Chapter 5

Feasibility and Acceptability of In-Depth Annotated Parallel Corpus-Aided Translation Teaching

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ABSTRACT

This chapter probes into the feasibility and acceptability of integrating an in-depth annotated parallel corpus into the translation classroom. It proceeds from outlining the conceptual and structural features of English/Chinese Online Translation Teaching Platform, an in-depth annotated parallel corpus designed for teaching and (self-) learning of translation. With a 90-minute lecture as a demo, it illustrates how the combined unity of course teaching materials and the platform, as well as the teaching method and the annotation mode of the corpus, can be effectively achieved. It then discusses users' perceptions of the use of the platform in classroom teaching as shown in a recent survey and points out the possibilities of future development.

INTRODUCTION

The last decade has seen a growing increase of the use of parallel corpora in translation education (e.g. Wang, 2004; Wang, Qing, & Wang, 2007; Zhu & Yip, 2010; Zhu & Wang, 2011; Li & Wang, 2011; Zanettin, Bernardini, & Stewart, 2014). The benefit of using parallel corpora is that, as Pearson (2003, p. 23) concludes, they can "provide students with evidences of how 'translators overcome difficulties of translation in practice' (Baker, 1995, p. 231)". With these linguistic evidences, students are left to "draw up their own translation guidelines" (ibid). Yet, a survey conducted by Wang et al (2007) reveals that students may make inappropriate generalizations out of these authentic data. This is partly because, as Wang et al (2007, p. 6) contends, students are not able to go deep into the language and translation issue due to their poor language and analytic ability. It is needless to say that these "inappropriate generalizations"[1], if put to use, will eventually have negative impact on translation practice. In this connection, without being further processed, the

evidences provided in the corpus may potentially point students in a wrong direction; whereas for evidences undergoing further processing, chances are that students will be enabled to generalize a proper rule, which will in turn help improve their translation performance. From this perspective, an in-depth annotation system based on which data can be further processed is called for, with a view to promoting a better understanding of language phenomena on the part of users.

On the other hand, after examining research articles published in China between 1993-2009, Yang and Bai (2010, p. 48) found that few of them were developed from empirical studies on applying corpora to translation teaching; whereas the existing studies, as Qin and Wang (2007, p. 49) point out, fail to address issues arising from the integration of parallel corpora into translation teaching. Zhu and Yip (2010, p. 389-390) also echo the need of a methodology to "apply machine-aided and corpus-based approaches in a systematic and rigorous fashion to the improvement of the pedagogical efficiency".

To address the first issue, this paper introduces English/Chinese Online Translation Teaching Platform, developed by City University of Hong Kong and supported by a parallel corpus with a textual accountability-driven annotation system. Through a lecture demo, the paper aims to explore how the in-depth annotated corpus can be effectively integrated into the translation classroom. The perceptions of the use of the platform in classroom teaching, as shown in a recent survey, will also be discussed.

CONCEPTUAL AND STRUCTURAL FEATURES OF ENGLISH/ CHINESE ONLINE TRANSLATION TEACHING PLATFORM

As already mentioned, users without fair language proficiency may generalize inappropriate rules out of linguistic evidences presented in the corpus,

which will eventually affect users' translation performance. In this connection, it turns to be a must for users to increase their language competence so as to better understand the authentic data.

To that end, English/Chinese Online Translation Teaching Platform proposes a textual accountability-driven annotation system, developed from Zhu and Yip (2010), Zhu and Wang (2011) and Wang and Zhu (2012). Given that text is an irreducible part of translation activities, a clear knowledge of how a text is formulated is essential in the interpreting of the source as well as the target text. With this as a good point of departure, the present textual accountability-driven annotation system, drawing inspirations from text linguistics, Systemic Functional Linguistics, stylistics, and discourse analysis, is designed to observe and explain how information is presented in the source text and re-presented in the target text, with a focus on the way the information is manifested at different text levels, its textual effects and functions. Specifically, the annotation describes *what* the language/translation phenomenon is, elaborates *why* it is used like this by analyzing its textual functions and/or possible textual effects, and explicates *how* it is formulated to achieve such effects (Zhu & Mu, 2013, p. 57). Through elaborating on these *what*, *why* and *how* questions, it aims to help students cultivate their textual awareness, increase their sensitivity to language details and improve their language and translation competence.

The various manifestations of information in both source and target texts are labelled by tagwords as language phenomena and translation methods or phenomena. Based on their functions in the formulation of a text, the tagwords can be roughly categorized into nine groups: translation methods, idiomatic expressions, rhetorical devices, grammar, intra-sentence information structure, inter-sentence cohesion, intra-paragraph progression, inter-paragraph development and cultural background. To see how language phenomena and translation phenomena or methods

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