

Translation Teaching in China: Problems and Solutions

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Abstract

There exist in translation teaching in China some problems such as insufficient translation faculty, insufficient class hour, unreasonable translation textbook, absence of translation technology in translation teaching, neglect of students' translation ethics education and students' lack of translation practice which impose a negative impact on the training of translators. In order to solve these problems, it is necessary to take the following measures: training sufficient translation faculty, providing sufficient class hour, compiling proper translation textbook, introducing translation technology in translation teaching, educating translation ethics to students and guiding students to take part in more translation practice.

Keywords: Translation teaching in China, problems, solutions.

Introduction

Along with the rapid development of globalization, there is an increasing need of qualified English translators in China. Nowadays, the translation market in China boasts a value of nearly RMB 30 billion. However, there are only 100 thousand registered English translators in China who cannot meet the increasing need of the translation market at all. Although there are many "invisible" translators, their lack of sense of responsibility results in many translation problems in China. Therefore, it is critical to China to train sufficient qualified translators. In China, English major students are the main source of translators, so we should pay great attention to the translation teaching for them so that they can become qualified translators after their graduation. However, there exist in translation teaching in China some problems which influence seriously the training of translators. Therefore, it is necessary to find corresponding solutions to them.

1. Problems in the Translation Teaching in China

1.1 Insufficient Translation Teaching Faculty

Lack of translation teaching faculty is a fact which affects greatly the training of translators. According to Yuan (2003), "enlarged enrollment of universities since 1999 imposed greater burden on translation teachers in China. Before 1999, a translation teacher in university was responsible for less than 100 students. However, after 1999, a translation teacher in university

has to teach more than 200 students.” Another reason of insufficient translation teaching faculty lies in the fact that there are in China’s universities insufficient masters or doctors majoring translation who are the main source of translation teachers. Since there are not enough translation teachers, many teachers majoring in linguistics or literature have to teach translation, which will inevitably influence the quality of translation teaching.

1.2 Insufficient Class Hour

Sufficient class hour is the foundation for the training of translators. However, insufficient class hour is a serious problem in the translation teaching in China. According to an investigation by Mu (1999), *Translation* is a required course in all the English departments in China’s universities, but it’s class hour is insufficient. In most of the English departments, there is only one semester for translation teaching which usually includes 32 class hours which are far from being sufficient for translation teaching.

1.3 Unreasonable Translation Textbook

Translation textbook plays a very important role in the training of translators. Nowadays, there are many translation textbooks in China, which, however, cannot satisfy the need of translation teaching in the age of globalization because of unreasonable materials arrangement in them. In most of translation textbooks in China, texts of literary style are preferred by compilers instead of texts of applied style. However, the age of globalization need translators who can translate texts of applied style more than those can only translate texts of literary style. Therefore, students unfamiliar with texts of applied style cannot adapt themselves to translation market immediately after their graduation.

1.4 Absence of Modern Translation Technology

In recent years, the rapid development of computer technology and natural language processing technology resulted in appearance of various computer-assisted translation technologies such as translation software, e-corpus, localization tool, on-line dictionary and so on. Proper use of computer-assisted translation technologies can improve greatly efficiency of translation and even quality of translation. Furthermore, today is an age of network and network can provide translators with a sea of information. Effective use of on-line information by such tools as search engines, on-line encyclopedia and on-line newspapers can also improve greatly efficiency of translation. However, these commonly-used translation technologies and tools are absent in traditional translation teaching mode in China.

1.5 Neglect of Translation Ethics Education

Translators should abide by translation ethics to protect reputation of translation profession from being damaged. Therefore, it is necessary to implant some knowledge of translation ethics into students’ brain in translation teaching so that they can have a clear understanding of translation ethics after they take translation as their profession. However, translation ethics education is neglected greatly in translation teaching. Many translation teachers think that their duty is to teach basic translation theories and techniques to students and pay little attention to teaching students some necessary translation ethics. Consequently, students fail to know these necessary translation ethics, which will probably lead to their violation of translation ethics such as seeking translation quantity instead of translation quality, unreasonable charging and so on.

1.6 Students' Lack of Translation Practice

As we know, improvement of translation skills must be based on translation practice. In translation practice, students can put the translation theories they learn from translation teacher into use. Nowadays, lack of translation practice is the "Achilles' heel" in translation teaching. Students will do scarcely other translation practice except for the translation homework assigned by translation teachers. Because of limit of time and energy, teachers usually assign a few translation homework to the students. As a result, students' translation theories are out of line with their translation practice, which harms seriously the effect of translation teaching.

2 Solutions to Problems in the Translation Teaching in China

2.1 Training Sufficient Translation Faculty

The status in quo of insufficient translation faculty in English departments of Chinese universities requires us to take effective measures to train translation teachers. It is suggested to take the following three measures: 1) Universities with the right to enroll MA and Ph.D. should train students majoring in translation as many as possible since translation teachers are mainly from masters and doctors majoring in translation; 2) Relevant authorities should organize regularly translation teaching training class. For example, Translation Association of China holds a translation teaching training class in summer vacation of every year. This class, with participation of scholars of translation studies and experienced translation teachers, attract many young translation teachers. In this class, translation teachers can learn some necessary translation theories from scholars and exchange their translation teaching experience with others; 3) English departments should enlarge translation faculty by inviting professional translators who have rich translation experience and therefore can give practical guide to students.

2.2 Providing Sufficient Class Hour

English departments should provide sufficient class hour to solve the problems of insufficient class hour in translation teaching. It is suggested to arrange four semesters for translation teaching. In the first year, translation teachers can teach students basic translation theories and techniques and focus on literary translation, which can lay a solid foundation for students. In the second year, translation teachers should teach students applied translation and focus on translation of different applied texts such as sci-tech translation, advertising translation, public sign translation, and commercial translation, which can meet the need of translation market.

2.3 Compiling Proper Translation Textbooks

As we discussed above, translation textbook plays a very important role in the training of translators. And most of translation textbooks in China cannot meet the need of translation market because of unreasonable translation materials arrangement in them. Therefore, it is necessary to compile some translation textbooks which can meet the need of translation market. Globalization needs translators who can translate texts of different styles. Therefore, when compiling translation textbooks, compilers should select texts of different styles as many as possible. Generally speaking, translation textbooks should include such texts as sci-tech text, economic text, legal text, advertising text, journalism text, tourism text, political text, financial text, insurance text, certificate text and so on. *A Textbook of Applied Translation* by Fang and Mao(2004) sets a good example for us.

2.4 Introducing Translation Technology into Class

As we discussed above, proper use of translation technology can improve the efficiency of translation and quality of translation. However, traditional translation teaching mode scarcely saw presence of translation technology. Therefore, translation teachers should introduce some necessary translation technologies to students and teach them how to use them in translation teaching so that students can make a proper use of them in their future translation career.

2.5 Educating Translation Ethics to Students

Translation teachers should stress importance of translation ethics instead of neglecting it in translation teaching. They should introduce some common translation ethics to students. For examples, they should educate students to reduce mistranslation to the least; they should educate students to charge fairly; they should educate students to finish translation mission in time; they should educate students to keep customer's secret; they should educate students to communicate with customers in a polite way; they should educate students to refuse translation mission to which they are not qualified.

2.6 Guiding Students to Take Part in More Translation Practice

Translation teachers and students should work together to solve the problem of students' lack of translation practice. Firstly, translation teachers should assign translation homework to students as much as possible after class and take evaluation of homework as an important part of final evaluation so that students will finish homework carefully instead of trudging through it. Secondly and more importantly, translation teachers should guide students to do more translation practice than translation homework. For examples, teachers can guide students to take part in translation contests; teachers can introduce some websites of translation studies in which students can do translation practice and discuss translation on line with other translators; teachers can also guide students to take translation mission which is paid.

Conclusion

In 21st century, translators will play an important role in globalization and therefore it is necessary train enough qualified translators. English majors are the main source of translators, so it is necessary to attach greater importance to translation teaching for English majors. Although there are some problems in translation teaching in China, we can take corresponding measures to solve these problems so that we can succeed to train enough qualified translators.

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