

Original Paper

Analysis of Translation Errors in English-Chinese Translation Practice

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Abstract

This paper adopts the error score method to study the English-Chinese translation quality of MTI English translation majors from five dimensions: fidelity, fluency, terminology translation, style and cultural acceptance, taking the Chinese translation practice texts of students majoring in MTI English translation as the research object. The results show that students are more likely to make mistakes in terms of fluency and terminology when translating from Chinese to English, and students have difficulties in conveying the style of the original text when translating from Chinese to English. The results propose some methods of avoiding translation errors and improving the quality of translation teaching.

Keywords

Translation quality assessment, Translation teaching, Error analysis

1. Introduction

Language learner error has always been an important research topic in the field of second language acquisition error analysis, which emerged in the 1940s, mainly focuses on the stages, causes and types of errors, but lacks complete method and theoretical framework to explain the process of second language acquisition. Since the late 1960s, error analysis theory has begun to recognize that it is very normal and natural to make mistakes in the second language acquisition process. Corder (1967) believes that it is the mistakes students make in the second language acquisition that further proves that learners use a clear language system in each stage of their language acquisition. It was not until the rise of error analysis research in the 1970s that teachers could not only find a breakthrough in language teaching based on error analysis theory, but also get feedback from learners' mistakes. Students' language errors are factual empirical data rather than teachers' personal theoretical speculation. By

collecting a large amount of students' error data, we can have a deeper understanding of learners' second language acquisition process (Schachter Celce-Murcia, 1977). Studying students' translation errors can inform us how to teach students to improve their translation skills, and this process can help inspire translation teachers to design appropriate courses and assessment methods to meet students' needs (Brown, 2007). Based on the corpus data, teachers can provide more constructive, specific and objective feedback to students.

In this study, data and corpus were obtained from the Chinese-English and English-Chinese translation assignments in a translation class of a university in Hubei Province, and translation errors in the corpus were identified, classified into systematic types, explained the causes of these types of errors, and finally evaluated as a basis for improving teaching. This study explores the process of students' translation from the perspective of translation errors, aiming to improve the effectiveness of translation teaching and propose a more effective evaluation method, aiming to provide a reference for the translation teaching of MTI English translation major.

2. Research Design

This study focuses on qualitative analysis. By analyzing students' translation errors, it explores the causes of translation errors and the process of translation thinking. After collecting a large number of students' translation works and identifying the corpus of translation errors, it sorts out the types of errors from a large number of translation errors in an inductive way, and finally puts forward teaching countermeasures to deal with similar errors.

2.1 Subject

The subjects of this study were 32 MTI students from a local polytechnic college.

2.2 Source Text

The author counted and analyzed the translation errors of students' homework, and the source texts covered four different fields: medicine, energy, culture and art, and machinery industry. This section, EC1, is taken from an introduction to vitamins and focuses more on translation skills. It is based on VOA's Medical Report column, which talks about medical knowledge and health. The Chinese-English translation number is CE1, and the introduction to the novel coronavirus epidemic is selected. The original text can better reflect the linguistic characteristics and cultural heritage of the Chinese language, and the students' ability to convert medical terms is examined. The number EC2 for Materials Field translation comes from an article on science and technology in *The Economist*. It involves many specialized words and tests students' ability to translate terms. The Chinese-English translation number CE2 is selected from the white paper "China's Energy Development in the New Era", and the translation mode of political and economic articles; The Chinese-Chinese-English Translation of Culture and Art is numbered CE3, which involves the culture, history, craft and aesthetic concepts of Chinese minority batik, focusing on students' understanding of the cultural meaning contained in the source text and their ability to accurately express the language. The code EC3 is

selected from Art of the Renaissance, which requires the translator to use a certain degree of spatial imagination and translation skills. The translation of mechanical articles into English is numbered EC4, and the introduction to mechanical design and processing technology is selected. The Chinese-English translation number CE4 selects an introduction to high-speed milling, with more emphasis on the training of translation skills.

2.3 Research Steps

Based on the translation assignments submitted by students, this paper analyzes the types and frequency of errors, and focuses on the error analysis of the translation quality of MTI students from five dimensions: fidelity, fluency, terminology translation, style and cultural acceptance, aiming to help students improve their ability to avoid translation errors and help teachers innovate teaching methods. The following are the specific research steps:

1. Assign translation work. Thirty-two MTI English translation students are required to complete the translation of eight source texts within a specified time, including four translations from Chinese to English and four from Chinese to English.
2. A total of 128 translations were collected.
3. Calculate an error value. The author made mistakes in labeling students' translated texts, and made a revision based on Liao's classification of translation errors (Yan, Wang, Liu, & Li, 2019). The author counted and analyzed students' translation errors from the perspectives of fidelity, fluency, terminology translation, style and cultural acceptance. Classify and code students' translation errors: Fidelity problems include L1: missed translation, over-translation, over-translation, including redundant words and unnecessary repetition. L2: misunderstanding the original text; The fluency problem is reflected in F1: grammatical errors, unsyntactic translation structures. F2: Wrong collocation, poor expression, improper choice of words; The term translation problem in this paper refers to the mistranslation of terms without being aware of them or the inaccurate translation of professional terms. The code is P1. Style problem refers to the translation style is very different from the source text style, the code is S1; Cultural acceptance problem refers to that the culture conveyed by the translation is not accepted by the readers, and the code is C1.

3. Research Results

3.1 Overall Translation Quality

3.1.1 The General Situation of Translation Errors

According to the statistical results of various errors, the frequency of fidelity problems in Chinese-English translation operations is 115 times, of which L1 (missing translation, over-translation, re-translation, including redundant words and unnecessary repetition): 59 times, L2 (misunderstanding of the original text): 56 times, the frequency of errors in fluency problem was 295 times, of which F1 (grammatical errors, translation structure unsyntactic) was 108 times, F2 (collocation errors, poor expression, improper word selection) was 187 times, the frequency of errors in term translation was 77

times, and other problems occurred 5 times in total. The frequency of fidelity problems in the operation is 96 times, of which L1:19 times, L2:77 times, fluency problem error frequency is 72 times, of which F1:8 times, F2:64 times, term translation problem error frequency is 57 times, S1 (style problem refers to the translation style is far from the style of the source text): 22 times, cultural acceptance problem C1 (translated culture cannot be accepted by readers): 19 times.

The above data is further analyzed according to the total frequency of errors in Chinese-English translation and English-Chinese translation according to each error type, and the results are shown in Figure 1.

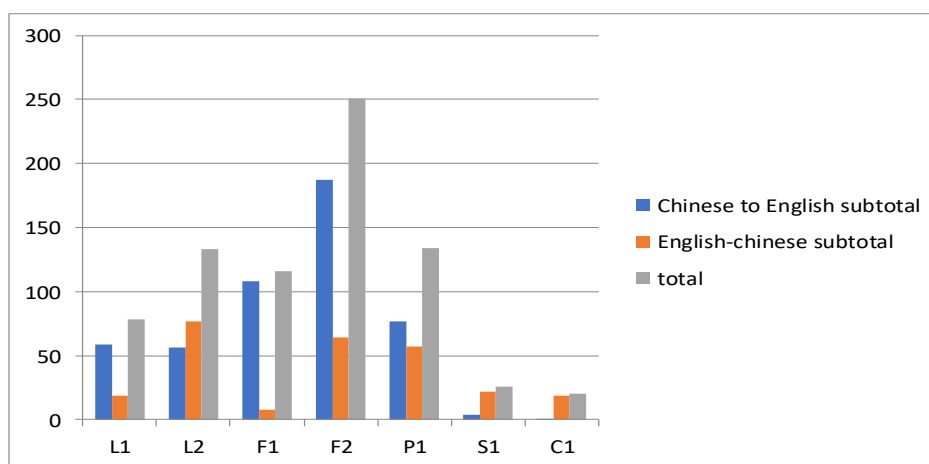


Figure 1. Frequency Statistics of 7 Types of Errors in 8 Chinese-English Translation and English-Chinese Translation Operations

As shown in Figure 1, the error type with the highest frequency of errors in the 8 operations is F2 (251 times), which is the second type of fluency problem: “wrong collocation, poor expression, improper word selection”; Second is L2 (133 times), that is, the second type of fidelity problem: “Translation error due to misunderstanding of the original text”; The error type with the highest frequency is L2 (77 times). The second was F2 (64 times); The error type with the highest frequency in C-E translation is F2 (187 times). The second is F1 (108 times), which is the first type of fluency problems: “grammatical errors, translation structure is not syntactic”; The L1 frequency of “omissions, over-translations, re-translations, including redundant words and unnecessary repetition” amounted to 78 times, 59 times in Chinese-English translation and 19 times in English-Chinese translation. The total F2 frequency of “wrong collocation, poor expression and improper word choice” was 251 times, 187 times in Chinese-English translation and 64 times in English-Chinese translation. This further shows that students in Chinese-English translation are more likely to have fluency problems, and students in English-Chinese translation homework have the most fidelity problems. Fluency problems are most likely to occur in translation assignments, mainly due to students’ insufficient grasp of basic grammar knowledge, resulting in poor translation expression and poor sentences.

3.1.2 The Directional Difference between Chinese-English Translation and English-Chinese Translation
Further analysis of the data in Table 1 is made to explore the directional difference between C-E translation and English-Chinese translation. The results are shown in Figure 2.

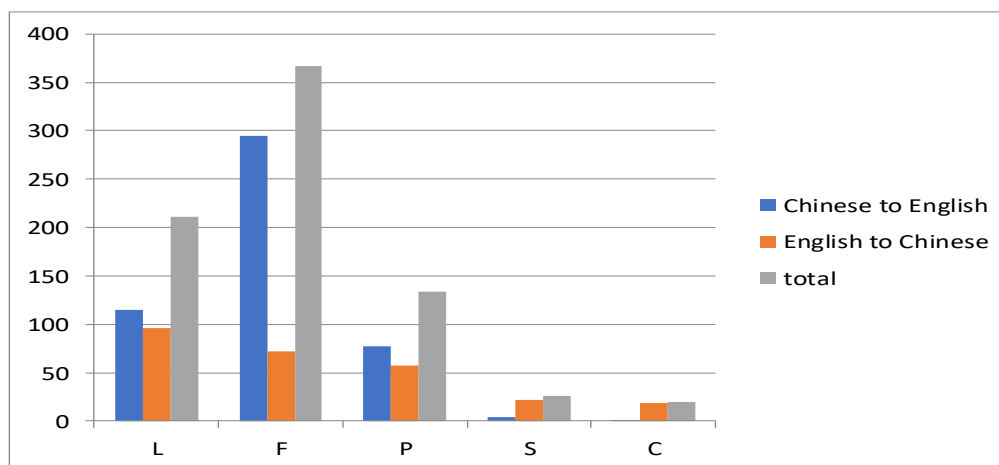


Figure 2. Contrast between English and Chinese errors

For the fluency problem (F), there were more errors in Chinese-English translation (295 times) than in English-Chinese translation (96 times), while for the style error (S), there were more errors in English-Chinese translation (22 times) than in Chinese-English translation (4 times). This indicates that the errors in students' translation have a certain direction, and they are prone to style problems when translating into English, and the translation style is inconsistent with the style of the source text. Translation from Chinese to English is prone to terminology problems and fluency problems, including grammatical errors, collocation errors, poor expressions and improper choice of words.

3.2 Comparison of Translation Quality in Different Score Intervals

Among the 128 translation assignments submitted, 16 scores were in the range of 96-100 points, 67 were in the range of 91-95 points, 42 were in the range of 86-90 points, and only 3 were below 85 points. The overall errors in the translation were concentrated on fluency problems, including grammatical errors, improper word selection, poor expression, etc. Secondly, many students make mistakes in the question of fidelity, such as mistranslations caused by their incomprehension of certain words. Among the translations with a score range of 91-95, a total of 137 had fluency problems, focusing on F2 (collocation errors, poor expression, improper word choice). The frequency of fluency problems is highest in the translations with the score range 81-85, focusing on F1 (grammatical errors). The overall quality comparison results show that students with weak foundation should consolidate basic grammar knowledge and strengthen training translation skills. Students with strong translation ability should focus on improving their ability to deal with terminology translation problems, and comprehensively improve their translation ability and technical literacy through efficient translation practice.

4. Discussion

4.1 Fidelity Problem

Error analysis is a traditional field of foreign language teaching research, but no consensus has been reached on how to classify errors uniformly and systematically in translation teaching research (Wu, 2007). Fidelity is still the most important index to evaluate the translation ability of translation learners. In the 128 translations submitted by 32 students in this study, the main problems of faithfulness are mistranslation and missing translation. As shown in example (1), students often use character translation rather than meaning translation, and are not good at using contextual information to accurately translate the original text:

(1) Original text: Looking only at a photographic reproduction of the composition, one might assume that the fictive dining room is a seamless continuation of the real refectory's space.

Students' translation: 只看这副逼真的复制品, 人们可能会认为这一虚构的餐厅是真实食堂的缩影。

Students can understand the original text, but it is too literal translation, almost word for word translation, resulting in unclear meaning of the translation, it is suggested to modify the translation as "photos of this work". Bilingualism and strategic competence are important components of translation competence (Han, 2020). Translation learners should pay attention to the cultivation of their own basic qualities, and constantly exercise in translation practice to improve the ability of translation strategies.

4.2 Fluency Problem

In this study, fluency refers to the problems in the translation such as improper wording, improper collocation, improper sentence structure, grammatical errors, and incoherence. The vast majority of the subjects are still lacking in fluency, and even low-level grammar errors frequently appear in the translation, which further indicates that translation learners are not enough to master basic grammar knowledge, and some sloppy students are easy to make low-level mistakes, such as (2):

(2) Original text: 当前数据表明, 所有人似乎均属于易感人群, 也有某些感染者表现为无症状。

students' translation: The current data seems to show that we are all susceptible catching this disease.

There is an obvious grammatical error in the student's translation. "seems" should be changed to "seem" and "susceptible to" should be "susceptible". This shows that students should cultivate serious and rigorous translation habits in daily translation training, and actively check the errors in the translation to polish it after translation, so as to improve readability and fluency. At the same time, the cultivation of the target language ability should not be ignored.

4.3 Terminology Translation Problem

Terminology translation error in this study refers to the improper and inaccurate translation of proper nouns, which deviates greatly from or is completely irrelevant to the generally accepted translation in the professional field. The source text used in this study involves more professional knowledge, so the

term is used more frequently. Most of the students can accurately and appropriately translate the names and other proper nouns in the source text, but there are still a few students who do not master the professional words and rare words. For example, “single vanishing point” should be translated as “灭点” rather than “单点”, “光伏产业” should be translated as “photovoltaic industry”, and “光伏” is referred to as “PV”. There are also many students who are not familiar with highly specialized words, such as “富勒烯 (fullerenes)”, “纳米管 (nanotubes)”, “氮化硼 (boron nitride)” and so on. In general, the vast majority of students can accurately and rigorously convey the meaning of terms in terms of processing, and the error rate of terms is low.

4.4 Style Problem

Language style is the embodiment of the unity of language form and content, and has the duality of form and verve (Hu, 2018). Style problem refers to the fact that the style of the translated text is very different from the style of the source text, or the style of the same translated text is inconsistent, and the formal and serious academic text is translated with a relaxed and witty language (Yu, 2009). Style is the core problem of literary translation, and the style of translation is the whole reference of literary translation, and it is one of the important characteristics that translators must pay attention to. In literary translation, the reproduction of the original style is a requirement for the study of the unity and diversity of the author's or work's ideological content and linguistic flair. For example, mistranslations in example (3) mean that the translation does not conform to the style of the original text. In highly professional articles, students use colloquial words where they should use written words:

(3) Original text: To start with, white graphene was an also-ran in the new field of two-dimensional materials, as these sheets of atoms are often called.

Students' translation: 首先, 白色石墨烯在二维材料(这些薄片材料通常被称为二维材料)的新领域中是一个失败者。

In the context of this materials exposition, the translation of "also-ran" as "failure" is overly colloquial. It is recommended to use "不被看好" or "不受青味" for a more academically formal and precise rendition.

All in all, translation learners should be clear about the style, genre and original style of the work, strengthen the sense of style in translation, and ensure that the content of the translation is closer to the style of the original text, so as to achieve the level of “elegance” in translation.

4.5 Cultural Acceptance Issues

In this study, the problem of cultural acceptance refers to the culture that the translator cannot accurately convey the output of the original text, or the culture that the reader cannot understand and accept the transmission of the translation. Cultural transmission in translation, as a translation strategy, advocates that translation should transfer cultural elements from the source language to the target language as much as possible, which is an objective requirement of cultural communication (Nie, 2015). In this study, some students mistakenly convey the cultural meaning in the original text. Taking Homework CE3 as an example, some students failed to accurately convey the culture, history and

aesthetic concepts of Chinese minority batik in their translation. Therefore, in order to reduce the rate of cultural acceptance errors, MTI English translation students still need to pay attention to the cultivation of cultural communication awareness in daily translation training.

5. Conclusion

Based on the data obtained from the Chinese-English and English-Chinese translation assignments of a university translation course, this study analyzed the frequency of errors in students' English-Chinese translation, and then evaluated the quality of the translations of MTI translation students. The results show that: (1) there are more style problems in English-Chinese translation, fidelity problems and terminology translation problems in Chinese-English translation. (2) Students with weak foundation are more likely to make grammatical errors and the translation is not smooth; Students with strong translation ability are more likely to make terminology translation errors. (3) Students are more likely to make frequent fluency mistakes in their overall translation assignments, which are mainly manifested as poor translation expression, improper word selection and collocation mistakes.

By analyzing the causes of translation errors of students in this study, the following measures can be implemented in translation teaching:

- (1) Teach students how to improve their understanding of the source text, how to use contextual information to accurately translate the original text, and teach reading and analyzing text skills in the class.
- (2) Strengthen grammar teaching, improve students' grammar ability, especially for students with weak foundation, consolidate grammar knowledge, avoid making low-level grammar mistakes.
- (3) Expand students' knowledge level and pay attention to the cultivation of cultural communication consciousness.
- (4) Guide students to use auxiliary translation tools to avoid terminology translation errors and cultivate terminology translation ability.
- (5) For missing translation, students are required to develop good learning habits, cultivate serious and rigorous translation habits in daily training, and check the translation after translation.

Due to limited conditions, only one translation teaching class was selected as the research object, and the research results could not reflect the general situation of learners. However, it enlighten us that translation learners need to cultivate solid basic translation skills on the one hand, improve terminology translation ability and bilingual ability on the other hand, and accurately grasp key details of the original text, so as to improve the readability of the translation. In addition, teachers should also focus on cultivating students' sense of style, so that students can better convey the meaning of the original text when dealing with the style of the source text, and make the translation consistent with the literary language style of the original text. Through the establishment of the corpus, we can identify the types, frequency and causes of students' mistakes, so that teachers can help students solve the problems in the translation process more effectively. All in all, when teaching translation, teachers should fully

understand each student's translation problems, formulate targeted teaching strategies, improve learners' technical literacy and translation skills at full speed, and help them efficiently carry out translation practice.

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