

TRANSLATION CONTESTS AS MOTIVATION TRIGGER FOR STUDENT PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITY. KAZAN FEDERAL UNIVERSITY EXPERIENCE

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Abstract

According to Vasily Sukhomlinsky, a prominent Soviet-time educationist, motivation for professional activity has to become the sophisticated basis of student academic process [3, 4]. Our Alma Mater, Kazan Federal University (KFU), holds numerous events throughout the year: with remote (online) format added during the pandemic. The Higher School of Foreign Languages and Translation (department of the Institute of Foreign Relations, KFU) offers bachelor and master degree students a wide range of language-oriented events – based on translation and other aspects. 300 translators in average graduate annually, and one of the professors' missions of high priority is the graduates' competitiveness for more employment possibilities.

Proper competitiveness is based not only on perfect academic skills but also on the strong motivation platform that consists of long-term professional interest, self-discipline and constant personal development. To breed the academic encouragement, our translation contests are on a regular basis and are thematically attached to crucial historical, cultural dates and anniversaries of Russia and the world. We dedicate the contests to jubilees of eminent national and world-known scientists, people of talent in art, literature, sport, etc. Therefore, parallel with various translation tasks, our contestants get a broader picture about the country and the world occasions of great importance and impact. Our contests traditionally consist of two parts: the first one (with more participants) – written and the final one – mixed format of interpreting and audio-visual tasks – where you have to take part in person. One may suppose that translation contests monitor individual skill development level only. On the contrary – the contests include pairwork and teamwork for cooperative spirit enhancing as well. The jury members estimate not only translation equivalency but also greet creativity and curious translation decisions.

It is essential to note that students not involved in the contest, can find their role in volunteering – especially in case a contest is international. It brings socializing experience together with consecutive and simultaneous skill improvement, and portfolio enrichment. Year by year the sections of languages are getting more and more diverse: Russian, Tatar, English, German, French, Spanish, etc.

In conclusion, let us highlight the most relevant translation contest motivation triggers: firstly, contests mentioned in the students' portfolio are awesome indicators of language experience for employers; secondly, media coverage enables students to gain popularity among peers and widens the bonds of inter-communication. Moreover, students' parents and kin feel more proud of their child's success; thirdly, regular contests give a wonderful possibility to estimate your academic skills personally, see your strengths and analyze possible mistakes; fourthly, a number of different-format tasks from various translation spheres may open personal talents of work with certain discourses and breed creativity, and enable to look at translation from different perspectives; fifthly, if the tasks are multi-format and different in complicatedness level, students see the prospect, make higher aims and achieve them finally (especially in case they participate in

contests from year to year); sixthly, thematic diversity attracts academically and expands erudition which is vital for translators; seventhly, after-contest feedback with profound analysis of tasks, creative findings and errors stimulates professional growth, etc. All this deepens motivation and gives a wider picture of our profession.

Professors involved in translation contest organizing gain invaluable experience as well: we see effective tasks for enhancing translation skills and v.v., the ones with low effectiveness capacity; we see the annual students' academic progress and analyze groups' statistics; we make stronger emotional bonds with our students and they see the professors' interest in enhancing the students' competence. We share our experience with our professional descendants in a more creative academic way. And, the last but not the least – we collaborate with colleagues more and our professor team gets close-knit and academically sophisticated.

Finally, we certainly have something to share with our colleagues worldwide – in terms of translation teaching experience and motivation boosting.

Keywords: linguistics, student, professor, university, translation, translation contest, motivation

1. INTRODUCTION

Kazan Federal University is “a city in the city” – as our students frequently call it – holds plenty events of the city, regional, national and international levels annually. The Higher School of Foreign Languages and Translation (department of the Institute of Foreign Relations, KFU) enjoys popularity of young people from the countries of the former Soviet Union, Asia, Europe, Africa and Latin America. Both bachelors and master degree students enhance their competence in their major – linguistics, and our professors are highly interested in inspiring their motivation towards translation in all of the aspects: written translation, interpreting and audio-visual translation. Our professors' mission is not only language competitiveness (we offer a range of more than 16 foreign languages) and fine academic skills but also creating magnetizing motivation platform which may spark further student self-development in terms of the language and other studying fields [1].

2. TRANSLATION CONTESTS

2.1 Translation Contests for Senior Schoolchildren

All translation contests held by our department are on the regular basis and are thematically attached to crucial historical and cultural events of our country and the world (f.i., jubilees of Russian greatest scientists like Lomonosov, Mendeleev, Tziolkovsky, Mechnikov, Korolyov, etc., writers like Pushkin, Lermontov, Leo Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky, Kuprin, Turgenev, etc., composers like Chaikovsky, Musorgsky, Prokofyev, Shostakovich, Rimsky-Korsakov, etc., artists like Aivazovsky, Shishkin, Bryullov, Repin, Vasnetsov, Glazunov, etc., educationists like Makarenko, Ushinsky, Vygotsky, Sukhomlinsky, Soloveychik, etc., actors and actresses like Smoktunovsky, Mironov, Leonov, Nikulin, etc., theatre and cinema directors like Stanislavsky, Mikhalkov, Bondarchuk, Konchalovsky, etc., vocalists like Shalyapin, Magomayev, Obodzinsky, Anna German, Zykina, etc., space pioneers like Gagarin, Leonov, Tereshkova, Titov, Savitzkaya, etc., sport athletes like). We do not pass by international events like the 75th anniversary in World War II, the 20th anniversary of International Space Station, sport championships, etc.

2.1.1 Early Motivation for Senior Schoolchildren

From 2016 on our professors have been working with senior schoolchildren in order to maintain smooth academic succession from school to higher education. Many pre-schoolers have become our students and we remember active participation of many of them in our language contests. Importantly, not all of them are top-academic students but highly language-oriented and event-open which is sometimes even more precious. They make a close-knit team of language volunteers at large-scale events like world championships and world cups in fencing, football, artistic swimming, diving (and more water sports), basketball, volleyball, tennis, badminton, etc.

We often hold our translation contests for the whole Republic to attract schoolchildren from rural areas – and their number is constantly growing: 2016 – 197 participants, 2017 – 201, 2018 – 289, 2019 – 304 contestants.

2.1.2 Early Language Involvement

Translation is not included into school curriculum – it offers thought-shaping exercises in language pairs – therefore, the jury criteria are different from the ones for university students. The contests may include 2 parts: the first – distant with written-translation tasks, the final – with pre-schoolers' presence involved and a wider range of tasks offered.

2.1.3 Translation Contest Structure

Traditionally, the final part of the contest contains 4 time-framed tasks of mixed type: written, interpreting and audio-visual. Each translation contest has a diverse range of aims focused on certain competence development and check-up: listening combined with gapping tasks, context-based statement translation, cartoon or movie extract translation and voicing, etc. It is a widely known fact that interpreters have to have a specially developed auditive system which does not immediately reach the perfection, so we support the task with subtitles at times in the same language as the video itself. Our contestants follow the story while listening and the statements to be translated (they are highlighted on the paper – italics or bold). Paper dictionaries are welcome unless the contestants are university students.

And while the jury is busy checking the first two tasks, contestants are offered to try their hand translating contaminants (occasional word-hybrids) – for creativity and fun. The outcome can be quite curious, and the jury pay special attention to our young contestants' wit and contextual guess.

The final task involves pairwork, and it is an audio-visual extract and its further voicing. Sense-based translation, intonation expressiveness, emotive background are in the focus of the jury attention.

2.1.4 More Translation Contests for Senior Schoolers

The second largest translation contest for schoolchildren "War-burnt lines" is held in springtime (May, 9th) and is traditionally dedicated to the Victory Day in the Great Patriotic War (1941-1945). The military-and-technological discourse is thought to be back-breaking, therefore, we present certain glossary (either on the board, or via presentation) to support the material comprehension, which is also motivation-friendly.

3. TRANSLATION CONTESTS FOR UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

Similar scale translation contests are offered to the students of Kazan Federal University. Students with major in Linguistics receive multi-layer tasks aiming at expanding their academic, erudition horizons. "The Wings of Victory", "The first translation attempts", LinguaForum and more are on an annual basis.

3.1 Volunteer Involvement

Importantly, in all of our translation contests for senior schoolchildren many of our students are involved in volunteer support-work: in organizing, contestants' registration, navigation around the building, assisting with material (giving out and handing in), photo- and video-support, etc.

3.1.1 Separate Translation Contests for Junior and Senior Bachelor Degree (BD) And Master Degree (MD) Students

It is crucial to note that translation for junior (1st and 2nd years of study of BDs and MDs) and senior (3^d and 4th years of study) BDs and MDs should not be mixed because chief profession-oriented disciplines start with the 3^d year of study with BDs and the 2nd term with MDs. This mixing might possibly bring motivation degrading as well – and that is the last thing professors would welcome in academic process. Still, for interaction and academic collaboration we certainly invite our juniors to take an active cheering-up part in senior student translation contests. And this participation cannot be taken as passive: they make notes, observe the way their senior companions behave in interpreting tasks and enrich their experience even like this. We call it "camouflaged motivation".

3.1.2 Different Translation Contest Requirement Approach for Junior and Senior BD And MD Students

Our annual translation contest "The first translation attempt" is for our junior BD and MD students. The requirements are somewhat simpler in comparison with the ones for our seniors, still the task fulfillment is in class, in front of our jury eyes. Video-tasks with gapping (certain information gapping) is for 2-time listening (unlike seniors with their listening just once). The tasks for juniors are supported with "survival glossary" (essential vocabulary minimum).

As for our seniors, they receive the tasks on defining styles and translating for various target public (stylistics

runs in the 3d year of study of BD-study). Senior MDs may get more squeezed in time-framing for this task fulfillment.

3.1.3 Feedback is a Must-Have

The post-contest feedback is seen necessary, as students can see the so-called horizon of academic progress. As for professors, they analyze the student academic strengths and weaknesses and focus on academic troubleshooting for further study-perfection and contest task improvement. Aside from the essential post-contest specific analysis, we ask the students about the task impact on their self-esteem, confidence and feeling of success. The feedback is obligatory according to many our partners [2].

3.1.4 Necessary Tips for Translation Contest Tasks and After-Contest Events

Our translation contests may contain poetic tasks: many young people write poems and the format is usually welcome by our participants. We frequently offer audio-visual tasks, as they are relevant, up-to-date and reflect the technology progress – according to students. The more diverse the tasks are, the more student motivation will follow. Students like challenges, so they are also delighted in case they are offered to improvise, to have spontaneous talk-and-interpret tasks. Especially if we involve different language pairs (with Russian, Tatar, English, German and more).

Non-linguist students (who do not have translation among their majors) have separate nominations and award-system.

After the contest we write articles for our university electronic journal – as long as the modern world is interactive, dynamic and social net presence demanding. By the way, photography and video-shooting do not seem to be essential: you have to be able to describe an event with eloquent language, combining language elegance and laconic word-shaping. Students gravitate to the post-contest work in a no less active way than to the contest itself: they share information with each other in their stories and get comments full of admiration and praise – something for their parents, their families to be proud of. It can trigger healthy competition, willingness to participate in events like this with students who are still doubting in terms of contest participation, it could be a wonderful “test-drive” of their language capabilities and a perfect chance to show academic involvement to their proud kith-and-kin.

3. CONCLUSION

Let us single out the basic motivation platform factors of regular university translation contests. So translation contests should be:

- Regular (annual large-scale contests or monthly mini-competitions welcome progress check, your personal language and translation growth (you can easily see the bright sides and be aware of what language faults you should focus more);
- Diverse in formats and tasks (for a wider covering of certain translation competences, for the emotional side when students receive unexpected creative tasks (try and translate word-hybrids depending on the target public: brunch, coffezilla, clamburger, cocacolinization, etc.);
- Thematic (discourse) and style (register) translation contest diversity (with different difficulty levels) – it all enhances language curiosity and general erudition;
- After-contest feedback as a must-have component (analysis of high-motivation reaction to tasks, focus on language faults, aiming at flawless language speaking and translating, monitoring of regular contestants, etc.);
- Student translation contest volunteering (not only for a tick in a student’s portfolio, but for precious social experience and upgrade of his/her soft skills);
- Wide post-event media-coverage (not for professors’ and university’s reports only, but for all the students to see their university involvement in their progress and personal growth, for the importance of student seeing their own contribution into the university prestige).

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