Cross-Cultural Literary Translation Teaching in Course of "Home Reading"

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Abstract. The paper concerns teaching literary translation as a type of cross-cultural speech act in the system of translators' professional training and integrated into the course of "Home Reading".The authors believe that all disciplines that comprise translators' professional training should be profession-oriented, equipping the students with skills and competences necessary for effective cross-cultural mediation, thus contributing to the formation of a cross-cultural component of the translator's competence. A hierarchy of tasks and assignments is presented in accordance with the three-stage structure of the translation process (pre-translation, translation, and post-translation stages).The results and efficiency of the proposed method, tested in the course of a 17-years long experimental teaching, is described.

1 Introduction

The dialogue of cultures is nowadays one of the most pressing problems of international communication. The society rightly strives to interpret every phenomenon of human life as a culturally determined phenomenon; entering the cultural dialogue, national cultures open new boundaries.

The main categories of the concept of cross-cultural dialogue are "culture-identity-dialogue-text-understanding" [1]. In this regard, translation has also been regarded as a cultural phenomenon as it crosses not only the borders of languages, but also the boundaries of cultures, and the translated text is transposed not only into another language system, but also into a different cultural system [2-4], which allows us to treat translation as a type of cross-cultural speech act[5,6].

However, recognizing the unquestionable influence of cultural factors on the translation process, we have no right to exaggerate their roles and interpret the translation as an exclusively cultural phenomenon. The peculiar nature of the language and culture interaction should by no means be underestimated.

In Russia's translator training educational institutions,professionally-oriented training of translators-to-be is in most cases carried out only within the specialized translation courses, without the sufficient use of the linguistic cycle courses potential. However, we believe that all disciplines that comprise translators' professional training should be profession-oriented, equipping the students with skills and competences necessary for effective cross-cultural mediation, thus contributing to the formation of a cross-cultural component of the translator's competence.

Thus, we included literary translation study into the course of Home Reading. As a result we expected a cultural-linguistic personality of the translator to reach both the literary-adequate level of language proficiency and a creative level of cultural proficiency. The former means its application for the reconstruction and interpretation of a foreign culture text, as well as for creating new texts. The latter is of utmost importance for translators, since it means that the translator acts as the co-creator, artist, co-author of spiritual culture products.

1.1 Theoretical Preliminaries

1.1.1 Translator Competences and Qualities

In the process of studying literary translation, a cultural-linguistic personality of the translator-to-be should transform into a self-growing, emotionally mature intellectually cognitive organism capable to cope with unforeseen culture-conditioned translation situations [7, 8]. The translator should possess dynamism, which allows one to constantly both strengthen and modify one's own ideas about one's own culture and the culture the source text belongs to in order to create a full-fledged translation [9].

To ensure effective cross-cultural communication at the level of a literary text, it is necessary to form such competences of the cultural-linguistic personality that would provide for creating a common cultural value shared by interlocutors belonging to different cultures. At the same time, the cultural-linguistic personality must be able to go beyond its own culture and carry out mediative activities [10].

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Proceeding from the principle of professional orientation of literary translation teaching in the course of Home Reading, the formation of a cross-cultural component of the translation competence, which allows the cultural-linguistic personality to go beyond its own culture and acquire the qualities of a cultural mediator, comes to the fore.

Analysis of linguistic and methodological literature on translation [11-16], work experience in "Translation and Translation Studies" program and our own observations of the translation process allow us to assert that the constituents of the cross-cultural component of the translation competence are as follows:

- background knowledge of the subject of communication and of the elements of the basic part of the foreign language picture of the world that relates to the subject of communication;
- linguistic knowledge of the types of linguistic correspondences, lacunae of cultural space and the ways of their elimination;
- the language skill of recognizing the content of cultural terms based on background knowledge;
- speech skill of understanding and using stable correspondences in this area of cross-cultural communication;
- speech ability to eliminate lacunas of cultural space, taking into account the ethnocultural features of communicants.

1.1.2 Methodological Principles

Formation of the cross-cultural component of the translation competence takes place not only in the intellectual and cognitive field; it also affects mental and emotional processes. This situation determines the integrated nature of tasks aimed at the formation and development of this component. The effectiveness of tasks, in turn, is ensured by applying specific principles of their creation and selection:

1. Step-by-step formation of the cross-cultural component of the translation competence;
2. Correspondence of training activities to real translation actions;
3. "Mobility" in the organization and selection of tasks.

Training in literary translation presupposes gradual formation of competencies and grading of tasks according to the degree of their complexity.

The proposed set of tasks reflects the selected sequence of actions in the translation process; in other words, the psycholinguistic specificity of the literary translation is taken into account. As the result, students should be prepared for real translation activities, provided the educational activities are adequate (or as close as possible) to the forthcoming translation activities.

The third principle is realized when adjusting assignments for teaching literary translation on the basis of the analysis of inaccuracies committed by students in generating translation text. This principle allows us to identify additional difficulties that students face in the process of mastering translation activity, and introduce additional tasks to overcome them.

2 The System of Assignments in Accordance with Translation Process Structure

Given there is the consistency of mastering the cross-cultural component of the translation competence, teaching literary translation as a kind of cross-cultural speech activity is divided into the pre-translation, translation, and post-translation stages.

At the pre-translation stage, tasks are mainly designed to develop the competencies required for translation. According to a recent research, this stage is of paramount importance: Firstly, it is a cognitive phase involving conscious intellectual activity aimed at source text meaning extraction and translation invariant and strategy determination; it teaches students to be active and aware source-text readers. Secondly, it contributes to translator's universalism, i.e. ability to adequately translate *any* text at a minimum time and effort [15]. The purpose of this stage is to maximize the preparation of students for translation activities. The tasks at this stage include: development of the ability to identify the author's message, cultural features of the text, which will contribute to the ability to implement cross-cultural communication at the text level.

The following may serve as pre-translation tasks examples, with *Denny* and *Andrew* as names of the characters of the story under analysis:

- *What made Denny and Andrew risk their careers? Can you call them real doctors?*
- *Who was responsible for the situation in the town? What can you say about the role of the Health Officer in the described events? Compare his behaviour with the behaviour of the young doctors.*
- *Compare the characters of Denny and Andrew. What did they have in common? What did they differ in? Who to your mind was a stronger personality? Give your reasons.*

This is a series of text-analysis tasks leading to the improvement of literary text competence, cross-cultural competence, communicative competence in reading and development of the ability to semantic text analysis.

These exercises are based on complete texts, since only a complete statement reflects a certain fragment of concept, which must be embodied in the translator's mind. In addition, working with complete texts accustoms students to take up translation only after reading all the text that is necessary for a complete and adequate understanding, and, therefore, translation.

The second series of pre-translation assignments follows the tasks of the first series within one class. The task would be to *find the meaning of certain culture-specific words and phrases, using encyclopedias, dictionaries and Internet resources,* followed by a possible question: *What is special about their cultural origin? Discuss your ideas with your partner.*

In our opinion, one of the main pre-translation assignments should be a task to develop the ability to use thesaurus and Internet resources, as the ability to use the

reference literature is a component of the ability to read authentic texts, which involves not chaotic, unsystematic, arbitrary, but communicatively conditioned use of reference literature:

- *What words or phrases require the translator's comments? Is everything clear in the translation of such units? What should be clarified?*
- *Think of the commentary that may be useful for a Russian reader as to the cultural background of the text.*
- *Try and make up the translator's comments to these words and phrases both in English and in Russian, that could reveal the main points of their meaning.*

When translating works of art, the translator frequently has to create comments on foreign cultural realities; therefore, in a series of assignments, a significant place is allocated to the training in the creation of translation comments, assessing their feasibility and effectiveness. They follow after assignments aimed at referring to dictionaries, encyclopedias and Internet resources, since they assume the use of information obtained through these sources.

Tasks aimed at developing the ability to identify the invariant content of thought and the development of the ability to quickly express this idea by various linguistic means deal with paraphrasing, leading to the development of paraphrasing skills, as well as discourse competence. In the process of paraphrasing, students allocate the invariant content of thought and express the isolated "pure" thought (the semantic cluster, the concept) in other linguistic forms. The tasks of such type may be formulated as follows:

- *Read the following extracts, paying attention to the underlined (culture-specific) words and phrases:<...>*
- *Paraphrase, explain or interpret them.*
- *Say what the author meant by them. What effect did he want to produce?*

These tasks contribute to overcoming the so-called "disease of literalism", to the development of translation flexibility. Paraphrasing teaches to find workarounds for achieving the goal in those cases where some part of the authentic statement does not lend itself to a direct translation.

Another type of tasks that contribute to the development of an cross-cultural component of the translation competence in the literary translation is tasks to choose the best translation from several suggested ones, based on the comparison of texts, since the translation process is a final comparison of two texts, two literary traditions, two text writers and two recipients.

The application of the method of comparative analysis of translations implies that the result of the translation process reflects its essence. Each translation is subjective in the sense in which any segment of speech is subjective, which is the result of an act of speech by an individual. The choice of the translation option to a certain extent depends on the qualifications and individual abilities of the translator. However, the subjectivity of the translation is limited by the need to reproduce the content of the authentic text as fully as possible, and the possibility of

such reproduction depends on the objectively existing and interpreter-independent relations between systems and the features of the functioning of the two languages.

Thus, translation may be seen as a subjective implementation of objective relationships by the translator. In individual cases, there might be errors that distort the nature of the translation relationship between the corresponding units of the translated text and the translation, but with sufficient volume of the material being studied, such errors are easily detected and eliminated.

The most effective analysis, in our opinion, isparallel texts' analysis: the source text paralleled withone or more translations.

Comparative analysis of translations provides an opportunity to find out how the typical translation difficulties are overcome, related to the specifics of the languages, as well as what elements of the translated text remain untranslated in the translation.

- *Do you feel that anything should be changed in these translations? If so, then what? How can you do it?*
- *Compare the choice of words in the source and target texts and observe the difference in the range of meaning that may occur in translation.*
- *Evaluate the source and target texts in general.*
- *Which one is easier to read? Which one is more understandable? What would you change in them? Explain your answers.*

Another effective assignment is compiling translation using different translations of single phrases made by professional translators:

- *Read the following translations and analyze them paying attention to the words in italics*(where we mean to attract students' attention to specific difficulties).
- *Decide which variant you prefer, and why.*
- *Analyze the weak and the strong points of the following translations.*
- *Make up another translation, compiling the elements of these two.*
- *Discuss it with your partner.*

Pre-translation tasks also include the classification of ways of transferring concepts while translating, as well as an explanation of the motives for using them:

- *Read the following professional translations.*
- *Study the translations. Point out devices that were used while transporting cultural peculiarities from English into Russian. Say which of them are successful and which are not. Give your own arguments.*

After completing the translation, you can ask students to exchange the texts of the translations and instruct each student at home to qualify mistakes and evaluate their quality. To ask students to analyze their own translations might be of no use. Experience shows that the one who performed the translation is often overly attached to his version and is not able to assess it impartially.

- *Exchange your translations with your partner. Study the translation at home, check mistakes, if any. Give your own evaluation of it.*

Translation tasks are a set of complete pieces of text that contain certain difficulties for translation and require the use of appropriate ways of conveying the realities.

The first and second proposed types of tasks are aimed at filling the gaps in the translation text based on the comparison with the source text. In the first type, students are offered separate segments of the text in English and their translations, where there are no words or phrases that convey the realities of culture. The student's task is to restore the translation text. This task is very time-efficient, and students have the opportunity to save their efforts in translating those parts of the text that do not contain the phenomena being investigated and focus exclusively on the transfer of cultural realities:

Fill in the gaps in the following translation, paying attention to the word in italics.

In the second type of assignments, students are offered a complete extract of the text sufficiently saturated with cultural realities. Every second sentence, including the ones containing cultural realities, is taken out. The task is to restore the translation text.

To sum up this series of exercises, we can say that gap-filling assignments provide students with certain "scaffolding" to build on their translation skills.

The third type of tasks is related to the independent work of students, which presupposes mental activity. Students receive an excerpt of text saturated with cultural realities for translation into Russian. They are first supposed to refer to a dictionary and encyclopedia on clarifying the meaning of realities and other necessary background information. Then students start to perform the translation independently. It might also be done in pairs or groups:

Read the following extract and trace its historical background. <...>

- *Make your own translation of this extract.*

When the participants in the process feel the translation is ready, the text is edited, that is, the control phase comes into force. When editing the source text and the translation text are compared, the translation defects are eliminated, the connectivity of the translated text is strengthened, certain corrections are made.

- *Read your translation aloud to assess the degree of similarity. Discuss your translations in a group.*
- *Read the Russian version aloud to feel the rhythm of the text.*
- *Read it aloud to compare its rhythmic value with that of the source text.*
- *Read your translation to the group mates. Explain your choice of devices. Sum up your ideas about the translation.*
- *Comment on omitted and added components, if any. How can you explain the reason for those additions/ omissions? How do they influence the sense or mood of the text?*
- *Compare your results with other students. See if anything can be improved. Choose the best one.*

Tasks of the translation stage can be performed in groups, pairs or individually.

All the tasks develop the willingness of students to analyze the situation, make independent decisions in problem situations, as well as the ability to interpret foreign culture phenomena and adequately respond to translation failures.

3 Results and Effectiveness

The effectiveness of the proposed method and the main theoretical provisions of this study were tested via experimental teaching at Southern Federal University, Russia.

The experiment took 17 years, from 2001 to 2017, and was staged within the framework of the academic subject "Home Reading" taught at the Department of Linguistics: 318 students from thirty two academic groups participated in the experiment. The experiment was of the so-called vertical type, as we compared the development of cross-cultural component of the translation competence at the beginning and the end of the experiment.

We considered students' results according to the criterion of efficiency of the educational process. Results that our student showed were evaluated both in subjective and in objective aspects. The objective aspect is seen as qualitative change in the development of cross-cultural component of the translation competence in comparison with the initial level that finds expression in quantitative increase of learning coefficient. Points received at entrance evaluation procedure are regarded as a basic value of success. The learning coefficient is viewed as a measurement unit for the level of development of cross-cultural component of the translation competence.

To calculate the coefficient of improvement, it was necessary to determine the average learning coefficient for every group chosen to take part in the experiment at the beginning and at the end of the experiment, and the average learning coefficient of the deferred testing.

Calculations at the beginning of the experiment showed that the average learning coefficient was 0,656. The average learning coefficient of the deferred testing was 0.821. The average learning coefficient of test 2 (0.856) was higher than the average learning coefficient of test 3 (0.821) by 0.035, as will be shown in Fig. 1.

The analysis of the experiment in the objective aspect allows drawing the following conclusions:

- teaching literary translation as a type of cross-cultural speech act in the course of "Home Reading" leads to quantitative increase in the learning coefficient that is expressed in knowledge improvement;
- quantitative increase of the learning coefficient is stable;
- the results of deferred testing confirm a high level of development of the cross-cultural component of the translation competence.
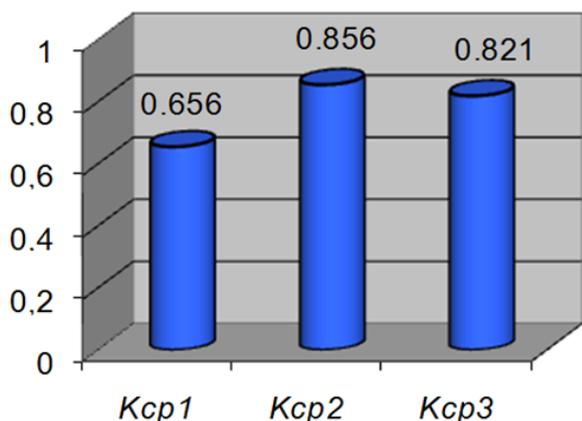
Fig. 1. The average learning coefficient at the beginning of the experiment Kcp1, the average learning coefficient of the deferred testing Kcp2, the average learning coefficient of the deferred testing Kcp3.

The subjective aspect is understood as students' satisfaction with the educational process. To compare the efficiency of the offered method of teaching literary translation in the subjective aspect, we calculated satisfaction index using a methodology devised by Nina Kuzmina [17].

Using Kuzmina's technique, a questionnaire-based survey of students was carried out at the beginning and at the end of the experiment. It was aimed at revealing students' ulterior feelings towards the offered method of teaching literary translation in the course of "Home reading".

We calculated the satisfaction index which, according to the results of questionnaire-based survey at the beginning of the experiment, was 0.34. The satisfaction index at the end of the experiment was 0.61, as is shown in Fig. 2.
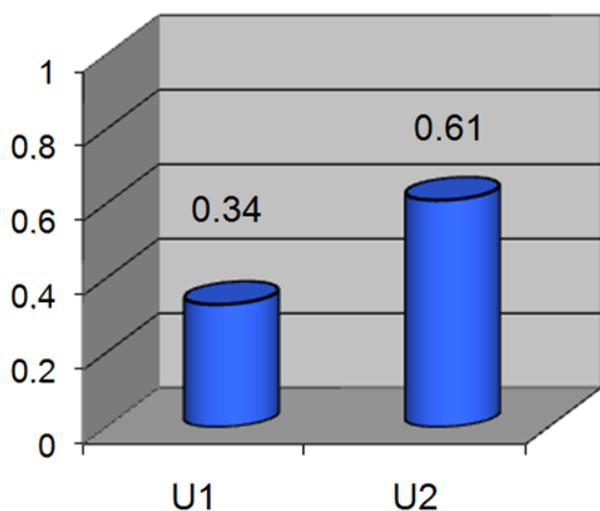

Fig 2. An average value of the satisfaction index at the start of the experiment U1; an average value of the satisfaction index at the end of the experiment U2.

4 Conclusion

Thus, the average value of the satisfaction index at the beginning of the experiment had a positive but low value that indicated that the students were indifferent towards the offered method of teaching literary translation in the course of "Home reading" and were not satisfied with the organization of the educational process. At the end of the experiment, the satisfaction index was more than +0.5 (satisfaction).

The analysis of test results, the data obtained during the experiment and the questionnaire-based survey results confirmed the hypothesis that including literary translation into the course of "Home Reading" is productive and allows one to prepare effectively students for the study of a more complex and polyhedral course of "Theory and Practice of Translation".

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