

Translating International Treaties: A Corpus-based Approach to Training Translation Students

تدريب طلبة الترجمة على ترجمة المعاهدات الدولية:
مقاربة مبنية على المدونات النصية

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Abstract:

This paper sketches an outline of a corpus-based training on translating international treaties, devised by the Algerian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. While the study departs from a narrative account by the senior translators in charge of the training, it provides a robust narrative analysis grounded in the theoretical framework of Corpus Linguistics. The training was analyzed based on corpus trajectory, typology, approaches, and competences. The paper demonstrates the versatility of corpora in translation practice and training and showcased an interesting experience while shedding light on its limitations. The outline of the Training drawn by the study and its subsequent analysis provided valid insights into the usefulness of corpus methodologies in translating international treaties and defined the competences needed to produce a text that shares equal authenticity with the source text, i.e., the negotiated text of the treaty.

Keywords: *ad hoc* corpora; institutional corpora; translating international treaties; translation competence; translation training; Translationese.

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ملخص:

ترسم هذه الدراسة معالم تدريب على ترجمة المعاهدات الدولية قائم على المدونات النصية تقدّمه وزارة الخارجية الجزائرية لفائدة طلاب الترجمة ومهنييها. وحتى وإن انبنت الدراسة على بيانات سرديّة لكبار المترجمين المسؤولين عن التدريب في الوزارة، فإنّها تقدم تحليلاً مؤسّساً يركّز على إطار نظري تحكمه لسانيات المدونة. وقد تم تحليل التدريب على أساس توجهات المدونات وتصنيفاتها ومناهجها وكفاءاتها.

وتوضح الدراسة مدى تعدد استخدامات المدونات النصية في ممارسة الترجمة والتدريب عليها وتستعرض تجربة فريدة تستحق التعميم مع تسليط الضوء على حدودها العملية والنظرية. وقد قدم مخطط التدريب الذي رسمته الدراسة وتحليله فيما يلحق رؤى صحيحة حول مزايا منهجيات المدونة النصية في ترجمة المعاهدات الدولية وحدد الكفاءات اللازمة لإنتاج نص يتساوى مع النص الأصل - أي النص المتفاوض عليه للمعاهدة - في الحجية القانونية.

كلمات مفتاحية: المدونات النصية المتخصصة، الترجمة المؤسسية، ترجمة المعاهدات الدولية، كفاءة الترجمة، التدريب على الترجمة، الترجمة المهجنة.

1. INTRODUCTION

Computers constituted a decisive turning point in human history that affected all fields and even redefined the basic concepts prevailing in most of them. Linguistics have adopted this invention as a tool for comprehensive language analysis, and it has become commonplace nowadays to analyse large and diverse linguistic samples, in the form of corpora, with a content that may exceed millions of words and tokens. Such corpora have become available thanks to the digitalization of the text and the emergence of powerful tools that compile, align, and analyse big linguistic data, obtained from natural language processing. In this regard, Stubbs (Stubbs 2004) asserted that the introduction of electronic corpora equals that of telescopes into astronomy.

Hence, applied research in corpus linguistics has brought about an infinite number of tools with a myriad of uses each, and it has become possible to study language in various ways, synchronous or diachronous, monolingual, comparative or multilingual, etc. Likewise, this qualitative technological leap was reflected not

only in linguistic research, but also in teaching translation. The computer and the web became among the basic tools in education and, therefore, translation training, and the role of the teacher shifted from a primary source of information to a facilitator within a new learning environment that relies on many corpus-based methodologies. Corpora in such learning environments are placed in the hands of the learner, who will be able to grasp the connotations of terms in natural contexts instead of looking up for them in a dictionary in isolation from any context and able also to study their colloquial occurrences without the excessive need for the teacher. Thus, the learning experience is shifted from a teacher-centred to a learner-centred approach.

The potential that digitalized texts have brought into the realm of translation study and practice is immeasurable. Corpora are generally understood as collections of texts ‘held in machine-readable form and capable of being analysed automatically or semi-automatically in a variety of ways’ (Baker 1995).

Although ‘corpus-based research is often assumed to have begun in the early 1960s with the availability of electronic, machine-readable corpora’ (Kennedy 1998, 13), the enhanced computational capabilities and the emergence of powerful natural language processing tools have contributed to the widespread of corpus methodologies and applications.

Moreover, corpus linguistics relies on no homogenous methodology but is rather used with varying qualitative and quantitative methods that share the common features of machine readability, natural occurrence, balanced representativeness, and exhaustive analysis (Stefanowitsch and Gries 2006). Likewise, corpora emphasize the fact that language occurs following cognitively-motivated patterns (Stubbs 2004), and, thus, incite an empirical approach to language analysis that is based on authentic data and inductive processes (Tognini-Bonelli 2001). Indeed, corpora allow formulating theoretical statements departing from induction (observing language in actual use) instead of instruction (formulating an a priori mental sketch on how language is ought to be used).

Johansson (Johansson 2007) argues that corpora offer a lens through languages asserting that ‘Seeing through corpora we can see through languages’, while claiming that ‘the comparison sharpens the perception of both similarities and differences.’ Therefore, corpora prove to be a versatile tool in terms of providing valid insights into language in its actual use and prevent building facts on any artificial language whatsoever.

Translation studies are replete with a myriad of corpus typologies that vary according to the different criteria. These may include, but not limited to, subject area (linguistic or translational), domain (general or specialized), mode (written or spoken), chronology (synchronous or diachronous), number of languages, directionality (unidirectional, bidirectional or multidirectional), etc. (Fernandes 2006).

For the purpose of our study, the typology involving monolingual (non-translated texts in one language), comparable (at least two monolingual corpora in one language or at least two languages with either/each corpus not being a translation of the other/others), and parallel corpora (translation corpora made by STs-TTs alignment). In fact, this typology has been elected in previous corpus-based research of legal translation (L. Biel 2010).

In the same wake, studies tackling the use of corpora in legal translation study, training and practice are many and diverse. Indeed, a number of these studies (Monzó-Nebot 2008; Rodríguez Inés 2009; Sánchez-Gijón 2009; Krüger 2012) focused on the usefulness of corpora in the translation training for different types of texts and various language combinations while asserting that translation quality improved accordingly (Prieto Ramos 2019a). Others (ZANETTIN 2002; L. Biel 2018; Prieto Ramos 2019a) transcended translation study to point out the applications of corpora in legal translation practice given their versatility. This study will shed light on a corpus-based training in an institutional setting, focusing on translating international treaties.

Indeed, the Algerian Ministry of Foreign Affairs provides internships for translation students enrolled in Algerian universities. The internship is a training provided at the Ministry's headquarters where trainees are immersed in institutional and professional settings as much as possible.

Accordingly, this study tackles the pertinence of using corpora to train interns, mainly translation students, in translating international treaties. It addresses how the Training² accounts for the actual translation competence and how corpora work towards the establishment of this competence.

To answer these questions, data pertaining to the Training have been gathered via interviewing senior translators in charge of the Training in the

² For the purposes of conciseness, the training provided by the Foreign Ministry is referred to as the 'Training' throughout the study.

different Ministry's directorates. Based on the interviews, core narratives were constructed via inductive and deductive analysis.

In inductive analysis, a thematic approach was adopted where themes of corpora, translation competence, legal translation were sought after to identify relevant data and establish the general patterns. In deductive analysis, the content of selected data was analysed according to a theoretical framework that pertains to corpus linguistics. The aim was to have a grounded narrative analysis and prevent any potential subjectivity.

One limitation to this study that might be highlighted is the unviability of feedback related to the effectiveness of the training in actual practice as trainees are not followed up further to the training. Moreover, official records pertaining to trainees are not open access and, hence, it is quite challenging to track them and obtain sufficient feedback.

2. A Narrative Account of the Training

Based on the core narratives construed following the methodology explained earlier, the Training may be outline as follows:

2.1 Time and Venue

For a duration of three months with three working days per week, the internship takes place at the ministry headquarters. Interns are dispatched to the different directorates of the ministry. Nonetheless, only directorates with translation offices are chosen to oversee trainees. These are limited to the Directorate-General of Protocol, the Directorate of Communication, Information and Documentation, and the Directorate of Legal affairs (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and National Community Abroad (Algeria) n.d.).

2.2 Training objectives

The training objectives are outlined based on a competency-based approach (Richards and Rodgers 2001). They are driven from the competencies required to duly perform the tasks that a professional translator working in a diplomatic institution would perform daily and duly.

To this end, trainees are dispatched into translation offices in different ministry directorates with different specialization each. Interns received within the

Directorate-General of Protocol undergo a training in, *inter alia*, translating diplomatic correspondence and letters, conference interpreting and verbatim reporting while those dispatched to the Directorate-general of Communication, Information and Documentation receive a training in translating press releases and statements as well as the content on the Ministry's website in the Arabic, English and French language combinations. They also perform précis-writing of international newspaper articles tackling topics and news related to Algeria.

Interns received within the Directorate of Legal affairs will be working on the translation of international legal instruments and related documents. They are mainly trained to translate bilateral and multilateral international treaties. The training provided to this population of trainees will constitute the exclusive focus of our study.

2.3 Participants (trainees and trainers)

Participants in the training are students enrolled in Algerian universities in the bachelor's and master's degree. Students are dispatched to the different directorates according to their majors. Logically, students specializing in legal translation will be received within the translation office of the legal division in the Ministry.

As per trainers, interns are supervised by senior translators with extensive experience and solid academic and research background for pedagogical purposes. This combination would allow trainers to construct their training as a bridge between translation study and practice. They are translators who, in addition to their linguistic competence, have acquired considerable knowledge in public international law for the purposes of translating international treaties while being aware of the inherent legal procedures and implications.

2.4 Method and Procedure

The training follows an escalating approach that departs from simple instruction to in-depth analysis and feedback. Trainees are ideally received in pairs and, seldom, individually. The training adopts a corpus-based approach. Corpora used are mostly electronic in Word and PDF formats.

Following an introductory session tackling the definition of international treaties, procedures of their conclusion and the process of their translation as well as the difference between official and non-official translations, interns are given a monolingual corpus of bilateral and multilateral treaties and agreements in the

source language and asked to infer the general linguistic features of treaty texts.

To facilitate the task, trainers, informed by Christiane Nord's (Nord 2005) text-analysis model, suggest guiding parameters for analysis. These parameters, driven from Nord's model, encompass subject matter, content, presuppositions, text composition, non-verbal elements, lexis, sentence structure, and suprasegmental features. If interns show rapid task execution, they may be asked to compare the textual features of treaties to those of generic texts such as the Ministry's press releases. A second step involves another monolingual corpus of international treaties in the target language(s) (English, French or Spanish). The texts in this corpus are not translations but original treaty texts. Trainees are asked to do the same as the first monolingual corpus.

The outcome of both tasks allows various practical applications. Trainees may grasp the difference between the SL and TL in terms of legal textual features pertaining to international treaties. They may also try to find adequate translation techniques to transfer the peculiar textual features of treaties from SL into TL in a spirit of comparable legal law rather than translation.

Indeed, trainers make resort to monolingual and comparable corpora as introductory tools into the realm of international treaties, their textual features, and the difference in terms of such features across language. This would pave the way the actual translation training using parallel corpora.

Parallel corpora, being translation corpora, will constitute the last stage towards translating international treaties. Informed by knowledge acquired from monolingual and comparable corpora, trainees are asked to study treaties in their SL along with their translations (TL). At this stage, they would have acquired sufficient expertise to retrace and analyse the techniques professional translators have adopted in their translation of treaties.

The second phase is to provide trainees with access to the local database of treaties and their translations for bilateral treaties as well as suggesting outsourcing from international organizations' treaty collections for multilateral treaties. One prominent source is the United Nations Treaty Collection ("United Nations Treaty Collection" n.d.). Trainees will be asked to compile parallel corpora according the translation task and its area of expertise. For instance, if they have to translate a maritime bilateral agreement, their corpus may contain the source and translation of different bilateral agreements; yet, it must comprehend the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea ("United Nations

Convention on the Law of the Sea” n.d.), Convention on the Territorial Sea and Contiguous Zone (“Convention on the Territorial Sea and the Contiguous Zone, 1958” n.d.), Convention on the Continental Shelf (“Convention on the Continental Shelf, 1958” n.d.), and the Convention on the High Seas (“Convention on the High Seas” n.d.) as key references. This would help them achieve consistency with the established stylistics, syntax and lexis.

2.5 Follow-through and Feedback

Feedback provided by trainers to interns is mostly formative rather than summative. The internship adheres to continuous constructive feedback and ad hoc information gap fillers rather than regular testing and evaluation. Indeed, the trainer is no longer the source of information but a facilitator of the learning process, providing, thus, the trainee with an autonomy of which traditional training approaches were criticized.

3. Analysis and Discussion

The analysis will be based on many key concepts in corpus linguistics and their application in translation teaching, training and practice. The analysis will draw on studies that focuses on the use of corpora in specialized translation, mainly legal translation (Prieto Ramos 2021; Prieto-Ramos 2017; Prieto Ramos, Cerutti, and Guzmán 2022; Prieto Ramos 2019b; Ł. Biel 2018; Prieto Ramos 2019a; Stefanowitsch and Gries 2006; ZANETTIN 2002; Sánchez-Gijón 2009; Pontrandolfo 2019; Bowker and Pearson 2002; Monzó-Nebot 2008; L. Biel 2010). The narratives will be tested against certain major theoretical translation concepts, with corpus linguistics fundamentals being invoked as needed.

3.1 Corpus trajectory and typology

In her seminal article, Biel (L. Biel 2010) suggested well established corpus trajectories and types that are complementary and, hence, difficult to dissect. Indeed, through the different types of corpora used in the Training, it can be asserted that the Training follows many of Biel’s trajectories. Such trajectories may be formulated as follows:

- **Internal trajectory:** which concerns studying the treaty-specific linguistic features, using a monolingual corpus;
- **External trajectory:** which tackles the way the language of treaties differs

from general language or special-purpose language such as diplomatic correspondence and press releases, and this using a comparable corpus of treaty texts and general language texts in the SL.

- **Cross-linguistic trajectory:** this trajectory is based on comparable and parallel corpora. First, a comparable corpus of treaty texts in the SL and non-translated treaty texts in the TL are used in the Training for purposes of studying linguistic variation of international treaties across the source and target languages. Second, parallel corpora are used to train translators on strategies and techniques of translation with the view of enhancing their decision-making competency. Lastly, arbitrary terminological and phraseological choices can be reduced with parallel corpora.

Drawing on the training narratives and corpus trajectories, trainers have judiciously used the different types of corpora. Monolingual corpora would enable trainees to study the idiomatic and collocative usages, syntactic and phraseological structures, and genre conventions in the SL then compare these parameters with the TL with the aid of a comparable corpora (Bowker and Pearson 2002).

In addition, monolingual corpora would facilitate introducing trainees to genre-specific terminology, phraseology and conventions (Krüger 2012, 510). In the case of international treaties, which deals with a plethora of international affairs pertaining to various domains, including diplomacy, economy, commerce, science and technology, transport and countless specialized field, monolingual corpora are the best tool to ease the cognitive load assimilation and help trainees acquire the basic concepts in their native language and, thus, be more prepared for cross-linguistic processes.

As per the cross-linguistic trajectory in the Training, a comparable corpus proceeds any parallel (translation) corpus as the study of the former paves the way to the use of the latter.

In this regard, comparable corpora of treaty texts in the SL and non-translated treaty texts in the TL allow trainees to compare the same parameters studied in the SL monolingual corpus with TL monolingual corpus. The purpose of this comparison, crudely expressed, is to demonstrate what makes an original text in both the SL and TL. More precisely, this would prevent trainees from being drawn into producing an unnatural or hybrid translation-incurred language due to SL interference. This hybrid language, while being widely known as

Translationese, is also known as the third code, third langue and translanguage and is characterized by deviations from TL conventions (Olohan 2004, 29, 90).

In fact, treaties are bound to the principle of equal authenticity, which entails that translators produce an “authoritative translation” that not only equals the source in meaning but also in legal effect (Didier 1990, 221). Translationese would certainly affect both meaning and effect of any treaty text produced via translation. Training with comparable corpora would help prevent such occurrence.

As far as the translation of international legal instruments, mainly treaties, is concerned, translators are ought to have the legal competence (Prieto Ramos 2017) that enables them not only to analyse legal texts but also to acquire drafting skills in a spirit of comparative law (Cao 2007, 38). Training with comparable corpora would help acquire such competence.

Parallel corpora, on the other hand, increase trainees’ involvement, productivity and confidence (Monzó-Nebot 2008) through helping them retracing translation techniques as adopted by professional translators and the solutions they devised to solve actual translation problems rather than relying exhaustively on the trainer’s intuition. Likewise, parallel corpora allow acquiring the field-specific terminology and phraseology as well as the established translation equivalents. Through providing a repertoire of strategies deployed by past translators as well as repertoires of translation equivalents, parallel corpora would contribute to establishing the skill of decision-making, the ability of translation choice argumentation, and the competence of confident problem solving (ZANETTIN 2002).

Indeed, it is often claimed that parallel corpora emphasize the translation process as a ST-TT comparison relatively allows retracing the translational decision-making process, while comparable corpora focus on the translation product (Stewart 2000, 210).

When compiling training-dedicated corpora, it is highly recommended to prevent any text that is affected by Translationese to be included in the corpus since Translationese would signal a lack in experience and competence. In the case of international treaties, Translationese is not common due to the importance of international legal instruments as well as the resources invested and delicacy dedicated to their translation.

Another side of this discussion revolves around a fit-to-purpose corpus type known as ad hoc corpora. Ad hoc corpora are smaller corpora compiled by the translator ‘for the sole purpose of providing information – either factual, linguistic

or field-specific – for use in completing a translation task’ (Sánchez-Gijón 2009, 115). In fact, legal corpora – like most specialized corpora - tend to be small (L. Biel 2010, 4). Corpora of international treaties follow suit as they are compiled by translators in need of assistance in producing translations that equal the source in authenticity. Besides, treaties being a subgenre contribute further in the small size of such corpora.

3.2 Corpus approaches

There exists two distinct but complementary approaches to using corpora in translation training: *corpus use for learning to translate and learning corpus use to translate* (Beeby, Rodríguez Inés, and Sánchez-Gijón 2009, 1). In the first approach, the trainer is responsible for the creation of corpora and the trainee has only to use such corpora for different purposes, most of which fall within the scope of translation and its skills. In the second approach, the responsibility of creating corpora falls on the trainee, who is provided with the knowledge required to compile and arrange such corpora in order to harness them for translation purposes. This also means that the learner must be aware of their types and the advantages of each type as well as the manner to use them in translation practice.

The Training adopts both approaches respectively. In the first approach, trainers used corpora to introduce trainees to the peculiarities and intricacies of international treaties, and afterwards, the strategies adopted by professional translators in translating such legal instruments and their problem-solving strategies. In the second approach, trainees are shown the manner by which an *ad hoc* corpus is compiled and duly harnessed as a multipurpose translation aid.

In reality, any treaty making and, hence, translation is bound to the principle of intertextuality, i.e., the presence of (a) former text(s) in the present text (Kristeva et al. 1980). Any treaty making and interpretation is based on the legal ‘antecedents’ tackling the treaty topic in a way a legal intertextuality is established. In the same way, the translator is expected to rely on institutional legal corpora to account for such intertextuality in the TL (BIEL 2013).

In this context, institutional legal corpora refer to the collections of texts that have been produced and translated by an institution (Government entity, international organization, NGO, etc.) and are harnessed for translation purposes, whether for human or machine translation (Pontrandolfo 2019, 14).

Therefore, it is safe to claim that Training on translating international

treaties is compatible with the two highly-complementary approaches mentioned above provided that the trainer uses them in a very levelled way.

3.3 Corpus-based Competences

Baker (Baker 1996, 177) argues that harnessing techniques and tools provided by corpus linguistics to the purpose of studying translation ‘... allows translators to understand what actually happens in the process of translation.’

Hence, one of the main advantages of translation training with corpora over traditional translation training is shifting from a trainer-centered to a trainee-centered approach. By this token, the use of corpora reduces the role of the trainer’s intuition in the translation training, while assigning more importance, as well as autonomy, to trainees. Likewise, the role of the teacher shifts from that of the principal information provider to that of an information facilitator (Rodríguez Inés 2009, 130–33). In other words, the trainer is no longer the Sage on the Stage but a Guide on the Side and the translation competence is no longer learned but acquired.

Indeed, corpus-use competence is now regarded as an integrant, rather than additional, part of the wider translation competence (Rodríguez Inés 2009). Many models have been developed in translation studies with the aim of defining the ideals components that make up such translation competence. PACTE³ (PACTE group 2003; 2005) and EMT4 (EMT Expert Group 2009; 2022) models are the best-known of translation competence models. As shown below in the figures outlining the sub-competences in each model, both models encompass a corpus component under the instrumental sub-competence in the PACTE model and under the technological and information mining sub-competences in the EMT model (Krüger 2012, 513).

³ A research group (A. Beeby, M. Fernández, O. Fox, I. Kozlova, W. Neunzig, M. Presas, P. Rodríguez, L. Romero. Principal investigator: A. Hurtado Albir) established in 1997 to carry out research on the process of translation competence acquisition (TCA) in written translation (PACTE group 2005).

⁴ European Master's in Translation is a quality label for MA university programmes in translation (“European Master’s in Translation (EMT) Explained” n.d.).

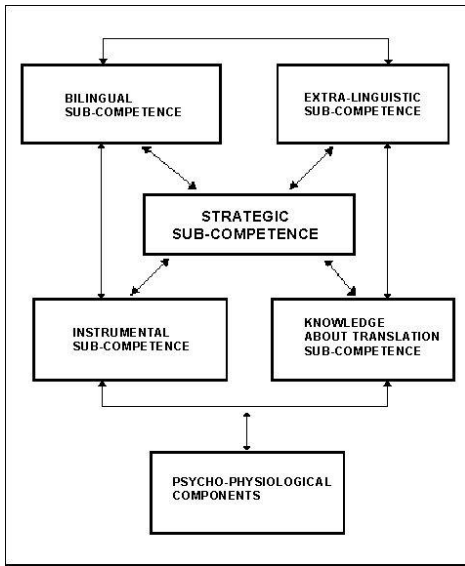


Figure 1. Translation competence model of the PACTE Group (PACTE group 2003, 60)

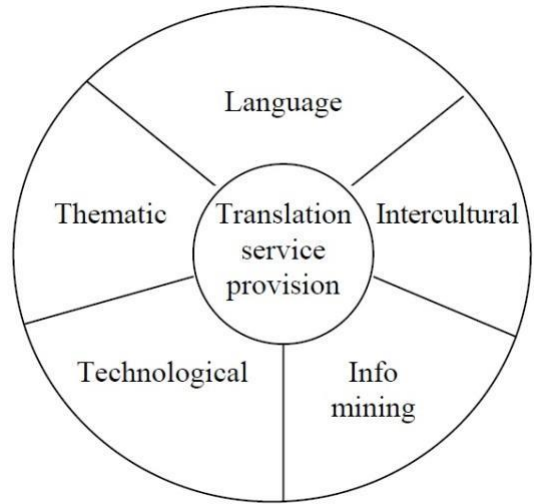


Figure 2. EMT reference framework for professional translation competence (EMT Expert Group 2009, 4)

As per the competences targeted by this corpus-based training, it is noteworthy that the Training structuring goes beyond the instrumental sub-competence in the PACTE model to address the bilingual, extra-linguistic, knowledge about translation and strategic sub-competences. In the EMT model, the Training goes beyond the technological and information mining sub-competences to connect with the remaining sub-competences (language, thematic, and intercultural). As a matter of fact, the PACTE instrumental sub-competence and the EMT technological and information mining sub-competences concern only the approach of *learning corpus use to translate* while the approach of *corpus use for learning to translate* would easily cover the remaining sub-competences in both models (see section 2.2 above).

The two models are useful in devising any specialized translation training. Accordingly, Fernando Prieto Ramos (2011, 12), departing from the PACTE and EMT models and based on his own experience and practice, outlined a legal translation competence model following a process-oriented approach. The model is based on a specific legal translator macro-competence that breaks down into five competences: strategic or methodological competence, communicative and textual competence, thematic and cultural competence, instrumental competence,

and interpersonal and professional management competence.

The Training might have addressed most of competences. Hence, an attempt to match the Training components, with special focus on corpus contribution, with their corresponding competences in Prieto Ramos' model is instrumental in this regard.

The strategic or methodological competence controls the remaining competences in the model. It focuses on the process, hence, the methodology of translation (translation brief analysis and macro-contextualization, source text analysis, transfer and text production, and revision (Prieto Ramos 2011, 14–17)). In the case of translating treaties, this competence involves deciding about the translation process after ST and TT macro-contextualization (text profiling and text profile comparison). For instance, translation strategy may differ between official and non-official translations as the function and purpose are not the same.⁵ Official translations would be, according to Nord's functional approach, instrumental (equifunctional) while non-official might be documentary though it is also instrumental (heterofunctional) in most cases due to the importance of non-official translations of any international treaty to its national application (European Commission/DGT 2012, 15–26).

As explained by Prieto Ramos (2011, 15), the strategic or methodological competence will promptly actuate the thematic, textual and instrumental competences.

As per the thematic and cultural competence, it revolves around the 'knowledge of legal systems, hierarchy of legal sources, branches of law and main legal concepts; awareness of asymmetry between legal notions and structures in different legal traditions' (Prieto Ramos 2011, 12) This competence encompasses introducing trainees to public international law and the law of treaties, mainly the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties, VCLT (United Nations 2005). In addition, it encompasses the knowledge about the process and procedures of treaty making, governed by the VCLT, and translation involvement in the production of authentic and non-authentic treaty texts (Ramos 2014a, 313). Nonetheless, the Training accounts for this competence to its introductory sessions where these

⁵ Official translations are translations to the authentic languages of the treaty, i.e., languages that are provided for in such treaty. Official translations are as authentic as the text. Non-official translations are translations to languages that are not provided for in the treaty and are common in treaties where the language of contracting party is not among the authentic languages of the treaty (European Commission/DGT 2012, 6).

concepts are discussed and explained to trainees (see section 2.4 above).

Consequently, corpus use is not instrumental in the thematic competence though it may help familiarize trainees with the main legal concepts recurrent in international treaties and their established translations (Yet, this might be a part of the textual rather than the thematic competence).

Indeed, The Training corpus-based approach has a deeply entrenched connection with the textual competence. The textual competence comprehends ‘linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic knowledge, including knowledge of linguistic variants, registers, specialized legal linguistic uses and legal genre conventions’ (Prieto Ramos 2011, 12). Accordingly, the scaffolded corpus-based approach of the Training, as shown above, would allow grasping linguistic variations following the internal and external variations (see section 3.1 above). Trainees, accordingly, would acquire knowledge about treaty language and genre conventions as well as treaty-specific terminology, phraseology, and textuality.

The adoption of Nord’s model (Nord 2005) for translation-oriented text analysis is an added value in terms of acquiring the textual competence in the Training. The analysis in Nord’s model departs from extra-textual factors, i.e., situational factors (in particular sender and sender’s intention, receiver, and text function) that allow both ST & TT profiling and are equivalent to Prieto Ramos’ translation brief analysis and macro-contextualization in his suggested ‘methodology for competence development in legal translation’ (Prieto Ramos 2011)⁶. Such analysis is carried out further based on the intertextual factors that are very interdependent (subject matter, content, presuppositions, text composition, non-verbal elements, lexis, sentence structure, suprasegmental features) (Nord 2005).

While the subject matter, content and presuppositions are important parameters that govern compiling the ad hoc corpus⁷, the remaining factors, that are of an explicit textual nature, are versatile parameters for the analysis of the texts constituting any corpus. Such parameters can be harnessed following a top-down approach.

Text composition and sentence structure enable the analysis of the text macro-structure that is constituted by the micro-structures (sentences and

⁶ These factors pertain to the strategic competence in his model.

⁷ These three parameters will delimit the generics scope and the chronological reach regarding the text to be included in the corpus.

paragraphs). Through corpora trainees may have an overview on treaty text composition which would reveal the different micro-structures making up the treaty macro-structure. Indeed, a treaty text can be divided into three distinguished sections pertaining to different discourses. The preamble pertains to the discourse diplomacy, the main text is highly technical according to the topic of the treaty⁸, and the final provisions are pure legal clauses governing the application of the treaty at hand. Understanding the text composition is a major step towards defining the translation strategy and the sources adequate and resources needed for the task. Likewise, corpora provide a glimpse on the complicated legislative sentence and its constituents (legal subject + legal action + the Case).⁹

The study of lexis through the Training corpora concerns treaty terminology and phraseology as a striking linguistic feature of legal language (Cao 2007, 53) and a source of difficulty in translating international legal instruments (Prieto Ramos and Cerutti 2021). Trainees may be acquitted with treaty-specific terminology and lexical peculiarities (Latinate register and archaic language, tautologies and established formulae, pronominal adverbs, the *sui generis* use of tenses and modal verbs, gender, etc.) (Doonan and Foster 2001; Houbert 2005).

Non-verbal, paralinguistic, elements such as illustrations, figures, maps, which are recurrent in treaties, have a role in supplementing, illustrating or disambiguating treaty texts (Nord 2005). Hence, leveraging such non-verbal elements to infer the meaning of the text and, therefore, interpret the treaty invokes, in addition to the textual competence, the strategic competence. Other recurrent non-verbal elements are suprasegmental features which encompass, *inter alia*, italics, spaced or bold type, quotation marks, dashes and parentheses (Nord 2005). Throughout the Training corpora, trainees may notice that the preamble *Considérants*¹⁰ are italicized to reflect their intonation should these were oral text. Bold type is also suprasegmental and, thus, has communicative functions. The

⁸ The subjects of treaties span the entire spectrum of international relation to include, *inter alia*, peace, trade, defense, territorial boundaries, human rights, law enforcement, environmental matters. such subjects change constantly (Cao 2007, 142).

⁹ The legal subject is ‘the person on whom an obligation is imposed or on whom a power, a privilege or a right is conferred’ while the legal action contains the enacting verb and states what is expected from the legal subject. As per the Case, it constitutes all the circumstances and conditions that add details to the ‘legal subj. + act.’ combination in any given legislative sentence (Crabbe 1993, I:73–75).

¹⁰ The treaty preamble consists of a sequence of secondary clauses (*considérants*) that begin with words such as ‘Recognizing’, ‘Recalling’, ‘Mindful’, ‘Emphasizing’, ‘Conscious of’, etc. (Aust 2007, 337–38).

Training corpora may reveal some of these functions that include capitalizing the first letter of terms of which the meaning is specific to the treaty (Butt and Castle 2006, 160–62) and capitalizing whole text segments to stress their importance (Crabbe 1993, I:42–43).

As far as far as translation is concerned, intratextual elements in the ST analysis has direct implications for training. As stated earlier, such elements provide Trainees with the needed parameters to act not only as ST interpreters but also as TT legal drafters by retracing their translation techniques, hence, being able to produce an authoritative translation.¹¹

As regards the instrumental competence, it highlights, besides ‘the knowledge of specialized sources, information and terminology management’, the use of parallel corpora and their automation in the form of translation memories (Prieto Ramos 2011, 12). In reference to the Training, the major criticism to be attributed is its lack of a solid instrumental component. The Training follows a rather rudimentary approach as corpora are monitored manually using utility desktop applications (MS office and PDF readers) instead of corpus-dedicated tools (“Tools for Corpus Linguistics” n.d.). Likewise, terminology extraction and management represent also a key skill that did not receive sufficient attention in the Training. Using corpus compilation, concordance and analysis tools would add more productivity and established a more robust methodology for the Training through anchoring the competences of terminology management, documentation and information mining and several related competences (Monzó-Nebot 2008; L. Biel 2010; Pontrandolfo 2019; ZANETTIN 2002; Krüger 2012; Prieto Ramos 2019b; Rodríguez Inés 2009; Ł. Biel 2018). One reason to be ascribed to such rudimentary approach is that translating international treaties relies on ad hoc (often disposable) corpora though a more robust approach involving a well-curated corpus is easily achievable.

To conclude, the interpersonal and professional management competence, which encompasses, in term of translating international treaties, teamwork, interaction

with other professionals (jurists and diplomats), knowledge of legal and professional framework for concluding and translating treaties (Prieto Ramos 2011). Whereas this competence pertains to, besides translation peculiarities in

¹¹ An equifunctional instrumental translation according to Nord’s function approach of translation (Nord 2005).

national and international institutional settings, translators' collaboration with peers as well as with jurists and diplomats, especially in cases of difficulties in treaty interpretation (Ramos 2014b, 322), the Training, and corpora in particular, have limited relevance in this regard.

4. CONCLUSION

Corpora offers a lucid lens into language and translation. Specialized translation is no exception. The training that the study outlined and analyzed provided valid insights into the versatility of corpus as a tool and as an approach in specialized translation training and practice. In this regard, it unveiled a repertoire of manners in which institutional legal corpora might be leveraged and used for several purposes that contribute to the quality and success of translation, mainly translating international treaties. Following diverse trajectories and adhering to varied approaches, institutional legal corpora contribute to the acquisition of the legal translation competence via increasing trainees' involvement, productivity, autonomy and confidence and shifting the center of learning from the trainer to the trainee. As per Prieto Ramos' legal translation competence model, the Training duly accounts for the majority of the model competences, which intensive focus on the textual competence. Prieto Ramos not only devises a legal translation competence model but also outlines a methodology for competence development in legal translation (stated respectively as analysis of *skopos* and macro-contextualization, source text analysis, transfer and target text production, revision) (PRIETO RAMOS 2011, 14–17). This methodology has both professional and academic grounds (PRIETO RAMOS 2011, 14). His model intersects with Nord's model in a noticeable way. In fact, not only both models follow roughly the same process but also do share many notions that include, inter alia, documentary and instrumental translation, the translation brief, *skopos* and communicative function(s), source text analysis, solving translation problems, quality assessment and control, and revision. As a matter of fact, key concepts provided for by Nord's text analysis are quite omnipresent in Prieto Ramos' legal translation competence model in a way that it can be claimed that the latter is based on the former.

Moreover, using Nord's model provided learning with an added value in light of Prieto Ramos' works. It is also an argument in favor of using Nord's model as a versatile corpus analysis model.

As per translating international treaties, it is a peculiar sub-genre, which adds on the complexity and difficulty of devising any specialized training in this field. Nonetheless, an approach that is based on corpora, mainly institutional ad hoc corpora, would make the task possible. Corpora are multipurpose tools for both translation study and practice as they provide authentic instances of translation strategies and techniques, established terminology and phraseology, and genre-specific adaptations, which would contribute to the acquisition of a wide range skills encompassed under the umbrella of the legal translation competence.

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