What’s in a Colour?
Studying and Contrasting Colours with COMPARA

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COMPARA is the largest edited parallel corpus in the world, publicly available and syntactically annotated.

Portuguese source texts (640 kwords)

Portuguese translations (797 kwords)

English translations (724 kwords)

English source texts (820 kwords)

Colour in Portuguese (4,474)

true colour (3,548)

hair and skin (459)
raca (682)
vinho (16)
fruit and vegetables (10)
originally colour (249)
metaphor

Colour in English (4,808)

true colour (3,614)

human (277)
race (684)

wine (16)

fruit and vegetables (11)
originally colour (268)
metaphor

Distribution of colours in Portuguese originals:

whiter and less specified

More words in the lexicon for hair and skin, and wine

Distribution of colours in English originals:

greyer and more pink

More morphological productivity for colour combination

Colour in translation

Natural reasons for colour mismatch
Different frozen metaphors: sorriso amarelo -> wan smile; romance cor de rosa -> ?; blue movies -> filmes tristes; nódas negras -> bruises; armas brancas -> knives; fazer a vida negra -> give a hard time; red herring; paint the town red -> ; brown off -> maçar-se

Different cultures: herring; paint the town red -> ; brown off -> maçar-se

knives; fazer a vida negra -> give a hard time; red

tristes; nódoas negras -> bruises; armas brancas ->

Differences EN

Differences PT

PT=EN

Vagueness: gold -> dourado, or de ouro, de prata

Different translator creativity: putty-coloured -> cor de massa de vidraceiro; civic redbrick -> novas e sem tradição; azuleleca -> tricklight

Different conventions: brown paper -> papel pardo, goldfish -> peixe vermelho; claras -> egg whites; página em branco -> blank page; dark purposes -> negros propósitos;

Artificial reasons for colour mismatch

• Other and Outras: cor de fumo -> smoke-gray

• Multiple and Múltipla: morphological differences

http://www.linguateca.pt/COMPARA/