Construction and Application of the Translation Teaching Model for MTI from the Perspective of Digital Humanities

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Abstract: With the deep integration of science and technology and humanities, great changes have taken place in the ways that human beings contact and learn. Digital humanities are an interdisciplinary and extended field, dealing with digital versions of knowledge products and helping to enhance and transform humanities and social science research. With the principles of practice-driven, process-oriented, cooperation-supported, and interaction-enhanced, the translation practical training and teaching platform has been developed. A translation-project-centered translation teaching model for MTI has been established with the Project-Based Learning theory based on the translation practical training and teaching platform. Students-centered and translation-projects-based, the processes of homework, including selecting, assigning, completing, correcting, and feedback, are well-organized in and out of class in this teaching model, which facilitates the transition of students from passive receivers to active constructors. The aim is to comprehensively improve students’ competence in translation and provide favorable conditions for cultivating professional translators with expertise. Effect test has been down and the result presents that there is a great improvement for students with the operation of the translation-project-centered translation teaching model, and both teachers and students have positive evaluation for it.

Keywords: Digital humanities, translation teaching model, MTI, translation projects.

1. Introduction

The deep integration of science and technology and humanities changes the ways that human beings contact and learn. With digital humanities people can reflect on and explore the possibilities of the humanities from a broader perspective. The training of modern language service personnel should follow the development of modern society, and the daily business of translators needs to be supported by the technological tools of the new era, especially in the context of big data and artificial intelligence where international information flux is growing exponentially[1].

In recent years, the program of Master of Interpreting and Translation (MTI) in China has been developing rapidly, and more than 300 universities run the MTI program. In the pre-digitalization era, most of classes tend to follow the traditional teaching paradigm for the training of students in the program. The traditional teaching paradigm focuses on presenting information, indicating that teaching contents can only be presented by the teacher’s initiative and the teacher’s teaching is preferred to students’ learning, which is a kind of receptive learning with low subjectivity of students[2]. A considerable part of its curriculum and teaching methods is more academic and theoretical than practical and applied, which makes it difficult for graduates to immediately engage in professional translation[3]. The traditional teaching mode finds it hard to meet the requirements of the language service market.

The rapid growth of digital humanities has brought new opportunities for translation teaching and talent training in the MTI program. Digital humanities is an extended domain, handling digitized versions of knowledge products in the arts, human and sciences[4]. Based on digital humanities, the new translation teaching model is student-centered, establishing a bridge between teachers and students conveniently and efficiently. It is a significant experiment in applying digital humanities technology to the teaching of translation with the advantages of strengthening practical skills, expanding teaching resources, and realizing personalized learning in the new era.

According to the functionalist ideas in the 1970s, the ideal competence in translation is the one that practitioners perform in the translation workplace [5]. Developing translation practices centering translation projects helps build students’ professional competence in translation[6]. The translation teaching model, therefore, needs to be built following the working model of translation practitioners, that is to say, centering on translation projects. This research will establish a project-centered translation teaching model based on the translation practical training and teaching platform, aiming to comprehensively improve students’ competence in translation and provide favorable conditions for cultivating professional translators with expertise.

2. Current Status

Digital humanities are an interdisciplinary field of study that integrates knowledge of humanities, data collection and analysis techniques, cyberinfrastructure, and algorithmic modeling to examine how digital technologies can be used to enhance and transform humanities and social science research[7]. The continuous development of science and technology has provided great opportunities for the growth of digital humanities, which play an important role in leading and empowering the development of a new paradigm for foreign language research and the promotion of “digital intelligence” in foreign language education[8]. Scholars have proved that the development of digital humanities in education is both necessary and feasible, and it is proposed to gradually improve the digital humanities education system by putting students at the center place[9]. However, there still exists some other problems.
(1) There is a lack of construction on MTI translation teaching model. The current research on translation teaching from the perspective of digital humanities is still insufficient, paying less focus to the construction of the translation teaching model. Most of the research on translation teaching, however, focuses on undergraduate translation teaching, and the researches on MTI translation teaching mainly center on translation ability. How to effectively combine digital humanities and MTI translation teaching needs to be carefully thought about. Chai Mingqiong and Wang Jing (2017)[10] made an exploration of the construction of a corpus for MTI translation teaching. Jiang Qian and Tao Youlan (2018) [11] discussed the application of the “flipped classroom” model in MTI translation theory course, and analyze the actual effect of flipped classroom. Liu Bingdong and Cao Lingmei (2021) [12] constructed a new college translation teaching model based on the application of corpus, and the teaching practice of the new model demonstrated the advantages of improving students’ level of English expression, diversifying teaching methods, and increasing students’ interest in learning translation. Wang Yuhua (2023) [13] conducted a survey that shows that using artificial intelligence technology in college education practice would have an important impact on the development of future translators’ key competence. Yu jing (2024) [14] pointed out that developing the core competences of MTI students around the skills that human translators excel at and being different from those of AI translators, is the key to the current reform of MTI teaching, thus paying attention to the ability of transcreation.

(2) Some constraints fail to be avoided in a traditional translation teaching mode. The teacher-centered teaching model focuses on the imparting of knowledge, emphasizes final results, and lacks interaction between teachers and students. Zhang Shidong, Jin Hongli, & Sun Pengfei (2020) [15] explored existing problems in multimedia-assisted education and found that the traditional teaching system follows the “teacher-centered” model, which is inefficient in the cultivation of students’ comprehensive competence in translation. In terms of pedagogical efficiency and development potential, the teaching paradigm of presenting information suffers from the excessive differences between teaching and learning, and it is difficult for an individual student to receive target teaching and unlikely to make a breakthrough in this paradigm in a short term.

(3) The current teaching content does not match the objectives of cultivating professional translators and the requirements of the language service market. Most of the teaching content in traditional translation teaching is chosen from translation textbooks. The capacity of the textbooks, however, is limited, which makes it difficult to cover the vocational requirements of society for translators in specialized fields (e.g., finance, medicine, mechanics, etc.), leaving a huge gap between the usual practice and professionalized translation projects[16]. Some scholars point out that the awareness of translation technology teaching in the current translation teaching model is weak, putting forward suggestions and countermeasures [17].

3. The Development of Translation Practical Training and Teaching Platform

3.1. Target
Since the 21st century, translation has been characterized by globalization, informatization, technologization, and professionalization, highlighting the importance of the technical ability of translation. Firstly, the development of this platform helps to lay the foundation for awareness of using translation technology and the improvement of translation competence, and for keeping teaching activities on track. Secondly, this translation practical training and teaching platform is utilized to achieve the purpose of advancing the efficiency of communication between teachers and students. Thirdly, it serves to realize the goal of providing favorable conditions for the cultivation of professional translators who are specialized, keeping up with the times, and in line with the requirements of the language service market.

3.2. Principles
Adhering to the principle of practice-driven, process-oriented, cooperation-supported, and interaction-enhanced, the platform naturally integrates the translators’ professionalism and the awareness of applying translation technology into the course, putting students at the center place and providing strong support for teaching.

3.2.1. Practice-Driven
This principle means to promote learning, consolidating, applying, and reflecting through consistent practices. Homework is an indispensable part of teaching activities, for one thing, it allows students to make application of knowledge, engage in deep thinking, and accumulate new things, achieving the effect of “learning by doing”, for the other, it helps students to test their own learning and teachers to check students’ learning.

Unlike the translation exercises that students do daily, the homework here mainly refers to translation projects, which will provide a translation situation for them. There are advantages of resorting to translation projects: (1) the realistic career experiences allow students to be familiar with the translation market; (2) project-based translation teaching transform the cultivation of translation competence from an abstract concept into a series of operable, comparable, and quantifiable indicators, precisely improving the competence; (3) completed translation projects will further improve the corpus, and the long-term accumulation will achieve the empowerment of translators and the recycling of linguistic assets[18]. Translators need to produce translations according to the client’s commission and requirements within a given time, and at the same time, to consider the acceptance of the audience. By completing the translation tasks or projects of moderate difficulty based on the requirements, students will perceive the differences between the work of professional translators and daily translation exercises, and get familiar with the working mode. Through practice, specific learning situations can be created, and students’ meaningful and active construction of knowledge can be facilitated.

3.2.2. Cooperation-supported
The principle here refers to that the translation projects are completed through both the cooperation between teachers and students and among students. Since translation projects belong to different levels of difficulty, there are more than one
way to complete the projects. As for these less difficult projects with comparative less words and easier understanding theme, students are required to finish them on their own. Students need to resubmit the projects after receiving teachers’ correction and making the refinement. As for those more challenging one, students are automatically divided into several groups (3-5 students) on the platform to finish the project together. In the group, each member has his or her own specific role, and will participate in with responsibilities and belonging to the group. A group discussion is encouraged to solve the problems that each student may encounter when completing their respective part of project. Once each one in the group has finished his or her part, students can move on to a mutual revision session, where members give advice to each other, and then revising and completing the whole project. The whole process allows these students in a group to work together as a learning community.

3.2.3. Process-Oriented
Translating emphasizes refining over and over again, and excellent translations cannot be accomplished overnight. This principle indicates that teachers and students provide their opinions and ideas to each other in the whole process of selecting, assigning, completing, correcting, and feedback on translation projects, and then students need to revise and submit their translations for the second time, which stresses the development of students and gradualness of learning. When it comes to the stage of assessment, the revised translations should be referred to when grading students’ work, which can encourage students to improve themselves constantly. Other factors, including the completion of projects, the innovative use of translation skills, the ability to operate computer-aided translation (CAT) tools, the quality of the revised translations, and students’ mutual evaluation, should also be taken into account, aiming to improve students’ participation and promote their sustainable development.

3.2.4. Interaction-Enhanced
It enhances communication between teachers and students and between students and students, which on the one hand, promotes students’ common progress, and on the other hand, facilitates teachers’ adjustment of teaching. Students are encouraged to leave as many traces as possible when completing projects, such as their thinking during the completion, the new knowledge they obtained, and the difficulties they encountered. All these are recorded in the comment column of corresponding sentences so that teachers can have a more comprehensive understanding of students’ works and their thinking processes when correcting. When it is found that students do a good job in their translation and their ideas are relatively novel, the teacher can mark the relevant knowledge next to the corresponding places to stimulate their further thinking. Teachers’ recognition and praise also needed to be written down, from which students obtain a sense of achievement and generate internal motivation to inspire their continuous pursuit of translation. If students fail to achieve a good result, the teacher may give some tips, skills, and some encouragement for them. Students should think carefully and revise their translations according to the teacher’s comments, mark their revision ideas in the resubmitted translations, ask questions in the corresponding comments column if they are still confused, and reflect on their new ideas in the comment column.

For the difficult points arising in the translation project, the teacher can first explain them in class, and then upload the well-translated versions of students’ assignments to the teaching platform. The discussion board is open for students to discuss, helping students learn from each other and reflect on themselves. This section will help students understand how a translation that meets the requirements should look like, and compare their translations with the typical one to find room for improvement.

According to Kościałkowska-Okońska, the “professionalism of the translator is expressed in his/her education, experience acquired and accumulated, as well as effective utilization of such auxiliary “equipment” as computer technologies, CAT tools or dictionaries”[19]. The course rationality integrates these factors into practices to cultivate students’ professionalism as translators, and to prepare them to become professional translators.

3.3. Construction of the Platform
The “PIGAIWANG” website is a cloud-based online service for the automatic correction of English composition or translation, which instantly generates scores and content analysis by calculating the distance between their assignments and the standard corpus. It helps to initially correct the translation projects submitted by students on grammar, collocation, etc. Teachers can review these translation projects on the platform and provide additional comments on the translation.

The translation teaching corpus is built according to different industries. According to a translation market demand survey, the top five sectors in need of translation services are finance and management, law, medicine, electro-mechanics, and gaming[20]. In order to meet the demand of the translation market and prepare for cultivating professional translators, the sub-corpora are built into five categories including finance and management, law, medicine, electro-mechanics, and gaming. For teachers, the corpus will help them to judge the levels of difficulty of translation projects by analyzing the features of utterances in the text, the proportion of the long and difficult sentences, the discourse, and so on, which is beneficial for students’ targeted learning. For students, they can search in the corresponding sub-corpus to obtain the most adopted translation of terms, and deeply understand and analyze the linguistic knowledge of each sector, so as to summarize the translation skills and contents, apply them in the subsequent translation projects, and improve their competence in translation.

Based on the “PIGAIWANG” website and translation teaching corpus, the translation practical training and teaching platform is constructed. Combining practical training with teaching, the platform intends to create a working scenario of professional translators for MTI students and provide a platform for translation practice. Besides, the functions of teaching, correction, and feedback are also available, making it possible for students and teachers to communicate and make progress together. In the early stage, students mainly complete translation projects on their own, and in the middle and later stages, the use of computer-aided translation tools is added to enhance the student’s awareness of the application of technological tools and improve their translation efficiency.

In addition, the platform has set up an error categorization board, which is convenient for teachers to mark the types of errors made by students in their projects. The problems that the courses make are divided into common and individualized problems. After checking students’ annotations and better understanding their thinking processes, teachers can highlight the common problems that occur in most of the students’
translations, and later explain them in the class. If it is a personalized problem, the teacher should first determine whether the errors are caused by improper mastery and application of knowledge and skills, or by carelessness. For the former, the teacher can explain it in the comment column. The comment column can be equipped with a recording function so that the teacher can directly record the explanation for a certain error. For the latter, the teacher can just mark the type of error and let students correct themselves after class.


4.1. Project-Based Learning

Project-based learning (PBL) refers to teaching activities that are grounded in curriculum standards and promote group collaboration to investigate real-world problems, and the aim is to facilitate the acquisition of core concepts and principles related to the subject matter, foster innovative thinking, and develop specific subject skills. There are five essential features of project-based learning: collaborative learning, research learning, organizing learning activities from problem-solving, learning from authentic projects, and evaluating through both process and results[21]. In other words, under the guidance of project-based learning, the translation teaching model will effectively develop students’ practical ability, problem consciousness, cooperative spirit, and innovative thinking. Since constructivism is an important theoretical basis for project-based learning, students are organized to use what they have learned to think about and explore authentic translation projects. The translation teaching model here is guided to change from teacher-centered to student-centered, and students transform from passive recipients of knowledge in traditional teaching to active constructors.

The project-based learning is positively applied in language teaching and translation. A model called the 10Cs of project-based learning TESOL curriculum is designed for the second language learning context [22]. Besides, the projects are divided into two types namely translation-oriented and research-oriented projects, and project-based learning is incorporated into the teaching of business English in the Chinese context, serving as an easy reference for teachers who may be interested in applying it in their teaching[23]. Based on the literature review, project-based learning is feasible for foreign language teaching and has the advantages of promoting language and content learning, developing personal qualities, and fostering intercultural communication skills[24].

4.2. Construction of a Translation-projects-Centered Translation Teaching Model for MTI

Under the guidance of the project-based learning theory, this research builds a translation-projects-centered translation teaching model based on the translation practical training and teaching platform (Graph 1). The platform is designed to enable students to integrate their knowledge in and out of the class, achieving an interconnected and efficient process of teaching and learning.

The whole process is divided into selecting, assigning, completing, correcting, and feedback. The first two links are completed in class, which makes a full preparation for the completion of translation projects and answers students’ questions. The next two links are completed outside the classroom, allowing students to complete translation projects and teachers provide appropriate suggestions. The last link is conducted both in the classroom and outside the classroom.
which promotes communication between teachers and students. The whole process is centered on translation projects, aiming to improve the students’ translation competence and to lay a foundation for students to become professional translators with expertise.

4.3. Application of the Translation-projects-Centered Translation Teaching Model for MTI

To verify the effect of the MTI translation teaching model, we have carried out a relevant teaching experiment. The experiment selected the first-year students of MTI at the University of South China, 15 in total. They were students of one class and taught by the same teacher. A semester-long teaching experiment was carried out on them, which was guided by the translation-projects-centered translation teaching model, based on the translation practical training and teaching platform. In the teaching process, the teacher assigns translation projects on different topics according to the teaching plan and conducts lectures based on the selecting, assigning, completing, correcting, and feedback of the translation projects. The teaching process is as follows.

4.3.1. In Class

In the class, the teacher mainly selects, assigns, and gives feedback on the translation project. As mentioned earlier, the translation project is real-life oriented, which is conducive to promoting students’ initiative to apply their knowledge and accumulate translation experiences. Translation projects should include as many different types as possible and be categorized, either according to the genre of the material, such as novels, prose, application essays, and expository essays, or according to the subject matter, such as science and technology, economics, medicine, and so on. Different types of materials help to broaden students’ horizons and enhance their knowledge base. The assignment of the project needs to be done by considering the difficulty of the materials according to these classifications and the current level of the students. In addition, translation projects of the same genre or subject matter should appear consecutively, so that students can practice sufficiently, gradually find the common features and ways of dealing with such materials, and accumulate experiences through trial and mistake. They can react quickly when they encounter similar materials in the future and produce approving translations that meet clients’ needs.

Assigning projects to students is a process of helping students fully understand the requirements of the translation project as well as the required form of translation, which helps students gradually adapt to the procedure of completing a professionalized translation project. Ignoring or misinterpreting some elements outside the text can sometimes lead to major errors in understanding the information in the original text, in selecting the information, and in choosing the style of the translation, causing failure of the translation to realize the client’s intention (Gong Rui, 2022). Teachers, therefore, should make efforts to assign students projects they have already completed and make pre-translation prompts for students based on a deep understanding of the original text and its requirements.

Written comments on assignments are generally outline-type, mainly reflecting the problem based on the text level and supplemented by some of the students’ notes, which are not enough to allow teachers to fully understand the thinking process of the students; in turn, the teacher’s comments may also fail to help students to deeply realize their problems, therefore, face-to-face projects explanations in class are very necessary [25]. In response to common problems, the teacher explains and summarizes the main points of this knowledge, and asks students to consolidate and complete targeted practice in class. In the question-and-answer session, students ask their remaining questions, which may provide teachers with new ideas for teaching.

4.3.2. Out of Class

Students work on the assignments set by the teacher after class, which are uploaded and then corrected by the teacher for feedback. Students may be not used to authentic translation projects when they are initially exposed to them. Sometimes, the content may be specialized, requiring consistency in the translation of terminology. In this case, teachers should encourage students to collect information, think positively, and complete the project independently. When students are more familiar with projects, they can be allowed to use tools to assist with translation. For example, the use of monolingual corpora can largely improve students’ efficiency and accuracy, and maintain consistency of translations. Students’ gradual exposure to computer-aided translation tools can also develop their awareness of the application of translation technology. Students need to check whether the translation meets the client’s requirements and whether the audience can smoothly read and understand the translation when projects have been completed.

The translation project correction is an important part of teaching activities, which also belongs to the teacher’s pre-course preparation. It provides an important channel for teachers to learn about the degree of mastery of students’ knowledge and the use of skills, which relates to the teacher’s teaching contents and teaching progress. On the one hand, there is an overall quality assessment of students’ translations. When correcting students’ work in the translation teaching platform, the teacher pays attention to both the details and the big picture and focuses on whether there is any deviation in the overall direction of the translation. On the other hand, there are error diagnoses and categorizations. There are many possible errors that students may make, such as basic problems, readability problems, pragmatic problems, accuracy problems, and terminology specialization problems. In the correcting process, the teacher can mark the type of errors according to the “error types”, helping students engage in specific practices later.

One of the benefits of teaching translation based on the translation practical training and teaching platform is that feedback from students and teachers can be sent to each other instantly. Opinions and thoughts are included in the projects, resembling a real-time dialog between teachers and students during the correction process. After receiving comments from the teacher, students carefully revise the translations according to the teacher’s comments and then submit the translations for the second time. This two-way feedback process promotes teacher-student communication efficiently and gives students ample room for development.

4.4. Effect Test of the Translation-Projects-Based Translation Teaching Model for MTI

The effect test of the teaching model is divided into three parts: firstly, the differences between the students’ test scores before the implementation of the MTI translation teaching
model and their test scores at the end of the semester; secondly, the self-assessment of their learning during the semester; thirdly, the comprehensive evaluation by teachers, taking into account the scores of the regular translation projects, the performance of the interaction, involvement in class discussion and so on.

In the test, passages of approximately 500 words with similar style and difficulty were selected and students needed to translate them and then upload them onto the translation practical training and teaching platform. Students were required to take the test once at the beginning of receiving the translation teaching model (pre-test) and then again at the end of the semester (post-test), and the scores of the two tests were recorded respectively. The SPSS25.0 is utilized to record and analyze students’ scores in both pretest and post-test (hundred-mark system, with the scores taken to one decimal place). The result is presented in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Pre/Post-test</th>
<th>Mean value</th>
<th>Std. deviation</th>
<th>T value</th>
<th>Degree of freedom</th>
<th>P value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Pretest</td>
<td>79.467</td>
<td>3.8502</td>
<td>-2.179</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>0.018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Post-test</td>
<td>86.333</td>
<td>1.6973</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It can be seen in Table 1 that there is a significant difference between the pretest scores and post-test scores (p<0.05), presenting an improvement in the post-test score, which demonstrates that the translation-projects-centered translation teaching model based on the translation practical training and teaching platform is conducive to improving students’ translation competence.

According to students’ self-assessment, students show a positive evaluation and a high degree of recognition of the MTI translation teaching model, believing that the practical training and teaching platform has largely improved the efficiency of their submission of the translation projects, and deepened the communication and interaction between them and teachers. Guided by the teacher, they have more opportunities to engage in translation projects, apply translation knowledge they have learned, and continuously complete their knowledge structure in the course. Besides, they are more likely to adapt the mode of professionalized translation projects.

The comprehensive evaluation of teachers shows that compared with the traditional teaching model, the MTI translation teaching model greatly facilitates both teachers and students. They say that in-class and out-of-class activities are well organized through the operation of the translation teaching model, in which timely communication is facilitated in the process of teachers’ correction and students’ resubmission. Teachers can make their courses more targeted, feel more passionate, and have a greater sense of achievement. Moreover, this translation teaching model puts students at the center and teachers at the lead, which is favorable for cultivating students’ independent learning ability and problem-solving abilities, stimulating them to form self-driven force and creativity, and creating good conditions for cultivating professional translators.

5. Conclusion

The MTI translation teaching model from the perspective of digital humanities taking translation projects as the core, is based on the translation practical training and teaching platform, emphasizes student-centeredness, reasonably allocates a series of teaching links in and out of the classroom, provides the teacher and the students opportunities to communicate, and contextualizes learning, contributing to allow students actively construct their knowledge frameworks in the continuous fusion of the existing knowledge and the new knowledge. Through application and effect test, the translation-projects-centered translation teaching model is feasible to improve student’s translation competence and improve their awareness of cooperation. In the era of rapid development of digital humanities, such a translation teaching model not only gives full play to the advantages of digital technology but also provides favorable conditions for MTI students to develop into professional translators with both expertise and keeping pace with the times. Students are encouraged to move from passive receivers to active constructors. Translation is an applied discipline and constant practice is the way to improve. It is needed to realize that there is no best translation, but a better one. Observing reference translations in the process of learning translation is far from enough to improve translation competence, which merely gives us a high standard of reference. Only by consolidating knowledge, scrutinizing, analyzing mistakes and reasons, summarizing, thinking creatively, and promoting self-improvement with a strong self-driven force in the process of countless practices can students gradually obtain the desired competence in translation and become professional translators.

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