On Task-based Approach in Translator Training

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Abstract
With the advancement of globalization, market demand for versatile translation talents has expanded, which makes traditional teaching approaches less likely to meet market requirements than task-based teaching. This approach shifts the focus from teaching to learning. However, a systematic review of task-based teaching in translator training needs to be done, particularly a simultaneous analysis of its merits and demerits. As the key to appropriately applying this approach is to consider its merits and demerits, the current study adopted bibliometric analysis to analyze relevant journal articles from the Web of Science. The results implied that task-based teaching could help cultivate versatile translation talents through careful design (e.g., tasks). Furthermore, its merits outnumbered its demerits. The current study can provide a reference for future research on the role of task-based teaching in translator training.

Key Words: task-based teaching; translator training; merits and demerits; application; bibliometric analysis

1. Introduction
With the development of globalization, cultural communication between countries is constantly increasing, which highlights the role of translators and, in turn, translator training. However, the traditional PPP (known as presentation, practice, and production) teaching approach is often designed for exam-oriented education, which facilitates mastery of the skills to pass specific exams (Chang, 2017), while the objective of translator training is to enhance the overall translation competence of students. Beginning to prevail in the 1980s, task-based teaching (TBT) advocates a student-centered classroom. It believes knowledge is acquired through teachers’ presentations and students’ knowledge construction (Fu & Li, 2012). TBT is a more effective teaching approach to cultivating translation talents (Chang, 2017). Due to a need for an overview of TBT in translator training, this study aims to sort out related research through bibliometric analysis to get an insight into its merits, demerits, application, and other information in translator training.

2. Research Method and Data Source
This study collects data on the Web of Science and employs bibliometric analysis to study the data. Bibliometric analysis is the way to synthesize the vast literature and examine the research area and its significant trends to provide a general overview of these articles (Sureka et al., 2020). It provides researchers with adequate references and resources beyond the limits of time and space in a much more efficient and convenient way. The search process is as follows: First, 39 related articles, whose publishing year spans from 2007 to 2022, were identified by entering the keywords (i.e., “task-based” AND “translation”) and selecting such categories as Educational Research, Linguistics, and Language Linguistics as the filter. Then, 21 articles were selected according to their relevance to the topic after carefully reading the abstract of the 39 articles. Finally, these 21 articles were analyzed in detail to understand the topic better.

3. Results and Discussion
An analysis of the 21 articles reveals three important topics about TBT in translator training: its merits, demerits, and application. Other topics are also mentioned in some articles, classified in the miscellaneous category (see Table 1 for details). The most discussed topic is the merits of TBT, with its demerits less frequently discussed. The topics are discussed in detail in the following paragraphs.

Table 1: Topics concerning TBT research

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<tr>
<th>S.N.</th>
<th>Topics</th>
<th>No. of related articles</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Merits</td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Demerits</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Application</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>4</td>
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3.1 Merits of TBT in Translator Training
TBT has many merits when it is used to cultivate translation talents. To begin with, TBT can help students promote language production and enhance their involvement in the learning process (Danan, 2010). Besides, TBT is more effective in boosting students to acquire the translation expertise required for becoming proficient in the field. Further, TBT encourages students to engage in real-world tasks, which enhances their ability to apply knowledge in practical situations.
professional translators (Wang & Wang, 2021). Moreover, the interactions between students and between students and the teacher can be increased in TBT (Wang & Wang, 2021). It is pointed out that TBT helps enhance students’ self-discipline and enables them to search for information and analyze its reliability, thus enhancing their competence by combining their knowledge with experience during the learning process (Galán-Mañás, 2013). Hurtado Albir (2007) put forward six advantages of TBT: Firstly, it provides students with simulating situations linked to authentic translation context, in which students’ communicative competence and language proficiency can be enhanced. Secondly, it adopts a series of activities in which students learn by doing. Thirdly, more attention is paid to the translation process than the translation products, enhancing students’ problem awareness. Fourthly, it fosters the awareness of learning and the ability to learn. Fifthly, it creates a student-centered classroom where the teacher guides, rather than controls, the learning process. Finally, it introduces a flexible curriculum that facilitates students’ participation and peer assessment. According to Inoue and Candlin (2015), TBT is adapted to crucial market requirements. The conventional teaching approach for translator training focuses on analyzing the source texts and identifying target text equivalents, which is limited to the transformation from one language to another. In contrast, TBT serves to cultivate translation talents who can better meet market requirements. To sum up, TBT can help translation students develop comprehensively.

3.2 Demerits of TBT in Translator Training

Every coin has two sides. The application of TBT in translator training may need some help from both the teacher and students (Li, 2013). From the teacher’s perspective, assigning suitable tasks to students might impose additional burdens on him/her. For another thing, it becomes more difficult for the teacher to keep track of every student’s progress in real-time when more attention is paid to the learning process than to its outcome. How to engage all students in the tasks at hand or timely monitoring their progress will remain a big challenge for the teacher. From the students’ perspective, students are more likely to get distracted in task implementation due to a need for more teacher supervision. Most students need others’ supervision to concentrate on the tasks and persevere (Ai & Liu, 2014). Furthermore, tasks usually require group work, with each group consisting of several members. During task implementation, some students are highly engaged, while some are not, resulting in unbalanced development of the students. Moreover, both the teacher and students have been accustomed to the traditional PPP teaching approach, so they may feel uncomfortable with TBT at first, which costs them extra time to adapt to it and may thus reduce learning efficiency (Li, 2013). In a word, TBT poses some challenges to the teacher and translation students.

3.3 Application of TBT in Translator Training

TBT can be effectively applied in translator training if the tasks are designed appropriately. TBT is considered an excellent way to test students’ abilities by requiring them to accomplish the assigned tasks (Ma, 2017). It is demonstrated in Shu-Chiao’s study (2017) that TBT could promote learning and simulate the workplace if it effectively integrated language use and subject knowledge. Rodríguez-Inés (2010) advocated the integration of electronic resources and tools into TBT to enhance the effectiveness of the teaching approach. The study of López-García and Rodríguez-Inés (2019) explained in detail how four tasks were designed to help students solve specific problems and acquire translation knowledge: Task 1 was aimed at enhancing students’ awareness of collecting holistic and adequate information to ensure the coherence and consistency of translation products; Task 2 was designed to help students practice how to use technologies to assist the translation process, thus making task implementation more efficient; Task 3 helped students acquire and apply translation knowledge based on the context, in addition to an accumulation of teamwork experience; and Task 4 was designed to test whether students were able to use the translation methods acquired in previous tasks. Hurtado Albir (2007) regarded tasks in translator training as the organizing unit of instructional design. In addition, TBT should create a collaborative atmosphere where students acquire knowledge adapted to real-world experiences and strive for a common goal in collaboration (Ghaemi & Sadoughvanini, 2020). In short, adopting TBT in translator training requires careful design, especially the design of the tasks assigned to students.

3.4 Miscellaneous

The study of Inoue and Candlin (2015) identified the four critical characteristics of TBT. First, tasks are holistic. When translators are dealing with the task, instead of translating the source text literally, they have to accomplish the task based on their understanding of what the source text intends to express to the target audience. Second, tasks are interconnected. Before the teacher assigns a task, he or she has to try to design practical tasks for students. Once it is done, tasks are assigned to students, who, in turn, plan how to finish the tasks and provide feedback to the teacher. Those processes are interconnected, through which students can improve their translation competence. Third, learning takes place in a
professional environment. TBT allows students to develop critical thinking abilities and cognitive skills when faced with professional challenges since the quintessence of this teaching approach resides in learning by doing (Tian, 2010). Finally, the center of the classroom is shifted from the teacher to the students. In a teacher-centered classroom, the teacher governs the learning process while students passively receive the information imparted by the teacher (Li, 2013). However, the situation has changed in TBT, where the teacher supports students and fosters their autonomy (Inoue & Candlin, 2015). Moreover, TBT emphasizes authentic tasks and student involvement (Rodríguez-Castro & Sullivan, 2015). Dominant as the traditional PPP teaching approach has been in translator training, TBT is promising shortly, as it can stimulate students’ enthusiasm and enhance their engagement.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study employed bibliometric analysis to review related articles from the Web of Science, focusing on TBT’s merits, demerits, applications, and miscellaneous details in translator training. The results show that the approach has merits and demerits, with the former outweighing the latter. However, the analysis results will be more vivid if visualization tools assist. In addition, the number of journal articles reviewed in the study is relatively small, which could be more conducive to making a generalizable conclusion. Nevertheless, the study is expected to draw other researchers’ attention to this topic and provide a reference for scholars interested in TBT’s merits, demerits, and application. As globalization further advances, followed by greater demand for cultural communication, TBT can be more widely applied in translator training in the long term.

References