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CONTENT PECULIARITIES OF MASTER'S PROFESSIONAL FOREIGN LANGUAGE TRAINING IN TRANSLATION STUDIES AND INTERPRETATION AT THE UNIVERSITIES OF SLOVAKIA

ABSTRACT

The article is devoted to the content analysis of peculiarities of Master's professional foreign language training in Translation Studies and Interpretation at the universities of Slovakia. In the context of globalization and integration processes the study of European countries' experience, in particular, of the Slovak Republic has been actualized. The possibility of implementing progressive ideas of Slovak experience in university level foreign language training of specialists in humanities has been pointed out. The structure and content of the Master's curricula in Translation Studies and Interpretation have been analyzed. The communicative and intercultural approaches have been defined as the principle approaches of training. It has been noted that university level foreign language training of future specialists in humanities contributes to the forming of students' linguistic and socio-cultural knowledge. It has been indicated that students acquire conceptual knowledge of the problem on the coexistence of different cultures in socio-cultural space. The general positive characteristics of Master's professional foreign language training have been defined.

Key words: university, Slovakia, training content, culture, foreign language, intercultural approach.

INTRODUCTION

According to the documents of the Council of Europe and European Commission the most strategic aims of contemporary education are to enhance efficiency of university education and to provide high quality of the educational process. Furthermore, "the reforming of the national system of higher education according to the Bologna Declaration has necessitated new priorities, structural and content changes in the Master's training" (Бідюк, 2014).

Nowadays the issue of Master's professional foreign language training in Translation Studies and Interpretation acquires special significance. This problem is especially important for Ukraine if we consider economic, social and political changes that are taking place in our society. Taking into account principal requirements of modern labour market, professional foreign language training of future translators requires modernization and improvement. In the context of integration processes the analysis of the European countries' experience, including Slovakian experience, is very vital. Thereby, the content of the curricula in Master's professional foreign language training in Translation Studies and Interpretation should be analyzed.

THE AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of the article is to identify the content peculiarities of Master's professional foreign language training in Translation Studies and Interpretation at the universities of Slovakia for further application of positive aspects in Slovak experience at the universities of Ukraine.



THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH METHODS

Theoretical framework of the research consists of the scientific works performed by domestic and foreign researchers. The Ukrainian scientists carried out a comparative-pedagogical study of different fields in specialists' professional training in the following countries: the USA (N. Bidyuk, N. Mukan), Great Britain (N. Avshenyuk, O. Serheeva), Germany (V. Bazova), Canada (A. Chyrva, N. Mykytenko), China (N. Pazyura). Some issues of translators and interpreters' professional training have been determined by of Y. Kolos, A. Kozak, S. Panov, O. Rohulska, A. Yankovets and others. Slovak experience in students' training in higher education institutions has been investigated by H. Tovkanets (Товканець, 2014). Slovak scientists have studied the problems on the development of Slovak higher education system in the context of integration into European Higher Education Area (B. Kosova, M. Radek). Various aspects of foreign language training are observed in the works by Slovak scholars such as H. Bálintová, G. Lojova, E. Reid and others. However, Master's professional foreign language training in Translation Studies and Interpretation at the universities of Slovakia has not become the principal issue of specialized literature in Ukraine yet. Owing to this fact, the conducted analysis is considered to be new in our country. We suppose that due to the integrational and globalizational transformations as well as labour market requirements special attention should be paid to improving the content of the Master's training in Translation Studies and Interpretation at the universities of Ukraine. Therefore, the study of Slovak experience acquires practical value.

To achieve the established goal we have used the effective research method, namely, content analysis of the curricula. Thus, it allowed to identify the content peculiarities and to characterize training content.

RESULTS

The problem of improving the system of professional Master's university level foreign language training is considered to be fundamental because of the demands of modern society. Besides, "the study of the experience of professional Master's training at Ukrainian universities has shown that today there are numerous problems in the Master education that require a gradual solution, namely, the scientific justification of conceptual and quality assurance of Master's training, renovation of legislative, organizational and pedagogical, scientific and methodological support" (Бідюк, 2014). Taking into consideration these problems and for the purpose of ensuring the quality of Master's training in Ukrainian system of higher education we consider that it is appropriate to study Slovak experience in Master's professional university level foreign language training in Translation Studies and Interpretation by analyzing the curricula.

Analyzing the educational opportunities of higher education institutions for the Master in Translation Studies and Interpretation we have found out that the academic degree of Master in Translation Studies and Interpretation can be obtained at the following universities of Slovakia: the Comenius University in Bratislava, Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, University of Presov in Presov, Matej Bel University in Banska Bystrica, University of Pavol Jozef Šafárik in Košice (Portál vysokých škôl, 2016). To obtain a Master's degree students can choose Translation Studies and Interpretation from the list of the programmes at one of the universities mentioned above. It should be noted that the list of the programmes at these universities vary. In addition, the list of the recommended programmes in Translation Studies and Interpretation for Master's training at the Comenius University in Bratislava is the following: English Language and Culture combined; Bulgarian Language and Culture combined; French Language and Culture



combined; Croatian Language and Culture combined; Hungarian Language and Culture combined; German Language and Culture combined; Polish Language and Culture combined; Portuguese Language and Culture combined; Romanian Language and Culture combined; Russian Language and Culture combined; Slovak Language and Culture combined; Spanish Language and Culture combined; Italian Language and Culture combined (Odporúčané študijné plány magisterského štúdia, 2016).

The analysis of the curricula (študijné plány) of the Master's professional foreign language training in Translation Studies and Interpretation has shown that the academic subjects are united into the modules, namely, compulsory disciplines, compulsory elective disciplines and elective disciplines. Modules are usually divided into blocks. However, the list of the subjects in these blocks varies for different programmes. For the purpose of pointing out the content peculiarities of the Master's professional foreign language training at the universities of Slovakia the syllabus of the curriculum "English Language and Culture combined" in Translation Studies and Interpretation at the Comenius University in Bratislava is reviewed as an example (Študijný plan, 2016). "The compulsory disciplines" module is divided into two blocks, namely, the Basics of Translatology; English Language and Culture. "The compulsory elective disciplines" module includes the following blocks: Translatology; Linguistics, Literature and Culture; English Language and Culture. In order to acquire new knowledge students need to study the academic subjects from these modules. The content of the curriculum for Master's training provides training for graduates – well-qualified interpreters or translators. The duration is 2 years (4 terms) and the mode of study is full-time. Content analysis of the curriculum for Master's training allows to identify main content peculiarities of specialists' preparation. Foremost, we have revealed that the number of the disciplines in professional foreign language acquisition is significant. The core disciplines are focused on conducting simultaneous ("Seminar in Simultaneous Interpretation", "Simultaneous Interpretation") interpretation. Their purpose is to teach students to perform one of the main kind of oral translation, namely, simultaneous interpretation, when "the translator is expected to keep pace with the fastest speakers, to understand all kinds of foreign accents and defective pronunciation, to guess what the speaker meant to say" (Кузенко, 2008), in professional level. The discipline "Translation in Practice" is also a core subject. The communicative aspect of students' professional foreign language training implies mastering "Sociolinguistics". Special attention is paid to studying literary translation, which deals with literary texts, for example, the works of poetry or fiction, the main function of which "is to make up emotional aesthetic impression upon the reader" (Кузенко, 2008) ("Literary Translation", "Theory and Practice of Literary Translation", "Chapters from the History of Literary Translation and Interliterary Relations", "Experimental Novel", "Translation of Children's Literature") and informative translation, which provides "rendering into the target language non-literary texts, the main purpose of which is to convey a certain amount of ideas, to inform the reader" (Кузенко, 2008). Here we can single out the subject that is focused on conducting translation of technical texts ("Technical translation").

The content peculiarity of Master's training in Translation Studies and Interpretation (the curriculum "English Language and Culture combined") at the Comenius University in Bratislava is that students may choose a compulsory elective discipline which provides principles of translation advertisements, the mass media and the audiovisual materials ("Language of the Mass Media and Advertisement (in translation)", "Film Adaptations of the Literary Works", "Translation of Audiovisual Texts"). The curriculum also provides those disciplines aimed at enriching students' vocabulary ("Neologisms in English Vocabulary", "Introduction to Law and Legal Terminology").



Social aspects in comprehension of reality (“Personalities, Events and System of the UK”, “Women and Their Status in the Society in the 18th and 19th centuries”) and different social manifestations of life (“The European Institutions”; “The American Theatre and the Society”, “Praxeology and Translation Studies and Interpretation”) comprise the curriculum, too. In addition, the block “Linguistics” presents the list of the subjects related to linguistic training: “Selected Chapters of General Linguistics”, “Contemporary Trends of Linguistics”, “The Chapters of Language Culture and the Theory of Literary Language”. Their purpose is to familiarize students with the basics of linguistics, namely, general linguistics, its general patterns and modern tendencies.

Master’s Training in Translation Studies and Interpretation at the universities of the Slovak Republic includes the study of the world literary heritage, which is well-grounded. It should be noted that this aspect of training is well-structured for acquirement of world literature and culture. Students of the Slovak universities study the subjects which help them to be aware of world literature and culture (“Modern Literature and Culture of the Original Inhabitants of North America”), literature in historical context (“American Literature in the 20th and 21st Century”) or history and the realities of life (“History and the Realities of the USA in the 20th and 21st Century”). It contributes to increasing the level of students’ motivation for the acquisition of literary heritage of different countries. Gaining successful results in the literary acquisition helps, in our opinion, to develop writing skills (“Writing: Self-Expression; Semiotics”), prose writing skills (“Experimental Novel”), to acquire complete knowledge in translation criticism (“Translation Criticism”). When mastering their specialty students can concentrate on learning Slovak literature in the historical context (“History of Slovak Literature and Translation”) and the investigation of the contemporary Slovak literature (“Contemporary Slovak Literature”). It makes possible to learn literature in historical retrospective, to determine the reasons of different changes that occurred in language, to elicit the facts and factors that influenced its development.

The characteristics of content peculiarities of Master’s professional foreign language training in Translation Studies and Interpretation at the universities of the Slovak Republic cannot be completed without pointing out cultural value of the content of the curriculum. The curriculum covers cultural context in comprehension of literature (“Modern Literature and Culture of the Original Inhabitants of North America”) and awareness of art and culture (“Art and Culture of Australia and New Zealand”). Thereby, the study of the world literary heritage, art and culture as well as language and culture is of a chief importance in the curriculum. In our opinion, the disciplines with such content are in the Slovak curriculum because of necessity to train professionals who can realize the problem of coexistence of different cultures in socio-cultural space, the unique characteristics of life in a multicultural environment of the world and of the Slovak region. Moreover, the study of linguistics and culture combined (the block “Linguistics”: the discipline “Chapters of Culture of Language and the Theory of Literary Language”, the block “English Language and Culture”: the discipline “Lingvo-cultural Aspects of Discourse”) promotes students’ intercultural awareness. It also helps to improve socio-cultural knowledge. We believe, that “a basic culture of an individual is implemented through the dialogue of cultures, constituent parts of which are ethical culture, culture of language, culture of communication, etc.” (Kačiuškienė, Bálintová, 2010). So, the content analysis allows to determine that cultural and intercultural aspects are considered to be an integrated part of the training content. We suppose that the implementation of the intercultural approach into Master’s professional foreign language training in Translation Studies and Interpretation at the universities of Slovakia is intensive



because the learning environment at the Slovak universities is mostly highly multicultural. It should be mentioned that “the intercultural approach is especially important, as it promotes the favorable development of the personalities, attitudes towards other languages and cultures and a sense of identity in response to the enriching experience of otherness in language and culture” (Reid, 2012). The Ukrainian society is also multiethnic (Зязюн, 2011). Therefore, in our opinion, the curriculum for future specialists of the humanities, especially for translators, at the universities of Ukraine, should be improved by means of active application of intercultural approach.

To acquire Master’s degree students should pass the compulsory specialty exams (“English Philology”, “Translation Studies and Interpretation”) and carry out “Thesis Defense” at the end of the defined period of preparation. Research skills gained by students during professional training (“Master’s Thesis Seminar”) are improved in the work on thesis.

Summarizing content analysis of peculiarities of Master’s professional foreign language training in Translation Studies and Interpretation at the universities of Slovakia we determined the following general positive characteristics, namely, the number of the subjects in professional foreign language acquisition is significant; the core subjects are focused on conducting simultaneous interpretation; students are trained to do literary translation and informative translation; students may choose the compulsory elective discipline which provides principles of translation advertisements, the mass media or the audiovisual materials only if the disciplines with such content are in the list of the subjects of the syllabus for the chosen curriculum; the study of the world literary heritage in combination with cultural knowledge is well-grounded and it familiarizes future professionals of the humanities with the works of world literature and culture; the linguistics block covers the disciplines which allow to provide professional linguistic training with considering cultural aspects; the implementation of the intercultural approach in Master’s professional foreign language preparation can be traced in the content of training.

CONCLUSIONS

So, the content analysis of peculiarities of Master’s professional foreign language training in Translation Studies and Interpretation at the universities of the Slovak Republic allows to conclude that the students of this educational level are well-qualified as translators and interpreters due to studying the content of the curriculum. The set of the disciplines is aimed at mastering professional foreign language acquisition. The communicative and intercultural approaches are the leading approaches of Master’s training in Translation Studies and Interpretation at the universities of Slovakia. Special attention has been paid to the presence of culture aspects in the content of the curriculum. It has been determined that the disciplines of literary cycle reveal the stages of development of world literature and culture (“Modern Literature and Culture of the Original Inhabitants of North America”, “History of Slovak Literature and Translation”, “Contemporary Slovak Literature”, “American Literature in the 20th and 21st Century”). In addition, cultural canvas in language acquisition is an integrated part of the curriculum (“Lingvo-cultural Aspects of Discourse”, “Chapters of Culture of Language and the Theory of Literary Language”, “Art and Culture of Australia and New Zealand”).

Thus, the experience of the universities in the Slovak Republic can be adopted by Ukrainian universities for enriching the content of the curriculum to train a well-qualified professional translator. Slovak experience of using the intercultural approach in the process of students’ training is rather demonstrative. We believe that Slovak experience of Master’s professional foreign language training in Translation Studies and Interpretation will improve the quality of students’ preparation in the Ukrainian system of higher education as national education aims to prepare a person for life in his/her own culture which is only possible



under conditions of integration with world cultures (Зязюн, 2011). Improving the syllabi for Master's training in Translation by means of the active use of intercultural approach can raise the quality of education in Ukraine to higher level.

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