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Developing New Learning Resources for the Linguistic Mediators' Training in Modern Social Environment

Nataliya Belenkova

Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (RUDN University), Moscow, RUSSIA

Larisa Lutskovskaya

Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (RUDN University), Moscow, RUSSIA

Rimma Gorbatenko

Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (RUDN University), Moscow, RUSSIA

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ABSTRACT

The topicality of the research is stipulated by the challenges of bringing the educational content and learning materials in line with the needs that young translators and interpreters have entering the labour market in modern fast developing society. The article aims to analyze from students' perspective the practical value and effectiveness of the learning materials for language mediators' training developed on the basis of the new content-focused technology in comparison to learning materials developed within the framework of the traditional approach. The methodology of the research included survey based experiment as well as the method of statistic data processing. The experiment involved the students doing their master degree course on Public Service Interpreting and Translation (total number of the participants is 30 students). The experiment was conducted in several stages including two surveys: the entry survey focused on obtaining the students' feedback on their general satisfaction with traditional learning materials, students' assessment of the materials' effectiveness for training as well as identifying particular areas of professional interest and respective needs; the second survey elicited students' responses concerning the effectiveness of the proposed new materials. The research enhances the awareness of the specific characteristics of the public services setting for training lingo cultural mediators. Practical learning materials were worked out and implemented into practice. The correlated training of interpreting and translation skills was proved. Based on the results obtained in the course of the experiment the authors propose new content focused approach to developing learning materials which constitutes practical outcomes of the research. The article had both theoretical and practical value as the theoretical background and the proposed methodology can be applied to developing training courses on translation and interpreting in various professional domains.

Keywords: lingo cultural mediation, translation, interpreting, training skills, learning materials, public services, specific setting

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Correspondence: Nataliya Belenkova, *Department of Foreign Languages, Law Institute, Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (RUDN University), Moscow, Russia.*

✉ belenkova_nm@pfur.ru

Contribution of this paper to the literature

- Within the frames of the constructivism approach the new way of selecting learning materials for training interpreters and translators for public services is suggested.
- The not standard methodology of using the learning materials in teaching practice is identified.
- The correlation of the efficiency of the linguistic mediators' training and the learning resources used is proved.

INTRODUCTION

The modern international situation and the social environment increase the role of lingo cultural mediators. The interpreters and translators' activity has become crucial. The importance of this activity is determined by the following factors: multilateral cooperation in all scientific, technical and research domains, professional and academic mobility, migration crisis. Very often the lack of any communicative skills in a foreign language or of any cultural awareness cause many problems in the interpersonal interaction. Moreover, because of language barriers people cannot get medical or legal assistance, provide education for themselves and for the children. Under these circumstances the specialists in translation and interpreting i.e. lingo mediators are in great demand.

Professional training of translators and interpreters has been in the focus of practical teachers, researchers and educators for decades. Many higher educational institutions realized such programmers. Traditionally the curricula of these institutions concentrated on the foreign languages for communicative purposes e.g. General English and did not take into consideration the specific settings of the mediation activity. Apparently, nowadays when the social environment has changed the translators and interpreters teaching and training should be carried out in accordance with modern lingo didactic approaches, technologies and aids. It should be correlated not only with various domains but also with diverse discourse inside the domains.

The Goals and Objectives of the Research

The main goal of this paper is to determine the correlation of the efficiency of the linguistic mediators' training and the learning resources used. The objectives of the study are to examine the materials for training interpreters and translators; to study various discourses in public services setting; to report on the learners' assessment of different aspect of their professional training as mediators and provide the recommendations for further development of the methodology of the linguistic mediators training.

Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (RUDN University) runs the master's program "Public Service interpreting and Translation". Program graduates are expected to provide linguistic mediation services primarily in judicial and medical settings. The specificity of interpreter assisted communication in these settings directly affects the choice of study materials used for interpreters' and translators training.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Studying the theoretical resources and lingo didactic literature of the last decade one can say that modern researchers and practitioners have always shown their interest to the problems of translation and interpreting and the ways, approaches, technologies and tools of training the appropriate skills.

The following issues of translation and interpreting development have been examined recently: training translation and interpreting skills in law setting (Atabekova, 2011); the issues of specific characteristics of public service interpreters' activity and the challenges of translators' and interpreters training including the lack of well qualified trainers and learning materials (Corsellis, 2008); methodology of training translators (Kiraly, 2000; Masalimova et al., 2016); general concepts, evolution and prospect of interpreting development (Pöchhacker, 2016); the issues of curriculum building in interpreters' training (Sawyer, 2004); the role of translation and interpreting

for public services in modern multicultural environment (Valero-Garcés & Atabekova, 2013; Grigoryeva et al., 2015); the importance of ICT resources for training language and culture mediation skills (Atabekova, 2017).

M. Vargas-Urpi (2017) describes the use of datasets in studies of public service interpreting focusing on its linguistic aspect. A. Remael & M. Carroll (2015) consider the interpreting as a dialogue with the participation of an interpreter who helps the transfer of verbal and/or non-verbal communication in a real time period.

B. J. Robinson, C. I. López Rodríguez & M. I. Tercedor Sánchez (2009) examine the significance of the students' responsibility and the self-assessment of the output of their studies in their professional training as interpreters.

Two approaches to training interpreting, in particular, flipped learning across disciplines with more interactive activities and the traditional flipped model are compared in the research made by D. Kim (2017).

Translation Studies as an academic subject has been characterized by some challenges for the last decades, these issues are reviewed by R. A. Valdeón (2017).

Very often interpreters who work in public service (community) settings can face many problems with cross-cultural differences and diverse cultural background of the interlocutors. S. Hale (2014) identified the output of the study on the ways how interpreters in legal setting anticipate the potential cross-cultural differences.

Various aspects of translator and interpreter's training are discussed by L. Meister (2017), I. S. Robert, A. Remael & J.J.J. Ureel (2017), J. Huh (2017), and C. Rico (2017). The correlation between training interpreting skills and note taking is studied by S. Chen (Chen, 2017). The integrated approach of translation and interpreting training with other subjects is the key topic of the research by S. Colina & C.V. Angelelli (2015).

Translation and interpreting are realized in various settings which have certain characteristics that modern linguistic mediators should be aware of. Apparently, each setting assumes the use of specific terminology and extensive knowledge of a particular discourse. The following researches can provide more information about legal/court interpreting (Mikkelsen, 2000) and translation (Millán & Bartrina, 2013); medical/healthcare interpreting (Nicodemus & Metzger, 2014) etc.

Practical handbooks and teachers' guides focused on the development of translators' and interpreters' professional skills are of crucial importance. The authors examined various aspects of teaching and training linguistic mediators from the point of view of the main problem of this research that is the correlation of the mediators' training and materials used for the purpose.

In "A Practical Guide for Translators" G. Samuelsson-Brown (2004) traces a number of the sources of reference that can be used by a translator in his practical work. The author reports on the importance of mono and bilingual on-line and paper dictionaries, encyclopedias, standards, reference books and past translations, research papers and monographs, database applications for translators, however he does not reveal the way how to use them in professional training.

'Interpretation: Techniques and Exercises' by J. Nolan (2005) provides an overview of didactic assignments mainly focused on linguistic challenges. J. Nolan sets examples only from the political and economic discourses. Considering the economic discourse the author suggests that interpreting should be trained on the materials of business section of The New York Times or in such mass media papers or on line sites as The Economist, The Wall Street Journal, The Financial Times. But no materials are mentioned as far as the political discourse is concerned.

Training professional translators and interpreters in Russia has deep roots. It is evoked from the research of Y.I. Retsker (2010), V.Y. Rosenzweig (1972), A.D. Shveytser (1988), L. S. Barkhudarov (1975), V.N. Komissarov (1970), and others. Now traditional approaches of Russian lingo didactics are realized in the use of materials compiled by (1) Russian authors like students books by I. Alekseyeva (2001) or S. Fomin (2006) or (2) authentic resources implied for teaching English for specific purposes e.g. "Professional English in Use Medicine" by E. Glendinning & R. Howard (2007) or "Professional English in Use Law" by G. D. Brown & S. Rice (2007).

However these materials have failed to match the contemporary educational environment and learners' needs. The former have few assignments for training mediators' skills, the tasks do not reflect the current situation in the word and are not focused on any special setting, whereas the latter contain much information on the subject, are written in an authentic language but do not include any tasks for translators' and interpreters' skills development. Moreover, authentic students' and course books for studying English in educational or culture settings are not available.

Apparently, the different sources and theoretical studies have been compared. In our opinion, neither of these materials can serve as the bases for training professional skills of translator and interpreters in a specific setting.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The experiment was held in the Institute of Law, RUDN University. The participants of the experiment were the learners studying at the Master program "Interpreter and Translator for Public Services and Institutions" run by the Department of Foreign Languages of the Institute mentioned above. All students (30) were included in the focus group.

To obtain accurate and reliable data of the experiment the following methods of investigation were used (the classification of research methods is given in accordance with the online resource "Wikibooks" (Research Methods, 2017]):

- Qualitative methods including various methods of collecting analyzing and interpreting information, in this case it was related to the examination of lingo didactic researchers' theories and approaches as well as learning materials; browsing, comparing and selecting new sources of information that could be implemented in the pedagogical practice; identifying and presenting the output of the teaching experiment.
- Quantitative methods related to all kinds of recording and data statistics. In the experiment presented in this paper these methods were used when reporting on the results of the observation, surveys, interviews and questionnaires that expressed the respondents' opinions and assessment.
- To observe and explain the findings of the research the methods of statistical analysis and the method of specific theoretical perspectives were used.

The lack of appropriate learning materials for training linguistic mediators in a specific setting (e.g. public services) determined the course of the experiment. Prior to analyzing the resources that could be used for training purposes, the professional interests of the participants were studied. The course books and other learning materials used in practice of training translation and interpreting skills were examined. Apparently, translation and interpreting skill should be trained in all discourses, but the students' interests differ greatly. They prefer to concentrate on a certain discourse and to pay less time and attention to the others. So the aim of the first stage was to learn the professional interests of the participants of the experiment. For this purpose a survey was held, it consisted of the following questions:

1. Are you generally satisfied with the learning materials? Why? (Yes/No)
2. What setting would you like to work at? (Educational, law, medical, others)
3. What do you expect your learning materials would be? Put the characteristics (authentic, interesting, up-to-date, useful for work) from more important to less important.

After the summarizing the data obtained, the search for the learning materials and resources was carried out. The hypothesis that translation skills can be trained in the cohesion with the interpreting skills provided the lingo didactic technology of the practical use of the selected materials and supplementary resources. As the basis for the experiment there were selected the free on line materials of the European Commission of Directorate-General (DG) for Education and Culture; DG for Health and Food Safety; Service Department Legal Service; DG

for Justice and Consumers etc. (https://ec.europa.eu/info/departments_en); and such sites as the official European Union website (<https://europa.eu/european-union>) etc.

The central stage of the experiment was carried out in accordance with the constructivism approach and implied an active involvement of the students in the process of teaching and learning. Browsing the appropriate sites the learners chose the materials to study. Then the files were divided into equal parts suitable for home work translation and in class activities. As a homework the students were to translate the appropriate part and distinguish the key words or chunks in two languages. In the class the interactive work was realized. Changing the languages one student voiced the lexical unit another one interpreted it, then they changed over. In the same way the students checked the translation made at home reading aloud the fragments of the text for further interpreting. So the consecutive interpreting was simulated. Later, interpreting the YouTube files and film fragments was integrated in the class activities.

In the follow-up phase of the teaching experiment, the students were asked to assess the efficiency of the suggested technology and respond to the questions:

1. Are you generally satisfied with the learning materials? (Yes/No)
2. Does the way of training translation skills match you expectations? (Yes/No)
3. Does the way of training interpreting skills match you expectations? (Yes/No)
4. Which type of training (a traditional or an experimental one) meets your prospective professional goals better and why?

Finally, their opinions were generalized and recommendations for further practice of mediators' skills development were put forward.

RESULTS

The experiment presented in the paper consisted of several stages, so the results of each stage should be reported. As it was mentioned above public service translation and interpreting touches upon various discourses such as educational, legal, medical etc.

As mentioned in the literature review, various aspects of mediators' (translators' and interpreters') professional training are of utmost importance. These problems are studied by lingo didactic researchers and practitioners involved in teaching and training specialists in higher education institutions. One of the acute issues of the current methodology of training linguistic mediators is the choice of learning materials and the integration of the new materials in the teaching practice. The present study proved the fact that the learning materials should be chosen taking into consideration the professional interests and perspectives of the translators- and interpreters-to be.

The pre experiment survey was aimed at assessing the students' opinion on the traditional learning materials used in their professional training. The output of the survey is presented in [Table 1](#).

The results of the survey indicated that only less than one third (9) respondents thought that the course books used were quite interesting and worth studying. The other part of the respondents (21) were sure that the materials they study should be more modern and related to the setting they were going to work at. Consequently, they supposed that the materials should be changed.

As the domain of public services includes various settings, it was important to find out what setting the participants of the experiment would prefer for their professional activity. The results obtained show that the majority of respondents (15) would like to connect their career with the law setting, about one third of the students (9) intended to work as translators and interpreters in medicine, and one fifth of the survey participants (6) supposed that studying the issues of education and culture were the most topical.

Table 1. The students' opinion before the pre experiment

Issue of the Survey	Positive response	Negative response
Satisfied with the learning materials	9	21
Professional setting including:	30	
Law	15	
Medical	9	-
Educational	6	
Requirements to the learning materials:	30	
useful for work	30	
up-to-date	28	-
authentic	27	
interesting	19	

Table 2. The students' opinion after the experiment

Issue of the Survey	Positive response	Negative response
Are you generally satisfied with the learning materials?	28	2
Does the way of training translation skills match you expectations?	28	2
Does the way of training interpreting skills match you expectations?	28	2
Which type of training meets your prospective professional goals better?	30	1
traditional	3	27
experimental	27	3

The students expected that the new learning materials should be, first, useful for work (100% of respondents); then, up-to-date (95%) and authentic (92%). More than a half of the participants (63%) supported the idea that the learning materials should be interesting.

On completion of the training with the use of the recently selected learning materials a post experimental survey was held. **Table 2** shows the output of the post experimental survey.

Though the first question was similar to the one of the pre experimental survey, the response differed greatly. 28 students answered that they were satisfied with the learning materials. The same number of the survey participants were sure that the experimental way of training translator's and interpreter's skills is much more effective for their professional career. 27 respondents expressed their positive opinion to the way the translating and interpreting skills were trained on the basis of the up-to-date learning materials.

As a result of the experiment the learning materials for practical training translation and interpreting skills were selected; the assignments for training and assessing the appropriate skills were worked out; the English - Russian glossary of the terms for the public services setting was compiled.

DISCUSSION

Nowadays the role of a linguistic mediator especially of a translator and interpreter in a specific setting is crucial. Training the appropriate professional skills in translation and interpreting is the goal of various educational institutions and programs. Modern educational environment is characterized by the diversity of curricula and learning materials. The development of translation and interpreting professional skills should be correlated with the learning materials. The latter should have a certain number of characteristics and, first of all, match the learners' professional expectation and requirements.

One of the educational approaches applied in the modern education is constructivism, which implies the involvement of the students in the process of education. We can assume that the students can participate in selecting

the materials for learning, as they realize what material can be useful for their professional career. Their professional interest in a certain setting determines the choice of the learning materials. Moreover, using the samples and the teacher's recommendations, the students can also prepare the tasks and assignments for training definite skills in translation and interpreting. The students with a high level of language proficiency can also assess the correctness of their fellows' output in translation and interpretation.

Mediation along with speaking, listening, reading and writing is considered to be a language activity (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, 2004). The development of speaking, listening, reading and writing skills is interdependent as speaking and listening are oral forms of language activities whereas reading and writing are the written forms. On the other hand, speaking and writing are productive forms and listening and reading are the perceptive ones. The experiment described above demonstrated that the translation and interpreting skills can be trained in cohesion on the basis of the same learning materials but with different tasks.

The experiment also included two surveys, the pre experiment survey observed the aspects to choose the learning materials, whereas the post experiment survey proved the efficiency of the technology suggested. Among the benefits of the experimental training its participants emphasized:

- the learning materials that were chosen by the students during the experiment correspond to the up-to-date real practice;
- the materials studied could be used when writing research papers and graduation thesis;
- the experimental training helped to prepare to the pre-thesis internship;
- the students felt more confident and comfortable in their translating and interpreting activities.

The examination of the literature review proved the fact that the lingo didactic approach to training translation and interpreting skills has not been previously described. The findings of the current study proved the efficiency of the applied lingo didactic technology; demonstrated the enhancement of the translation and interpreting skills of the students. Doing the translation and interpreting tasks the students enhanced the speed of the use of the professional vocabulary, improved the professional reaction in interpreting; reached more adequate translation. The students were motivated to use appropriate on line resources including on line reference materials, dictionaries, encyclopedias and official sites of relevant agencies.

At the same time despite these promising results, further research in various settings and with a greater number of participants is required.

CONCLUSION

Much attention has been paid to the development of the mediator's professional skills i.e. the skills of translating and interpreting. This issue has been studied from various angles but still there are some unsolved problems left. The literature review showed that such issues as the choice of the learning materials as well as their importance for training skills in translation and interpreting was not studied yet.

The research held by the authors highlighted the importance of the correlation of the learning materials with the specific domain of the students' perspective professional activity. The experimental findings that include the output of the teaching experiment and the statistical data supported the authors' outlook on the issue.

In course of the research diverse learning materials for training interpreters and translators were examined; various discourses in public services setting were studied; the learners' assessment of different aspect of their professional training as mediators was reported. The trajectory for further evolution of the methodology of the linguistic mediators' training was provided taking into account the ideas of constructivism and the interrelated development of all kinds of language activity.

The current research is limited by the lack of information from other specific settings and by a small size of the experiment participants. So further theoretical examination and teaching experiments are strongly recommended.

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