Corpus-based Undergraduate Consecutive Interpreter Training: An Evaluation of the Backbone Corpus

Richard Bale
Centre for Translation Studies
University of Surrey
r.j.bale@surrey.ac.uk
# Rationale for the PhD project

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<th>Year</th>
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<td>% GCSE language</td>
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<td>73</td>
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<table>
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<td>% GCSE language</td>
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<td>46</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>40</td>
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</table>

(CfBt Trust 2012)
Rationale for the PhD project

• 1999-2009: UK UG French studies down 29%
• 1999-2009: UK UG German studies down 52%
  (CfBT Trust 2011)
• Language ‘learning’ separate from interpreter training (for example Keiser 1978: 13; Kornakov 2000: 244)
• To what extent is this realistic in the UG context?
A corpus-based approach to:

• trial the use of the Backbone corpus in UG interpreting modules

• explore the classroom-based and self-study opportunities afforded by such resources

• contribute to corpus-based interpreter training (cf. Bendazzoli & Sandrelli 2005, 2009)
Approach

• Pilot study + 3 case studies (n=27): interpreting and lexical knowledge

• Pre-testing / post-testing

• Questionnaire and self-evaluative essay

• Accompanying exercises: interpreting- and language-focused tasks

• “Pedagogic mediation” (cf. Widdowson 2003; Braun 2005)
Language-focused exercises

• Listening comprehension tasks
• Concordance searches
• Exploratory tasks
• Language comparisons using two sub-corpora simultaneously
Interpreting-focused exercises

• Preparatory tasks – using themed section searches to compile topic-specific glossaries

• Anticipation - browsing video content

• Self-assessment – checking interpreting performance against transcripts

• Peer-assessment – recording interpreting tasks and assessing each other

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Evaluation: the student perspective

• Abundance of learning materials at an appropriate level for UG students

• Resources uploaded to one place; easy to access

• Language-focused exercises encouraged listening and concentration on a deeper level

• Both types of exercise rated ‘helpful’ or ‘very helpful’ by the majority of students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very helpful</th>
<th>Helpful</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language-focused</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>25/27</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interpreting-focused</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>24/27</td>
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</table>
Evaluation: the student perspective

• “I found the interpreting exercises on the computer a little bit strange. I prefer it ‘live’.”

• The multiple choice element of some language-focused tasks made the exercises too simplistic.

• “Whole-text reading” (Braun 2007: 309) – uses corpus transcripts in ‘live’ practice

→ students request more of this, particularly in self-study
How were the corpus-based materials used during self-study?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method of corpus exploitation</th>
<th>Total number of students using this method</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Using the exercises to apply the same techniques to other videos/scenarios</td>
<td>18</td>
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<tr>
<td>Using the sub-corpora in L1 and L2 simultaneously to compare education systems</td>
<td>12</td>
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<td>Key-word lists</td>
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<td>Concordances</td>
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<td>Annotation highlighter</td>
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<td>Co-occurrence</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>Section search</td>
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</table>
Evaluation: the tutor perspective

• Abundance of materials – variety of topics and speakers
• Greater degree of pedagogic personalisation and differentiation
• Greater topic preparation by students
• Familiarisation with the corpus - time-consuming
• Corpus-based training: making the tutor’s life easier (?)
• Minor technical hitches
In summary

- Student reaction largely positive
- Seems to promote preparation and a sense of discovery (Johns 1986)
- Shift towards more individualised learning
- ‘Traditional’ corpus functions used less frequently
  → students request more information about functions
- Easier for the tutor (?)
- Corpus (computer)-based work preferred in self-study
References


