

Review research paper

HOW CAN AND SHOULD TRANSLATION TEACHERS BE TRAINED?

Olga Petrova, Vadim Sdobnikov

Nizhny Novgorod Linguistic University, Russia

Abstract. *The need to train a large number of translators necessitates the training of professional translation teachers. At present, translation is taught either by translators having no pedagogical education or by teachers of foreign languages with no degree and often no practical experience in translation. Both categories need additional training that would supplement their education. The existing system of short-time professional development courses is not adequate to the task of filling in the gaps in professional education of translation teachers. The article discusses a conceptually new approach to retraining and training translation teachers that presupposes developing and introducing several type programs. They are extensive retraining programs for those who currently teach translation and two types of master's degree programs for students having a bachelor's degree either in translation or in teaching foreign languages. In both types of programs, the pedagogical and translation components of education will supplement each other, so that graduates will acquire competences necessary for being good translation teacher. Special emphasis should be laid on translation didactics which so far has not been taught either in translator training programs or in teacher training programs of any type or level. The authors discuss principles of designing and developing such programs.*

Key words: *translation trainers, competences, translation didactics, translation mentality*

1. INTRODUCTION

The number of international interactions has grown dramatically in the global environment, which requires interlingual and intercultural mediation effected by professional interpreters and translators. It has entailed the need to train those who can serve as mediators in cross-cultural communication. Education systems of many countries, including Russia, have faced the challenge and tried to adapt to it rapidly and in the most effective way. The effectiveness of the changes can be measured, at least, in the growing number of educational institutions that train translators/interpreters in specific countries. The trend has spread even to the regions that previously have managed to do without extensive translation services provided by nationals. An example can be adduced: Faryab University (Afghanistan) has made a decision to introduce translator training as an educational program addressed to Afghani citizens, and has established relations with Higher School of Translation (Linguistics

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Corresponding author: Olga Petrova. Nizhny Novgorod Linguistic University, Minina 31a, Nizhny Novgorod, Russia, 603155, Russia | E-mail: o.v.petrova.nn@gmail.com

University of Nizhny Novgorod) in Russia. It will be the first translator training program in Afghanistan ever.

Development of translator training at universities has given an impetus to the development of translation didactics. Many scholars have contributed to it. A general review of translation didactics development has been offered by Amparo Hurtado Albir (Albir 2017). Chakib Bnini (Bnini 2016) and Douglas Robinson (Robinson 2007) have formulated general principles of training translators and interpreters. Maria Brander de la Iglesia and Jan-Hendrik Opdenhoff (Brander de la Iglesia, Opdenhoff 2014) followed Daneil Gile (Gile 1995) in specifying the competences which an interpreter should possess. Franz Pöchhacker (Pöchhacker 2004) has reviewed the most common models and methodological approaches in the area of teaching court and hospital interpreting. Jorge Diaz Cintas (Díaz Cintas 2008) has outlined the foundations of didactics of audiovisual translation. Cristina Lara Plaza, among others, views Translation Studies as an interdisciplinary field and on this basis considers multicomponential models of translator competences (Lara Plaza 2016). Other scholars have developed methods of teaching various types of translation (Jordan-Núñez 2014; Kubanek, Molnar 2012). This is a very short list of contributors to translation didactics development.

With translator training being developed quantitatively and, we hope, qualitatively, another challenge has emerged: the need to train those who are best qualified to teach translators, i.e. translator trainers. Although many educators and education managers pretend to ignore the challenge and do little to respond to it, the need to create a system of training translator teachers does exist and, moreover, is urging. As has been said, little is being done to this effect so far. Meanwhile, life itself and the needs of educational institutions make us search for the answers to the questions: who trains translators now? What is their path to the translator trainer profession? What competences are required from translator trainers?

Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to analyze the situation in the field of training translator trainers in Russia and other countries, the ways and methods of training translator trainers used now (if any) and to propose possible and probable formats of training them.

2. VARIOUS WAYS TO BECOME A TRANSLATOR TRAINER: SITUATION IN RUSSIA AND GLOBALLY

The general perception of the situation in the field of translator trainers training is mainly based on empirical evidence and, therefore, is not exact, especially in the Russian context. A rare example is a survey conducted by a research team from Linguistics University of Nizhny Novgorod which reveals certain trends in and particulars of the translator trainer education. Although the need to investigate into the ways of how people become translation teachers has not been unnoticed by Western translation scholars; hence, some works (though not numerous) dedicated to the problem.

2.1. Translator Trainer Education in the Russian Context

It so happened historically that there are no specialized programs for training translation teachers in Russia. Unlike teachers of other disciplines, who are trained at pedagogical colleges or whose professional training in a chosen field at a university is supplemented with the additional qualification "Higher School Teacher", translation

trainers are never trained to teach translation. A survey of the current situation at the translation and interpreting schools and departments shows that people teaching there either have a degree in translation, but have never been taught to teach anything and have no knowledge of translation didactics, or have a degree in education and have been trained to teach foreign languages, but have no professional training in translation. There are no people having a degree in teaching translation.

In the 90-s, when Russia was suddenly confronted with the necessity to translate a huge amount of information, there appeared a need for many translators who had to be trained in as many universities and colleges as possible. Translation teachers were scarce in the country, so the task was assigned to teachers of foreign languages. Educational authorities believed that all you needed for translation and teaching translation is being fluent in a foreign language. So teachers with no education in translation, often being sure that translation consists merely in replacing signs of one language by signs of another, entered the translation market themselves and simultaneously began teaching this amateurish approach to translation, at the same time feverishly educating themselves with the help of randomly chosen, often incongruous translation manuals. With such eclectic self-education, they couldn't possibly give students any integral, comprehensive idea of translation. A considerable part of these teachers continue to train students. Moreover, some of them look upon translation classes as an aspect of teaching a foreign language. The survey shows that today nearly 50% of translation trainers have no degree in translation.

At the same time the other half is people who have graduated from translation schools and departments. The question of how and which type of translation they were taught should be discussed separately. What is relevant here is that, having no education in translation didactics, they began reproducing the way they themselves had been taught – and some still keep doing it. There is nothing basically wrong about the method of teaching based on copying one's own teachers. The question, however, is whether those teachers were professional enough.

The situation is aggravated by the fact that the translation market has changed radically lately, in terms of quantity, quality and time limits, as well as in terms of the tools used. It is noteworthy that translation and even interpreting have turned into an immensely technological activity, which requires special skills and knowledge from translators/interpreters and translation teachers. Moreover, it can be said without exaggeration that technologization of the translation activity changes translators' professional mentality and their approach to translating a text. The fact has been emphasized by Yves Gambier who argues that a new paradigm has appeared in the Translation Studies, specifically, the one “which reflects the platforms and mediums through which the activity of translation is now carried out” (Gambier 2019 : 357).

In order to train translators capable of meeting the new requirements instructors have to be aware of these requirements, and the knowledge previously acquired is now obviously insufficient and obsolete.

True, many translation teachers feel that their teaching methods are obsolete; some of them realize that they need more learning to cope with the new challenges. For that reason, many short-term professional development courses are organized by Russian universities, translators' associations and even translation companies for those who feel the imperative to develop as educators. Unfortunately, the practice of short-time professional development courses (usually limited to 72 hours with no more than 36 of

them being contact classroom hours) is not adequate to the task of preparing highly qualified translation trainers. They can only help in solving some particular problems that the teachers are confronted with in class. For example, methods of teaching various types of translation or interpreting seem to be the most popular topic. Another topic suggested for discussion by those who want to be trendsetters in translator trainers education is, of course, the application of information technologies in translation and interpreting. By all means, the topics are valuable in themselves but not sufficient to train translator trainers. The short-term development courses are not sufficient.

Thus, it can be noted with regret that the formats of training translator trainers offered by the Russian education system are not consistent with the goal. One can justly say that the system completely lacks any effective format of translator trainer education.

2.2. Translator Trainer Education in the Global Context

The situation in other countries, particularly in the West, is somewhat different. As has been mentioned above, attention to the problem has been devoted to the problem of training translation trainers or, at least, to enhancing the competences translation teachers should possess. Investigations have been made into the matter, which resulted in the lists of translation teacher competences. E.g., Dorothy Kelly argues in her most appraised book that “the different areas of competence or expertise required to be a competent translator trainer are: professional translation practice, Translation Studies as an academic discipline, teaching skills” (Kelly 2005 : 151). It is worth mentioning that the latter is treated by her as the most important competence, and is subdivided into “subcompetences: organizational, interpersonal, instructional, contextual or professional, instrumental (Ibid.). The same list is provided in Kelly’s other book (Kelly 2008 : 105-106). It can be supplemented by another classification of translator trainer competences developed by EMT Expert Group. It includes: Field Competence, Interpersonal Competence, Organizational Competence, Instructional Competence, Assessment Competence (The EMT Translator Trainer Profile 2020). It is obvious that the two classifications overlap, which can be easily explained: after all, they are based upon a similar vision of the tasks being solved by a translation teacher and of the practices used in teaching. To these we can add still another classification elaborated by Russian scholar Dmitry Shlepnev. He differentiates between Translation Competences subdivided into general and specific, Common Didactic Competences and Special Didactic Competences also subdivided into general and specific (Sdobnikov, Shamilov, Shlepnev 2020). What comes to the front is the special attention to didactic competences not mentioned explicitly in EMT and Kelly’s classifications. True, they are implied in both of them. One can say that they are dissolved in other competences while Shlepnev makes them a focus of his attention.

Given the space limitations for this paper, we shall not dwell on the essence of each competence in detail. Moreover, the matter seems irrelevant to our discussion. What matters here is the question: how these competences can be obtained by those who want to become competent translator trainers?

Many investigators strongly believe that to do so one should have professional experience, i.e. experience in translating or interpreting or both. The idea has been voiced more than once both in Russia and abroad. Donald Kiraly is exceptionally straightforward in expressing it: “It cannot be expected that language instructors without professional translation expertise will have a professional translator self-concept themselves or that they will be able to help

their translation students develop one” (Kiraly 1995 : 3). No one doubts that professional experience is the essential prerequisite for successful teaching. It might follow from this that it is sufficient to engage in translation activity professionally or not quite professionally, as the case might be, to develop “a professional translator self-concept” (to use the terminology of Kiraly), to acquire the profound understanding of the essence of the translation activity and to master the ways and means of solving the problems encountered in the process of translation. We might expect that those professionals who have decided to dedicate themselves to teaching translation might have an idea of acquiring some knowledge of Translation Studies as required by Dorothy Kelly and, maybe, of translation didactics, though it is unclear what sources of information they would use. But, coming back to professional experience, we believe that it is not irrelevant how it can be acquired.

Daniel Gouadec gives the answer to the question which he thinks to be a simple one: teachers on a translator-training programme should spend one month in all three of the following situations: working in a translation firm (either as a translator or a reviser or a terminologist); working in an in-house translation service (same as above); being a freelance professional (same as above) (Gouadec 2003 : 13). It seems that Gouadec is over-optimistic in his belief that it suffices to have three months of translation experience to achieve the goal formulated by Kiraly. The minimal knowledge of how the translation market is organized can be obtained but not the profound understanding of the profession itself.

Anyway, the old idea that training in translation schools should be done by practitioners seems to be die-hard. But now it is not the only guidance for education administrators. Marc Orlando writes that “many trainers and scholars ... recommend that professional practice be carried out simultaneously when teaching in T&I programmes. Consequently, many T&I training institutions have chosen to employ professionals for the vocational classes – these instructors sharing their experience without paying much attention to theory – and academics with expertise in T&I Studies who share their scholarly knowledge but have limited or no experience in T&I practice” (Orlando 2019 : 4). Yet, Orlando remarks that “being an experienced T&I professional, or a widely published and well-regarded academic, is no guarantee of pedagogical competence and teaching skills” (Ibid.). One can hardly counter this claim.

We see that the situation globally is similar to that in Russia. Academics teaching translation and interpreting can be divided into two categories: those who have vast experience in T&I and those whose practical experience is limited or equals to zero. Practitioners recruited by translation schools to teach T&I usually have no knowledge of T&I methodology. And both groups have never been taught to be translator trainers.

What helps them perform their duties with some degree of efficiency? At least, they can copy what their own teachers used to do in class. It is hardly the best way to acquire all the competences mentioned above.

It logically follows from the above that there is a need for the development of programs aimed at professional training of translation and interpreting teachers.

3. NEW APPROACH TO TRAINING TRANSLATION TEACHERS

3.1. Why do We Need a New Approach?

It has already been stated that the existing system of short-time professional development courses is not adequate to the task of filling in the gaps in professional education of translation

teachers. Limited to one week, such programs cannot provide any courses, either theoretical or practical, that would be more or less comprehensive. Unless people have a degree in translation and their skills and knowledge need only brushing up, 36 classroom hours can hardly be of much use to them. With all the variations from university to university an average course in Translation Studies in the specialist's degree program is about 200 hours long. An average course in practical translation is at least ten times longer. Of course, one cannot expect any professional development course to provide as many class-room hours as a specialist's degree program, but the existing short-time courses do not stand up to any comparison with even the shortest variant of the courses offered by bachelor programs that offer at least 36 hours of Translation Studies and 700-800 hours of practical translation. A typical short-time professional development course consists of 36 classroom hours divided between lectures in Translation Studies, lectures in Translation Didactics, practical translation classes and masterclasses showing methods of teaching various types of translation. Needless to say, such a program can only provide superficial, haphazard knowledge.

Moreover, standard professional development courses, sometimes also known as advanced (or further) training courses, have one and the same program for teachers with a degree in translation and for people with a degree in education. The very phrase "advanced (or further) training" presupposes at list some initial, basic training as a prerequisite, while the survey carried out by a research team from Linguistics University of Nizhny Novgorod shows that 45.8% of those who currently teach translation have none. Nevertheless, they are offered the same courses as those 54.2% with a degree in translation.

It is obvious that such a system cannot possibly solve the problem of providing universities with highly qualified translation teachers. It is necessary to find some conceptually new approach to the problem of improving the current situation, an approach that will ensure a high level of translation training in the future.

Generally speaking, a teacher must have all the knowledge and skills that their students are supposed to acquire, plus the knowledge of how to impart this knowledge to students and help them to develop the necessary skills, plus the ability to do it. In case of translation teachers it means knowing at least the fundamentals of Translation Theory, having the necessary skills and a professional competence in translation/interpreting, knowing how the translation industry works, knowing the requirements in the translation market and knowing how to teach it all to students.

Everybody agrees that a teacher of translation and interpreting must have skills and knowledge of a professional translator. However, there is no such unanimity when it comes to Translation Studies. One can hear translators saying that they don't need any theory in their practical work. In the process of translating and especially when interpreting they do not think about the model of translation they are following or about the difference between adequacy and equivalence of their translation – which is true. The purpose of teaching Translation Studies as an academic discipline is quite different. Translation Studies (or, as the academic subject is usually called in Russia, Translation Theory) is by no means a collection of recipes for "correct" translation. It is an instrument for shaping the student's mentality, for developing that professional translator self-concept of which D. Kiraly speaks. And if the knowledge of some basics of Translation Studies is advisable for professional translators, it is an absolute must for translation teachers, whose major task is to facilitate the development of their students' professional mentality, to help them acquire self-awareness as translators.

Nearly half of all the translation trainers in our universities have never been professionally educated in theoretical aspects of translation. Moreover, 42.6% of those who teach

Theory of Translation have no education in translation at all. Of course, there are teachers who have studied the subject on their own. But it is obvious that even in such cases we cannot expect these teachers to have any consistent theoretical background. Experience shows that self-education is often eclectic. As a result, instead of shaping the professional mentality of students these teachers merely provide them with information about various translation schools and translation models – the information that any student can easily find in oh so many sources these days.

3.2. What can be done to improve the situation?

There can be at least two different solutions: a) to develop programs for retraining the people currently teaching translation in our universities and b) to develop programs for training a new generation of translation teachers.

It follows from the above that it is necessary to have two different types of retraining programs - for people with a degree in translation and no education in the science of teaching and for people with a degree in teaching foreign languages and no education in translation. The two categories need totally different programs.

To become a good teacher, practicing translators and interpreters need some training in pedagogy, educational psychology, teaching methods, general didactics, and translation didactics. They will probably also need an industry overview course because many of them concentrate on some specific segment of the marketplace and tend to extrapolate their experience to the whole of the translation industry, thus misleading students and preparing them for something different from what they will actually face in their professional life. This group might also need a refreshing course of Translation Studies and probably some practical translation classes where they would translate various types of texts, going beyond the field of their concentration.

The program should be flexible. Its specific content may vary and will depend on several factors. The survey shows that 48.5% of translation teachers having a degree in translation are people over 40, with half of them being over 50, which means that their theoretical background can be somewhat outdated. At the same time, the other 51.5% are better prepared in terms of theory, but have a more limited experience both as teachers and as translators. So, with them the emphasis should be placed on practical classes. With the diversity of age and experience among the translators currently teaching at the universities all the retraining programs should be tailor-made, adapted to the specific needs of a particular group. Most translation teachers in senior groups will probably need a course of IT technologies in translation and also a course of post-editing. So, to retrain translation teachers with a degree in translation a modular program is needed with a basic psychoeducational block and a number of modules addressed to different groups depending on their background and experience.

With foreign language teachers turned translation trainers the situation is totally different. First of all, they will need a basic practical course of translation or/and interpreting and a course of Translation Studies. The need for the latter has already been explained. As for the practical course of translation, it is necessary for several reasons. On the one hand, it seems strange: why teach practical translation to people who have a more or less lengthy experience both of translating and teaching translation? But on the other hand, the very fact of practicing something does not necessarily guarantee that people are doing it in the right way. It has already been said that many foreign language teachers, who have never

been taught translation, have a somewhat amateurish concept of what translation is. They translate isolated words and phrases, rendering lexical meanings rather than sense, they interpret the principle of “keeping close to the original text” as the demand to translate a foreign text literally, copying all its forms and constructions. They practice this kind of translation themselves (we come across such translations daily) and teach their students to do the same. This is not an abstract inference. These are observations made over years of teaching at all sorts of professional development courses. It proves that translation trainers with no degree in translation need both a course in Translation Studies and a course in practical translation, however long their experience as translators and as teachers of translation might be.

They will also need an extensive course introducing them to the specifics of the translation industry, its structure, various requirements to translations and translators, etc. They will certainly need a familiarization course to gain basic practical knowledge and background information on modern technologies and instruments used in translation.

The major problem with such retraining programs is to somehow squeeze them into the busy schedule of university professors. This is actually the main reason why professional development courses are now seldom longer than a week. In other fields there are retraining programs that are lengthy enough. But they are programs designed for independent studying, with a set of learning materials, a list of assigned tasks and consequent tests – a pattern totally unacceptable for retraining translation teachers, especially those with no degree in translation.

A proper retraining program in our case must be comprehensive. There should be no less than 300-350 hours of guided classes. They could be organized in a combined format, with some classes being conducted online and some as contact, face-to-face interaction. The re-trainees should be provided with some materials for studying independently, of course. However, the results of this independent work must be necessarily discussed with professors. It could be partly done in the format of a videoconference. But it should always be some form of personal interaction. There is no place for tests here because the process of shaping students’ mentality cannot be formalized. It involves analyzing, debating and looking for alternatives.

As for the classes devoted to classroom techniques and translation proper, they must be taught exclusively in the face-to-face format. Here immediate contact with the professor of the course is of vital importance. The thing is that teaching translation is not just teaching its technology. It is necessary to explain to students what they can and should do with a text and what they have no right to do, what is the essence of translation, what is the correlation between the situation in which the text is generated and that in which it is translated, and how it all influences the process of decision-making and reflects on the final TL text. This is probably the toughest challenge for a translation teacher, and the purpose of a retraining program is to teach how to do it. It is the core of translation didactics, on which we shall dwell further.

These classes must also include explanations of the essence and purpose of translation analysis. Unfortunately, analysis is often thought of as just a formal stage of working with the text. Students are supposed to say who is the author of the text, when the text was written and what it is about. Sometimes, though not often, students are asked to think about a possible purpose of translation. That is the end of it. Decisions made in the process of translation seldom depend on the results of the analysis. For the trainers to be able to make such analysis purposeful in class, the professor of the course must demonstrate how it can influence translation itself.

A combination of on-line and off-line classes with seminars in the format of video conference will allow to reduce the time of re-trainees' physical absence from their university and at the same time provide course participants with an extensive, comprehensive, and integral program.

3.3. The Role of Translation Didactics in Training Translation Teachers

Translation didactics is the most important course in the re-training program. It is equally needed by translation teachers with and without a degree in translation, neither of whom were taught it in college. It is necessary to differentiate between general didactics of translation, which is actually philosophy of translation, and didactics of some particular types of translation, which we would rather call methodology.

General translation didactics must be an obligatory basic course. The purpose of teaching is to inculcate it in the minds of translation teachers that translation deals with texts, not with words and phrases; that a professional translator differs from an automatic translator in understanding the sense of the text instead of identifying the meanings of separate words; in seeing every text in some context - whether linguistic or extralinguistic; in understanding that there is no such thing as "translation in general" or "justa translation", that every translation is done for some specific purpose. They should realize that there cannot be just one "correct translation", that translation is always multivariant. That translation consists in making decisions, with choices and decisions depending on when and for which purpose the text was written and why and for whom it is now being translated.

Another aspect of general translation didactics is the way a translator treats the text. Unfortunately, many translation teachers are convinced that the quality of translation depends on the number of transformations made by the translator – the more the better. The very right to make transformations is understood as an absolute freedom from the form and structure of the original text. Trained by such teachers, students feel it not only as their right, but as their duty to change something in the structure of the TL text in comparison with the original. When asked what the purpose of such changes was, they answer somewhat illogically: "But a translator has the right to do it!". Transformations for the sake of transformations became a regular disease among students, just because they are not taught to understand that any deviation from the original must have some reason, must be purposeful and well-grounded. Moreover, the purpose and the grounds can only be determined by the norms and popular usages of the TL. Translation trainers must explain the difference between translating the original and editing it. To do it, the teachers themselves must be aware of the difference and have a correct, one would even say respectful attitude to the original text.

There is one more aspect to it. Very often students distort the text saying something like "It sounds better this way", and this approach is sanctioned by their teachers. It is absolutely necessary to make translation trainers understand that sense and meaning can never be sacrificed to the "beauty" of translation.

It is also necessary to discuss the translator's attitude to the recipient of translated text, the necessity to see the text with the eyes of the recipient, who views it through the prism of their own cultural background.

With all their seeming obviousness, these things are not always realized by translation trainers. It is necessary to inculcate this attitude in them, to make it part of their perception of the process of translation in order to be able to develop such attitude in students. All this should be made clear to translation trainers in the course of translation didactics.

3.4. Training a New Generation of Translation Teachers

The second solution to the problem of not having enough competent translation trainers is to develop programs for training a new generation of translation teachers. Since bachelors cannot be university teachers, the only option is master's programs.

Here there also should be two different programs, one for those who have bachelor's degree in translation (group 1), the other for teachers of foreign languages (group 2). Both groups will graduate as masters in Translation and Translation Training.

In group 1 there will be students with all the skills and knowledge necessary for being a translator, with an up-to-date theoretical background. So, all they will need in the line of translation is a brushing-up course that would help them keep up their level. But they will certainly need an extensive course of translation didactics.

Apart from this, the program should include a basic psychoeducational block that will include pedagogy, educational psychology, teaching methods, and general didactics.

As for group 2, the program should include an intensive course of practical translation/interpreting, a course in Translation Studies and an extensive course of translation didactics.

After 2 years of such training both groups should have at least 3 months of internship with students working, as suggested by D.Gouadec, in a translation firm, in an in-house translation service and as a free-lance professional for a month in each capacity gaining the expertise that will give them the necessary competences.

4. CONCLUSION

In order to meet the requirements of the modern translation market it is necessary to have a sufficient number of highly qualified translators and interpreters, which in its turn necessitates training a sufficient number of professional translation teachers. However, at present translation is taught either by people with a degree in translation and no degree in education or by foreign language teachers. Today universities in Russia do not offer any specialized degree programs for translation teachers. The only way out of the situation is to develop and introduce extensive retraining programs for those who currently teach translation and two types of master's degree programs for training translation teachers having a bachelor's degree either in translation or in teaching foreign languages. In both types of programs, the pedagogical and translation components of education will supplement each other, so that graduates will acquire competences necessary for being good translation teacher. The paper outlines possible formats and content of such programs.

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