

TRANSLATION AS A MULTI-PURPOSE TOOL IN LANGUAGE TEACHING

The need for a change in teacher education is a consequence of changes in the contemporary world and the language policies which attempt to accommodate those changes. The globalization requires that citizens be plurilingual or polyglot and presupposes many new skills, competence levels from students:

- ability to use their plurilingual, pluricultural repertoire in knowledge building: to reuse in one language subject knowledge acquired in other languages; to use oral and / or written sources in several languages in order to build new knowledge in one or several disciplines;
- ability to summarize orally or in written form in his / her own language or some other languages within his/her repertoire information presented in different languages;
- ability to switch smoothly from one language to another and to act as an intermediary for people who do not understand what is being communicated by reproducing orally information during an interaction (conversation, team work) in a common language, etc.

But none of the documents on multilingualism actually relates translation to language teaching in any clear way. Translation is certainly mentioned, but always in sections that remain quite separate from the comments on improving language teaching. Language learners learn languages; professional translators translate; and those are seen as quite separate worlds.

It is obvious, that translation is somehow inherent in the language-learning process itself; that it is a skill that is as fundamental to the bilingual mind as each of the other skills is to monolingual and bilingual minds alike. On this view, translation is a way (or set of ways) of learning a foreign language, and should be considered a fifth skill to be practised within the language classroom, alongside reading, listening, speaking and writing [1].

In practical terms, translation brings a number of beneficial aspects to the general process of language learning. First, translation allows time for reflection on elements of a text, its sociolinguistic, socio-cultural and pragmatic peculiarities, as opposed to spoken communication, where fluency and interactivity dominate. Since a learner has some time to formulate and reformulate a text we can focus on preciseness and accuracy, especially in refining meaning. Comparing and reflecting on the various possibilities of translation provides deep insight into the nature of languages and cultures.

Secondly, translation can be used with a lot of classroom activities (brainstorming; vocabulary preview, grammar explanation, anticipation guides; reading, writing, speaking and listening activities, etc), when appropriate, allowing students to apply themselves to whatever extend their motivation may drive them. The main point is that any learning activity you can think of, or almost, can be associated with translation and it can be integrated with communicative tasks. Translation can involve much more than the mere exercise of “literal translation”, which here becomes just one possibility among many others.

Thirdly, translation provides students with the opportunity to work outside the

constraints of a classroom, contributing to collective communicative events (interpreting and mediating in social and transactional situations for friends, family, clients, foreign guests, etc.).

Finally, translation is beneficial to the real needs of learners because it is needed in modern societies. All above mentioned abilities and many others, of course, are directly connected with translation skills and competences, which, no doubt, should be practiced within the language classroom.

References

1. Butzkamm W., Caldwell J. *The Bilingual Reform: A Paradigm Shift in Foreign Language Teaching*. Gunter Narr Verlag Tubingen, 2009. – 260 p.