

Introducing Translation Studies to Level 300 Students of Russian

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The need for the introduction of translation studies into the curriculum of the Department of Modern Languages, University of Ghana, has been premised on the fact that, it has become the mediation between languages. The study has been necessitated by different ways in which researchers and translation theorists approach the study of the translation process. The work explores the linguistic and methodological approach to translation studies for level 300 students, Russian Section and maintains that the approach focuses on key issues, such as definition, meaning, and equivalence. The course should aim at assisting students to translate simple passages, phrases, and words extracted from journals, novels, newspapers, and other documents of Russian and English languages. The approach discourages the teaching of translation at level 300 based on assumption. Examples to bring the concept to students start from basic to intermediary level. There is a need to assess students through standardized tests. The paper concludes that, tests of all types can help estimate students understanding of the translation process and will enhance their translation skills.

Keywords: translation, Russian, English, level 300, assumption, skills, texts, intermediary

Introduction

There is a need to add translation studies to the curriculum of universities and other institutions of higher learning. The paper discusses the need for translation studies and makes available to the reader certain basic principles in translation. Though the presentation does not intend to discuss in detail translation theory, it sets the pace for future detailed study. The work is written based on the author experience in the teaching of Russian language at level 200 and the teaching of translation at level 300 and 400.

The paper is neither to propose optimal course description and course content nor to criticize or analyze translation courses currently being taught at the University of Ghana. Rather, it is all about some suggestions which in the teaching of translation, should be taken into consideration, especially at introductory stages.

A close analysis of the performance of level 300 students of translation from Russian to English and English to Russian based on assignments, had prompted the author to suggest that translation methodologists, teachers, and instructors should take into consideration the various levels, in this perspective level 300 at the University of Ghana.

The paper outlines that translation studies is about: the need for translation studies, hints on translation teaching based on assumptions, and introduction of translation studies to level 300 students of Russian in the University of Ghana. It briefly defines translation, aims and objectives, and methodological approach based on

background knowledge and conclusion.

What Is Translation Study?

This aspect of the paper is not to concentrate so much on the definition of translation, but to unfold what translation study entails. Translation study involves the translation of one language to another. The study deals with documents of all kinds, such as statutory declaration, contracts and agreements, letters of administration, passports, economic and commercial documents, personal letters, journals, magazines, newspapers, and many others.

Translation studies also discusses the trends in writing, stylistic features of documents, and languages. With technological advancement and research into various disciplines in the academia, new words and terminologies have emerged in the language world. With these developments, there is the need to inject new styles into the translation process. Translation studies concentrate on the overall patterns of translation. The general market situation of any given time influences the translation pattern. Any socio-political and economic change affects the use of language and for that matter translation studies. The studies assume a relationship between actors in the translation process and outsiders. Translation studies should be recognized as an inter-disciplinary subject, because it transcends all the fields in the academia. Translation studies “is indeed a discipline in its own right: not merely a minor branch of comparative literary study, nor yet a specific area of linguistics, but a vastly complex field with many far-reaching ramifications” (Bassnett-McGuire, 1980, p. 2).

The Need for Translation Studies

Translation studies have become mediation between languages. The study has become necessary because of different ways in which researchers and translation theorists approach the study of the translation process. It is evidently clear that translation studies are rooted in very different linguistics perspectives, for that matter, it is important to adopt a holistic view of the studies. There is a need to set standards and principles to guard the studies. The check on the translation trends through translation studies has become necessary because translation professionals are presumed to have a considerable degree of autonomy within a pluralistic linguistic, socio-political, and economic society. This has usually resulted in studies focusing on particular aspects of the translation studies—organizational processing of translation, the inter-relationship between translators, and their audience. The studies concern itself with quality and required communication process in translation. Because of this communicative agenda that translation studies sets, there is the need to make sure that text books that are used in teaching translation in universities and other institutions of higher learning where translation studies are a course meet some standards. Because of its emerging importance, many universities and institutions of higher learning are adding translation courses to their curriculum. The course is to unfold and make available the principles of translation which have been accumulated through research, teaching, and other experiences. The course also concerns itself with consultations and interactions with teachers, lecturers, and researchers in translation studies.

Explicitly, there is no need to dissociate oneself from the new information age which has an immense impact on translation studies. The interaction has become necessary, because of the need in translation studies. New ideas, principles, and self-evident propositions need to be empirically tested through a collaborative and practical approach. It also ensures a common methodological approach to translation teaching in universities and institutions of higher learning.

Translation Teaching Based on Assumptions

Courses have their various disciplines, aims, and objectives from level 100 to level 400 in all universities. Course outlines set the objectives and aims expected to be achieved at the end of the course.

In the teaching of foreign languages, course contents, aims, and objectives should guide the lecturer. The lecturer in translation studies should take into consideration the course contents in literature, history, language, and Russian/Spanish/French/Chinese/Swahili/Arabic studies. The lecturer should approach translation studies within a suitable integrating framework. The approach should not be concentrated on language and grammar as is most likely to be the tendency, but should take into consideration terminologies, vocabulary, and expressions emanating from different courses taught within the discipline. In a nutshell, there must be a multi-disciplinary approach to the introduction of translation studies and translation teaching.

Introduction of Translation Studies to Level 300 Russian Students

Translation, according to Cambridge International Dictionary of English (1995, p. 1551), “is the changing of words into a different language or the changing of something into a different form”. Translation is basically a change of form of a language without changing the meaning. “Translation is the expression in another language (or target language) of what has been expressed in another, source language, preserving semantic, and stylistic equivalences” (Bell, 1991, p. 5).

Types of Translation

Jacobson (1959, p. 234) believed that there are three types of translation:

- (1) Intralingual translation or rewording: It is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of other signs in the same language. In other words, it could also be recasting of a text or story in different words in the same language;
- (2) Interlingua translation or translation proper: It is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of some other languages;
- (3) Intersemiotic translation or transmutation: It is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of nonverbal sign systems.

Aims and Objectives

The aim of the paper is to introduce translation studies and translation from Russian to English and English to Russian to level 300 students of Russian at the Department of Modern Languages, University of Ghana. The course aims at assisting students to understand the basic principles in translation studies; it also aims at assisting students to translate phrases and words from passages, journals, novels, and short stories, into Russian, and vice versa. Another aim is to prepare students to be independent translators of simple Russian and English texts. This course introduces students to basic knowledge in translation theory, such as equivalence and type of texts. The aim of the course is also to review the most persistent problems in the study of English Russian and Russian English vocabulary. Through the different materials used in teaching at this stage, students will be introduced to the register in the texts related to various disciplines, such as sociology, political science, geography, medicine, and others. The course aims specifically at teaching written translation. Grammatical skills already acquired will enable students write a good translation. The course also aims at increasing the vocabulary of the prospective students and their proper application or use in the translation process. It also aims at assisting students to gain command over the Russian and English languages in the translation aspect at that level.

Teaching Methods Based on a Background of Knowledge

The assumption is that level 300 students of Russian taking translation as a course understands Russian expressions, phrases and words, like “исследовать” (to research into something), “обнаруживать” (to find and to discover), “заключенный” (prisoner), “обслуживать” (to provide service), “руководитель” (leader, supervisor), “надежда” (hope), “корпус” (campus, residential area), “доклад” (lecture), and “докладчик” (presenter of a speech or lecture).

They are already conversant with verbs and words like the above-listed. Translating some of these words from English to Russian poses difficulties to some students. The application of the grammatical skills in translation is different from the study of vocabulary. This underpins the importance of background knowledge and the risk involved in basing teaching on assumption. While students are conversant with some of these words, some are not able to identify the meaning properly in terms of translation. Since these words will be joined by other words to form phrases and sentences, there is the need to introduce students to the proper use of the dictionary, where students will be introduced to the first semantic meaning and other associated meanings. This will enable students identify the meaning of words through the context.

For instance, one may erroneously conclude that all students at this level can translate simple phrases like the following into Russian:

Чемвыпишете?
(What are you writing with?)
Answer: Япишукарандашомиручкой.
(I am writing with a pencil and a pen.)
Ягуляю ссестрой.
(I am taking a walk with my sister.)
Яразговариваюсврачом.
(I am conversing with a doctor.)

A test in simple English bearing the instrumental case in mind will test the students’ ability to translate their knowledge and skills acquired in the study of the instrumental case into practical reality. This can be realized through the quality of their translation in terms of grammatical accuracy. Russian language has five grammatical cases, and it will be important to test knowledge of students in the cases to ensure a good translation.

For instance:

Я вижу девушку.
(I see a young lady.)
Я читаю книгу.
(I am reading a book)

Many other examples found in the English text will also test the students’ knowledge in the accusative case through translation.

The under-listed examples will assist students to review their knowledge in the genitive case and to apply this skill in the translation process:

У меня нет сестры.
(I do not have a sister.)
У меня есть сестра.
(I have a sister.)

У вас есть книга.
 (You have a book.)
 У меня нет книги.
 (I do not have a book.)
 В читальном зале много студентов.
 (There are many students in the reading room.)
 Сколько девушек в зале?
 (How many girls are in the hall?)

The following under-listed examples are in the dative case:

Я должен позвонить брату.
 (I have to call my brother on a telephone.)
 Я послал сестре телеграмму.
 (I sent a telegram to my sister.)
 Какие песни вы любите?
 (What songs do you like?)
 Мне нравятся народные песни.
 (I like traditional songs.)
 Ты любишь ганскую музыку? (Accusative)
 (Do you like Ghanaian music?)
 Сестра давала преподавателю свою тетрадь.
 (My sister gave the teacher her exercise book.)
 Она купила брату билет в театр.
 (She bought her brother a ticket to the theater.)
 Ты купишь билет в театр знакомому?
 (Are you buying a ticket for your acquaintance to the theater?)
 Почему ты не купишь билет в кино незнакомой девушке?
 (Why are you not buying a ticket for the unfamiliar girl to the cinema?)
 Кому вы пишете письмо?
 (To whom are you writing the letter?)
 Я пишу письмо родителям.
 (I am writing the letter to my parents.)

The other interesting aspect that is beneficial to the student in the translation process is the appearance of “music” and “song” that is “Музыка и Песня” in Russian. It is important that students take note of the two words and make use of them correctly in their various contexts in the course of translation.

The under-listed examples also tests students’ ability to translate adequately in the preposition case:

Ты живешь в городе или в общежитии?
 (Do you live in town or in the hostel?)
 Кофи работает на заводе, а Максим работает в магазине.
 (Kofi works in a factory but Maxim works in a shop.)
 Ученики сидят в аудитории и одновременно пишут в тетрадях незнакомые слова.
 (The pupils are sitting in the classroom and are writing unfamiliar words in their exercise books.)
 Студенты сидят в классе.
 (The students are sitting in class.)
 Он работает на почте.
 (He is working in a post office.)

Some plural forms in the proposition are listed below:

Студенты пишут упражнения в тетрадях.
(The students are writing assignments in the exercise books.)

These exercises have two-fold significance: First, students are able to revise their grammar; and then, secondly it expatiates on the concept of form and meaning. It clearly unfolds the phenomena, SL (source language) or LO (language of origin) and the TT (translated text) or TL (translated language).

The revision of the Russian grammar popularly known as the cases will help the lecturer to come out with practical and viable steps in the next stage of the introductory processes.

Students will be introduced to terminologies like “Эквивалентность” (equivalent), “язык оригинала” (the original language or the source language), “язык перевода” (the translated text), “смыние” (intended meaning), “значение” (meaning), “контекст” (context), “процесс перевода” (the translation process), “адекватность” (adequacy), “носитель языка” (the indigenous speaker) and many other terminologies that students are likely to meet in the course of their translation. Level 300 students are conversant with the following phrases and sentences related to the students’ life. This is likely to boost students’ interest in translation:

Юбилей университета
(University’s Jubilee)
Основание университета
(Founding of the University)
Пользоваться случаем
(Making use of a chance)
Какой праздникот мечается25-ого января
(What holiday is celebrated on the 25th of January)
Почему современные студенты так любят ДеньСвятойТатьяны.
(Why are the modern students so addicted to St. Tatiana’s Day?)
(Polishuk, Zezekalo, & Korobushkin, 2006, p. 14, 39)

Other examples are as follows:

(1) Хочется выразить признательность участникам конференции за яркие и интересные выступления и выразить надежду на дальнейшие встречи.

(Would like to express my recognition to the participants of the conference for brilliant and interesting speeches and hope that we can meet sometime in the future.) (Lomakinen , 2004, p. 3)

(2) Сердечно приветствую вас от имени Министерство Образования и Науки Российской Федерации.

(Sincerely greets you on behalf of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation.) (Furenko, 2004, p. 19)

(3) Старинные бриллианты великолепно смотрелись в выставочном зале звонницы успенского собора московского кремля.

(The old diamonds looked splendid in the exhibition hall of the assumption cathedral’s belfry in the Moscow Kremlin.) (Diplomat, 2001 p. 13)

(4) Приемы посла соединенного королевство Великобритании и Северной Ирландии Сера Родерика Лаина всегда собирают элиту российской столицы.

(The reception given by Sir Roaderic Lyne, her Majesty’s Ambassador of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to Russian Federation, always attracts the elite of the Russian capital.) (Diplomat, 2001, p. 23)

(5) Глубокую симпатию к Африке выразили участники торжественного собрания, состоявшегося 24 Мая в доме дружбы.

(Participants of a solemn convention held at Friendship House on May 24 expressed their deep fellow feelings for the peoples of Africa.) (Diplomat, 2001, p. 21).

(6) Россия нужна Африке.

(Africa needs Russia.) (Diplomat, 2001, p. 21)

(7) Родители Трейси, которая пыталась покончить жизнь самоубийством, устроили её специальный лечебный центр.

(The parents of Tracy, who attempted to commit suicide, have put her in a special treatment center.)

At this stage, students are introduced to more complex sentences. Students at this stage are introduced to the two main kinds of translation: idiomatic and literal translation. Idiomatic translation is linked with meaning-based translation and the literal translation is directly linked with form-based translation. Students are admonished to adopt the meaning-based translation which aims at communicating the meaning of the original language text in its natural form to the language of the receptor (Larson, 1998, p. 17). There is no need to introduce students to other kinds of translation, such as modified literal and unduly free translation. The examples given from the basic to the intermediary are all meaning-based translation. Students are notified at this point that rigidity in the translation process may invalidate the meaning-based concept and may shift the translator to the trail of literal translation

Students should be notified that once proper translation has taken place, the translated text is equivalent to the source language. At this juncture, there is the need to point to students that a one-for-one equivalence of lexical items will result in literal translation and that there is the need to look for a natural way of expressing the meaning in the language of the receptor. For instance, in Example (6), the right translation is “Africa needs Russia”, but at a glance, many students will be tempted to translate it this way “Russia needs Africa”. This is based on one-for-one equivalence. In Examples (3) and (4), “Kremlin” and “Sir Roaderic” are words without equivalents and cannot be translated; “Ireland” also cannot be translated. In a nutshell, it should be made known to students that there are concepts in the source language that are known in the receptor language, others are unknown in the receptor language. A more detailed study on the principle of equivalent effect will be looked at the next stage, where the real teaching of translation commences. Examples provided in this paper have been adequately translated and they serve as a model. Stylistically, they are standards and students may be able to produce almost the same in the course of translation.

Conclusions

The author does not claim to have provided an exhaustive coverage of the topic. It is conceded that there is the need for an in-depth research into the introduction of translation studies to university students and students of other institutions of higher learning in Ghana and elsewhere. In so far as contemporary linguistics attaches much importance to translation studies, there is the need important to attach importance to its teaching, especially at the introductory stages. Foreign language learning and teaching are always linked with translation studies. Lecturers and instructors of foreign languages should ignite students’ interests in translation studies. Instructors and lecturers should monitor students’ reaction to the introductory process. Based on this reaction, instructors will be able to work out an acceptable methodology for the real teaching process. It is important to state that the number of students in a translation class should be manageable. It is suggested that the number should not exceed 25. This will enable the instructor to pay attention to individual students. A good foundation of the introductory process will lay a solid foundation for future studies. Though there is an assumption that students know how to use the dictionary, instructors must re-orientate students on its usage.

This paper deals with the introduction of translation studies to level 300 students of Russian. It does not deal with the teaching of translation, though knowledge has been imparted, the real teaching will take place in the

sub-sequent stages.

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