

ICT for Teaching Translation and Interpretation for Masters of Applied Linguistics

Maria Stepanova

St. Petersburg State Polytechnical University (Russian Federation)

info@terralinguistica.ru

Abstract

Nowadays ICT are part of every translator's and interpreter's work, vast majority of professionals in this field use ICT daily. Therefore the Master of Applied Linguistics curriculum should include ICT based elements in order to provide students with the learning experience to meet the demands and expectations of the market. This paper demonstrates the ways ICT are used to provide better acquisition of skills for specific language tasks of translation and interpretation and familiarization of future translators and interpreters with specific working practices.

The course in translation and interpretation for Masters of Linguistics in St. Petersburg State Polytechnical University is practice oriented and is aimed at developing professional skills in accordance with the demands of the current market. This course also includes a theoretical part to make professional translators and interpreters aware of the theoretical basis of their profession. ICT are used in both lectures and practical training classes as well as for independent students' work.

The following ways of using ICT in the course in translation and interpretation are suggested: (1) to support acquisition of theoretical knowledge of the basic translation studies ideas and terms; (2) to provide alternatives to real-life situations in the professional field by means of video; (3) to show the best practices in simultaneous and consecutive interpreting; (4) to provide examples of translators and interpreters' failures to analyze; (5) to provide a high quality audio and video material for interpreting practice; (6) to provide topical texts in different languages for translating practice; (7) to provide modern tools to support translating and interpreting, such as CAT, online dictionaries and databases, search engines, communication tools etc.

It is concluded that ICT integration into the curriculum enables to support every stage of the translators and interpreters learning process, to make it more efficient and to get better results.

1. Introduction

Nowadays Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) are part of every translator's and interpreter's job, vast majority of professionals in this field use ICT in their work [1]. Both translators and interpreters use computers, online dictionaries and terminology databases, computer-aided translation tools (CAT), searching engines, different communication tools and other types of ICT in their everyday working practice [2]. Therefore I strongly believe that the Master of Applied Linguistics curriculum should include ICT based elements in order to provide students with the learning experience 'consistent with the demands and expectations of the current market' [1]. To be prepared for the real professional world graduates should be equipped not only with the language knowledge and skills but with ICT-related skills and they should have some experience in using modern electronic tools for translating and interpreting. Moreover, ICT need to be integrated into the whole training process to make it more efficient and practice oriented.

The goal of this paper is to demonstrate the ways ICT are used in teaching the Master of Applied Linguistics course in St. Petersburg State Polytechnical University to provide better acquisition of theoretical knowledge and practical skills for specific language tasks of translation and interpretation and familiarization of future translators and interpreters with specific working practices.

The course in translation and interpretation for Masters of Applied Linguistics in St. Petersburg State Polytechnical University is practically oriented and it is aimed at developing professional skills in accordance with the demands of the current Russian and European market. This course also includes a theoretical part as it is believed that a professional translator and interpreter should be aware of the theoretical basis of her or his profession. The graduates are expected to have the solid theoretical knowledge of linguistics including translation studies, to know professional terms both in his or her native and target languages, to have translating and interpreting skills, to have strong communication and socialization skills and be able to work in the international community. In my opinion integrating ICT into the curriculum helps to achieve the goal of training competent translators and interpreters.

In St. Petersburg State Polytechnical University ICT are used in both lectures and practical training classes as well as for independent students' work. The following ways of using ICT in the course in translation and interpretation are applied:

1. to support acquisition of theoretical knowledge of the basic translation studies ideas and terms;
2. to provide alternatives to real-life situations in their professional field by means of video;
3. to show the best practices in consecutive and simultaneous (conference) interpreting;
4. to provide examples of translators and interpreters' failures ('bad practices') to analyze;
5. to provide a high quality audio and video material for interpreting practice;
6. to provide topical texts in different languages for translating practice;
7. to provide students with modern tools to support translating and interpreting, such as CAT, online dictionaries and databases, search engines, communication tools etc.

2. Using ICT to support acquisition of theoretical knowledge

According to Russian traditions of translators and interpreters training the theoretical knowledge of translation principles, concepts, professional terminology is considered to be very important. It should support the practical skills of translating and interpreting. But it must be admitted that traditional forms and methods of teaching translation theory, such as lectures and classes where students just listen to the teacher, answer questions, have tests and occasionally make reports or presentations, are now out of date and ineffective. In my view theoretical classes should be as interactive as possible. And the best solution in this case is using ICT to support acquisition of theoretical knowledge of the basic translation studies ideas and terms and to demonstrate the best and worst practices in order to illustrate the theoretical points under discussion.

To help students to learn translation terms in the easiest way it is advisable to use puzzles (crosswords). All over the world puzzles and crosswords are known as most popular intellectual games for both children and adults. They are widely used in educational practice including teaching languages. The experience of using crosswords in teaching translation theory demonstrates that making and solving crosswords help to learn professional terms more efficiently. Tests in the form of crosswords can be considered as an alternative solution to the traditional tasks as they enhance students' activity, improve their interest and motivation.

To make puzzles and crosswords it is advisable to use web-instruments, e.g. <http://cross.highcat.org/> and <http://crosswordus.com/ru/puzzlemaker> for making crosswords in Russian and <http://www.puzzlemaker.com> and <http://puzzlemaker.discoveryeducation.com/> for making crosswords in English. In my opinion, the optimal number of terms included in a crossword is from 15 to 20. When making terminology crosswords students can understand meanings of terms better, and solving crosswords made by their colleagues helps them to revise and deepen their knowledge. It is also useful to make and solve crosswords which require translating terms from one language to another. Such tasks help to develop translation skills easily as making and solving puzzles looks more like having a fun rather than studying.

As it has been stated above, ICT in translation and interpretation classroom can be successfully used to demonstrate the best and worst practices in order to illustrate the theoretical points under discussion. Students definitely cannot be observers in interpreting booths and see the work of professional interpreters with their own eyes. Therefore using video can be a good solution. Nowadays one can find a great number of video and audio materials online and this can provide an alternative to real-life situations. Students can see videos made at international conferences, congresses, negotiations, sport and cultural events, interviews etc. Some interpreters provide video and audio records of their best working practices on their personal web sites, for example <http://yermolovich.ru> where one can hear both speaker and interpreter.

Watching video of interpreters' work in the classroom enables students to see the real work environment, difficulties that interpreters face, as well as solutions of different problems suggested by professional interpreters. At the same time one can find many videos of interpreters' failures and mistakes ('bad practices') and such materials can be used to discuss the reasons of interpreters' mistakes and possible ways to avoid them. Using audio and video materials in the classroom makes the process of studying translation theory more practice oriented and prepares students to the real work.

3. Using ICT in translators training

In translators training classes ICT are mainly used to provide topical texts in different languages for translating practice as well as to provide students with modern tools to support translating and

interpreting, such as CAT, online dictionaries, glossaries and databases, search engines, communication tools etc.

In fact, the issue of using online translation technologies and computer-aided translation tools is a controversial one. Many teachers object to using these technologies in translation classes and in independent studies. They argue that it is necessary to teach students how to translate properly, using their mind, memory, cognitive abilities and skills as well as dictionaries. Using electronic devices, online translators and CAT, to their mind, will prevent students from developing good translation skills. But it is an unquestionable fact that the rapid development of online translation tools, e.g. *Google Translate*, has already transformed the whole world. Nowadays practically everyone involved in using foreign languages including translators uses these tools. Thus it seems unreasonable to ban these technologies in classroom as students will use them anyway in their practice. I recommend referring to these tools occasionally in order to help students to make use of them in the best way possible.

For example activities with online translation instruments (*Google Translate* and its tools *Translation, Translated Search, Translator Toolkit* and *Tools and Resources*) will provide the students with the information about the possibilities of machine translation as well as its limitations. Beare argues that such activities can help students to 'notice similarities and differences between the mother tongue and the target language' [3], which is undoubtedly beneficial for the translators-to-be.

In order to teach students to see both benefits and limitations of online translation tools I ask them to translate a text using only dictionaries. Then they translate the same text by means of *Google Translate*. After that, students compare the two translations and find strong and weak points of the target texts made by a person and computer.

According to my experience exercises based on online translation help to encourage students to use editing skills to improve the quality of translation. Using *Google Translate* for this type of exercises can help students find grammatical and lexical errors in the target texts and correct them. Special attention should be paid to translation of specialized terms and lexical units. The analysis of 'bad' translations and correction of errors has proved to be a rewarding activity. Students compare original texts and their 'bad' translations, find and correct errors. Then the causes of the revealed errors are discussed in class. The good sources of such 'bad' translations are target texts produced by electronic translation tools as well as other students' translations. Examples of bad translations and translators' mistakes can be also found in the Internet. There are even specialized websites, communities and blogs collecting the negative examples of bad translations, for example *Sad Translations Community* (<http://community.livejournal.com/sadtranslations>).

The method of translation errors analysis and correction is considered to be an important part of translators' training within the Master of Applied Linguistics course. It helps students to become 'immune' to the most common errors and make fewer mistakes in their practical work in future. It is definitely better to learn by someone else's mistakes than to make one's own mistakes.

4. Using ICT in interpreters training

Using ICT in interpreters training course can help to show students the best practices in consecutive and simultaneous (conference) interpreting as well as to provide examples of 'bad practices' (interpreters' failures). The sources of these materials have been discussed above.

Online sources also provide perfect audio and video materials for developing interpreting skills. For interpreting exercises in class it is advisable to use records instead of reading or speaking as a teacher should listen to the students' speech and be able to control and correct possible mistakes or pronunciation imperfections. I recommend using such web sources as *Simple English News* (<http://www.simpleenglishnews.com/>) or *News in Easy English* (<http://newsineasyenglish.com/>) etc. to develop interpreting skills in early stages of interpreters training. They provide clean high quality sounds spoken slowly and it is an ideal material for early interpreting practice. For training advanced interpreters I use records of usual TV and radio news, politicians' speeches, celebrities' interviews, conferences presentations etc. available online. It is easy to choose different regional accents, specific pronunciations, speed of speech, quality of sounds to make the interpreting training environment as close to the real work environment as possible.

5. Conclusion

Having discussed the issue of reasonability of using ICT for teaching translation and interpretation for Masters of Applied Linguistics, I believe it is possible to state that it undoubtedly has certain benefits. ICT integration into the curriculum enables to support every stage of the translators and interpreters learning process, to make it more efficient and to get better results.



However it should be bear in mind that ICT-based activities cannot be used in isolation, but included into the whole course as its integral part. They should not replace traditional activities proved to be efficient in translators and interpreters training over the years and decades.

References

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