

Fact or fiction?

Studies in honour of Solveig Granath

Edited by
Elisabeth Wennö, Marie Tåqvist,
Peter Wikström, & Johan Wijkmark



Solveig Granath

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Foreword

Elisabeth Wennö

The title of this volume, *Fact or fiction? Studies in honour of Solveig Granath*, is very deliberately chosen, because the need to uphold this distinction and to keep asking the question is the hallmark of Solveig Granath, as a person and as a scholar. The personal need presumably derives from the down-to-earth, no-nonsense mentality of the small Värmland community of Töcksfors, six km from the Norwegian border, where she grew up and where a spade is a spade. “Thus began a long and distinguished career” (2004) as the title of one of her articles reads. The scholarly need may be the result of being the product of no less than five higher education institutions: Karlstad University (BA English, German and French), Mölndal Teacher Training College, and doctoral studies at Brown University, Umeå University, and Gothenburg University. This, however, is not strictly true, as she would most certainly object to being a product of anything. She makes her own choices. “Is that a fact?” reads another title (2001) for a corpus study of the syntax and semantics of *the fact that*, and in this case, it is.

One of Solveig Granath’s teaching duties has been LANGUAGE HISTORY, to which she has introduced hundreds upon hundreds of students with exceptional success because of her expertise and passionate interest and it is, appropriately, the first out of the thematic strands that organize this volume. However, language history has not specifically been one of her research areas and therefore it is especially gratifying that Nils-Lennart Johannesson has contributed an article in this field, titled “‘Hreran mid hondum hrimcealde sæ’: On verb attraction in Old English”, which also links to her interest in syntax and word order (see, for instance, articles on adverb placement [2002] and clause-initial *Thus* [2004]). Johannesson’s article explores some properties of clauses in Old English where verb attraction is at work, suggesting that alliteration and other poetic devices are successfully enabled by the OE mobility of verbs and the phenomenon of verb attraction.

The second theme of the volume is SYNTAX, possibly Solveig Granath’s favourite language aspect and the field in which she wrote her doctoral thesis, titled *Verb Complementation in English: Omission of*

Preposition before That-clauses and To-infinitives (1994; 1997). Verbs and verb syntax are also the centre of attention in Gunnar Bergh and Sölve Ohlander's contribution with the intriguing title, "*Iniesta passed and Messi finished clinically: Football verbs and transitivity*". They argue and demonstrate that special language is also distinguished from general language by syntax and not only jargon. Likewise, Arne Olofsson, in his "*EVERY 3 in OED: A grammatically neglected determiner (or two)*", makes a strong case in showing that the determiner *every* is not restricted to count nouns in the singular (*each*), but also used to determine certain abstract count nouns in the singular and abstract non-count nouns implying *possible*, and with abstract non-count nouns implying *complete*.

The third area of interest to Solveig Granath is CORPUS LINGUISTICS, which has been a major research approach since her doctorate and also the subject of a number of articles, lately based on the Columbia School Theory, which relies on objective data and empirical observations rather than speculation. The attraction of corpus linguistics is that it provides the opportunity to analyse and describe language in use as well as to analyse its syntax and meaning in context. On this note, Ylva Berglund Prytz explores, in "Refugee or migrant? What corpora can tell," how the semantically related words *refugee* and *migrant* are used, finding that there is a slight change of view in the recent European migration crisis, even though the distinction between 'having to escape for survival' and 'trying to make a living elsewhere' is maintained although blurring. In "A proposed method of clarifying the meaning of contentious political-cultural words: The case of *country* and *nation*", Mats Mobärg focuses on two other words belonging to the same semantic field, investigating how the words behave in three contextual-semantic roles in a literature corpus from Shakespeare to Virginia Woolf. The thematic strand ends with Karin Aijmer's contribution, "'You're absolutely welcome, thanks for the ear': The use of *absolutely* in American soap operas". She too uses corpora to study the syntax, frequency and meaning of the intensifier *absolutely* in American English as exemplified in soap operas, and shows that the intensifier has developed discourse-organising functions. This is especially topical since Solveig Granath has also taken a scholarly interest in fiction on TV in "Contradictory messages and lies: Paralanguage in televised narratives" (2000).

Throughout her adult life, Solveig Granath has been involved in teaching and in language teaching research. In the late 1990s, she worked on an externally funded project involving the use of corpora to teach English syntax to EFL students at the university level (1998), and more recently she has written on the use of IT in teaching (2008 and 2009), on who benefits from learning to use corpora (2009), and on the functional ability and linguistic correctness among advanced learners of English (2007). In fact, the aspect of APPLIED LINGUISTICS has always been a strong feature in her approach to the relevance of language research. In this area, Hilde Hasselgård has contributed a study of “Conditional clauses in novice academic English: A comparison of Norwegian learners and native speakers”, which involves syntactic, semantic and pragmatic features of conditional clauses, finding that Norwegian learners are prone to overuse the conditionals with *if*, but on the whole they master syntactic and semantic features, although with less epistemic use in argument building. The second contribution on this theme, by Erica Sandlund and Pia Sundqvist, studies the diverging assessments of spoken English in the Swedish national test in grade 9: “Equity in L2 English oral assessment: Criterion-based facts or works of fiction?” Here the problem of the equal assessment of oral proficiency is addressed, using a conversation analysis approach. The study concludes that assessment is affected by factors such as moral stance, rater experience, and the interlocutor.

The fifth thematic strand centres on LITERATURE, which is an area that Solveig Granath has also paid attention to, not only by participating in higher seminars for doctoral students in literature and reading their theses, but also as the main editor of six anthologies including both language and literature papers presented by researchers and selected students mostly at the CSL conference, but also in other contexts. In the same spirit of bridging the gap between language and literature, Magnus Ullén points to the link between literature and rhetoric in his article “Reading literature rhetorically: Nathaniel Hawthorne’s ‘The Prison-Door’ as an exercise in close reading”. He demonstrates how this can be done, and fruitfully so in EFL settings, as rhetorical readings also require attending to social and cultural history as well as highlight how literary functions are similarly at work in other types of discourse. As it happens, Maria Holmgren Troy also contributes an article that includes a Hawthorne text: “The fact of metafiction in nineteenth-century American

children's literature", showing that the fact of the matter is that metafiction is not, as alleged, a recent phenomenon, but that Hawthorne's and Stoddard's books for children exhibit a range of quite sophisticated metafictional elements.

As a literary device, *metafiction* has been productive at least since Homer's *Odyssey*, but the term as such was coined in 1970 (by Gass and Scholes). Around the same time, the term *political correctness*, which until then had been used as a conservative slur, started to be used in a self-critically ironic mode, as a defensive response, especially among feminists and the political left. Recently, Solveig Granath and Magnus Ullén completed an article on political correctness, using *Time Magazine* 1923–1996 as the corpus (2016 forthcoming), and terminology was the content of a course she studied not long ago as well as the subject of the last research group she headed at Karlstad University. Thus, TERMINOLOGY is the sixth and final theme of this anthology. The term *political correctness* is the topic of Peter Wikström's contribution "No one is 'pro-politically correct': Positive construals of *political correctness* in Twitter conversations", in which he studies instances of tweets that challenge the assumption that political correctness is a term that most people would not like to be associated with. Rather, he shows that it is also used to avert potential misunderstanding or project a respectful stance, among other things. The next article on this theme, by Philip Shaw, draws attention to Shakespeare's classic question: "What's in a name?" The contribution is titled "Three types of zoological common names and their formation-processes", and deals with the name and naming process in zoology in terms of the folk, collector, and popularizing categories, with comparisons of instances in English, French, German and Swedish and the ways in which the names and naming reflect societal differences. Terminology in the context of translation is the topic of Thorsten Schröter's "Translating in and for higher education in Sweden: Some reflections from a practitioner", which describes an area of university life that is increasingly required, but generally neglected and undervalued. The article provides "notes from the field" about the conditions and problems of translating university documents, including challenges related to the lack of some Swedish–English word and term correspondences. Finally, on the topic of word meaning, Michael Wherrity, in the article "*Ex uno plures*: A case for monosemy", discusses whether lexical items are polysemic or if

they have a basic meaning which we use to signify what we want in various contexts. He proposes a middle path, showing that, on a continuum of an open-class semantically rich item to a grammatically impoverished item, the polysemic approach works best with open-class rich items, while grammatical items are best explained in terms of a basic meaning, which in the case of *in* is cognitively conceived as a three-dimensional containment.

This volume contains a wealth of polysemic items as well as examples of how we create spatial metaphors to structure, categorise, and order the world as well as thinking. Fittingly, such a cognitive approach is demonstrated in Solveig Granath and Michael Wherrity's article "Thinking in space: The lexis of thinking from a cognitive perspective" (2008). Our understanding of Solveig Granath rests on our interactions with her in this world and it can be summed up in one all-embracing, monosemic, basic meaning that is, for once, beyond interpretative ambiguity: in every professional activity, she is on it.