

Bengt Altenberg and **Sylviane Granger** (eds.). *Lexis in contrast: Corpus-based approaches*. Studies in Corpus Linguistics 7. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2002. 337 pp. ISBN 90-272-2277-0. Reviewed by **Magnus Levin**, Växjö University.

For many years, lexis was treated as a rather chaotic area of language where those unpredictable and idiosyncratic features that did not fit into syntax were put. Now, a major shift in priorities has occurred and lexis features high on the research agenda. In recent years lexical properties and their influence on syntactic phenomena have been receiving increasing attention. Instead of being considered as separate entities, lexis (which was earlier called ‘vocabulary’) and grammar are now seen as interdependent. The revival of contrastive linguistics (CL) is another change in the focus of linguistic theory that has been important to this collection of papers. Like the increasing interest in lexis, this trend has been greatly facilitated by the computer revolution, but CL has also benefited from increasing internationalization and the integration of Europe, and the current interest in real-life communication. The volume *Lexis in contrast: Corpus-based approaches* is a sign of these developments. The collection features thir-

teen papers divided into four sections and an introduction by the editors. The contributions include studies both of translation corpora and of L1 corpora. All the papers involve English as the object of study, while the contrasting languages mainly involve French, Swedish, Spanish, Chinese and Italian. Although practical applications of multilingual corpora form the main part of the volume, more theoretical issues are also discussed at some length.

Most papers in the book are thoroughly investigated pieces of work, while a few seem somewhat superficial, but that may be due to the necessary restrictions of space in a volume like this. Nevertheless, this book contains a wealth of ideas and approaches and is a valuable addition to both lexicology and CL.

Bengt Altenberg and Sylviane Granger's introduction provides a comprehensive overview of the renewed interest in lexis and CL, and the motivations for it. The editors present a number of applications of multilingual text corpora in contrastive lexical studies. They mention, for instance, that such corpora can provide insights into the languages that might have been overlooked in monolingual corpora, they provide material for the study of contextual influence and they are essential in investigations of multilingual lexicography and terminology. These areas are also in focus in many of the papers in this volume. Some more theoretical issues are also brought up in the introduction. It is argued that equivalence in translation is relative and a matter of judgement. This is an important point since one of the common features of the empirical studies in this book is the low translation equivalence across languages for pairs that at first glance would seem to be very close. In such cases a corpus can lend some intersubjectivity to the findings.

As for the future of lexical CL, the editors think that there are "exciting times ahead" (p. 39). The papers collected certainly seem to be precursors of such a future.

The first section of the volume is entitled Cross-Linguistic Equivalence and contains three papers. As indicated in the heading, the papers explore the complex problem of finding equivalents across languages. In the first of these Raphael Salkie investigates the issue of translation equivalence with the aid of two examples – the translation of the German word *kaum* into English, and the English word *contain* into French. Although rather limited in scope, the study clearly illustrates how parallel corpora can solve translation problems.

In the next paper, Elena Tognini Bonelli compares the English phrases *in the case of*, *in case of* and *in case* in an English newspaper corpus with their *prima facie* Italian equivalents *nel caso di*, *in caso di* and *se per caso*. The phrases in question produce quite similar patterns. For instance *in case of* and *in caso di* both have a strongly negative semantic preference, co-occurring with words like

death, war, massive calamity and constipation. The author proposes the term ‘functionally complete units of meaning’ to characterize the co-selectional patterns of words, because “words do not live in isolation but in strict semantic and functional relationship with other words” (p. 91). Words have different collocational (lexical) and colligational (grammatical) patterns, and through co-selection multi-word units are formed. This study demonstrates clearly that the fine-grained evidence obtained from the repeated patterns in corpora can provide essential information for translators. Although the fit between the languages was very good this time, it cannot be assumed in other cases, Tognini Bonelli suggests.

The section on cross-linguistic equivalence ends with Bengt Altenberg’s paper, which is a thorough comparison of the Swedish equivalents of English causative *make* + Object + Infinitive. The conclusion is that the two languages have a similar range of options for translations: analytical constructions with *make* in English and *få* in Swedish, other causative verbs (*get, cause, komma, tvinga*), synthetic causative verbs and miscellaneous constructions. Altenberg connects these findings with results from learner corpora and argues that, since analytical constructions are cross-linguistically similar and unmarked in both languages, they are likely to be overused by learners. Altenberg’s study shows convincingly how findings from parallel corpora can enhance our understanding of cross-linguistic phenomena.

The next section is devoted to Contrastive Lexical Semantics and contains three case studies. In his contribution, Åke Viberg continues his quest to map lexical differences between English and Swedish. In this article he compares the Swedish high frequency verb *få* with English *get*. These high frequency verbs have developed a number of new meaning extensions in different languages (some of which have become grammaticalized), and this can account for the different patterns in English and Swedish.

In a highly stimulating contribution, Lan Chun compares English metaphors with *up/down* with Chinese metaphors with the corresponding *shang/xia* within the framework of cognitive semantics. Four target domains are focused on, namely QUANTITY, SOCIAL HIERARCHY, TIME and STATES, with examples such as *The price of milk should be down next week, the upper strata of society, from 1918 up to 1945* and *That was a low-down thing to do*. The comparison reveals remarkable similarities between the languages in the L1 corpora. Both pairs of words are frequently used in these domains, and what is oriented *up* is also oriented *shang* (with only one exception), and what is oriented *down* is consistently oriented *xia*. This indicates that “there may indeed exist a univer-

sal metaphorical system” (p. 173). This paper clearly demonstrates how CL can be used to test linguistic theories.

To conclude this section of the collection, Michel Paillard’s paper produces some tentative findings which suggest that metonymy is more common in French, while hypallage (the reversal of the normal functions of elements in order to create a specific effect, as in *Melissa shook her doubtful curls*) is more readily used in English.

The section entitled Corpus-based Bilingual Lexicography offers a wide selection of methodologies. The papers are largely concerned with problems occurring in translations. A major focus is on how to use corpora to facilitate translation. In the first contribution, Wolfgang Teubert argues that bilingual databases will supplant traditional printed dictionaries because these databases can cope better with translation units in context. He exemplifies his point by comparing the words *work*, *travail* and *Arbeit* in different version of such diverse sources as Plato’s *Republic* and EU documents. It is striking how rarely the standard translation equivalent occurs in actual translations. For instance, *Arbeit* is only rendered *travail* in three out of twenty instances, while the plural *travaux* is used eight times in the corpus of EU documents. Teubert suggests that recurrence should be used as a parameter for distinguishing good translation practice from bad, and that “actual translation practice offers a wider choice of options and a larger design space for translation than the traditional bilingual dictionary” (p. 212).

Victòria Alsina and Janet DeCesaris take an entirely different approach in their paper. Instead of looking at translations, which contain transfer from the source language, they compare the information provided in monolingual dictionaries and in English/Spanish and English/Catalan dictionaries for the polysemous adjectives *cold*, *high* and *odd* with native-speaker usage in the British National Corpus.

Sylviane Cardey and Peter Greenfield’s concern is the construction of computerized set expression dictionaries. Set expressions, like *when pigs have wings* and *to breathe down someone’s neck*, cause problems for natural language processing, and one of the aims of the authors is to build a system that can recognize these expressions. Not surprisingly, they conclude that “although machines are useful in advancing and verifying the work of the linguist, there remains much core work which only the linguist is competent to carry out (conception, understanding and organisation), and such work is also essentially manual in nature” (p. 246).

This section is concluded by Christine Chodkiewicz, Didier Bourigault and John Humbley, who work on the production of a glossary for specific purposes.

They explore English and French equivalents in legal texts and find that some terms, such as English *friendly settlement* and French *règlement amiable*, are equivalents in the corpus, whereas the term *proceedings* has no less than twelve equivalents in the French texts. Automatic processing of terms offers a large number of advantages: the total number of occurrences can be accessed, the context enables the translator to disambiguate meanings and to facilitate the harmonization of terms.

The last three papers in the volume are gathered under the heading Translation and Parallel Concordancing. To begin with, Olivier Kraif reflects on translation alignment and lexical correspondences. The contribution by François Maniez, somewhat oddly placed under the heading “Parallel Concordancing”, looks at the problem of resolving potentially ambiguous items, like for instance the word *rate* and the phrase *based on*, in translations. He compares a corpus of medical texts with a newspaper corpus and finds that there are clear differences between the distributions of the various alternatives in different corpora. For example, *based on* is more frequently found as a complex preposition in medical writing than in news text, and such information would be a considerable help to translators.

In the final paper, Patrick Corness demonstrates how the software Multiconcord can be used to investigate translation variants. He exemplifies this by looking at some length at the phrasal verb *pick up* and its translations into Czech and Lithuanian.

The articles in *Lexis in contrast* provide ample evidence for the empirical and practical benefits of contrastive lexical studies. The volume highlights the potential of modern translation corpora and of comparisons of L1 corpora. Both theoretical linguists and translators will profit from reading this book. *Lexis in contrast* covers a wide range of topics and applications of a neglected area and is warmly recommended for anyone working in any of the fields covered in the volume.