

Introduction – Languages in contrast 20 years on

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This special issue of the *Nordic Journal of English Studies* comprises papers from the symposium *Languages in Contrast* held in Lund 5 December 2014 in celebration of the 20th anniversary of the Nordic Parallel Corpus Project which led to the English-Norwegian Parallel Corpus (ENPC), the Swedish-English Parallel Corpus (ESPC) and the Finnish-English Contrastive Corpus Studies Project (FECCS). When they were first compiled, the parallel corpora opened up new possibilities for empirical, corpus-based questions about language relationships and translations (see Johansson 2007, 2012: 1). The catalyst for these possibilities was in many ways the structure of the parallel corpora: they are bidirectional translation corpora which facilitate comparisons of comparable original texts in two languages, original and translated text in one language and original text in one language and their translations into another language. The fact that original English texts were to a great extent common to the three original corpora also allowed some degree of comparison of translations (into different languages) of the same text.

The ideas and thinking that gave rise to the parallel corpus project are described by Jarle Ebeling in an introductory overview opening this special issue. In this overview, Ebeling takes stock of the background and the early history of parallel corpora, in particular the English-Norwegian Parallel Corpus and the English-Swedish Parallel Corpus. The title of his paper reflects the fact that the development of such corpora and the techniques for exploring them in linguistic analysis has changed the field of contrastive linguistics – in the words of Stig Johansson (2012) we can now talk about “contrastive linguistics in a new key”.

In the papers that follow, the tonal environment of this new key is illustrated, examined and discussed in two main sections: *Exploring contrastive methods* and *Contrasting word meaning and use*. By way of a series of small-scale investigations, the papers in the first section test the methodological power of the principal tone of the key, the parallel corpus, and point to methodological strengths and potential new uses as

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well as future challenges. The section includes papers by Johan van der Auwera and Evie Coussé, Signe Oksefjell Ebeling, Hilde Hasselgård, Thomas Egan and Åke Viberg. In the second section, parallel corpora are used to study the meaning of words in one language by consulting their correspondences in another. The section includes one paper by Karin Aijmer and one by Mats Johansson and Lene Nordrum – the latter paper inspired by Bengt Altenberg's talk at the symposium in Lund. The papers underline Stig Johansson's (2007: 28) insight that multilingual corpora have the advantage of making visible meanings that are difficult to access in monolingual corpora, and thus make a case for parallel corpora in semantic and pragmatic studies beyond those with strictly contrastive concerns.

In what follows, we present the papers in their order of appearance. In the first paper in the section *Exploring contrastive methods*, Johan van der Auwera and Evie Coussé use three different methods to shed light on the similarities and differences between English *such* and Swedish *sådan*, which they describe as 'similatives'. Through this triangulation of combining language-specific scholarship, analysis of comparable and parallel corpora, they demonstrate that while the *possible* uses of *such* and *sådan* are similar, their *actual* uses are not so to the same extent. Both the comparable and parallel corpus analyses are carried out on the basis of the ESPC. English *such* is almost exclusively used adnominally, while Swedish *sådan* is also frequently used (pro)nominally. Identifying and intensifying uses are common for both, but the intensifying use is much more prominent with *such*. Further, the recognitional use is only found with *sådan*. The similarity use is well-established for both *such* and *sådan*, but *such* sees more competition from *like/sort/kind* than *sådan* from *sort/typ*. van der Auwera and Coussé conclude that *such* and *sådan* are neither the same nor different; rather, they are similar.

The paper by van der Auwera and Coussé demonstrates how parallel corpora can serve as a crucial component in studies combining different materials and methodologies. The particular advantage of parallel corpora is its unique ability of highlighting patterns of contrastive pragmatics. A problem that is often raised concerning such patterns, however, is the question of size. Can we in fact trust that small parallel corpora, such as the ENPC and ESPC, give rise to representative patterns? Or, put differently, to what extent does corpus size matter? Signe Oksefjell Ebeling addresses this question in her paper. She uses an

extended version of the fiction part of the ENPC, the ENPC+, to revisit three earlier ENPC case studies and concludes that corpus size alone is perhaps not as decisive as we may have feared, but at the same time, the corpus structure and design in general are far from trivial matters. The first of Ebeling's studies suggests that reliable results can be arrived at on the basis of small-size corpora, since the replica study based on a larger corpus produces virtually the same results as the original study, whereas in the second case study, the time lag between some of the texts in the ENPC and ENPC+ seems to be a major factor, as a language change appears to be taking place. Other factors contributing to conflicting results between the original and the replica emerge in the third study, including individual style/preference on the part of the author/translator and the length of corpus texts.

Hilde Hasselgård breaks new ground in taking a colligational pattern based on function words as her starting point, the sequence “*the N1 of the N2*”, (e.g. *the end of the day*). The paper has a double aim: to discover recurrent patterns in the lexical and semantic make-up of this colligational pattern in English and its correspondences in Norwegian, and to explore the possibilities of carrying out a contrastive study on the basis of function words. The English pattern is found to select the N1 more systematically than the N2, and the Norwegian correspondences are more frequently congruent in translations than in sources. Common non-congruent correspondences include compound nouns, *s*-genitives and expressions where the English N1 corresponds to a Norwegian adverb. Individual (N1) lexemes may have their preferred type of correspondence. Hasselgård concludes that the bottom-up approach represented by the function-word starting point can be a fruitful basis of cross-linguistic study.

In his article entitled “Contrasting translations”, Thomas Egan discusses the advantages of using translations from the same source text into several languages as well as the weaknesses of the more traditional contrastive approach of comparing originals and translations to compare expressions in two languages. The method of using translations for contrastive observations has been referred to as ‘parallel translations’ by Johansson (2007: 31), but has not been extensively explored in the literature so far. To support his argument for the advantages of parallel translations, Egan draws on material from a version of the ENPC and ESPC only including the English original texts that the corpora have in

common, as well as the Oslo Multilingual Corpus (OMC). For example, on the basis of Norwegian source texts with translations into English and French it is shown that English and French use different means to encode temporal and perceptual [throughness]. Based on Altenberg (1999), Egan further proposes a formula for measuring the degree of mutual correspondence between items in translations from the same source into different languages. Egan sees the source text as a verbal prompt that is constant for all translators; thus, the source text serves as the *tertium comparationis*.

Åke Viberg's paper "What happens in translation" explores differences between original text and translations and the implications of such differences for contrastive studies by comparing the use of verbs meaning *sit*, *stand* and *lie* in original and translated texts from the English-Swedish Parallel Corpus (ESPC). Viberg shows that postural verbs have a much higher frequency overall in Swedish originals than in English originals, and also that postural verbs are significantly under-represented in the Swedish translations and significantly over-represented in the English translations. These findings point to contrastive differences between English and Swedish, as well as to translation effects. Importantly, however, Viberg shows that the pattern of over- and under-representation looks slightly different at a more fine-grained level of analysis: that of different types of subjects. Viberg discusses his findings both through the lens of research methodology and from a theoretical point of view. A conclusion of importance for studies based on small-scale parallel corpora is that although frequencies can be considerably skewed in translations, a language remains true to its system of basic semantic contrasts in professional translations. Viberg also points to how his results can be related to theories of language contact and studies of second language acquisition and bilingual development – truly a new theoretical pitch in corpus-based contrastive studies.

The second section, *Contrasting word meaning and use*, includes two papers where the meaning and functions of Swedish words are viewed through their English translations and sources in the English-Swedish Parallel Corpus. In the first of these papers, Karin Aijmer uses the ESPC to explore the Swedish modal particle *nog*. Because English does not have modal particles, and thus no obvious equivalent of *nog*, translation patterns are suggestive of the meanings and functions of the

particle. *Nog* is often omitted in translations, or added in translations from English to Swedish. Overt translations tend to convey modal meaning, with modal adverbs being the most frequent type of correspondence. In medial position, *nog* typically functions as a softener or downtoner. In initial position, however, *nog* can be stressed and carries a more contrastive meaning, for instance involving contradictory assumptions. The key feature of *nog* (and its correspondences) is that the speaker, having sufficient knowledge to judge that something is true, assumes responsibility for the truth of his/her utterances, attitudes and opinions, and actions. However, the modal meaning of *nog* serves as a mitigator of the opinion or attitude expressed.

Mats Johansson and Lene Nordrum take Bengt Altenberg's observations about the Swedish word *hinna* as their point of departure. Similarly to Karin Aijmer, they work from the assumption that since *hinna* lacks a straightforward equivalent in English, its English correspondences in the ESPC are particularly useful for shedding light on *hinna*'s meaning and use. Based on the observed translations and sources of *hinna*, Johansson and Nordrum propose that *hinna* is monosemous, but is usually enriched by implied meanings through presupposition and conversational implicature. The core-meaning of *hinna*, they suggest, is time sufficiency, but *hinna* typically presupposes ability and conversationally implicates actualization. The paper ends in the vein of Eckhard König's (2012) observation in a special issue of the journal *Languages in Contrast* regarding how results from small-scale contrastive investigations can serve as complements to general claims made in typology. In the case of *hinna*, its meaning categories can be fitted on van der Auwera and Plungian's (1998) semantic map of modality, in which case the meaning components time sufficiency and ability represent contiguous modal meanings.

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together contribute to the pitch of the future key of corpus-based contrastive linguistics, at least in its Scandinavian accent.

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