

# *Blended Teaching of Translation: Problems and Suggestions*

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**Abstract:** Blended teaching is prevailing among universities. This teaching mode can improve translation training effectiveness and facilitate the construction of translation discipline. However, the problems in blended teaching are becoming increasingly prominent. As far as the blended teaching mode is concerned, there are some general problems such as inaccurate cognition of the concept of “blending”, low degree of online and offline integration and teacher-centered instead of student-centered learning. As far as translation discipline is concerned, lack of translation technology resources and insufficient application of them are prominent. In response to these problems, this paper puts forward suggestions: to clarify the concept of “blended teaching”; to build an online teaching platform; to improve the management and evaluation system related to blended teaching.

## **1. Introduction**

In recent years, the rapid development of information technology has provided opportunities for and injected vitality into the reform of higher education. Blended teaching is being carried out in colleges and universities. Combining characteristics of translation discipline and modern educational technology, blended teaching of translation aims to improve translation training effectiveness and facilitate the construction of translation curriculum. However, there are still many problems in the context of blended teaching in translation. On the one hand, the concept of blended teaching is not clear to many teachers, which leads to various problems in the implementation of blended teaching. On the other hand, there is a new trend of “technicalization, digitalization, professionalization and marketization” [1] in translation education, while translation teaching has not yet made a timely response. Only by objectively analyzing these problems and taking corresponding measures can translation teaching truly adapt to the development trend of modern education and cultivate qualified translators needed by the society.

Many scholars have discussed the problems in online teaching (learning) or in blended teaching. However, they didn't touch the fundamental problems existed in blended teaching. Some scholars discussed the problems in translation teaching. However, they don't have much consideration of information technologies that can have great influence on the development of translation discipline. Considering that, this study will discuss the fundamental problems in blended teaching and the problems of translation teaching technologies respectively. It will propose comprehensive solutions

responding to those problems.

## **2. General Problems in Blended Teaching**

### **2.1 Inaccurate Concept of Blended Teaching**

As for the connotation of “blending”, it is generally believed that “blending” refers to the deep integration of information technology and teaching. This deep integration will promote fundamental changes in teaching content, methods, means, evaluation and so on. Some scholars have proposed that “online and offline learning will fully integrate and interact with each other, which will bring about a thorough change in teaching philosophy and curriculum design, so that the teaching mode will be student-centered”. [2] However, due to the deep-rooted traditional teaching concepts, although many teachers have realized the positive role of information technology in teaching, the application of information technology in teaching is still not wide. Some teachers rely heavily on the software Wechat and QQ to carry out their teaching. MOOC and flipped classroom have not been fully implemented. “Although many colleges and universities including some ‘double first-class’ ones have built smart classrooms, yet they hardly play roles in blended teaching”. [3] Evidently, teachers still cling to the traditional teaching ideas despite of the modern technologies and equipment. It can be safely said that if the teaching philosophy is not updated, no matter what technologies and means are involved, the teaching modes will not change.

### **2.2 Low Integration of Online and Offline Teaching**

Blended teaching is usually composed of online and offline teaching. However, these two parts are not unrelated and distinct, but complementary and integrated with each other. The interactive integration of online and offline teaching reflects the “blending” nature of blended teaching. Ideally, online and offline teaching should support each other and cooperate organically to form an integrated blended teaching. However, in reality, the connection between online teaching and offline teaching is poor, or even completely separated. For example, some people regard pre-class preview and after-class review as online learning, and other parts offline teaching. Some equate online teaching with online resources uploading, online homework submission and other platform functions. These blended teachings have a low degree of integration between online and offline. The connection between the two is not smooth, even completely disjointed. In terms of teaching content, there is a lack of scientific and rational distribution of online and offline teaching content. In terms of teaching process, first of all, there are fewer online teaching activities, less online interaction between teachers and students, and the communication is not timely. Secondly, the teaching process lacks systematicness and fluency. Offline teaching activities are self-contained, and there is no unity and continuity with online teaching activities. Thus, it is difficult to give full play to the advantages of blended teaching and form a new teaching mode.

### **2.3 Teacher-centered instead of Student-centered Learning**

Students are the main body of teaching activities, and their learning autonomy and enthusiasm in learning are preconditions for successful teaching. Compared with traditional teaching, blended teaching requires students to invest more time and energy, and requires students to learn independently and actively. In essence, blended teaching is conducive to releasing students’ learning autonomy and mobilizing their learning enthusiasm and participation. Students learning autonomy is reflected in the fact that students can choose when and where to learn; students will learn with study tools that adapt to their capabilities; students will accept more project-based learning; students will

acquire knowledge through field experiences such as internships, guided projects and collaborative projects. However, in most blended teaching, students' learning enthusiasm and autonomy have not been released. For example, in online learning, students seldom take the initiative to consult relevant references and explore relevant content independently. In offline learning, it is still "teacher-centered", not "student-centered". Students' role has not been highlighted, and students' passive learning is quite common. It is true that students have been influenced by the traditional exam-oriented education for a long time, and they are not accustomed to autonomous learning and inquiry learning. However, teachers have not played a positive role in guiding, inspiring and supervising curriculum design and teaching management, which is an urgent problem to be solved in blended teaching.

### **3. Problems of Translation Teaching Technology in Blended Teaching**

#### **3.1 Lack of Technical Resources for Translation Education**

The technical resources of translation education mainly refer to the comprehensive resources such as technical knowledge, equipment, tools, environment and services in translation education (such as teaching network, education cloud platform, intelligent terminal, etc.), which are the basic guarantee and important support for the informatization of translation education.[4] The existing online teaching platforms only have basic educational and teaching functions which cannot meet the needs of translation teaching. Taking Chao Xing Xue Xi Tong (Superstar Learning Platform) as an example, teachers can only upload learning materials, assignments and discussion topics. And classroom management just includes checking students learning statistics and posting notices. However, these functions cannot meet the specific needs of translation teaching. In the era of digitalization and intellectualization, translation teaching includes not only the transmission of translation theories and skills but also the operation and training of translation technologies that require the support of corresponding translation technology software and hardware. "With the rapid development of translation artificial intelligence and big data technology, utilizing translation technologies has become an important element of the translator's ability system in the new era, and translation technology teaching has become an important part of translation education in colleges and universities".[5] The ability of utilizing translation technologies refers to that translators' comprehensive application of various tools and technologies in the process of translation. In the three stages of translation, the translation technologies and tools involved mainly include computer-aided translation (CAT), translation quality assurance tools (QA), search engines, translation management systems (TMS), machine translation and post-translation editing, terminology management tools, localization tools, etc. These are the important contents of translation technology teaching in the era of artificial intelligence. However, due to the lack of translation technology teaching function of online teaching platform and the lack of translation technology supporting resources in translation teaching, translation technology teaching is seriously lagging behind, as Wang pointed out, "Translation colleges and universities generally have a serious shortage of investment in technological resources of translation. And the big data platforms and intelligent terminals developed for translation education and teaching are rare. The lack of technology convergence and sharing mechanism of behavioral data in teaching and learning process results in a serious shortage of educational technology resources, which restricts the rapid development of translation education." [4]

#### **3.2 Insufficient Application of Translation Education Technologies**

At present, the traditional teaching mode is still common in translation teaching, and educational technologies have not been well integrated with translation teaching. First of all, the existing teaching platforms cannot meet the needs of translation teaching. Secondly, teachers cannot effectively apply

educational technologies to translation teaching practice. For example, some teachers are not motivated in the application of educational technologies since they think that educational technologies have little to do with translation teaching. Thirdly, the blended teaching of translation often copies teaching methods of other courses that are not technology-based, which ignores the particularity of translation teaching. Lacking software and hardware support, the implementation of technologies has not been effectively integrated with translation teaching.

Field training of translation is an extremely important part in translation teaching. Students are usually required to have field visits, training and learning in a translation company for two weeks. However, it is difficult for students to deepen their learning in such a short time. What's more, the problems that may arise in students' learning cannot be found and solved in time. If this field training can be completed on an online simulation training platform, it would be much effective in translation teaching. However, the construction of this online training needs to simulate multiple steps of the translation process, involving a variety of technologies and tools. The construction of this kind of simulation training platform is very complex, which cannot be completed by teachers themselves. Although some translation companies or translation software can carry out project simulation teaching, due to the high price, it cannot be used for daily teaching, and the online project simulation teaching platform specifically for translation teaching has been a blank.

#### **4. Suggestions on Blended Teaching of Translation**

##### **4.1 Clarifying the Concept of “Blending” and Innovating the Philosophy of Translation Teaching**

At present, blended teaching of translation still stays at the preliminary stage. To break this situation, we must make clear the connotation of “blending” and innovate teaching ideas. Blended teaching does not mean a simple change in teaching time and space, nor a simple superposition of technology and education, but a change in teaching modes. This teaching mode should highlight the dominant position of students, that is, student-centered, to enhance students' autonomous learning ability and in-depth learning ability. Blended teaching is essentially an innovative teaching concept. Generally speaking, the renewal of teaching ideas will lead to the change of teaching methods, and new technologies and means will be applied to teaching.[3] In other words, to judge whether a teaching mode is innovative is dependent on whether its teaching concept is innovative, rather than what kind of information technology is used. To judge whether a teaching mode is a blended teaching depends on whether its teaching concept is student-centered and realized by means of information technology. Teaching philosophy should precede educational technology. However, the current situation of blended teaching is that technical means precede teaching ideas. As Wu & Li pointed out, “The online education philosophy innovation in universities is far lagging behind the technological innovation. With basic hardware, the core element of promoting online teaching and realizing high-quality online teaching is the innovation of teaching philosophy.” [3]

Blended teaching of translation should also take into account the characteristics of translation disciplinary and social needs, constantly updating the philosophy of translation teaching. Different teaching philosophy emphasize the translator's corresponding translation competence. Tao & Liu believe that in order to improve students' intercultural communicative competence, we should carry out task-centered translation reading and discussion; in order to strengthen students' translation ability, we should set up translation workshops centered on training translation skills; in order to cultivate students' professional translation ability, we should develop project-centered translation practice. [6] In his teaching practice, Wu Qing found that the process-oriented translation teaching process highlights students' awareness of translation problems and their ideas of solving translation problems. The attempt of role-playing simulates all links and positions of real translation tasks to the greatest

extent, which not only cultivates students' sense of responsibility, but also greatly mobilizes their interest and subjective initiative. [7] For translation education, teachers should actively respond to social changes, construct a perfect theoretical system of intelligent education, attach importance to educational technology, and realize the transformation from traditional teaching to intelligent teaching.

#### **4.2 Strengthen Platform Construction and Update Translation Education Technology**

As translation develops towards professionalization, cultivation of students' translation professional ability has become particularly important. Professional abilities include project execution and management, editing and proofreading, and the ability to use tools. The new teaching ideas need both the corresponding teaching platform and technical support, otherwise the best teaching idea can only be empty talk. The biggest challenge of translation teaching management is the platform construction. The platform needs to have the function of integration of production, teaching and research. With scientific and technological means and tools, the platform can perform tracking, guidance, supervision and evaluation of translation education and teaching. Thus, the platform become a bridge to combine online and offline learning. At present, such a comprehensive translation teaching platform does not exist. The solutions are as follows: First, upgrade and change some relatively mature enterprise platforms, and add corresponding functions suitable for translation teaching, such as corpus alignment, terminology management, post-translation editing, project simulation, etc. This requires the cooperation between translation teaching departments and enterprises. Secondly, cooperate with translation companies or translation software companies, or purchase required software and tools for teaching. This is the most convenient way, but it is undoubtedly difficult for many colleges and universities because of their financial stress. Thirdly, develop new teaching platforms of each university. In fact, some colleges have developed their own teaching platforms, such as the online translation teaching and research platform of English College of Beijing Foreign Studies University, which has two functions: real-time teaching and assisting research. In terms of translation teaching, the platform has the functions of assigning, correcting and returning translation assignments, allowing multi-user to edit the assignments online in real time. These functions are not perfect enough for translation teaching, and need to be further upgraded to meet the needs of online translation teaching. Similarly, this is difficult for ordinary colleges and universities to achieve.

#### **4.3 Establish a Supporting Management and Evaluation System for Blended Teaching**

The renewal of teaching philosophy and the change of teaching methods inevitably require the synchronous follow-up of the teaching management system. "We should establish a teaching management and evaluation system supported by big data and oriented by core literacy. With intelligent technologies, we can break the information isolated island to enhance our abilities of processing, decision-making and management of big data in education. With big data, we can change the single summative evaluation into formative evaluation." [4] In terms of teaching management, the management department should encourage teachers to carry out blended teaching, actively explore appropriate teaching management system, and effectively guarantee the quality of curriculum teaching. Through the network platform, we can realize the management of teaching process, promote the standardization of teaching activities, further enhance the standardization of classroom teaching process, and ensure the quality of teaching. At the same time, we should use big data analysis technology to establish a scientific teaching management system. The teaching management system should take into account both online and offline management, including student learning, classroom teaching and teaching service management.



The evaluation of online translation teaching should be multi-dimensional and comprehensive. On the one hand, teaching evaluation can test the effect of teaching practice and find problems in teaching. On the other hand, it can improve the quality of teaching and promote the development of teaching. We should not only pay attention to the results of teaching, but also to the process of teaching, especially the emotional experience between teachers and students in the process of teaching. The evaluation content should include the selection of network resources, the distribution of teaching time, the setting of interactive links, the arrangement of teaching activities, the way of course investigation, the application of modern technology, and the training of students' practical ability. Considering characteristics of high practicality of translation specialty, experts from the language service industry and cross-industry should be invited to participate in the evaluation activities in order to evaluate scientifically and reasonably. The construction of a diversified evaluation system for translation teaching is a field that needs to be explored in depth.

## 5. Conclusion

At present, there are still many problems and challenges in blended teaching of translation. On the one hand, we should change the educational philosophy, give full play to the advantages of blended teaching mode, and improve the teaching effect; On the other hand, we should continue to promote the reform of translation curriculum system, improve teaching, management and evaluation system, strengthen online platform construction. We should update the translation teaching technology, and constantly strengthen students' translation professional ability to meet the market demand. At the same time, we also expect that the teaching platforms supported by modern information technology will continue to improve their teaching functions, and make our education technicalization and digitalization. With the economic globalization, the professionalization and marketization of translation education are becoming more and more prominent. Translation education should fully meet the new requirements of professionalization and marketization and actively construct a comprehensive training system to effectively improve the quality of education.

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