

Investigation and Strategy Research on Chinese-English Translation Competence of College Students in an Agricultural University from the Perspective of International Communication

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Abstract

The Chinese-English translation competence of students in agricultural colleges is of crucial significance in the context of international agricultural exchanges and collaborations. This research is designed to comprehensively understand the current status of Chinese-English translation competence among undergraduates in an agricultural university, analyze the influencing factors, and subsequently explore effective strategies for enhancing their translation skills. Through a meticulous analysis of questionnaire and interview data, it is concluded that the overall performance of the majority of students in Chinese-English translation is at a moderate level. The influencing factors are found to include the foundation of English knowledge, translation techniques, cultural awareness, as well as the interest and motivation of the students. Considering these findings, it is recommended that English instruction should strengthen English language knowledge, cultivate the professional knowledge of translation and translation skills, broaden the cultural background knowledge and stimulate learning interest and motivation.

Keywords

Chinese-English Translation Competence, International Communication, Strategies

1. Introduction

With the facilitation of economic globalization, the standing of Chinese agriculture

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within global agriculture has been continuously enhanced, thus giving rise to an increasing demand for international professionals and interdisciplinary talents. [Lei \(2023\)](#) also asserted that in the era of globalization, the need for translators equipped with outstanding translation competences and ample professional knowledge is on the rise. Agricultural college students are obliged to comprehensively present the profound history and development of China's agricultural sector. Therefore, Chinese-English translation competence has become an essential skill for them.

1.1. Purpose and Significance of the Research

By using questionnaire and interview, the primary aim of this study is to explore the current state of the Chinese-English translation competence among college students in an agricultural university. By analyzing the outcomes of the questionnaires and interviews, this study will analyze the factors that exert an influence on students' Chinese-English translation competence. On this basis, it also endeavors to offer some suggestions for the enhancement of students' Chinese-English translation competence.

This research is significant for two reasons. On the one hand, it can provide certain useful teaching approaches to improve students' Chinese-English translation competence. On the other hand, it is conducive to agricultural colleges in cultivating more agricultural talents and interdisciplinary talents with excellent Chinese-English translation competence, thereby promoting the international development of Chinese agriculture.

2. Literature Review

2.1. International Communication and C-E Translation Competence

With the acceleration of globalization, the importance of international communication has become increasingly prominent. A country's international communication competence directly affects its status and discourse power in international affairs. Strengthening international communication competence is of great significance to shaping national image and enhancing international influence.

Based on the model of translation competence proposed by [Ma \(2013\)](#), it is considered that the translation competence of Chinese-English translators consists of five components: bilingual communicative competence, professional knowledge of translation, strategic competence, extra-linguistic competence (including subject knowledge, encyclopedic knowledge and cultural competence) and the competence to use inquiry tools.

Among them, bilingual communicative competence constitutes the core of Chinese-English translation competence. Professional translation knowledge is a vital component of translation competence, mainly incorporating basic knowledge such as guiding the process, methods, and steps of translation, as well as professional translation knowledge (types of translation instructions and users, etc.). Strategic competence represents the translator's professional skill, referring to the

translator's competence to identify the optimal solution to problems encountered during language exchange in Chinese-English translation. Extralinguistic competence is the peripheral competence of Chinese-English translation competence, including subject knowledge, encyclopedic knowledge, and cultural competence. The competence to use inquiry tools is an indispensable competence for translators, which refers to their competence to locate the relevant information they require within a relatively short period during the translation process.

2.2. Research of C-E Translation Competence Abroad and at Home

Foreign scholars' research on Chinese-English translation have focused on the problems of psychological cognition, language conversion and practical operation in the process of Chinese-English translation. [Chen, Hayakawa, & Marian \(2020\)](#) identified the cognitive and linguistic variables that predict how quickly and accurately bilinguals are able to translate single words. What's more, the masked translation priming effect was examined in Chinese-English bilinguals using lexical decision and semantic categorization tasks in an effort to understand why the two tasks seem to produce different patterns of results ([McPhedran & Lupker, 2021](#)).

Regarding the research on Chinese-English translation competence, domestic scholars have mainly focused on the constituent factors and development levels of Chinese-English translation competence. [Wang \(2012\)](#) pointed out that both bilingualism and translation skills are indispensable components of Chinese-English translation competence. Furthermore, scholars have also investigated the research and influencing factors of Chinese-English translation competence in college English teaching and put forward effective strategies. [Zheng \(2019\)](#) demonstrated that the Chinese language interferes with the process of Chinese-English translation for non-English majors, mainly in three aspects: vocabulary, syntax, and text structure. [Wang \(2020\)](#) explored the differences in four aspects, namely, translation concept, translation motivation, translation learning strategies, and language proficiency, which have an impact on the quality of translations. [Wang \(2023\)](#) found that when students engage in Chinese-English translation, they usually hastily search for formal equivalency words in their mental vocabulary or simply replace English words with Chinese pinyin, displaying evident evasion or confusion.

In summary, remarkable progress has been made in the research on Chinese-English translation competence. However, in the context of agricultural universities, it is necessary to conduct a more systematic investigation into the current situation of Chinese-English translation competence based on the actual circumstances of students, analyze the influencing factors, and then put forward targeted strategies.

3. Research Design

3.1. Research Questions

Based on the purpose and significance of the research, the main research questions

are as follows:

- 1) What are the current situations of Chinese-English translation competence of agricultural college students?
- 2) What are the influencing factors for these current situations?
- 3) What are the strategies for improving students' Chinese-English translation competence in English teaching?

3.2. Research Subjects

For the convenience of conducting the research, the student research subjects are the students of the research instructors. The English instructors for interview are randomly selected from the college English teachers. The student research subjects involved in this research are undergraduates from Yunnan Agricultural University, specifically those majoring in animal medicine, plant protection, and tobacco, all of which are agricultural disciplines and encompass students from Grade 2020 to Grade 2023. In total, 205 questionnaires were distributed, and 203 valid ones were retrieved. Subsequent to the questionnaire phase, interviews were conducted with 7 English instructors and 5 students at Yunnan Agricultural University.

3.3. Research Instruments

1) Questionnaire

The questionnaire was formulated with reference to the five models of Chinese-English translation competence proposed by Ma (2013) in the research work "A Study of Translation Competence from Chinese into English". Additionally, it was modified in accordance with the actual learning conditions of the participants. The questionnaire is composed of two segments. The first part pertains to the students' personal details, comprising 4 questions. The second part focuses on the students' Chinese-English translation competence and consists of a total of 20 objective questions.

As shown in **Table 1**, it contains a total of 20 objective questions.

Table 1. Questionnaire distribution: five dimensions of C-E translation competence.

Dimensions	Items
Bilingual communicative competence	1 - 5
Professional knowledge of translation	6 - 9
Strategic competence	10 - 14
Extra-linguistic competence	15 - 17
The competence to use inquiry tools	18 - 20

2) Interview

The interview for teachers focuses on the teachers' understanding of students' Chinese-English translation competence which includes students' performance

and influencing factors in Chinese-English translation, the impact of current English courses on students' Chinese-English translation competence, and suggestions for future students' development of Chinese-English translation competence. There were 7 teachers accepting this interview. The interview for students aims to understand the students' general understanding and attitudes about their Chinese-English translation competence. And there were 5 students accepting this interview and they were chosen randomly. **Figure 1** clearly shows the structure of interview questions for teachers and students.

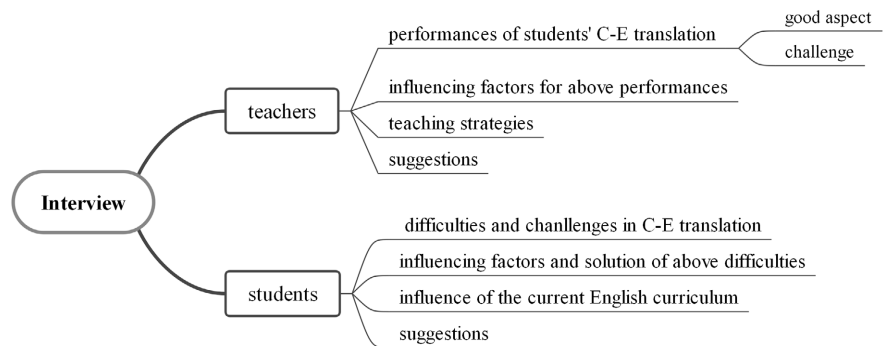


Figure 1. The structure of interview questions for teachers and students

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Results of Questionnaire

This research studied Chinese-English translation competence of college students in Yunnan Agricultural University through questionnaire. Five questions were set in the dimension of bilingual communicative competence. The results are shown as follows:

Table 2. Students' attitude towards bilingual communicative competence.

Questions	A	B	C	D	E
1	24.14%	49.75%	23.65%	1.48%	0.99%
2	36.95%	47.78%	9.85%	2.96%	2.46%
3	23.15%	49.75%	20.69%	3.94%	2.46%
4	20.69%	44.83%	24.63%	7.39%	2.46%
5	25.62%	21.18%	45.32%	6.4%	1.48%

Note: Options A-E indicate completely agree, basically agree, somewhat agree and somewhat disagree, basically disagree, completely disagree.

Table 2 presents the findings regarding students' perspectives on their bilingual communicative competence. Approximately 74% of the participants indicated that the primary hurdle in Chinese-English translation lies in expressing ideas in English. 73% of them were able to consider word collocations, and 66% took into account the similarities and differences between English and Chinese sentence structures during translation from Chinese to English. 46% of the participants

contemplated the coherence of the text. However, 85% of the participants felt that their knowledge of English was insufficient in areas such as vocabulary, grammar, and sentence structure. From these data, it is evident that one of the major obstacles students face in Chinese-English translation is the deficiency in English knowledge, including vocabulary and grammar (Figure 2).

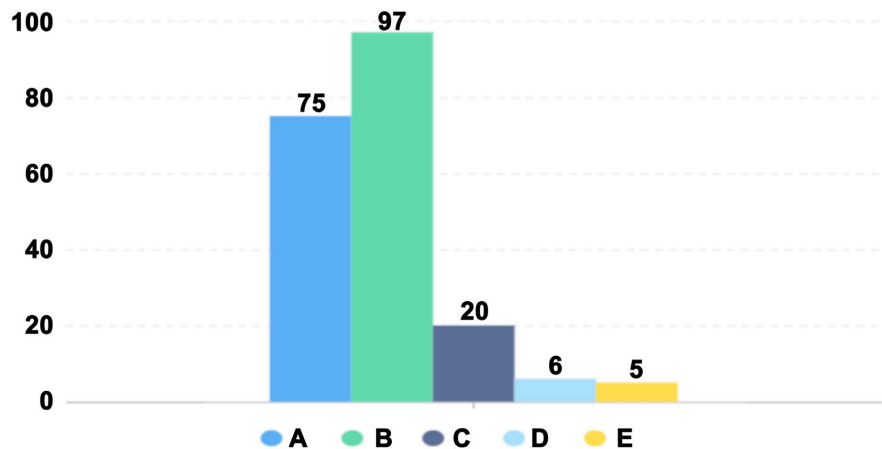


Figure 2. Students' choices for lack of English knowledge. Note: Options A-E indicate completely agree, basically agree, somewhat agree and somewhat disagree, basically disagree, completely disagree.

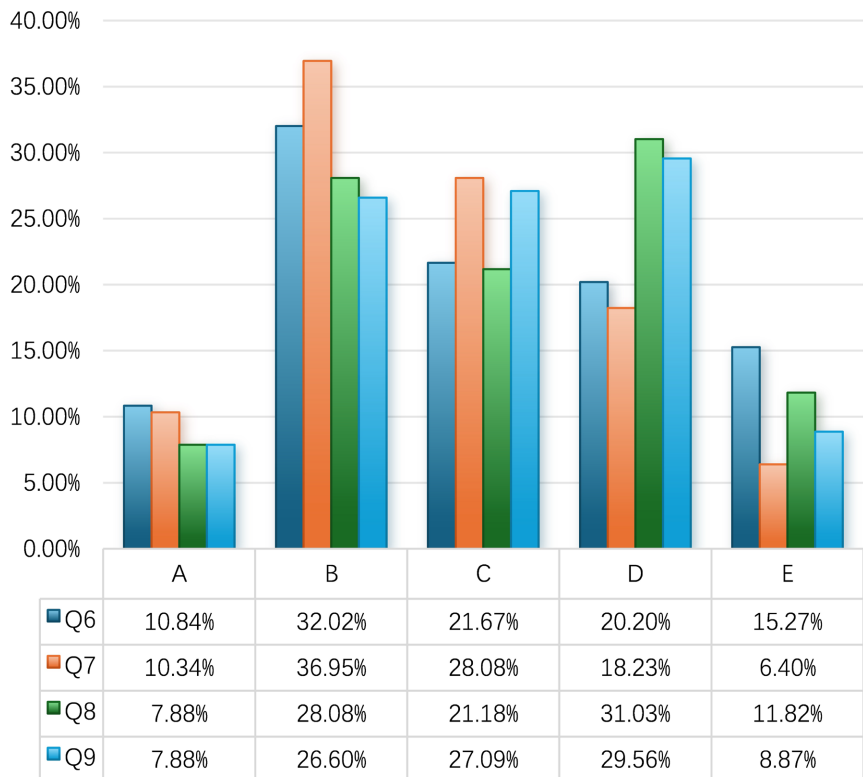


Figure 3. Students' choices for their professional knowledge of translation. Note: Options A-E indicate completely agree, basically agree, somewhat agree and somewhat disagree, basically disagree, completely disagree.

In the second dimension of the questionnaire on students' professional knowledge of translation, the author investigated whether students had systematically learned some theoretical knowledge of translation, knew the standards and principles of translation, and understood different types, principles and methods of translation. And four questions were set. The specific results are as follows:

Figure 3 presents the results about participants' professional knowledge of translation. Most of the participants demonstrated that they had grasped some fundamental professional translation knowledge and were aware of the translation standards and principles. However, there remained some uncertainties in their understanding of these standards and principles. More than half of the participants believed that they only had a basic understanding of different translation types, and only 7.88% had a comprehensive understanding. Overall, these outcomes suggest that students have acquired basic professional translation knowledge but still require further improvement in more comprehensive skills.

Table 3 reflects that the majority of the participants had a certain level of understanding and command of basic translation strategies, yet there were some confusions and uncertainties in practical application. Additionally, over half of them were unsure of how to handle long and complex sentences, words, and idioms with Chinese characteristics when translating from Chinese to English, and it was challenging for them to break free from the influence of Chinese sentence structures and thinking patterns. 46% of the participants consciously employed some translation strategies. This might imply that students struggle to apply translation strategies when confronted with more difficult Chinese-English translation tasks. In summary, while most participants were familiar with basic translation strategies, they faced greater difficulties when dealing with long and intricate Chinese sentences imbued with Chinese characteristics and culture.

Table 3. Students' attitudes about their strategic competence.

Questions	A	B	C	D	E
10	9.85%	34.98%	31.03%	19.21%	4.93%
11	22.66%	36.95%	31.03%	6.4%	2.96%
12	24.63%	41.38%	29.06%	3.45%	1.48%
13	22.66%	41.87%	26.11%	7.39%	1.97%
14	11.82%	35.47%	36.45%	12.81%	3.45%

Note: Options A-E indicate completely agree, basically agree, somewhat agree and somewhat disagree, basically disagree, completely disagree.

The subsequent section pertains to extra-linguistic competence and the competence to use query tools. Nearly 80% of the participants concurred that Chinese-English translation is not merely a language activity but also a cross-cultural communication endeavor. Furthermore, in Chinese-English translation, they considered the differences between Chinese and foreign cultures and the cognitive competences of the target readers, and flexibly handled the original text, which is

commendable. However, over 70% of the participants indicated that they frequently encountered translation difficulties stemming from an inadequate understanding of the original text, such as ancient Chinese proverbs, classical texts, and technical terms. The specific data are illustrated in **Figure 4**.

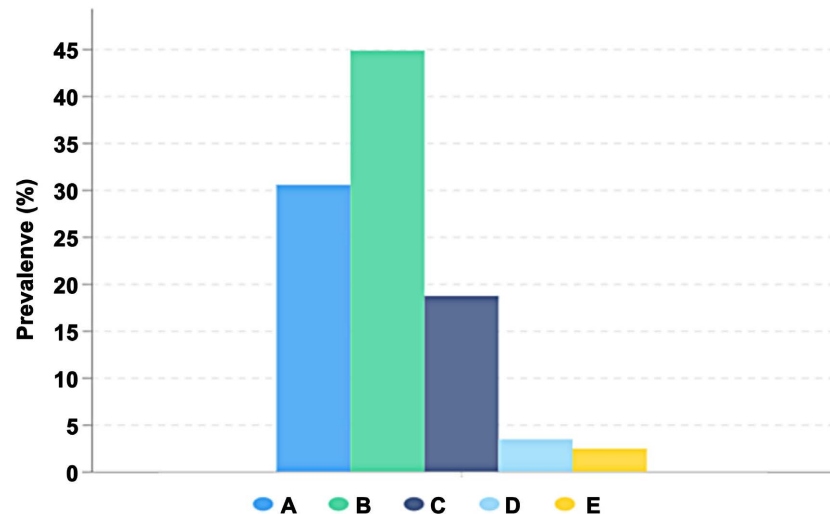


Figure 4. Students' attitude towards inadequate cultural knowledge. Note: Options A-E indicate completely agree, basically agree, somewhat agree and somewhat disagree, basically disagree, completely disagree.

As for the competence to use query tools, nearly 60% of the participants first searched for relevant professional terms and parallel texts online before commencing translation. **Figure 5** clearly depicts these results. Nevertheless, unavoidably, most students also resorted to using translation tools directly to translate Chinese texts.

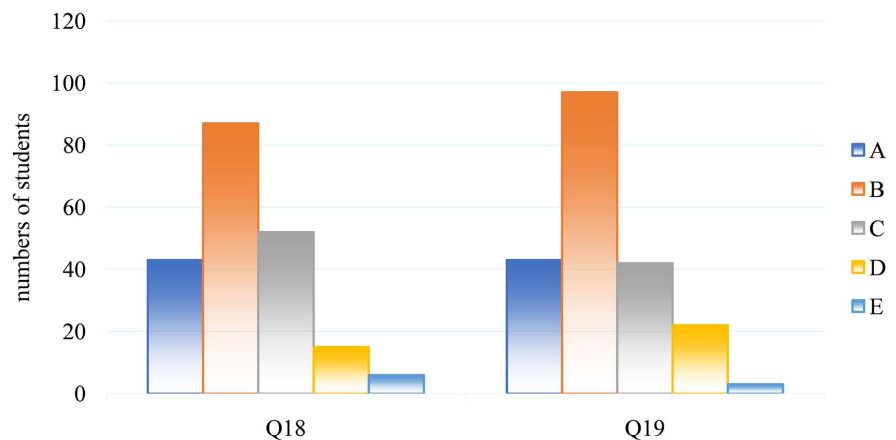


Figure 5. Students' choices for the competence to use query tools. Note: Options A-E indicate completely agree, basically agree, somewhat agree and somewhat disagree, basically disagree, completely disagree.

Collectively, these results indicate that the participants exhibited significant

deficiencies in all five individual competences, particularly in language communication competence, translation expertise, strategic competence, and extra-linguistic competence. The majority of the participants believed that they had a weak command of English knowledge, such as vocabulary, grammar, and syntax. Regarding translation expertise and translation strategies, some participants lacked a sound understanding of the types and methods of translated texts and were unsure of how to handle the translation of long and complex Chinese sentences.

4.2. Results of Interview

To further investigate the current state of students' Chinese-English translation competence, analyze the influencing factors, and subsequently propose effective strategies, interviews were also incorporated into this study. Five students and seven teachers were randomly selected to participate in these interviews. The interview results are as follows:

1) Results of Students' Interview

Question 1: Do you find it difficult to translate from Chinese into English? What are the main challenges you have encountered?

All the students interviewed found Chinese-English translation to be a challenging task. Four students attributed their difficulties to a limited vocabulary, being familiar only with simple words. The second student pointed out that the grammar and sentence structures of Chinese and English differ significantly and require flexible adjustment during translation. Moreover, Chinese contains many culture-specific words related to history and region, for which there may not be equivalent expressions in English. Some Chinese rhetorical devices and expressions are uncommon in English, necessitating translation and transformation.

Question 2: What do you think are the factors contributing to your current difficulties? How did you attempt to overcome these difficulties?

All the students considered vocabulary to be the primary influencing factor. Two students expressed the difficulty in memorizing words, while three students admitted not having developed a daily habit of word memorization. The second student noted that his understanding of the original Chinese text was not profound enough. The fifth student claimed that learning English grammar was so arduous that it led to a loss of interest in the language. To address these difficulties, they adopted various approaches. They began by focusing on basic grammar and simple sentence patterns. The second student stated that in Chinese-English translation, he would first strive to understand the original text and then search for relevant materials or directly use translation software.

Question 3: How do you perceive the impact of the current English courses on your competence to translate from Chinese into English?

The students believed that the English courses had a certain influence on their Chinese-English translation competence. The second student felt that the English courses had enabled him to master the basic sentence structures of English grammar, thereby reducing the occurrence of grammatical errors or sentence confusion during translation. Additionally, the English courses had cultivated his

English language sense and expression competences. They also emphasized the necessity of offering specialized translation courses to learn translation knowledge and strategies.

Question 4: What measures do you think can enhance your competence to translate from Chinese into English?

All five students advocated for the importance of expanding their vocabulary and strengthening their grammar knowledge. The second student further suggested the need to learn more translation techniques and acquire a deeper understanding of Chinese culture to improve comprehension of the original text.

In summary, the key findings from the students' interviews are presented in **Figure 6**.

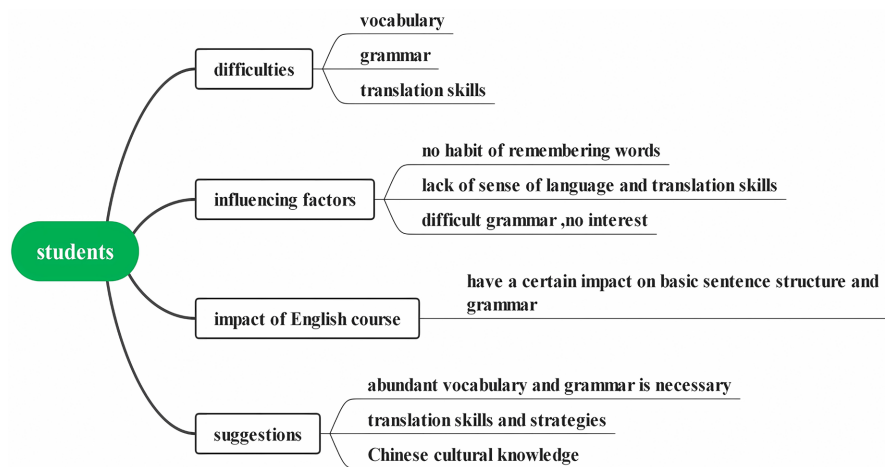


Figure 6. The key results for students' interview.

2) Results of Teachers' Interview

Question 1: Based on your teaching experience, how would you evaluate students' performance in Chinese-English translation? In which aspects do they perform well, and what are the main challenges they face?

Six teachers regarded the students' Chinese-English translation competence as average. The second teacher noted that approximately one-third of the students demonstrated a relatively good competence. The fifth teacher also stated that Chinese-English translation was one of the difficulties for students. For students with average performance, all teachers rated their vocabulary as ranging from low to medium. Additionally, the second, third, and seventh teachers observed that students did not have a firm grasp of sentence structure knowledge, were unable to effectively transfer logic and thinking between Chinese and English, and frequently resorted to using Chinglish.

Question 2: What factors do you believe influence students' performance?

The teachers identified several factors that affect students' Chinese-English translation competence. The first and second teachers emphasized the need to enhance students' awareness of Chinese-English translation. They also noted that the actual translation practice opportunities were limited, and students lacked

independent learning and practice outside of class. The fourth teacher pointed out that some students lacked background knowledge in various cultural aspects. Since the translation questions in CET-4 and CET-6 often involve knowledge of Chinese culture, possessing certain cultural background knowledge is beneficial for promoting the improvement of language application competence.

Question 3: Do you employ specific teaching methods or strategies to enhance students' competence to translate from Chinese into English? Can you share some effective teaching practices?

In addition to traditional teaching methods, most teachers designed teaching approaches centered around students, taking into account their actual situations. For example, the first teacher assigned a large number of translation exercises to improve students' practical competences. The second teacher conducted special lectures on Chinese-English translation skills and practiced with CET-4 and CET-6 real questions. The third teacher combined task-based teaching, the flipped classroom model, and the output-oriented approach, focusing on pre-class preparation and after-class consolidation. The sixth teacher believed that students' interest in learning was crucial and adopted an interactive teaching method, using group discussions to share translation methods and skills. The seventh teacher placed greater emphasis on cultivating students' cross-cultural awareness and helped them understand the differences between Chinese and English by analyzing cultural difference cases.

Question 4: Do you have any suggestions for the future development of agricultural college students in the field of Chinese-English translation?

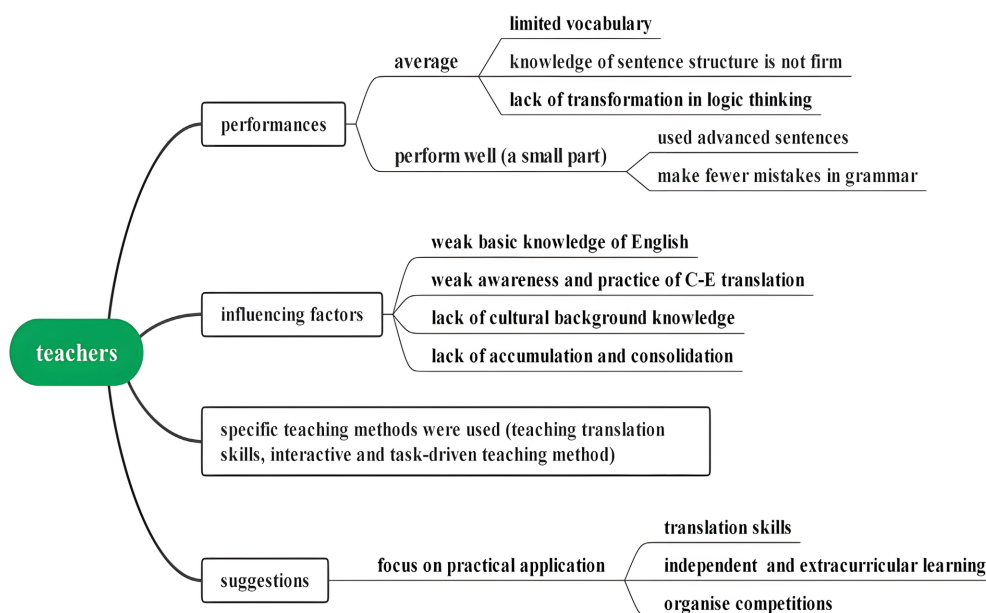


Figure 7. The key results for teacher's interview.

The teachers considered it essential to focus on the practical application of Chinese-English translation. For instance, the second and fourth teachers suggested

strengthening extracurricular learning and independent study to enhance students' practical competences. They also proposed organizing extracurricular activities such as Chinese-English translation competitions. To improve students' basic knowledge, the fifth teacher recommended establishing word competitions to expand students' vocabulary.

In conclusion, **Figure 7** clearly illustrates the key findings from the teachers' interviews.

4.3. Discussion

1) Achievements in Current Situation

According to the results of the questionnaire and interviews, compared to the other four individual competences, students' competence in using query tools was relatively better. The translation process inherently involves the process of looking up data (Li, 2006). In the current era of rapid internet development, students should possess strong search skills, enabling them to select different search tools and strategies based on diverse learning tasks and goals. The results indicated that students were able to promptly locate words and the Chinese source text, which was beneficial for their translation efforts. However, it was inevitable that some students would overly rely on machine translation and lack independent thinking, highlighting the need for them to use query tools appropriately.

2) Problems in Current Situation

There were also several issues with students' competence in Chinese-English translation. One of the difficulties students faced was their excessive focus on vocabulary and grammar, making it challenging for them to select appropriate vocabulary and sentence patterns to accurately convey the meaning of the original Chinese text. Grammatical errors and inappropriate use of sentence patterns were also common in their translations. Secondly, students had only a limited understanding of translation expertise and strategies. During the translation process, they were often constrained by the semantic structure of the original text, resulting in numerous Chinglish expressions. Finally, some students did not fully understand ancient Chinese proverbs and professional terms with Chinese characteristics, and instead opted for literal translations, which made it difficult for readers to comprehend the translated versions.

3) Influencing Factors

By analyzing the current situation and existing problems, the following influencing factors were identified. First, students' basic knowledge of the English language was weak. Second, their practical translation practice was relatively limited. The lack of coherence, rigidity, and logical flow in students' translations was primarily due to their uncertainty regarding which translation methods to employ. Additionally, a shortage of cultural background knowledge was a significant factor. To accurately understand the original text, translators need to possess not only language knowledge but also sufficient subject knowledge and encyclopedic knowledge. Finally, a subjective factor was students' learning interest and

motivation. Due to a lack of interest and motivation, students were reluctant to accumulate vocabulary and syntax knowledge and failed to pay attention to consolidating the knowledge learned in class after class.

5. Conclusion

5.1. Major Findings

Through the above analysis and discussion, it was determined that the students' Chinese-English translation competence was average. Students' weak foundation in language knowledge was the primary impediment to improving their Chinese-English translation competence. Additionally, their Chinese-English translation skills and cultural background knowledge also required enhancement. When dealing with expressions with cultural connotations, students may find it difficult to find the exact corresponding English expressions. When encountering long and complicated sentences with complex grammatical structures, how to translate them accurately and smoothly is also one of the common translation challenges that students often face. Moreover, students' motivation and interest in learning could not be overlooked. College English teaching should focus on improving students' skills in listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translation. During the research process, it was discovered that students' Chinese-English translation skills needed attention in multiple aspects.

5.2. Implications

1) Strengthening Students' English Language Knowledge

To strengthen students' English language knowledge, teachers should create a rich and diverse extracurricular language learning environment and organize a variety of extracurricular English activities. Additionally, students could engage in more intensive listening exercises after class, which would not only help them accumulate vocabulary but also enable them to identify their own grammatical mistakes or sentence disorders, thereby reinforcing their grammar and syntax knowledge.

2) Cultivating Translation Skills and Strategies

Translation involves not only word conversion but also the recombination of sentence structures and grammar. During class, teachers should teach students a variety of translation skills and strategies and guide them on how to select the most suitable strategy in different situations. Moreover, practical translation exercises should be provided to allow students to apply the learned translation skills and strategies. Special lectures and competitions on Chinese-English translation could also be organized to enhance students' extracurricular learning and translation practice.

3) Broadening the Cultural Background Knowledge

Chinese culture is profound and extensive. Firstly, students should be encouraged to read more classical cultural works, such as ancient poetry and historical

records, to gain a deeper understanding of the profound meanings within. In particular, Chinese agricultural knowledge contains a wealth of professional knowledge. Furthermore, by comparing the differences between English and Chinese, the translation techniques for unique Chinese cultural words could be introduced, strengthening students' understanding of translating Chinese culture (especially the special terms related to Chinese cultural customs and festivals). It is also recommended that we launch international agricultural exchange and visit programs. This helps agricultural personnel from different countries communicate face to face, enhances mutual understanding, which can better realize the circulation and sharing of information in the international agricultural field and improve the competence of international communication.

4) Stimulating learning interest and motivation

Interest is the best teacher and a driving force for independent learning. Firstly, clear learning goals should be established to enable students to track their progress and achievements during the learning process. Secondly, students should be encouraged to develop independent learning skills, learning how to solve problems and acquire knowledge on their own. By doing so, students can expand their vocabulary and reinforce their grammar knowledge while enjoying the process of reading and translating. Finally, organizing study groups, seminars, translation competitions and other activities is increasingly important to promote communication and cooperation among students and enhance students' interest and motivation.

5.3. Limitations of the Research

This study had several limitations. Firstly, only 203 valid questionnaires were collected, representing a relatively small and simple sample, which limited the general competence of the data. The results of this study may not accurately reflect the current situation of Chinese-English translation competence among all college students in Yunnan Agricultural University. Secondly, although the questionnaire was designed by the author after extensive literature review and met the minimum standards for reliability and validity, the content design lacked broader recognition, which may have posed some difficulties for students' understanding.

Project Funding

1) School-level education and teaching reform project: Research on Integrated Teaching Mode of New Agricultural College English and the Cultivation of International Communication Competence in "Understanding Contemporary China" (YNAUJG2023105), 2023.10-2025.10.

2) Construction of the third batch of school-level first-class courses "Intercultural Communication" (2023YLKC007), 2023.10-2025.10.

3) School-level Curriculum Ideology and Politics (Key Project): Research on the Ideological and Political Teaching Mode of College English Courses Oriented on the cultivation of International Communication Competence of Agricultural

Culture (YNAUKCSZJG2023005), 2023.10-2025.10.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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