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**Didactics of translation and assessment: a case study of Kwame Nkrumah
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Abstract

Not many studies have been done in the didactics of translation on experimental and case studies. In this paper, the findings of a study conducted in didactics and translation assessment will be presented. Data was collected from students learning French/English translation in the Department of Modern Languages at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi. Two questionnaires with forty one variables were coded and entries made into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences. (SPSS 20.0) Then, frequency distribution tables were generated according to levels of study for two consecutive academic years, i.e. the first semester of both the 2015/2016 and 2016/2017 academic years. The study helped in classifying some errors committed by students and the sources of such errors through the use of a model. As a result, some specific recommendations were made in the form of didactic strategies to be adopted in order to avoid such occurrences in the teaching of translation.

Keywords: didactics, translatology, skills, errors, source language, target language, utterance.

INTRODUCTION

Didactics of translation belongs to the area of translatology, which is an emerging discipline created by Brian Harris in 1972. One can agree with Gile (2011) that it is a science of translation which has literary, professional, psychological, pragmatic, linguistic, cognitive, ethnographic and sociolinguistic aspects. It can however be grouped into three main categories according to the object of its scientific orientation. This scientific orientation can be elucidated based on the product, the process and the function of translation (Reiss, 2009).

In this article, we shall explore the product of translation which happens to lack much attention in research but which seems to us, critical in our practice as teachers of translation. We shall present a study of errors committed by students in level 100, 200 and 400 based on exercises representing sub-skills that learners of translation ought to acquire.

Curricular for Translation, Interpretation and didactics have improved significantly since 1972. It is noteworthy that there have been basically functional and interpretative approaches. The latter is drawn from ideas put forward by Marianne Lederer and Danica Seleskovitch (the Paris school of meaning) and the former by Christiane Nord (Model for Translation-Oriented Text Analysis in 1991). Putting these different approaches together in this study makes our methodology bivariate in the sense that it centres on both the process and the product of translation.

Didactics of translation and theory of errors

Works on didactics in regard to theories and texts show a lack of a single clear and distinct definition of errors in translation. Thus, while Gouadec (1989: 38) defines error as a breaking off of appropriateness during the process of

translating a first document into a second document, error is perceived to be an unjustifiable distortion of a message or its characteristics. Nord (2009:237) from her functional approach view point, defines an error or a mistake as any breach of translational instruction in relation to any functional aspect. According to Gile (2009:214) however, mistakes in translation could be traced from eight sources which he enumerates as follows:

- a.) Insufficient knowledge of the source language. (translated language). (TL)
- b.) Inattentiveness while reading the source language text.
- c.) Poor quality of the source language text.
- d.) Lack of seriousness in reformulation from the source language text.
- e.) Mechanical inaccuracy during writing.
- f.) Inability to appreciate applicable norms.
- g.) Insufficient knowledge of the target language. (TL) (Language translation is made into)
- h.) Problems regarding adhoc information acquisition.

From the foregoing, Gile postulates that mistakes and carelessness are attributable to the following four factors: a. insufficient mastery of the target language, b. a momentary contamination or interference of the target language by the source language, c. fundamental inability of the learner to distance themselves from linguistic structures of the source language text while reformulating into the target language and d. insufficient attention committed to reformulation and the absence of verification of acceptability of produced utterance in the target language.

It seems that the list in its entirety covers factors which are the source of the commission of errors. It is reasonable therefore to categorize them into structural

factors which have to do with insufficient previous knowledge and random factors due to inattentiveness. There are however, general causes which could be traced from lack of mastery of both source and target languages.

Didactics product and process oriented assessment

Translation thought and self-assessment date back to the era of Cicero. However, several other translators have made comments on their works and have made known through research and publications, the translational tendencies of their time. It was after the Second World War that translatology emerged as a discipline. Reiss (2009:2) designated Eugene Albert Nida as the precursor and attributed this fact to his book titled "Toward a science of translating" in 1964. This discipline could be empirical or purely theoretical and it is James Holmes who is credited to have had the idea of translatology as an independent and empirical discipline with two main objectives: a.) to describe translation phenomena and b.) to propose theories that explain and predict translation problems. In this regard, he divided translatology into two branches: fundamental translatology and applied translatology. Fundamental translatology is also divided into two branches.

1. Fundamental translatology or pure translatology comprises two branches:

a.) Descriptive translatology which is further divided into product oriented or textual translatology based on text products in the target society and process oriented or cognitive translatology which is centred round underlying cognitive processes of translating.

b.) Theoretical translatology which presents models from applied translatology and scientific findings in connected disciplines.

2. Applied translatology. This aspect is also grouped into didactics of translation, production of linguistic tools, lexicology, terminology, bilingual lexicography, and translation criticism or assessment of translation.

Our contribution in this article is in the area of fundamental translatology in relation to the production of models and applied translatology in relation to didactics and translation criticism.

Objectives:

1. To make an inventory of errors made by undergraduate students learning translation i.e. French/English, English/French at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology. (KNUST)
2. To discover the cause of the most frequently observed errors.
3. Propose a categorization of the causes of such errors through the use of a model.
4. To provide pedagogic strategies for the teaching and learning of translation at the various levels.

Research Questions:

1. Do the methods of teaching translation at K.N.U.S.T. furnish learners with requisite skills to help them to translate to the satisfaction of potential customers after taking their degree?
2. Are there skills that are absent from the translation course at K.N.U.S.T.?

METHODOLOGY

The population referred-to is made up of undergraduate students of KNUST studying translation at the Department of Modern Languages. This has to do with 181 students for the 2015/2016 academic year and 181 students again for the 2016/2017 academic year. Students of Level 300 for each academic year did not

take part since they were outside of Ghana for a year's programme abroad. In 2015/2016 academic year, the frequency distribution was as follows: Level 100 (N=90), Level 200 (N=38), Level 400 (N=52) with one person not responding. In 2016/2017 academic year, the frequency distribution was as follows: Level 100 (N=107), Level 200 (N=31), Level 400 (N=33) with 10 non-respondents.

Given the fact that alone, we do not possess sufficient capacity to figure out linguistic and translational phenomena involved in the study, we had to use "Les règles d'or de la traduction" by Hiernard (2003), using the model of translation skills developed by StPierre (2014), 2 questionnaires, qualitative and quantitative were used with questions and exercises from the textbook. The tests were conducted under the supervision of the researcher with the help of colleagues from the Department. Duly filled questionnaires were collected and in each academic year as already indicated, 181 students participated.

Data collected were coded and entries were made and analyses realized through the software for statistical analyses: SPSS 20.0 for frequency distribution, percentages and results. We then presented the data in tables before analyzing and interpreting the results.

Finally, the results of the analysis were subjected to a statistical verification test: chi2 at access of probability in order to validate the interpretation of the said results. In fact, we consider results obtained as representative enough to throw light on students' difficulties in the learning of translation.

Translation skills

Table 1: Model for translation skills

| Linguistic sub-skill | Translational Sub-skill | Methodological Sub-skill | Disciplinary Sub-skill | Technical sub-skill | Intercultural Sub-skill |
|--|---|---|---|--|--|
| Capacity to write | Capacity to transfer | Capacity to research | Capacity to understand the domain | Technical capacity | Capacity to Understand cultures |
| Knowledge of rules of grammar and syntax of SL & TL | Knowledge of techniques of transfer and comprehension of source message | Knowledge of tools and resources at the disposal of the translator (dictionary, encyclopedia) | Knowledge of terminology appropriate to specific domains | Machine aided softwares for translation knowledge | Knowledge of source and target culture |
| Ability to apply rules of grammar and syntax to source | Ability to translate from source to target language without change in | Ability to use resources and tools at the disposal of the translator | Ability to use correct terminologies for specific domains | Ability to use machine aided softwares for translation | Ability to take into account characteristic of SL and TL cultures. |

| | | | | | |
|---------------------|---------|--|--|--|--|
| and target texts | meaning | | | | |
|---------------------|---------|--|--|--|--|

Note. Adapted from *Le modèle de compétences comme tronc commun des programmes de traduction*. By Saint Pierre Carine (2014) (Masters thesis, U. of Ottawa) Retrieved from [http://ruor.uottawa.ca/bitstream/10393/31866/3 St-Pierre Carine 2014](http://ruor.uottawa.ca/bitstream/10393/31866/3/St-Pierre_Carine_2014).

Table 1. above is a model of skills in translation which are the sets of capacities, abilities, and knowledge which altogether constitute skills of translation. We had to analyse data collected with results corresponding to each subskill of the model. The six sub-skills are the know-how, necessary for accomplishing tasks in translation. The knowledge, ability and capacity reinforce the know-how for mastery in the art of translating. Each sub-skill is made up of a capacity, an ability and knowledge which represents the aim of learning to translate. Abilities are developed through practice and previous knowledge acquired. It is by applying what has been learnt that students can really understand and develop abilities. It is the mastery of these abilities that give the student the required capacity for translating.

In a nutshell, these know-how, imply a plethora of knowledge, abilities and capacities that enable the translator to accomplish his work. The inability to perform any of these sub-skills, bring to the fore the deficiencies, problems, inaccuracies and errors of learners and their sources.

Questions of the corpus for assessment of sub-skills

Students were to translate the following utterances into French in order to establish whether inter-cultural sub-skills had been acquired:

1. "To take a French leave." The French equivalent is rendered as: "Filer à l'anglaise."
2. "A jobless person" The equivalent in the TL is "Une personne sans emploi"

3. "I have known her for 25 years." To be translated as « Je la connais depuis 25 ans. »

The following utterances were culled to test for methodological sub-skills. Respondents were to look out for the contextual meaning of "station" in each utterance through the use of dictionaries or any other means that they deemed fit.

1. "Meet you at the station at 5, platform 3." "Station" in this utterance refers to the railway station. Students were to make inferences in regard to the cognitive environment or the linguistic elements in the utterances such as "platform", to establish this fact.

2. "A busker got on at the next station and started playing the guitar" "Station in this context is the lorry park since it is the meaning of busker that establishes this fact.

3. "Classes have been cancelled because our school is going to be a polling station. Students in this case were to establish the contextual meaning of "station" which is a place for casting votes during elections.

In another test, students through the use of dictionaries were tested for their knowledge in linguistic sub-skills i.e. knowledge of rules of grammar and syntax of the source and target language. Days of the week and months of the year in French begin with small letters. In the same vein, words like Mount Everest, Cape of Good Hope were to be translated. It is important to state that in French, geographical terms are always written in small letters. Thus, "le mont Everest and "le cap de Bonne Espérance" are appropriate.

Under disciplinary sub-skills, respondents were to choose different registers of English that correspond to sentences provided. The levels of language were;

slang, elevated, journalese, administrative, religious and standard registers. The following were the utterances and respondents were to indicate which type of language each sentence belonged to:

i.) Brother Bob, would you please close that door? → Religious

ii.) Jesus Christ, shut that door Bob, can't you? → Slang

iii.) Bob, would you be so kind as to close the door? → Elevated

iv.) Shut that door Bob, will you? → Standard

v.) Bob asked to shut door → journalese

vi.) Bob is requested to close the door. → Administrative

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 2:- Intercultural sub-skill and translational sub-skill 2015/2016

| Test | Answers | No. of responses | Correct % | No. responses | Wrong % |
|------|-------------------------------|------------------|-----------|---------------|---------|
| 1 | To take a french leave | 44 | 27.7 | 115 | 72.3 |
| 2 | A jobless person | 107 | 67.3 | 52 | 32.7 |
| 3 | I have known her for 25 years | 70 | 44 | 89 | 56 |
| 4 | Men at work | 7 | 4.4 | 152 | 95.6 |

Note. Reprinted from *Problèmes de traduction : le cas des étudiants à K.N.U.S.T.* By Cornelius Azasu (2017) (Unpublished PhD thesis)

The table above presents results for intercultural sub-skills and translational sub-skills. In the 4 tests, out of the sample size of 181, 159 respondents filled this part of the questionnaire. Out of the number, there were 22 non-respondents. In test 1, students of all levels were to translate “filer à l’anglaise” into English. The equivalent in English is “to take a French leave.” 44 participants representing 27.7% had the right answer while 115 respondents or 72.3 % had the wrong answers. In test 2 however, 107 students who constitute 67.3 % of the valid population had correct responses as against 52 or 32.7% who had wrong answers. In test 3, 70 respondents making up 44% had answers right with 89 also symbolizing 56% getting wrong answers. Test 4 rather proved to be difficult for the respondents as shown by the results. “Men at work is translated as “attention travaux” or “travaux en cours.” This phrase which is often displayed on the highway, does not demand word for word or literal translation as that will constitute transcoding instead of translation.

Visibly, students’ answers show that majority have the inter-cultural sub-skill. In this regard therefore, only 7 respondents accounting for 4.4% had the answer right while 152 respondents or 95.6% had it wrong.

Table 3:- Linguistic sub-skill 2015/2016

| Test | Answers | No. Of responses | Correct % | No. Of responses | Wrong % |
|------|---------------------------|------------------|-----------|------------------|---------|
| 1 | le mont Everest | 47 | 29.6 | 112 | 70.4 |
| 2 | le cap de Bonne Espérance | 11 | 6.9 | 148 | 93.1 |

Note. Reprinted from *Problèmes de traduction : le cas des étudiants à K.N.U.S.T.* By Cornelius Azasu (2017)

(Unpublished PhD thesis)

In table 3, test 1. was to test the capacity of respondents to apply rules of grammar while being observant with the use of dictionaries. Mount Everest was to be translated into French. It is important to note that geographical terms just as days of the week and months of the year in French, begin with small letters. Thus, “le mont Everest” is the appropriate answer. For this, 47, representing 29.6% had correct answers while 112 responses symbolic of 70.4% had this wrong. Similarly, in test 2, the word “Cape” as in “Cape of Good Hope” becomes “cap” in French. This is found in many good French dictionaries but instead of being observant, respondents were careless or inattentive and this accounted for the mechanical inaccuracies. The larger minority of 11 participants or 6.9% had it right while 148 or 93.1% got it wrong.

Table 4:- disciplinary sub-skill 2015/2016

| Test | Answers | Number of responses | Correct % | Number of responses | Wrong % |
|------|----------------|---------------------|-----------|---------------------|---------|
| 1 | Standard | 30 | 18.9 | 129 | 81.1 |
| 2 | Journalese | 37 | 23.3 | 122 | 76.7 |
| 3 | administrative | 33 | 20.8 | 126 | 79.2 |

Note. Reprinted from *Problèmes de traduction : le cas des étudiants à K.N.U.S.T.* By Cornelius Azasu (2017)

(Unpublished PhD thesis)

In the case of Table 4 above, for the 2015/2016 academic year, students were to indicate the registers that correspond to the utterances. The results show that the majority of students do not have a grasp of disciplinary skills in translation.

Thus, 18.9%, 23.3% and 20.8% respectively were obtained for the correct answers while those who had wrong answers were on the higher side with the following corresponding results: 81.1%, 76.4% and 79.2%.

Table 5:- The man was taken to the station for questioning

Methodological sub-skill 2015/2016

| | Frequency | percentage | Percentage valid |
|-------------------|-----------|------------|------------------|
| poste de police | 125 | 69.1 | 78.6 |
| incorrect | 34 | 18.8 | 21.4 |
| Total | 159 | 87.8 | 100 |
| % of non-response | 22 | 12.2 | |
| Total | 181 | 100 | |

Note. Reprinted from *Problèmes de traduction: le cas des étudiants à K.N.U.S.T*
By Cornelius Azasu (2017) (Unpublished PhD thesis)

Table 5 above was designed to check whether students know how to use the dictionary to look up contextual meanings and also to assess their ability to make relevant inferences from the cognitive environment of “station” in the sentence to determine its contextual meaning. Interestingly, for this test, 125 respondents constituting 78.6 % valid had it right while 34 of them also representing 21.4 % valid had it wrong.

Summary of results

To sum up, it was observed that results obtained by majority of respondents in this survey was below 50%. The only assumption that can be deduced is that students have not mastered the complete usage of the dictionary. It is important

to note that apart from meanings of words the dictionary gives examples of usage according to various language registers; the actual meanings and figurative meanings for instance. Table 4 and table 5 offer instances of tests designed to assess disciplinary sub-skills and methodological sub-skills. Results show 18.9%, 23.3%, 20.8% and 78.6%.

In fact when words are polysemous the dictionary presents the various shades of meanings. It is in the light of this that the researcher designed this type of exercise in order to assess student's knowledge of the semantic fields of the word "station" in English. In spite of the abysmal performance, one observable trend is that in regard to results obtained in Table 5 for instance, the word "questioning" collocates with "police station" so one can surmise that due to the conventional association of those words in discourses, that could explain the percentage of success which was above 50%. With regard to Table 2, the expression, "filer à l'anglaise" simply means "to take a French leave." However, the following are some of the answers given by respondents : "filer has the English" , "they spun English" , "they are good in English" , "they switched to English" , " they have gone away to Britain" , "they fled to the Englishwoman" , "they sped along at an Englishwoman" , just to cite a few of such instances.

CONCLUSIONS

The key research findings are as follows:

1. Students have not mastered the use of monolingual dictionaries for the verification of meanings of words in the source language.
2. Students rather tend to rely heavily on bilingual dictionaries alone.
3. Errors arise when there is lack of comprehension of segments of utterances.

4. "False friends" or cognates in both English and French have the tendency of encouraging students to assume that such words are synonymous.
5. Majority of students are prone to choosing the very first shade of meaning they find in the dictionary.
6. Students are often inattentive and as such, are unable to observe structural differences in grammar and syntax, in respect of the source language and the target language.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. The trainer of future translators should focus attention on students' acquisition of linguistic sub-skills which will enable students to know rules of grammar and syntax of SL and TL, in order to inculcate in them the ability to apply rules of grammar.
2. Translational sub-skills could be concentrated upon in order to help learners in the acquisition of techniques of transfer and comprehension of source texts since this will enable them to translate from SL to TL effortlessly.
3. Methodological sub-skills should be taught so that students will know much about lexicography and the use of the dictionary in looking up contextual meanings.
4. Disciplinary sub-skills should be taught so that, students will know the terminology appropriate to specific areas, levels of language and registers of SL and TL.
5. Conscious effort should be made to help students acquire technical sub-skills in order to make them understand advantages and disadvantages in the use of machine aided software like "Google translator" so that much attention could be

devoted to the use of hard copies of dictionaries, both monolingual and bilingual.

6. Intercultural sub-skills should not be over looked as knowledge of source and target language cultures is key in the effectiveness of translation.

7. The use of textbooks in translation cannot be overemphasized as good ones present all the sub-skills to be acquired by learners of translation.

We are of the view that the results of this empirical study, presented in this article and the observations made about translation didactics and assessment could go a long way to help solve translation difficulties encountered by undergraduate students studying translation.

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