Moving beyond English: Challenges and opportunities in expanding a Japanese-English parallel corpus to include Chinese and Spanish

Kayo Matsushita
Rikkyo University

For the past couple of decades, researchers of Corpus-based Translation Studies (CTS) and Corpus-based Interpreting Studies (CIS) have intensified their efforts to compile authentic data needed for empirical research (Fantinuoli & Zanettin, 2015; Hu, 2016; Russo, Bendazzoli, & Defrancq, 2018). However, most of these corpora use English either as the source/target language or as the pivot language, with the Oslo Multilingual Corpus for CTS and the European Parliament Interpreting Corpus (EPIC) for CIS being notable exceptions (ibid.). Even if dependence on English is justifiable from a practical and economical point of view, it may consequently inhibit discovery of unique phenomena among less-studied languages and language pairs, especially when non-European languages are involved.

In order to examine such a possibility, this study analyzes the outcomes from an ongoing, multi-institutional corpus project which aims to expand an existing parallel corpus between Japanese and English to include the two most spoken languages other than English—Chinese and Spanish—using Japanese as the source language. As a pilot study, both professional interpreters and student interpreters were asked to perform simultaneous interpretation from Japanese to Chinese and Spanish that was then compared with simultaneous interpreting from Japanese to English using ELAN, an annotation software. In the analysis, linguistic interference in simultaneous interpreting as defined by Lamberger-Felber & Schneider (2008) was frequently observed, but the types were different from those typically seen in the Japanese-English language pair (homophones in the case of the Japanese-Chinese language pair and word order in the case of the Japanese-Spanish language pair). By presenting the initial results of the pilot study, this paper aims to provide comparative data to test some of the key findings of prior research regarding linguistic interference.

Key words: parallel corpus, interference, Japanese, Chinese, Spanish

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