

Correlation of Translation and Other Language Activities

Nataliya Belenkova^a and Victoria Davtyan^a

^aPeoples` Friendship University of Russia, Moscow, RUSSIA

ABSTRACT

International cooperation in all professional settings makes translation a very important tool of interpersonal and professional relations of specialists in different domains. Training of undergraduates and graduates' translation skills in a special setting is included in the curriculum of non-linguistic higher education institutions and studied from various aspects. The objective of the paper is to consider some psychological and teaching issues related to translation as a language activity. Russian and foreign researchers' works and the findings of the practical experience of Foreign Languages Department of Law Institute, Peoples` Friendship University of Russia are presented. The survey of the specialists with different practical experience of translation in the law setting is analyzed. The examination of training translation in the law setting at non linguistic higher education institution is provided. The data of the current research can be used in teaching practice to develop the translation skills of the undergraduates, graduates and postgraduates.

KEYWORDS

Mediation, language activity, teaching translation, psychological aspects of training translation skills

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 07 August 2016
Revised 15 September 2016
Accepted 28 October 2016

Introduction

Nowadays mediation is examined as a language activity like reading, writing, listening and speaking (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment, 2004). Translation as a constituent of mediation can also be considered as a language activity. Any kind of language activity is usually studied from different points of view inter alia linguistic, pedagogical, from the point of view of methodology of teaching and from a psychological viewpoint (Cook 2001; Gower, Phillips & Walters, 2006; Harmer,

CORRESPONDENCE Nataliya Belenkova ✉ belenkovanm@gmail.com

© 2016 Belenkova and Davtyan. Open Access terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>) apply. The license permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, on the condition that users give exact credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license, and indicate if they made any changes.

2001; Hedge, 2000; Richards & Renandya, 2005; Rivers, 1981; Scrivener, 2005; Learning English and Psychology, 1997-2014).

The examination of coherence of translation with other language activities namely reading and writing can be observed by skimming the text that is quite evident, as well as listening and speaking, which is much more latent but very often it exists in practice.

When the issue of the interrelation of language activities is focused on, primarily the psychological foundations common for all language activities are discussed. Psychological phenomena as cognition, perception, memory, attention, concentration are important for the development of all kinds of language activities (Arnold, 2011; Kihlstrom, 2011; Mackey, 2014; Rothbart & Bates, 2006, Shiner & Masten, 2008). Some psychological aspects of mediation as a speech activity have been already discussed (Belenkova, 2015).

Such processes as linguistic encoding and decoding in the native or foreign languages are typical of such mediation activities as translation and interpreting (Hall, 2011; Encoding and Decoding, 2008). So training skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing causes perfection of translation and interpreting skills. On the other hand, teaching translation, interpreting as mediation activities can make positive effect on the perfection of communicative skills of other language activities.

This article is focused on some issues of training translation as a kind of mediation. In recent years the interest to intercultural and polylinguistic communication has been increased greatly. The development of international relations in all settings caused the necessity of interpreters and translators with high proficiency level. These specialists are to be trained in higher education institutions of deferent domains. The positive output of such training depends on many factors, one of which is how effectively translation skills training is integrated in studying a foreign language for specific purposes at a higher education nonlinguistic institution. The final results of the translators skills and competencies development vary in accordance with the efficiency of the translators training incorporation with the improvement of other language skills, namely, reading, writing, listening and speaking.

Unfortunately, studies concentrated on these issues have not completely analyzed the problem and its further examination seems to be urgent. The contradiction of the recent research and the practical importance of translators training makes the current paper topical. The information presented fills the gap in the research literature related to the topic.

Literature Review

Translation is closely connected to other kinds of language activity, which perform the same function *inter alia* communicative and are realized in the common basis in a system of a definite language.

Any language is a system of symbols, signs that are actualized both in oral and written forms that depend on the psychological mechanisms used. Oral kinds of speech can be articulated and heard, whereas the written kinds of speech translation including are quite visible and are perceived by eyes.

Translation is primarily connected with the ability to correlate visual, graphical images with sound and motor ones and later with semantic units.

Then these semantic units are decoded into a word or words of another language where they are transferred into letters or combination of letters of another language system. Apparently, the same processes occur in such language activities as reading and writing.

However, neither reading nor writing can be realized without articulation and speech though it has an inside character. In the middle of the 20-th century, Russian psychologists proved that our thoughts are shaped as inner speech and only after that are reported orally or in writing (Artemov, 1958; Leont'yev, 1959; Zhinkin, 1998). The more difficult the thinking operation is the more transparent the inner speech is and on the contrary if the thinking task is quite simple the inner speech reduces or vanishes. If this statement is transferred to translation, it is evident that the expansion of the inner speech greatly depends on the complication of the text to be translated. Sometimes when the original text or the text translated into a target language make some difficulties for comprehension the inner speech turns into outer speech. The translator reads the translation aloud to make the understanding easier or to check if the translation is correct from the point of view of the target language. In this way, all kinds of language activities are involved in translating.

Moreover, though verbal and written forms of communication use different stylistic devices, vocabulary and grammar patterns, these communicative forms are interdependent and interrelated. General language patterns of verbal communication can be used in a written variant but in a more transformed and extended way; any language subsystem of a definite functional style has a complicated system of more or less synonymic expressive means related to each other (Brinton & Brinton, 2010).

Written speech as well as translation is an indirect form of speech communication where only graphic symbols are used. It is characterized by absolute comprehension of the idea written or translated and clarity of thought. A translator cannot use intonation and such extra linguistic means of communication as verbal situation and body language.

The main mental operation used in translating is transformation. When the information in one language is converted into the information in another language, words and word combinations are changed, grammar structures are simplified. On the other hand when the translation from English into Russian is implemented, the text extends greatly as the general number of words increases. Here the principle of adequate substitution occurs (Zhinkin, 1998).

Language transformations imply quick mental comparison of the language systems and mental reasoning. Mental operations become more and more complicated, they include specification, elaboration and improvement of the information being translated.

Traditionally teaching a foreign language assumed cultivation of listening, speaking, reading and writing skills with the help of exercises implying different levels of learners' proficiency. Translation as a language activity should be taught and trained, as a good command of a language does not mean that a person can be a good translator. A translator should also have a deep awareness of the source and target language culture, international situation and have profound knowledge of the setting he/she is going to translate (Diploma in Translation, 2014).

Apparently, to develop students' translation skills special assignments taking into consideration zero, partial and overall learners' transformation skills should be used. These assignments should not only improve language abilities of the learners but also give them an idea of different translation techniques e.g. borrowing, a word-for-word translation, transposition, compensation etc. The subject matter and the complexity of the assignments depend greatly on the age of the learners, the level of education, the special setting of translation and other factors (González, 2004). Moreover, such individual characteristics of learners as perception, the ability to disintegrate of the information logically, and the level of the text understanding make effect on the efficiency of the translators' training.

Research Methodology

The objective of the current research is to examine some aspects of a translator training from the point of view of the students of non-linguistic higher education institution inter alia Law Institute of Peoples' Friendship University of Russia who get the second profession as translators of a special setting and have some experience of translation (less than 5 years). The students' opinions were compared to the opinions of translators in legal setting with different practical experience namely from five to 10 years and more than 10 years who work in the branches of international legal corporations and firms located in Moscow. The survey was held in 2016 from February to May. The total number of research participants was 150 including 50 third or fourth year students and 100 translators half with the experience from five to 10 years and the other half with the experience more than 10 years. Each group of participants had equal number of male and female (Wiki How to do anything, 2016).

All participants of the experiment were supposed to generalize the idea of a highly qualified translator and for this purpose respond to the questionnaire "To Be a Good Translator" that included the issues from the sites Wiki How to do anything (2016) and The 9 qualities of a great translator (2016).

The items of the questionnaire were:

1. Become fluent in another language. Get an extrinsic knowledge of your language to better understand how it works and how foreigners approach it
2. To be a successful translator, you have to be a good writer, too.
3. Take translation classes. A translator is a skilled professional with qualifications and experience.
4. If you can, go to that country of your second language.
5. Translating to your native language is a whole lot easier than translating to a foreign language.
6. Stick to the setting you know.
7. Speak and read in your foreign languages as often as possible.
8. There are many channels in English on TV. Try to find them and interpret the show as it goes. For even better practice, **write down** what you're interpreting.
9. The translation field needs fast, reliable people.
10. What other qualities are compulsory for a translator?

11. Translators must have the readiness and ability to research in order to translate to a high quality.

12. Translators must be self-disciplined. They must also create a schedule and stick to it. However, there is no clocking in and clocking out like there is with many jobs.

The survey was held within 2 months. Afterward the participants' opinions were examined and generalized.

Results and Discussion

Survey Results

All respondents unanimously agree that deep knowledge and fluency in a foreign language is a must for a person who wants to be realized as a translator. They also think that reading and speaking in a foreign language, as well as the intention and ability to do research in linguistics and in the setting of the translation are binding to perfect translators' skills.

The majority of research participants are sure that a translator must work in the setting that is familiar to him/her. Only 50% of female respondents with the experience from five-to 10 years are more self-confident and do not share this opinion. 50% of male respondents of the same category do not agree that a translator must be reliable and fast. Most female translators (82%) that work for more than 10 years oppose the idea of having a schedule for work.

Both female and male experienced translators (more than 10 years of practice) are aware that interpreting skills can be helpful to improve skills in translation. 75-77% of female respondents from other groups supported this point of view whereas the opinion of male respondents differed from 50% of the students to 85% of the translators with practical experience from five to 10 years.

Other items of the questionnaire caused more diversification in opinions. University students, translators-to-be consider that to be a good translator one should have some talent in writing (80% female, 100% male) or visit the country of the foreign language (60% female, 100% male). 80% of female students and only 50% of male students suppose that a formal training in translation is necessary. Translation to a native language is easier for 60% of female respondents; male students feel no difference what the target language of translation is.

The following group of research participants (the experience from five-to 10 years) think that a translator should be a good writer (66% female, 42% male); special education and translation to a native language are more preferable (75% female, 85% male); all female translators from this group support the idea of visiting the country of a foreign language to improve the translation skills, but only 34% of their male colleagues share this opinion.

The mature translators realize the importance of special education and training for successful professional activity (100% respondents both male and female). They partly agree with the importance of visiting the country of a foreign language (100% female, 50% male). Male respondents do not think that a gift for writing is important for a translator's career (100% of female respondents completely disagree with them). The language of translation and

the target language do not make any difference for male respondents (82% of female think the opposite way).

All participants of the survey considered that a translator must have good memory, an ability to express thoughts in different ways, clear reasoning. He/she should be sociable and communicative, calm, self-possessed and reserved. Law students of Peoples' Friendship University of Russia are sure that a very important quality of a translator is an ability to read and translate simultaneously.

Among other important factors of a successful translator, the survey participants focused on such abilities as to concentrate on the idea of the text, to be aware of the general and specific topics of the text, to find close equivalents for translation. A translator must be very careful with the language of the original text, on the other hand creativity is also very important.

Respondents with a long practical experience consider that the knowledge of the native language is as important for perfect translation as the knowledge of the foreign language. They insist on the translator's being self-disciplined and tolerant.

The University students and their more experienced colleagues in translation are aware of the importance of the interrelation of all speech activities for a translator's career. Moreover, they realize that speech activities should be well developed not only in the foreign language but in the native language as well. Efficient translating also assumes wide knowledge of the history, culture, social and political systems of the foreign language country and the specific features of the setting of the translation.

Teaching Experience

Practical experience of teaching translators for legal setting shows that developing skills in translation is closely connected with developing other skills. Listening to any information from mass media or their fellow students or a teacher, students can write down the key issues of the information but not in the language of the information perceived but in another language. The same assignment can be done while reading with different communicative purposes. Students can translate the ideas they like or the most important items of the text or the problems that cause their interest or wish to discuss. Writing skills in legal setting can be trained in translating legal documents from Russian into English. The material for reading and listening can be concentrated on the linguistic, cultural or social matters. So developing language skills the students enlarge their knowledge that can be used in translating.

As it was mentioned above speaking is not so evident while translating as more often it is of latent nature. Nevertheless, for educational purposes the inside speech can take the verbal form and become outside. The speech verbalization can occur at intermediary step between encoding and decoding.

Another type of assignments developing translation skills are the assignments that are aimed at translation proper. The tasks for translation from a foreign language into Russian and from Russian into a foreign language help to actualize the students' awareness of foreign language grammar, word stock, spelling and punctuation. They help to develop transformation skills. These assignments usually take much time and efforts and that is why they are made at home as a rule.

Translation from a foreign language into Russian also provides the perfection of reading skills and the translation from Russian into a foreign language helps to improve writing abilities and skills. Moreover, if the text to be translated is difficult for understanding the inner speech becomes actual i.e. verbal and consequently listening mechanism starts to function developing listening skills.

Translation is also an efficient tool of assessment. In this case, translation tasks are usually done during testing, in the examination sessions etc. For this purpose, the translation should be written in time limit. The necessity to cope with the translation in a definite period makes a learner do the translation with the utmost efficiency.

Skills of all language activities are actualized in translating. Such psychological phenomena as cognition, perception, attention, concentration are exercised. All language skills and psychological phenomena are correlated, interrelated and united in one inseparable integrity.

Conclusion

Any language activity as well as translation as a form of mediation has a communicative function. Any communicative speech act is implemented into practice in the form of a speech utterance or text verbally or in a written form. It includes not only perception but production as well.

One of the main mental operations urgent for translation is transformation. Translation can be considered, on the one hand, as a perception of a written text in one language accompanied by cognition and decoding by means of words as speech units and, on the other hand, as a production of a written text in another language. Here cognition and encoding/decoding can be followed not only by inner voiceless speech but also by verbal articulation i.e. elements of real speaking. Reading, writing and listening skills are improved as well.

The survey held in Law Institute of Peoples` Friendship University of Russia as well as in Moscow branches of some international legal firms showed the opinion of students taught as translators in special setting and the views of the experienced translators about the correlation of all kinds of language activities when they are involved in translating. It assumes that training translation is closely connected with the development of other language activities. It also proved the importance of theoretical knowledge on translation tools and methods, on the one hand, and the awareness of foreign language culture and social life, on the other hand.

Theoretical research and experimental data testify that training translation as a language activity should be integrated in teaching and training other language activities. Translation skills are related to other skills and are developed and perfected taking into consideration linguistic and psychological aspects of professional education. On the other hand, training translation skills can promote further development of other language activities first reading and writing, then listening and speaking. Different translators` characteristics should be cultivated with special assignments and a whole system of exercises, e.g. a student is making an oral presentation in a foreign language and while listening to the presentation the other students make written notes in a source language. This assignment can be made in another way: listening to mass media

in the native language student can make a written translation of the information in a target language.

As the purpose of the current paper was to show the integrated character of training all language activities, translation including, the findings of the study presented enough data to prove the relevance of this assumption, and the topicality of the issue studied.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Notes on contributors

Nataliya Belenkova, PhD, Associate Professor of the Department of Foreign Languages at the Law Institute of Peoples' Friendship University of Russia, Moscow, Russia.

Victoria Davtyan, Senior Lecturer of the Department of Foreign Languages at the Law Institute of Peoples' Friendship University of Russia, Moscow, Russia.

References

- Arnold, J. (2011). Attention to Affect in Language Learning. *Anglistik. International Journal of English Studies*, 22(1), 11-22.
- Artemov, V.A. (1958). *Course of Lectures in Psychology*. Kharkov: A.M. Gor'kiy University, 420 p.
- Belenkova, N.M. (2015). Psychology of Mediation. *Proceedings of INTED 2015 Conference, 2nd-4th March 2015*. Madrid, Spain, 3784-3788.
- Brinton, L.J. & Brinton, D.M. (2010). *The Linguistic Structure of Modern English*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 446 p.
- Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. (2004). *Learning, Teaching, Assessment*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 261 p.
- Cook, V. (2001). *Second language learning and second language teaching*. London: Edward Arnold, 262 p.
- Diploma in Translation. (2014). *IoL Educational Trust*. Direct access: <http://www.ciol.org.uk/sites/default/files/DipTransHandbook.pdf>
- Encoding and Decoding (2008). Direct access: http://finances.social/sotsiologiya_719/kodirovanie-dekodirovanie-38721.html
- González, D.M. (2004). *Multiple voices in the translation classroom: activities, tasks and projects*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 259 p.
- Gower, R., Phillips, D. & Walters, S. (2006). *Teaching practice*. Oxford: Macmillan Education, 224 p.
- Hall, S. (2011). *Encoding, decoding*. In: *The Cultural Studies Reader*. Edited by During S. Abingdon. London: Taylor & Francis e-Library, 507-517.
- Harmer, J. (2001). *The Practice of English Language*. London: Longman-Pearson, 384 p.
- Hedge, T. (2000). *Teaching and Learning in the Language Classroom*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 343 p.
- Kihlstrom, J.F. (2011). *How Students Learn and How We Can Help Them*. Department of Psychology. University of California, Berkeley. Direct access: http://socrates.berkeley.edu/~kihlstrm/GSI_2011.htm
- Learning English and Psychology (1997-2014). Direct access: <http://www.isabelperez.com/psico.htm>
- Leont'ev, A.I. (1959). *Problems of the Psyche Development*. Moscow: APS RSFSR Press, 584 p.
- Mackey, A. (2014). *What happens in the brain when you learn a language? The Guardian*. Direct access: <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2014/sep/04/what-happens-to-the-brain-language-learning>
- Richards, J.C. & Renandya, W.A. (2005). *Methodology in Language Teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 422 p.
- Rivers, W. (1981). *Teaching Foreign Language Skills*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 562 p.



- Rothbart, M.K. & Bates, J.E. (2006). Temperament. In W. Damon, L. Lerner (Eds.). *Social, emotional, and personality development*. New York: Wiley, 99-166.
- Scrivener, J. (2005). *Learning Teaching: A Guidebook for English Language Teachers*. Oxford: Macmillan Heinemann, 416 p.
- Shiner, R.L. & Masten, A.S. (2008). Personality in childhood: A bridge from early temperament to adult outcomes. *European Journal for Developmental Science*, 2, 158-175.
- The 9 qualities of a great translator (2016). Direct access: <http://www.thelanguagefactory.co.uk/9-qualities-great-translator/>
- Wiki How to do anything (2016). Direct access: <http://www.wikihow.com/Become-a-Translator>
- Zhinkin N.I. (1998). *Language, Speech, Creation*. Moscow: Labyrinth, 368 p.