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Retrospect and Prospect of E-C Translation Teaching for Undergraduates of English Majors

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Abstract

In the past 20 years (2003-2023), many scholars have conducted various studies on E-C translation teaching for undergraduates of English majors based on different theories and perspectives. Through these studies, researchers have clarified the basic development of E-C translation teaching in China. These studies are interdisciplinary and they demonstrate the characteristic of multiple perspectives. This paper reviews the E-C translation teaching for undergraduates of English majors in China in the past 20 years based on representative studies. We found that E-C translation teaching research for undergraduates of English majors mainly emphasize three aspects: the interdisciplinary study of translation teaching, the problems in translation teaching, and the coping strategies in response to them. Once the weaknesses of E-C translation teaching for undergraduates of English majors are solved, translation teaching can be improved.

Keywords

English majors, translation teaching, new liberal arts concept, pedagogical reform

1. Introduction

The E-C translation teaching activity of undergraduates has received extensive attention from scholars in the past two decades, and scholars have researched this activity from different perspectives. This paper will focus on the E-C translation teaching studies for undergraduates of English majors. Under the backdrop of its constantly increasing comprehensive national strength, China has improved its requirements for interdisciplinary translation talents. To keep abreast of this trend, many universities and colleges have adopted knowledge and tools from other disciplines in their E-C translation teaching activities. Many scholars have taken an interdisciplinary approach to translation teaching studies, which covers the disciplines of pedagogy, translatology, linguistics, computers, and the Internet, which aligns with the new liberal arts concept. The new liberal arts concept is committed to breaking down the

barriers between different disciplines and realizing the exchange between disciplines. While studying and analyzing the E-C translation teaching for undergraduates of English majors in China from the perspective of different disciplines, scholars have pointed out some problems in translation teaching and proposed solutions. Based on the selected papers on E-C translation teaching for undergraduates of English majors in the past 20 years, this paper summarizes the different perspectives in translation teaching studies and problems in translation teaching courses, and responds to these problems one by one, to provide some ideas for improvement.

2. Research from the Perspective of Different Disciplines

Since the introduction of translation courses for undergraduates of English majors in Chinese universities, with the rapid development of science and technology and the Internet, the demand for excellent translation talents in the translation market has increased. At the same time, the requirements of the translation market for the ability of translation talents become diversified. In this context, translation teaching in different universities has also appropriately adjusted and innovated to adapt to the development of time and the challenges it brings. Another trend brought about by the development of time is the new liberal arts concept, which refers to “the liberal arts formed after the reorganization of the traditional liberal arts and the intersection and integration within the liberal arts and between the liberal arts and the natural sciences” (Kaibao Hu, 2020). Nowadays, it is difficult to cultivate interdisciplinary talents by relying only on the knowledge system and teaching methods of a single discipline, and the same is true for translation teaching. Translation teaching, which integrates the tools of different disciplines, can radiate new vitality in the new era and cultivate new types of liberal arts talents. So far, scholars have studied translation teaching for undergraduates of English majors in China from different disciplinary perspectives, which can be roughly divided into pedagogy, translatology, linguistics, computer science, and Internet technology.

2.1 Research from the Perspective of Pedagogy

Translation teaching is a kind of teaching activity, thus there are abundant theories to support the study of it from the pedagogy perspective. When different scholars study translation teaching from the perspective of pedagogy, they mainly focus on the teaching mode, curriculum and specific classroom forms. Teaching mode refers to “the stable structural form of the process of teaching activities carried out in a certain environment under the guidance of certain educational ideas, teaching theories, and learning theories” (Kekang He, 1997). Yu Wang (2003) explores the “learner-centered” translation teaching model based on the teacher’s teaching method. To fully mobilize students’ learning initiative, teachers should first help students establish a correct view of translation and the idea of lifelong learning. Based on the theory of constructivism, Ning Li (2010) puts forward the idea of the overall construction mode of teaching, that is, to implement the constructivist concept of process-focusing into all aspects of translation teaching and divide translation teaching into four stages: arousing translation awareness, process training, ability transformation training, and conditions of realization and evaluation.

Jichun Liu (2010) also applies the theory of constructivism as a basis and discussed the third teaching mode of translation teaching, namely, the conceptual construction mode that is different from the traditional practical and theoretical modes. The so-called concept construction mode of translation teaching is that teachers integrate translation theories into translation concepts based on their understanding and teach students through these concepts. In the study of translation teaching, the discussion of teaching mode belongs to the macro level.

Scholars' discussion of the curriculum is a study of translation teaching from the medium level. Defeng Li, and Mu Hu (2006) focus on the relationship between students, teachers, and society, and they discuss the learner-centered translation curriculum. This kind of curriculum fully takes into account the market's demand for translation talents, which is conducive to cultivating translation talents who can adapt to the market. In recent years, flipped classrooms have been introduced into various teaching activities, and this specific classroom form belongs to the micro level of teaching activities. One of the major features of the flipped classroom is that it attaches importance to students' digestion and absorption of knowledge, in this way, it can significantly optimize the teaching effect. Xudong Yu (2016) introduces the flipped classroom to the teaching of translation skills, and divides the class into three sections: before, during, and after class, emphasizing the communication between students and teachers, so that teachers can answer students' questions to help them internalize and consolidate what they have learned. Wei Zhang, and Youlan Tao (2017) propose a new type of flipped classroom based on the concept of SPOC (Small Private Online Class), which combines online and offline classes, makes full use of online platform resources, and encourages students to learn independently under the guidance of teachers and practice with the help of online platforms. Scholars conduct detailed research on translation teaching from the macro, medium, and micro levels, and they discuss the teaching modes, curriculum, and classroom forms that meet the needs of time and the market.

2.2 Research from the Perspective of Translatology

From the perspective of translatology, scholars focus on the cultivation of translation competence and directly use the perspective of translatology to explore translation teaching models. The PACTE (Process of the Acquisition of Translation Competence and Evaluation) model proposes that translation competence should include six categories: bilingual communication ability, extralinguistic ability, conversion ability, vocational ability, psychological and physiological ability, and decision-making ability. Rui'e Zhang, and Deyong Chen (2008) elaborate the compound training model of translation ability for undergraduates of English majors based on these six abilities. They believe that translation ability is an important factor in curriculum design and teaching, and they point out that the curriculum and teaching mode of translation should roughly cover three parts: understanding students, curriculum content focusing on the cultivation of students' abilities, and quizzes. Shujie Wang, and Xue Wang (2019) rethink the translation teaching mode for undergraduates of English majors from the perspective of ecological translation, emphasizing the central position of translators, namely, students, in the process of translation. Also, teachers should create a harmonious ecological environment for translation

and establish a sound post-translation evaluation system. From the perspective of translatology, translation teaching studies focus more on the process of translation, how teachers can effectively cultivate students' translation ability, and how students can improve through the feedback given by teachers, to continuously optimize the quality of translation and consolidate translation knowledge.

2.3 Research from the Perspective of Linguistics

Translation teaching studies from the perspective of linguistics are mainly manifested in the construction of corpus and its application in teaching. Corpus is an important concept and tool in the field of linguistics, which not only can quantify data but also can conduct qualitative analysis of data. The introduction of the corpus into translation teaching can effectively improve teaching efficiency. At present, the corpus commonly used in translation teaching is mainly the corresponding corpus, also known as parallel corpus, that is, a corpus composed of the original text and its corresponding translation. Kefei Wang, Hongwu Qin, and Haixia Wang (2007) explore the translation teaching platform based on the bilingual corpus in Chinese and English, and apply the bilingual corresponding corpus to translation teaching, allowing students to choose their translation materials, which fully stimulates students' autonomy and initiative in learning. Zijie Cai, Peiying Hong, Jiayi Liang, et al (2017) focus on using the corpus to explore students' shortcomings in translation practice, and further proposed a learning mode of using corpus in translation teaching. In this learning mode, students summarize the lexical-syntactic features of the bilingual materials with the corpus and then revise the translation practice they did before with the knowledge they summarized. The application of corpus in translation teaching is helpful to summarize translation skills and improve teaching efficiency.

2.4 Research from the Perspective of Computer Science and Internet Technology

Integrating translation teaching with disciplines from natural sciences and introducing tools from natural sciences into translation teaching activities can improve teaching efficiency to a certain extent. So far, translation teaching studies from the perspective of natural sciences mainly combine translation teaching with computer science and Internet technology to explore a new and dynamic teaching method. Bin Xu (2006) points out three advantages of CAT (Computer Aided Translation/Computer Assisted Translation) technology in translation teaching, namely, it can better meet the needs of the translation market, meet the technical requirements of translation institutes, and has online delivery which is more convenient. With the rapid development of science and technology, China enters the Internet era, and the introduction of Internet technology into translation teaching is in line with the trend. Zili Duan (2008) tries to integrate network information technology into translation teaching, and establishes a technical platform for online translation courses, making full use of online teaching resources to cultivate students' comprehensive ability in translation. In the era of the Internet, artificial intelligence (AI) technology updates faster and faster, and it may be a good tool for translation teaching. Zhongliang Zhou (2023) discusses the application of ChatGPT, a language processing machine learning model, in translation teaching, the possible risks, and ways to deal with them. At the time of critical changes, to improve translation teaching, the reformation of it should conform to the trend. When it

comes to integrating new technologies into traditional ways of translation teaching, it's important to get it appropriately.

3. Problems in Translation Teaching for Undergraduates of English Majors

While translation teaching continues to improve and optimize with time, there are still some problems. These deficiencies mainly come from two aspects. On the one hand, due to the rapid development of time and the increasing demand for translation talents in the market, translation teaching courses in universities and colleges are out of touch with the needs of the real workplace, and the students who have received translation teaching courses in universities and colleges may not be qualified for translation work after graduation. On the other hand, there is a lag between teaching materials and traditional teaching methods. Many universities and colleges have been using classic translation textbooks, while they have not injected new vitality into translation teaching. Some teachers do not make full use of the teaching tools and resources brought about by the rapid development of science and technology when having translation teaching courses. Based on the selected papers, this paper divides the problems in translation teaching for undergraduates of English majors into four aspects: teaching materials, curriculum, teachers, and students.

3.1 Lack of Targeted Teaching Materials

As one of the bases for teachers to carry out teaching activities, teaching materials play an important role in the process of teaching. The appropriate teaching materials can make the teaching process run smoothly, save teachers time and effort, and help students consolidate what they have learned. However, there are still some deficiencies in the current translation textbooks for undergraduates of English majors. First of all, in terms of the selection and compilation of teaching materials, the selection of teaching materials in some schools is relatively chaotic and arbitrary. It is also difficult for textbook editors to take into account the needs of all kinds of universities and colleges when compiling translated textbooks, as pointed out by Decong Lai, and Wenhua Tao (2007), there is no translation textbook specifically designed for undergraduates of English majors in normal universities. Secondly, translation practice in translation textbooks is not enough, and Zhaofeng Jiang, and Yan Zhou (2005) believe that some textbook editors do not pay enough attention to translation practice. Translation practice is a practical form that allows students to deepen and internalize what they have learned in practical translation activities.

3.2 Lack of Reasonable Curriculum Design

Curriculum design mainly refers to the macro concept of the school's arrangement of various courses, including curriculum structure, curriculum content and curriculum plan. One of the shortcomings of the translation curriculum design is the unreasonable allocation of class hours. In many schools, translation courses are only offered for two semesters, with two hours per week, and it is very difficult for students to master translation theories and skills in such a limited time. According to Shuhuai, Wang, and Changjiang Li (2008), the translation courses in each university range from 2 to 4 semesters, with an

average of 105.6 class hours. The second shortcoming of translation curriculum design is the lack of specificity in the course content and lesson plans. Yun Zhang, and Fangui Zeng (2006) point out that the current teaching activities are difficult to cultivate talents who can meet the market demand. In addition, there are shortcomings in the curriculum model of translation teaching, and many universities still follow the traditional teacher-centered curriculum model. Jun Wen (2004) concludes that the commonly used curriculum model in translation teaching in China does not put the subject of translation learning, namely, students, at the center and ignores students' initiative in learning. Curriculum design is the framework that needs to be relied on to carry out teaching activities, and an unreasonable curriculum design will hinder the smooth progress of teaching activities.

3.3 Teachers Lack Theoretical Foundation and Practical Experience

As one of the main subjects in teaching activities, teachers' professional ability and literacy are important factors affecting the teaching effect. Teachers with extensive knowledge and practical experience will be more sophisticated in imparting knowledge to students. In some universities, teachers do not have enough translation practice, which means that they do not have enough experience to teach students practical translation skills. Jingmin Fu, and Beilei Ju (2012) point out that many translation teachers in universities and colleges are not from translation backgrounds, but from linguistics and literature majors, and their theoretical foundation of translation is not solid enough, and they do not have a comprehensive and systematic understanding of translation theory and skills. Chuanyun Bao (2009) argues that some translation teachers do not have actual translation experience in the workplace, do not take the act of translation from the perspective of social communication, and do not know much about the cognitive process of translation. Teachers' lack of theoretical knowledge and practical experience in translation will directly affect the teaching effect, and it is difficult to give students professional guidance.

3.4 Students Lack Solid Language Foundation and Cultural Awareness

Students are another subject of teaching activities, and they are also a major influencing factor for teaching effectiveness. Some students do not have sufficient bilingual proficiency and have a weak foundation. Translation is an activity that requires the translator to have a certain level of proficiency in both the source and target languages and is a high-level goal in language learning. Many students try to improve their English while neglecting their native language skills. There are also some students whose grammar skills are not solid, and their translation is not concise enough. In recent years, there have also been some changes in students' attitudes of learning, and they have their own views and opinions on teaching activities. When students' self-awareness is too strong, it is conducive to giving full play to the initiative of learning, but it will hinder students from accepting the knowledge imparted by teachers to a certain extent. Some students also have a weak cultural awareness and a low level of understanding on the cultural background of English-speaking countries. Cultural background knowledge is also important in translation, which determines whether the translator can accurately convey the author's original intention.

4. Measures to Improve Translation Teaching for Undergraduates of English Majors

The problems in translation teaching for undergraduates of English majors, namely lack of targeted teaching materials, lack of reasonable curriculum, lack of teachers with theoretical foundation and practical experience in translation, and lack of students with solid language foundation and cultural awareness, will hinder the optimization and development of translation teaching in China to a certain extent and are not conducive to achieving good translation teaching results. Many scholars have worked on improving these problems and they have conducted various studies from different perspectives. Based on the studies from these scholars, this article summarizes four coping strategies in response to the four problems.

4.1 Compile and Select Teaching Materials in a Targeted Manner

Universities and colleges with different educational targets, such as normal universities and science and technology universities, can combine the characteristics of their excellent disciplines to compile or select teaching materials that are more suitable for their students, to cultivate professional translation talents. When compiling textbooks, teachers can refer to the problems that should be paid attention to when compiling translated textbooks pointed out by Shuneng Lian (2007) with the example of *A Coursebook on English-Chinese Translation*. These include focusing on key points based on students' current level, setting up basic skills training with the goal of developing students' translation skills, and arranging various forms of translation training. Zijian Yang (2006) suggests that the ideal translation textbook should be centered on stylistics, use comparative analysis to deal with English and Chinese texts, grasp the stylistic characteristics of sentences and paragraphs with the help of linguistic research results, and integrate translation theories and translation skills into different chapters.

4.2 Optimize the Curriculum Design

The allocation of translation class hours should be more reasonable, and students need a certain amount of time to learn translation theory and perform translation practice. In terms of course content and lesson plans, translation courses should take into account the actual demand of the market for translation talents and the expectations of students in translation teaching. Yun Zhang, and Fangui Zeng (2006) emphasize that the curriculum should consider the needs and interests of students and follow the market demand and talent training rules. Xiangling Wang, and Xiaolan He (2008) propose to provide students with authentic translation projects, so that students can lay a solid foundation before entering real translation workplaces. In addition, the curriculum model should move away from the traditional teacher-centered approach to the student-centered mode. Zhiqin Liao (2008) emphasizes the need to build a teacher-led student-centered personalized teaching model to fully mobilize students' enthusiasm and initiative for learning. With a more reasonable curriculum, translation teaching can be carried out smoothly and efficiently.

4.3 Enhance Teachers' Professional Literacy

Teachers should actively participate in translation practice, fully accumulate experience in practice, and lay a good foundation for better providing students with systematic translation teaching. Translation

teachers should have the three abilities pointed out by Limin Zhou (2021): language and cultural translation ability, translation teaching practice ability, and information technology literacy ability. Universities and colleges can arrange for teachers with non-translation backgrounds to translation universities for further study, cooperate with translation companies, establish a sound system for training translation teachers, cooperate with other colleges and universities, train teachers through lectures and other exchange methods, and invite professional translators from translation companies to universities and colleges for professional guidance

4.4 Improve Students' Language Proficiency and Cultural Literacy

As the critical subject of translation teaching activities, students themselves should improve their English proficiency and become proficient in grammar knowledge, and they should constantly improve their ability to use their mother tongue. Students should fully understand the cultural connotations behind the two languages, accumulate corresponding knowledge in daily life, and increase their knowledge reserves. In addition, in the daily learning process, students should listen carefully to each lesson with a calm mind and try their best to understand and absorb the knowledge imparted by the teacher.

5. Conclusion

In the past 20 years from 2003 to 2023, many scholars have conducted detailed research on translation teaching for undergraduates of English majors, and they have analyzed the basic development of translation teaching activities from different perspectives, the problems that have arisen in the development process, and put forward their own opinions on how to solve these problems. Based on the existing studies, the translation teaching for undergraduates of English majors in China will be interdisciplinary and diversified in the future. On the one hand, other disciplines such as computer science and linguistics provide powerful tools for efficient translation teaching, and the connection between translation teaching and other disciplines will be closer in the future. On the other hand, the diversity of teaching activities is reflected in the diversity of teaching materials, curriculum content and teaching methods, which will be presented in different forms. In an era of rapid technological development, translation teaching will keep up with the pace of time, make full use of the Internet and other resources to make continuous innovations, so that translation teaching will radiate new vitality in the new era and move forward steadily.

Based on translation teaching for undergraduates of English majors, this paper reviews scholars' research on this topic in the past two decades and summarizes the research on translation teaching from different disciplinary perspectives under the backdrop of the new liberal arts concept. This paper also summarizes the deficiencies in translation teaching from the four levels of teaching materials, curriculum, teachers, and students, and proposes solutions to these deficiencies. The past 20 years have been a period of rapid development and progress, as well as a period of continuous incorporation of new concepts, tools and methods in translation teaching. In the future, translation teaching will

confront new challenges and opportunities. With the advice and guidance from various scholars, translation teaching will be carried out smoothly and translation talents will be cultivated to meet the needs of time.

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