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TRANSLATION IN THE ENGLISH CLASSROOM

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В статье рассматриваются возможности использования перевода с русского языка на английский в процессе преподавания иностранного языка в вузе с целью оптимизации аудиторной работы, а также лингвистического, психологического и личностного развития студентов.

Ключевые слова: перевод, функционально-переводной метод, иностранный язык, родной язык, лингвистика.

The article reveals the possibilities and reasons for using Russian-English translation with university students; offers the ways of educating and developing them linguistically, psychologically and personally through translation activities.

Keywords: translation, Functional-Translation method, foreign language, mother tongue, linguistics.

Every foreign language instructor is well aware of classical and up-to-date teaching methods and technologies. Today, the preference is given to those ones that deny the use of the mother tongue in the classroom: natural approach (S. Krashen), communicative approach (M. Halliday), suggestopedia (G. Lozanov), the silent way approach (C. Gattengo), lexical approach (M. Lewis) [2, p. 9]. One will immediately classify the Grammar-Translation method as irrelevant, old-fashioned and unproductive. At the same time, translation from Russian into English is one of the customary tasks and activities for local academic English instructors. None of the textbooks compiled by Russian-speaking lecturers can avoid traditional translation tasks. There are also some language teaching technologies that establish close links between the mother tongue and the target language: sandwich technique and mother tongue mirroring (W. Butzkamm), code switching, content and language integrated learning (D. Marsh), etc. [1].

The truth seems to lie in the rational use, combination and variation of all available techniques and methods for the pursuit of certain educational goals. If we use translation in our classroom, it doesn't really mean that we apply the Grammar-Translation method of teaching. But there is no doubt that translation practices can be successfully integrated into the academic plan if you know their potential and turn this mechanical transformation into a challenging and stimulating task. G. Anderman, the Professor of Translation Studies at the University of Surrey, did a survey on teaching translation in 21 British universities: 19 of them responded that teaching translation is "a way of improving students' linguistic proficiency" [3, p. 137]. Some other language practitioners argue that "translation could be renovated and made communicative ... if we could shift the emphasis from learning translation as a set of discrete skills ... to using translation as a resource for the promotion of language learning, ... using it to our advantage as a powerful tool for developing language awareness" [4].

In this article we are going to research some worthwhile applications of Russian-English translation in the academic English classroom with different levels of students.

1) Translation for educational purposes.

There are some common uses of translation (words, word combinations and sentences) that work mostly with beginners and intermediate students: semantization of vocabulary; drilling or testing the vocabulary; practicing certain

grammar constructions and forms. Advanced students can successfully make an English summary of a Russian text or even do sight translation. In fact, these tasks apparently help to improve students' competence of the foreign language. But the educational potential of translation is much wider.

Example 1. *На монополистических рынках наряду с мелкими и средними фирмами существуют и достаточно крупные компании. – Rather big companies operate in monopolistic markets along with small and medium businesses. / Along with small and medium businesses, there are quite big companies in monopolistic markets.*

Важную роль в конкурентных отношениях играют объем и структура той информации о конкурентах, которой располагают фирмы. – The amount and structure of the information companies have about their competitors plays an important role in their competitive relations. / Companies' competitive relations are affected by the information they have about their competitors.

To be able to translate these sentences, apart from grammar and vocabulary, students need to “think in English” to make the required transformations of the word order and the sentence structure. Besides, this activity often encourages discussions since no two students have identical translations. And if senior students do it at sight, it requires the consolidation of economic background, lexical and grammar competence, and even some linguistic knowledge (style and text arrangement).

Example 2. *Инвестиции – investments, а не investitions; аналитик – analyst, а не analytic; аппарат – apparatus, а не apparat; повар – cook, а не cooker (like worker, teacher, etc.).*

Here students will learn specific word building patterns that can be confusing in English.

Example 3. *Отличный, восхитительный, удивительный, великолепный, прекрасный – great (excellent), delightful (admirable), amazing (wonderful), gorgeous (magnificent), beautiful (glorious).*

It will help students discover and learn the synonyms and the variety of the English language.

Example 4. *Открыть книгу – to open a book; открыть Америку – to discover America; открыть лицо – to show the face; открыть секрет – to reveal the secret; открыть (обнародовать) информацию – to disclose information; открыть фирму – to set up a company.*

This task will teach students that words in English should be chosen contextually, with proper shades in their meanings, rather than automatically.

Thus, translation develops three qualities, essential to language learning: accuracy, clarity and flexibility; students are taught to think comparatively and thoroughly.

There are also other approaches including speech-oriented translation activities. Robert Weschler developed a Functional-Translation method which helps students understand and express the most useful ideas using their mother tongue knowledge and skills, thus making the learning process enjoyable and stress-free. He says that it is “better to think of the inevitable influence of the L1 (here – mother tongue) on the L2 (here – target language) as a potential aid or tool; most students in “English-only” classes ... are constantly asking themselves, “But what does it mean?” and they answer themselves in Japanese (here – mother tongue), no matter how much the teacher may want them to “think in English” [5]. Here are some examples of bilingual activities offered by R. Weschler:

1. “*Bilingual Dialogues*”. Students make pairs. Student A receives an English dialogue while student B receives the equivalent in his native language. Each is given about five minutes to translate the dialogue, line by line, back into the other language. On completion, they compare their translations with the originals of each language, noticing the differences and writing the original above their own translation. Then, they act out the dialogue. With this exercise, students will learn that there are many ways to say the same thing.

2. “*Lost in the Translation*”. Students are seated in circles of up to ten students each, counting off 1 to 10. Even-numbered students each receive a piece of paper with a different English sentence written across the top. Odd-numbered students each receive a piece of paper with an unrelated sentence in their native language written across the top. All sentences are chosen to focus on specific translation problems. Each person reads their sentence, translates it directly below, folds the top of the paper over so only their translation shows, and passes her paper to the student to her right. The process continues with translations on the same page going back and forth between English and other language at least six or seven times. Finally, each student reads his paper to the class, from the top down. The ways in which the meaning of the original sentence gets “lost in the translation” leads to linguistic discoveries.

3. “*The Dumb Interpreter*”. Four students are seated facing each other in a square. Student A receives the half of a dialogue in his native language, Student B the English half, Student C (“The Dumb Interpreter”) nothing at all, and Student D (“The Know-it-all Computer”) receives both halves. Re-enacting the real life situation, Student A tries to express his lines in English, Student C tries to correct him, Student D gives the definitive correction to all, and on and on.

2) Translation for linguistic and personal development

Translation is always based on comparison and contrast, analysis and choice. As such, students will enhance their personal analytical and critical thinking

skills, discussion and argumentation capabilities. Linguistically, students will enrich their knowledge of their native language through collocations, idioms and cultural notions; develop their respectful and inquisitive attitude towards it. Translation enables students to explore the potential of both languages – their strengths and weaknesses.

Example 5. *Глядеть, выгядеть, прогядеть, пригядеть, огядеть-ся* – *to look at, to look like, to look over; to look after; to look around.*

Example 6. *У черта на куличках /за тридeвять земель* – *in the middle of nowhere; белая ворона / гадкий утенок* – *a black sheep; на седьмом небе от счастья / на верху блаженства* – *on cloud nine; денег куры не клюют / денег как грязи* – *to have money to burn.*

These tasks can hardly be done without looking deep inside the origin and the meaning of the words. They can also be used to discuss the cultural and perception background of two nations. In addition, the more students are aware of the differences between their native and the foreign language, the less interference between them will occur.

3) Translation for psychological and physiological improvement

Translation is proved to be a sophisticated type of people's cognitive activity since it involves the key functions and processes of their intellectual abilities: attention, perception, memory, and thinking. The mental process of translation includes matching the form and the matter, comparing the general and the particular, practice and theory; analysis, generalization, and classification of information. Students can find it difficult at first, but as soon as translation is well-prepared and organically integrated into the teaching process, it will definitely become stimulating and rewarding for students and instructors.

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