

The Practice and Enlightenment of TBLT in Business English Translation Teaching

-- A Case Study of the Business English Majors of Honghe University

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Abstract

Task-based language teaching, TBLT for short, is task-centered teaching approach, which reflects a relatively advanced teaching concept and fits into the practical characteristics of business English. It is suitable for business English translation teaching. Based on the author's teaching practice for many years, this paper explores the application of TBLT in business English translation teaching through a questionnaire survey on the Business English majors of Honghe University in China.

Keywords

TBLT; Business English Translation; Translation Teaching.

1. Introduction

In the 21st century, as international trade and exchanges become increasingly frequent and intimate, business translation has become an important bridge connecting economic and cultural exchanges between countries. However, due to the characteristics and specialization of business translation, the teaching of business English translation is quite different from traditional translation teaching and is highly practical in the teaching process.

As a novel teaching model, TBLT enables students to complete given or designed tasks under the guidance of teachers to achieve the established teaching objectives. It especially emphasizes that in the process of task implementation, students should make full use of their existing knowledge reserve, give full play to their learning and cognitive ability, fulfill learning tasks in practice, and construct the intellectual framework in the real-world context. This characteristic accords with the practical characteristic of business English translation teaching. Therefore, TBLT is more suitable for the practical teaching of translation courses in colleges and universities, especially business English translation teaching.

In recent years, the author, as a college English teacher, has applied TBLT to the teaching of Business English Translation for Business English majors in Honghe University. Through the questionnaire survey on the students who take this course, it is found that TBLT has great referential significance in motivating students' enthusiasm, improving the teaching effect and cultivating students' ability to use English practically. This paper elaborates and summarizes the author's teaching practice in recent years, reflects on the teaching effect and puts forward some suggestions for improving teaching in order to better promote the reform of translation teaching in universities.

2. Status Analysis

Business English Translation is a specialized core course specially offered for undergraduates majoring in Business English in Honghe University, which is generally offered in the second

semester of sophomore year. From years of teaching practice, the author has found some major problems existing in the teaching of business English translation in our university, which are listed as follows:

2.1. There are Fewer Teaching Hours in the Curriculum Arrangement and Insufficient Translation Practice Opportunities for Students

Despite being a core course for Business English majors of Honghe University, Business English Translation only accounts for one credit in the whole credit system, and there are only two teaching hours per week in the class schedule. So how to complete the teaching of theoretical knowledge within the limited teaching time and ensure that students have sufficient opportunities for translation training ---this is the question that the author has been thinking about in her teaching practice. In addition, due to the large number of students enrolling in the course and the large class capacity, it is impossible to make comprehensive comments on students' performance in translation practice, both in terms of time allocation and actual operation.

2.2. Students' English Application Ability Still Needs to be Strengthened, and Their Translation Ability is Insufficient

With more than one year of specialized training in English, the overall language ability of Business English majors in our university has been significantly improved, but the language application ability still needs to be strengthened. In recent years, the passing rate of TBEM (Test for Business English Majors) is increasing year by year, which shows that the overall language competence of students is constantly improving. In spite of this, there are still a lot of grammatical mistakes in translation practice of many students; and such phenomena as misunderstandings caused by mistranslation and Chinese thinking pattern still exist.

In addition, since students' fundamental courses mainly focus on basic modules of language learning, such as English listening, speaking, reading and writing, there is a lack of pre-requisite courses for translation courses, which makes students lack preliminary understanding of relevant translation strategies and skills. Besides, the excessive use of machine translation and online translation in translation practice results in students' lack of translation ability.

2.3. Students' Background Knowledge of Business English is Insufficient, and the Content of Teaching Materials is Relatively Outdated

Business English translation is rooted in business context. And it is just like a castle in the air to talk about business translation without business knowledge. Due to the remote location of Honghe University, although students have acquired some basic theoretical knowledge about business in some courses, they have rare opportunity to be exposed to actual business situations, so it is difficult to visualize what they have learned, resulting in the disconnection between theoretical knowledge and translation practice.

What's more, business translation is a discipline based on the new economic trend, and is closely related with the local economic and social development and business activities. At present, most of the existing textbooks are relatively fixed and without much changes over the years. If we blindly follow the existing teaching materials, it is bound to be isolated from reality and fail to keep up with the needs of the development of the times. Furthermore, most of the textbook contents are general and lack of content related to regional economy and business activities, which makes students feel that what they have learned is far from their lives and cannot be put into practice. In the long run, students will gradually lose their interests to learn.

In light of the above problems, the author believes that it is imperative to introduce TBLT into translation teaching to reform the traditional teaching methods. Only by creating as many real-world translation practice opportunities for students as possible and simulating the process of

completing translation tasks, can we effectively encourage students to master translation skills as soon as possible within a limited period of time and cultivate qualified business translation talents.

3. The Implementation of the Teaching Process

In recent years, the author has made attempts to apply the task-based teaching approach throughout the whole process of translation teaching. Translation tasks are carried out inside and outside the classroom, and classroom teaching is mainly on theoretical instructions and translation comments, so as to maximize the use of teaching time and extend the coverage of teaching. The author will take the course of Business English Translation as an example to show the implementation of TBLT in the real-world teaching process in the following part.

3.1. Pre-task Stage

The Pre-task stage is also called the task preparation stage. At this stage, teachers are required to input a lot of effective information before the beginning of the task so that students can have a basic understanding of the content and background knowledge to be translated. For instance, in the chapter of "Advertising Translation", teacher starts from three classic advertising slogans of Coca-Cola, McDonald's and Apple mobile phone, and guides the students to discuss the topic and get the pragmatic features of Chinese and English advertising slogans. Then the teacher discusses the skills of advertising translation associates with the textbook cases, proposes some specific problems in translation practice to let students think about the possible problems in specific translation and improvement methods, so that students have certain knowledge and ability to handle the upcoming translation task. Meanwhile, some network resources and translation of some classic advertisements are introduced to students to provide corresponding hardware supports for students to complete translation tasks.

3.2. Task-cycle Stage

The Task-cycle stage is the specific stage of task implementation. In this stage, the teacher assigns students to complete the given translation task individually or in groups. Due to the professionalism of Business English Translation, translation tasks are given in the form of specialized topics, covering the translation of most business activities, including business cards, trademarks, advertisements, commodity descriptions, business correspondences, etc. When designing tasks, the teacher designs translation tasks according to the contents involved in each chapter and the materials accumulated in her translation practice over many years, so that the translation content is both targeted and practical. Taking "advertisement translation" as an example, the translation task of this chapter is the translation of an advertisement of crossing-bridge rice noodles, a speciality of Mengzi where Honghe University is located. As a result, the students show great interest in translating the material because it is so down-to-earth. In this way, through doing translation tasks, students can learn actively and effectively combine teaching content with translation practice. In this case, students' translation ability is further enhanced.

3.3. Post-task Stage

After the task is completed, the teacher will select translation of some students as the corpus to show the whole class. Through comparison and analysis of multiple translated texts, the teacher will point out the problems existing in translation, guide students to pay attention to the standard and the quality of language in the process of translation, so as to improve students' language application ability, and enhance students' ability for discrimination and appreciation of the translation.

Additionally, for the translation task completed in groups, students are required to evaluate the translation within the group first, and then conduct mutual evaluation between groups. Through the revision of the translation and sufficient group discussion, students can reflect on the finished translation, so as to find problems and deepen their understanding. It not only helps in knowledge acquisition and innovation but also cultivates students' teamwork ability and independent learning ability.

It can be seen that in the Post-task stage, students change from passive recipients of knowledge to active constructors through various teaching forms, such as Q&A by teachers, discussion between teachers and students, on-site Q&A, etc.

4. Feedbacks and Reflections on Teaching

After years of application of TBLT in translation teaching, the author issued questionnaires to students who had studied or were studying this course in early April 2021, in order to collect students' feedbacks on teaching effect and provide data support for further improvement of teaching quality. This survey involved a total of 92 students majoring in Business English in Honghe University, from freshmen to seniors. Most of the surveyed students were juniors and seniors who had completed Business English Translation (accounting for 75% of all participants in the survey).

Through the questionnaire survey, it is found that nearly 90% of the surveyed students like and support the application of TBLT in this course, and most of the students think it is necessary to carry out task-based teaching activities in translation teaching. In addition, more than 90% of the students believe that TBLT is effective for them to learn relevant knowledge of Business English Translation and the assigned translation tasks can help them to learn. From the perspective of ability improvement, most students believe that TBLT is constructive to cultivate students' teamwork spirit and stimulate their innovative thinking and potential. Compared with traditional teaching methods, nearly 80% of the students deem that TBLT had a good teaching effect.

Based on the survey results, students generally agree with TBLT. However, some students also put forward some viewpoints and comments on TBLT. By reflecting on the problems raised by students in the questionnaire, the author summarizes the following points that needs to be paid attention to when applying TBLT to teaching:

4.1. Pay Attention to the Rationality of the Task

From the item of task difficulty, it is found that 75% of the students think that the translation tasks assigned by teacher is "very difficult" or "difficult". Besides, in the column of suggestions for teaching improvement, many students mentioned that they hope that the tasks assigned by teachers can be designed or reduced according to students' acceptance. On the one hand, this reflects that students' English level is not sufficient enough. On the other hand, it also reminds the teacher to consider the rationality and feasibility of tasks when designing tasks. Task-based teaching advocates that students learn by doing and do by learning. Therefore, whether the task is designed reasonably and feasibly is directly related to whether the expected teaching objectives can be achieved. What's more, when designing tasks, the teacher should also consider the compatibility and interest of tasks with what students have learned, so as to maximize the students' enthusiasm to participate in translation tasks.

4.2. Emphasize the Subjectivity of Students

Suggested by the survey, most students can actively participate in the tasks in and out of class, but few students are unwilling to complete the tasks. In TBLT, students are the subjects of task completion, and they acquire corresponding knowledge and ability through participation and experience of learning tasks. Only when students can actively participate in the process of

completing tasks can the value of TBLT be truly achieved. Therefore, when designing teaching procedures, the teacher should make full use of all favorable resources and strive to create practical learning environment for students, and flexibly use various teaching methods and means (such as Q&A, class discussion, mutual evaluation between groups, etc.) to enhance students' participation. Moreover, for a few students who are not willing to participate in the task, teachers should communicate with students more, trying to understand their existing problems and provide incentives or appropriate supervision.

4.3. Reflect the Leading Role of Teachers

In the process of task-based teaching, teachers are the planners, organizers, supervisors and evaluators of tasks. Only when teachers reasonably design and assign learning tasks, thoroughly organize the process of task implementation and carry out task evaluation and feedback, can the smooth progress of the whole teaching activity be ensured, and the teaching objectives be achieved. In fact, compared with traditional classroom teaching, task-based teaching has put forward higher challenges to teachers. In terms of the teaching of translation courses, teachers should participate in translation practice as much as possible in daily life, and acquire a wide range of information and knowledge, so as to accumulate a large number of practical materials for task design.

5. Conclusion

Through years of teaching practice and combined with this investigation, it is found that the introduction of TBLT into the teaching of Business English translation can improve the shortcomings of the original teaching methods in terms of content, methods and objectives. It sets differentiated translation tasks for different business translation contexts, reflecting great practicality and flexibility. Hence, it can adapt to the teaching requirements of business English translation today. Taking students as the center, TBLT gives full play to students' initiative in learning, so that they can complete the translation task successfully under teachers' guidance. In the process of completing the task, students not only master the relevant translation theories and methods, but also get familiar with the business background and knowledge, so as to achieve the teaching objectives. At the same time, students can get the corresponding sense of achievement in the process of participating in the task. In general, TBLT creates a real language application environment for students, focuses on the cultivation of students' practice and application ability, and lays a good foundation for the cultivation of applied Business English talents.

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