

Multimodal Construction of College English Translation Teaching from a Cross-cultural Perspective

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ABSTRACT

College English translation teaching essentially helps non-English major students master translation skills, improve translation competence, and integrate translation with their respective majors. As for translation activities, language is the starting point while culture is the endpoint. In order to effectively improve teaching quality and students' satisfaction, translation courses should be placed in the perspective of cross-cultural communication. Therefore, this research paper principally explores and analyzes the multimodal construction of college English translation teaching from six aspects: values, linguistic proficiency, cross-cultural competence, translation competence, teaching materials and methods, teachers and technology. It concludes with the following claims: 1) inspiring students to love Chinese culture and serving as ambassadors for China's cultural exchanges on the global stage are the core values for effective translation teaching; 2) the constant improvement of linguistic proficiency in both English and Chinese is a fundamental guarantee for learning and excelling in translation; 3) being immersed into culture to appreciate the language differences as well as learning to view Chinese culture from the perspective of the English culture serves as a boost to translation quality; 4) teachers should combine translation theories, strategies and methods to help students better understand the relationship between theory and practice, leading them to guide their own practice with theory and further develop theory through practice; 5) teachers are also expected to continuously diversify their teaching methods, compile and use interesting, informative and inspiring textbooks; 6) the application of translation technology will help align teaching with the translation market, sufficiently enabling students to meet job requirements upon graduation.

Keywords: *College English, Translation teaching, Multimodal construction, Cross-cultural perspective.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Just as language is the carrier of culture, college English education not only teaches students language skills, but also enables them to be immersed in the English culture and gain cross-cultural awareness. College English is an important means for non-English major students to improve their English pragmatic and cross-cultural communicative abilities. Besides, the reform of college English teaching is related to the cultivation of international talents for China and an enhanced international competitiveness. In the past twenty-odd years since the 21st century, significant achievements have been made in the reform of college English teaching in China, with remarkable

changes in teaching concepts, content, methods, means and environment. Outstanding results have been achieved in stimulating students' interest and autonomy in English learning, and improving their comprehensive English competence. In 2020, China's Ministry of Education once again issued the "Guidelines for College English Teaching", which rephrased the goals of college English teaching at three levels: foundation, improvement, and development. The three levels illustrate progressive requirements for the difficulty level, subject areas and quality of the translated text, and even the specific translation skills that indicate translation competence. The original intention of language education has always been serving the translation needs of the country. From the policy of reform and

opening up to China's accession to the WTO and to the Belt and Road initiative, the foreign language education community has made positive efforts to respond to each historical node of China's development as well as each important speech made by national leaders on foreign language talent training. Especially in the context of artificial intelligence, big data and cloud computing, college English translation teaching is showing a multimodal trend. This research paper will analyze the multimodal construction of college English translation teaching from six aspects: values, linguistic proficiency, cross-cultural competence, translation competence, teaching materials and methods, teachers and technology.

2. THE OVERARCHING TEACHING PHILOSOPHY: VALUES

Translation talents serve as an important bridge connecting China and the world in the process of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. To cultivate a large number of translation talents with patriotism, political determination, proficient business skills, integration with China and foreign countries, and willingness to contribute, it is required that college English translation teaching should uphold the original intention of cultivating morality, establish the teaching concept of "moral education to be prioritized in talent cultivation", integrate ideological and political education into classroom teaching, form a win-win situation of translation knowledge, and demonstrate the educational height of college English translation teaching, thus achieving the fundamental task of cultivating moral character through college English translation teaching. With regard to textbook compilation, "college English textbooks is supposed to accentuate the presentation of Chinese culture, providing students with materials to disseminate Chinese culture in foreign languages" [1]. Therefore, in the process of selecting course materials and arranging teaching elements, college English teachers should make students fully aware of the important role of "telling Chinese stories well and spreading Chinese culture" in China's external publicity and communication. Though non-English major students mainly work in their respective areas, they are always expected to prioritize China's interests in cross-cultural communication, proactively maintaining its national image and influence in the related global sectors. From a cross-cultural perspective, the term culture is so broad that it includes not only music, literature, arts and so on that we refer to in our daily life, but also

the ways the Chinese people approach people and society, as well as their perspectives on themselves and the world. Therefore, college English teachers can choose chapters that highlight Chinese virtues and traditional culture, allowing students to improve their language conversion skills and stimulate their patriotism through translation practice. Only with patriotism can they find ways to extend professional exchanges through translation activities, facilitating cultural and hi-tech interactions between China and English-speaking countries.

College English translation teaching should use narrative translation as a means to guide students to produce easy-to-understand English narrative in the shoes of the target audience so that an effective dissemination of Chinese stories is achievable. For instance, China Daily as a useful learning material for college English teaching, serves as an ideal source for students' reading and translation abilities. Teachers may choose articles suitable for their students' levels, promoting their understanding of China's politics, economy, culture, education, technology and many other key areas. Oral presentations, debates on related topics and written reports are helpful exercises. Thanks to classroom interaction and after-school teamwork assignments, students are expected to gain a deeper understanding of the cultural background, terminology and translation skills involved in the relevant materials. Via a series of learning processes, students' patriotism, cross-cultural and translation competences will be improved, and they will also develop the habit of keeping up with current events and news, which will facilitate their engagement in translation work in their respective fields, thus enhancing their cross-cultural communicative skills for future careers. Self-directed learning is a process of discovering problems and striving to solve them, which is beneficial for cultivating students' learning ability and improving their translation competence. Students are the main body of learning, and in order to achieve good teaching results in college English translation teaching, it is necessary to mobilize their learning enthusiasm, initiative and creativity. They should be inspired by teachers to take the initiative to learn translation, understanding its importance as a basic skill to their own future development. In short, the value perspective that guides and inspires students to learn translation well and better serve the country is the most important philosophy in college English translation teaching. Only by

following it can teaching and learning be effectively carried out.

3. BILINGUAL PROFICIENCY

Undoubtedly, to engage in quality translation activities and achieve cross-linguistic communication, the significance of language proficiency cannot be underestimated. But "the quality in the current translation market is dissatisfying, with translated texts that are rigidly word-for-word, messy and unreasonable here and there. Most translators despite their enthusiasm for the jobs lack language proficiency, which has grown into an enormous hurdle that they need to overcome" [2]. Teachers should guide students to constantly improve their overall English proficiency, helping them master the relevant cultural knowledge and basic translation skills. During their freshman and sophomore years, students should be guided to read extensively beyond textbook knowledge, expand their vocabulary, and accumulate rich cultural knowledge. The elective English courses for junior and senior years should continue to help students consolidate the knowledge and skills they have learned, teaching translation according to the features of their respective majors so that they can apply it to their future work and study. The cultivation of college English translation competence can be achieved by strengthening the teaching of English pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar, laying a solid foundation for language learning; by stressing intensive English listening and reading training, students' language input and output; by promoting accuracy of translation through the creativity of English writing; and by integrating the translation process into the teaching of listening, speaking, reading and writing in college English, and thereby solidifying the foundation of English-Chinese translation. Meanwhile, teachers can inspire students to strengthen their Chinese reading and learning, improve their Chinese literacy, comprehensibility, expressive ability, and logical thinking. Currently, there are many English competitions organized at different levels and by varied institutions, involving multiple aspects such as listening, speaking, reading, writing, translation, grammar, vocabulary and so forth. Teachers can therefore encourage students to actively participate in competitions, promote learning through competitions, and stimulate their enthusiasm for English learning. Only with an internal motivation for English

learning, will they think hard about how to learn the language well.

4. CROSS-CULTURAL COMPETENCE

Throughout college English translation teaching, students should aim at interlanguage communication. However, it is not only a simple conversion of written symbols, but also a process of mitigating cultural differences to achieve cultural equivalence through code-switching. "Translation promotes cultural openness through interlanguage conversion, which in turn promotes the openness of our thinking" [3]. In this regard, teachers should improve students' cultural literacy. To successfully complete a translation, in addition to basic vocabulary and grammar knowledge, it is also necessary to have a certain understanding of both the source and target cultures, so that the process can run smoothly with ideal effects. Teachers should lead students to explore cultural knowledge, such as history, culture, economy, social development and many other aspects, "guiding them to reflect upon the cultural differences involved in translation" [4].

Throughout the teaching process, teachers should focus on cultivating students' cultural literacy and imparting overseas cultural knowledge, incorporating Chinese and Western cultures, increasing students' understanding of language and cultural backgrounds, enabling them to grasp the differences between the two languages and cultures, thereby improving the accuracy of translation. College English translation teaching should center on cultivating students' cross-cultural competence, which is embodied with the contrastive analysis and precise application of Chinese and Western cultures. Additionally, social culture and language thinking habits of Western countries that are displayed in English lexicology, syntax and discourse can be introduced to them so as to deepen their understanding of the Western culture. Meanwhile, attention should also be paid to the effective input and output of their mother tongue culture. In this way, students will be inspired to actively compare Chinese and Western cultures, understanding each one's basic national conditions, history, social customs and many other delicate features. By doing so, on the one hand, obstacles caused by cultural differences in the translation process can be solved more easily; on the other hand, students may deepen their holistic appreciation of the cultural connotation of their mother tongue.

More specifically, one of the most effective ways for students to understand Western culture is to watch contemporary Western film and television works and imitate what they see so as to engage in writing or debating about the film themes. In this way, students will not only be motivated to delve into cultural learning, but also to develop the habit of learning English and understanding Western culture through film and television works. Another effective way to learn culture is to send students to major English-speaking countries for short-term exchanges, but the duration should not be too short, but last at least one semester. In this way, students can fully engage with local cultural customs, interact with foreign peers, and improve their English proficiency and cross-cultural competence. Seen from previous experience, living and studying independently abroad has a significant impact on improving language and cultural abilities. However, two issues need to be taken seriously when it comes to exchange programs. The first is to ensure students' safety, including their ideological and political righteousness. The second is to motivate them to actively communicate with locals, rather than staying together with their compatriots. They will greatly benefit from such programs as long as the two issues are properly addressed.

5. TRANSLATION COMPETENCE

"The ultimate goal of translation teaching is to cultivate students' translation competence" [5]. It is based on the three aforementioned points: values, language proficiency, and cross-cultural competence. Only with correct values and professional ethics can translation activities be ensured of political righteousness. Only with full confidence and excellence in cross-language and cross-cultural communication can one further master the ideas and specific operations of translation, with a deeper understanding of the knowledge system of translation, which is reflected in the teaching of translation theories, strategies, skills and methods. The current college English teaching takes six 45-min sessions to cover one study unit. Teachers should have the discretion to allocate a certain amount of time to specifically instruct translation skills to students. If possible, the course can even be made compulsory. For non-English major students, they should be introduced to some basic translation methods and theories, such as the widely used literal translation, liberal translation, addition, deletion, ellipsis, conversion, split translation, substitution and so on. After mastering certain translation strategies, skills and

methods, students can significantly improve their translation speed and quality.

Due to the limited college English class hours, teachers had better make full use of the texts in the textbooks, select some sentences as examples, and inspire non-English major students to stick to cultural equivalence during their translation practice. This requires that in the process of code-switching, the indivisibility and high correlation between language and culture determines that culture cannot be ignored in translation and that cultural equivalence counts in translation. Translators not only need to achieve an equivalent conversion between the original text and the translated text in terms of vocabulary, syntax, and discourse style, but also need to consider the different social backgrounds and cultural connotations of the two languages. In other words, they have to achieve information transmission and the equivalence in deep cultural appreciation, which is even more demanding for translators. It is noteworthy that students must be urged to reflect and work on translation instead of only discussing theory without practice or referring to keys without seeking a thorough understanding. Just like other essential life skills, translation requires unremitting practice, a philosophy which needs to be implemented throughout translation teaching.

6. TEACHING MATERIALS AND METHODS

The selection of suitable translation materials is also very important, for a good translation textbook will enable students to appreciate the importance of combining theory with practice through training. At present, there is a scarcity of specialized translation textbooks for universities. Therefore, teachers should be mobilized to write textbooks that are suitable for their students in line with their actual language and translation competence and prospective professional requirements, thus making the books more realistic and conducive to the growth of talents. It is advisable to appropriately incorporate translation theories and skills into the textbooks to help students improve their basic English translation literacy. The selection of the teaching materials that make up the textbooks also takes scrupulous efforts, since the topics of the exercises should be diversified and it is ideal to use raw materials that have not been translated yet. In other words, students cannot obtain references to such exercises directly from the internet, a library or bookstore. Only in this way will they take such

practice seriously. Nevertheless, by doing so, teachers are required to spend a lot of time selecting materials, translating them on their own, highlighting the key and difficult points in translation and eventually incorporating those points into their teaching process, during which, students are mobilized to be fully engaged into the related translation practice, with their abilities of expression and analysis as well as their confidence boosted. Additionally, teachers should inspire students to identify and address the translation obstacles caused by the homogeneity and heterogeneity of English and Chinese cultures, so that the cultural equivalence between the translated and the original texts can be achieved. Otherwise, their translation would only be a rigidly literal translation or a rather superficial one that only scratches the surface of the original text, thus robbing the translation of its cultural vitality.

College English translation teaching is essentially about instructing translation skills, which can be realized through classroom collaboration and self-practice after class. For either, teachers should offer as many opportunities as possible for students to display themselves so that their courage, confidence and expressiveness can be boosted. With the student-centered teaching philosophy, students are expected to play a key role, with their classroom participation, assigned teamwork and the course assessment being effectively guided and supervised. Students can first be led to appreciate the original texts through group discussion before producing some target texts. Then the translations of each group can be compared, displayed, and analyzed for strengths and weaknesses before the teacher makes the final comments. Out of class, under the guidance of standardized assessment requirements set by College English Test Band 4, teachers can design self-study programs for students to complete either independently or through group work, with various translation topics involved such as history, culture, politics, economy, technology and society. Also, teachers should offer timely feedback and evaluation online. Such student-centered teaching can effectively stimulate students' enthusiasm for translation, enhance their sense of achievement, and help cultivate their creative and critical thinking abilities. Teachers can expand the teaching content of college English translation by adding materials with distinct Chinese characteristics. In this way, students can improve their narrative ability through translation, especially concerning the global dissemination of something Chinese. It is claimed

their cross-cultural competence in telling the world about China will be boosted thanks to such teaching design.

7. TEACHING MATERIALS AND METHODS

Faculty development is a crucial guarantee for the smooth implementation of college English translation courses. "Universities are supposed to establish and improve a training system for college English teachers, enabling them to make sensible career development plans" [6]. Teachers should be offered as many opportunities as possible to pursue further studies in major English-speaking countries, especially in Britain and America, so that they can improve their cross-cultural competence and English proficiency. Nowadays, thanks to the extensive intercollegiate partnerships between China and the West, many foreign language schools among China's universities are able to dispatch their staff overseas for academic programs lasting up to one year. Apart from that, schools can also subsidize teachers to take part in training for English or translation teachers. A good case in example is the summer vacation training organized by Translators Association of China. But undoubtedly the best way to improve faculty quality is to recruit teachers with PhD from renowned overseas universities or top-tier domestic ones.

To effectively improve students' translation skills, teachers engaged in English translation teaching not only need to have high translation competence themselves, but also need to use various teaching methods. Firstly, teachers must recognize the importance of translation teaching for students by devoting more time and efforts to course preparation. As aforementioned, the organization and compilation of translation textbooks largely requires teachers to take initiative in selecting materials, pondering the original text and translate, and summarize relevant skills according to the specific difficulties. They also need to make sure that those skills are delivered in an acceptable manner for students. Secondly, teachers themselves should also continue to learn translation theories and methods, engage in translation practice, study cultural differences between East and West, keep track of the latest research on contrastive analysis of English and Chinese, and consciously improve their translation and cross-cultural competences. Teachers cannot truly appreciate the translation difficulties unless

they often practice translation themselves. Therefore, translation teachers should readily take some translation tasks in addition to teaching and research. Through practice, they can continually improve their teaching quality and get inspired in their research. Thirdly, teachers need to change their teaching philosophy, innovate teaching models and methods, and shift from teacher-centered and textbook-centered mode which simply imparts language skills to the student-and-ability-centered one. In other words, they should not only impart language knowledge and skills, but also pay more attention to cultivating students' practical language application and autonomous learning abilities. It is a shift from focusing on lectures in the classroom setting to the connectivity of theory and practice as well as the in-class and out-of-class teaching and learning. Last but not least, teachers had better choose the process-oriented teaching approach, mock the real situation, adopt an interactive and contrastive teaching method, thus training students to study both independently and cooperatively. They should not only care for students with a weak learning basis, but also create development opportunities for students with a better foundation.

In recent years, translation technology has been developing rapidly, to an extent that some even predict translation as a profession will soon be eliminated, with translators replaced by machines. Despite such bluffs, students may still be severely affected in job opportunities and earning abilities if they fail to keep up with times by mastering translation technology efficiently. Therefore, for universities that offer a course of college English translation, it is necessary to increase teaching facilities, build network platforms and corpora, introduce advanced software, and hold regular forums on translation theory and practice. It is vital to develop students' information searching ability, for "it is an extension of the conventional translation competence" [7]. Teachers can make full use of modern information technology and adopt a computer-based model, so as to promote English teaching towards a personalized and autonomous fashion unconstrained by time and location. For example, through a flipped classroom teaching model, strengthened online tutoring and forums, students' creativity, criticality and confidence in studying translation theory and practice will be enhanced. More specifically, teachers can conduct translation technology training, enabling students to know the basic concepts and principles of computer-assisted translation tools and learn to use

them efficiently. Via information retrieval, corpus integration and management in translation practice, students' technical literacy will be further developed.

8. CONCLUSION

Starting with language and ending with culture, college English translation is carried out thanks to creative teaching methods, advanced technical means and student-friendly textbooks. Patriotism plus a strong desire of being a Chinese ambassador on the world stage are the core values for college English translation teaching. "In cultural exchanges, translators need to not only interpret Chinese stories well, but also adhere to the righteous Chinese cultural stance" [8]. The constant improvement of bilingual proficiency in both English and Chinese is the fundamental guarantee for learning and doing well in translation. Steeping oneself into culture to appreciate the differences between the two languages and learning to view Chinese culture from the perspective of the English culture will help improve translation quality. In translation classes, teachers should integrate theories, strategies and methods to help students appreciate the relationship between theory and practice, use theory to guide practice and reflect on theory through practice. Teachers should also continually enrich their teaching methods, write and use interesting, informative and inspiring textbooks. The application of translation technology can also align teaching with the translation market, generally allowing students to adapt to the requirements of related jobs after graduation. In summary, from a cross-cultural aspect, the multimodal development of college English translation teaching involves six aspects: values, bilingual proficiency, cross-cultural competence, translation competence, textbooks and methods, teachers and technology. Teachers, together with universities offering college English translation courses must work hard in the six areas to continually improve teaching quality and students satisfaction.

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