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Trainer's Choices in Teaching Translating/Interpreting

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Abstract

In spite of a relatively great variety of theoretical approaches to translation, translation theory mainly deals, irrespective of how elaborate it is, with fidelity to either the letter or the spirit of a message. The former type is described according to various particular approaches, as literal/semantic/documentary/overt/source language/source culture/author oriented translation while the latter is called communicative/instrumental/covert/cognitive/target language/target culture/reader oriented/ethnocentric translation. The choices discussed here refer to both translation theory and translation pedagogy. Thus, for an undergraduate course in translating/interpreting designed to meet both academic and vocational requirements a communicative translation model is chosen as theoretical background for a training focused on translation as an end product rather than on translation as a process. Mainly based on performance assessment and error analysis this training approach is meant to raise linguistic and cultural awareness and develop associated translational competences.

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Keywords: translation theory; translator training; performance assessment; error analysis; translational competences.

1. Introduction

Although as old as human society,as a profession/art /trade/job, translation is relatively young in terms of theory. In fact, as Susan Bassnett says (1992), "research in translation studies has barely begun. There are dozens of books to be written, doctoral theses to be pursued, theoretical texts to be discovered and translated; literary history is waiting to be re-written as the new knowledge filters through." And in actual fact dozens of translation studies have already been written in the last decades, including a great variety of theoretical approaches. The main issue – whether assumed as such or not – of any translation theory is fidelity to either the letter or the spirit of a message.

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Thus, translation may be described as literal/semantic/documentary/overt/source language/source culture/author oriented or communicative/instrumental/covert/cognitive/target language/target culture/reader oriented/ethnocentric. Different theories give different names to two main types of translation which may be roughly called faithful and unfaithful and account for their relevance.

2. Linguistic Background

Linguistic approaches to translation describe it as an operation performed on languages: a process of substituting a text in one language for a text in another. Such research is mainly focused on the languages involved in the exchange and it is based on the idea of universals in language, on "the belief in a static and absolute *tertium comparationis* in relation to which universally valid concepts are simply given differing labels in various languages" (Snell Hornby, 1988: 65, original emphasis) as a prerequisite of translatability.

The *théorie du sens* as professed by the Sorbonne School of Interpretation and by the cognitive approach to translation clearly refers to the concept of *tertium comparationis* when it identifies a *deverbalized* component of meaning which, in the comprehension of a message, corresponds to "immediate and deliberate discarding of the wording and retention of the mental representation of the message (concepts, ideas, etc.)." (Seleskovitch, 1989: 8).

In the same spirit the *Comparative Stylistics* of Vinay and Darbelnet (1996), a classic in the field of translation studies, attempts to give concrete translating techniques/ procedures reflecting the complex interlingual operations involved in translating as a result of the various ways in which different languages cut out reality.

Vinay and Darbelnet distinguish between two types of translation, namely *direct* and *oblique*. The former creates a direct correspondence between the two languages since translating involves no semantic or grammatical restructuring. The latter exhibits the structural and conceptual differences between the two languages which bring about complex recasts in the translated units, from changes of the grammatical classes to the adoption of a different perspective on the surrounding reality.

The direct translating procedures are: the *loan transfer* (also called *borrowing*), the *loan translation* (also known as *calque*) and the *literal translation*. The indirect/oblique translating procedures Vinay and Darbelnet suggest are: *transposition, modulation, equivalence*. They are also the first to introduce the techniques of *explicitation* and that of *compensation*.

The linguistic model proposed by Vinay and Darbelnet still enjoys a high popularity in spite of recent developments in translation theory. This is mainly due to its relevance to translation training.

3. Pragmatic Arguments

The pragmatic orientation is a result of a new perspective on language and meaning. Pragmatics as contrasted with linguistics emphasizes the relativity of meaning, makes meaning dependent on particular language users and particular communicative situations, "pragmatics has brought considerable insights into the nature of the intended meaning, the relation of meaning to communicative environment and the principles of cooperation and communication between producers and receivers of texts" (Hatim and Mason, 1990: 8). Thus pragmatics deals with the "language in action",it focuses on the Saussurian concept of *parole* and on that of *performance* in Chomsky's terminology.

Within the pragmatic orientation the textual and the functionalist approaches seem to have most substantially contributed to redefining translation as communication.

The assumption that communication by language is primarily communication by texts and translation is a particular form of bilingually mediated communication which occurs between texts is at present assumed by most translation scholars irrespective of their theoretical orientations.

Text as main frame of reference for translation is studied in relation to either its linguistic characteristics and conventions or its dominant communicative function. According to these criteria texts are categorized in *genres* and in *text-types*.

The most widely used text typology is that of Karl Bűhler (1965). Bűhler divides the communicative functions of language into *informative* (referent oriented), *expressive* (source oriented) and *vocative* (audience oriented).

Taking Bűhler's functional theory of language as adapted by Jakobson, Peter Newmark (1988) offers the following comprehensive typology to be used as criterion for choosing the translation method:

- *The expressive function*, dominant in the so called "sacred texts" including such types as:

(1) Serious imaginative literature.

(2) Authoritative statements.

(3) Autobiography, essays, personal correspondence.

- *The informative function*, dominant in the so-called "anonymous" texts divided, according to topic into: scientific, technological, commercial, industrial, economic and other areas of knowledge or events, and according to format into: textbook, report, paper, article, memorandum, minutes.

- *The vocative function* dominant in such "anonymous" texts as: notices, instructions, propaganda, publicity, popular fiction.

To these three original functions Newmark added three more: *the aesthetic* (language designed to please the sense), *the phatic* (language used to maintain friendly contact with the addresser), and *the metalingual* (language's ability to explain, name and criticize its own features).

To each type of text corresponds a method of translation. Thus, anonymous texts are to be translated *communicatively* while "sacred texts" should be rendered *semantically*.

Another pragmatically marked theory of translation is H. Vermeer's *skopos theory* in which translation is no longer a mere process of transcoding but a specific form of human action, with a *purpose* technically referred to as translation skopos.

In Vermeer's theory translation is mainly seen as a *commission* "one translates as a result of either one's initiative or someone else's: in both cases, that is, one acts in accordance with a <commission> (…). A commission comprises (or should comprise) as much detailed information as possible on the following: (1) the goal, i.e. a specification of the aim of the commission (…) (2) the conditions under which the intended goal should be attained (naturally including practical matters such as deadline and fee). The statement of goal and the conditions should be explicitly negociated between the client (commissioner) and the translator, for the client may occasionally have an imprecise or even false picture of the way a text might be received in the target culture. Here the translator should be able to make argumentative suggestions. A commission can (and should) only be binding and conclusive, and accepted as such by the translator, if the conditions are clear enough." (Vermeer in Venuti (ed) 2000: 229).

Thus the criterion for choosing a translation method is no longer attached to the text itself but to the *goal*, the *skopos* of the translations as agreed upon, after negociating, with a client. The translation may, under such circumstances be *faithful*, or *unfaithful,* semantic/documentary/overt or communicative/instrumental/covert since "Fidelity to the source text (whatever the interpretation or definition of fidelity) is *one* possible and legitimate skopos commission." (Vermeer in Venuti (ed) 2000: 230, emphasis added).

Mention should also be made that in translating and particularly in interpreting informative messages, *unfaithfulness* to the letter appears to be somewhat inherent, a prerequisite of communication.

4. Message/Process/Profession Centred Pedagogical Approaches

Dorothy Kelly in *A Handbook for Translator Trainers* makes a very critical analysis of the traditional pedagogy of translation. "For a long time in the history of translator training – she argues – trainers have assumed that students or apprentices learn to translate simply by translating. As professional translators with little time to devote to reflection on how to organize teaching and learning, many early trainers limited class activity to asking for on-sight (oral) translation of journalistic and literary texts, with little or no prior preparation on the part of the students, and to offering their own <correct> version as a model after public confirmation that the students' versions lacked professional quality. This approach to training was essentially apedagogical, and of course extremely frustrating for students." (2005: 11) Although drawn in such dull colours this picture might, however, be true given the relatively short history of translation theory and pedagogy.

The recent development of translation studies has had considerable impact on translator training. Especially the pragmatic approaches made the translator pedagogy focus on translation as a profession/job/service. With one notable exception which is Delisle's (1993) translation approach informed by the *théorie du sens* and the contrastive tradition of Vinay and Darbelnet, the translation pedagogies seem to somewhat neglect the message to be translated and the end product, i.e. the translation itself.

Thus Gile says that "The idea is to focus in the classroom not on results, that is, not on the *end product* of the Translation process, but on the process itself. More specifically, rather than simply giving students texts to translate, commenting on them by saying what is <rights> or what is <wrong> in the target language versions produced, and counting on the accumulation of such experience and indications to lead trainees up the learning curve, the process-oriented approach indicates to the student good Translation *principles, methods* and *procedures*." (1995: 10, original emphasis).

The basic concepts and models proposed by Gile are: communication, quality, fidelity to the message, comprehension and knowledge acquisition (documentary research), the sequential model of translation, the effort model, the gravitational model. Gile suggests that the process-oriented approach has the following advantages:

- Progress is faster than with a product orientation which is based on trial and error.
- Attention is focused clearly on one aspect of the process at a time, avoiding dispersion while product orientation implies dealing with all the problems which arise at the same time.
- Greater emphasis is laid on translation strategies, allowing students to better assimilate how to work, rather than whether or not their efforts have born fruit.
- Greater flexibility is possible in areas such as linguistic acceptability or fidelity, which is particularly useful in the early stages of training when comparing students' results with the teachers' or with "ideal" versions can prove de-motivating or even conflictive.

Christiane Nord (1991) proposes a profession - oriented model for translator training based on Vermeer's skopos theory and on Reiss's (1989) and House's (1977) translation typologies which can both be traced back to Bűhler's text typology. Nord's model is the most comprehensive pragmatic approach to both translation theory and translation pedagogy. The translator training should, according to Nord, simulate professional practice and this should not be limited to translating as such but should include a realistic purpose and all profession related circumstances. To this end, translating students have to perform three operations: 1) the translation brief; 2) the source text analysis; 3) the classification and hierarchisation of translation problems. This information is of utmost importance in orientating the translator's choices of translation method emphasizing the responsibility translators have towards their partners in translational interactions who may be commissioners authors, clients, but also towards their readers who must not be deceived in their expectations.

5. Course in Translating/Interpreting for Undergraduate Students - An Integrated Approach

5.1. Professional Competences

Different translator training approaches have shaped different professional profiles according to their particular orientation. Thus, Delisle (1980: 235) points out what he defines as four major essential competences: the linguistic, encyclopedic, comprehension and re-expression competences. Roberts (1984: 172) another linguistically oriented trainer offers a five point description of competences the translation job requires:

1. linguistic (ability to understand the source language and quality of expression in the target language);
2. translational (ability to grasp the articulation of meaning in a text and to transfer it without deforming it into the target language, avoiding interference);
3. methodological (ability to document themselves on a given subject and to assimilate the corresponding terminology);
4. disciplinary (ability to translate texts in certain basic disciplines such as economics, computing, law);
5. technical (ability to use different translation aids, such as word processing, terminological data bases, dictaphones, etc.)

It is interesting to note that the functionalist description of competences is not different from the linguistic one in terms of content – the abilities referred to are the same – but it is different in terms of importance – which is inferred form a different hierarchisation. Nord ranges them as follows: "… the essential competences required of a translator [are] competence of text reception and analysis, research competence, transfer competence, competence of text production, competence of translation quality assessment, and, of course, linguistic and cultural competence both on the source and the target side.” (1991: 235).

5.2. Training tools and activities

With a view to developing such competences in undergraduate translating/interpreting students, we propose an integrated training approach.

This approach mainly favours Nord's functionalist model since it appears to involve the most complete investigation of both extra-textual features such as: Sender, Sender's intention, Recipient, Medium, Place, Time, Motive, Function and of the *intra-textual* ones, ranging from: Subject Matter, Content, Presupposition, Composition, Lexis, Sentence Structure to Suprasegmental Features (function of italics, bolds, etc) and Non-Verbal Elements (pictures, diagrams, blank spaces).

After being lectured on the theoretical issues, students are encouraged to discuss/assess previously made translations - their own or others' - using relevant conceptual tools. This activity is meant to make students assimilate and effectively use the knowledge they are delivered.

Nord's theory should, in our opinion, be complemented by a contrastive study of the working language since translation is primarily a matter of language, a particular relation - some call it *contest* (Brisset in Venuti (ed) 2000) - between two languages/cultures.

The contrastive study is based on students' translating from English to Romanian of a selection of linguistic sequences ranging from phrase collocation level to text level. Such study will point out semantic and structural differences which are meaningful if put into a translation perspective, i.e. which can bring about translation problems. This study will make students learn to identify and use the translation procedures as described by Vinay and Darbelnet (1993) and the translation methods assigned to each text-type/function (Newmark, 1988).

We give below some translations of linguistic sequences meant to illustrate the application of various translation procedures as described by Vinay and Darbelnet.

Table 1

Procedure	Translation	
	English	Romanian
Loan/through translation	bulldozer	Bulldozer
Calque	sky-scraper	zgârie-nori
Transposition	Give away	prioritate de dreapta
	medical/law students	studenti la medicină/drept
	attempted murder	tentativă de omor
	she hurried into church	s-a grăbit să intre în biserică
Modulation	Instant coffee	cafea solubilă
	civil servant	functionar public
	sunny-side up	ochi de ou
	I’ll buy you a beer.	Te invit la o bere.

This approach is meant to build up linguistic and cultural competences which are, in our opinion, the main components of the translation competence and therefore the main objectives of a translating course for undergraduate students.

Since the focus of our pedagogical approach is on the end product rather than on the process of translation, the error analysis is designed to be a prevailing activity in our translation course. This mainly deals with students' translations but it also involves others' translations generally informative texts from translated English books. These are books published recently by various Romanian publishing houses.

The analysis followed by a "retranslating" of such texts allows a retrospective use of Nord's model which in our opinion is more accessible to undergraduate students than a prospective one. In a published translation, extra-textual elements, for instance, can be identified more easily than in a prospective translation which requires simulation. Simulate a particular translation situation is a quite unrealistic task for undergraduate - perhaps even for graduate students since they objectively lack knowledge of the professional environment.

A sample of such translation assessment as reflected in the "re- translation" is given below. It is obvious that the translation to be analyzed was chosen for its precarious quality! Good quality translation are not however neglected. Their analysis can also throw light on translation issues and on the relevance of the functionalist model.

Table 2.

Original text	Published translation	Student's translation
Table of Contents	Cuprins	Cuprins
Preface	Prefată	Prefată
1 Introduction	1 Introducere	1 Introducere
2 The Westminster Model of Democracy	2 Modelul Westminster al democratiei	2 Democratia de tip Westminster
3 The Consensus Model of Democracy	3 Modelul consensualist al democratiei	3 Democratia de tip consensual
4 Thirty-Six Democracies	4 Treizeci si sase de democratii	4 Treizeci si sase de democratii
5 Party Systems: Two-Party and Multiparty Patterns	5 Sisteme de partide	5 Sisteme politice: bipartidism si pluripartidism
6 Cabinets: Concentration Versus Sharing of Executive Power	6 Cabinetele. Concentrarea puterii contra distributiei puterii executive	6 Modele de guvernare. Guverne monocolore versus coalitii guvernamentale
7 Executive-Legislative Relations: Patterns of Dominance and Balance of Power	7 Relatii executiv-legislativ. Modele ale dominantei si ale echilibrului puterii	7 Relatia dintre executiv si legislativ: între dominatie si echilibru
8 Electoral Systems: Majority and Plurality Methods Versus Proportional Representation	8 Sisteme electorale. Metodele majoritară si pluralitară contra reprezentării proportionale	8 Sisteme electorale: majoritarism sau reprezentare proportională?
9 Interest Groups: Pluralism Versus Corporatism	9 Grupuri de interese. Pluralism contra corporatism	9 Grupuri de interese: Pluralism vs corporatism
10 Division of Power: The Federal-Unitary and Centralized-Decentralized Contrasts	10 Dispersarea puterii. Contrastele federal-unitar si centralizat-descentralizat	10 Separarea puterilor. Antinomiile federal-unitar si centralizat-descentralizat
11 Parliaments and Congresses: Concentration Versus Division of Legislative Power	11 Parlamente si Congrese. Concentrare contra divizare a puterii legislative	11 Tipuri de parlament si de congres. Puterea legislativă: între concentrare si dispersare
12 Constitutions: Amendment Procedures and Judicial Review	12 Constitutii. Proceduri de amendare si de control constitutional	12 Tipuri de constitutie. Metode de revizuire si modificare
13 Central Banks: Independence Versus Dependence	13 Băncile centrale. Independentă contra dependentă.	13 Băncile centrale: între independentă si dependentă
14 The Two-Dimensional Conceptual Map of Democracy	14 Harta conceptuală bidimensională a democratiei. Cele două dimensiuni	14 Harta bidimensională a democratiei: o reprezentare conceptuală
15 Macro-Economic Management and the Control of Violence: Does Consensus Democracy Make a Difference?	15 Managementul macroeconomic si controlul violentei. Este diferită de-mocratia consensualistă ?	15 Tipurile de guvernare si controlul violentei: Democratia de tip consensual sub semnul întrebării
16 The Quality of Democracy and a "Kinder, Gentler" Democracy: Consensus Democracy Makes a Difference	16 Calitatea democratiei si o democratie „mai gene-roasă mai tolerantă". Democratia consen-sualistă este diferită	16 Calitatea democratiei: democratia consensualistă sau pentru o democratie mai blândă, mai tolerantă
17 Conclusions and Recommendations	17 Concluzii si recomandări.	17 Concluzii si recomandări.
App. A	Apendicele A	Anexa A
Two Dimensions and Ten Basic Variables, 1945-96 and 1971-96	Două dimensiuni si zece variabile fundamentale, 1945-1996 si 1971-1996	Două dimensiuni, zece variabile fundamentale, 1945-96 si 1971-96
App. B	Apendicele B	Anexa B
Alternative Measure of Multipartism, Cabinet Composition, and Disproportionality, 1945-96 and 1971-96	Unităti de măsură alternative ale multipartidismului, compozitiei cabinetului si disproportionalitătii, 1945-1996 si 1971-1996	O metodă de reprezentare cantitativă a pluriparti-dismului, compozitiei cabinetului si disproportionalitătii, 1945-96 si 1971-96
	Referinte	

References	Indice	Bibliografie
Index		Index
The Westminster Model of Democracy	Modelul Westminster al democratiei	Democratia de tip Westminster
In this book I use the term Westminster model interchangeably with majoritarian model to refer to a general model of democracy. It may also be used more narrowly to denote the main characteristics of British parliamentary and governmental institutions (Wilson 1994; Mahler 1997) - the Parliament of the United Kingdom meets in the Palace of Westminster in London. The British version of the Westminster model is both the original and the best-known example of this model. It is also widely admired. Richard Rose (1974, 131) points out that, "with confidence born of continental isolation, Americans have come to assume that their institutions-the Presidency, Congress and the Supreme Court - are the prototype of what should be adopted elsewhere." But American political scientists, especially those in the field of comparative politics, have tended to hold the British system of government in at least equally high esteem (Kavanagh 1974).	În această carte, folosesc termenul *modelul Westminster* interschimbabil cu *modelul majoritarist* cu referire la un model general al democratiei. De asemenea, el poate fi utilizat pentru a numi principalele trăsături ale institutiilor guvernamentale si parlamentare britanice (Wilson 1994; Mahler 1997) – parlamentul Regatului Unit functionează în Palatul Westminster din Londra. Versiunea britanică a modelului Westminster este si cel mai cunoscut exemplu al acestuia, si în acelasi timp versiunea sa originară. Totodată, ea este larg admirată. Richard Rose (1972, p. 131) subliniază: ,,cu încrederea generată de izolarea continentală, americanii au ajuns să-si asume ideea că institutiile lor – Presedintia, Congresul si Curtea Supremă – reprezintă prototipul ce ar trebui adoptat peste tot”. Dar politologii americani, mai ales cei specializati în analiza comparată, au tendinta să nutrească aceeasi înaltă admiratie pentru sistemul britanic de guvernare (Kavanagh 1974).	În această carte foosesc conceptul de *democra tie de tip Westminter* la concurentă cu acela de *democra tie de tip majoritar*, pentru a descrie un model general de democratie. Folosesc acest concept şi pentru a defini principalele trăsături ale parlamentului şi guvernului britanic (Wilson 1994; Mahler 1997) - Palatul Westminster fiind locul în care se reuneşte parlamentul britanic. Democratia de tip Westminster este primul, dar şi cel mai bun model de democratie, apreciat în lumea întreagă. Vorbind despre democratia americană, Richard Rose (1974: 131) arată că „datorită izolării lor continentale, americanii au ajuns să creadă că institutiile lor politice - preşedinti, Congresul şi Curtea Supremă - sunt, de fapt, prototipul democratiei, un exemplu pentru întreaga lume.‟ Dar politologii americani, mai ales cei specializati în politica comparată, par să aibă pentru democratia britanică o admiratie cel putin la fel de mare ca cea pe care o au pentru democratia americană (Kavanagh 1974).

(Original text: Arend Lijphart, *Patterns of Democracy. Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries*, Yale University, 1999.
Published translation: Arend Lijphart, *Modele ale democratiei.* Forme de guvernare si functionare în treizeci si sase de tări, Polirom, Bucuresti, 2000).

A particular translation issue should also be discussed since it is relevant to translating from English to Romanian. Languages in translation may turn into languages in contest. Translation as a dual act of communication which presupposes the existence of two distinct codes, the *source language* and the *target language* reflects the relation between these two codes depending on their respective linguistic and cultural identities.

One purpose of our course in translating/interpreting is to identify and assess the ethnocentric behavoiur, i.e. the dominant character of one of the two languages in translation.

Under particular historical circumstances, one of the two languages in translation – either the *source* or the *target* language – imposes its character or *forma mentis* on the other. Today American English as the language of the most influential power in the world has consistently assumed the leading part in the contest of languages. The New World “invented” the *consumer society*, the *hot dog*, the *spot advertisment*, the *blue jeans*, the *musical*, the *jazz*, etc. and the Old World imported the “inventions” and adopted their American names. Contemporary European languages contain, therefore, a considerable amount of American borrowings. The Romanian language makes no exception. It adopted English words such as, e.g. *hamburger, stress, management, fan, week-end, business, show, tabloid, rating, top, thriller, design,* etc (partially adapted them to the Romanian pronunciation and grammar system) or borrowed only “meanings” and attached them to Romanian words. This type of borrowing, called semantic calque/loan translation is generally associated with words having similar forms in the two languages. Thus the Romanian verb *a realiza* enriched its semantic content with the meaning of the English verb *to realize*, i.e. ‘to become aware of or accept sth as a fact; to begin to understand sth’ (Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, 2000). Likewise the Romanian adjective *formal* added to its original meaning that of the English adjective *formal*, i.e. ‘very correct and suitable for official or important occasions’ (Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, 2000). The Explanatory Dictionary of the Romanian Language (Dictionarul Explicativ al Limbii Române, 1996) includes the meanings acquired by the two words mentioned above which shows that they have been generally accepted by the Romanian speakers and assimilated into the Romanian idiom. This also points to a not very recent time of borrowing. Very recent borrowings - made in the last decades as a result of the Romanian society's "re-opening" to the Western World – of either English words or English meanings are not acknowledged by dictionaries of the Romanian language.

Thus words like: *rating, thriller, fashion,* etc. or the English meanings of the Romanian words *curricular* (in the collocation *reformă curriculară* i.e. reform of curriculum) or *a aplica* (in the collocation *a aplica pentru un post/job*, a calque of the English *apply for a job*) are not included in dictionaries. Although not accepted yet by linguists such borrowings are very largely used particularly in the media, which is, by nature, the most cosmopolitan part of any national culture.

As illustrated by the sample above the Romanian language of some published translations appears to be overwhelmed semantically and grammatically by English, having lost its "intelligence", its own means of expression thus running the risk of losing its referential character and growing into a vernacular idiom.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, an integrated approach to translator training for under graduate students which combines linguistic and pragmatic features is the preferred choice since it has the advantage of greater flexibility and increased suitability.

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