The Investigation into the Present Situation of College English Translation Teaching —Taking Shaanxi Normal University as an Example
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Abstract. With the economic integration and acceleration of the globalization process, China has an enormous demand for translation talents. Currently, college English translation teaching can’t meet the domestic demands for translation talents. In order to improve the shortage of translation talents, promote the development of college English translation teaching, and cultivate inter-disciplinary and applied talents, this paper makes the investigation into 150 sophomores (non-English majors), and explores some extant problems in college English translation teaching, ranging from unreasonable syllabus, old teaching models to students’ weak cross-cultural awareness. Therefore, it also puts forward a series of pragmatic suggestions, including the implementation of syllabus, the application of innovated teaching model, the concerns of the university and the improvement of students’ cross-cultural awareness and so on.

Introduction

With the rapid economic growth and acceleration of the globalization, China has a particularly close connection with the world. The demands for translation talents expand increasingly. Yet, English major students can’t meet the status quo. So translation teaching in the college has a long way to go. When it comes to College English Translation Teaching, it often refers to the course of English major students. Li (2004) made a questionnaire towards 74 English teachers. The result shows that 80 percent of teachers reckon that translation course aims to develop specialized translation talents, and it’s unnecessary for non-English majors. Thus it can be seen, college English translation teaching is in a marginalized position. Cai (2003) believed that attaching importance to the translation teaching is a significant step in the course of reforming college English curriculum. Cross-cultural awareness is given enough attention (Liu 2017; Dong & Zhang 2018). Mu & Zou (2015) argued that translation theory should be connected with discrete disciplines. Aimed at the present situation of the College English Translation Teaching, this paper presents some suggestions. Although this issue has been studied for many times, it is still prominent from the current situation.

The Problems in the College English Translation Teaching

It is necessary to make a clear definition between pedagogical translation and translation teaching. Delisle (1988) first distinguished these two definitions: pedagogical translation is a means of teaching that helps students understand the main idea of the passage, while translation teaching aims to impart translation skills and knowledge and empower students certain translation abilities. Luo (2002) argued that the definition of translation teaching should be defined again. Translation teaching consists of college translation aiming at non-English major students, and major translation teaching directing at English major students or translation major. This paper deals with college translation teaching for non-English majors. Take Shaanxi Normal University as an example, the
author adopts the method of observation and interview, and makes an investigation into 150
sophomores of Faculty of Music (with 70 males and 80 females majoring in music performance).
This lasts ten weeks. In addition, the author makes a rough analysis to the teaching materials and
adopts the interview towards students to explore the existing current situation of college English
translation teaching. Meanwhile, based on the observation to students’ class performance and their
assignments, several problems are presented.

The Teaching Syllabus is Not Fully Implemented

The teaching syllabus has been reformed several times, in order to provide a proper standard for
college English translation teaching. The syllabus emphasizes students’ five basic skills: They are
listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translating respectively. These skills are equally important.
College students can translate fluently and accurately. But many universities put much emphasis
upon the previous four skills, less emphasis on translating skill. Even if they instruct translation, the
involved knowledge is little and not targeted. It is often instructed in the process of explaining texts.

Teaching Mode is Traditional

Although many teachers in the universities have transformed their teaching method, it is still a
little inefficient. Except those who have a strong motivation for learning English, many students
still show less interest for English translation. In the past, the class was going like this: The class is
teacher-oriented. Teachers instilled knowledge into students and students passively accepted them.
Students played a passive role in learning. Teachers spent much time on the vocabulary, grammar,
and meaning, little time on the translation practice. This method neglects the importance of practice,
thus limiting students’ thinking and creativity what the translation is all about. Despite today’s class
has been improved, it cannot attract students’ attention. For this, we should take some creative
measures, instead of staying in or satisfying with the current method.

The University Doesn’t Value College English Translation Teaching

Firstly, the course hour of English teaching is total 36 hours, with 2 hour every week. To be clear,
the course hour is not only for translation teaching, it is for the whole aspect. It includes the training
of five skills. We can obviously see that time for translation course is very inadequate. No
specialized translation course is provided for non-English majors. Secondly, the textbook is out of
date and cannot conform to times. It’s also lack of relevant translation theories and techniques such
as amplification, omission and so on. These methods and techniques are extremely vital in
translating. Aside from that, the exercises in the book can’t effectively embody any translation
teaching. Many of them focus on students’ command of vocabulary and grammar. For example, the
sentence among exercises is “宪法规定公民享有言论自由( provide for)”. From this, it’s cannot
see any about translation method or technique; it’s just a test for phrases and grammar.

Students’ Cross-Cultural Awareness Is Weak

Many students have some biases towards translation. They reckon that only they have mastered a
wealth of vocabularies, they can do translation. But the fact is actually not like that. From their
performance in the class, there are mainly two issues. One is that they know the main idea of the
passage, but they can’t translate it fluently and coherently. The other is that they would translate it
in a wrong way. Just as Nida (1993) said, translation is the exchange between two cultures. For a
successful translation version, familiarizing with their differences is more important than learning
two languages.

The Suggestions to College English Translation Teaching

Based on the previous problems and the new course requirement, this paper provides some
operational suggestions. In order to meet domestic demands for applied talents, college English
translation teaching must be given enough concerns.
Properly Implementing of Teaching Syllabus

College students have mastered enough grammar and vocabularies. They don’t have big problems in English learning (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). But, translation capability still needs to be improved. For fully implementing the Teaching Syllabus and improving students’ translation skill, the Ministry of Education should issue some obligatory measures such as offering translation class in the university. Meanwhile, the university should follow it for the benefit of students. And translation class should be targeted under the guidance of teachers.

Application of Innovated Teaching Mode

Traditional teaching models should be abandoned, with the creative teaching mode replaced. Teachers can get the utmost out of the science technology to bring new life to the class. College students are the young generation with many creative ideas, and the teacher can adopt Flipped Classroom Teaching. Make students become the subject of the classroom. Teachers can let students watch videos about translation methods and techniques and finish some translation tasks before the class. Then teachers group students and let them choose the best translation version in their groups. Then choose the best one from those chosen ones in the class. Finally the teacher makes a comment and draws a conclusion about the method and technique used in the process of translation.

In addition to that method, the teacher can also use Weibo to teach translation. As every one hot issue appears, he or she can find some relevant materials as translation tasks. Or he/she can find some videos in Youtube for students. Then ask students translate them in class. By doing so, it’s good both for teachers and students. For teachers, it can improve their teaching ability. For students, it can largely attract students’ attention and step up their learning motivations, avoiding that they are indifferent and boring. Meanwhile it’s also conducive to their creativity and logical thinking.

Concerns of the University

Firstly, the course hour of English teaching is total 36 hours, with 2 hours every week. It includes all aspects of English teaching. Just we have said that the four skills has gotten enough training in the past, nowadays we should put more emphasis on translation teaching. Because the basic studying hour is limited, universities can hold lectures of translation for whole students, not solely for English majors. Or they can offer optional class of translation that instructing some fundamental theories and techniques in the second year, not the third or four year.

Luo (2002) pointed out, “Chinese had many issues in translation teaching. College translation teaching is short of high-quality textbooks, eligible teachers and special research institution.” Secondly, textbooks that are closely connected and relevant to the life and their majors should be chosen, and those out of date materials should be abandoned. Cai (2018) mentioned college English should be transformed into professional English that meets students’ needs. The specialization of public English is to teach students how to derive their professional knowledge. Therefore, translation teaching can be related to concrete disciplines, such as medicine, engineering, Internet, technology and so on. It also needs to be innovative to serve for students. The compilation of translation textbooks that are available to non-English majors is necessary. Thirdly, universities should pay attention to the construction of faculty, improve their capabilities, and foster a wealth of comprehensive teachers who have a combined knowledge of English translation and their majors. And it should provide specialized training for those are interested in translation.

Enhancement of Cross-Cultural Awareness

Teachers can consciously recommend some magazines and applications to students, encouraging them increase their culture knowledge of the target language. Teachers can also show some foreign films in class. These effective measures can help them know differences between two kinds of different cultures, improving their cross-cultural awareness. It can bring new life to the class, developing students’ learning motivation.
Conclusion

Based on these problems, this paper provided some practical suggestions, in order to change the present situation of college English translation teaching. Translation teaching must recognize the current situation and find solutions to these issues in ways that make college English translation teaching goes well. In terms of teachers and students, universities must give priority to college English translation teaching. There are still some limitations in this paper. Firstly, the paper is only based on Shaanxi Normal University, which isn’t comprehensive enough. Secondly, the number of interviewee is limited. In addition, the research doesn’t involve the interview of students of other majors to get a whole insight. For the future study, it can be researched from the perspective of empirical study, and adopt more participants. In conclusion, college English translation teaching should be attached much importance in college English translation teaching.

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References


