MASTERING TEACHING AUDIOVISUAL TRANSLATION TO PHILOLOGY STUDENTS: CHALLENGES AND PECULIARITIES

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Abstract

This research addresses teacher training for teaching audiovisual translation (AVT), which is considered to be one of the most widely practiced fields of translation nowadays. Audiovisual or as it is also known multimodal content originated in the mid-1950s, and since then its popularity has been constantly growing. Thus, educating qualified specialists to meet the dynamically changing market demands imposes new challenges on teachers and university heads, providing a source of training for audiovisual translators. A major issue stemming from therein is to teach the basics of one of today's highest-demanded types of translation, namely AVT.

It is critical to underscore that due to the complexity of the structure of the subject matter, this type of translation is considered to be one of the most difficult. AVT is barely amenable to automatization due to the complexity of its structure and is now becoming a fundamental element of the so-called human translation, a translation carried out exclusively by people, without the use of machine translation or its elements. Therefore, the process of teaching AVT significantly differs from teaching any other type of translation, or simply the language itself.

This research considers the main challenges of working on audiovisual translation, along with the model exercises for its teaching. Throughout the study a survey of philology students on the topic of AVT practice has been conducted; the features and challenges they stated and faced were identified. The overall results of the survey in conjunction with the possible ways of overcoming the difficulties encountered have been presented. The study is concluded with recommendations for training sessions and workshops on the topic, as well as exemplary thematic exercises for practice.

Keywords: audiovisual translation, audiovisual translation training, multimodal content, associative experiment, thematic exercises.

1 INTRODUCTION

Over recent years, audiovisual translation (AVT) has been studied as a distinctive type of translation activity both from the perspective of audiovisual communication across languages and in its interrelationship with psycholinguistics. Understanding of audiovisual materials as multimodal texts, i.e. texts which, through verbal and non-verbal elements, address two perception channels - auditory and visual - simultaneously, stems from this interrelationship (Alekseeva, Akhmetzyanova, 2021).

It was noted that until the beginning of the 21st century, that the majority of studies devoted to the study of audiovisual translation and its features were based on a descriptive approach (Cintas, Szarkowska, 2020). Foreign researchers have emphasized the need to study the multicode nature of audiovisual materials, focusing on audiovisual materials aside from words, phrases, and/or sentences (Gambier, Gottlieb, 2001;

García, 2015). Herewith, scattered and fragmentary studies are present and, consequently, there is an insufficient number of studies integrating a combination of semiotic codes of audiovisual materials and peculiarities of their perception by the audience. New teaching alternatives to traditional methods have been introduced through computers, interactive whiteboards, tablets, and mobile phones (British Council, 2013). This row may be prolonged by the use of multimodal content being an integral part of the aforementioned technologies. And translation has been accepted as one of the most effective means of language learning (Carreres, 2014, p. 128).

The methodological basis for teaching audiovisual translation implies developing three interrelated aspects under the main goal. The intended learning outcome should be the proficiency of the audiovisual translator, resulting in the fulfillment of the objectives of their professional life. Hence, the three main aspects mentioned above are related to pragmatics, pedagogy, and cognitive science. At the same time, there are currently only a few structured educational programs for teaching audiovisual translation in our country, and short-term courses offered by audiovisual studios do not ensure the best results.

In the present study, the authors provide the results of a dedicated training methodology applied to philology students learning a foreign (English) language at the C1 level. The training model has been applied within one semester as part of the First Foreign Language Translation Practicum course. There are two phases of the model: namely, the propaedeutic and operational phases. The first phase focuses on theoretical training in audiovisual translation; the second is based on the direct application of the acquired skills when working on films and TV series.

2 METHODOLOGY

In total, 52 university students participated in the study. There were 25 3rd year students in the control group and 27 corresponding-year students in the experimental group.

The purpose of the study was to examine the specifics of teaching audiovisual translation in two groups of students: an experimental group and a control group. The task of the control group was to perform regular translation of audiovisual material. The experimental group was assigned to additionally focus on perceiving audiovisual material as a material composed of a set of semiotic codes, i. e. to work simultaneously on all perception channels of the future recipients of a multimodal content.

The students were surveyed using a scale method to assess their own perceptions regarding their work on the materials. The main concern of the study has been given to the advantages and difficulties encountered.

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Theoretical Provisions

To date, there is still no unified understanding of the term audiovisual translation among linguists. In this regard, we join the notion of defining AVT as a distinct type of translation, as it is inherently neither oral nor written translation; it acts as a mediator, the object of which is audiovisual materials simultaneously affecting the auditory and visual channels of perception of the recipient.

The current theory of audiovisual translation distinguishes 14 semiotic codes, which are manifested in the verbal and non-verbal elements of any multimodal content (Gambier, Gottlieb, 2001). The combination of verbal and nonverbal elements perceived by the audience simultaneously results in coherence, intertextuality, and pertinence, as well as compliance with the maxims of the conversation.

Equally critical is the fact that some scenes of any multimodal material may be dominated by verbal signs, both auditory and visual; while others require the translator to focus on scenographic, paralinguistic, acoustic codes or other nonverbal signs to convey meaning faithfully in the process of the AVT.

AVT demands a combination of skills, capabilities, and knowledge of theoretical foundations of a number of scientific disciplines and professions, i.e. the acquisition of certain interrelated competencies, constituting a professional translation.

Upon consideration of the ways to introduce audiovisual translation as an academic discipline in the curricula of higher education institutions, one must acknowledge that this process is impeded by a number of factors. First and foremost there is an issue of the methodological reluctance of teachers to provide training in this discipline.

The other major problem is the insufficient development of methodology for teaching audiovisual translation.

The lack of clearly formulated requirements for assessing the level of audiovisual translation training is also a

related concern. A similar problem was discussed earlier by Polish teachers after the audiovisual translation was introduced into the undergraduate and postgraduate curricula at Polish universities (Kajzer-Wietrzny, Tymczynska, 2015). This acute problem still remains unsolved due to the lack of assessment criteria outlined in the educational and working standards, with the latter being currently dependent only on the client's requests.

With the demand for teaching audiovisual translation in higher education institutions steadily rising, the need to address dedicated methodological guidance for teaching this special type of translation is becoming clear. Thus, the following section summarizes some of the methodological guidelines developed for use in teaching audiovisual translation.

3.2 Practical Provisions

The materials provided for the audiovisual translation by the students were specifically designated by the teacher of the course. Prior to the task, the students had to undergo the survey concerning the content of the multimodal materials by Likert Scale: Strongly disagree = 1, Disagree = 2, Neither agree nor disagree = 3, Agree = 4, Strongly agree = 5. The questions asked regarded the psycholinguistic aspect of the materials, namely the topic of the perception and reception of the content. The survey was based on 17 parameters of the semantic differential, with parameters according to V. Petrenko (Petrenko, 1983). The questionnaire on the material contained the aforementioned 5-rank semantic scales, according to which certain scenes had to be assessed. The results proved that the students in both groups perceived the multimodal content rather similarly, with the data on the answers to the questions being consistent. Upon the data obtained, it was found that the recipients of the audiovisual materials had perceived the materials the same. This is presumably attributed to the fact that the students of both groups represented the same culture, were approximately the same age, and had been raised in the roughly same environment, which influenced the peculiarities of their perception.

The questionnaire was concluded with three open-ended questions measuring the participants' comprehension level and a multiple-choice question on whether the visual, verbal, auditory, or all/no channels prevailed in the scenes shown. In total, the questionnaire consisted of 60 closed and open-ended questions.

The results obtained from the survey, namely, open-ended questions, encompassed the following answers:

Table 1. *Some* answers to open-ended questions.

No.	Have you found it challenging to perceive/understand the chosen scenes?	Is there a particular symbolic sign that you can identify in the scenes you have seen? And if yes, then what was it?	Have you experienced any emotions and/or feelings while watching the extracts?
1	Lack of context	No	Empathy, injustice
2	No	Struggling to make a choice	Violence, willingness to help
...	...	...	...
61	Rather fast-paced action, visibly fragmented scenes	Cannot emphasize anything	At first positive, then negative halfway through, then mostly positive again
62	It was fast-paced	Haven't noticed	Anxiety

Based on Table 1 as well as some omitted data, it can be seen that 30 out of 52 respondents had experienced issues with the perception of the selected extracts. Most respondents noted difficulties in understanding certain scenes (motives or actions of the characters), which, presumably, was due to the fact that most of the respondents had seen the extracts for the first time and did not know the full context of the material. Emotional perception of the material was generally the same for all interviewees. Empathy and sympathy, anxiety, pity, disgust, no or unrecognized emotions, and positive emotions were received. Of the 52 respondents, 41 noted rather negative emotions on the spectrum.

Upon completion of the survey and having already learned the basics of audiovisual translation, the control, and experimental groups started working on their own translation. The performance of the students has been assessed by the course teachers. The performance was assessed via a scale from 2 to 5 points for the task of the student belonging to a certain group. The overall results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Students' scores on the completed task.

Scores	Control group	Experimental group
5	7 (28%)	12 (44%)
4	13 (52%)	13 (48%)
3	4 (16%)	2 (7%)
2	1 (4%)	-

As can be seen from Table 2, the experimental group of students received better scores upon the assessment. The students in the first group mostly completed the task for the 'good' score with just one student failing the task, having not taken into account the psycholinguistic aspect of the multimodal materials. The second group was better at task completion with an almost identical number of students receiving 'good' and 'excellent' scores. The experimental group was better at focusing on ensuring that all channels of perception, i.e. visual, verbal, and auditory were correctly transmitted in the process of audiovisual translation. The assessment from the point of course teachers has been based on several factors, among which were the implementation of the knowledge on the topic received, the use of correct lexical units, grammar, and syntactic structures.

4 CONCLUSION

The above-mentioned model of teaching audiovisual translation through the analysis of the perception channels engaged in the process of reception is efficient for developing the sociocultural, linguacultural, and linguistic expertise of future translators, as well as for establishing proficiency in the translation of audiovisual works.

The results indicate different perspectives on the use of AVT in teaching and learning foreign languages as well as the basics of translating the multimodal material. Teachers who use the aforementioned elements seem to benefit from them and find AVT to be a motivating and engaging tool for both students and themselves. This conclusion resonates with the results of other research in this area. The given educational model provoked lively interest among the 3rd year students, while the detailed analysis of audiovisual content contributed to new knowledge acquisition.

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