Improving Terminological Skills and Competence of Translation Students by Means of Advanced Terminological Tools

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Abstract

The paper describes an experience of project work of master of translation students with a collaboration with a translation tools providing company on creating a multilingual glossary for terms relevant to translation and interpreting studies. The work resulted in the "Translation Studies" dictionary in 5 languages (English, German, French, Spanish, Russian), which contains 100 terms on translation theory. All dictionary entries include definitions of the terms, usage examples, and a transcription (for English). The multilingual glossary is maintained in the format of SDL MultiTerm, a specially designed software system for terminology management. The dictionary can be used by students of linguistics in the study process, to prepare for course and final state examinations, and it can be used in practical translation work. The project work offered to the students allows them to familiarize themselves with these technologies not just theoretically but also as part of a hands-on experience that yields practical results; it allows the students to acquire useful professional skills. It has been concluded that a lexicography project is an effective tool for teaching future masters of translation.

1. Introduction

Obtaining a master's degree in translation involves gaining profound theoretical knowledge as well as a broad set of professional competences that let the graduate confidently operate on the modern translation services market.

At the current stage, *a practice-oriented approach* grounded in fundamental scientific linguistics appears to be preferable when teaching future translators as part of a masters program. A leading form of practice-oriented teaching is project work, which is predicated on the principles of *collaboration pedagogics, problem-based and activity-based approaches, personality-oriented teaching* [1]. This type of assignment is used in some translation colleges [2] but it is not systematic.

We share the opinion that the most effective way to implement project work in masters education must involve the collaboration of schools and companies' representatives. The Linguistics and Cross-Cultural Communication department of Peter the Great St. Petersburg Polytechnic University is undertaking a collaboration with the T-Service company to create a multilingual glossary for terms relevant to translation and interpreting studies.

The educational goal of the first joint project was letting the students familiarize themselves with lexicographic treatment of terminological units. The practical goal was creating a translation studies glossary for use in teaching, in preparation for course and final exams, and in practical translation and interpreting work.

2. On collaboration pedagogics

The dictionary project was led by Maria Stepanova, associate professor of the Department of Linguistics and Cross-Cultural Communication at the Peter the Great Saint Petersburg Polytechnic University, and Svetlana Svetova, general director of the T-Service company.

Students were offered a work plan, tasks and time frames, prepared by the teacher, as well as an approach to "role assignment" within the group ("terminologists" and a "project manager"). All aspects of the project's execution were discussed by the teacher and the students during the introductory activity when the students received the task, and later during weekly meetings.

The basis of the dictionary was chosen to be derived from L.L. Nelyubin's "Explanatory translation studies dictionary", which contains Russian-language translation theory terms. The teacher selected 100 terms that are most frequently used in scientific discourse.

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The work comprised researching terms in foreign languages in dictionaries, glossaries, reference books, textbooks, research papers. Missing translated equivalents were constructed by students themselves. Then the terminology was verified, usage of terms in corresponding contexts was checked, as well as their frequency. The main task of the teacher was to develop the stages of the research, as well as to select the most reliable sources for both lexicography work and verification with using text arrays.

The following recommendations can be made for further terminology projects:
- setting goals should be as detailed as possible;
- project stages should be strictly defined;
- sources of information should be checked by the teacher in advance;
- role assignment should remain free;
- selection of further topics for dictionaries and areas of development can be delegated to students, and this project can be demonstrated as a pilot one.

3. On problem-based and activity-based approaches

Students assigned as "terminologists" were presented with the following specific project tasks:
- choosing a language for work (English, German, French, or Spanish)
- researching terms in foreign languages in dictionaries, glossaries, reference books, textbooks, research papers defined by the teacher and found by themselves
- substantiating the choice of the translation equivalent or equivalents
- selecting context examples and comments
- constructing translation equivalents for cases where there are none in available sources
- verification of terminology, checking the usages of terms in corresponding contexts, frequency of use in scientific literature on translation theory, textbooks and practical translation tutorials.

The "Project Manager" compiled the students' results into a unified dictionary, she also facilitated communication and discussion, as well as during the weekly meetings.

This approach allowed the students to feel like they're completing concrete tasks as part of a real translation project with typical time constraints and collective responsibility when there's a need to make decisions relatively quickly, research extra information and verify it.

4. On personality-oriented teaching

Developing the multilingual "Translation theory" dictionary involved creating a team of 15 "terminologist" students who then elected their "project manager". The team was split into three sub-teams, each of which also had a coordinator from among the team members. The "roles" were assigned in a free form, based on the students' volition, which allowed them to feel as comfortable as possible when working on the tasks and making terminological decisions.

The "project manager" managed work distribution, setting specific goals, coordinating activities, kept track of the schedule, and maintained a summary table of the dictionary. It is the coordination of terminology activities in particular that we can call the most important and interesting among other project tasks because it allowed both the "terminologists" to learn more about aspects of collaborative translation and teamwork (where diverse communicative skills are required) and the "project manager" to perfect the interaction procedures within the project team.

As an example of "team discussions" we can consider cases where there were no explicitly Russian established translation equivalent for a particular English term, or where several terms corresponded to a single concept (some of which were obsolete, others rarely used, and yet others were recently innovated). Explaining their choices, making their own suggestions, defending their viewpoint allowed the "terminologist" students together with the "project manager" to learn to hone argumentation skills, which are very important in contemporary translation, especially in communication with customers and considering practical aspects of "translation quality".

4. Conclusions

The work resulted in the "Translation Studies" dictionary in 5 languages (English, German, French, Spanish, Russian), which contains approximately 100 terms on translation theory. All dictionary entries include definitions of the terms, usage examples, and a transcription (for English). The dictionary can be used by students of linguistics in the study process, to prepare for course and final state examinations, and it can be used in practical translation work.
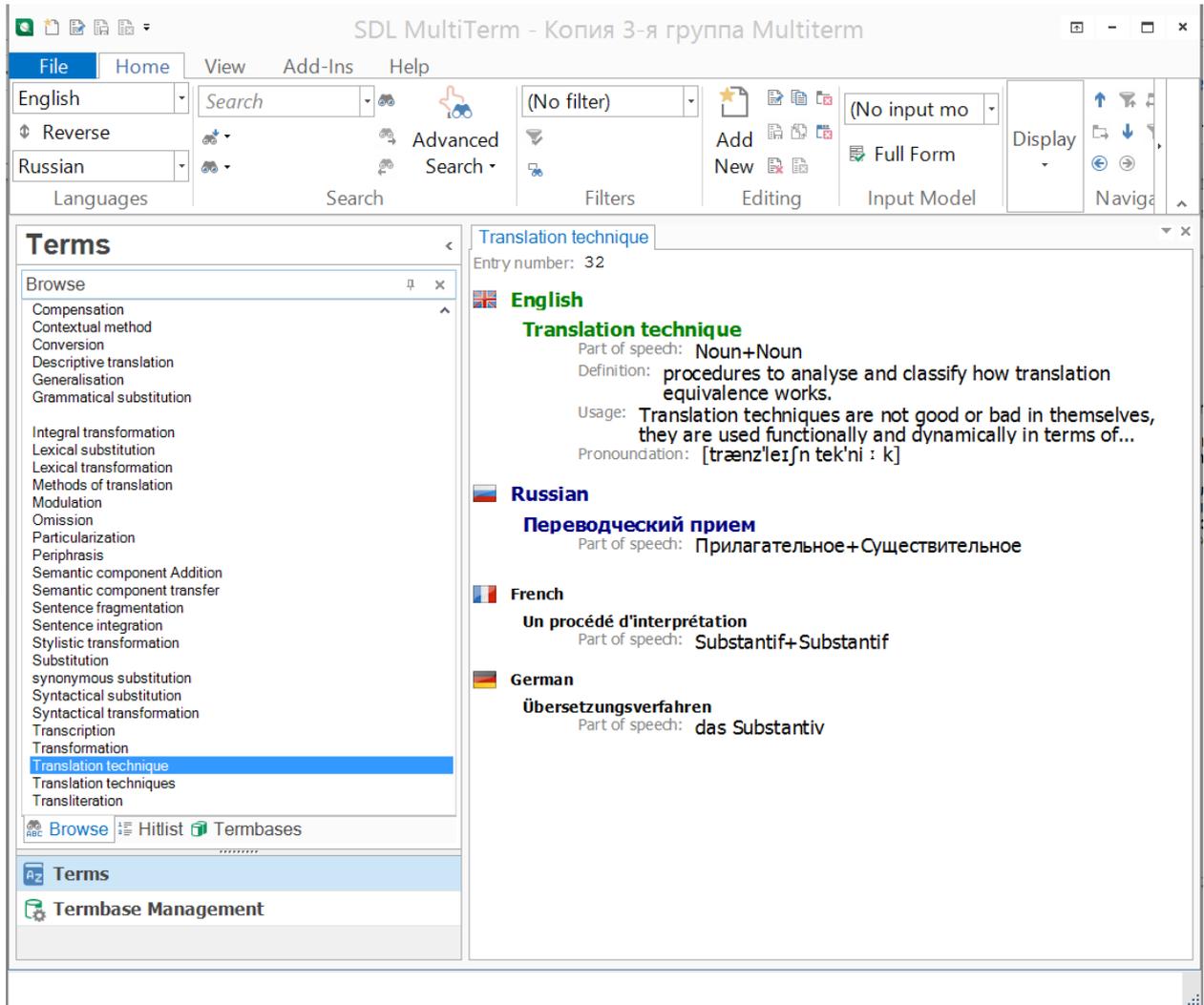
Fig. 1. The dictionary is available in SDL Multiterm format
on the *multiterm.tra-service.ru* portal.

The multilingual glossary is maintained in the format of SDL MultiTerm, a specially designed software system for terminology management. SDL MultiTerm uses a meaning-based approach to terminology management. A single entry contains all terms that designate a single concept. An entry can incorporate any descriptive and classifying information, including graphical, audio and video illustrations. Familiarity with this approach to terminology management allows students to create their own multilingual terminology databases for use in study and in translation work.

The project, which lasts for one semester, lets the students obtain practical bilingual lexicography skills, get to know and manipulate the SDL MultiTerm format and other terminology formats, as well as reinforce their knowledge of translation theory terminology in their native and foreign languages. Moreover, the group nature of the project work will enable the students to improve their teamwork skills and learn project management.

Today's translator cannot do without a firm grasp on modern technologies such as translation memory and terminology management systems. The project work offered to the students allows them to familiarize themselves with these technologies not just theoretically but also as part of a hands-on experience that yields practical results; it allows the students to acquire useful professional skills. Therefore, the lexicography project is an effective tool for teaching future masters of translation.

References

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