

# The Implementation Strategies of MTI Translation Teaching from the Perspective of Cognitive Linguistics

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**Abstract:** This paper is mainly concerned with the implications of cognitive linguistics for MTI translation teaching, with an emphasis on the implementation strategies and teaching procedures. Cognitive linguistics sheds new light on translation teaching by focusing on the translation process itself and regarding translation as a cognitive activity of the translation subject. The three major steps of translation teaching include both the design of the framework structure and the handling of the details, reflecting the teaching philosophy of teachers as “guiders” and “facilitators” and students as “active constructors of knowledge meaning”, which provides practical ideas for the adjustment of translation teaching.

**Keywords:** Cognitive linguistics, MTI translation teaching, translation competency.

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## 1. Introduction

Translation teaching aims to improve students' translation competency. Traditional translation teaching, first of all, focuses on enhancing students' language proficiency, with the belief that translation cannot be done without solving problems in the language level. Secondly, translation is regarded as a conversion between the source language and the target language, with an emphasis on the lexical and syntactic comparison as well as summing up various translation skills. Thirdly, the traditional language-based translation teaching lacks the dynamism and interactivity of meaning construction, and students are put in a passive receiving position. Although the knowledge is undoubtedly beneficial to students in translation, over-reliance on language training models and confinement to evaluating the pros and cons of language transformation can easily mislead students to believe that translation is simply a simplified and mechanized comparison and application of language systems. Language transformation in translation is only extrinsic and superficial, while cognitive operation is intrinsic and deep-level.[1] Cognitive translation studies have rejected the idea that translation is solely based on linguistic transformation, and have instead focused on various cognitive elements involved in the translation process, including the nature, mechanism, and procedure of translation. This study will explore how to design MTI translation teaching based on the perspective of cognitive linguistic view on translation. In particular, it aims to resolve the contradiction between the lack of language ability and the improvement of translation competency, and how to change the relationship between teachers and students from "knowledge indoctrination" to "cognitive construction" based on the translation perspective of cognitive linguistics, in order to provide enlightenment for MTI translation teaching.

## 2. Translation Teaching Mode and Translation Competency

The connotation of teaching mode is relatively clear. He Kekang[2] pointed out that teaching mode is a stable process of teaching activities carried out in a certain environment under the guidance of certain educational philosophy,

teaching and learning theories. Zheng Jinzhou[3] believed that the teaching mode is a relatively stable, systematic, and theoretical teaching paradigm formed around a certain theme in teaching activities under the guidance of certain teaching thoughts. It can be seen that theoretical guidance, teaching activities, and paradigms are the key words in the definition of teaching mode. Generally speaking, a teaching mode includes theoretical basis, teaching objectives, teaching procedures, and classroom activities. Combining these factors, we believe that the translation teaching mode is guided by relevant education or learning/teaching theories, aims to improve students' translation competency, and adopts specific teaching methods and approaches to carry out translation activities. Different theoretical bases will lead to different translation teaching modes. For example, the traditional translation teaching mode is based on Behaviorism and Structuralism, while the interactive translation teaching mode is based on Constructivism and Cognitive linguistics.

As for translation competency, academic definitions vary. The primary task of translator training is to cultivate students' translation ability. "What aspects does translation ability include? How to cultivate the translation ability? These issues have increasingly become the focus of translation teaching and research"[4]. The Spanish PACTE research group[5] proposed that translation competency includes bilingual ability, translation knowledge, non-linguistic knowledge, instrumental knowledge, strategic ability, etc. Alves and Goncalves[6] believed that translation ability is built on linguistic and pragmatic abilities, and the sum of translation abilities is a complex cognitive network composed of knowledge, abilities, and strategies. He Gangqiang[7] pointed out that translation ability includes the translator's cognitive thinking ability, linguistic ability, and communicative ability. From the perspective of teaching practice, we propose that translation ability includes source language proficiency, target language fluency, and language conversion ability (involving pragmatic sensitivity, logical reasoning, cultural awareness, expression, and writing). Therefore, the cultivation of translation ability is closely related to knowledge construction, theoretical learning, and translation practice.

### 3. Literature Review

The translation perspective of cognitive linguistics holds that "translation is a multiple interactive process participated by cognitive subjects with real-life experience as the background, where the reader and translator, based on a thorough understanding of the various meanings expressed in the source language text, tries to express them in the target language, and should strive to depict the real world and cognitive world described by the author"[8]. The translation perspective of cognitive linguistics emphasizes the restrictive roles of experience and cognition, attaches importance to the interactive relationship among the author, the work, and the reader, and pursues the "rationality of interpretation" and "harmony of translation". Cognitive linguistics is built on the foundation of experiential philosophy. When examining translation from the perspective of cognitive linguistics, it highlights the performance of subjective cognitive activities in translation compared with the traditional text-centered translation perspective and the translation perspective of traditional linguistics. This is an essential phenomenon related to translation activities that has not received sufficient attention in translation studies. At the same time, compared with translation perspectives such as deconstructionism, hermeneutics, and cultural school, which emphasize the subjective factors such as the translator's (that is, the deconstructor's or interpreter's) own horizons, experience, and positions in translation activities, the translation perspective of cognitive linguistics proposes to exert the restrictive roles of experience and cognition on subjective factors.

Scholars at home and abroad have conducted research and discussion on the application of cognitive science in translation teaching. Olohan[9] conducted empirical research on the cognitive comprehension ability of translation majors. Tao Youlan and Huang Jin[10] used cognitive schema theory to guide the compilation of translation exercises and proposed that following the cognitive path is the minimum standard for designing translation exercises. Wu Bo[11] believed that the process of translation is a series of cognitive activities in which the translator cognizes the original work and the world reflected by it. The concept based on cognitive linguistics theory has important implications for the cultivation of translation ability. Zhu Lin[12] expounded the embodied cognitive view in translation teaching, advocated a constructivist teaching view oriented by the cognitive process, and constructed a seamless teaching system connecting instruction, internship, and seminars to promote learners' cognitive development in translation. Termina[13] believed that translation should be regarded as a dynamic process that

presents a series of extralinguistic, perceptual, and conceptual structures (i.e., conceptual/cognitive equivalence). The key to translation training is to activate learners' conceptual systems composed of cognitive frameworks, cognitive models, cognitive domains, cognitive patterns, and cross-domain mappings. Wang Xiangling and Sha Lu[14] adopted the Community of Inquiry framework theory to reveal that "students who tend to use higher-level cognitive strategies such as monitoring and reasoning to solve translation problems have higher translation quality scores." In a nutshell, it is found that researchers have a common understanding of the shortcomings of traditional translation classroom teaching, in which the teacher-centered error correction teaching model still dominates; teachers impart knowledge and students passively accept it; the form of translation exercises is monotonous; the concepts of teaching translation and translator training are confused, etc. Therefore, the cultivation of translation ability and the research on translator training from the perspective of cognitive linguistics are still topics worthy of further discussion.

### 4. Cognitive Model of Translation

Translation teaching from the perspective of cognitive linguistics views translation as a cognitive activity, emphasizing the translation process from the surface structure of Chinese to that of English, and decomposes the translation process as much as possible to constitute the entire procedure. The cognitive perspective of meaning coincides with constructivism. Lakoff[15], one of the founders of cognitive linguistics, believes that "understanding arises from the interaction and continuous negotiation between the environment and learners. When there are differences in culture, knowledge, values, and assumptions, mutual understanding can only be achieved through the negotiation of meaning." Langacker's[16] cognitive grammar theory points out that "meaning is not an inherent attribute of linguistic expressions, but is acquired through the interpretation of situational concepts in the context, that is, in the actual scenarios of language use." It can be seen that from the perspective of cognitive linguistics, the meaning of language is constructed through the cognitive operations of language users. Constructive learning theory believes that students should be transformed from passive recipients of external stimuli and objects of knowledge infusion to active processors of information and active constructors of knowledge. Accordingly, teachers should be transformed from knowledge transmitters and lecturers to helpers and facilitators of students' active meaning construction.

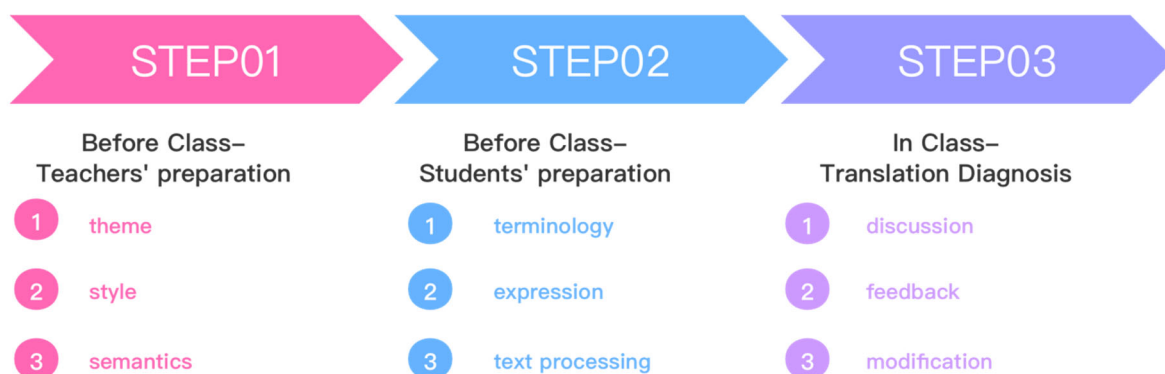


Figure 1. Steps of cognitive translation teaching

### Step 1 Teachers' Preparation Before Class — Correct Understanding and Grasp of the Basic Aspects of Translation

Traditional translation classrooms often focus on translating literary works, with words, phrases, sentences, or short paragraphs as the translation objects. The standard translation is often provided by the teacher for comparative analysis, followed by summarizing corresponding translation techniques. However, the cognitive linguistics perspective suggests that the fundamental level of translation is not words, phrases, or sentences, but rather the text as a whole. This primarily refers to the overall meaning, theme, and style reflected in the text, as well as its representation of the objective and subjective worlds. For beginners, it's more beneficial to understand the entire text rather than seeking word-for-word translation. Starting from the basic level of the "text", the process of translation practice becomes dynamic rather than static. The words and sentences in the original text may seem ready-made, but they are actually manifestations of semantics, which vary based on the situational context and the cultural context of the translation's intended audience. Therefore, translation is not just a visible conversion of words; it requires the translator to convert the implicit semantics behind the words based on the context, so that the translation can more closely resemble the essence of the original text's semantics. "Capturing the meaning while forgetting the form" might be the best summary of this point. Additionally, different translators may have different understandings of the same text, indicating that translation is inevitably a creative cognitive process. Teachers should encourage students to provide unique translations that reflect their own cognitive processes and objectively evaluate the reference translations provided by the teacher.

### Step 2 Students' Preparation Before Translation - Establishing a Terminology and Expression Database

In practice, it is recommended to effectively utilize the flipped classroom method by providing students with the translation material (text) beforehand. This allows students to make extensive preparations before translation, including establishing a terminology database and an expression database. It is not advisable for students to attempt actual translation until they have completed their own terminology and expression databases, as there may still be significant language-related issues at this stage. For the establishment of these databases, students are encouraged to effectively utilize the internet to obtain as many authentic target language texts related to the translation material as possible, aiming for at least 3 or more articles. Based on the translation material and the searched authentic target language texts, students can then create their own terminology databases. Subsequently, they can shift their focus from the vocabulary level to the overall text structure and language construction, summarizing target language expressions (including sentence structure, the use of conjunctions, and text processing characteristics of the target language). Searching for authentic target language texts can provide a better understanding of the background of the translation material. The establishment of terminology and expression databases can significantly improve the accuracy and authenticity of language use during the actual translation process, minimizing the risk of awkward translations due to insufficient background knowledge and language proficiency. In other words, students should possess a certain level of background knowledge and language proficiency before engaging in practical translation. However, the acquisition of

background knowledge and language proficiency is completed outside the classroom and by the students themselves.

### Step 3 Teachers Playing a Diagnostic Role in the Classroom

As mentioned above, after students have made adequate preparations before translation, including summarizing terminology and expression databases, teachers can allow students to present their search processes for terminology and expressions in class. This process tests students' understanding of the terminology in their databases and the expressions they have collected. Once students have a certain grasp of terminology, especially expressions, they can begin the actual translation of the text. Therefore, the teacher's primary role in subsequent classrooms is to diagnose the translations provided by the students. This diagnosis is not limited to checking for correctness in vocabulary and grammar usage but rather focuses on diagnosing the linguistic construction of the translation to deepen students' understanding of the essence of translation and cultivate their cognitive thinking abilities. Additionally, cognitive translation teaching can effectively utilize internet resources to establish a translation teaching platform. On this platform, students can work together in groups, and teachers can effectively manage and keep track of each group's division of labor, searches for authentic target language texts, the establishment of terminology and expression databases, translation submissions, and modifications. This allows teachers to identify which step students are facing difficulties and propose corresponding solutions.

## 5. Implications

The cognitive linguistics perspective in translation focuses on the translator's experience, cognition, and reproduction process during translation activities. Wang Yin[8]proposes that the translation model of cognitive linguistics encompasses six viewpoints: "translation is experiential; translation involves multiple interactions; translation has a certain creativity; translation has a discourse nature; translation strives for harmony; and translation bridges 'two worlds' (i.e., the real world and the cognitive world)". It is believed that this comprehensive descriptive view of translation from the perspective of cognitive linguistics has profound significance for teaching centered on cultivating translation competency.

Firstly, the translation view of cognitive linguistics itself can develop into a translation teaching model. The reality→cognition→language procedure it proposes is actually a macro translation process that takes into account various non-linguistic factors in translation: reality, people, and text. These factors can be further subdivided into the current situation, the description of the translation task, people's stance, the relationship between people and text, the relationship between text and reality/situation, and the relationship between people.[17] At the same time, it also considers how these factors and their interactions are reflected in language. In other words, the translation view of cognitive linguistics pays equal attention to the conversion between the source language and the target language, as well as the cognitive activities behind language conversion.

Viewing translation teaching through the lens of cognitive linguistics' translation perspective, we realize that teaching interchangeable skills between different languages in the

classroom is far from being the entirety or center of teaching. Translation teaching should also include guiding students to face the original text and the world it reflects, determining their attitude towards the original text, analyzing the entire translation situation, and confirming their position in translation activities. It should also involve taking responsibility for one's role in the translation process and clarifying the purpose and effect that translation activities should achieve.

Secondly, the translation view of cognitive linguistics is based on the philosophy of experiencing the relationship with the real world, and the translator is the most important and active subject of experience and cognition in the translation process. Naturally, the requirements for the translator are not limited to his language conversion ability but also require him to have considerable coordination and problem-solving abilities. That is why "harmony," "multiple interactions," and "translation's 'two worlds'" are considered important aspects of the translation view of cognitive linguistics. The translator's translation ability is actually established as a very important concept.

Therefore, translation teaching should include at least two basic sections: one is to allow students to understand and participate in every step of the translation process. That is to say, recognizing the original text, establishing translation goals, carrying out translation activities, and revising the translation to achieve the established purpose; the second is to train students in the "carrying out translation activities" section on how to perform language conversion, how to handle interpersonal relationships in translation, and how translators make translation decisions and choices. The translation teaching model of cognitive linguistics not only trains students' language ability but also requires students to exercise their problem-solving abilities such as creativity, interpersonal communication skills, and making correct choices and decisions. In other words, the translation view of cognitive linguistics establishes the cultivation of translation ability as the center of translation teaching.

## 6. Conclusion

Under the framework of cognitive linguistics, this paper introduces cognitive task-driven implementation strategies for translation, highlighting the significance of embodied cognition in knowledge accumulation and translation skill development. It focuses on the cultural essence of concepts beyond linguistic forms, emphasizing learners' contextual understanding and personal cognitive experiences. Leveraging digital tools like networks and multimedia, this approach guides learners to cognitively construct new information and meanings within diverse textual contexts.

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