

DOINA IVANOV

THEORY AND TECHNIQUE OF TRANSLATION

TEORIA ȘI TEHNICA TRADUCERII

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INTRODUCTION

The study of translation and the training of professional translators is an integral part of the explosion of both intercultural relations and the transmission of scientific and technological knowledge. Teachers are preoccupied in helping students to master the learning and translation skills they will need to be effective professionals.

The ground rules for translation theory appear to have been laid down almost exactly two hundred years ago and can be encapsulated in the following quotation: ***“Description of a good translation: general rules flowing from that description”***. (Tytler, 1791).

In translator training programs there are two pedagogical assumptions:

- There is no substitute for practical experience – in order to learn how to translate the student should translate, translate and translate;
- There is no way to accelerate that process without damaging students’ ability to detect errors in their own work – faster learners are thought to be careless or superficial.

There are studies which accept the first assumption but reject the second one. It is true that there is no substitute for practical experience, and translator training programs should continue to provide their students with as much of it as they can. But there are

ways of accelerating that process that do not simply foster bad work habits.

All humans learn better, faster, more effectively, more naturally, and more enjoyably through rapid and holistic subliminal channels. Conscious, analytical learning is a useful check on more efficient learning channels; it should not be the main channel through which material is presented. There is a balance between the two extremes of learning:

- Subliminal/unconscious learning, the “natural” way people learn outside of class;
- Conscious, analytical learning, the “artificial” way people are traditionally taught in class.

As learning approaches the subliminal extreme, students learn enormous quantities of material at up to ten times the speed of traditional methods. Because learning is unconscious, it seems they haven't learnt anything; to their surprise they can perform complicated tasks much more rapidly and accurately than they ever believed possible. These subliminal methods are effective and involve little critical reflection. Translators need to be able to process linguistic materials quickly and efficiently; but they also need to be able to recognize problem areas and to solve them in complex analytical ways. Translators need to be able to shuttle back and forth between rapid subliminal translating and slow, critical analysis, namely they should be trained to do both. Translators need to be able not only to perform both subliminal speed-translating and conscious

analytical problem-solving, but also to shift from one to the other when the situation requires it and also to recognize when the situation does require it. Students should be given a chance both to experience the power of subliminal learning and translating and to question the nature and impact of what they are experiencing. Subliminal functioning without critical self-awareness quickly becomes mind-numbing mechanical routine; analytical critiques without rich playful experience quickly become inert scholasticism.

The present course is an introduction to the theory and practice of translation. This introductory course is designed to give graduate students an overall view of what translators do and how translation is studied. This course offers ways of integrating a whole series of theoretical perspectives on translation, from psychological theories, through terminological theories, linguistic theories, and social theories to cultural theories. This course might be used as supplementary material in practical translation seminars.

The present course has two parts: the **first part** is a fusing theory with advice and information about the practicalities of translating, a resource for novice and practicing translators that helps translators learn how to translate faster and more accurately. Likewise it provides advice and tips about how to deal with potential problems and it offers suggestions for discussion, exercises and examples for the teaching of translation. It is useful for translation studies classroom, for students, as well as those working in the

field of translation. The **second part** is a theoretical approach with information from the linguists' point of view and a practical part with text analysis which is relevant for the act of translation.

PART I

1. OUTSIDE AND INSIDE PERCEPTION OF TRANSLATION

Translation can be perceived from the outside (user's point of view), or from the inside (translator's point of view). For people who are not translators it is simply a text; for people who are, it is mainly an activity.

From the translator's internal perspective, the activity is most important: the process of becoming a translator, doing research, networking, translating words, phrases and registers, editing the translation, delivering the finished text to the teacher/client.

Inside/internal perception: a translator thinks about translation from inside the process, knowing how it's done, having a real and practical sense of the problems involved, some solutions to those problems, and the limitations on those solutions (the translator is aware of the fact that no translation will ever be a perfectly reliable guide to the original).

Outside/external perception: a non-translator thinks about translation from outside the process, not knowing how it's done, but knowing that it's a well-made translation. Outside translation users would like to have a text translated reliably and rapidly.

Reliability

A text reliability consists in the trust a user can place in it as a representation or reproduction of the original.

A discussion of a text reliability is venturing into the territory traditionally called “accuracy” or “equivalence” or “fidelity”. There is no single touchstone for a reliable translation, no single formula for abstract “equivalence” that can be applied easily in every case. The translation should be reliable, accurate and effective, literal and readable in the target language. A text that meets these demands is called a “good” or “successful” translation.

Some users demand literal translations, others demand semantic (sense-for-sense) equivalence. “Fidelity” of a translation means not an exact one-to-one correspondence between original and translation. Reliably translated texts cover a wide range from the lightly edited to the substantially rewritten, with the “accurate” or “faithful” translation somewhere in the middle. From the translator’s internal point of view, “creative interpretation” signals the undeniable fact that all text-processing involves some degree of interpretation and thus some degree of creativity, and the translator’s sense that every target language is more or less resistant to his/her activities.

The translator’s reliability means professionalism.

The translator should be accurate, attentive to details, his work must be correct. A sensitive and versatile translator knows that his/her task requires not only “accuracy” but various forms of summary or commentary or adaptation, and various kinds of imaginative re-creation.

Aspects of translator reliability

Reliability regarding the text

1. Attention to detail: the translator is very attentive to the contextual meaning of each word he/she uses;
2. Research: the translator does careful research, in reference books, internet databases and other web-based research;
3. Checking: the translator checks his/her translation closely, and if there is any doubt he/she asks an expert before delivery to the client.

Reliability regarding the client

1. The translator should feel entirely competent in his/her area of specialization. The translator also knows when he/she can handle the task and when something is simply beyond his/her abilities;
2. Promises: the translator should make realistic promises to clients regarding delivery dates and times, and then keeps those promises.
3. Friendliness: the translator is friendly and helpful in person or on the phone, has a sense of humour, and offers helpful advice.
4. Confidentiality: the translator will not disclose confidential matters learned through the process of translation to third parties.