

Exploration and Analysis of College English Translation Teaching Practice in a Cross-Cultural Context

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Abstract: In the wave of globalization, cross-cultural communication scenarios are increasing, and college English translation teaching needs to actively adapt to this trend. In the process of teaching advancement, guidance that combines both instrumental value and humanistic connotation should be established first. Based on this, teaching methods should be flexibly adjusted, combining students' cognitive characteristics and cross-cultural translation needs to optimize methods, constantly updating teaching materials, and integrating multicultural knowledge into them. This allows students to naturally encounter language expressions in different cultural backgrounds during their learning. With the help of modern technology, broader practical scenarios can be built, breaking the limitations of traditional classrooms and closely connecting teaching with practical applications, thereby systematically improving students' cross-cultural translation abilities.

Keywords: Cross-cultural; Translation teaching; College English

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1. Introduction

In the process of continuous globalization, the interaction between different cultural systems is becoming closer. Translation, as a key link connecting different cultures, has continuously increased its value in the context of multicultural integration. College English translation teaching, as the core position for cultivating translation talents, not only needs to impart skills of language conversion but also needs to focus on the deep influence of cross-cultural factors in translation practice. The integration of a cross-cultural perspective can provide a broader horizon for college English translation teaching, make teaching content more suitable for the needs of actual communication scenarios, help improve students' perception of different cultural contexts, and thus more accurately convey meaning in the translation process.

2. Clarifying teaching objectives, balancing instruments and humanities

The setting of college English translation teaching objectives from a cross-cultural perspective needs to be based on the actual needs of cross-cultural communication. It is necessary to strengthen the accuracy and fluency of language conversion, ensure that the instrumental attributes of translation are fully utilized, and focus on the deep exploration and transmission of cultural connotations, highlighting the humanistic value of translation. The organic integration of the two can guide teaching activities to achieve a balance between skill development and cultural immersion, providing directional guidance for students to build a comprehensive translation ability system ^[1].

Specifically, cross-cultural translation ability encompasses core elements such as proficiency in language conversion, sensitivity to cultural differences, and flexibility in adapting to different contexts. These elements exhibit varying combinations of needs in different translation scenarios. By analyzing the mechanisms of these elements in practical translation tasks and combining them with the phased characteristics of translation teaching, teachers can establish a specific framework for teaching objectives. The specific goals can be divided into three dimensions: language conversion, cultural perception, and contextual adaptation. In the language conversion dimension, students are required to master vocabulary, grammar, and expression habits between English and the target language, ensuring accurate and fluent translations without language barriers. For example, when handling legal documents, they should be able to convert legal terms such as jurisdiction and statute of limitations into professional expressions in the target language, maintaining consistency of terminology across different legal provisions and avoiding deviations in legal interpretation due to ambiguous terminology. In the cultural perception dimension, students are guided to deeply understand social customs, values, historical traditions, etc., in different cultural backgrounds, enhancing their sensitivity to and respect for cultural differences. For instance, when translating introductory texts about folklore and festivals, they need to capture the collective emotional expressions inherent in activities like temple festivals and carnivals, allowing the target readers to experience the unique atmosphere and spiritual core of festive activities in different cultures through the use of contextual vocabulary in the translation. In the contextual adaptation dimension, students are trained to flexibly adjust their translation strategies based on the specific context of the translation task, ensuring that the translation remains faithful to the original text while conforming to the expression habits of the target culture. For example, when translating verbal expressions in international business negotiations, students should adjust the translation of concessions, insistence, and other positional expressions based on the cultural backgrounds of both negotiating parties, adopting wording that conforms to the other party's cultural communication habits while maintaining the original meaning. When translating diplomatic statements, they need to strike a balance between principle and flexibility, converting expressions such as stern protests and friendly negotiations into language that conforms to diplomatic language norms, reflects the country's stance, and considers the cultural acceptability of the other party, ensuring accurate transmission of diplomatic information and effective communication.

Integrating the various elements of cross-cultural translation ability into specific translation scenarios can make teaching objectives both clearly directed and able to cover the diverse needs in translation practice, providing students with a clear development path to form a comprehensive cross-cultural translation ability.

3. Innovating teaching methods to enhance the pertinence of education

Innovating teaching methods needs to be based on the complexity and diversity of cross-cultural translation, breaking away from the constraints of a single imparting mode. By building a teaching framework that echoes

cultural differences, teaching strategies can be more tailored to the translation needs of different cultural scenarios, thereby strengthening the adaptability of teaching to students' individual differences and practical application scenarios, and promoting the development of translation ability in a dynamic and contextualized direction^[2].

For example, teachers can adopt a context-oriented translation strategy, starting with a dining scene, and select two expressions: "Eat while it's hot, it won't taste good when it cools down" and "Try this, it's a local specialty." They can guide students to analyze the impact of contextual differences on translation. The former is often seen in family dinners, reflecting natural concern in close relationships. When translating, it is necessary to retain this interpersonal warmth, and it can be translated as "Dig in while it's hot—it gets soggy when it cools down," conveying a casual feel through the colloquial expression "Dig in." The latter is mostly used in restaurant dining, implicitly polite and recommendatory, and can be translated as "Try this, it's a local specialty," which is both socially polite and accurately conveys the information. After students complete the translation, teachers can show real dialogue cases in different cultural backgrounds, guiding students to compare and analyze the differences in contextual adaptability of the translations, such as whether formal vocabulary is overused in family scenes or whether necessary polite markers are missing in dining scenes.

In addition, teachers can also adopt a task-driven approach, designing translation tasks for promotional materials for community cross-cultural exchange activities, which can be decomposed into three sub-tasks: poster translation, process description, and communication scripts. In the poster translation task, teachers can select expressions containing cultural imagery such as "gather happily" and "blessings fill the home," and categorize them into emotional resonance and scene description. Taking "gather happily" as an example, teachers can guide students to compare the expression effects of "gather happily" and "come together joyfully." The former focuses on the state, while the latter emphasizes action, which is more suitable for Western promotional contexts. On this basis, teachers can organize students to try basic translation + cultural annotation, such as translating "gather happily" as "people gathering happily, a typical scene in Chinese celebrations," to ensure that the cultural imagery of the original text is retained in the translation while making the translation conform to the aesthetic habits of the target culture. When translating process descriptions, teachers can design specialized training for time expressions and action guidance. For example, in "starting at around 2:30 p.m.," students are guided to analyze the vagueness of "around" in cross-cultural communication, comparing "around 2:30 p.m." with "at approximately 2:30 p.m." to clarify that the latter is required for formal descriptions; for the translation of instructions such as "please line up in order," students are organized to discuss the applicable scenarios of "please line up in order" and "please queue in sequence," selecting them based on the nature of the activity while emphasizing the common usage of "queue" in British English. In the communication script task, teachers can construct a scene-object correspondence table, covering scenes such as receiving the elderly and guiding young people. Taking "this way, it will start soon" as an example, teachers can guide students to distinguish between "Please follow me, it will start soon" for the elderly and "this way, starting in a minute" for young people, with the former using complete sentences to show respect and the latter using short sentences to show intimacy. Thus, students can deepen their understanding of language expression differences in different cultural backgrounds through practice.

Innovative teaching for cross-cultural translation can break through the single teaching mode by constructing a dynamic teaching system adapted to different cultures. This can deepen students' understanding of cultural differences, improve the efficiency of translation in multiple scenarios, and provide a systematic path for cultivating compound translation talents.

4. Updating teaching content and infiltrating cross-cultural knowledge

Teaching content is the core carrier that supports the effectiveness of translation teaching, and its renewal should be guided by the practical needs of cross-cultural communication. A content system with both language depth and cultural breadth should be constructed. Teachers should integrate the latest cross-cultural communication cases, representative cultural phenomena, and translation difficulties between different cultures into the course content. This allows students to keep up with the pulse of the times while learning language conversion skills, and enhances their sensitivity to and respect for cultural differences^[3].

For example, teachers can introduce cases of name adjustments for multinational brands. Taking the car brand BMW as an example, although the early direct translation “Bayi’er” is faithful to the German pronunciation, it lacks emotional connection and brand association in the Chinese context. In the specific teaching process, teachers can first present the advertising copy when the brand entered the Chinese market in 1994. The expression “Bayi’er automobile, German craftsmanship” is difficult to impress consumers due to the alienation of the translated name. Compared with the current translated name “Baoma,” teachers can guide students to dismantle the cultural code of Chinese character combinations: the character “宝” (*bao*) is associated with images such as jade and treasures in traditional culture, conveying the high-end value attributes of the product; as the most important means of transportation in ancient times, the horse (*ma*) carries the metaphor of speed, which echoes the functional attributes of the car. At the same time, teachers can show the subsequent promotional slogans of the BMW Joy series, analyze how the emotional experience contained in the word “Joy” achieves cultural translation through English translation, and let students understand the evolutionary logic of translation from phonetic correspondence to cultural adaptation. The introduction of the Lao Gan Ma translation case can form a reverse reference. Teachers can show the initial literal version of “Old Dry Mother” adopted by the brand, and analyze the misunderstandings caused by this translation in the English context—“dry mother” has a derogatory connotation in slang, which conflicts with the homely attribute of the product. Compared with the current strategy of keeping the original name “Lao Gan Ma,” combined with the brand’s overseas promotion materials, it analyzes the path to enhance cultural identification by maintaining voice identification: on the shelf labels of North American supermarkets, only “Chili Sauce” is marked below “Lao Gan Ma” as a category description, rather than a forced translation of the brand name. At the same time, students are guided to observe feedback cases from overseas consumers, such as the spontaneous dissemination of “Lao Gan Ma” being called “Chinese magic sauce” on social media, to understand that when cultural uniqueness is difficult to fully convey through translation, retaining the source language symbols can actually build unique brand cultural memory points.

In addition, teachers can introduce the classic literary work “Dream of the Red Mansions” as a case study for cross-cultural translation teaching, exploring the difficulties involved in translating cultural images. For example, when translating “Never lose, never forget, immortal life, everlasting prosperity” and “Never leave, never abandon, youthful beauty, eternity lasting,” Yang Xianyi and his wife translated them as “Never Lose, Never Forget, Eternal Life, Lasting Prosperity” and “Never Leave, Never Abandon, Fresh Youth, Eternally Lasting,” respectively. In contrast, when translating these two sentences, Hawkes uniformly translated them as “Mislay me not, forget me not, and hale old age shall be your lot.” Both Yang Xianyi and his wife and Hawkes successfully conveyed the original meaning, but Yang Xianyi and his wife paid more attention to faithfully disseminating Chinese culture and deeply understanding the profoundness and vastness of Chinese culture during the translation process. Although the themes of these two sentences are similar, there are subtle differences: Baoyu, as a god in the heavenly realm, is described as having immortal life, while Baochai, as

a woman in the mortal world, is described as having youthful beauty. Hawkes' use of the same translation for different identities in the original text, while facilitating reading and understanding for foreign readers, sacrifices the richness and diversity of the original text, as well as the deep meaning reflected by the text. In this way, students can not only improve their cross-cultural translation skills but also deepen their understanding of language expression differences in different cultural backgrounds, laying a solid foundation for becoming compound translation talents.

Updating teaching content and infiltrating cross-cultural knowledge requires building a teaching system where language and culture coexist. Through dynamic integration of multicultural elements, it strengthens the foundation of language conversion and cultivates cultural cognitive abilities, providing deep support for cross-cultural translation practices.

5. Utilizing modern technology to construct a new platform for practice

Modern technology provides a new pathway for the teaching practice of cross-cultural translation, breaking the limitations of time and space and building a learning scenario that integrates virtuality and reality. Teachers can construct a dynamically interactive platform by integrating digital resources, presenting cultural differences in a visual and perceivable manner. This promotes the transition of translation practice from unidirectional output to multidimensional interaction, enhances the immersion and effectiveness of teaching, and expands new dimensions for cultivating cross-cultural translation abilities^[4].

For example, teachers can develop a multimodal cultural comparison database, integrating parallel corpora from mainstream media in China and abroad in the past five years, covering topics such as food culture, festive customs, daily consumption, and film and television entertainment. Each corpus includes three parts: the original text, commonly used translations, and cultural background annotations. For instance, in the daily consumption section, relevant reports on Chinese food delivery and Western takeaway are included, annotating the translation adjustment from “takeaway guy” to “delivery rider” for food delivery workers, and attaching comparative images of delivery tools and service times. Based on this, teachers can also guide students to use the database's search function to count the frequency of English translations for emerging vocabulary such as milk tea and script murder, analyze the degree of acceptance of translations like “milk tea” and “script murder” in the English-speaking world, and present the cross-cultural dissemination path of lifestyle vocabulary through data visualization charts.

Furthermore, teachers can design an intelligent translation feedback system to achieve real-time evaluation of cultural suitability. After students complete translation exercises introducing traditional handicrafts, the system can not only detect grammatical errors but also provide graded scoring for cultural expressions. For example, if a student translates “Su embroidery” as “Su embroidery,” the system suggests adding “traditional Chinese embroidery from Suzhou” to reflect regional characteristics. If the translation of “paper cutting” only includes “paper cutting” and omits the attribute of “folk art,” it triggers a cultural information missing warning and pushes related translation examples of Mexican and Norwegian paper cutting as references. Simultaneously, a manual review process is set up where teachers can view the system-generated cultural sensitivity analysis report. For commonly mistranslated vocabulary such as the tea ceremony and Hanfu, teachers can organize special topic discussions, collect real translation needs from different cultural backgrounds using platforms like online forums and social media, encourage students to participate in translation practice, and improve the cultural suitability and practicality of their translations.

Apart from on-campus practice, teachers can also contact external enterprises to jointly establish a cultural bridge translation workshop, incorporating the enterprise's documentary subtitle localization projects into the teaching process. Relying on a cloud-based collaboration system, the workshop synchronizes real-time raw materials provided by overseas film crews, including oral videos of intangible cultural heritage inheritors, documentary clips of folklore festivals, and more. When students divide into groups to claim translation tasks on themes such as Tibetan opera and shadow puppetry, the system automatically matches a corporate translator-reviewer from the corresponding cultural field as an online mentor. For instance, when translating a segment of Tibetan opera, students need to grasp not only the conversion between Tibetan and Chinese but also have a deep understanding of the historical background, performance form, and cultural implications of Tibetan opera, ensuring that the translation accurately conveys the original meaning while reflecting the unique charm of Tibetan opera. Serving as online mentors, corporate translators can provide real-time guidance to students on cultural difficulties encountered during translation, such as the symbolic meaning of Tibetan opera masks and the emotional expression of specific singing styles. Through one-on-one tutoring, students' cross-cultural translation skills are enhanced.

The new practical platform empowered by modern technology can reconstruct the cognitive dimension and practical field of cross-cultural translation teaching through digital resource integration and interactive design, providing systematic support for the dynamic transmission of cultural differences and the deep cultivation of translation skills.

6. Conclusion

In summary, the teaching practice of English translation in universities from a cross-cultural perspective should be based on language conversion, with cultural cognition as its core. Through two-way calibration of teaching objectives, contextual reconstruction of teaching methods, dynamic updating of teaching content, and deep empowerment of technology platforms, a multi-dimensional collaborative teaching system can be constructed. The value of this system lies not only in improving the proficiency of translation skills but also in cultivating a deep understanding and adaptability to cultural differences. This makes the language conversion process a precise transmission and effective dialogue of cultural meaning. Thus, in the context of multicultural integration, translation teaching can achieve a deep leap from instrumental skill training to cross-cultural communication ability shaping.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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