The Advantages and Drawbacks of Using Corpus in Translation

Wai Sam IU
University of Birmingham, UK

Introduction

The importance of language is that it is a tool of communication. Nevertheless, language itself sometimes causes problems for language users, including language teachers and learners, linguists and translators, to name but a few. For example, polysemous words would bring them many troubles. Some synonyms or near-synonyms may not be identical in all senses. Therefore, a pair of synonyms or near-synonyms is not interchangeable in all contexts. Language users must be alert when they choose a word. The senses of a word or a phrase are almost entirely determined by the context in which the word or the phrase occurs. This paper examines whether cease and abolish can be considered as a pair of synonyms or near-synonyms in an ideologically significant text by the use of a corpus study. The research concentrates on whether these two words are interchanged on purpose or it is just a mere translation of making use of a legal term.

The article, included in Appendix 1, shows that the word cease is used to replace the word abolish in an announcement made by the President of Taiwan, Chen Shui-bian (陳水扁). The opening question concerning ‘semantic distinction’ in this article has aroused much interest and criticism from people across the Taiwan Strait. The study will be conducted by employing the computer-aided facilities - corpora research by using the Bank of English (2006) and the consultation of a dictionary. First, a general introduction is given about corpus studies in getting meanings of words in different contexts. Then, the cease/abolish pair is investigated occurring in the authentic case in three different areas. This is followed by a deeper investigation of the advantages and drawbacks of the use of corpus in research work. The last section concludes the findings of the research and reminds translators to be careful when choosing an appropriate word/phrase to fit a specific context.

A Brief Introduction to Corpus Studies

Sinclair defines a corpus as ‘a collection of naturally-occurring language text, chosen to characterize a state or variety of a language [which] typically contains many millions of words’ (1991: 171). There are different types of corpora, from a few thousand words to more than 500 million words, to suit language users’ individual needs. A few types of corpora (from Hunston and Laviosa, 2000: 106) are shown in Table 1. Kennedy states that ‘corpora have been compiled for many different purposes, which in turn influence the design, size and nature of the individual corpus’ (1998: 3). For instance, if one wants to compare two languages, one may choose a small parallel corpus, since “despite some disadvantages, obvious from comparison with very large corpora such as [the British National Corpus] or [the Czech National Corpus] the small number of occurrences may
show some very typical patterns more readily” (Čermák, 2005: 145).

**Table 1. Types and Names of Corpora**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Corpora Type</th>
<th>Corpora Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comparable</td>
<td>The Brown Corpus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparable</td>
<td>LOB Corpus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparable</td>
<td>The International Corpus of English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diachronic</td>
<td>The Helsinki Corpus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General</td>
<td>British National Corpus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General</td>
<td>The Bank of English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialised</td>
<td>CANCODE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialised</td>
<td>The London-Lund Corpus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Corpus users would probably make a choice of what kind of corpus should be employed to accomplish their research goals. Kennedy further points out that some current corpora intended for linguistic research have been designed for general descriptive purposes – that is, they have been designed so that they can be examined or trawled to answer questions at various linguistic levels on the prosody, lexis, grammar, discourse patterns or pragmatics of the language. Other corpora have been designed for specialized purposes. (1998: 3 ~ 4)

In the next section, we will see how corpus studies assist in disclosing the different meanings of words and phrases in a specific area.

**Corpus Studies and Ideology**

Olohan states that ‘ideology that is implicitly coded in utterances can be uncovered through the study of patterns of association, of which language users may not be overtly aware’ (2004: 148). The concordance lines provided by a corpus give researchers a good chance to infer and conclude the meanings of words from the repeated grammatical patterns as well as the collocation and colligation of the words in question. For example, Stubbs has made a corpus study to ‘show how ideological…positions are conveyed, not just by individual words, but by patterns of vocabulary and grammar’ (1996: 82). From his research he finds that ‘some sexist imbalances…are constructed by the way language is used in individual texts’ (ibid). In addition to this, Koller and Mautner also agree and specify that differences between socially, ideologically, or historically distinct discourses often crystallize in different semantic prosodies of key lexical items whose descriptive and/or associative meaning is contested. (2004: 223)

They claim that the collocates of a node can assist in inferring the meaning of the node in different contexts. In short, corpus data can reveal any underlying meaning of a word.

Olohan further points out Fowler’s notion that ‘the choice of one option over another
may be an indication of ideological stance’ (ibid). This serves as a starting point in this paper to investigate if the cease/abolish pair could produce any special function in the article, which will be discussed in the following section.

‘Cease’ and ‘Abolish’: near-synonyms?

Before carrying out the research into the meanings of the two critical words, let us briefly review the history of the Taiwan Issue.

Taiwan has been part of China since ancient times and that the Taiwan issue is a byproduct of the civil war between the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) and the Chinese Communist Party. (Huang, Feb 28, 2006)

The National Unification Council (NUC) was set up in 1990 by the former President of Taiwan, Lee Teng-hui. After the ‘1992 Consensus’, both sides across the strait tacitly consented to the ‘one China’ principle. However, Lee now believes that the NUC, with the Guidelines for the council, is an anachronism. He also agrees with the present President of Taiwan, Chen Shui-bian, to use the word cease instead of the word abolish in Chen’s announcement regarding the NUC and the Guidelines. Consequently, Chen’s move has stirred up discontent with the opposition. They believe that Chen has committed some outrageous actions which would endanger Taiwan. Especially, the Chairman of the Chinese Nationalist Party, Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九), even comments that Chen’s declaration would have threatened the Taiwan-US and cross-strait relations. Undoubtedly, the choice of word in Chen’s announcement has aroused much controversy across the Taiwan Strait and the international situation.

The Meanings of ‘Cease’ and ‘Abolish’

This research is conducted by consulting the Collins COBUILD Dictionary (2003) and the use of the Bank of English (accessed April - May 2006) together with a consultation with a native English Speaker. The cease/abolish pair in question comes from a piece of online news (Ko Shu-ling and Snyder, Feb 28, 2006, at http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/front/archives/2006/02/28/2003294988, accessed 27/04/2006). The article focuses on the word cease which occurred in a recent announcement regarding the National Unification Council (NUC) and the Guidelines for National Unification (Guidelines) made by the President of Taiwan, Chen Shui-bian. The announcement was declared originally in Chinese. However, when it was announced to the world, it was translated into English. The substitution of the verb cease in this piece of news seems to have aroused public attention thoroughly. At the time, this declaration – and particularly the distinction that was made between the two verbs ‘cease’ and ‘abolish’ – caused much discussion in the Taiwan Strait. The study develops into the investigation of the meanings of the two items in the next sub-section.

Native Speaker’s Intuition

The traditional way to know how cease and abolish are naturally used is to see how they are naturally used by English native speakers – how they interpret these two words. From
an intuitive and native speaker’s point of view, Davis (private communication, May 2006), an English teacher, comments that the two words are quite distinct. He gives the following definitions:

Cease: to end something, at least for a certain period in the conversational context, as in an action, e.g. cease smoking

Abolish: to end some state of affairs on a more permanent basis, that is to stop something that has been more institutional or that has been accepted legally previously, e.g. slavery, capital punishment

A very distinct characteristic emphasised in the definitions above is that abolish means to stop something that has been more institutional or that has been accepted legally previously. For example, ‘Some of the first countries to abolish capital punishment included Venezuela (1863), San Marino (1865), and Costa Rica (1877)’ (Death Penalty, at http://www.newsbatch.com/deathpenalty.htm, accessed 13/05/2006), and ‘In Great Britain, [death penalty] was abolished (except for cases of treason) in 1971’ (ibid). These are often of a legal/official nature. Davis says that he would not treat them as synonyms and thinks that the consequences they lead to are different. He finally comments that the two words are not interchangeable.

Dictionary Definition

The complete definitions and examples for the words cease and abolish, in the Collins COBUILD Advanced Learner’s English Dictionary (2003) are attached in Appendix 2. Cease has three different functions in meaning, that is, (i) to stop happening or existing; (ii) to stop doing something and (iii) a synonym of ‘stop’, i.e. to stop something happening or working. In short, it means something stops or someone stops something. According to the dictionary, abolish has one function in meaning, namely, to wipe something out. Clearly cease means that a matter itself stops naturally or somebody stops a matter, but does not eliminate it as abolish does. The two words are not considered as synonyms or equivalent words. The two words have different propositional meanings.

Information from a Corpus

The following data were generated from the Bank of English corpus (accessed April - May 2006) by using the commands: cease@ and abolish@ to get all the instances of verbs. The procedure of getting the concordance lines of each of the two words was the same. The total occurrences of cease and abolish in the corpus were 10,670 and 5,936 respectively. An initial limit of 200 concordance lines for each word was randomly selected. This provided the opportunity for all other classes of words, such as nouns, adjectives etc. of each item to be deleted. After removing all the irrelevant lines, the first 100 lines of each group (in Appendices 3 and 4) remain for a further evaluation. Table 2 gives a picture of the result of the evaluation.
Table 2. The characteristics of ‘cease’ and ‘abolish’ gathered from corpus research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb Pattern</th>
<th>Cease</th>
<th>Abolish</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>30 %</td>
<td>0 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V to-inf</td>
<td>48 %</td>
<td>0 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V -ing</td>
<td>10 %</td>
<td>0 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V n</td>
<td>12 %</td>
<td>48 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be V-ed</td>
<td>0 %</td>
<td>47 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other patterns</td>
<td>0 %</td>
<td>5 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Voice**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Active: 100 %</th>
<th>Active: 48 % (V n), 3 % (other patterns)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Passive: 47 % (Be V-ed), 2% (other patterns)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**General meaning**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>To stop existing</th>
<th>To annihilate something (usually by the authority)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To stop doing something</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To put an end to an activity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Collocation (4:4 span, T-score)**

|       | Fire, desist, agreement, exist, gulf | Government, tax, plans, fees, decision |

V: verb intransitive; V n: verb transitive following by a noun group
V to-inf: verb followed by a to-infinitive; V -ing: verb followed by a present participle
Be V-ed: verb transitive (passive voice)

The grammatical features and meanings of the two words in the corpus are similar to those described in the dictionary. The result of the corpus research also identifies the syntactic patterns (e.g. V n: transitive verb followed by a noun group) and the collocations of the two words. The concordance lines display the repeated grammatical patterns which assist in analysing the senses of the two words. In this corpus research, it seems that active voice dominates all incidences of cease. Simply speaking, cease can be both a transitive and an intransitive verb. It can be followed by a to-infinitive (e.g. ‘cease to be feminist’, ‘cease to beget anymore’, concordance lines 53 and 54, in Appendix 4), a gerund (e.g. ‘cease attacking Israel’, ‘cease engaging in unlawful practices’, concordance lines 11 and 20, in Appendix 4) or a noun group (e.g. ‘cease hostilities’, ‘cease its securities business’, concordance lines 28 and 34, in Appendix 4).

On the contrary, abolish is a transitive verb, which is usually followed by a noun group in active voice, or occurs in passive voice. As Table 2 illustrates, the ratio of active and passive voices is similar, with an exception of 3% of active voice and 2% of passive voice occurring in other grammatical patterns (concordance lines 19, 56 and 81 (active), 24 and 54 (passive), in Appendix 3). Although not all the occurrences of abolish follow the general patterns, the exceptions still retain the characteristics of the meaning. Take the example of Line 19. The stylistic feature of this sentence is ‘inversion’, i.e. the object of the verb is placed at the beginning of the sentence (Existing offices he abolished, and invented new ones…). This inversion emphasises the doer’s power that he abolished... and invented..., and makes the object existing offices more noticeable as a contrast to the new ones. Furthermore, from the co-text, it is known that the doer acts as if he were an Emperor (the authority) to turn everything topsy-turvy. Abolish usually refers to the situation that the authority does away with something or something is removed by the authority. Moreover,
from the co-texts in the corpus, it can be seen that *abolish* usually occurs in the contexts concerning law, rules, policy and authority. *Cease*, on the contrary, occurs in a greater variety of situations. Other than grammatical words, the first five collocates of the two words (collocates of *cease*: fire, desist, agreement, exist and gulf; collocates of *abolish*: government, tax, plans, fees, and decision) with the highest frequency also give some hints of the situations in which *cease* and *abolish* are concerned. All this serves as further evidence that the two words are not identical in meaning.

The findings from the three kinds of research discussed above\(^1\) demonstrate the distinctive meanings of the two words in question. In short, *to cease* simply means to end or put an end to a state or an activity, e.g. ‘The noise at the door had ceased, but he was not fooled’ (concordance line 15, in Appendix 4). On the contrary, *to abolish* means to annul, to abrogate, e.g. ‘The Court has done nothing to abolish affirmative action or to remove it’ (concordance line 12, in Appendix 3). Since it is so, why *abolish* has been substituted by *cease* in Chen’s announcement is worth a more profound study concerning their propositional meanings. This will be carried out in the following section.

**Analysis of the News in Relation to the Findings**

There has been much controversy over the use of the word *cease* in the English version of the announcement made by the President of Taiwan. This immediately became the headline of the news. It is very suspicious that the word *abolish* is replaced by the word *cease* as the two words are not synonyms. In this case, whether *cease* and *abolish* are wrongly treated as if they were synonyms or near-synonyms, or whether there might be any hidden meaning behind the chosen word merits a further investigation. Let us see if there are some hints in the article itself.

First of all, the NUC, together with the Guidelines, is a very sensitive issue in the Taiwan Strait. According to the content of the article, the word *cease* is emphasised by a pair of quotation marks in the headline. The expression *semantic distinction* which served as the sub-headline is also highlighted by capitalisation. This typesetting has already made an implication about the choice of words in Chen’s announcement. Moreover, the question is immediately answered in the very next sentence:

> Chen says the NUC will ‘cease.’

**SEMANTIC DISTINCTION?** The president avoided using the term 'abolish', but his words nonetheless indicated the council and guidelines are now defunct. (Ko Shu-ling and Snyder, Feb 28, 2006)

It is very likely that in this particular case a pair of non-synonyms has been used as if it were a pair of synonyms. It is, therefore, reasonable to believe that *cease* is intentionally selected in the announcement. This may serve as a kind of political euphemism to mitigate the latent political unrest and to avoid any unstable situation in the Taiwan Strait. Consequently, Taiwan maintains its relationship with the US government. The news says that Chen’s decision:

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\(^1\) The three kinds of research refer to the investigations on 1) native speaker’s intuition, 2) dictionary definition and 3) data in Bank of English (corpus research), as discussed above.
...was based on the principle of popular sovereignty, and was prompted by China's ongoing military buildup and attempts to use "non-peaceful" means to unilaterally change the status quo in the Taiwan Strait. The US was expected to respond positively to Chen's action, seeing it as an acceptable compromise between outright abolition of the council and guidelines... (Ko Shu-ling and Snyder, Feb 28, 2006).

On the one hand, the 'status quo' in the Taiwan Strait would remain unchanged; on the other hand, the motive (the announcement) of Chen can be achieved.

The cease/abolish pair actually seems to be more a binary opposite than one sharing equivalent meaning. A binary opposite is a pair of words. Through the cultural opposition to each other the meanings of the words are created. 'If meanings are culturally constructed and exist at the level of binary opposition, then this also suggests that such meanings are ideological' (Englishbiz – Binary Opposition 3, at http://www.englishbiz.co.uk/extras/binaryopposition3.htm, accessed 04/05/2006). The theory is that 'we gain meaning from something not from the direct qualities of the thing in itself but from a difference between the thing' (Englishbiz – Binary Opposition 2b, at http://www.englishbiz.co.uk/extras/binaryopposition2b.htm, accessed 04/05/2006).

It is not difficult to infer that Chen might be disseminating or maintaining his ideological sense in the society. It is said that Chen always advocates the independence of Taiwan. That is why he might want to maintain the ‘status quo’ as it is still not a right time to make any explicit political declaration. The word abolish would have been a stronger choice which might have troubled the status quo. The society’s ideologies might, therefore, be “hidden” because they seem “natural” or “common sense”, as the result of “progress” (Glossary of Linguistic Terms a-m, at http://www.englishbiz.co.uk/grammar/main_files/definitionsa-m.htm, accessed 04/05/2006) in Formosa under Chen’s reign. In addition to education, mass media plus ideologically loaded words can be an efficient tool to disseminate a belief. From the meanings of ‘cease’ and ‘abolish’ revealed by the corpus research above, it can be presumed that ‘cease to function’ can be interpreted as ‘stop functioning at the moment’, while ‘cease to apply’ can be interpreted as ‘stop being used at the moment’. Therefore, ‘an entity ceases to function’ and ‘the rule ceases to apply’ do not mean that they are necessarily destroyed or vanish. Instead, they might still exist but just remain inactive at present.

The word cease might, therefore, be intentionally chosen to replaced the word abolish in the English translation of the announcement to retain the implicit ideology. The question Semantic Distinction at the very beginning of the article has already challenged the semantic meaning of the two words. The reporters also ask for an explanation of the words in question. The government officials, however, could offer little explanation. From the results of the research above and the analysis of the text, it can be deduced that cease and abolish are not synonymous words. Nevertheless, as stated in the previous two paragraphs, the function of this specially selected cease has already implemented Chen’s goal, as well as mitigated the serious atmosphere in the Taiwan Strait. In this particular situation, cease and abolish are treated and used as a pair of near-synonyms, but with an implied meaning.

The research into the meanings of the cease/abolish pair and the analysis of the text have been accomplished, but there remain some queries. Are corpora a useful tool in language analysing? How can corpora successfully assist in language research? This brings
the discussion round to the advantages and drawbacks of using corpus in the next section.

**Corpora: Pros and Cons**

In this section, we will go through the merits and demerits of corpora as a tool in research work.

**Advantages**

Computer technologies can assist in finding out the senses of words and phrases in different contexts in a speedy way. Language users will find it very profitable as a corpus can provide them with a large collection of grammatical patterns, collocation and colligation of words and phrases to aid their analysis in a very short time. Tognini-Bonelli points out that ‘the linguist can now assemble corpora ad hoc, selected according to specific language varieties, genres, topics, etc, and the specific function of the analysis for a given application’ (2004: 13) simply by clicking a button. Like the above corpus research, by making use of the alphabetization command, it is very easy to obtain the words adjacent to the node in an alphabetical order. This facilitates the work of getting the grammatical patterns, and in turn picking out the meanings of the node. Tognini-Bonelli continues that without ‘the advent of corpora’ (2004: 20), the semantic prosody of a word would be difficult to obtain. It is true that corpora provide quantities of authentic texts and update senses of words/phrases for analysis, especially in an open corpus. Corpus research can also help in finding out the underlying meaning of a word as mentioned by some researchers like Koller and Mautner, Olohan and Stubbs. For example, the above results of the study of *abolish* show that it is often used in the contexts relating to law, policy and authority.

Another advantage of using corpora introduced by Adab is the increase of language competence. She suggests that student translators could ‘identify examples of a similar type in the corpus and to propose an explanation as to why [their choices were] less appropriate in the particular context’ (2002: 143). Students will then have a deeper understanding of the words or phrases in question. In addition, Adab adds that ‘comparable monolingual corpora…allow understanding and knowledge of key concepts and appropriate terminology in both SL and TL’ (2002: 142). Corpus research enables student translators ‘to acquire sufficient understanding of the subject of the text and thus to allow an accurate transfer of information’ (ibid). The more the translator understands the original text, the more accurate the translated text will be.

**Drawbacks**

It is true that corpora help in language learning and analysing. Using corpora may, however, be a time-consuming task. Jääskeläinen and Mauranen have carried out a corpus experiment in order to ‘test the usefulness of corpora as a translator’s tool with authentic translating tasks and real translators at work’ (2005: 50). The result reveals that some of the translators rarely use corpora in their work, as their schedule is too tight. Although Jääskeläinen and Mauranen find this a disappointing result, they agree that ‘during hectic times, one needs to rely on routines and put off learning new things’ (2005: 52). After getting the concordance lines, one has to spend much time to investigate and infer the
meanings of the words from the grammatical patterns. Sometimes it takes a longer time to work out the conclusion if the word in question is a polysemous word and if the word bears various grammatical patterns. More samples produce a more accurate result; nevertheless, more time is required. Hence, corpora may not always be a useful tool to translators, especially if the concordance programme is not a user-friendly programme. Translators might need extra time to get familiar with the operation procedure and to know what functions a corpus provides before doing research.

The collections of texts in corpora may cause problems in analyses. The information, e.g. senses of words/phrases, might not be accurate or might be obsolete as the data in a corpus are recorded for a specific period of time, and if it is not an open corpus ‘which is being constantly expanded in order to keep it up to date’ (Coffin et al., 2004: xviii). The newly developed senses of a word might not be inputted in time. There might be some inadequacy. Secondly, the data in a corpus may be not sufficient for analyses since ‘[s]ome sentences won’t occur because they are obvious, others because they are false, still others because they are impolite’ (Leech in Kennedy, 1998: 23). There are also difficulties in collecting the texts due to the issue of copyright, as well as the problem that it is difficult to know which texts should be collected in order to increase occurrences of a word or a phrase in a corpus (for example, there are only 47 occurrences of transhipment/transshipment in the Bank of English), unless an initial research of that particular word or phrase has been carried out. This is another time-consuming task. Another inadequacy is perceived by Barnbrook concerning ‘[the] output that omits occurrences of words that you are interested in, and [the] output that includes occurrences of words that you are not interested in’ (1996: 82). It takes more time either to make a second search or delete the unnecessary information.

A corpus supplies an immense quantity of authentic texts and serves as an electronic tool to provide convenience in the investigation for different linguistic scopes. It still, however, requires human interaction to help in the research activity. Leech points out that a ‘computer program (e.g. a concordance program) is used simply as a tool for sorting and counting data, while all the serious data analysis is performed by a human investigator’ (1991: 14). He believes that ‘successful analysis depends on a division of labour between the corpus and human mind’ (1991: 15). Similarly, with regard to ‘the semantic interpretation of artificial and natural languages’ (2001: 374), Hauser denotes that in addition to the semantic interpretation, the interpretation of natural language still needs ‘the pragmatic interpretation in communication. It consists in matching the objects of the semantic level with corresponding objects of an appropriate context of use’ (ibid). Therefore, any hidden meanings of a word or a phrase may not be easily and explicitly detected and perceived from the data provided by a machine-based corpus. The cease/abolish pair is an example of this kind as cease is intentionally chosen to execute a special mission. The success of the investigation of the cease/abolish pair in this paper results in the division of labour between the human mind and the corpus. How real language is used is eventually revealed by the interaction between these vital elements.

**Conclusion**

After conducting corpus research and comparing the result with a native speaker’s intuition and with dictionary definitions, the evidence is that the cease/abolish pair in question
cannot be considered as synonyms or near-synonyms. The discussion above has given an answer to this query. The reason for treating the two words as synonyms seems to have been motivated by ideological concerns (and not just because the norms of legal English are being applied, as the article claims). Although the online news reports the announcement made by the President of Taiwan, the critical question of the choice of words used in the announcement is the focus of the news. The question has, actually, been answered in the content of the article. It says that the president stopped short of using stronger language...to do away with the unification council and guidelines. From the COBUILD Dictionary, we learn that cease is a formal word which is ‘used mainly in official situation or by political and business organizations or when speaking or writing to people in authority’ (Sinclair, 2003: xii). It is, therefore, believed that cease is carefully and purposefully selected and in this particular context is an ideologically loaded word, on the one hand to maintain the president’s prevailing power in the society, and on the other hand to relax the tension in the Taiwan Strait, as well as the international situation.

It is said that a corpus can be a good tool in research work and corpus research is a useful tool in the studies of ideology in discourse because there is a huge quantity of authentic texts stored in a corpus for any kind of linguistic examination. However, no matter how efficient a tool is, it still has its shortcomings. The analysis in this paper shows some shortcomings, although it does provide overwhelming support for native intuition. In this context-specific case, it is very obvious that the word cease is intentionally chosen to obscure an aim (the president’s will) so as to bring some kind of stability, but which also makes the covert (his ideology) carry on prevailing so as to satisfy himself and his supporters. The use of cease, in these circumstances, gives full scope to its function, that is, on the one hand it retains Chen’s ideological assertion; on the other hand it provides a similar but acceptable outcome - the NUC and the Guidelines become inactive. Whether this is equivalent to abolition in the political sense is questionable. Corpus research has not fully succeeded in providing examples which reflect the subtlety of cease in this context-specific case. Hunston in Olohan points out that ‘corpus methods have less to contribute here because instances of language use are, to a large extent, decontextualized, and a specific text is not the focus of study’ (2004: 149). Perhaps, research on a context-specific text requires more concordance lines for the investigation. However, this research reminds translators to be very careful in finding an appropriate word, especially in some sensitive issues.

References


Chen says the NUC will “cease”

SEMANTIC DISTINCTION?: The president avoided using the term ‘abolish’, but his words nonetheless indicated the council and guidelines are now defunct

By Ko Shu-ling and Charles Snyder

STAFF REPORTERS IN TAIPEI AND WASHINGTON

Tuesday, Feb 28, 2006, Page 1

President Chen Shui-bian (陳水扁) yesterday announced that the National Unification Council will "cease to function" and Guidelines for National Unification will "cease to apply," bringing an end to weeks of speculation and debate on the fate of the largely symbolic body.

Chen said his decision was based on the principle of popular sovereignty, and was
prompted by China's ongoing military buildup and attempts to use “non-peaceful” means to unilaterally change the status quo in the Taiwan Strait.

If all goes well, Chen said, he would approve the recommendation of the National Security Council (NSC) today.

As expected, the president stopped short of using stronger language about “abolishing” the council and guidelines. But it was not clear yesterday what, if any, substantive difference was intended by the carefully chosen wording.

When questioned by reporters, government officials could offer little explanation, saying only that the words Chen used were translations of legal terms from English.

Chen made the announcement after chairing a NSC meeting. He had instructed the council to come up with a report by today on the political and legal repercussions of his proposal to do away with the unification council and guidelines.

The National Security Council proposed that the unification council should cease to function and that a budget should no longer be earmarked for it. The unification guidelines should cease to apply and the Executive Yuan will be instructed to act according to this decision, the council proposed.

Chen said that his decision did not change the “status quo” in the Taiwan Strait, but instead returned sovereignty to the people of Taiwan.

“We do not intend to change the status quo, and strongly oppose the use of any non-peaceful means to unilaterally change the status quo,” Chen said.

Any assumption about the country’s future -- such as the council and guidelines’ premise of eventual unification with China -- would deprive Taiwanese of their freedom of choice, he said.

“We do not rule out any form of future development in cross-strait relations as long as the decision is made via democratic means and by the free will of the 23 million people of Taiwan,” he said.

Chen expressed gratitude to US President George W. Bush for publicly lauding Taiwan's democracy and prosperity in his speech in Kyoto, Japan, last year. Chen also expressed appreciation to the US government for saying it wished to continue cooperating with Taiwan on issues of mutual interest.

With some concerned about whether future constitutional reform would further breach the pledges he made in his first inauguration address, Chen yesterday said that any reforms must be made from the bottom up, from the outside in and from civil society, not the government.

“Constitutional reform must obtain the consent of three-fourths of the legislature and
ratification of the people,” he said. “Any issue of constitutional reform that strays from due constitutional proceedings is not conducive to maintaining the status quo and should be disregarded.”

Chen called on Beijing to engage in direct dialogue with his administration to facilitate sound cross-strait development.

Chen also asserted the administration's resolve to enhance the nation's defenses.

NSC Secretary-General Chiou I-ren (邱義仁) told the press conference after the council meeting that the administration's support for maintaining the status quo was unchanged, and that it hoped China would not use “non-peaceful” means to change it.

“On that basis, all promises remain valid, including the ‘four noes,’” he said.

Chiou was referring to Chen's inauguration pledges not to pursue formal independence, provided that China had no intention of using force against Taiwan.

The US was expected to respond positively to Chen's action, seeing it as an acceptable compromise between outright abolition of the council and guidelines and the need for Chen to satisfy domestic political concerns, observers in Washington say.

The State Department began preparing a response within hours of Chen announcing his decision, but at press time the statement had not yet made the rounds of officials who must sign off such statements.

The department would accept Chen's wording in exchange for a “convincing, authoritative” restating of the “four noes,” a source said.

The National Unification Council

* The council was set up in 1990 by then president Lee Teng-hui as Taiwan's top policymaking body on unification with China.

* The council has been dormant since President Chen Shui-bian took office in 2000.

The Guidelines for National Unification

* The guidelines were approved by the Cabinet on Feb. 23, 1991, with the goal of establishing a "democratic, free and equitably prosperous China."

* No timetable was set for unification.

* The guidelines' principles include:
  
  • Unification should be achieved in gradual phases under the principles of reason,
peace, parity and reciprocity.

- Both China and Taiwan are parts of Chinese territory.
- The timing and manner of China's unification should respect the rights and interests of the people in Taiwan and protect their security and welfare.

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Lee backs Chen on NUC
Opposition threatens to impeach Chen over NUC

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Appendix 2


P. 3
abolish (abolishes, abolishing, abolished)
If someone in authority abolish a system or practice, they formally put an end to it.
VERB V n
☐ The following year Parliament voted to abolish the death penalty for murder.

P. 216
cease (ceases, ceasing, ceased) ◆◇◇
[1] If something cease, it stops happening or existing. [FORMAL]
VERB V
☐ At one o'clock the rain had ceased.

[2] If you cease to do something, you stop doing it. [FORMAL]
VERB V to-inf V -ing
☐ He never ceases to amaze me...
A small number of firms have ceased trading.

[3] If you cease something, you stop it happening or working. [FORMAL]
VERB = stopV n
☐ The Tundra Times, a weekly newspaper in Alaska, ceased publication this week.

Appendix 3

100 concordance lines of abolish for abolish@ in the Bank of English Corpus (2006)

1. over a child's future would be abolished. <p> Local authorities' current
2. all account-keeping fees would be abolished. <p> Federal Treasurer Ralph
3. accountability for public funds is abolished. <p> There are more than 800 PFI
4. to work longer and harder has been abolished. <tref> <hl> Outed: I'm Shaft,
5. announced that the government will abolish a special 5 percent sales tax on
6. himself a QC, will resist moves to abolish a defendant's automatic right to
7. decided to support the proposal to abolish a separate entrance exam. That
8. Maybe, but his decree the same day abolishing a value-added tax - as he
9. unofficial organisations have been abolished. A spokesman in Washington says
10. Commonwealth grants and will have to abolish a defined set of state taxes. At
11. attractive. <p> It also plans to abolish account-keeping fees for disabled
12. The Court has done nothing to abolish affirmative action or to remove it
13. to take them at their word and abolish all degree certificates as well as
14. Tory suggestions that he wanted to abolish all team sports. But at the age of
15. over its new diplomatic strategy to abolish all nuclear weapons. <p> Liberal
16. those who brought it about at once abolished all the franchises of the working
17. the 1975 Act until after SHA was abolished. All that had happened before
18. will lose its enchantment by being abolished altogether." The Strand seemed
19. topsy-turvy. Existing offices he abolished, and invented new ones for the
20. Islam. The religious caliphate was abolished, and the state was made secular.
21. rules laid down from above were abolished and replaced by self-governing
22. import bans and quotas have been abolished and tariffs lowered. Under the
23. appropriations. The fund has been abolished and its loans have been
24. new conservatives. He wants the NCC abolished and is leading the charge --
25. freedom of the press was officially abolished, and the government imposed
26. a storm in cyberspace. Actually, abolishing any bit of government would be
27. by President F.W. de Klerk to abolish apartheid. The delegates to an
28. fresh, almost too much so. Time was abolished, as if the tens of thousands of
29. Istanbul to mark May Day, which was abolished as a public holiday in 1980. The
30. Minister spent his day would be abolished as part of a range of changes to
31. and crude conduct. The customs were abolished at the Reformation in England but
32. by other banks. The clause was abolished at the end of 1990. <p> So too
33. you supported." Duty frees will be abolished between EU states next year. <hl>
34. The national veto will not be abolished. Britain will insist on it for
35. of realigning the centre if he abolishes Britain's first past the post
36. a hidden agenda within government to abolish Britain. <p> Yours faithfully, <p>
37. so of my becoming articled it was abolished but they didn't make it
38. Support for the right to silence, abolished by Michael Howard against the
39. from the country, 1767; slavery was abolished by Pennsylvania; the first US
40. The Supreme Soviet reciprocated by abolishing censorship, and fixing a date for
41. to press ahead with the plan to abolish Clause 28. He conceded that the
42. 96 overs a day, down from 100, but abolished concessions for wickets and the
43. liability, the document abolishes constructive murder. With regard
44. the Boston School Committee to abolish corporal punishment in the public
45. of financial liberalisation: Abolishing credit controls; Deregulating
46. By removing these, the aim is to abolish delays at <p> customs posts and
47. ties by facilitating divorce, abolishing discrimination against
48. extreme example where patents are abolished, drug companies, like our
49. law was suspended, if not actually abolished, during the writing of this
50. members vote unanimously to abolish duty free in 1992 1992 Reprieve
51. travel industry also warns that abolishing duty-free shopping could lead to
52. don't speak out of turn" rule were abolished -- early steps in a cultural
53. establish the slavery that had been abolished eight years earlier at the height
54. unions agitating to have the tax abolished, enterprises may soon find
on opening. The Government plans to abolish entry fees for adults from
and would be extremely difficult to abolish, even if most Americans wanted to
for pledging to reduce and then abolish fee-paying education. <p> On the
would ensue if the custom were abolished. Finally, although Mrs Little and
of the continent, where slavery was abolished first, that led the continent and
crosses my mind that, if ever they abolish fishing, I would have to leave the
<p> Finally, if patents were to be abolished for this technical area, I can
Gray Q.C. called for juries to be abolished for libel cases following large
by some rowdy House freshmen to abolish four cabinet agencies. Meanwhile,
countries sign an agreement abolishing frontier controls between them,
are starved of money. Having abolished grant-maintained schools, ended
years on the promise that they would abolish hunting, but they have failed to
was confronted with an attempt to abolish hunting was in 1949. The Minister
five million it must be possible to abolish illiteracy altogether - but only
he was quite pleased when it was abolished in January 1920, despite the fact
cacao and, when slavery was finally abolished in the 1830s, the British brought
don't read Hansard # is about to be abolished in Mr Major's latest down-sizing.
trade in free markets, which were abolished in 1986. Drastic austerity,
failing. Exchange controls were abolished in Japan and Britain in 1979-80.
says that the toll will be abolished in between 14 and 17 years' time,
ten years after it was formally abolished. In a report, the organisation
with a pitched ball. This rule was abolished in 1882. <p> Coney Island, which
were first distorted, then simply abolished. In many important spheres
unusual cruelty and should be abolished in favor of more merciful means
entry charges for children were abolished in April 1999. The Natural
back, thanks to a wild promise to abolish income tax. He duly engineered the
leadership alternative seeks to abolish. Individuals with the highest
get to the root of the problem and abolish industrial society." With the
Virgin and Fidelity among others. Abolishing initial charges - also known as
to overthrow him had wanted to abolish Islamic law -- but he said he
to modify its functioning, not abolish it). Interventions of a sporadic
transformed and human sacrifice was abolished. It is not the human body which
of determinism; they have not abolished it. The forces and social
there was - until we eventually abolished it - the burden of high spending
communist party has been officially abolished it's still too early to talk
he has been true to his word and abolished it. As a consequence, both
of the new government would have abolished it, saw in its new methods a
is one reason why he is so keen to abolish it.) He must sit and wait. For
second nation in Central America to abolish its army. Costa Rica did away with
lobbied the State Department to abolish its prohibition on women diplomats
which were introduced in 1991 and abolished last year. Interest in them will
wage, then at ?0 per week, was abolished. Looking back, Lofthouse would
critics think the Fund should be abolished. Meanwhile America's Congress is
and New Zealand Food Authority to abolish minimum meat standards in pies.
five weeks before the board was abolished. Mr Beattie said the rules were
time to time, especially since they abolished National Service. It might well
Appendix 4

100 concordance lines of cease for cease@ in the Bank of English Corpus (2006)

1. at his crib And bid all conflicts cease. <p> Oh, little Jesus, sleeping now
2. man focused, or tried to. The sound ceased. A figure bent above him, a skin
3. Monday in Portugal unless fighting ceases after an EC-brokered peace
4. Peter's involvement with England ceased after the international with
5. Therefore, our task is to cease all overcoming, and leave
6. her shots grew erratic and finally ceased altogether, and the Rodney and King
7. the kingly man's restless movements cease and he seems to sleep deeply and
8. The armed clashes should immediately cease and arms should immediately be laid
9. 21c of the Exchange Act, that Thorn cease and desist from committing or
10. Legion hopes that all activity will cease, as the nation pauses to reflect on
11. have been calling for Palestinians to cease attacking Israel. Syria, which has
12. release United Nations hostages and cease attacking UN safe areas". This
13. in the years after nuclear testing ceased, before beginning to fall again.
14. But if they cross that boundary they cease being gifts. Therefore, equating
15. notebook. The noise at the door had ceased, but he was not fooled. Whoever had
16. three months. The symptoms of pain ceased completely following the 12th
17. When nerve stimulation of the muscle ceases, depolarization signals are no
18. for those who drive for a living, (b) cease driving for 3 months and then be re-
19. gave up breakfast and lunch, then I ceased eating altogether. About three
20. the court may order the employer to cease engaging in unlawful practices and
21. up all night writing it. Iraq will cease fire and agree to everything. <p>
22. about 30 feet away. <p> Reckner: Cease firing; guns on the bench. <p>
23. civil war in 1958. Though fighting ceased for a time, the central Lebanese
24. to the annual meeting that the Hunt cease fox hunting on its own behalf, but
25. creations. When her outpourings had ceased, he spoke again. This guy's rich,
26. I tell you today that fighting must cease &hellip;" It was a decision
27. citizens. Iraq was also told it must cease hostile or provocative actions
28. Showing little sign that they would cease hostilities, Bosnian government and
29. no, which will force my efforts to cease. I cannot say my yes to legends
30. 2001 &lt;/dt&gt; &lt;p&gt; WILL the killing never cease in the Middle East? With another 17
31. margin related to these products ceased in 1997. Gross margin (deficit)
32. states. The armed conflict has not ceased. It has found surrogate expression
33. but the demands on his time did not cease. It was while leading a campaign at
34. on or after August 31, 1999 to cease its securities business unless it
35. table. The air-strikes will cease, Kosovo will be divided, and
36. would be issued to ensure the breach ceased. Legislation allows for television
37. that the manifestations immediately ceased. No more children had seizures and
38. to restore the locomotive nearly ceased on the news it was impossible to
39. that the squeeze on manufacturers ceases once the currency's value stops
40. erupting about 15,000 years ago and ceased only 2,000 years ago. &lt;p&gt; We
41. &lt;p&gt; In 1995, however, the OETC ceased operator training, or at least
42. Berthe would, like her sister Edma, cease painting after her marriage, to
43. which lived on a shoestring, have ceased publication. &lt;p&gt; The government
44. Calendar Quarters, the PCX shall cease sending (i) 'trade-at" commitments
45. for London mayor. Nor have they ceased sniping against Beckett for taking
active sperm. Then, when they ceased taking the mixture, their sperm
we will cease operations here and cease the publication of new titles.
leadership level all contacts had ceased: the friendly co-existence of the
that from July next year it would cease the controversial practice of drift
ordered the defendants to immediately cease their fraudulent activity and froze
that had prevented their passage had ceased. Then there was a protracted
destruction, unless they immediately ceased this pro-tection and support -and
of the therapeutic exchange will cease to be feminist, no matter what
from man's first offspring until he ceased to beget anymore. All the time
have accepted the situation and ceased to harry the whites. Whatever
1994. On April 16 the old codes ceased to be valid; they will no longer
extinct volcanoes, have long since ceased to be active. As Kouveliotou
announced the Soviet Union has ceased to exist. Today leaders of 11
something he finds repulsive, it will cease to be pleasurable. Oral sex is a
recommended that the services should cease to carry articles about Congress
set in motion by the Gods and they cease to exist when the Gods depart.
Strange how diplomats never cease to be diplomats ... After we had
qualify for merger relief will cease to do so. The wording of the EEC
so strong that after a while you ceased to notice it, although it always
a man who only in this last hour had ceased to be a stranger. She lost the
to hear and read, it has all ceased to be, it has passed by and has had
central idea struck home Yeats never ceased to make mortal desires' his
about leaving 57. The place has ceased to offer any comfort to me, as a
antisocial behavior above all other, ceased to be the authoritative moral
us confess to sins that we have long ceased to have any power to commit even if
distant from each other, but they ceased to goad. Cecil eventually escaped
of tenures as approximate shorthands ceases to be valuable in this situation
that moves me - always. It never ceased to affect my heart - generosity of
a need has been satisfied then it ceased to motivate an individual, although
all boundaries between the two ceasing to exist. <p> Steven is a 27-year-
and he'll realise that things don't cease to exist just because he can't see
s spare parts section. The 911 has ceased to exist. <h> Friday, 6pm <h><h>
though others believe that he has ceased to kick against the tide. Shawcross
poetry, she survived. But once she ceased to be able to distinguish between
people-full stop. Without them it ceased to exhibit its two most appealing
has been held responsible for Milan ceasing to be the mythical, impregnable
if political patterns north and south cease to diverge so blatantly.
the royal family, the Empire - have ceased to guarantee anything but
Hong Kong and its 6.5 million people ceased to be independent from China long
has broken down and government has ceased to function outside narrow circles.
society in which the main objective ceased to be helping those in need but
Motors, recently announced it would cease to make its main product, the Elan.
currencies of EMU members will cease to be legal tender. <p> All this
when Comecon for practical purposes ceased to exist, trade in the area has
with America. Both arrangements have ceased to be controversial. Icelanders are
Yeltsin follows suit the reforms will cease to have any meaning and Mr
wheat growing area of the world will cease to exist, it might shift north
that most central ministries will cease to have any authority on Russian
Society, says the Mujahideen have ceased to be a viable alternative to
party has since then officially ceased to exist.] Already the main
had with the United States. It never ceases to astonish me how the fortunes of
4) If an Employee who is vested ceases to be a Participant and has a
we judge the world we have. If we cease to judge this world, we may find
When does an immigrant to Canada cease to be one? After 10 years? One
knelt and prayed -- and Julia ceased to breathe. A conventional and