



Research Paper

# On Compiling Omni media Interpretation Text books for Undergraduate Translation Majors in the Context of Big Data

Ji Lingzhu\*

Corresponding Author, Associate Professor, Department of Foreign Language, Taiyuan normal University, City of Jinzhong, Shanxi, PR China

Ma Qiang

Lecturer, Department of Foreign Language, Taiyuan Normal University, City of Jinzhong, Shanxi, PR China

## Abstract

In the 21st century, with the further internationalization of Chinese society, the demand for interpreters at all levels has been expanding. The supplies of interpreters from the training institutions are inadequate to meet the needs of the talent market, and the gap between supply and demand for interpreters is not only huge, but also the positioning of the market needs keeps increasing. In the era of big data, the interpreters should be able to use different kinds of high-tech devices to collect, analyse the coming information and release the output for the employer in the target language. The present interpretation teaching materials in the form of "textbook + tape" or "textbook + CD-ROM" can no longer effectively adapt to the university undergraduate interpreter training requirements. The requirements for interpreter training should be reflected in the new customized interpretation teaching materials in the era of all-media, including the content, compiling style, compiling concept and presentation of teaching materials that meet the cognitive abilities of learners.

**Key Words:** omnimedia interpretation textbooks big data

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## I. Introduction

It has been nearly twenty years since the Ministry of Education approved for the establishment of the undergraduate translation program in 2006. The number of universities and colleges with undergraduate translation program has increased to over 230. As an indispensable component of the program, interpretation teaching aims at language teaching as well as guiding the students to understand the nature, object, principle, method of interpretation and initially master interpretation skills through repeated and a lot of interpretation training practice. Since interpretation textbooks are the basis for teachers to organize teaching activities and the main source for students to acquire relevant knowledge, skills and learning strategies, they are important for the interpretation program construction, teaching as well as learning. In the present context of big data, there should be a reform for interpreting textbook writing and publishing. The choice of resource materials and composing model of the textbooks are in urgent need of updating.

### 1. The present situation and problems of interpretation textbooks

According to Mr. Mu Lei's statistics, by the end of the 1970s, there were only two interpretation textbooks published in China, and the number was very limited,<sup>1</sup> because China was not open to the outside world, and the reform and opening to the outside world policy was issued by the Chinese government in 1978. Since the 1990s, with the advance of economic, business, scientific and cultural communication with other countries, the demand for interpreters has kept increasing, which promoted interpretation teaching and research. Consequently, the number of interpretation textbooks published has grown rapidly. The strategic transformation of China in the new era and the implementation of the "the Belt and Road Initiative" and the "Chinese culture going global" strengthen the mission of college interpretation teaching to cultivate

\*Corresponding Author: Ji Lingzhu\*

interpreters with a global perspective and proficient in both Chinese and foreign languages. Therefore, various kinds of interpretation textbooks have been published one after another. According to Tao Youlan's statistics, from 1990 to 2017, China has published as many as 240 interpretation textbooks (including various teaching and learning aiding materials).<sup>2</sup> From 2000 to 2020, 120 general interpretation textbooks published in China (excluding teaching aids and special interpretation textbooks, such as business interpretation, scientific interpretation, conference interpretation, tour guide interpretation, scientific interpretation, medical interpretation, etc.)

At present, the widely used and well-known English-to-Chinese and English-to-Chinese interpretation textbooks in colleges and universities can be roughly divided into two categories: the special-purpose interpretation textbooks compiled for specific groups in specific occasions such as economic, tourist and trading negotiations; the comprehensive and universal interpretation textbooks that cover multiple themes and target readers at all levels. These textbooks provide a certain amount of teaching materials to improve learners' language proficiency and impart interpretation skills, laying a foundation for interpretation teaching.<sup>3</sup> However, as a skill-based language art, interpretation training should take into account the requirements of the independent learning stage of interpreters, based on the language encyclopedia knowledge module, and increase targeted language input, while focusing on "skill" training. In the actual classroom interpreting teaching practice, we found the following obvious problems with the existing textbooks for the undergraduate students.

### **1.1 The problem with selection and arrangement of teaching materials**

Many interpretation textbooks fail to focus on the systematic training of interpretation skills, only choosing some reading materials centering on a certain theme as interpreter training materials with new word bank, special term explanations and reference translation, very similar to the textbooks of reading and translation. The chosen teaching materials are irrelevant to the interpreting skills that should be trained and practiced. This kind of textbooks are not conducive to students' understanding of the objective laws of interpretation and mastering the basic skills and methods of interpretation. Another serious problem is that the source texts are not arranged in a scientific order in these interpretation textbooks. The linguistic difficulty for different chapters is at nearly the same level.<sup>4</sup>

### **1.2 Implicit Targeted trainees**

A large proportion of textbooks have no clearly targeted trainees. In the curriculums for undergraduate English majors and translation majors, and even the one for master's program of translation and interpretation, interpreting course is one of the required courses. Textbooks are expected to target the specific groups of learners according to corresponding training objectives. However, in the statistics from Ji&Li(2021), the proportion of textbooks that have no clearly aimed student body exceeds 40%.<sup>5</sup> This intention to cover as many users as possible will obscure the core positioning of the textbook. The proficiency levels of Chinese university undergraduates and post graduate students are very different, so a textbook can better serve the learners of interpretation only if it clarifies its core audience. The undergraduate interpreter trainees need to master the basic interpreting skills as well as improving their linguistic proficiency level in both languages, especially the target language command.

### **1.3 Inadequacy in authenticity and timeliness**

The practice materials in the interpretation textbooks are used to train and consolidate the interpretation skills that have been taught and discussed, or for practicing specific thematic exercises. They are generally selected from newspapers, books and official websites at home and abroad, such as political leaders' speeches of the international organizations and different countries, press interviews, press conferences and conversations between Chinese and foreign speakers. Some interpretation textbooks fail to distinguish the differences between interpretation and translation, neglecting the oral suitability of training materials with obvious written language characteristics in both English and Chinese. Some speeches are included in the textbooks, but the supporting audios or videos are recordings done by others instead of the actual speakers, losing the authentic speech contexts and linguistic features. For instance, there is one speech video by a hospital director in Jiangsu Province introducing the hospital to foreign visitors in the textbook we are using at present, but the recording and the video are done by a staff member from the publishing house of the textbook, with no emphasizing, no slowing down, neither other sounds of the occasion etc. Besides, when these materials are published and the textbooks printed, they are already outdated and unable to reflect the development trends in China and the world. It is difficult to arouse students' interest in learning and prepare the learners for the future working environment.

#### **1.4 The gap between media of textbooks and teaching reality**

The textbook we are using at the moment is **Consecutive Interpreting---A Hands-on Textbook**, including Discs, Student book and teacher's book, mainly in the form of print media. To avoid making mistakes in class or to get a good daily performance record, some of my students buy teacher's book and cannot help reading the transcripts before or during class, although I repeatedly require them to predict the coming information of the speech according to the topic and previewing questions. I am not denying here the function of translating the corresponding text in the preview process in reducing the students' anxiety and providing them with linguistic and topic knowledge assistance. However, replacing interpretation experience with translation practice makes it difficult for the trainees to obtain the interpretation experiences of effective listening, information processing and reconstructing under the pressure of time and corresponding occasions. In addition, the training of interpreting talents has objective requirements for the teaching hours spent on interpreting practice. In the present background of Chinese higher education reform, teaching hours on specialized courses are reduced to a certain extent, the remaining class hours cannot meet the required practice. Therefore guiding students to practice after class becomes necessary. The existing textbooks cannot provide sufficient independent learning space, neither massive bilingual learning resources, nor effective interactive learning environment.

#### **2. Development of omnimedia interpreting textbooks in the era of big data**

There are some improvements in the textbooks published in China for interpreter trainees with the advent of big data and upgrading of other information technology. After 2016, traditional audio and video materials are gradually replaced by online teaching resources, and publishers of interpretation textbooks are more inclined to provide audio and video teaching materials through online platforms. Learners and instructors can download the required resources in either audio or video forms by themselves by following the prompts to the designated official websites or scanning the designated QR codes. The emergence of online teaching resources means that the advance of the information technology is promoting China's interpretation teaching materials to develop in the direction for the convenience and speedy access for students and teachers.

Since the 1970s, thanks to the technological advance, teaching content can be stored on magnetic, optical and dielectric media in the form of digital code, and electronic textbooks can be copied and printed. The advent of big data brings new opportunities to the interpretation textbooks. Instead of simply digitizing the content of the existing printed textbooks, the publishers are able to present teaching contents by means of animation, video, images, text, graphics, sound, and other forms, and integrate different media forms (paper media, television media, broadcast media, network media, mobile phone media, etc.) to construct multi-media textbooks. Therefore the interpretation teachers and trainees can obtain more timely comprehensive reading, audio-visual and interactive experiences in the energy-consuming preparatory stage, handy assistance for while-interpreting stage and efficient and accurate analysis and categorized storage shortly after interpreting.

At present, with the continuous updating and popularization of big data application, more and more countries and regions in the world have already used or are promoting all media digital textbooks. The world giant Google has cooperated with Pearson Education Group, Macmillan Publishers Limited, McGraw Hill Education, Cengage Learning and other well-known textbook publishers to launch sales and leasing services for all media textbooks. Apple has also launched a series of all media textbooks based on iOS mobile operating system with three textbook publishers. The textbook publishers in China are also exploring and publishing all media textbooks. The electronic textbooks launched by the People's Education Press of China have digitalized teaching materials and brought about intelligent interaction in a scientific and intuitive all media form, providing a good paradigm for changing the traditional textbook compilation mode. Using this kind of textbooks, students will be able to use I pads or smartphones to conduct offline learning and interactive communication whenever and wherever possible.<sup>6</sup> However, many interpretation textbooks used in Chinese universities are still dominated by the single media form of "textbook+CD/tape", and the number of interpretation textbooks integrating various media forms is very limited. The big data era calls for interpretation materials that can create authentic or at least near-authentic interpreting environments, provide independent learning space and massive resources, and promote interactive learning methods.

#### **3. Thoughts on composing interpretation textbooks in the era of big data**

The interpretation teaching materials in the context of big data should focus on students' independent learning, collaborative learning and exploratory learning, with the difficulty levels of the materials and interpreting skills reasonably ordered and arranged, conforming both to the characteristics of the interpretation thinking process and the law of cognitive skill improvement. Modern interpretation textbooks should be able to cultivate the learners' independent learning mode and language learning strategies, so as to realize the teacher-students, and students-students multi-dimensional interactions.<sup>7</sup>

**3.1 New teaching models such as Mooc, Flipped Classroom and Micro class** have been widely and deeply promoted with the convenience of big data, and interpretation teaching also puts forward higher requirements for students' autonomous and self-directed learning. Interpretation textbooks should serve the needs for learners' self-construction of knowledge, rather than passively accepting the teaching of knowledge and skills in classrooms. The construction of all media interpretation textbooks based on constructivism can provide sufficient space for independent learning, promote interactive learning, and highlight the practicality of interpretation. Learning to interpret is to gain experience in the cognitive process, and interpreting ability is actually the result of experience and cognition, and the result of interaction between the source language and target language. The interpretation textbooks should be able to help the teachers and students to comprehensively use various media forms, and effectively improve the interpretation teaching effect by creating interactive interpretation experience with strong sense of scenes for students. The learning activities will never end. Interpretation learning in the context of big data is no longer a personal act because of information sharing. The multi-media textbooks will guide the students to connect and expand their knowledge network according to their own knowledge structure, which is also conducive to the principle of individualized teaching.

### **3.2 Textbook Designing**

The textbook designing and composing should follow the requirements of the interpretation courses in *National Quality Standards for the Teaching Quality of Undergraduate Translation Majors*. In the context of big data, the construction of interpretation textbooks must break through the traditional way of compiling textbooks and conform to the following principles.

#### **3.2.1 The content of the textbook should be systematic.**

When arranging teaching materials for the undergraduate students, attention should be paid to pronunciation and intonation, speed of speech and the choice of words, and the difficulty level should increase gradually since their target language command is still inadequate. The teaching content should be arranged scientifically for different stages of teaching with corresponding teaching aims and focuses.

#### **3.2.2 The training of interpretation skills should be supplemented by language improvement.**

Interpretation skills should be taught and trained in class and further strengthened in interpretation practice after class. In interpreting practice students will have more opportunities to use the skills of interpretation memory, note-taking, digital interpretation, discourse analysis, prediction and others so that the distance between the interpretation classroom and the requirements of interpretation job market can be shortened for the sake of students.

#### **3.2.3 The third is the principle of authenticity.**

The development of mega data brings about massive bilingual materials to the teachers and learners in various forms of media. The composers of the textbooks should screen, filter massive bilingual information, select appropriate teaching materials, and integrate training resources containing representative accent samples using full media to effectively improve the authenticity of interpretation teaching materials. The fourth is the principle of interaction, which is to study how to mobilize learners' enthusiasm and highlight their dominant position through all media teaching materials, so that interpretation learners can not only be good at autonomous learning, but also cooperate with each other to truly improve their interpretation ability.

### **3.3 The feasible Development mode**

As far as the development model is concerned, interpretation teaching requires "The cooperation and compensation of multi subjects and multi factors".<sup>8</sup> The construction of interpretation textbooks also needs to optimize the effectiveness of the textbooks on the basis of diversified forms of cooperation. The construction of all media interpretation textbooks that meet the demands of the big data era can not be separated from the cooperation of innovative subjects such as university management, education industry, academia, research community and students and teachers.

The construction of teaching materials needs to fully mobilize the enthusiasm and initiative of students. With the help of the innovative enthusiasm and technical expertise of student teams, teachers and students should cooperate to develop reader friendly all media teaching materials. In the process of research and development, the direct experience of front-line interpreters can be comprehensively and truly transferred to students by using various media forms, so as to cultivate students' job market awareness, which can enhance the teaching effect while realizing the coordination of vocational training.<sup>9</sup>

#### **3.3.1 Making good use of the university resources**

The interpretation talent education institutions can also try to take the University as a platform, take the lead in

carrying out in-depth cooperation with relevant departments and offices, take advantage of the opportunity of international academic exchanges in various majors of the University, participate in conference organization, personnel reception and interpretation services, and obtain first-hand training materials, so as to expand the topic range of all media interpretation textbooks, effectively improve the practicality of textbooks, and serve all teachers and students. Our students once had opportunities to be volunteers for an international conference sponsored by Geography Department of another university. After the conference, the students excitedly reported their own work and said that they wished to have more similar opportunities although they spent a lot of time to prepare for the conference. At the same time, schools at all levels and of all types can integrate the high-quality resources of colleges and universities inside and outside the province, deeply tap and comprehensively use the wisdom of experts from all schools, and jointly develop a series of characteristic textbooks that meet their own needs, such as *All media interpretation textbooks for application-oriented undergraduate colleges and universities*, *Omnimedia interpretation textbooks for local teachers' colleges and universities*, and *Omnimedia interpretation textbooks for provincial financial and economic colleges*.

### **3.3.2 Cooperating with local government and other institutional resources**

The development of all media interpretation textbooks also requires strengthening communication and cooperation with local governments, enterprises, institutions and other departments where universities are located, serving the local socio-economic and cultural development, and reflecting the local characteristics of interpretation textbooks. For instance, Shanxi is a province famous for its different folk art forms, such as drum music, local opera, folk songs, paper-cuts, dough sculpture etc. So in class and after class, students are often encouraged to make good use of the local websites in Shanxi to read the materials connected with the folk arts, artists and the local culture that nurtures the art. Some students helped to translate the lyrics of local opera into English, and some translated the introduction to the folk papercuts exhibition. In this way, the trainees will have opportunities to integrate classroom learning with their extracurricular autonomous learning of the relevant themes and get better-prepared for the future workplace folk art culture interpretation.

### **3.3.3 Knowing the international development in the field**

The development of teaching materials must also strengthen the cooperation with foreign professional colleges, international organizations and international service institutions, and ensure that the teaching materials closely follow the international advanced teaching concepts by building international collaboration and drawing on the experience of foreign omnimedia teaching materials compilation.

### **3.3.4 Adapting to the students' learning styles and needs**

Along with technological advances in the era of big data, the classroom is becoming more and more student-centered. There are more scenes of teacher-student interaction and equal participation in the classroom, and interpretation learning is experiencing a shift from classroom teaching to independent learning. Students can share their ideas with others, freely combine and divide their work, and have the opportunity, space and time to evaluate and discuss their peers' ideas. Teachers have shifted from being the transmitter of traditional teaching to being the facilitator, learner, discoverer, guide and organizer of modern teaching, focusing on students' independent knowledge and skill construction in teaching, and promoting the transformation of the teaching process from teaching to learning, so that students' independence and autonomy are continuously enhanced. In response to the realistic needs of interpreter training and the shortcomings of traditional interpretation teaching materials, the interpretation teaching materials in the era of omnimedia should be written in a way that can reproduce the real interpretation environment, provide space for independent learning, and advocate interactive learning methods.<sup>10</sup> "In the design process, due consideration should be given to whether the material also conducive to students' independent learning, collaborative learning and inquiry learning and other multiple approaches, and teaching resources should be designed and developed around students' knowledge. The teaching resources should be designed and developed around students' knowledge construction."<sup>11</sup>

### **3.3.5 iBookAuthor—an omnimedia book editing tool for the teachers**

iBooks Author is a free eBook authoring tool released by **Apple** on January 20, 2012, which creates eBooks that can be downloaded on iBooks and read on iPads. The revolution brings about by iBooks Author is that anyone can insert multimedia content including audio, video, 3D objects, etc. through the many templates or self-built eBooks it provides, while also utilizing HTML, Javascript, and other technologies, all in a WYSIWYG style. Interactive photo galleries, movies, Keynote presentations, 3D projects, and others can be added to the iBooks by using Multi-Touch widgets. The eBook you're working on can be previewed at any time on your iPad, and your finished work can be easily submitted to the iBookstore for free or paid download.

Compared with traditional printed books, full-media interpretation materials are characterized by a huge amount of information, multimedia presentation and interactive effects, with text, pictures, audio, video, interactive and 3D effects, and rich graphics, which can provide a strong sense of scene, realistic visual impact, and comprehensive sub-language information. It has set a new benchmark for e-books, redefined personal libraries, and brought a new reading experience to users worldwide.<sup>12</sup>

Because of their time-sensitive nature, interpretation materials often need to be supplemented and replaced with new content and forms of practice, and are upgraded for various reasons as well. iBooks Author can effectively support book updates. This means that if a new version of the downloaded eBook is released, iBooks Author will notify learners to download the updated version for free and replace the old version on the bookshelf automatically. It can overcome the shortcomings of traditional interpretation textbooks in all aspects and meet the skillful, practical, professional and personalized requirements of omnimedia interpretation textbooks.

## II. Conclusion

In the era of big data, the construction of omnimedia textbooks should be strengthened, breaking through the current difficulties faced by the compilation of interpretation textbooks. The present model “printed textbooks supplemented by audio-visual materials” should gradually be replaced. The omnimedia interpretation textbooks, which contain a large amount of information, cover a wide range of areas, have rich learning resources, are convenient for the users. With this kind of the textbooks, the teaching outcomes might be improved because the learners will have a richer user experience, and be more interested in learning, and the interpretation teaching is no longer limited by time and space. The practical contradiction between the sharp increase in the number of students and the lack of classroom training time will be effectively alleviated, and the multi-dimensional teaching interaction between teachers and students will be achieved. All media interpretation textbooks are in line with the undergraduate students’ learning styles, linguistic proficiency and cognitive abilities, especially the needs of personalized learning, and attach importance to the construction of autonomous learning mode and the cultivation of interpretation strategies, and consequently contribute to improve the quality of current interpretation talent training.

ChatGPT (full name: Chat Generative Pre-trained Transformer), a chatbot program developed by OpenAI, an American artificial intelligence research lab, was released on November 30, 2022. It is an artificial intelligence technology-driven natural language processing tool that understands and learns human language to carry out conversations. It can also interact with the context of the chat, truly communicate like a human, and even perform tasks such as writing emails, video scripts, copywriting, translations, coding, writing papers, and more. This new generation of AI will soon bring about another round of reform in interpreter-training technology and interpretation textbook compiling.

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