

# **The Development of Corpus-related Skills in Translator Training. Using *Webquests* as a Facilitating Instrument**

Ulrike OSTER & Teresa MOLÉS CASES  
Departament de Traducció i Comunicació  
Universitat Jaume I  
Castelló, Spain  
oster@uji.es; tmoles@uji.es

Over the last decades, the use of electronic resources has increased steadily among translators. The growing importance of these tools for translation practice is also reflected in the increase of ICT-related contents in the curricula of translator training institutions and in scholarly publications on this subject (e.g. Aston, 1999; the contributions in Zanettin, Bernardini & Stewart, 2003; Marco & van Lawick, 2009; Sánchez-Gijón, 2009; Frérot, 2011; Kübler, 2011). It is usually in specific modules on translation-relevant ICT that students get acquainted with a wide array of electronic resources, among them different types of corpora. Ideally, the corpus skills acquired in these courses will then be practiced throughout different subjects, i.e. translation as well as language courses, because training students in the use of tools like translation memories or corpora can only be truly meaningful if they get the opportunity to apply their newly acquired skills in actual translation courses (Oster, 2007).

In practice, however, the immediacy and simplicity of handling offered by free bilingual and multilingual on-line dictionaries, glossaries and terminological databases can easily lead the novice translator to perceive other types of reference material that requires a more reflective use (monolingual dictionaries, encyclopedia, thesauri, etc.) as obsolete and cumbersome. If students are reluctant to resort to these traditional resources simply because their use is more time consuming, what can one expect of their willingness to employ such complex tools as electronic text corpora? For quite some time now, corpora are being praised as very valuable sources of information for translators and as useful tools in translator training (e.g. Pearson, 1996; Bowker, 1999; Bernardini, 2004). But do we translator trainers really succeed in making our students aware of the benefits of their use and in developing the necessary skills for it? Our impression is that this success is rather limited. In this presentation, we will thus try to explore ways of making it easier for translation students to familiarize themselves with different types of corpora and their utility for acquiring linguistic and translation competence. Our first aim will be to propose a general structure for corpus-related contents in the translation curriculum (levels, aims, contents, types of corpora used) and a typology of corpus-based tasks for translator training.

On the other hand, one of the main difficulties of integrating active corpus work into the translation classroom is that working with corpora is a major challenge both for the student (because of the linguistic complexity of the material and the conceptual complexity of the tool) and for the teacher (due to the existence of individual differences in students' abilities, and to the fact that the multiplicity of possible results and interpretations makes the outcome of tasks rather unforeseeable, etc.). In order to account for these difficulties, a corpus-based task should meet a series of requirements. It should, for instance:

- allow students to work at their own pace
- guide students in a structured way through the task
- give them access to all the necessary resources (e.g. links to the relevant corpora, dictionaries, worksheets, etc.)
- provide all the necessary basic information so that the teacher can concentrate on individual assistance, if needed
- provide additional information or explanation if required

One task format that makes it possible to fulfill these conditions is the so-called *webquest*, a type of task that is increasingly employed for web-based activities in content-oriented teaching as well as in language learning. Due to their versatility webquests seem especially well suited to serve as a facilitating instrument for the introduction of corpus-based tasks in the translation classroom. The main part of our presentation will therefore be focused on presenting several activities that highlight the possibilities of this task format in the context of translator training.

## References

- Aston, G. (1999). 'Corpus use and learning to translate.' *Textus* 12: 289-314. Available from <http://home.sslmit.unibo.it/~guy/textus.htm> [16-02-2012].
- Bernardini, S. (2004). 'Corpora in the classroom'. In: Sinclair, J. (ed.). *How to Use Corpora in Language Teaching*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. 15-36.
- Bowker, L. (1999). 'Exploring the Potential of Corpora for Raising Language Awareness in Student Translators.' *Language Awareness* 8: 160-173.
- Frérot, C. (2011). 'Parallel Corpora for Translation Teaching and Translator Training Purposes'. In: Goźdz-Roszkowski, S. (ed.). *Explorations across Languages and Corpora*. Frankfurt a. M.: Peter Lang. 433-450.
- Kübler, N. (2011). 'Working with different corpora in translation teaching.' In Frankenberg-Garcia, A., Flowerdew, L. & Aston, G. (eds.). *New Trends in Corpora and Language Learning*. London: Continuum. 62-80.
- Marco, J. & van Lawick, H. (2009). 'Using corpora and retrieval software as a source of materials for the translation classroom.' In: Beeby, A., Sánchez-Gijón, P. & Rodríguez Inés, P. (eds). *Corpus Use and Translating. Corpus use for learning to translate and learning corpus use to translate*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. 109-128.
- Oster, U. (2007). 'Working towards autonomy: Corpora in the translation classroom.' In: Wotjak, G. (ed.). *Quo vadis Translatologie? Rückblick, Zwischenbilanz und Perspektiven aus der Außenperspektive aus Anlass von 50 Jahren universitärer Forschung und Ausbildung von Übersetzern und Dolmetschern an der Universität Leipzig*. Berlin: Timme. 311-325.
- Pearson, J. (1996). 'Electronic texts and concordances in the translation classroom.' *Teanga* 16: 85-95.
- Sánchez-Gijón, P. (2009). 'Corpus use and translating: corpus use for learning translate and learning corpus use to translate'. In: Beeby, A., Sánchez-Gijón, P. & Rodríguez Inés, P. (eds). *Corpus Use and Translating. Corpus use for learning to translate and learning corpus use to translate*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. 109-128.
- Zanettin, F., Bernardini, S. & Stewart, D. (eds). (2003). *Corpora in Translator Education*. Manchester: St. Jerome.