



## CORPUS-BASED STUDIES IN CONTRASTIVE LINGUISTICS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF OSLO

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In the Department of Literature, Area Studies and European Languages (ILOS), University of Oslo, there is a long-standing tradition of corpus-based contrastive studies, dating back to the early 1990s when the English-Norwegian Parallel Corpus project was initiated by Stig Johansson (of the former Department of British and American Studies). Since then, other projects have followed, notably *Språk i kontrast* (directed by Cathrine Fabricius-Hansen and Stig Johansson), the Russian-Norwegian (RuN) corpus project (directed by Atle Grønn), and the Information Structure and Word Order Change in Germanic and Romance Languages (ISWOC) project (directed by Kristin Bech and Kristine Eide), and the Portuguese multi-corpus project AC/DC (directed by Diana Santos), which since 2011 has been associated with ILOS. Further initiatives have also contributed to a growing interest in contrastive studies, extending into more and more languages.

Fruits of these efforts were in evidence at the departmental seminar that took place on the 15th of May 2013, focusing in its entirety on corpus-based contrastive studies. With 14 papers (18 presenters) and close to 50 participants altogether, the event clearly demonstrated the standing this area of research has come to occupy within the department. Moreover, the papers revealed what a multifaceted field this is, through the diversity of topics covered, the number of languages compared, the types of corpora used, and the different methodological and theoretical frameworks applied.

In the first paper, ATLE GRØNN explores the temporal organization of counterfactual conditionals with focus on the perfect auxiliary *ha* (= 'have') in Norwegian. Data from the Oslo Multilingual Corpus show that languages like English, German and French are much more well-behaved at the syntax-semantics interface when it comes to the use of the past perfect in counterfactuals. In Scandinavian (and Dutch) the temporal auxiliary is often semantically redundant both in the antecedent and consequent of counterfactual conditionals.

SILJE SUSANNE ALVESTAD presents an analysis of aspect in Slavic imperatives based on her PhD thesis defended at ILOS in 2013. Her comparative study involves twelve different Slavic languages with examples taken from the ParaSol corpus. The different distribution of imperfective and perfective aspect in Slavic

imperatives – with more imperfective forms found in the east Slavic languages – is accounted for by an aspect neutralization parameter which says that “fake” imperfective morphology can be used when the aspectual meaning is semantically definite.

It is not unusual to add words in translation between languages, but when these words take the form of a pragmatic particle, e.g. *well* and *like*, it becomes all the more interesting to scrutinise the context of the source language to find out what triggers its use in translation. KJETIL RÅ HAUGE demonstrates how translational data between Bulgarian and a number of source languages can be put to use when analysing the function of such pragmatic particles.

ELIZAVETA KHACHATURYAN investigates the use of the Russian particles *deskat'* and *mol*, used to convey shades of reported speech, and their translations into Italian, a language with a completely different way of expressing reported speech, and which often uses expressions involving the verb *dire* 'to say' to explain e.g. a subjective impression conveyed with a specific utterance. The investigation draws on comparable Russian and Italian data from the Uppsala-Tübingen Russian Corpus and the Italian CORIS/CODIS corpus.

On the basis of the Oslo Multilingual Corpus, HILDE HASSELGÅRD explores the semantic field of additive conjunction by studying the Norwegian connector *dessuten* and its correspondences in English and French. The three languages are found to differ in their realization of additive connectives, as attested by the wide range of correspondences found in both English and French. The findings suggest that *dessuten* is stylistically neutral and vague in the additive relation it expresses.

In his study of clausal modifiers in noun phrases, JOHAN ELSNESS investigates a random sample culled from the English-Norwegian Parallel Corpus. The analysis confirms the generally held view that non-finite modifiers are more common in English, whereas finite relative clauses are more commonly used in Norwegian, attesting to a higher degree of explicitness in Norwegian. It is also established, particularly on the basis of data from the Multiple-Translation Corpus, that individual translators' preferences play an important role in the translation of clausal modifiers.

HILDEGUNN DIRDAL examines the individual style of translators on the basis of their use of clause building and clause reduction in translations from English into Norwegian. The source of data is the A.S. Byatt text of the English-Norwegian Multiple-Translation Corpus and its translations into Norwegian by ten different translators. Dirdal concludes that translators' styles depend on both “the degree to which they introduce syntactic changes and the types of structures they prefer”.

Based on a comparable corpus comprising social science texts, BERGLJOT BEHR-ENS focuses on event nominals in English and Norwegian and establishes that English has a significantly higher proportion of these in original texts than Norwe-

gian has. To find out what happens to event nominals in translation between the two languages, Behrens uses the Multiple-Translation Corpus and finds that translators in general tend to be influenced by the source language norms, but to different degrees.

SIGNE OKSEFJELL EBELING addresses the concept of semantic prosody in three small-scale case studies based on the English-Norwegian Parallel Corpus+. It is shown that units containing *commit* and *signs of* have good Norwegian matches with regard to semantic prosody. Units with *utterly*, however, show less stability across the two languages, and no “perfect” matches are identified in Norwegian in terms of semantic prosody.

KRISTINE EIDE discusses word order in Old Portuguese and Old Spanish on the basis of data drawn from a 13th and 14th century parallel corpus, concluding that the different position of subjects and objects attested in the two languages stems from their different information structural properties, namely the fact that Old Spanish, unlike Old Portuguese, allows new information in the left periphery.

CHRISTINE MEKLENBORG SALVESEN & KRISTIN BECH compare V2 word order in a corpus of Old English and Old French texts and find, along with considerable similarities, marked differences. The placement of the subject in Old English, for example, is largely governed by information structure (i.e. whether the subject conveys new information or old, given information), while the subject in Old French is generally placed according to syntactic rules.

HANS PETTER HELLAND & ANNELIESE PITZ present a syntactic account of present and past participles in German and French. The analysis is couched in a minimalist generative framework, based on data from the Oslo Multilingual Corpus. It is shown that even though German and French have similar constructions available, the two languages prefer different ways of expressing the same semantic content. The authors argue that their novel treatment of Asp-phrases in the syntax of participles enables them to account for idiosyncratic facts about German and French with far-reaching cross-linguistic implications.

LILJANA ŠARIĆ & IVELINA TCHIZMAROVA show how new insights can be gained even from relatively small parallel corpora. Comparing six novels with their translations, they find differences between the verbs corresponding to *come* in Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian (BCS) and Bulgarian. The BCS verb tends to be used as a general verb of movement, while its Bulgarian counterpart expresses movement towards the speaker or the hearer, and in some cases also towards neither of these, but towards a location that is the focal point of the utterance.

In the final paper, DIANA SANTOS studies some frequent verbs in Portuguese and Norwegian (corresponding roughly to *be* and *have*), using a corpus of multiple (student) translations in both directions of translation. After illustrating the quantitative regularities of the verbs, she outlines a fine-grained semantic annotation scheme for the Portuguese verbs.

We believe that the papers in this volume attest to the great potential of corpus-based contrastive research, as formulated by Johansson (1998, 3-4):

Language comparison is of great interest in a theoretical as well as an applied perspective. It reveals what is general and what is language-specific and is therefore important both for the understanding of language in general and for the study of the individual languages compared.

Finally, we wish to extend our thanks to the authors for their contributions both to the seminar and to this issue of OSLa. Thanks are also due to the participants at the seminar and not least to the many external reviewers who carefully assessed the contributions. We are also grateful to the department for funding lunch and Portuguese refreshments!

#### REFERENCES

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