



Teaching Translation in Promoting College English Teaching in Newly Built Universities

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Abstract

Teaching translation is regarded as one of the means of foreign language teaching. It aims to help students master relevant language points so as to improve their foreign language proficiency. In Tier 2 colleges and universities, there is a widespread phenomenon that students lack solid English foundations, also due to the heavy learning pressure from the other subjects such as their major, it is easy for them to neglect English learning and make it stagnate. In this paper, through the application of the translation teaching method, freshmen and sophomores' understanding and adsorbing basic English knowledge in classrooms are enhanced, and their learning abilities such as memorizing phrases and expressions, recognizing and analyzing meanings of sentences are strengthened. Meanwhile, problems which should be paid attention to as well as the shortcomings of the teaching method are also pointed out when the method of teaching translation is applied in teaching practice.

Key words: Teaching translation; College English teaching; Promoting role

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1. TEACHING TRANSLATION AND TRANSLATION TEACHING

Teaching translation and translation teaching are two different concepts. Zhang (2001) pointed out that the

teaching of translation and translation teaching are two different types and different levels of teaching, and the purpose of the former is to consolidate and cultivate students' foreign language ability, while the latter aims to cultivate students' bilingual communicative ability. The focus of translation teaching is to teach translation skills and knowledge, aiming at cultivating translation talents; while teaching translation is regarded as one of the foreign language teaching methods, which aims to help students master the language points, so as to improve their proficiency of foreign language. Mu (2007) pointed out that in teaching translation, translation is the appendage of foreign language teaching, the means of teaching rather than the purpose of teaching. If translation is to help students understand the text and test the students' mastery of foreign language vocabulary and grammar, it belongs to the category of translation teaching; if it reaches students with a certain level of English (such as students who have passed CET Four or CET Six), and aims to cultivate students' ability of translation, it can be regarded as translation teaching. According to their own teaching requirements, the teaching translation has a low requirement for translation, which is suitable for foreign language teaching in the first, second year or lower grades of colleges or universities, while the target of translation teaching is the students majoring in foreign language majors or translation majors, and the requirements for translation are much higher in contrast to teaching translation.

2. ANALYSIS OF ENGLISH PROFICIENCY AND LEARNING STATUS ON STUDENTS IN NEWLY BUILT REGULAR UNIVERSITIES

Students in newly built regular universities generally have unsolid or common learning basis in English in

contrast to those in other regular universities, and when they enter university, they encounter the paradox that there is limited learning time, while their learning tasks seem limitless, especially they have to put focus on their major learning, which unconsciously weaken their time and energy on English. Therefore, how to improve college learners' English proficiency and solve the problem between English teaching and learning are arduous tasks in front of every English teacher who teaches in colleges or universities.

2.1 Analysis on Students' English Scores in College Entrance Examination

The overall English level of students in newly-built regular universities is not very high. Take my universities as an example. In 2013, our college passed the assessment of the National Ministry of Education, and became an undergraduate university. As a newly built undergraduate university, the scores of the students enrolled in recent years were keeping at a relatively low level. Take the example of the students enrolled in 2015. According to the enrollment statistics, there were about 1/5 students' English scores in the entrance examination under 90, the lower level section; about 3/5 students' English scores ranged from 90 to 120, the mid-level section; and the percentage of students with scores above 120, the high level section were less than 1/5. Therefore, from the statistics it can be seen clearly that in a newly built undergraduate university, most students enrolled in recent years just have a very common English basis, or, unsolid English basis.

2.2 On the Time of English Teaching Period

The course of college English has limited teaching period, only 2 times, 4 classes a week; meanwhile, students also confront the learning pressure from major subjects and other public courses. Objectively, as foreign language learners, students have limited time and energy on learning English.

2.3 On Pressure From Examination

General, English course is tested in final exams, and ordinarily there is usually no exams, so some students do not feel the pressure from examinations, as a result, they may be undisciplined and idle their time and be half-hearted about their learning.

2.4 On Objective English Environment

Objectively, there is no environment for the use of English. Even some students want to use English for oral English expressions and other exercises, there is no chances except for giving speech in English class and finishing English homework after class.

2.5 On College English Teachers

College English teachers bear great teaching pressure, because they have much teaching content to teach in a short period of time. Take our college as an example,

there are 4 books taken as the teaching materials, including comprehensive reading, common listening, news listening, and one exercise book, with English class only twice a week, a total of 4 hours. Therefore, in such a dilemma how college English teachers arrange the class and impart learning content and help students improve English proficiency have become key questions in front of each college English teacher in newly built undergraduate colleges and universities.

2.6 On Students' Learning Attitude

In newly built universities, some of the students do not realize the necessity of English learning or they are too proud to admit they have to work hard to be advanced in English, and some students have poor self-learning ability, and they need to be further supervised and urged to make progress. In these circumstances, college English teachers can only make students answer questions by themselves, forcing them to face problems, facing their own shortcomings, perhaps can make a difference in college English learnings.

3. A TEACHING METHOD IN COLLEGE ENGLISH CLASS BASED ON TEACHING TRANSLATION

According to the phoneme objectively existing in college English class in newly built universities, a teaching method based on teaching translation is put forward, namely, through frequent answering questions in class, students are compelled to understand the meaning of sentences, to consolidate their memory and understanding of English words, expressions, sentences, and improve their sentence-meaning identifying ability. The method is mainly applied to basic vocabulary learning and to deal with the comprehension of sentences in text or context, also it can be used in dealing with exercises after text. Attention should be paid when the teaching translation method is applied, namely, students are not required to translate sentences completely or even perfectly. They are just required to speak out the general meaning of the sentences, and let the teacher understand whether they have grasped the language point or not. Through teaching translation, students themselves can find some words, phrases, or sentence structures which have not yet grasped or forgotten, and teachers can quickly find students' understanding mistakes or unsolid language cognition, then can point it out so as to help students to make up it.

3.1 The Advantage of Teaching Translation

The teaching of translation can effectively increase the degree of vocabulary memorization. Many students think themselves above their own business, in fact, they are not as good as they think. For example, some sophomores are hard to distinguish the word "quite" and "quiet", some forget the meanings of the word "pressure", the phrase

“carry out”; even for the key expression “pick out” which is emphasized repeatedly in class, some are hard to give the right meaning in context. By the means of teaching translation, students are compelled to take the initiative to understand the meaning of the sentence and make clear the meanings of vague words, thus increase the level of words’ memorization.

Teaching translation enables students to improve their concentration, understanding and internalize the words in the sentences. It not only makes teachers dominate in teaching process, but also spurs the initiative of students, and it also improves students’ ability to apply basic knowledge into practice.

Teaching translation can improve students’ ability to understand and improve their reading comprehension. For example, “get all one’s way” is a new expression which is not marked in the appendix word’s lists, but by carefully reading the sentence and combining the context, students can understand its meaning correctly.

Teaching translation can avoid teachers’ repetitive efforts. Through teaching translation, teachers can find out which knowledge points have been clearly grasped and which ones are unfamiliar, avoiding the repetition of knowledge teaching and unnecessary learning.

In conclusion, the application of the teaching translation method to handle the sentence comprehension and the exercise after the text can effectively consolidate students’ vocabulary learning and promote reading comprehension.

3.2 Notes on Applying Teaching Translation Method

To apply the method of teaching translation, first of all there should be a good classroom learning environment, where teachers are responsible and love their work, they are enthusiastic about teaching, which is considered as the prerequisite when the teaching translation method is applied into practice; second, teachers should have rich teaching experience and have high proficiency in English, and they should have no problem with the text and the sentence comprehension; third, teachers should be sensitive to students’ reactions and the difficulty of understanding some sentences, so as to make timely adjustments

The most common problem with the use of teaching translation is long time-consumption. When teachers ask students to give the meaning of a sentence, most students in the need of maintaining their dignity will try to answer it, thus they need some time to think, sometimes even the time is so long that it is obviously not permit in time-constraint class, and also the long time can stagnate the normal process and make other students impatient. Thus in the circumstances, teachers should interrupt or change it to have a good control of teaching schedule.

Teachers should teach in accordance with students’ aptitude and personality. Teachers should try hard to

have a basic understanding of students’ aptitude and personality, for example, in a class, which students are good at English, which ones are at average level, which ones are not good, and which ones are ambitious and diligent, which ones are careless and sluggish. Teachers should be aware of the above referred. Teachers should not abandon the students with poor English also give some excellent students the opportunity to show their presence and strength. The much difficult questions should be given to the students with high level of proficiency which can increase the sense of achievement. The easy questions should be completed by the students with poor level which can increase their confidence.

In teaching process, teachers do not need to emphasize the translation methods and translation skills, the main purpose of understanding sentences is to enable students to master relevant knowledge, however, when understanding sentences, explanations on some translation methods should not be avoided, which can be briefly explained or pointed out.

3.3 The Practice of Applying Teaching Translation

Take the first part of Unit 2 in the new edition of College English Comprehensive Course and the following exercises as an example. The title of the text is *freedom givers*. After the introduction to arouse students’ curiosity and interest, the text learning is followed. The teacher points out that four representative characters and four parts reveal the struggles of black Americans for freedom. In terms of difficulty of the text, there are more new words, sentence patterns which are difficult to understand comparing with the other three parts in the first part (Para. 1 to para. 5), and thus the first part has relatively higher difficulty. In this case, the teacher just chooses some relatively easy sentences and asks students to translate them, such as “a gentle breeze swept the Canadian plains as I stepped outside the two-story house”, “alongside me was a slender woman in a black dress”. For other sentences, the teacher also require students to translate in some ways, or there are questions designed in the sentences that are left for students to think about, such as “what is the meaning of ‘great—father’?”, and “in the expression ‘be created equal’, why equal rather than equally, and is there a similar use or not”; for simple usage it can be passed over, such as “give up struggling”, “more than” etc.

In after-school exercise, questions are also given in a detailed, slightly different and difficult way. Take the 2nd question in “Fill in the gaps” in part of Vocabulary as an example, which says “Citibank picked the chief executive of Etang.com as its first Chinese customer Thursday to open an account at its new branch in the _____ Peace Hotel along Shanghai’s fabled waterfront”. Due to the long length and complex structure of the sentence, the best students in class are chosen to make a

sentence understanding, and afterwards, according to the existing problems, the teacher gives explanation, such as the meaning of chief executive, “.com” typically means to network names, the meaning of “open an account”, “branch”, etc. After the analysis, the complicated sentences becomes simple and interesting, and the students have learned a lot of knowledge, which has deepened the memorization of the words and phrases and improved the comprehension of sentences.

3.4 Shortcomings

The method of teaching translation emphasizes the students’ mastery of the words and phrases as well as sentences understanding. It focuses on places where teaching and learning are very basic and easy to be ignored, through constant identification and understanding to strengthen vocabulary memorization and sentence comprehension.

Therefore, as a solo method, it must be combined with other teaching methods to truly complete college English teaching tasks, to fully develop students’ English abilities and improve students’ English proficiency.

CONCLUSION

As a basic teaching method to improve students ability of vocabulary memorization and sentence comprehension, teaching translation has its practical value and has achieved good results in newly built undergraduate colleges and universities. However, teaching translation cannot be used as an isolated teaching method, and

teachers must combine with other diversified teaching methods to achieve a flexible and vivid teaching effect and to enhance students’ English proficiency.

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