

A Commentary on Career-oriented Translation Classes and TBL Translation Practice

職業導向的翻譯課程和 TBL 翻譯實作之評論

應芳瑜

弘光科大國際溝通英語系助理教授兼語言中心組長

I. A Commentary on Career-oriented Translation Classes

A. Translation Classes for Master's Degree Programs in Translation

In general, professional and career-oriented translation classes are offered in master's degree programs in translation. Most of these programs are two or three years. For example, the two-year master's program in Chinese-English translating at Heriot-Watt University provides students with in-depth training in the skills and techniques used by professional translators.¹ Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey offers three programs—a Master of Arts in Translation, a Master of Arts in Translation and Interpretation, and a Master of Arts in Conference Interpretation.² University of Bath has a master's degree program in translation with business interpreting which is business-oriented and focuses on written translation from English to Chinese and Chinese to English, as well as business interpreting between English and Chinese.³ However, translation classes are taught by English teachers in some master's degree programs at certain universities. Can English teachers teach translation classes? To be more specific, English teachers must have experience in translating a variety of documents in order to teach translation classes. Translation is a profession and it is different from English teaching and learning (ELT). It requires comprehensive knowledge in different fields and industries. On the one hand, most translation classes, especially hands-on or practical translation classes in this kind of program, should be taught by professionals in translation industry. For example, professors who are translators or have a master's degree in translation, such as Jean Boase-Beier, Christine Calfoglou, and Antoinette Fawcett, taught these classes (Fawcett, García, & Parker, 2010). On the other hand, theoretical translation classes

¹ The information is derived from Heriot Watt University at <https://www.hw.ac.uk/uk/study/postgraduate/chinese-english-interpreting-and-translating-2-years.htm>.

² The information is derived from Middlebury Institute of International Studies at <https://www.middlebury.edu/institute/academics/degree-programs/translation-interpretation>.

³ The information is derived from University of Bath at [https://www.bath.ac.uk/courses/postgraduate-2020/taught-postgraduate-courses/ma-translation-with-business-interpreting-chinese-full-time/?utm_source=findamasters&utm_campaign=bpid\[68\]&utm_medium=featlisting&utm_content=textLink](https://www.bath.ac.uk/courses/postgraduate-2020/taught-postgraduate-courses/ma-translation-with-business-interpreting-chinese-full-time/?utm_source=findamasters&utm_campaign=bpid[68]&utm_medium=featlisting&utm_content=textLink).

can be taught by professors in translation theories. In short, master's degree programs in translation ought to be strictly career-oriented in order to enable students to become professional translators.

There are some necessary requirements for students to become knowledgeable and professional translators or interpreters. Torres-Simon and Pym (2019) in their article, "European Masters in Translation: A Comparative Study," indicated that a C1 level in English is a national requisite to access any British degree. An entry requirement of a C1 level (IELTS 7.0)⁴ allows students to have essential language ability on which scaffolding strategies can be applied to equipping students with key professional translation skills. Moreover, to gain a practical foundation in translating, students have to learn how to use computer aided translation (CAT) software as the trend goes. Some industries offer full-time or freelance translation jobs in which subtitling and audio-visual translation are mostly required. How to use CAT tools can be included in translation classes. Apart from these skills, students have to use different approaches to translate when coping with different professional contexts from different fields and industries. In the end, students also have to know how to interact with clients if they choose to become freelance translators. Client-dealing classes may be the last layer of the scaffolding in the course design for master's programs in translation. In conclusion, students in translation graduate programs ought to take more career-oriented translation classes by which they are channeled to the professional translation jobs.

In Taiwan, there are master's degree programs in translation and interpretation. For example, NTNU GITI (Graduate Institute of Translation and Interpretation) is the first master's program in Taiwan. It trains translators and interpreters and focuses on research on the translation of Chinese classics and local masterpieces. Faculty members in NTNU GITI include scholars and experts from different disciplines and professions.⁵ NTNU GITI students have great freedom to choose from a wide variety of courses, specializing in translating texts in two of these four areas: "science and technology; law and politics; economy and commerce; and literature."⁶ Another national university's translation graduate program, NCUE GITI, also offers professional translation courses, specializing in these five areas: humanities and history, finance and commerce, diplomacy, law and politics, and social sciences. These areas in both NTNU GITI and NCUE GITI seem to cover most industries and

⁴ This is based on IELTS at <https://www.ielts.org/ielts-for-organisations/common-european-framework>

⁵ The information is derived from NTNU at <http://en.ntnu.edu.tw/p-Translation.php>.

⁶ Ibid.

sectors. According to U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the largest employers of interpreters and translators in 2018 were from professional, scientific, and technical services, which account for 33%.⁷ Self-employed interpreters and translators account for 22%, educational services 18%, hospitals 8%, and government 6%.⁸ Based on Mary Ziegler's report on Innerbody Research, self-employed interpreters and translators are usually well established in the field and work for several facilities on a freelance basis (2018). She also noted that the "majority of hospital interpreters are employed by hospitals or interpretation agencies" (2018). In this regards, it seems hospital interpreter jobs are relatively more stable because interpreters are hired by hospitals and they don't have to encounter the risks of freelancing, such as unstable income and no permanent employee benefits. Moreover, practice makes perfect. Hospital interpreters can interpret accurately when they have enough experience, so can company-employed or government-employed interpreters. In short, GITI students who are interested in hospital interpreter jobs can take more translation classes about medical expertise and seek opportunities to serve an interpreting internship offered by hospitals. Similarly, this career-oriented suggestion applies to students who are interested in other industries, fields, or sectors.

B. Translation Classes for English Majors at Undergraduate Level

Unlike the translation classes in the master's degree programs in translation that prepare students to become professional translators, the translation classes for English majors are selective classes for those who are interested in translation. In Taiwan, some universities offer selective translation classes, for example, the department of foreign languages and literatures of National Taiwan University offers interpretation theory and skill classes and translation and practice classes.⁹ The department of English of National Taiwan Normal University offers fundamental English interpretation classes, financial English translation classes, and Chinese-English translation classes.¹⁰ The department of foreign languages and literature of National Sun Yat-sen University offers several kinds of translation classes—translating English texts into Chinese classes, translating Chinese texts into English classes, a translating journalistic writing class, a literary translation class, a Taiwanese literature translation

⁷ The information is derived from U.S. Bureau of Labor at <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/media-and-communication/interpreters-and-translators.htm#tab-3>.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ The information is derived from NTU at http://www.forex.ntu.edu.tw/undergraduate_curriculum/?lang=en.

¹⁰ The information is derived from NTNU at <https://www.eng.ntnu.edu.tw/index.php/ba-courses/>.

class, a fundamental oral interpretation class, and an advanced oral interpretation class.¹¹ In view of these class structures for English majors, translation skills are still considered to be part of the primary competences that English majors in Taiwan ought to acquire.

Moreover, learning how to meet the needs of these students in translation classes may need a pre-class survey. First, what are the students' English proficiency levels? What are their CEFR levels? Why do they want to take the translation class? Do they have experience in translation? How well can they translate? Are they better at source language or at target language? Is this the first time they take a translation class? How do they choose the words in the target language when translating the source language? Do they want to learn computer aided translation (CAT)? There are tons of questions for a teacher who prepares to teach a translation class for English majors. Some researchers attempted to design new classes for teaching translation in order to deal with these issues. Fabio Alves analyzed students' problem-solving and decision-making in translation (2007). Sin-wai Chan developed a new curriculum for the teaching of translation technology (2010). Luo Xuejuan created a course design of CAT for undergraduate English majors (2010). In short, the translation classes for English majors is an introductory course which helps students to learn basic translation skills and the sentence structures of source language and target language.

II. A Commentary on TBL Translation Practice in a Translation Class for Undergraduates

A. A TBL Approach in a Translation Class for English Majors in Hungkuang University

In consideration of the status quo of the translation classes that are taught in master's programs in translation and in undergraduate programs for English majors, this commentary expounds on a classroom observation that presents a task-based learning (TBL) approach in a translation class for English majors. The translation class is combined with a project which aims to make students consciously take an active role in their learning through the practice-oriented or so-called hands-on course design. Students in this class were grouped according to their wishes to practice translating assigned documents and correct another group's translations in class. Students applied the knowledge they had learned from the teacher to practice doing

¹¹ The information is derived from NSYU at http://www.zephyr.nsysu.edu.tw/course/super_pages.php?ID=course3.

translation exercises and correcting another group's translation assignments. In so doing, students found the differences between their own translations and another group's when correcting their peers' assignments. At last, they consulted the teacher about how they could improve. The teacher, who had worked as a freelance translator for years, delivered a short lecture on translation skills and then gave students half of class time to do their translation assignments in class. The topics of translation exercises varied widely so that students could practice translating many types of contents in order to understand what a professional translator is expected in real work settings.

Through the on-site observation of the class, the TBL features are shown as follows:

1. The teacher provided teaching materials of different genres and topics for students to learn and practice translating in order to enhance students' understanding of different genres and topics (e.g., news, recipes, manuals, business, etc.).
2. Team briefings were conducted in order to develop teamwork communication and how to assign translation tasks as freelance translators do.
3. The teacher instructed these students and pinpointed their mistakes or inadequacies in the process of group briefing about their co-created translation assignments.
4. Each group handed in their translation assignment and consulted the teacher about how to improve the quality of their translations, such as, sentence structures of source and target languages, the use of parts of speech, etc.

B. A Reflection on the Classroom Observation

The following inferences are drawn from the classroom observation:

1. Various problems in the translation of source and target language sentences that students encounter during translation can be solved by means of team translation activities and in-class consultations.
2. Learning environments vary over time and from classroom to classroom. Nowadays, most students have smart phones and use them to google what they want to know at any time. Gradually, students feel that they need to learn, do, and ask. The role of the teacher may be transformed into an in-class consultant, assigning tasks to groups of students and giving them advice. In this translation

- class, the teacher pointed out the pros and cons of students' classwork when grading it.
3. The hands-on method or learning-by-doing approach may be another change of classroom teaching in translation classes. The ratio of classroom lectures to student practice can be set as 1 to 1, i.e., one period¹² of lecture and one period¹³ of translation practice in a two-hour translation class per week.
 4. The Department of English belongs to the College of Liberal Arts; for this reason, it is generally believed that it may not offer many practical exercises or hands-on activities. But the teacher can give easier assignments or quizzes to let students try them out at the beginning of a semester in order to understand their acceptance and how well they finish the assignments. If ninety percent of students can complete the first assignment or test successfully, the teacher can continue to follow this strategy. If not, it must be adjusted based on students' responses.
 5. The last inference is the teacher who taught this translation class had taught these students since they were freshmen and both of them were very close. Moreover, these students had adapted to the teacher's teaching methods. These students gave this teacher an almost 5 in their assessments in teaching and learning for this class.

With all these inferences in mind, understanding students is the most important consideration of teaching, and it is the primary work that teachers may have to do in the translation class design. Besides, master's degree programs in translation and interpretation may have to cater to the translation needs of various industries and what a translator or interpreter is expected by these industries. After all, translation and interpreting graduates have to find a professional job in the real world after graduation. Professional translation classes may have to link to the job descriptions of the interpreters and translators in the job market.

References

- Alves, F. (2007). Cognitive effort and contextual effect in translation: A relevance theoretic approach. *Journal of Translation Studies*. 10(1), 57-76.

¹² It refers to a division of time in the day when a subject is taught in school.

¹³ Ibid.

- Chan, S. W. (2010). A new curriculum for the teaching of translation technology: The teaching of a translation project course as a case. *Journal of Translation Studies*, 13(1&2), 83-154.

- Fawcett, A., García, K. L., & Parker, R. A. (Eds.). (2010). *Translation: Theory and practice in dialogue*. New York, NY: Continuum.

- Luo, X. J. (2010). The course design of CAT for undergraduate English majors of Sun Yat-sen University. *Journal of Translation Studies*, 13(1&2), 251-272.

- Sawyer, D. B., Austermühl, F., & Raído, V. E. (Eds.). (2019). *The evolving curriculum in interpreter and translator education*. New York, NY: John Benjamins.

- Torres-Simon, E., & Pym, A. (2019). European masters in translation: A comparative study. In D. B. Sawyer, F. Austermühl, & V. E. Raído (Eds.), *The evolving curriculum in interpreter and translator education* (pp. 75-98). New York, NY: John Benjamins.

- Ziegler, M. *What does a hospital interpreter do?* Dec. 11, 2018 Retrieved from <https://www.innerbody.com/careers-in-health/how-to-become-a-hospital-interpreter>.

