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Study on the Application of TAPs in the Translating Class*

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Abstract—TAPs (think-aloud protocols) is originally a research method in psychological and cognitive science, which is used in language learning studies in the last decades. The studies on translating class in China have changed a lot in the last several decades. It begins with focus on the translating skills and so far has developed to student-centered constructive teaching mode. Although scholars in China and abroad have made remarkable achievements in interdisciplinary research on translating teaching, they generally combine it with linguistics other than with other disciplines, especially psychology and cognitive science. There is a lack of sufficient research on translating cognitive characteristics and the thinking process of translation learners. This research tries to use the "thinking aloud protocols" in cognitive psychology to construct a new teaching model of practical translation courses for English majors, in order to do trying research on translating thinking process study, to strengthen the attention paid to the students in translating learning, and to improve their translating ability.

Keywords: TAPs, cognitive psychology, teaching model

I. INTRODUCTION

"TAPs" (think aloud protocols), which means to articulate what's happening in the brain, is one of the most common ways to gather research data in psychological and cognitive science (Chunjie Guo, 2007:1). The specific procedure is as follows: the researcher asks the subjects to say what they were thinking as much as possible during the experimental task, records the process with a video or tape recorder, and then transfers what the subjects said into a written text for research analysis (Dechao Li, 2008). TAPs can be divided into two main categories: first, synchronic vocal thinking, which means that the subjects reported out loud all the information they had in mind while performing the task, and second, retrospective thinking with sound. This means that information was collected from the subjects after the task was completed. The reason for using this method is usually because the task duration is long or other factors, the subjects may be affected by memory, experience, etc., or unable to externalize their mental activities during the

execution of the task. For tasks with relatively short time, the real-time retrospective thinking aloud method is more complete and comprehensive than the synchronic thinking aloud method.

This paper will combine these two kinds of methods, strive to fully present as much as possible the thinking activities in the process of translating, to describe and conclude the thinking characteristics of several kinds of practical texts translation activities, so as to help the translation learners to obtain translation ability.

The TAPs used in translation teaching emphasizes more on the sound expression of the translation process operated by the brain, and requires students and teachers to say what they think when translating to the maximum extent, rather than recording and video to collect data. The translation process may refer to the whole process from preparation to translating completion, or the thinking process experienced by the translator in his/her brain during translation activities. This study adopts the latter definition and focuses on the translation thinking process of translators.

II. APPLICATION OF TAPs TO TOURISM TRANSLATION TEACHING

Tourism translation is a required course for senior undergraduate students majoring in translation and interpretation. Students have two periods for this course (90 minutes in total) per week. The teaching purpose of this course is to help translation majors to have a deep understanding of the characteristics of common practical texts in tourism and to cultivate their translation ability on the basis of their preliminary understanding of translation theory and practice (E-C and C-E translation Course and Translation Theory Course are learned before). This course is highly practical, and students' participation in classroom teaching accounts for a large proportion. In general, the first section of each period of class is the time for students to report on the practical content related to the translation subject assigned by the teacher before class. Both students' report and teachers' explanation and demonstration adopt thinking aloud method, that is, our class presents not only the translation results, but also the thinking activities in the translation process (See "Table I" for a comparison of basic teaching elements between thinking aloud translation teaching and traditional translation teaching).

TABLE I.   COMPARISONS BETWEEN TAPS TRANSLATING TEACHING AND TRADITIONAL TRANSLATING TEACHING

Elements involving class	TAPs translating class	Traditional teaching class
teacher	Organizer, assistant, guider and promoter	Controller, authority, knowledge giver
students	constructor	receiver
Teaching contents	Real translating tasks	textbook
Learning way	Cooperative learning (students-teachers; among students)	individuals
Teaching method	TAPs, interaction	Experiential oral transmission
Teaching purpose	To develop translating ability	To grasp translating skills

As can be seen from "Table I", based on the TAPs translation teaching mode, teachers are no longer the center of teaching, but the assistant and classroom activities organizer to help students complete real translation tasks. Instead of only presenting the translation results, teachers use TAPs to present the thinking activities when translating, explaining the reasons for the translation, presenting the various elements that affect the translation process and results to the students for their reference, imitation and even criticism. Students no longer passively accept knowledge, but actively become knowledge builders. They are divided into several groups to show the translated works completed after class, and present various influential factors in the translation process by using the retrospective TAPs method.

TAPs teaching mode in practical translation course mainly includes two parts: teachers' thinking aloud demonstration and students' translation practice based on TAPs.

Teachers' thinking aloud demonstration mainly refers to the teachers' on-the-spot translation. As shown in table 1, teachers comment on group reports, give lectures on various tourism translation topics, and answer students' questions on classroom translation practice. When translating, teachers use the thinking aloud method and speak out what she/he was thinking about to reveal as much as possible the thinking process during translation, including how to find the purpose of translation, how to choose translation strategies and translation units, etc., so as to enable students to learn and imitate (or criticize) while observing. When the teacher demonstrates the translation process, students can interrupt the teacher to ask questions at any time. This means that teachers are required to have a rich theoretical background and good translation practice ability.

Students' thinking aloud translation practice can be found in-class discussion, students' speech report, asking questions to speech reporters (these belong to retrospective thinking aloud, reproducing the thinking process of group discussion or individual translation outside class), as well as classroom translation practice and group discussion (these belong to synchronous thinking aloud, because there is no preparation). Students' thinking aloud translation practice can be individual thinking aloud translation or group translation. It is proved that data derived by multiple subjects in the form of question-and-answer (i.e., collaborative translation) is often more complete and authentic than data obtained by individuals talking to themselves. For example, when the teacher asks a question to a student about a sentence translation, the student should not only say the translation result when answering the question, but also speak out the translating process in his mind. The teacher will comment on the translation process and result later. After the learning based TAPs, students can learn, imitate and criticize in the process of thinking aloud by teachers and peers, so as to enhance their practical and theoretical competence in tourism translation.

To verify the feasibility and advantages of this teaching mode, the author carried out teaching experiments and selected two sophomore classes (who have completed the E-C Translation Course) as experimental class and comparative class. The experimental class uses the TAPs teaching mode. The comparative class follows the traditional translation teaching mode (that is the four-step teaching process: skills teaching — example analysis — practice — translation evaluation). At the beginning of the semester and at the end of the semester, translation tests are performed on the two classes of students, and the quality of the translation is evaluated by experts. The pre-experiment test ensures that the students have no significant difference in the translating abilities. The post-experiment test compares the translation results of the two class students. In addition, questionnaire and interviews will be conducted with students in the experimental class at the end of the semester to further explore the effectiveness and advantages of this teaching model. The related questions are: first, can TAPs teaching mode help students increase their interest in practical stylistic translation learning? Second, can TAPs teaching help students improve their awareness of using existing translation theories and skills? Third, "can group aloud thinking promote participants' mutual learning?

III.   RESULTS OF EXPERIMENTS IN TOURISM TRANSLATION TEACHING

The results of surveys and interviews show that the vast majority of students in the experimental class are supportive and enjoy this teaching mode. The advantages of this mode are mainly the following two points:

On one hand, the largest advantage of the TAPs translation teaching mode lies in its intuitiveness and direct guidance. Compared with traditional translation teaching, the TAPs translation teaching mode pays more attention to the thinking process of translation of teachers and students, which makes up for the lack of the translation process

revealing in practical translation teaching research. It may help students to establish an effective mechanism to find and solve translation problems, to stimulate their interest in translation studies, to deepen their understanding of translation theory, and practically improve their translating ability.

On the other hand, in the process of the TAPs teaching, students are allowed to insert or interrupt the teacher's presenting process, and expressing their views on the analysis process or results, which promote the classroom teacher-student interaction. Different from the traditional role in class, the teacher plays the role of information-giver, problem solver, guide, helper, organizer and promoter, etc. In this way, interactive classroom teaching can become true. In addition, group voiced thinking activities help participants learn from each other, make progress together, and increase their sensitivity to translation problems.

It is worth noting that the new teaching mode based on TAPs places higher requirements on teachers. Teachers should have a wealth of translation practice experience, but also have a strong ability to apply theoretical analysis of the translation process, so as to be able to link translation practice theoretically and explain translation decision making process. In addition, when using the new teaching mode based on TAPs, short and typical translation texts should be selected. Too long texts are easy to distract students and are not conducive to a comprehensive and complete presentation of the thinking process.

IV. CONCLUSION

To sum up, this study uses TAPs to construct a new teaching model of practical translation courses, which helps to develop the new process of translation teaching. Through teaching practice, it is found that this model is of great benefit to improve students' translation ability. It is true that the application of TAPs teaching mode of practical translation courses is still in its infancy, but with the deepening of research, it is believed that the teaching mode will gradually be mature and improved greatly benefit the translation learners.

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