FUTURE TRANSLATORS’ PRAGMATIC COMPETENCE: ITS STRUCTURE AND PRINCIPLES OF FORMATION

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DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.30525/978-9934-571-27-5_62

Abstract. The article “Future translators’ pragmatic competence: its structure and principles of formation” deals with the essence and the structure of the notion “future translators’ pragmatic competence”, pedagogical conditions which may further future translators’ pragmatic competence formation, the stages of future translators’ pragmatic competence formation and the set of methods and principles of future translators’ pragmatic competence formation.

The subject of our investigation is the content and the principles of future translators’ pragmatic competence formation in the process of their foreign language professional university education.

The main goal of the article is to discover the essence and the structure of the notion “future translators’ pragmatic competence”, its components, criteria and indicators, pedagogical conditions, formation stages and the principles of formation.

The tasks of the research are: to study the essence and the structure of the notion “future translators’ pragmatic competence”; to amend the content of the notion “future translators’ pragmatic competence”; to define components, criteria and indicators of future translators’ pragmatic competence and the stages of its formation; to explain the pedagogical conditions of future translators’ pragmatic competence formation; to elaborate methods and principles of future translators’ pragmatic competence formation in the process of their foreign language professional university education.

The following conclusions can be drawn from the present study: future translators’ pragmatic competence is a situational dynamic informational structure (a combination of competencies) in a future translator’s con-
Pragmatic competence is fast becoming a key instrument in foreign languages teaching process. Modern conditions of Ukraine’s integration into the world educational and informational society, the rapid growth of international and intercultural contacts make the colleges and universities of the country prepare a new generation of qualified translators – the ones who are highly competitive, able to work effectively according to the highest world standards, ready to improve constantly the level of their professional qualification.

The specific character of translators’ professional activity isn’t limited only to international and intercultural communication. In this case, what is meant is that a translator functions as a kind of a mediator between representatives of various spheres in the process of the translator’s foreign language professional communication. To some extent a translator is responsible for the success of the communication between his/her clients. For that purpose a translator needs to be able, for example, to analyze and to understand the communicative intention of interlocutors absolutely correct or to be able to evoke necessary reaction from the hearer, which (the reaction) corresponds to the communicative intention of the speaker. All that is beyond simple knowing of a foreign language and its culture. Thus, it is necessary for a translator of today to be able to prevent communicative failures in the process of his/her foreign language professional communication, that is – to
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possess pragmatic competence of a target language. As pointed out in the previous sentences, it can be seen that the problem of future translators’ pragmatic competence formation in the process of their foreign language professional university education is an increasingly important area in pedagogy today.

The main goal of the research is to discover the essence and the structure of the notion “future translators’ pragmatic competence”, its components, criteria and indicators, pedagogical conditions, formation stages and principles of formation. The information of the article is structured in the following way: Introduction, Essence and Structure (its components, criteria and indicators), Pedagogical Conditions, Formation Stages, Principles of Formation, Conclusion.

The tasks of the research are: to study the essence and the structure of the notion “future translators’ pragmatic competence”; to amend the content of the notion “future translators’ pragmatic competence”; to define components, criteria and indicators of future translators’ pragmatic competence and the stages of its formation; to explain the pedagogical conditions of future translators’ pragmatic competence formation; to elaborate methods and principles of future translators’ pragmatic competence formation in the process of their foreign language professional university education.

2. Essence and structure

As has been pointed out in the introduction to the paper, the problem of future translators’ pragmatic competence formation in the process of their foreign language professional university education is an increasingly important area in Ukrainian pedagogy today. Before proceeding to examine the essence and structure of the notion “future translators’ pragmatic competence”, it will be necessary to dwell on the terms “competence” and “competency” used in our research. In our opinion, the terms “competence” and “competency” have different meaning, but they are closely connected. “Competency” and “competence” are dynamic informational structures in a human consciousness, which have different volume, form and constituents, and which cannot exist or develop without each other. The term “competency” refers to an informational structure, consisting of information, such as knowledge, abilities and experience. The information is usually learnt during the study of some disciplines at school or university, for example. “Competence” can be defined as a situational
dynamic informational combination of “competencies”, which provides guarantees for a proper reaction or behaviour of a person in a definite (professional) situation [12].

Having defined what is meant by the terms “competency” and “competence”, we will now move on to discuss the essence and structure of the notion “future translators’ pragmatic competence”.

The results obtained from psychological and pedagogical reference literature have shown that there has been no such a notion as “pragmatic competence/competency” or “future translators’ pragmatic competence” till now [2; 4; 5; 6; 8; 13; 14; 17].

Some attempts have been made to denote the meaning of “pragmatic competence”. Previous studies have reported that in the field of language teaching and translation, various definitions of the term “pragmatic competence” are found. An example of this is the study carried out by Bondar L. V. and Koshlaba I. B. [3; 9]. The scientists use the term “pragmatic competence” to mean students’ awareness of a foreign language from the position of its users, i.e. native speakers (the choice they make in the process of their native language communication and the influence of what was said on the others in a speech act). They hold the view that “pragmatic competence” assumes that a speaker can use an appropriate language and paralinguistic means in accordance with the situation and social environment. The following means belong to a paralinguistic group: outer emotional and feelings indicators (facial expressions and gestures, gesturing, body language), contact in the process of communication (shaking hands with somebody, tapping somebody on the shoulder), space and time organization standards, acoustic voice characteristics (timbre, the pitch of a voice, intonation, phrasal and logical stress, loudness of a voice), the use of pauses, laugh, cough etc. in the process of communication.

This case has shown that “pragmatic competence” refers to the readiness of a speaker for social foreign language interaction.

Another example of what is meant by the term “pragmatic competence” is the work of such scholars as Lobacheva I. M. and Andrushenko A. O. [1; 10]. For them, “pragmatic competence” associates with the knowledge of the principles of a foreign language utterance formation, structuring and use according to its (the utterance) communicative function. To put it differently, pragmatic competence is the awareness of a speaker in a philological field of knowledge.
In Dorohov’s R. S. opinion [7], “pragmatic competence” is a constituent of future translators’ professional training. For the scientist “pragmatic competence” is the ability of a speaker to provide a proper influence on the hearer in the process of his/her professional translators’ communication. Besides, it is a multifold complex phenomenon, which is based on its components implementation in the process of professional translators’ communication, such (components) as communicative intention, emotional and evaluative attitude to the speaker, situational reference and professional orientation of an utterance in a strictly determined professional situation of translators’ communication. Here, “pragmatic competence” is an effective means of professional translators’ problems solving, i.e. potential efficacy of an utterance in the process of translators’ professional activity.

The evidence presented thus far supports the idea that the term “pragmatic competence” is generally understood to mean: some awareness of a speaker in a philological field of knowledge; the ability of a speaker to provide a proper influence on the hearer in the process of his/her professional translators’ communication; the readiness of a speaker for social foreign language interaction and so on.

In this research the term “future translators’ pragmatic competence” is defined as a situational dynamic informational structure (a combination of competencies) in a future translator’s consciousness, which provides guarantees for a proper influence on a hearer’s reaction or behaviour (in accordance with the speaker’s intention) and for correct analysis and understanding of the hearer’s communicative intention in the process of a translator’s foreign language professional communication. The term “future translators’ pragmatic competency” refers to an informational structure in a future translator’s consciousness, consisting of information (such as knowledge, abilities and experience), learnt in the process of their professional university education.

Having defined what is meant by the term “future translators’ pragmatic competence” and “future translators’ pragmatic competency” we will now move on to discuss its components, criteria and indicators.

The following competencies have served us as a basis for the definition of future translators’ pragmatic competence components: native language competency, foreign language competency, translation competency, sociocultural competency, operational competency, background knowledge, strategic competency. As regards the components of future translators’
pragmatic competence, they comprise a foreign language component, a discourse-translating component and a strategic-operational component. Now we should dwell upon each of them.

The foreign language component implies that a future translator has detailed knowledge about the common and specific vocabulary of a target language; the knowledge of a target language and the native language morphology, syntax, semantics, phonetics and stylistics; is able to use the knowledge in writing and in communicative acts; is able to comprehend and to produce the native and a target language correctly (i.e. to form and to express his/her own thoughts in accordance with his/her native language and a target language grammatical, phonetic, stylistical and lexical sets of rules).

With respect to the discourse-translating component we should mention first the meaning of the term “discourse” we use in our investigation.

The term “discourse” was introduced by Zelling Harris in 1952, the well-known linguist used the term to refer to one of distribution sides based on the equivalence between phrases and phrasal units; an utterance in context and the situation connected with it [16]. There are four main meanings of the term (lat. *discursus*, “running to and from”) today used in modern scientific literature: a text, a closed complete communicative situation (event), the style of communication, an example of a communicative behaviour [ibidem].

Taking into account the fact that there can be no professional translation communication beyond a discourse, we agree with Makarov M. L. [11] and distinguish three ways of the term interpretation: from the formal point of view, “discourse” is a formation larger than a sentence; from the functional point of view, “discourse” is a language use in all its diversity; from the situational interpretation, “discourse” is a language realization in social, psychological and cultural circumstances within communication.

As regards the discourse-translating component of “future translators’ pragmatic competence”, we believe that it comprises future translators’ receptive and productive skills to communicate using two languages (native and foreign) providing faithful conveying of original sense/content, using appropriate methods, strategies and ways of translation with help of such additional abilities as to switch fast from one language to another, to listen to the others attentively, to analyse the original text for a correct understanding and choosing some appropriate translation means to guarantee faithful conveying of original sense/content to a target language, to be aware of
national and cultural specific standards of native speakers’ social and linguistic behaviour and so on.

In the case of the strategic-operational component we hold the view that a future translator, for example, is aware of foreign language communication strategies, understands types of foreign language behaviour and native and foreign language rules for talks, knows algorithms necessary for a translator for effective professional foreign language activity (ability to work fast with various Inernet-resources; fast reading; “blind typing” and so on).

We have also defined criteria and indicators of future translators’ pragmatic competence formation. The key criteria of future translators’ pragmatic competence formation can be listed as follows: psychophysiological, adequate translation (faithful conveying of original sense/content to a target language), effectiveness and success of communication.

As regards the psychophysiological criteria, its indicators are: stress resistance; physical and mental endurance; self-control; self-discipline; reflection (ability of a person to realize the fact of his/her own existence, to see and to analyse his/her own behaviour not only from the position – “I am here”, but also from the position of the people surrounding him/her); self-restraint (the ability to stop oneself doing or saying something, even though one wants to, because it is more sensible not to do or say it); the ability to switch fast from one language to another; the ability to listen to the others and to hear; the ability to understand, to memorize, to be attentive and etc.; personal translators’ interests and motives, in the aggregate, for professional foreign language translation activity targeted at language interpretation methods learning (which includes also the rules of hidden and implicit sense/content revelation, an utterance influence on a hearer, types of language reaction to a stimulus in a speech act and so on).

In the case of the criteria called “adequate translation” (faithful conveying of original sense/content to a target language), it includes the following indicators: the ability of a future translator to analyse the original text for a correct understanding and choosing some appropriate translation means to guarantee faithful conveying of original sense/content to a target language; precision in original sense/content conveying, provoking an emotional reaction in the hearer, which agrees with the speaker’s communicative intention; the ability to use appropriate means of translation, strategies and tactics in every concrete situation.
With respect to the final criteria “effectiveness and success of communication”, its indicators are: the process of foreign language communication (speech or written) during which the initiator of the process with the help of a translator realizes his/her communicative intention successfully, the hearer’s perception and understanding of what has been said is adequate and correct and both sides (the initiator and the hearer) obtain mutual consent.

This chapter has described the authors' interpretation of the essence and the structure of the notion “future translators’ pragmatic competence”, its components, criteria and indicators. What follows is a brief outline of pedagogical conditions which may help to develop future translators’ pragmatic competence in students.

3. Pedagogical conditions

This chapter describes and discusses the pedagogical conditions which may further future translators’ pragmatic competence formation.

The results obtained from psychological and pedagogical reference literature have shown that there is no universal interpretation of the term “pedagogical conditions”. The evidence from this study suggests that the general understanding of the phenomenon is like: conditions, possibilities, the factor of educational process. This shows a need to be explicit about exactly what is meant by the term.

According to Popova O. V. [15], pedagogical conditions are a total of interdependent conditions (premises), which guarantee the organization, monitoring, regulation and interaction of the pedagogical process subjects and objects within a concrete goal realization. We support this definition of the term “pedagogical conditions” and we use the term “pedagogical conditions of future translators’ pragmatic competence formation” to refer to the outer conditions of effective pedagogical goal realization, which have been created by a lecturer to positively influence the educational and pedagogical process.

The key pedagogical conditions of future translators’ pragmatic competence formation can be listed as follows: students’ positive motivation for becoming translators, interdisciplinary interaction (like the disciplines of humanitarian, linguistic groups and professional methods in the process of future translators’ pragmatic competence formation), students’ immersion in independent professional foreign language translation activity with
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ing into account the specific character of the language spoken in the region where students study.

Pedagogical reference literature supplies us with the following definition of the term – coordination of curriculum documents determined by the system of science and didactic goals [2; 4; 5; 6; 8; 13; 14; 17]. Thus, interdisciplinary interaction shows a complex approach to learning and upbringing.

There is a large volume of published studies describing the role of interdisciplinary interaction in an educational process. In addition, we can say that interdisciplinary interaction furthers: future translators’ cognitive activity; effective formation of integral skills, abilities, knowledge and pragmatic competence as well; proficiency enhancement; the perfection of educational process within a university.

The third pedagogical condition has been named students’ immersion in independent professional foreign language translation activity with foreign language texts and foreign language native speakers.

There is no consensus among pedagogical scientists about the term “students’ independent activity”. We support Popova’s O. V. [15] definition of the term, who has considered “students’ independent activity” from the position of a student, i.e. as a productive and analytical student’s activity; as the highest form of a targeted outer motivated cognitive activity of a student which can be structured and corrected by him or her in accordance with his or her individual needs.

We distinguish the following kinds of students’ immersion in independent professional foreign language translation activity with foreign language texts and foreign language native speakers: listening to lectures and making notes; fulfilling practical translation tasks; translation; work with various literature (e-books and e-documents, printed issues); fulfilling searching and analytical tasks (working also with data bases and card indexes); working with modern systems of online-translation and automatic translation; working with Internet resources to be able to communicate with native speakers via e-chats or e-mail and so on.

The final pedagogical condition is future translators’ understanding of the importance of their professional foreign language activity (at the inner belief level) for their native country (Ukraine) educational and international relations. It assumes that learning pragmatics of a foreign language may help students, for example, to realize the importance of correct and appropriate
foreign language use as well as their native one; to be able to find common and different aspects of speech acts realization in their native and foreign languages; to understand/decide for oneself how much one should adopt the pragmatic standards of a foreign language not to lose one’s national identity at the same time and to be a worthy representative of one’s country (Ukraine) in his/her professional foreign language translation activity.

In this chapter it has been explained that the key pedagogical conditions of future translators’ pragmatic competence formation are students’ positive motivation for becoming translators, interdisciplinary interaction (like the disciplines of humanitarian, linguistic groups and professional methods in the process of future translators’ pragmatic competence formation), students’ immersion in independent professional foreign language translation activity with foreign language texts and foreign language native speakers, future translators’ understanding of the importance of their professional foreign language activity (at the inner belief level) for their native country (Ukraine) educational and international relations. The chapter that follows moves on to consider the formation stages of future translators’ pragmatic competence.

4. Formation stages

We have worked out a model of future translators’ pragmatic competence formation which comprises the goal, components, criteria and indicators, pedagogical conditions, formation stages, forms and methods used in our investigation, and principles of formation. In this chapter we will discuss the formation stages of future translators’ pragmatic competence formation.

To better understand the mechanisms of future translators’ pragmatic competence formation model we have classified the stages of its formation into three distinct types such as cognitive-enriching, reproductive-productive, evaluative-reflecting.

The aim of the cognitive-enriching stage is to enrich students’ knowledge of different language units within a foreign and their native languages; psycholinguistic peculiarities of speech acts realization in a foreign language and their native; specific character of interpreting and translating within two languages; the use of ICT (Information and Computer Technology) resources in the process of their professional university education; students’ background knowledge.
With respect to the reproductive-productive stage of future translators’ pragmatic competence formation, it is targeted at practical professional skills formation at a reproductive level, and the activation of students’ ability to fulfill professionally oriented foreign language tasks in the process of their learning and quasi-professional translation activity.

In the case of the evaluative-reflecting stage of future translators’ pragmatic competence formation, its aim is to solidify future translators’ professional behaviour and their ability to evaluate and to correct the results of their own translation activity and the one of their group mates.

The result of the students' preparation is a completely formed future translators’ pragmatic competence taking into consideration the specific character of translators’ professional activity (e.g. translation centers, crewing agencies, tourist agencies, arts and culture agencies, publishing houses, universities, governmental establishments, public organizations and so on).

This chapter has reviewed the three key stages of future translators’ pragmatic competence formation (cognitive-enriching, reproductive-productive, evaluative-reflecting). In the next chapter we will present some of the findings of our empirical research on the principles and methods of future translators’ pragmatic competence formation.

5. Principles of formation

This chapter describes and discusses methods used in our investigation and the principles of future translators’ pragmatic competence formation.

The experiment was targeted at testing of the pedagogical conditions of future translators’ pragmatic competence formation and their realization within our model.

The aim of the cognitive-enriching stage has been the first and the second pedagogical conditions realization: students’ positive motivation for becoming translators and interdisciplinary interaction (like the disciplines of humanitarian, linguistic groups and professional methods in the process of future translators’ pragmatic competence formation). There have been used the following methods at the stage: problem-based learning, presentation, case studies, illustration, brain-storming and so on. Among the forms of the mentioned pedagogical conditions realization have been: lectures (also – a lecture-plenary meeting), summarizing lectures, practical lessons, role playing, quasi-professional business playing and so on.
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For example, we have elaborated a special course “Future Translators’ Pragmatic Competence” which consists of 3 lectures, 2 practical lessons and 20 hours for students’ individual work. The aim of the special course is to provide students with information about the essence and the structure of future translators’ pragmatic competence and its practical performance for them to be able to resolve professional problems successfully in the process of their professional foreign language communication. The special course “Future Translators’ Pragmatic Competence” includes twelve topics for study, among which are: Future Translators’ Pragmatic Competence, Future Translators’ Professional Competence, Making a Decision (types and the role of the made decisions in professional translators’ activity), Physical and Mental Endurance in Professional Translators’ Activity, Speech Acts Theory, Types of Communicative Strategies, A Future Translator’s Image and so on.

This can be illustrated briefly by the first lecture of our special course which has had a form of a plenary meeting and has been devoted to the topics “Pragmatics. Future Translators’ Pragmatic Competence. Future Translators’ Professional Competence. Physical and Mental Endurance in Professional Translators’ Activity”. The goal of the lecture is to shed light on the essence and the structure of future translators’ pragmatic competence. As a result of the lecture-plenary meeting we have acquainted the students of an experimental group with the essence and the structure of future translators’ pragmatic competence, with the basis of future translators’ mental activity hygiene. All that has furthered students’ positive motivation for their future professional foreign language activity and interdisciplinary interaction (e.g. “Psychology”, “Pedagogy”, a special course “Pragmatics. Speech Acts”).

With respect to the reproductive-productive stage of future translators’ pragmatic competence formation, it has been targeted at the third and the fourth pedagogical conditions realization: students’ immersion in independent professional foreign language translation activity with foreign language texts and foreign language native speakers, and future translators’ understanding of the importance of their professional foreign language activity (at the inner belief level) for their native country (Ukraine) educational and international relations. For that purpose we have elaborated a textbook “Future Translators’ Pragmatic Competence: Principles of Formation” [18]. The aim of the book has been to acquaint readers (teachers, lecturers, students who are going to gain a master’s degree) with the essence
and the structure of future translators’ pragmatic competence and to supply them with some practical help in foreign language teaching (English) to form and to develop this competence. The following methods have been used at this stage: presentation, case studies, illustration, brain-storming and etc. Among the forms of the pedagogical conditions realization have been: practical lessons, role playing, quasi-professional business playing, translation practice (at governmental establishments, translation agencies, public organizations), students' individual work and so on.

The aim of the evaluative-reflecting stage of future translators’ pragmatic competence formation has been the fourth pedagogical condition realization: future translators’ understanding of the importance of their professional foreign language activity (at the inner belief level) for their native country (Ukraine) educational and international relations. At this stage we have used such methods as project-based learning, presentation, case studies, brain-storming and so on. There have been used the following forms of the pedagogical condition realization at this stage: student conferences, students’ individual work, master classes and trainings in translation, business role playing, disputes and so on. This can be seen in the case of business role-play “Translation Training”. The students of our experimental group have had to present a translation training for junior students – future translators of their department, the topic of the training has been “Adequacy of Translation (on the material of modern releases of such translation groups as Novafilm, Coldfilm, Lostfilm, Kolobok, GoldTeam, Hamster, BaibakoTV, New Studio)”. The goal of this lesson has been to provoke students to demonstrate their potential and actual knowledge, skills and abilities in the sphere of translation and a target language pragmatics; to activate future English translators’ professional creative potential; to teach professional ethics to the students. The students of the experimental group have been divided into small groups of 4-5 persons. Each group has chosen some authentic video material and their Russian and Ukrainian version made by one of the translation groups. The most excellent examples of the chosen authentic video material which have attracted students’ attention have been Supernatural, Mentalist, Warehouse 13, Stranger Things, Fringe, Father Brown, The X-Files and such cartoon films as Home and A Troll in Central Park.

The students of the experimental group have shown excellent results in the process of the translation training for the junior students. They have used authentic English video material appropriately and have demonstrated
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professional ethics and linguistic awareness within two languages. Besides, the preparation of the experimental group students for the mentioned translation training has furthered their analytical foreign language activity; has unlocked their personal potential for the use of ICT (Information and Computer Technology) and other reference translation resources; has activated their ability to understand the authentic English language produced by its native speakers; has solidified their appropriate professional behaviour and their ability to evaluate and to correct the results of their own translational activity and the one of their group mates. All that has furthered future translators’ pragmatic competence formation.

6. Conclusion

This research extends our knowledge of future translators’ pragmatic competence formation in the process of their foreign language professional university education. The work contributes to existing knowledge of the matter by providing information on the essence and the structure of the notion “future translators’ pragmatic competence”; its components, criteria and indicators; pedagogical conditions; formation stages; forms and methods used during our experiment; principles of formation.

According to the main goal and the tasks of the study we:

a. have defined the term “future translators’ pragmatic competence”;
b. have amended the content of the notion “future translators’ pragmatic competence”;
c. have defined components (foreign language, discourse-translating, strategic-operational), criteria (psychophysiological, adequate translation (faithful conveying of original sense/content to a target language), effectiveness and success of communication), indicators of future translators’ pragmatic competence and the stages of its formation (cognitive-enriching, reproductive-productive, evaluative-reflecting);
d. have explained the pedagogical conditions of future translators’ pragmatic competence formation;
e. have elaborated methods and principles of future translators’ pragmatic competence formation in the process of their foreign language professional university education.

The results of this study have indicated that future translators’ pragmatic competence is an effective means of professional translators’ problems solving. It helps future translators, for example, to realize the importance
of correct and appropriate foreign language use as well as their native one; to be able to find common and different aspects of speech acts realization in their native and foreign languages; to understand/decide for oneself how much one should adopt the pragmatic standards of a foreign language not to lose one’s national identity at the same time and to be a worthy representative of one’s country (Ukraine) in his/her professional foreign language translation activity.

Further research in this field would be of great help in learning what students’ level of pragmatic competence is and in developing appropriate teaching and learning materials and tasks to maximize learning outcomes.

References:


