Bridging languages in agriculture and forestry translation studies academic courses

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Abstract

The growing demand for professional translation in translators’ training in universities requires a safe teaching model needed for a development of a successful professional translation course. Therefore educational institutions must accommodate a number of changes that would enable building student- and teacher-friendly learning environment crucial for an advanced translation academic course. The present paper discusses three domains where these changes are of critical importance: lexicon, thesaurus and pragmatics. The units of verbal level are separate words. For example: balance, birchbark, log. Ideas, concepts and notions are units of the thesaurus level. For example, the term cross-cutting is associated with a number of other notions as felling, assortment, sawcut etc. Pragmatic level requires a wide knowledge of the national and cultural peculiarities of communication. Methodological base of the research is language personality theory, as well as personal teaching and learning experience in translation study of texts in Agriculture and Forestry. The authors examine each of these domains and offer a range of recommendations for institutions developing a model of building professional competence in a foreign language, English in particular. Differences in learners’ languages and home cultures are taken into account and ways to respond to them in terms of teaching techniques are produced.

Keywords: lexicon; thesaurus and pragmatics; a teaching and learning model; translation study
1. Introduction

The paper presents the results of the collaborative research into Agriculture and Forestry translation studies academic courses, in the project Bridging languages in Agriculture and Forestry translation studies academic courses. The growing demand for professional translation requires a safe teaching model needed for a development of a successful professional translation course. Therefore educational institutions must accommodate a number of changes that would enable building student- and teacher-friendly learning environment crucial for an advanced translation academic course. Realizing the impossibility to cover all the points of such a complicated issue of the academic course of the theory of translation today we would like to draw the attention of the conference to the basic concepts of it. This will include the model of language personality, the bicultural personality concept and the way they are tackled in modern linguistics researches and could be applied into academic practice.

1.1. The aim of the study

The aim of the study is to determine how the English and Russian languages should be correlated in Agriculture and Forestry translation studies. The aim is realized through the following goals: to specify the model of language personality; to point out the main features of the bicultural personality concept; to give recommendations on how these issues could be applied in Agriculture and Forestry translation studies academic course.

2. Literature review

The research is based on the analysis and observations of the works by Vinogradov (1980), Li and Xia (2010), Erton (2010), Shakhovsky (2010), Clark and Schroth (2010), Wiersema (2004), Arutjnova (1996), Kubrjakova (1994), Cook (1993), Karasik (1992), Pochezpov (1990), Karaulov (1989), Goldberg (1981), and many others. First of all, in this research the authors paid attention to the student’s personality. According to Cook (1993) “there are three reasons for being interested in personality. They are: first, to gain scientific understanding, second, to access people and next, to change people”. Lately in Russian linguistics based on the research works of academician Vinogradov there has been a considerable demand for language personality theory study. The language personality theory is presently reviewed in linguodidactics, linguoculturology, cognitive linguistics, lexicography, stylistics and other intra- and extralinguistic disciplines. The complex analysis makes it possible to identify verbal-semantic, thesaurus and pragmatic levels. The language personality in Russian linguistics is defined like “the total combination of abilities and characteristics of person, which determine making and perception of verbal product (text)” (Karaulov, 1989). The process of developing and establishing a language personality appears to be an essential component of the objective and subjective transformation of the information society. In Russian language it can be only one word while in English there are two words or even more. For Russians “les” means wood, forest, timber. There is no difference in the word, but in the meaning, we can understand the real meaning only from the context.

For example, the word “les” (wood/forest/timber) can make problems in translation for the students: [virubat les] - to cut over; [gustoi les] - thick forest; [devstvennii les] - virgin forest; [krepegneii les] - pit wood, timber; [lipovii les] - basswood; [listvenni les] - greenwood; [peretstoini les] - overripe wood; [podchichat les] - to prune the old wood away; [sagat les] - to wood. It is a matter of fact that the language system reflects and collects within itself the total history of people’s experience in the process of their social activity. “The process of translating involves two different languages which are the carriers of their respective cultures; therefore it is not only a process of transference between languages but also a communication between diverse cultures” (Li & Xia, 2010).

Let’s pay our attention to the word “Bread/ Khleb”. As we see it consists of 1 word in both languages, it’s a noun in both languages. But the difference lies in the perception of the meaning. For Russians in almost every legend or fairy-tale the most important hero is Bread. It’s masculine, characterized by power, symbolizes abundance and wealth. In American English, the words "bread" and "dough" are slang for money. A "bread winner" is a person who earns money to keep their family going and a "bread basket" often refers to a geographical region that has a principle grain supply.
Here, following the linguists, we have to consider the structure of the language personality as a three-level model, including verbal-semantic, thesaurus and pragmatic levels. Description of the levels assumes not only glossary of the given levels but also gives rise to the relations between existing elements and typical clusters, i.e. complexes of elements and relations. The hypothesis that we put forward here draws attention to the most important, socially relevant similarities of people that have become encoded in the natural language system, lexical, in particular. To effectively communicate people need to have some generalized model of each other (personality structure as a set of interrelated selves) to orient within the stream of communication.

Clark and Schroth (2010) examined relationships between academic motivation and personality among college students. The results suggested that students with different personality characteristics had different reasons for pursuing college degrees: those who lacked motivation tended to be disagreeable and careless; intrinsically motivated students tended to be extraverted, agreeable, conscientious, and open to new experiences; extrinsically motivated students tended to be extraverted, agreeable, conscientious, and neurotic. The units of verbal-semantic level are separate words. That is verbal-semantic level implies the ability to use existing language tools to create texts of certain genres in all possible situations. Ideas, concepts and notions serve as units on the thesaurus level. ‘The exponents’ of the thesaurus level may become units of verbal and semantic level used in this context as marks. Pragmatic level requires a wide knowledge of the national and cultural peculiarities of communication.

According to Wiersema (2004), cultures are getting closer and closer and this is something that he believed translators need to take into account. In the end it all depends on what the translator, or more often, the publisher wants to achieve with a certain translation (as cited in El-dali, 2012). For example, for our students it was interesting to find the book by David Moon “The Plough that Broke the Steppes: Agriculture and Environment on Russia’s Grasslands, 1700-1914”, (Moon, 2013) where the author analyses how naturalists and scientists came to understand the steppe environment, including the origins of the fertile black earth. Among a variety of stereotypes a language personality chooses only those that match his/her intentions and motives of behavior. As a result, a variety of stereotypes is achieved even within a part of the same linguistic group.

The secondary language personality is viewed by modern linguistics as abilities to communicate in foreign languages. It is difficult to overestimate the importance of that conclusion for the process of teaching a foreign language as it assumes basic distinctions in the choice of teaching methods for various groups of language learners. Motivational or pragmatical level of language personality assumes mastering the particular national practical skills, those which determine stereotypes, motives and values of national and cultural peculiarities of communication. Formation of the secondary language personality that is an ability to successfully communicate with the representatives of other linguocultural or professional society, is the main and most difficult task in learning a foreign language or a professional language.

3. Methodology

Methodological base of the research is language personality theory, as well as personal teaching and learning experience in translation study in Agriculture and Forestry.

3.1. Participants

173 students, 155 females and 18 males, from 6 groups, 3 subgroups of the first, second and third year of undergraduate course of Kazan (Volga Region) Federal University, Kazan, Russian Federation, were invited to participate in the study. The students’ major is Linguistics; their speciality is Translation and Interpretation Studies. All of the respondents study English as a second Language and two other European or Oriental languages. The average age was 21.25 years ranging from 18 to 22 years.
3.2. Instrument

The participants of the experiment were given an extract from a text (original) from an agricultural journal. They were allowed to use dictionaries while doing the task. The quality of the translated text was assessed between 2 and 5 points. Where:

- 5 - when the student did translation correctly without any changes in the meaning, stylistically correct, no grammar mistakes. The language is scientific and understandable.
- 4 - in general one can understand the notion of the given information. There are some insignificant semantic, stylistic or grammar errors.
- 3 means that the translated extract understandable in some way, there are a great number of semantic, stylistic or grammar errors.
- 2 – the meaning of the text is changed, understandable because of semantic, stylistic or grammar errors. 1 means done nothing.

3.3. Results

The experiment allowed to determine that the quality of translation does not depend on the duration of learning English, since students of different years could produce equally efficient or poor translation. Therefore it is worth speaking of the process of building a bicultural personality and its importance for the successful career in translating.

4. Conclusions and recommendations

In this regard there is a problem: how to modify the teaching and learning process in higher education institutions so that translation studies academic courses could contribute to communicative competence sufficient for a professional dialogue with the colleague - the foreigner, a native speaker or a ESL professional. Evidently, a complex of research procedures of theoretical, experimental and practical and methodical levels is required:

- to develop the concept of pedagogical/teaching system of formation of foreign language communicative competence;
- to define theoretical-methodological prerequisites of formation of foreign-language communicative competence on the basis of system analysis of professional activity of the modern expert, intrinsic characteristics of the technical specialist, foreign and domestic experience;
- to develop innovative theoretical model of formation of professional competence in a foreign language that meets modern requirements and deterministic principles of science, pragmatism, continuity, hierarchy, order, interdisciplinary and combines a wide variety of theoretical and practical methods.

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References


