

Research on Cultivating Critical Thinking in College English-Chinese Translation Courses

Jing Yi

Foreign Studies College of Hunan Normal University, Changsha, Hunan, 410007, China

ABSTRACT

With the deepening of globalization and the increasing interchange of different countries, translation shows more and more significance. Foreign studies colleges in universities are the cradle for cultivating high-quality professional translators, and the result of translation teaching becomes quite important. This paper discusses the importance of fostering critical thinking in college translation teaching. Through the analysis of the existing problems in present college translation teaching, this paper proposes several constructive methods of critical thinking cultivation, thereby providing references for translation teachers in colleges. Furthermore, with the rapid development of AI, the cultivation of critical thinking in college translation teaching is of especial importance.

KEYWORDS

Critical thinking; College E-C translation courses; Problems and strategies

1 Introduction

Critical Thinking is to evaluate thinking through certain standards and then improve thinking. It is reasonable and reflective thinking, which is both a thinking skill and a thinking tendency. Critical thinking can enhance students' ability to understand the two languages (English and Chinese), their thinking patterns, and the cultural information embedded in the languages during translation, and also improve students' ability to express the target language. Traditional English-Chinese translation teaching mostly focuses on the training of bilingual conversion skills at the pure language level, which neglects the cultivation of critical thinking to some extent. This teaching mode, which emphasizes skill improvement, may lead to students' lack of efficient ability to analyze the original text and express the translation text when faced with complex translation problems.

2 The importance of cultivating critical thinking in college English-Chinese translation courses

Translation is not only the conversion between two different languages, but also the cultural exchange and the adaptation of context. The cultivation of critical thinking can help students better examine translation tasks from both macro and micro levels. Make more accurate and reasonable translation choices when dealing with translation difficulties such as complex sentence patterns, polysemous words and cultural expressions. Traditional translation teaching focuses on the training of language conversion skills, but to some extent, it neglects to guide students to think about the deep thinking mode and cultural differences behind language. The introduction of critical thinking can promote students to jump out of the simple language transformation framework in the process of translation, learn to conduct in-depth analysis of translated materials, think about different ways of thinking in different languages, cultural background and language environment behind them, and make translation decisions that better align with the needs of target readers. In the actual translation task, students can reasonably adjust the translation according to the specific context, so that the translation can not only accurately and completely convey the original ideas, but also meet the needs of the target readers. In order to form critical thinking, students need to learn to question, analyze, reflect and weigh in all stages of translation, learn to analyze and compare different translation strategies in the process of translation, check whether their translation corresponds accurately to the original text, whether the translation is natural and fluent in the cultural and linguistic environment of the target language, and use their knowledge and interlingual contrast to self-regulate. This process of analysis and reflection can effectively cultivate students' translation ability. In a word, translation is not only the conversion between two languages, but also the communication between two different cultures. Each language has its own unique cultural background behind it, and each language has its own unique way of thinking. These cultural and thinking differences often determine the complexity of translation. Critical thinking can promote students to pay more attention to the source language culture and the target language culture in the process of translation, and think about how to translate from multiple dimensions (language, culture and communication).

3 The main problems in English-Chinese translation teaching

3.1 The teaching methods are fixed

Up to now, the translation classroom teaching in many colleges and universities in China is still mainly taught by teachers, and students have few opportunities to participate in classroom activities. To some extent, this traditional teaching method limits students' enthusiasm for learning translation. In the process of teachers' explanation, students often just make corresponding records. Therefore, students' learning initiative and thinking enthusiasm can't be well developed. In such a classroom, students lack the motivation to ask questions and solve problems, and there is a certain disconnect between the translation knowledge imparted by teachers and students' actual practice. Therefore, it is difficult for students to improve their translation ability quickly and effectively, and it is difficult for students to adapt to the real needs of the complex and changeable translation market after the course. For example, in the teaching of business English translation, if we don't add group discussion and encourage students to think critically during the discussion, it may be difficult for students to deeply understand the key points of translation in the business context, and ultimately it will be difficult to cope with the actual translation challenges in business activities.

3.2 The evaluation methods are not perfect

Translation teaching in many colleges and universities pays too much attention to the evaluation of students' translation results-translation texts, but to a great extent, it neglects the evaluation of students' thinking ability in the process of translation. Teachers usually take students' finished translations as the main judgment basis, and overemphasize the consistency between students' translations and reference translations. This evaluation method is one-sided, ignoring the review and examination of students' thinking process in the process of translation. The translation process is a complex thinking process, and students' innovative consciousness and problem-solving ability in this process are also worthy of teachers' attention. Imperfect evaluation methods can't fully reflect students' true translation level, nor are they conducive to stimulating students' interest in translation learning and the formation of students' critical thinking. For example, when evaluating the literary translations submitted by students, if we only pay attention to the consistency between the students' translations and the reference translations, we may largely ignore the individual creativity reflected in the different translations submitted by different students and the individual thinking characteristics reflected in the students' translations. These factors are as important as accuracy and completeness in translation evaluation, especially in literary translation evaluation.

4 Effective strategies for cultivating critical thinking in English-Chinese translation teaching

4.1 Establishing a student-centered teaching philosophy

In order to change the teaching concept of teacher first in classroom teaching, it is necessary to embody the principle of student-centered when designing teaching content and teaching strategies. All teaching contents and teaching strategies should promote students' active participation in learning, critical analysis of translation versions, participation in class discussions or group tasks, and critical thinking in the learning process, so that students can spy out the existence of different cultures and ways of thinking from behind the language and form their own translation views. Because different students have different levels of knowledge, hobbies and ways of thinking, teachers should use flexible teaching methods and evaluation methods according to students' specific conditions in the implementation of translation teaching, so as to teach students in accordance with their aptitude. Teachers can provide suitable learning resources and guidance for students of different levels, and help students to master translation skills and gradually improve their critical thinking ability. For example, a translation teacher can encourage students to reflect on the whole process of translation, and ask students not only to consider the transformation at the language level, but also to make an in-depth analysis of the purpose, context and cultural background of translation, and to examine the accuracy and effectiveness of translation expression and even the communicative effect of translation from multiple angles. This personalized teaching method helps students to form a more independent critical thinking mode, and helps students to actively find problems and propose solutions. To establish a student-centered teaching concept, teachers are also required to provide students with suitable practical opportunities according to the actual situation. In translation teaching, it is difficult to cultivate students' critical thinking simply by classroom explanation and theoretical teaching. Only through a large number of practical activities can students fully exercise their critical thinking ability in practical translation tasks. This is what I will talk about next.

4.2 Adopting different teaching methods

In order to fully arouse students' enthusiasm for classroom participation, translation teachers should also innovate teaching methods and design rich teaching activities. The task-driven approach requires designing challenging translation tasks based on different course contents, so that students can exercise critical thinking by completing these tasks. Challenging tasks can stimulate students' curiosity and desire to explore to a great extent, and guide students to think deeply. For example, a teacher can give an article involving complex cultural background or professional knowledge and ask students to translate it. In this process, students need to consult a large number of materials, use what they have learned to reason, and constantly question and improve their translation. Students should not only think about how to accurately convey the meaning of the original text, but also how to deal with cultural differences and other issues, and exercise their critical thinking ability in constant self-reflection and criticism. Teachers can also use case analysis to lead students to analyze typical translation cases and guide students to think about the characteristics and applicable scenarios of different translation methods. Teachers can choose different versions (2 or 3) of the same text for students to compare and analyze. Students will gradually form their own translation cognition in the process of thinking about why there are different translation choices and the advantages and disadvantages or characteristics of different translation versions. For example, for the translation of the same ancient Chinese poem, different translators may adopt different strategies, some pay attention to the reproduction of formal confrontation, and some pay attention to the transmission of the artistic conception of the original poem. Through analysis, students can deeply understand the deep thinking mechanism of different versions of the translation, analyze the advantages and disadvantages of the translation under the guidance of different strategies, and lay the foundation for their future translation of ancient poetry. In addition, teachers can also arrange for students to carry out cooperative translation in the form of group discussion. Students can have thinking collision in discussion and cooperation. Group members can exchange their own translation versions and translation ideas. By discussing the different versions of other students in the group and understanding the translation ideas of other members in the group, the group members can learn from each other and evaluate each other, thus exercising critical thinking. For example, when translating English business contracts, if the team members have different understandings and expressions of certain terms or specific expressions in the business context, they will discuss and negotiate, and then correct each other's mistakes until the English translation of the terms is finally confirmed, thus forming a translation that conforms to the expression habits of Chinese business contracts. This process allows students to think critically in cooperation, and their translation ability is also improved.

4.3 Improving the evaluation system

Evaluation is an important teaching link to improve teaching quality. Translation teachers in colleges and universities should establish a diversified evaluation system, and comprehensively evaluate students' thinking ability and innovation ability on the basis of considering and evaluating students' translation process. The traditional evaluation system often only pays attention to the accuracy and completeness of the translation results, but ignores the consideration of students' thinking process in the translation process. A diversified evaluation system should comprehensively assess students' translation thinking, selection of methods, and problem-solving capabilities. For example, teachers can ask students to write translation practice reports, explain and review their own translation process, analyze translation difficulties encountered and translation strategies adopted to solve these difficulties, and reflect on the gains and losses of translation. Through such an evaluation system, translation teachers can have a more comprehensive understanding of students' translation learning, and then take more practical measures to promote the cultivation of students' critical thinking. Besides, the subject of evaluation can also be diversified. In addition to teachers' evaluation of students, teachers can also guide students to conduct self-evaluation and mutual evaluation, so that students can better understand the advantages and disadvantages of their translation choices in this process.

5 The cultivation of students' critical thinking in English-Chinese translation teaching under the background of AI

In recent years, the development of artificial intelligence is changing with each passing day. From the initial emergence of ChatGPT to the launch of DeepSeek in China in early 2025, from the appearance of various corpus tools to the introduction of various large language models, the whole world has experienced a major change in the past three or four years. Undoubtedly, this reform has had a profound impact on the humanities and social sciences, especially on translation. This influence is both positive and negative. On the positive side, artificial intelligence can not only translate words quickly, but also realize synchronous translation of voices. Many primary translation tasks are very childish in the face of artificial intelligence, the efficiency of translation has been greatly improved, and the rendering quality of

traditional translation software has been greatly improved. It is precisely because of the intervention of artificial intelligence that the negative impact on translators is gradually reflected. The demand for human translators in the whole society is declining, and many translators are facing the situation of salary reduction or even unemployment. Newly graduated translation students find it difficult to find jobs, and the number of applicants for translation majors is rapidly decreasing. Although these phenomena are understandable, they also reflect the current situation that the whole society does not have a comprehensive understanding of artificial intelligence translation and manual translation.

Limited by the length of the article, we only make a brief explanation. As far as the current situation is concerned, although AI translation can handle most simple translation tasks, its processing results for complex texts and literary texts are not satisfactory. In the final analysis, the core technical foundation of artificial intelligence is still machine, and the development of large language models still relies on feeding existing natural language texts. The understanding and translation of text by artificial intelligence is still based on the existing text. Although it can translate the language, it can't really read and understand the text in depth like a human translator. AI can hardly keenly capture elements beyond the surface language, such as the cultural connotations of the original text, the author's intention, and the values in the original. When the translation is expressed, all the expressions of artificial intelligence are based on the sewing and processing of existing data. This is also the biggest difference between artificial intelligence and translators. When expressing a translation, a translator can creatively present the translation on the basis of fully understanding the surface and deep information of the original text and fully considering the needs of the target readers or translation requirements. This is especially true in literary translation. In this way, the emergence of artificial intelligence cannot eliminate translators. It only puts higher demands on translators. Compared with the past, translators need to have more superb language understanding and expression skills and more complex post-translation editing skills. In this case, it is even more crucial for translators to develop their own more robust critical thinking abilities. In post-translation editing, the translator should be able to keenly find out the mistakes and inadequacies in the translated text of artificial intelligence based on his own consideration of the original text, bilingual culture, translation requirements and the needs of target readers, and make critical translation improvement and revision.

6 Conclusion

In a word, the cultivation of critical thinking is very important in English-Chinese translation teaching in colleges and universities. Translation teachers in colleges and universities should update their teaching ideas in time to meet the requirements of the times. Teachers should innovate teaching methods, fully mobilize students' enthusiasm, optimize the content of teaching materials and comprehensively evaluate students' level, so as to effectively improve students' critical thinking ability and improve the quality of translation teaching.

About the author

Jing Yi, Ph.D , associate professor , research direction: translation studies , author's affiliation: Hunan Normal University, Changsha.

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