

CORPUS USE AND LEARNING TO TRANSLATE, ALMOST 20 YEARS ON

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It is almost 20 years since a series of conferences known as CULT (Corpus Use and Learning to Translate) started. The first and second took place in Bertinoro, Italy, back in 1997 and 2000, respectively. The third was held in 2004 in Barcelona, and the fourth in 2015 in Alicante. Each was organized by a few enthusiastic lecturers and scholars who also happened to be corpus lovers. Guy Aston, Silvia Bernardini, Dominic Stewart and Federico Zanettin, from the Università di Bologna; Allison Beeby, Patricia Rodríguez-

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Inés and Pilar Sánchez-Gijón, from the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona; and Daniel Gallego-Hernández, from the Universidad de Alicante, organized CULT conferences in the belief that spreading the word about the usefulness of corpora for teaching and professional translation purposes would have positive results. Bernardini and Zanettin (2000), Zanettin et al. (2003) and Beeby et al. (2009) published contributions from the first three CULT conferences, and Gallego Hernández (2016) has already published a collection of miscellaneous papers from the fourth. This issue of *Cadernos de Tradução* contains another selection of papers from the fourth, with the specific aim of presenting practices and research carried out in academic institutions and clearly designed to equip translation trainees with corpus-related knowledge and skills that will help them in their professional life.

Against that backdrop, the first paper presented in this issue is entitled “*Discovery learning in the language-for-translation classroom: Corpora as learning aids*”. It includes Silvia Bernardini’s review of the idea of discovery learning with corpora, evaluating its potential and its implications in relation to translator education. The author has always advocated (e.g. 2000) the capacity of corpora to make students think for themselves by presenting them with hints, questions and challenges, and to stimulate their autonomy in terms of learning, research and work. Here, she presents examples of corpus-based discovery projects that can contribute to the development of a variety of competences, including all those proposed by the EMT expert group (2009).

In “*Corpora and corpus technology for translation purposes in professional and academic environments. Major achievements and new perspectives*”, Cécile Frérot acknowledges (as other authors do in this volume) that, despite the usefulness of corpora in educational and professional environments, most translation courses, especially at MA level, offer very limited training in the specific use of these resources. Instead, academic courses and professional translators seem to opt for training in and the use of translation memory systems. The author also comments on the few

experimental studies carried out to date to test the usefulness of corpora, concludes that more studies are needed to obtain empirical evidence of their benefits, and observes that there are still some methodological issues to address in such studies.

Another paper that takes stock of previous research is “*Revisiting corpus creation and analysis tools for translation tasks*” by Claudio Fantinuoli. In addition to suggesting that one of the factors in professional translators’ low level of use of electronic corpora and concordancers may be that they are mainly designed for linguists, the author presents TranslatorBank, a free corpus creation and analysis tool that can be used for translation tasks of various degrees of complexity, according to users’ needs.

Entering the realm of the use of corpora for specific training situations and purposes, we find “*Using corpora in scientific and technical translation training: Resources to identify conventionality and promote creativity*” by Clara Inés López-Rodríguez. In this paper the author suggests that quality corpora can help students find better solutions than some translation memories and bilingual resources, which tend to provide translations that are ready-made but not always suitable.

The paper entitled “*Corpus de aprendices, corpus de traducciones profesionales y escritura creativa en la clase de traducción general: Un proyecto de investigación-acción*”, by María Teresa Sánchez Nieto, also deals with the issue of creativity, although from a different methodological perspective and with a focus on general translation in the combination DE>ES. The author describes a research-action project in which two groups of students were exposed to different educational input involving the use of corpora.

In the paper “*Uso de corpus monolingües y comparables en el aula para traducir conectores adverbiales*”, Beatriz Sánchez Cárdenas and Pamela Faber also report on a study, in this case one conducted to test whether exposure to corpora improved the translation of certain grammatical items, specifically adverbial connectors. Preliminary results seem to indicate that the use of comparable corpora can, at least, raise awareness of translation

problems posed by apparently ‘uninteresting’ words whose translation is thought to be quite straightforward.

Finally, despite referring to theoretical functions in the title of his paper, “*Exploring theoretical functions of corpus data in teaching translation*”, Éric Poirier describes the background and the actual application of an approach to the teaching of sense discrimination in translation. With the help of a small annotated corpus, the author produces a list of conditional rules of interpretation whose application he illustrates with examples of teaching and learning activities focusing on sense discrimination.

This special issue is, we believe, a balanced combination of reviews of and reflection on what corpora have so far brought to the teaching of translation, and the application of corpora to specific cases. We hope that this publication will be followed by many others as corpus-based translation education continues to enjoy healthy growth in the years to come.

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