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From Foreign Language Learner to Translator, or Via Scientiarum (путь к знаниям)

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The aim of this article is to highlight some methodological aspects to be considered by both teachers and learners in modern university ELT and translation classes. Although learner factors are not yet well understood, our selective review of some of them shows that there is an increasing awareness of specific characteristics which bear on approaches to translation teaching/ learning process and which can ultimately influence the learning outcome.

Keywords: translation/ interpreting teaching, translation/ interpreting learning, translator-teacher roles, learning style, translation style, translation strategies.

The translation and interpreting professions are a major destination point for language learners. The concept of an aptitude for translation is derived from popular debates about the part that translation might play in language learning and acquisition in modern universities. Today, after the dismissal by proponents of so-called “natural methods” of language teaching and learning of the grammar-translation method, very few experts in language pedagogy have felt inclined to recommend translation as a fruitful method of or aid in language pedagogy, though a lot of teachers have continued to find it beneficial. In many university language programmes, both European and Russian, translation forms a part; translation into the language being learnt is used to test the learners’ productive ability in the language being learnt, while translation out of the language being learnt is used to test their

comprehension of the language being learnt, but it is rare that either bears any resemblance to what goes on in translation classrooms, where people practice and study translation as a skill in its own right, to be used in conveying meaning to people unable to derive this from a text in its original language (Malmkjær, 2010). There are voices of different scholars for and against using translation in language pedagogy. The grammar-translation method, which was developed in Prussia in the early eighteenth century, bears no resemblance to what is meant by Translation/ Interpreting in university curricula today, because the grammar-translation method concentrated on practice in the translation of individual sentences constructed to illustrate clearly and progressively particular features of grammar. Today, the voices against translation exercises in the language classroom say:

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- Translation is radically different from the four skills which define language competence: reading, writing, speaking and listening; what is more, it takes time which could have been spent on developing these skills.
 - Translation is unnatural; it misleads students into thinking that there is one-to-one correspondence between languages.
 - Oral methodology should have the absolute priority in the classroom. Sentences, specially constructed for written translation, are never going to be a hit in such a context.
 - The kernel of the teaching-learning process is the connected text, which takes the central position and cannot be split into bits for translation purposes.
 - Translation interrupts thinking in the language being learnt.
 - Translation is a very bad way to test language skills, it prevents naturalness.
- a. To produce translators and interpreters in, at least two foreign languages and prepare them to become part of a competitive market with high intellectual, professional and technical skills.
 - b. To produce native language editors and style correctors who can work in publishing.
 - c. To create the basis for graduates who work in journalism, television and cinema (dubbing and subtitling – a much wider market in non-English speaking countries for obvious reasons), radio, public relations, tourism, companies with international relations, and so on.
 - d. To prepare students for teaching jobs in the foreign and native languages and translation.
 - e. To prepare students for postgraduate studies and research. (González Davies, M., 2004)

The voices for translation exercises in the language classroom argue:

- Translation is not independent of the four skills, it is not necessarily a waste of time.
- Translation is not unnatural; even more, it is an innate skill of bi-linguals.
- Language interference is extremely valuable for language learners.

Whatever voices sound louder today, the roles of translation and interpreting as university disciplines (not translation exercises in language classes!) evolved considerably in the last few decades.

The aims of translation / interpreting teaching in most European universities go together with the ideas delivered by the *Facultat de Ciències Humanes, Traducció i Documentació* at the University of Vic (Spain):

An important role here belongs to the teacher of translation / interpreting: his or her teaching styles, assumptions about translation, priorities as to what should be included into the syllabus, and professional and academic backgrounds as well as his or her personality, enthusiasm and motivation to teach. In an interactive modern learner-centred context, the roles of both sides – learners and teachers – in teaching/ learning process are widely discussed. Traditionally, teachers expect to be viewed as authority figures, identified with roles like instructor, lecturer, sole problem-solver, director, manager, judge, leader, evaluator, controller, and even doctor, who must “cure” the ignorance of the students. According to R. Oxford, talking about the role change in the foreign language classroom, some teachers may feel discomfort as their status is being challenged. Others welcome their new functions as facilitator, helper, guide, consultant, adviser, coordinator, idea person, diagnostician, and

co-communicator (Oxford, 1990). This change could be well-transferred to the translation teaching class, where new teaching capacities will also include identifying students' learning strategies, and helping students become more independent. The teacher is no longer "the guardian of translator truth -keeper of the correct translation" and master copy holder (González Davies, 2004. P. 36). Teacher's status is no longer based on hierarchical authority in such classes. When students take more responsibility, more learning occurs, and both teachers-translators and students-translators feel more successful.

Translation is understood as communicative and team activity, with students' work accepted and appreciated. Interaction provides a stimulus for learner autonomy, which leads to the change of the student roles: the student does not just draw upon the roles from the outer world, but enriches the world with new attitudes (Kononova, 2009).

A person who has evolved from the lecturer (concerns only with the subject matter) to the teacher (develops through a new interest in methodology) and to the facilitator (seeks for interpersonal expertise and awareness) is capable of guiding the students towards making motivated choices, that is, of helping them to cross the following stepping stones appropriately (González Davies, 2004):

- Awareness-raising through setting a theoretical framework and practising with texts.
- Exposure to potential translation problems and solutions.
- Decision-making in which both the source text and the translation assignment are taken into account.
- Justification of choices: the students have to discuss their selected translation option with other students and justify it, as well as evaluate their peers' choices.

- Rendering of a final product that is a result of careful thought and thorough discussion.
- Development in the students of a self-concept as translators.

In terms of student performance, Maria González Davies considers four main aspects: (1) *the student's background*, (2) *the student's learning style*, which includes translation style, (3) *the student's attitude*, that is their motivation for embarking on translation studies, their concept of the translation profession, and their self-concept as translators, (4) *the student's aptitudes*, that is the appropriate abilities and mental framework: flexibility to tackle a text and to apply different strategies; adaptability to different texts, contexts and assignments; text-interpreting skills that include problem-spotting and solving in addition to high reading and writing proficiency (González Davies, 2004). This list could be continued by some more factors, that is: (5) *personality traits*, and (6) *degree of awareness of translation strategies choice*.

STUDENT'S BACKGROUND

In a nutshell, learners who are more educationally and socially advanced seem to gain better performance. Carlos Castaneda, an American anthropologist and writer, in his famous "The Teaching of Don Juan", says: "When a man begins to learn, he is never clear about his objectives. His purpose is faulty; his intent is vague. He hopes for rewards that will never materialize, for he knows nothing of the hardships of learning" (p. 128). It raises no objection, still, these hardships step by step build the strong student's background.

STUDENT'S LEARNING STYLE

General learning styles, such as field dependence/ independence, perceptual learning styles (visual, auditory, tactile, kinesthetic,

group, individual, etc.), analytic/ global, collaborative/ competitive, participant/ avoidant, reflective/ impulsive learning styles, etc., has a strong effect on the translation strategies the student use, and indicate possible strengths and possible tendencies or habits that might lead to either success or difficulty in academic settings. Student learning style does not reflect a student suitability or unsuitability for translation studies, or the profession of translator. Labeling students in this way is misleading, and can be destructive if the student uses the label as justification for a major shift in career goals. A learning style preference also does not serve as an excuse for a bad grade on the test.

STUDENT'S ATTITUDE

More highly motivated students use a significantly greater range of appropriate strategies than do less motivated learners. Motivation is related to translation/ interpreting studies, which is another key to strategy use. For instance, students who want to learn translation mainly for future career in the Chamber of Commerce and Industry will use different strategies than learners who want to learn a new language merely to fulfill graduation requirements.

STUDENT'S APTITUDES

Educational psychology has taken up the common-sense notion of special gifts or talents, over and above a general academic ability ('intelligence', IQ). The idea of a foreign language aptitude, thus, a translation/ interpreting aptitude is, from one point of view, simply a refinement of the ordinary person's view of a gift for languages, and from another, an application of the psychological concept of special abilities. The important aspect of the current view on aptitude is that it is not something that a person either has or has not (*'I am good at translating.'* *'I am not good at*

translating.') The view of the language aptitude in general, and translation aptitude in particular, reflected in modern psychometric tests, is that aptitude is not a single entity, but a composite of different characteristics which come into play. This view (Stern, 2001) harmonizes with the theory that proficiency is a composite and that language learning is not monolithic.

In a wider sense, student's aptitudes mainly refer to cognitive abilities which lead to proper cognitive strategies. Such strategies are a varied lot, ranging from reflecting and using resources for translation to bridging languages and cultures professionally. Dr. M. Kholodnaya considers so called mental structures as psychological basis of mental experience. Within these structures, she indicates three layers, each of which serves its own goal:

- 1) Cognitive experience. Cognitive experience is responsible for information perception, its keeping, and sorting; it is introduced by archetypical structures, means of information coding, cognitive schemes, semantic frames and, finally, conceptual patterns.
- 2) Meta-cognitive experience. It serves to perform conscious and unconscious regulation of information processing; it is aimed at controlling individual intellectual resources, and introduced by unconscious intellectual control, conscious intellectual control, meta-cognitive awareness, and open cognitive platform.
- 3) Intentional experience. It is in charge of selectiveness of intellectual activity. It concentrates on forming of subjective criteria for the choice in particular subject field, for the direction in decision making. Preferences, commitments, and states *of mind* form mental base for intentional experience. (Kholodnaya, 2004)

PERSONALITY TRAITS

Affective factors and personality traits are often underestimated in the translation classroom. But any teacher-translator, as well as language teacher – and for that matter, any student – can testify that language learning, and translation learning in particular, often involves strong positive or negative emotions. Besides, there are certain personality characteristics which are helpful or detrimental to both language and translation learning. It is sometimes said that students with histrionic talents are more successful learners than inhibited or introverted students. Such observation may be only stereotypes and at best half-truths. Recent studies (Stern, 2001) have attempted to identify personality traits and interpret them in the light of clinical and personality psychology. An obvious problem for all learners is the size of the learning tasks, and the length of time and intensity of effort required to reach a satisfactory level of proficiency. Good would-be translators are not those to whom success comes very easily, but they have persevered, have overcome frustrations, and have, after many trials and errors, achieved their goals. Personality variables include positive task orientation, ego-involvement, need achievement, high level of aspiration, goal orientation, and perseverance, on the one hand, and social and emotional predispositions, on the other.

AWARENESS OF TRANSLATION STRATEGIES CHOICE

Translation strategies are considered a kind of operation in the translator's mind while translating. It is a tool to tackle the possible problems that emerge during the translation process and a concept to describe translation as a decision process (Gambier, 2010). Strategy is one of the ambiguous terms in Translation Studies: it is not only used in different ways, but

it also seems to be in competition with a dozen of other terms: techniques, methods, procedures, operations, etc. The number, types and names of strategies differ. There are works on how to translate metaphors, collocations, proverbs, puns, humour, proper names, culture-bound references, allusions, etc. In the majority of cases, we have 5-7 strategies, but rarely the same names between different authors.

Scholars interpret strategies as controlled and uncontrolled, conscious and automated processes. They talk about a more specific level (how to solve local problems) and a more general level ("black box" of the translator). Another concept of strategy is related to the different work phases:

- Compensation strategies before translation: organizational strategies, reading strategies, text-analysis strategies, search strategies mining, etc.
- Production strategies while translating: writing up a draft, solving local problems, finalizing the translated version, revision strategies, survival strategies – compression, omission, paraphrase, simplification, literal translation, neutralization.
- After translating: how is the final work presented and distributed, how is the delivery medium selected and how is one paid? (Ibid.)

Strategies in interpreting and translation are not seriously compared by now.

Conclusion

The process of transfer from foreign language learning to translation/ interpreting study is neither short nor easy. There are some points of intersection though, they lay in different (compared with traditional) teacher and student roles, motivation, attitudes and aptitudes, cognitive and learning styles. Along with this,

some aspects are specific – the aims of teaching, activities, in addition to translation strategies and classroom dynamics, learning resources, learning choices.

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От иностранного языка к переводу, или Via Scientiarum

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В статье рассматриваются некоторые аспекты преподавания перевода в университете в парадигме лично ориентированного образования, а именно: роли преподавателя-переводчика и студента, переводческие стратегии. К обсуждению предлагаются проблемы, связанные с влиянием ряда факторов на академическую успешность студента, таких как способности, учебные стили, личностные качества. Статья затрагивает проблему точек пересечений двух академических дисциплин – преподавания иностранных языков и преподавания перевода.

Ключевые слова: преподавание перевода, роли преподавателя-переводчика, учебный стиль, стиль переводчика, переводческие стратегии.
