Building and Applying Corpus in Interpretation Teaching—Taking the Construction of the Corpus of Covid-19 Epidemic as an Example*

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Covid-19 epidemic swept the world in 2020 and still exists. Due to the uneven level of Chinese and English interpreting related to the Covid-19 epidemic, this essay explains the characteristics of interpretation and interpreting teaching, and the importance of building a corpus of thematic interpretation of the Covid-19 epidemic, focusing on the construction and application of the Covid-19 epidemic corpus in interpreting teaching and the importance and construction methods of thematic corpus used to cultivate the comprehensive interpreting ability and level of English majors (especially in translation and interpretation).

Keywords: interpreting teaching, corpus, Covid-19

Introduction

With the deepening of globalization, the importance of interpreting teaching in the teaching of English majors has greatly increased, and the attention of teachers and students to interpreting teaching has increased significantly. Nowadays, the Covid-19 epidemic continues to spread globally. Since the outbreak, news reports, medical professional texts, international conferences, and international speeches related to it have emerged in an endless stream, which is of reference significance for countries and the world as a whole. The improvement of students' ability to interpret the topical content of the Covid-19 epidemic is conducive to the exchange and sharing of information about the Covid-19 epidemic in various countries and the results achieved in the fight against the epidemic. The accuracy and professionalism of the interpretation of epidemic information will affect the correctness of decision-making in countries around the world, and most importantly, it involves the safety of human life. The corpus is of great significance in the teaching of interpreting. In practice, teachers and students will jointly construct a comprehensive corpus on the topic of the Covid-19 epidemic, thereby promoting the steady improvement of the teaching quality of English majors.

After doing literature review, we found that the specific manifestations of the application research of corpus in interpreting teaching include: classroom teaching mode, corpus construction design, and technical methods of self-built corpus. In 2007, Zhao pointed out that in translation teaching, the temporary

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establishment of a small corpus by teachers will help supplement the content of textbooks and auxiliary materials, so as to assist teaching in a more targeted, immediate, and novel manner. Wang and Ye (2009) discussed the technical details of interpreting teaching corpus construction. Zhang (2011) designed a teacher interpreting training corpus composed of four parts: language improvement and knowledge accumulation, skill training, comprehensive training, and interpretation appreciation, based on the characteristics of interpreting teaching and the advantages of corpus used in interpreting teaching. Zhao (2011) analyzed the theoretical basis, main links (including corpus collection, corpus sorting, corpus coding and labeling, technical processing of predictive logical structure, etc.) of the construction of a corpus for interpretation teaching, and design steps (design concept and overall framework, corpus collection, design and development, real-time teaching interpretation teaching corpus updated in time). Xiao and Chen (2013) proposed how to make the corpus play a key role in interpreting teaching. However, due to the suddenness and urgency of the Covid-19 epidemic, the construction of a Covid-19 epidemic thematic corpus is relatively scarce. Therefore, the corpus-based interpreting teaching research on the Covid-19 epidemic has just started, and there are still many problems that need to be explored and analyzed in depth. Therefore, on the basis of explaining the characteristics of interpreting and the teaching of interpreting, and the importance of establishing a corpus for interpretation on the topic of COVID-19, this essay further proposes how teachers and students can actively construct and improve the corpus of interpretation on the topic of COVID-19.

**Characteristics and Existing Problems of Interpreting Teaching**

Interpretation teaching must be based on the characteristics of interpreting. The characteristics and standards of interpreting show (Li, 1999) that interpreting teaching is different from other courses related to language teaching. It involves the ability and skills of various aspects of sight, listening, writing and translation, the comprehensive application of language knowledge and topical knowledge. Due to the limitation of interpreting teaching time, it is almost impossible to teach the above aspects in different categories within a limited time. Therefore, in interpreting teaching, teachers should understand translation theory, choose teaching content scientifically, and use this as a guideline to conduct comprehensive interpreting training for students according to the characteristics of interpreting.

The purpose of interpreting teaching is to cultivate and improve students’ interpreting ability, and to train students to meet or exceed the standard qualifications of the interpreting industry. The interpreting ability is actually a comprehensive ability. Liu (2017) believes that the interpreting ability includes four major parts: language ability, cognitive ability, communicative ability, and conversion ability, which are further subdivided into: ability to break away from the form of original language and ability to listen and analyze, short-term memorization ability and coordination ability, note-taking ability, memorization ability, reading ability of note information, ability to generate translated language, ability to analyze discourse, ability to understand cross-cultural understanding, ability to understand original language and linguistic knowledge, and ability to reconstruct target language, conversion ability, decision-making ability, etc.

The process of improving students’ ability in interpreting teaching has a long time span. A significant improvement in a short time is almost impossible. Rather, it must rely on long-term accumulation and many years of practice to realize qualitative changes after quantitative changes, thereby improving students’ overall interpreting skills and ability.
Interpretation teaching must focus on practice. In teaching, a large amount of practical training must be included, partially based on explaining background knowledge, teaching note-taking experience and short-term memory experience so that students can conclude the interpreting methods and skills that suit them in practice.

In the interpreting class, we observed that when students interpret content related to the Covid-19 epidemic, interpreting expression is a major difficulty. The main problems are: Students do not respond, do not know how to translate the original text, how to express in the target language, some are because they do not understand the professional terms related to the Covid-19, and some are because they lack the relevant background scientific knowledge of the Covid-19; the students have language problems in their interpretation and they interpret in a stunned, uncomfortable way with improper phrase collocations, and ignore the collocations of verbs and nouns in terms of verbatim translation; students’ interpretation seems to be blunt with unnatural translations, even though they understand the meaning of the original text. Their interpretation does not conform to the habitual expression of the target language audience, and they have trouble reorganizing the sentence structure and expressing it naturally in their own words. These phenomena illustrate the necessity of using a large number of authentic corpora in oral interpretation teaching.

The Importance of the Construction of the Covid-19 Epidemic Corpus in the Teaching of English Majors

Although most of the current interpreting teaching materials involve various topics, including tourism, medical treatment, education, technology, etc., there are currently very few interpreting teaching materials on the topic of the Covid-19 epidemic. The application of the corpus to the interpreting teaching will help solve the problems mentioned above in interpreting teaching. The construction of the Covid-19 epidemic corpus has strong practical value. It not only allows multiple parties to understand the measures and effects of countries in the world in response to the epidemic, so as to learn from each other’s experience to fight against the epidemic, but also improve the efficiency and accuracy of translation and train students to learn the proficiency and professionalism of interpreting. The process will allow students to improve their comprehensive interpretation level from this specific topic to other topics, and transfer this experience and ability to other topics and content interpretation in the future self-learning process. In the process of constructing the corpus on the topic of the Covid-19 epidemic, students will inevitably improve their search capabilities, analytical skills, and ability to integrate and summarize. More importantly, due to the current uneven translation levels of Chinese and English interpretation related to the Covid-19 epidemic, critical thinking can be cultivated in the searching and comparison process, which will encourage students to learn English language tracing the source and improve their overall language ability and level. In addition, the project also helps to cultivate students’ self-learning ability and cooperative learning ability in interpreting.

Building a Corpus on the Topic of the Covid-19 Epidemic

The construction of the Covid-19 epidemic corpus used in interpretation teaching is not accomplished overnight, but a long-term accumulation process. In our opinion, at the initial stage, teachers had better built a simple small-scale corpus based on the current status of students’ interpreting skills, and understood the background and subject knowledge that students lack on the Covid-19. The purpose is to provide students with both Chinese and English vocabulary and sentences to initially lead students into the field of interpretation of the Covid-19 topic.
In the second stage, students are called to build and enrich the corpus to create a corpus for the Covid-19 epidemic. Teachers are suggested assign students tasks to collect at least 10 parallel corpora in Chinese and English with interpretation in units of two students. The genre is not limited. Students can combine the Chinese and English resources of China Daily to build and expand the vocabulary corpus of the topic. At the same time, build an audio and video corpus based on different interpretation scenarios related to the Covid-19 epidemic (Yang & Zhu, 2016), such as international conference scenes, press conference scenes, on-site interpretation scenes, etc., and observe in actual scenes to accumulate experience and master the latest background information on the topic of the Covid-19 epidemic and the main points of interpretation. In this way, teacher takes the lead first and the students supplement with their own experience and difficulties in the practice of interpreting the topic, which can not only cultivate the students’ enthusiasm and autonomy in learning interpreting, but also exercise their interpreting skills.

Organize and summarize the corpus and classify the collected bilingual corpus. The unified theme of interpretation is the Covid-19 epidemic; interpreting occasions can be classified into international conferences, press conferences, news reports, medical expert speeches, medical workers interviews, etc. Interpreting types are classified according to consecutive interpretation and simultaneous interpretation. The level of difficulty is divided into professional ones and general ones. Speech speed is divided into three levels: fast, medium, and slow. Also, duration and total word count and whether there is an accent should be included (Xu, 2019).

Implement interpretation and memorization training based on the Covid-19 epidemic corpus jointly constructed by teachers and students. Methods include: keyword method, classification method, sentence reading training, visualized memorization, outline memorization, retelling training, etc. (Zou, 2016). Teachers should carry out interpreting memorization training based on the current status of students’ interpreting ability, and proceed step by step, which can be divided into several parts: (1) listening and writing transcribed text and reading; (2) reading followed by audio with hidden text; (3) follow-up + other task practice (Liu, 2017).

**Conclusion**

In the process of establishing the corpus of the Covid-19 epidemic, the role of the teacher should be to lead, assist, and guide, check whether the corpus collected by the students has application value, let students give full play to their subjective initiative, improve their enthusiasm of learning interpreting, strengthen the comprehensive understanding of the Covid-19 epidemic knowledge, and improve autonomous interpreting ability in interpreting practice.

**References**


