

How corpora can assist legal translation learners: The GENTT TransTools Corpora platform and Sketch Engine

Cómo los corpus pueden asistir a los estudiantes de traducción jurídica:
la plataforma *GENTT TransTools Corpora* y *Sketch Engine*

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Abstract: This paper analyses the application of corpora to the teaching of legal translation in higher education settings combining the use of both the GENTT *TransTools Corpora* platform and *Sketch Engine*. A review of previous teaching experiences with legal textual corpora is presented, followed by a descriptive overview of GENTT's research group 10 years' experience using corpus in the classroom with a translation training approach that promotes scaffolded education as well as constructive and cooperative situated learning. These suggest that classroom activities with monolingual, multilingual and translated corpora of legal documents may prove useful to students of legal translation, improving their strategic competence and providing them with text models and patterns to be used as terminological, textual and legal/conceptual references.

Keywords: legal translation; legal translation teaching; legal translation teaching with corpora; ad-hoc corpora; disposable corpora.

Resumen: Esta aportación analiza la aplicación de corpus a la enseñanza de la traducción jurídica en la educación superior utilizando la plataforma GENTT *TransTools Corpora* y *Sketch Engine*. En primer lugar, revisaremos la bibliografía sobre experiencias previas de aplicación de corpus textuales a la enseñanza de la traducción jurídica. A continuación, describiremos la experiencia de 10 años del grupo GENTT en el aula de traducción especializada, en la que hemos aplicado una metodología basada corpus y dirigida a promover la formación guiada y el aprendizaje constructivo y cooperativo. Estas experiencias sugieren que los corpus monolingües, multilingües y traducidos de textos especializados constituyen una herramienta docente muy eficaz para los estudiantes de traducción, ya que les proporcionan modelos y patrones textuales que pueden ser utilizados como referencia textual, conceptual, lingüística y terminológica.

Palabras clave: traducción jurídica; didáctica de la traducción jurídica; uso de corpus para la enseñanza de la traducción; corpus ad-hoc; formación de traductores.

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1. Introduction

The study of language using corpus linguistic techniques has strongly expanded since the late twentieth century and is considered a basic resource for any type of linguistic study today. Traditionally, corpus linguistics has focused on obtaining information about the real behaviour of language in different domains and communicative situations. Teachers use corpora for purposes different to those of linguists and researchers from other fields like sociology and communication, whose primary interest is the analysis of various levels of discourse.

The use of corpora in linguistic disciplines has greatly increased, as a result of the exponential advances in information technology, online connectivity and artificial intelligence. Currently, thousands of ready-made corpora with a variety of purposes, structures and subjects are publically available. Some of them are ready available and can even be searched online using the corpus owner search engine¹. Moreover, recent developments in software programmes and utilities for corpus building and searching² make it possible for any interested person to compile and employ ad-hoc corpora quickly and simply using web content or their own materials.

The application of corpora to translation studies began in the 1990s. According to Kübler (2011: 69):

Baker (1999) investigated translators' behaviour by studying parallel corpora in order to assess the distance between the language of translation (what she called third code) and the language of native speaker texts. Around the same time, Aston (1999) outlined the uses of corpora in translation and translation teaching, and the first Corpus Use and Learning to Translate (CULT) conferences took place (Beeby et al. 2009; Bernardini and Zanettin (ed.) 2000; Zanettin, Bernardini and

¹ See the University of Essex linguistic corpus list: https://www1.essex.ac.uk/linguistics/external/clmt/w3c/corpus_ling/content/corpora/list/index2.html; the University of Louvain learners corpus list: <https://uclouvain.be/en/research-institutes/ilc/cecl/learner-corpora-around-the-world.html>; the corpora collection created by Mark Davies, Professor of Linguistics at Brigham Young University: <https://corpus.byu.edu/faq.asp#x8>; and multilingual corpora from international institutions such as DGT Translation Memory and the United Nations Parallel Corpus v1.0.

² *Sketch Engine*, BootCaT, Jaguar, WebCorp, etc. (corpus compilation). *Sketch Engine*, Wordsmith Tools, MonoConc Pro, AntConc, WConcord, etc. (corpus exploitation).

al. 2003). Much work has since been put into creating and enhancing corpora and corpus tools in order to study translation, and to showing how appropriate corpora can help translators find the information they need to translate.

While the application of corpora to translation studies initially focused on analysing the translation behaviour of translators and developing their competences, currently the new applications of corpora to translation research and teaching reflect the exponential changes that, according to Borja Albi & Martínez-Carrasco (2019: 193), have taken place in the language industry and the professional translation market:

[...] we can state that the emergence of digital systems, networked communications, machine learning and large-scale data analysis, and the increasing integration of these technologies into translation businesses and production processes, entails a risk of job losses, but also important advantages, in that there is an ever greater demand for translation into more and more languages. It will, however, involve a different way of working, requiring new training profiles that include technological skills, computational linguistics, marketing, transcreation, proofreading and entrepreneurship.

As a result of these developments, corpora are now used in translation studies for different purposes³:

1. Studying the behaviour of translated texts and identifying the possible existence of translation norms (Baker, 1995; Olohan, 2004; Corpas, 2008; Laviosa, 2010).
2. Employing corpus translation resources in professional practice as a tool to obtain terminological, phraseological and textual information, known as *disposable corpora* (Bowker, 1998; Zanettin, 2002; Bernardini & Castagnoli, 2008; Gallego-Hernández, 2015).
3. Using corpora resources and data, either to create translation memories, to develop translation engines, or other natural lan-

³ In this contribution we will use the expressions *parallel corpus* to refer to translated corpus. *Comparable corpus* will be used to refer to a set of texts that have been put together according to the same type of criteria (texts of a certain size, on a set topic, from a given period, etc.) in two languages.

guage processing projects (Czulo & Hansen-Schirra, 2017). Existing translated corpora can easily be used as translation memories, by producing an aligned version in standard translation memory format (TMX).

4. Using corpora as a training resource for first and second language acquisition, known as *language learner corpora* (Aston, Bernardini & Stewart 2004, Sinclair 2004).
5. Employing corpora as a training resource in the translation classroom and in translation education programmes (Zanettin, 1998; Aston, 1999; Varantola, 2003; Rodríguez-Inés, 2008; Bowker; MacBride & Marshman, 2008; Marco Borillo & Van Lawick, 2009; Bernardini, 2016; Rodríguez-Inés & Gallego-Hernández, 2016; Biel, 2017).

This paper focuses on the latter, the use of corpora as a translation training resource applied to the legal translation classroom, and includes contributions from language for specific purposes (LSP) approaches, particularly those related to the acquisition of legal language in both the source and target languages.

In order to incorporate corpus work to the legal translation modules and evaluate its impact on translator competence development, we have resorted to an action research perspective, a methodology designed by and for educators used when trying to solve a specific problem in the classroom (Cohen & Manion, 1990). In the case at hand, we advocate for corpora to be applied in the classroom when the learning curve begins to slow down as students come face to face with specialized –and in particular legal– translation in their later undergraduate and post-graduate years. It is precisely when they are beginning to feel confident about general translation, that they are faced with the need to learn complex legal concepts, using a specialized language with which they are unfamiliar in both the source and target languages, and having to master legal drafting, with its very particular style and conventions.

2. Our legal translation training approach

The concept of translation competence and its components has been addressed from multiple perspectives and has generated a number of models encompassing different subcompetences. Some of the major

proposals influencing this work are the pioneer contribution by Hurtado (1999: 43-44); the European Union EMT (2017) model; and the holistic models developed by the PACTE group (2015 and 2018) which proposes a common European framework of reference for translation's academic and professional areas.

Legal translation occupies a particular domain in the translation market and requires specific competences on the part of the translator. The distinct nature of the field is determined by the specificity of the array of legal genres, which have their own linguistic, textual and communicative characteristics. Knowledge of the enormous variety of existing legal genres and the characteristic textual function of each one, combined with knowledge of the field of law and the ability to use the appropriate documentary sources in each case are the pillars on which the competences of the legal translator are based.

This integrated package of knowledge, skills and attitudes has prompted various proposals for legal translation competence models. A comprehensive overview of legal translation competence models can be found at Martínez-Carrasco (2017), which includes, among others, the models proposed by Šarčević (1997: 113-114); Borja Albi (2005: 15); Prieto-Ramos (2011: 11-18); Cao (2014); and Scarpa & Orlando (2017: 26-31). These models, together with my personal experience as a practicing self-taught sworn legal translator, inform this work.

The methodology we apply to legal translation teaching is structured around the concept of textual genre (Borja, 2013: 35) and embodied in an active, constructivist teaching plan based on task performance and guided discovery through pre-translation activities and translation commissions that mimic real professional working conditions.

Each task is organized according to the areas to be reinforced (terminology, phraseology, formulae, syntax, equivalence problems, textual fit, etc.), and is designed to address the genres that most often reach the translator's table. The selection of working texts is made according to real market demand and updated each year (contracts, corporate governance documents, wills, powers of attorney and judicial documents, among others).

Activities with monolingual, multilingual comparable, and parallel/translated corpora are key elements in our teaching model. Most human language learning is based on intertextuality and imitation. The acquisition of legal language skills and legal knowledge requires a demanding

cognitive input process on the side of the students. Cognitive tasks such as reading, writing and translating legal documents serve as different sources for that input. Cognition and learning might therefore be connected through corpora exploitation.

3. Developing resources to work with corpora in the classroom: the GENTT Corpus and the GENTT *TransTools* Corpora

Until quite recently, the work done with corpora in the legal translation classroom consisted of compiling small corpora of specific genres (with texts taken from the Internet and even from paper documents) and exploiting them with tools like *Wordsmith Tools* or *AntConc*. The process was hard and time-consuming, as there were few available corpora and those that did exist required a long processing time. Texts had to be scanned and formats had to be changed. The focus was on monolingual corpora and some small parallel text corpora compiled by students in the classroom, since practically no translated corpora were open to public access. The extensive use of this approach in the classroom was thus restricted.

To improve this situation and promote the use of corpora in specialized translation education, the GENTT, research group created the GENTT corpus of specialized texts in 2004 which in 2014 was converted into a training tool for the specialized translation classroom with the development of the GENTT *TransTools* specialized corpora platforms (GENTT, 2017). Currently, these include corpora and resources related



Figure 1. The GENTT *TransTools* specialized corpora platforms

to the field of law (corporate, notarial, contractual and judicial genres) and the field of medicine (informed consent, information for patients, legal-medical genres). At this time, banking and finance modules, clinical trial protocols and academic documents are under construction. The aim is to progressively increase the number and range of modules for highly specialized disciplines or professional sectors to cover the specialties with the highest demand in the professional market.

In the design of this teaching-learning environment, the GENTT group advocates a contrastive legal genre analysis approach and the use of online knowledge systems specially designed for translators that encompass a number of legal-conceptual, discursive-textual and terminological resources aimed at facilitating the reusability of translation resources (Borja Albi, 2013: 36).

The contents collected or compiled for each specialized domain are organized in five sections:

1. *Catalogue of prototypical documents*: a list of the documents used in each specialized domain in the working languages, accompanied by an explanatory genre matrix. Ad-hoc monolingual corpora in Spanish and English and translated English-Spanish corpora are included in this section with samples of the legal genres identified for each branch of law.
2. *Legal/conceptual background*: conceptual/contextual information pertaining to the specialized domain. This section is directly related to extralinguistic (legal concepts knowledge) competence and is made up of explanatory and educational texts regarding the law.
3. *Ad-hoc glossaries of terminology and phraseology*: glossaries specific to each genre or branch of law created by extracting terminology from the platform's corpora.
4. *Resources for translators, with Bibliography and Links subsections*: links to useful webpages and portals for specialized translators.
5. *Monolingual and translated Spanish and UK legislation corpora*: national and international legislation that regulate each branch of law and constitute a source of essential terminological, textual and contextual information fostering the extralinguistic competence.

The corpora, glossaries, contextual information and resources can all be explored by means of an integrated search facility, which covers all the

sections on the site and retrieves results of various types, depending on the search criteria selected in the advanced search window⁴.



Figure 2. GENTT *TransTools* sections

4. How corpora can assist legal translation learners

While some may think that the main goal of teaching translation corpora is to familiarize students with the target language, this is only one of the many areas where corpora can enhance translator training. Others include:

1. Strategic and technological competence
2. Extralinguistic and conceptual competence
3. Linguistic competence
4. Academic research (for postgraduate and doctoral students)

4.1 *Strategic and technological competence*

The strategic and technological sub-competence includes the specific skills related to efficient management and the reuse of specialist knowledge. This is mentioned in the first place because using assisted translation tools is the foundation for developing any activity that involves corpora. In order to be able to work with corpora, students must be familiar with spreadsheets, databases, translation management systems,

⁴ A more detailed explanation of the platform for legal documents, *TransTools/JUDGENTT*, can be found in Borja (2013: 48).

file format converters, terminology extraction software, corpora compilation and search tools. These computer tasks prepare the student for the information society and the emerging translation profiles that the market demands. Document web searches for corpus building enhance the information mining competence of the students.

4.2 *Extralinguistic and conceptual competence*

Developing a strong *extralinguistic and conceptual competence* is probably one of the most difficult features of legal translation as opposed to other types of specialized translation. Because of the differences between legal concepts and systems, the concept of equivalence is approached from a different perspective when solving problems of partial equivalence and zero equivalence. The complexity of legal concepts and the anisomorphism between legal systems (civil law and common law, for instance) require that translators have operative knowledge of the law that allows them to research the semantic fields of complex concepts and terms. This type of information can be searched and retrieved from ad-hoc corpora of legislative texts and law textbooks.

The GENTT *TransTools* platforms include corpora of legislation and of legal handbooks and other educational materials. These corpora cover both different branches of law (tort, criminal, business, contract, etc.) and legal genres (contracts, wills, judgments, statements of claim, powers of attorney, articles of association, etc.).

4.3 *Linguistic competence*

The concept of linguistic competence is quite broad and covers every level of text and discourse. Although much has been written in this respect, there is still no clear consensus about the linguistic needs of translators. In any case, this refers to competence in more than one language and the ability to identify and contrast the distinctive features of text and discourse with particular emphasis on the ways in which phraseological and syntactic patterns interact to create meanings. According to Montalt, Ezpeleta-Piorno & García Izquierdo (2008):

Bilingual sub-competence consists of the underlying systems of knowledge and skills that are needed for linguistic communication to take

place in two languages. It is made up of comprehension and production competences, and includes the following knowledge and skills: grammatical competence; textual competence (which consists of being proficient in combining linguistic forms to produce a written or oral text in different genres or text types); illocutionary competence (related to the functions of language); and socio-linguistic competence.

In the case of legal translation, there is no doubt that corpora constitute a very powerful resource for students to familiarize themselves with the language used in the specialty in both the source and target languages (Biel, 2012; Borja, Juste, Ordóñez & Conde, 2014). Since legal language is a technolact that students have usually not had any prior contact with, a systematic learning approach to this specialized language is necessary, both in the source and in the target languages.

To raise legal language awareness, we have developed a number of contrastive terminology and phraseology activities that are largely dependent on comparable corpora comparisons from which students are asked to extract keywords and multi-word expressions and look for equivalences based on real language use (Fanego & Rodríguez-Puente, 2019). Searches for keywords in context (KWIC), collocations, n-grams and part-of-speech tags (POS) in the available translated legal corpora make possible the systematic bilingual comparison of textual databases. They allow students to identify, among others, morphosyntactic differences and textual norms and conventions.

Working with translated corpora can also be useful for enhancing the quality of legal translations in terms of textual fit (Biel, 2017), genre conventions, appropriate use of specialized legal terminology and grammar (prepositional phrases, suffixed prepositions, multiple embedded clauses, style, fossilized formulae and deontic expressions). Aligned parallel corpora are a source of translation suggestions produced by real translators. *Sketch Engine*'s word sketch feature helps translators to identify idiomatically correct word combinations and to use words like native speakers do.

Comparable corpora from the same legal genre (e.g. an ad-hoc corpus of 'wills' in English as compared to '*testamentos*' in Spanish) allow the student to explore the ways in which meanings are expressed in texts sharing the same communicative situation and help them to recognize expert users' preferences for certain words and sequences of words over

others that might seem equally possible. The observation of the textual behaviour of equivalent genres helps the translator to become familiar with and reproduce the particular and unique style of legal discourse in their translations (Biel, 2017; Prieto-Ramos, 2011; Pontrandolfo, 2015; Vigier, 2016).

4.4 *Academic research*

Finally, an increasing number of postgraduate students of legal translation choose corpora-based and corpora-driven research approaches (Biel, Engberg, Martín Ruano & Sosoni, 2019). However, these research methods rely on specific quantitative and statistical methods that differ from those used in the undergraduate classroom and hence they are beyond the scope of this work.

5. Designing situated activities for the legal translation classroom using corpora

The training context determines the design of classroom corpora activities depending on, among others, the students' prior translation and legal training, the level (graduate or postgraduate), the module contents (institutional translation, trade documents, inheritance documents), and whether it is a direct or inverse translation. As we pointed before, corpora activities are aimed at legal translation students in their last year of undergraduate studies or master's students with a general advanced C2 level in Spanish and C1/C2 in English and who have already acquired the basic competences for general translation.

For the vast majority of students at this training level, this is their first contact with law as a discipline, with legal language and with legal documents. The teaching goals are: 1) to obtain instrumental knowledge of the basic legal concepts of the continental and common law systems; 2) to become familiar with legal language and discourse in Spanish and English; 3) to become familiar with the genre conventions of the legal genres selected for each module; and 4) to be able to use legal information resources and legal database research tools. Most of the students are not familiar with corpus methodologies. This means that some initial training sessions are needed, in which students become

acquainted with the methodology of corpus linguistics and with the selected corpora databases and software (goal 5).

The classroom activities we have developed are designed to work with the *Sketch Engine* corpora and software tools and the GENTT *TransTools* legal genre corpora. There are countless corpora user-friendly software applications and web platforms, but we have chosen the two resources that have produced the best results in our specialized translation classroom.

Sketch Engine is, in our opinion, one of the most versatile, complete and user-friendly corpus tools that exists today. It contains some of the biggest monolingual and parallel corpora in many languages and allows users to easily create their own ad-hoc corpus. Furthermore, it offers a comprehensive set of search and concordance features in an easy-to-use interface. Finally, and most importantly, *Sketch Engine* is an online tool that requires no installation and will provide access to university lecturers and students until 2022 at no cost, thanks to funding from the EU through the ELEXIS infrastructure project.

The second resource of choice is the teaching-learning environment developed by our research group, *TransTools* (see section 3). It has the disadvantage of not being accessible to the public, but the advantage of having been expressly designed to work in the translation classroom, and we have developed a number of lessons plans applicable to a variety of legal environments and genres (Informe Final Startup UJI, 2016). The lesson plans follow the different stages of a real translation commission: 1) compiling the necessary prior textual and contextual information; 2) translating, applying the techniques and strategies characteristic of legal translation and respecting genre conventions; and 3) revising and filing all the resources obtained in the process in such a way that they are easily retrievable for future translation jobs.

Space limitations prevent us from including the various activities we have developed and currently apply in the classroom. We shall just include a brief list of hands-on corpora activities for the legal translation classroom using *Sketch Engine* and the *TransTools* specialized corpora platform. All of them have been carefully planned and include a full description, aims, sources and materials, methodology and teaching rationale.

- Activity 1: Compiling two monolingual disposable corpora of company incorporation documents (one in English and one in Spanish) using *Sketch Engine*.
- Activity 2: Monolingual keyword extraction from the corpora compiled in Activity 1. Terminology comparison.
- Activity 3: Bilingual keyword extraction from a EU parallel corpus.
- Activity 4: Identifying and comparing genre conventions (macrostructure, keywords, formulae, technical expressions, boilerplate clauses drafting, etc.) by means of a comparable corpus of commercial contracts.
- Activity 5: Finding the right translation for polysemous terms by searching a comparable corpus of articles of incorporation taken from the corporate governance sections of big international companies.
- Activity 6: Retrieving concordances and collocations to use as terminological, textual and conceptual references in intersystemic translation of specific genres. In the case of the genre *Last Will and Testament*, terms such as *trust*, *bequeath*, *devise*, *personal representatives*, among others, would be the object of contrastive analysis using a comparable corpus.
- Activity 7: Finding textual conventions and norms related to the intrasystemic translation of deontic expressions applying *Sketch Engine* to the Eur-Lex-English 2/2016 parallel corpus of legislation available on the platform and choosing Spanish as the target language.

6. Conclusion

The aim of this article has been to reflect on the potential applications and imbrications between translation technologies and the specialized legal translation classroom. By promoting the use of corpora in the translation classroom, we hope to encourage its use among professional translators who have not yet discovered the efficacy of this approach as many studies claim. It should also serve to highlight the need to adapt translation education to the new requirements created by the exponential development of Artificial Intelligence (AI) applications, spe-

cifically Automatic Translation (AT), which have not yet been included in translation curricula.

More technologically-articulated tasks and projects should be implemented in the specialized translation classroom so that students learn, among others, how to compile a corpus; explore a specialized domain and understanding difficult or unknown concepts; acquire bilingual information on domain-specific terminology and phraseology; identify genre features; convey information appropriately in the target (native) language; and work together to agree on terminology and phraseology.

As this contribution suggests, the possibilities for applying work with corpora to legal translation teaching are great and clearly provide an opportunity for teachers to exercise their creativity. Corpora also serve as a tool to motivate and stimulate students, thanks to the fact that they foster both learning by doing and constructivist learning. Moreover, they give them the resources necessary to make informed translation decisions reinforcing the students' self-confidence in their role as translators-to-be.

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