

On-demand Curriculum Rebooting for BA Programs at the School of Interpreting and Translation of BISU in the Post-Covid World

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Abstract

The SARS-Cov-2 pandemic has greatly re-shaped the world in almost all aspects such as economy, society, education, as well as international affairs. Holding high the great banner of Chinese socialism and Xi Jinping Thought, the current research attempts to describe the adjustments of teaching patterns and curriculum for translation majors at Beijing International Studies University in the post-Covid period.

Key words: Rebooting; Curriculum; Translation

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BACKGROUND INTRODUCTION — MAJOR DRIVERS FOR TEACHING MODE AND CURRICULUM REFORM

Chinese President Xi Jinping (2019) urged that the CPC must make further efforts to guide the people, especially young people, to better understand the origin and development history of Chinese civilization, and conduct international exchanges to let the international world better comprehend Chinese civilization, history and national spirit. Naturally it is every college teacher's

mission to hold high the great banner of Xi Jinping Thought and enhance the cultural self-confidence for the Chinese nation through translation activities. We have noticed that the present college teaching mode and curriculum of translation cannot satisfy the social and economic needs of the domestic market and translation industry. Some scholars (Bartsch, 1987; Li, 2000; Chen, 2000; Qiu & Ma, 2001; Zhang, 2002; Tang, 2003; Sang 2003; Du *et al.* 2004; Shi, 2004) have already discussed the curriculum reform for translation majors from different perspectives. In addition, foreign language schools at different universities keep updating their educational concepts and implementing corresponding reforms in their translator training modes. However, we must keep a clear mind about the achievements and face a series of new challenges arising from the post-Covid period such as the continuous college admission increase ever since 1997, the economic restructuring caused by economic development mode transition, and the severe employment situation caused by the pandemic. Facing those challenges, we propose to push forward the reform project of curriculum adjustment in order to ingratiate the discipline of translation in the post-Covid world.

1. REFORM OF TEACHING MODE

The implementation of people-oriented high-quality education is the national education policy (Wang 1998). However, the denotation of "high-quality" has often been neglected or hugely compromised. Job market demand urges universities to cultivate versatile talents with knowledge as well as practical skills. We fully understand the necessities of on-demand training and cultivation of translators and interpreters in the new era. College education should be reformed to meet the needs of social and economic development, and first of all it should ensure the comprehensive and healthy development of students as social individuals. The one-sided market

determinism does not mean that college education must ignore moral education. Instead, ethics, law and morality are the fundamental factors for a qualified translator/interpreter. The issue of intellectual development in quality education can no longer be ignored in cultivating and training interpreters and translators. Many intellectual factors (i.e. critical thinking, innovation, sense of mission) shall be included in every phase of college education. Several significant factors shall be especially emphasized in the development of human being intelligence: 1) the ability of classification; 2) resilience; 3) learning ability; 4) induction and deduction; 5) conception; 6) complicated comprehension (cf. Nickerson et al. 1985). Hence students shall be given more independence in college education and learning process.

Meanwhile, job market analysis is also quite important in teaching mode reform. On-demand education mode is a welcome change of pace for college students whose practical ability is closely associated with their destinies (cf. Brindley 1984).

Approximately 60% undergraduates at the School of Foreign Languages of a top Chinese university ever tried to attend financial or legal courses or even change their majors. Therefore, learners should be placed at the very center of the education process. Education authorities and teachers must be clear that training programs shall be closely linked with the practical needs of students, and translation learners should be involved in re-setting their own learning goals, selecting content, methodology, and even assessment instruments and criteria. Interpretation class was paid less attention before the new millennium although we could list awful lots of complicated reasons. However, in the past two decades, the booming development of international trade needs lots of qualified interpreters with specified and professional knowledge (international trade, military, sports, finance, diplomacy, art, medicine, railway construction, etc.). Thus we have to pay special emphasis on interpretation class reform. We adjusted our teaching goals. Students at the School of Interpreting and Translation of BISU shall 1) perform as a translator in professional settings (e.g., effective use of time, tools, and resources for translation assignments, workload management, coordination and cooperation with colleagues, effective and constructive

self-assessment of performance, ability to provide constructive peer feedback); 2) use computer-assisted translation tools; 3) possess working knowledge on topics that characterize private and public-sector settings in the respective language combination; 4) understand the history, current developments, procedures and practices of representative organizations and institutions that provide or use interpreting services. Job market feedback is another reference and guideline for us to reform teaching mode. Some graduates explained the importance of dialect perception in real interpreting practice in African and South Asian countries. Thus we collected and increased listening and interpreting materials targeting African, South Asian, and Southeast Asian varieties of English such as Nigerian English, Kenyan English, Indian English, Singaporean English, Bangladesh English, Philippine English, and Cambodian English, etc. In addition, we propose faculty rotation in interpreter training, i.e., two or three teachers might participate in one single course. The audio-visual translation class abandons the traditional teaching mode and creates an immersive environment to stimulate real contexts to improve students' translation performance. It has been based on the ideology that verbal communication can not be separated from specific situations. Furthermore, due to China's increasing rely on internal circulation and domestic market, intra-lingual translation becomes more urgent and targeted dialect training (such as Cantonese) is absolutely necessary. Naturally the new normal has brought lots of challenges for teaching faculty at the School of Interpreting and Translation. On the other hand, we keep exploring and updating the corresponding curriculum.

2. NEW NORMAL AND NEW CURRICULUM

The curriculum reform and new teaching mode are quite complementary to each other. New normal and trend of translation industry and job market urges university authorities to adjust the current BA program curriculum. In response to the new normal of translation industry in the post-Covid world, we rebooted the curriculum and added new courses (as demonstrated in Table 1).

Table 1
New Normal and New Curriculum

New technology	Translation industry	Globalization and localization	Translation research
1) Translation Technology	1) Translation and Interpretation as a Profession	1) Localization Project Management	1) Methodology of Translation Studies
2) Terminology Management	2) Remote Interpreting	2) Localization and Terminology	2) Applied Research Project
3) Language Use and Technology	3) Multimedia Translation	3) Audio-Visual Localization	3) Applied Interpreting Studies
	4) Chinese Specialized Translation	4) Software Internationalization and Localization	
	5) Russian-English Translation	5) Language Engineering Localization and Terminology	
	6) French-English Translation		
	7) Korean-English Translation		
	8) Spanish-English Translation		

By holding high the Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era and the

great banner of socialism with Chinese characteristics, the School of Interpreting and Translation updated the

curriculum, featuring new technology, language service (translation industry), localization service, and translation research in the post-Covid period. Undergraduate students are supposed to construct a solid foundation by improving their ability of listening, speaking, reading, writing and translating in a comprehensive manner. The updated “English + Second Foreign Language + Specialized Knowledge” model highlights the incorporation of language skills as well as professional skills as a qualified translator/ interpreter. Thanks to the technological development, interpreters could provide remote interpreting service nowadays. Through discussion-oriented sessions, simulations and testing, and talks given by guest speakers, this language-neutral course examines the origins and evolution of remote interpreting, including over-the-phone interpreting, video-mediated interpreting and remote simultaneous interpreting in community and conference settings. Students will explore issues in professionalism and ethics as well as future trends in remote interpreting.

On the other hand, cultural confidence is another new topic in translation studies. The course of “Chinese Specialized Translation” develops and refines a practical translation skill set within the specialized domains such as medicine, science, business, etc. In addition, students will gain familiarity with textual conventions that govern source and target texts within these domains and deepen their understanding of both Chinese and English as language for special purposes. Apart from translation proper, students will also be able to analyze texts for register, style, tone and content to determine the most appropriate process to achieve the highest quality translation. Finally, students’ research skills will improve through the examination of available resources and the creation of domain-specific resources.

The main objective of the course of “Language Use and Technology” is to provide students with the opportunity to become familiar with the practical and theoretical issues concerned with creating and accessing large linguistic corpora (electronic collections of “real world” text) with computers for a host of applications; both academic and professional. We will discuss the advantages of approaching language through empirical data collected from real-world sources; in addition, we will highlight conceptual and practical aspects that pose challenges to creating robust, representative language samples. This course is designed to provide the student opportunities to discover new angles to their current academic or professional interests through the use of large-scale data sources and the power of computers. Likewise, in the course of “Language Engineering Localization and Terminology” students will gain a familiarity with the language industry and understand the factors involved in the localization process. In addition, students will be able to appreciate the advantages of using computer

assisted tools during this process, but also recognize the limitations and disadvantages of this approach. Apart from tool usage, students will also be able to analyze the various steps in the localization of a product to determine the most appropriate process to achieve the highest quality possible. Finally, students’ translation and research skills will improve through the examination of available resources and the creation of translation resources.

DISCUSSION

Elective courses target students’ various learning interests, practical needs and future careers. Both students and teaching faculty are part of the greater learning community. Teachers are more like mentors instead of traditional instructors. Different ideas, algorithms, and patterns interact or even clash with each other, and in this way we are committed to develop a new teaching mode and dynamic curriculum. Therefore, our teaching mode and curriculum at BISU is just a beginning instead of an ending. Just as we mentioned previously, the discipline of translation must ingratiate itself into the new development of our world in order to survive in the post-Covid era.

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