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## EXPLORING SPECIALIZED TRANSLATION RELEVANCE AS TO LANGUAGE AWARENESS ENHANCEMENT WITHIN THE ENGLISH FOR PHD STUDENTS COURSE AT THE TODOR KABLESHKOV UNIVERSITY OF TRANSPORT

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**Abstract:** *The paper treats the role of specialized texts English-Bulgarian translation within the English for PhD students course at the University of Transport, Bulgaria, with respect to learners' language awareness (LA) enhancement. This topic relevance stems, on the one hand, from the course curriculum objectives related to improving students' general and specialized communicative competence and, on the other, from the status of translation ranging among the most frequently performed tasks with PhD students. LA, as it has already been revealed, is a crucial prerequisite to communicative competence perfecting. Thus, investigating translation impact on students' raised comprehension of translated professional texts content, message and particular language features, testifying to learners' heightened LA, provides valuable insight into studied task (and procedure alike) educational significance as a whole (translation preparatory activities and translation process itself). The current study findings derive from observing PhD students handling translation supporting activities, based on a variety of language learning strategies (LLS) implementation, translation process itself, and, from exploring learners' attitude towards the applied approaches usefulness as to translated material grasping in general and with respect to its characteristics. Research is developed within the context of a number of literature sources, made reference to, and, highlighting pedagogical translation value as well as its implementation beneficial effects. Conclusion is made as to specialized translation impact not only on PhD students' LA, but also on related teaching process parameters, such as learner autonomy (LrA) and motivation (LM). Translation procedure importance is likewise stated with respect to specialists' improved employability.*

**Key words:** *pedagogical translation, specialized translation, language learning strategies, language awareness*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The current paper aims at depicting the task of pedagogical translation of specialized text materials within an English as a foreign language (EFL) course for non-philological PhD students in terms of translation relevance as to students' language awareness (LA) enhancement – a crucial prerequisite to general and specialized communicative competence improvement. Specialized materials translation task is analyzed from a multifaceted perspective, focus being put not only on translation process itself, but on all preparatory approaches implemented with the purpose to guarantee translated text maximum equivalence degree with source material as to meanings transfer, contained information and applied language. Collected evidence justifying pedagogical translation relevance, along with all associated procedures, derives not only from already published related research, but also from a developed, performed and examined by the author survey among taught PhD students as to their assessment of used preparatory techniques, prerequisite for successful materials translation, due to heightened understanding of source texts, as a whole, and in terms of source materials features.

The article will comply with the following layout. To start with, pedagogical translation will be defined and exemplified with respect to its beneficial outcomes concerning communicative competence in the context of referred to in advance year-long controversies as to translation usefulness as a teaching tool. Subsequently, carried out survey will be delineated in terms of its descriptors (study parameters or implemented procedures aimed at facilitating students' grasping of translated specialized materials) and as to the evaluation, provided by respondents, of survey parameters effectiveness on comprehension. Further on, interviewees' assessment will be analyzed in the perspective of applied preparatory translation procedures affiliation to major language learning strategies (LLS) and these strategies contribution to LA. Finally, concluding remarks will be made regarding specialized pedagogical translation significance as to PhD students' LA enhancement, learner autonomy (LrA) and learner motivation (LM) improvement, as well as concerning specialists' increased employability prospects.

## **2. PEDAGOGICAL TRANSLATION ROLE IN LEARNERS' COMPETENCE IMPROVEMENT**

### **2.1. Evaluation of arguments against or in support of pedagogical translation**

As already mentioned, a group of foreign language teaching (FLT) specialists reject native language (NL) use within FLT/ English language teaching (ELT), and, thus, translation for educational purposes, due to arguments, amongst which concerns as to the lack of adequate amount of target language classroom exposure, beliefs in foreign language (FL) being best learned likewise acquiring NL, opinions as to effective learning being due to both, FL and NL languages separation or the necessity for FL thinking stimulation<sup>1</sup>.

There exists, on the other hand, the group of arguments in favour of NL implementation in FLT/ELT, and, hence, in support of educational translation (among other procedures), this set of views gradually becoming more prominent than previous one owing to extensive grounding not only related to research findings, but also to obtaining practical outcomes. Thus, for example, the New Concurrent Method, Community Language Learning (CLL), Dodson's Bilingual Method, Contrastive (CT) and Comparative Teaching (CpT) approaches have yielded noticeable FLT (ELT) success; NL-use classes have produced better achievements than only-English courses accomplishments; the exclusive English language application in ELT has been revealed detrimental to learning, whereas classroom communication, teacher-learner relationships and learner anxiety parameters have been proved positive under NL pedagogical use conditions<sup>2</sup>.

Based on research and practice analysis does not testify in favour of the above presented first group of statements; in contrast, consistent studies witness to the advantages of NL implementation in FLT/ELT. Thus, for instance, NL adequate use within educational process cannot prevent teachers from lavishly immersing learners into target language. Furthermore, it is supposed to greatly contribute to students' competence through enhanced LA as a result of increased taught knowledge explicitness, consciousness being essential in terms of learning results ([2], [3], [4], inter alia). It is compelling to affirm that views as to FL acquisition complying with NL patterns do not conform to findings in support of language transfer presence, stemming from inherent NL<sup>3</sup> inner translation occurring at almost all FL learning levels. Hence, contrastive with NL teaching has been established on many occasions beneficial in various contexts through raising students' understanding, as a language code cannot exist or function autonomously, not interfering with others already acquired; in contrastive analysis perspective, this assertion rejects beliefs as to above mentioned NL/FL need of compartmentalization. On the other hand, FL thinking training can definitely be promoted by improved taught language items comprehension. Last, but not least, referred to above New Concurrent Method, Community Language Teaching, Dodson's Bilingual Method, Contrastive and Comparative Teaching<sup>4</sup> have proved their ELT usefulness application due to both (FL and NL) codes deliberate and purposeful implementation, strongly preconditioning FL taught topics grasping through contrastive mechanism elucidation.

### **2.2. Exemplification of ELT pedagogical translation benefits**

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<sup>1</sup> Rf. [1] as to researchers' essential arguments in favour of NL exclusion in FLT.

<sup>2</sup> Rf. [1] as to researchers' essential arguments in favour of NL implementation in FLT.

<sup>3</sup> Transfer can also derive from FL1. Transfer significance in FLT was revealed by [5], [6], [7], [8], [9], [10], inter alia.

<sup>4</sup> Rf. [1] for details.

Pedagogical translation functions as a tool aimed at assisting taught language acquisition and enhancing learner's FL competence, these features differentiating it from translation in general (authors cited in [11]).

Some authors lay emphasis on this instrument implementation benefits based on contrastive analysis learners perform between both, NL and FL, this process improving their understanding of FL/NL characteristics. Thus, for instance [1] provides evidence on the efficiency of translation into NL in ELT, within the English perfect teaching, this procedure being founded on exploring contextual markers, taught category values, use; furthermore, [12] displays the same category CT model, within business ESP, likewise including translation, and, founded on putting forward, elucidating and exemplifying English/Bulgarian equivalences. Similarly, authors in [13] refer to researchers confirming translation favourable effect in terms of observing FL, based on contrasting it with NL, within learners' improved comprehension of NL/FL convergences and divergences, which leads to facilitating learning, inhibiting NL interference and, consequently, to promoting acquisition. In the perspective of [14] alike translation leads to eradicating interference; correspondingly, translation allows learners to contrast NL/FL systems with the purpose to examine and correct errors [15]; translation additionally encourages attentiveness to categories forms [16] and represents a type of "linguistic transcoding" ([17: 1] in [18]).

Pedagogical EFL translation possesses equally the following advantages. Translation, which has often been referred to as "the fifth skill"<sup>5</sup> (authors cited in [14: 2]), due to its educational relevance, contributes to elucidating vocabulary and grammar, verifying learners' comprehension in reading and listening tasks [13], promotes correctness and intelligibility in students' expression ([19] in [13]). Furthermore, teaching purposes translation leads to increased students' participation and learner anxiety lowering (authors cited in [11]), stimulates learner creativeness and independence, encourages interaction ([14]).

### 3. SURVEY DESCRIPTION AND DISCUSSION

Specialized translation training was performed within the third module of the PhD students EFL course [20]; this course section is aimed at specialized communicative competence building not only in terms of terminology, but also with respect to typical to scientific discourse grammar categories and language functions, within topics related to learners' professional fields, all of them associated with transport, though through the lens of transport management, mechanical, electrical, civil engineering and economics, among others. Translation process itself was assisted by the prior implementation of appropriate LLS (occasionally applied during factual translation as well) directed at translated text adequate comprehension, prerequisite to the achievement of a high degree of translation equivalence, and was also facilitated by interaction meant to introduce students into treated issues, and, thus, into translated materials context, to elicit professional and language knowledge, and, consequently, to prompt expectations as to language used.

To explore specialized translation role in PhD students' LA enhancement, respondents were asked to complete a developed and analyzed by the author survey comprising ten essential descriptors corresponding to the approaches made use of in overall translation process in the objective of enhancing learners' grasping of translated material matters, content and characteristic language features. Understanding level testifies to translation descriptors' impact on students' LA, LA concept referring to discernment and clear-cut knowledge of language functioning, in general and in particular, at all language levels and spheres of use ([21] and authors cited herein). Implemented procedures (used on a regular basis within PhD students' EFL course) were related to supporting training in a cognitive teaching perspective [20] in terms of specialized translation skill perfecting, greatly preconditioning required specialized communicative competence. Survey purpose, along with questionnaire items, were written in Bulgarian to ensure optimal comprehension. Respondents were asked to fill in a table containing six columns, the first one encompassing descriptors or indices (approaches, strategies, techniques or procedures implemented within translation process), whereas remaining five ones referring to students' evaluation of procedures effectiveness degree in terms of

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<sup>5</sup> According to the present paper author, translation greatly impacts four skills of reading, listening, writing and speaking; on the other hand, their development preconditions translation skills upgrading.

surveyees' ameliorated consciousness of translated text message and its characteristics, to a weak, satisfactory, good, very good or excellent degrees.

Here follows a list of poll descriptors:

**Descriptor 1.** Word-formation analysis (*a*)<sup>6</sup>; associating lexis with cognates (*d*); guessing values, based on linguistic (incl. word-formation) and non-linguistic information (*e*);

**Descriptor 2.** Pattern observation and analysis with respect to form/semantics connections (*a*);

**Descriptor 3.** Constructing and proving hypotheses referring to language categories values and functioning (*a*);

**Descriptor 4.** Paraphrasing by means of grammar transformations and vocabulary alternations (*a*), (*e*);

**Descriptor 5.** Providing definitions, synonyms, antonyms and translation equivalents (*a*); linking vocabulary and grammar with synonyms and antonyms; including new vocabulary and analyzed grammar in exemplifying sentences (*d*);

**Descriptor 6.** Summarizing a specialized English text/paragraph into English; summarizing such a text/paragraph into Bulgarian (*a*), (*e*);

**Descriptor 7.** Contrastive teaching (CT) or establishing contrasts with analogous NL/FL1 categories in terms of form/values (*a*); laying emphasis on connections between EFL/NL/FL1 acquired knowledge and taught topics (*d*);

**Descriptor 8.** Comparative teaching (CpT) or comparing language items with similar form/values English vocabulary and grammar (*a*), (*d*);

**Descriptor 9.** Searching for key vocabulary and grammar with the purpose to guess translated material gist; guessing values based on translation material context (*b*); using key words in gist translating; approximation while interpreting translation material with the objective of producing approximate translation (*e*);

**Descriptor 10.** Student group or student/lecturer interaction within translation process (questioning for elucidation, confirmation, values specification, translation equivalents, contextual markers, etc.; introducing translated text corrections; joint work) (*c*).

According to survey analysis findings, 100% of respondents estimated the applied translation preparatory approaches had contributed to *an excellent degree* to specialized English → Bulgarian translation process due to improved comprehension of translated texts and their characteristics<sup>7</sup>. What can these favourable results be assigned to? Referred to descriptors not only match LLS implemented in the purpose of contributing to students' more efficient grasping of translated materials language categories, but indices are *complex*, incorporating *mutually related one-type approaches, instances pertaining to more than one technique or procedures referring to two LLS types concurrently, depending on their application purpose*. It is essential to stress that strategies made use of aroused PhD students' interest in further implementing techniques as a result of learners' becoming better acquainted with categories, patterns and values, and thus, with larger translated text segments content; this attitude stimulated active participation in translation process, and hence, more intense language data manipulation through appropriate LLS handling. Translation process was carried out rather adequately due to successfully applied preparatory approaches; there was an atmosphere of motivation, students putting forward translation solutions.

LLS (approaches, techniques or procedures) correspond to actions taught to learners, deliberately used by them and intended to improve their language studying process and knowledge; LLS significantly impact students' LA enhancement through ameliorated language information processing, and, thus, result in advanced learner comprehension of forms, values and tenets regulating language (in particular and/or in general) functioning ([22], [23], [4], [24], [25]). LLS are commonly classified as cognitive, metacognitive, affective, social, memory-related and compensatory ones [23]. Cognitive and metacognitive strategies, subsumed under the term of *cognitive approaches* in author's works [4], [25] (*a*), precondition examined language items comprehension and students' understanding of their

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<sup>6</sup> Letters from (*a*) to (*e*) designate LLS types instances, contained in descriptors, in compliance with LLS presentation order below.

<sup>7</sup> In compliance with an almost identical survey performed among third year students within the Technical English Course at the same university, 2.78% of respondents estimated the applied procedures contributed to a *good degree* to translated texts and their features comprehension, 27.78% of students assessed implemented approaches usefulness respectively to a *very good degree*, and 69.44% of interviewees evaluated used strategies as beneficial to an *excellent degree*. These findings could have been more encouraging with a number of classes commensurable with PhD students' course ones and as a result of higher learner motivation, comparable to that of PhD students.

learning process characteristics, *affective techniques* (b) aim at reducing learner anxiety, *social procedures* (c) focus on student interaction or lecturer/student bilateral communication in terms of language education process, *memory-related approaches* (d) assist memorization and *compensatory strategies* (e) incorporate actions proposing to offset students' language knowledge deficiencies [23].

As already mentioned, considered survey descriptors (rf. above descriptors presentation) correspond to mutually interacting and complementing LLS. Thus, **Descriptor 1** consists of a *cognitive LLS constituent* (a), a *memory-related LLS constituent* (d) and *compensatory LLS constituents* (e); **Descriptors 2 and 3** include *cognitive LLS constituents* (a); **Descriptors 4 and 6** encompass *LLS constituents, referring to both approaches, cognitive* (a) and *compensatory ones* (e), according to approaches implementation purpose; **Descriptor 5** comprises *cognitive* (a) and *memory-related LLS constituents* (d); **Descriptor 7** involves *cognitive* (a) and *memory-related LLS constituents* (d); **Descriptor 8** comprises *LLS constituents relating to both, cognitive* (a) and *memory-related* (d) *approaches*, again depending on their purpose of application; **Descriptor 9** encompasses *affective* (b) and *compensatory LLS* (e), and, finally, **Descriptor 10** embraces *social LLS* (c).

Based on discussion, the applied assisting approaches in specialized translation had significantly contributed to PhD students' comprehension of translated texts, and, thus, to learners' LA, due to LLS appropriate implementation and these procedures complementarity<sup>8</sup>.

**CONCLUSION:** The current study aimed at investigating specialized translation relevance in terms of PhD students' LA enhancement provides results witnessing to translation substantial beneficial influence on examined texts understanding, as a whole and as to encompassed language categories essence and functioning, due to the variety of individually and jointly implemented LLS, cooperating when appropriately combined and actively supporting overall English → Bulgarian translation process. It needs to be recognized that LLS intense and symbiotic use can be achieved to the highest extent in translation teaching. Advanced information likewise lays emphasis on pedagogical translation role, which was denied for many years even by renowned in their fields researchers, whose views may still play a role in some EFL teaching classrooms at all levels of education. It can be similarly confirmed that there are strong reasons in favour of designating translation as the *fifth skill* (rf. to authors in [14: 2]) as well as an *integrative task* or *strategy*, based on:

1. Depicted LA corroborating importance of specialized translation as a result of the great majority of LLS abundant and efficient application;
2. LA preconditioning *receptive* and *productive skills* development, these abilities positively affecting translation capacities;
3. Improved LA further strengthening students' specialized translation competence;
4. Already revealed in literature LA significant contribution to LM and LrA, three crucial parameters of language teaching process.

Last, but not least, enhanced proficiency in specialized translation, related to upgraded overall LA, is capable of beneficially impacting specialists' employability, in many spheres of social life, due to constantly increasing qualification requirements towards applicants.

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<sup>8</sup> Rf. [25] as to ways (direct or indirect) LLS types implementation impacts university students' LA.

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