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The Exploration and Analysis on the Reform of Classroom Teaching Mode for Translation Subject

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Abstract: Regardless of certain learning effects, the mechanical practice mode in traditional translation teaching is, to some extent, stimulated by behaviorism, and widely divergent from our learner-oriented as well as interaction-focused teaching ideal. To train well-rounded translation professionals with the spirit of innovation and exploration as well, it is necessary for us to establish both interactive and collaborative learning atmosphere, encourage self-examination in translation theory and translation skill practice also, and achieve the initial effects in real teaching practice by relying on associated theories of education, psychology, and linguistics, etc, combining the features of translation subject, and truly implementing the student-oriented, task-featured, and modern educational technology-based principle.

Key words: translation; teaching methods and approaches; teaching reform

Just like foreign languages teaching, most traditional translation teaching takes 3P (Presentation, Practice, and Production) method. Particularly, in the translation teaching for foreign languages major, teachers in general illustrate translation skills with specific examples, let students conduct classroom practice afterwards, and assign a certain amount of translation tasks to practice after class. This mechanical practice mode in traditional translation teaching is, to some extent, stimulated by behaviorism, and widely divergent from our learner-oriented as well as interaction-focused teaching ideal. In terms of translation teaching in undergraduate programs, To train well-rounded translation professionals with the spirit of innovation and exploration, it is necessary for us to establish interactive and collaborative learning atmosphere, encourage self-examination in translation theory and translation skill practice, and achieve the initial effect in real teaching practice by relying on associated theories of education, psychology, and linguistics, etc, combining the features of translation subject, and truly implementing the student-oriented, task-featured, and modern educational technology-based principle, which is elaborated and illustrated as follows:

1. SET LEARNERS AS THE TOP PRIORITY AND ADVOCATE INDEPENDENT TEACHING

This teaching method is primarily based on humanism educational concepts. While focusing on learners' overall needs in one aspect, teachers consider the individual difference among the learners on the other,

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teach learners upon their abilities, stimulate their learning motivations and interests, and train their independent learning abilities. The humanism focuses on personal emotion, perceptions, beliefs, and intentions and is mainly represented by Maslow and Rogers. Maslow (1971) pointed out that learning should take learners as the first priority, interest as the premise, and success motivation stimulating as the starting point, and let learners develop on their own in the process of perceiving and acknowledge knowledge. Rogers (1983) then proposed the concept of meaningful learning, and believes that “The meaningful learning combines logic and intuition, sense and sensibility, concept and experience, and idea and meaning, etc. We will turn into a complete human being when using this method to study.” RoSefs (cited from Shi Liangfang 1994) also proposed ten learning principles: human was born with learning potential; meaningful learning occurs when students notice learning contents are associated with their own purposes; the learning involved with self-organization (i.e. changing the views about themselves) is threatening, and is likely to be resisted; it is easier to recognize and assimilate those learning contents threatening oneself when outside threats are reduced to the lowest; students use a distinguishing method to percept experience when self-threat is fairly low, and make progress in learning; most of meaningful leaning is to learn from practice; it will promote learning when students responsibly participate learning process; self-initiated learning involving learners’ overall aspects (including emotion and sense) is of the most persistent and the deepest; students will strengthen their independence, creativity, and autonomy when taking self-criticism and self-evaluation as primary basis and leave the criticism from others as the secondary priority. The most useful learning, in modern society, is to understand learning process, always maintain open attitude toward experience, and integrate them into own change process. It can be recognized from above opinion that Humanists focus on establishing relaxed learning environment, reducing coerciveness from education, protecting the active images of students on their own, and exerting every single student’s naturally born learning potential, to let them proactively participate and spontaneously perform purposeful as well as meaningful learning. Based on this point, during translation teaching, regardless of course types (language knowledge course, translation knowledge course, language skill course, or translation skill course), it is all requested to, in line with learning requirements, stimulate students’ learning interests and motivations, combine difference in various aspects of students’ age, gender, personalities, perception styles, and learning strategies, and then create corresponding learning tasks conforming to teaching contents, making overall teaching integrate with customized one and smoothly accomplishing teaching objectives. Teachers, meanwhile, are responsible for directing students to select effective learning methods and strategies and encouraging students to establish learning objectives and training them self-assessment awareness, to let them control learning contents in certain scope and direct the learning performance for their own. While conducting interpretation skill practice, for instance, teachers, based on interpretation features, train whole students interpretation notes, number interpretation, speech skills, misinterpretation handling countermeasure, interpretation relay skills, language type analysis, theme recognition, and cross-culture communication skills, etc in one aspect; Teachers as well, based on difference of students in various dimensions including knowledge and skills mastery, introvert and extravert personalities, learning styles (visual learners, audio learners, and motion learners), meta-cognition strategies, recognition strategies, and social communication emotion strategies, etc, take diverse teaching patterns such as partner teaching, group discuss, role play, interpretation workshop, learning portfolio, achievement show, etc to stimulate students’ initiative and make them enjoy understanding and learning on the other. Practice shows that during teaching it helps students select corresponding learning strategies and improve academic achievement by respecting students’ learning styles (Brown 1994). Meanwhile, students themselves as well can, based on self-examination assessment, select learning resources (network, teachers, teaching materials, partners, experts, and academic journals) or learning methods (discussion, seminar, presentation, task-assigning, and exploration, etc), to truly achieve independent learning.

2. TAKE TASK AS THE CENTER AND ENCOURAGE EXPLORATION AND ANALYSIS STYLED TEACHING

Constructivism started from psychologist Piaget’s cognitive development theory, Vygotsky’s social psychology theory, and Bruner’s discovery learning theory in early 60s of 20th century (cited from Hou Wanchun 2000). The collaborative learning theory then grew up in America in 70s of 20th century and

made substantial progress from the mid 70s to mid 80s. Piaget (cite Shi Liangfang 1994) believed that cognitive development is affected by three fundamental processes of assimilation (the process that individual filters or changes stimulus input), accommodation (the process to organically adjust own internal structure to fit specific stimulus situation), and equilibration (the transition process to make cognitive development from one equilibration state to another higher equilibration state through own adjustment mechanism). It can be said one person's overall knowledge is built up through the process of constant interaction and change with the environment. Vygotsky (1978 : 96) proposed the concept of Zone of Proximal Development in early 30s of 20th century, indicating the difference between the actual level of development for children to independently address the issues and the development to independently address the issues under adult direction or in the collaboration with competent partners. And he also stressed that teachers during teaching are able to unleash students' potential and assist them build up learning frame to address learning issues. Bruner's discovery learning theory mainly stressed that teachers need to create independent exploration and analysis situation for students and develop their curiosity to make them have internal learning motivation and organize and obtain information in discovery learning process. Bruner (1968) pointed out: Knowledge acquisition is an active perception process and the one for students to gain new knowledge through independent thinking. The advocates of collaboration learning claim to promote the learning for the learners themselves and others by applying various forms such as group study, etc. Slaven (1980) believed that collaboration learning a teaching methodology to create learning environment for learners, direct them to mutually collaborate in heterogeneous groups, and improve individual learning effects and as well archive co-learning objectives. It can be recognized from above viewpoints that collaborative exploration and analysis teaching proposes learners, under certain situations, proactively build up knowledge with necessary information resource accumulation and discovery process via collaborative exploration and analysis form, etc, among which teachers are not knowledge inculcating people at all, they are knowledge promoters and encouragers instead. And this theory stresses learners' initiative, purposefulness, and cooperativeness, etc.

Meanwhile, this method stresses that translation teaching takes task its center, firstly because translation owns higher practicality as well as cross interdisciplinary, and it helps improve teaching effects to organize teaching activities with task-oriented mode; secondly, task-oriented teaching concept has been extensively spread and future university students got in touch with this teaching mode as early as in fundamental education stage, and therefore understand its process and function, which helps implement teaching practice. This method has broad application scope. No matter translation theory or translation practice and knowledge creation or skill practice, all of them can be used to perform task-oriented collaborative exploration and analysis. Particularly, it can take a certain learning subject as the center, then set a teaching goal, divide students into groups, and organize them to complete some activity in collaborative exploration and analysis by following certain procedure, order, progress and as well applying associated teaching resource and learning strategies.

In translation theory teaching, since translation theories are numerous and jumbled, teachers can first briefly illustrate related theoretical issues (translation standards, translator's role, and translation framework, etc) by taking seminar or biography mode, then set up research task, present requirements and offer relevant information such as academic websites, journal names, and related research overview, etc; and then further divide students into group with 4-5 persons and request them to, based on information referring, expert consulting, and mutual discussion, etc, write a academic standard-conforming paper with around 5000 words within one month from their own experiencing and thinking results. At last, it is based on the requirements of innovativeness, theoretical and practical significance, language and literature proficiency, and academic standards, etc to assess paper quality and uniformly record group score as a part of class assessment, which helps train their exploring ability and collaborative spirit and improve their R&D awareness to some extent as well, strengthening their understanding and apperception on translation theories.

3. HIGHLIGHT INTERACTIVE TEACHING AND CREATE DEMOCRATIC ATMOSPHERE

This teaching method is primarily based on social learning theory and mainly represented by with Bandura. This theory considers behavior, individual (mainly refer other personal factors such as perception, etc), and environment as a mutually affecting and interconnected system. Bandura (cited from Shi Fangliang, 1994) stressed that many human learning activities are cognitive, yet human learning primarily comes from reaction results and observation. Example demonstration can generate different results of Observational Learning Effect (observers learn a novel reaction), Inhibitory Effect (observers strengthen inhibition on their own existing behaviors), Disinhibitory Effect (observers reduce inhibition on their own existing behaviors), and Social Facilitation (trigger reaction already in observers' behavior library), etc. Therefore, Bandura stressed social interaction and its impact on learning process. Learners mutually inspire and influence during learning process and proactively build up knowledge structure (Bandura 1971). This type of interaction, in specific teaching, is reflected as the learning activities in classroom, the interaction among teachers, students, and learning environment; and these active interactive activities will certainly promote knowledge perception and skill training for learners. Just as Zha Youliang (2001) described: "In teaching activities, teachers and students are interacting with both courses and environments. And the projected teaching objectives can only be achieved in the process of interaction, mutual assistance, inter-association, and mutual promotion in teaching activities." This teaching interaction impossibly happens in traditional "knowledge-injection" teaching. Since in traditional learning environment dominated by blackboards, chalks, and teaching materials, teachers in general are in dominating position, occupying learning resources (such as teaching materials), and owning discursive power. Students on the other hand are in a passive position to accept what teachers say and almost have no discursive power; and this type of information exchange is unilateral and lacks democracy and interaction. It is supposed to create relaxed democratic atmosphere, optimize teaching and learning environments, and promote the interaction among various teaching elements, so as to promote teaching effects. This teaching method is suitable for integrating with multimedia and network technologies; since modern education technologies provide more relaxed and suitable environment for interactive teaching, and therefore make it possible to conduct bilateral and multilateral communications between teachers and students, students and students, and learners and machines. Particularly, E-mail, blog, web audio, etc provide more democratic and convenient communication patterns while learners discuss specific translation skills or collaboratively complete a translation task; and the academic websites, newspapers and digests, citing database, etc that can be searched from both domestic and overseas search engines provide plenty of resources. Particularly, E-mail, blog, web audio, etc provide more democratic and convenient communication patterns while learners discuss specific translation skills or collaboratively complete a translation task; and the academic websites, newspapers and digests, citing database, etc that can be searched from both domestic and overseas search engines provide plenty of resources; for another example, it can possibly simulate interpretation events such as international conferences, business negotiations, etc in interpretation teaching to promote interaction and coordination between teachers and students as well as students and students. It can simultaneously help students acknowledge their translation problems such as mismatches, logical confusion, under-translation, and over-translation, etc through the feedbacks from partners, teachers, experts, and computers, etc, directing students to promptly modify and practice. The prompt interaction and feedback between teachers and students as well as students and student in traditional translation seminal or instructor-led classroom teaching can certainly help activate translation classroom atmosphere and avoid unilateral and dull side of theory elaboration or skill analysis as well, which promotes teaching effects.

4. APPLY MODERN EDUCATION TECHNIQUES AND ENRICH TRANSLATION TEACHING METHODS

With the development of modern education technologies, multimedia, network, and language material database, etc, have been broadly applied in foreign languages teaching, not only enriching teaching materials, but also changing the traditional and unitary “Blackboard + chalk + textbooks” teaching method. Multimedia information currently integrates text, audio, and video information, and information forms include both static and dynamic as well as video and audio, and they are as well easy to operate and can achieve human-computer interaction and inter-face interaction. In addition to mass open hypertext information resources provided for learners and translators, World Wide Web as well offers technical support and convenient conditions for real-time communications (chat room and audio, etc) and non-real-time (blog and online discussion areas, etc) discussion, streamlining interactive communications between teachers and students as well as among students themselves. Yet computer languages material libraries (including original languages material libraries, additional code languages material libraries, parallel languages material libraries, learner languages material libraries, and grid languages material libraries, etc) as well play increasingly important role in foreign language teaching and research due to their advantages of large information volume, true language materials, and easy retrieval, etc; and they are not only applied in teaching materials development, but also in language learning research. Particularly, in terms of languages material libraries in classroom teaching, the teaching method changes introduced by data or context form that is generated by the a large number of examples with true context meanings from languages material libraries, will turn into the breakthrough for foreign languages education modernization (He Gaoda 2005).

In translation teaching, modern education technologies promote teaching method modernization. Multimedia and network have turned into important information presenting form, information source channel, and communication carrier regardless of teachers’ teaching, students’ learning, and teacher-and-student communications. The utilization of machine translation, automatic editing and proof reading software, and information delivery have as well become one of teaching contents. It is more popular to collect translation information and examples (including articles in pure language and practical articles) via the Internet, TV, and radio, etc and present teaching information with multimedia in classrooms. Some teachers upload the main contents, lesson plans, and teaching reflection, etc of the translation theories they are teaching to the Internet and meanwhile connect with associated websites to present related background knowledge, research movement, and development trends, etc to strengthen students’ comprehension. Some teachers, with the help form multimedia, discuss the hot topics (such as translation framework, translation trend, translation study movement, and translation guild regulations, etc) in translation field with students in groups to create teach-student interaction atmosphere. Some teachers try to develop translation of education software, build up translation teaching platform so as to, in the classroom, dynamically monitor students’ translation process, promptly get feedback, and individually direct students; and students in turn are able to understand their learning situation at any time. Some translation teachers, based on widely collected information, build up translation teaching resource libraries (such as translation English language library, conference interpretation library, law translation resource library, English-Chinese cultural resource library, translation sect resource library, etc) on their own and apply then to classroom teaching activities and encourage students to search the frequency of a translation situation occurs in both translation and interpretation practice in the libraries, its common handling ways and results, etc; and also let students summarize the rules based on analyzing and applying language material libraries, in order to improve research competence. In short, with rapid IT development computers have changed their “Assistant” role and completely moved toward teaching front line.

In short, translation teaching aims at training students’ learning competence, thinking competence, and translation competence, which is just the same as what gardeners need for cultivating seedlings, in addition to rich nutrition (translation skills and knowledge in associated fields, etc), customized and humanized management methods (different teaching and methods and approaches) are as well required; and only in this way can seedlings become useful.

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