The New Application of Corpus in Translation Research and Teaching

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Abstract: Corpus linguistics uses a large number of real texts as research materials, mainly drawing conclusions through probability and statistical methods. Therefore, corpus linguistics is essentially empirical. In terms of translating from Chinese to English, translators often make mistakes not in grammar, but in improper collocations. On this issue, this article explores the application of corpus research methods to enable Chinese English translation to not only reproduce the original content but also ensure the accuracy and appropriateness of the translation.When looking at a single translation in isolation, it often does not have much value. By comparing multiple translations comprehensively, new discoveries may be made, and the retrieval tools of the corpus can accurately and quickly provide reliable statistical descriptions for teaching practice. The rapid development of corpus linguistics and computer linguistics has provided rich and authentic corpus for synonym analysis. In teaching, teachers can teach students how to use corpus retrieval to select words, helping them observe the typical collocation behavior of a word in the context and understand its semantic characteristics in the context.

1. Introduction

Translation is a process of transforming an expression in the source language into a corresponding expression in the target language. Yan Fu's "faithfulness, expressiveness, and elegance" has always regarded the translation field as the standard of translation. "Faith" means that the translator should truthfully express the content of the original text. "Expressiveness" means that the translation should be smooth, and "elegance" means that the translation should be literary. However, achieving these standards in translation practice is not easy. From the rise in the late 1950s to the rapid development since the 1980s, corpus linguistics has been widely used in the research of second language acquisition, language teaching, contrastive linguistics, lexicography, syntax, and semantics. Corpus linguistics takes a large number of real texts as research materials and draws conclusions mainly through the method of probability and statistics, so corpus linguistics is empirical in nature[1]. The corpus not only provides an unprecedented range of speech materials for language research but also transforms traditional language research from sampling methods through introspection, self-made examples, or induced questioning to survey sampling, with authentic and reliable materials [2]. In the course of corpus development, it appears that corpus scholars have not paid much attention to translation research and translation practice and have not given enough consideration to translation that is closely related to language research. Translated texts have always been excluded from the corpus [3]. In Chinese-English translation, the errors that translators often make are not grammatical but involve improper collocations. This paper discusses the application of the corpus research method to ensure that Chinese-English translation not only reproduces the original content but also ensures the accuracy and appropriateness of the translation. With the development of the corpus, many researchers have begun to integrate it into translation studies and apply it to translation teaching, providing new methods and new ideas for modern translation teaching [4]. The translation teacher can store the collected versions in it and call them up at any time for comparative study. Looking at a translation in isolation often doesn't yield much value. When multiple translations are compared comprehensively, new discoveries may emerge, and the retrieval tools of the corpus can accurately and quickly generate statistics and provide reliable statistical descriptions for teaching practice [5]. The question of whether the corpus-based translation teaching model can break through many limitations of the traditional teaching model,

and thus provide a reference for improving the level of translation teaching and cultivating high-level qualified translation talents, remains a topic of discussion [6]. The successful combination of the corpus method and translation teaching can truly tailor instruction to students' aptitude, thereby facilitating the development of students' research and innovation abilities. Practice has proven that implementing corpus-based translation teaching in the translation classes of newly-established undergraduate colleges is an effective way to fundamentally change the teaching status of translation classes.

2. Corpora and translation studies

Since the 1990s, there have been various trends in translation research, which Chesterman summarized as three: "Firstly, the focus on translation itself has expanded to the focus on translators and their decision-making research. Secondly, there has been a shift from a prescriptive approach to descriptive methods. Thirdly, there has been a shift from philosophical conceptual analysis to confirmatory research." As a result, translation research has been introduced into the descriptive research stage. This method starts from real translation corpora and explains and describes translation phenomena and processes, providing a theoretical basis for corpus translation research. The linguistic school holds a simplified linguistic translation theory, which overemphasizes the form of language while neglecting the social and cultural environment in which language occurs. Secondly, traditional corpus linguists believe that the language used for translation, even native language translation, is different from "standard language"[7]. Therefore, translation is a "deviation" from normative language and a "distortion" of language. The corpus is like an electronic library, where we can use translation corpora to query and obtain a large amount of data and information. As an English learner, due to a lack of in-depth knowledge of vocabulary, one may not know which words are paired with which words, or may be unsure of the accuracy of the translation[8]. In this case, one can use corpus retrieval to search for or verify the correctness of the paired words. The following is an example of how to use corpus retrieval to verify collocations using the Chinese term 'strong tea'. Through comparative research in corpus linguistics, translation theorists have begun to reveal the unique literary style and creativity of translators in literary translation, reveal the norms and strategies of translation in certain social, historical, and cultural environments, and gradually verify the hypotheses made by translation theorists regarding the universal laws of translation [9-10]. Unlike parallel corpora, the establishment of a multilingual corpus requires the collection of two or more monolingual corpus texts, with only the original text and no translation included. Comparable corpora are the most valuable for translation research among these three categories.

3. The New Application of Corpus in Translation Teaching

3.1. Corpus and Translation Practice

Translation corpus, as a resource, can also greatly enhance translation teaching. It can be used to obtain rich teaching materials, acquire and confirm translation patterns and translation knowledge, and make trainees more professional. The rich, authentic, and comparative translation materials in the corpus serve as teaching materials to impart translation patterns and knowledge, enabling translation learners to receive more professional training. When the corpus includes several works by the same author, researchers can use the corpus to study the author's language style. Every writer has their own language habits and often prefers to repeatedly use certain words. These words often carry unique meanings, reflecting the writer's personal semantic rhythm. In translation practice, translators frequently encounter the need to distinguish between synonyms. Translators often resort to dictionaries or their own experience for this purpose. Although dictionaries provide explanations of meanings, they primarily focus on collocation and grammar, often lacking explanations and examples related to style. Consequently, it can still be challenging to differentiate between synonyms solely through dictionary use. Fortunately, the rapid development of corpus linguistics

and computer linguistics has provided rich and authentic corpora for synonym discrimination. In teaching, teachers can instruct students on how to independently use the corpus to search for words and help them observe a word's typical collocational behavior in context, enabling a better understanding of its semantic characteristics. Corpora can also provide us with various types of language information, such as language redundancy, lexical co-occurrence, standardization, syntactic patterns, and word characteristics. This information aids in interpreting the textual features of Chinese text and the translator's style. Teachers and students can depart from traditional didactic teaching methods and passive learning approaches by actively engaging with corpus technology in their translation teaching and learning. In this translation teaching mode, students take on the central role, shifting from the traditional teacher-centered approach to a learner-centered one, which enhances students' autonomy and fosters increased interaction between teachers and students. Following translation exercises, teachers and students can use real language application examples to validate the authenticity of the collocations used in translation exercises and analyze why a particular word was chosen for translation over its synonym or equivalent. This provides an effective foundation for translation practice and teaching. Throughout the process of translation teaching, based on students' actual proficiency levels, corpora can be employed to extract learning materials of varying difficulty levels. This approach allows students at different levels to independently observe and analyze the application of translation strategies in specific corpora and explore specific translation rules. It contributes to tailoring instruction to individual aptitudes and enhancing students' overall translation abilities and proficiency levels.

3.2. Corpus and Translation Universality

Since the 1980s, more and more translation theorists have conducted extensive and in-depth research on translated texts, believing that translated texts have their inherent characteristics, that is, they possess a certain universality. The current state of translation teaching is in a blind and chaotic condition. When compared to traditional translation teaching models, corpus-based translation teaching can reflect the characteristics of bilingual text digitization, diversified translation analysis, and scientific translation conclusions. The application of corpora in English Chinese translation teaching can fundamentally improve the teaching environment, help teachers solve many practical problems in teaching practice, promote the reform of translation teaching for English majors in newly established undergraduate colleges, make translation classrooms full of vitality, and thus improve the quality of translation teaching. Both English and Chinese have some special sentence patterns and structures, and textbooks cannot fully explain how to handle them in translation. Students can gain more emotional understanding from the rich sample sentences provided by the corpus. If the teacher can also summarize and explain the methods appropriately, they can achieve better teaching results. She and some other translation theorists have proposed that simplification, clarification, and standardization are inherent characteristics of translated texts. Many researchers have used corpora to verify the universality of translation and have already confirmed it on small-scale corpora. This article analyzes it from three aspects, as shown in Figure 1.

Choose suitable materials for students to do translation exercises, so as to strengthen students' understanding and mastery of translation theory and skills. This teaching method makes students lack the necessary context when learning translation, and they can only learn the translation of vocabulary and sentence structure in isolation, but their ability in paragraph and text translation is weak. On the basis of comparative analysis of English text and English translated text, we can find that almost all English translation texts have some characteristics, and some translation theorists classify these universals as simplification, clarity, and standardization. Translation corpus not only provides a large number of translation examples with objectivity, authenticity, and effectiveness for translation teaching, but the corpus is composed of electronic versions, which has the characteristics of autonomy and openness, making the teaching form more diversified and greatly promoting students' data-driven learning style. Although the application of self-built small corpus is limited, teachers can teach students how to collect corpus and build their own corpus. In this process, on the one hand, students can deeply feel the different usages of different words and the value of different

texts, cultivate their interest and enthusiasm for translation of a second foreign language, and at the same time improve their ability to translate and build their corpus.
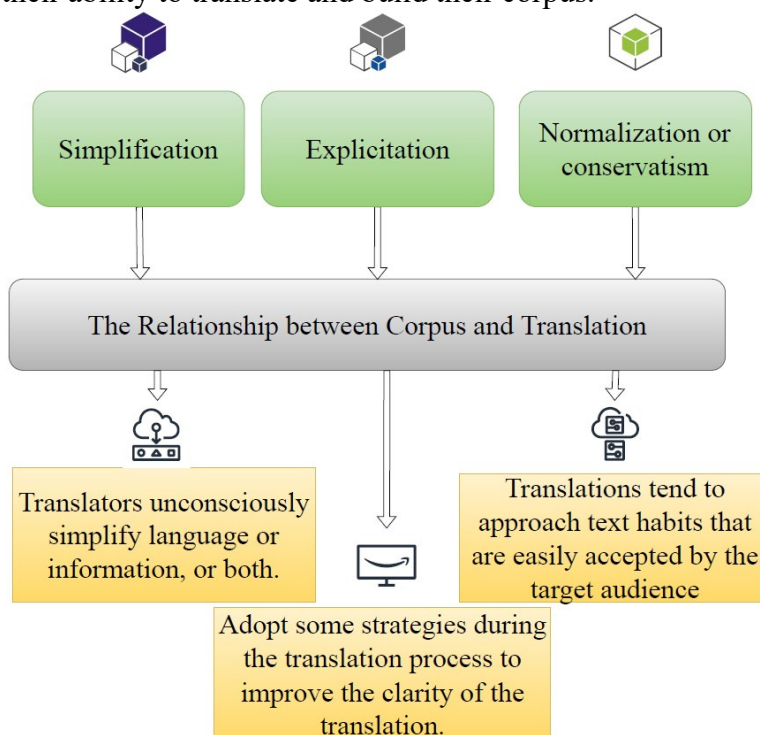

Figure 1 The Relationship between Corpus and Translation

4. Conclusions

With the development of corpus translation studies, scholars have begun to introduce corpora into translation teaching, leading to a transformation of traditional teaching methods. Firstly, due to the rich corpus and texts, which are real and live language resources that can be shared, this feature provides a large number of translation examples and contexts for modern translation teaching. This enables learners to obtain semantics in context and make their translations more flexible and authentic. Translation corpora provide new tools for translation research, expand the scope of translation research, and propose new research ideas. Translation theorists cannot study corpus data in isolation but must pay close attention to understanding the environment in which the text is located. The combination of corpora and descriptive translation methods has led scholars to produce new results in translation research that are more objective and authentic. In the field of teaching, the application of corpora has broken the shackles of traditional teaching, changed the teacher-centered teaching model, enriched teaching resources, and made translation training more professional. However, we should not let the immense superiority of corpora obscure our vision; corpora also have some limitations. In translation, especially in literary translation, comparative and qualitative analysis is often more important than quantitative analysis. Additionally, in the field of translation teaching, corpora can provide rich and complete translation examples and coherent contexts, offering an objective and persuasive basis for translation teaching.

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