

In search of equivalence

Emma Goldsmith reports from an ITI workshop that showed participants – in theory and practice – how to make the most of corpora when translating



Emma Goldsmith MITI is a freelance Spanish to English medical translator who made a career switch from nursing some 25 years ago. She writes a blog called 'Signs & Symptoms of Translation' about medical translation and SDL Trados Studio.

On Friday 12 September, 24 ITI members met up at the Centre for Translation Studies, University of Surrey, for a half-day hands-on workshop entitled 'In search of source and target-language equivalence with the help of corpora'. Our speaker was Dr Ana Frankenberg-Garcia, Senior Lecturer in Translation Studies and Programme Director of the MA in Translation at the University of Surrey. Her own research currently focuses on dictionary use and applied uses of corpora in translation practice and research, lexicography and foreign language learning.

The workshop was divided into two parts: a theoretical background to corpora, collocation and word sketches, and a hands-on session using corpora in Sketch Engine.¹

Varied audience

Dr Frankenberg-Garcia asked us to briefly introduce ourselves, outlining our language pairs, professional background and familiarity with corpora. Our experience in the latter ranged from none at all (the majority of attendees) to a corpora expert who was picking up tips on giving corpora

presentations. I personally fell somewhere in the middle, since I research terminology with subject-specific corpora in AntConc, but had not used Sketch Engine before.

At the pre-lunch session, Dr Frankenberg-Garcia explained how native speakers of a language have a natural grasp of what sounds right and wrong. In English, we instinctively know when to use *do* or *make*. We wouldn't say *do a promise* or *make a good job*. In 1957, JR Firth defined these word combinations as 'collocation', with his famous quotation, 'You shall know a word by the company it keeps'.

Fast-forward half a century. Corpus software now finds collocates of a word in just a few seconds using statistical probability. Language learners can clearly benefit from this. But what about translators? For a start, translators can suffer from source language interference in their target language. French to English translators may be so familiar with the phrase *entrer dans la salle* that an equivalent preposition slips inadvertently into their English translation: *enter in the room*. Niggling doubts can be quickly allayed by

performing a word sketch in a corpus, as Dr Frankenberg-Garcia promised to show us during the hands-on session.

Lunch was an informal finger-food buffet, which gave attendees time to catch up with old friends, make new contacts and find out who's going to Gateshead next April.

Back in the classroom, it was time to put our new knowledge into practice. We'd been advised to bring laptops, but logging on to the University Wi-Fi proved impossible. There was an inevitable delay while we switched to the classroom desktops and registered on Sketch Engine for the first time, but finally we

'You shall know a word by the company it keeps'

JR Firth, 1957

were all up and running.

It was exciting to select our language-specific corpora and generate concordances and collocations in our own languages. Dr Frankenberg-Garcia walked us through a bilingual word sketch, explaining how we could use this method to avoid false friends. For example, I created a word sketch for *personaje* (Spanish for *character*) and a list of modifiers appeared, including *principal* and *femenino*, suggesting that the English translations could be *principal* and *feminine*, respectively. However, by setting up the equivalent word sketch for the English word *character*, a discerning translator will

personaje			character			brown			marrón		
n_modifier	95,189	1.7	modifier	897,290	0.2	modifies	223,516	0.3	modifies	9,189	3.2
famoso	2,392	9.15	main	43,241	8.79	rice	13,109	9.28	enano	344	9.34
principal	4,819	8.7	cartoon	11,580	8.32	trout	3,425	8.26	color	2,525	7.89
favorito	1,729	8.55	fictional	7,293	7.95	sugar	11,161	8.21	tono	684	7.8
femenino	2,073	8.48	favorite	11,268	7.58	bear	2,754	7.11	cuero	206	7.64
secundario	1,882	8.29	female	8,897	7.5	hair	14,175	7.02	tonalidad	86	7.24
ficción	1,203	8.29	lead	4,154	6.89	Lemma: pelq			mancha	264	7.17
ilustre	916	8.18	moral	4,687	6.84	Query			coloración	54	6.86
ficticio	623	7.6	Chinese	6,127	6.83	eye	17,361	6.78	ojo	513	6.79
						dwarf	830	6.68	bota	103	6.64
						ale	842	6.47	balbino	25	6.44
									pana	22	6.25

pelo		
n_modifier	34,121	1.0
punta	4,456	10.75
largo	3,642	9.58
corto	2,641	9.43
liso	885	9.17
rubio	903	8.89
suelto	701	8.64
castaño	436	8.46
fino	507	7.85

Creating bilingual word sketches (examples above) is a useful way to avoid the dreaded 'false friends'


see that these two adjectives are probably *main* and *female* in English (see image, page 36, left).

Word sketches

Bilingual word sketches can be performed manually, by opening separate browser tabs for each language and splitting your screen in half. You can also do bilingual word sketches automatically in Sketch Engine by selecting a second language under Advanced Options. Dr Frankenberg-Garcia explained how to search for a word that isn't offered the first time round. For example, I entered *brown* and *marrón* in the English-Spanish bilingual word sketch. The list of words *brown* modifies in English includes *rice*, *sugar* and *hair*, none of which are in the 'modifies' list for Spanish. This means that *marrón* is probably not used to modify these nouns in Spanish. By clicking on *hair* and entering the Spanish word *pelo*, a new window opens with modifiers for *pelo*. Again, a discerning translator will soon spot *castaño* in the list (see image, page 36, right).

Searching for alternative translations of the word *brown* in another language may seem pretty basic. But just imagine navigating through word sketches in subject-specific, purpose-built corpora. That's a whole new ball game.

There wasn't time to explore Sketch Engine in more depth, but Dr Frankenberg-Garcia has whetted our appetites. Proof of this were all the suggestions for follow-up training sessions in the workshop feedback form, including how to make more complex queries, search for word chains, create corpora in WebBootCaT, address data protection issues and use mining technology.²

We were also asked to rate our speaker in the feedback form. 20 out of 24 attendees awarded Dr Frankenberg-Garcia the top possible grade. This was anonymous feedback, but I'm happy to say that I was one of those 20. 

¹ www.sketchengine.co.uk – reference corpora available in 36 languages. Annual freelance translator subscription to Sketch Engine: £78 plus VAT.

² Feedback data provided by Ann Brooks, ITI Professional Development Officer.

THE ITI WALKING WEEKEND: THIS YEAR AND NEXT



The ITI Walking Weekend in June 2014 took place in the remote and rolling countryside of Shropshire, close to Wenlock Edge. The weekend was based at the 16th century Wilderhope Manor, a National Trust property now used as a youth hostel and offering characterful accommodation.

A group of about 36 translators, interpreters, partners and friends arrived on the Friday evening for dinner. As usual, there was a choice of longer or shorter walks on both days, ably organised and led by Roger Hulme, Mike Hanson and Charlie Gobbett and helpers. Roger also gave us fascinating information about the geological history of Wenlock Edge. The walks began with a climb up to the top of the Edge, followed by relatively easy walking along ridge-top paths offering glimpses between the trees of the wide views on either side. Although a little cloudy, the weather was kind and we returned to the hostel in the evening in good spirits, ready to enjoy the

medieval banquet provided for us. Sunday's walk took us along the Edge in the opposite direction and gave wonderful views of the hostel in brilliant sunshine before we returned to it in the early afternoon. Many thanks also to Mike Hanson for his excellent organisation of the weekend.

In 2015, the Walking Weekend will take place from 12-14 June in the Wye Valley, on the border between Gloucestershire and Wales. The accommodation will be even more historic this time – in the Norman castle of St Briavels, now converted into a comfortable youth hostel, where you may end up sleeping in 'The Prison', 'The Guard Room' or the 'State Apartments'! As usual, the weekend will begin with an evening meal on the Friday evening, and there will be a choice of walks on the Saturday and Sunday.

■ Please contact Isabel Hull at translator@churchillians.net for further details and a booking form if you would like to come.



ITI LONDON REGIONAL GROUP

AGM & 20th Anniversary Christmas Party, Wednesday 3 December, London

The LRG celebrates its 20th Anniversary this year and, for the occasion, we have arranged a special Christmas Party in the Court Room at Brown's Brasserie in Covent Garden (www.theroomsatbrowns.co.uk/rooms-at-covent-garden/).

We hope that many current and former LRG members will join us for this special event. The AGM will be conducted from the Bench of the old Westminster County Court!

Further information can be found on the LRG website (www.iti-lrg.org.uk), on the ITI online Events Calendar, and via the usual social media channels.

Venue: Brown's Brasserie, Covent Garden, London WC2N 4AG

Time: 6 for 6.30pm

Price: LRG members £25; former LRG members £28; non-LRG members £32

Book your place online at: iti-agm-20th-anniversary-christmas-party.eventbrite.co.uk

Last date for booking: Friday 21 November 2014