

# A Study on the Application of Case-based Learning Method in Translation Class for Master of Translation and Interpreting

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**Abstract:** In 2007, China established the Master of Translation and Interpreting (MTI) program, with a training model centered around practice and oriented towards employment. The improvement of translation ability not only lies in the mastering certain translation theories and skills, but also requires considerable practice. The most prominent feature of case-based learning method is practicality. It is worth the effort to study how to effectively enhance students' translation ability through case-based learning. Taking the MTI program of Xi'an Technological University in Shaanxi province, China, as an example, this paper, through literature and classroom practice, mainly discusses the background, necessity, implementation stages, significance, and points that should be paid attention to when using case-based learning method in translation class. It is found that case-based learning method can help students acquire knowledge on translation through their own analysis, thinking and selection so as to improve their translation ability and creativity. It is expected that this study could promote the reform of traditional translation teaching, improve students' translation abilities, and provide some reference for the cultivation of high-level, application-oriented, and specialized translators in the MTI program of other universities.

**Keywords:** Case-based learning; Translation practice; MTI

## 1. Introduction

With the continuous development of China's economy and the deepening of reform and opening up, there is an increasing demand for high-level professional translation personnel in China due to more and more frequent political, economic, technological, cultural and other exchanges with other countries all over the world. The year 2007 marks a milestone in the development of translation studies in China, when China launched a pilot program for Master of Translation and Interpreting (MTI), providing an important way to cultivate high-level, applied, and specialized translators. "By 2023, 316 translation master's programs and 301 translation bachelor's programs have been established in China." [1] Compared with traditional foreign language teaching, the specific teaching goal of MTI is proposed as "vocational translation skill training based on students' bilingual communication ability", [2] emphasizing the training of practical translation skills and the analysis of translation cases. "Case-based learning mode is widely adopted in applied majors in recent years, suitable for majors with characteristics of practicality." [3] MTI program is practice-focused and employment-oriented with the goal of developing students' translation abilities, which is in line with the biggest role of case-based learning method: to improve students' practical ability. Roles of the students are to analyze the case and figure out solutions to questions related to the case, acquire relevant professional knowledge and skills, proficiently use translation tools, so as to link classroom learning with knowledge and skills required in the job, and apply what they have learned in translation. In recent years, in order to meet the growing demand of the domestic translation market, many universities of science and engineering have established Master of Translation (MTI) programs, with the aim of cultivating professional translation personnel and providing society with urgently needed professional translation human resources in various industries. In 2020, Xi'an Technological University was successfully approved as a translation master's degree program which is based in Shaanxi, leveraging Shaanxi's geographical advantages, making full use of its engineering foundation and military background, relying on the its advantages in disciplines such as optoelectronics, machinery, materials, and Chinese language and literature,

with the characteristics of engineering and technological translation and cross-cultural translation, to cultivate applied translation personnel with a wide range of professional education and solid foundation. In 2021, the first batch of students were enrolled. In the study plan for MTI students, a total of 6 courses are offered for professional basic courses, all of which are closely related to translation. It is the mission of every teacher to keep pace with the times, change his teaching concept, implement case-based learning approach in class, and integrate practice-focused and employment-oriented cultivation model throughout the entire education process in translation teaching.

## 2. The Necessity of Applying Case-based Learning Method in MTI Translation Class

Through the observation of the translation class for MTI students at Xi'an Technological University, it was found that there are two problems in translation teaching.

**2.1 Emphasizing Theory over Practice.** At present, the translation teaching for MTI students at Xi'an Technological University mainly focuses on teaching theory instead of translation practice. Teachers focus on teaching translation methods or skills in the classroom, with limited practice and a lack of close integration between theory and practice. As a result, students cannot proficiently apply the translation theory or skills they have learned into practice, nor can they truly master translation theory and skills in translation practice. This goes against the current goal of cultivating translation personnel in China, which is not conducive to the cultivation of students' interest in learning and the improvement of their translation abilities.

**2.2 Single Teaching Mode.** At present, the translation class for MTI students at Xi'an Technological University still follows the traditional teaching method of "teacher lecturing, student listening", with monotonous teaching pattern. Classroom teaching is mainly teacher-centered, instead of student-centered, so the students' subjectivity is not fully triggered, and effective teacher-student communication and student-student communication are not fully realized. Although the traditional teaching method is beneficial for impart theoretical knowledge to students to a certain extent, it is not conducive to arousing students' enthusiasm and initiative. In the long run, this mode is not helpful to the development of students' practical abilities and the improvement of students' all-round abilities and comprehensive quality, and cannot meet the requirements of training translation personnel based on practical ability which is the guidance of training program.

Therefore, the application of the case-based learning model into the translation class has changed the traditional teacher-centered class model and transformed it into student-centered one, with teachers primarily playing a guiding role. Under this teaching mode, the theoretical knowledge of translation that the students have learned is used in specific translation case, and translation skills and rules summarized in the cases are presented. Therefore, students' learning desire is triggered, their interest in translation is stimulated, and their translation and innovation abilities are improved.

## 3. The Application of Case-based Learning Method in MTI Translation Class

Although there is no fixed model for case-based teaching, in general, the application of case-based learning method in MTI courses should include two main stages: the preparation stage and the implementation stage. Only by effective application of these two stages, can the successful case-based learning be ensured.

**3.1 The Preparation Stage.** The preparation stage includes theoretical preparation and case preparation. Theoretical preparation is the foundation of the entire case-based learning, mainly including the study of translation methods, the comparison between English and Chinese languages, and the understanding of technical terms. In case preparation, the case used in case-based learning need to be carefully selected and organized. Cases are the foundation for implementing case-based learning and a prerequisite for ensuring teaching quality. Therefore, it is extremely important for teachers to select, write, and design cases that are suitable for teaching. Cases are written according to the teaching objectives. The training objectives of MTI students at Xi'an Technological University are: the cultivation of high-level, applied, professional English translation personnel

required in the fields of engineering and technological translation and cross-cultural translation with good professional ethics, proficient translation skills, and extensive knowledge reserves, who also cultivate a firm political stance and patriotism, abide by discipline and laws, adapt to the requirements of the new era of socialism with Chinese characteristics, and realize students' all-round development. The required courses for the MTI students mainly include: Introduction to Translation, Scientific English-Chinese Translation, Scientific Chinese-English Translation, Translation Theory and Practice, and Computer Aided Translation. The main optional courses are as follows: consecutive interpretation, applied literary translation, translation of Chinese classics, translation workshops, etc. Teachers can design different teaching cases based on the teaching focus of different courses, and appropriately integrate the language points of each unit in each course into the case analysis. Besides, the lesson plan should reflect the current society, technology, culture, foreign trade, diplomacy and so on.

**3.2 The Implementation Stage.** “Unlike traditional teaching methods, the most obvious feature of case-based learning is its emphasis on thinking process.” [4] “Different from the traditional translation teaching mode, the case-based learning method focus on practice and translation process.” [5] Implementation refers to organizing students to raise questions, analyzing and studying them, and finding solutions to them through case studies under the guidance of teachers. First, questions are designed for students. In order to better motivate students' thinking ability and creativity through case studies, stimulate their interest in learning and desire for self-exploration, it is necessary to set reasonable questions in the case studies. Firstly, setting the context and introduce the question. In order to change the traditional “teacher-centered” model in class, stimulate students' learning motivation, and cultivate their practical abilities, it is necessary to set reasonable questions in advance. Interesting, real situations and questions can effectively attract students' attention, bring them into a good classroom atmosphere, stimulate their thirst for knowledge, and cultivate their problem-solving consciousness. The next is group discussions. The key to the success of case-based learning lies in group discussions. When grouping, teachers should try to consider the English proficiency of different students to ensure that each group has students with different levels. To ensure the quality of group discussions, a team leader should be designated who is responsible for organizing the discussion of his group, writing the outline of the group's presentation, and display the version. The main task of teachers in this stage is to organize and guide students' discussions, making the discussion on the track, and avoid deviating from the main topic of the discussion. Then, all the students discuss the advantages and disadvantages of each group's translation version, and determine the final translation. Finally, the case analysis is a must. Case analysis is the final stage of case teaching, which plays a very important role in summary and evaluation of the entire teaching process. After the case discussion, the teacher should promptly summarize the entire process of case analysis and group discussion, conclude the ideas, difficulties, key points, and main problems solved in this case discussion. Reasonable evaluation and teacher's summary can better identify problems, summarize experiences, and thus ensure the positive role of case-based learning.

#### **4. The Significance of Case-based Learning Method in MTI Translation Class**

**4.1 Understanding the current situation and figuring out solutions to them.** This study, through the observation of the relevant translation courses of MTI majors in Xi'an Technological University, can help teachers know clear about the problems that arise in translation class, encourage them to figure out solutions to the problems, so as to improve their teaching skills and students' translation abilities, which may contribute to translation teaching reform and the cultivation of high-level, application-oriented, and specialized translators. Besides, the classroom observation and the practice of case-based learning method in MTI translation class at Xi'an Technological University could provide some useful experiences of case-based learning for other universities.

**4.2 Implementing the Student-centered Teaching Concept.** “The traditional translation class is teacher-centered, with error correction as one of the main methods, and reference answers as the means, which does not conform to the essential characteristics of translation in real situations.” [6] In case-based learning, typical cases should be carefully selected by teachers based on teaching

objectives, key and difficult points in translation, and teaching requirements, to guide students to specific situations and effective case analysis realized by independent thinking, collective discussion, achievement presentation, and multiple evaluations. Thus, students' ability to analyze situations, solve problems, and successfully complete translation task is developed. In the case-based learning, students are encouraged to be involved in classroom learning through finishing tasks and analyzing situations. With students' dominant role in the classroom, they are formed in small groups for discussion and case results presentation, thus cultivating teamwork spirit, and enhancing learning interest and enthusiasm. The role of a teacher is to organize the classroom, guide discussions, and provide evaluations. In this teaching mode, different ways are used for the progress of students: leverage students' strengths, tap into their potential, and provide all-round evaluations.

**4.3 Attaching Importance to the Discussion Process.** Traditional classroom teaching may place too much emphasis on students' mastery of language points, emphasizing exams, scores, while neglecting the development of translation abilities. The case-based learning method focuses on cultivating students' ability to analyze problems and solve them. Through real cases, students are encouraged to discuss the problems in groups based on independent thinking, and then actively seek solutions to them. Therefore, this teaching model places more emphasis on the learning process and cultivates students' translation abilities during the process. In the case-based learning class, authentic and contemporary cases are used, allowing students to truly integrate translation theory with translation practice. After completing the course, students can put into practice what he has learned in university, and become backbones in translation industry.

## **5. The Points for Attention in Case-based Learning Method in MTI Translation Class**

**5.1 Carefully Selecting Cases for Studies.** "The source of translation cases is not strictly limited to a specific field." [7] But in universities with a focus on science and engineering like Xi'an Technological University, practical texts should be chosen as much as possible. "At present, the translation market has the larger demand for the translation of highly specialized materials such as machinery, energy, electronics, information, and medicine." [8] Translation cases, if possible, should conform to the characteristics of the university, teaching objectives, and students' ability to complete teaching tasks, and their knowledge structure and language proficiency should also be taken into consideration. MTI at Xi'an Technological University is characterized by engineering technology translation and cross-cultural translation, so the cases are mainly about technology and culture. Besides, the case sources should be reliable and cases be new so as to stimulate students' learning motivation and enthusiasm, and effectively enhance their learning ability and translation skills.

**5.2 Encouraging students' participation in teamwork.** Each student should actively participate in group discussions and conscientiously complete group translation tasks. when encountering difficulties, they should actively take measures to solve problems instead of giving up, share experiences with group members, review different versions with each other so as to promote teamwork spirit.

**5.3 Cultivating a high-quality teaching team.** "Teachers are required not only to be able to teach and study translation, but also to have rich practical experience in translation when applying the case-based learning method." [9] Forging iron requires one's own hard work. Case-based learning model in translation class requires a teaching team with solid translation skills and practical experience, who can offer authentic and contemporary translation cases for students, guide them for discussion in class, help to continuously improve their translation ability so as to cultivate high-quality translators.

## **6. Conclusions**

Through the above discussion of the case-based learning method in the MTI translation courses in Xi'an Technological University, it can be seen that in MTI education, the introduction of the case-based learning method into the translation class, studying the characteristics and specific ways

of the implementation of case-based learning method in class so as to raise questions and figure out solutions to them, not only provides students with translation practice opportunities, helps them improve their translation skills, proficiently use modern translation tools, but also cultivates their collaborative team spirit so as to establish themselves in the translation field in the future. Case-based learning method in translation class has changed the traditional teaching mode that mainly focuses on theoretical translation knowledge. As a result, students' learning enthusiasm can be aroused and their creativity can be encouraged through their own analysis, thinking, selection, and summary in the case study, helping them to gain translation experience so as to improve their translation skills. Therefore, the introduction of case-based learning method into translation class is in line with the education objectives of MTI program, which is of great significance for the improvement of students' translation skills and the cultivation of their all-round professional abilities.

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