

## On a Web-based Translation Workshop Platform with Local Economic Characteristics

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**Abstract**—This paper explores a web-based translation workshop platform with local economic characteristics. This translation workshop platform differs from other translation workshops in two aspects. For one thing, it integrates word processing, software applications, information exchange, data storage, information retrieval, customer monitoring and other functions into one. As a result, the exchange of idea among students and teachers is not confined to class but available anywhere and any time if there is an access to the Internet. For another, it accumulates translation resources (including software, information, terminology, etc.) in accordance with the field of the local economic characteristics, and attaches great importance to the construction of professional and technical translation term base so that the translation efficiency could be improved. In short, it is an improvement of traditional translation personnel cultivation and teaching mode and an application of latest network technologies in translation teaching, which gives some implications for other application-oriented talents cultivation.

**Keywords**—web-based; translation workshop; local characteristics; cultivation mode; teaching mode

### I. INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of translation industry has brought opportunities and challenges for the cultivation of translation talents. However, only a small part of demand is for high-end translators, those who will engage in translation research. More are for application-oriented translators, those who are able to do practical translation. In the latest revision of 'the English teaching syllabus of English major in higher education' laid by Ministry of Education of China, students of translation major are required through translation courses to have a general understanding of the basic translation theory, know the similarities and differences between English and Chinese languages, master some common translation skills, and be able to translate chapters or paragraphs with medium difficulty from English into Chinese. Practice and application are, it can be seen from the translator demand and requirements of Ministry of Education, two basic trends of translation courses, to keep up with which, the cultivation and teaching mode must first be taken into consideration..

### II. CURRENT SITUATION

#### A. Cultivation Mode

Cultivation mode involves textbooks used, curriculum and teacher resources etc. At present, textbooks used in college English translation major mostly are literature-oriented, practicing a generic content translation teaching, main content being literature and linguistics, while application-related translation textbooks mostly are in the fields of foreign trade, medicine, computers, advertising, trademark, law, news, much fewer than the literature-oriented.

For curriculum, it is sub-divided into four aspects in Beijing University of Foreign Studies, namely, foreign language skills, mother tongue cultivation, translation practice and disciplinary literacy "[1]. The first two aspects, foreign language skills and mother tongue cultivation, are premise and foundation to translation and basic and common requirements for knowledge structure and ability of translators, therefore also applicable to applied translation talents cultivation. The last two aspects, translation practice and disciplinary literacy, however, imply differently in literature-oriented and application-oriented curriculum. For one thing, discipline may mean the subject of translation including translation theory and skills; for another, it may mean the basic knowledge of various professional disciplines to be translated, such as business, law, non-ferrous metallurgy. The main difference, therefore, lies in the different weight of translation subject and professional discipline in the specific curriculum. In application-oriented curriculum, translation theory should be appropriately reduced and the proportion of specific areas of professional disciplines appropriately increased. As such, students will be able to engage in the translation work of relevant field upon graduation, obviating the need of "crash course". However, the ratio of the knowledge of translation subject and professional discipline in the specific curriculum, the question of how to deal with the relationship between them are still problems faced when setting curriculum.

For teacher resources, on the one hand, teachers presently teaching translation courses in college have little or no application translation education background because they, generally speaking, graduated from foreign language colleges and the translation courses they learned as students were more or less literature-oriented. On the other hand, they

are too occupied to grasp a systematic knowledge of applied translation. Furthermore, they themselves as application translation teaching staff should have had a considerable application-oriented translation practice [2], which however they actually lack.

### B. Teaching Mode

Traditional translation courses in China basically adopt the so-called "result-comparing" mode, in which students are given some translation exercises at the beginning of the class and teachers compare students' translation with the "standard translation" at the end and make some comments. During the process, teachers dominate the class whereas students just passively listen to teachers' comments and accept "standard translation. The mode, called by Zhu and Xu [3] "product-oriented" teaching model, always debilitates students' interests in participating translation activities and renders the class inefficient and ineffective. Therefore, many scholars (e.g., [4]; [5]) suggest that the mode be replaced by translation workshop so that student-centered and process-oriented teaching mode would take the place of teacher-centered and product-oriented teaching mode.

The term "workshop" originally used in the field of education and psychology research, was first introduced by Lawrence Harpin in the last 1960s to the city plan, referring to a way for people with different views to think, explore and communicate. Thereafter, the concept has been gradually spread and become the basis of various definitions of "workshops". Li and Zhong [4] argued that "Translation Workshop" is an activity in which a group of people engaged in translation get together, hold an extensive discussion on certain translation task and through constant consultation produce a translation version that all members could accept or approve.

"Translation Workshop" is the product of the development of translation teaching and research in a new stage. It has triggered great interest and lots of research among translation researchers and teachers since its emergence (e.g., [5]; [6]; [7]). Just as Li and Zhong [4] pointed out, "as a teaching method, translation workshop provides a platform for students to engage in a large quantity of high-intensity translation training, allows them 'to learn translation in translation', 'to learn translation in cooperation' and 'to learn translation in discussion', constantly improves translators' translation capacity and through interactive learning environment inside and outside classroom enables them to realize, understand and grasp the true meaning of translation, and lay a foundation in the future to independently take part in translation activities, implement translation project and undertake translation tasks." Zhu and Xu [3], after comparing product-oriented mode with process-oriented mode, claimed that the latter is clearly superior to the former.

As can be seen from this, workshop mode has distinctive characteristics. First, practice dominates the whole teaching process. Theoretical teaching is reduced to such a degree that without which, practice would be difficult or impossible.

Secondly, all translation is completed through cooperation. Students are encouraged to discuss the translation task and work jointly in order to improve translation quality. Thirdly, students' creativity is highly valued. In the environment of workshop, the acquisition of knowledge is realized through students' active participating, thinking and constructing, in which creativity has an important role to play.

While its advantages widely recognized, its shortcomings, however, are also evident. For example, the exchange of idea between teacher and students, or among students is still confined to classroom setting; effective means of modern information sharing and use is still lacked; a gap still exists between classroom teaching and professional translation company operation. Considering this, it needs to be further improved.

## III. SUGGESTIONS

The focus of this study is on a web-based translation workshop platform with local economic characteristics, which is supposed to effectively improve the current translation cultivation and teaching mode in college.

### A. Teaching Mode

The development of computer technology and the popularity of the network quietly changed the work environment of translators. Electronic dictionary, computer-aided translation software, Internet search engine and the use of new tools and new resources such as web corpus have fully proved the change occurred in the field of translation. Under this environment, in order to adapt to the changing times and improve translation efficiency, it necessitates translators to explore the application of new technologies and techniques to the field of translation.

The web-based workshop platform to be discussed in this article is based on the theory of translation workshop. It needs a fixed place equipped with computers (preferably assisted translation software is installed), multimedia devices (such as projectors, etc.) and Internet connections (including indoor LAN), similar to the laboratory of science and engineering, able to meet the needs of small-scale discussion, report and presentation, and a variety of daily teaching, practice and exchange.

This platform distinguishes itself from non web-based translation workshop in the following ways. First, it has the function of Information storage and resource sharing. All translation-related information, terminology, students' translation works etc. can be stored in the platform, available for specific people via registering. Second, it has the function of information exchange. The platform provides a forum for students to hold real-time discussions, or make comments on or raise questions about the uploaded translated works. Provided there is an access to the Internet, the information exchange is unencumbered by the class time or classroom space. Third, it has the function of customers monitoring. After customers' to-be-translated material is uploaded to the platform, the first draft, second draft and final works of translation, as well as teachers' comments and suggestions can all be uploaded to the platform. Customers can view any of them if desired or needed. Thus, customers not only know

the progress, but also the process of the translation, so are more confident in the quality of the translation. This is a breakthrough compared with traditional translation operation in which customers only get a finalized translation but know little or nothing about the translation process.

From these it can be seen that the platform is a network translation environment rather than a traditional physical classroom setting. Under this environment, new technologies such as word processing, software applications, data storage and information retrieval can be realized, information or idea exchange among students and teacher is not restricted to classroom setting, and customers can monitor the whole process or progress of translation. Thus, in terms of teaching mode, it is a great improvement of traditional or non web-based translation workshop.

### *B. Cultivation Mode*

In today's society, disciplinary branch is getting smaller. It's simply impossible for any one to learn the knowledge in all fields. With this trend, translation cultivation is increasingly becoming application-and-specialization-oriented. Therefore, any cultivation program that aims at developing "universal translation professionals" capable of performing translation in any field is hardly realistic. Its students trained are either not solid enough in foreign language foundation, or too superficial in disciplinary literacy or mother tongue cultivation. A more realistic cultivation goal might be to train students to have solid foreign language foundation, profound mother tongue accomplishment, a good mastery of knowledge in "certain field" and some translation practice. To achieve this, one key issue is to position clearly "the certain field" in which students will work in the future, so that they know what professional knowledge and practice they need. Another issue is when the "certain field" is decided, how to distinguish one "certain field" in one college from another "certain field" in another college given the fact that translation is set as a major in more and more colleges across the country.

Our answer to both issues is "to relate and combine the 'certain field' with local economic characteristics" when deciding the curriculum. Basically, economy in different provinces or cities is not always the same. Therefore, the combination of "certain field" in curriculum with local economic characteristic makes it possible for translation majors in different locations to have their own features and advantages, and more importantly, conforms to the translation development trend of application and specialization. And even students want to learn more in other fields after graduation, this "certain field" could serve very well as a basis.

On the other hand, only through the development of local specialty courses in translation teaching can the trained personnel better serve the local economic construction. The southern Jiangxi, for example, rich in non-ferrous metals such as tungsten, rare earth reserve, enjoying the reputation of "world capital of tungsten" and "kingdom of rare earth", has tungsten and rare earth as its major feature of economy. During recent years, by actively promoting its industrial

restructuring and enhancing its sustainable development through technological innovation and industrial chain extension, southern Jiangxi is becoming increasingly close with the outside world and more urgent in the demand for nonferrous metallurgy foreign language professionals. For instance, only in the "China-Jiangxi (Ganzhou) Rare Earth & Tungsten Industrial Cooperation Meeting" held in Ganzhou in July 2010, over 50 interpreters and translators with rare earth and tungsten education background were needed and more were needed in the after-meeting visit. Southern Jiangxi is a region of long history cultural development. With its rich historic celebrity presence, Hakka culture and Soviet revolution history, an English translator without professional training will find himself incompetent in translating relevant material with unique local characteristics due to geographical differences.

Take Shanxi Province for another example, "the rapid socio-economic development of Shanxi in recent years has resulted in colorful international cooperation and exchange. High-quality and high-standard professional interpreters and translators qualified for the communication tasks, however, are very rare, far from meeting the actual translation needs. According to Shanxi's restructuring and surpassing positioning in its '12th five-Year plan' and an estimated future demand of at least 4000 applied professional translation talents, there is still a great shortage of translation talents, in particular the high-level translation talents [5].

Thus, the model of combining translation personnel training with local economic characteristics has broad applicability. Both colleges and local economy benefit from it. Colleges with translation major all over the country can distinguish their translation major by setting "the certain field" (or students' future professional field) in their translation curriculum according to the economic characteristics of the place where the universities locate, and local economy can have a stable and reliable talents pool for its development.

Textbooks, teachers, and practice bases can then be determined based on the cultivation program.

### *C. Platform Construction*

The construction of the platform first requires computers with network that have at least the function of text processing, software applications, information exchange, data storage, information retrieval and customer monitoring. So it should include the column of forum, sharing space, retrieval component, user management, and registration etc., which, technically, can be realized. Secondly, resources (software, information, terminology, etc.) based on students' future professional field need to be accumulated, in particular, professional and technical translation terminology library needs to be constructed and used so as to reduce resource (human or material resources ) consumption and enhance translation efficiency. Finally, in the run of the platform, the operation mode of formal business translation company can be copied, for example, accepting customers' assignment, signing a contract, determining the major translator, the first draft, and the second draft. This helps

students understand the management and operation of the translation company.

In short, the platform is in line with the developing trend of translation personnel cultivation because it is information- and practice-oriented in teaching mode, and specialization- and application-oriented in training mode.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Globalization is one of the most prominent features and trends of world development. In this context, the translation professionals become even more important. Application-oriented translation, involving many disciplines and industries, presently becomes the body of translation. With this trend, traditional translation teaching is facing the challenges brought about by high and new technology and can hardly meet the needs of the new situation. As a result, the student-centered and process-oriented translation workshop appeared. What's more, it has, while web-based, the function of word processing, software applications, information exchange, data storage, information retrieval and customer monitoring, is an application of emerging network technology in translation. Besides, to improve translation efficiency, the platform accumulates resources based on the economic characteristics of a certain places and attaches importance to professional and technical translation term base construction. To sum up, the platform is a useful exploration of the way of university graduates serving local economy and also serves as an example for other application-oriented talents cultivation.

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