

Research on the Translation Practice Competence Under the Background of Professional Accreditation

-- A Case Study of Undergraduates Majoring in English Translation in Mudanjiang Normal University

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Abstract

As the core quality of translation majors, translation practice competence is an important indicator to evaluate the quality of translation talents, and it is necessary to conduct an in-depth investigation and analysis on it. Therefore, this study surveys the practical translation competence of undergraduates majoring in English translation with the help of the past exam papers of CATTI. Through investigation and analysis, it is found that most students' translation practice competence can not reach the standards of professional accreditation, and corresponding teaching reform measures must be taken to improve it.

Keywords

Translation practice competence; Professional accreditation; Translation teaching.

1. Introduction

In 2006, the Ministry of Education approved Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, Fudan University and Hebei University to recruit undergraduate students majoring in translation, which indicates that the translation major is separated from the foreign language major and become an independent discipline. At the same time, it also means that its training objectives are different from that of the foreign language talents in general. To be specific, the translation major should emphasize professionalism, applicability and practicality in order to cultivate qualified translation practitioners who can meet the standards of translation market. The translation practice competence is the major goal of talent training and the key quality for their future career. It is necessary to investigate and analyze their translation practice competence and adopt corresponding teaching strategies to improve it. Therefore, this study focuses on the practical ability of translation majors, which is a key link in the cultivation of translation talents at the undergraduate level and a core element in the evaluation of translators' competence.

2. Research Background and Research Objects

The "professional accreditation" in this study refers to the China Accreditation Test for Translators and Interpreters (CATTI) issued by the Ministry of Personnel. As one of the national vocational qualification exams, this test has been incorporated into the national vocational qualification certificate system. It focuses on assessing the examinees' actual translation ability, especially whether their translation practice competence meets the basic professional standards for translators. It can be seen that the qualification accreditation test mainly evaluates the translation practical competence of examinees, which is in line with the main training goal of translation majors and is the most authoritative standard to test the translation practice competence at present. Considering the actual translation ability of undergraduates, this study surveyed their translation practice competence with the test paper of CATTI Band 3

in November 2020. 243 undergraduates of grade two and grade three were tested and all of them were majored in English translation in the School of Applied English of Mudanjiang Normal University. The purpose of the survey was to evaluate the level of their translation practice competence, find out the deficiencies in their translation competence and hence adopt corresponding teaching strategies to improve it.

3. Analysis of the Research Results

The test result showed that most of the students could not get 60 scores, failing to reach the passing standard, and 29 students reached the standard, with an average passing rate of 11.9%. This indicated that most of the grade-2 and grade-3 translation majors in our school could not reach the evaluation standard of professional accreditation. By analyzing the test papers, it was found that there were a considerable number of deficiencies in the students' translation practice competence, which can be summarized into four aspects: deficiencies in comprehension competence, in expression competence, in proofreading competence and in knowledge competence. In the following part, these four aspects of deficiencies will be analyzed in detail, so as to figure out the corresponding measures for improvement.

3.1. Deficiencies in Comprehension Competence

Comprehension competence is the basis of the other competences required to the translators, and if the translator's competences are compared to the pyramid, the comprehension competence is the foundation, a support and guarantee of the other abilities. The deficiencies in the comprehension competence is the major cause of mistranslation and poor-quality translation. In this research, the comprehension competence deficiencies of the students were quite obvious, which was also the primary factor for their failure to meet the professional accreditation standards for translation. Comprehension problems were mainly reflected in English-Chinese translation, and students' understanding of the original English text was not accurate and deep enough. The students' test papers in the survey were analyzed in detail and the major problems were summarized, which could be classified into three levels: lexical level, syntactical level and textual level.

In terms of lexical level, the major problems lied in the misunderstanding of key words, polysemous words and some idiomatic expressions. The incomprehension or misunderstanding of keywords would undoubtedly lead to mistranslation and the incorrect transmission of key information, which is a mistake that professional translators should never make. In addition, many students could not judge the meaning of polysemy in the specific context, resulting in misunderstanding and mistranslation. In addition, some students could not understand some fixed usages or idiomatic expressions accurately, so they could not correctly grasp the information conveyed in the original text. For example, "a pool of" was translated into "一池子", and its correct meaning should be "a large number of". As can be seen from the lexical problems, most students' comprehension competence was not solid enough, and often judged the word meaning in isolation, unable to correctly understand its meaning according to the specific and whole context. These comprehension problems must be solved, and good comprehension competence at the lexical level is the primary training target that must be achieved in the translation teaching, which is the most basic step of students' translation ability cultivation.

In terms of syntactical level, the comprehension deficiencies were mainly reflected in the students' misunderstanding of long and complex sentences. Most students made mistakes in the translation of long and complex sentences in the test. They could not make the correct grammatical, contextual and logical analysis of long sentences with complex structures, so they could not understand the meaning of these sentences correctly, resulting in the frequent mistranslation. After the test, some of the students who took part in the test were interviewed,

so that the major difficulties they encountered in the translation process could be known and summarized. According to the interviews, the most obvious difficulty was the translation of long and complex sentences, with which many students had no clue about the translation procedure. They could not figure out the sentence structure and the relationship between the sentence elements, hence failing to grasp and convey the key information. The comprehension problems of long and complex sentences reflected that students' language ability was not solid enough and they lacked the ability to deal with tricky problems in translation, which is the key and difficult point in translation teaching.

In terms of textual level, the comprehension deficiencies were reflected in the misunderstanding of the central idea of the article, the inability to clarify the text structure, and the failure to grasp the logical relationship between sentences and paragraphs. The understanding problems at the textual level showed the weakness in their comprehensive understanding ability and in their language proficiency. In all, the deficiencies in reading comprehension would directly affect the quality of translation, leading to the failure in passing the professional accreditation. Therefore, in the translation teaching, instead of only focusing on the instruction of translation theories and translation skills, the cultivation of students' reading comprehension ability should be strengthened, and the consolidation of students' basic language skills must be carried out throughout the whole teaching process.

3.2. Deficiencies in Expression Competence

The translation process is to transform the source language into the target language, and the translation is finally presented with the target language. Therefore, the quality of the translation or the successful completion of the translation task largely depends on the translator's expression competence with the target language. Through the analysis of the test papers in this survey, it was found that there were obvious problems in the students' expression competence, which were reflected in the following four aspects: under-representation, over-representation, stiff and obscure expression and language errors. Under-representation means that the translation cannot accurately and completely convey the information of the original text, arbitrarily omit the original message, ignore the writer's emotional attitude, and do not conform to the language style of the original text. Secondly, there were the phenomena of over-representation in some students' papers and they added information that was not contained in the original Chinese, causing over-translation and distorting the writer's intention. Under-representation and over-representation are problems that should be avoided, which reflects the students' lack of translation awareness and ability. Thirdly, due to the constraints of language ability and the language form of the original text, there were many stiff and obscure expressions in their translation, which were manifested as the obvious translationese. For example, the translation was not natural and fluent due to the failure to properly convert the passive voice. Finally, in the section of Chinese-English translation, language problems were particularly obvious. Most students made language errors in their translation, such as inaccurate word selections, chaotic sentence structures, tense errors, collocation problems and so on. Based on the analysis of expression problems, in the translation teaching, special attention should be paid to improving students' bilingual expression ability, especially the training of their Chinese expression ability. Only by improving the Chinese and English expression ability of the students, can they meet the basic requirements for translators by the translation market.

3.3. Deficiencies in Proofreading Competence

Proofreading competence is one of the essential qualities for translators, and it has become even more important as artificial intelligence enters the translation industry with machine translation replacing part of human translation. Proofreading refers to a detailed comparison between the original text and the translated text to check whether there are semantic,

grammatical and pragmatic errors, so as to ensure the accurate transmission of the original information and improve the quality of the translated text. Proofreading covers multiple dimensions, such as self-proofreading, editor proofreading, expert proofreading, etc. This test mainly investigated the translator's self-proofreading competence. Through the analysis of students' translations, we could find that the students' proofreading competence was not satisfactory, they failed to pay enough attention to the post-translation proofreading, or even lacked the proofreading awareness. In the test papers could be found handwriting errors, missing words, low-level grammatical errors and insufficient conveyance of original information, these are the most basic problems that should be solved through self-proofreading. In the interview after the test, it could be seen that some students had no time for proofreading due to the time limit of the test, while other students lacked the proofreading awareness or regarded translation as a kind of homework or examination, not entering the role of translator, and thus doing perfunctory proofreading. Proofreading is a kind of translation activity in which translators make the last revision according to the original text. It is an indispensable step in the translation process and a key link to improve the quality of translation. Students' poor post-translation proofreading competence and lack of proofreading awareness are closely related to the traditional lecture-based methods in translation teaching. Therefore, in future translation teaching, it is necessary to change conventional teaching methods, focus on cultivating students' sense of responsibility and let them treat each translation activity as a task, so that they can do the proofreading seriously and meticulously and try to ensure the successful completion of each translation task.

3.4. Deficiencies in Knowledge Competence

Here, knowledge refers to encyclopedic knowledge, cultural knowledge and thematic knowledge that translators should be acquainted with, rather than the knowledge about translation theories, skills or other relevant translation knowledge. The translator's knowledge competence refers to the ability to make comprehensive use of this kind of knowledge in translation practice. Knowledge competence requires translators to have a wide range of knowledge scope and vision, be familiar with Chinese and Western cultural backgrounds, and pay attention to hot issues such as social, political and economic issues. Knowledge competence helps the translator to understand the deep meaning of the original text, overcome the barriers of cultural communication, and deliver the original information to the target text readers in the most reasonable and comprehensible way. In this study, the students' knowledge competence showed obvious deficiency and some of the students were even ignorant of the hottest issues or the issues of the greatest concern such as the background knowledge of COVID-19. The errors in the translation of such hot issues not only showed the students' language problems, but also reflected the deficiencies in their knowledge competence. Therefore, in the translation teaching, the cultivation of students' knowledge competence must be placed in an important position. It should be realized that an excellent translator should be a "miscellaneous person", having extensive knowledge, concerning about social problems, and being highly responsible .

4. Conclusion

The study shows the students' translation practice competence is deficient in the aspects of comprehension, expression, proofreading and knowledge. In view of these four aspects, effective teaching reform measures should be taken so as to improve students' practical translation ability. To be specific, the following teaching measures should be adopted. First of all, students' language ability should be consolidated throughout the whole teaching process. Students' bilingual expression ability should be enhanced, the proportion of practical courses should be increased, and students' language understanding and expression ability should be improved through large amount of translation practice. The teaching mode of "reading +

translation” should be adopted so as to improve students’ language competence and translation competence at the same time. Through reading, students’ comprehension competence can be steadily improved, and then the input in the reading process can be transformed into an effective output, that is, expression in translation. Secondly, “translation workshop mode” and “task-based teaching method” should be adopted in the teaching reform. Though this kind of teaching reform, students are urged to take on the professional translators’ role in advance by translating in the simulated working environment. The students are trained to treat each translation activity as a task with special attention given to the proofreading, hence improving their translation consciousness, work ethics and translation quality, all of which will greatly contribute to their translation practice competence as future translators.

Acknowledgments

1. 2020 Research Project of Education and Teaching Reform in Colleges and Universities in Heilongjiang Province: Research and Practice on the Innovation of Translation Talent Cultivation Mode under the Background of Professional Accreditation

Fund No.: SJGY20200736

2. 2020 Key Project of Education Science Planning in Heilongjiang Province: A Study on the Construction of Curriculum Ideological and Political Education of English Majors in Colleges and Universities from the Perspective of Cultural Confidence

Fund No.: GJB1320372

3. Research Project on Degree and Postgraduate Education Reform of Mudanjiang Normal University: A Study on the MTI Curriculum Teaching Design of Computer-aided Translation

Fund No.: MSY-YJG-2018YB033

4. Humanities and Social Science Research Project of Mudanjiang Normal University: A Study on the Translation and Dissemination of the Winning Works of Mao Dun Literary Prize Under the Background of Chinese Culture “Going out”

Fund No.: QN2019025

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