

Innovating Translation Pedagogy: Maximizing Teaching Effectiveness by Focusing on Cognitive Study

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Abstract : This paper aims at synthesizing the difficulties in cognitive processes faced by translation majors in mainland China. The purpose is to develop possible solutions and innovation in terms of translation pedagogy, curriculum reform, and syllabus design. This research will base its analysis on students' instant feedback and interview after training in translation and interpreting courses, and translation faculty's teaching experiences. This research will take our translation majors as the starting point, who will be one of the focus groups. At present, our Applied Translation Studies Programme is offering translation courses in the following areas: practical translation and interpreting, translation theories, culture and translation, and internship. It is a four-year translation programme, and our students would start their introductory courses since Semester 1 of Year 1. The medium of instruction of our College is solely in English. In general, our students' competency in English is strong. Yet in translation and especially interpreting classes, no matter it is students' first attempt or students who have taken university English courses, students find class practices very challenging, if not mission impossible. Their biggest learning problem seems to be weakening cognitive processes in terms of lack of intercultural competence, incomprehension of English language and foreign cultures, inadequate aptitude and slow reaction, and inapt to utilize one's vocabulary bank etc. This being so, the research questions include: (1) What specific and common cognitive difficulties are students facing while learning translation and interpreting? (2) How to deal with such difficulties, and what implications can be drawn on curriculum reform and syllabus design in translation? (3) How significant should cognitive study be placed on translation curriculum, i.e., the proportion of cognitive study in translation/interpreting courses and in translation major curriculum? and (4) What can we as translation educators do to maximize teaching and learning effectiveness by incorporating the latest development of cognitive study?. We have collected translation students' instant feedback and conduct interviews with both students and teaching staff, in order to draw parallels as well as distinguishing from our own current teaching practices at United International College (UIC). We have collected 500 questionnaires for now. The main learning difficulties include: poor vocabulary bank, lack of listening and reading comprehension skills in terms of not fully understanding the subtext, aptitude in translation and interpreting etc. This being so, we propose to reform and revitalize translation curriculum and syllabi to address to these difficulties. The aim is to maximize teaching effectiveness in translation by addressing the above-mentioned questions with a special focus on cognitive difficulties faced by translation majors.

Keywords : cognitive difficulties, teaching and learning effectiveness, translation curriculum reform, translation pedagogy

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