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# Speaking of consequences in Chinese, Croatian, English, French, and Greek

## A corpus-based study

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# Research question

How similar (or different) are the semantic prosodies of near synonyms in related languages such as Chinese, Croatian, English, French and Greek?

- Based on Xiao and McEnery (2006) and Polizzi (2022)

# Previous work

- Xiao and McEnery (2006) and Polizzi (2022) examine the phenomenon of semantic prosody and its implications for language learning
- Examined from a cross-linguistic perspective by contrasting two sets of near synonyms (*consequence*-related words)

# Relevance

- Xiao and McEnery (2006) – groups of near synonyms in English and Chinese: the consequence group (among others)
- Polizzi (2022) – a corpus-based analysis of consequence groups, taking into account two closely-related languages, English and German
- Our research: corpus-based analysis of near synonyms of consequence groups in 5 languages
  - more languages, recent data, web-data availability

# Research Object and Basic Concepts

## **Semantic prosody**

- 'A form of meaning which is established through the proximity of a consistent series of collocates' (Louw 2000: 57).
- Words and phrases
- Express speaker/writer attitude or evaluation (Louw 2000: 58).
- Typically negative - relatively few positive

# Research Object and Basic Concepts

**Other usage restrictions:** good basis for a contrastive study

- Semantic preference
  - Semantic sets of collocates
- Genre, discourse domain, register

# Methodology: Locating data

1. Find most accurate synonyms of 'consequence'
  - a. Across languages:  
*Google Translate, Kontext, WordReference, PONS*
  - b. Within language:  
*CNRTL synonym dictionary, Larousse synonym dictionary, Hrvatski jezični Portal*
2. Selection and analysis of comparable corpora:  
*TenTen webcontent: SketchEngine*
3. Random sample of 2,000 lines

# Methodology: Analysis

4. Analysis with AntConc
  - a. Collocations (max 10 ranked by log-Likelihood)
  - b. Concordances (max 10 ranked by frequency)
5. Two-dimensional analysis of examples
  - a. Affective value
  - b. Genre, discourse domain, register
6. Cross-lingual comparison



# Results

ENGLISH	CHINESE	CROATIAN	FRENCH	GREEK
consequence	后果	posljedica	conséquence	συνέπεια
effect*			efekt	effet
outcome*	结果	ishod	suite	απόρροια*
result	成果	rezultat	résultat	αποτέλεσμα

Colour coding



# Importance of Text Domain: English

'outcome'

## negative:

health/medical:

*The lab focuses on the identification of genetic, epigenetic and genomic **abnormalities** that lead to **poor** patient **outcome** in uveal melanoma, retinoblastoma and other eye cancers.*

## neutral:

*Instead of using a judge to decide the final **outcome**, the parties agree to use an arbitrator.*

## positive:

*After reading months of ridiculously goalseeked Wall Street commentary, where first a Trump victory was the **best outcome** for stocks.*

# Importance of Text Domain: Greek

απόρροια 'outcome'

## negative:

[...]τουλάχιστον έως τον Αύγουστο του 2012, καθώς και **δομικά προβλήματα** των ελληνικών εξαγωγών, αλλά και **νέες δυσκολίες** ως **απόρροια** της οικονομικής **κρίσης**.

[...] at least until the August 2012, as **the structural problems** of the greek exports and the **new difficulties**, the **outcome** of financial **crisis**.

## positive:

[...]Πρόκειται για **εντυπωσιακά αποτελέσματα**, τα οποία είναι άμεση **απόρροια** της **εντατικής δουλειάς** που έχει γίνει **από όλους μας** στην Κωτσόβολος, καθώς παραμείναμε **πιστοί στο όραμά και το στόχο** (μας).

[...] These are **impressive results**, which are a direct **outcome** of the **intensive work** that has been done by all of us in Kotsovolos, as we remained **faithful to (our) vision and the goal**.

# Summing up

- near synonyms of 'consequence'  
in comparable web corpora in 5 languages
- cross-lingual correspondences  
on basis of semantic prosody and usage restrictions
- relevant for bilingual lexicography, translation and language learning

# Limitations and outlook

- Obstacles to overcome in the research
  - French: polysemy
  - Greek: plural queries
  - Chinese: segmentation
- limitations of our approach include
  - Amount of data analysed
  - Role of intuition in evaluation
- future work: find comparable data from better defined discourse settings (e.g. news, conversation, ...) in available repositories

# A final note...



taken by our wonderful Julianna



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# Questions?

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