English amid(st) and among(st) : a contrastive approach based on Norwegian and Swedish translation data

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Abstract
This chapter examines the hypothesis that translation equivalents may be employed to cast light on the semantic network of a lexeme in its original language. The lexemes investigated are amid(st) and among(st), which are commonly taken to overlap in meaning. The data consist of all tokens of both prepositions in the English language original texts that are common to both the English-Norwegian Parallel Corpus and the English-Swedish Parallel Corpus. A particular question addressed is how the various senses of among(st) are related to each other (amid(st) is always used to code a SETTING). All tokens of among(st) are first sorted into semantic classes using normal corpus linguistic methods. The translations into Norwegian and Swedish of the various senses are then examined with an emphasis on the similarities and differences between them. The basic hypothesis is that the senses that are translated in similar ways in a particular language are felt to be more closely related by users of that language than senses that are translated in very different ways. The results lend some support for the hypothesis that translation equivalents can be used as a basis for a semantic classification of polysemous lexemes.

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