

DEVELOPING TRANSLATORS' SKILLS: SPECIAL TASKS AND ASSIGNMENTS

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Abstract

Training translators for specific purposes is a time and effort consuming process. A translator should have well developed language skills, the awareness of linguistic theory and the theory of translation, discourse knowledge, the apprehension of a great range of extra-linguistic factors such as cultural and historical information. Teaching and training translators-to-be at a higher education institution should address and meet the professional needs of the students.

To reach the goal the Department of Foreign Languages of Law Institute, RUDN University (Peoples' Friendship University of Russia) designed and implemented a system of various tasks and exercises that are concentrated on the development of the abilities and skills of lingua-cultural mediators (translators in particular) to carry out the professional activity in the domain of law. The assignments were realized in the teaching practice within the framework of the Degree Program "Translator for Specific Purposes (Law)"

The paper analyzes the practical experience and the effectiveness of the use of the developed technology; it presents the findings of the teaching experiment. The authors set the examples of various tasks that are aimed at the improvement of the students' lexical and grammar skills, discourse competences and the knowledge of the cultural and social traditions of the countries which language the learners study. Special attention was paid to the use of information communication technologies (ICT) as the sources of reference and background information and materials. Some tasks enhance the students' abilities to self-study and self-correction; extend their memory capacity. The findings of the experiment training are also presented.

Keywords: lingo-cultural mediation, translation for specific purposes, special tasks and assignments, skills and competencies development.

1. INTRODUCTION

Professional training of translators in legal setting like any other training of specialists has a definite purpose i.e. to develop various competences. Translation as a part of lingo-cultural mediation is considered as one of the language activities, its training is concentrated on the development of the competences common for the other language activities. The issue of translators' competencies was studied widely in many research papers and books (Baker 2001; Common European Framework (2011); Eser 2015; Kaminskienė, Kavaliauskienė 2012; Ramos 2011; etc.) as well as at the European Union internet resources e.g. https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/emt_competences_translators_en.pdf;

<https://www.euatc.org/news/item/162-european-masters-in-translation-emt-project>; http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/translation/programmes/emt/key_documents/emt_competences_translators_en.pdf. etc.

Generalizing the information from various resources the following translators' competencies can be underlined: bilingual cultural, textual, thematic, strategic, research, knowledge about translation, instrumental. All these competencies comprising of lexical and grammar skills are developed in the course of four year Degree Program "Translator for Specific Purposes (Law)" with the help of various exercises, tasks and assignments that form practice activities at the language class.

2. THE DIVERSITY OF TASKS AND ASSIGNMENTS FOR TRAINING TRANSLATION

Each task or assignment used in teaching practice has its certain purpose and is aimed at developing definite skills or sub skills. Moreover, each task should take a certain time period to do it and its definite space in the class time. The content and the form of the task make an effect on the output and the efficiency of the task in the learning practice. Sometimes the words "the more tasks we do, the better we practise" is not true. The quantity of the tasks do not often result in a positive output. The effect can be positive if the tasks have the certain purpose and are aimed at developing particular sub skills and consequently competencies. Paraphrasing the statement "Die Lösung des Problems gelingt nach unserer Meinung nicht durch Erhöhung der "Dosis", sondern durch ein Wechseln des "Medikaments" (Funk, Kuhn, et al. 2014) that means "The solution of the problem succeeds not by increasing the "dose", but by changing the "medicine", one can say that to succeed in developing a skill it is not always necessary to do a lot of tasks but to do the tasks of the better quality and of the special purpose. In other words to train translation skills more efficiently the whole system of the assignments aimed at the development of the special translation sub skills and their elements should be used in practice.

Apparently, the tasks used in teaching practice train some competencies in cohesion e.g. linguistic – cultural, linguistic – thematic, linguistic – knowledge about translation etc. When training translators in legal setting the material for the tasks is extracted from the legal documents and cases. The abilities of concentration and memory perfection as well as self-correction could also be trained (Gemeinsamer...2001).

First, training translators' skills is integrated with the development of reading skills when looking through various extracts the students should determine the communicative intention of the text and its type (e.g. certificate, labour agreement, jury's verdict etc.). Then, separate language items should be trained in many exercises. The content of the exercises depends on the language. What language items are considered to be more difficult by the students, they are trained in a greater number of tasks. In training translators from English into Russian special attention is paid to nominative sets consisting of two or more nouns; chunks denoting concepts not familiar to Russian learners and related to legal background of the USA or the UK; the ways of translating the infinitive, the gerund, the verbs in the passive voice etc. As far as the translators from German into Russian are concerned, the language units that cause many difficulties and consequently much training in special exercises are: compound nouns; lexical sets consisting of two nouns; descriptive expressions including several words etc. Such exercises could hardly be found in standard students' and activity books and should be prepared by the teacher in accordance with the students' needs and levels of the language proficiency.

In the authors' opinion, such language assignments should be realized regularly to achieve the perfect translation of these items. These tasks are the preparatory phase of training translators. Such practice activity is integrated with learning the issues of the students' speciality i.e. law. When the translation of such language items does not cause any difficulty, the following stage of training translators comes. The students learn the whole procedure of the translation activity.

The common mistake of immature translators is to start translating as soon as they get the text for translation. On the contrary, the more skilful specialists know that before translating they should do some preliminary work. So the translators-to-be should:

- read the text carefully to identify its main idea and communicative intention;
- identify the main issues/standpoints of the text;
- write out vague and unfamiliar words, concepts, word combinations, abbreviations, and find their exact equivalents in the dictionaries or/and on line resources;
- determine the logical compatibility of the grammar structures;
- formulate the general meaning of the sentences and constructions using the appropriate methods of

transformation;

- in case of any misunderstanding or wrong understanding analyse the sentence from the syntax point of view to identify the internal link between the parts of a sentence, the separate components and the correlation between the paragraphs of the original text,
- on the completion of the translation examine the output text carefully to compare and check it with the original, to make corrections if necessary, to edit and proofread it;
- schedule your time in the way that you could reread and re-examine the translation in a few hours or the next day to perfect the final variant.

3. METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS

The efficiency of the suggested system of the tasks and assignments for training translation skills was identified in course of the educational experiment held in the Department of Foreign Languages, Law Institute, RUDN University.

The students participating in the experiment were to translate an extract of 1000 characters from English/German into Russian for half an hour. The extract was not familiar to the students though it was connected with the setting they study i.e. Law. During the semester, the students translated several extracts of the different legal genres: various legal documents, cases, research papers on legal issues. Other parameters of translating (the length of the extract and the time for translating) were constant.

The number of the experiment participants amounted to 50 second year students learning English and 20 second year students learning German. The difference is explained by the fact that English as a foreign language is more popular among the students than German and so less students study German.

Half of the students i.e. 25 English learners and 10 German learners were trained with the use of the tasks presented above, whereas the other part of the learners was trained in a traditional way i.e. translation was practiced together with teaching lexis or grammar as well as with the development of the other language activities skills, mostly reading, writing and listening. At the end of the experiment, the translations of all students were analysed and compared by the experts with the translating experience of more than 10 years.

To the experts' opinion, the quality of the translations made by the students from the experimental group was much higher. The style of the translated sample was closer to the style of the target language (Russian). The syntactic structures of the sentences were typical of the Russian language. The students could divide the sentences in English into semantic structures more precisely. Moreover, the participants of the teaching experiment could cope with the translation in a shorter period. They also noted that they felt more self-confident in their skills and abilities and more skilful in overcoming all language difficulties they faced making the translation.

4. CONCLUSION

A well-known assumption that a high level of language proficiency does not mean high skills of translation prove the importance of special training in translation. This language activity should be trained purposefully and regularly. Like training skills of any other language activity, training translation skills and developing the appropriate competences are time and efforts consuming. To reach the high level of translators-to-be proficiency and the high quality of the translation a system of special tasks and assignments should be realized into teaching practice.

The experiment held at the RUDN University (Peoples' Friendship University of Russia) presented the positive results of the teaching approach implemented in the course of professional training the students at the Program "Translator for Specific Purposes (Law)". The experiment findings showed the efficiency of the tasks and assignments suggested and proved the effectiveness of this approach in developing translators' skills and competencies.

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