



Lingua Didactic Approaches to Teaching Translation

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Abstract

Translation has been a subject matter of teaching and training for many years. Different scholars suggested various lingua-didactic methods to develop translating skills from the native language into a foreign one and back. Nowadays translation as well as interpreting are considered as the elements of mediation that is a language activity according to the European Union documents. Consequently, translation should be referred to as a language activity, and developing special translation skills should be the purpose of foreign language for specific purposes teaching at a higher education institution. In this case, the experience of previous lingua didactic tendencies might be very useful in modern educational environment.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the potential of the XX century theoretical ideas and practices of teaching and training translation from the point of view of the contemporary non-linguistic higher education. The positive outcomes of different scholars of the past should be studied and incorporated in the teaching practice nowadays. Some aspects of the teaching experience of translation skills training for lawyers-to-be at a non-linguistic University are presented.

1. Introduction

The history of foreign language teaching knows a lot of different methods and approaches. Some of them are well known (e.g. Audio-Lingual Method, Communicative Approach, Natural Approach, Task-Based Learning and others); some are less known (e.g. Whole Language, Multiple Intelligences etc.) [3]. As the purpose of our study is to examine different approaches to the development of translation skills as a part of such language activity as mediation [2], the examination of the approaches that can be used for training translation is of primary importance.

2. Studying theoretical concepts and ideas

Apparently, that the first teaching approach which presents its connection to the translation is the *Grammar-Translation Method*. The main teaching tools of this method are reading and translating texts, doing exercises and tests. This method is widely criticised by its little interest to the development of listening and speaking skills [4]. However, the importance of this approach to Russian learners of the English language as a foreign one is great and it was revealed in the previous research [1].

Lexical Approach to teaching a foreign language focuses on studying words and word-combinations, it is very important for training translating skills, as very often the meaning of the utterance to be translated becomes transparent when not a separate word but “a chunk” is decoded into a target language.

The use of tasks simulating the practical situations is the subject matter of *Task-Based Learning*. Translation skills development is usually realized with the documents and papers that are connected with the real discourse.

Gradual development of all verbal activities is examined in *Language Activity Development Approach*. As translation being a part of mediation can also be considered as a kind of language activity this approach can be used in training translation. According to this method, any activity is encouraged by a motive, is characterized by different ways of activity realization and the output.

Competence-Based Education in teaching foreign languages implies that learners must have definite competencies in all language activities depending on the level and the goal of learning. The European Framework of foreign languages includes the scale of competences in listening, speaking, reading and writing, but competences in translating are not yet developed, and it is a matter of further research.

Content and Language Integrated Learning is very important for training translation. Though fundamental principles of translating are common for all settings, but any particular domain can make effect on translating as a language activity.

Training translation can be realized with the help of *gamification* approach to learning that stresses the great role of different educational games. One of the most popular technologies typical of this

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approach is the flip flop flash cards that can be used in practice for the purpose of developing some skills in translation.

Nowadays *blended learning* is gaining its popularity. This approach assumes the unity of a traditional way of learning and teaching with the use of different information communication technologies that make translation skills development more efficient.

3. Practical implementation of theoretical ideas

Russian learners of foreign languages primarily use translation as a tool of memorizing new vocabulary, then exercises on translation from English into Russian and back are very popular in Russian educational environment. Therefore, when students of Higher education institution start dealing with translating texts of a specific setting they know how to work with the dictionary and are familiar with the simple translation techniques. Nevertheless, translation of legal documents causes many problems first connected with the complicated structure of a sentence. To understand the meaning of the utterance and cope with the translation the students are taught to analyse the grammatical structure of each sentence starting with the predicate, then the subject and the direct object and afterward the indirect object and the adverbial modifier.

Let us take for example the extracts from “The case of Fox, Campbell and Hartley v. the United Kingdom” [<http://www.worldlii.org/eu/cases/ECHR/1990/18.html>] which was examined by the students of the Master Program of the Law Institute at Peoples’ Friendship University of Russia (RUDN University). Having analysed and discussed the issues of legislation and the protection of human rights, the students were supposed to make a written translation of some parts of the case.

Some problems can be faced by an unexperienced learner on making a translation of the sentence “On being arrested both Mr Fox and Ms Campbell were shown the notice drawn up for persons held in police custody which explained their rights”. First, Past Participles “drawn up” and “held” should not be mixed with the verbs in the Past Tense. Then the question arises “What “explained” the rights?” On the first glance the conjunction “which” can be considered as a link to the “police custody” and only on some reflection, it is evident that it refers to the word “notice”.

Another example which needs grammar approach to training translation is:

“The motive behind the kidnapping was believed to have been an attempt to force the young woman to retract an allegation of rape made the previous year as a result of which a person had been convicted and sentenced to 3 years’ imprisonment”. Here three infinitive forms show different grammar relations that can be transparent only after deep grammar analysis. The infinitive “to have been an attempt” is a part of a complex known as “a complex subject” to Russian learners of the English language [<http://study-english.info/complex-subject.php>]. The infinitive “to force” is related to the noun “attempt” and the infinitive “to retract” shows the purpose of action. The content becomes more or less transparent only after a thorough grammar analysis.

Special attention should be paid to studying separate lexical units. The idea that new words in a foreign language should be learnt using the context [<http://www.lingholic.com/how-to-remember-words-when-learning-a-language/>] is not valid when we speak about legal English. The meaning of such terms as “barrister”, “solicitor”, “binding principle” or “liability” should be learnt precisely from the dictionary to use them correctly in the translation.

Lawyers’ translation activity is often associated with translating legal documents. But in course of professional training the students of Institute of Law, Peoples’ Friendship University of Russia (RUDN University) have a translation internship when they translate research papers or conference proceedings on the topic of their diploma work from English into Russian. Citing foreign authors, undergraduates, graduates and postgraduates should have the skill of translating foreign sources. Different assignments developing such skills are regularly trained. The students are highly motivated to do these assignments as the output of translation makes effect on the quality of their papers and their academic rating as well.

Translation skills are developed not separately but with other language skills e.g. reading in a foreign language. Before translating any extract a student should browse or scan the material he is going to translate and then understand completely the content of the extract to be translated.

As the content reflects the students’ interests, their profession and the setting of their forthcoming career they try to absorb the information they get when reading and making translation. So not only linguistic skills are developed but the awareness of the special knowledge is enhanced.

Contemporary translating is impossible without the use of information communication technologies. First, students are sure that “Google translation” is the best and the quickest way of translating from English into Russian. Apparently, they should be dissuaded from this idea. The main things the students should be trained when using the ICT translation tools are that any machine translation



needs editing and proofreading; the perfect translation is made only by a specialist and the on-line dictionaries such as Multitran [<http://www.multitran.ru>] or ABBYY Lingvo [https://www.lingvolive.com/en-us?lol=true&utm_source=lingvo-online.ru&utm_medium=301redirect&utm_campaign=reg+landing] and Google Translation as well are the instruments that can help them..

Contemporary teaching of foreign languages is based on the Competence approach which is presented in European document [2]. Here all language activities are described from the point of view of the corresponding descriptors and levels of language proficiency. The exception is the mediation and its forms as interpreting and translation. So further research and development of this issue are very topical nowadays.

4. Conclusion

People have been involved in translation activity for centuries. Nowadays training interpreters is a special branch of higher education. The efficiency of this training depends on different lingua didactic approaches used in teaching. As the practical experience shows better educational results are achieved when not one but a lot of different approaches are used.

References

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