The Tendency of Linguistics-based Studies in Social Science

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ABSTRACT

Linguistics is associated with particular lexical items and that are observable from investigation of an electronically-stored corpus of written and spoken texts, in other word: data. Information technologies represented by AI (Artificial Intelligence) have broadened the boundaries of linguistic theories into International relations, Law, History etc. Linguistics-based studies in Social Sciences (including Humanities) is needed to be done from the perspective of integration in AI Era. This paper endeavors to explore the application of linguistic theories and methods for three different disciplines: International Relations, Law and History.¹

INTRODUCTION

Linguistics is a subject focusing on human languages. It explores the nature, function, structure, application, and historical development of language, and other language-related issues. Linguistics is generally defined as a scientific and systematic theoretical study of language. Moreover, language is the most important human communication tool and the direct reality of thought.

PERSPECTIVE

This part will discuss the interdependence between linguistics and other disciplines such as international relations, law and history, focusing on the research status and theme of linguistics. It shows that linguistics is not an isolated discipline

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and increasingly embodies the multidirectional and cross-cutting nature of its
discipline perspective.

(1) International Relations

From the perspective of international relations, scholars are also deepening their
research on language, and the importance of language to the study of international
relations is also increasingly shown.

First, language has an ontological and epistemological significance for
understanding international relations. Since the late 1980s, people have paid more
and more attention to the role of language in international relations. This is mainly
determined by the characteristics of the language itself and the international relations
discipline. An important function of language is to express the world through
different forms of speech acts [15]. Language has its own ontological significance in
international relations. Language is also the basic condition for constructing
institutional facts. Without these institutional facts, language can exist; on the
contrary, it does not work. Therefore, we must pay attention to the ontological role
of language in international relations. From the perspective of epistemology,
language is indispensable to our understanding of the world. We must express our
complex social world through language so that it can be well organized and orderly
[15]. As Ludwig Wittgenstein and Jürgen Habermas stated, we should no longer
treat actors as a "black box", but the study of the language of actors is an important
part of exploring the "black box" [14].

Secondly, language has a constructive function. Language is symbolic and can
create meaning. The symbolic power of language enable language to better represent
facts and reflect the intentions of actors through the mode of taking effect by words,
for example, through the syntax and semantics of language. Language can also
construct or denigrate honor [15]. For example, in Bush's speech, the negative
descriptions about Saddam and Iraq and the positive descriptions about the United
States played an important role in the construction of the negative image of Iraq and
the positive image of the United States. Under the guidance of this view, the current
study of language in international relations is increasingly in-depth and concrete.

(2) Law

Although linguistics and law both belong to the field of humanities and social
sciences, in the eyes of many people (whether they are linguists, legal scholars, or
other academic fields), these two disciplines do not have some connections. Is there
really no intersection between law and linguistics in theory or method? The fact is
the opposite [8]. Some changes have taken place in the field of Anglo-American
law, especially in the field of evidence law, but the real big change lies in
philosophy - epistemology - how the world is recognized and how the value of
knowledge is added. This is the so-called "linguistic turn" of philosophy.
In the philosophy of language, language (speech) has acquired the status of subjectivity. It is no longer merely a "mirror image", but an "existing" mode of the world [11]. In the relationship between law and language, they are closely connected, because language is the carrier of law. However, according to the contemporary philosophy and epistemology, it can be said more clearly that language is not only a manifestation of law, but also a way of existence. From the formulation of law to the implementation of law, from the confirmation of facts to the trial in court, from the debate in court to the execution of trial, it can be said that the operation of law and the practice of law are all constructed and completed by language (words). At this point, there is a belief or inference that should be clear and firm: since the law is constructed by language, linguistic theories should bear the right to give priority to interpretation.

The question is: how to explain it. Fortunately, compared with 50 - 60 years ago, or even 20 - 30 years ago, linguistics - modern linguistic theory can provide much more explanatory tools. The concepts and ideas that modern linguistic theories offer can also be listed in long lists: topics, themes, marks, turn, argument, role of argument, etc. We can imagine and reason that due to the language's constructive nature to human beings and the world, jurisprudence has the possible conditions to absorb and integrate these terms and thoughts.

(3) History

Since entering the 21st century, we have heard the slogan of the “post-theory”. The cultural atmosphere that gave birth to the theory has changed over time. People no longer concentrate on the exploration of the deep theory, but instead pay attention to the social value and cultural practice. This is what he called “after-theory”. The feeling of “post-theory” is born after “after-theory”, but “post -theory” is not” no theory” and it is also not returning to “ before-theory”[3]. It is not only a tribute to “theory” but also a conscious awareness of the shortcomings and limitations of “theory”. Under this background, history is also facing a “linguistic” turn.

Post-modernist historians equate language symbols with facts and reintroduce rhetoric. Hayden White argues that historical narration can be divided into four ways: romance, comedy, tragedy and satire [17]. In this way, history is only a kind of narration or plot, and all kinds of narration methods are of equal value. It can be said that the important thing in historical research is literariness rather than scientific calness. Metaphors, similes and plots have replaced the principle of truthfulness, concept and explanation, and completely attribute history to plotting, coding and so on. Therefore, they can only exist as words and texts. Post-modern history advocates textualism, and the author declares death when the work is finished [2]. The whole reading process is equal, and no one can claim that he has the best understanding of the text.
METHODOLOGY

Linguistics has been more widely applied and the fields involved are more varied. In the study of humanities represented by international relations, law, and history, language research methods can be divided into two major categories. One is text analysis represented by discourse analysis, and the other is statistical methods represented by corpus-based and corpus-driven approach.

(1) Text-based Analysis

The text-based analysis method is to dig from the surface layer of the text to the deep layer of the text so as to find out the deep meaning that cannot be grasped by ordinary reading. The so-called "text" refers to the manifestation of written language, which uses language and other symbols to convey the meaning of the author's language expression. It is usually a combination of sentences or sentences that express complete and systematic meaning. The text can be a sentence, a paragraph or an article, carrying the specific content and complete meaning of the author and article. Text is widely used in the research of linguistics and other humanities.

Discourse analysis is the most representative text-based analysis method. The main task of discourse analysis is to explore the relationship between language use and social reality. Discourse is the specific speech act of communication between people in a specific social context, and the verbal activity of certain communication between the speaker and the receiver through a text in a specific social context.

Political scientists regard discourse as a symbol of power. Discourse is a practical activity that begins in writing, reading, and exchanging [12]. In any society, the production of discourse is controlled, selected, organized, and re-disseminated according to a certain procedure, in which complex power relations are hidden. Any discourse is a product of the operation of power relations. They believe that different countries tend to have different discourses over the same event or phenomenon. Due to this, many scholars in international relations have used discourse analysis methods to carry out relevant studies. Hanssen took the Botswana War as an example. In terms of the relationship between discourse and foreign policy, such as the change of discourse and the comparison of texts, he pointed out that language plays an important role in foreign policy [6]. Some domestic scholars have made similar studies. For example, Yong-tao Liu used discourse analysis to analyze the language of President Bush’s “war mobilization” in Iraq, pointing out that Bush used his discourse to construct Iraq’s negative image and the US’s justice image, thus allowing the Iraq war to have “legitimacy” [10].

Jurists believe that discourse is a rule of power control. Taking the history of law as an example, they think that there is a set of grand narrative discourses made by the rulers themselves under the ideology. These discourses are rooted in people's life style and cultural habits and influence people's life style and cultural habits at the same time. It is almost impossible to “see and read” its entire real picture, but some
fragments of them can be proved by documentary records. Many scholars have carried out relevant studies in this area. In the United States, linguists such as Roger Shuy and Ronald Butters have made discourse analysis of the "linguistic evidence" (trademark infringement, etc.) in the cases to assist the judges in determining the facts and making reasonable judgments. In Britain, the Aston University's Judicial Language Center collaborated with local judicial authorities to provide substantive and active assistance for case resolution and judicial decisions through discourse analysis, handwriting identification, author identification and so on. In China, starting from the phenomenon of metaphor in legal discourse, Feng-jing Liu bases himself on the "noumenon of law" and analyzes the legal provisions and principles that are the essential elements of law [9].

Historians think that discourse can reveal the truth. Michael Cslvin McGee once said, “substance is concealed by appearance and truth is covered by words.” The historical truth is shelved because of its transcendental nature. What we have is only words or texts about the truth. In the discourse analysis of history, Chinese academic circles are not lagging behind. Qin-hua He described and explained the origin and evolution of "law" by crawling through the text and taking the discourse of "law" as a clue. At the same time, he used the method of discourse analysis to deeply explore the legal consciousness and legal concepts of ancient and modern China [7].

(2) Corpus-based or Corpus-driven

Gary King, Robert O. Keohane and Sydney Verba pointed out that a good scientific research can be quantitative or qualitative [4]. Therefore, in addition to traditional text-based analysis, we can also perform quantitative analysis. Compared with traditional text analysis methods, corpus research methods lay more emphasis on quantitative analysis. In recent years, with the continuous development of corpus linguistics, researchers from various academic fields, including scholars from international relations, law, history, sociology and other specialties, have intervened in corpus studies and used corpus to solve problems in their respective fields.

Generally speaking, the research paradigm of corpus can be divided into two types: corpus-based and corpus-driven [16]. The corpus-driven research paradigm holds that corpus linguistics is an independent discipline. The “Corpus-based” research paradigm argues that corpus linguistics is not an independent discipline but a research method that can be used to validate existing hypotheses and theories.

In terms of interdisciplinary research, corpus-based research paradigm is very popular. Wei-gang Gong uses the Google BOOKS corpus as a source of data, and merge big-data and cloud computing methods to make a macro investigation on the historical development trend, evolution process, relationship networks, and social influence of the 19th century China Maritime Silk Road and major trading products [5]. Based on a self-built corpus, Yu-fang Qian observed the discourse of the "Chinese dream" in the major newspapers and magazines of the United States and the United Kingdom, identified, described and interpreted these discourses through
social context analysis, revealing that the discourse representations of the Western media around the "Chinese dream" [13]. Ya-min Zeng adopted a corpus-driven research paradigm. He took the Obama administration's foreign policy discourse as an example to study the phenomenon of foreign policy discourse construction [18]. Based on the self-built three corpora of 2008 Beijing Olympic games, 2012 London Olympic games and 2016 Rio Olympic games, Li-jiang Chen used the corpus linguistics analysis tool keywords to analyze the Chinese reports of the British mainstream media BBC on the 2008 - 2016 three Olympics, and explored the presentation characteristics and changing trends of China's national image in the British media [1].

CONCLUSIONS

So, what do we need to pay attention to in the process of interdisciplinary integration? The collision between disciplines is prone to produce brilliant sparks in generate, but various problems will be as follows. The first to bear the brunt is the issue of the strengths and weaknesses of disciplines in the course of cross-disciplinary studies. The language discipline is often in a weak position when carrying out interdisciplinary studies. Secondly, it is necessary to maintain the noumenon of the subject knowledge in the process of interdisciplinary study. Many scholars will lose their own research noumenon when carrying out interdisciplinary research.

The language discipline will not disappear, but we need to place the language discipline in a larger environment and integrate it with other disciplines. Only in this way can the basic function of the language discipline be better reflected and the language discipline also be better developed.

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