Chapter 16

Translator Education and Metacognition:
Towards Student-Centered Approaches to Translator Education

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ABSTRACT

Translator training has undergone major changes over the last two decades. One of those changes is a transition from training courses organized around a series of translation difficulties to a conception of training organized around a set of skills and competencies that have emerged as the product of inter-disciplinary research on translation and educational science. Helping students to take better control of their own learning is an aspect that can be influenced by knowledge produced in educational research. Metacognition as knowledge produced in educational science can contribute to this transition. This chapter highlights the metacognitive dimension of translation and shows that metacognition can help translation students to become responsible for their own learning. Finally, the authors present the results of a study that allowed them to identify and define metacognitive factors that help learners succeed in their transition from university to the labor market. Some crucial aspects of training are overlooked when it focuses exclusively on disciplinary knowledge.

INTRODUCTION

"Take this text home. Translate it! Next week, in class, I will comment on your translations. You will take good note of those comments and you will try not to repeat the same mistakes in future translations. That is how you will become professional translators." These lines offer a very unsophisticated idea of the way translation was generally taught until the beginning of the 80s. By then, instead of providing students with principles of translation that could help them develop translation competence, teaching was conceived mostly as a way to assess learners' in-ability to translate. In other words, the premise was that by translating a text every week students would be, after a certain time, able to work in the transla-tion industry. The students' learning objective

was to try to match the teacher's performance. Jean-René Ladmiral (1977, p. 73) called this approach *performance magistrale* or instructional performance, as Kiraly (2000, p. 23) called it. The teacher's performance stood for the desired level of translation competence learners should aim at. In the same way, admission exams to certain translation training institutions included the translation of a text. Thus, to become translators, candidates had to demonstrate competence in what they were supposed to learn once accepted into the program. Fortunately, things have changed for the better.

The main objective of this chapter is to present arguments in favor of finding epistemological and methodological tools with the potential to support a transition from teacher-centered approaches towards learner-centered initiatives as well as to provide learners with a more active role in their learning process. Translator education could achieve this by exploring the metacognitive factors that facilitate would-be translators' entrance into the labor market. We will, first, analyze two approaches to translator education informed by well-known and established theories of learning. These are Jean Delisle's learning by objectives approach and Donald Kiraly's social constructivist approach. These approaches epitomize the transition from teacher-centered conceptions of translation teaching to learner-centered ones. Second, we will discuss the principles of learner-centered education to emphasize the importance of knowledge about learning as a way to ensure that translation teaching embarks on the learning paradigm with assurance. Third, we present the results of some research initiatives about the link between translation training and the labor market. We believe that translation training should open to sources of information other than language and communicational considerations to better inform teaching initiatives. For example, using the results of empirical research initiatives accomplished in collaboration with translator employers. Finally, we share the results of a study on the metacognitive factors of translation that facilitate novice-translators' transition from the university to the labor market by giving them better control of their learning process.

FROM TEACHER-CENTERED TO STUDENT-CENTERED APPROACHES TO TRANSLATION TEACHING

As Dorothy Kelly (2005, pp.11-19) documented it, translation teaching has evolved simultaneously with Translation Studies and parallels the evolution of educational science. Such evolution of translation teaching is apparent in some of the approaches proposed to teach translation in the last 30 years. We will not comment on all the approaches Kelly describes in her book. Instead, we will point to and comment upon two of those approaches. The first one is Jean Delisle's learning objectives approach and the second is Donald Kiraly's social constructivist approach. Three reasons explain our decision to concentrate on these two approaches. First, among the approaches identified by Kelly, these two stand out as the only ones to be grounded on an established theory of learning. Second, Delisle's and Kiraly's approaches give us an excellent idea of the advances made by translation teaching from 1980 to 2000. Third, our choice highlights the role of learners in these two approaches.

According to Kelly, the first systematic approach to translation teaching was the work of Canadian scholar Jean Delisle, who in 1980 proposed an initiation course for translators in the language combination English/French. In his approach, Delisle implemented the principles of programmed learning or learning by objectives. *L'analyse du discours comme méthode de traduction*, Delisle's first handbook, combined the theoretical principles of the *Théorie du sens*, as applied to the training of interpreters and translators at the École Supérieure d'interprètes et de traducteurs attached to the Sorbonne University

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