

Translation Science as an Aid to Second Language Teaching

Alenka Kocbek

University of Primorska / Koper, Slovenia

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ABSTRACT

In line with the findings of authors such as Cook (2010), Widdowson (2003), Malmkjær (1998), who have advocated integrating translation in second language teaching (SLT), the paper proposes adopting selected approaches from translation science as teaching strategies aimed at enhancing learners' cross-cultural communicative competences. Firstly, the functionalist perspective with the "skopos" theory (Reiss and Vermeer 1984) is presented, according to which translation can take a number of forms and pursue different strategies to best fulfil its intended purpose and thus enable effective cross-cultural communication. This theory introduces the concept of the cultural embeddedness of language, which was also at the core of the so-called cultural turn in translation science and according to which a message can fully be understood only if embedded in the context of the culture underlying it. Furthermore, to fully envisage the interrelatedness of language and culture I suggest viewing communicative situations in the light of the "cultureme theory" (Oksaar 1988, Kocbek 2012) where culturemes are defined as patterns of communicative behaviour, i.e. as socio-cultural categories realised through realisational and regulatory "behaviouremes". Realisational behaviouremes refer to verbal, paraverbal and non-verbal aspects of a communicative act, while the regulatory ones involve extra-linguistic factors, such as time, space, status, social order, culturally-specific norms and conventions, etc. The concept of cultureme as a teaching tool can be applied in SLT at different levels and with varying degrees of complexity – from simple communicative situations such as greeting customs to complex communicative acts requiring the use of culture-specific text types. Finally, to acquaint learners with ideas, concepts, conventions and cultural practices which have no corresponding counterpart in their culture (i.e. memes), translation is proposed as the vehicle for transferring such culturally-bound concepts across cultural and linguistic boundaries (i.e. as a survival machine for memes) in accordance with Chesterman's theory of memes (1997).