

On the Ways to Improve the Teaching Effect for English-Majors' Interpreting Course

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Abstract

An increasing amount of interpreters have been in great need with the soaring market demand for intercultural communication since the open and reform policy was implemented in China. The universities' foreign language departments are undertaking the responsibilities of cultivating the students with proficient language level as well as basic interpreting skills. However, only a small portion of foreign language major students are capable of handling the interpreting task well. Immediate methods of enhancing the teaching effect in interpreting class are worth of studying and exploring.

Keywords

Teaching Effect, English-Major Students, Interpretation.

The goal of interpreting course in universities is to cultivate the students equipped with great foreign language competence and basic interpreting skills to live up to the market expectation. As is required in the Syllabus of Higher Learning, English majors in first and second year should master the elementary linguistic knowledge of English through comprehensive and strict training of communication skills, improve their ability of using the language through practice, form the habit of thinking logically and critically, and enrich their knowledge of cultural differences. Therefore, English majors should have grasped the comprehensive abilities of using the language through a series of rigid and systematic training in listening, speaking, reading, and writing when they begin the interpreting course, which requires the language competence as the foundation and prerequisite.

The goal of interpreting course for English majors is served as the preparation stage for professional interpreting training, neither to improve the students' language level solely nor produce the professional interpreters. Thus the basic interpreting skills and interpreting theories should be imparted to the students instead of the comprehensive language level improvement or advanced professional interpreters. Concerning the aimed basic interpreting skills that students are expected to master, the teachers of interpreting courses can choose the material which is aimed to improve the students foreign language proficiency as well as interpreting knowledge and techniques. The often-used textbooks are *a Course of English Interpretation* (by Zhong Shukong) and *Practical Interpreting Handbook* (by Ninghong & Lv Shisheng), which contain the language materials of different types and levels, emphasizing on the students' understanding of varied types of interpreting source language and enhancement of their vocabulary, interpreting practice, listening comprehension, and intercultural knowledge. Besides these, current news in auditory forms, articles in periodicals, newspapers, journals, and various kinds of TV programs such as celebrities' interviews and documentaries can also be served as the supplemented teaching material to arouse the students' interest and enrich the types and degrees of source language of the interpreting practice. Moreover, keeping the qualities of interpreters in mind, the teacher should also pass on the world knowledge in interpreting class to broaden the students' horizon and enlarge their scope of knowledge so that their anticipation skills and overall comprehension of the source language information could be strengthened. Through the forms of introduction of the specific seminars or lectures on a specific theme, discussion and debating in class, home assignment for searching for the related background knowledge, the students' world knowledge will be enlarged through the series processes of

accumulation so that they can be more encyclopedic to remove the understanding difficulties in interpreting material and strengthen their cognitive knowledge, improving the interpreting effect.

The interpreting skills should be imparted to the students to practice so that they would know the nature and principle of interpretation so as to handle them more competently. Preparation, understanding and analysis of the information, extraction of the main clue, short-term memory, note-taking, reconstruction in target language compose of the basic interpreting skills which are crucial to the enhancement of the interpreting level. Before listening to the interpreting source material, the students should make adequate preparations including the identification of the main ideas and extract the important clues, which concern the listening principle and memory skills. The main process of interpretation is interpreter's reproduction, reconstitution, reorganization of the source language, based on the proper understanding and deverbilization of the connotations of the speaker, which requires the interpreter to get rid of the shells and limitations of the linguistic forms and extracts the underlying sense of the speech. Therefore the students should be reminded that the essence of interpreting is to extract the meaning of the source language by breaking the shell of the original language. The teacher will assign the reconstruction and generalization task of the paragraph or ask the students to retell the main plots or central idea of an article to strengthen the students' awareness of principle of listening as well as the ability of memorizing and summarizing the main information of the interpreting message.

Memory training plays the important role in the enhancement of the students' interpreting abilities. The short-term memory helps the understanding and memorization of the conveyed information, key words as well as sentences. The students can be asked to undertake the task of retelling main ideas in both source language and target languages thus the habit of grasping and expressing the central clues of the material instantly will be formed. Shadowing exercises is another way to help students to split attention while doing the listening, memorizing and speaking task almost simultaneously. This exercise means the word-for-word or parrot-style repetition of the language. The students are required to repeat what the speaker says so that the information could be retrieved quickly during interpretation, their ability of allocating attention to different tasks thus being strengthened. Note-taking is an effective way to solve the problem of the limitation of memory. Clear and legible notes are marvelous guidance for the interpreters who should master the principle and techniques of note-taking. Serving as the "reminder", note-taking should be simple and understood at a glance. It is not necessary for the interpreter to do excessive notes which will cost them much energy to miss the fleeting information, and simple words or even symbols can carry the meaning of the interpreting source language. The teacher can ask the students to note down the key words that convey the main idea as well as figures and technical terms which require the standard of accuracy. Note-taking is also personalized, for the interpreter can use any words, symbols, signs, abbreviations that he thinks apparent and clear to be distinguished, which can improve the situation of spending too much time and energy retrieving the ideas of the interpreting source information. Nevertheless, the students should be encouraged to focus on their independent brain memorizing instead of being relying on the notes all the time, which is after all an assistant tool for the human beings memory.

Students of interpreting course should also be assigned to do real interpreting activities both inside and outside the class which is of great significance to the improvement of skills."Role-plays and simulations of interpreting scenarios have emerged as the key method for developing interpreting and discourse management skills which are sensitive to the purpose of interaction and constraints of a particular communicative context"(Pochhacker,2004:187).Thus the students should be encouraged to have interpreting simulations, role-plays, topic presentations, group discussions to overcome the shyness, enhance the ability of public speech, and the most important ,strengthen their interpreting skills. Furthermore, the universities can cooperate with foreign enterprises, joint ventures, and international organizations to provide opportunities for the students to do the practice training, broadening their horizon and enriching their experience. The students are to undertake the tasks of interpreting in various kinds of commercial exhibitions and international activities held by the foreign affairs organizations so as to expose themselves more chances in the real interpreting situation. In all,

to make sure that the students can have equal opportunities to take part in the class practice and provide as many chances as possible to improve their comprehensive abilities through the real-situation interpreting is of vital importance to help them boost the confidence and strengthen the interpreting level.

The universities should take good advantage of the multi-media facilities to provide the students with vivid auditory and visual material, improving their listening comprehension as well as the understanding of interpretation through the interpreting activities in the video. Just as Mu Lei (2000:71) put It, “audio-visual input can help enlarge the range of the students’ materials of study and change the conventional way of teaching, and can make the class teaching become more closer to the real interpretation situation so as to make the whole class teaching more vivid and give the students feeling of practical experiences.”

In all, foreign language students in interpreting class should be imparted the basic interpretation theory knowledge as well as the skills such as memory training, note-taking, and world knowledge is also an effective way to enlarge their scope of knowledge, which would literally improve the interpreting performance. Students’ involvement in various kinds of interpreting activities both inside and outside the classrooms is to be recommended and mass media facilities such as recorders, power points and projectors are also of great assistance to strengthen the students’ learning effect in interpreting class.

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