The Revelation of the TAPs on Translation and Interpretation Teaching

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Keywords: TAPs, Think-aloud, translation and interpretation teaching, translation process

Abstract. TAPs (Think aloud Protocols) is one of the commonly used methods for collecting data in psychology and cognitive science research. It has been widely used in foreign language teaching research in recent years. Based on the application of TAPs in translation studies, this paper explores the revelation of TAPs for translation teaching and interpretation teaching, aiming to propose a new feasible path for the existing translation teaching methods and improve the level of translation and interpretation teaching.

1. Introduction

TAPs (Think aloud Protocols) is one of the commonly used methods for collecting data in psychology and cognitive science research. It has been widely used in foreign language teaching research in recent years. This concept can be traced back to *Duncker's (1945)* exploration of the process and the way in which people use Think-aloud to solve problems. *Guo Chunjie (2015)* defines the Think-aloud as: the subjects (the people who accepted the test) speak out all the information in their mind at any time during the completion of a certain task. At the same time, the researchers use a device such as a tape recorder or video recorder to record all the verbal information the subjects expressed in the experiment. After the subjects completing the task, the researchers transcode the recorded audio or video into a textual protocol which can be used for further analysis, and evaluate and sort the data in order to select meaningful Think-aloud research materials. Finally, analyze those materials according to the purpose of the research, and restructure the thinking patterns and laws of the subjects.

2. Application of TAPs in translation studies

Early TAPs research focused on the field of psychology and cognitive science. It is an "introspective method" or "verbal report procedures" used to explore the brain's thinking process. Later, this method has been widely used in language research, such as SLA(second language acquisition), language learning, language processes, foreign language examiner research, etc. *(Lam, 1995)*.

In recent years, some changes have taken place in translation studies, due to the application of research paradigms and models of new discipline in this field. The study of the translation process introduced an empirical research method, which marks the evolution of translation studies. The Western TAPs experiment is one of the empirical methods which has been widely used in translation process research and has achieved significant results. In the 1980s, *Krings (1986, 1987)* used the TAPs to explore the translation process. He believes that TAPs is "the most natural and suitable method for exploring the process of translation thinking", which can be seen as the beginning of applying TAPs to research for the translation process. Since then, *Fraser (2000)* and some scholars have used TAPs to describe and analyze the translation process.

The application of Think-aloud in translation studies started late in China but it has rapidly developed in the past two decades and achieved certain results. *Miao Ju (2005)* proposed that the translation process should focus on the translator's thinking process, and skills, knowledge, strategies and formation process in the thinking process should be the key points. She believed that although Chinese translators had called for research on the translation process for a long time, it is not clear how to conduct process research. Therefore, she advocated the use of TAPs to explore the internal

process of translation rules, strategies, steps, and believed that TAPs is "the only way to explore the 'black box' at present."

There are also many scholars who have expressed doubts and concerns about the validity, applicability and credibility of TAPs translation studies, such as *Toury (1995)*. However, most researchers regard this method as the most likely (or closest) method to reflect the brain's operation during translation *(Li Dechao, 2004)*.

In summary, the author believes that using TAPs to study the translation process can not only help us to re-examine the essence of translation activities from multiple dimensions, but also play an important role in guiding translation teaching. Therefore, in this paper, the author will discuss the guiding significance of TAPs for translation and interpretation teaching respectively.

3. The revelation of the TAPs on translation and interpretation teaching

Baker (1998) argues that the process of translation is actually the process of solving problem, including identifying, analyzing, and solving specific problems. These problems can be divided into global problems and local problems, so the way to solve problems can also be divided into global solution, local solution and delayed solution. This is consistent with *Guo Chunjie (2015)* "The translation process can be divided into five steps: planning, understanding, analysis, migration and modification". The Think-aloud record provides a data source for the thinking activities in the translator's cognitive process for the research of translation process. Oral narration follows the train of thought while translating, and expresses the activities of thought. Therefore, teachers can use TAPs as a teaching method to understand, monitor, and evaluate the students' translation process, and provide support and guidance for students to solve problems.

3.1 The revelation of the TAPs on translation teaching

As far as translation teaching is concerned, the uniqueness of the TAPs teaching method is that it does not adopt the theoretically-deductive method commonly used in translation teaching, but adopts the empirical-inductive method, that conclude the observable characteristics of students' translation process*(House, 2000)*. In contrast, the former is that teachers will preset teaching objectives and difficulties. Given teachers are mostly based on their own experience, sometimes they may be differ from students' reality and needs; the latter adopts descriptive method, which based on the observation, recording, analysis and summarization of the characteristics presented by the students in the translation process, can reflect the real needs of the students in the learning process more than the former.

TAPs teaching should be based on real translation situations, not just formal exercises. It should be used to solve practical translation problems. The real translation problem should be closely related to the translation market trend, cover a full range of fields and be challenging and perplexing to some extent. However, as a teaching material, teachers can choose the content, length and difficulty according to the reality.

Translation process researchers often use the expert-novice paradigm, which compares the behavior and translation products of professional/expert translators and novice/student translators in the translation process *(Ma Xingcheng, 2017)*. In the implementation of TAPs translation teaching, teachers can also use TAPs to demonstrate the translation process, encourage students to ask questions and contribute ideas about the content of the translation, and even propose a different translation version. Teachers should respond to students' questions in time, and also use the TAPs to describe their own translation ideas. Under the traditional mode, "giving the original text-students translating-giving model translation-summarizing translation strategies", the students are confused about how to figure out a good version, why it is good, whether there are other translation versions, etc. Comparing with the former, this method is more intuitive to make up for the shortcomings in translation teaching.

3.2 The revelation of the TAPs on interpretation teaching

Interpretation has the characteristics of instantaneity, consistency and irreversibility. It has higher requirements on students' skills. So interpretation teaching is also different from translation teaching.

In the process of teaching, teachers must adhere to the cultivation of students' practical ability. The application of TAPs in interpretation teaching should also follow the particularity of the interpreting behavior itself, and cannot simply copy the experience of other translations.

Li Dechao and Wang Weiwei (2011) believes that the special form of interpretation makes the application of TAPs in interpretation research not as synchronous as in translation studies. In the study of interpretation, the relatively lagging "immediate retrospection" is used more frequently. That is, the translator makes a verbal report after translating a group of meanings. In the process of interpretation teaching, it can be found that most students have different levels of fear in interpreting, and often have no time to take into account details such as word selection and word order adjustment. It is difficult to be unhurried and have some ideas about how to deal with it in the process of interpretation; some better-level students have formed several unconscious "automated" interpretation processes in their brains, so they are easy to fall into the think set. Teachers can use this "immediate retrospection" in the teaching process, so that students can simultaneously describe all the information and changes in their brains due to interpretation during the interpreting practice, so as to understand the problems and difficulties in the interpretation. Students can use the recorded data to recall and analyze the problems they have generated during the interpretation process, and consciously strengthen their weakness. On the one hand, it can help students with lower interpreting proficiency leak filling. On the other hand, students with better interpreting proficiency can pay attention to the energy allocation in the process of interpretation, clarify the purpose of interpretation, and consciously use the interpretation strategies to produce better translation.

Teachers can also group students in the interpretation teaching. After each interpreting task, the group will discuss and evaluate it internally and conduct a group report. Both members can question each other and discuss together. Students can comprehensively evaluate their interpretation performance through self-evaluation, group evaluation, teacher suggestion and other steps, objectively and comprehensively understand their proficiency, highlights and deficiencies in interpretation, summarize the skills and strategies that need to be improved, and target the next training. In this way, students can review and reflect on their own interpretation thinking process, which helps students to enhance their sensitivity to interpretation and improve their ability to solve problems. Students can master the TAPs to self-examination when there is no other criticism and teacher guidance during the interpreting training. Teachers can also analyze and record the high frequent problems and strategies of the students in the interpretation process through process observation and recording, which will be emphasized in future interpretation teaching.

4. Summary

TAPs is a new method of translation and interpretation teaching, although there are still some doubts in the academia, such as whether it can truly reflect the translation process/thinking process, whether it will affect the ongoing translation process, and whether the two translation modes in the TAPs experiment will interfere with each other *(Li Dechao, 2005)*. But if they are properly operated in teaching, they can make students understand their thinking process more intuitively and clearly, and use translation theories and skills consciously to develop their ability to find and solve problems. . In the group Think-aloud translation activities, they can learn from each other's strengths; according to review and discussion students can discover some translation strategies and methods that they unconsciously used in the translation process while participate in the Think-aloud activities, which can not only increase interest in translation and interpretation learning but also cultivate good translation habits, and do better in the future practice.

In the translation and interpretation teaching, we can record the different characteristics of different objects in the process of translation by professional translators and students, teachers and students, students and students and etc. so as to summarize some common patterns or general laws; students of different levels can also be grouped together. Based on the output of the translation, the thinking characteristics and aptitudes of different groups of students while translating the same task will be analyzed, aiming at the future translation and interpretation teaching.

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