

# *Multimodal Translation in College English Class for Non-English Major Learners*

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**Abstract:** English students majoring in non-English disciplines always lack motivation in learning the language. Traditional classroom teaching not only fails to ignite the enthusiasm of college students in the new era but also creates a disconnect from reality, further diminishing their interest in learning. This study attempts to introduce multimodal translation into university classrooms, believing that utilizing new technologies and media can achieve the following objectives: 1. stimulate the interest of non-English major students; 2. help students master the comprehensive English ability; 3. better understand languages as a carrier of culture, and be a more confident communicator when discussing their own culture in English.

## 1. Introduction

College English, as an undergraduate compulsory course which teaches a foreign language and foreign culture in China, has recently become the focus of curriculum reform for the urgent demands of international talents and its large influences among college students.

Previous research has put forward programmatic suggestions on reformation of college English course. For example, Liu Zhengguang pointed out that to realize the course reform of foreign language courses, attention should be paid to the reconstruction of the teaching materials and contents [1]. He Fang and Do'ning believed that college English teachers should realize the essence that language can transmit and educate college students from different aspects like morality, patriotism, by adopting a variety of teaching methods [2]. Some scholars gave specific advice to teaching content: Li Er'long designed an English reading course with teaching goals, contents and approaches [3]. But in general, there are few studies exploring theoretical guidance concerning teaching methods on it.

Under the guidance of official documents, the teaching reform of college English course should be combined with the theory of language teaching and second language acquisition to guide learners

to achieve language abilities and the ability of translating culture.

## 2. Multimodal Translation

Language is the carrier of culture. Translation, as a language application activity, is not only the transformation between languages, but also the communication of ideas and cultures. As early as the 1990s, translator Lefevere pointed out in *Translation, Rewriting and Manipulation of Literary Frame* that ideology and translation are inseparable and closely related. It not only affects the translator's translation strategy [4], a translation will also affect the reader's thoughts in return. With the development of technology, the form of translation has changed greatly, which is no longer limited to the words, but also extends to diversified modes. In a narrow sense, multimodal translation refers to the translation of audio and visual works, comics, advertisements and so on. In a broad sense, it refers to the conversion of different modes such as texts, sounds and images (as shown in Figure 1).

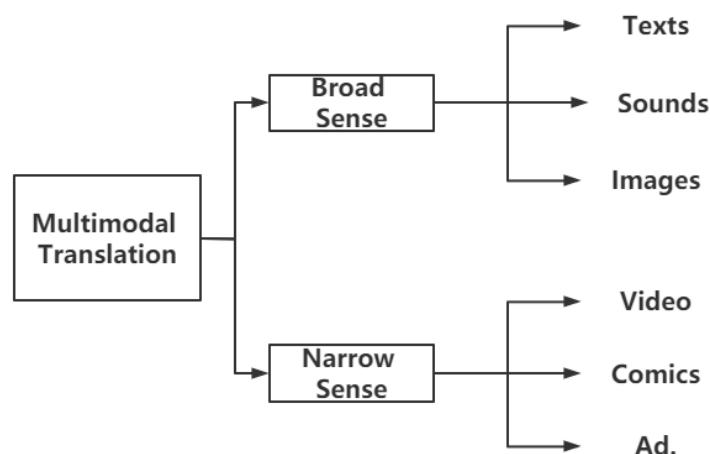


Figure 1. Multimodal translation

The influence of multimodal translation is also much higher than that of traditional translation media. With its fast speed, large amount of audiences, it has become a powerful way of publicity in the new era. It is a popular belief in a certain country or a collective; and it is embodied in philosophy, politics, art, aesthetics, religion, ethics, etc. [5].

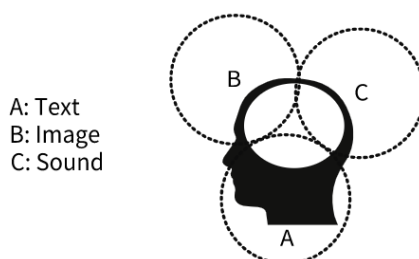
Nowadays, multimodal translation is one of important tasks in college English teaching. There are mainly three reasons: 1. Language learning. College English courses should cultivate non-English major undergraduates' language abilities, i.e. English listening, speaking, reading and writing. Multimodal translation requires learners to mobilize a variety of senses, which is the embodiment of the comprehensive ability of listening, speaking, reading, writing and translation. 2. Communicating and Understanding. Compared with traditional translation learning, which just emphasize written text translation, multimodal translation can give English learners a language context containing sounds, pictures and words, which is closer to real communication environment. They are expected to be more confident to use English in an international multimodal context, like streaming media, international conferences and media briefing. 3. Culture translating. Unlike traditional English class, which only emphasizes English language and culture, the tasks of translating Chinese culture will not only help Chinese students better understand their own culture, but also fosters cultural dialogue and understanding by enabling people to engage with different perspectives, beliefs, and cultural practices. It allows for the exploration of new ideas, challenges stereotypes, and encourages empathy and mutual respect among diverse cultures. It also helps

preserve cultural heritage. By translating customs, social norms values and beliefs into different languages, local or traditional cultural elements can be safeguarded for future generations and serve as a bridge between the past and the present.

### 3. Multimodal and Blended Teaching

The fact that the multimodal environment can have positive effects on learners is originated from the cognitive-affective theory. According to the theory, learners deal with multimodal information in different ways [6]. As is shown in Figure 2, the information learners can obtain from one modality is limited [7].

Only when learners can select information, organize information, and eventually integrate the new information with the knowledge they have already acquired [8]. In a multimodal environment, learners obtain and filter information through texts, sounds and images for memorizing. In order to complete learning tasks, like translation, learners need to combine newly acquired information with their existing knowledge, and then produce newly integrated one in a multimodal way, so as to achieve effective learning. Multimodal patterns enjoy a better effect than traditional methods in terms of vocabularies acquisition and memorizing [9]. Multimodal mode is also conducive to the cultivation of students' creativity and critical thinking ability [10]. Multimodal can also provide more vivid teaching contents, to strengthen teaching effects [11].



*Figure 2. Limited information is obtained in a single modality*

The combination of online and offline teaching makes the multimodal environment no longer limited to classrooms. With networking technology, students can realize the steps of information selection and memorizing after class. It is beneficial in the following aspects: 1) Motivation. Blended teaching has been shown to improve learners' motivation for learning [12], as new technologies and new learning ways can draw learners' interests; 2) Personalization. Blended teaching can make learning personalized, because it enjoys rich online resources and learners can choose the learning content according to their personal interests and needs. Teachers can upload the selected audio-visual resources to the online course database, set task points for students to finish. The materials should cover a wide range of areas, and the number of the materials should be larger than that of the required task points. In this way, students can choose learning contents according to their own interests. 3) Measurement. Blended teaching also has the advantage of making measurement. Teachers can monitor the students' learning situation through data. Once there is a problem, it can be detected and solved in time. The completion of online courses, participation in offline classes (speech, discussion, and attendance), homework, and quiz tests can be recorded through learning system to facilitate teachers to collect and analyze research data. Students can also learn about the basic information of their learning based on the data feedback.

#### 4. Teaching Objectives

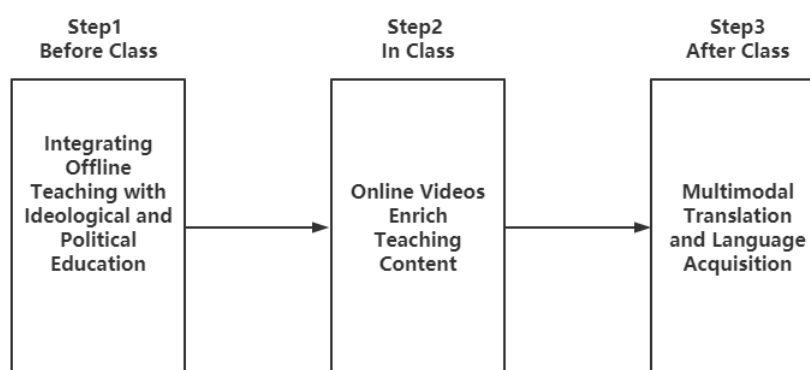
In order to meet the new demands for international talents, College English classroom education should strive to achieve the following goals:

*Table 1. Teaching objectives*

| Teaching Objectives |   |
|---------------------|---|
| Language Ability    | Use multimodal and mixed teaching methods to improve the interest of non-English major college students in English learning and their English learning effect, and improve their English language ability in listening, speaking, reading, writing and translation. |
| Application         | Following the changes of the times and conforming to the development of science and technology, multimodal translation ability enables students to display the Chinese culture through multimedia.  |

#### 5. Teaching Design

While learning language knowledge, college English learners should be involved in multimodal environment. College English is composed by four semesters, covering a wide range of topics, including green environmental protection and development, science and technology, science and ethics, university education and life, family and society, history and individuals, which contains rich educational resources, and is worthy of discussions. Language learning cannot be realized within one night. It needs learners to be immersed in the environment. Therefore, it is imperative to divide college English course into online and offline two parts to realize teaching guidance both online and offline. There will be three steps as is illustrated in Figure 3.



*Figure 3. Three steps of the teaching design*

##### 5.1. Integrating Offline Teaching with Multimodal Translation

First, teach how to use multimodal environment and guide students to learn independently. Students should not use multimodal resources for recreational reasons, but should learn to how use the resources rationally so as to obtain effective learning. If teachers want to develop students' online independent learning ability, they should first guide how to use online multimodal resources offline, such as recording or memorizing information, shadowing reading, reflection and discussion,

etc.

Second, multimodal teaching can inspire students to think actively. Teachers can lead students to conduct language learning through news guidance and video appreciation and inspire them to think deeply. The following table takes "Excellent English Comprehensive Course 1" edited by Tang Bin and published by Higher Education Press as an example:

*Table 2. Excellent English comprehensive tutorial 1*

| Unit  | Theme                | Goals  | Multimodal  |
|-------|----------------------|--|---|
| Unit1 | Introducing Yourself | Abilities:<br>Multimodal translation capability: listen to the video and translate the self- introduction made by the boy<br>Oral Expression: introduce yourself (Students can take short videos to introduce themselves individually in English). | A Chinese young boy's self-introduction 100 years ago. (video)                      |
| Unit2 | College Life         | Abilities:<br>Multimodal translation capability: translate campus map<br>Dialectical thinking: "Knowledge is one thing, virtue is another."  | Primary education in Ruijin (pictures and words)                                    |
| Unit4 | Smoking Ban          | Abilities:<br>Multimodal translation capability: to translate the news of smoking ban<br>Dialectical thinking: "Smoking Ban vs. Personal Choice"   | News reading;<br>Burning and destroying Opium in Humen (videos; pictures and words) |

Third, students are encouraged to express their views in a multimodal way. Students can discuss questions online. Students who fail to answer questions in offline classes can also express their opinions.

## 5.2. Online Videos Enrich Teaching Content

Make full use of network resources to enrich the online course content. Network enjoys rich resources and have diversified contents. But although it is a valuable learning database, it also contains harmful information and young people being addicted to Internet are a great social problem. Therefore, college education is necessary to establish a relatively constrained online learning environment for learners. First step is to select the learning contents, which includes but is not limited to Chinese culture, Chinese history, Chinese figures, Chinese technology, Chinese dream, etc.

## 5.3. Multimodal Translation and Language Acquisition

The multimodal translation task features captioning translation and dubbing. By mobilizing the senses of hearing and vision, students obtain source information from texts, images and sounds, and then integrate the newly acquired information with their existing knowledge, so as to complete the process of information selection, information integration and effective learning. Videos should not be too long, but need to grasp the key points.

## 6. Conclusion

English courses for college students should pay attention to the change of ways in the process of teaching reform. Teachers should learn to use new teaching technology in language classroom

scientifically. English classes use hybrid teaching methods to introduce online and offline multimodal environment. It can improve the motivation and interest of non-English major college students in learning foreign languages to realize effective language learning and personalized learning, stimulating students' creativity and achieving better education effect.

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### Data Availability

The datasets used during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

### Conflict of Interest

The author states that this article has no conflict of interest.

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