Research on Literature Translation Curriculum Reform Based on Workshop Model

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Keywords: Workshop Model, Literary Translation, Curriculum Reform

Abstract. Based on the analysis of the current situation and problems of literature translation teaching, the necessity and feasibility as well as the application process of workshop model in literature translation teaching are explored to improve the teaching effect of literature translation through curriculum reform and to cultivate translation majors’ literature quality, literary text analysis ability, expression ability and translation ability.

1. Introduction

With the booming development of science and technology, the process of economic globalization has been accelerated so that exchanges among countries in the world are increasing in the fields of science, technology, politics, economy and culture. As a bridge for cultural exchanges, the importance of translation has become more and more prominent. Literary translation is an important aspect of cultural exchange between countries, and its significance is especially prominent. The requirements for English majors in the Teaching Syllabus or English Majors formulated by the Ministry of Education are: “Translation theories and techniques can be used to translate articles and literary works from English and American newspapers into Chinese or to translate Chinese newspapers, magazines and general literature into English”. Thus, literature translation course plays an important role in the undergraduate curriculum system of English major. However, there are still some problems in the teaching of literary translation in colleges and universities: first, teachers are the main body of the classroom, while students’ participation and enthusiasm are not high, and students lack vitality; second, the teaching content is mainly based on the textbook, while the translation practice content lacks practicality. Third, the teaching model adopts the combination of theory, skills and example explanation, pays more attention on theory than practice. The process of translation explanation focuses on error correction and explanation of the reference translation, which cannot cultivate students’ creativity. Fourth, students lack professional guidance and monitoring in translation exercises under class, and students’ understanding of the source language and the problems existing in the target language cannot be corrected in time. Therefore, it is imperative to reform the teaching model of literary translation.

2. Translation Workshop Teaching Model

A workshop is a period of discussion or practical work on a particular subject in which a group of people share their knowledge or experience. [7] A translator is also a reporter. [2]

In 1964, Paul Engle initiated a translation workshop (translation seminar) at the University of Iowa. Translation workshop is a forum which is similar to a translation center where two or more translators engage in translation activities together. [3] The translation workshop is a group of people with the same interests and research directions. Workshop members exchange experiences, study, discuss and cooperate with each other, and jointly solve problems encountered in translation. Its essence is to promote students to “learn from doing”, that is, to learn translation through translation practice. It conforms to the cognitive law of “practice-understanding-re-practice”. This model is different from the traditional translation teaching model. Students are no longer passive recipients, but the center and main body of the class. They are participants and learners of the class activities. Teachers are the guides of the class activities and are responsible for organizing and
supervising the translation practice. Students’ practical skills and the ability to actively explore and cooperate are valued and encouraged. The workshop teaching mode attaches great importance to the improvement of students’ creative thinking and skills. The translation workshop usually consists of two parts: group discussion and individual speech. At the same time, teachers will give some interpretation and explanation to the problem. As a teaching method, it emphasizes the participation of students so that it helps to promote the interaction between teachers and students.

3. Necessity and Feasibility of the Application of Workshop Model in Literature Translation Teaching

The translation workshop is very practical. The essence of the translation workshop teaching model lies in practice. Translation theories and techniques are used to assist translation practice. Its main characteristics are: selecting practical materials and integrating translation skills and basic knowledge into practice; students learn translation skills and theories from translation practice and master methods to solve problems so as to improve the ability to solve problems. Teachers arrange simulated or real translation projects and put forward corresponding requirements. Students complete preparatory work, translation and proofreading together in the form of translation teams, and learn translation in translation practice. This model helps to improve students’ interest in learning and activate classroom teaching atmosphere. Teachers’ monitoring of translation practice is helpful to discover and guide students’ problems in translation and to adjust and improve teaching methods and strategies.

Translation workshop highlights students’ center position. [6] In the operation of translation workshop, attention is paid to students’ status as cognitive subjects, and students’ participation has become an important factor in determining teaching effect. Students become the center of the classroom, which helps to cultivate students’ creativity and problem-solving ability.

Translation workshop helps to train students’ ability in cooperative translation. [6] Translation workshop practice includes self-study, teamwork, teachers’ guidance, communication of classmates. The evaluation system should be diversified and the assessment of students’ learning effect should be in the form of comprehensive examination of classroom report, translation assignment and final examination. In the process of completing the project, team members are required to complete a translation task through joint preparation, data search, discussion, analysis and summary. This process can fully train team members’ cooperation ability.

Workshop model is project-oriented. [6] By selecting the most practical and targeted translation project, translation theories and translation skills are integrated into the solution of the project so that students can learn in practice and experience in learning. Choosing students’ favorite literary works as teaching content is helpful to promote students’ division of labor and cooperation.

4. Application of Workshop Model in Literature Translation Teaching

Based on the characteristics of workshop teaching model and the teaching experience of literature translation course, the application process of translation workshops in literary translation teaching includes three stages: preparation, management during the translation period and evaluation after translation. Each stage actually includes different specific tasks and these tasks should be completed by teachers and students.

4.1 Preparation Before Class

Teachers should select literary works that currently do not have Chinese translation or translation projects undertaken outside school as translation texts based on students’ translation level. All the students should be divided into several groups (4-5 students/group). Team members analyze translation texts by way of discussion which includes understanding (customer’s) translation requirements, making translation plans, material collection and integration, task assignment (translation, proofreading and review) and other possible problems. For example, the author once assigned task for students to translate some chapters of the Australian novel The Spare Room, there
are some medical terms and descriptions of disease treatment, so the students consulted dictionary to get the meaning of those medical terms. For those medical terms that cannot be found in dictionary, the students consulted professional doctors to understand the pathology so as to translate the terms according to the context. This novel also involves some words with Australian cultural background, such as the translation of record names; the translator needs to find relevant information about the record, and supply this information in the translation to help readers understand the meaning of the record in the context. In addition, students should also be required to preview translation theories and techniques before class, consult the background information of the original text, discuss translation strategies, and members of the whole team should carry out collaborative translation. The translation task should be completed on time and the final results should be submitted.

4.2 Class Activities

Each team should display their translation in PPT and summarize the translation process. After the display, other teams are suggested to make comments on the advantages and disadvantages of the translation, and finally teacher should evaluate the translation process and quality of each team. Each team sends a representative to make a 5-10 minute presentation, and other members of the team can supplement and explain. Other students could express their different ideas about the translation. The discussion includes the loss of information in the process of translation, choice of translation strategies and translation skills. Each student can express their own opinions, suggestions, or questions about other groups. Translators are also communicators. [1] Such communication helps students to learn from each other and provides each student with opportunities to express their own opinions, and at the same time, it helps teachers to understand students’ situation. [5]

The differences in translation will eventually lead to some problems, doubts and even arguments. Teachers should affirm the merits of the main translator’s translation and analyze the advantages of different versions, and other students can also point out the errors in the translation and provide reference. The translator who has been proposed amendment can accept the amendment so as to verify and amend the translation after class. The translator can also insist on his/her own point of view. This stage should be guided by the following issues: text author, text object, writing style and writing purpose. In this process, teachers should use relevant knowledge to evaluate translators and translation so as to help them solve translation problems. When the main translator reads the translated text, the listeners should think about and make a comparison to three texts at the same time: the reader’s translation, his own translation and the original text. By comparing the translated sentences with high acceptability, students’ discrimination ability will be improved. There may be many possible translations of a term or an expression, thus resulting in diversification of translation. This is also one of the most distinctive achievements of the translation workshop, which is a good communication process and is conducive to the development of everyone’s potential.

4.3 After-School Tasks

After listening to the opinions of teachers and students, each team should revise their own translation after class. If there are any questions, they can continue to discuss with teachers and classmates on wechat. Finally, each final draft will be sent to the public mailbox of the class so that it is convenient for teacher and classmates to read. The translation of each team is part of the final evaluation. Repeated revision and scrutiny help students develop good translation habits and cultivate students’ ability to analyze and judge the translation. Teachers should collect and correct students’ translation after class, and give feedback to students. As commentators and trainers, teachers should accept translators’ choice of words and expression to maintain the original style of their text. Furthermore, teachers should mark out students’ general problems or problems need to be noticed and summarize them in class so as to avoid other students making similar mistakes in translation. Finally, teachers should point out students’ shortcomings in translation and summarizes their achievements.

Evaluation is an indispensable part of teaching, meanwhile, it is also a good way for teachers to
evaluate students’ learning situation, to adjust teaching methods and to improve teaching quality. [5] Classroom is only one of the important parts of the translation workshop activity process, and it is not the only basis for evaluation. The evaluation of translation course consists of formative evaluation and summative evaluation. The final grade of includes class report, assignment and final examination. The score of class report mainly consists of students’ score and teacher’s score. Students’ scores include self-score and other groups’ scores. The evaluation elements include: content, logic and adaptability. This scoring method is fair and conducive to giving full play to teachers’ guiding role, and it combines translation theory with practice, cultivates students’ translation awareness and critical thinking and improves students’ translation practice ability.

Each student should hand in at least three assignments in a semester. Teachers’ correction is divided into three stages: the first assignment at the beginning of the semester, the mid-term assignment and the final assignment. Teachers should record each student’s current translating level through the first translation homework correction, understands each students’ main problems so as to guide students in translation workshop. Teachers should learn about students’ progress from mid-term assignment, which includes translation strategies, mastery of translation theories and problems in translation. The final assignment is helpful for teachers to understand students’ achievements in one semester and summarize the merit and demerit of translation teaching. The final examination includes traditional examination questions and evaluation questions. Students are required to use translation theory and translation skills to evaluate the translation questions. This method can evaluate students’ mastery of the teaching content and their comprehensive translation ability.

5. Conclusion

Workshop teaching model “conforms to the reform direction of translation teaching for English majors and also conforms to the demand social and economic development for professional translation talents”. It makes up for the shortcomings of the traditional teaching model, reasonably allocates the proportion of translation theory and translation practice, pays attention to the process of translation practice, encourages students to learn, cooperate, progress, discover problems, solve problems and complete exercises in the process of practice, improves the evaluation system and assessment requirements of translation practice, greatly mobilizes students’ initiative while improves text analysis and appreciation, enhances students’ self-confidence in translation practice, and improves students’ translation level and cooperation ability.

Acknowledgment

I would like to express my thanks to those who consistently care about and encourage me in the whole process of paper writing.

I am also deeply grateful to my colleagues who gave me pertinent suggestions.

Mudanjiang Normal University Teaching Reform Project Number 1: 18-XJ20027
Mudanjiang Normal University Teaching Reform Project Number 2: 18-XJ20028
Mudanjiang Normal University Teaching Reform Project Number 3: 18-XJ20029
Heilongjiang Province College Students Innovative Training Program Number 4: 201810233032

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