IDIOMATICITY WORKSHOP

1-2 SEPTEMBER 2017

ABSTRACTS
Phraseology in a cross-linguistic perspective: borrowing or parallel developments?

Gisle Andersen (NHH – Norwegian School of Economics, Bergen)

The inventory of idiomatic lexico-grammatical patterns in a language is not static, but new patterns of lexical co-occurrence evolve over time, for instance as the result of language-internal lexicalisation or conventionalisation of innovative metaphors, or the result of external influence due to language contact. It is well known that the English language exerts great influence on other languages at the lexical level, resulting in extensive borrowing of terminology as well as everyday words (e.g. Anglicisms such as controller or overhead). Although much less studied, it is also clear that the ‘phrasicon’ (Granger 2009) of a language, i.e. its ‘inventory of communicative formulae, catchphrases, slogans and other multi-word items’ (Fiedler 2017: 90) is not unaffected by such external influence (cf. Andersen 2010, 2016; Fiedler 2014, 2017). This paper represents a first attempt to approach ‘the largely unexplored area of phraseological borrowing’ (Fiedler 2017: 90) in the Norwegian language. The aim is to explore new phraseological units via a corpus-based contrastive analysis of items believed to be the result of language contact between English and Norwegian. Examples of such items in Norwegian are the sky is the limit; å gå den ekstra milen ‘to go the extra mile’; ikke (helt) min kopp te ‘not (exactly) my cup of tea’; tingen er at ‘the thing is that’ and når det kommer til ‘when it comes to’.

I first present a typological survey of phraseological borrowing that draws on the work of Granger and Paquot (2008) and, more recently, Fiedler’s (2017) work on phraseological Anglicisms in German. Next, I show how cross-linguistic corpus methods can be used efficiently for investigating phraseology across time, and for shedding light on the question of whether cross-linguistically parallel structures are the result of borrowing or parallel developments. This is done on the basis of diachronic and synchronic English language corpora such as the Old Bailey Corpus, COHA and COHA, as well as the Norwegian Dictionary Corpus (Nynorskkoorpuset), the National Library’s Text Archive (Bokhylla.no) and the Norwegian Newspaper Corpus. The bulk of my presentation is devoted to case studies of English-induced phraseological units including idioms, catchphrases, and various formulae, some of which perform important discourse-pragmatic functions.

Corpus approaches to cross-linguistic idiomaticity: PMs and metacommenting in English and French

Kate Beeching (University of the West of England, Bristol)

One aspect of idiomaticity which is said to distinguish native from non-native speakers is the colloquial use of (hedging) pragmatic markers (PMs). Although PMs have been the subject of substantial research over the last 20 years, there is no definitive grammar of these terms to support pedagogic interventions which will help learners become more native-like and idiomatic. PMs are subject to considerable variability across national varieties of pluricentric languages, registers, social strata (age, gender, socioeconomic status), context and syntactic positioning. Their functions are difficult for native speakers to articulate, and there are false friends across languages (actually/actuellement; effectively/effectivement; finally/finalement) which muddy the picture.
This lecture evaluates different methodologies which have been applied in the investigation of idiomaticity in contrast with specific reference to PMs and metacommenting. It airs some of the challenges and relative merits of each approach and focuses on the use of:

- small spoken corpora (role-play data)
- large national reference corpora and variational pragmatics
- translation corpora

Examples will illustrate the use and distribution of PMs and metacommenting in English and French.

Novice translators and the challenge of -ing clauses

Hildegunn Dirdal (University of Oslo)

English -ing clauses are used in a large number of syntactic positions and with a wide range of semantic roles. Norwegian present participle clauses, on the other hand, can only be used in a small subset of these. The study reported on in this presentation is an investigation of the way in which novice translators deal with the resulting challenge of translating English -ing clauses into Norwegian.

The data show that the novices use a similar range of solutions as professional translators and are sensitive to syntactic and semantic roles. However, they use the most frequent construction types even more often than the professionals, whereas they seldom use constructions deviating more strongly from the structure of the source text. The novices have more problems with adverbial -ing clauses than with those functioning as objects or as postmodifiers of nouns. This could be because adverbials are more detached from the rest of the clause. With clausal objects, which are selected by the verb, they make very few mistakes.

Some of the problematic renderings of adjuncts have to do with the syntactic integration into the rest of the clause rather than the choice of structure for the -ing clause itself. This might be attributable to a lower degree of automatization, making it more difficult for the students to keep large chunks in memory and resulting in a more local focus.

The bidirectional contrastive method in theory and practice

Signe Oksefjell Ebeling (University of Oslo)

In this talk I will outline the so-called bidirectional contrastive method (BCM) and demonstrate its value in contrastive studies. The BCM requires a bidirectional translation corpus and relies on the assumption that translation may serve as tertium comparationis. Thus, some underlying theoretical assumptions and concepts will be briefly introduced together with an illustration of the English-Norwegian Parallel Corpus model. A case study of the cognates bring/bringe will be performed to show the potential of the BCM in uncovering lexico-grammatical similarities and differences between two closely related languages. The study reveals some clear tendencies, including the fact that Norwegian appears to rely on multi-word verbs containing the particle med ‘with’ to cover the meaning of bring. While
around 10% of the simplex uses of *bring* are rendered by *bringe* in Norwegian translations from English, more than 40% are rendered by *komme med* ‘come with’, *ha med* (REFL) ‘have with’ and *ta med* (REFL) ‘take with (REFL)’. Although the two languages seem to have the same linguistic resources at their disposal to express the event of bringing something (*bring/*bringe*), the results of this study show that English and Norwegian may prefer different patterns to encode it.

A collostruction-based approach to the Integrated Contrastive Model: The idiomaticity of causative constructions in English, French and French learner English

Gaëtanelle Gilquin (University of Louvain)

Collostructional analysis is a family of techniques aimed at investigating the interface between lexis and grammar (Stefanowitsch & Gries 2003, Gries & Stefanowitsch 2004a, 2004b). It relies on the theoretical framework of Construction Grammar and the methodology of quantitative corpus linguistics to measure the association strength between a construction and the lexemes occurring in a given slot of this construction (its ‘collexemes’). In this presentation, collostructional analysis will be combined with the Integrated Contrastive Model (Granger 1996, Gilquin 2000/2001), which investigates transfer on the basis of a contrastive interlanguage analysis of learner and native corpora, and a contrastive analysis of comparable/parallel corpora. This combined approach will be used to study the idiomaticity of periphrastic causative constructions, and more precisely the association between the causative verb (*make*) and its non-finite complement. After showing that the [X *make* Y V<inf>] construction displays strong lexical preferences for certain (classes of) verbs in the non-finite verb slot (Gilquin 2006), I will present the results of a contrastive collostructional analysis of the English construction and its French equivalent [X *faire* V<inf> Y], based on the British National Corpus (for English) and Scientext (for French) and carried out thanks to Coll.analysis (Gries 2007). The similarities and differences in the preferred verbal complements of the two constructions will be highlighted. These results will then be related to the results of a collostruction-based contrastive interlanguage analysis comparing native English data (from the British National Corpus) with learner English data produced by French-speaking students (from the International Corpus of Learner English). Data representing other learner populations will also be used sporadically, as a way of confirming the possible role of transfer in French-speaking learners’ non-idiomatic uses of the *make* causative construction.

References
Phraseology: a critical reassessment

Nicholas Groom (University of Birmingham)

The concept of phraseology has come to increasing prominence in linguistics over the last two decades, but remains somewhat notorious for meaning different things to different researchers. In attempting to resolve this complexity, it has become more or less conventional for commentators to draw a distinction between two broadly contrasting approaches to the subject. One approach may be described as ‘typological’, in that it aims to develop formal taxonomies of word combination types, and to use such taxonomies to address theoretical and applied questions about language learning and teaching. The other approach may be referred to as ‘probabilistic’, in that it centrally involves using computational methods to identify phraseological units in large corpora of attested language data purely on the basis of frequency and/or statistical significance of co-occurrence.

The aim of my talk is to submit this bipartite distinction to a critical review and reassessment. I begin by arguing that if we evaluate these two approaches to phraseology along the purely methodological lines described above, the probabilistic approach will inevitably fare much better than its typological rival. I then go on to consider another (and currently almost entirely neglected) way of comparing the two approaches, which focuses more strongly on evaluating the ontological status of the term ‘phraseology’ itself within each approach. I argue that the probabilistic approach fares much less well from this perspective, as it raises a number of fundamental theoretical questions which probabilistically-oriented researchers have so far failed to address satisfactorily. I will conclude by pointing out that there is a third (and again all too often overlooked) conceptual approach to phraseology, which may offer a solution to the theoretical dilemmas currently facing researchers working within the probabilistic paradigm.

Idiomaticity in English and Norwegian: combining contrastive and interlanguage corpus studies

Hilde Hasselgård (University of Oslo)

I will present some features of the project “Idiomaticity in English and Norwegian – A corpus-based approach”, discussing benefits as well as challenges of combining contrastive analysis with learner language analysis, as in the Integrated Contrastive Model (Granger 1996, Gilquin 2000/2001). Much previous contrastive and interlanguage research deals with
individual lexemes or grammatical constructions. In contrast, the Idiomaticity project focuses on lexicogrammatical patterns, as phraseology is expected to (and to some extent has been shown to) vary across both languages and proficiency levels. I will further discuss the usefulness – and the feasibility – of adding a register dimension to the comparison. Finally I will show a case study, starting from the relatively frequent English 4-gram in the case of as an illustration of how the model can work.

The art of the unsaid – exploring the use of hedging strategies in a cross-cultural perspective

Stine Hulleberg Johansen (University of Oslo)

Pragmatic competence is a prerequisite for successful communication. One aspect associated with pragmatic competence is that of hedging. Hedging can be explained as a rhetorical strategy that reduces the force or truth of the whole or parts of an utterance (Kaltenböck, Mihatsch & Schneider, 2010) and failing to use it correctly can lead to communicative failure. This can be particularly challenging in a cross-cultural context. The current study aims to provide more insight into this aspect of pragmatic competence by contributing to the existing bodies of research in four areas; the cross-cultural branch of hedging research, by comparing hedging strategies used by native speakers of Norwegian and learners of English to those of native speakers of English; spoken language, looking at hedging strategies in spoken corpora; learner language, particularly the issue of transfer; and corpus pragmatics, using a function-to-form approach. The study will use the face-threatening act of refusing as a framing device, searching for “no” and “nei” respectively to see whether they co-occur with hedging strategies. Preliminary findings from a small pilot study using the Norwegian part of the Nordic dialect corpus indicate that direct refusals collocate with various words and phrases commonly associated with hedging functions, e.g. pragmatic particles.

Reference
Kaltenböck, Gunther, Wiltrud Mihatsch & Stefan Schneider. 2010. New approaches to hedging. Bingley: Emerald

Not everyone enjoys being loved, but I like it

Øyvind Thormodsæter (University of Oslo)

This investigation will be conducted in order to analyse the translation paradigms and chart the lexicogrammatical features of primarily three English verbs, like, enjoy and love, and their Norwegian correspondences like, nyte and elske.

The investigation will be two-pronged. The first part will use data from the English-Norwegian Parallel Corpus to chart the translation paradigms of said verbs, to analyse the level of correspondence between the English and Norwegian verbs, and to describe the lexicogrammatical features of the verbs in context in both languages. These results will be compared to data from three other corpora with texts from native users in both languages using Gilquin’s (2000/2001:98-199) model of Contrastive Analysis (CA of native language). This investigation also aims to observe the extent to which meaning is a result of the pattern
or phrase, i.e. whether the meaning of a particular pattern is consistent, and if so, whether there is a consistent translation into the other language in the corpus. Preliminary searches with ENJOY yield interesting results, which will be commented on at the presentation.

The second investigation will compare native and learner usage of English. Data will be extracted from a variety of corpora, largely applying Granger’s (1996a) Integrated Contrastive Model as referred by Gilquin (2000/2001:98-101). Finally, these data will be compared to data from an elicitation test given to native and learner users.