Paper #: 517

Software for Communicative Competence Development in the Professionally Oriented Texts Translation

Olga M. Karpenko

Modern University for the Humanities, Moscow, Russia

Email: dn@muh.ru

ABSTRACT

The study raises the issue of implementation of the competence-based approach in software design for computer support of translation of specialized texts. It examines the proposal of creating the software that will allow simulating the activity of specialists on professionally oriented texts translation with the aid of various translation tools, taking into account social aspects of communication between individual and program interface.

Key Words: competence-based approach, communicative language competence, translation tools, professionally oriented texts translation

Computer programs for teaching foreign languages is a traditional area of application of information and communication technologies (ICT), which has a history of many decades. Nowadays we observe very intensive development of a new scientific school dealing with Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) issues. The use of computers to assist in language learning dates back to the middle of the twentieth century, and CALL has evolved alongside technological advances since then. The first phase, 'Behaviouristic CALL', prevalent between the 1950s and 1970s, favoured the use of drill and practice type courseware and rested on the role of the computer as 'tutor', delivering instructional material to the learner. During the second phase of 'Communicative CALL', between the 1970s and 1990s, the role of the computer in language learning involved not only acting as 'tutor' but also as 'stimulus' for more communicative language activities, such as student discussion and writing activities. The third phase of 'Integrative CALL' from the 1990s again paralleled both technological and pedagogical developments. Pedagogical paradigms were beginning to shift in the 1990s towards more integrative and constructivist approaches to teaching. In this third phase of CALL, the role of the computer can be seen as expanding yet further to incorporate its use as 'manager' and 'messenger'. The role of the computer as 'manager' relates to the computer's capacity for managing infinite quantities of data, whether through a spreadsheet or database or dedicated course management software.

On the other hand, higher education is currently undergoing important changes. The principles of competence-based approach are implemented in the framework of the Bologna process, an European reform process aimed at creating the European Higher Education Area. For instance, learners become responsible for their own learning, which is supposed to be a lifelong one, the contents taught should be closely related to the future professional environment, and learners must be enabled to achieve autonomous learning and self-assessment.

Principles of the competence-based approach to studying foreign language are the scientific and methodological basis of any modern study system. These principles were adopted by the Council of Europe within the 'European Competencies of Foreign Languages Proficiency'. The aim of teaching foreign languages with this approach at non-linguistics higher education institution is formation of professional and communicational competencies. The competencies represent an integral personality attribute securing its readiness to carry out foreign language professional activity as well as cultural and professional communication.

The most important component of Foreign Language Professional and Communicational Competency is a linguistic competency that is judged as the qualification for the proper use of language and practical foreign language communication especially in the field of professional interests. Besides common vocabulary a specialist should master specific vocabulary and clichés typical for oral and written communication within the particular professional field. These are essential issues for successful professional communication. Authentic documents created by native speakers are a source of linguistic, professional, social, and cultural knowledge. Authentic specialized texts act as a source of professional sublanguage, commonly accepted rules and standards of professional communication. They also serve as a material for specific training tasks and drills and a ground for new lexical units.

The competence-based approach poses new challenges to software developers. The old paradigm of education (teacher – information – learner) is being progressively replaced by the new one (learner – information – teacher). The new challenge of training process (in particular translation training) is to arrange cognitive activity for the learner (e.g. comparison and decision), to teach him how to draw the information independently (e.g. retrieving sentences from translation memories or corpora), how to use it in practice (e.g. consulting the specialized term base), and how to constitute the opinion based on previous knowledge (e.g. editing the suggested translation retrieved from translation memories).

However, practice and experience of translation teaching shows us that besides knowledge about language use and linguistics (text analysis, for instance), comprehension of cultural features, research skills, the correct use of the tools for terminology management and computer-assisted translation, are crucial to the improved quality of the final product. As far as it is possible, we should try to simulate real life situations of translators, by using authentic texts, letting learners work in teams and making them use ICT tools.

The acquisition of knowledge needed to work with these tools is one of the main goals. Nowadays, many software translation tools are available via the Internet. Dealing with the software translation tools requires fairly sophisticated techniques. Such methods are described in detail in many publications, scattered through the pages of international magazines and journals [1] – [9]. For instance, M. Wilkinson [8], [9] works with specialized text-corpuses, J. P. Loucky [2], [3] - with bilingual electronic dictionaries, Shih Chung-ling [6], [7] - with systems of the translation memory and of machine translation, E. Monzó Nebot [4] - with parallel texts, and Qing Ma and P. Kelly [5] with vocabulary learning software.

It should be noted that at our Academy (Modern University for the Humanities) we have already been teaching translation to our students using computer technologies, systems of machine translation and specialized terminological electronic dictionaries. So at present it is very important to put the translation problem on the level of technologically-promoted training ambiences.

The detailed methodology for working with a variety of translation tools is not so much available to many experts, who have to translate the texts in their

specific subject area. Such a specialist should be able to use a variety of software tools that can improve the quality of translation.

Thus, there is also the need for software development meeting goals of the competence-based approach through supporting a training process of professionally oriented texts translation. It is necessary to create an educational consultant-system that will allow simulating of the activity of a modern specialist on professionally oriented texts translation with the aid of aforementioned computer-based supporting tools. Such a system will allow users to learn the main didactic principles of working with the basic software tools available to support the translation. There will not be any binding to any particular system of machine translation, system of translation memory or electronic dictionary.

Such a system can be used as an additional tool for regular classes at higher education institutions. Appraisal will allow formation of recommendations on the use of this software during the process of advanced training of specialists. These specialists could not be proficient in foreign language but facing a need for professional communication with representatives of other countries or regions. Such a consultant-system should become the responsive, interactive environment for technology-enhanced learning that motivates, engages and inspires learners.

Modern University for the Humanities invites all interested in ICT to the cooperation, to jointly develop consultant-systems for the improvement of foreign language vocational and communicative competence, and to provide the quality translation of specialized texts. We have accumulated great experience in using software tools to improve the quality of professionally oriented texts translation.

References:

[1] Ana Niño "Evaluating the use of machine translation post-editing in the foreign language class", Computer Assisted Language Learning, Vol. 21, Issue 1, February 2008 , pp. 29 – 49.

[2] J. P. Loucky "Combining The Benefits Of Electronic And Online Dictionaries With Call Web Sites To Produce Effective And Enjoyable Vocabulary And Language Learning Lessons", Computer Assisted Language Learning, Vol. 18, Issue 5, 2005, pp. 389 – 416.

[3] J. P. Loucky "Integrating Various Computerized Dictionaries To Maximize Learning Of All Major Languages", Presentation for JALTCALL 2007, http://www.jaltcall.org/conferences/call2007/site/presentationabstracts.php?id=53 - (online)

[4] E. Monzo Nebot "Corpus-Based Teaching: The Use Of Original And Translated Texts In The Training Of Legal Translators", Translation Journal, Vol. 7, No. 4, October 2003, http://accurapid.com/journal/26edu.htm - (online)

[5] Qing Ma and P. Kelly "Computer Assisted Vocabulary Learning: Design And Evaluation", Computer Assisted Language Learning, Vol. 19, Issue 1, February 2006 , pp. 15 – 45.

[6] Shih Chung-ling "Using Trados's WinAlign tool to teach the translation equivalence concept", Translation Journal, Vol. 10, No. 2, April 2006, **http://accurapid.com/journal** (online)

[7] Shih Chung-ling "Teaching Translation Of Text Types With Machine Translation Error Analysis And Post-Mt Editing", Translation Journal, Vol. 11, No. 2, April 2007, http://www.translationdirectory.com/articles/article1324.php - (online)

[8] M. Wilkinson “Discovering Translation Equivalents In A Tourism Corpus By Means Of Fuzzy Searching», Translation Journal”, Vol. 9, No. 4, October 2005, http://accurapid.com/journal/34corpus.htm - (online)

[9] M. Wilkinson “Corpora, Serendipity & Advanced Search Techniques”, The Journal of Specialised Translation, Issue 7, January 2007, http://www.jostrans.org/issue07/art_wilkinson.pdf - (online)