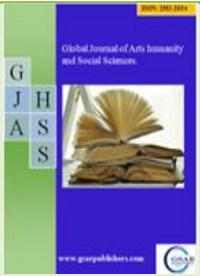
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## Innovating English Translation Instruction from the Perspective of Classroom Ecology

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### Abstract

In the context of English translation teaching, classroom ecology has gained attention for its role in bridging linguistic and cultural gaps. In traditional translation teaching, teachers often dominate the classroom, while students remain in a passive state of receiving knowledge. In the present study, by providing pre-class learning materials, in-class opportunities to showcase the students' output, and after-class teacher and student reflection, we aim to treat students' learning product as a driving force, enhance students' central role in the classroom, and lay emphasis on peer collaboration and student-teacher interaction, thus to effectively transform the classroom ecology in translation instruction. Future research may explore the venues to leverage AI technologies like Chat-GPT or DeepSeek to empower teaching and optimize the classroom ecology of foreign language teaching.

**Index Terms-** Classroom ecology, English translation, teaching reform, course materials, peer collaboration

## INTRODUCTION

Classroom ecology refers to the study of the interactions and relationships between the various components within a classroom environment, including the physical setting, social dynamics, and instructional practices, and how these elements collectively influence student behavior, learning, and development (Doyle, 2006). Classroom ecology, emphasizing the interconnectedness of these factors and their impact on creating a conducive learning environment, plays a pivotal role in English learning as it encompasses the dynamic interplay between the physical environment, social interactions, and instructional practices that shape the learners' experiences. It attaches importance to the creation of a supportive atmosphere where students feel comfortable in participating, collaborating, and taking risks while using English. Recent studies in this line highlight the importance of teacher-student rapport, peer interactions, and culturally responsive teaching in enhancing English learning outcomes (e.g., Mercer & Dörnyei, 2020).

In the context of English translation teaching, classroom ecology has gained increasing attention for its role in bridging linguistic and cultural gaps (Fang, 2021). Researchers have explored how

ecological approaches can promote critical thinking, intercultural competence, and translation accuracy. For instance, integrating technology and collaborative learning tools into the classroom ecology has been shown to enhance students' translation skills by providing authentic materials and fostering peer feedback (Li & Wang, 2021). Recent developments in classroom ecology research also indicate that the use of digital platforms and interactive tools has been shown to sustain a positive classroom ecology, even in remote translation teaching contexts (Chen & Liu, 2023).

Nevertheless, in traditional translation teaching, teachers often dominate the teaching and learning process, rendering the students merely a passive recipient of knowledge. This teaching model overlooks the students' central role and initiative in translation learning, which is detrimental to cultivating their autonomous learning abilities and practical translation skills (Van Lier, 2018). We aim to shift the focus to student output as a driving force, enhance students' central role in the classroom, and effectively transform the classroom dynamics of translation teaching.

## RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

As a college English course for second-year non-English major



undergraduates, the course *Practical English Translation* combines practicality and humanistic values, aiming to further enhance students' English translation skills while deepening their understanding and interpretation of China's excellent traditional culture, as well as fostering their intercultural communication competence. Based on this, the course fully considers the practicality and moral depth of translation, utilizing multimodal resources such as images, audio, video to continuously improve the classroom ecology. In addition to teaching translation techniques, the instructor emphasizes guiding the students to pay attention to the transformation of linguistic forms and content in English-Chinese translation. This content-based approach not only strengthens the acquisition of language knowledge but also promotes the internalization of moral values, thus achieving a combination of knowledge impartation and value orientation.

The translation process involves the transformation of information encoding between two languages, as well as the conversion of two modes of thinking and value systems under different cultural contexts. The course *Practical English Translation* holds unique advantage in telling China's stories well and communicating China's voice effectively to the outside world. The introduction of socialist core values and the elements of traditional Chinese culture to the translation curriculum helps to better integrate value orientation, skill cultivation, and knowledge impartation during the teaching process. However, we identified the following two problems on the basis of previous English translation teaching experience: (1) Students lack sufficient relevant knowledge. As the moral and political materials students encounter are presented in Chinese, their understanding of the English expressions for various concepts and viewpoints is limited. Additionally, due to limited exposure to political discourse materials, students exhibit some apprehension in such English translation. (2) Students show low level of willingness to classroom participation and interaction, probably for two reasons: first, insufficient pre-class preparation on the part of the students; second, inadequate scaffolding on the part of the teacher. To create a "student-centered" classroom, it is essential to frontload part of the learning process, allowing the students to familiarize themselves with thematic knowledge through exploratory and collaborative learning in advance. During this process, teachers are required to provide necessary support or scaffolding.

The construction of classroom ecology encompasses a myriad of factors such as teachers, students, the physical classroom environment, teaching content, teaching methods, instructional media, and classroom atmosphere, etc. (Zainudin & Awal, 2012). In an ecological classroom, teaching objectives shall focus not only on students' knowledge acquisition and skill development but also on cultivating the students' comprehensive qualities such as moral values, innovative thinking, and teamwork spirit (Sinclair 2020). To achieve these objectives, teachers need to adopt flexible and diverse teaching approaches, such as situational teaching, cooperative learning, and project-based learning, so as to stimulate students' interest and enthusiasm for learning and foster a conducive classroom ecology.

## INNOVATIVE REFORM IN TRANSLATION TEACHING

In their 2013 study, Guerrettaz and Johnston (2013) focus on the four elements that shape classroom ecology, including the participants, processes, structures, and physical objects (such as course materials). This teaching case centers on the teaching process and materials. To address teaching challenges and improve classroom ecology where "real learning takes place", the *Practical English Translation* course has made substantial improvements to the teaching materials. The integration of moral and political education content and resources mainly compiled by the teacher includes: (1) a bilingual English-Chinese parallel corpus of classic allusions in the first three volumes of the *Governance of China*; (2) lecture PowerPoint files on socialist core values developed by the school's faculty; (3) the Standardized Terminology Database for the External Translation of Chinese Discourse with Characteristics (available at URL: <http://210.72.20.108/index/index.jsp>); and (4) materials related to socialist core values collected from authoritative publications such as *Beijing Review* and *China Daily*.

By combining online and offline teaching model, teachers act as the guide and organizer of the classroom, while placing students at the center and fully leveraging their initiative. Through group-based task, information searching, collective discussion, and group presentation, the group members engage in exploratory and collaborative learning to accomplish the learning objectives (Zhang & Li, 2023; Chen & Lin, 2023). The socialist core values serve as the main focus for integrating moral and political education into the curriculum. This approach guides students to engage in discussions based on prior learning to compare the strengths and weaknesses of different translation methods. Here the teacher encourages the students to attend not only the linguistic forms but also the embedded moral connotations. Course assessment consists of formative and summative evaluations. Formative evaluation emphasizes students' participation in the course and their performance in group tasks and collaboration, accounting for 50% of the overall evaluation, i.e., the final score. Summative evaluation consists of a closed-book final exam, which also accounts for 50% of the overall evaluation.

Given the *Practical English Translation* course's emphasis on combining practicality and moral education content, we implement a teaching approach with unit-based thematic modules. The course content consists of 9 units in 3 thematic modules (covering topics such as the Chinese Dream, socialist democratic politics, ecological civilization, major-country diplomacy, etc.). With a blended online and offline teaching model, each unit covers certain practical translation techniques and relevant case studies, which are primarily delivered through in-person classroom instruction and "flipped classroom" learning. Each thematic module focuses on applying the translation techniques to analyze the translation of the materials on moral and political education, mainly. Through "flipped classroom" learning, the students finish part of the learning tasks before class and then engage in classroom activities, which makes

the classroom more focused on student interaction and problem solving. Based on the integration of in person class teaching and flipped class learning, the specific teaching procedures are illustrated in Figure 1.

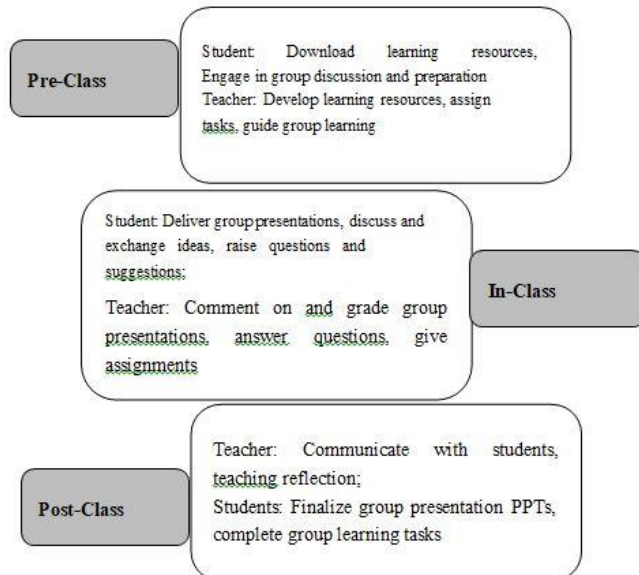


Figure 1. The blended teaching model for English translation

In the stages of pre-class preparation, in-class group presentation, and post-class assignment, the moral and political education elements are organically integrated, which allows the students to grasp the essentials of moral values while completing the learning activities. In the following section, we take the thematic module "Harmony between Humans and Nature—Key Terms of Ecological Civilization" as an example to illustrate the organization and implementation of the blended teaching model in translation instruction.

**Stage 1: Pre-class Preparation** The instructor organizes relevant materials (including news reports and online resources) into separate Word files related to the theme and distribute the materials to students via an online platform. Guided by the instructor, students are divided into groups of 4 to 5 to discuss the pre-selected topics, and collaborate to produce the PPT for their in-class presentation.

#### Stage 2: In-class Presentation

First, the instructor briefly lectures the thematic tasks and objectives of the session, focusing on the key terms and their moral significance. Next, each group presents their learning outcomes in PPT presentations. After each presentation, other groups can raise questions and offer suggestions, sharing their own reflections on the theme to broaden perspectives. For each group presentation, the instructor points the strong points and short comings, offers feedback, and assigns scores to each group as an item of the regular performance assessment. For instance, a group selected the theme "Key Terms on Building Ecological Civilization."

Their presentation covered key terms related to the major achievements, driving forces, significance, and major measures of ecological civilization construction, as well the logic chains among these terms, which are symbolized by arrows and blocks. The main content of the PPT slides for their presentation is shown in Figure 2.

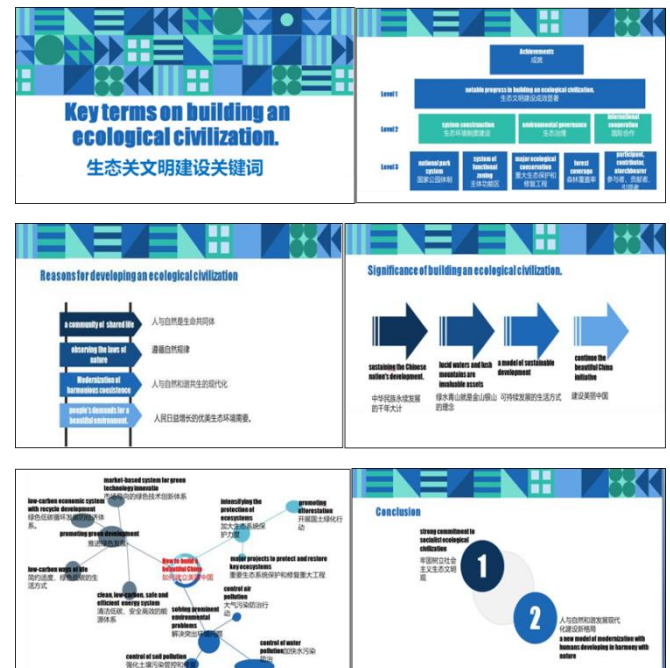


Figure 2. Sample PPT slides of student presentation

**Phase 3: Post-Class Reflection.** Based on the students' classroom presentation performance, the teacher engages in targeted communication with the group members to know more about their collaboration details, and then conducts teaching reflections to identify and address the existing problems. After receiving the comments and suggestions from the teacher, the students revise and finalize their PPT files and upload the revised version onto the online platform.

## REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

Through the teacher and students' concerted efforts, the teaching reform of the course *Practical English Translation* has achieved remarkable results, successfully meeting the preset teaching objectives in improving classroom ecology and boosting students' learning and output. The main outcomes can be summarized in the following two aspects:

From the students' perspective, they have become active participants in the ideological and political teaching process (Mercer & Dörnyei, 2020). Different stages of classroom learning have stimulated their autonomy, improved the classroom ecology, and enhanced teaching effectiveness. Through group activities such as content organization, material selection, and topic discussion, the students have gained a clear understanding of the logical connections among the key terms and important arguments on the target theme, which in turn strengthens their abilities in

information gathering, critical thinking, teamwork, and self-directed learning. Notably, many students shared their learning experiences regarding their attitude and collaboration inclination toward group presentation, which can provide valuable material for moral and political education. In their evaluations of the course at the end of semester, the students indicated that the *course Practical English Translation* deepened their understanding of the thought on socialism with Chinese characteristics as well as improving their translation skills.

From the teachers' perspective, the classroom teaching reform requires them to reconstruct existing the teaching theories and adapt to the big data era. By changing the way teaching materials are presented and how classes are organized, teachers can reduce students' sense of alienation from the ideological and political content, thus to optimize the classroom ecology, and strengthen the educational function of the course. Teachers can also innovate their methods of translation research and broaden their horizon from the viewpoint of classroom ecology theory, which could be conducive to pedagogical improvement and academic advancement.

## CONCLUSION

In the present study, we mainly examine how to improve the classroom ecology of moral and political education in the course *Practical English Translation* by focusing on the reform of teaching material and process, thus offering some insights into enhancing the effectiveness of translation teaching. In the future, research can be conducted in the following two strands: (1) Research on teacher classroom discourse. Existing studies mostly focus on code-switching between teachers' first and second languages. Currently, translanguaging research is gaining momentum, and researchers can explore how to improve classroom ecology from the perspective of translanguaging practice (Johnson & Golombek, 2022). (2) Research on technology-enhanced classroom ecology. This study utilized a mini-corpus and flipped classroom model to enhance students' classroom agency and highlight the scaffolding role of teachers. Future research could explore how to leverage AI technologies like Chat-GPT and DeepSeek to empower teaching and improve the ecology of foreign language classrooms.

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