Translation and educational psychology: Quality needs a cluster?

Nadia Bouchellaleg, Ouargla

As an educational psychologist I find it very imperative to focus on the process of teaching/learning translation if to take into account the quality. Translation is a slow and demanding process that requires skill and training. So, educational psychology has to provide translation with scientific research and more understanding about the most effective teaching/learning methods. The aim of this article, then, is not to present anything new. It is an attempt to promote the importance of a closer and more organised dialogue between educational psychology and translation field in a cluster with the aim of finding a common ground and objectives inside the cluster.

It is my impression that when taking into account the situation in the translation field from the quality point of view, it is highly noticeable that the various translators are still wide apart from educational psychologists. Thus, there is not yet very much real co-operation between educational psychologists and translators. In other words, there is not too much interest in translation theory and educational psychology among practitioners. To put it more explicitly, there still does not exist a common ground and understanding between educational psychology and translation field. What is needed, then, is to start a sound and goal-oriented dialogue in the sense of creative teamwork, a dialogue where all translators and educational psychologists should meet. In this matter, it is imperative to point out that a cluster is becoming necessary for a better translation quality.

1- what is a cluster?

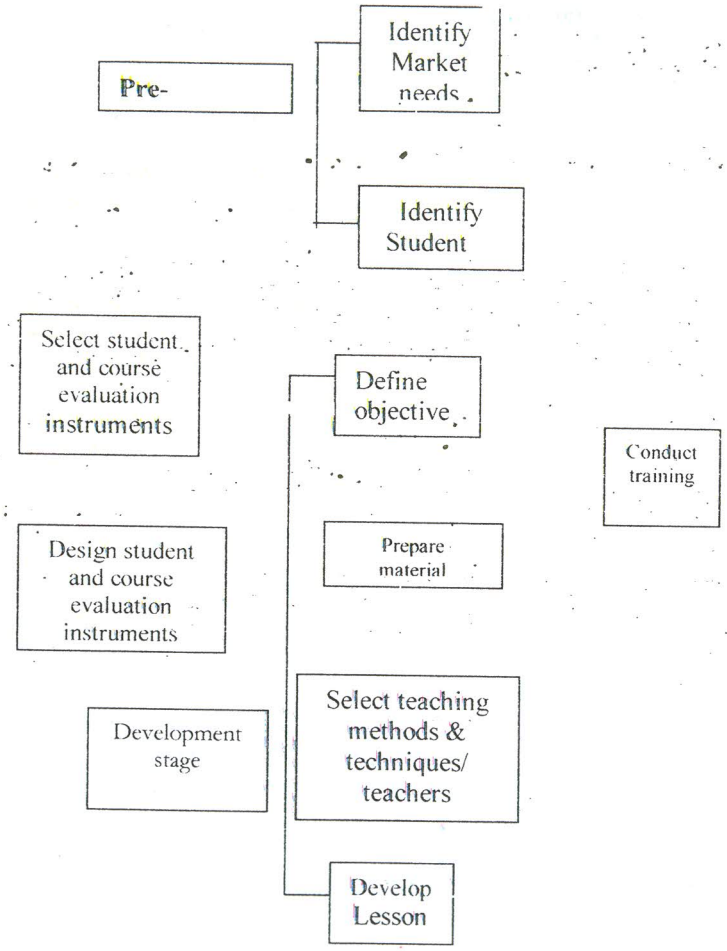
If to improve the quality, co-operation is, then, imperative to become a real cluster. The word cluster means: 1) a number of things of the same kind as fruits or flowers growing closely together; 2) a number of honeybees clinging together in a solid mass. (Webster's Third New International Dictionary). In this case, the translation cluster may include educational psychologists and translators. The reason behind working as a cluster is to better the quality of translation in order to survive in a competitive business. Educational psychology has to

provide the translation field with more understanding about the process of teaching/ learning. This may help the different actors in the translation field to produce competent translators who are sensitive, wise, vigilant, talented, gifted, experienced and knowledgeable persons. (Joseba, 1999). To be a good translator, therefore, one cannot just have some part of humanity; one must be a competent human being. (Martin Kay, 1992)

2-How can educational psychology foster better translation quality?

Until recently, translator training has received little attention. Translators have been trained informally, with neither clearly defined curricula nor proper training methodology. For this, translation teaching requires co-operation with very qualified and specialized professionals for better quality; in this case, educational psychology is very essential. Educational psychologists are specialists in learning and teaching; they do research on teaching methods and help train teachers; for this, this co-operation represents an effective ground for laying a very solid platform for better translator training program.

It is my impression that like any other training programs, designing a translator-training program should follow specific steps. These components have to cover the needs of both the students and the market. As an educational psychologist one can say, therefore, the most effective way that can offer better understanding is the one that takes into account all what is surrounding the process of teaching/learning. This can be illustrated as follows:



I) Pre-development stage

1) Identifying Market Needs. In order to put together an effective training programs, or even creating an efficient translator, the market demands must be taken into account. The issue that is raised is the specialization. Nowadays the market is characterized by technological factors. Pym believes that "translator training must try to address the phenomenon of specialization". (Pym, 1998). It is also argued that "the market for translation is ultimately determined by available technology"(Pym, 1998); so, professional translator should physically possess basic computer technology.

What is more, for better translation quality the translator training programs have to be more vocational and less academic so that to offer the students real-life scenarios. An efficient translator have to be able to cover both the theoretical aspects of translation and the practical aspects of translating. In this case, it incorporates both educational and vocational dimensions.(Gabr, 2001:4). Ulrych certifies that trends in translation pedagogy are increasingly in favor of interfacing vocational and educational components, based on the premises that training is never divorced from long-term educational commitments.(Ulrych, 1996: 252).

2) Identifying student needs. Stern and Payment argue that if the instructor disregards the needs of the learners, this may hamper their motivation and then their success will be threatened. The consequences might be as follows:

"1-Training content is inappropriate and poorly received.
2- The teacher misses the opportunity to connect with the students.
3- Communication breakdown occurs.
4- The teacher loses credibility". (Stern and payment, 1995: 70).

Accordingly, the course should integrate both the broad objectives of the curriculum and the personal needs of the students. Mossop argues that the university is obliged to teach the student the general skills required by the would-be translator which are "text interpretation, composition of a coherent, readable and audience-tailored draft translation, research, and checking/correcting"(Mossop, 2000).

Another prerequisite for developing a translation career is the acquisition and development of research skills. Sofer emphasizes that "a translator has to develop research skills, and be able to acquire reference sources which are necessary for producing high quality translation. Without such sources even the best of translator cannot hope to be able to master a large variety in many unrelated fields."(Sofer, 1999:36).

Another imperative concept that should be covered in the translation program is that of teamwork. In real-life situations, the translator does not work in a vacuum. There are always contacts with colleagues, and other professionals for the purpose of finding certain information, solutions and guidance. In this case it is pointed out that translators should learn how to work in teams as well as how to do the job alone (Gabris Laszlo, 2000). Fostering team spirit in the class will help eliminate fear among peers and will promote cooperation to reach solutions and exchange information. Mayoral confirms that " students must be trained for teamwork , sharing translation tasks not only with other translators, but also with professionals in other fields".(Mayoral, 2000:3).

It is also highly believed that the students have to be introduced to real-life situations because "the importance of incorporating real-world criteria within a curriculum for translator training and education cannot be underestimated"(Ulrych, 1996:252).

II) Development stage

3) Defining Instructional Objectives.

Once the needs of both the market and the students are identified, they have to be translated into specific instructional objectives. Mager defines an objective as a "description of performance you want learners to be able to exhibit before you consider them competent" (Mager 1984, 3). As such, the objectives describe the desired result of the course.

In order for curriculum developers to tailor efficient instructional objectives, they should consider both students' objectives and adult learning principles. Some main principles are as follows:

" 1- Adults learn best when they are involved in developing learning objectives for themselves which are congruent with their current and idealized self-concept.

2- The learner reacts to all experience as he perceives it, not as the teacher presents it.

3- Adults are more concerned with whether they are changing in the direction of their own idealized self-concept than whether they are meeting the standards and objectives set for them by others."(Sainz 1994, 135)

3a) Reasons for Instructional Objectives

Sheal argues that the quality of a training program depends on the adequacy of the course, or instructional, objectives. Developing instructional objectives is, therefore: the most important step in the curriculum development process. It is the one that pulls together all the other steps in the process of course design and development. Sheal concludes that if objectives are not identified and properly clarified,"then sooner or later there will be confusion: in the course development; in the presentation; among the learners; in the follow-up after the course; or in making an evaluation." (Sheal, 1989: 73).

Instructional objectives are useful in that they "tell the teacher where the course is going and how to know when he has gotten there" (Harris and DeSimone 1994: 126). Clear objectives help both the teacher and the student. They help the teacher design lessons that are easier for the teacher to evaluate and for the student to understand.

Objectives, in addition to serving as a basis for selecting learning materials and course delivery methods, can provide a way to measure whether learning has been achieved; can be used by the department to evaluate the success of the course; and can help the students focus and organize their attention and efforts before and during instruction (Mager 1984). In short, the use of properly prepared instructional objectives ensures consistency and congruity between what is learned, course content and evaluation items, and, thus, limits the amount of irrelevant course material and facilitates student learning.

3b) Characteristics of Useful Instructional Objectives

The quality of a training program depends upon the adequacy of its objectives. Mager argues that in order to define objectives that are useful, one must consider several factors:

*First, one should consider who the learners are as well as their preferences and learning styles. The objective should describe the performance expected of these learners, in other words, it should always identify what the learner is expected to be able to do.

*Further, the objective should always describe the important conditions, if any, under which the performance is to occur.

*Finally, the objective should state the criteria to be used for judging its success. In other words, the objective should identify, wherever possible, the criteria for acceptable performance by describing how well the learner must perform in order to be considered acceptable. "Course objectives that lack the performance, conditions, and criteria are often ambiguous and result in frustration and conflict between those who interpret the objectives differently." (Harris and DeSimone, 1994: 127)

4) Preparation of Materials

In order to achieve the broad goals of the course, the teaching material should cover theoretical as well as practical aspects. Gentile believes that the components of the course material should attempt to bridge the gap between theory and practice, and, even quotes Neubert, stating that "theory without practice is empty" just as "practice without theory is blind" (Gentile 1996). Nintai argues that "theoretical insights could enable students to become aware of their task, available translation options, and, of factors involved in decisions and choices.... Practical exercises should be organized so that they complement the theoretical courses" (Nintai 1994: 42-43). Mayoral, too, says, "I think it is good to have students complete a certain amount of practice before they are introduced to theoretical concepts" (Mayoral, 2000).

5) Select Teaching Methods and Techniques

Once the instructional objectives are identified and the content is prepared, the next logical step is to select the teaching methods and techniques that can best achieve these objectives. It should be noted that some methods are more appropriate for achieving particular objectives than others. Selection of appropriate teaching and training methods requires knowledge of the different techniques and sound judgement on

the part of the person who is designing the program, be it the instructor or the curriculum developer.

Research about teaching and learning shows that students learn more, better and quicker if they are actengaged in the instruction process. In order to achieve this goal, use of both active and passive modes of instruction is highly recommended (University of Kansas 2000). Charney and Conway argue that presenting information using a variety of methods strengthens understanding and retention (Charney and Conway, 1998). Further, translation, being a craft and a science, requires training based on language theories. Therefore, a sound approach to translation teaching and training ought to employ methods that address theoretical aspects of translation as well as the practical aspects of translating, i.e. passive and active modes of instruction

6) Selection of Teachers

In some institutions, professional developers develop the curriculum, and only then are teachers selected in light of their academic qualifications, personal skills and professional backgrounds. In other institutions, teachers perform both tasks, developing the curriculum as well as teaching the courses. Regardless, there is an on-going debate in translator training communities about who should teach translation. So far, there seem to be three groups with differing opinions:

1-The first group supports the notion that the academics, the scholars, the Ph.D. holders, should teach translation;

2-the second assumes the professionals, the actual doers of the job, should teach translation; and the last group, which seems very logical in its approach, is of the view that a team of academics and professionals should perform this task. The academics can teach the theoretical aspects of translation while the professionals can guide students in practice. Mossop believes that language and literature professors should teach courses in linguistics and translation theories, while practicing translators, teaching on a part time basis, should handle practice-in-translation modules.(Gabr, 2001:11)

Gouadec concludes that "the answer to who should teach translators is quite straightforward: both professionals with a talent for teaching and teachers with good knowledge of the job ... that they are supposed to train people for." (Gouadec, 2000).

Laszlo adds that translation teachers should attend formal training in language and translation teaching, and should have some sort of certification or accreditation attesting to their ability to translate (Laszlo 2000). This requirement is also supported by Barcsak: "It seems that teachers must be trained in teaching translation" (Barcsak 1996: 174). What is more, Harris and DeSimone argue that the teacher must have both training competency and subject matter expertise. The first involves the knowledge and skills needed to design and implement a training course, the ability to communicate knowledge clearly, mastery of various teaching methods and techniques, good interpersonal skills and the ability to motivate students. Subject-matter expertise, on the other hand, refers to mastery of the subject matter to be taught. (Harris and DeSimone, 1994: 127).

7) Developing Lesson Plans

A lesson plan, as defined by Harris and DeSimone, is "a guide for actual delivery of the training content" (Harris and DeSimone 1994: 132). It is used to structure the lesson and to help with the flow of the class (S. Kizlik, 2000). It is also a way of communicating instructional activities for a specific subject matter. Lesson planning requires that the instructor identify in advance what is to be covered and how much time should be allotted for each activity. By planning the lesson, the instructor ensures that specific skill gaps are filled and teaching principles are related to the content of the learning experience (Charney and Conway 1998).

In order for the instructor to develop an effective lesson plan, it is recommended that the lesson plan specify:

1-Learning objectives
2-Target students
3-Class prerequisites
4-Content to be covered
5-Selection and/or design of teaching/training media
6-Sequencing of activities
7-Timing and planning of each activity
8-Types of evaluation items

Conclusion

In conclusion, developing a translator-training program is a creative task that must be approached systematically. It requires following carefully planned steps and making concerted efforts. It is a demanding task that necessitates teamwork, intensive research and considerable academic and professional background in educational psychologists, and all actors in the translation field should co-operate inside the cluster for better translation quality.

References

1-Barcsak, A. 1996. Teaching Literary Translation-A Student's Point of View. In *Teaching Translation* and Interpreting 3. New Horizons. Papers from the Third Language International Conference, Elsinore, Denmark, 9-11 June 1995, eds. Dollerup, C. and Appel, V., 16:171-174. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: Benjamins.

2-Charney, C. and Conway, K. 1998. *The Trainer's Tool Kit*. New York: AMACOM Dollerup, C. and Appel, V., 16:137-144. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: Benjamins.

3-Gabr, M. 2001. Toward a model approach to translation curriculum development. Translation curriculum development, V 5, No2, April 2001, p1-15.

4-Gabris, Laszlo. 2000a. Teaching Translation and Interpretation. http://www.fut.es/~apym/symp/gouadec.html

5-Gentile, A. 1996. Translation Theory and Teaching: Connecting Theory and Practice. In *Teaching Translation and Interpreting 3. New Horizons. Papers from the Third Language International Conference, Elsinore, Denmark, 9-11 June 1995*, eds. Dollerup, C. and Appel, V., 16:55-62. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: Benjamins.

6-Gouadec, D.2000. Notes on translator training. From International Symposium on Innovation in translator and Interpreter Training. http://www.fut.es/ ~apym/symp/guadec.html.

7-Harris, D. and Desimore, R.L. 1994. Human Resources Development. Texas: The Dryden Press

8-Joseba Abaitua, 1999. Is it worth learning translation technology? In

Training Translators and Interpreters: New Directions for the Millennium 3rd Forum on Translation in Vic.. May 12-15,. Universitat de Vic, Spain

9-Kizlik, sandra.2000. Lesson Plans in Easy Way. http://www.adprima.com/easyless.htlm

10-Mager, R. F. 1984. Preparing Instructional Objectives, 2nd ed. Belmont, CA: Pitman Learning.

11-Mayoral, R. 2000. Notes on Translator Training (replies to a questionnaire). From *International Symposium on Innovation in Translator and Interpreter Training*. http://www.fut.es/~apym/symp/gouadec.html.

12-Mossop, B. 2000. What Should Be Taught at Translation School? From *International Symposium on Innovation in Translator and Interpreter Training*. http://www.fut.es/~apym/symp/gouadec.html

13-Nintai, M. N. 1994. Translating African Literature from French into English. In *Teaching Translation and Interpreting 2. Insights, Aims, Visions. Papers from the Second Language International Conference, Elsinore, Denmark, 4-6 June 1993*, eds. Dollerup, C. and Lindegard, A., 5:55-62. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: Benjamins.

14-Pym, A. 1998. On the Market as a Factor in the Training of Translators. http://www.fut.es/~apym/market.html.

15-Sainz, M. J. 1994. Awareness and Responsibility: Our Students as Partners. In *Teaching Translation and Interpreting 3. New Horizons. Papers from the Third Language International Conference, Elsinore, Denmark, 9-11 June 1995*, eds

16-Sheal, P.R. 1990. How to Develop and Present Staff Training Courses?. London: Kogan Page Limited.

17-Sofer, M. 1999. The Translator's Handbook, 3rd ed. Maryland: Schreiber Publishing, Inc.

18-Stern, N. and Payment, M. 1995. 101 Stupid Things Trainers Do To Sabotage Success, 5th ed. California: Richard Chang Associates, Inc.

19-Ulrych, M. 1996. Real-World Criteria in Translation Pedagogy. In Teaching Translation and Interpreting 3. New horizons. Papers from the Third Language International Conference, Elsinore, Denmark, 9-11

June 1995, eds. Dollerup, C. and Appel, V., 16: 251-259. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: Benjamin.
20-University of Kansas, center for teaching excellence. 2000. Great Beginnings: Planning your course. http://eagle.cc.ukans.edu/~cte/tt-planningcrs.html
21-Webster's Third New International Dictionary.