

AN EXPLORATION OF THE TEACHING PRACTICE AND REFORM OF COLLEGE ENGLISH TRANSLATION MODULE COURSE—TAKING SOUTH CHINA AGRICULTURAL UNIVERSITY AS AN EXAMPLE

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Abstract: Courses are the core of higher education. Higher education attaches great importance to the effective integration of knowledge impartment, quality cultivation, and value orientation in various courses. As an important basic course, the College English Translation Module Course has a particularly prominent connection with cultural connotations and values. Taking the College English Translation Module Course of South China Agricultural University as an example, this paper aims to enhance students' translation competence and comprehensive quality, and achieve the goal of holistic education. It explores the teaching practice of College English Translation from two aspects: "exploring the cultural connotations and values in the specific textbook of *A Practical Translation Course for College English*" and "cultivating students' rational application of translation skills and methods", and finally puts forward reform measures to improve the teaching effects. Through teaching practice and exploration, this paper comes to the conclusion that the translation module course not only enhances students' translation competence but also improves their cultural literacy, sense of social responsibility, and international perspective, helping them establish positive values, thus achieving the comprehensive educational goal of holistic education.

Keywords: College English translation module; Teaching practice; Translation competence; Comprehensive quality; Holistic education

1 INTRODUCTION

"Courses are the core of higher education, the fundamental basis for talent cultivation and teaching work, and also a key factor affecting and even determining the quality of education and teaching" [1]. Higher education particularly focuses on the effective integration of knowledge impartment, quality cultivation, and value guidance in various courses [2], aiming to cultivate students' disciplinary competence while enhancing their cultural literacy and comprehensive quality, helping them establish positive values, and thus achieving the educational goal of holistic education.

South China Agricultural University (hereinafter referred to as SCAU) offers a number of module courses, including listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translation, for second-year non-English major undergraduates. As an important part of the series of module courses, the College English Translation Course attaches great importance to the systematic cultivation of students' translation competence. At present, the textbook adopted by SCAU, *A Practical Translation Course for College English* (hereinafter referred to as PTCCE), has practical content and clear explanations of translation techniques, and the actual teaching in class emphasizes the effective integration of theory and practice.

"Translation is a cross-linguistic, cross-cultural, and cross-social communicative activity. The translation process is not only a process of language conversion, but also a process of cultural conversion reflecting the characteristics of different societies" [3]. Thus, the translation course has an especially close connection with cultural connotations and values. Therefore, how to effectively integrate cultural connotations and values into knowledge impartment and skill training to enhance students' cultural literacy and comprehensive quality, and thus achieve the goal of holistic education, has become an important direction for the teaching practice and reform of the College English Translation Module Course in SCAU.

Taking the College English Translation Module Course of SCAU as an example, this paper analyzes from two aspects, "exploring the cultural connotations and values in PTCCE" and "cultivating students' rational application of translation skills and methods", explores the teaching practice of College English Translation, and puts forward reform measures to improve teaching effects finally.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

The division of College English into skill-based module courses (listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translation) is one of the cores of College English teaching reform. This is a gradual developing process.

The late 1980s to the 1990s was the exploration stage of College English module courses. During this period, College English textbooks had already been divided into volumes according to different skills, laying a foundation for the

subsequent module courses.

Around 2004 to 2010 was the promotion stage of College English module courses. Under the guidance of the Ministry of Education's document *College English Curriculum Requirements (trial)* (issued in 2004), the traditional single College English course was divided into a series of skill-based module courses for students to choose to learn according to their own competence and interests. It was at this time that "translation", as an independent course, truly entered the course selection scope of non-English major students on a large scale. During this stage, scholars conducted extensive research and discussion on the teaching of College English translation, mainly focusing on the training of students' language conversion ability and translation skills [4-5].

2010 to the present is the deepening and diversification stage of College English module courses. In this stage, scholars' research on translation module courses is no longer limited to the linguistic and skill levels, but shifts to the cultivation of students' systematic translation competence and overall quality [6-7].

It should be noted that many scholars at home and abroad have analyzed and studied the concept of translation competence. Among them, Neubert pointed out that translation competence covers five core modules, including linguistic competence, cultural competence, transfer competence and so on [8]. Liu Heping pointed out that "linguistic knowledge and competence, translation knowledge and skills, and general education" [9] are the three widely recognized components of translation competence in China. Therefore, in the process of studying translation competence, in addition to linguistic competence and skills, scholars at home and abroad consistently emphasize the importance of cultural competence and general education.

The research on the teaching of College English translation in SCAU has also gone through the above three stages. The highlight of this paper is that this is the study of teaching College English translation from two specific aspects based on PTCCE currently used by SCAU. It not only supplements the existing literature but also plays a positive role in promoting the teaching practice and reform of College English translation in SCAU as well.

3 THE TEACHING PRACTICE OF THE COLLEGE ENGLISH TRANSLATION MODULE COURSE IN SCAU

This part analyzes from two aspects, "exploring the cultural connotations and values in PTCCE" and "cultivating students' rational application of translation skills and methods":

3.1 Exploring the Cultural Connotations and Values in PTCCE

PTCCE is both educational and humanistic. "In addition to telling Chinese stories well and promoting the finest aspects of Chinese culture", it is also appropriate "to tell foreign stories and promotes foreign cultures under the guidance of the concept of mutual learning among civilizations" [10]. Therefore, if we can deeply explore the relevant cultural connotations and values in PTCCE during teaching, they can be naturally integrated into the class, which is mainly reflected in the following aspects:

3.1.1 Focusing on current affairs and national development

The Chinese-to-English text *The Most Important Speech of the Century* in the first unit of PTCCE involves important discussions on China's modernization process; while the Chinese-to-English exercise *Our Objectives in the 50 Years* presents China's development blueprint and historical process, helping students understand the direction of national development.

3.1.2 Telling Chinese stories, promoting Chinese culture and introducing social development

The translation materials in PTCCE cover a variety of themes, reflecting China's development and achievements in different fields:

Scientific and Technological Innovation and Economic Development *Eradicating Extreme Poverty* states: "Since the implementation of reform and opening up in the late 1970s, China has helped as many as 400 million people out of poverty. In the next five years, China will provide assistance to other developing countries in various aspects such as poverty reduction, education development, agricultural modernization, environmental protection, health care, etc." [11]. In addition, *Innovation in China* points out: "Innovation in China is flourishing at an unprecedented speed" [11]. And *China-made Products* describes that "China-made products are getting more and more popular in the world. While China has paid a price for its, it does contribute to poverty eradication. Meantime, it has provided jobs to the people around the world" [11].

In a word, these materials demonstrate China's efforts and achievements in poverty alleviation, innovation, globalization, etc.

Urban Development *Urbanization in China* mentions that "the Chinese government has been promoting 'people-oriented' development philosophy" and "also calls for building 'a resource-saving and environment-friendly' society" [11]. In addition, *Shenzhen* tells people that as a special economic zone established by the Chinese government in the 1980s, Shenzhen has undergone tremendous changes.

The materials above introduce China's urbanization process and development concepts, reflecting social changes and governance ideas.

Educational Development *Ensuring the Justice of Education* expounds educational policies and development goals, reflecting the direction of social progress.

Cultural Characteristics *The Mid-Autumn Festival*, *Chinese Garden Architecture*, *Traditional Chinese Paintings*, *Qipao* and *The Traditional Chinese Hospitality* show the diversity and influence of traditional and contemporary Chinese culture. Among them, *The Mid-Autumn Festival* points out that "Since ancient times it has been a custom for the Chinese people to celebrate the mid-autumn harvest season, similar to that of celebrating Thanksgiving in North America." Meantime, it specifically notes that "In 2006, the Mid-Autumn Festival was listed as a China's cultural heritage" [11]. *Chinese Garden Architecture* outlines the historical origin and evolution of Chinese gardens, their cultural symbolic significance, and artistic expression methods. The harmonious relationship between man and nature embodied in Chinese gardens is actually a reflection of the concept of "harmony between man and nature". *The Traditional Chinese Hospitality* tells that "The traditional Chinese hospitality requires food diversity, with plentiful dishes that will never be eaten up". "Today, Chinese people would like to combine Western cuisines with traditional Chinese dishes" [11], which reflects the integration of Chinese hospitality with Western food culture.

Historical Heritage The materials in PTCCE that present the profound heritage of Chinese history and culture and the long tradition of foreign exchanges mainly include *The Han Dynasty*, *The Invention of Paper*, and *The Silk Road*. Among them, *The Invention of Paper* tells that between the 2nd and 5th centuries AD, people invented a kind of paper, "silk paper". And "some silk books that have been found are over 2,140 years old" [11]. In addition, *The Silk Road* introduces the origin and overview of the Silk Road, and particularly highlights the important role of it in developing civilizations in China, South Asia, Europe and the Middle East.

3.1.3 Introducing foreign cultures and social phenomena

Proverbs in Latin American Talk enables people to deeply understand that Latin Americans are good at using proverbs skillfully in their conversations and vividly demonstrating the wit and humor of proverbs, which reflects their national culture and wisdom. *Enchantment of the South Sea Islands* introduces the geography and customs of the South Pacific islands, enhancing our understanding of the geography and culture of these unfamiliar islands. *Beethoven's Music* states that "Beethoven's importance in music has been principally defined by the revolutionary nature of his compositions" [11]. In addition, there are also other related materials such as *Darwin's Intellectual Power*. In translation, these teaching materials can not only expand students' international horizons but also promote their understanding and respect for diverse cultures.

3.2 Cultivating Students' Rational Application of Translation Skills and Methods

In teaching, the rational application of translation skills and methods help to convey the cultural connotations and values of the original text more accurately. A large number of exercises in PTCCE reflect the flexible application of translation methods. The following example of original text and translated text is a representative one from PTCCE:

Original Text: zhōng guó rén zì gǔ yǐ lái jiù zài zhōng qiū jié qīng zhù fēng shōu , zhè yǔ běi měi dì qū qīng zhù gǎn ēn jié de xī sù shí fēn xiāng sì, guò zhōng qiū jié de xī sù yú táng dài zǎo qī zài zhōng guó gè dì kāi shǐ liú xíng [11](zhōng qiū jié).

Translated Text: Since ancient times it has been a custom for the Chinese people to celebrate the mid-autumn harvest season, similar to that of celebrating Thanksgiving in North America. The custom of observing Mid-Autumn Festival came into vogue around the early Tang Dynasty all over China[11] (The Mid-Autumn Festival).

How is the rational application of translation techniques reflected from the original text to the translated text?

First of all, the translation of "zài zhōng qiū jié qīng zhù fēng shōu " as "to celebrate the mid-autumn harvest season" mainly reflects the technique of part-of-speech conversion. Specifically, the adverbial phrase "zài zhōng qiū jié " (during the Mid-Autumn Festival) in the original text is converted into an adjective used as an attributive ("mid-autumn") in the translated text; while the object "fēng shōu " (harvest) in the original text is also converted into an attributive in the translated text, i.e., the attributives "mid-autumn" and "harvest" together modify the head noun "season".

Secondly, "it has been a custom" in the translated text reflects the flexible use of the pronoun "it" in translation, which serves as a formal subject representing the infinitive phrase "to celebrate the mid-autumn harvest season". The word "custom" reflects the technique of addition in translation, and it is consistent with the pronoun "that" following it. "That" also reflects the flexible use of pronouns in translation, which not only echoes "custom" but also avoids the repetition of this word.

In addition, the technique of sentence splitting is adopted in the translation, dividing one sentence in the original text into two sentences in the translated text to conform to English expression habits.

Finally, the word "observing" in the second sentence of the translated text reflects the technique of free translation, which embodies the most fundamental activity of people's "celebrating" the Mid-Autumn Festival, i.e., "viewing the moon". Moreover, the translation of this sentence also involves word order adjustment, i.e., "around the early Tang Dynasty all over China" is placed after the main part of the sentence "The custom of observing Mid-Autumn Festival came into vogue", which reflects the expression habit of English sentences—generally expressing the main part of the sentence first.

The above example reflects the rational application of various translation techniques, including part-of-speech conversion, the flexible use of the pronoun "it", addition, sentence splitting, free translation, and word order adjustment. Through the rational application of these translation techniques, students can not only understand the cultural connotations of the translated materials better but also improve their expressive ability and thus achieve better translation effects.

4 REFORM MEASURES TO IMPROVE THE TEACHING EFFECTS OF THE COLLEGE ENGLISH TRANSLATION MODULE COURSE

Through practice, the following aspects can be focused on to improve teaching effects.

4.1 Updating Teaching Concepts

First, teachers should have a better understand of the integration and penetration of culture and values, find the right entry points in combination with course content, and naturally integrate them into the teaching of College English Translation at appropriate times. Second, teachers should fully attach importance to the educational function of teaching and realize the effective integration of knowledge impartment and value guidance. Finally, teachers should expand the teaching scope, which is not limited to the classroom but also includes extracurricular and online forms.

4.2 Enhancing Teachers' Comprehensive Competence

On the one hand, teachers should maintain a lifelong learning attitude, strengthen the study of cultural literacy and professional theories, and improve their professional level and teaching ability, especially their adaptability and innovation ability in the current modern teaching environment. On the other hand, teachers should enhance their teaching enthusiasm and sense of responsibility, and create a classroom and learning environment with passion and warmth for students.

4.3 Optimizing Teaching Materials and Resources

On the basis of the present textbooks of PTCCE, supplement with other high-quality teaching resources, such as making full use of relevant content from the College English textbook series, as well as cultural content from the online press, so as to enrich teaching content and expand students' horizons.

4.4 Innovating Teaching Methods

On the one hand, teaching methods such as problem-based learning and interactive participation can be adopted to stimulate students' interest in learning and foster their cultural identity. On the other hand, combined with online teaching tools, such as recorded courses, video lectures, and online discussions, the flexibility and effectiveness of teaching can be improved. In addition, teachers should also conduct timely teaching reflection and experience exchange to continuously improve teaching strategies.

4.5 Strengthening Students' Independent Learning

Students are at the heart of the learning process and its active participants. Therefore, teachers should guide students to clarify the learning goals of the course, enhance their awareness of independent learning, and combine classroom learning with after-class expansion [12]. In addition, teachers can provide diversified methods for the process-oriented assessment of the course learning, such as team cooperation and group discussions, to encourage students to actively participate in learning activities, such as collecting relevant cultural cases and analyzing and sharing their translations with classmates, so as to improve students' learning participation and effects.

5 CONCLUSION

Courses are the core of higher education. Higher education attaches great importance to the effective integration of knowledge impartment, quality cultivation, and value orientation in various courses. To sum up, at this stage, the teaching of College English translation should, on the basis of consolidating students' curriculum knowledge and translation skills, deeply explore the cultural connotations and values in teaching resources, and cultivate students' ability to accurately convey cultural information and conduct cross-cultural communication through the rational application of translation skills and methods. Through teaching practice and exploration, this course not only enhances students' translation competence but also improves their cultural literacy, sense of social responsibility, and international perspective, helping them establish positive values, thus achieving the comprehensive educational goal of holistic education.

COMPETING INTERESTS

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