

A Research on the Translation Study of Non-English Major Postgraduates: Based on the Perspective of Deep Learning

Dejun Liu, Dongshan Wang

School of Languages and Literature, University of South China, Hengyang, Hunan, 421001, China

Abstract

This paper discusses the application of deep learning theory to English translation teaching and learning for non-English major postgraduates (NEMPGs). In view of the lack of English translation ability of NEMPGs, this paper analyzes the problems involved in the lack of translation ability, the significance of deep learning theory applied in translation teaching and learning, and methods of improving the translation ability of these students. The research shows that it is both feasible and of practical value to apply deep learning theory to English translation teaching and learning for NEMPGs.

Keywords

Translation Teaching and Learning; Deep Learning; Translation Ability; Translation Teaching; NEMPGs.

1. Introduction

The new version of the English Teaching Syllabus for Non-English Major Postgraduates of the Ministry of Education clearly puts forward that in teaching, we should adhere to the principle of proceeding from practice, and cultivate and improve the ability of graduate students to use English. This includes the ability of English to Chinese translation and vice versa. For E-C translation, students, with the help of dictionaries, are required to translate difficult general articles into Chinese correctly at the speed of about 350 English words per hour; For Chinese to English, with the use of dictionaries, they can translate general difficult short text into English, with no major language errors, at the speed of about 250 Chinese characters per hour. Thus, translation ability is extremely important to graduate students, both in academic exchange and scientific research.

2. Research Design

2.1. Research Questions

This research is conducted by adopting the questionnaire survey method and experiment method to address the following two research questions.

- 1) What measures are to be taken to arouse NEMPGs' initiative and creativity guided by deep learning?
- 2) What ways are desirable to improve students' translation ability?

2.2. Current Status of NEMPG Translation Ability

The insufficient translation ability of NEMPGs, however, can be seen in teaching. Actually, this is a common phenomenon when modifying English papers or abstracts written by students and some non-English major colleagues.

In fact, translation is inseparable from deep learning. Whether doing E-C or C-E translation, it is necessary to mobilize high-level thinking through deep learning, and start the creativity and enthusiasm of learning. Translation is a process of deep reading, but more often reading is

superficial. Therefore, translation must first be read in depth to fully understand the original text, whether in Chinese or English. The current translation problems for NEMPGs are mainly reflected in the following aspects: incorrect understanding; wrong or inappropriate expressions; negative cultural transfer; insufficient discourse cohesion and negative transfer of sentence structure. These problems involve such aspects as vocabulary, long and difficult sentences, word order, reference, style, context, culture.

2.3. Theoretical Background

Deep learning theory has become a hot topic in teaching and research since Ference Marter and Roger Saljo published the article "The Essential Difference between Learning: The Results and the Process" in 1976. Domestic and foreign scholars have carried out extensive research from the theoretical understanding (He Ling, Li Jiahou, Zhang Hao, Wang Qiang, etc.), influencing factors (Roziana Shaari, Alison Rushton, Lu Genshu, Zhao Zongjin, etc.), classroom teaching (DeepK. Khosa, Glen Homby, Longxiang, Chen Jianlin, etc.). However, deep learning is rarely involved in language acquisition in foreign classroom teaching; and domestic research on it is also mainly in primary and secondary schools, there are only a few in college English learning, and a fewer for NEMPGs learning (Ren Xiaofei: 2003; Pei Ruya: 2018;). This is not commensurate with the increasing scale of graduate education and the general low English proficiency of NEMPGs. After the end of the college English courses, both the undergraduates and the postgraduate have a considerable vocabulary, and they can read the professional articles with a certain difficulty. However, because creativity and enthusiasm did not start due to the little participation of higher-order thinking in the past, students' learning stayed at a low level, causing them only expect to pass exams, fueled by the fact that undergraduates from part of colleges blindly pursue CET4 and CET6 passing rate, paying little attention to the students' ability of actual language use. Therefore, students do not expect to understand what has learned intensively, and passively accept what is taught, causing them difficult to establish relations between newly learned knowledge and previously learned one for the transfer and application of new knowledge. The graduate syllabus states that "graduate English teaching... In the teaching process, the purpose is to cultivate and improve the ability of graduate students to use English." By focusing on critical learning of new knowledge and ideas on the basis of understanding and integrating new knowledge and ideas into the existing cognitive structure, deep-learning-guided learners can build connections between many ideas, and transfer the existing knowledge to new situations for decision-making and problem-solving. (He Ling, Li Jiahou: 2005) Therefore, we can use deep learning to guide graduate English teaching for NEMPGs. As an essential ability in academic research and communication, the importance of translation is becoming obvious due to the increasingly frequent international exchanges.

3. Ways to Improve the Translation Ability of NEMPGs

As mentioned above, translation is very important for the future professional study and academic research of graduate students, but the current situation is far from being satisfying. Therefore, English teaching must strengthen translation teaching, and explore ways to improve the students' translation competence. Therefore, corresponding measures should be taken in response to the existing problems.

3.1. Teachers and Students Should Realize the Importance of Translation and the Role of Translation Teaching in Improving the Translation Ability

In the middle of the nineteenth century, translation methods dominated foreign language teaching. As foreign language teaching turned to listening and speaking ability training, translation had been gradually marginalized in foreign language teaching and research. Until the end of the last century, foreign scholars began to reexamine the connection between

translation and foreign language teaching, and recognized the positive role of translation in foreign language classroom teaching (Schaffner, 1998; Vermes, 2010; Carreres, 2014; Pitado Gutierrez, 2018). The reason why the translation practice was criticized in the past lies mainly in the surface practice of drilling translation, failure to deeply understand it, and failure to think more about how to do translation well. Many science and engineering teachers who claim that they are capable of doing translation with the help of a dictionary are actually often slapped in the face, otherwise the translation level status would not have been so awkward. The purpose of translation teaching is to promote the development of their professional ability (Vermes, 2010), revolutionize the unsatisfactory situation of translation, and meet the needs of future professional learning, research and academic exchanges.

3.2. Deep Learning Solves Understanding Errors

Understanding errors involve mistakes caused by vocabulary, long and difficult sentences, language order, reference, culture and so on. In terms of vocabulary, although many graduate students have a considerable vocabulary, this vocabulary learning is actually a surface learning. They only know the literal meaning of a word, without knowing the part of speech of the word, not to mention its connotation meaning, extended meaning, contextual meaning, technical term meaning.

Example 1. (Source Text) Furthermore, humans have the ability to modify the environment in which they live, thus subjecting all other life forms to their own peculiar ideas and fancies. (ST) Students are familiar with the word life in a sentence. The common meaning is "生命, 生活", but half of the students choose the wrong meaning when translating the sentence. The reason why this kind of mistake occurs is that students are used to the reading habit of learning superficially, never trying to understand the real meaning of vocabulary, hazily feel that it is the case without the intention of inferring the contextual meaning of the word. In fact, the sentence subject is humans followed by the phrase their own, which shows that the word humans (人类, 生命形态的一种) parallels to other life forms, so the word life in the sentence should be translated as "生命", namely life forms can be translated as "生命形式". Moreover, what the pronoun their means; the Chinese order of all other should be "other all 所有其他的". The word Furthermore is used as an adverbial, containing all the following content; and the attributive clause in which they live can be translated as "他们生活的环境", which can be omitted in the Chinese version; the word thus guides the present participle phrase as an adverbial. Consequently, the above sentence can be translated as: (Target Text)此外, 人类有能力改变环境, 从而让其他所有形态的生命服从人类自己独特的思想和想象.(TT)

Example 2. This pattern of spatial perception among the Hopi seems to be similar to their pattern of time perception, in which periods of time are not seen as separate pieces of duration, as they are in the Western cultures, but are integrated as pieces of a connected pattern. (ST)

Although Chinese and English are basically in the same order in the basic structure, the structure of long sentences is very different. Example 2 is a sentence in the public English graduate student textbook. After a detailed analysis and translation in class, some students can still offer a translated version opposite in meaning to the original text. The difficulty of this sentence lies not in the main clause, but in the subordinate clause. Difficulties lie mainly the following aspects: what is the antecedent of which; what is the function and meaning of the word as in as they are; what does they refer to; and how to adjust the order in English and Chinese language in translation. The phrase in which guides an unrestricted attributive clause, and pattern (mode, 模式) is the antecedent which; the word as guides an unrestricted attributive clause, both a relative word connecting the preceding sentence and a pronoun referring to separate pieces of duration; and the word they refer to periods of time. In translation, the second half of the sentence order should be adjusted, so that it is in line with

the Chinese expression type. Therefore, the phrase as they are in the Western cultures becomes periods of time are (seen as) separate pieces of duration in the Western cultures, but are not seen as separate pieces of duration among the Hopi, but are integrated as pieces of a connected pattern. So the desired translated version is as follows: 霍皮人的这种空间感知模式似乎与他们对时间的感知模式相似。在西方文化中,各时段被视为时间延续过程中的独立片段,而在霍皮语中却要将各时段连接成连续统一体。(TT)

Example 3. I shall define him as an individual who has elected as his primary duty and pleasure in life the activity of thinking in a Socratic way about moral problems .(ST)

The attributive clause guided by the word who is the difficult point in this sentence. A large part of the students does not understand the structure of the sentence, and cannot understand the sentence due to failure to identifying what component the activity of thinking in a Socratic way about moral problems acts as in the sentence. Actually, this part is the object of has elected, which is called an isolation structure in English, V + Prep + N1 + N2. In this structure, N2 is the object of the preceding V, or the verb. Moreover, students only know that the word elected is a past participle of elect, meaning "election, 选举". If it is translated as "选举", then, the translation deviates in meaning from the intended one. In fact, in this sentence, the meaning of the phrase elect something as equals to that of view something as.

我认为他是这样一个人:他把以苏格拉底的方式来思考道德问题的行为看成是自己一生中基本的责任和最大的快乐。(TT)

Or:他把以苏格拉底的方式来思考道德问题的行为看成是自己一生中基本的责任和最大的快乐,我认为他就是这样的人。(TT)

Or:我把他看成是以苏格拉底的方式思考道德问题的行为当成自己一生中基本的责任与最大的快乐的人。(TT)

Therefore, deep learning is of great importance in translate sentence with special structure as the above mentioned in terms of understanding the framework of a sentence.

3.3. Deep Learning Corrects Misexpression and Impropriety

The negative transfer of Chinese expression to English can be seen. However, negative transfer can be seen causing unacceptable expressions in Chinese.

Example 4. And the demand that rose in those societies for entry to higher education extended to groups and social classes that had not thought of attending a university before the war. (ST)

Many students translate the phrase attending a university as "take part in college, 参加大学" instead of "上大学" in Chinese. This shows that in addition to the negative transfer of the Chinese language structure and culture to the English language, it can also be found that the English expression mode will also negatively transfer to the Chinese language. There is also the common European Chinese structure when students translate, which also reflects this phenomenon. More common English related words are directly translated into Chinese, such as when (当... 时候), before (在... 之前), and so on. In addition, the phrase for his primary duty and pleasure in life in example 3, the student translates it as "他一生中基本的责任与快乐". Though the Chinese phrase "基本的责任" in the translation is in line with the Chinese expression style, but the phrase "基本的快乐" is worth considering, because there is no such an expression in Chinese, etc. Usually what someone is most willing to do or do it life-long, we often use "greatest happiness, 最大的快乐" rather than "basic happiness 基本的快乐".

3.4. Deep Learning Solves the Problems of Discourse Cohesion and Negative Structure Transfer

As many articles on the negative transfer of structure to English have been published while the negative transfer of English culture and language structure affecting Chinese translation has

not attracted enough attention, but this phenomenon is equally striking. Therefore, the current section pays attention to it, for example, "在...之前", "如此...以至于", "某地有某物", "太...以至于不能", "随着..." And so on, which is extremely common in English. When students translate English into Chinese, they are also deeply influenced by the source language, and directly translate into Chinese without hesitation, forming what scholars call "translation cavity" or Europeanized Chinese.

Example 5. I was playing basketball with my colleagues yesterday afternoon when you called me.(ST)

当你打我电话时，我昨天下午正与我的同事们打篮球。(Tr. by students)

When translating, the student noticed that the Chinese language usually put adverbial clauses at the beginning of the sentence, but they still failed to get the ideal translation or translation in line with the Chinese expression. The first reason is to rigidly put the English word when "当...时候" translated into Chinese; then yesterday afternoon should be put together with "my colleagues"; and thirdly, the word "my" in "my colleague 我的同事" can be omitted.

昨天下午你打电话时我正与同事们打篮球.(TT)

Example 6. We must eliminate corruption and bureaucracy before we are able to establish a clean and efficient government.(ST)

在我们建立一个干净而高效的政府前，我们必须消除腐败与官僚主义。(Tr. by students)

Due to the influence of English sentence patterns, failure to getting rid of it and students' shallow learning, they often strictly render the dictionary meaning of the source language into the target language, or even never considering whether this expression conforms to the target language, especially when it is their native language. In fact, the word before means "在...之前", but Chinese rarely uses the expression "在...之前". It often uses a word with the mean "then" in English, "然后" in Chinese instead.

只有消除腐败与官僚主义，我们才能建立起干净而高效的政府机构.(TT)

Or: 我们只有先消除腐败与官僚主义，(然后)才能建立起干净而高效的政府机构.(TT)

Example 7. Today is Monday.(ST)

今天是星期一。(Tr. by students)

At first glance, there seems to be no problem, but actually, this translated sentence is influenced by the English structure. Native Chinese is 今天星期一(today Monday), because in Chinese nouns and adjectives can be directly used as predicates, while the English counterparts cannot be, such as 她大眼睛，红脸蛋(She big eyes and red face); 我们四人一组(we group of four); 西红柿每公斤三元(tomatoes three yuan per kilogram); 市场繁荣(market prosperous); 灯光特别亮 (lights particularly bright), and so on. The above Chinese sentences do not need to add another predicate verb, but the English sentences cannot be expressed in this way.

Besides the negative transfer of English to Chinese, deep learning is important in understanding and translating discourses. A discourse is "a piece that is relatively complete and independent in communicative function. Relatively complete articles or work excerpts can be called discourse." The definition indicates that when translating a text, the translator should put a single word and sentence into a macro text, rather than translating the meaning of words or sentences in isolation. In addition, due to the differences in English and Chinese expression, Chinese expression emphasizes meaning and English forms, which often leads to the problem of discourse cohesion or even misexpression of non-English graduate students in either Chinese or English or English translation. Many of the above examples also demonstrate the importance of discourse cohesion.

Example 8. 衡阳产业发达，是国家级湘南承接产业转移示范区、国家服务业综合改革试点城市、国家新型工业化产业示范基地。(ST)

Due to its flourishing industry, Hengyang has become the state-level demonstration area of undertaking industrial transfer in the southern part of Hunan Province, the national pilot city of comprehensive service industry reform, and the industry demonstration base of the new national industrialization. (TT)

The original sentence is concise. In order to avoid applying this concise structure directly to English, connecting words such as due to, of, and, article the, pronoun its and other words not found in the original text are added. The addition of these words in the translation meets the target language needs in expression.

Here is another example to explain discourse deep learning.

Example 9. Desperate to make the time count, the boss grabs the nearest available person and starts delivering practiced words about the contribution he makes to their great enterprise. The reaction is not quite what was hoped for. Discreet questioning establishes that this is an employee's guest. He doesn't work for the company, recognize the boss, or appreciate the attention---and, as a matter of fact, has only a passing acquaintance with the employee who issued the invitation. What this guest wants is not professional fellowship but a fresh drink if the boss would kindly step out of the way. (ST)

老板急于把握难得的机会，于是顺手拽住身边最近的人，大讲自己事先反复练习过的一番赞美之词，盛扬此人对公司的贡献。可是对方的反应却是始料不及。细心询问几句才知道此人只是公司一位员工带来的客人，既不在公司工作，又不认识眼前的老板，甚至对方才的盛誉之词也无动于衷---

事实上，此人与邀请人也只是泛泛之交。这位客人此时需要的不是同行的友情，而是一杯提神的饮料。劳驾老板发发善心，甬挡住去路。(TT)

As the first part desperate to make the time count is an absolute structure, the subject is placed at the beginning of the second and is moved to the front of the sentence in the Chinese translation. The two words "赞美" and "盛扬" are added which made the meaning of the translation clear. "可是but" is added to the translation of the second sentence; "带来的 brought by", "眼前的, before one's eyes" to the third; and translate the phrase appreciate the attention as "甚至对方才的盛誉也无动于衷", then omits the translation of the antecedent who. Many of the connection methods in the source language are not copied into the target language, but some words are added to conform to the Chinese expression. However, the NEMPGs often do not consider these problems, thus translate English words literally into the Chinese language. For example, they translate the phrase fresh drink in the sentence as "新鲜的". It is the result of literal translation without deep learning and deep thinking. In fact, most drinks sold in the market, except for fresh fruit juice, are not fresh drinks. Therefore, it is more reasonable to understand and translate it as a "refreshing drink".

4. Conclusion and Implications

It can be seen that the problems in English teaching and learning for NEMPGs, especially the translation problems, can be guided by deep learning to mobilize their own high-level thinking and active participation in learning, rather than being satisfied with the previous superficial learning style. The teacher introduces the translation theory and translation skills in class, and guides the students to analyze the translation examples together. In this way, through a long time of efforts, the translation level may well be improved, and it can meet the needs of professional learning and research.

Acknowledgments

This work was supported by grants from the Project of Degree and Graduate Education Reform Research of Hunan Province (No. 2019JGYB194).

References

- [1] J. L., Chen. Research on Informationized Foreign Language Learning Method in the Big Data Era [J]. *Electronic Foreign Language Audio-Visual Teaching*, 2017(4):3-8,16.
- [2] L, He&J. H, Li. Promoting Student Deep Learning [J]. *Modern Teaching*, 2005(5): 29-30.
- [3] X.,Long. Research on Theory and Practice of Foreign Language Deep Education---Evaluation of the Learning Guide to World Language and Culture Deep Learning [J]. *Electronic Foreign Language Audio-Visual Teaching*, 2020 (2): 93-96.
- [4] Marton F.&Saljo R. On Qualitative Difference in Learning: Outcome and Process [J]. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 2014 (46).
- [5] R.Y., Pei. Research on Ways of Subject Competence Formation Based on Deep Learning [J]. *Journal of Hainan Radio and Television University*, Volume 19, 2018(1): 140-144.
- [6] X.F, Ren. Translating Problems of Non-English Major Graduates and Teaching Measures [J]. *Journal of Jiangsu University (Higher Education Research Edition)*, 2003(2): 69-71,78.
- [7] Z.J., Zhao. Research on the Deep Learning Level and Related Factors--Analysis Based on The Learning Survey of Ocean University of China [J]. *Education Research and Experiment*, 2013(1): 73-77.
- [8] Q., Wang. Overall Teaching Design of Senior High School Directed by Deep Learning [J]. *Foreign Language Education Frontier*, 2022, (1): 17-25,87-88.