CORPUS-BASED TRAINING TO BUILD TRANSLATION COMPETENCES AND TRANSLATORS' SELF-RELIANCE

DIANA OȚĂT
University of Craiova

Abstract: *Among well-established standard operating strategies and methodologies aimed at improving students' multi-layered translation competence, corpus linguistics has given impulse to new inter-disciplinary standpoints. Plugging in cutting edge toolkits, corpus use envisages real-life translation training in compliance with current market demands. The paper underpins specialised corpus design, using MAXQDA as an interactive tool meant to build translators' functional autonomy.*
Keywords: *corpus linguistics, multi-layered translation competence, translation training*

1. Introduction

Within the context of the contemporary market-driven society, governed by a steadily interplay of demand and supply, Translation Studies has witnessed a paradigm shift from the descriptive and normative approach of the 1960s towards a more dynamic outlook to open up cooperative strategies that bridge societies and cultures.

Formal correspondence, as labelled by Catford (1965:20), prescribing that equivalence needs to be observed mainly at the syntactic and lexical levels, has been reshaped by Nida (1984:13), who highlights the dynamic nature of translation by advocating that "anything that can be said in one language can certainly be said in another language". Likewise, Newmark (1988) regards translation as *A dynamic reflection of human activities*, relevant in terms of real-life purpose intercultural communication. Under the circumstances, target text-oriented perspectives impact on the outcome.

Chartering new territories within the composite landscape of contemporary translation practice, Toury (1995:201) advocates that by adopting a target text-oriented perspective, translators resort to the social function of translation, assigning paramount importance to cultural variables in the production of target texts.

Subsequently, translation-training programmes focused on the development of translator's competence, while also boosting trainees' self-reliance and decision-making. Special attention has been paid to a growing awareness of the translators' role as intercultural mediators. The key role that translators play within the professional and social landscape is revealed by the fact that tailor-made curricula and programmes emerged as a response to the increased demand for this profession. This phenomenon is pinpointed by Baker (2014):

... from food chains to the film industry, and from news reporting to networks of political resistance, the world has become a dense web of interrelations that are continually being reshaped through various forms of linguistic and cultural mediation. (Baker 2014:19)

In what follows, we aim to put forward an interdisciplinary training framework designed to build translation trainees' functional autonomy. By challenging trainees with real-life translation tasks, we seek to develop both the translation competence in compliance with current quality requirements and further transversal competences via corpora design methods and computer-assisted tools.

2. Input Data

Preparing future translators to adhere to the contemporary translation market effectively and responsibly, we shall indicate how corpus linguistics and CAT tools (MAXQDA software) contribute to the development of translation trainees' competence. Thus, we underpin an integrative approach to translation training as a "viable and fruitful perspective within which translation and translating can be studied in a novel and systematic way." (Laviosa 1998:1)

2.1 Meeting the contemporary translator

A preliminary stage of our training framework is devoted to raise students' awareness with regard to the contemporary translator's profile. Hence, students are familiarised with the joint-efforts carried out at the European level to improve translator training programmes. Special attention is paid to the European Masters' in Translation (EMT) network, launched in 2009 by the EC Directorate-General for Translation. Accordingly, students grow aware of some core strategies adopted in order to establish current quality benchmarks and develop effective translation study programmes at Master's level.

In line with the recommendations endorsed by the EMT expert group, students come to understand the concept of *multi-layered translation competence*, incorporating several particular dimensions:

- The interpersonal (i.e., interaction with clients as purpose-oriented) and production dimensions;
- Language competence, activating both L1 and L2 mastery to provide a natural and error-free translation of the source text;
- Intercultural awareness;
- Information mining competence (coupled with critical thinking skills);
- Thematic area competence;
- Technological competence.

(adapted from Chodkiewicz and Curie-Sklodowska 2012:39-41)

Beyond the particular dimensions of the *multi-layered translation competence*, further interdisciplinary dimensions are introduced to students. Under the circumstances, we highlight the importance of the intercultural competence as an integral component embedding linguistic and social awareness, essential for a translator to detect and compare culture-related translation units. Alongside the information mining competence and technological competence development via corpus analysis, trainees will get acquainted with the organisation of thematic maps, widening their specialised terminology.

2.2 Corpus linguistics and translation training

Among the first scholars to highlight the importance of corpora encompassing both source and translated texts, Baker (1993:243) postulated that translators would come to better perceive "the nature of translated text as a mediated communicative event" through a systematic corpus-based investigation. Even though the approach envisaged by Baker was aimed at developing interpreting competences, it was later adapted for the written dimension of translation. Other prominent scholars have placed corpus-based research at the heart of novel translation research directions. The main objectives of general or specialised corpora introduced to translation training programmes are related to an increased awareness of source and target texts different socio-cultural settings so as to secure a natural and error-free end product. Almost two decades ago, Laviosa (1998:1) argued that the corpus-based approach would evolve "through theoretical elaboration and empirical realisation", resulting into "a coherent, composite and rich paradigm" relevant for theory and practice.

Special attention is paid to the advantages brought by corpus-based analysis, such as the deeper comprehension of authentic texts and, implicitly, an increased natural language flow in target text production, as well as a better identification and a more appropriate application of translation norms, strategies and procedures. Also, the investigation of authentic texts and their comparison to translated versions in parallel corpora will enable students to chart and further re-use general and specialised terminology.

Digital corpora and computer-assisted tools are now at the touch of a button-distance to generate different types of frequency lists in terms of text typology, lexical particularities, specialised terminology or translation procedures applied. Such outcomes can be further applied and incorporated in larger software packages and environments for advanced developments of CAT tools.

3. Corpus-based Training as an Added Value

Sharing Baker's (2014: 23) perspective in that cutting-edge technology and, especially, computer-assisted tools are essential to the contemporary job of a translator, acting as "participatory culture that makes many of the challenges posed through translation and interpreting possible", we designed and implemented a corpus-based analysis of parallel specialised corpora. The setting up of our experiment consists of three stages, combining contemporary corpus design recommendations, translation theoretical insights and practical corpus-based assignments.

3.1 Corpus design

The first stage of our experiment concerns the operational knowledge of corpus design. Thus, the first task for the trainees is to compile a parallel specialized corpus, i.e. a bilingual corpus comprising 10 cooking recipes from *Jamie's 30 Minute Meals*, authored by Jamie Oliver and available as an interactive electronic book at http://www.jamieoliver.com, and their Romanian translated version *Găteşte în 30 de minute cu Jamie*, available at www.tvpaprika.ro. Students are asked to search the internet and organise both the original texts and their translated version in two pdf-format documents, to increase usability.

The theoretical and practical recommendation put forward by Lüdeling and Kytö (2008) underpin students' corpus design procedures serving to answer specific research questions. Students not only design a reliable corpus in accordance with the key criteria of

representativeness and balance, and they are also given the opportunity to handle authentic texts, dealing with particular cultural rituals and artefacts, hence the intercultural component is prevailing.

3.2 Achieving theoretical insights

Before embarking upon the practical assignments, students are required to review previous resources regarding the functionalist approach to translation in terms of text typology and language functions as put forward by Reiss (1981/2000), Newmark (1988) and Hatim and Munday (2004). Admittedly, students are asked to identify and feature recipes linguistically and culturally, providing arguments with reference to the dominant and secondary text functions and their effect on the target readership. Further theoretical insights are directed at the cultural intertraffic strategies.

3.3 Computer-assisted simulation for corpora use

Having designed the electronic coups and established the theoretical framework in terms of language functions and text typology, the students are required to investigate the corpus by means of computer-assisted tools.

First we set the research tasks:

- to upload the parallel specialised corpus in MAXQDA 12, a qualitative data analysis software;
- to mine the parallel corpora in order to determine terminology frequency and translation procedures incidence, and their interconnection;
- to design and develop thematic maps by means of the options provided by the software, which can be further re-used for other translation assignments.

Using the options available in MAXQDA 12, students are divided into three groups, as follows:

- Group 1 members will carry out a corpus-based analysis in order to identify specific ingredient-terms and their counterparts, alongside the translation procedures;
- Group 2 is in charge of a corpus-based analysis to identify measurement units used in the source texts and their equivalents in the target texts, as well as the translation procedures applied;
- Group 3 is concerned with a corpus-based analysis to identify kitchen tools, appliances and cooking procedures terms and their equivalents in translation, and the corresponding translation procedures.

While training corpus-design skills applied to translation, our experiment will also enable the students to network, hence developing interpersonal competence via a real-time virtual interface. The applications provided by the software will allow the students to access the two sub-corpora simultaneously. Selecting the colour-based labelling option, the students can mark different text excerpts in terms of *ingredients, measurements and kitchen tools, gadgets, cooking procedures* to which they can further add comments related to the most appropriate translation procedures.

As illustrated in Figure 1 below, by selecting the Code System option, a different colour is assigned to each group and then each group has the autonomy to assign a different colour to each translation procedure identified while investigating the corpus.
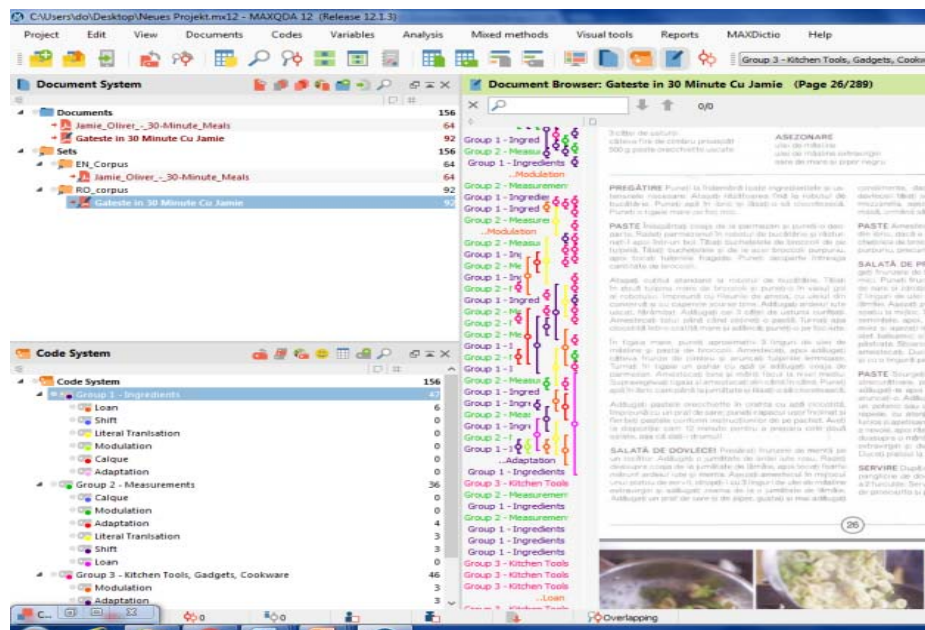
Figure 1. Text encoding in MAXQDA 12

After developing and applying computer-assisted research methods to identify and label translation-related particularities in terms of terminology frequency and translation procedures incidence, each group selects the option *Dictionary* and the software will generate word frequency lists as well as thematic lists, related to their research topic.

To complete their corpus-based research study, students are asked to display and interpret the results achieved via digital tools.

The generated outcomes are listed below:

- diagrams highlighting terminology frequency;
- document portraits indicating translation procedures incidence in relation to the specific terminology items labelled;
- word clouds associated with thematic maps encompassing the most relevant (bilingual) terminology.

Figure 2 illustrates a document portrait generated to establish translation procedures incidence in relation to the specific terminology items labelled.
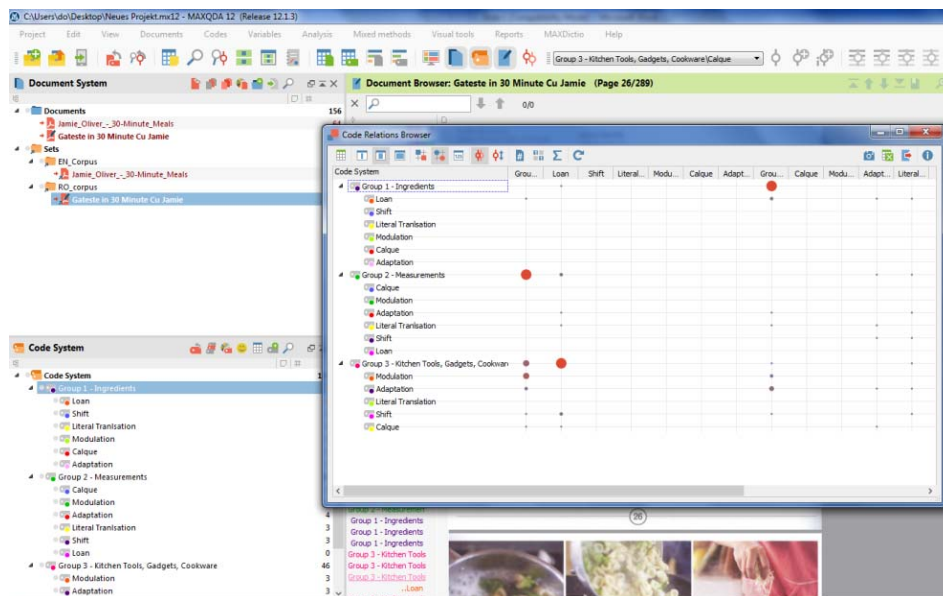
Figure 2. Document portrait: procedures incidence in relation to the specific terminology

4. Considerations on the Experiment

By carrying out this experimental research we sought to develop students' awareness with reference to the outcomes that computer-assisted corpus investigation brings to translation practice.

Our experiment envisaged the design of an electronic corpus, a simulated computer-assisted corpus analysis and a digitalised representation and interpretation of the results that can be further applied to larger scale translation tasks.

Using corpora to develop and train translation competences will also assist students in the long term to better identify and to investigate source text and/or target text variations, both diachronically and synchronically. Special importance is paid to cultural variables and localisation strategies, as trainees are assigned to identify and evaluate particular authentic examples of culture-related items or specific social context patterns.

Such corpus-based analysis is also effective in training students' research skills, both quantitative and qualitative analysis being involved. Moreover, digital corpora design and analysis may enable students to use and organise extensive linguistic information, document, organise, analyse or compare corpora.

In the long run, valuable translation-oriented routines as driven by computer-assisted corpora investigation can be applied to a whole range of texts and tasks, preparing trainees for a better insertion to the labour market and boosting their professional recognition.

5. Conclusion

We advocate that computer-assisted investigations of corpora can develop the students' multi-layered translation competence, and enhance self-reliance. Consequently, we consider that the central achievement lies in the production of a target text that meets the

expectations/requirements of a target readership/client while also allowing the translator to develop.

Last but not least, the paper highlights the need for constant tailoring and re-tailoring of translator training programmes at the academic level. Some practical suggestions as to how raise students' awareness with regard to the digital processing of specialised corpora in translation may act as a springboard.

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Notes on the author

Diana OȚĂT is a Junior Lecturer, PhD, Department of British-American and German Studies, Faculty of Letters, University of Craiova. Her research activity focuses on Translation Studies, legal English, pragmatics and intercultural communication. She has a Master's degree in Intercultural Communication Strategies – German language, University of Bucharest, and a Bachelor's degree in English Language and Literature – German Language and Literature, University of Craiova.