

Parallel Corpus, Translation Studies and Translation Teaching

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Abstract. Based on the study of the literature review, this paper discusses the investigation of the parallel corpus to the universals of translation, the norm of the translation and the style of the translator as well as how the teaching and learning material can be obtained, translation model be testified using the corpus-based tools. Although this approach has shown a great potential in translation studies, its limitations should not be ignored.

Introduction

In recent decades, corpus and corpus linguistics are founded and developed gradually. The application of corpus has greatly broadened the horizon of applied linguistics research and provided a new philosophical thinking model for foreign language teaching research[1]. The parallel corpus which is suitable for translation studies not only provides a powerful tool for pure translation studies, but also as a resource greatly promotes the translation teaching.

Since the mid-1990s, Mona Baker, Gideon Toury, Miram Shlesinger, Kristen Malmkjaer and other translators have begun to describe the nature and characteristics of translation by using corpus. In 1995, the research center for translation of UMIST headed by Mona Baker founded the first comparable corpus—Translational English Corpus or TEC[2]. At present, many large-scale parallel corpora are established internationally. Many scholars in China's mainland, Taiwan and Hong Kong have begun to develop bilingual parallel corpora. Based on this parallel corpus, we can not only compare the similarities and differences between the two languages, but also carry out extensive translation teaching and research.

At present, the construction and research of bilingual corpus have become a hot research and development project both at home and abroad. This paper will discuss the positive effects of parallel corpus on the universals of translation, the norm of the translation and the style of the translator in translation research as well as how the teaching and learning material can be obtained and translation model be testified using the corpus-based tools so as to broaden the horizon of translation studies in China.

Parallel Corpus and Pure Translation Studies

Parallel Corpus-based Study of the Universals of Translation. Corpus-based research is conducive to the conversion of translation research from prescription to descriptiveness, because the acquisition of a large number of real corpora can stimulate the inductive exploration. Translation corpus has a guiding significance for the exploration of the universal law of translation and the exploration and verification of the universality of translation text[3]. One of the main trends of corpus-based translation studies is the study of linguistic features of translation, and the so-called universality is “the typical features of the translation but not the original text. This feature is not the result of the interaction of specific language systems[4].” Mona Baker and others propose using parallel corpus to study these features of translation and confirm the following hypothesis of the universality of translation: The first one is the simplification, which means that translators simplify the language and information unconsciously. The second one is the explication, which means that translators tend to make the content clearer in translation. The third one is the normalization, which

means that the translation tends to conform to the most common pattern or way in the target language. The fourth one is the leveling out & convergence, which means that the translation tends to be intermediate rather than to the periphery[5]. A corpus-based translation study has obvious advantages for the discussion of the universals of translation. It makes the intuitive and fuzzy form become clear and operable. It changes the small scale and artificial research and the research of limited language and text types into the large-scale, systematic, coherent and specific targeted research. What's more, it changes the scattered research and the research without persuasion into the coherent research and the research that can explain the trend[6]. The corpus plays an invaluable role in exploring the universal law of translation, analyzing the general stylistic features of texts and predicting the development trend.

Parallel Corpus-based Study of the Translation Norms. We can quickly and reliably analyze the translation norms by using corpus and computer. In the specific social, historical and cultural environment, translation will have some regular features, this is Mona Baker's translation norms or Gideon Toury's operational norms. In a certain period, the accumulation of the general characteristics of the translation language is the foundation of the construction of translation concept and translation norms. Recognizing these characteristics will help us better understand the translation norms in specific periods in translation studies[7]. For example, when Mona Baker analyzed the translation of the contemporary non-literary works, he found that the tolerance of Japanese text for foreign translation words is higher than French and Arabic. From it, we can see that the norms of translation behavior will be different because of the different social cultures[8]. Through corpus, we can study the translation strategies and language differences between female and male translators and also study that if certain language features and translation strategies are in some specific translation categories, such as novels, news or speech.

Parallel Corpus-based Study of the Style of Translator. Corpus also has a significant influence on the research of the style of translation and translator. The traditional style research can make a careful analysis for the style, however, the understanding of the occurrence frequency of various stylistic signs and other aspects is subjective. In order to avoid the subjective assumption, the research of the style must be supported by quantified actual corpus[6]. It is difficult to come up with a convincing conclusion that if certain expression form and language performance are the preference of translators and appear repeatedly, individually or accidentally by relying on the experience or the observation and introspection for individual example. It is also difficult to make the quantitative research for the literary style of full-length translation by relying on traditional method. The translation corpus is stored in the form of electronic text. Through the automatic labeling and processing of computer software, the multidimensional and multifaceted comparison and research of the lexical density, sentence length, word frequency, collocation mode and specific word frequency can be made conveniently and quickly, so as to reveal the translator's unique language habits, the language industry preference, the usage of special syntactic structure and punctuation, etc. Mona Baker has made a comparative study of the translation styles of famous English translators Bush and Clark by corpus. The original text which is translated by Bush comes from three writers whose languages belongs to different variants of Spanish. The genre includes novel and biography. The original text which is translated by Clark comes from two Arab writers with different styles. Through the analysis of the word frequency, average sentence length, stylistic variation and the use characteristics and use mode of various forms of the word "say", Mona Baker convincingly proved the existence of "the translator's brand"[9].

Parallel Corpus and Translation Teaching

Co-occurrence Dynamic Context by Using Index Software. The founder of the structural linguistics Saussure divided the words into syntagmatic relation and paradigmatic relation. The corpus indexing can provide contextual relations for us. Researchers can specify a search term as the center to make the syntagmatic and paradigmatic comparative analysis for the adjacent left and right words and analyze their language ecology, so as to sum up the grammar and discourse function of this word[10]. In teaching, teachers can teach students how to use corpus retrieval to

select words and help students to observe the typical collocation behavior of certain word in context so as to know the semantic features of this word in context. After doing translation practice, teachers and students can use real language application examples to verify whether the used collocation is authentic in translation practice and can analyze that why use a word collocation instead of its synonyms. For example, we retrieve the collocation relation of VALID in Brown Corpus by using Web concordancer. The result is Concordances for VALID=22, that is that we can get 22 collocation relations with the word “valid”. The collocation rules of this word in corpus become the language ecology of this word so as to provide the effective basis for translation practice and translation teaching.

Viewing and Emulating Translation and Improving Bilingual Conversion Ability by Using the Original Text and Corresponding Translation Provided by Corpus. Bilingual parallel corpus is a reference tool and a working platform for translation teaching. Taking Chinese-English parallel corpus created by the Chinese Foreign Language Education Research Center of Beijing Foreign Studies University as an example, with the help of retrieval software, this corpus can provide the following things as the reference. The first one is the example of the abundant and various bilingual inter-translation of a certain word and phrase. The second one is the example of the common bilingual inter-translation with a special structure. The third one is the rich multi-translation material which can be extracted randomly[11].

Taking the common structure of bilingual inter-translation retrieval as an example, there are some special patterns and structures in English and Chinese and textbooks can't clearly tell us how to deal with them. But students can get more perceptual knowledge from rich example sentences provided by corpus. For example, for the “so...that” structure, textbooks usually give the corresponding translation “Ru Ci...Yi Zhi” and moreover this correspondence is deeply ingrained in the minds of teachers and students. Using the parallel corpus of English and Chinese, the “so...that” structure and its corresponding Chinese structure are described and analyzed. The statistical analysis results show that: The first one is that the main corresponding form of “so...that” is not the “Ru Ci...Yi Zhi” and other similar structures but the zero corresponding. The second one is that there are many corresponding forms of “so...that” in Chinese translation but there are no fixed structures to correspond with “so...that” in Chinese text. The third one is that in translation, compared with literary texts, the non literary texts tend to the structural correspondence[12]. In translation teaching, students make the inter-translation retrieval for the bilingual corpus and feel the inter-translation context. After the perceptual knowledge of students to the structure of translation is enhanced, they can get a good teaching effect with teachers' proper induction and explanation.

The parallel corpus can also provide a text with multiple translations. With the parallel corpus platform and tools, translation teachers can store different versions of translation that can be used at any time for comparative study. When we just read a translation, we can't find its characteristics, but when we compare many versions we may discover new things so as to inspire and help students. Moreover, the corpus retrieval tool can do statistics quickly and accurately and provide a reliable statistical description for teaching practice. For example, we can use the type / token ratio to observe the richness of words of different translations: Based on the corpus of similar size, the larger the numerical value of type/token ratio and average word length, the richer the vocabulary, and the greater the complexity of the vocabulary[1].

Self-built Small Corpus for Translation Teaching. It is not the “Arabian Nights” for translation teachers to build small corpus by themselves. The self-built person can build a parallel corpus which is applied to translation teaching and constantly expand and develop it in a certain period as long as they have some basic computer knowledge, such as text editing, format conversion, internal code conversion, etc and master the positioning retrieval software[13] which manages the retrieval corpus, such as Concordance, WordSmith, etc, and the software that is suitable for teaching display. Only when the teacher sets up the positive thought and tries to prove the corpus in the teaching, can the translation teaching be improved. Some people even regard

bilingual parallel corpus as an “interpreter training workshop” to enhance the students’ ability to understand the original text and translate them in a more fluent target language [11].

Conclusion

The translation corpus provides a new tool for translation studies, expands the research scope of translation and provides the data of quantitative analysis and the support of quantification for translation studies based on qualitative research. This point has been confirmed in the research of the universality of translation based on corpus. In addition, in the field of translation teaching, corpus can provide abundant and complete translation examples and coherent contexts, which provides an objective and convincing basis for translation teaching.

Absolutely, there are some problems in corpus translation research and its application. Kristen Malmkjaer thought that the use of corpus makes the translation theorists pay more attention to the universality of the translation and ignore the difficult problems in translation, or take the difficult problems in translation as the secondary problems[14]. The corpus-based translation research also has its own shortcomings, which mainly embody in the obvious positivism and scientism tendency as well as the bottom-up approach[15]. Therefore, whatever the pure translation research or applied translation studies, translation researchers should be alert to the empty and unnecessary quantitative research and avoid the pure pursuit of science.

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