

## **Effectiveness of self-built Chinese-English Corpus on Assisting Translation Teaching**

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### **Abstract**

*With the thriving of corpus-based translation, the discussion of corpus and translation teaching has been carried out abroad for years; however, similar studies in China, especially, the integration of theory research and empirical study, are still limited. By building a student-centered teaching-oriented corpus and applying it to teaching practice, the research probes into the usefulness and feasibility of corpus-based translation teaching. Besides that, some proposals are made on how to carry out translation-competence oriented teaching with the assistance of specialized parallel corpus.*

**Keywords:** college English translation teaching, corpus-based translation, parallel corpus

### **1. Introduction**

In Chinese universities, although the English translation course is classified as professional course, but for non English majors, English translation courses are not singled out and have not been given due attention (Yuxi, Wang, 2010). This does not mean it is not important for the non-English major students to improve translation Skills. In fact, on the contrary, improving students' practical skills in translation occupies a very important position in English curriculum reform. Through the observation of College English teaching practice, we find although the students have a certain English language foundation and translation potential, but in the actual exams as College English Test (CET), test scores of translation part are quite low. Teachers have relied on the traditional direct instruction in teaching translation skills. This reflects the gap between the necessity of college students to improve English translation and the lack of offer in English classroom.

To fill the gap, innovative translation instruction should be introduced. Corpus as a supplementary tool used in language teaching, is an emerging area of research of applied linguistics. Corpora, with a lot of authentic language materials and the use of advanced retrieval software, can greatly benefit translation teaching (Baker, 1995). On the basis of theoretical research, some of the previous researches have touched upon the field of the integration of corpus and translation teaching with empirical evidence(Rui Ma, Qinggui Chen, Bo Fan,2010:81), but few researches test the self-built corpus on teaching of non-English majors. Given the current situation, a small Bilingual parallel corpus is built with the resources both from CET translation tests and college English textbooks, which is applied to translation class.

### **2.1 Preliminary Construction of the Corpus**

The original corpus size is altogether about 500,000 English words and Chinese characters. There are about 300,000 Chinese characters and 200,000 English words in the specialized parallel corpus that is used in the experiment. The scope of the corpus is mainly concentrated on the translation texts of CET, and the materials in the corpus are mainly chosen from CET examination papers and major college English textbooks. Based on the comparative linguistic theory, differences between Chinese and English are discussed by use of the self-built corpus so as to train students' research ability in learning, and as well as create an effective, feasible and innovative translation teaching and Learning mode.

## 2.2 Corpus Maintenance and Updates

To the initial corpus more students' translations are added in the teaching process, because although currently available online corpuses are surely important for the translation of research and teaching reference and of which teachers should guide students to make use, the lack of corresponding translation work of students fail to reflect the problems faced with the students or guide the specific teaching (Yu Jun, Wang Zhaohui, 2010). Therefore, in this study, besides standard version of English translation, students' translation works are selectively added during practice. For teachers, it can help identify common problems that exist and make better evaluations and give appropriate guidance to students; for student, it offers a self-learning and mutual learning platform to help students to play initiative. By comparing the reference translation and their own work, students can better identify and solve the problem themselves. Furthermore, from the corresponding reference translation language database, they can identify effective translation techniques all by themselves.

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1 Participants

The subjects (n=90) chosen for this study are two intact classes of non-English major sophomores from North China Electric Power University, who have similar English proficiency levels on the whole, which can also fulfill the precondition of conducting the whole experiment.

### 3.2 Procedures

The subjects are divided into controlled group and experiment group, with the former receiving the translation class using conventional resources and the latter the corpus-based teaching mode. A pretest was given to make sure they are parallel in translation. An introduction on the specialized English-Chinese parallel corpus and its analyzing tool was given to the students, which would help them to get a rough impression of the corpus and they were asked to do their own exploration on it. The used corpus analyzing tool is ParaConc, which is available on the Internet at <http://www.athel.com/para.html>. Two months later, a post-learning test is conducted to identify the students' translation performance. The translation tests before and after the program are based on the translation part of CET-4 because most of the students in the two classes are keeping their mind on the exam, and they are making great efforts to pass it in this term.

### 3.3 Data Analysis

All the subjects are given two different translation tests respectively before and after the learning. As can be shown from the table below, the subjects of both groups performed almost equally in the pre-learning.

This result is consistent with their achievements of the College English Placement Test. But when the mean scores of the after-learning test are compared, difference is found between the two groups, with the mean scores of the experimental group a little higher.

**Table3.1 Comparison of the Scores in Independent Samples Test**

	subjects	mean	T	Sig(two-tailed)	Mean difference
Pre-test	Control group	8.83	0.239	0.812	0.09
	Experimental group	8.74			
Post-test	Control group	10.23	2.981	0.004	1.14
	Experimental group	9.09			

Independent Samples Test was used to analyze the scores of both groups at the same time. The analysis data show that in the pre-test,  $t=0.239$ ,  $\text{Sig}(2\text{-tailed})=0.812$  ( $P>0.05$ ). It means that there is non-significant difference between the two groups before the experiment. In such case, the results from the statistic analysis can be more convincing and can explain whether the application of corpus-based approach can enhance the translation performances better. However, in the post-test, the analysis data show that  $t=2.981$ ,  $\text{sig}(2\text{-tailed})=0.004$  ( $P<0.05$ ), Which means that there is significant difference between the performance of the two groups. And the mean difference is 1.14, higher than that of the pre-test. Remarkable progress has been made by the experimental group in the post-learning test compared either with their score of the pre-learning test or with that of the control group's performance in the post-learning test. Results indicate that the corpus-based teaching is more effective than simply direct instruction in improving students' translation performance.

### **3.4 Discussion**

Because other factors in the experiment are the same, the improvement of the students in the experimental group can only be attributed to the lexical approach applied in the integrative English class during the whole semester. Compared with the conventional organization of translation, the advantages of a corpus-based teaching may be summarized as follows.

First, the electronic texts can greatly improve the efficiency of preparing lessons. The amounts of resource in the corpus can provide teachers with materials of different teaching needs in different fields and make efficient access to instructional materials. The sources are all from authoritative publications, which ensure the reliability of the samples needed in class.

Second, making the differences of words, expressions and sentences clearer and more visualized. In the classroom, comparable corpora can be used to confirm translation hypotheses and to suggest possible solutions to actual translation problems related to a specific text (Zanettin, 1998). Students can compare the different uses in different contexts conveniently with the specialized parallel corpus, and then by thinking and screening they can make their own translation choice and principles that can be used in their future practice. It is an enhancement and expansion of what the teacher has taught them.

Third, it helps to construct a class atmosphere that teachers and students can learn from each other through corpus-based discussion. Based on the materials of the corpus, both teacher and students can make their own points of view about what has been taught and learned more valid, from which both teachers and students can be benefited. Teachers can improve the materials of the corpus in accordance with the feedback of the students' and make the class more target-oriented. For students, such learning emphasizing on exploring involves more interest, allowing students to participate more actively, and stimulating students' initiative and enabling high learning efficiency. By exploring the corpus, students can gain a sense of accomplishment of learning.

Last, collecting the translation exercises of students and building the specialized learner corpus which can serve the future teaching. Teachers can make the works of students electronized and set foundation for the further translation research in this field.

### **4. Summary**

From the data gained through the experiment, it can be concluded that the self-built parallel corpus is of significant help in translation teaching by enhancing students' translation competence and assisting teachers to carry out their teaching work. It is clear that the corpus-based translation teaching is worth being introduced into our classroom to construct the competence-oriented translation teaching model.

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