

## Application of Corpus in Translation Teaching

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**Abstract.** Corpus plays an important role in translation teaching. In this paper, the author takes English-Chinese translation teaching as an example, explores the value of corpus in translation teaching and discusses the feasible method of combining corpus with translation teaching.

### Introduction

In linguistics, the term “corpus” refers to a large amount of text. Written or spoken language is collated and given a format and markup so that to form a corpus. From the date of its birth, corpus is widely used in language research and language teaching. In 1993, Baker, in *Corpus Linguistics and Translation Studies: Implications and Applications*, for the first time, combined the corpus with translation studies and proposed the concept of Corpus Translation Studies. In his view, Corpus Translation Study is a kind of research which based on corpus, using statistical methods so that to analyze the nature of translation activities and translation process systematically. In addition, Professor Baker has established the world's first English translation corpus, proposed the use of parallel corpus, comparable corpus and multilingual corpus to study the language features and text style. No matter what kind of translation corpus, the purpose of its creation can be summarized into two: translation studies and translation teaching. At present, corpus-based translation studies have made some progress. In contrast, the study which combines corpus and translation teaching is still inadequate. In 1997, Bernardini put forward the importance of corpus in cultivating professional interpreters and translators. In recent years, the application of corpus in translation teaching has aroused great interest of researchers. Professor Wang Kefei (2004,2007) has repeatedly written articles to explain the role of parallel corpus in translation teaching and to explore the application of principles, teaching methods and other important issues. In this paper, the author will use English-Chinese translation teaching as an example to explore the application of corpus in translation teaching.

### The Role of Corpus in Translation Teaching

Parallel corpus contains some kind of language text and its corresponding translation so that to achieve synchronous translation. Parallel corpus can be bilingual or multilingual, either unidirectional or bidirectional. Comparable corpus collects text in the same language, including text written directly in this language and translated into this language, but the two types of corpus must be the same subject, or the same genre. Both corpora can improve our language consciousness and cultural consciousness in the process of translation, which is of great significance to translation teaching. As Bernardini (1997) said, the traditional translation teaching should be combined with the corpus so as to cultivate students’ “translation consciousness”, “reflection consciousness” and “adaptability”, these three main skills make professional translators differ from the professional translation lovers.

### **The Value of Parallel Corpus in Translation Teaching.**

Since the nineties of the twentieth century, parallel corpus has been the focus of corpus translation studies. Parallel corpus has important value in translation teaching of English - Chinese translation. Based on the parallel corpus, students can find the difference between the linguistic features and stylistic features such as the length of sentences and the degree of equivalence between English and Chinese translations. And it has a more intuitive understanding of the translator's translation strategy.

Firstly, the parallel corpus provides a context for students' correct understanding and expression of semantics. Unlike the static interpretation of the dictionary, the parallel corpus provides context for semantic understanding. We know that the meaning of the same English word in different contexts is sometimes very different. According to a great number of corpus resources, parallel corpus provides a large number of real contexts which can help students to improve the context consciousness and understand the meaning of words more accurately. In addition, the vast majority of English and Chinese words are not one by one, and there will be a "word translation" phenomenon, therefore, in the English translation, there are often blunt or even wrong translation. According to a parallel corpus and efficient search tool, students can quickly search for a variety of possible expressions of English words in Chinese and rely on context to choose the most authentic and most appropriate translations.

Secondly, the parallel corpus is conducive to the translation strategy of learning and discussion. The translation in parallel corpus is often rigorously screened and the quality of the translation is guaranteed. Students can find and summarize other people's translation strategies and techniques by studying the comparison of the original text and the translation, so as to improve their own translation level.

### **The Value of Comparable Corpus in Translation Teaching.**

Although parallel corpus plays an important role in English-Chinese translation, parallel corpus has great limitations in Chinese-English translation practice. First of all, in accordance with international practice, professional translation generally takes the mother tongue as the translation work. At present, the Chinese bear most of the translation tasks from Chinese to English. Therefore, many Chinese-English translation will inevitably appear many kinds of mistakes. As we all know, translation is not a simple correspondence between words and words. The translator will inevitably have an improper translation due to lack of language knowledge and cultural background, or the influence by mother tongue or definite thinking. For example: "Chinglish" is the common Chinese translation problem. Comparable corpus can provide better reference and help in Chinese-English translation. The corpus is actually composed of two corpus. The corpus collects text in the same language, including text written directly in this language and translated into this language, but the two corpus must belong to the same subject, or the same genre. First of all, the corpus can provide us with a large number of original English text, so that we can analyze the language of a particular genre of English language features and stylistic features, such as word frequency, sentence length, collocation and so on. In the translation of the related genre of the article, these language features undoubtedly have important guiding significance during the translation process. Secondly, according to the search tool of comparable corpus, we can quantitatively analyze the two types of corpus. Through comparative analysis, we can find the difference between the original text and the language of translation, and these differences are the main inappropriate mistakes, and often easy to be overlooked. This analysis can help us to avoid similar mistakes in the future translations.

### **The Use of Corpus in Translation Teaching**

Through the above analysis, we can easily find that both parallel corpus and comparable corpus have important value in English-Chinese translation teaching. The former is mainly applied to the teaching of English-Chinese translation, the latter plays an important role in the teaching of

Chinese-English translation. In short, the application of corpus in translation teaching can be divided into two aspects: the innovation of teaching design and the improvement of traditional teaching design.

Combining with the translation corpus, we can firstly reform the teaching design of translation courses. Traditional translation courses generally revolve around different topics and organize words from words to sentences and to discourse. Qin Hongwu and Wang Kefei (2007) pointed out that the translation courses with translation corpus can be organized according to the "frequency" principle. Teachers can use corpus to retrieve the common translation strategies and translation skills of a language and then explain them from high frequency to low frequency. In that way, students can first master the common translation skills and then further explore the difficult translation skills with low frequency. In addition, the traditional translation of teaching links can also be combined with translation corpus so that to improve itself.

Firstly, the translation corpus is combined with material selection. Translation corpus is rich in resources and teachers can choose corpus as a translation material freely according to the teaching plan. Many corpora, especially comparable corpus, are built around a theme or a genre, such as: National Publications Translation Corpus. In addition, the parallel corpus provides text and its equivalent translations, which largely saves time and effort for teachers to select material.

Secondly, the translation corpus is combined with the text analysis. Using translation corpus, parallel text analysis can be done to prepare for translation. Xi'an University of Foreign Studies Graduate School had tried to introduce parallel text reading and analysis into the translation classroom. Practice has proved that by comparing the parallel text, students can have a better grasp of the terminology, a more in-depth understanding of the stylistic features of a genre, and understand the differences between English and Chinese language, so as to prepare for learning translation strategies and translation skills.

Thirdly, the translation corpus is combined with classroom lectures. Traditional translation teaching mainly relies on teacher's subjective analysis and experience imparting, but corpus-based translation teaching can be data-oriented. We can firstly quantify the corpus, and then make out the corresponding genre translation standards which based on the data, such as the average sentence length, the frequency of specific words and so on. For example, Baker (1995), through a quantitative analysis, pointed out that the average sentence length of the Latin translation of Goethe's poems should be 48 words in order to reflect the deviation of his poetry from ordinary German. Such standards are undoubtedly more objective, scientific and concrete. We can see that relying on the translation corpus to explain the translation strategies and techniques can greatly improve the objectivity and efficiency of translation teaching.

## Conclusion

Parallel corpus and comparable corpus can play a very important role in translation teaching. Using translation corpus, we can update the idea of translation teaching, and can also improve the traditional teaching methods so that translation teaching can become more scientific, more objective and more efficient.

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