Specialized Translation Teaching Strategies: A Corpus-Based Approach

Yingying Ding

Abstract—This study presents a methodology of specialized translation with the objective of helping teachers to improve the strategies in teaching translation. In order to allow students to acquire skills to translate specialized texts, they need to become familiar with the semantic and syntactic features of source texts and target texts. The aim of our study is to use a corpus-based approach in the teaching of specialized translation between Chinese and Italian. This study proposes to construct a specialized Chinese - Italian comparable corpus that consists of 50 economic contracts from the domain of food. With the help of AntConc, we propose to compile a comparable corpus in for translation teaching purposes. This paper attempts to provide insight into how teachers could benefit from comparable corpus in the teaching of specialized translation from Italian into Chinese and through some examples of passive sentences how students could learn to apply different strategies for translating appropriately the voice.

Keywords—Corpus-based approach, translation teaching, specialized translation.

I. INTRODUCTION

CORPUS linguistics is seen as the study of linguistic phenomena through large collections of texts. In recent years, the corpus linguistics and its applications present an important area in translation studies. In 1993 Mona Baker [2] introduced the term Corpus-based Translation Studies, which refers to the study of the process and product of translation through corpora. According to [8], this field of research has the following characteristics. Firstly, the research is based on the analysis of authentic texts. Secondly, this research offers analytical perspectives both in quantitative and qualitative terms so that statistical data can be obtained concerning lexical, syntactic and stylistic characteristics. Finally, this methodology can be applied through linguistic and cultural approaches in translation studies. The primary aim of this work is to compile a small specialized corpus of contracts in the field of food.

This paper is divided into five parts. After a brief introduction on the discipline of Corpus-based Translation Studies, we review the state of the art of the didactic value of corpora in translation teaching. Then a description of the corpus design and compilation will be given, and finally after the analysis of the active and passive sentences some possible applications of corpus in specialized translation teaching will be discussed.

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II. CORPUS TYPOLOGY IN CORPUS-BASED TRANSLATION STUDIES

Depending on the type of task to be performed, different types of corpora may be classified. Generally, corpora can be applied to translation studies include parallel corpus and comparable corpus as in [9]. A parallel corpus, as [12] suggests, includes the texts of the source language with their translations. Parallel corpora can be unidirectional, containing original texts in language A (e.g. Italian) and relative translations in target language B (e.g. Chinese), or bidirectional, containing original texts in two languages A and B (e.g. Italian and Chinese) and corresponding translations in the same two languages (e.g. from Italian to Chinese and from Chinese to Italian). Parallel corpora can be applied in translation to identify linguistic equivalents, in the study of translation strategies adopted by translators and in the development of automatic translation systems [12].

A comparable corpus is divided into comparable bilingual corpora and comparable monolingual corpora. The first is defined as a set of original texts in language A and in language B, containing texts with similar content, domain or communication function; the second one consists of original texts in language A and translation in the same language. The comparable corpora have been used mainly for terminology and assisted translation. They can also provide references to the language in its natural context and thus allow translation students and translators to produce high quality target texts [13].

III. CORPORA IN TRANSLATION TEACHING

Traditionally, in translation classes, the teacher plays a central role; s/he should need to be familiar with translating different texts types and genres and to be prepared to comment on student's translation. On the other hand, the students have to acquire language skills and translation ability to “reproduce what is conveyed in the source text by using appropriate translation skills” [7].

For a long time, the translation teaching has been carried out mainly based on the teacher’s experience. However, the use of corpora in translation teaching has attracted a growing interest in the last twenty years.

Bernardini [3] proposes to use large corpus in the teaching activity which is helpful to the development of students’ professional skills such as "awareness, reflection and reaction". Aston [1] shows the main benefits deriving from the use of corpora in terms of training and education, as corpora provide a tool to facilitate the translation process, giving translators the opportunity to expand their own linguistic and
The tool used for this study is SegmentAnt (Version 1.1.3), created by Laurence Anthony to segment Japanese and Chinese, which can be downloaded free from the web [20].
SegmentAnt was designed on the basis of various Chinese segmentation tools such as Jieba, PyNLPIR, Tinysegmenter, and Smallseg. With this tool you can select a text or a series of texts (UTF-8 encoded) and segment them by separating words. Here are two examples of segmented text and non-segmented text (see Figs. 1 and 2).

As we have seen, the word segmentation is a necessary step for analyze Chinese texts. In the section that follows we will explore some features of passive constructions in Italian and Chinese on the basis of comparable corpus data.

V. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS: ACTIVE AND PASSIVE SENTENCES

The contract text is a formal written agreement, which creates legal obligations between two or more parties. When we translate contracts, since Chinese and Italian belong to two different language families and present many differences in their grammar and discourse structure, in order to translate active and passive sentences, further consideration of the strategies and techniques will also be required.

A. Passives in Italian

The passive in Italian is generally marked by the auxiliary essere ‘be’ followed by a past participle (see example 1). The structure ‘essere + past particle’ can be considered as the norm for Italian passive, which focuses on the action or on the person/thing affected. However, essere can also be replaced by other auxiliary such as venire ‘come’ and andare ‘go’ (see examples 2 and 3).\(^1\) In the example 2, the passive structure is formed with venire and the past participate. This is used only in a more formal register and tends to express the idea that a regular action is involved. In the example 3, the structure andare is followed immediately by the past participle, in which case it has a prescriptive sense, indicating how things should be done.

(1) I prezzi dei prodotti forniti sono indicati nel listino allegato[…].

‘The prices of the products supplied are indicated in the attached price list’.

(2) Il contratto viene eseguito secondo le seguenti modalità.

‘The contract is executed according to the following procedures’.

(3) […] va considerato non essenziale per la Fornitrice.

‘it should be considered not essential for the Supplier’.

Comparing the passive forms in the contract contest, the frequencies are given in Table I.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE I</th>
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<tr>
<td>FREQUENCIES OF PASSIVES IN CORPUS IT</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>217</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It can be seen from Table I that essere passives are predominantly more frequent than venire passives and andare passives, especially the last one, which is generally used in colloquial speech. Since the passive voice is often used to highlight the patient and its consequences, to evaluate this hypothesis we examined all passive sentences (279 instances). The results are given in Table II.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>TABLE II</th>
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<tr>
<td>SEMANTIC PROPERTIES OF PASSIVES</td>
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<tr>
<td>Passive type</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essere passive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venire passive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andare passive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From Table II, it is clear that the distribution of these passive constructions is grouped into three categories. We note that the passive sentences are more frequently neutral in this genre. The portions of essere passives and venire passives are very similar. It is also important to note that the distribution of semantic properties is possibly related to the contract texts, which are supposed to be precise, clear and neutral. In the next section, we will analyze the passive constructions in Chinese and compare them with Italian passives.

B. Passives in Chinese

Passive structures in Chinese are often marked by the passive particles, such as bei, shou and you, as shown in (4), (5) and (6).

|\(^4\)|| 被 拘 留 部 長 处 罚 |
|‘Punished by law enforcement authorities’|
|\(^5\)|| 不 可 抗 力 影 响 的 一 方 |
|‘the Party affected by force majeure event’|
|\(^6\)|| 由 双 方 代 表 簽 字 |
|‘Signed by both parties’|

Table III gives the frequencies of passive constructions with three different markers in the Chinese corpus. It can be seen that the construction with you appears to be the most frequent in our data. Although the sentence with bei is the most commonly used in Chinese, however, the statistics suggest that in terms of this specific genre, the frequency of passive markers varies greatly. Furthermore, the original meaning of the participle bei is ‘suffer’, consequently, when we use it, the situation described by the bei construction is often interpreted negatively, same as shou. Reference [10] points out, however, that although the use of the passive constructions to express a

\(^1\) Another way of expressing the passive is the construction with si, especially in the more colloquial register. When the verb used is an impersonal si construction has an expressed subject, it can express a passive meaning. For example, it is said that In quel negozio si vendono delle belle scarpe ‘they sell some nice shoes in that store’ is equivalent to In quel negozio sono vendute delle belle scarpe ‘some nice shoes are sold in that store’ [6]. The impersonal sentences in Italian are so similar with the si passive construction. Considering this feature, it cannot be studied efficiently using a corpus-based approach, so we will not include such type of passive voice in this study.
negative evaluation is still common, they have spread to neutral contexts as well, especially in written Chinese.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Passive type</th>
<th>Negative (%)</th>
<th>Positive (%)</th>
<th>Neutral (%)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bei</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>——</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shou</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>——</td>
<td>——</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>you</td>
<td>40.2%</td>
<td>——</td>
<td>59.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table IV shows the distribution of passive markers across three meaning categories. We can note that Chinese passives usually have negative semantic property. The passives marked by bei and shou are always negative because of their original meaning. In relation to you, it can be seen that it shows a less percent of negative property, because you does not have an inflicting meaning. Considering these observations, the passive with you can be used more frequently than bei and shou for contract texts.

VI. CONCLUSION

In this study we have attempted to show how comparable corpora can be used to investigate passive voice of translation. We started out by reviewing the existing literature on corpus-based translation studies, especially on translation teaching. We described the creation of a small comparable corpus for the specialized translation teaching. In our analysis of passive constructions in Italian and Chinese from a contrastive perspective based on the comparable corpus, we noted that there are some differences in terms of frequencies and semantic properties. These differences are primarily associated with the functions of passive markers and the genre involved in this study. Given the small size of the comparable corpus complied for this paper, it is difficult to provide an abundance of empirical evidence. However, it is hoped that comparable corpora could offer a useful tool for specialized translation teaching.

REFERENCES

[18] http://www.laureenanthony.net/software/antconc/ Accessed on 10/03/2018