Study on Innovation in Pedagogical Methods in the Class of English Translation Theory and Practice

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Abstract: English Translation Theory and Practice is a core course for senior English majors, which aims to improve students' translation abilities and expand their knowledges of translation theory. The traditional class of English Translation Theory and Practice needs to be improved in three aspects, namely, teaching objectives, teaching methods and teaching tools. This thesis will analyze these three problems and put forward targeted innovative methods.
Keywords: CATTI; "PBL" teaching method; CAT software

1. Analysis of problems in traditional class

The traditional class of English Translation Theory and Practice is out of date in terms of teaching objectives, teaching methods and teaching tools, which can not meet the students' needs of improving their translation practice abilities, nor can it fully meet the needs of society.

1.1 Teaching objectives

English Translation Theory and Practice is a comprehensive and wide-ranging translation course. Therefore, the traditional teaching objectives of English Translation Theory and Practice usually cover the explanation of the origin and history of translation theories, the teaching of the connotation and using methods of translation strategies and skills, and the explanation of translation principles of different types of texts including popular science, politics, literature, business contracts and economic texts. The problem is that the traditional teaching objectives neglects the teaching of practical translation skills that are urgently needed by society. As a result, the knowledge learned by students is difficult to meet the actual social needs.

According to the information offered on some famous job-hunting websites, for the positions for English translators, employers list the types of translated texts required in the descriptions of job responsibilities, including texts of product instructions, texts of companies' official website, product descriptions on e-commercial platforms, news of the company, advertorials of company and its products, business contracts, business mails, written materials related to business activities and reception, data, etc. . Meanwhile, in job requirements, about 20 percent of employers put forward the need for translation majors. The above information shows that employers have two needs for translation positions, one of which is ability requirements, that is, graduates are required to be proficient in dealing with various types of texts, while second of which is professional requirements, that is, job appliers must be translation majors or English majors.

Considering the practical social demands, there are two problems in the traditional teaching objectives of English Translation Theory and Practice. Firstly, since it is a comprehensive course, the teaching of English Translation Theory and Practice must cover skills of the translation of a vast range of texts, causing the result that teachers can impossibly go deep into the teaching of translation skills for one or two specific types of texts but offer students some superficial explanations of translation skills for multifarious types of texts, which makes it difficult for students to meet the ability requirements of employers; Secondly, English majors should have enough supporting certifications to prove their translation ability for job application, such as translation ability certificates including CATTI certification, NAETI certification and so on while the traditional class of English Translation Theory and Practice does not include helping students to obtain translation ability certificates.

1.2 Teaching methods

In the traditional class of English Translation Theory and Practice, the characteristics of teaching methods of assigning translation exercise and guiding students through it is that teachers take active steps to assign and guide while students take passive steps to accept and finish the exercise according to teachers' demands. The usual teaching methods are as follows: the first step is teachers' explanation, that is, teachers explain the translation skills and tell the students what skills must be applied during translation; the second step is group discussion, that is, students discuss in groups about how to apply the demanded skills to this exercise and offer teachers a final translation version; The third step is teachers' evaluation, that is, teachers evaluate whether the translation skills have been applied correctly, whether the translation of words or phrases is accurate, as well as whether the whole text is fluent.
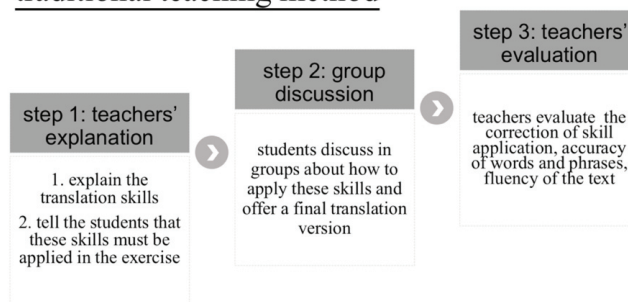

Table 1 "Three-step" teaching method in traditional class

The problem of this teaching method lies in the lack of two links: "question raising" and mutual evaluation", which means that there should be a link between "teachers' explanation" and "group discussion" for students to raise questions and think initiatively; also there should be a link after the final translation is offered by comparing horizontally with the translation versions offered by other groups and the versions offered by teachers so as to make a self-reflection about their own translation process.
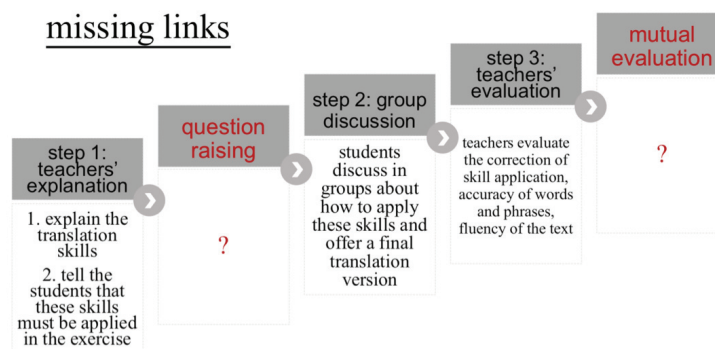

Table 2 Missing links in the traditional "Three-step" teaching method in traditional class

1.3 Translation tools

The traditional translation tools used in the class of English Translation Theory and Practice are usually papers and pens, which cause two problems. First, students do not understand the mainstream translation tools (CAT softwares), which is essential to graduates in their application for translation positions; Second, students' translation practice is lack of inefficiency since they can't build term database and memory database, which are effective aids for translators to accumulate translation corpora to improve translation efficiency, with the help of traditional translation tools.

2. Innovative pedagogical methods

2.1 Innovative pedagogical methods for teaching objectives: adding "teaching exam skills for CATTI"

To solve the problem that the traditional teaching objectives in the class of English Translation Theory and Practice is difficult to meet social needs, the innovative pedagogical method is to add the goal of "teaching exam skills for CATTI" on the basis of the traditional teaching objectives. With the full name of "China Accreditation Test for Translators and Interpreters", CATTI is managed by the Foreign Languages Bureau, which has been rated as one of the ten vocational examinations with

high gold content by domestic mainstream media, and its certificate is considered as the most authoritative translation professional certificates in China. Therefore, obtaining CATTI certificate is of great benefit to English majors when they are trying to obtain translation positions in job hunting.

According to the some previous researches, the framework of the construction of CATTI translation teaching corpus should include four sections, namely, corpus content section, translation skills section, communication and interaction section and construction management section[1]. In the translation class, the teaching of exam skills for CATTI in the class of English Translation Theory and Practice can be achieved in three ways, including analysis of translation examples, teaching the way of building two kinds of term databases (Pinyin retrieval and subject matter retrieval). In the analysis of translation examples, teachers use the latest bilingual news as original materials, analyzing relevant translation skills, on the basis of which teachers will teach students how to build term databases by using self-built corpora provided by CAT software.

2.2 Innovative pedagogical methods for teaching method: using "PBL" teaching method

"PBL" teaching method is a problem-oriented teaching method, which helps students to think initiatively and form distinctive translation versions. It is a way that "under the guidance of teachers, students actively analyze, discuss and solve problems through autonomous learning and cooperative learning" [2] Before the translation exercise begins, students will discuss and answer the following table (Table 3) in groups, and different answers reflect students' independent thinking. After the translation is completed, each group would evaluate other groups's translation by asking several questions (Table 4). During the mutual evaluation students would evaluate each other group's translation version by checking if the translation is accordant with the that group's answers to questions raised before translation. Through asking all these questions, "students become independent thinkers, learners and effective cooperators" [2]
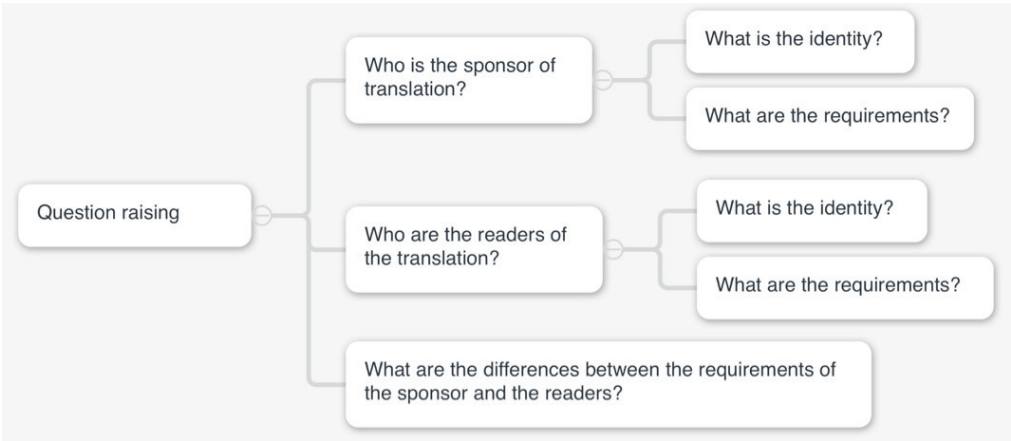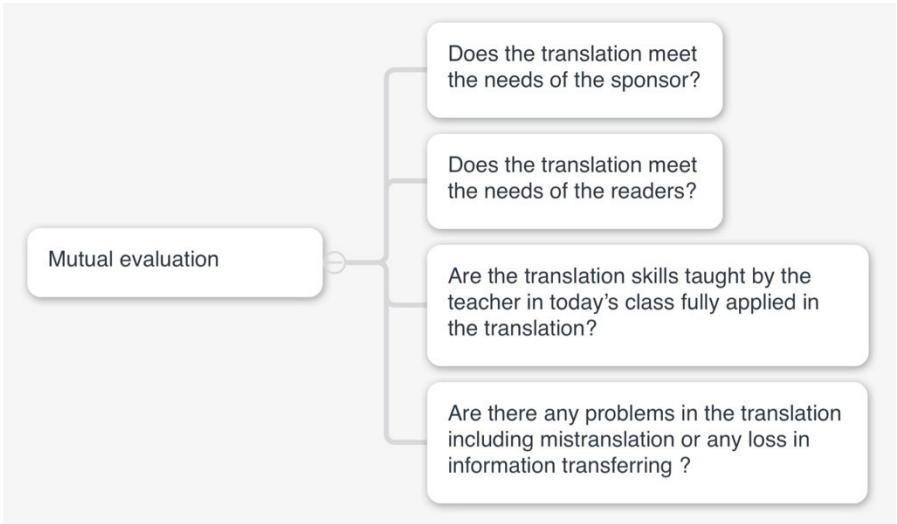

Table 3 question raising before translation

Table 4 mutual evaluation after translation

2.3 Teaching tools-teaching students to use CAT software

Applying CAT softwares in classes "simulates the collaborative translation process of translation companies, which lays a good foundation for students to quickly adapt to the working environment of translation market after graduation. "[4] At present, the popular CAT software in the market includes Trados, memoQ, OmegaT and so on. Some softwares' functions are complex and charge high fees, while others are easy to use and do not charge for basic functions. In the class of English Translation Theory and Practice, teachers can teach students to learn some easy-to-use CAT software, such as NiuTrans, and introduce the use of other mainstream CAT softwares. In class, teachers should teach students how to build term bases and memory database on the platform of CAT softwares, which are not only helpful for students to accumulate experience in translation practice and improve translation efficiency but also useful to provoke the initiative of students since "the method of allowing students to build translation corpus independently can promote the transformation of translation classroom teaching from teacher-centered to learner-centered" [5].

3. Conclusion

The traditional class of English Translation Theory and Practice is out of touch with the actual social needs in terms of teaching objectives which fail to meet the actual needs of the society, teaching methods which fail to give students enough initiative in class, as well as teaching tools which is lack of explanation of modern CAT softwares. Through the innovation, the class of English Translation Theory and Practice will better improve students' translation skills, accumulate their translation experience and increase their employment competitiveness.

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