

TEACHING TRANSLATION IN KAZAKHSTAN: PURPOSES AND PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract. *Translation Studies is one of the most popular specialties in the Republic of Kazakhstan due to multilingual nature of the Kazakhstan community. The first reason for its popularity is related to the specific internal situation based both on Soviet heritage and contemporary language policy; the peculiarities of intercultural communication in Kazakhstan is also a topical problem related to translator training. The second reason is rooted in such peculiarities of Kazakhstan foreign policy as transparency and cooperation that is why the role of translation has increased dramatically since the beginning of XXI century. So the analysis of translator training is considered to be very important in order to understand strong and weak points of every special discipline. Feedback such as a brief survey of students' opinions helps us in establishing the relationship between practical application of translator training and content of the curriculum. Results of such survey are also presented in the article. One of the evident tendencies represented here is the increasing popularity of Machine Translation, including CAT techniques, among the proposed items. It seems reasonable because of the increasing importance of special software designed for translation. It is also stated in the article that the main purpose of translator training is to provide our students a strong theoretical background as a foundation for critical analysis of possible ways of solving translation problems.*

Key words: *translation studies, Kazakhstan, language policy, translation training*

1. INTRODUCTION

Translation Studies is an academic inter-discipline dealing with the systematic study of the theory, description and application of translation, interpreting, and localization. It has become very popular in the Republic of Kazakhstan in recent years for several reasons. The first one is related to the specific and a very complicated internal situation due to both Soviet heritage and contemporary language policy. The second reason is rooted in such peculiarities of Kazakhstan foreign policy as transparency and cooperation; that is why the importance of translation has increased dramatically since the beginning of XXI century. The multilingual nature of the Kazakhstan community is also one of the very important reasons for the necessity of improving translator training. Apart from these three factors, Alan J. Feely and Anne-Wil. Harzing (2004) noted that multinational companies and their subsidiaries are an increasingly important part of the global business landscape, and English is mostly used as an international language in communication among their businesses. So that, it seems very important to improve English-Kazakh, English-Russian, and especially trilingual translation, using contemporary methods of teaching translation.

These three pairs of languages are actually indispensable in Kazakhstan today. They are Kazakh/Russian, Russian/English, and especially English/Kazakh, that is why the highly developed skills in Kazakh and Russian meet the requirements for the future translators. Hence, the analysis of future translator training is considered to be very important in order to understand some strong and weak points of every discipline included into the curriculum. It is also necessary to assess the practical importance of compulsory and elective courses in order to accomplish both the process and the result of translator training.

2. RELEVANT PROBLEMS OF TEACHING TRANSLATION IN KAZAKHSTAN TODAY

There are also some problems which should be mentioned as the most relevant for translator training:

- use of CAT and Machine translation (at this stage, it is not highly developed);
- training in simultaneous (especially trilingual) translation;
- improvement of future translator's background knowledge as an essential component of professional activity;
- critical thinking development. Thus, in accordance with Pym (1993), specialization in the translation market implies that "a good translator is not someone who knows many things but someone who has the skills and contacts to find specific information when necessary" (Pym 1993, p.110), which means that critical thinking development and research skills should also be taken into account in Translation Studies training.

The lack of material for training in trilingual translation, which is really relevant for modern Kazakhstan, is also one of the most important hindrances in teaching translation. Hereafter, different types of disciplines related to Translation Studies program, will be analyzed from the point of view of solving these problems.

3. TYPES OF DISCIPLINES IN TRANSLATION STUDIES

The courses provided for TR students, should be classified not only in accordance with their status in the curriculum, but also on the basis of theoretical or practical approach. It is also necessary to take into account the peculiarities of Translation Studies and the stage of future translator professional development, because all the courses forming the curriculum form a system on the principle of increasing complexity.

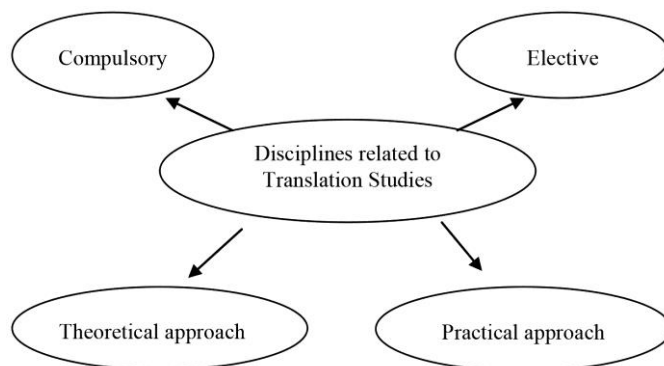


Fig. 1 Types of disciplines in Translation Studies

Of course, the second principle of the Translation Courses subdivision is not very strict. It is obvious that some elements of practical approach are inherent in theoretical disciplines and vice versa some theoretical elements in practical courses content can be considered as having their own distinctive features.

3.1. Compulsory courses in Translators Training

First of all, it is necessary to underline that the list of courses given below, comprises the disciplines included in the State Overall Standard; so that, all these courses are mandatory for all universities in Kazakhstan.

3.1.1. Practical compulsory disciplines

The following Practical Disciplines proposed in all Universities of Kazakhstan for Translators/Interpreters Training are aimed at future translator language skills improvement.

- English for General-Occupational Purposes

The courses are especially for students who are preparing to advance their English and become equipped with foreign language skills necessary for better translation.

The courses mostly include students' development of oral skills, listening comprehension, brief grammar review, developing writing skills and enrichment of vocabulary by means of the usage of Cambridge Advanced Examination (CAE) preparation course books and some supplementary materials.

- English for Specific/Professional Purposes I - C1, C2. These courses cover materials to prepare for Cambridge Proficiency Examination (CPE) with additional reference to learners' future profession. Selected texts and activities provide a basis for follow up translation assignments. Most lessons begin with a speaking activity to introduce the theme and to prepare for the task that follows, which may be listening, reading, comprehension or summary. Authentic texts from a variety of sources, including newspapers and magazines, advertisements, non-fiction books and literary extracts, give students exposure to the type of reading texts. A wide knowledge of vocabulary is one of the keys to achieving a good result in learners' proficiency. Students are encouraged to respond to the ideas in the text and are given the opportunity to put new vocabulary to immediate use, and then they are encouraged to use the new vocabulary in their follow up translation tasks.

- Practice of literary translation. During this course the following themes are primarily covered: translation of the emotive prose and publicity materials; the foundations of the emotive prose and literary publicity style; accumulation of logical, functional, communicative and emotional aspects in literary translation; analysis of the text and strategy of translation; preparation for translation and foundations of pre-translation analysis; development of translation strategy; terminological and logical analyses and the communicative structure of the ST. Contextual analysis of the plot, stylistic analysis, and hidden thoughts are considered. Lexical translation devices are covered: transliteration (transcription, semantic modification, description, commentary, mixed (parallel) translation. Grammatical devices are practiced: functional replacement, additions, antonymic translation, conversion, descriptive translation. Stylistic devices are also studied: change of the word content, change of the image, word-for-word translation. Finally, transformations used in literary translation are introduced: concretization, generalization, modulation, semantic development, compression, antonymic translation, descriptive translation, compensation.

- Practice of written translation. This course covers the following topics: translation of articles from Kazakh/Russian and English newspapers; translation of business language (English and Kazakh/Russian) with emphasis on technical terms from economics, management, banking, commerce, insurance, and business law; format, style and expression in business documents (contracts, proxies, etc.); exercises and presentations in class as well as written assignments.

- Practice of informative translation. Translation of informative texts is highly standardized: this applies both to the structure of the whole text and to the arrangement of the individual paragraphs and sentences. The translator should know and obey certain rules to achieve success in his/her work which may thus be referred to as the craft since the task of the translator is to find target language equivalents of the source text units and use them in translation as standard substitutes. So the main task of the course is to provide students with the knowledge of peculiarities of different informative-texts translation taking into account their specific structure and use of standard word-combinations.

- Practice of oral translation. This course requires students' training in comprehension, note-taking and memory skills in both English and Kazakh/Russian; the acquisition of specialized vocabulary in various fields through the study of authentic conference texts; exercises on consecutive oral translation of conference papers; speech expansion based on notes, etc.

- Classical language (Latin). This course introduces basic knowledge of the Latin language in relation to modern languages; morphology, syntax and word building are given special attention. The language of the instruction is Kazakh/Russian.

Two types of internship are also represented in the curriculum - educational (training) and professional – productive. The first one is held at companies that can offer relevant conditions suitable for translation or interpretation. This kind of internship aims to provide a basis for the bridge between the university and the industry. Students are required to keep a diary, and write observation reports to their supervisors. Professional – Productive internship can be considered as the second stage being fulfilled at companies, translation bureaus, higher educational institutions, newspapers and TV agencies, advertising agencies. The main purpose of professional – productive internship is to provide conditions suitable for translation or interpretation which requires a full time internship for at least a month possibly leading to a part-time job in that company. Supervisors receive feedback from both the company officials and the student translator on the practicum process.

Thus, all practical compulsory courses are related to multi-fold translator training. But it is possible to point out one weak point in translator/interpreter training based on our State Standard: "...instead of the lack of resources and technology, there is too much for a person to be able to come to grips with" (Fictumova, 2004).

3.1.2. Theoretical compulsory courses and their importance for translators training

As it is stated above, theoretical disciplines are also aimed at the formation of translator professional competence, because practical skills of translator/interpreter in the majority of cases rest upon their knowledge of translation theory and related courses. Due to peculiarities of translator training in Kazakhstan, it is necessary to describe some key disciplines forming the theoretical background of the future translator.

- Introduction to specialization in translation:

The main topics of the course include: the role and significance of translation in the modern world; basic qualities of the translator as mediator among representatives of different languages and cultures; language competence, psychology and physical training, background knowledge; general conception of translation and theory of translation in the system of philological disciplines; types of translation; notion of translation unit - word for word, adequate and free; general theory and history of literary translation; translation as global transformational science; professional translator's ethics; rules of translation; training for negotiations; methods, principles and ways of translation; main translation categories.

- Cultural linguistics: culture of communication in practice. This course focuses on the ethics of inter-personal communication. Case studies and examples are selected from both the native language and the target language. Some of the topics include: principles of dialogue and communication, formal and informal situations, slang, verbal communication and the body language, effective communication techniques.

- Principles of interpreter's professional activity. Learners as future translators are introduced to the job of translators. Some of the topics that are covered especially focus on their basic duties in a translation bureau, peculiarities of social context during oral consecutive translation, legal considerations of written translation of official papers, etc.

- Theory of translation provides the translator with the appropriate tools of analysis and synthesis, making him/her aware of what s/he is to look for in the original text, what type of information s/he must convey in the TT and how s/he should achieve his/her goal. These courses contain the materials for the workshop on the general theory of translation and aims to help students discuss basic postulates of translation theory and to use them in text analysis and in identification of translation problems. The practical assignments are preceded by brief accounts of respective theoretical assumptions which provide students with the required terminology. Specific problems of English-Kazakh/Russian translation will also be presented. This material will deal with various lexical, collocational, grammatical and stylistic difficulties of English-Kazakh/Russian translation.

- Functional stylistics (English/Kazakh/Russian). Stylistics explores the subsystems of English language styles, the character of their language expression, and semantic nature of stylistic devices (phonetic, lexical, phraseological, and syntactical) and specifies features of written and oral language. The aim is to provide the students with a theoretical knowledge of Stylistics that will enable them to start their own stylistic analysis. The task is to describe and specify the whole range of stylistic devices found in language, and to establish their relevant characteristics and functions.

- Theory and practice of intercultural communication. Principles of communication in a multilingual, multicultural society that create relations between people who speak different languages, the role of translators to eliminate conflicts and misunderstandings and similar aspects of communication issues are covered through specific examples and case studies. The course is conducted in essentially English with the influence of our multilingual atmosphere.

- English literature and problems of translation. Obviously, this course is essential for the students since English literature is closely connected with the English language. The course is planned to cover English literature from the beginning to the present. The course includes a brief historical outline, literary trends and notable writers and poets. Besides this the students read the literary works in the original, analyze them, compare

the authentic text with Kazakh/Russian/Kazakh translation and work out the strong and weak points of a translated version.

Writing Graduation Project is considered to be the final phase of Translators Training. The senior student of 'Translation Studies' takes up 'a theme for the completion thesis' at the beginning of the senior academic year and is guided by an academic advisor throughout the year. The following fields of science are examples: applied linguistics, comparative linguistics, social linguistics, psycholinguistics, cultural linguistics, bilingualism, problems of translation, literature and translation, education of translators, etc. The academic supervisor assesses the student for his or her performance on the process, decision making, selecting materials, and the tools that he or she uses in the research (instrumental management).

To sum up, it is necessary to underline that all the theoretical compulsory disciplines are aimed at the formation of the translator's personal qualities. They include a strong theoretical background as a foundation for critical analysis of possible ways of solving translation problems. Unfortunately, the number of credits intended for theoretical courses does not correspond to such a complicated purpose.

3.2. Elective courses for future translators

Elective Courses should also be subdivided into groups on the basis of the predominance of theoretical or practical components in their content.

3.2.1. Practically-oriented elective courses

Some of disciplines mentioned below are aimed at general improvement of future translator competence (e.g. Analytical Reading, Public Speaking), but most of them are related to the certain types of translator/interpreter skills.

- Written translation of modern literary texts. This course is designed for the students of foreign language teaching (English) to provide them with the approach of translators to written texts, which are selected from among the authentic texts of literary style such as short stories, extracts of classics, and articles of popular writers and magazines.
- English for tourism. The course includes the fundamentals of the interpreter's work with foreign tourists. Besides, students are provided with the knowledge of the culture of English/American realia, geographic, and socio-economic peculiarities and elements of cross-cultural communication.
- Analytical reading. The purpose of the course is to teach students peculiarities of texts, belonging to various functional styles and philological analysis of texts which include text structure, character sketches and linguistic features.
- Public speaking. The aim of the course is to teach future interpreters how to behave and speak at public events such as conferences, congresses, business meetings, etc. The course also teaches linguistic peculiarities of public speeches.
- Business English. The discipline covers a wide range of business vocabulary and types of texts structure. The material under study includes texts devoted to economic structure of modern countries, main enterprises, managements, bank structure, finance, etc.
- Translation of journalistic texts. The course contains a wide range of journalistic texts devoted to cultural, social, economic and political events in the world. The students learn structure translation peculiarities of such texts.

- Techniques of official texts translation. The aim of the course is to acquaint the students with the structure, semantics and linguistics peculiarities of official texts. The students are provided with a wide range of official documents: agreements, contracts, treaties, powers of attorney, etc. Besides, students fulfill practical tasks.
- Introduction to written translation. The discipline covers the types of texts due for written translation: literary, political, business texts, business letters, etc. Besides, it provides students with the knowledge of translation methods: generalization, specification, modulation, loan-translation, etc.
- Translation of scientific texts. On the wide linguistic material students study the structure of scientific texts, peculiarities of the vocabulary used, morphological, syntactic and stylistic features, and their translation from Kazakh/Russian into English and from English into Kazakh/Russian.
- Note-taking techniques for interpreters. The aim of the course is to teach the semantic structure of the intercourse and a method of conveying it into the target language. Students learn a wide variety of notes (sings) elaborated and used by interpreters in translation.
- Practical techniques of ELT. The course acquaints students with modern methodological theories and their application to ELT. The students learn the latest methods of teaching vocabulary, grammar, speaking, reading, writing and listening.

Some elective disciplines can be regarded as standing ‘at the border’ between practically and theoretically-oriented courses, like the following ones.

- Practical phonetics of English. The aim of the course is to study in practical usage the following components of phonetics: pronunciation of sound combinations with the aspects of assimilation, adaptation, elision; the word-stress and prosodic picture of the sentence and the extract.
- Modern Kazakh/Russian language (theory and practice). The course contains such components of as theoretical phonetics, lexicology, theoretical grammar and stylistics of the Kazakh/Russian language. The discipline is provided with the wide range of practical tasks and exercises which create the wide linguistic outlook of future interpreters.

Certainly, there are varied elective courses providing different skills such as speaking (public speaking, introduction to written translation, written translation of modern literary texts and analytical reading), but it is also necessary to pay special attention to listening skills improvement, because it is the factor of paramount importance for future interpreter. In addition, it is also should be taken into account that legal translation (which is partially represented in techniques of official texts translation) is now taking up the key position in translation. So that, such kind of elective courses should be included in the curriculum for future translators. Innovations in the sphere of translation (different types of machine translation, use of translation memory systems, etc.) “equip graduates with a thorough knowledge of the translation industry, professions and processes, and with a range of competences that are relevant to professional requirements in this area” (Optimale, 2010).

3.2.2. Theoretical elective courses

Most of these courses are aimed at the development of translator/interpreter’s mental outlook due to professional sphere. Some of disciplines correspond not only to Translation Studies itself, but also to teaching translation from methodological point of view.

- **Methods of teaching translation.** This course covers the following topics: preliminary level of teaching translation; potential and operational structures of teaching translation methodology; integrating the knowledge of translation theory into methodology; main methodological devices used in teaching translation; teachers' commentary on translation; dealing with student mistakes; factors creating lingua-ethnic barriers and methods of their neutralization; the role of linguistic norm and functional styles in methodology; common mistakes in translation; 'free' and 'word-for-word' translations and their negative influence for communication; teaching cultural component in translation.

- **Contemporary translation studies.** This course allows the students to overview the current trends in 'Translation Studies'; the influence of global changes and developments in societies and technology in this branch of science; perspectives of certain research topics about translation; and the vision of translator as a social scientist. Conducted in English, this course is suggested for students who would like to get a graduate degree in applied linguistics.

- **Lingua-cultural aspects of translation.** The aim of this course is to show the relations between language, culture and translation, and develop an understanding of cross-disciplinary approach to the social sciences that investigate them. Special topics of discussions and sample situations that arouse interest result in new dissertation topics for further research that contribute to the field.

- **Literary Kazakh/Russian language for philologists.** The discipline includes the knowledge in grammatical, lexical and stylistic peculiarities of the Kazakh/Russian language. The discipline provides linguistic fundamentals for further teaching translation disciplines. Larson pointed out the principle of the best translation: the best translation is one which (1) uses the normal language forms of the receptor language, (2) communicates, as much as possible, to the receptor language speakers the same meaning that was understood by the speakers of the source language, and (3) maintains the dynamics of the original source language text. Maintaining the 'dynamics' of the original source text means that the translation is presented in such a way that it will, hopefully, evoke the same response as the source text attempted to evoke (Larson, 1998). So that, skills and knowledge in native language is as significant as in a foreign one for the process of translation.

- **Research techniques in language studies.** The discipline contains a wide array of scientific techniques used in philological research. The students are taught on diverse linguistic materials how to use these techniques in practice.

To sum up, it is possible to state that translator/interpreter should also be provided with special knowledge for future scientific activity. There are a lot of correlations between linguistics and translatology as a developing branch of science; that is why providing of special tools for scientific research in the sphere of Translation Studies is required.

4. SURVEY OF STUDENTS' OPINION

In order to provide feedback, i.e., to make clear our students' opinion concerning the present situation and their perspective a brief survey was held by our Department. The questionnaire included two questions which were aimed at investigating students' attitude concerning the curriculum. Senior Students of Translation Studies Department in our University were selected as the target group for the survey.

1. Which of the courses mentioned below may be considered as useful for future translators' training?

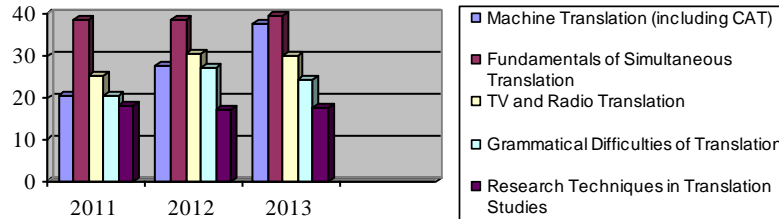


Fig. 2

Fig. 2 demonstrates such tendencies as:

- The increasing popularity of machine translation (including CAT techniques) among the proposed items. It seems reasonable because of the increasing importance of special software designed for translation. It is stated in contemporary scientific research that the first half of the twentieth century was characterized by revolutions in information and communication technologies that have influenced numerous professions, including translation. The new technology has made translators' work easier, but, in order to meet the market needs, information and communication technologies must occupy their rightful place in student training. (Archer 2002; Askehave 2000).

- The maximum popularity combined with a small-scale increase of such disciplines as fundamentals of simultaneous translation, which is also considered to be a response to the challenges of our epoch.

On the other hand, our students underestimated the importance of such disciplines as grammatical difficulties of translation and research techniques in translation studies. Perhaps, they did not comprehend the importance of scientific research in the field of Translation and also didn't take into account the relevance of such disciplines for their future professional activity. At the same time, Morry Sofer (1999) stated that translators must develop search and research techniques and must be able to obtain basic reference sources in order to produce quality translation. If translators do not have a good command of such techniques, they cannot translate texts concerning some special subjects and fields. Such courses as Research Techniques in Translation.

2. Which of the Elective Courses in our Curriculum seems to be the most applicable to your future professional activity?

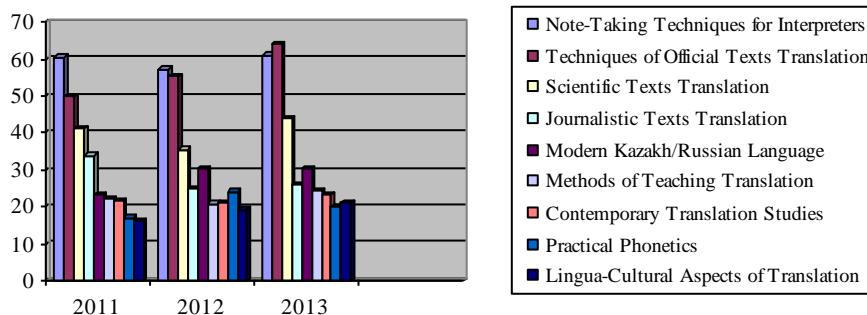


Fig. 3

Since translation is multidisciplinary, translator training programs must include not only language command both in source and target languages, but also, equally important, must bring together knowledge and skills that belong to different disciplines, such as documentation, terminology, desktop publishing, as well as some knowledge of specialized texts. Students must learn this so that they can ultimately thrive collectively as members of a profession (Aula, 2005). Diverse elective disciplines presented here were ranged according to their prospective importance for translator professional activity. The majority of students who had finished Professional-Productive Internship, considered such disciplines as Note-Taking Techniques, Techniques of Official Texts Translation, Scientific Texts Translation to be the most applicable. This fact indicates, first of all, students priorities based on their first professional experience and their own impressions; secondly, it proves the relevance of the courses aimed at translation of certain type of texts.

5. CONCLUSION

Anabel Galán-Mañas stated that “higher education institutions and employers should work together to identify market needs and provide training accordingly. This collaboration should also envisage real work experience for students as part of their training before they finish their studies” (Galán-Mañas 2011, p.1). It is also possible to establish the relation between practical application of translators training and content of the curriculum using brief surveys of students’ opinion. Fictumova J. (2004) pointed out that “in the last decade the practice of translating and therefore also training of translators, like many other features of our lives, have undergone a major change”, which should take into account the content of disciplines dedicated to translator/interpreter training. Thus, theoretical and practical, compulsory and elective disciplines should be aimed at building up of translator’s personal qualities. The most important purpose of translator training is to provide our students a strong theoretical background as a foundation for critical analysis of possible ways of solving translation problems.

At the present stage of Translators Training development in Kazakhstan there are no special courses aimed at forming skills in innovative translation technologies (e.g. using Translation Memory programs, application of computer-assisted translation etc.). Whereas, many specialists in the field of translation state that “familiarizing translation students with a virtual environment helps them to acquire the professional skills that will be demanded in the future, since in the current information society a translator’s work demands the automation of most tasks, the use of tele-working” (Alcina, 2002).

Finally, the most important goals today are the development of research in the field of multilingual translation (English - Kazakh - Russian languages) with the usage of information technologies and investigation into possibilities of modern information technologies usage in the process of translators/interpreters training.

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