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Advantages and drawbacks of using group work in translator training

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Abstract

Nowadays the role of a lecturer has considerably changed as the study process has become more student-centered. Students' cooperation and communication, sharing knowledge and ideas have become highly valuable. The aim of the research was to improve the quality of translator training identifying students' opinion about the advantages and drawbacks of group work. The conducted research allows concluding that the use of group work in the process of translation is a successful way of diversifying the process of translator training because in spite of some drawbacks the group translation facilitates the development of the translator's experience, skills and language competence.

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1. Introduction

Attitudes towards group work as a method of translation are quite controversial. On the one hand, a generally accepted view is that the most widely used method of translation is individual translation. On the other hand, it is at least one more method how to diversify and enrich translation classes; as G. Davies states, there is room for more than one approach to teaching translation (Davies, 2004). Moreover, according to K. Klimkowski, even a brief glance at modern CAT technology solutions available shows that the tendency towards group translation rather than individual translation is already a matter of fact (Klimkowski, 2006).

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The authors of the research fully agree to K. Klimkowski's paraphrase of A. Pym's well-known definition of translation competence to show the difference between individual translation and the group translation process:

- A series of viable target text (TT) renditions are proposed by different translators (or subgroups within the group);
- One viable TT is arrived at through conflict and compromise.

The effect of synergy, as K. Klimkowski aptly names it, ensures that discussion, conflicts and compromises in the group lead to solutions that improve the quality of the translation (Klimkowski, 2006).

Regarding translator training, students' cooperation and communication in the process of translation promote the exchange of students' knowledge and experience, thus creating a more qualitative translation. However, R. Andersone has a point of view that group work has not been used professionally and effectively in the educational establishments of Latvia and even all over the world (Andersone, 2004). Teaching staff use to assure that group work is often unmanageable and consider it to be an inefficient teaching method. The drawbacks of group work that are mentioned most often are as follows:

- A variety of knowledge, experience, skills, competence, interests, character, attitude towards the work among the group members;
- The leader who imposes his/her point of view and diminishes the realization of other students' ideas;
- Inability of students to plan their time and take into account other students' opinion;
- Improper division of duties within the group as there are duties that can be fulfilled easier and faster;
- Lack of initiative and motivation among the students to be actively involved in the working process;
- A possibility to see the group mates from the negative side (Andersone, 2004).

However, researcher D. Prets has an opinion that, working in a group, students are more positive and friendly towards each other in comparison with those students who practice individual work and competing methods of studying (Prets, 2000).

The authors of the research maintain that the use of group work in the translation process has the following drawbacks: problem of concentration; the contribution and performance of every group mate may be unequal; group mates may have different speed of translation; the level of knowledge and competence may be different; different opinions can cause conflicts in the group and negatively influence the translation process.

But, at the same time, they believe that professionally organized group work is a very successful means how to develop students' translation skills because it gives an opportunity to popularize diversity – students learn from each other, take into account the point of view of their group mates, get new experience, in such a way improving the quality of translation. Therefore, the ultimate goal of the research was to identify students' opinions towards group work to improve teaching/learning process – giving students a chance to share their ideas, background knowledge and experience and using this information to diversify translation process, make it more interesting and improve the overall quality of the translation.

The hypothesis of the research has been as follows: group work has both advantages and drawbacks; therefore, lecturers should ensure the necessary preconditions for fruitful group work and students should improve their skills and competence to use group work in the translation process in the most professional way, overcoming its drawbacks and concentrating on the advantages.

2. Design and research methods

56 students of Riga Technical University, Institute of Applied Linguistics participated in the survey. They were students of different academic years – 7 of them were 1st year Master study program students (4 Latvians, 2 Russian-speaking students, 1 foreign student), 12 of them were 4th year Bachelor study program students (3 Latvians, 5 Russian-speaking students, 4 foreign students) and 37 of them were 1st year Bachelor study program students (9 Latvians, 14 Russian-speaking students, 14 foreign students). To reveal students' ideas and collect their opinions on the topic, the essay "The Use of Group Work in the Process of Translation" was organized in the 1st semester of academic year 2015/2016. Content analysis has been chosen as the main research method. Definite questions were offered to the students to discuss in the essay:

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