gia khảo sát thông qua bảng câu hỏi gồm ba phần: (1) phương pháp giảng dạy của giảng viên, (2) hiệu suất phiên dịch của sinh viên và (3) thái độ của sinh viên đối với chất lượng phiên dịch. Kết quả khảo sát nêu bật các yếu tố chính ảnh hưởng đến chất lượng phiên dịch, bao gồm phương pháp giảng dạy, trình độ ngôn ngữ, kiến thức chủ đề, hiểu biết văn hóa, kỹ năng ghi nhớ và sự tự tin. Các phát hiện cho thấy giáo viên cần cho sinh viên nhiều cơ hội thực hành bổ sung hơn nữa và sinh viên cần cải thiện năng lực ngôn ngữ và nhận thức văn hóa của mình hơn nữa.

Từ khóa: Phiên dịch; sinh viên chuyên ngành tiếng Anh; chất lượng phiên dịch.