

Study on Problems of Vocabulary Use in Translation Practice of Non-English Majors

Libin Liu

Shanxi Polytechnic College ,Taiyuan 030006,Shanxi

ABSTRACT

In the process of translation practice, non-English major students often have many problems of vocabulary use, such as spelling errors, improper collocation, misuse of vocabulary, confusion of parts of speech, poor grasp of the polysemy and emotional color of English words and so on. Through studying the problems of vocabulary use that appeared in the translation practice for non-English major students, some strategies for English vocabulary teaching are proposed to further improve students' vocabulary use ability.

KEYWORDS

Non-English Majors; Vocabulary Problems; Teaching Strategies

College English is a compulsory basic course for non-English majors. It is a teaching system that focuses on English language knowledge and application skills, learning strategies, etc., is guided by the theory of foreign language teaching, and integrates a variety of teaching methods and means. It aims to cultivate students' comprehensive application of English, improve their ability of listening, speaking, reading, writing and translating, and enable them to use English to effectively communicate information orally and in writing in their future work and social interactions. At present, international exchanges and cooperation are becoming more and more frequent, and translation plays a very important role in cross-cultural communication. Improving the translation ability of non-English majors is conducive to further promoting the deeper integration of Chinese and Western cultures, improving the ability of foreign discourse, and serving the dissemination of Chinese culture to the outside world. Therefore, it is especially important to solve the problems arising from the translation practice of non-English majors.

1 Vocabulary Problems Often Occurring in Translation Practice of Non-English Major Students

Translation is a basic type of language test, which mainly tests students' mastery of vocabulary, grammatical structure, and English expression habits. Some non-English majors, with insufficient translation theory and low translation practice ability, always feel at a loss as to how to translate when they encounter some translation questions and always make some mistakes in vocabulary and grammar. Due to less vocabulary accumulation, insufficient mastery of the usage of words, and insufficient flexibility in the use of these words, so in the process of translation, they can't find the right words to express the meaning of the translation, and some of them misuse the words to express the wrong meaning^[2].

1.1 Spelling mistakes and improper collocation

Non-English majors often make spelling mistakes because they don't have a good grasp of the correct way to memorise words and don't remember the words well. Some non-English majors have weak basic knowledge of phonetics, don't find the rules of word spelling, don't memorise words efficiently, just rely on rote learning, don't spell words correctly according to the pronunciation of words, so that the efficiency of memorising words is relatively low, and spelling mistakes, lost letters, fewer letters, and wrong letters of the alphabet are endless in the process of translation.

When translating, if the vocabulary collocation is not reasonable, it will produce ambiguity and inaccurate translation. Many English phrases have many meanings, and non-English majors often get confused with these phrases, and remembering the fixed collocations is difficult for students. The same phrase has to be translated into different meanings in different contexts. Some students do not have a complete grasp of the meanings of the phrases, they only know the meanings of the phrases they often use, but they are not familiar with the other meanings of the English phrases, and therefore they are prone to make some mistakes in the process of translation.^{[3]-[4]}

Students also get mixed up about the meanings of similar phrases. Since they don't use these phrases often, they can't tell the difference between phrases with high similarity and can't remember their meanings, so that they often make mistakes when translating. In addition, some students often mix up the prepositions in fixed collocations, such as focus on, arrive in, arrive at, depend on, devote to, committed to, agree with sb, agree on sth, etc., which are often used incorrectly in translation^[5].

1.2 Vocabulary Misuse

Since the cultures and language habits of English and Chinese are completely different, and students are deeply influenced by Chinese thinking, they will translate according to Chinese thinking before converting into English, and they often misuse some words, which can't really convey the meaning of the original text. For example, "完成任务" should be used to complete the task, not finish the task. Non-English majors are deeply influenced by Chinese thinking, they don't form English thinking, and they are not familiar with English idioms and collocations, so in the process of translation, they often translate according to Chinese thinking and misuse some words and collocations.^[6]

1.3 Lexical confusion

Many English words have the characteristics of multiple words, and students often confuse the lexical nature of words in translation practice, and the phenomenon of lexical misuse of words occurs. When translating, students don't know what lexical properties should be used for the words, and the verbs should be used as nouns, and the nouns should be used as verbs, resulting in lexical confusion. For example, the lexical properties of 'to' are difficult for non-English majors. 'to' is both an infinitive sign and a preposition. Some students don't even know that there are different forms of 'to', but only know that 'to' is followed by the original form of the verb, which is always followed by the original form of the verb no matter what the situation is, obviously making the mistake of lexical misuse.

1.4 Poor grasp of multiple meanings of words

In English, the phenomenon of multiple meanings of words is very common. Most students only remember the meanings of words that are often used, but ignore other meanings that are not often

used or differ greatly from the original meaning. They don't remember the meanings of words that are more difficult to remember, and they don't remember the different meanings of words with specific examples. Therefore, in translation, non-English majors often translate words into the meanings of words that often appear, so the translation is not authentic, and in some cases, it is also translated incorrectly. For example, "The usual meaning of "lead" is "领导, 带领"; e.g. The president and vice president led the army. 总统和副总统带领着军队." However, in the phrase "drinking water supplied by old-fashioned lead pipes", there is a natural mistake in the translation, which should be translated as "饮用水是通过老式的铅管道供应的". Some of the translated sentences are not difficult for non-English majors, only that non-English majors do not have a good grasp of words with multiple meanings, so when they come across other meanings of words, they will be at a loss, and naturally, the translation will not be correct.

1.5 Poor grasp of the emotional colour of English words

In the process of translation, some English words are derogatory, some are positive, but some English words have both derogatory and positive emotional colours. This requires the students to analyse specifically according to different contexts and settings, and translate them into either positive or negative sentimental colours. However, most non-English majors do not have a good grasp of the emotional colour of words, and often translate positive words into negative and negative words into positive in the process of translation, so as to distort the meaning of the original statement. For example, envy has both pejorative and positive affective colours; when used as a positive word, it means "羡慕"; when used as a pejorative word, it means "嫉妒". To grasp the emotional colour of English words and translate their corresponding meanings, it is necessary for students to grasp the emotional colour of English words and translate them into positive or negative meanings according to the specific contexts and different contexts.

2 Analysis of the vocabulary problems of non-English major students in translation practice

1. These vocabulary mistakes made by students in the process of translation are partly caused by their carelessness and failure to remember, and partly caused by the fact that they do not master the correct way of memorising, which results in a relatively low efficiency of memorising, and partly because some students do not notice the importance of vocabulary use in translation practice.

2. When teaching vocabulary, many university English teachers still explain vocabulary according to the traditional teaching method, usually only explaining the basic meaning of words and related collocations, but not explaining vocabulary according to the context and the specific context. Most teachers also neglect to explain the connotation and cultural background of vocabulary, and students only memorise the frequently occurring meanings of words when they remember them, but ignore the fact that vocabulary has different meanings in different contexts and different collocations. As a result, if the special usage of vocabulary is encountered and the context in which the vocabulary exists is changed, students often make mistakes in translating the vocabulary.

3. When students memorise words, they only memorise the Chinese meanings of the words, remember the basic meanings of the words, but not the lexical properties and the related special usage of the words, not to mention that they don't have a deep understanding of the origins of the English words and don't dig into the deep connotations related to the words, and they still can't apply them appropriately during the specific translation process, so much so that different kinds of vocabulary problems often occur.

4. Due to the differences between Chinese and Western cultures, non-English majors fail to notice the differences in the use of vocabulary between English and Chinese, and fail to form a good English thinking mode, which leads to the phenomenon of improper use of vocabulary or misuse of vocabulary in the translation process. Non-English majors do not understand Western culture from multiple perspectives, lack of knowledge systematic understanding of English, and are deeply influenced by Chinese thinking, so they always use vocabulary according to Chinese thinking in the process of translation, and therefore many vocabulary translation errors will often occur^[7].

3 Strategies for Teaching English Vocabulary in College

3.1 Adopting Diversified Teaching Methods

For college English vocabulary teaching, English teachers should adopt diversified teaching methods and teaching approaches to teach students the correct way to memorise words and learn vocabulary, and to improve the effectiveness of students' memorising words and learning vocabulary. Students can be taught to learn words according to the method of word formation and the law of word composition, and mastering this law can improve the efficiency of students in learning words and memorising words. English teachers should also teach students to pay attention to the correct pronunciation of words, and memorise words according to the pronunciation law of words, which can improve the efficiency of non-English majors in memorising words. Students can also be taught to use the harmonic method, the association method and other memory strategies to improve the efficiency of vocabulary memorisation.^[8]

3.2 Adopting Contextual Teaching and Lecturing Methods

Teaching the meanings and usages of words in a certain context can enhance students' impression, make them understand the meanings and usages of vocabulary better and deepen their memory. Some vocabulary words have different meanings in different contexts, and different ways of combining vocabulary words also have different meanings. Therefore, explaining the usage of vocabulary words in the context of the contexts and related contexts will enable students to grasp the different meanings and usages of different words in a more flexible way. At the same time, we should also strengthen students' training on fixed collocations, teach students the usage and meaning of fixed collocations in example sentences and contexts, deepen students' impression, and make them form English thinking, so that they can understand the meaning of fixed collocations according to English thinking in the process of translation in the future and can use fixed collocations correctly in translation.

3.3 Cross-cultural communication teaching

As translation practice is deeply influenced by Chinese and Western cultures, it is especially important to cultivate students' English thinking mode. In vocabulary teaching, it is indispensable to strengthen students' understanding and mastery of the cultural connotation of English vocabulary, which directly affects the translation effect. Many vocabularies in English have rich cultural connotations and are closely related to the culture of English. As many English words come from Greek, Latin, French and so on, some of them are closely related to Greek mythology, the Bible and other Western cultures. Therefore, in the process of vocabulary teaching, English teachers should focus on explaining the cultural connotations of these words to students to increase their impression, so that they can understand the etymology of English vocabulary, understand the

cultural connotations of English vocabulary, and at the same time deepen their understanding of the British and American cultures, which will help them to learn the words better in the future.

3.4 Adopting word formation teaching

Word formation is one of the basic elements of English vocabulary. Most words in English have their origins, and exploring the roots of English vocabulary is also an important part of vocabulary teaching. The use of word formation can expand students' knowledge of vocabulary and explore the ins and outs of vocabulary, which is conducive to students' deeper understanding of vocabulary and mastering the correct usage of vocabulary. English has borrowed many words from Latin and Greek, and many words have retained their roots, so we can guess the approximate meaning of a word by grasping the meaning of the root. You can also use the meaning of the root word to guess the meaning of the word. Memorising words according to their roots will make a deeper impression and will not be easy to forget. For example, the roots life and liv mean "生活、生存", alive, live, living, life. The meanings of these words are all based on the meanings of the root words, and once we have mastered the meaning of the root word, we will be able to master the meanings of a series of words formed from that root word.

3.5 Adopting dictionaries for teaching

Dictionaries play an important role in English vocabulary teaching. Using dictionaries can make students understand the connotation of vocabulary and vocabulary usage more deeply. Teaching students how to use English-Chinese dictionaries for English vocabulary learning helps them learn independently. If students only use English-Chinese dictionaries, they will only focus on the Chinese explanations of the words, but the Chinese explanations sometimes do not really reflect the usage and meaning of the English vocabulary, while the English explanations are able to explain the specific meanings and usages of the words in English in an authentic way. English-Chinese dual-explanation dictionaries can make up for the inadequacy of English-Chinese dictionaries in the explanation of words, which can make students understand the meaning and usage of words in a deeper way and deepen their impression of words^[9].

4 Conclusion

In view of the vocabulary problems that often occur in translation practice for non-English majors, university English teachers should adopt diversified teaching methods and teaching strategies in vocabulary teaching. They should teach students the meaning and usage of vocabulary in specific contexts, understand the root of vocabulary, pay attention to explaining the cultural connotation of English vocabulary to students, cultivate students' English thinking mode, teach students to learn vocabulary by using English-Chinese double-entendre dictionaries, and discover the connotation of English vocabulary, so as to reduce the vocabulary problems of non-English majors in the practice of translation, and thus to improve the students' translation practice. The students will be taught to use English-Chinese Dictionary to learn English vocabulary by themselves.

About the Author

Liu Libin, Master degree, Associate professor, Research direction: English teaching and translation studies.

References

- [1] Chen Jinshi, Dong Jinwei. The creation and practice of teaching system of all-round improvement college English course[J]. Jinan: Shandong Foreign Language Teaching, 2018,39(6),52-61.
- [2] Xu Ke. Research on lexical petrification phenomenon in Chinese-to-English translation of English major college students [D]. Changchun: Northeast Normal University,2014.
- [3] Dai Guangrong. A corpus-based study of English-Chinese lexical interpreting[J]. Xiamen: Journal of Xiamen Institute of Technology,2008,16(3),94-98.
- [4] Fu Yuanlan. On reciprocal translation of vocabulary[J]. Changsha: Journal of Changsha University, 2012,26(3),97-98.
- [5] Wang Chen. An experimental study of vocabulary learning in higher vocational non-English majors [D]. Shijiazhuang: Hebei Normal University,2014.
- [6] Guo Man. English translation of dissertation abstract vocabulary under the guidance of purpose theory[J]. Jinan: Journal of Jinan University,2012,22(4),38-40.
- [7] Chen Siyan. Analysis of lexical problems in translation practice of non-English major college students[J]. Science and Technology Information,2011,(35),534+587.
- [8] Bai Lan. From EGP to ESP: The Development Trend of University English Teaching Reform[J]. Jishou: Journal of Jishou University, 2019, 40(5),139-145.
- [9] He Xuliang. Analysis of word choice strategies in English composition for non-English major undergraduates [D]. Xi'an: Shaanxi Normal University,2002.