

Coming Closer to Communities of Practice through Situated Learning: The Case Study of Polish-English, English-Polish Undergraduate BA Level Language for Specific Purposes of Translation Class

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Abstract : The growing trend of market specialization imposes upon translators the need for proficiency in the working knowledge of specialist discourse. The notion of specialization differs from a broad general category to a highly specialized narrow field. The specialised discourse is used in the channel of communication based upon distinctive features typical for communities of practice whose co-existence is codified and hermetically locked against outsiders. Consequently, any translator deprived of professional discourse competence and social skills is incapable of providing competent translation product from source language into target language. In this paper, we report on research that explores the pedagogical practices aiming to bridge the dichotomy between the professionals and the specialist translators, while accounting for the reality of the world of professional communities entered by undergraduates on two levels: the text-based generic, and the social one. Drawing from the functional social constructivist approach, seen here as situated learning, this paper reports on the case of English-Polish, Polish-English undergraduate BA Level LSP of law translation class run in line with the simulated classroom-based and the reality-based (apprenticeship) approach. This blended method serves the purpose of introducing the young trainees to the professional world. The research provides new insights into how the LSP translation undergraduates become legitimized through discursive and social participation and engagement. The undergraduates, situated peripherally at the outset, experience their own transformation towards becoming members of these professional groups. With subjective evaluation, the trainees take a stance on this dual mode class and development of their skills. Comparing and contrasting their own work done in line with two models of translation teaching: authentic and near-authentic, the undergraduates answer research questions devised by a questionnaire survey. The responses take us closer to how students feel about their LSP translation competence development. The major findings show how the trainees perceive the benefits and hardships of their functional translation class. In terms of skills, they related to communication as the most enhanced one; they highly valued the fact of being 'exposed' to a variety of texts (cf. multi literalism), team work, learning how to schedule work, IT skills boost and the ability to learn how to work individually. Another finding indicates that students struggled most with specialized language, and co-working with other students. The short-term research shows the momentum when the undergraduate LSP translation trainees entered the path of transformation i.e. gained consciousness of 'how it is' to be a participant-translator of real-life communities of practice, gaining pragmatic dint of the social and linguistic skills understood here as discursive competence (text > genre > discourse > professional practice). The undergraduates need to be aware of the work they have to do and challenges they are to face before arriving at the expert level of professional translation competence.

Keywords : communities of practice in LSP translation teaching, learning LSP translation as situated experience, peripheral participation, professional discourse for LSP translation teaching, professional translation competence

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