

Original Paper

On the Application of Translation Quality Assessment Model in MTI Teaching

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Received: September 3, 2021

Accepted: September 30, 2021

Online Published: October 9, 2021

doi:10.22158/elsr.v2n4p1

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.22158/elsr.v2n4p1>

Abstract

The 21st century is an era of globalization with rapid development of information technology and there are more and more close exchanges among countries. Under this background, the importance of translation is self-evident, and MTI (Master of Translation and Interpreting) teaching, which is closely related to it, has also attracted increasing attention. On the whole, after over ten years of development, translation teaching in China has begun to take shape. Both major foreign language colleges and foreign language departments of various comprehensive colleges have set up corresponding translation courses. But at present, the teaching effect of MTI is far from satisfaction. Based on the translation quality assessment model of Malcolm Williams, the necessity and possibility of the application of the translation quality assessment model in MTI teaching is explored, and the concept of the application of the translation quality assessment model in the classroom is put forward, aiming to establish an objective and effective evaluation system in MTI teaching so as to further promote the development of MTI teaching.

Keywords

Malcolm Williams, Translation Quality Assessment Model, MTI teaching, application

1. Introduction

Juliane House, a German scholar, first proposed the concept of Translation Quality Assessment (TQA) model in 1976, which is the first set of systematic and scientific translation assessment model recognized internationally and plays a leading role in the research of subsequent translation criticism and translation quality assessment. Any translation quality evaluation is inseparable from vested standards, so House analyzes and compares the source text to the target text from the three aspects, that

is, meaning of words, pragmatics and the whole text, in light of the theories of system-functional linguistics and discourse analysis. In the process of comparison, problems in the target text are found and a reasonable evaluation is made on the target text. In addition, House also makes a comparative analysis of the original text and the translated text from eight dimensions: (1) Geographical Origin; (2) Social Class; (3) Time; (4) Medium (simple/complex); (5) Participation (simple/complex); (6) Social Role Relationship; (7) Social Attitude; (8) Province. The previous three aspects are considered from the perspective of language users, and the latter are closely related to pragmatics. In general, they all serve as translated text analysis parameters, from which to analyze whether the target text is equivalent or deviated from the original in ideational and interpersonal meaning (House, 1977, p. 42). It is believed that the translation quality assessment model proposed by House is a pioneer work in the field of translation studies. Besides, in terms of evaluation categories, House's translation quality assessment model is a qualitative assessment with subjective factors.

As a professor at the University of Ottawa in Canada, Malcolm Williams suggested that argument schema should be the ideal criterion for translation quality assessment in his book *Translation Quality Assessment: An Argumentation-Centered Approach* in 2004. Since all texts are argumentative more or less, arguments are widely present in various types of discourse, which is exactly in line with the universal appeal of translation quality assessment for different texts. Argumentation-centered TQA core parameters finalized by Williams are argument schema, prepositional functions/conjunctives/other inference indicators, arguments and narrative strategy. Among these parameters, the argument schema needs to be explained emphatically. The argument schema consists of Claim (C), Grounds (G), Warrant (W), Backing (B), Qualifier (Q) and Rebuttal/Restriction (R), and the translation quality assessment mainly depends on whether the translation accurately reflects the argument schema of source text. Inspired by the concept of "defect" for the ICQ (Industrial Quality Control), Williams microscopically defines errors in translation as critical defect, major defect and minor defect (Williams, 2004, p. 67). Williams' TQA model takes into account both qualitative and quantitative evaluation at both macro and micro levels, and it is of great referential significance.

At present, researches on translation quality assessment model in China can be divided into two categories: one is the critical research on the existing translation quality assessment models. For example, Chinese scholar Si Xianzhu not only analyzed House's translation theory, but also pointed out its shortcomings. "For a scientific, complete and operable evaluation model, in addition to covering all necessary evaluation parameters, there must be clear operation steps" (Si, 2005, p. 83); the other one mainly focuses on the empirical analysis of the existing evaluation models of translation theories, such as the application in novels, essays, laws and other texts, involving various text types. On the whole, the effect of translation quality assessment model on translation improvement is worthy of expectation. Since the launching of the Master of Translation and Interpreting (MTI) teaching program in 2007 by the Academic Degrees Committee of the State Council of China to meet the society's need of professional translators and interpreters, more than 200 colleges and universities have been approved to

start this program. In order to improve the teaching quality, it is necessary to apply translation quality assessment model in the teaching. However, the author thinks that the application of translation quality assessment model in the current MTI teaching is still not enough. Therefore, it is of immediate significance to try to use a scientific and suitable translation quality assessment model for MTI teaching to enable teachers to quickly see students' translation weaknesses and facilitate students' self-examination.

2. The Necessity of Applying Translation Quality Assessment Model

From an artistic point of view, translation is characterized by its complexity. To put it simply, translation is to use one language to fully express the meaning of another language, but this process is easier said than done. Yan Fu, a pioneer in Chinese translation, said in his translation of *Evolution and Ethics and other Essays*, "There are three difficulties for translating—faithfulness, expressiveness and elegance. Content faithfulness has been hard enough. Without expressiveness, translation fails even if it is faithful to the source text. Therefore, expressiveness needs to be valued." Besides, language is a special cultural phenomenon, closely related to various cultural backgrounds, which makes translation an activity of cross-cultural communication. It is generally believed that a language is mainly composed of pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar. If the difficulties in translation and these three elements are connected, the pronunciation reflects the rhythm; grammar corresponds to expression form and vocabulary carries meaning and stands for meaning. Among these three difficulties, rhythm is usually ignored. Except for poetry, translation of other text types rarely has requirements on rhythm. It is unwise to weak expression form and meaning for the sake of rhythm. Meanwhile, it is not hard to find that translation is also a dynamic activity with strong subjective initiative. Actually, simply pursuing expression form and meaning is not simple in translation, which also shows that it is difficult to achieve a completely unified standard of translation quality assessment model.

However, translation has both artistic characteristics and internal laws of its own. The author views that the internal laws of translation itself are largely based on the application of translation criteria and translation theories. Moreover, translation criticism analyzes translations according to corresponding translation theories, or draws conclusions by comparing and analyzing different translation versions of source texts. Translation criticism is an essential step in the process of modifying and improving translation quality. The translation quality assessment model is equivalent to listing a formula for translation criticism on the basis of translation theory, and a relatively scientific and reasonable translation quality assessment result can be obtained only by inserting relevant parameters into the formula. Achieving a scientific, objective and relatively accurate evaluation is the highest and ultimate goal of translation quality assessment (Liu, 2018, p. 8). The complexity of translation itself determines no translation theory can be efficacious forever. Therefore, it is necessary to analyze the translation from the whole text in the process of applying theories. If the translation quality assessment model is complete and feasible, and the translation quality analysis can be quantified, accordingly, the efficiency

of translation analysis and revision will be greatly improved. “The in-depth study of the scientific translation quality assessment model not only has a broad application prospect in translation education, but also is of great theoretical significance for the translation studies system in the future” (Li & Xiao, 2020, p. 72).

3. Translation Quality Assessment in MTI Teaching

There is no doubt that MTI teaching is a discipline that requires a great deal of practice. Colleges and universities offering MTI teaching generally have requirements on the amount of practice, and only those who meet the requirements of translation can graduate successfully. It is against this backdrop that many students are already struggling to cope with the monthly translation practice, and the application of translation theory has become impractical. Although translation skills can be summarized from translation practice, it may be more efficient for MTI students to apply the theories summarized by predecessors. Of course, relevant theoretical courses are provided in the school, so that students can systematically learn the knowledge of translation theories, and teachers will give examples of the application of translation theories in class. However, translation theory is not widely used in translation practice.

From the perspective of MTI students, many students cannot achieve ideal results in the process of modifying the translation by themselves due to subjective preferences for their own translation. And then if their teachers give guidance, students will be enlightened suddenly. This phenomenon occurs because translation activities are subjective to some extent. As translators hold the initiative in translation, when they get the source text, they will inevitably bring their own ideas into the translation. Even obvious mistakes such as grammar, vocabulary or spelling are sometimes not caught in time.

From the perspective of MTI teachers, it may be the most effective way for teachers to directly and clearly mark students' translation problems, so that students can be aware of their own shortcomings in a short time, but the workload of teachers deserves attention. Initially, it is impractical for MTI teachers to correct a large number of translation assignments after heavy teaching work. Besides, translation does not have standard answers like other science assignments, and even if there is a reference translation, it still needs to be analyzed by comparison. Most importantly, each student's translation is different, so are the problems. Therefore, MTI teachers, with limited time and energy, cannot review the translation work one by one in the face of a large and tedious workload.

From the perspective of current MTI academic performance evaluation, it is not enough to evaluate only by the final exam. It would be too arbitrary to judge such a practical subject as translation only by one exam result. Fortunately, more and more teachers are evaluating students in combination with classroom performance and the final exam. Nevertheless, class performance is not as concrete as the final exam. In order to make classroom performance more concrete, the evaluation should be more closely related to classroom translation practice.

After analyzing from the above perspectives, it is not difficult to find that students' translation practice is not combined enough with translation theories in the current MTI teaching. In addition, efficiency is in urgent need of improvement in the teaching. Both students and teachers hope to find translation problems in time to improve the quality of translation. In order to achieve this goal, it is expected that the translation quality assessment model can be applied to the whole process of MTI teaching to carry out quantitative analysis of translation.

4. The Assumption of Applying Translation Quality Assessment Model

"Translation criticism cannot be separated from descriptive or prescriptive research, so it must be well-grounded" (Xiao, 2010, p. 129). The translation quality assessment model is not just an empty shell. As long as the model is reasonably designed and applied scientifically in MTI teaching, it can be highly feasible in practice.

4.1 The Application of Translation Quality Assessment Model

As mentioned above, there are 8 parameters in House's TQA model. Even though the specific content of parameters is not concerned, too many parameters are not conducive to evaluation. The efficiency improvement is the primary purpose of applying the translation quality assessment model to MTI teaching. If the assessment process is too complicated, it will lose application significance. In terms of evaluation, Williams' micro quality assessment is more practical in MTI teaching, and the defects in translation are mainly summarized into three categories: critical defects, major defects and minor defects. Critical defects can affect translation's usability. For example, a translation error in an instruction manual leads to malfunctions in use. A major defect is one that obstructs the translation's actual effect, but is not the most serious. Minor defects are those that do not substantially affect the meaning of the source text. Under this classification, specific parameters can be selected or added appropriately according to different text types. For instance, terminology can be used as a parameter in the translation assessment of scientific and technical texts. Therefore, the author believes that the translation quality assessment model can be designed from the following three aspects on the premise of ensuring feasibility in the MTI teaching:

Table 1. Design of Translation Quality Assessment Model in MTI Teaching

| | | |
|------------------------|----------------------|--|
| Critical Defect 50% | Information Accuracy | 1. Whether there are translation errors (including translation errors caused by misunderstanding or translation errors of terminology) 2. Whether there are over translation or under translation |
| Major Defect 30% | Language | 1. Grammatical errors 2. Poor word selection |
| Minor Defect 20% | Expression | 1. Whether the expression is smooth and the narration style is close to the source text 2. Whether there are spelling mistakes or punctuation errors |

The expression of the text in one language into another language is called translation. It can be clearly seen from the definition of translation that the transmission of original information is fundamental. Therefore, it is reasonable to treat information accuracy as the primary criterion of translation quality assessment model. It is particularly necessary to focus on whether the original information is added or deleted randomly in the translation, especially whether the translation has any deviation in understanding. Moreover, considering that this translation quality assessment model is mainly used in MTI teaching to evaluate students' translations, the language quality is specially added as a parameter. Some students are careless to make grammatical mistakes in the translation, which could have been avoided by conscious checking. A good translation should be equivalent to the source text to the greatest extent in terms of ideational function and textual function, so lexical expression and stylistic style of translation are also emphasized here based on lexical meaning, pragmatics and discourse. As various factors affecting the quality of translation should be taken into full consideration in parameter selection, the relationship between form, content and effect between original text and translation should be properly handled (He, 2012, p. 27). The three assessment parameters listed in this paper are relatively common and easy to evaluate. In practical teaching, MTI teachers can appropriately adjust the parameters according to the characteristics of different text types.

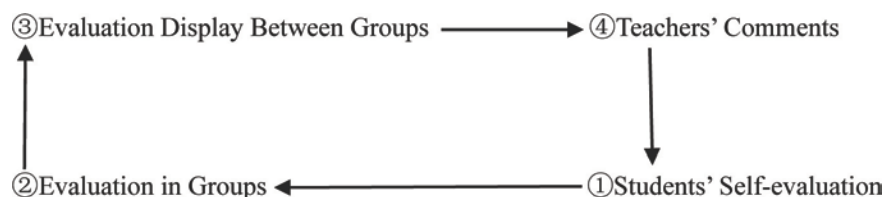
After the parameters are confirmed, each parameter can be assigned its own weight to make the evaluation more objective. For example, information accuracy is crucial to the whole translation, and such mistranslations caused by students' understanding deviation will affect the utility of the whole translation, so this parameter can be assigned to 50%. In addition, if this parameter scores 8 on a scale of 0-10, then its weighting score is $8 \times 50\%$. In this way, weight scores of other parameters can also be calculated quickly, and the final score of students' translation is the sum of each weight score. In this way of assessment, not only are the evaluation results more quantitative and intuitive, but students can find the deficiencies of their own translation better according to the weight score.

4.2 MTI Teaching in the New Mode

"Teachers should weaken the traditional indoctrination teaching and carry out more task-centered and diversified teaching activities. We advocate task-based teaching in the syllabus" (Zhong, 2014, p. 43). The traditional mode of student translation plus teacher comment has been adopted in many translation classes. The advantage of this model is that teachers can directly point out the shortcomings of students' translation. However, its disadvantages are also very obvious. First, students are given a certain amount of time to translate, then students are asked to share their own translations, and finally the teacher makes comments. As a result, the teaching content of one class is not enough, and the pace of class slows down. Under the new mode, students are required to translate after class, and the teacher to share the reference translation. All in all, there are four steps to evaluate translation quality. The first step is to encourage students to compare their translations with good translation and evaluate the translation by themselves. The second step is to evaluate in groups. Of particular note is to give specific scores and give reasons for deduction based on confirmed parameters. The third step is to show the mutual

evaluation between the groups. In the last step, the teacher is responsible for the comments. Specifically, teachers evaluate whether the scores of translation are reasonable on the basis of the mutual evaluation scores of students. By leaving the error correction to students themselves, students can better participate in the class, and more directly discover the problems in their translations, which is conducive to improve their translation ability.

Table 2. Class Flow Chart



In addition to allowing more students to participate in the classroom, such a class arrangement can make classroom performance more quantifiable and specific. It is worth noting that group presentation also needs to take turns, so that all students have the opportunity to present, but also to avoid some students fishing in troubled waters. As a leading role in class, teachers can have more time to share good translations instead of spending time on translation correction, and even lead students to do some reading appreciation when there is enough time. After all, translation is a process from quantitative change to qualitative change, which requires continuous accumulation. Only with continuous inward input can produce excellent translations.

4.3 Various Evaluation Methods in MTI Teaching

The evaluation methods in the MTI teaching need to be diversified to maximize the effectiveness of the translation quality assessment model. The first is the diversity of evaluation content. There are various types of texts in MTI teaching. So it is inappropriate to select one or more fixed texts to evaluate the quality of students' translations. "Different text types constitute different language expression forms, including word features, style and norms, rhetorical devices, etc. and also form different language functions, text emphases, translation purposes, translation strategies and methods" (He, Si, 2009, p. 97). If only one type of text is selected to evaluate students' translation practice, the results are often biased. Therefore, teachers should not be limited to a certain type of text when selecting the text type for evaluation. The second is the diversity of evaluation methods. The traditional form of evaluation represented by examination is not quite reasonable to some extent, which causes many students to only pay attention to the final result and ignore the process. Students' mutual evaluation, exchange and presentation and classroom participation can be integrated into the evaluation method to fully mobilize students' enthusiasm and make the evaluation method more reasonable and effective. The last is to combine the process evaluation and final evaluation. A single process evaluation may be subjective, while relying only on the final evaluation is inevitably too arbitrary. In the above MTI teaching mode, every student can use the translation quality assessment model to join in class discussions, and teachers

can clearly know about the class performance of each student. Scoring according to the performance can make the process evaluation of students concrete, quantitative and practical, although it is tedious for teachers to record each student's class performance.

5. Conclusion

Translation quality assessment model is an efficient way for translators or translation learners to quickly find out deficiencies to improve the quality of their translation. At present, however, the TQA model is not widely used in MTI teaching in China. By analyzing the current MTI teaching, this paper demonstrates the practicability of the translation quality assessment model in the current MTI teaching, and on this basis, it proposes a new mode applying the TQA model of Malcolm Williams in MTI teaching. This mode has two advantages. One is to lay out an outline for MTI teaching, which is not a restriction, but a standardized process that teachers can arrange reasonably according to the actual teaching needs. Secondly, diversified evaluation methods break the fixed evaluation mode like traditional final examination to make evaluation results more objective. Nowadays, MTI teaching is flourishing, especially translation education has ushered in an era of large-scale and standardized development (Zhong, 2019, p. 69). It is necessary to construct a scientific and reasonable TQA model for teaching so as to improve the teaching efficiency and the students' translation ability to link with the CATTI(China Accreditation Test for Translators and Interpreters) examination and to meet the goals of MTI program. However, at present, there are not many researches on the TQA model in China as well as its application in translation teaching. The author proposes the idea of applying translation quality assessment model of Malcolm Williams to MTI teaching, which needs to be further examined and discussed by more scholars.

Acknowledgements

This work was supported by the Teaching and Research Fund of China National Committee for Translation & Interpreting Education in 2019 (No. MTIJZW201917) and the Postgraduate Course Construction Fund of China Three Gorges University in 2020 (SDKC202019).

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