THE PROBLEMS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL TRAINING IN THE FUTURE TRANSLATORS/INTERPRETERS EDUCATION

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Abstract. In spite of rapid development of translation studies during the last 20 years, the psychology of translation is still undeveloped as a scholarly discipline. As a consequence there are no proper psychology courses for future specialists that might provide insight into translator’s and interpreter’s professional activity and help them do their job better. Only few universities in Russia present translator and interpreter psychology courses as optional ones. As for Kazakhstani universities and many universities abroad, there are no courses on psychology of translation. This lack leads to an urgent need for their development from theoretical and practical grounds. This paper aims to ground the importance of psychological approach to translation/interpretation in the conditions of a multi-aspect professional activity and reveal the content of psychological knowledge and skills, needed in the professional field of future translator and interpreter in order to present as an academic course within the framework of higher education.


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1. Introduction

In the history of translation study development there were different approaches to translation as literary, linguistic, social, psychological, cultural, or communicative ones, which were researched more or less at different periods and by scholars of different countries. The great interest of different sciences to translation/interpretation is explained by its multi-aspect, complicated character of object to study. At the same time A. Fedorov having underlined this characteristic of translation pointed out the psychological approach: “The problems of translation can be discussed from various points of view, historical, cultural, literary, linguistic, and psychological since the translator’s activity presupposes definite processes that take place in the sphere of psychic activities and since it bears on the problem of the psychology of creativity” [A. Fedorov 1968:22]. Further, V. Komissarov, considering the problems of training future translators and interpreters also touched upon the integrative approach to translation/interpretation study, paying special attention to psychological aspects of these processes: “For psychologists - translation presents an activity with specific psychological mechanisms of perception, understanding, memory, imagination, specific motivation, and operation of reformulating” [V. Komissarov 1976: 6]. But at the same time the scholar didn’t pay due attention to the theory of psychological training, as he referred the ethno-social- and psycholinguistic conditions of translation to practical field of preparation, announcing them deprived of any theoretical significance[V. Komissarov 1980]. In spite of this since the 1960-th different psycho-physiological aspects of translation had been as separate objects of study for scholars while considering the activity of interpreter, especially of simultaneous interpreter [A.Shiryaev 1982] and in this way a first contribution to the development of psychology of translation [B. Belyaev 1963; B. Artemov 1969] was made. Thus, the study of translation/interpretation from a psychological point of view allows considering this object more widely [A. Krukov1984], than it was done only from the points of linguistic and literary issues which can be described by “the constant search for linguistic tools to express the unity of form and content that makes up the original” [A. Fedorov 1968:121]. Nowadays it became quite clear that, “A person-centered approach to any text, language, or culture will always be more productive and effective than a focus on abstract linguistic structures or cultural conventions” [Douglas Robinson 2003: 112]. So, the presence of different approaches to translation are explained by understanding translation as a process and result, according to which there are two points of view: external and internal as Anthony Pym puts it [1993: 131, 149-50]. Translation is a text from the perspective of "external knowledge," but an activity (aiming at the production of a text) from
the perspective of "internal knowledge." The more complicated one is evidently the second point of view, "internal knowledge", because it's really difficult and sometimes impossible to have a deep insight into the mind of translators during the process of translation/interpretation “… the mind of the translator has always been the black-box that has not been included or at least not actively mapped…” [I. Zimnyaya 1993: 87].

2. The subject of study
In considering psychological approach to translation/interpretation we may single out two directions: 1) psychology of translation which concentrates on the study of specifics of psychological mechanisms of perception, understanding, memory, imagination, operation of reformulating the message and 2) psychology of communication, psychology of interaction between translator/interpreter and client. So, these two directions served as a base for discussion about priority of cognitive or communicative function in translation. In this case a great interest is presented by I. Zimnyaya’s point of view who considers translation as an activity of speech rather than thought, since it fulfills communicative but not cognitive functions [I. Zimnyaya: 1993: 97]. She has defined translation as a complex, specific, secondary type of speech activity and this statement holds true for all forms of translation: written translation and oral interpretation. Translation being a speech activity has all necessary characteristics of an activity: the presence of an object, a product, results, units, means, and ways of realization. Translation is also characterized by a definite structure that consists of the aspects of motivating, inducing, orienting, knowing, and performing. So like other types of speech activity, listening, speaking, reading, and writing, it is based on the manner in which thought is shaped and formulated by means of language, or speech. Moreover, translation also implies thought reformulation. Reformulation is an inseparable part of the inner mechanism of translation, characterized by different degrees of consciousness and, more importantly, occurring at different points or moments in the process.

Teaching future specialists to translation/interpretation as a communicative activity is the right perspective to our mind because communication plays a core role in multi-aspect professional activity of any translator and interpreter. Moreover we support the conviction made by I. Zimnyaya that a person who has mastered the basic types of speech activity will not necessarily turn out to be a good translator. Rather translation needs to be taught by means of special methods that take the peculiar psychological characteristics of this complex, specific, secondary type of human speech activity into account. That’s why psychology of communication should be taught on the basis of specifics of translator’s psychological mechanisms of perception, understanding, memory, imagination, operation of reformulating.

3. Methodology of the study
According to the aim of our paper we used the following methods of research: theoretical study of the problem, analysis of current system of translator/interpreter education, analysis and evaluation of student’s psychological competence, using questionnaires, special written assignments (essays, project), practical tests, multiple choice tests during Midterm and Finals. 50 students from the first to the fourth year of study at the program “Translation studies” were involved in the research. So in order to reveal the students’ general knowledge about psychology of translation we used questionnaires, their personal attitudes and ideas toward psychological training we applied written assignments (essays, projects), as for evaluation the student’s special knowledge and skills in the field of psychology of translation and communication after some instruction we conducted oral test during Midterm and multiple choice tests during Finals.

4. Results and discussions
A thorough analysis of current translator/interpreter curricula and syllabi of academic disciplines presented as obligatory and optional courses in Kazakhstani and universities abroad indicated the absence of separate courses oriented to fill a gap in psychological knowledge and more importantly to develop students’ psychological skills and habits. Since the introduction of translation studies in the Kazakhstani system of higher education (1996) State Educational Standards were adopted five times at different periods: 1996; 2001; 2004; 2006; 2012 years. But only in the State Educational Standard of 2001 year was there a discipline, called “Psychology and Pedagogy”, which touched upon the problems of general professional knowledge of psychology and communication. Later, this subject was taken away from translation study curricula at university and instead replaced by other disciplines such as the “Fundamentals of translator’s professional activity” and “Practical course on culture of speech communication”, which have their own subjects of study therefore they don’t give a full, systematic psychological training for future translators/interpreters.

So the importance of a psychological component in the interpreter’s/translator’s education was proved by the results of scientific researches, based on the competence approach to professional training. According to competence-based curriculum design for training translators/interpreters, competence is seen as comprising five sub-competences, bilingual, extra linguistic, translation knowledge, instrumental and strategic, as well as some psycho-physiological components [Amparo Hurtado Albir 2007:170-171]. The psycho-physiological components consists of cognitive components, such as memory, perception and attention; attitudinal aspects, as intellectual curiosity, perseverance, thoroughness, critical spirit, knowledge and confidence in one’s own capabilities; knowing the limits of one’s own capabilities, motivation, etc.; and skills such as creativity, logical reasoning, analysis and synthesis. In general professional competence of future translators/interpreters comprises three main components: linguistic, social-cultural and social-psychological where the last one is called also as communicative component. According to N.V. Komissarova the social-psychological or communicative component is less developed by students during their study at university [N.V. Komissarova 2003]. That’s why the graduates of translation schools feel themselves uncomfortable, confused, not prepared for contact with clients,
don’t know how to interpret before audience and behave themselves in accordance with professional ethics. The results of questionnaires and practical tests applied to the students confirmed this statement.

Conclusions
Psychology is that science, which provides a deductive approach to understanding an interpreter’s/translator’s activity who constantly is dealing with people of different social status, psychological types, cultural belongings and professional fields [Douglas Robinson 2003: 122-123].

So, on the basis of above mentioned analysis we come to conclusion that the course of psychology for future translators/interpreters should be designed as teaching for communication for the following reasons: a) translation is a specific type of human communicative activity; b) effective mastering translation as communicative activity needs developing necessary psycho-physiological qualities of translators: intelligence, memory, learning styles, input, imagination, processing, response, ethics; c) higher level of mastering translation as a communicative activity allows the future translators/interpreters to provide an adequate perception, interaction and influence on the foreign language partners during interlingua, intercultural and interpersonal communication; d) developing the psychological/communicative component in professional competence helps the future translators/interpreters to easily orientate and adapt to the conditions of multi-aspect professional activity. While developing psychological/communicative sub-competence a special attention should be paid to the formation of student’s personal attitudes, the level of psychology knowledge, skills, and habits on an integrative basis during the lectures, seminars and practical classes. The last ones should be conducted as training and coaching, using role plays, case studies, discussions and others.

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