

TEACHING TRANSLATION: CHALLENGES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

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Abstract: Translation theory and practice have been part of our faculty curricula for many years and our institution has been a pioneer in the preparation of young professionals for the labour market. Translation has always served as the channel of communication between countries and cultures. The world is changing rapidly with countries striking different negotiation agreements or with an increasing demand for cooperation and involvement in ambitious bilateral or multilateral projects. Globalization, EU integration, job opportunities, professional achievements, research, are among the reasons that drive and urge the students to acquire skills and competences in the field of translation and interpreting.

Translation as a course has proven to be very successful and useful in the market with an increasing demand for opting to expand its teaching from bachelor and master to doctoral studies. It equips students/trainees with the right skills and qualifications to seek employment opportunities in different governmental and non-governmental agencies, organizations or companies.

In that regard, the job of instructors of the translation and interpreting course is very challenging, vesting them with many responsibilities when confronted with students' demands, their motivation and attainment. They have to adapt to current changes by involving contemporary teaching approaches and instructions in guiding and walking the students towards various aspects of translation theory and practice.

Keywords: teaching translation, translation and interpreting course, globalization, labour market, students' demands, skills and competences, etc.

1. INTRODUCTION

Teaching foreign languages to undergraduate and postgraduate students involves many courses tailored to their needs for preparation in future careers as translators, language instructors, communication/public relation officers, etc. One of these courses deemed important for the upgrading and enrichment of students' language skills at our Faculty of Foreign Languages, University of Tirana is translation theory and practice.

Translation is the process of "rendering the meaning of a text into another language in the way that the author intended the text" (Newmark, pp.5). However, the definition of translation is not confined only to faithfulness because many scholars and practitioners in the translation discipline provide the interested parties with many important tips on the translation process as well as with many insights on the exploration of different text types where "translation cannot simply reproduce, or be, the original" because "the first business of translator is to translate" (Newmark, pp.5).

21st century world is growing and developing fast. Life dynamics is highly dependant on high technology and innovation. Businesses, enterprises, organizations, agencies, etc. are all trying to find new markets and customers aiming at growing and expanding both locally and globally. Translating documents, books, documentaries, movies, news, agreements, patents, contracts, etc., is a necessity for them to flourish.

Translation training is very important to final year undergraduates in foreign language/translation, master degree students or research students beginning to explore the field. Translation lecturers have diverse and versatile teaching techniques and they are knowledgeable in specific areas where translation is required. They demonstrate high competence in mastering the classroom instruction and most of them have intensive personal experience in translation and conference interpreting.

Moreover, machine-aided translation, corpora-based translation, artificial intelligence translation software and tools, are all important means to consider during the translation teaching/training courses.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Teaching translation is seen as a very important activity and for that reason many scholars and esteemed professors have developed essential theory books in translation studies.

Professor Peter Newmark (1988) in the introduction of his book addresses the potential future translator by telling him/her in direct speech that "I cannot make you into a good translator; I cannot cause you to write well. The best I

can do is to suggest to you some general guidelines for translating. I shall propose a way of analysing the source language text; I shall discuss the two basic translation methods; and I shall set out the various procedures for handling texts, sentences and other units. I shall at times discuss the relation between meaning, language, culture and translation. By offering plenty of examples I hope to provide enough practice for you to improve your performance as a translator”.

Jeremy Munday (2016) starts his book by stating that “translation studies is the now established academic discipline related to the study of the theory, practice and phenomena of translation”.

Basil Hatim (1997) emphasizes the need for textual competence stating that “one useful way of seeing contrastive linguistics at work is through translation, and an interesting way of looking into the translation process is perhaps through an examination of the kind of decisions which translators make in handling texts. This should enhance our understanding not only of what actually happens when text confronts text, but also, and perhaps more important for our purpose here, of what it means to be textually competent”.

Basil Hatim and Jeremy Munday (2004) stress out the need of translation practice because “translation, both commercial and literary, is an activity that is growing phenomenally in today’s globalized world. The study of translation, an interdisciplinary field known as Translation Studies, has also developed enormously in the past twenty years”.

Meijuan Zhao (2023) considers the historical overview of translation teaching methods by starting with grammar-translation approach “which emerged in the 19th century”, continuing with contrastive- analysis technique “which became popular in translation instruction about the middle of the 20th century”. According to Pica & Falodun (1993) as stated by Zhao (2023) translation lecturers started to use “a more communicative approach in the 1970s with the advent of communicative language instruction”.

According to Alenzi (2020), Rezvani & Bigdeli (2012) as stated by Zhao (2023) “the task –based approach has become more well-likes in translation instruction in recent years” because “this approach focuses on practical translation assignments and issue solving exercises that replicate real-world translation contexts, To encourage critical thinking and decision-making, students are given actual materials to evaluate, translate, and modify.” Moreover, “this method also incorporates technology and translation tools”.

3. METHODOLOGY

The methodology used in the development of this paper was of a qualitative approach focusing on our observations, experience and insights throughout our teaching translation and conference interpreting for more than twenty years at the university level.

The first part of the paper focuses on the analysis of our work with students based on our syllabus and classroom activities aiming to achieve the objectives and expected outcomes set forth in the beginning of the academic year. The second part of the research focuses on the challenges and responsibilities of translation lecturers handling classroom lectures, activities, tasks and examinations.

We used as a theoretical framework the research paper of Meijuan Zhao (2023) by starting with effective strategies and continuing with challenges in teaching translation. However, our research took completely a new focus and outlook by developing new insights in teaching translation to university students.

Part 1: Teaching the translation course: target students, objectives, expected outcomes

Translation course aims at familiarizing undergraduate/master students with knowledge in translation and conference interpreting theory and practice. The topics are conceived to be comprehensible and functional. The level of selected topics corresponds to the students’ level who are expected to develop their analytical and interpretation skills and further improve their language and way of thinking through various discussions in the seminar classes.

The students are provided with lectures on contemporary models of translation and conference interpreting as well as consult the compulsory and recommended bibliography and fulfil all tasks assigned in the seminar classes.

Target students

The target students in this course are final year English Language undergraduates and master degree English and other Foreign Language students at our Faculty of Foreign Languages, University of Tirana, Albania.

Course objectives

The course objectives are:

- to familiarize students with knowledge on translation/interpretation theory and practice, building on their previous experience in the related courses;
- to expand students’ knowledge of contemporary approaches, such as translation and interpretation criticism and text analysis;
- to develop students’ skills in relation to critical thinking, provision of comments, arguments and opinions.

Expected outcomes

The expected outcomes of the translation course are:

- To acquire in-depth insights into the theory and practice of translation and conference interpreting;
- To set forth problems and reach conclusions;
- To deepen their insights into the process of translation and conference interpreting;
- To develop their analytical, linguistic and critical capacities.
- To manage stress and prepare assignments with due diligence;
- To learn working in a team and develop team spirit.
- To prepare a final individual project in translation consisting on a chosen selected area and involving commentary.

Key concepts

Throughout the teaching process, the following key concepts are considered and developed:

1. Equivalence in translation
2. Translation across cultures
3. Translation strategies
4. Style, register, idiolect, sociolect
5. Translator's choice
6. Translation and power
7. Interpretation and its types
8. Interpretation and its difficulties
9. Interpretation and the labour market.

Part 2: Challenges and responsibilities in teaching translation course

Translation is indispensable in our everyday life and it can emerge in a wide range of activities from the translation of international agreements to the bilingual or multilingual menus in restaurants. The ability to choose the correct translation technique is a skill that needs to be developed by future translators; therefore, it is essential for translation students to be aware of why a particular technique is used.

There are many challenges as well as responsibilities of teaching translation to undergraduate and postgraduate students. There are also many techniques in a translation classroom from the cooperative teaching learning perspective. Interpreting is also a very challenging aspect especially when teaching and training master students who have English as a second foreign language.

One of our major challenges as instructors is adapting to new approaches and methodologies during our teaching classes. The reasons to do so are various:

- keeping students' interest high
- making them enjoy the assigned task
- finding appropriate classroom activities involving cooperative work
- adapting to their needs to work either individually or in pairs/small groups during classroom/homework assignments such as different extracts from magazines, news articles, movies, books, etc.
- achieving the goal of furnishing the students with the right skills and qualifications in translation/interpreting

4. DISCUSSION

Teaching translation is not an easy task because it involves many skills, knowledge and expertise. According to Amin Ali Al Mubarak (2023) the "teaching, in general, and teaching translation in particular, is an exceptionally challenging task since conferring learning and experience to someone else requires total knowledge of the topic, as well as the authority of the correspondence of knowledge". Based on these assumptions the role of the translation lecturers or instructors is indispensable in sharing expertise and knowledge with their students especially in terms of performing the translator's job as a freelancer "because the one who teaches translation must be an expert in this field, namely, capable of teaching translation theories as a science as well as having the actual practical skills of being a good translator" (Ibid.).

According to Basil Hatim and Munday. J. (2004) the efforts in translating texts of every nature and difficulty lie with the "comprehensibility" in order to achieve "translatability". They argue that this "must go hand in hand with the recognition that, while there will always be entire chunks of experience and some unique ST values that will simply defeat our best efforts to convey them across cultural and linguistic boundaries, translation is always possible and cultural gaps are in one way or another bridgeable" (Ibid.).

Furthermore, according to Peter Newmark (1988) translation "theory is pointless and sterile if it does not arise from problems of translation practice, from the need to stand back and reflect, to consider all the factors, within the text and outside it, before coming to a decision". What translation lecturers do in their classroom is assigning different

tasks to students to trigger their thinking and identify the surface structures and the deep ones and decide on their choices based on the type of the texts they need to translate.

Meijuan Zhao (2023) captures very well the difficulties and challenges that translation instructors face while teaching translation. He categorizes these difficulties into: “the subjectivity and ambiguity of translation, linguistic and cultural differences, specialized fields and technical vocabulary, time limits and deadlines, and managing student’s expectations and motivation”. He further argues that despite these challenges and difficulties translation instructors “may create solutions to improve the teaching and learning process in translation studies by being aware of these difficulties” (Ibid.).

Célia Tavares et.al. (2023) emphasizes the need of training students for the translation of technical terms especially by involving activities on the use of CAT and MT tools in their assignments by arguing that “training helps develop several areas of competence of crucial importance for a translator, namely, technical competence regarding computer-assisted translation (CAT) and other translation technologies such as MT, in order to meet the increasing demands of the translation market”.

Alison Cook-Sather (2001) in her paper considers translation as a “metaphor” because from her observations she tries to explain the difficulties of being static and faithful to the text. Thus, she argues that “to translate can mean to bear, remove, or change from one place or condition to another. It can mean to make a new version of something by rendering it in one’s own or another’s language. It can also mean to change the form, expression, or mode of expression of, so as to interpret or make tangible, and thus to carry over from one medium or sphere into another. And to translate can mean to change completely to transform”.

5. FINDINGS

Our research identified both advantages and challenges in teaching translation as enlisted below:

Brainstorming ideas is a good starting point to trigger discussion and understand the students’ skills and knowledge in the translation discipline.

Many lecturers at our faculty would start their classes by raising questions to their students on whether they have ever had any prior experience in mediating between two people who did not speak each other’s languages or whether they have had any experience in translating one text whatsoever into their language. If one or two “experienced” students start sharing their previous tasks in translation, the lecturers would try exploring more by triggering an interactive discussion to understand how their students would define translation. The beginning of the course starts with brainstorming ideas on the translation process and the need to translate.

Students’ groups are various and so are their expectations.

Translation is taught at both bachelor and master level. Experience has shown that third year students when exposed to translation theory find it rather difficult to get familiar with the terminology offered by the textbook. However, during seminar classes they are more interested in learning and exchanging ideas and views regarding their translation choices. In the beginning of their practice students tend to use the wrong translation techniques when translating from English into Albanian. Those who aim to pursue their master studies in the teaching profession might find it a bit weird in the beginning regarding the course. Students of British and American Studies and students of translation and conference interpreting show more interest in the course. Gradually, all groups reach the same level of interest when they explore and learn more on the importance of translation in their future professional career. Master students have a different approach when accessing different translation materials to prepare and analyse throughout their studies because they are there to obtain the diploma required for their future profession.

Interactive learning enhances students skills in translation

The most enjoyable tasks are classroom activities when students work in pairs, or when they present their translation projects in front of everyone and get feedback but also have a chance to defend their thesis. Frequently students are assigned to read and understand the text in the classroom and after having done so they are expected to translate it home. During seminar classes questions about the text are raised to check whether everyone managed to read and understand the text fully. Then they are invited to enlist the new words and phrases they came across mostly on a whiteboard for everyone to see and memorize.

Examples and experience-sharing are a good way of keeping the students’ motivation high.

Many classroom activities involve student-oriented approaches but the translation lecturer oftentimes is there to observe, guide and advise them how to perform the tasks on time, how to manage stress and how to meet deadlines. One way of doing so is by reinforcing the fact to the students that after their graduation they will obtain an esteemed diploma for the labour market. The students are also told that they are the future professionals who will carry on with the job of translators and interpreters because our country is developing in every sphere and the need for translating documents is increasing. Moreover, the monetary gains are also important factors in keeping students’

motivation high. The lecturers at times include bits and pieces from their personal experience especially when students find it hard to cope with specialized fields or technical terms.

The problem of lacking specialized/technical dictionaries needs to be overcome.

Students and lecturers both recognize the need for specialized/technical dictionaries in their native language. This is a common discussion especially in the beginning of the course and we as lecturers try to accommodate to their questions and demands to find these important tools in the market. However, we somehow manage to explain that at present scholars are not sitting to compile dictionaries as it used to be the case 25 or 30 years ago when we used to be students ourselves. Therefore, we try to keep their motivation high by sharing insights on the official documents available online, such as laws amended in line with the EU directives and requirements. The students learn from us that they cannot make up words especially in specialized/technical fields and that they should always consult approved terminology by experts in the area.

Lack of machine translation software in the university premises needs to be addressed.

Despite the fact of knowing a lot about machine aided translation, the software needed to practically demonstrate their use in classroom activities puts students and us in a challenging climate. We carry on explaining theoretically what CAT and MI tools are but find it hard to illustrate it in concrete terms. There is an increasing demand for literate professionals in using computer assisted translation in order to save time and energy and meet deadlines with due diligence. Moreover, we as lecturers need more training in that regard.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Times have changed and we are going global on daily basis. In that regard we as instructors try to be continuously informed on the current developments and trends in order to convey that knowledge with accuracy and professionalism to our students. Students on the other hand, need to be motivated and we as their instructors try to walk them smoothly and carefully from practice to theory and back, by demonstrating a lot of patience and devotion. This paper concluded that brainstorming ideas during teaching classes is a good starting point for triggering discussion and understanding the students' skills and knowledge in the translation discipline. Moreover, through this research we could share our diverse experience with various students' groups who have various expectations during classroom instructions. Another important finding was that interactive learning enhances students' skills in translation. The use of a multitude of examples and experience-sharing are a good way of keeping the students' motivation high. However, the study also indicated some challenges in the classroom activities which directly impact both the students' preparation for the labour market and lecturers' performance in lacking the skills to use CAT an MI software in classroom due to lack of these latter. To add to the list of challenges the lack of specialized/technical dictionaries in the market is another challenge that needs to be addressed.

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