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Since the late 1980s, corpus tools have been used in translation studies to analyze the linguistic patterns of source and target texts in terms of keywords, collocation, colligation, semantic prosody and semantic preference. Mona Baker’s 1993 essay ‘Corpus Linguistics and Translation Studies: Implications and Applications’ marks the turning point of corpus-informed translation studies (CTS), i.e. converting from a research direction to a fledging discipline. In the years that have followed, a series of new hypotheses have been put forward, e.g. with respect to translation universals or the general tendency of translationese. As a subfield of translation studies, CTS means more than describing translation quantitatively; it formulates new hypotheses (e.g. translation universals), proposes new research methods (e.g. translator style) and develops new tools (e.g. computer-assisted translator training).

Dai Guangrong’s *Hybridity in Translated Chinese: A Corpus Analytical Framework* employs the lens of corpus linguistics to shed new light on the hybrid characteristics of translated Chinese across lexical, syntactic and discursive levels. The author compares translated Chinese texts with the native ones, explicates the strangeness of translationese through qualitative and quantitative analysis, and arrives at conclusions that differ from the general translation universals. All these efforts are conducive to the development of CTS and provide insights into non-Eurocentric translatology.

The introduction starts with a definition of ‘hybridity in translated language’ before asking the following questions: ‘What are the linguistic features of hybridity in translated Chinese? Are there any common features of hybridity in different genres of translated Chinese? How can the patterns of hybridisation be compared across the diachronic corpora?’ (p. 4). The methodology and potential contributions are also presented. Two crucial perspectives of hybridity are highlighted in this volume: intergeneric and diachronic. Chapter 2 reviews the previous (pre-corpus) studies, which were confined to conceptual or theoretical definitions without offering an empirically grounded description. Beset by methodological limitations (e.g. small sample size, heterogenous genres), they often reached contradictory conclusions. Accordingly, the pre-corpus studies attributed the hybridity in translation to multifarious sources (e.g. idiosyncrasies of translators, postcolonial influence, etc.). Dai categorizes linguistic hybridity as either interlingual or intralingual with the assistance of parallel corpora and comparable corpora, respectively. (As an alternative to Dai’s corpus-based approach, the generic hybridity in translated Chinese could also be empirically explored by a corpus-driven multidimensional analysis [see Ji, 2017].)

Methodologically, Chapter 3 uses the distinction between S-universals (the universal difference between translations and source texts) and T-universals (the universal difference between translations and the native non-translation texts) (Chesterman, 2004) to categorize hybridity as S-oriented or T-oriented. The continuum of translation norms covers the properties of ‘normalization’ and source language ‘shining through’. The hybridization in Dai’s spectrum, involving weakened characteristics in terms of frequency and variation, can be located anywhere between the typical patterns of the source language (SL) and those of the target language (TL) (p. 30). Yet, regrettably, the analysis of translation norms in this chapter does not account for the empirical findings from Chapters 7 to 11. The norms discussed in this
volume are mainly confined to linguistic norms, with scarce attention to the social cultural
dimensions.
Translation is an important venue for language contact, and a mirror of social changes. Bor-
rowing from previous studies by grammarians and Sinologists, Chapter 4 offers a brief review
of the hybridity of Anglicized Chinese, particularly since the May Fourth Movement in 1919. It
addresses three new social themes: literary revolution, democracy and science. This historical
background produces substantial hybridized Chinese words because Mandarin was under-
going a shift from ˇwen yan ˇwen (classical Chinese) to ˇbai huˇa ˇwen (modern Chinese). If we
reexamine the social context in 1919 through the lens of polysystem theory, we see that the
Chinese language at that time was in the periphery of macro-polysystems. Many translators
proposed translation as a form of the country’s salvation. In this sense, Anglicized Chinese
was probably an efficient and effective way to drive Chinese language and culture toward
the center of macro-polysystems. As suggested by polysystem theory, relations between
various subsystems are liable to change over time. The hybridity in translation will display
varying degrees of Anglicization in different historical phases. Hence, it is a sensible act to
use diachronic corpora in Dai’s research. It would be an asset for his hybridization research
if he could cross-reference his findings with polysystems.
Chapter 5 introduces the methodology applied throughout the book. Dai assumes that any
hybrid characteristic of a translated text will occur systematically in a wide range of different
translations (p. 55). The corpus design is guided by a number of criteria, including ‘a size suffi-
cient to allow generalizable statements, balance as well as comparability across languages’
(Neumann & Hansen-Schirra, 2012, p. 25). Therefore, the corpus varieties in this study are
composed of parallel corpora, comparable corpora, general corpora, specialized corpora and
synchronic and diachronic corpora. As a result of this approach, comparisons of multi-per-
spectives and dimensions can satisfy the need for intergeneric and diachronic interpretation
on the hybridity of the Chinese language. Methodologically, this chapter reflects the value
of triangulation in translation studies. The applied tool or theory can be metaphorically com-
pared to a beacon casting light on the darkness of research questions. However, the corner
under the beacon would still be in darkness if not lighted by another beacon.
Chapter 6 registers a set of grammatical norms of native Chinese language, including non-
inflectional morphology, aspect prominence, monosyllabism and paratactic syntax. These
characteristics allow us to differentiate translated Chinese from nontranslated Chinese. In
the empirical research, the log-likelihood test is employed to examine whether there is a stat-
istical significance between native Chinese and translated Chinese in terms of phonetic, lexical,
grammatical and discourse levels. In contrast to the translation universal studies (e.g. Baker,
1993), Dai goes beyond the confines of general tendency and takes account of the generic
factors through a detailed exploration of fiction and academic discourses.
Chapters 7 to 11 are reserved for case studies, including data retrieval, data analysis and
investigation of specific hybridity features in translated Chinese. Chapter 7 investigates the
lexical features of hybridity in translated Chinese, focusing on the morphological increase in
translated Chinese and analyzing some suffixes, i.e. ‘zhèng’ (症, English: disease) and ‘zhì’
(制, English: system). The results indicate that the tendency of inflectional affixes of translated
Chinese is likely to be constrained by the source language. Chapter 8 explores classifier con-
structions through evidence from comparable and parallel corpora. The concordance results
in native and translated Chinese are dissected in detail, with the ‘yi + classifier’ (i.e. 一个,
English: a/one + classifier) construction as a case study. The author contends that it is a rep-
resentation of hybridity in translated Chinese marked by the typical grammatical construc-
tions like ‘Yi + ge + countable noun’, ‘Yi + ge + abstract noun’, ‘Yi + ge + verb/adjective’
and ‘Yi + ge + complex phrases’. Chapter 9 analyzes the hybridity features of light verb
constructions ‘进行’ (jin xíng) in translated Chinese. Based on evidence obtained from the parallel corpus, Dai describes the constructions in translated Chinese and non-translated Chinese and concludes that translated Chinese uses more light verbs compared to nontranslated Chinese. Chapter 10 conducts a detailed investigation on the syntactic hybridity characteristics of ‘shi’ (是) sentence structures in translated Chinese. Chapter 11 presents two more hybrid features in translated Chinese, i.e. nominalization and cohesive features. It investigates the main methods of normalization, namely adding ‘de’ (的), ‘zhī’ (之) and ‘zhě’ (者), and also discusses some normalization structures in translated Chinese. The last chapter outlines the conclusion and expectations of the research.

In short, this volume is likely to stimulate interest in translation studies, comparative linguistics and language contact. Given that hybridity in translation is not confined to Chinese but widely exists in other (semi-) peripheral languages, this volume can serve as a reference model for other languages, too, to unearth hybridized linguistic patterns.

References


