

Reflections on Several Important Issues of Translation Teaching

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ABSTRACT

With the prospering of translation practice and with the founding of translology as an independent discipline, the study of translation teaching has become a very important field in translation studies. The present paper discusses three key issues in this field: the aim of translation teaching, the process-approach to translation teaching, the classroom teaching model of translation. Based on an analysis of other scholars' viewpoints—their merits and shortcomings—the author offers his own reflections on these issues.

KEYWORDS

Translation teaching; Teaching purpose; Process approach; Teaching model

1 Introduction

Translation teaching belongs to applied translation research. This paper discusses how to apply the basic knowledge of translation to translation teaching and language teaching to cultivate students' language proficiency, translation practice ability, and theoretical competence in translation. According to the teaching purpose, translation teaching activities can be roughly divided into two categories: one is the teaching activities carried out through translation exercises and explanations in order to promote language teaching and students' mastery of the language. The ultimate goal of this teaching activity is not to improve the translation level—although it will also have this effect objectively—but to improve the foreign language level. This teaching method is often called teaching translation; The other is to set up special translation courses to enable students to master basic translation skills and improve their translation practice and theoretical level. Such translation courses can be further subdivided into two purposes: training general foreign language talents and training professional translation talents. This kind of teaching is often called translation teaching. Teaching translation and translation teaching are complementary, with different concepts and different purposes, but they are intrinsically related. It can be considered that teaching translation is the basic stage of translation teaching and, under certain conditions, a necessary preparation for the smooth implementation of translation teaching, and translation teaching is the further development of teaching translation. The highest stage of specialized translation courses is for translation majors, whose main task is to train translation professionals, so that learners can have comprehensive and solid translation practical ability and theoretical quality (translation or interpretation or both). Canadian translator Jean Delil also distinguishes teaching translation from translation teaching, and his definition of the two is similar to our view (Che Huanhuan, 2006). Below, let's talk about some personal opinions on the implementation and research of translation teaching.

2 All-round development of translation competence—the ultimate goal of translation teaching

Translation teaching aims at comprehensively cultivating students' translation ability. Traditional translation teaching pays special attention to the training of learners' language ability and regards the translation process as a mere language conversion process, while neglecting the improvement of other abilities. In recent years, with the in-depth development of aesthetics research, cultural research and other fields, it is recognized that translation is not limited to language conversion, but involves culture and aesthetics, and requires the translator to have comprehensive encyclopedic knowledge. Therefore, what translators need is a comprehensive ability. Neubert has summarized five components of translation competence: linguistic competence, textual competence, thematic competence, cultural competence and transfer competence (Miao Ju, 2007). Miao Ju further summarized three translation competencies that translators should possess: cognitive competence, linguistic competence and communicative competence (Miao Ju, 2007). According to Yang Xiaorong, the translator's competence engaged in Chinese to English translation should include: translation skills, grasp of translation standards and translation principles, language application ability, knowledge, and comprehensive

ability (Yang Xiaorong, 2002). Liu Miqing points out that translation ability should be composed of five aspects: linguistic analysis and application ability, cultural analysis and expression ability, aesthetic judgment and expression ability, two-way transfer and expression ability, logical analysis and correction ability (Liu Miqing, 2006:10-18). It should be realized that the translation process involves more than just language, and a qualified translator is not only a bilingual, but also a qualified learner, a bicultural, and an excellent communicator.

From a comprehensive point of view, we believe that the cultivation of the translator's ability can be grasped in the light of several major steps in the translation process. As we know, translation is a process of processing information from the original text, which includes three basic steps: "comprehension - conversion - expression". Therefore, in a nutshell, the main aspects of translation ability should be comprehension, conversion and expression. Such a process is actually a mental cognitive process. Specifically, in terms of comprehension, the translator is generally required to have a strong grasp of the source language, the source language culture, and other information in the source text, such as the text theme, text color, stylistic features of the language, aesthetic features and so on. As far as the conversion process is concerned, it mainly takes place in the translator's brain. In this process, it is necessary for the translator to form a representation in his mind in order to exert his conversion ability. Mental representations are forms of reflection and existence in our minds. Psychologists believe that humans have at least four types of representations in the form of cognitive maps, mental images, schemas, and mental languages (Li Rongbao, 2002:31). The translator can form a complete representation in the brain's memory after reading the whole text and understanding it reasonably. Factors such as vocabulary, background knowledge, experience, and personal experiences stored in long-term memory formed by the translator's usual accumulation play a vital role in promoting the formation of representations. This undoubtedly shows the necessity and importance for translators to improve their own cultivation and broaden their knowledge. Therefore, it is required to encourage learners to look at the world and acquire as much encyclopedic knowledge as possible in the process of translation teaching. At the stage of restructuring and expressing the translated text, what the translator needs to exert is his grasp and comprehension of the target language and its culture, his ability to use various translation techniques and apply basic translation principles in a comprehensive and flexible way.

By synthesizing the three major steps of the translation process, we can see that the translator is entrusted by the patron, understands his requirements, starts a dialogue with the author by reading the text, obtains the text information, processes this information in his own brain, and at the same time transforms it into a translation acceptable to the reader after the translator weighs. In this process, translators need to deal with different subjects, and these subjects belong to different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. In this way, a qualified translator should also be a good communicator. Translators' communicative competence has not received due attention before. With the rapid development of translation studies, this competence should become the key concern of translation teaching. Interpreters need to have strong communicative skills, which is obvious. The interpreter must communicate well with both parties, and the communication effect of both parties depends largely on the interpreter's communicative competence. At the same time, it should be noted that translators engaged in translation should also have strong communicative skills. Soviet literary theorist M. M. Bakhtin found by studying Dostoevsky's novels that the author and the protagonist have an equal 'subject-subject' communicative relationship. According to this reading feeling, Bakhtin constructed his dialogue theory. In this way, the reading of the works is also a dialogue between the two subjects. German sociological philosopher J. Habermas believes that it is necessary to rebuild rational social interaction behavior. Communicative behavior involves the interaction between people in social life. Different subjects use language as a medium to reach consensus with others through dialogue, so as to achieve mutual understanding, coordination and cooperation.

To a great extent, translation is a kind of communicative action, which takes the dialogue between the translator and different subjects as its core content. The translator constructs his own translation in the process of dialogue with the patron (if any), the original author and the target reader. Therefore, we can't narrowly understand the communicative competence that translators need to have. This ability is not only reflected in interpretation, but also in the dialogue and communication between the translator and the patron (if any), the author and the reader during translation. Generally speaking, the greatest embodiment of communicative competence is the application of linguistic competence and non-linguistic competence, such as social and cultural knowledge, in the actual social communication process. Sociolinguist D. Hymes's definition of communicative competence is: Communicative competence is a person's ability to use language knowledge, which includes not only using language knowledge to express it accurately, but also choosing different ways to express oneself in different contexts and whether the expression is appropriate. From a broader perspective, communicative competence refers to the ability to communicate with others, exchange thoughts, emotions and information, and be good at dealing with relationships between people in order to work together. This is actually a kind of

social communication ability.

It can be seen from the above that the communicative competence that a translator should possess is not limited to his grasp of the source language and the target language itself. On this basis, what he needs to have is the ability to communicate with people on an equal footing and in an appropriate manner, so as to make the relationship between people, i.e. between subjects, in a state of harmony rather than confrontation. On the one hand, the translator needs to show his own subjectivity, and on the other hand, the translator needs to fully utilize his own communicative ability to carry out dialogues with other subjects, so as to grasp the intention of the sponsor, the author and the readers. That is to say, the translator needs to listen to the voices of others at the same time of making his own voice heard, and grasp in what context it is appropriate to express his own opinion in what way, and in what context he must fully respect the opinion of other subjects. In this way, the final translation is a qualified translation that truly embodies "communicative rationality".

In a word, the cultivation and development of translators' translation ability should be based on bilingual ability (including the ability to analyze the text comprehensively), aesthetic cognitive ability, and conversion and expression ability including translation skills, and at the same time pay attention to the translators' bicultural ability, communication ability and the accumulation of encyclopedic knowledge. Only in this way can the teaching of translation achieve the ideal effect.

3 "Result comparison method" and "process teaching method"

Secondly, "result comparison method" and "process teaching method" are combined. Secondly, the "result comparison method" and the "process teaching method" should be combined. The "result comparison method" of translation teaching is a prescriptive teaching mode that emphasizes the result of translation. One-sidedly emphasizing the use of the result comparison method is bound to put students in a passive listening position, which is not conducive to the students' real understanding of the true meaning of translation and improve their actual translation ability.

The process teaching method, on the other hand, draws on the theoretical study of the translation process, reflects the actual process of translation and the main role of the translator, and is therefore conducive to the development of translation ability. Instead of emphasizing the result of translation, it focuses on describing and explaining the process of translation - how the result is produced, which is the characteristic of process teaching method. It highlights the description of the translator's behavioral performance, thinking activities, and operational process. The purpose of this teaching method is to gradually cultivate students' cognitive ability, strategic competence, professional operation ability and psychological quality, and to turn their attention to the translation process, thinking process and decision-making process; while practicing translation, they experience and recognize the knowledge they apply, the methodological skills they adopt, and the creativity they exert, i.e., the comprehensively acquired translation ability. (Miao Ju, 2007).

When applying the translation process teaching method, teachers' task is to inspire and guide students to analyze and understand, play a guiding and monitoring role, and guide students to revise their translations and compare them with each other. Process Teaching Method is indeed a useful new attempt in translation teaching. However, we can't completely deny the role of result comparison method. When some scholars advocate the process teaching method, they blindly belittle the traditional result comparison method. They think that this teaching method is not an effective way to master translation skills and develop translation ability, but one of the reasons why translation teaching lags behind ... classroom teaching is simplified, homogenized, and antagonistic, the teaching atmosphere is depressed, and students are in a passive position, especially weakening students' self-confidence and creativity. (Miao Ju, 2007) We believe that this view is not comprehensive. There is certainly no doubt that the traditional translation teaching method should be reformed. However, just because a new method has certain advantages, the old method can't be refuted as useless, not to mention that this new method is still in the stage of practical verification. Results comparison method emphasizes translation teaching from static level, while process teaching method emphasizes translation teaching from dynamic level, both of which have their own emphasis. One-sided use of any way is difficult for students to get all-round training. Therefore, the scientific translation teaching method is a combination of dynamic and static, that is, the prescriptive result comparison method and the descriptive process teaching method are organically combined - fundamentally speaking, translation is both a process and a result.

4 Understanding of several emerging theories of translation teaching

Finally, we will talk about our views on several emerging translation teaching theories. In recent years, some scholars have introduced some language teaching modes into translation teaching, and put forward some new translation teaching modes. For example, Wang Xianglin draws lessons from American translation theorist Douglas Robinson's people-oriented translation teaching thought, combined with constructivist translation teaching mode, and puts forward a project-driven collaborativetranslation teaching mode aiming at the traditional teacher-centered and text-based translation teaching mode. This model emphasizes that students are regarded as the center of the classroom. Under the guidance of teachers, students collaborate with each other in real translation projects to complete translation tasks like professional translators. (Wang Xianglin, 2008) Cao Xiyong put forward that the task-based translation teaching mode is a new mode that conforms to the current trend of task era and the practice of translation teaching in China. The theoretical basis of this model is constructivist learning theory and second language acquisition theory; The teaching principle adheres to student-centered, with tasks as the main thread, collaborative and interactive, and learning situations as the premise. (Cao Xiyong, 2008) Zhong Shouman discussed the new mode of university translation teaching, which is market-oriented and focuses on cultivating translation ability, and advocated that university translation teaching should be market-oriented, aimed at cultivating professional translators and carried out through professional translation projects. (Zhong Shouman, 2009)

It is not difficult to find that although the above-mentioned theories of translation teaching are different, their connotations are very close and mutually inclusive. The terms "project" and "task" are similar, except that 'project' theory emphasizes the intervention of real translation projects in translation teaching, while "task" has a wider scope. The scope of "task" is wider, which can be actual projects or different translation tasks created by translation teachers according to the different levels of students. The "market" theory focuses on the market demand, and even suggests that "in terms of teaching mode, we can adopt the way of cooperation between schools and translation agencies and set up schools' own translation companies" (Zhong Shouman, 2009). (Zhong Shouman, 2009) Translation agencies are business organizations that undertake various translation projects/tasks, and linking translation agencies with translation teaching in schools is actually introducing real translation projects into translation teaching. These theories are obviously the development of traditional translation teaching, which solves the drawbacks of traditional translation teaching to a certain extent. However, in the process of applying and practicing these theories and their teaching modes, some problems are still worth noting.

No matter what kind of teaching mode teachers adopt, the general principle of translation teaching is that it must take the cultivation of students' practical translation ability as the fundamental purpose. Therefore, all teaching modes are guided by this principle and serve to realize this purpose. No model of translation teaching can be the only model to realize the purpose of translation teaching, and no model is perfect. This reminds us that when we carry out translation teaching, we should not reject the traditional model, and we should not accept and implement the new model without thinking or considering the actual situation. On the one hand, we should welcome the exploration of new and useful models, and on the other hand, we should inherit the positive aspects of the traditional translation teaching models. Since the new teaching models mentioned above have not been widely used for a short time, their actual effects have yet to be verified. For example, the market-only theory will, to a certain extent, make translation, which is a highly humanistic activity, full of commercial atmosphere and promote the utilitarianism of translators. We are not saying that we should not respect the market demand, but we should pay attention to the fact that translation as a kind of humanistic activity, its pursuit of humanistic spirit of the subject, i.e., the search for and infinite approach to the real perfect translation is the true essence of translation practice. The translations made by completely yielding to the market or other objective external factors are very often only expedient works. As we can see, the market-oriented and task-oriented translation teaching model does encounter one problem or another in the course of practice.

First of all, the market-oriented model driven by actual projects may not be fully applicable to areas with underdeveloped economy and low openness. Generally speaking, the more developed a region's economy is, the more open it is, the more frequent its foreign exchanges will be, and the greater the demand for translation, so there will be more actual translation projects. However, the situation is not so optimistic for less open areas with relatively backward economy. How can there be so many practical translation projects for students in a region where the translation market is not very prosperous? What's more, the students' levels are uneven, and the translation level is obviously different. How can there be so many corresponding translation projects for these students to practice? How can so many customers feel at ease and boldly let these students undertake practical, especially important translation projects? From this point of view, it is doubtful whether the project-driven market-oriented translation teaching model can really be fully

implemented.

Secondly, at present, due to the lack of unified syllabus guidance, the project and task-driven translation teaching model is easy to cause teachers' arbitrary choice of translation tasks and projects. Especially in many cases, different teachers can choose different types and scales of actual projects, which shows great contingency. If this contingency is too prominent, it will have a negative impact on school education that needs certain systematic planning. At present, most schools still use textbooks compiled according to the current syllabus, and most of these textbooks do not and cannot reflect the above-mentioned emerging translation teaching ideas. Therefore, in order to practice these teaching ideas, an urgent task is to compile feasible teaching syllabus and teaching materials according to the basic laws and characteristics of project and task-driven teaching mode, and give systematic guidance and regulations to teachers' project and task selection behavior. Only in this way can students get standardized and flexible training, and the purpose of task-based and project-based translation teaching can be truly realized.

In addition, since task-based and project-based translation teaching models emphasize student-centeredness, such models can, on the one hand, greatly mobilize the learning enthusiasm of most students and increase students' participation before, during and after class. However, if the student-centered model is over-promoted, it will inevitably result in the neglect of the teacher's role, the absence of the teacher's role and the weakening of the teacher's control over the classroom. Students' self-directed learning ability and self-discipline, as well as their teamwork, will affect their engagement and the outcome of their learning. It goes without saying that students with weak independent learning ability, poor self-discipline or lack of teamwork are easily ignored in such a learning atmosphere and their motivation to learn is likely to decline. To emphasize student-centeredness at such a time is a typical incompetent practice of laissez-faire, which is against the good intentions of task-based and project-based translation teaching. At this point, teachers must make full use of their teaching experience and their ability to guide and organize. It should be recognized that student-centered teaching practices are not meant to obliterate the guiding role of the teacher in the implementation of teaching. In the task- and project-driven translation teaching model, teachers have to play even more important roles and act as more characters than in the traditional translation teaching model. This point has been mentioned before and will not be repeated here.

To sum up, we believe that at the present stage when the traditional and emerging modes of translation teaching co-exist, the best solution for translation teaching should be to organically combine the traditional mode emphasizing language transfer ability with the mode emphasizing student-centered project/task collaboration.

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