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ICAME (International Computer Archive of Modern and Medieval English) is an international organization composed of linguists and information scientists. The aim of the organization is to collect and distribute machine-readable text corpora for the empirical study of the English language. Each year, since 1979, ICAME has organized an international conference with a specific discussion topic. The theme of the 35th ICAME Conference was “Corpus Linguistics, Context and Culture” (<http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/conference/fac-arts/english/icame-35/index.aspx>).

The conference was held at the University of Nottingham, UK, from 30 April to 5 May 2014. The main venue was Sir Clive Granger Building, situated right in the middle of the impressive University Park Campus, where most delegates were offered comfortable accommodation. Although the distance from the city centre occasionally created some inconvenience, the conference was carefully organized so that delegates did not have to leave the Campus for meals or other services.

The opening talk was delivered by Professor Ronald Carter (University of Nottingham, UK) and focused on the main topics of the conference, namely how corpus linguistics (henceforth CL) deals with issues of context and culture, and how the study of these aspects of language use involves crossing disciplinary borders, engaging in collaborations with scholars in other fields and exploring the challenges related to the application of corpus techniques to neighbouring areas. Carter then referred to his recent research using CANELC (the Cambridge and Nottingham e-Language Corpus), a one-million-word corpus of

spoken e-language created by the University of Nottingham in collaboration with Cambridge University Press. Preliminary analyses suggest that the notion of culture should be integrated with the idea of “emergent” cultures and that context in Internet communication should be better seen as “dynamic” rather than static, two perspectives that require the integration of various methodological approaches.

1. Pre-conference workshops. The conference was preceded by six pre-conference workshops. Issues related to the complex interplay between language, context and culture were explored from a variety of perspectives, including:

Corpus-based analyses of specific linguistic phenomena across languages (“Cross-linguistic perspective on verb constructions”, Signe Oksefjell Ebeling and Hilde Hasselgård, University of Oslo, Norway) and across native and non-native varieties of English (“Perfect and perfectivity re-assessed through corpus studies”, Elena Seoane, University of Vigo, Spain, Cristina Suárez-Gómez, University of Balearic Islands, Spain and Valentin Werner, University of Bamberg, Germany);

Corpus-based text and discourse analyses, investigating features such as cohesion, coherence, information structure and information packaging across registers and languages (“Corpus-based approaches to discourse relations”, Kerstin Kunz, University of Heidelberg, Germany and Ekaterina Lapshinova-Koltunski, Saarland University, Germany), and recurrent patterns in specialized discourse (“Health communication and corpus linguistics”, Kevin Harvey and Gavin Brookes, University of Nottingham, UK).

CL methods in the study of literary texts (“The Corpus Stylistics Workshop”, Michaela Mahlberg, Peter Stockwell and Rein Sikveland, University of Nottingham, UK).

The pre-conference workshops provided a stimulating starting point for discussion on corpus methodology and interdisciplinarity. Methodological issues are among ICAME’s most distinctive areas of interest. These were addressed in particular in the workshops dealing with discourse analysis and stylistics. Among the challenges of corpus-assisted discourse analysis are effective data extraction through semi-automated identification of textual and discourse phenomena, the statistical evaluation of different aspects of discourse and how different software tools can be combined to arrive at more comprehensive descriptions of data. On the other hand, the practical workshop on statistical methods in sociolinguistics (chaired by Vaclav Brezina, University of Lancaster, UK) focused the participants’ attention on an often-underestimated aspect of corpus analysis: the need to look into the data not in their aggregated form, but in terms of differences within the sample. This perspective underscores the importance of corpus balance and the adoption of alternative statistical measures than those traditionally used in corpus studies (e.g. the log-likelihood test for collocational patterns). Finally, the practical workshop also pointed out the need to develop user-friendly visualisation tools to explore corpus data in order to, literally, “have a clear picture” of language variation.

The second issue anticipated by the pre-conference workshops was that of *interdisciplinarity*. The increasing need of empirical data in a range of disciplinary domains calls upon corpus linguists to experience forms of collaboration with colleagues in other areas of study, to demonstrate what new insights CL can bring to discipline-specific knowledge and to highlight the range of applications of corpus

findings to real world contexts, such as that of professional communication.

2. Keynote lectures. All the five keynote speakers explicitly addressed interdisciplinary and methodological issues albeit with different emphases and from different perspectives. In a talk entitled “Place-making in Brooklyn, New York”, Beatrix Busse (University of Heidelberg, Germany) showed that in the domain of urban place-making, the analysis of a combination of authentic language data, ranging from semi-structured interviews to historical newspaper discourse, is crucial to identify linguistic patterns indexing social value and construing Brooklyn as a brand for creative consumption.

In his exceptionally clear and entertaining style, Tony McEnery (University of Lancaster, UK, “The Corpus as Social History: Prostitution in the Seventeenth Century”) demonstrated the positive contribution of CL to Social History. Using the EEBO (Early English Books Online) corpus, available at Lancaster University, McEnery investigated representations of female prostitution in the seventeenth century. He provided clear methodological guidelines for the study of lexical meaning and social representations in the past: first, the corpus linguist needs to collaborate with the historian to establish the socio-cultural setting within which interpretation occurs; then, the historian should provide a list of useful lexical items generated on the basis of close reading (a typical procedure in the study of history); finally, the corpus linguist should explore lexical patterns and inconsistencies using CL techniques. In the study of marginalized groups for which documentary sources tend to be sparse, corpus data can provide ample evidence of indirect representation strategies, particularly through lexical variation, which indicates change and transience of discourses in society caused by exogenous pressure. Throughout his talk, McEnery stressed the importance of complementing quantitative information with qualitative analysis if CL aims to

distinguish itself from Culturomics and conduct “deep” investigations of meaning and social representation.

The study of lexical meaning in discourse was also the focus of Wolfgang Teubert’s talk (University of Birmingham, UK, “Building on the Corpus-driven Approach: A Wider Look on Meaning”). He advocated taking a corpus-driven approach to the analysis of intertextual practices aiming at detecting how lexical meaning is constructed in discourse. To illustrate this approach, he presented a study of the meaning of the term *human rights*. In Teubert’s view, the meaning of an expression is given by anything that has been said about it in different contexts and epochs. Therefore, corpus linguists should take a diachronic approach to lexical variation focusing on intertextual links. Since language is a cultural artefact, Teubert argued, scholars should always justify their methodological decisions and interpretative tools, arguing each time for the framework chosen to define intertextuality and for the method used to investigate it.

In Ute Römer’s talk (Georgia State University, USA, “Corpus Research for SLA: The Importance of Mixing Methods”), the issue of interdisciplinarity emerged as crucial in terms of both the insights that CL can bring to specific domains of knowledge and the positive effect of combining methodologies. To illustrate her points, Römer reported two case studies in the field of Second Language Acquisition, carried out in collaboration with scholars in areas such as computational linguistics, genre analysis, psycholinguistics and cognitive linguistics. Römer convincingly argued for the importance of mixing methods to increase our understanding of central issues in second language research, such as the features of learner input and learner production, and aspects influencing the acquisition of second language structures.

If Busse, McEnery, Teubert and Römer presented examples of how CL engages with disciplinary fields needing empirical language data to substantiate, expand and

even challenge existing knowledge, Susan Hunston (University of Birmingham, UK, “The Contexts and Cultures of Interdisciplinary Research Discourse”), on the other hand, approached interdisciplinarity as an object of study itself. Hunston introduced an ESRC-funded project carried out in collaboration with Elsevier, aiming at unveiling the features of interdisciplinary research discourse. In her lecture, she discussed the theoretical foundations of the project, according to which the relationship between context and text is bi-directional: the context determines the text (top-down perspective), but the text, too, constructs the context (bottom-up perspective). This view affected corpus design, which was based on a bottom-up approach. Hence, texts were gathered not on the basis of external contextual criteria, as most often happens in studies of academic discourse, but considering their internal characteristics. Hunston argued that shifting the focus from disciplinary to interdisciplinary discourses might change the way we conceptualize and investigate academic discourse.

3. Full papers, work-in-progress reports and posters. The conference included 73 full papers, 34 work-in-progress reports, 11 posters and 3 software demonstrations. The presentations were distributed in three and sometimes four parallel sessions dealing with the following topics, listed in decreasing order in terms of number of slots allotted: History (5), Discourse (4), English as a Foreign Language (4), English for Specific Purposes (3), Grammar (3), World Englishes (3), Research methods (2), Translation (2), Collocations (1), Pragmatics (1), Semantics (1) and Spoken language (1).

The five sessions on the history of language mostly presented diachronic studies investigating the development of specific lexical and grammatical forms to find possible explanations for present-day English language features. For instance, Geoffrey Leech (Lancaster University, UK) explored the reasons why the connective *for*

has been steadily declining over the past 100 years while *(be)cause* has been rising in frequency. He argued that the processes that have most likely produced this outcome are colloquialization, Americanization and pragmatization. Other papers presented synchronic investigations of language features at a specific stage of the development of English. For instance, Tobias Bernaish (University of Geissner, Germany) studied intensifiers, such as *very* and *so*, in Late Modern English also considering possible gender variations. Irma Taavitsainen and Anu Lehto (University of Helsinki, Finland), on the other hand, focused on the medical case report in Late Modern English, analysing its communicative functions, issues of conventionalism and author stance.

The sessions dedicated to discourse analysis featured a good number of papers combining tools from CL and Critical Discourse Analysis to the study of media representations of salient social issues, including national, racial and gendered identities in media coverage of global sport events (Sylvia Jaworska – Reading University, UK – and Sally Hunt – Rhodes University, South Africa); the 2011 London riots in broadsheets and tabloids (Maria Cristina Nisco and Marco Venuti – Università di Napoli Federico II, Italy); trans* persons' gender identity, particularly through misgendering practices, in the British press (Kat Gupta – University of Nottingham, UK). Other presentations focused on the description of discourse practices, seeking to map variation across languages (e.g. the placement of adverbial connectors of contrast in English and French editorials, Maité Dupont – Université catholique de Louvain, Belgium), across communities (e.g. the notion of “future” in blogs related to climate change, Kjersti Fløttum, Øyvind Gjerstad, Anje Müller Gjesdal – University of Bergen, Norway – Nelya Koteyko – University of Leicester, UK – and Andrew Salway – Uni research, Norway) and over time (e.g. changing patterns of sustainability discourse through

corporate self-representation strategies, Alessandra Molino – Università degli Studi di Torino, Italy). Other papers focused on the use of figurative speech considering the theoretical and methodological implications deriving from the study of this strategy in less explored text genres (e.g. metonymy in British text messages, Caroline Tagg and Jeannette Littlemore – University of Birmingham, UK) or the implications of this feature for real life contexts. A particularly interesting paper was presented by Jane Demmen, Andrew Hardie, Veronika Koller, Paul Rayson, Elena Semino (Lacaster University, UK) and Zsófia Demjén (Open University) on the positive and negative effects of violence metaphors (e.g. *fight*, *battle*, *war*) by patients, family carers and healthcare professionals in end-of-life care. Despite the recent criticism levelled at such figurative language, which has been removed from policy documents on end-of-life-care in the UK, the authors found that in some cases, violence metaphors may be self-empowering or they may be employed to express solidarity. Hence they suggest that rather than abolishing violence metaphors altogether, healthcare professionals should take a more nuanced approach considering the different contexts of end-of-life communication.

An area that has greatly profited from the insights deriving from the applications of corpus techniques is that of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). The majority of papers presented studies comparing native and learner English, often using the corpora compiled at the Université catholique de Louvain by the team coordinated by Sylviane Granger (i.e. ICLE, LOCNESS, LINDSEI and LOCNEC). For instance, De Cock (Université catholique de Louvain, Belgium) and Perez-Parades (Universidad de Murcia, Spain) studied personal involvement in learner interviews through a range of features such as demonstratives, indefinite pronouns, private verbs, possibility modals, attributive adjectives and the type/toke ratio. Along with native vs. non-native comparisons, some studies

provided interesting longitudinal data using the LONGDALE (Longitudinal Database of Learner English) corpus, again compiled at Louvain: Caroline Gerckens (Leibniz Universität, Germany) explored the development of phraseological competence in the use of the verb *make*, pointing out the importance of considering inter-learner variability; attention to individual development paths was also paid by Pieter de Haan (Radboud University, Netherlands) who investigated noun phrase structure and distribution in advanced Dutch learners of English. Finally, a very stimulating perspective was provided by comparisons between EFL and ESL (English as a Second Language) varieties, which have rarely been studied together as non-native variants. Sandra Deshors (New Mexico State University, USA) and Stefan Gries (University of California, USA) showed that EFL/ESL speakers show systematic deviation patterns as compared with native speakers, while Gaëtanelle Gilquin (University of Leuven, Belgium) focused on periphrastic causative constructions providing evidence for the hypothesis that phraseological competence benefits from a naturalistic rather than an instructional context of acquisition, but also showing that non-native varieties share common features such as redundancy and explicitation.

The quality of the conference was overall very high and there were numerous excellent papers and work-in-progress reports in the remaining sessions. In the area of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), two papers should be mentioned which approached academic discourse from two different perspectives. John Flowerdew (City University of Hong Kong, China) provided frequency and distribution data of signalling nouns (e.g. *idea*, *fact*, *problem*) across genres (academic lectures, book chapters and research articles) and across a range of disciplines in the natural and social sciences. On the other hand, Lene Nordrum (Lund University, Sweden) adopted a top down approach, more typical of genre analysis, to investigate rhetorical moves in

data commentaries in chemical engineering research papers and Master theses. Using software-assisted annotating procedures, she first identified rhetorical moves and, subsequently, investigated the lexicogrammatical strategies and the phraseology associated with each move, noticing significant differences in the way novice and expert academic writers report their most important results, with expert writers relying much more on nominalization than reporting clauses.

The sessions on research methods featured papers focusing on statistical tests and procedures; these papers were thought-provoking, albeit at times extremely technical. Among these contributions, that of Vaclav Brezina (University of Lancaster, UK) was particularly fascinating, as the statistical test proposed, i.e. Cohen's *d*, seems to provide more meaningful descriptions of the differences and similarities between two or more corpora than traditional methods testing whether differences are statistically significant or not. Through Cohen's *d*, scholars can take into account not only the incidence of use of a given variable, but also its dispersion, that is, how it is distributed across the corpus. The presenter demonstrated that applied to the study of collocations, Cohen's *d* highlights the words that are common throughout the whole corpus and not just in one or two texts.

To conclude, the 35th edition of the ICAME Conference was a remarkable event, where the achievements of CL became apparent in the contribution that it has made to the study of language structures and variation, but also to applied language studies (EFL and ESP research) and related language-based disciplines, such as discourse analysis, which have taken advantage of corpus techniques to the point that corpus-based and corpus-driven approaches are now seen as established and vital methodologies. The conference was also inspiring because it showed that as technology develops and more, especially diachronic, corpora are compiled, CL still

has vast potential in the study of language change and variation. In addition, the keynote lectures and the papers showed that CL has much to offer to an increasing range of disciplines and applied areas interested in the relationship between language, context and culture, such as literature, history, (ethical) newspaper writing, web-based and professional communication, and staff development programmes in jobs where the use of language is a significant issue.

The conference was organized by a group of young researchers and PhD students coordinated by Michaela Mahlberg (University of Nottingham, UK). The atmosphere was dynamic and supportive; the social programme was rich and scattered throughout the sessions so as to encourage progressive interaction and indeed cohesion among delegates. All of this rendered the intensive five-day conference a very enjoyable and productive meeting.

The next ICAME Conference will take place in Trier, Germany, from 27 to 31 May 2015.

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