

Self-enriched Translator Training with Specialized Subject Knowledge

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Abstract: There has already been the ongoing trend in the shift of focus in specialized translator training from domain-specific knowledge training to an all-round competence development. Based on the analysis of the current problem with the specialized translator training with subject knowledge, this study is to propose suggestions as to how translators deal with the problem of lacking in subject knowledge. Provided in this paper is the detailed illustrations of four methods of self-enriched translator training with specialized subject knowledge, i.e. self-training in efficient subject knowledge management, self-training for efficient reading, self-training to reuse translations in parallel corpus, self-training to use post-editing machine translations. This study aims to contribute to the future specialized translator training by serving as a reference source or even an inclusion as component parts in these training programs.

Keywords: Subject Knowledge, Translator Training, Self-enriched Training, Thematic Competence.

INTRODUCTION

Specialized translators training will encounter the problem of how to understand subject matter in non-literary or technical source texts. You simply cannot translate well without understanding what you are translating. Considering the fact that most translators are not the subject matter experts, though they are with good translation competences, they still find it difficult to deal with domain-specific texts.

There exist two seemingly opposite ways of how to carry out subject knowledge training, the deductive and inductive approaches, each one of which has innate problems as to their effectiveness or usefulness. The deductive approach introduces briefly the subject matter knowledge for a given assignment, and leaves a large amount of the work to be figured out by students themselves. In series of lectures about the basic knowledge of a science, student trainees need to derive from the knowledge about the scientific knowledge necessary in understanding the text in a particular field. The problem is that it is hard to decide what knowledge should be considered as the basic science needed for translators to know in understanding a science text. The list of basics in a science could be numerous. It is also questionable as to the usefulness of the basic knowledge in real translation process. In many cases, the knowledge involved in a translators' assignment may not be necessarily have anything to do with the knowledge taught during the training.

On the other hand, there is the inductive way to deal with the subject matter problems. In this approach, students are trained with several selections from a domain-specific field. With this partial knowledge, students are expected to figure out the way to understand a given text about a discipline. But, the problem remains that the selected text for training could

not exhaust all the possible topics in a discipline. Though, the selected materials may explain a topic in depth, as contrasted to the rudimentary knowledge introduced in the deductive approach, it is lacking in the completeness of basic knowledge about a discipline.

Risku questioned the way in which subject knowledge is typically conveyed in translator training and the usefulness of such knowledge when it comes to preparing students for coping with real-life translations [1]. For both deductive and inductive approaches, it remains a big concern to select the disciplines and the future usefulness of such basic knowledge and selected knowledge in future implementation in a translation. After the training with both approaches, students' subject matter knowledge is still segmented or fragmentary. If the training is not carried out shortly before the knowledge is used, another problem arises as to how the translators expect to recall the knowledge they have received in these trainings or what if the knowledge is irrelevant to the text to be translated, not to mention some knowledge will become out of fashion in some years after the training. By the way, specialized translators only can dream of working on a narrow range of domain-specific subjects because the translation market simply is greatly diversified and narrow range of subjects mean fewer clients and money-making opportunities.

Self-training in Efficient Subject Knowledge Management

It is a good way to instruct students with the basics of domain-specific subject matters or pre-selected materials about the disciplines. As Kiraly has addressed the importance of enabling students to learn how to learn, it is increasingly evident that the abilities of problem-solving and self-motivated learning are more important than the acquisition of the content knowledge [2]. In line with Gardner's [8] multiple intelligences and abundant empirical literature about learning styles, there is an urgent need to shift in focus and attitude towards subject matter training. So, the essence of the solution to this issue is to make students cope with the problems in their translations by a set of problem-solving skills and self-directed way of finding the right necessary knowledge.

The shift of attention should be from the training of knowing "knowledge" to the design of series of skill training to find and manage the "knowledge", i.e. personal knowledge management in identifying the informational needs and fulfilling the needs. In the process, students use technical devices, such as a web-based information storing database or web-portal to store, categorize, search or share the recorded

information, such as OneNote, Ever Note, Wiz Note, McCoy Notepad, Timenote, Ant Note, King Notebook, Youdao Cloudnote, And Note, Le Cloudnote, etc.

Students can document the needed information with these web-portals, which all provide cost-free personal usage and can be used to link with the massive information sources on the Internet or any other information carriers. To the students, this can also serve as a personal data base of full text corpora and term-base. Not just as an information storage, the web-portal makes it convenient to categorize, retrieve and even share the information. Translators can also tailor the interface for easy access to or fast construction of the information, which is sought and processed in their translations. As is indicated in Dunn & Griggs, domain-specific subject knowledge had better be transmitted through self-motivated individual pursuing [3]. Thus, this knowledge management approach is reasonable in that it helps translators construct knowledge for real work uses, i.e. what they are intended to learn or the knowledge in close proximity to their translation work.

This approach can be summarized in a flow chart, such as the one in the following Figure-1:



Fig-1: Six phases of Knowledge Management

Among the six phases of knowledge management, students may have diversified needs as to their different learning preparations to fill in the knowledge gaps. For some students, it is not necessary to search for the background knowledge for understanding the source texts, while others may need to go through some of the phases. The training materials can use real translation assignments from small translation projects in practice. Any subject matter materials are suitable for such a purpose to train students for improving their personal knowledge management skills. In a sense, this approach serves as the tool to engage students in a longtime involvement in the learning process of any subject matter, which translators may come across in daily work.

Self-training for Efficient Reading in Subject Knowledge

The materials to read for translators, as a part of their lifelong learning process, include various types

of paper-format or digital form books, journals, magazines, newspapers, blogs, Wechat newsletters, dictionaries and novels, etc. These materials may cover extensive topics on science, cultures, current events, psychology and languages, etc. This wide coverage means that translators need to plan their reading carefully, otherwise it will be time-consuming and cost-ineffective. By the way, the above materials may be of different uses or aide to the translators' work. So, it is useful to know how much to invest in reading these materials. For the formal educational bodies, it is also necessary to have an explicit way of assessment of students' informal learning. For the training bodies, it is anticipated that a way of classified reading serves well in monitoring students' professional development.

A summary of the classified reading types can be seen in the following Figure-2. In-depth learning is when translators need to acquire skills or specialized knowledge as a prerequisite to their professional

development or career development training, such as in reading textbooks, handbooks, manuals and etc. Problem solving is when translators encounter specific problems in translation work, such as term queries, software uses, domain-specific matters, etc. Scanning and skimming is when translators have no particular goal of learning but rather scour around for any information that maybe of future uses, such as in reading newspapers, magazines, specialized journals,

and the most recently very popular Wechat friend circle. Emulating or imitating is when it comes to learning from experts and professionals, such as establishing a contact with experts by reading translator experts' blogs, specialized forums, or daily communication through email contacts, etc. Incidental learning is when translators are reading through novels, culture guides, or product instructions, etc.

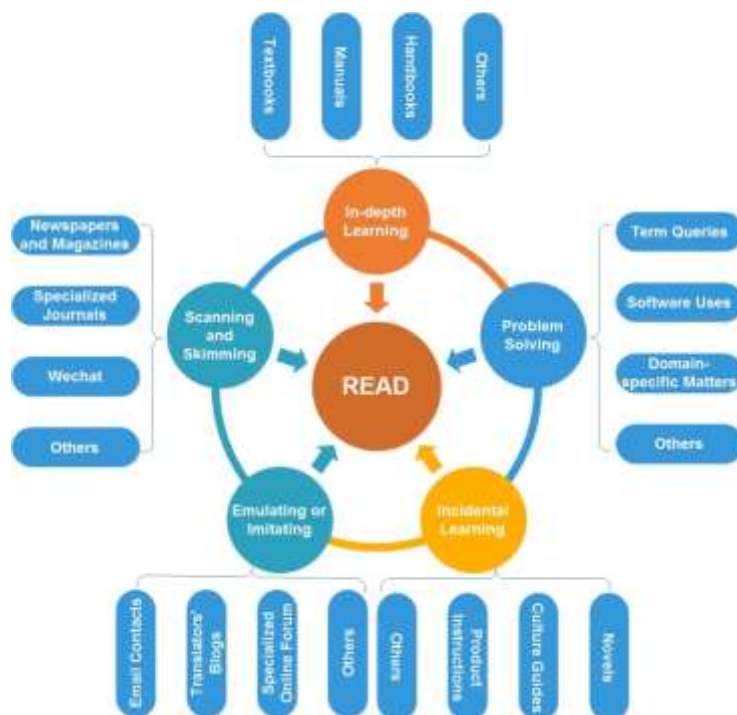


Fig-2: Five Types of Reading in Subject Knowledge

These five types of reading suggest that reading can be focused or unfocused, planned or unplanned, intentional or unintentional, conscious or unconscious. Translators need to distinguish every type of reading so as to make the best of the reading.

Self-training to Reuse Translations in Parallel Corpus

Atkins & Varantola suggests translators use at least half of their time and efforts in finding the references [4]. Parallel bi-texts are valuable sources of reference materials for translators to improve the quality and speed of their translation. It is often difficult to find possible translations in mono-lingual and comparable corpora, and it involves tremendous work to indentify, classify and generalize from the concordance lines to relate to a form in ST. This procedure to find similar contexts for target words in TL corpus always ends up with hits to make translators face too many possibilities. Thus, to save translators from the time-consuming efforts to discriminate and attend to word uses in ST, it is more desirable to have a side-to-side translation with both ST and TT.

Parallel corpus contains both ST and their TT as translations. If it is an aligned corpus at the sentence or at least paragraph level, the translators will be able to retrieve all the sentences in both ST and TT that contain the search words and their reference translations with the use of a proper tool, such as BFSU CQPweb, PKU CATaligner, Paraconc and Multiconcord, etc. Then, the translators can make translation hypotheses and evaluate their translation choices in a specialized environment.

Apart from finding the translation equivalents, translators can also use parallel corpus in learning. Since parallel corpus provide both ST and TT contexts, the retrieved sentences are easier to be understood for translators. For the same reason, incidental learning of subject knowledge increases. Despite the drawbacks that translators need to discriminate the reliable translations from unreliable translations, parallel corpus provides a useful way for finding translation equivalents and translation evaluation. With the availability of more good quality corpora and suitable corpus searching tools and online platforms, using parallel corpus for translator training will be more cost-effective.

Self-training to Use Post-editing Machine Translations

In today's world where post-editing (PE) machine translation (MT) for translators in specialized domain field becomes a required competence, translators need to be ready for this changing face of the translation industry. Groves suggested the importance of PE in the translation process [5]. When taken as a part of revision, post-editing MT output played an important role in improving translation speed and maintaining translations' clarity and accuracy [6]. However, traditional translation curriculum has always underestimated the importance of the use of translation technology in translator training, not to mention the inclusion of post-editing MT in the teaching contents. Thus, translators need to enrich themselves in this aspect of translation.

The following is what they should learn by themselves. Translation Automation User Society (TAUS) carried out a global survey of LSPs in January 2010. TAUS's survey report proposed some PE Guidelines: aiming at quality translation equivalent to HT (human translation); avoiding omitted or added translation; changing culturally inappropriate contents; using MT output as much as possible; checking errors in spelling, punctuation, word category, and word order and word choices; ensuring good syntactic choices, idiomatic correctness and formatting.

Also, the Google Translator Tool Kits are not only user-friendly but also powerful statistical machine translation system, with which many clients send MT outputs to translators for post-editing. Google Translate, compared with other machine translation systems like Bing (Microsoft), and Systran (IBM), supports more language pairs and provides more acceptable results.

Last but not least, translators need to know some computer-aided translation modules that enhance the MT systems, such as the one mentioned in Ortiz-Martínez, which is a new version of THOT Toolkit, an open-source toolkit for SMT, which includes post-editing and interactive MT [7]. Such tools with interface with an existing MT system but with more functionalities such as marking non-translated words, suggesting synonyms, extracting and evaluating sublexical/constituent translations for out-of-vocabulary, etc.

CONCLUSIONS

In all, insufficient subject knowledge for a translator imposes a real problem, but this problem can be dealt with in a number of ways other than learning the subject domain-specific knowledge on the scratch. For professional translators, the focus should be on improving their language competence, intercultural competence, translation service provision competence, information mining competence, thematic competence

and technological competence. As long as they are equipped with these competences, they can adopt other methods to deal with the lack of domain-specific knowledge, as those four methods elaborated in this research paper.

The limitation of this research is self-evident, i.e. lack of quantitative survey data collected from both translators and clients about the feasibilities of the design of the self-training mode. The future work can focus on the design of such a training program which includes this self-training module as the major component and the subsequent evaluation of the translator trainees' performances in translating texts of domain-specific fields.

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