

# A Study on Application of Translation and Communicative Methods in German Language Education in Higher Learning Institutes

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**Abstract:** With the continuous development of national 'reforms and opening-up' policy and development of economic globalization, learning and application of foreign languages are becoming increasingly important. Society needs a large number of professional linguistic workers. Therefore, there are higher requirements for new era higher learning institutes which serve as training base for cultivating linguistic talents. Linguistic talents must possess very strong overall quality and skill to meet these requirements. In this context, this study carried out an in-depth analysis and research on translation method commonly used in German language teaching, and communicative method which is increasingly popular in recent years, to contribute to cultivation of German linguistic talents in higher learning institutes of China.

**Keywords:** Higher learning institutes; German teaching; Translation method; Communicative method

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## 1 Introduction

As the need of social market for language talents is gradually growing, requirements for language talent are also gradually increasing. Higher learning institutes are exploring on methods to improve integrated quality and skill of foreign language learning student. Translation and communicative methods are widely used in foreign language teaching in China. It is conducive to improvement of foreign language teaching in China

bases on these two basic teaching methods, thereby to improve the level of language talent cultivation in higher learning institutes.

## 2 Basic facts of translation method

### 2.1 Concept of translation method

Translation method is the most basic teaching method in foreign language education. It means to grammatical translation of foreign language into native language prior to foreign language teaching. In short, grammar serves as the core of explanation in teaching. Foreign language teaching is carried out through translation for learning and memorization of grammar rules, and memory is consolidated through extensive translation. This emphasizes the mutual use of native language and foreign language to be learned.

### 2.2 Advantages of translation method

(1) Grammatical translation method can help to save time of teacher by making full use of native language. In teaching, there are many complex structures and abstractive concepts that will be easier and more straightforward to be explained in native language, which is also easier for students to accept.

(2) Grammatical translation is grammar-orientated, which can help students to build a solid foundation of grammar and knowledge for more accurate expression. This allows learners to build good foundation for language learning.

(3) Grammatical translation attaches great importance to training of reading ability in students. It emphasizes learning of original texts and extensive reading and writing, which are conducive to improvement of writing

skill and reading ability in learners.

(4) It attaches great importance to comprehension ability of students. It systematically imparts grammar knowledge and emphasizes memorization rules and examples for foreign language learning.

(5) It is convenient for teacher, and has lower requirement for quality and pedagogy prerequisite in teacher.

### **2.3 Disadvantages of grammatical translation method**

(1) Over-emphasis on role of translation and neglecting the use of non-translation training method. Precise translation is difficult if knowledge of both languages is not sufficient.

(2) Over-emphasis on teaching grammatical knowledge and neglecting language skill. In grammatical translation, reading class becomes grammar analysis class. In grammar class, students merely mechanically memorize grammar rules and principles. Students memorize grammar rules and principles. Students merely mechanically memorize grammar rules and vocabularies through intensified training. Training of listening and speaking skills is neglected. Grammar rather than grammar is emphasized. As the result, learners are not able to use the language correctly and fluently in communicative occasions.

(3) It emphasizes only written form and neglects linguistic ability. Learners often learn only 'dumb German'. They can read and write, but not able to do listening and speaking. As the result, they only understand grammar well but speak the foreign language stutteringly.

(4) It emphasizes rigid and dull memorization. Teaching method is not diversified. Teaching process is boring and monotonous. It is not easy to arouse learning interest in students.

## **3 Basic facts of communicative method**

### **3.1 Concept of communicative method**

Communicative method is initially known as ideation method. Its meaning is basically summed up into three words: ideation, function and communication. It is a teaching method to cultivate language ability for communication in specific linguistic contexts based on linguistic function items. Communicative method is carried out based on communication theory and learning theory. It improves communicative ability of foreign language based on listening, speaking, reading and

writing. Communicative method cultivates learning of foreign language knowledge based on communicative ability, in which communication is the ultimate learning goal and communication activity is the main teaching method. Classroom with communicative method is typically presented as: situation simulation is held in classroom and students participate in classroom communication activities. Foreign language ability is improved through communication<sup>[1]</sup>.

### **3.2 Advantages of communicative method**

(1) It focuses on needs of student. Teaching content and system are set based on idea function. Teaching purpose is more definite. Communication and cooperation between students are boosted.

(2) It attaches great emphasis on training communicative ability in students. It emphasizes ability of language application and cultivates awareness of learning for application. In addition to form and structure of language, it attaches greater emphasis on language content, meaning and function in foreign language teaching. It trains students to properly use foreign language at certain social environments.

(3) It advocates communicative process in foreign language teaching, so that students can experience and apply foreign language extensively in real language situation. Communicative ability can be developed through various communicative activities. It emphasizes initiative and interaction in students, which are conducive to stimulate interest of learning, research spirit and learning autonomy in students.

### **3.3 Disadvantages of communicative method**

(1) Functional idea elements are diverse, with no unified standard and stipulated element. Compilation of teaching material mainly bases on function, which interrupts grammatical system and this increases difficulty in learning grammar.

(2) Ways to handle the relationship between language competence and communicative competence, and ways to handle the relationship between grammatical system and functional syllabus still require further solutions.

(3) There are still many problems in curriculum setting, assessment and teaching method. At initial stage, communicative method confuses students who are accustomed to other methods. A similar function can be expressed in many forms. There is no objective standard selection way, so it is necessary to search and solve the existing problems in practice<sup>[2]</sup>.

## **4 Problems and countermeasures in practical application**

### **4.1 Problems in application**

There are still many problems in practical application of translation method and communicative method. There are a variety of reasons for these problems, mainly in the following aspects.

(1) Many teachers are lack of understanding in scientific nature of German language teaching. Foreign language teaching is a professional knowledge. Students should be taught only when teachers have systematically understood and learnt foreign language grammar. Simply speaking, the problem is that many foreign language teachers have sufficient professional ability but slightly inadequate pedagogy and teaching skills.

(2) Due to the influence of traditional teaching mode, many foreign language teachers still use the old teaching method: phonetics first, explanation of words one by one, then explanation of grammar and finally text explanation. Although German language teaching syllabus in higher learning institutes has started to incorporate cultivation of communicative ability currently, progression remains problematic due to the influence of traditional education mode. It is difficult to arouse enthusiasm in students because of dull teaching method.

(3) Teaching of communicative method is limited by some external objective factors, which reduce the efficacy of communicative method. For example, influence of traditional teaching concept and method, and the fact that some students are indeed not suitable for communicative method.

(4) Subjective initiative of students is poor. They do not actively participate in learning, which seriously affects efficacy of teaching. Many students only participate passively and most of them are reluctant. In most real-life classrooms, students remain not interested and do not actively involved in answering questions even when teacher uses role-playing and scene simulation to carry out teaching activities. Efficacy of teaching in classroom is poor.

### **4.2 Countermeasures for problems**

Based on the analysis of root causes of these problems, it is not difficult to find that both translation and communicative methods have their own disadvantages that result in poor teaching result. In term of their

respective characteristics, the most efficient way to solve these problems is organic integration of translation and communicative methods. Drawbacks of each other can be complemented and the advantages of both methods can be maximized. At present, many believe that human communicative ability and language ability should be mutually complementing. Translation method focuses on language ability whereas communicative method focuses on communicative ability. Therefore, following organic integration of communication method and translation method, communicative competence in student can be developed on the basis of language competence. This will surely make university classrooms become more interesting and better efficacy can be acquired.

## **5 Advantages of integration of grammar translation method and communicative teaching method**

In term of general environment of foreign language teaching, current higher learning institutes are paying more attention to education and training of overall language ability in students, in order to ensure students can effectively use and apply the knowledge they have learned in school for effective foreign language communication after graduation. This is also the unavoidable transformation trend in foreign language teaching, which is drawing closer to practicality from knowledge-based. At the same time, innovation of education mode in China is also in constant progression. System reform of the entire industry is carried out to improve professional level and application ability of students, so that they are able to apply and be proficient in what they have learnt. Therefore, innovation of teaching mode and method should be emphasized in German language teaching, to truly achieve scientific education under guidance of teacher in which the main character is student. In order to promote improvement of German language level of students, language application and learning autonomy abilities of student should be cultivated<sup>[3]</sup>.

In traditional teaching method of China, teacher pays more attention in teaching German knowledge step by step - which is the fundamental teaching method. Responsibilities of teacher are to impart knowledge and solve queries. In the current language education in higher learning institutes, teacher pays more attention in imparting knowledge and lecturing students at the level of knowledge but neglect about 'teaching', that

is, practicality of education. It is necessary to allow students to understand the role and function of language education in real life and thereby to solve their queries which include two aspects. First, student cannot fully understand on knowledge that teacher imparts and have doubts. Second, students draw inferences from one instance from teacher's teaching and doubt is extended. At the same time, characteristic of adulthood inclination in higher learning institutes is apparent, so it is very important to carry out systematic foreign language teaching. Use of translation method in teaching can ensure learning of German knowledge in higher learning institutes, but the limitations of translation method in teaching are also obvious. Function of translation method can only be fully demonstrated when students accumulate sufficient knowledge in German and achieve proficiency level of German knowledge for more advanced content learning of German. Otherwise, it may reduce the overall efficiency of teaching and even lead to large gap difference between students, which is completely not conducive to further teaching. Effective integration of communicative method and translation method can prevent these problems. Different with translation method, communicative method highlights the main character roles of student in practical application of German language teaching. It encourages and attracts students to participate in classroom atmosphere set by teacher. It adopts diversified teaching methods which provide encouragement to students and enhance learning autonomy of students. This enables students to gain knowledge growth and improve their language application through participation in classroom activities<sup>[4]</sup>.

In other word, integration of translation method and communication method not only can help students to improve their reading, writing and translation abilities but also their listening and speaking skills for daily communication, and thereby enhance their overall German language proficiency. Advantages of integration of translation method and communication method can thus be fully demonstrated. It will support higher learning institute students in China to complete their German language learning. At the same time, it also brings new concept and teaching method innovation to foreign language education and teaching in China, and thereby promotes development of the entire education industry and talent cultivation.

## **6 Integration strategy of grammatical translation method and communicative teaching method in German language teaching of higher learning institutes**

### **6.1 Main integration approach of grammatical translation method and communicative teaching method**

Nurturing students into new era compound talents is not only social requirement but also requirement for students themselves, it is also the goal of schools. Therefore, more scientific and rational education mode must be adopted in German language teaching in higher learning institutes to provide good education service for students. Therefore, continual study and exploration of integration approach of translation and communicative methods are necessary. First of all, importance should remain to be attached to German grammar system. Advantages of traditional translation method should be continually adopted; it can help students to build a solid foundation for German learning. When combined with use of communicative method in classroom, it helps students to achieve two-way improvement in communication and knowledge abilities. Secondly, it is necessary to set up appropriate communicative activity and teaching content to give full play of students' autonomy and to activate interest and enthusiasm of learning in students so that students fully participate in classroom. Specifically, it remains necessary to carry out traditional teaching method to train reading and writing skills such as grammar and vocabulary. At the same time, it is also necessary to develop listening and speaking abilities in students through communicative activities in order to strengthen overall language level. These help students to proficiently use German in social communication and lay foundation for work-life learning after graduation<sup>[5]</sup>. Finally, communicative content and communicative selection should be appropriate for students and do not deviate far from real-life environment. Ideally, communicative activities that can improve grammar level should be selected for further effective integration of communicative method and translation method.

### **6.2 Specific application of two methods in classroom teaching**

Students will develop language expression ability after

language learning, but the language expression ability still being far from actual language communication ability. Simply speaking, students have learned grammar rules of the language but they are not able to use the language for cross-cultural communication, especially at different environments and situations of communication which are not under regular grammatical pattern. Therefore, it is very important to improve application of translation method and communication method in German language education and teaching. Specific application is divided into three aspects. Firstly, to carry out traditional translation method and grammar teaching, for learning of grammar rules and accumulative learning of vocabulary and training of reading and writing abilities. Secondly, creation of situations or role-playing activities by teacher for training of listening and speaking abilities. Finally, strengthening and improvement of grammar rules and daily accumulation of vocabulary. In addition, specific learning situation of students can be evaluated in the form of formative evaluation, thereby feedback on teaching quality can be obtained. Social and cultural environments of German can be demonstrated to students through communicative activities. This allows them to understand the different ways of using the language in different situations, which enhances the overall improvement of listening, speaking, reading, writing and application abilities in students.

## 7 Conclusions

Theory and method of foreign language teaching are abundant. These are the results of continuous development and research by educators in China; teachers can learn from the theories and methods. However, it is very important to warrant the scientificity and rationality of theory and method in specific application. Of course, theory and method must be assessed by practice. Theory without practice cannot provide help for German language education in

China. In fact, translation method and communicative method are both foreign language teaching methods. Both methods are not antagonistic but have great complementary roles. Translation method focuses on accumulation and learning of knowledge, while communicative method focuses on practical use of language. Therefore, integration of translation method and communication method complements and promotes each other<sup>[6]</sup>.

Through research on application of translation method and communicative method in German language teaching in higher learning institutes, it is not difficult to find out that both traditional translation method and modern communicative method are very effective German language teaching methods in higher learning institutes. However, both methods have respective their drawbacks and shortcomings. Therefore, continued in-depth exploration of integration of the two methods is required in order to achieve ultimate goal of German professional talent cultivation in higher learning institutes.

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