THEORY OF TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETING

STUDENT'S BOOK

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT -

HANOI UNIVERSITY OF FOREIGN STUDIES

ENGLISH DEPARTMENT

CONTENT

The whole course runs for 30 class hours

INTRODUCTION

When studying interpreting and translation (I/T) at University, students often meet with a lot of difficulties such as how to remember what has been said, how to express an idea clearly and quickly in the target language, how translate from the source language (SL) into the target language (TL) and so on. In order to help students become better interpreters and translators and enjoy the subject, the theory of interpreting and translation is introduced.

It is important for prospective interpreters/translators to understand the process of I/T, to identify the problems in doing I/T and then to find efficient and feasible solutions. These issues are also the main content of this short course. It is hoped that participants will find the course practical, useful and enjoyable.

AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE TRAINING COURSE

By the end of the course, participants will be able to:

know their role as interpreters/translators.

use I/T techniques and skills.

have increased self-awareness and confidence.

understand the ethics of the profession of I/T.

recognize non-verbal communication.

understand cultural concerns in I/T.

solve problem situations.

use specialized terminology in some areas.

assess and evaluate I/T.

As can be seen from the Content page, the first three Sessions focus on translation and the last three Sessions are about interpreting. There is a small part about the ways to assess I/T at the end of the course.

Teaching & Learning methods

Classroom lectures, interpreting/translation activities and self-study.

Assessment

Students are required to take a written test based on the content of this program.

    - Test: 80%

    - Attendance: 20%

Recommended Reading:

1. I/T Handouts of Auckland Institute of Technology (given by Dr. Sabine Fenton).

2. Newmark, Peter. (1988) A Textbook of Translation, Prentice Hall.

3. Newmark, Peter. (1982) Approaches to Translation, Pergamon Press.

4. Nida, Eugene & Taber, Charles (1982). The Theory and Practice of Translation.

1.1 WHAT IS TRANSLATION?

Translation is rendering a written text into another language in the way that the author intended the text.

Translators are concerned with the written word. They render written texts from one language into another. Translators are required to undertake assignments, which range from simple items, such as birth certificates and driving licenses, to more complex written material, such as articles in specialized professional journals, business contracts and legal documents.

1.2 WHY IS TRANSLATION?

Even with the most up-to-date and sophisticated communication systems, we can never know how many languages man uses today in the world, let alone how many languages man has used during the course of his development. Some sources say there are some two or three thousand languages being used in the world, but some others say the number may be as large as eight thousand. What a habit man has, that of speaking different tongues! And thus he offers himself difficulties and obstacles.

Since communication within only one speech community is not enough, certainly there has a great number of times arisen a situation in which some individuals are unable to understand the words or expressions of some others. This phenomenon creates a barrier to understanding whenever man tries to communicate across a great distance of space or across a great interval of time. Something has to be done to overcome this restriction. One way to cope with the restriction is for individuals to know the foreign language. But this is not the final solution because apparently no individual in the world can know all the languages in use. The best polyglot so far knows only about twenty-five languages, and still people want to read what other people write and what other people say. Translation and interpreting may be considered as the most universally accepted solution for surmounting the obstacle. And thus there is a need for professional translators and interpreters.

1.3   HISTORY OF TRANSLATION

Translation has always been done by somebody for somebody. The first trace of translation dates from 3000 B.C, during the Egyptian Old Kingdom, the area of the First Cataract, Elephantine, where inscriptions in two languages have been found. It became a significant factor in the West in 300 BC Luther's Bible translation in 1522 laid the foundations of modern German. In the 19th century translation was mainly a one-way means of communication between prominent men of letters and, to a lesser degree, philosophers and scientists and their educated readers abroad, whilst trade was conducted in the language of the dominant nation, and diplomacy, previously in Latin, was in French.

The 20th century has been called the "age of translation" to which one may add "and interpreting". International agreements between states, between state, public and private organizations are now translated for all interested parties, whether or not the signatories understand each other's language. The setting up of a new international body, the constitution of an independent state, the formation of a multinational company, gives translation enhanced importance. The exponential increase in technology (patents, specifications, documentation), the attempt to bring it to developing countries, the simultaneous publication of the same book in various languages, the increase in world communication, has correspondingly increased requirements. That the very survival of such bodies as the United Nations is crucially dependent on interpreting and translation can be taken as a good example of the importance of translation and interpreting.

1.4 THE DYNAMICS OF TRANSLATION (PETER NEWMARK)

There are some participants/actors in the translation process:
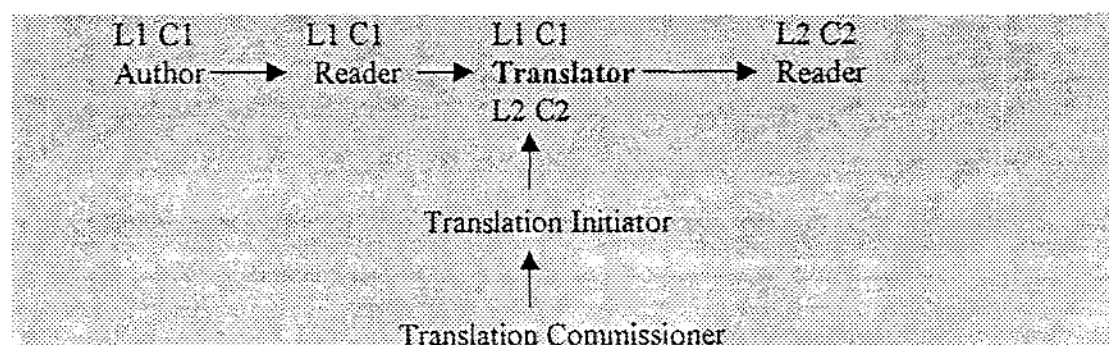
9 The truth (the facts of the matter}

A text is pulled in ten different directions, as follows:

1. The individual style or idiolect of the SL author. When should it be (a) preserved, (b) normalized?

2. The conventional grammatical and lexical usage of this type of text, depending on the topic and the situation.

3. Content items referring specifically to the SL, or third language (i.e. not SL or TL) cultures.

4. The typical format of a text in a book, periodical, newspaper, etc., as influenced by tradition at the time.

5. The expectations of the putative readership, bearing in mind their estimated knowledge of the topic and the style of language they use, expressed in terms of the largest common factor, since one should not translate down (or up) to the readership.

6, 7, 8. As for 2, 3 and 4 respectively, but related to the TL.

9. What is being described or reported, ascertained or verified (the referential truth), where possible independently of the SL text and the expectations of the readership.

10. The views and prejudices of the translator, which may be personal and subjective, or may be social and cultural, involving the translator's "group loyalty factor", which may reflect the national, political, ethnic, religious, social class, sex, etc. assumptions of the translator.

1.5   TRANSLATION THEORY

Since the mid 1980s there have been some major translation theories in the world.

- Linguistic Theory of Translation (by Catford, Nida) focuses on finding the equivalence (of meaning, grammar, content...)

- Functionalist Theories of Translation (German school) by K.Reiss, Neubart, Wilses, Vermeer, Skopco) do not pay attention to source texts. Their main aim is what we do with translation.

- Translation as Cultural Events Theory (by Mary Snell Hornby) sets up an integrated approach to translation.

- Manipulation School of Translation (by Susan Bassnett) (School of UK and Holland) points out the power of translation.

- Deconstructionist Theories (by Edwin Gentzler) (USA) forget source texts and regard translation as the second original.

- Culture and Context Theories (by Peter Newmark) focus on culture and context during the translation process. As this is the most suitable for undergraduate students, the theory, which is introduced below, is based on Peter Newmark's.

Translation theory, in a narrow sense, is concerned with the translation method appropriately used for a certain type of text, and it is therefore dependent on a functional theory of language. However, in a wider sense, translation theory is the body of knowledge that we have about translating, extending from general principles to guidelines, suggestions and hints.

What translation theory does is, first, to identify and define a translation problem (no problem - no translation theory!); second, to indicate all the factors that have to be taken into account in solving the problem; third, to list all the possible translation procedures; finally, to recommend the most suitable translation procedure, plus the appropriate translation.

1.6   PRE-TRANSLATION CONSIDERATIONS
1.6.1. READING THE TEXT

You begin the job by reading the original for two purposes: first, to understand what it is about; second, to analyze it from a "translator's" point of view. Understanding the text requires both general and close reading. General reading is to get the gist. Close reading is required, in any challenging text, of the words both out of and in context.

1.6.2. THE INTENTION OF THE TEXT

The intention of the text represents the SL (source language) writer's attitude to the subject matter. Two texts may describe a battle or a riot or a debate, stating the same facts and figures, but the type of language used and even the grammatical structures (passive voice, impersonal verbs often used to disclaim responsibility) in each case may be evidence of different points of view.

1.6.3. THE INTENTION OF THE TRANSLTOR

Usually, the translator's intention is identical with that of the author of the SL text. But he may be translating an advertisement, a notice, or a set of instructions to show his client how such matters are formulated and written in the source language, rather than how to adapt them in order to persuade or instruct a new TL (target language) readership. And again, he may be translating a manual of instructions for a less educated readership, so that the explanation in his translation may be much larger than the "reproduction".

1.6.4. TEXT STYLES

Following Nida, we distinguish four types of (literary or non-literary) text
1. Narrative: a dynamic sequence of events, where the emphasis is on the verbs or, for English, "dummy" or "empty" verbs plus verb-nouns or phrasal verbs.
2. Description, which is static, with emphasis on linking verbs, adjectives, adjectival nouns.
3. Discussion, a treatment of ideas, with emphasis on abstract nouns (concepts), verbs of thought, mental activity ("consider", "argue", etc.), logical argument and connectives.
4. Dialogue, with emphasis on colloquialisms and phaticisms.

1.6.5. THE READERSHIP

You should characterize the readership of the original and then of the translation, and to decide how much attention you have to pay to the TL readers. You may try to assess the level