

Translating metaphors: a corpus-based approach

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Contrasting two or more languages appears, at first glance, to be straightforward, but, as is well-known, there are several difficulties inherent in language comparison: what is to be compared and what is the nature of equivalence? In this talk I explore a practical approach to contrastive analysis based on the analysis of parallel (translation) corpora using a multilingual concordancer such as ParaConc. It is clear that while corpus-based analyses do not completely put to rest these issues, they do provide a promising way forward for contrastive studies. However, in order to exploit the potential of corpora we need to understand exactly what a corpus represents and what, in particular, a translation corpus represents.

I will relate the content of corpora to a usage-based approach to the analysis of language and to the translation process and will illustrate the potential and limitations of corpus analysis through a study of the translation of various kinds of metaphor.