

# An Empirical Study on Improving Students' Translation Competence Based on Distinctive Thinking

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**Abstract:** Based on critical thinking review, an empirical research is conducted on the sophomore English major students in Chifeng University to measure the impact of critical thinking on students' translation ability. The results show that critical thinking can effectively improve students' translation ability. The study has practical significance in students' translation teaching.

## 1. Introduction

Critical thinking, also known as discerning thinking, is now a very popular research topic in the western countries led by United States. The discerning thinking originated from Socrates' Question and Answer Method, a famous ancient Greek thinker, philosopher and educator. In Socrates' teaching process, he did not directly teach students. But through frequent discussions, quizzes and even debates between teachers and students, he stimulated and induced students to think, so that they can get more knowledge with their own thinking "(Chen Junyu, 2004: 11). He asks students to be critical of common views and interpretations, emphasizing the clarity and logic of thinking during the questioning process. Dewey (1933), known as the father of contemporary discerning thinking, defines discerning thinking as an active, sustained, and serious reflection of an explanation or assumption based on the reasons and conclusions supporting an interpretation or hypothesis. The Center of Critical Thinking in 2004 summarizes the concept of discerning thinking by conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, analyzing, and analyzing collected information by means of observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, communication, summary and evaluation process. Chaffee (2009) pointed out that a person with a discerning mind can make an informed decision when they are thinking some main points of view without subjective opinions. In the Western countries, higher education workers attach great importance to the cultivation of students' discerning thinking, and many universities regard discerning thinking as the main form to measure students' learning achievement. According to a survey conducted by the American Association of Higher Education in 2011, 95 percent of the 433 colleges and universities have identified discerning thinking as one of the most important skills to develop students. Correspondingly, 81% of surveyed employers expect universities to place a high priority on the development of students' discerning thinking skills (O. L. Liu et al, 2014).

Compared with the western countries, the study of discerning thinking and its related topics started late in China. Since the late 1980s, the academic circles in China began to introduce the concept of "critical thinking" and started to study it (Chen Junyu, 2004:8). He Qixin and other scholars in the "On the Reform of Foreign Language Undergraduate Education in a Number of Opinions," said: "In language skills training often emphasize imitation of memory, but ignores the development of students' abilities of thinking, innovation, analysis and independence (He Qishen et al., 1999: 26). In recent years, the research of the discerning thinking has been carried out in full swing in China. The author has searched the literatures of "English Translation Teaching" and "Critical Thinking" as the search terms, and retrieved the relevant documents including 168 journal papers, 7 master's thesis papers and 2 international conference papers from 2011 to 2016 in Chinese Journal Net. However, there are only five papers related to translation teaching, and these five papers are limited to the theoretical research and exploration level, without empirical research.

Influenced by traditional Chinese farming culture, collectivism and the linguistic features of Chinese context, the traditional translation classroom is usually a teacher's "one-man", this

"teacher-centered" teaching method. "As a teaching method, the translation of the reference provided by the teacher as the ultimate goal of the translation does not meet the true nature of the characteristics of the translation, to a certain extent, strangled the students to learn translation initiative and creativity "(Link difficult, 2000).

When most Chinese students encounter problems in the classroom and they need to discuss, in order not to hurt others face and self-esteem, they like to use the generally more subtle, polite language while do not like the blunt criticism. When a personal point of view is in conflict with most other people's views, most Chinese students adopt the principle of "minority comply with majority" and hide the positive and negative views that are in conflict with the group members. They will not stand firm in public view. Most Chinese students, while impatient or even angry, impose their own disagreements on their own, but most people believe that the phrase "Bad fortune from the mouth of the mouth" of the Chinese old saying, to take a cautious, "silent winning sound" attitude. (Mei Guo, 2013)

In such a classroom culture, students gradually formed a lazy thinking and they often used to passively accept and store information, experience problems blindly rely on textbooks and teachers, as well as they do not know the answer needs to take the initiative to analyze, explore research in order to obtain. Over time, the classroom will form a "memory-based teaching culture."

So, how can we fundamentally change this traditional mode of translation classroom and improve the quality of translation courses, we may wish to introduce the academic attention of the discerning thinking into our translation classroom to watch its effect.

## **2. The process of cultivating the discerning thinking in the process of translation teaching**

In contrast to the traditional teacher-centered translation model, the humanistic teaching model emphasizes the student-centered approach to translation teaching. Cognitive theory holds that teaching is not 'transfer' of knowledge, but that students are 'acquired' actively (Zhu Shanjun, 2006). To achieve this kind of "student-centered" classroom teaching mode, it is a key factor to cultivate the students' discerning thinking ability. However, in order to improve the skills and quality of students' discerning thinking, teachers and students should work together to create a new type of teaching culture - "Thinking Teaching Culture" (Li Xueshu, 2011). This kind of new-style thinking teaching culture is a kind of teaching mode "the whole process of student-centered, letting the students participate in, experience and problems solving which is advocated by discerning thinking "(Liu Yi, 2011). Specifically, the discerning thinking in the process of translation teaching and training reflected in the following aspects:

First, it is necessary to change the teacher's role in the classroom. In the translation class, the teacher's role is no longer the starring of the classroom, but changed into the classroom director who can guide, help students learn translation. Teachers should thoroughly change the dominant and authoritative position in the traditional classroom from the bottom of the heart. They should take the students' learning effect as an important means to evaluate their teaching quality. In the teaching process, teachers should pay attention to mobilize the enthusiasm of students, stimulate students' interest in learning and create a good classroom learning atmosphere for students. Teachers should also discover the students in the learning process problems and give timely guidance and guidance.

Second, it is a good way to improve students' translation skills through the form of group collaboration. Each class consists of three groups of students divided into several study groups. Each week, the students are arranged with an article ranging from 300 to 500 words. The style is mainly translated into prose. Students are required to understand the original text carefully and complete the translation independently. And then the group members together to discuss the original and the respective translation, there is formation of a group of translations after discussion. The group members of the translation and group translation will be handed in to the teacher who corrects them before the next two days. This group collaboration expands the students' thinking so that they can from multiple angles, multi-directional understanding of the original, and lets them see the strengths of others, recognize their own deficiencies, and develop their team awareness and cooperation.

In addition, it is the establishment of diversified evaluation methods. The evaluation of students' learning is no longer a traditional teaching evaluation of teachers in a pen evaluation, but the effective organization of student evaluation, teacher and student evaluation and other multiple evaluation methods. The so-called teacher-student mutual assessment, that is, the teacher can objectively evaluate the students' learning, but also often require students to their own teaching content and teaching methods to evaluate and feedback to follow-up teaching to be improved. The so-called student evaluation, in addition to the group within the mutual assessment, but also for mutual assessment between groups: in each of the first 30 minutes, assign a student to the podium to explain their team members to complete the teacher's assignment in the last class, explaining how the team members understand the original text, what problems are encountered in the translation process, and how they deal with these problems. During the course, the teacher asked the students to identify problems in the group's translation and encouraged them to give their own understanding and answers to these questions. Then, teachers explained the original text and given the reference translation to encourage students to identify defects in the reference translation and cultivate the spirit of the students who can question the authority. Throughout the teaching process, teachers should encourage students to speak, be good at inspiring students to actively think and develop students to find, analyze and solve problems.

### **3. Experimental study**

The purpose of this study is to answer the following questions: Can the students' translation ability be effectively improved by cultivating students' discerning thinking?

The subjects of this study were 34 students in the second year of the English major of Chifeng College, 18 students in one class and 16 in the other. The experiment will be conducted from March 9, 2015 to July 10, 2015 (the fourth semester). The experimental period is 18 weeks. The experimental course is "Chinese to English".

Before the experiment, the author first taught two classes of "English to Chinese" in the traditional teaching mode, and adopted the undistinguished translation teaching model for the two classes, namely, the teacher is the center of the classroom, ignoring the active initiative of the students. Teaching methods is the teaching of law, with reference to the answer for the ultimate goal of translation teaching. After a semester of conventional teaching, there is the final examination of the students. The test content, including three parts of the English translation of the phrase, the English translation of the sentence, the chapter translated into English. Then, I will test the average score as a test of this pre-test, the lower average score of the class (16) as the experimental class, the higher average score class (18) as control class. In the experimental cycle, the students in the experimental class adopt the above-mentioned "student-centered" teaching mode. In the teaching process, they pay more attention to the cultivation of the students' discerning thinking ability, while the traditional classes continue to use the traditional translation teaching mode.

At the end of the twentieth teaching week, which is the end of the experimental period, students in both classes are tested at the end of the term. The examination questions include three parts: Chinese-English translation of sentences, Chinese-English translation of sentences, Chinese-English translation of the text, and the average score of the students in the two classes as the main reference data.

In order to ensure the validity and authenticity of the experiment and to minimize the subjectivity of human, teaching teachers (the author) does not participate in pre-test and post-test two exams of the volume of work. These two exam papers were charged by two colleagues. The main two scoring methods are the error score and the overall score.

### **4. Data analysis and research results**

In the present study, the T test was used to test the average scores of the two classes before the experiment. The data were analyzed by SPSS 19.0 software. The distribution of the two test scores and the results of the two tests were tabulated (figure 1 and table 1) and showing a descriptive

analysis.

Table 1 List of Test Results

Test	Class	90-100 points		80-89points		70-79points		60-69points		60points below		Average points
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Pre-Test	Experimental class	1	6.25	8	50	3	18.75	3	18.75	1	6.25	77.19
	Control class	4	22.22	8	44.44	4	22.22	2	11.11	0		81.50
Post-test	Experimental class	4	25	10	62.5	1	6.25	1	6.25	0		82.84
	Control class	2	11.11	8	44.44	7	38.89	1	5.56	0		80.69

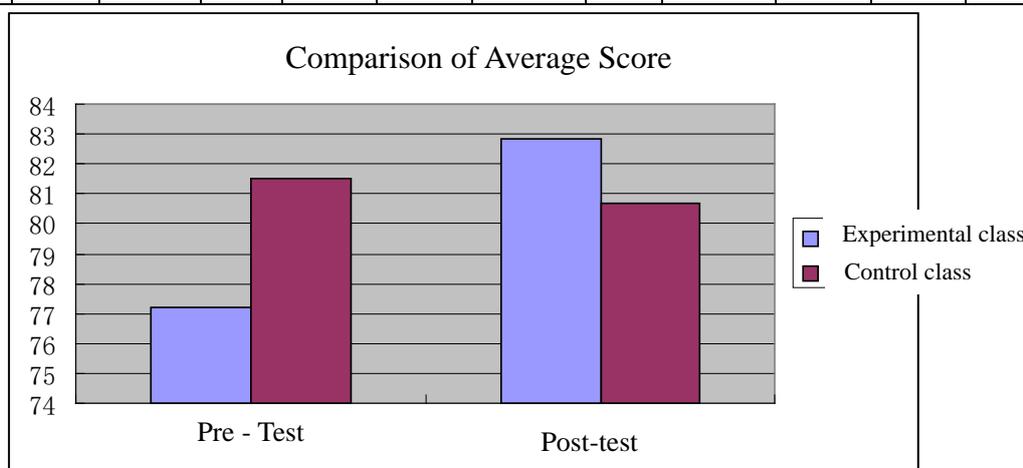


Figure 1

In the pre-test, the average score of experimental class is 77.19, while the average score of control class is 81.50. From the distribution of the number of points, in the experimental class, 90 points or more (including 90 points) is 1, accounting for 6.25% of the total number. 80 points (including 80 points) or more is 9, 56.25% of the total number. 70 points (Including 70 points) is 4, accounting for 25% of the total number. While in the control class, 90 points or more (including 90 points) is 4, 22.22% of the total number. 80 points or more (including 80 points) is 12, 66.67% of the total number. 70 points below (not including 70 points) is 2, accounting for 11.11% of the total number. From the above data, the control class average score is higher than the experimental class average of 4.31 points. In control class, 80 points or more (including 80 points) than the experimental class students 10.42 percentage points higher than the control class. 70 points (not including 70 points) less than the experimental class students 13.89 percentage points. Thus, in the former test, the results of the control class are higher than the experimental class.

After the experiment, average score of 82.84 in the experimental class, while the average score of 80.69 in the control class. From the distribution of the number of points, in the experimental class 90 points or more (including 90 points) is 4, accounting for 25% of the total number. 80 points (including 80 points) is more than 12 people, accounting for 87.5%. While in the control class, (Including 90 points) is 2, accounting for 11.11% of the total number. 80 points or more (including 80 points) is 10 people, accounting for 55.55% of the total number of. 70 points (excluding 70 points) is 1, accounting for 5.56% of the total number. From the above data, the experimental class average score is higher than the control class average 2.15 points.

The ratio of 80 points or more (including 80 points) in experimental classes is higher than the control class students 31.95 percentage points. And the difference between the former test scores and the post-test scores of the experimental class ( $0.002 < 0.05$ ), while There was no significant difference between the pre-test scores and post-test scores in control group ( $0.541 > 0.005$ ).

Table 2 Pairs of samples tested in experimental class

	Paired Difference					t	df	Sig. (Bilateral)
	Average score	standard deviation	standard error of the mean	95% confidence interval for the difference				
				Lower limit	Upper limit			
Before the experimental class to after experimental class test	-5.65625	5.86719	1.46680	-8.78266	-2.52984	-3.856	15	.002

Table 3 Pairs of samples tested in control class

	Paired Difference					t	df	Sig. (Bilateral)
	Average score	standard deviation	error of the mean	95% confidence interval for the difference				
				Lower limit	Upper limit			
Before the experimental class to after experimental class test	1.19444	8.12972	1.91619	-2.84837	5.23726	.623	17	.541

## 5. Results and discussion

The purpose of this study is to demonstrate the practicality and effectiveness of discerning thinking in translation teaching. The experimental results show that, after one semester of discerning thinking training, the average grade of the experimental class has increased by 5.65 points, while that of the control class has decreased by 0.81 points. Why does the performance of the control class decrease? The reason is that the pre-test is the ability of the students' English-to-Chinese translation, while the latter is the students' ability to translate Chinese into English. And we know that the difficulty of Chinese-English translation is slightly larger than the difficulty of English-Chinese translation. Compared with the control class, the average score before the experimental class is lower than the control class 4.31 points, after the test results were higher than the control class 2.15 points, a relative increase of 6.46 points. From the above statistical data, we can basically answer the purpose of this experiment to study the problem: the teaching of critical thinking effectively enhance the translation ability of the students.

As one of the most popular research topics in foreign academic circles, the study of critical thinking in China mainly concentrates on the theoretical level. Most speakers think of it as a kind of "thinking mode" and regard it as a kind of "educational mode" applied to the teaching practice of empirical research is rare. In this study, combined with small class teaching, traditional teaching model of synchronous teaching found that the strengths and effectiveness of critical thinking in improving the translation ability of students. However, as Wen Jun said: "The ability to develop the translation is not an overnight success, it depends on the perseverance, relying on the accumulated over time with the final internalization of the scene, the translation skills and the formation of

translation ability. And there is no one-size-fits-all approach 'for one's own method is the best way' "(Wen Jun, 2004). The study is only a tentative start, the findings still need to be further verified in the follow-up study.

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