

Shorter notices

The 20th ICAME conference in Freiburg, Germany (26–30 May 1999)

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A warm and sunny Freiburg provided the pleasant back-drop for the 20th ICAME conference, especially appreciated by those ICAMERs who hail from more northerly regions. The scenic old town is certainly worth several sight-seeing tours and a first opportunity for orientation was given to the ICAMERs with organized walking tours of the campus and the city centre on the day of arrival. Other enjoyable social and cultural activities were to follow, but the main attraction was of course the academic programme with a variety of stimulating presentations, which were united by the over-arching motto of 'Corpus Linguistics and Linguistic Theory'.

The conference started with an opening reception at the Hotel Victoria on the evening of May 26, during which the ICAMERs were greeted by the dean of the faculty, Bernd Kortmann. The good food and the pleasant service turned this informal opening into an excellent opportunity for renewing old friendships and for making new ones.

The next morning saw the official opening of the ICAME conference by the rector of Freiburg University. This was immediately followed by the start of the academic programme. While the programme was not divided into explicitly themed sections, an overall unifying effect was created through many of the papers taking the conference motto into account by connecting corpus-linguistic methodology to theoretical concerns. All in all there was an outstanding array of varied and stimulating presentations, which showed the breadth and depth of current corpus linguistic research. The conference organizers certainly did not have an easy job in drawing up the conference programme.

Among those who took a meta-perspective on the field of corpus linguistics were Hans Lindquist and Magnus Levin, and Robert Sigley; their papers addressed the important question of the comparability of corpora and corpus studies, but using different approaches. The refreshing talk by Janet Holmes combined sociolinguistics and corpus analysis, while Michael Svensson drew on functional-systemic grammar for his paper. Connections to theoretical linguistics were also made by the presentations of Gunther Kaltenböck on *it*-extraposition, Jürgen Esser on the linguistic sign, Mariangela Spinillo on the word-class definition of determiners, Patrik Svensson on how cognitive linguistics can profit from corpus data, Thomas Lavelle on the predicative AP construction in the framework of Construction Grammar, Nelleke Oostdijk on creating a new descriptive model integrating language system and use, and, finally, Bas Aarts, who entertained (and enlightened) us with a wonderful dialogue between a corpus linguist and Noam Chomsky.

Other presentations concentrated more on individual linguistic features or aspects. Among them were *gonnalgoing to* (Ylva Berglund), the comparison of disyllabic adjectives (Pam Peters), *all-*, *both-* and *half-*constructions (Maria Estling), *be able to vs. can/could* (Roberta Facchinetti), the adverbs *now*, *then*, *just* and *again* (Felicita Tesch), fixed phrases in spoken English (Uta Lenk), idioms in Kenyan English (Paul Skandera), prepositional verb constructions (Anneli Meurman-Solin), and neologisms and context (Antoinette Renouf). Graeme Kennedy's study of a high-frequency feature, modals in the BNC, once more showed the usefulness of the Zürich BNC server and its helpful, competent administrators to the community of corpus linguists. The connection between corpus linguistics and the field of phonetics were highlighted by the presentations of Ilka Mindt and Anne Wichmann.

There was also a spate of papers on contrastive studies, learner corpora and corpus-related learner applications, indicating that this application of corpus linguistics is becoming ever more important. Contrastive approaches based on parallel corpora were presented for Russian (Natalia Gvishiani), Swedish (Karin Aijmer), Norwegian (Stig Johansson) and German (Josef Schmied/Angela Hahn/Sabine Reich, and Wolfgang Teubert). While Clive Souter, Eric Atwell and Peter Howarth were concerned with easing the acquisition of English phonetic structure, the papers by Fanny Meunier and Sylvie de Cock dealt with phraseological and syntactic aspects of learner speech.

The diachronic workshop was integrated into the main conference this time by being scheduled as a parallel session on Friday afternoon. There the *Historical Rostock Newspaper Corpus*, nicely supplementing *ZEN*, was introduced to the ICAME community by Kristina Schneider. We also heard more about ongo-

ing work on the *Corpus of Early English Medical Writing* (Irma Taavitsainen, Päivi Pahta), and the *Corpus of Early English Correspondence* (Minna Palander-Collin, Arja Nurmi). Other papers dealt with the history of causal connectives (Claudia Claridge, Manfred Markus) and the evolution of *get*-constructions (Marianne Hundt). Thomas Kohnen's contribution about speech acts aimed at using corpora for an investigation into historical pragmatics, a field that is attracting more and more attention.

There was also a 'plethora of posters', all in all fifteen of them. Short and precise introductions were provided into learner-corpora research, such as the Uppsala Student English Project (Ylva Berglund, Margareta Westergren Axelsson), the tagging and parsing of learner corpora (Peter de Haan, Inge de Mönink), and the Chemnitz Internet Grammar (Angela Hahn). Geoffrey Leech/Nicholas Smith presented information on the tagging of LOB and FLOB and the possibilities this offers for the study of language change. David Lee told us about his goal of replicating Biber's multi-factor analysis with the help of a subset of the BNC. Other posters concerned themselves with individual linguistic features, e.g. negation (Sebastian Hoffmann), anotomy (Steven Jones), noun phrases (Tore Nilsson), the present perfect (Norbert Schlüter), intensifiers (Anna-Brita Stenström), directives (Bernadette Vine) and contractions (Margareta Westergren Axelsson). Two posters dealt with historical topics, 'Herbals and Early English Medical Writing' (Marti Mäkinen) and 'The Influence of Gender on Politeness in EMode' (Terry Walker).

Of course, an ICAME conference would not be complete without paying attention to the important methodological and software-related aspects of corpus linguistics. Two new tools for accessing corpora, CUE and Qwick, were presented by Oliver Mason, while Sean Wallis reported on recent further developments of ICECUP. In the software presentation section Knut Hofland was able to demonstrate the long-awaited second edition of the ICAME CD-ROM to the conference participants and to announce a special offer for ICAMERs.

The social programme was as memorable as the academic one. Of course the conference organizers could profit from a few natural advantages, such as the wonderful city of Freiburg itself, the beautiful landscape surrounding it, and — last but not least — the fact that we found ourselves in the middle of a wine-growing area. However, they also made sure to make the very best of these advantages in their planning. The conference participants had two nice evening meals at the Schlossberg restaurant 'Dattler', which from its prominent hill-side location gave us a marvellous panoramic view of Freiburg and its surroundings. Besides, the short walk up and down that hill gave us the chance to burn off at least some of the calorie intake (an unavoidable side-effect of most confer-

ences!). The social highlight of the conference was certainly the conference trip and banquet. After a scenic drive through the wine-growing area we visited the French city of Colmar with its historic town centre. In the evening we were treated to a wine tasting of local vintages and a wonderful buffet dinner at the 'Winzergenossenschaft Breisach'. Even during this social gathering there was the opportunity to indulge in linguistic analysis by using the data Christian Mair (with some help from Marianne Hundt) provided in his brave attempt to serve as an interpreter during the wine tasting. Someone should have had a tape recorder running ...

The conference officially closed on Sunday at noon. The town of Freiburg may have been glad to be rid of all the visiting scholars (us and all those librarians!), but some of us would certainly have enjoyed a longer stay in this pleasant area. Our thanks go to the conference organizers and their student helpers for making this a thoroughly enjoyable and profitable conference, to which we will always think back with pleasure.