

COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH IN TRANSLATION

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Rezumat

Relatarea propusă este dedicată importanței utilizării traducerii în clasă, în realizarea procesului de comunicare. Prezentul articol susține ideea că traducerea include toate caracteristicile necesare pentru efectuarea unei sarcini de comunicare. Deseori, traducerea e considerată o operație de schimbare a codului, care presupune o interpretare și o comunicare de idei. Traducătorul se concentrează asupra analizei textului, interpretarea fiind baza analizei, efectuată în vederea traducerii. Traducerea, deci, nu este o simplă schimbare de cod, dar în corelație cu interpretarea, presupune comunicarea sensului mesajului original.

It might be surprising to note that the developments in both the study of translation as a linguistic science and in language teaching methodology are quite similar, if not parallel. Thomas [3, p. 85] reviews that early philological approaches to translating were prescriptive and adopted a diachronic perspective to language. This approach lacked a distinction between *langue* and *parole*. Later formal views of translating corrected the earlier prescriptivism and altered the focus of attention to the synchronic dimension of language but, however, were still limited in perspective. The semantic and pragmatic dimensions of language were still neglected and translating was felt to be simply about the mechanistic transfer of codes. Such approaches gave no recognition to the creative dimension of translating and the whole process was felt to be about form without regard for a user perspective. The Ethno-Semantic approach brought with it an attention to meaning and employed componential analysis as a tool with which to achieve *dynamic equivalence*. With the formulation of the dynamic equivalence approach to translating the progression in linguistic approaches to translating to pragmatics and the importance of culture is finally made. The central claim of a dynamic equivalence approach is that function should have priority over form. This dimension is further strengthened and extended in the Text Linguistic approach to the translating process. For the first time the whole text becomes the unit of analysis and the reader's experience of the world and other texts becomes an important factor in the translating process. The translator in a text linguistic approach to translating is no longer conceived of as a passive, mechanistic decoder of linguistic form but has an active, creative role to play.

In a similar manner language teaching was confined to the study of language structure with no real focus on the role of the situation or the communicative needs of the learners. With the communicative approach, the communicative role of the student is finally focalized and he is no longer the passive learner who receives knowledge and responds in a predetermined way. The parallels with developments in language teaching methodology are evident although there is one important difference, as noted by Thomas [3,p.90]; the communicative approach to language teaching has been accused of neglecting the formal aspects of language in favour of the pragmatic whereas translating by its very nature has to unite form with function and this is one important benefit from translating.

In fact the main objection against translation in the communicative approach is that using the mother tongue interferes with the target language, and since different languages have different linguistic structures and thinking strategies, use of students' mother tongue may hinder their learning and may result in a distorted view of language when using the target language with native speakers [2, p. 134]. This main objection rests on an assumption which claims that different languages view life and the universe differently and that language learning strategies implied in learning one language differs when learning another language. However, with the recent developments in experimenting the communicative approach in teaching English as a foreign and a second language for more than half a century, and after the new methodological studies in the field of translation and translation didactics, this view of rejecting the use of mother tongue in language education can safely be declared to be ill-founded.

To support this argument, some studies [3, pp. 125-130] that compared the strategies used by professional translators and foreign language learners (e.g. referring to the dictionary, giving synonyms of

difficult words, rephrasing certain sentences, etc...) showed that these strategies are quite similar and that reference to L1 in language use – whether learning, teaching or translating- will not lead to misused L2 strategies in language learning. It is not then unreasonable to claim that the practice of translating may actually promote language learning. At least the claim that translating prevents people from thinking in a language, whatever that objection actually means, must be seriously questioned.

It is important to emphasise that this stand does not mean an objection to the use of communicative activities in the classroom. Rather it views the use of such activities as a necessary prerequisite for the development of communicative competence in language learners. There are doubts, however, when it comes to the view which maintains that knowledge of the second language system is the outcome of communicative activity not the prerequisite for it [1, p. 205].

The suggestion then, that translating encourages an unhealthy dependence on the L1 or that: it promotes semantic interference cannot be maintained. If professional translators employ successful strategies which are L2 based, then the regular practice of translation cannot inevitably lead to an overuse of L1 type strategies. Translating includes all the features required of a communicative task. A genuine information gap exists between the person who produces the message and the person wanting to understand it. The cognitive complexity of the task can be controlled so as to allow gradual exposure to linguistic or pragmatic features of language. Translating tasks enable linguistic elements to be presented and practised in relation to communicative outcomes. In other words the relation between form and function can be demonstrated to learners. In such translation tasks linguistic elements would not be drilled in isolation from communicative behaviour, nor would functions of language be taught apart from their linguistic exponents.

In fact The history of foreign language teaching is in the main a history of bi-lingual methodologies heavily reliant on the practice of translating. Thomas [3, p. 114] states that this bi-lingual movement becomes 'increasingly monolingual from the period of the Reform movement. Significantly members of the Reform movement were not themselves against translating within language teaching. What they sought redress in the excesses of the Grammar Translation method were 'problems of cross association and the obsessive focus on grammatical structure to the neglect of other features of language'. There are signs that the twentieth century attachment to monolingual language teaching is fading and this is perhaps more obvious in the modified version and the modern view of the communicative approach which makes use of different bi-lingual techniques like TPR and Suggestopedia. On this possibility it is interesting to quote Howatt: „Finally, the monolingual principle, the unique contribution of the twentieth century to classroom language teaching, remains the bedrock notion from which the others ultimately derive. If there is another 'language teaching revolution' round the corner, it will have to assemble a convincing set of arguments to support some alternative (bilingual?) principle of *equal power*” [3, p. 289]. There is some evidence that this return to a bilingual principle has now begun and it is clear that translating is to form a major part of this principle.

References

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