Translation as a Means
of Teaching Intercultural Communication

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Translation process is a complicated phenomenon, which involves human cognitive sphere and intercultural issues and, thus, requires interdisciplinary studies. Speculating about translation from methodological perspective helps to find new ways of using it as an effective technique for foreign language acquisition. The purpose of this article is to differentiate between professional translation and translation as an EFL teaching technique, prove the necessity and benefit of the latter for developing students' intercultural communicative competence at EFL classes.

Keywords: translation as a teaching technique, professional translation, Grammar Translation Method, Communicative Language Teaching, Intercultural Communicative Competence, close reading, authentic text.

To define translation is rather simple; to explain what translation entails is quite another matter. Explaining this phenomenon has been the subject matter of translation theory throughout history.

Generally, translation is defined as a "multidimensional and multifaceted process determined by the system and norm of the two languages, the two cultures, the two communicative situations (the primary and the secondary), the referential situation, the functional parameters of the source text and the translation norm". (Shweizer, 2009). So as the very nature of translation is not only a speech act but also an act of cross-cultural communication, translation studies have an interdisciplinary status. They have close links with contrastive and cognitive linguistics, socio- and psycholinguistics, semiotics, didactics and methodology. Such an integrated approach helps to emphasize particular features and functions of a translation process and identify scope of application of this complex phenomenon.

This article regards translation from a perspective of language teaching methodology. Namely, it explores the innovative ways of using translation considering its cognitive and intercultural nature as a means of EFL teaching aimed at developing students' intercultural communicative competence.

Primarily, a distinction between professional translation and translation as teaching technique should be clearly noted.

Research shows that traditionally translation as a teaching technique is viewed in the following respects:

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a) as a step to obtaining professional translation skills; it involves numerous activities in practicing translation of passages and whole texts;

b) as a useful exercise in the EFL classroom "in order to compare grammar, vocabulary, word order and other language points in English and the students′ mother tongue" (Ross, 2000).

c) as a helpful aid in stimulating necessary vocabulary and grammar patterns (Abdrakhmanova,2001; Zharkova, 2004).

d) as a quick and efficient way to check students' comprehension (Gurwitch, 1976, Chebotarev, 2006).

In all these cases, procedurally translation as a teaching technique resembles professional one in many ways. Nevertheless, there are some distinguishing aspects to be scrutinized.

Commonly, translation is realized in three steps: 1) comprehension, 2) de-verbalization, 3) secondary verbalization (Komissarov, 1971; Latyshev, 2003).

It goes without saying that the quality and depth of student's and professional translator's comprehension of the text will be different. While the general understanding is quite sufficient for students, who may have other purposes for translating passages□ (e.g. for further relating and analysis of cultural phenomena of their own), professional translators must tend to a detailed, complete and adequate comprehension. Their aim is to consider the text structure, grasp the author's intention and addressee's features. They always do the translation with a certain practical purpose.

Comprehension is followed by the second stage, de-verbalization, which conceals definite hazards for a non-professional translator. Since de-verbalization is the most complicated stage, it represents a particular difficulty for students. They tend to find equivalents to each word and phrase of the text and translate the passage "word by word", while professional translators find the meaning of whole utterances. They rely on their background knowledge, cognitive experience, and analysis. At this stage it is difficult but important for a student to abstract away from the formal representation of the text (words) and concentrate on its nonverbal features (meaning), making it the object of one's cognition, relating and inner dialogues between cultures. This process is accompanied with the so called "cognitive dissonance" (Festinger, 1999), a mental state of discomfort due to the discrepancies between source and target cultures. The teacher's role here is to use such a state of mind to make students think critically, analyze differences and coincidences between two cultures and make intercultural deductions.

The last stage, secondary verbalization, is also accomplished differently. Regarding professionals, it is realized through two phases: paraphrasing and identification. First, a translator transforms the meaning of the initial text into the target language, and then he carefully checks the results in respect of the language, cultural, stylistic, artistic and other norms. For a student learning a foreign language it is not necessary to bring the target text to perfection – in most cases he has other objectives. Moreover, it is not possible due to the fact that he is not aware of special rules, norms and methods of linguistic transformations. However, he has basic linguistic and cultural knowledge that enable him to decipher, relate the facts of two cultures and interpret them in terms of one another revealing differences and coincidences, switching and negotiating between languages.

As is seen from the above considerations, procedurally professional translation differs a lot from translation as a teaching technique. Further, it should be noted that differences between professional translation and translation as a

Table 1. Features of professional Translation and Translation as a Teaching Technique

Translation as an EFL Teaching Technique	Professional Translation
Done as an exercise	Done with a practical purpose
Usual setting (classroom), relaxed atmosphere	Unfamiliar surroundings, stress
Possibility to ask for repeating phrases	No re-asking
No strict time limits	Rapid speech, precise time frames
Educational situation	Real intercultural communication
Texts are chosen in accordance with students' language proficiency level and interests	Texts can be quite long and complicated by unfamiliar notions
The rules of adequacy and equivalency might be taken out of consideration	No mistakes, misrepresentations or lapses are permitted

teaching technique go far beyond the procedure. Organizational aspect should also be taken into account. Some distinguishing peculiarities in this respect are represented in the chart below.

As is seen from above considerations, professional translation can and should be regarded differently from translation as a teaching technique.

The next thing that should be mentioned in case of translation as a teaching technique is that its application has long been criticized throughout the history of EFL teaching. In this article an attempt is undertaken to devise a method that melds translating techniques with interesting cultural critical thinking activities that promote meaningful communication among English language learners.

Elimination of Translation Techniques in EFL Teaching

The use of translation as a language teaching technique has long been viewed with suspicion: its status and role was either exaggerated (Grammar Translation Method) or condemned totally (Communicative Language Teaching).

Prior to the 1960s, the translation of literary texts was the main method for studying a foreign language in Russia. Teachers used to focus students' attention on grammar and vocabulary by having them read and translate target language texts. It was assumed that examining grammatical structures and deducing rules is an excellent mental exercise that would help students grow intellectually by broadening their language, history and literature knowledge (Larcen-Freeman, 2000), and develop memorization techniques. It is obvious that this method was a teacher-centered one, which limited interaction and spontaneous creativity. Besides, classical target language text used for translation were often difficult because they were written in non-standard language and presented as a linguistic exercise with no attempt to include themes, style, or culture into the lesson. Grammar Translation Method was strongly criticized in the mid-1980s because it was unconcerned with students' oral communication skills. As a result, in the late 1900s the tedious Grammar Translation Method lost popularity in Russia (Passov, 2006). Simply learning how to translate and recite rules proved to be insufficient for learners who recognized the value of oral communication in the target language.

As a response to criticism of traditional foreign language teaching methods that did not prepare students to communicate the Communicative Language Teaching approach arose. This approach numbers a variety of

alternative student-centered methods that prepare students to interact with authentic language in real life situations and settings excluding the learners' native language from the teaching process absolutely. Vocabulary and grammar are generally not drilled and memorized, but are instead acquired through communicative interactions and tasks that are relevant to the English learner. Thus, students acquire true communicative competence which includes a mastery of grammar, discourse, language style, and verbal and non-verbal strategies.

However, scientists (Larina, 2005; Stier, 2006) cast doubts on the assertion that obtaining communicative competence will ensure students of efficient process of intercultural communication. Internationalization, globalization and geopolitics require tolerance and understanding of cross-cultural differences together with validation of one's own identity. Thus, it is more appropriate to talk about gaining intercultural communicative competence rather than merely communicative one.

Intercultural Communicative Competence as a Modern Objective of Foreign Language Teaching

Although the term Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) is in wide use today, there is little consensus about what it is. Some stress global knowledge, others sensitivity, while others point to varying skills. The definition and characterization which is going to be presented here, however, suggest ICC to be considerably more complex than any one of these views.

ICC may be defined briefly and simply as: "a complex of abilities, knowledge, motivation and skills needed to perform effectively and appropriately when interacting with others who are linguistically and culturally different from oneself"

(Fantini, 2009). Thus, "someone with some degree of intercultural communicative competence is someone who is able to see relationships between different cultures – both internal and external to a society – and is able to mediate, that is interpret each in terms of the other, either for themselves or for other people. It is also someone who has a critical or analytical understanding of (parts of) their own and other cultures – someone who is conscious of their own perspective, of the way in which their thinking is culturally determined, rather than believing that their understanding and perspective is natural" (Byram, 1997).

As it can be concluded from the above definitions, the traditional components of intercultural communicative competence are knowledge, skills and attitudes, complemented by the values one holds because of one's belonging to a number of social groups, values which are part of one's belonging to a given society.

Such an interpretation of ICC may be considered quite acceptable but for the fact that it does not emphasize the knowledge of the language itself.

In connection with this, it is reasonable to cite R. Wiseman's approach to the ICC nature and structure here (Wiseman, 2006). He proposed to view ICC through six "C"s:

1. Communicative competence
2. Cooperative competence
3. Confidence
4. Commitment to universal human rights
5. Critical thinking
6. Comparability

In the author's interpretation, communicative competence is understood as the knowledge of not less than two languages; cooperative competence involves the ability to work in a team; confidence implies a person's assertiveness as a professional; commitment to universal human rights includes person's civic duties and responsibilities, patriotism and tolerance; critical thinking is

viewed as intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action; comparability implies skills of interpreting and relating that is ability to **interpret** a document or event from another culture, to explain it and **relate** it to documents or events from one's own culture.

It is obvious from the above conception that among the important skills composing ICC are the skills of interpreting and relating facts from the source language and culture into the target ones. Assuming the fact that all the constituents can be influenced through education, experience, and guided practice, such that a person can learn to be competent intercultural communicator, it is beyond doubt that relating and interpreting activities should be included into the EFL teaching process.

Rehabilitation of Translation Method: Using Translation as a teaching Technique effectively

The guidelines suggested here for using translation as an EFL teaching technique are aimed to develop students' intercultural communicative competence. It should be noted that translation and the study of grammar, vocabulary and idioms suggested here are not done in the traditional tedious way; instead, translation techniques are connected with relevant and engaging cultural activities which enable students to obtain valuable and interesting cultural insights and apply their critical thinking skills outside the classroom.

Following are some important principles for using translation as a means for developing intercultural communicative competence:

- Using translation as a means for developing intercultural communicative competence should be based on the "Close Reading" technique, which is choosing a specific passage and analyzing it in fine detail, as if with a magnifying glass, and then commenting on points of style and on one's reactions as a reader. Close reading can be seen as four separate levels of attention which one can bring to the text: linguistic, semantic, structural, and cultural.

- Due to the fact that Close Reading is a very subtle and complex process requiring advanced linguistic and cognitive skills, the students' proficiency in the language should be taken into consideration. It is recommended for high-intermediate and advanced students.

- Choosing the correct text for translation is very important for purposes of interest, relevance and language level. The text is to be authentic material, defined as the 'real' language created by native speakers. The culture should be presented in a text as "it is lived and talked about by people who are credible and recognizable as real human beings" (Byram, 1997). The intercultural perspective on authenticity will encourage constant comparison and contrast of cultures.

- Moreover, it is obvious that close reading is a very time consuming process because students have to achieve the necessary degree of familiarity with the text. Thus, extra hours or self-study with further discussion in class should be provided for.

Step 1: Before reading

1. Give the students a set of instructions and explain them that they should close read the text, i.e. observe facts and details about the text:

- focus on particular passages and on the text as a whole;
- notice all striking features of the text, including: concepts, reflecting mode of life in different cultures, structural elements (e.g. etiquette, conversational formulae), particular cultural and historical references, oppositions and correspondences, metaphors and idioms;
- read with a pencil in hand, and annotate the text: underline or highlight key words and phrases—anything that strikes you as surprising or significant, or that raises questions;
- look for patterns in the things you've noticed about the text—repetitions, contradictions, similarities. Mark the context / fragment for them;
- make sure you understand them correctly;
- if you are not really sure what all these mean, check their meanings up on the dictionary. Be careful: mind the context;
- interpret your observations: move from the observation of particular facts and details to a conclusion, or interpretation, based on those observations and the knowledge of your own culture. Try to understand why these facts catch your attention;
- ask questions about the patterns you've noticed—especially **how** and **why**;
- paraphrase the marked context in your own language;
- try to compare/differentiate the found facts with/from anything similar in your culture.

2. Choose a passage from a text and practice Close Reading. Check if the students do it correctly. As soon as the students understood the purpose of this task, offer them the whole text.

3. Have the students pay attention to the title of the text. Ask them questions like: *Look at the title of the text. What is the text going to be about? How do you understand ...? What do you know about it?*

4. Draw students' attention to the issue or problem which the text is devoted to. Set up a discussion with the help of the following questions: *What do you know about the problem raised in the text in your own culture? Is such a problem topical for / relevant to your culture? To what extent?* Have the students relate this problem to that in the Russian culture and prepare them to interpret the facts from intercultural perspective.

Step 2: While reading

1. Decide whether the students will read the text in class or at home.

2. Have them ask themselves special questions while reading: *Which facts show that the actions take place in the USA? Have you read anything about that in the Russian language? What things reflect the peculiarities of the American culture? Do we have any similar things in Russia? What words and expressions characterize the topic / problem of the text? Is this problem relevant to the Russian culture? What connotations (additional meaning) do these words have, in your opinion? What associations do the meanings of these words have in two cultures: American and Russian? Are there any conversational formulae, metaphors, idioms, sayings in the passage? Are there any similar expressions in the Russian language? Which fact interested / amazed you most? Why? What seemed interesting / unusual / strange to you from the point of the Russian culture?*

Step 3: After reading

1. Set up a discussion on students' general impression of the text.

2. Divide the class into small groups. The students discuss the most interesting and amazing facts they have found in the text and make a report. A speaker is chosen to present the report to the rest of the class. Give the students two sets of useful expressions for the report: 1) expressions that help them represent the facts about the source culture *(this fact shows us that Americans are fond of... ; this phrase proves that there are ... in America; the idea of ... in the US is reflected in ... ; the ... symbolizes that ... in America; this ... implies that Americans are always... ; the ... characterizes Americans as... ; it reveals the fact that Americans are... ; it tells us that the American culture is ...);* 2) expressions that help them interpret the found facts from the perspective of their own culture *(if we compare it with Russia... / in comparison with Russia ...; in the Russian culture, on the contrary, ...; actually, in Russia it's quite the same / not quite the same; judging from the point of our culture, ... ; we can't say this talking about Russians; in Russia we never do so; applying this to talk about Russians, we can conclude...).*

3. Students form pairs and work together to make translations of the certain passages of the text.

4. The student pairs take turns presenting their translations to the class. The teacher asks the following questions: Why did you choose this word? Can this be said easily in your language? Can you translate this symbol literally into your language?

5. The whole class chooses the best translations from among all those presented.

Conclusion

"As a language learning activity, translation has many merits. It invites speculation and discussion, develops clarity, flexibility and accuracy. The teacher can select material to illustrate particular aspects of language and structure and culture with which the students have difficulty" (Duff, 1989).

It is fascinating to analyze cross-cultural differences, and critical thinking thrives when EFL students question their assumptions and consider diverse point of view.

Taking all this into consideration, it is possible to affirm that translation practice, carefully used in different moments of the language learning process, and especially with intermediate and advanced students, can contribute to the students´ general culture, intercultural communicative competence advancement, creative and cognitive skills, while widening the range of their possible future job opportunities.

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[1] Here we will be talking about students whose major is not translation, but who use translation techniques as an aid in their process of acquiring a foreign language.

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Перевод как средство обучения межкультурной коммуникации

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В настоящее время существуют различные определения понятия «перевод». Кроме того, исследователи различных гуманитарных направлений различают такие формы перевода, как перевод учебный и перевод профессиональный. Переводу как средству обучения иностранным языкам придается весьма неоднозначный статус. Еще со времен переводных методов перевод в учебных целях достаточно широко использовался для активизации, контроля понимания и выявления степени усвоения языкового материала. Помимо этого учебный перевод рассматривается как особая переводческая деятельность, значимая для овладения профессиональным переводом. Современные тенденции рассмотрения статуса

и функций перевода связаны с исследованиями в области межкультурной коммуникации и когнитивистики. В данной статье предпринята попытка разработки технологии применения перевода в процессе обучения английскому языку с целью формирования межкультурной коммуникативной компетенции.

Ключевые слова: перевод как средство обучения, профессиональный перевод, грамматико-переводной метод обучения ИЯ, коммуникативный метод обучения ИЯ, межкультурная коммуникативная компетенция, изучающее чтение, аутентичный текст.