On Ability Training in Interpreting Teaching in Chinese Universities

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Abstract. In recent years, the theory and teaching of interpreting in China are being developed rapidly. The research achievements and teaching quality are constantly on the rise. At the same time, theories and teaching researches on interpreting both at home and abroad are also being strengthened. However, which students’ abilities should be cultivated in the current interpreting teaching and research? The six basic abilities of students are concluded in the current interpreting teaching through the author’s many years of interpreting and teaching experience in this article.

Introduction

In recent years, the theory and teaching of interpreting in China are being developed rapidly. The research achievements and teaching quality are constantly on the rise [1]. As an English teacher with a master's degree in translation, I have a profound understanding of the difficulties of interpreting on the basis of my interpreting experience in many activities. The six basic abilities that should be cultivated in daily interpretation teaching have been summarized based on my working experiences: high linguistic proficiency in English and Chinese, encyclopedic knowledge, excellent memory, a strong ability in oral expression, rigorous working style, a good psychological quality, which will be elaborated through some classical examples and the specific interpreting examples that I have personally experienced in the following parts.

High Linguistic Proficiency in English and Chinese

First of all, a good interpreter should be proficient in English listening, speaking, reading and writing, especially for the world’s major English accents. The training work of these five basic skills in China’s universities about listening, speaking, reading, writing and translating are of almost no problem, except the listening ability to distinguish the different English accents, which still needs to be improved. Over the years, I have worked as the interpreter for many international meetings. Many attendants from the native English-speaking countries in Europe and America, they have strong accents such as Indian English, which makes it difficult to communicate with each other. Therefore, the English video or audio materials around the world should be properly applied into the daily training of the interpreting teaching. Undergraduate interpreting teaching has formed a consensus based on skills, however, the teaching of the basic interpreting abilities has not really been implemented in the concrete aspects. The prominent problems are: timeliness and diversity of material selected is overemphasized and its practicability in neglected teaching skills is overemphasized and the skills training is neglected, too [2]. At the same time, there are many dialects in China, such as Hokkien, Cantonese, Sichuan dialect, Shandong dialect, Henan dialect, Northeastern dialect, etc. Therefore it is very necessary and important to guide students to learn Chinese dialects properly. The students need to understand ancient Chinese poetry and idioms, which may be used in later translations. Only when both English and Chinese attainments improve, the students’ ability to interpret can be improved. The students can not become a qualified interpreter if one of these abilities is lacking.
Encyclopedic Knowledge

Jean Herbert, a famous interpreting expert, once said that a good interpreter needs to "know everything of something and know something of everything" [3], which requires that the students should understand all aspects of knowledge, such as politics, economics, finance, history, religion, culture, education, medicine, military, chemistry, electronics, etc., and should be better at the knowledge in a certain aspect. Interpreting teaching is the use of language communication skills which have been acquired to develop oral skills training. The nature of interpretation determines the content of interpreting teaching [4]. I will explain the listening materials the students do not understand in Chinese in my class. And the students must pay attention to the accumulation of knowledge and reading widely, because they do not know what kind of situation they will be met with in the future. Encyclopedic knowledge is a necessary quality for a good interpreter.

Excellent Memory and Good Physical Strength

Memory is crucial to a qualified interpreter. The complete expression of information is the ultimate interpreting goal for interpreters. If an interpreter's memory is not good, the missing or inaccurate information translated will inevitably affect the audience's understanding and even affect the conflicts and contradictions between the two countries. For a long time, the poor performance of interpreters has been attributed to the lack of short-term memory inherent in interpreters, causing a series of misunderstandings. Many interpreter lovers lose their confidence in interpreting practice because they can not memorize a large amount of information in a short period of time. It is mistakenly believed that only those who are naturally born with excellent memory should be able to engage in interpreting activities [5]. During the process of accompanying interpreters, pens and notebooks are my necessary preparations. Some of the information can be memorized by means of notes, which will greatly decrease the burden on interpretation. As an interpreter, I once assisted a foreigner in renting a house in urban areas and it is still a little difficult for me to assist the landlord and the foreigner in negotiating and signing rental contracts even with the notes, which requires a relatively high memory. Therefore, it is necessary to guide students to make full use of notes and exercise their memories in the teaching of interpretation, a healthy body means the same important for our students to cope with the heavy workload in the future, which urges them to take necessary exercise in their free time.

A Strong Ability in Oral Expression

It is also very important for our students to achieve a complete and smooth interpretation in both C to E translation and E to C translation. The most taboo in interpretation is to pause without words, even in the face of something unknown to interpreters, which can be explained by means of summarizing and explaining. If a interpreter does not even figure out the general content of the a sentence, he will have no other better choice but to omit it directly in his interpretation, and an interpreter can not delay the input of the next sentence because he did not understand the previous one. Good ability of expression and communication will improve your interpreting effect to finish the interpretation better, faster and more perfectly.

Rigorous Work Style

The students’ performance in their interpreting practice represents not only themselves but the images of the universities, companies and even countries. Therefore, the students must realize their duties, be meticulous in their work, and establish a good concept of professional ethics. And an interpreter’s mistakes during the translation will cause many unexpected problems. So I tend to be rigorous and meticulous about the students for fear of any wrong translation or mistranslation. The role and value of a qualified interpreter will be reflected by the clients’ satisfaction. Therefore it is very crucial for the students to be cautious and meticulous in their interpreting work.
Good Psychological Quality and Adaptability

There are always some emergencies in the process of interpretation. No one can guarantee that meetings, speeches and negotiations will be conducted in accordance with the scheduled procedures. Unexpected events are unpredictable and unprepared, which requires interpreters to calm down themselves to respond promptly. As an interpreter, the role he plays is like a bridge. Many cases tell us that good psychological quality and agile ability to respond to the important role of negotiation interpretation process. If the interpreter does not handle well in a business talk, the contract will be terminated, and even worse, it may give rise to a dispute of interest. Good psychological quality and adaptability training needs a long process of accumulation and the students can also improve themselves by means of a lot of public speech training, and communication with more capable experienced interpreters. As the number of interpretations increases, the students’ ability and experience will grow gradually and their psychological quality will be improved as well. I still remember one of my interpreting experiences as an interpreter for a press conference that I was stymied by a reporter on the stage and despite the fact that I finally smiled softly in the end, it still reminds me that I should be fully prepared before each work.

Conclusion

The interdisciplinary exploration of interpretation research has experienced different stages such as "germination period", "stagnation period", "growth period" and "adjustment period", showing different characteristics [6]. Therefore, every translator's experience is accumulated from scratch, and each translator is not born with rich experience, which needs to be accumulated over time. Focus on learning, accumulation and summary are crucial for interpreting students. The practice of interpreting with the video on the computer screen or the audio in the headphones in the classroom is still somewhat different from the real live interpretation. And it is also expected that the students with a certain knowledge reserves and interpreting abilities will be able to participate in the translation practice to improve their interpreting skills.

References


