

The Use of Monolingual Corpora as Translation Resources for Chinese and English Translation Teaching

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Abstract

Corpora for Chinese and English translation teaching online has attracted much attention in recent time. As a valuable resource for translators and translator training, the general monolingual corpora are readily available, such as BCC and CCL in Chinese and BNC and COCA in English. This article focuses on the benefits of using such monolingual corpora as BCC and COCA in English and Chinese translation and establishes a preliminary corpus-assisted teaching model for translation. Drawing on the given examples, the authors argue that the monolingual corpora-assisted framework for translation teaching will particularly enhance students' self-learning abilities and thus improve the training of translation students via online teaching.

Keywords: translation teaching, English-Chinese, Chinese-English, monolingual corpora, self-learning, benefits of monolingual corpora, COCA, BCC

1. Introduction

The aim of this article is to investigate how the general monolingual corpora, such as BCC (Beijing Language and Culture University Chinese Corpus) and COCA (Corpus of Contemporary American English), can be adopted as translation resources in translation teaching (TT), specifically involving English and Chinese. Since the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic in China, university students have been physically self-isolated, and the classes cancelled. However, for implementing the “keeping learning during class cancellation” policy, many universities in China are encouraged to pursue online education. Under the circumstances, corpora as translation resources may be of much significance for translation teachers' teaching and students' learning during such special period. As a matter of fact, corpora have been popularly applied in language teaching in general (Barlow, 2000; Johns, 1991; Granger et al., 2002; Aston et al., 2004; Sinclair, 2004; Flowerdew, 2009; Peters et al., 2000) and translation teaching specifically (Aston, 1999; Bowker, 1998; Stewart, 2000; Danielsson & Ridings, 2000; Gallego-Hernández, 2014; Meyer et al., 2000; Monzó-Nebot, 2008; Sánchez-Gijón, 2009; Laursen and Arinas-Pellón, 2012). As Bernardini (2004: 97) agrees, corpora plays an important role in translator education in three aspects, which includes translation aids, sources of learning activities and of knowledge about the language, and most importantly instruments that can integrate language teaching and translation teaching into a whole.

For corpus use in translation teaching, there are three most relevant types: the monolingual corpus, the bilingual comparable corpus and the parallel corpus (Rodríguez-Inés, 2013). To date, focus has been on the application of the parallel corpus in translation teaching (Danielsson & Ridings, 2000; Pearson, 2000; Meyer et al., 2000). However, the general monolingual corpora, especially in Chinese-English TT, have been seldom explored, despite that they may be more readily available compared with parallel corpora. “A monolingual corpus is an equally valuable resource, though usually for different purposes. As monolingual corpora are generally larger and, in some cases, may be considered representative, they are able to offer information on more or less standard language use on the basis of quantitative data” (Vintar, 2008: 153).

Due to the availability and advantages of monolingual Chinese and English corpora, this article tries to explore this type of corpus in Chinese and English translation teaching so that students' self-learning abilities can be enhanced and thus the training of translators improved during such special period that online education prevails. It starts by briefly describing translation teaching and corpora-based approaches to TT. Next, it introduces the monolingual Chinese and English corpora available for translation education purposes. In what follows, it presents the ways to improve Chinese-English translation teaching by designing monolingual corpora-

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based tasks. Overall, the examples presented in this article seek to inspire how both translator trainers and trainees can make use of monolingual corpora for translation teaching and translation tasks respectively. Finally, proposed is a preliminary monolingual corpus-assisted TT model.

2. Translation Teaching and Corpus-assisted Approaches

There has been a growing need of translators since China has launched a national strategic program of the “Belt-and-Road Initiative” and continued to implement the policy of “further opening up”. Training great translators is taken as a priority in the Faculties of Foreign Languages of Chinese universities in the coming years. So far, over 240 higher institutions have provided master of translation and interpreting program while more than 250 universities offered bachelor’s degree of translation in the Chinese mainland. However, there are many problems for translation teachers in the process of training translators, as Rodríguez-Inés (2013) also states:

Translation teachers responsible for training future translators find problems such as insufficient teaching time in the classroom compounded by their own limitations, in terms, for instance, of the depth of their knowledge and experience of each and every area in which translation trainees should become competent in order to deal with the challenges of professional practice (Rodríguez-Inés, 2013: 58).

Before we attempt to tackle the problems involved in TT, we may need to answer two key questions associated with translation pedagogy, namely, what to teach and how to teach it (Kelly, 2005). Li et al. (2015) further indicates the “what” and “how” crucially depend on what skills, competencies, and knowledge are required of professional translators to complete the translating tasks. In other words, translation teachers are invited to think of efficient methods to help students acquire or develop translation competences. As regards the “how” question, TT researchers have developed a number of approaches, e.g., Gouadec’s (2003) situational approach, Gonzalez Davies’s (2004) and Li’s (2013) task-based approach, Kiraly’s (2000) social constructivist approach, to give a few examples (see a review in Kelly 2005).

However, in the new millennium of fast-growing technologies, the translation industry changes so fast, and the translator training is challenged in an unprecedented way. Hurtado Albir (2007) summarizes three main categories of challenges facing translation teaching today, including international demands, the demands of society and the job market, and the call for competence-based training models. Therefore, one of the core competences translators need to deal with the challenges lies in the technological aspects of translation which the previous teaching approaches may not consider enough.

In response to the problems and challenges mentioned above in the current situation, corpus technology, as part of “the technology-based battery of resources at the translator’s disposal” (Beeby et al., 2009), is of great importance in translator training. The corpus presents many pedagogical advantages both for translation teachers and translation students wherever they are, during the class sessions or after the course time. As Aston (1999: 295) says, “by drawing attention to the different ways expressions are typically used and with what frequencies, corpora can make learners more sensitive to issues of phraseology, register and frequency, which are poorly documented by other tools.” Rodríguez-Inés (2013: 59) specifically summarizes 11 advantages of electronic corpora, among which the most relevant ones to the current discussion are listed as follows:

- They enable users to search for information quickly and systematically in large volumes of heterogeneous documents.
- They offer many examples and a great deal of context.
- They make it easy to identify collocational patterns.
- They make it easy to identify frequency data, which helps users determine the relevance of detected patterns.
- They provide users with a solid basis for making strategic decisions or lexical choices.
- They promote a sense of discovery.

But in a corpus-assisted approach, a translation teacher is just an information facilitator, “someone who guides students in their learning process, helping them as and when necessary and fostering their acquisition of operative knowledge” (Rodríguez-Inés, 2013: 58). In order to deal with the constantly changing translation industry, students need to be trained to obtain the life-long learning abilities. Bearing that in mind, it is significant for translation teachers and students to get familiar with corpus technology.

Through the literature search, three types of corpora can be used in translation teaching and much emphasis has been placed on the application of the parallel corpus in translation teaching involving such language pairs as

English-French (Pearson 2000a, 2003), English-Norwegian (Johansson & Hofland, 2000), German-English (Hansen & Teich, 2002), English-Spanish (Gallego-Hernández, 2014;Corpas-Pastor and Seghiri, 2009), Italian-English (Zanettin, 2001), English-Chinese (Zhu & Yip, 2010), to name but a few. Parallel corpora can provide contextual information, but its disadvantages are also obvious. To begin with, few parallel corpora are publicly available. Next, it takes considerable efforts and numerous resources to build a sizeable parallel corpus. Even if it is successfully built, the subjects included are of scarce. In addition, it is not free and available to translation teachers since it involves issues of copyrights. Last but not the least, it requires further investigations how the parallel corpus can be integrated into specific teaching syllables. Taking these issues into account, this article attempts to apply the general monolingual corpora in Chinese-English TT.

3. An Overview of Monolingual Corpora in Chinese and English

This section deals with monolingual Chinese and English corpora. However, it should be noted that not all monolingual corpora are included here but those available and sizeable. As the name of monolingual corpus itself suggests, it consists of texts written in only one language, either the source language or the target language. Thus, they are called SL monolingual corpus and TL monolingual corpus respectively in the literature (Coffey, 2002). It is heavily dependent on the translation direction. But, the distinction between these two may not be clearly made in the coming sections since both types of monolingual corpora are central in the current investigation.

Such corpora are two Chinese monolingual corpora, Peking University's CCL and Beijing Language and Culture University's BCC, and two English monolingual corpora, British National Corpus and Brigham Young University's Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA). They cover a range of topics and reach over 100 million words or characters (see more details in Table 1).

Table 1 Introduction to Major Chinese and English Monolingual Corpora

Name of Corpus	Size	Genres	Developer	Website
The Chinese Corpus of CCL	Over 500 million characters	fiction, magazine, news	Peking University	http://ccl.pku.edu.cn:8080/ccl_corpus/
The Chinese Corpus of BCC	15 billion characters	literature, science and technology	Beijing Language and Culture University	http://bcc.blcu.edu.cn/
The Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA)	more than one billion words	spoken, fiction, popular magazines, newspapers, academic texts	Brigham Young University	https://www.english-corpora.org/coca/
The British National Corpus (BNC)	100 million words	spoken, fiction, magazines, newspapers, and academic	Oxford University press	https://www.english-corpora.org/bnc/

Although monolingual corpora are usually general, a number of researchers/translation teachers have begun to recognize their specific values in translation teaching, e.g., for the choices of synonyms, and quality improvement of students' translations (Bowker & Pearson, 2002; Bowker, 1998, 2000), assisting tourist brochures translation (Stewart, 2000), terminological issues (Maher et. al., 2008). For the Chinese-English language pair, few scholars have investigated the roles such general corpora as COCA and CCL in translation teaching (Sun, 2018; Zhu, 2011). This article follows their steps to further explore ways to improve the Chinese and English translation teaching by using such monolingual corpora as COCA and BCC mentioned above.

4. Benefits of Monolingual Corpora Use in Translation Teaching

This section looks at the monolingual corpora BCC and COCA in Chinese-English TT. It exemplifies the use of retrieving information of abbreviations, providing corpus evidence for translation methods used in TT, and making decisions of the synonyms and idiomatic expressions.

4.1 Using Monolingual Corpora to Retrieve Information of Abbreviations

As Belda (2004) argues, “abbreviations have been on the increase in all fields of the English vocabulary”. It goes true for Chinese as well. One of the major problems that student trainees need to deal with is how Chinese abbreviations can be appropriately translated into English for the target readers’ sake or vice versa. However, students have to know the complete forms and information of the abbreviations before they start to translate them. In this case, the monolingual corpus is able to help find the complete forms, which is exemplified by a Chinese abbreviation “三通” from Premier Wen Jiabao’s Report on the Work of the government (Year 2009) as follows.

ST1: 两岸协商在“九二共识”基础上得到恢复，全面直接双向“三通”已经实现。

TT1: Consultations between the two sides of the Taiwan Straits were resumed on the basis of the 1992 Consensus, and complete, direct and two-way mail, transport and trade links were established. (for reference)

In ST1, the Chinese abbreviation “三通” poses challenges to students during Chinese-English translation. If they don’t know its complete form and what it really means in Chinese, it is not possible for them to translate it accurately. Even if it was translated into “three direct links” through transcoding strategy, the target readers would not understand it. Therefore, the Chinese monolingual corpus BCC benefits students for searching its complete form and relevant information. Due to the limited space, only the first ten examples are provided, shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1 “三通” in BCC (the first ten examples)²

1	全文	虽然陈水扁上台以来屡屡有一些颠倒黑白之言、出尔反尔之举，但在“三通”——这个两岸民众多年来有目共睹、是非对错分明的议题上，他也能
2	全文	“三通”——两岸“试点直航”五周年回顾消除人为障碍 实现真正“三通”——两岸“试点直航”五周年回顾海峡两岸航运交流协会理事长 胡汉
3	全文	导人实现了时隔60年的首次握手；2008年，两岸实现历史性的“三通”——海、空运直航和直接通邮；2011年，台湾开放大陆学生赴台就
4	全文	湾同胞书》，呼吁海峡两岸结束军事对峙状态，并首次提出尽快实现“三通”——通航、通商、通邮，完成祖国统一大业。1979年1月1日，人
5	全文	湾同胞书》，呼吁海峡两岸结束军事对峙状态，并首次提出尽快实现“三通”——通航、通商、通邮，完成祖国统一大业。1979年1月1日，人
6	全文	，忽而说他没有做过承诺，忽而表示要开放两岸“三通”，忽而又说“三通”“威胁台湾安全”；忽而叫嚣要发动“对抗中国的圣战”，忽而宣称要
7	全文	经验成功，不但解决了西安市目前连接自来水管、暖气管等所需要的“三通”“弯头”等器材缺乏的困难，而且使焊接后的耐压力比设计要求还高一
8	全文	伸；双向交流在某些领域拉开序幕，双方事务性商谈更为频密；直接“三通”“蓄势待发”。经贸合作向纵深拓展两岸经贸交流的互利、互惠、互补
9	全文	国”为台挤进联合国张目；不要以种种理由阻止两岸“三通”，开放“三通”“越快越好”；反对“把经济当做政治工具”，反对“戒急用忍”政策
10	全文	，声称要在他明年“连任”和“一边一国”的基础上同大陆方面谈“三通”……。台湾当局领导人的这些说法看在海内外关心两岸关系和“三通”

From the above figure, we can know that the complete form of the Chinese abbreviation “三通” is short for “通邮”(mail), “通航”(transport) and “通商”(business) by looking at the examples in the corpus (e.g., example 4 and 5). It is associated with the Chinese Mainland and Taiwan. Based on the real meaning this abbreviation carries, it would be easier for students to translate it into its corresponding English counterparts.

4.2 Corpus Evidence for Translation Methods

Translation involves the transfer of the source language (SL) to the target language (TL). How to transfer, i.e., translation methods, is a key topic during translation teaching. In fact, it poses no barriers for translation teachers to explain translation methods in the class. But it is difficult to find authentic examples to deep students’ understanding of the methods so that students can employ them in real scenarios. In Chinese-English TT, one of the most important methods, frequently mentioned in the course books, is part of speech transfer (POS transfer for short). POS transfer refers to the transfer of one POS category in SL into another POS category in TL in the translation process.

Due to the POS differences between English and Chinese, words with the same semantic meaning are probably of various POS categories. Corpus can give student trainees insights into translation techniques and thus help test the adequacy of the various translation methods. For example, should the Chinese verb “批评” in ST2 always be translated into the English verb “criticize”? Put it into “corpus” question, which one is more frequently used in English native language, its verb or noun?

ST2: “您大小也是个干部，干部嘛，说话要有证据，批评要注意政治，可不能信口开河。”(Mo, 2012)

² The examples in BCC are accessed in March 2020.

TT2: And officers need to back up what they say with proof, they must temper their **criticisms** with political necessities. There is no room for irresponsible talk. (translated by Goldblatt, 2011)

To address this issue, the authors choose the English monolingual corpus COCA to search for the frequency of the word “criticize” in various forms. The search words are “[criticize]” and “[criticism]”. The result is tabulated below.

Table 2 POS Distribution of “Criticize” in COCA in 2019³

No	Search word (Verb)	Result	No	Search word(Noun)	Result
1	Criticized	14078	1	Criticism	32185
2	Criticize	7740	2	Criticisms	4763
3	Criticizing	5260			
4	Criticizes	1413			
		<u>28491</u>			<u>36948</u>

According to the results retrieved from COCA, we can find that the noun “criticism” is more frequently used than the verb “criticize” by the English native speakers. This shows that during Chinese-English translation, the Chinese verb “批评” may firstly better be translated into the English noun “criticism”, and secondly into the verb “criticize”. This search has provided empirical evidence supporting the translation method of POS transfer in Chinese-English translation process. As mentioned earlier in this section, translation techniques and translation methods constitute an important part of translation teaching, which should be practiced by students frequently to the largest extent. As one of the valuable resources for translation pedagogy, COCA is free and updated. It contributes to teaching translation methods by translation teachers and assigning relevant tasks to students for practices as well.

4.3 Using Monolingual Corpora to Better Choose Synonyms in Translation

It is well known that an English word/phrase could have different Chinese equivalents, i.e., synonyms. Those synonyms may share the same semantic meaning, but they carry various emotions. They could be commendatory, neutral or derogatory. Various emotional words may exert different effects on the target readers. Therefore, it is of much significance for students to understand the context of the ST and find the appropriate corresponding equivalents in TT. An English example is given below.

ST3: The underwriter realizes this and certainly does not set out to make life difficult for his agency colleagues. However, he has a job to do. Part of that job is to ensure that people who attempt to buy policies because they expect to “die” soon do not succeed in fooling him and his company. (Li, 2011:30)

TT3:核保人认识到这一点，当然不会让他的代理同事难堪。然而，他又肩负着责任，部分责任是，确保那些因期盼自己很快“死亡”而设法购买统保单的人欺骗核保人自己及其公司的企图不会得逞。

In the classroom, the authors found students had translated the English word “succeed” into “成功”(succeed in its commendatory sense) or “得逞”(succeed in its derogatory sense, often for a time) in Chinese. Are they both proper Chinese translations here in this sentential context? Both expressions mean someone has achieved his/her goals. However, what differs lies in the emotional sense they carry. Bowker & Pearson (2002) believe that a monolingual corpus can provide the contextual relationships of words, contributing to choosing among synonyms rightly. Therefore, the author asked students to search the phrase “not succeed in” in the English monolingual corpus COCA, and there are total 224 examples. The search result is followed in Figure 2.

³ The data is accessed in 28 March, 2020.

Figure 2 “not succeed in” in COCA (the first ten items)

1	2019	NEWS	OregonLive.com	A	B	C	no penalty harsh enough," she said. # "You did not succeed in ruining our lives," she told Butts. " We still live on
2	2019	ACAD	Cato Journal	A	B	C	can not easily be solved. A fully unbacked currency in elastic supply will not succeed in gaining the necessary trust. Alternatively, seeking to tie
3	2019	ACAD	The Catholic Historical Review	A	B	C	of St. Louis Cathedral. Bishop Benoit Joseph Flaget of Bardstown believed DuBourg could not succeed in a city " where the ungodliness of the
4	2018	MOV	Tiger	A	B	C	with your own mistakes, and I'm doing it, so I did not succeed in football because of me, because of my temperament. Hey, Frank taking
5	2017	MOV	The Channel	A	B	C	the enemy have no power over her... And let the son of iniquity not succeed in injuring her. - Lord, hear my prayer... - And let my
6	2012	WEB	lbjlib.utexas.edu	A	B	C	: # If they do mount another round of heavy attacks, they will not succeed in destroying the fighting power of South Vietnam and its allies. # B
7	2012	WEB	topics.nytimes.com	A	B	C	in an attempt to end the Palestinians' international isolation. The pact did not succeed in restoring the flow of aid and did not last. Clashes bet
8	2012	WEB	allgov.com	A	B	C	at FMCC when anyone with a pulse got credit, and since she could not succeed in the private sector got a political " job " Has no knowledge of
9	2012	WEB	...e-map-as-history.com	A	B	C	the Ottoman Empire. Despite promises from the European powers, Arab nationalists did not succeed in creating an all-encompassing Arab kir
10	2012	WEB	gamestudies.org	A	B	C	first and second category the answer is rather straightforward. Hypertext may or may not succeed in creating coherent, sustained narrative r

In the examples given above, the number of phrases in the pattern “not succeed in +verb-ing” is 7. Among all, the number of verbs with derogatory sense is 3 (1, 5, 6) while there is only one neutral verb (7). In terms of commendatory sense, three verbs follow the word “succeed” (2, 9, 10). A quick analysis of the specific contexts of this word in COCA could draw students’ attention to the fact that the English word “succeed” is not always of commendatory sense. For some students who fail to identify its derogatory sense, they are very likely to translate it into “成功” being commendatory instead of “得逞” of derogatory nature.

Chinese students as English learners, unlike English native speakers, can understand its emotional meaning hidden easily. But if they are taught to make an analysis of the context using monolingual corpora, the translation equivalent chosen will be more appropriate. Realizing the value of a monolingual corpus in translation teaching in this regard, the author often uses this as teaching material during translation teaching. It is further believed that taking the students through the whole process of word identification, its associated emotional meaning, will make them more sensitive to English words and improve their translation training.

4.4 Using Monolingual Corpora to Identify Idiomatic Expressions

Another benefit that monolingual corpora can bring is to help students identify what expressions are more frequently used or idiomatic. According to Johansson & Hofland (2000), corpus can be used to train translators to make decisions among different linguistic options of some specific language structures. Bowker (1998) believes that corpora can assist translators and translation students for “subject field understanding, correct term choice and idiomatic expression”. An example is given below.

ST4: It is not difficult to ensure high-speed growth of the national economy through expanded investment on a large sale. But it is difficult to realize effective economic growth and raise the enterprises capital profit rate and productivity.

TT4:要通过大规模地扩大投资来保证国民经济的高速增长并不难，难就难在要实现经济的有效增长以及提高企业的资本利润率和生产力。（for reference）

To some degree, when some TL phrases are chosen to be SL equivalents, language intuition plays a significant role. In example 4, some students may render the English phrase “effective economic growth” into Chinese “有效的经济增长”(back translation: effective economic growth)while others translate it into “经济的有效增长”(back translation: economic effective growth).Then, which is more frequently used or idiomatic in Chinese? We know that “effective economic growth” is a natural order in English. However, it would be not natural in Chinese if students translate it into Chinese “有效的经济增长”.

In order to address this issue, students are invited to search the Chinese corpus BCC for the frequency of the two Chinese equivalents. In BCC, there are several sub-corpora, but only three of them are searched here, namely, Subcorpus-Newspaper, Subcorpus-multi genres, Subcorpus-Science & Technology because they are more relevant. Both Chinese phrases are respectively searched in the abovementioned corpora. The results are shown in Table 3 as follows.

Table 3“有效的经济增长” vs “经济的有效增长”in BCC

ST	TT	Subcorpus- Newspaper	Subcorpus- multigenres	Subcorpus-Science & Technology	Total
The effective economic growth	有效的经济增 长	0	6	18	24
	经济的有效增 长	14	26	47	87

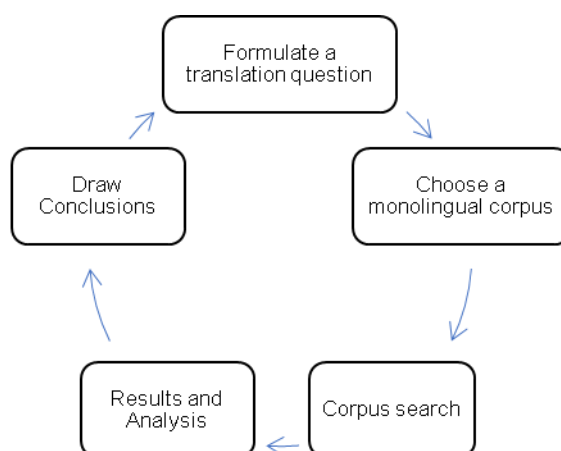
As Table 3 shows, the frequency of “经济的有效增长”(87 occurrences) is higher than that of “有效的经济增长” (24 occurrences). It means the former is more frequently used. What’s more, no occurrences in the subcorpus-Newspaper are found. Through the use of the Chinese monolingual corpus BCC, translation teachers are confident enough to demonstrate that the Chinese equivalent of the English phrase “effective economic growth” goes to “经济的有效增长” instead of “有效的经济增长” since it is more often used by Chinese native speakers.

5. Monolingual Corpus-assisted Approach to Translation Teaching and Potential Challenges

Motivated by the benefits of monolingual corpora discussed in the previous sections, the authors propose a monolingual corpus-assisted approach to Chinese-English TT for online education. So far, there have been two different approaches to the use of corpora in translation teaching, including corpus use for learning to translate and learning corpus use to translate (Beeby et al., 2009). Gallego-Hernández (2015) further explains, “in the former approach, corpora are compiled by trainers and translator trainees merely exploit them as a translation aid. Trainers may also use corpora as a source of teaching materials. In the latter approach, the translator trainees themselves build and exploit corpora”. From this angle, the corpus-assisted approach proposed in this paper belongs to the former, indicating students only need to emphasize their explorations of translation difficulties and know how to exploit corpora for solutions to those translation problems. This is indeed much easier since compiling a corpus is a time-consuming task.

The purpose of this cross-disciplinary teaching framework is threefold: 1) students are able to improve their language proficiency of both English and Chinese, and also corpus-related translation competences, such as search ability of corpus use, linguistic awareness, skills for information retrieval; 2) the corpora resources are free and thus can be fully exploited under the current COVID-19 context, as mentioned in previous sections; 3) the quality of students’ translations can be improved through the use of monolingual Chinese and English corpora. The approach is detailed in Figure 3.

Figure 3 A Monolingual Corpus-assisted Approach to Chinese-English TT



The proposed corpus-assisted teaching framework is student-centered, which differs from the traditional one being lecturer-centered. It has two fundamental elements, i.e., the translation questions to be answered and a corpus to be used. In addition, it develops three types of translation competences, including problem-solving competence, translation/language competence, and research competence. In each stage, students are supervised in their exploration of the related subject so that they can develop corpus-related competences which will assist

them to use monolingual corpora in TT.

The first and foremost issue using this approach has to do with formulating a translation question. Students must raise their awareness of how to ask questions in the translation process, in one of the cases above, in relation to how to translate the phrase “effective economic growth” in English into Chinese, “经济的有效增长” (back translation: economic effective growth) or “有效的经济增长”(back translation: effective economic growth). It has to be transferred to the so called “corpus question”, i.e., which is more frequently used in the Chinese monolingual corpus, the former or the latter? In this way, the corpus can play its due roles and provide corpus answers.

Once the question is clearly formulated, an appropriate monolingual corpus needs to be chosen if its access is assured. Which corpus, the Chinese monolingual corpus BCC and CCL or the English monolingual corpus BNC and COCA, should be employed is highly dependent on the translation questions to be addressed. To be more specific, the choice may be influenced by the translation direction depending on whether the expression to be found is, for example, the complete form of the Chinese abbreviation “三通”, or if it is a matter of comprehension of English words/phrases as the SL.

Then, corpus search can be conducted after a search strategy is devised for the “corpus question”. Monolingual corpora can offer linguistically empirical evidence that is convincing, which indicates teachers and students do not necessarily rely on their language intuition. However, it is a must for translation teachers to give lectures about how to use such corpora to students. It requires language proficiency to perform corpus searches. It is still questionable whether they can do the search and benefit from corpora without instructions of translation teachers.

In final terms, corpus results are analyzed, and conclusions are drawn. In this phase, students have to make decisions based on the corpus results and the corresponding analysis. For instance, in the example given in section 3.2, students need to identify the sentential contexts of “succeed” which could be commendatory, neutral or derogatory. Then, they can get to the appropriate translation when it is understood.

If monolingual corpora are regularly adopted by translation teachers in training students and students can use them for repeated practices, not only the students’ translation competences may be improved, but also the research competence enhanced. Simply put, the corpus-assisted approach can reinforce students’ autonomy for developing translation competences.

6. Conclusions

This paper has attempted to investigate the benefits of general monolingual English and Chinese corpora as translation resources for translation teaching. Our quantitative and qualitative analysis reveals monolingual corpora are overwhelmingly useful and students do not need to rely on their intuitive processing during translation for some specific translation-related tasks. Moreover, a preliminary monolingual corpus-assisted approach to TT is established. Although the corpus-assisted approach has been already applied in translation teaching, the use of monolingual corpora to Chinese and English translation teaching seems to be insufficient. In addition, this approach can enhance students’ awareness of questions during translation processes and improve their language or translation competences. Most importantly, the approach has shifted from the teacher-centered mode to the student-centered one.

However, the monolingual corpus-assisted approach has great challenges. To begin with, it is question-driven learning mode. Students may have to be trained to find their questions in translation, and then devise a search strategy for corpus use. The next thing that corpus use in TT entails is learning how to search the corpus and make a corpus-based analysis of the results. In this paper, we have endeavored to present several examples of how to obtain the empirical data from general monolingual corpora. Although all the examples given in the above sections involve the English-Chinese language pair, we are convinced that the approach used here can also be extended to other language pairs only if there are available monolingual corpora.

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