

Embracing AI Era: Challenges and Strategies in Translation and Interpreting Teaching in Universities

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Abstract: *Against the backdrop of rapid development in artificial intelligence technology, the translation and interpreting industry is undergoing profound transformation. Large language models represented by ChatGPT have quickly entered public attention, promoting the development of translation technology and triggering widespread discussion on the future of the translation profession. Faced with both external skepticism and internal transformation, translation and interpreting teaching in universities faces challenges while also welcoming opportunities for transformation. This paper, starting from the developmental background of the translation discipline, combines an analysis of the current status of the translation and interpreting industry and the development trend of AI technology to reflect on the main problems in current university translation and interpreting teaching. It also proposes several pathways based on front-line teaching practice, aiming to provide reference for cultivating translation talents with core competitiveness in the AI era.*

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Translation and interpreting teaching, Cultivation of translation talents in universities.

1. Introduction: Opportunities and Challenges in Translation Education

As a bridge between language and culture, translation has always had important strategic value. Especially driven by major initiatives such as "Telling China's Story Well," and the Belt and Road Initiative, China's demand for foreign-language translation has increased significantly. The dual demand of "bringing in" and "going out," that is, China's two-way interaction with the world, determines the need for high-quality, professional translation talents. However, on the other hand, each innovation in machine translation and AI translation has triggered heated discussions about the prospects of translation development, with most opinions being pessimistic. The development of technology and external doubts will undoubtedly continue to awaken concerns among foreign language learners about the future of translation study and employment. In recent years, enrollment in foreign language majors has continued to decline, indicating a general decline in public confidence in employment prospects for foreign language graduates.

In November 2022, the debut of ChatGPT amazed many with its performance in text generation, language comprehension, and translation polishing, causing anxiety among many practitioners and students: will translation work be completely replaced by AI? Many have asserted that translation jobs may become one of the first occupations to be replaced by AI. In recent years, the scale of enrollment in foreign language majors has continued to shrink, and some universities have even listed translation majors as "warning majors." In fact, from the perspective of national strategy, the importance of translation has only increased. The reality is that translation teaching and research in China are currently at the best development stage in history. General Secretary Xi Jinping, in a reply letter to foreign experts at Foreign Languages Press, clearly pointed out that translation is an important task for promoting the exchange of human civilizations. During this year's National People's Congress and Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, the government work

report emphasized the need to "deepen cultural exchanges between China and foreign countries and enhance international communication capabilities." These important directives have pointed the way and provided fundamental guidance for translation education, teaching, and research in China. In the 2022 directory of master's and doctoral academic disciplines in China, translation was newly added as a degree parallel to foreign languages and literature. In 2024, the first round of applications for doctoral programs in translation was approved at nine universities, which will soon begin formal enrollment. Over the past decade, the translation discipline has developed from obscurity to a prominent field. The fundamental reason is that the cultivation of high-quality, professional translation talents aligns with the trend of the times and meets national needs.

2. A New Landscape for the Translation Industry in the AI Era

2.1 Potential Impacts on Translation and Interpreting Industry under Large Language Models

In August 2023, OpenAI and the University of Pennsylvania jointly published a study examining the potential impact of large language models such as GPTs on the U.S. labor market.[1] The study listed occupations with the highest exposure under the condition of using GPTs, and interpreters and translators ranked among them. The study results showed that 76.5% of the work content of translators and interpreters could see task completion time reduced by at least 50% through the use of GPTs. However, this kind of "exposure" is not equal to "replacement." As the study showed, AI is a tool for improving efficiency, not a complete substitute. GPTs can save translators and interpreters a great amount of working time but still requires human judgment, cultural adaptation, and contextual processing, which are precisely the irreplaceable aspects of human translators and interpreters. The core competitiveness of the translation and interpreting major is gradually shifting to complex contextual processing ability under AI assistance, cross-cultural communication

ability and integration ability of professional knowledge.

2.2 The Current Status of China's Translation and Interpreting Industry

According to the 2024 China Translation Industry Development Report, the main characteristics of China's translation industry in 2023 are: the total output value of domestic translation enterprises continued to grow steadily, the scale of translation talents in China continued to increase, the number of full-time translators slightly increased, the demand for multilingual talents increased significantly, and the trend of higher education among translation talents became evident; the proportion of BTI (Bachelor of Translation and Interpreting) and MTI (Master of Translation and Interpreting) graduates engaging in translation work increased again, and translation professionals have provided good support for the country's development and various fields. The number of enterprises whose business scope includes "machine translation and AI translation" continued to grow rapidly. The development prospects of translation technology are broad. More than 80% of translation enterprises actively embrace large model technology, and more than 70% of related colleges and universities have established machine translation-related courses. In addition, the state attaches great importance to the cultivation and development of translation and interpretation talents. The successful inclusion of translation majors in the master's and doctoral degree directories highlights its academic independence. In the future, translation work will focus more on tasks that require high specialization and cultural sensitivity, and the requirements for the comprehensive quality of translators will be higher.

3. Exploratory Paths in University Translation and Interpretation Teaching Practice

3.1 Clarifying Teaching Goals: Translation Competence Scales Guide the Direction

Unclear goals for improving translation and interpreting competence and ambiguous assessment standards have become common problems in translation teaching. In translation teaching, teachers can refer to *China's Standards of English Language Ability*, which details the levels of translation and interpreting competence. Before the course starts, it is necessary to describe course objectives precisely in language and confirm students' current translation and interpreting competence level and cultivation goals. In practical teaching, clear teaching objectives should be set at the beginning of the course, repeatedly communicate learning goals, and use quantitative indicators to stimulate students' self-learning awareness.

3.2 Strengthening Teacher Guidance: From Explaining Knowledge to Teaching Methods

In the era of the internet and artificial intelligence, English and interpreting learning resources are everywhere, and language learning tools and platforms are constantly emerging. However, students still face the dilemma of "poor use of tools" and "difficulty transforming knowledge." This exposes the irreplaceability of teacher guidance in universities, which is mainly reflected in two aspects:

First, according to Krashen's Input Hypothesis, ideal language input should be comprehensible. For learners, incomprehensible input is just noise and cannot promote language acquisition. To make language input beneficial to language learning, its meaning must be processed. The more interesting and relevant the language materials are, the easier it is for learners to unconsciously acquire language. Therefore, one responsibility of university English teachers is to transform language materials into "comprehensible input" for students and make the input teaching process—that is, classroom teaching—as vivid and interesting as possible by carefully selecting teaching content and designing teaching activities.

Second, the responsibility of teachers is not only to deliver knowledge but also to teach learning paths. According to students' learning conditions, teachers should design scientific and effective competence improvement paths. English teaching is not only about transmitting knowledge but also about cultivating learning methods and thinking styles. The vision of university English teachers should not be limited to the course they teach, but should also focus on the long-term development and ability cultivation of students. As the saying goes, "Teaching one to fish is better than giving one a fish." In university translation courses, "fishing" refers precisely to the cultivation path of translation professionalism and translation competence.

3.3 Diversifying Teaching Methods: Stimulating Student Participation and Improving Class Effectiveness

According to the nature and goals of university translation courses, the following teaching methods can comprehensively improve students' business interpreting skills and interpreting professionalism:

Demonstration teaching method: Record videos on how to use ChatGPT to assist in interpreting preparation and review, enhancing students' digital literacy and adaptability to technology.

Situational teaching method: Set up real scenarios such as business negotiations and diplomatic receptions to improve students' adaptability and communication skills.

Interactive teaching method: Introduce peer review and group cooperative interpreting, allowing students to construct knowledge systems and reflect on expression strategies through communication.

Each of the above three teaching methods has its strengths, and their combined use can effectively improve classroom teaching effectiveness and student engagement.

3.4 Implementing Ideological and Political Education: Deepening Vocational Ideals and Professional Ethics Education

University courses integrate knowledge delivery, ability cultivation, and ideological and political education. University teachers should extract cultural genes and value paradigms from professional courses and incorporate subtle

guidance on ideals and beliefs into knowledge learning. Translation and interpreting courses in universities can formulate corresponding ideological and political integration measures and educational goals. The focus of ideological and political education lies in deepening vocational ideals and professional ethics education, which is highly consistent with the goals of translation education. Two integration measures include:

Integrating ideological and political content into translation and interpreting practice materials: Consciously using content rich in ideological elements as carriers for knowledge transfer and skill training, such as China's foreign policies, international cooperation, economic development strategies, environmental protection policies, poverty alleviation, and cultural exchange as translation materials. Teachers should also actively expand translation materials, highlighting timeliness and ideological depth. These translation exercises can not only improve students' translation abilities but also help them deeply understand China's national strategies and global responsibilities.

Simulating real translation and interpreting scenarios: Scenario simulation is an important means to cultivate students' practical abilities. By setting real business scenes such as exhibitions and business cooperation negotiations, students can better understand the complexity of real interpreting and translation scenarios in simulated practice and become familiar with the basic processes of practical translation, thereby improving translation professionalism. Translation professionalism includes professional ethics, professional skills, professional conduct, and political ideology, all of which are intrinsic ideological and political elements of the course.

Through the above two measures, university translation and interpreting courses should strive to achieve three educational goals: cultivate students' patriotism, enhance their capacity of deep learning, and strengthen their innovation and practical ability.

4. Conclusion

The arrival of the AI era indeed presents unprecedented challenges to the field of translation teaching. Translation and interpreting teaching should not remain at the level of traditional language equivalence, but should actively embrace the development trend of integrating technology and education. University teachers are not only transmitters of language skills but also guides of technology and cultivators of values. Therefore, in teaching practice, they should use competence scales to clarify teaching objectives, strengthen teacher's guidance on methodology, flexibly apply diverse teaching methods, and integrate ideological and political education into classrooms to deepen professional ethics education.

References

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