

An Exploration of Vocational English Teaching from the Perspective of Eco-Translatology

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Abstract: With the deepening of globalization, cultivating inter-disciplinary talents with excellent vocational English communication skills has become an urgent demand of the times. However, there is a prevalent issue of "ecological imbalance" in current vocational English teaching practice in China, which is disconnected from real vocational scenarios. To address this dilemma, this paper introduces the Eco-translatology theory proposed by Professor Hu Gengshen as a new research perspective. This theory regards language activities as a dynamic process in which the translator adapts to a specific ecological environment and makes choices, and its "three-dimensional transformation" methodology provides profound insights for the reform of vocational English teaching. This paper first explains the core essence of Eco-translatology, and then conducts an in-depth analysis of the "ecological imbalance" problem existing in current teaching. On this basis, the paper will focus on constructing a vocational English teaching model with "three-dimensional transformation" as the core and typical work tasks as the carrier, aiming to provide useful theoretical reference and practical guidance for improving the effectiveness of vocational English teaching and cultivating international talents that meet the needs of the times.

1. Introduction

With the in-depth development of economic globalization and the continuous advancement of "the Belt and Road" cooperation, China's integration with the world has reached an unprecedented level. Against this grand backdrop, the demand for talents in various industries has undergone profound changes. Possessing only professional skills is no longer sufficient to meet the challenges of international competition; interdisciplinary talents who can proficiently use English for effective vocational communication have become an urgent need to support national strategies and industrial upgrading [1].

Vocational English teaching, as a key link connecting campuses with the workplace and cultivating international applied talents, its teaching quality directly affects the effectiveness of talent cultivation [2]. The importance and urgency of its reform are self-evident. However, in sharp contrast to this urgent social demand, the current practice of vocational English teaching in China has largely failed to break free from the constraints of traditional models and is facing a series of severe challenges and dilemmas.

The rise of Eco-translatology has provided us with a highly enlightening new perspective. Creatively introducing the basic principles of Eco-translatology into vocational English teaching research can not only provide a powerful theoretical analysis tool for reflecting on the shortcomings of existing teaching but also point out the direction for constructing a harmonious, open, and dynamic new teaching model. It urges us to shift the focus of teaching from isolated language skill training to cultivating learners' comprehensive and adaptive communicative competence in simulated or real vocational ecological environments.

2. Core Essentials of Eco-translatology

Eco-translatology is an innovative theoretical paradigm of translation proposed by Professor Hu Gengshen, a Chinese scholar. It breaks through the limitations of traditional perspectives rooted in linguistics or pure literature, and instead examines translation activities from the holistic and systematic perspectives of ecology. Its core idea is to understand translation as a dynamic process in which translators continuously adapt to the translational eco-environment and make proactive choices, with the ultimate goal of achieving harmony, unity, and balance between translators and the eco-environment. To gain an in-depth understanding of this theory, it is essential to grasp its three fundamental cornerstones: the core concept of "translation as adaptation and selection", the key notion of "translational eco-environment", and the methodology of "three-dimensional transformation" [3].

"Translation as adaptation and selection" serves as the theoretical foundation and logical starting point of Eco-translatology. Inspired by Darwin's theory of biological evolution, this concept holds that the essence of translation is a cyclic process of "adaptation" and "selection" towards the complex environment, dominated by translators. "Adaptation" is the prerequisite, referring to the translator's active perception, understanding, and conformity to the overall environment composed of multiple factors such as the source text, source and target language cultures, the author's intentions, readers' expectations, and social norms. Without sufficient adaptation, subsequent selection would be blind [4]. "Selection", on the other hand, is a crucial link where translators exert their subjectivity based on adaptation. It is reflected in the weighing and choosing of words, sentence structures, styles, and even overall strategies, with the criterion of enabling the target text to be optimally integrated into the target environment and achieve effective communication. Adaptation and selection are dialectically unified: adaptation provides the basis for selection, while selection realizes the goal of adaptation, together forming a continuous spectrum of dynamic adjustment. When this concept is applied to vocational English teaching, it implies that students' learning should not be passive reception, but rather a practical process of proactively adapting to task requirements and contextual constraints in simulated vocational contexts, and then making appropriate choices of language and communication strategies.

"Translational eco-environment" is a core concept of Eco-translatology, providing the stage and constraints for the occurrence of "adaptation and selection". The term "eco-" here does not refer to natural ecology, but a complex integrated system composed of interrelated and interacting elements such as language, communication, culture, society, as well as authors, readers, and clients. It features distinct integrity and interrelatedness, where changes in any element within the system may affect the final outcome. In the context of vocational English, this concept can be specifically defined as "vocational eco-environment", which covers industry-specific terminology and textual norms (linguistic dimension), industry codes of conduct and business culture (cultural dimension), specific communication scenarios, purposes, and objects (communicative dimension), as well as relevant industry standards, laws, and regulations (social elements). This means that a competent vocational English talent must be able to comprehensively consider this multi-dimensional

environment. Meanwhile, the translational eco-environment is also dynamic and hierarchical: it changes with scenarios and time, and is nested from the macro cultural background to the micro communicative context, requiring users to possess the ability of dynamic adaptation.

"Three-dimensional transformation" is the specific methodology of Eco-translatology for guiding practice, and represents the three basic operational dimensions for translators to make adaptive selections. Firstly, linguistic dimension transformation requires translators to make choices at the levels of vocabulary, syntax, and style, so that the target text conforms to the habits of the target language. In vocational English, this goes beyond general grammar and demands accurate mastery of industry-specific registers—such as archaic words in legal English and nominalization structures in scientific and technological English. Secondly, cultural dimension transformation focuses on the transmission and coordination of the cultural connotations of the two languages, requiring translators to have cultural sensitivity and properly handle differences in cultural images and values. In vocational scenarios, understanding cultural differences in time concepts and communication styles is crucial, as it directly affects the success or failure of business activities. Thirdly, communicative dimension transformation is the highest level, requiring translators to always take ensuring the realization of communicative intentions as the ultimate goal. In vocational English, all choices regarding language and culture must serve the fundamental objective of effectively completing communication tasks; for instance, a business email with perfect grammar but inappropriate tone is still a failure in terms of the communicative dimension [5]. These three dimensions are not isolated, but unified in translation practice that pursues overall ecological balance.

In summary, the core essentials of Eco-translatology form an organic system: "adaptation and selection" is the philosophical idea that runs through the entire theory, "translational eco-environment" is the stage and constraint for the conduct of activities, and "three-dimensional transformation" is the specific guide for actions on this stage. This theory elevates translation from mere textual correspondence to a creative communicative activity that seeks balance in a complex ecosystem, providing a highly insightful theoretical framework for the reform of vocational English teaching.

3. Analysis of the Current Status of Vocational English Teaching

3.1 Imbalance in the Ecological Environment of Translation Teaching

For a long time, listening, speaking, reading, and writing have been the top priorities in college English teaching, while the role of "translation" in enhancing college students' comprehensive abilities—such as their language expression skills—has been overlooked. Although the College English Teaching Guidelines explicitly require further improvement of students' abilities in listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translation, the textbooks used in college English courses do not include independent translation modules; translation-related content only appears in after-class exercises. This indicates that translation teaching has always been placed in a marginal position [6].

From the perspective of Eco-translatology, the imbalance in the teaching ecological environment is a key factor leading to the neglect of translation teaching. On one hand, in terms of college English curriculum design, universities lack emphasis on translation teaching. The curriculum mainly focuses on listening, speaking, reading, and writing, with almost no corresponding compulsory translation courses. Teachers also prioritize listening, speaking, reading, and writing in their teaching, and only briefly cover English-Chinese translation. On the other hand, in terms of teaching content, the English textbooks currently used by colleges and universities rarely include modules that comprehensively introduce translation theories and techniques. The after-class

exercise section also mainly focuses on English-to-Chinese translation, with a lack of specialized translation exercises.

In summary, the inadequacies in curriculum design and textbook content have led to the neglect and marginalization of translation teaching, which has affected the improvement of students' translation skills and English proficiency. Additionally, due to the limited class hours of college English courses, teachers can only allocate their time and energy to explaining grammar and texts, focusing on cultivating students' language expression and comprehension abilities while neglecting the improvement of their translation skills.

3.2 Outdated Teaching Models

In the teaching process of college English listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translation, translation teaching is highly comprehensive and practical, making it a key and difficult part of English teaching. Translation not only requires students to have a solid foundation in language knowledge and certain translation abilities but also demands that they gain in-depth insights into cultural differences between China and the West and understand the historical and cultural context behind texts. To improve the quality of translation teaching, college English teachers must continuously enhance their teaching competence, knowledge literacy, and translation skills.

As frontline English teachers, they should not only strengthen their learning of educational laws, teaching methods, and instructional techniques, and broaden their knowledge of translation theories but also actively participate in translation practice. Through practical experience, they can better refine their translation abilities. Moreover, compared with the teaching of listening, speaking, reading, and writing, translation teaching places greater emphasis on practice. However, some English teachers devote more time and energy to imparting linguistic theoretical knowledge and conducting scientific research, while rarely organizing translation practice activities—this has hindered the improvement of students' translation skills.

In terms of teaching model selection, most college English teachers adopt a teaching approach centered on knowledge indoctrination and theoretical lectures. The teaching content they choose is relatively simplistic, lacking relevance to real life and a sense of the times. In this traditional teaching model, teachers remain the focus of instruction; a large number of translation question types form the main content, and teachers only teach students basic translation methods.

3.3 Isolation and Rigidity in the Linguistic Dimension

The primary issue in current vocational English teaching from the linguistic dimension is the failure to achieve a true transition from "General English" to "Vocational English". The teaching content often remains confined to universal vocabulary and grammatical rules, which are severely disconnected from the "register" required by specific industries [7]. The so-called "register" refers to the norms of language use formed in specific professional scenarios, including professional terminology, syntactic structures, textual genres, and stylistic features. Many textbooks and classroom exercises are filled with artificially fabricated and idealized dialogues and texts, while severely lacking authentic workplace texts such as technical specifications, project reports, business correspondence, and contract clauses. As a result, students may memorize a large number of general vocabulary words but have a poor understanding of core terminology in their respective industries; they may master complex grammatical structures but fail to write an email that complies with industry standards. This type of teaching, which is divorced from the real linguistic ecological environment, renders the knowledge students acquire rootless. When facing actual work tasks, their language abilities prove inadequate, and they are unable to carry out effective "adaptive selection and transformation".

4. Construction of Vocational English Teaching Strategies from the Perspective of Eco-translatology

4.1 Creating a Teaching Ecosystem to Build an Efficient English Classroom

Creating a harmonious teaching ecosystem is a key factor in improving the quality and effectiveness of translation teaching. On one hand, colleges and universities should attach greater importance to translation teaching and establish the concept of emphasizing the cultivation of college students' abilities in listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translation. Only by enhancing awareness and attention can a solid foundation be laid for the creation of a sound teaching ecosystem.

On the other hand, emphasis should be placed on the scientific development of the curriculum system, ensuring that the overall curriculum design and course content selection meet the requirements of the times. With the development of economic globalization, trade liberalization, and the construction of China's Hainan Free Trade Port, enterprises have an increasing demand for interdisciplinary and application-oriented talents. Such talents are required not only to have solid professional knowledge and skills but also to possess certain translation abilities. However, the current English curriculum design in some colleges and universities is clearly unable to meet this demand.

Therefore, colleges and universities should keep up with the trend of the times, gain an in-depth understanding of the development needs of the Hainan Free Trade Port, and set up translation courses based on the demands for English in the Free Trade Port and industry-specific English. They should also increase course content related to cross-cultural communication and language application, and cultivate students' cross-cultural awareness—only in this way can a good foundation be laid for the high-quality development of translation teaching. For example, tourism majors can offer courses such as "General Oral English" and "Oral English for the Free Trade Port".

At the same time, college English teachers should appropriately integrate content such as translation skills and grammar training into daily teaching, and drive translation teaching through the teaching of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. In practical teaching, English teachers can explain and analyze difficult sentences in textbook content, and assign tasks of English-Chinese comparative reading to students after class to help them clarify the inherent differences between English and Chinese. Through the combination of in-class and after-class teaching, students can gradually develop a sense of translation, thereby creating a favorable teaching environment for cultivating students' translation abilities. For instance, teachers should select appropriate texts based on students' actual situations and professional characteristics: at the initial stage, translation texts related to textbook content can be chosen, and then gradually transition to text materials aligned with the College English Test Band 4 and Band 6, ensuring that the teaching content is applicable, up-to-date, and professional.

In the process of creating a harmonious translation teaching ecosystem, English teachers should focus on the diversity, professionalism, and standardization of teaching. Among these, "diversity" refers to the variety of teaching content and teaching methods. When selecting teaching content, teachers should make scientific choices based on college English curriculum standards and the talent needs of the Free Trade Port construction, attach importance to interdisciplinary integrated teaching, and ensure the diversity of teaching content. In terms of teaching method selection, English teachers should adopt methods such as case teaching and project-based teaching according to the age characteristics, cognitive laws, and actual situations of contemporary college students. This can fully stimulate students' initiative and enthusiasm for learning, and encourage them to actively participate in various translation practice activities.

"Professionalism" means that schools should set up targeted professional translation courses based on the majors of different students and the talent needs of the Free Trade Port. Examples of such courses include "Practical English Translation", "Practical Oral English for the Free Trade Port", "Comparison of Chinese and American Cultures", "Workplace English Translation", and "Cross-Cultural Communication".

"Standardization" requires that English teachers should possess standardized teaching skills and professional literacy required for translation teaching, and pay attention to implementing standardized teaching in the teaching process.

4.2 Reconstructing Teaching Content with Typical Work Tasks as the Orientation

The systematic reconstruction of teaching content is the cornerstone for the implementation of the Eco-translatology-based teaching model. Its core lies in completely breaking the traditional arrangement logic centered on general language knowledge points, and shifting to taking typical work tasks in students' future professional fields as the main thread. It organically integrates the learning requirements of the three dimensions—language, culture, and communication—thereby constructing a content system that is close to the real professional ecological environment.

This reconstruction process starts with in-depth and detailed industry demand analysis. The teaching team must go into enterprises and cooperate with industry experts to sort out the core work processes covered by the target job group and the key tasks within them. For example, for the international trade major, the chain of typical work tasks may run through the entire process from market development and customer acquisition, business negotiation and contract signing, to order execution and document operation, and even after-sales support and dispute resolution. For the hotel management major, the teaching content may be developed around the guests' complete check-in experience, ranging from reservation reception at the front desk, room service during the stay, to check-out procedures and subsequent customer relationship maintenance. Each task module is no longer an isolated language practice unit, but a "micro-ecosystem" containing a complete professional communication scenario, which provides a natural context for the three-dimensional integrated teaching.

From the linguistic dimension, the focus of teaching must shift from generalized grammar and vocabulary to highly specific industry registers. This means that the teaching content should be deeply embedded in the terminology system, syntactic features, and textual paradigms of the relevant industry. Students need to systematically master the core professional terminology in this field and its accurate usage, rather than just memorizing common vocabulary. At the same time, emphasis should be placed on analyzing specific text types closely related to professional tasks. For instance, engineers need to be familiar with the rigorous structure of technical reports and equipment manuals, while business professionals need to master the standard format of business plans and bidding documents. In addition, differences in stylistic features across different professional scenarios should also be a key focus of teaching, such as the distinction between the conciseness and objectivity of internal technical communication and the vivid persuasiveness of external market promotion. This register-based language teaching ensures that every language skill students learn can be directly applied to their future careers.

From the cultural dimension, the reconstructed teaching content will go beyond the superficial introduction of local customs and practices, and deeply explore the cultural elements that directly affect professional behaviors and the success or failure of communication. This includes understanding corporate culture, business ethics, and workplace codes of conduct—such as the significant differences in decision-making models, superior-subordinate communication, and meeting styles among enterprises in different countries. More importantly, it is necessary to

cultivate students' sensitivity to differences in values in cross-cultural communication, such as different understandings of the concept of time, the spirit of contract, and the ways of building interpersonal relationships. The teaching content should use real cross-cultural business cases to guide students to analyze how cultural factors subtly influence negotiation strategies, team cooperation, management methods, and conflict resolution, making them realize that in the workplace, cultural misunderstanding is far more fatal than language errors.

From the communicative dimension, all learning of language and culture must ultimately converge and be reflected in the effective completion of real professional communication tasks. This dimension requires that teaching design must endow each learning activity with a clear communicative purpose, specific communication objects, and concrete communication scenarios. For example, learning to write emails is not only for grammatical correctness, but more importantly, to achieve the goal of effectively conveying information, building trust, or solving problems to specific objects (such as customers, colleagues, or superiors) in specific situations (such as consultation, complaint, or gratitude). Therefore, the design of teaching content should revolve around comprehensive tasks such as simulated business negotiations, writing project proposals, presenting technical solutions, and handling customer complaints. In these tasks, students need to comprehensively apply their language abilities and cultural insight, weigh the pros and cons, and make the most appropriate adaptive choices to achieve the ultimate communicative intention. This task-oriented integrated design ensures that what students learn is no longer fragmented knowledge points, but comprehensive abilities that can be flexibly applied in the complex and changing real workplace environment.

4.3 Strengthening Practical Teaching and Reforming Teaching Models

The "translator-centered" perspective in Eco-translatology theory holds that in the process of translating a text, the translator plays a dominant role—all adaptive behaviors and selection behaviors need to be determined and ultimately implemented by the translator. Since the key to cultivating students' translation abilities lies in their participation in practice, under the framework of Eco-translatology, emphasis should be placed on practical teaching and the innovation of teaching models.

First, the reform of college English translation teaching based on Eco-translatology should prioritize organizing and conducting teaching practice, and implement the student-oriented concept in practical activities. It is necessary to reduce the proportion of teachers' explanations in practical sessions, design English practice activities, create opportunities for students to engage in translation practice, and increase the share of students' participation in translation-related tasks. By selecting translation materials that align with students' interests during teaching, teachers can stimulate students' enthusiasm for participating in translation practice and provide them with more hands-on opportunities. This allows students to understand and master relevant translation techniques through practice, thereby effectively improving their translation abilities.

Colleges and universities can enhance cooperation and exchanges with foreign-funded enterprises, arranging for students to participate in on-the-job practical training in these enterprises to hone their practical skills. They can also actively organize English proficiency competitions and English club activities, leveraging the "second classroom" to improve students' English translation skills and cross-cultural communication competencies.

Second, eco-translatology theory emphasizes that translators should be able to conduct translation effectively across three dimensions: language, culture, and communication. However, many students face difficulties in English translation learning due to the negative transfer of their mother tongue. Given the inherent differences between Chinese and Western languages, as well as

variations in linguistic environments, it is essential to further innovate teaching models and prioritize the cultivation of students' cross-cultural awareness to enhance the accuracy of their translations. To achieve this, teachers should integrate cross-cultural awareness training into daily teaching, design teaching activities focused on cross-cultural understanding, and explain knowledge about the customs, traditions, and linguistic cultures of English-speaking countries as comprehensively as possible. This helps expand students' cultural knowledge, enrich their background in foreign language and culture, and enable them to recognize differences between Chinese and Western cultures. For example, in practical teaching, teachers can adopt project-based learning: organizing students to view materials, images, and videos related to English-speaking countries, then assigning real translation projects based on these resources. Students can complete the translation projects while referencing the videos, images, and relevant materials. The application of project-based learning not only boosts students' interest in translation learning and transforms the atmosphere of traditional translation teaching but also helps students gain a deeper understanding of Western culture through completing translation projects—thereby reducing the likelihood of incorrect translations in their future English translation practice.

Third, with the continuous development of science and technology and the advancement of Internet technology, modern teaching tools have become increasingly diverse, promoting the reform and innovation of college English translation teaching. Teachers can establish WeChat groups, QQ groups, and DingTalk groups, where they upload documents, images, videos, notes, and materials to provide students with rich and diverse resources for self-directed learning. Meanwhile, teachers can use online platforms to enrich the content of translation courses and build a two-way interactive teaching environment.

5. Conclusion

At present, China is in a crucial stage of deepening reforms. Under the backdrop of globalization, there is an increased emphasis on the cultivation of translation talents. English, as an international common language, is an indispensable important skill for modern talents. College English is an important foundational course in higher education, and translation teaching is a key component. From the perspective of ecological translation studies, translation teaching activities can enhance students' translation practical abilities, meet the needs of social usage, and also improve the comprehensive ability level of talents, thereby promoting the all-round development and progress of society.

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