

Fact or fiction?

Studies in honour of Solveig Granath

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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.

‘Hreran mid hondum hrimcealde sæ’: On verb attraction in Old English

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Abstract

This paper deals with a phenomenon in Old English syntax labelled ‘verb attraction’. In an Old English clause with two verbs, such as an auxiliary verb and the following non-finite verb, or an object-control verb such as *hatan* ‘to command’ plus the infinitive verb form in the infinitive clause governed by *hatan*, verb attraction makes the non-finite verb form leave its canonical syntactic position to become adjoined to the higher finite verb. The paper explores some properties of clauses where verb attraction is at work, and ends with a consideration of the usefulness of verb attraction in poetry.

Keywords: Old English syntax, verb syntax, verb attraction, adjunction to finite verb, Old English word order.

1. Introduction

The presentation of a feature of Old English word order in the current article will be couched in the general framework of Government and Binding Theory (for which see Haegeman 1994). For various modifications to the framework which for reasons of space cannot be presented here the reader is referred to Johannesson 2015.

As described within the chosen framework, Old English had three standard positions for the verb in the clause: the verb stem was base generated under V in the verb phrase (VP), it could be moved to the I node in the inflection phrase (IP) to merge with its inflection features, and it could be further moved to the C node in the complementizer phrase (CP) as part of a topicalization process. It should be pointed out here that Old English could have verbs in clause final position; in order to capture this feature, the I node will have to be placed to the right of the VP it takes as its complement.

In a clause with two verbs, such as an auxiliary and a following non-finite verb, each verb must have its own VP and IP, since each verb will have its own complementation pattern (as shown by the complements of the verb stem in the VP) and its own tense and agreement properties (as

specified by a bundle of features in the I node), and each verb will have at the minimum two positions at its disposal, V and I. Section 2 below will discuss clauses with auxiliary verb + a non-finite main verb. In some examples the verbs will be seen to behave as expected on the basis of the brief discussion above; in others, however, the non-finite verb will be seen to move away from its regular position and be adjoined to the finite auxiliary, wherever that happens to be. The movement of the non-finite verb to a position next to the finite verb is the phenomenon that here will be referred to as ‘verb attraction’. Section 3 will deal with the object-control verb *hatan* ‘to command’, which takes as one of its complements an infinitive clause (CP). This combination of a governing verb (*hatan*, which in all the examples studied is finite) in the matrix clause and an infinitive verb form in the complement clause will again open up for the possibility of verb attraction across the CP boundary. Section 4, finally, will provide a brief conclusion.

2. Auxiliary + main verb

The standard constellations of finite auxiliary + non-finite main verb are illustrated in examples (1) (auxiliary and main verb under their respective V), (2) (auxiliary under V, main verb under I) and (3) (both verbs under their respective I); the relevant verbs are underlined. Since the higher IP encloses the lower IP, the auxiliary in V will inevitably precede the main verb, and the auxiliary in I will inevitably follow it. The derivation of the relevant parts of examples (1)–(3) is shown in (1')–(3').

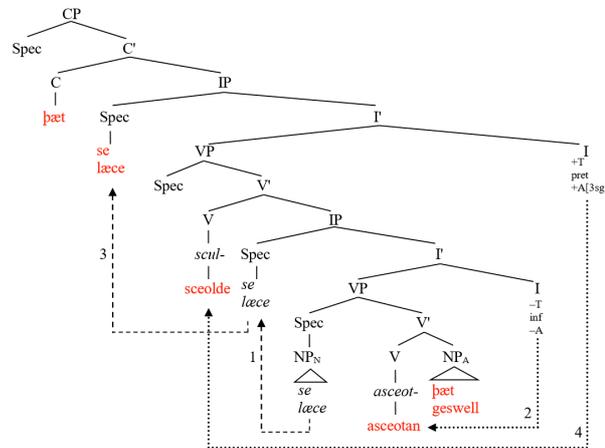
- (1) ... hi cwædon þa sume þæt se læce sceolde asceotan þæt geswell;
þa dyde he sona swa, and þær sah ut wyrms.¹ (*ÆLS (Æthelthryth)*
61) ‘... some of them then said that the physician should lance that boil; then he
straightway did so, and there oozed out pus.’
- (2) Hit gelamp æt sumum sæle þæt ða deofulgyldan þe ða gyt
ungeleaf-fulle wæron. gecwædon þæt hi woldon þone apostol to

¹ All the examples in this paper, including punctuation (in some texts the original manuscript punctuation) and identification labels, have been taken from the 2004 version of the Toronto Corpus. All the translations of the Old English text are my own.

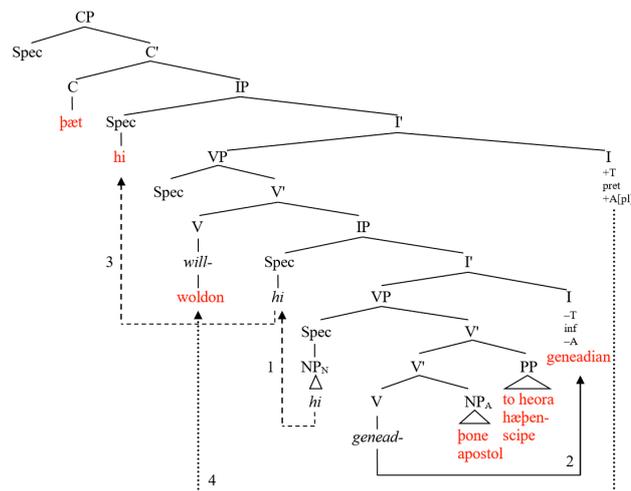
heora hæþenscipe geneadian. (*ÆCHom I*, 4 213.194) ‘It happened on one occasion that those devil-worshippers who had not yet come to the faith said that they wanted to force the Apostle to their paganism.’

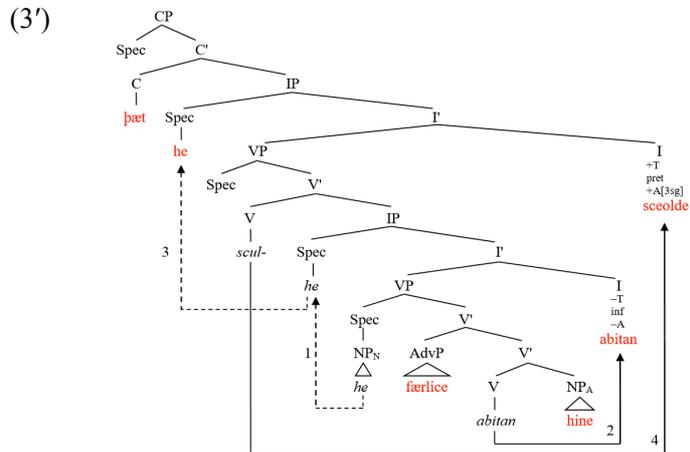
- (3) Symon þa ða he þam folce ætwunden wæs. getigde ænne ormætne ryððan innon þam gete þær petrus in hæfde þæt he færlice hine abitan sceolde. (*ÆCHom I*, 26 393.135) ‘Simon, when he had got away from the crowds, tied an enormous mastiff inside the doorway of Peter’s dwelling so that it suddenly would devour him’.

(1')



(2')

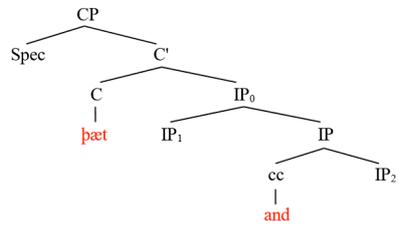
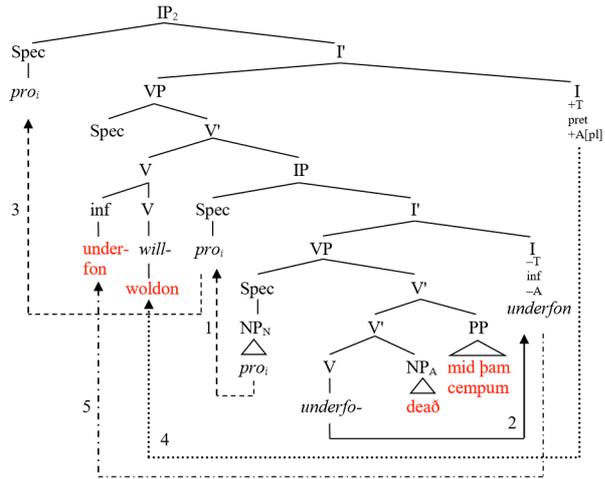
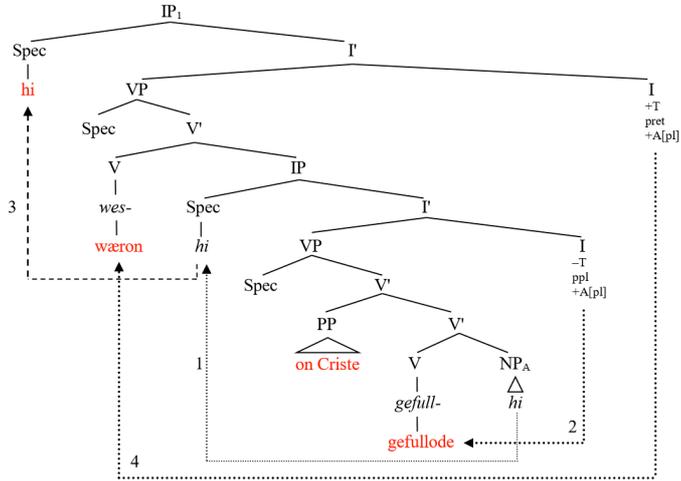


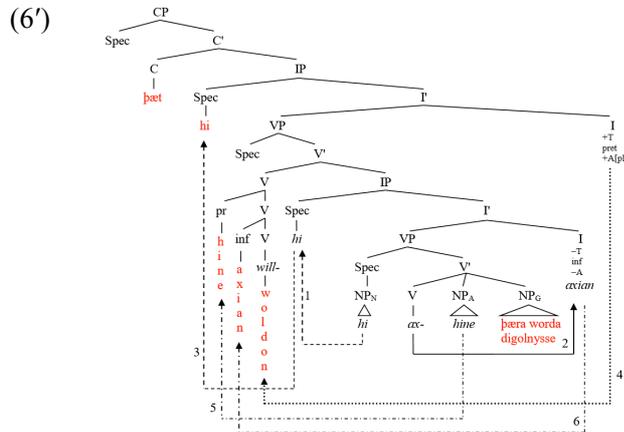


But it is easy to find exceptions to the regular patterns. In the following three examples ((4)–(6)) the main verb is placed before the auxiliary (marked by underlining), although they are obviously in the early part of the clause and would have been expected to appear in the opposite order.

- (4) Hwæt þa six gebroþra hi sylfe þa tihton and seo modor samod secgende him betwynan þæt hi sweltan woldon for godes gesetnyssum, and hi cwædon þus, God sylf gefrefrað us swa swa Moyses geswutelode on ðære fiftan bec, þæt is þæt God gefrefrað his ðeowan. (*ÆLS (Maccabees)* 120) ‘Lo, then six brothers urged themselves and the mother along with them, saying among themselves that they would die for God’s laws, and they said thus, “God Himself will comfort us just as Moses proclaimed in the fifth book, namely that God comforts His servants.”’
- (5) He het beheafdian siððan þa hundseofontig cempa, butan heora hwilc wolde awegan his geleafan, ac hi ealle efston anrædlice to slæge, and Claudies twegen suna cwædon þæt hi wæron on Criste gefullode, and underfon woldon deað mid þam cempum, for Cristes geleafan. (*ÆLS (Chrysanthus)* 227) ‘He then commanded that the seventy soldiers were to be beheaded, except those who would deny their faith, but they all hurried with determination to the execution, and Claudius’s two sons said that they were baptized in Christ, and would receive death together with the soldiers because of their belief in Christ.’

(5')





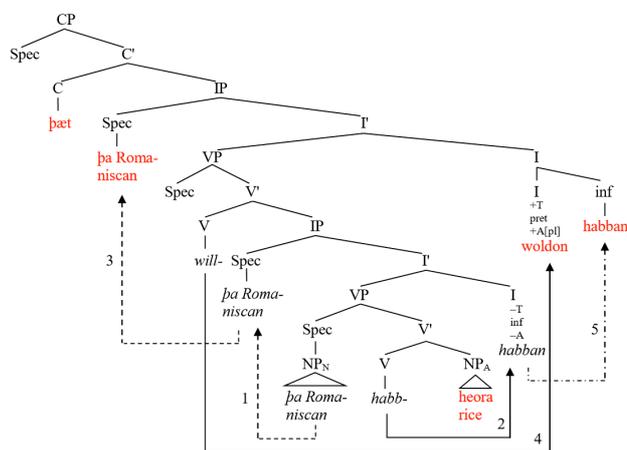
In the next three examples, (7)–(9), we can see the two verbs together at the end of the clause, again in the ‘wrong’ order.

- (7) Hi cwædon, þæt þa Romaniscan heora rice woldon habban, and hyt eac syððan gelamp, swa swa hi foresædon þa, þæt æfter Cristes æriste and upstige to heofonum comon þa Romaniscan leoda and þæt land gehegdon and þa burh Hierusalem besæton mid fyrde, oð ðæt hi hungre acwælon. (*ÆHomM 4 (Ass 5)* 66) ‘They said that the Romans wished to have their country, and so it also happened later on, as they then predicted, that after Christ’s resurrection and ascension into Heaven, the Romans came and harried the country and besieged the city of Jerusalem until they /the inhabitants/ died of hunger.’
- (8) & þa cende hio sunu, hire frumbearn, <on> þas niht þe nu toniht wæs, & hio <mid> <claðum> <hine> <bewand> & on binne alegde, forþan þær ne wæs oðeru stow on þam gisthuse þæt hio þæt cild meahte onasettan. (*HomS 1 (ScraggVerc 5)* 22) ‘And then she gave birth to a son, her first-born one, on this very night, and she wound him with cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no other place at the tavern where she could lay the child.’
- (9) He þa Decius se casere, þa he for into Efese mid ðrymme and mid prasse, he ða his heortan hof swa upp ofer his mæðe, swilce he god wære: ongan ða timbrian deofolgyld on cirican, and bead þæt mid him ðærrihthe ælc man be his heafde deofle sceolde offrian;

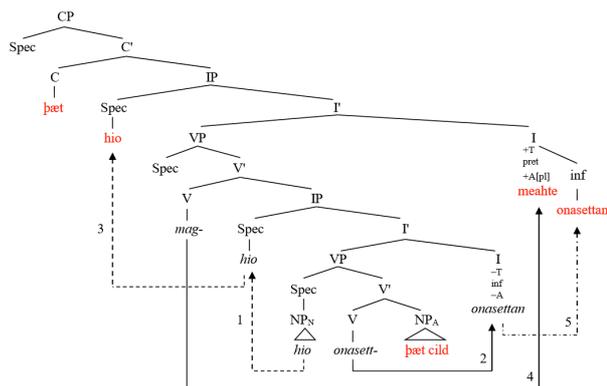
and gehwa dyde swa for ðæs caseres ege, and elles ne dorston, ac ælc hine sylfne on lichaman and on sawle mid þam hæþengylde earmlice gefylde. (LS 34 (SevenSleepers) 23) ‘He then, Decius the Emperor, when he entered into Ephesus with force and pomp, his heart then swelled up beyond measure, as if he were a god; he erected an idol within the church and commanded that each man with him on pain of his head should make sacrifice to the devil; and everybody did so for fear of the emperor, and did not dare to do otherwise, and each defiled himself, body and soul, miserably with that heathen-worship.’

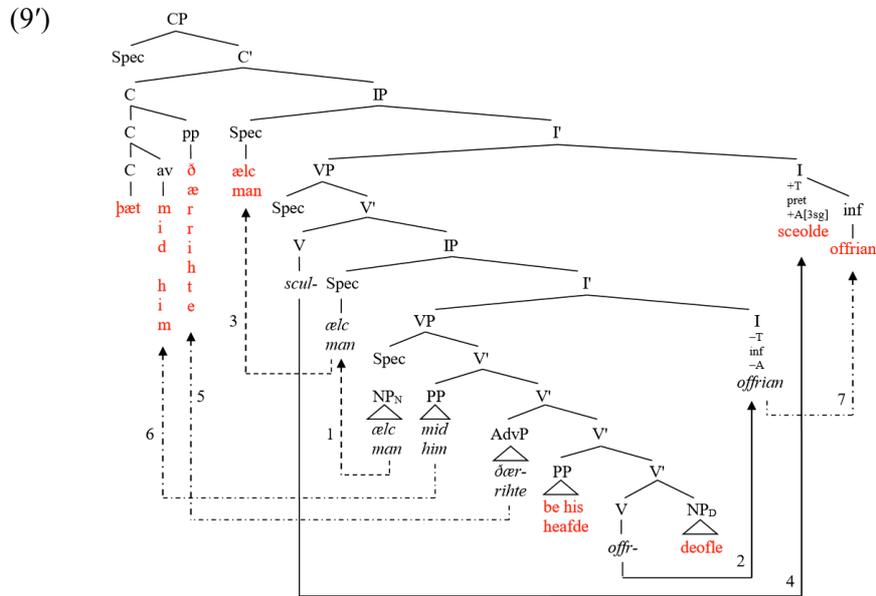
The derivation of the relevant parts of the examples are presented below in (7')–(9').

(7')



(8')





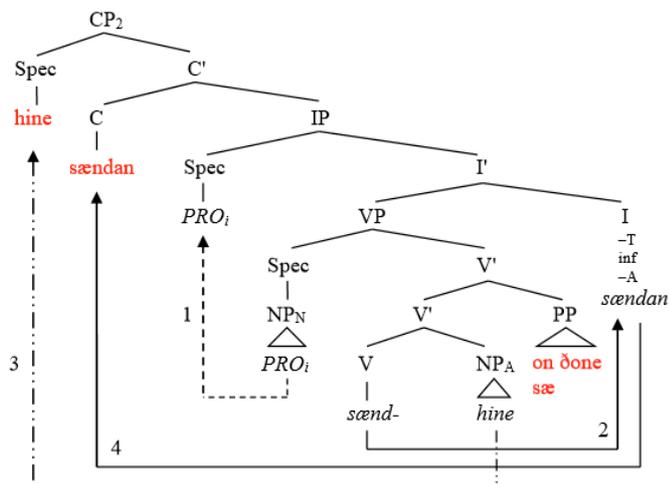
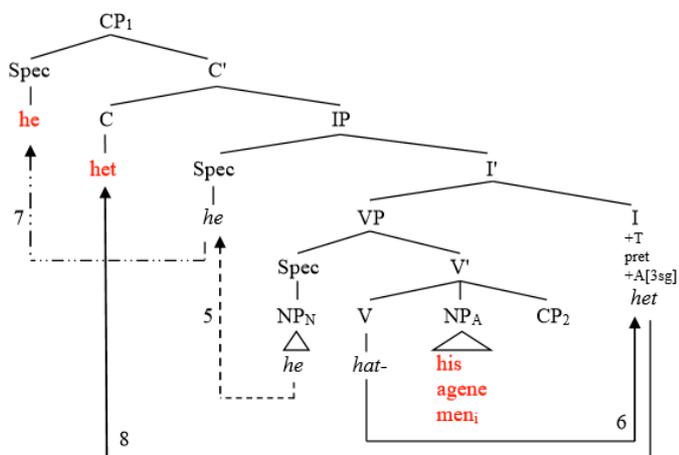
3. *Hatan* + infinitive clause

The Old English verb *hatan* ‘to command’ is, like its modern English counterpart, an object control verb: the verb takes an accusative object, which refers to the person who is commanded to do something, and an infinitive clause as complement, specifying what the referent of the object NP is to do. The subject of the infinitive clause is never spelt out, but has the same reference as the object in the matrix clause. In many Old English texts the object is never spelt out, either: to the Anglo-Saxon mind, commands were given by persons in authority (kings and noblemen, queens and ladies, governors, bishops), and the presence in their vicinity of servants and soldiers, ready to carry out their commands, could typically be taken for granted, as will actually be the case in most of the examples below.

The first example below, (10), is maximally explicit, in that the object of *hatan* is expressed and the two verbs stay within their respective CPs, as is shown in (10’).

- (10) Ond se gerefa þe hi cwellan het, se wæs sona mid swa miclum sare gewitnad, þæt he nolde læng libban, ac he het his agene men hine sændan on ðone sæ, ond þa sædeor hine sona forswulgon, þæt his ne com þy furðor an ban to eorðan. (**Mart 5 (Kotzor)** (Ja 19, A.21)) ‘The official who had commanded that they should be killed, he was shortly after punished by such great pain that he no longer wished to live, but he commanded his own men to send him on the sea, and the sea-beasts straightway devoured him, so that not a single bone came to land.’

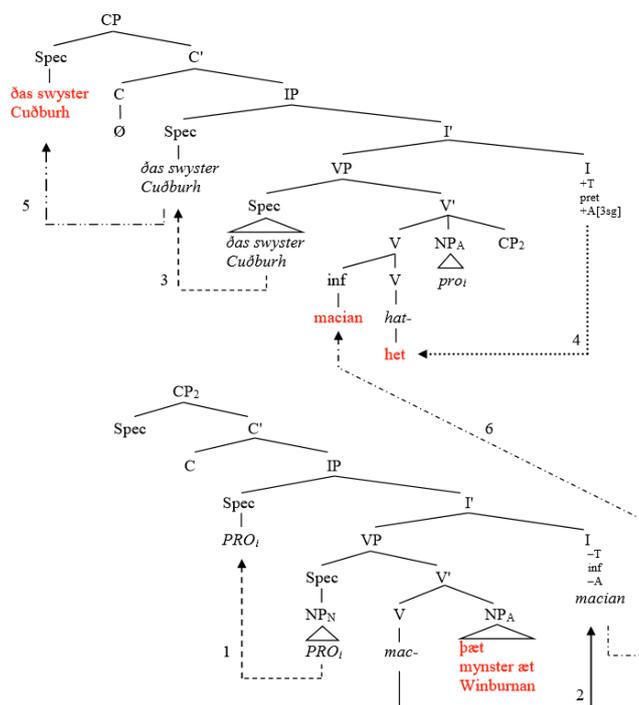
(10')



The verb *hatan* can be found in any of its possible positions, V, I or C, when verb attraction is activated. The V position is the least frequent one in the material investigated, but at least one example can be found in the corpus. In (11) below the matrix clause is a relative clause, where the relative pronoun (in this case *ðas* ‘whose’, along with the rest of the phrase in which it is embedded) is topicalized. The verb will nevertheless not move to C, since the C position in a relative clause is filled with a relative particle (either *þe* or, as in this case, zero). As the analysis in (11') shows, the author has left the form *het* under V (rather than move it to I), and the infinitive *macian* has been raised from the infinitive clause to be adjoined to the finite verb there.

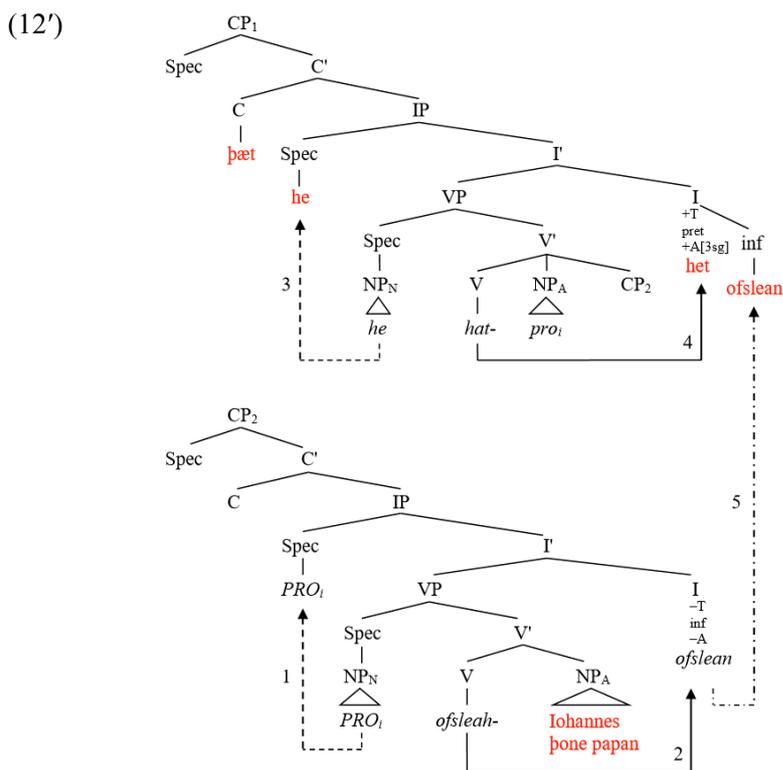
- (11) Her Ingild forðferde, ðas swyster Cuðburh macian het þæt mynster at Winburnan. (**ChronF (Baker)** 718.1) ‘In this year Ingild passed away, whose sister Cuðburh commanded that the Abbey at Wimborne should be erected.’

(11')

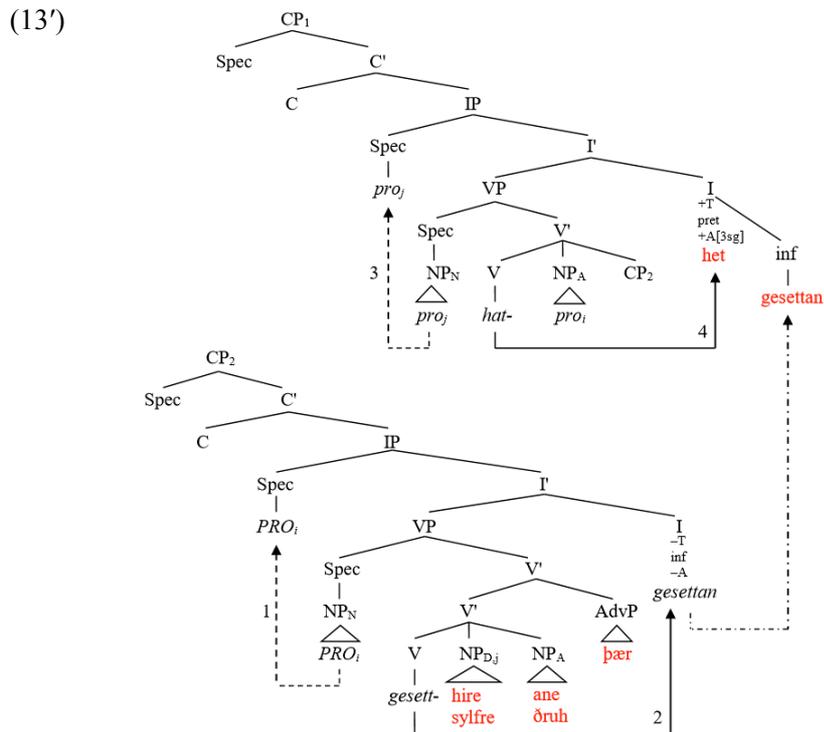


In the following two examples the finite verb, *het*, is placed in I, and the non-finite verb has moved up to piggy-back on it at the right edge of the clause.

- (12) Se ðeodric wæs Amulinga; he wæs cristen, þeah he on þam arrianiscan gedwolan þurhwunode. He gehet Romanum his freondscipe, swa þæt hi mostan heora ealdrihta wyrðe beon. Ac he þa gehat swiðe yfele gelæste, & swiðe wraðe geendode mid manegum mane: þæt wæs toeacan oðrum unarimedum yflum þæt he Iohannes þone papan het ofslean. (Bo 1.7.6–10) ‘This Theodoric was a descendant of Amal; he was Christian, although he persevered in the Arian heresy. He promised the Romans his friendship, so that they might enjoy their ancient rights. But he fulfilled those promises very evilly, and ended very cruelly with many a crime: that was, in addition to other countless evils, that he commanded that the Pope John should be killed.’



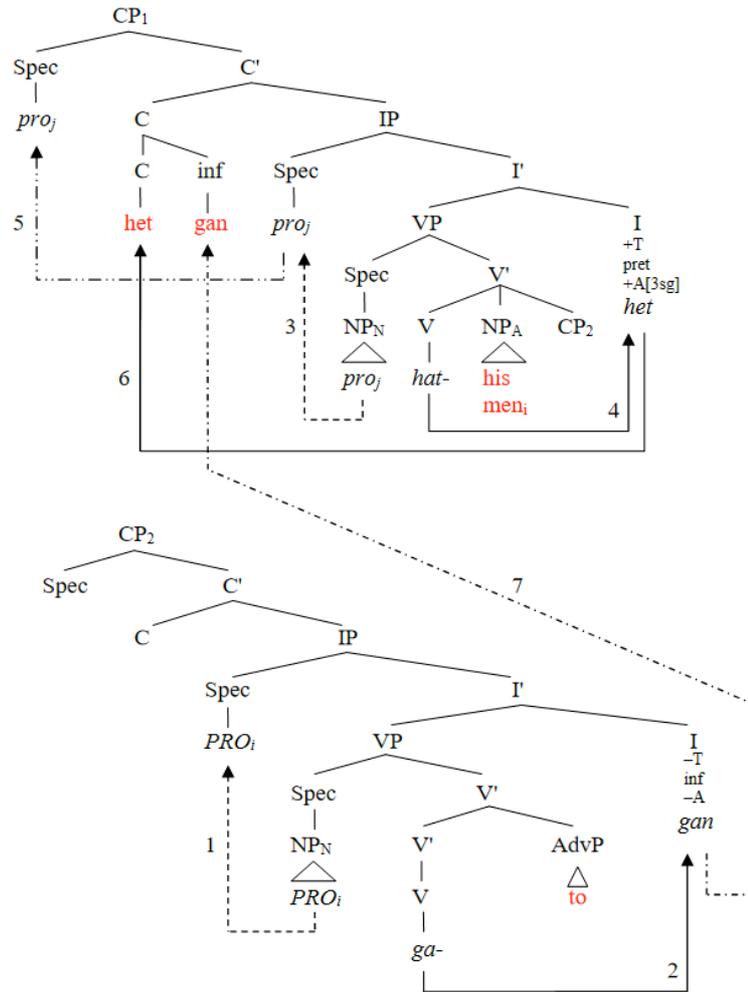
- (13) Ða bæd Constantia Constantinum hire fæder þæt he þære eadigan Agne ane cyrcan arærde, and hire sylfre ane ðruh þær het gesettan. (*ÆLS (Agnes)* 287) ‘Then Constantia asked her father Constantine to raise a church to the blessed Agnes, and commanded that a sepulchre should be placed there for herself.’



In the next group of examples ((14)–(16)) we find the finite verb, *het*, having moved up to C in connection with topicalization (in these examples not part of a relative clause), and the infinitive verb is capable of moving up to join *het* there as well as a result of verb attraction, as shown in the derivations in (14')–(16').

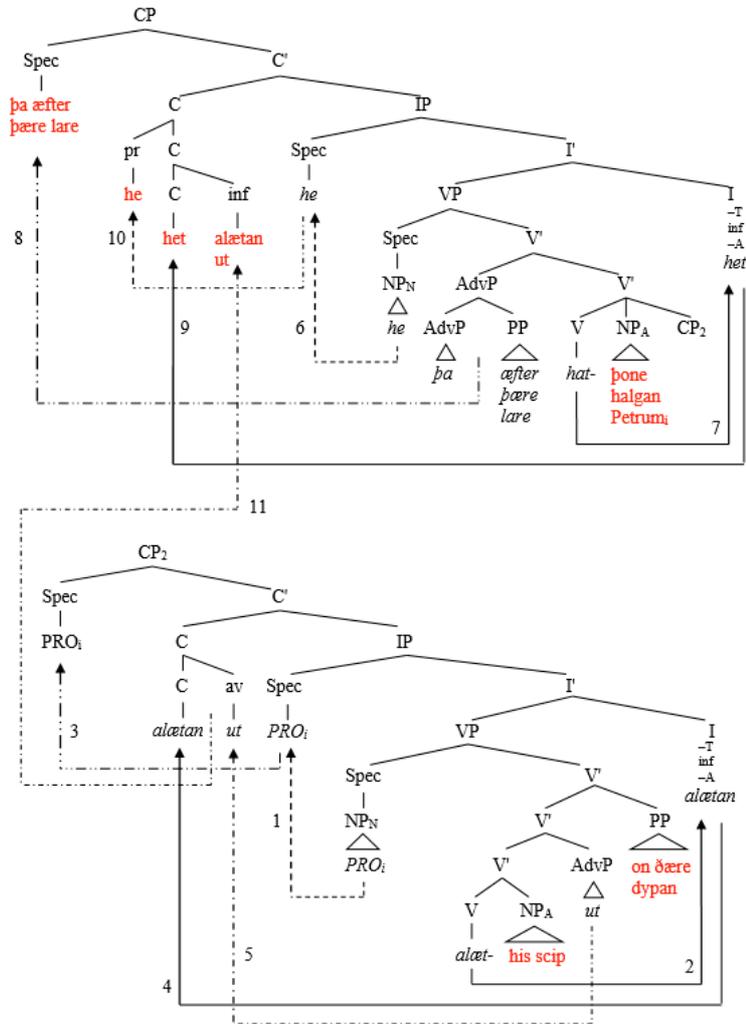
- (14) Ða het he, <Pilatus>, swa don: het gan his men to. (*HomS 24 (Verc 1)* 255) ‘Then he, Pilate, ordered [them] to do so: [he] ordered his men to go about their work.’

(14')



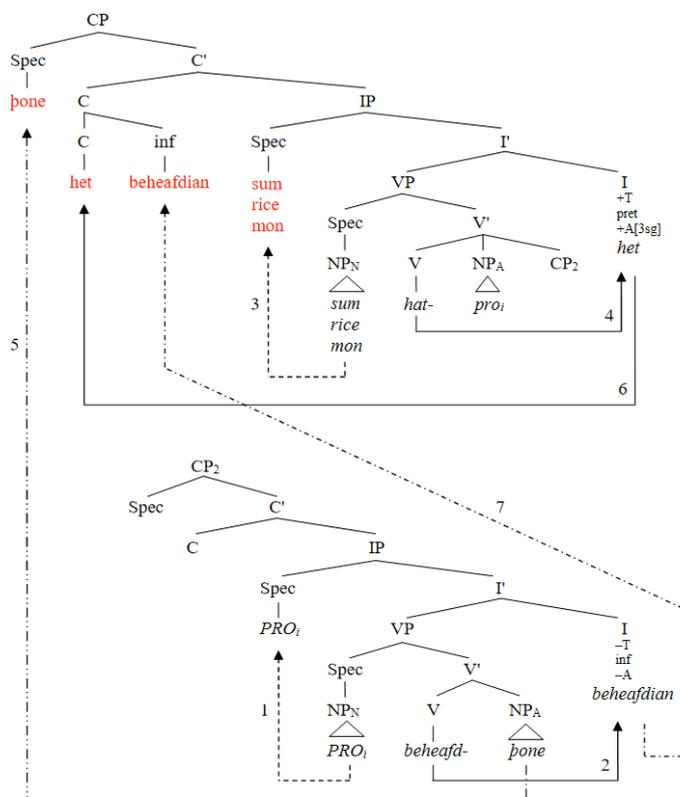
- (15) Ða æfter þære lare, he het alætan ut þone halgan Petrum his scip on ðære dypan, and het hy aweorpan heora net on fixnoðe. (ÆHom 15 16) 'Then after the teaching he commanded St Peter to let his boat out on the deep, and commanded them to cast out their nets for fishing.'

(15')



- (16) On ðone ilcan dæg bið þæs halgan cnihtes þrowung sancti Iusti, se wæs VIII wintre þa he martyrdom þrowode for Criste. Þone het beheafdian sum rice mon, se wæs on naman Ritsoalis. (**Mart 5 (Kotzor)** (Oc 18, C.1–3)) ‘On the same day is [celebrated] the martyrdom of the holy boy Saint Justus, who was eight years old when he suffered martyrdom for Christ. A powerful man who was called Rictovarius commanded that he should be beheaded.’

(16')



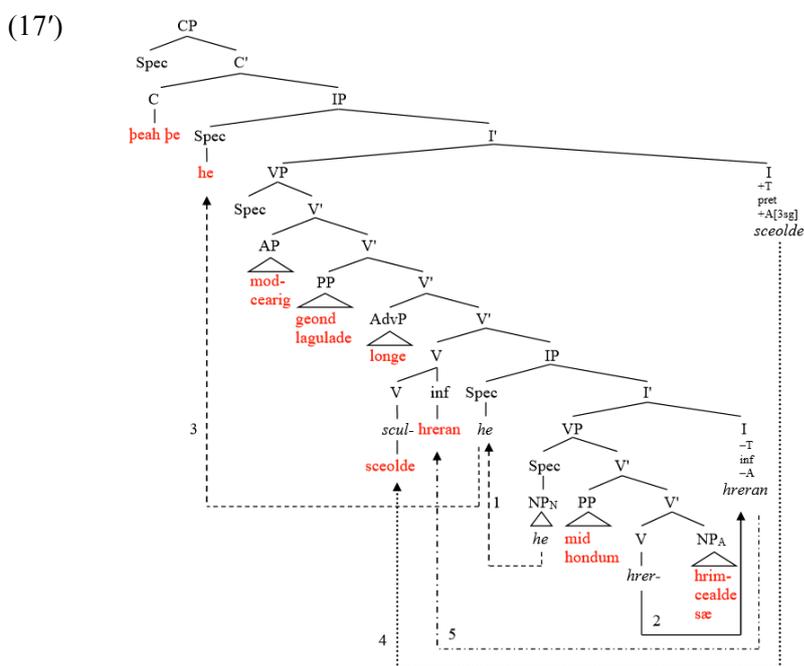
4. Conclusion

Verb attraction yielded structures that Anglo-Saxon writers and readers must have found pleasing and attractive, since we can find examples in different kinds of linguistic contexts (the harvest has only begun). To a present-day reader the results may seem odd, but it cannot be denied that there is a neat regularity to the derivation process underlying verb attraction examples: add one more movement after a regular clause structure has been achieved, and you will have your verb attraction structure.

There is one genre where the usefulness of verb attraction should be obvious, namely poetry. For reasons of space we will have to confine ourselves to a consideration of verse 4 of the *Wanderer*: “hreran mid

hondum hrimcealde sæ” ‘to stir with [his] hands the ice-cold sea’. Taken in isolation, the verse looks as if the adverbial “mid hondum” has insinuated itself between the verb and its object, which in the context of a VP should not be possible. A more reasonable interpretation is that the verb, that most mobile of Old English clause constituents, has moved some way away from its object. Such an interpretation is confirmed by a consideration of the full sentence, as shown by the way it is presented in the *Toronto Corpus*: no verse boundaries to catch our attention, so that we can focus on the syntactic structure of the clause (17). The derivation of the syntactic structure (17') confirms that verb attraction is really at work here: it is the device that allows the *scop* to use “hreran” as an alliterating verb in the very position where it is.

- (17) Oft him anhaga are gebideð, metudes miltse, þeah þe he modcearig geond lagulade longe sceolde hreran mid hondum hrimcealde sæ, wadan wræclastas. (Wan 1) ‘Often the lonely traveller hopes for grace, the Lords mercy, although he dejected beyond the sea long must stir with [his] hands the ice-cold sea, tread paths of exile.’



Verb attraction is clearly a phenomenon the study of which enriches our understanding of the possibilities of Old English syntax.

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Iniesta passed and Messi finished clinically: Football verbs and transitivity

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Abstract

Football language, like other special languages, is not only of lexical interest. It is also special by virtue of various syntactic and semantic features, related to the situational context of football. Two areas of verb syntax, involving transitivity, are in focus: the omissibility of certain contextually recoverable “football objects” (e.g. *Iniesta passed [the ball], Messi finished [the attack]*) and the occurrence of “unconventional” objects of certain verbs (e.g. *Their third goal killed the match, Manchester United sold Ronaldo to Real Madrid*). Thus, like other special subject areas, football creates its own semantic-pragmatic framework, paving the way for constructions and collocations that deviate from those applying in general language.

Keywords: football language, transitivity, omitted objects, unconventional objects, expressive economy, selectional restrictions

1. Introduction

Football, or soccer, has long been the most popular and widespread sport on earth, variously referred to as the “people’s game” and the “world’s game” (e.g. Walvin 1994, Murray 1996, Harvey 2005). Its global status, in minds and media, extends far beyond the world of sports – it is also a mass and pop cultural phenomenon of rare proportions.¹ This implies that football language, broadly defined as the repertoire of expressive means and registers used for communicating about football, is arguably the world’s biggest “special language” (cf. Sager et al. 1981:63ff.). At the same time, due to the vast number of people interested in football worldwide (cf. Goldblatt 2007:x), media coverage, etc., it may be considered, to a considerable extent, a public language, thus part of

¹ Cf. Goldblatt’s (2007:x) rhetorical question: “Is there any cultural practice more global than football?”

“general language”.² In this article, however, our main focus is on the specialness of football language, relating to certain aspects of its verb syntax.³

To be sure, special languages are perceived as such mainly owing to their technical vocabulary (Sager et al. 1981:230), football language being no exception (cf. terms like *sidefoot*, *offside*, *one-two* and *set piece*): “[t]he language of football is first and foremost terminology” (Lavric 2008:5). However, special languages may also exhibit characteristic grammatical features, e.g. with regard to article usage, nominalisations, etc., usually less conspicuous than special terminology.

One typical feature of football language relates to verb usage. The example in the title provides two instances of this: the use of the verbs *pass* and *finish*. First of all, we may note that for someone totally unfamiliar with football language, even the basic meaning of the example sentence, i.e. a goal being scored, would likely be shrouded in mystery. At the lexical level, both *pass* and *finish* have special “football” meanings (enhanced by the seemingly odd collocation *finished clinically*), distinguishing them from general language, in itself a demonstration of the specialness of football language; this, of course, is not unique to *pass* and *finish*.⁴ Syntactically, the verbs in question behave in a no less special way, related to their lexical properties. In the example sentence, the verb *pass* has, as it were, an implicitly transitive function. Contrary to the “normal” intransitive use of *pass*, it does not mean that Iniesta just walked or ran by, but that he delivered the ball from a certain distance, by kicking it, to Messi. The ball, however, is not mentioned,

² For discussion of the relations between football language, sports language and general language, see Bergh & Ohlander (2012a:14ff.). Cf. also Beard (1998), Svensén (2009:71f.) and Sager et al. (1981:68): “There is no absolute borderline between general and special language”.

³ In comparison with the plethora of academic studies on historical, sociological and cultural aspects of football (cf. Russell 1997:1f.), the language of the game may be described as under-researched (Lavric 2008:5). On the other hand, there are several books (e.g. Leith 1997, Seddon 2004) dealing with “football talk”, “footballese”, “soccerese”, etc., from a popular cultural rather than linguistic perspective, often with a focus on jargon and clichés (cf. also Morris 1981:298ff.), but certainly testifying to the public interest in some noticeable features of, e.g., football commentary and match reports.

⁴ Another well-known example of verbs taking on special “football” meanings is *dive* in the rough sense of ‘fall to the ground, pretending to have been fouled’, as in *Diving is one of the biggest problems in today’s football*.

only contextually implied, like Messi, the recipient of the pass (cf. *Iniesta passed the ball to Messi*). Similarly, the verb *finish*, normally a transitive verb, appears to lack an object while, nonetheless, referring to an act of goal scoring by Messi. In this case, the “understood” or “missing” object is not *the ball* (cf. **Messi finished the ball*), but rather something more vague or abstract, such as *the attack*.⁵

Object omission, however, is not the only special verb usage to be found in football language. There are other types of special or “unconventional” verb behaviour related to transitivity, often involving violation of “normal” selectional constraints, as illustrated in expressions such as *kill the match* and *rest a player*. Such verb usage will also be dealt with in due course.

Although our principal focus will be on English, we shall have occasion to consider some relevant examples of parallel usage concerning Swedish football verbs; for instance, the title example translates literally into perfectly idiomatic “football Swedish”: *Iniesta passade och Messi avslutade kliniskt*. It should be added that far from all of the special verb usage discussed in the following pages is exclusive to football language. In fact, similar usage may be found in other types of sports language, especially – but not only – in other ball sports (cf. Bergh & Ohlander 2012a:16f.).

Before we go on to consider verb usage in football language in some more depth, something should be said about the notion of transitivity in so far as it relates to our further discussion of certain football verbs.

2. Transitive and intransitive verb use

The traditional distinction between transitive and intransitive verbs, closely related to notions such as complementation and valency, lies at the very core of English verb syntax. In the words of Quirk et al. (1985:53), transitive verbs “are followed by an object”, as in *Iniesta passed the ball*, whereas intransitive verbs “are followed by no

⁵ The examples used in this study are for the most part edited examples from extensive web searches. For example, the verb *pass*, used intransitively with an omitted object (*ball*), occurs (among thousands of others) in the following examples: ... *just stood there and watched as Iniesta passed to Messi, Iniesta passed the ball to Messi on the edge of the box*; cf. also *Messi finished clinically from an Andres Iniesta through ball*.

obligatory element”, as in *Iniesta passed* (cf. also, e.g., Sweet 1891:89f., Biber et al. 1999:141). As pointed out by Huddleston & Pullum (2002:216), the notion of transitivity is often more usefully applied to verb use than to verbs as such, since not all verbs are either transitive or intransitive: “although *faint* is always intransitive many verbs can occur either with or without an object. For example, *read* is intransitive in *She read* and transitive in *She read the letter*” (cf. Jespersen 1924:158, Quirk et al. 1985:1169). In a similar vein, Biber et al. (1999:147) note: “It is striking that a lot of English verbs have both transitive and intransitive uses”, *pass* being a prime example. Incidentally, this also applies to Swedish verbs (*SAG* 2:535). As is well known, a special transitive–intransitive relationship holds for ergative – or dual-transitivity – verbs: *Joe opened the door* versus *The door opened* (cf. Biber et al. 1999:147, Huddleston & Pullum 2002:217).⁶ Such verbs, however, will not be further considered here, nor – with one or two exceptions – shall we be concerned with Quirk et al.’s (1985:54) distinction between monotransitive, ditransitive and complex transitive verbs. Thus, when we speak about transitive versus intransitive use of football verbs, what we refer to are monotransitive verbs, i.e. verbs with one object, as in *Iniesta passed [the ball]* and *Messi finished [the attack]*.⁷

Of special relevance to our present purposes is the omission – or, rather, omissibility – of objects under specific circumstances, a well-known aspect of some, but not all, transitive verbs. Why, for example, is it that the same object (*the ball*) is omissible in *Iniesta passed the ball to Messi* but not in *Barcelona possessed the ball for 72% of the match*?

From an overall communicative perspective, omission of objects – or indeed any linguistic element – can be seen as a special exponent of a general principle of expressive economy, underlying various types of ellipsis, along the lines of: “Do not say more than you have to for the message to get across!”⁸ To ensure communicative clarity, however, it

⁶ Sweet (1891:90) calls this class of verbs “passival”: “their grammatical subject is logically their direct object, as in *the book sells well*”.

⁷ In a valency context, such verbs are often referred to as (one type of) “two-place verbs”, co-occurring with a subject and another clause element (cf. Biber et al. (1999:141, 147).

⁸ Cf. “Zipf’s Law”, embodying the “principle of least effort” (Zipf 1949). From a pragmatic perspective, object omission may be seen as a syntactic reflection of Grice’s well-known “maxim of quantity”, implying (second sub-maxim) that one should avoid being more informative than necessary (Levinson 1983:101). Cf. also Jespersen’s

can only be applied as long as the omitted element can be identified, or “recovered”, one way or another. Commenting on ellipsis, Halliday (1967:206) notes that “what is left unsaid cannot be otherwise than taken for granted.” Similarly, in a critical aside on grammarians’ tendency to overuse their “panacea”, ellipsis, Jespersen (1924:307) admonishes grammarians to be “wary in admitting ellipses except where there can be no doubt as to what is understood.” More specifically, Sweet (1891:90) notes that “transitive verbs can [...] stand without any object-noun [...] when [it] may be understood from the context” (cf. Quirk et al. 1985:1169). A typical example of this is the phrase *Stand and deliver!*, as ordered by highwaymen and brigands in the old days of (original) highway robbery. The normally transitive verb *deliver* may here occur without an object since the context clarifies, unequivocally, what should be delivered, i.e. the travellers’ money and valuables. Interestingly, objectless *deliver* is also common in present-day English as a metaphorical expression, although in other contexts, as in *The team (government) failed to deliver*, where *the goods* is usually the understood object (cf. e.g. *LDOCE: deliver*).

Huddleston & Pullum (2002:301) discuss the sentence *They won*. They argue that the intransitive use of *win* here is “interpreted as ‘win a contest’, and which contest it was can be determined from the context.” In such cases, further, “the omission of the object ... is restricted to particular verbs.” Thus, there appear to be certain idiosyncratic lexical constraints at work, permitting some verbs, but not others, to drop their objects in certain contexts. Along the same lines, Biber et al. (1999:147) speak about “object-deleting verbs”, i.e. verbs such as *paint, write, drive, drink, eat, read*. Quirk et al. (1985:722f.), describing the transitive–intransitive relation as one of “conversion”, distinguish between, among others, the following types of object omission: (a) “A specific object is understood from the situational context”, e.g. *Don’t touch!*; (b) “A nonspecific object is semantically entailed”, e.g. *They can’t spell*. (For Swedish, cf. *SAG* 3:297.) Especially the first type of omission is highly

(1924:309) discussion of “suppression”, akin to Grice’s quantity maxim: “we suppress a great many things which it would be pedantic to say expressly”; “Only bores want to express everything, but even bores find it impossible to express everything.” For a more technical, in-depth perspective on “null-complement phenomena”, i.e. omissions, see Ruppenhofer & Michaelis (2014).

relevant as regards certain intransitively used football verbs. This is illustrated in the title example – but note that somebody completely ignorant of even the basics of football, thus unable to associate the example with a game of football, would be at a loss to identify the missing objects of the verbs *passed* and *finished*. At the same time, as mentioned in section 1, omitted objects may vary in “precision”, in general language as well as in football language. Consequently, they are not always uniquely recoverable: “the object idea [may be] so vague or uncertain that it is not necessary or easy [...] to express it” (Sweet 1891:90).

From a communicative perspective, the basic point of the above discussion is the recoverability of the omitted object, which, in turn, is dependent on a variety of linguistic, contextual and situational factors, as well as background knowledge. This can be illustrated by the most basic of all ball-sport verbs, i.e. *play*. A sentence like *They played beautifully* is, in isolation, multiply ambiguous, its full interpretation heavily dependent on context. If uttered after a game of football, the verb *played* will have *football*, or *the game*, as its self-evident “understood” object. If uttered after, say, a concert, *played* will have another, equally self-evident missing object, i.e. *music*, *concert*, *violin*, etc. Each subject field, or event, thus creates its own contextual and situational conditions for object omission. In a way, two different – but polysemous – verbs *play*, each with its own set of omissible objects, could be said to be involved in the different interpretations.⁹ The kind of inferencing required for a full interpretation of *They played beautifully* in different contexts and situations is part of any communicatively competent speaker’s language ability. From another angle, unless the “missing” object is recoverable, the message will be incomprehensible or blurred – expressive economy at the expense of communicative clarity.

Let us proceed to another aspect of transitivity, involving the nature of objects that may co-occur with specific verbs, thus of clear relevance to certain transitive football verbs. Just as verbs may have certain restrictions concerning what type of subject they can take (e.g. animate versus inanimate), there may also be restrictions concerning type of object (cf. Quirk et al. 1985:771f., Biber et al. 1999:378). For example,

⁹ For some discussion of the different meanings of *play* in relation to “the whole notion of discrete lexical senses”, see Lyons (1977:554).

the football verb *kick* requires an animate, human subject (i.e. a player) and (normally, barring a foul) a concrete, inanimate object (i.e. ball) – cf. *Messi kicked the ball* versus **The ball kicked Messi*. The same applies to the football verb *pass* (*Iniesta passed the ball*), as opposed to the “ordinary” verb *pass*, which is why the sentence *The ball passed Iniesta* (‘The ball went past Iniesta’), unlike **The ball kicked Messi*, is fully grammatical; the general-language verb *pass* has a different meaning and different selectional restrictions from those of the homonymous football verb.¹⁰

Quirk et al. (1985:1176) divide monotransitive verbs into “semantic groups, according to the kinds of subject and object that they take”. Among these are verbs with “[t]ypically animate subject + typically concrete object”, e.g. *carry* and *clean*, and verbs with “[t]ypically animate subject + typically animate object”, e.g. *admire* and *kill*. The word “typically” in these formulations is important, indicating that verbs may often belong to more than one category, i.e. that boundaries between categories tend to be blurred. For example, the verb *kill* typically takes an animate object (to kill *somebody*), whereas *buy* and *sell* normally take inanimate objects (to buy/sell *something*). In football language, however, these verbs often take “unconventional” objects: *kill* may co-occur with an inanimate object, *buy* and *sell* with human objects (see section 4). As will be seen, such apparent violations of selection restrictions often involve a transition from literal to metaphorical meaning (cf. Chomsky 1965:149, Quirk et al. 1985:772).

3. Omission of football objects

As emphasized in the previous section, object omission can only take place under the condition of recoverability, where contextual factors play a dominant role. One such factor is the overall conceptual framework, or semantic sphere, characteristic of different subject fields and,

¹⁰ The restrictions just exemplified, involving what are, basically, semantic categories with syntactic effects (e.g. ±abstract, ±animate, ±human) are, of course, readily recognizable as Chomsky’s (1965:95, 113, 149ff.) “selectional rules”, the violation of which may result in deviant sentences like **The boy may frighten sincerity*, on a par with **The ball kicked Messi* (cf. Huddleston & Pullum 2002:227). Quirk et. al. (1985:771f.) use the more transparent term “semantic restrictions”.

consequently, of special languages. The conceptual framework of football, and football language, is characterized by notions such as ‘play’, ‘game’, ‘win’, ‘lose’, ‘goal’, ‘ball’, ‘shoot’, ‘pass’, ‘save’, ‘attack’. Knowledge of football’s conceptual framework is thus a necessary requirement for the proper identification of missing objects in football language; the same applies to the special languages of other subject fields. Also, object omission within a special subject field may be at least partially genre- or register-dependent (cf. Ferguson 1983, Müller 2008). According to Ruppenhofer & Michaelis (2010:163f.), stressing “the connection between genres and argument omission”, “certain genres license object omissions that are otherwise permitted only in generic-habitual contexts”, match reports being mentioned as one such genre. Further, live match reporting may, due to time pressure, give rise to a higher frequency of omitted objects than, say, a post-match analysis of a game.

Let us briefly return to the football verb *pass*, as used in the title example (*Iniesta passed*). We have already noted that the understood missing object of *passed* can only be *the ball*, uniquely identified by the football context. Put differently, object deletion in this case – converting *pass* from a transitive to an intransitive verb – is made possible by the football context. This may be compared with the unacceptability in general language of freely omitting the object of *pass* as a transitive verb. At the breakfast table, for example, an imperative sentence like **Pass, please* would be incomprehensible: it could never be interpreted as the intransitive (objectless) equivalent of, e.g., *Pass the butter, please*. There are many things on a breakfast table that may be passed (bread, butter, jam, etc.) – on the football pitch, there is only one: the ball. In other words, the breakfast context does not enable object omission with *pass*; the football context does, meeting the requirement of recoverability.

In view of the fact that, for players and spectators alike, the ball is at the very centre of attention for (at least) 90 minutes during a game of football, it is hardly surprising that it is often omitted with various football verbs, among them *pass*. Below are some other examples, of varying frequency, of football verbs with *ball* as the omitted object,

starting with verbs relating to the actions of outfield players, as often heard and seen in football reports and commentary:¹¹

shoot: Marta *shot* [the ball] hard past the keeper to make it 3–1
sidefoot: Rooney calmly *sidefooted* [the ball] into the bottom corner
strike: Ronaldo *struck* [the ball] powerfully into the back of the net
fire: Neymar *fired* [the ball] over the bar from 18 yards
backheel: The Celtic defender clumsily *backheeled* [the ball] into his own net
clear: Terry *cleared* [the ball] miraculously just off the line
cross: Pirlo *crossed* [the ball] into the penalty area
curl: Beckham *curled* [the ball] wide
head: Ibrahimovic *headed* [the ball] home for 2–2
collect: The midfielder *collected* [the ball] and shot from the edge of the box
play: The Real striker needlessly *played* [the ball] back to the midfield
recover: The Liverpool defender *recovered* [the ball] and passed to Milner¹²

Goalkeepers, as opposed to outfield players, are associated with, e.g., the following verbs:

save: Hart *saved* [the ball] from point-blank range¹³
parry: Casillas was alert and parried [the ball] to safety
tip: Neuer heroically *tipped* [the ball] on to the bar
fist: The keeper *fisted* [the ball] away

At this point, a few comments of general relevance should be made. First of all, in the above examples, *ball* may be regarded as the prototypically omitted object, not as the only, uniquely recoverable one. In some – but not all – of the examples, other omitted objects are equally conceivable, such as *shot* in connection with verbs like *clear* and *strike*. For these and many other verbs (e.g. *sidefoot* and *head*), there is no clear semantic difference between *ball* versus *shot* as omitted objects; for goalkeeping verbs such as *save*, the understood object may also be conceived as, e.g., *free kick* or *penalty*.

¹¹ Ruppenhofer & Michaelis (2010:164), discussing omitted objects, note that they are “entities that are not only mutually identifiable to speaker and hearer but also a current joint focus of attention, e.g. [...] the ball in the match-report genre.”

¹² Cf. *Messi quickly recovered [from his injury] to produce an epic comeback*, where *recovered* has its usual general-language meaning.

¹³ Cf. the following piece of wordplay on a banner at a football match, as observed by Morris (1981:301): *Jesus saves but Smith nets the rebounds*.

Further, as regards semantic roles, *ball* as object typically appears in “agent–patient clauses [and] expresses the patient role” (Huddleston & Pullum 2002:245), i.e. the “affected” role in the terminology of, e.g., Quirk et al. (1985:741) and Biber et al. (1999:127). As we shall see presently, this is not always the case with omissible football objects.

It should also be stressed that not all transitive football verbs may occur, with equal ease, without an object. For example, the football verb par excellence, *kick*, whose self-evident object is normally *the ball* (occasionally, less normally, a player in the opposition). Nonetheless, *kick* does not readily permit object omission, as evidenced by the rarity (as confirmed by web searches) of, e.g., *?She kicked into the net* instead of *She kicked the ball into the net*, in contrast to the perfectly normal *She shot (fired, sidefooted, struck, backheeled, etc.) into the net.*; the same goes for *?She hit into the net* for *She hit the ball into the net*. Interestingly, the verb *deliver* – which often occurs without an object in general language (cf. section 2) – apparently does not gladly part from its object (*ball*) in football language: *?*The Villa striker delivered into the penalty box* – as opposed to the common intransitive general-language use: *Arsenal didn’t deliver*. Likewise, the stative verb *possess* – central to the notion of “possession football” – does not normally occur without *ball* in tow: cf. *Barcelona possessed the ball for more than 70 per cent of the match* – **Barcelona possessed for more than ...* (but: *Barcelona dominated for 90 minutes*; cf. below).

Thus, as noted earlier, there appear to be various idiosyncratic lexical constraints determining the omissibility of objects in football language (and not only there; cf. section 2). Despite similar meaning, individual verbs may behave differently in this respect – often a matter of relative rather than absolute preference. This should be kept in mind as we consider some other omitted objects below. Another point worth mentioning is that some verbs may occur freely without an accompanying adverbial (cf. *She shot and the keeper saved*), whereas others seem to prefer the company of an adverbial, indicating manner or location/direction (cf. *He curled wide* versus *?He curled*). This also applies to certain other football verbs, as will be seen below.

With regard to Swedish, the corresponding football verbs tend to behave in roughly the same way as the English ones exemplified above, permitting the omission of *bollen* (‘the ball’) in similar contexts: *Marta sköt hårt* (cf. *Marta shot hard*), *Ibrahimovic nickade i mål* (cf.

Ibrahimovic headed home), *Hart räddade* (cf. *Hart saved*) – but hardly *?Hon sparkade i mål* (cf. *?She kicked into the net*). It thus appears that English and Swedish football verbs share the same basic principles and similar lexical constraints governing the omissibility of objects (cf. *SAG* 3:297, Bäckström 2013).

Alongside *ball*, one of the most frequently omitted football objects is *goal*, exemplified below:

- score*: Chelsea *scored* [a goal] again on the half-hour
- net*: The West Ham youngster finally *netted* [a goal]
- miss*: Kane *missed* [the goal] but scored the rebound to put Spurs ahead
- save*: The keeper *saved* [the goal] with her foot to keep Japan in the game
- concede*: Milan *conceded* [a goal] just before the half-time whistle
- defend*: The visitors *defended* [their goal] bravely for a full 90 minutes

As already emphasized, alternative missing objects are often conceivable in connection with football verbs, *save* being a case in point; the verb *net* may also occur with *ball* as a missing object: *She netted [the ball] confidently from the penalty spot*. Another example is *miss*, which may take *chance* or *opportunity* as its omissible object. By contrast, the verbs *score* and *concede* often take *equalizer* (‘equalizing goal’) as their object: *Milan scored (conceded) an equalizer just before half-time*. In this sentence, however, the object cannot be omitted on the model of *goal*. From the sentence *Milan scored (conceded)*, the object *goal* is automatically recoverable, being, as it were, “built into” the football senses of *score* and *concede* as an entailment relation (see e.g. Lyons 1977:788f., Levinson 1983:174, Cruse 1986:14); by contrast, *equalizer* is not recoverable, being semantically too specific to be entailed by *score* and *concede*. The fact that the missing object may be *interpreted* as an equalizer, given the right contextual and situational circumstances (in particular, the score at the moment of the utterance), is a different matter. In parallel fashion, also depending on context, the verb *shoot* may occasionally be perceived as having *goal* as its missing object. From a sentence such as *Messi shot from the edge and equalized Barcelona*, a goal may be inferred, but only thanks to the co-occurrence of *and equalized Barcelona* – on its own, the phrase *shot from the edge* says nothing about the result of Messi’s effort. In this respect, then, *shoot* contrasts with the verbs *score* and *concede*, where *goal* is always the

built-in, uniquely recoverable object: cf. *Ronaldo scored* versus *Ronaldo shot*.

Compared to Swedish, the most notable difference is that the normal Swedish equivalents of *score* and *concede*, with omitted objects, are expressions where the object, i.e. *mål* ('goal'), is retained: *göra (ett) mål* (cf. Engl. *make a goal*) and *släppa in ett mål* (cf. Engl. *let in a goal*). Corresponding to objectless *score*, there is also the intransitive verb *näta* (cf. Engl. *net*), as well as its somewhat facetious synonym *måla*; however, these verbs are nowhere near as frequent as *göra mål*.

In connection with, in particular, the verbs *score* and *concede*, with reverse meanings, the absence of an object, i.e. *goal*, naturally means that it cannot be modified; this, of course, applies to all missing objects. Instead, in some cases, the verb itself may be modified by an adverbial. For example, *Arsenal scored (conceded) a last-minute goal* is equivalent to *Arsenal scored (conceded) in the last minute*; cf. also *Walcott scored a glorious goal – Walcott scored gloriously*, *City conceded two goals in ten minutes – City conceded twice in ten minutes*. However, this expedient does not always seem to be available, restricting the possibility of object omission, not only in football language.¹⁴

From a semantic point of view, *goal* as an omissible object tends to differ from *ball*: cf. *score [a goal]* versus *pass [a ball]*. While *ball* is usually assigned the semantic role of "patient" or "affected" (cf. above), *goal* mostly involves the outcome of the verb action, what Jespersen (1924:159f.) and others (e.g., Quirk et al. 1985:749f., Biber et al. 1999:127) refer to as "object of result" or "resultant object".¹⁵ This type of object is at its most obvious with verbs like *score* and *concede*; less so with *save*. From a wider perspective, the semantic-role contrast between *ball* and *goal* can be seen as a reflection of the different functions of the ball and the goal in the game of football, where the ball serves as the prerequisite means to a certain end, i.e. scoring goals.

The omitted objects so far discussed – *ball*, *shot* and *goal* – may be characterized as fairly specific, representing key elements in any game of football. However, omitted objects may also be of a more abstract or vague nature (cf. Sweet 1891:90). One such case was mentioned in

¹⁴ Cf. e.g. *She wrote (read) an amazing book* versus *She wrote (read) amazingly*.

¹⁵ Cf. Ruppenhofer & Michaelis (2010:164): "objects in resultative constructions are omissible in match reports but not outside that genre."

section 1, in connection with the verb *finish* in the title example (*Messi finished clinically*), used intransitively. It was argued that the omitted object, part of the semantic make-up of this football use of *finish*, is *attack*: *Messi finished the attack clinically*. This kind of omitted object is clearly a shade less specific than, e.g., *ball*.¹⁶

A similar kind of rather imprecise omissible object is *opposition*, often in connection with the verb *attack*: *From the first minute PSG attacked [the opposition] relentlessly*. As always, the object may be more varied when not omitted, including the names of specific clubs: *the opposition's goal (penalty box, defence, Chelsea, etc.)*. Incidentally, *defend* as a football verb may also be used intransitively: *Liverpool defended well*. Here, however, the omitted object is the corresponding reflexive pronoun; cf. the alternative *Liverpool defended themselves well*. Further, in contrast to verbs like *attack*, the transitive football verb *beat* (*Arsenal beat Chelsea 2-0*) never occurs without an object (**Arsenal beat 2-0*); again, idiosyncratic lexical constraints seem to be in operation.

Interestingly, most of the corresponding Swedish football verbs (*avsluta* 'finish', *anfälla* 'attack', *slå* 'beat') behave in identical ways to the English ones just discussed with regard to the omissibility of objects. This also applies to the next group of omitted objects and their concomitant verbs.

For some verbs, the missing object is even more general than the ones mentioned so far, referring to the game of football itself. Earlier on (section 2), the noun *football* was mentioned as the understood object in the sentence *They played [football] beautifully*; cf. *They played beautiful football*. Other omissible objects, like *game* or *match*, are equally possible: *They played [the game] beautifully*. With some other verbs – such as *win* and *lose*, but also, e.g., *dominate* – *game* and *match* (but not *football*) are also readily omissible: *The London side won (lost) [the game]*, *Germany dominated [the match] throughout the first half*. Incidentally, a more specific verb such as *referee* may also drop its object: *Who refereed [the match]? –Pierluigi Collina*. Naturally, more

¹⁶ Obviously, the verb *finish* is not here used intransitively in the same way as in a sentence like *The match finished in a draw*, where *finished* (=ended) exemplifies a more “genuinely” intransitive verb use, i.e. without an omitted object, in the same way as, e.g., *The door opened*; cf. Quirk et al. (1985:1169).

detailed objects – variants of *game* or *match* – are often conceivable, e.g., *the Champions League final*.

So far, our discussion of omitted objects in football language has concerned monotonative verbs. In a few cases, however, a ditransitive or complex transitive verb may be involved. For example, the verb *deny*, usually taking both a direct and an indirect object (*They denied him access*) often turns up in football contexts: *Julio Cesar denied Ronaldo brilliantly* (cf. also the passive equivalent: *R. was brilliantly denied by J.C.*). Those familiar with football and English football language will know that the sentence refers to an excellent piece of goalkeeping by Julio Cesar, denying an opponent player a goal by making a brilliant save. In other words, the verb *deny* here functions as an action verb (cf. also the adverbial *brilliantly*, a seemingly odd collocate of *deny*), with an omitted direct object, i.e. *goal*.¹⁷

An even more conspicuous example of radical simplification in terms of omitted clause elements is provided by the verb *convert*. It is usually classified as a complex transitive verb (Quirk et. al 1985:53ff., 1200), constructed with an object and/or a complement introduced by *(in)to*: *They converted the sofa /into a bed/, They converted /to Catholicism/*. As a football verb, however, *convert* may also be used “absolutely”, without an object, in sentences like this: *Özil was awarded a penalty but failed to convert*. True, this frequent use of *convert* in football language, with neither an object nor a complement in place, looks superficially similar to the intransitive use of *convert* in, e.g., *They converted* (e.g. to Catholicism). At a deeper level, however, it is essentially different, being a syntactically abbreviated version of ... *but failed to convert the penalty into goal*. In other words, both the direct object (*the penalty*) and the complement (*into goal*) are conveniently omitted, recoverable from the immediate situational context – a striking gain in expressive economy, also illustrating the somewhat imprecise nature of the understood object (*penalty, chance, opportunity, etc.*).

¹⁷ Cf. also cases like *The keeper denied [Ronaldo] a powerful shot*, where it is the *indirect* object that may be omitted; cf. the alternative construction: *The keeper denied a powerful shot from Ronaldo*.

4. Unconventional football objects

Apart from the omissibility of certain recoverable objects, discussed in the preceding section, football language may display its special character in other ways related to verb usage. For example, due to their special meaning, football verbs often co-occur with what may – from a general-language perspective – be seen as somewhat unexpected adverbials, e.g., *finish clinically* and *deny brilliantly*, as exemplified earlier. In this section, we shall consider another collocational aspect of football language (and, in many cases, sports language at large), namely the co-occurrence of certain verbs with objects that may be perceived as clearly unconventional in relation to general language, mainly in terms of infringements of “normal” selectional restrictions (cf. section 2).

Animacy is a well-known semantic feature, of considerable relevance to verbs and their patterns of co-occurrence with subjects and objects. For example, the verb *kill* prototypically takes an animate (agentive) subject as well as an animate (affected) object (*John killed Bill*, *The lion killed the lamb*). However, there are also less prototypical cases, by no means rare, such as *The stone killed Bill* and *Curiosity killed the cat*, with inanimate (instrumental) subjects (cf. Quirk et al. 1985:743, Biber et al. 1999:124).

In metaphorical usage, less prototypical objects may also occur, in general language as well as in football language. One such example is the well-known everyday expression *to kill time*, before boarding a plane, for instance. On the football pitch, the same expression often has a related but special meaning, referring to a sort of go-slow action, deliberately wasting time to prevent the opposing team from scoring: *Spurs were trying to kill time towards the end of the game*. The verb *kill*, with a special meaning, also turns up in other metaphorical football phrases, such as *kill /off/ the match (game)*, as in *Their third goal killed the match*, i.e. decided the game for good, ahead of time.¹⁸

Thus, the verb *kill* provides examples of football usage that deviates from general language by taking non-prototypical, inanimate objects, forcing a metaphorical interpretation (cf. Quirk et al. 1985:772). The

¹⁸ The verb *close* could have been used as a metaphorical synonym of *kill* (*They should have closed the game in the first half*), a kind of usage related to familiar phrases like *close the argument* and *close the deal*.

same kind of usage is common in Swedish football language (*Målet dödade matchen* ('The goal killed the match')).

The distinction between human and non-human (inanimate) football objects is relevant in many other cases. Some football verbs normally take human objects, reflecting events on the pitch, e.g. the roughly synonymous *tackle* and *challenge*: *The defender cynically tackled him from behind*.¹⁹ On the other hand, in general language, a verb like *read* typically takes inanimate objects, such as books and other reading matter. However, *read* may also, in metaphorical usage, take human objects, with the meaning of 'see through': *She read him like an open book*. This kind of use is also found in the context of football: *The keeper read the penalty taker and was able to save*. But *read* may also occur with non-human football objects: *The keeper read the penalty (free kick, shot) and parried*.

So far, the cases dealt with have mainly concerned instances of metaphorical usage, in which there are clear parallels between general language and football language but where football language may exhibit a range of objects specific to football. However, differences between general language and football language may be even more conspicuous. This applies not least to the converse verb pair *buy* and *sell*. Since the abolition of slavery, these verbs normally take only non-human objects in general-language contexts. In football language, however, examples like the following abound, especially during the so-called "silly season" when the "transfer window" is open for clubs to buy and sell players:

Real Madrid *bought (purchased) Ronaldo* from Manchester United in 2009
 Manchester United *sold Ronaldo* to Real Madrid in 2009
 Manchester United lost a number of fans when they *traded Ronaldo* to Madrid

The occurrence of a human object with verbs such as *sell* and *buy*, and *purchase* and *trade*, speaks volumes about today's football as big business. At a more general level, it demonstrates the close connection between linguistic phenomena and the "real" world, where changing conditions often give rise to changed usage. It may be added that, unsurprisingly, Swedish usage is here identical to English. Buying and

¹⁹ Incidentally, *tackle* and *challenge* may also occur with omitted objects: *Jovetic challenged from behind, but no yellow card*.

selling players is a universal feature of international football (and professional sports at large), reflected in similar ways in the world's football languages.

Another group of football verbs involving the frequent – and, linguistically, perhaps more surprising – appearance of human objects includes examples such as the following: *The Barcelona boss rested Suárez for the midweek game, Hodgson decided to play Rooney out on the left.*

The most common use of *rest* as a general-language verb is intransitive: *rest for two hours*. When used transitively, its object is more often than not a part of the body: *rest one's legs*. In football language, however, it may also take a human object, i.e. a player, as illustrated in the first of the above sentences. The verb *rest* has a distinctly causative meaning (cf. Sweet 1891:90, Quirk et al. 1985: 745f.), its subject usually being the manager or coach of a team.²⁰ This also applies to the verb *play*, which in general language, when used transitively, does not normally take human objects. In a football context, however, *play* often takes a player as its object, with a meaning opposite that of *rest*, as exemplified in the second sentence.²¹ It is notable that the corresponding Swedish verbs – *vila* ('rest') and *spela* ('play') – can be used in the same causative way, with players as objects, a usage most likely inspired by the syntactic behaviour of the two English football verbs.

A similar use is displayed by the verb *sign*. In general language (cf. e.g. *LDOCE: sign v*), this verb may be used intransitively, with an understood object (*Sign here, please*), but more often transitively, with inanimate objects (one's name, a contract, etc.). In football language, *sign* may also take a human object, like *buy* and *sell*: *"I nearly signed Ibrahimovic," admits Wenger*. The example can be seen as a convenient shorthand for *"I nearly made Ibrahimovic sign a contract (with Arsenal)"*. Thus, the behaviour of *sign* is yet another example of causative verb use in football language, where a player turns up as the

²⁰ A similar, causative use of *rest*, with *patient* as object, may be found in medical language: *Rest the patient for 10–15 minutes in a supine position*. In football language, this use of *rest* is more or less synonymous with the verb *bench*: *Enrique benched Suárez for the midweek game*; cf also: *drop a player*.

²¹ The verb *play* also occurs with certain other, special football objects, e.g. *play the offside trap* (defence tactics), *play the advantage* (refereeing).

(superficial) object, corresponding to the subject in *Ibrahimovic signed (the contract)*.²² Here, too, Swedish usage has followed suit, to the point of importing the verb *sign* as a direct loan (*sajna*): *Real Madrid är på gång att sajna den kinesiske mittfältaren Lin Liangming* ('R.M. are on their way to signing the Chinese midfielder L.L').²³

Summing up, this section has focused on some different types of unconventional football objects, where the common denominator has been the violation of what may be seen as the “normal” selectional restrictions of certain verbs; from a general-language perspective, such infringements often give rise to superficially odd collocations. In some cases, they may result in metaphorical usage (e.g., *The third goal killed the match*). In others, the unconventional objects may be due to the occurrence of human instead of inanimate objects of certain verbs: players may be rested, bought and sold, as well as signed – reflecting, in a way, their status as almost dehumanized commodities in the heavily commercialized world of football.

5. Concluding remarks

The overall purpose of this article has been to argue that football language, like other special languages, is not merely a matter of lexical interest. Certainly, terminology remains at the core of all special languages as its most easily recognized characteristic. However, as we have attempted to show here, football language is also special by virtue of certain syntactic and semantic features having to do with transitivity, related to the situational context of football as well as to certain specific football-related genres, such as match reports and commentary.

Our focus has been on two areas of verb syntax, setting football language apart from general language: the omission – for reasons of expressive economy – of certain contextually recoverable “football objects” (*ball, shot, goal*, etc.) and the occurrence of “unconventional” objects (e.g., human objects of verbs such as *buy, sell, rest* and *play*). To be sure, our exemplification and discussion can lay no claim to being

²² *LDOCE (sign v)* notes that the same kind of usage applies in certain musical contexts: *CBS Records had signed her back in 1988 on a three-album contract*.

²³ For discussion of the impact of English football loans on European languages, see Bergh & Ohlander (2012b).

exhaustive – for example, the idiosyncratic lexical constraints that seem to determine the relative propensity of football verbs to omit objects are clearly in need of further elucidation. Still, we hope to have demonstrated that football language is indeed a rewarding field of syntactic-semantic inquiry, well worth in-depth exploration; this may also, as a side-effect, shed some further light on classic areas in syntax, semantics and pragmatics. In particular, the phenomena discussed here illustrate the close relationship between language and reality, not least the relevance of contextual and situational settings for syntactic form, selectional restrictions and collocations.

In closing, we would like to repeat that the examples discussed in this article are by no means unique to football language; many of them – concerning both omissible and unconventional objects – could also relate to other ball sports, or to sports language at large. More generally, all special subject areas tend to create their own contextual framework, involving a specific semantic-pragmatic sphere. This, in turn, paves the way for constructions and collocations that may deviate considerably – even spectacularly – from those applying in general language, thus helping to distinguish special languages from general language. Football language, it appears, is an obvious case in point.

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EVERY 3 in *OED*: A grammatically neglected determiner (or two)

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Abstract

It is not unusual for grammar books to treat the determiner *every* as having one function only, viz. that of more or less parallelling *each*, disregarding cases such as *There is every reason* and *I wish you every happiness*. The present article is an attempt to redress the balance by critically assessing presentations in some of the major grammar books and in the canonical set of five dictionaries for learners. The end result is a tentative description of three different uses of *every*, *EVERY^{each}*, *EVERY^{possible}* and *EVERY^{complete}*.

Keywords: English, countability, determiner, dictionary, grammar, noun

Background

In February 2005, quite a few eyebrows must have been raised by teachers of English who had been avid readers of Quirk et al. (1972 and 1985) and other standard grammars when, on February 11, Tony Blair and his cabinet were reported to have sent to Buckingham Palace the message “We all wish them every happiness for their future together” (them being Prince Charles and Camilla Parker Bowles). Quirk et al. (1972: 139 and 1985: 257) and Quirk & Greenbaum (1973: 61–62) include *every* in a set of determiners defined by the property of occurring only with count nouns in the singular: *a(n)*, *every*, *each*, *either*, *neither*.¹ *Happiness* is definitely a non-count noun and thus unable to take *every* as a determiner according to major grammar books.

The instance quoted could of course be explained away as being formulaic and thus exempt from grammatical rules. The formulaic

¹ Etymology is outside the scope of this article, but as an ex-teacher of English grammar and word formation I find it interesting that the fairly neat distinction in use between *each* and *every* in present-day English is not an age-old one. *Every* started out as a combination of *ever* (as a booster) and *each* (as the head), found in Old English as *æfre ælc*, as described in *OED* s.v. *every*.

character is implicitly confirmed by the learner's dictionary *MED*:² "We wish you both every happiness in your future life together." Similarly in *CIDE*: "I'd like to wish you every [...] happiness in your new home."³

In Quirk et al. it is also stated (1985: 1241), perfectly correctly, that the only possible modification of a noun with *every* (as defined, my comment) as its determiner is of the restrictive kind.⁴ Another characteristic is said (1985: 1405) to be that a noun determined by *every* is an unlikely notional subject in existential sentences.

In Quirk et al.'s book, there is only one *every*.⁵ Hasselgård et al. (1998: 134) is in the same tradition. The same holds for Biber et al. (1999: 275), and the statistics presented there for *every* (1999: 278) simply refer to the string of letters, with no comment on different functions. But there is in fact at least one other *every* than the one defined by Quirk et al., and the usage in question is by no means isolated to the lexical item *happiness*. It has the opposite main defining characteristic, viz. that of occurring with definitely non-count nouns or with non-count senses of nouns with dual membership. It can also readily combine with both restrictive and non-restrictive modification and occur as a determiner in notional subjects in existential sentences.

² Throughout this article, I will be using the (semi-)official acronyms for dictionaries. The full titles are to be found in the list of references.

³ During a break from the present linguistic exercise, I happened to pass a TV set and was provided with a present-day American example in the TV series *The Mentalist* from 2014, episode 4. After concluding the sale of a (stolen) engagement ring to two undercover FBI agents, the jeweller bid them farewell with "I wish you every happiness."

⁴ For some reason, probably to do with the semantic notion of universality, in a restrictive relative clause with a non-personal antecedent preceded by *every*, the zero option for the relativizer in object position is next to obligatory (98 %), as shown by Olofsson (1981: 101). This is typical of all the so-called universal pronouns/determiners (*all*, *each* and *every*). Strictly speaking, the determiner does not go with the noun but with the whole complex of noun + clause, hence my use of "preceded" rather than "determined". See, for instance, the fairly non-technical demonstration in Olofsson (1981: 20).

⁵ Interestingly, Solveig Granath's countyman (yes, not only countryman but also countyman) Jan Svartvik, a member of "the gang of four" behind Quirk et al. (1972 and 1985), branches out with his colleague Olof Sager in a grammar for Swedish undergraduates (Svartvik & Sager 1978: 250) and mentions a second function of *every*, exemplified by "I'll give her every assistance (help, encouragement)", noting that *every* can occur with non-count nouns. However, as will be apparent below, their examples are not quite parallel with *every happiness*, cited above.

Even the superobservant grammarian Otto Jespersen missed (or at least omitted) this other *every*; there is a brief mention (six lines) in Jespersen (1949: 598), but the chapter in question was written by Niels Haislund, Jespersen being too old and ill to finish the final volume (no. VII) of his grammar on his own. Haislund glossed this *every* as “all possible, the utmost degree of”, which seems to echo in every detail *OED*, under *every* 3.⁶ Without stating the source, Haislund gave two examples from the dictionary, containing *every consideration* and *every prospect*. In addition, he provided two 19th-century literary quotations, containing *every use* and *every business*.⁷ Surprisingly, the grammarian refrained from commenting on the grammatical properties of the nouns involved.

Zandvoort (1965: 170) noted that *every* can be used with abstract nouns in the sense of “all possible”, using *indication* and *reason* as examples, but there is no mention of the degree sense found in the *every happiness* type.

Lexicography and grammar

In *OED*, even *OEDonline*, there is no later example of this *every* (presented under 3) than 1891 (*OED* simply quotes the list of examples invented for the 1891 instalment of its predecessor, *NED*): “I feel every respect for him”, “They showed him every consideration” and “There is every prospect of success”. The third example, by the way, demonstrates that “*every* 3” can readily occur as a determiner of the noun (phrase) in a notional subject in an existential sentence, a function in which the “standard” *every* does “not so easily” occur according to Quirk et al. (1985: 1405).

The absence in *OED* of instances later than 1891 can easily be misinterpreted as an implicit report of the death of *every* 3. However, this is only a reflection of the simple fact that the extensive revision

⁶ Actually, the “list of books” in Jespersen (1949: 1–40) has no entry for *OED*, only for its predecessor, *NED*, in spite of the fact that the change of name (and physical format) took place as early as 1933. This shortcoming is of no consequence, because in terms of content, the two are identical.

⁷ The *business* example reads in full “What business had I to take it out of your pocket? – Every business”.

programme for the online version has not yet reached *every*. The wording that James Murray and his colleagues produced in the late 1880s still stands. For the revision programme, I have sent to the present editors the following examples from 20th century literary sources.

However my daughters and I join in wishing you every happiness in your married life. (Evelyn Waugh, *Decline and fall* (1928, p. 141 in the 1937 Penguin edition), from a congratulatory letter composed by a head of school)

This she had done [...] from an early age with every naturalness. (Iris Murdoch, *The time of the angels* (1966, p. 38 in the 1968 Penguin edition))

Dictionaries for learners show considerable differences as to grammatical information about the use of *every*, including *every* 3.⁸ Their general defining style is functional (Svensén 2009: 241), i.e., semantic with a tinge of pragmatics. Typical wordings are “used when referring to”, “used for showing”, “used to emphasize”, and “you use **every** to indicate”.⁹

Traditionally, there has seemed to be little need for grammatical explanations in a dictionary mainly used for decoding, but the addition of an encoding function should have changed the situation in favour of grammar.¹⁰ Apart from the general tag “determiner”, grammatical terms and explanations are totally absent in *CIDE*, which is in line with the semantic focus of this dictionary. The same absence is noted in *LDOCE*. In addition to “determiner”, *MED* also has “singular countable noun”. *OALD* has “indef det”, “singular countable ns” and “abstract ns”.

⁸ For logistic reasons and for some degree of uniformity, I will be using the editions from 1995 (“the year of the dictionaries”) for the learners’ dictionaries *CIDE* (from its second edition, not used here, called *CALD*), *COBUILD*, *LDOCE* and *OALD*. For *MED*, which appeared later, the first edition (2002) will be used.

⁹ Surprisingly, only two out of five dictionaries (*LDOCE* and *OALD*) remember to include individuality in their definitions. To take one example of the opposite, *MED* has “used for referring to all the people or things of a particular type or in a particular group, or all the parts of something.”

¹⁰ Lord Quirk’s preface to the third edition of *LDOCE* may give the impression that the encoding function and the grammatical information are unique to this dictionary. However, in the first edition (1948) of the mother of all dictionaries for learners, *ALDCE*, in later editions known as *OALD*, A. S. Hornby mentions in his introduction the focus on idioms and *syntax* (emphasis mine), and as for encoding (without using the term), he says that “for writing English [the foreign student] will continue to find this volume useful.”

COBUILD, using its “Extra Column”, boasts the largest set of terms, but even so there is nothing about countability or abstractness. In order to cover examples such as “his every whim”, *COBUILD* (alone) makes an *ad hoc* reclassification of *every* and labels it “adjective”.

Table 1 lists the lexical items used to exemplify what I (following *OED*) call *every 3*. Bold face marks the one word that occurs in all five dictionaries, whereas those occurring in three out of five are italicized.

Table 1. Nouns used after “*every 3*” in example sentences

CIDE	COBUILD	LDOCE	MED	OALD
chance	care	chance	happiness	(combination) ¹¹
confidence	effort	hope	<i>intention</i>	opportunity
effort	<i>intention</i>	precaution	reason	reason
happiness	reason	reason	<i>sign</i>	success
hope	<i>sign</i>			
<i>intention</i>				
opportunity				
possibility				
prospect				
reason				
right				
<i>sign</i>				
success				

In my opinion, the set of examples for *every 3* in *OED* is heterogeneous, which is actually hinted in the duality of the heading of section 3: “All possible”, “the utmost degree of”. There is a thin line between the two paraphrases proposed, but whereas the first one seems to go with amount, the second one explicitly refers to degree.¹² In the above table for learners’ dictionaries, it can be noted that clear-cut “degree” examples are found only in *CIDE* and *MED*, the two newest additions to the market, and in *OALD*. Also worth noting is the status of *every reason*, which seems to be a candidate for inclusion in the category of set phrases.

¹¹ The full example reads “He tried every conceivable combination of numbers”, which in my opinion illustrates the “standard” use of *every*. It was new to the fifth edition of *OALD* and was discarded for the sixth.

¹² This (potential) distinction is ignored in *CIDE*, where all the examples that contain the nouns listed under *CIDE* in this table are lumped together under the “guide word” (technical term in *CIDE*) GREATEST.

Conclusions

On the basis of observations in grammars, dictionaries and other sources, I would like to submit the following tentative description, using considerably more grammatical terms and concepts than the average learner's dictionary. On the other hand it is simplified as compared with the dictionaries, which often set up separate groups for adverbial functions of the whole noun phrase. In my opinion, there is no difference as to the function of *every* in relation to its head between "Every year has twelve months" and "We go to Italy every year".

EVERY^{each} is a determiner used with count nouns in the singular.¹³ It is normally possible to paraphrase such a construction by means of *all* + plural.¹⁴ Typically, the nouns involved refer to something or somebody actually existing in a group or set. **EVERY^{each}** can take a postdeterminer (or adjectival?) position after a genitive (including possessives). The individuality along with the universality can be strengthened through the expanded form *each and every*. Examples:

Every home should have one.

I'll be watching your every movement.

EVERY^{possible} is a determiner used with abstract count nouns in the singular or abstract non-count nouns (or non-count senses of nouns with dual membership), often referring to something not (yet) in actual existence.

You will be given every support.

¹³ It is not unusual to find statements, without further comments, to the effect that *every* goes with plurals, as in "every two weeks". This is a superficial and mechanical way of looking at things. The situation was correctly and concisely described a century ago in Jespersen (1914: 113): "Very frequently a unified plural is found after *any*, *no* and especially *every* ...". Regrettably, his nice term "unified plural" does not seem to have caught on to the extent that it deserves.

¹⁴ This simple rule of thumb was formulated "... the noun may be put in the plural and *every* replaced by *all*" in the first (1948) edition of *ALDCE*, but it is not to be found in any present-day dictionary for learners.

EVERY^{complete} is a determiner used with abstract non-count nouns (or non-count senses of nouns with dual membership).¹⁵ The nouns are typically derived from gradable adjectives or otherwise semantically associated with gradability.

I wish you every happiness/success.

Famous (?) last words

To conclude, I have every^{complete} confidence that every^{each} reader of this will see that there is every^{possible} reason to improve the grammatical analysis and description of every^{each} **EVERY**.¹⁶

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¹⁵ The tag *complete* is not carved in stone. It is difficult to come up with something that is either neutral or widely acceptable in collocational terms. Other candidates are, for instance, *perfect*, *total* and *greatest*.

¹⁶ My computerized grammar checker marked *every happiness* and *every naturalness* as ungrammatical (faulty number agreement). I rest my case.

Lexicography

- ALDCE = The Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English. 1948. London: Oxford University Press.
- CALD = The Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary of English. 2003. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- CIDE = The Cambridge International Dictionary of English. 1995. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- COBUILD = Collins COBUILD English Dictionary. 2nd ed. 1995. London: HarperCollins Publishers.
- LDOCE = Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English. 3rd ed. 1995. Harlow: Longman Group Limited.
- MED = Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners. 2002. Oxford: Macmillan Publishers Ltd.
- NED = New English Dictionary on Historical Principles. 1884–1928. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- OALD = Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary. 5th ed. 1995. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
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Refugee or migrant? What corpora can tell

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Abstract

It has been suggested that there is a clear difference between the terms *REFUGEE* and *MIGRANT* (for example Edwards 2015). A *migrant* is someone who chooses to move in order to find work or a better life, while a *refugee* is forced to move because of threat to life or freedom. This study looks at how the two terms are used in British English today and explores what contemporary corpora can reveal about changes coinciding with the escalation of the European migrant crisis.

Keywords: migration, refugee, corpus, Present-day English, British National Corpus, Oxford English Corpus

Introduction

In August 2015, UNHCR published an article on their website in which Adrian Edwards discusses the words *refugee* and *migrant*. He points to the difference between *refugees*, whose status is defined and protected in international law, and *migrants*, who are subject to the immigration laws of individual countries, and argues that “[t]he two terms have distinct and different meanings, and confusing them leads to problems for both populations.” (Edwards 2015).

As a linguist, it is difficult to accept casual claims about the meaning and use of words without wanting to examine them in more detail. As a corpus linguist, the natural approach is to ask ‘what can I find in a corpus?’ For this paper I want to see what can be found out about the current use of the terms *REFUGEE* and *MIGRANT*¹ in contemporary British English, and explore whether the patterns of use can be seen to have changed with the recent developments in Europe sometimes referred to as ‘the European Migrant Crises’ (Wikipedia 2016; UNHCR 2015). The aim is not to provide a complete picture but rather to see what obvious patterns emerge when looking at two corpora of Present-day

¹ The forms *REFUGEE* and *MIGRANT* are used to refer to the headwords, not distinguishing between the singular and plural forms.

British English, and to reflect briefly on the type of research that is made possible through the existence of such resources.

The question of differences and similarities between *REFUGEE* and *MIGRANT* is not new and has received some attention recently. The Migration Observatory, based at the University of Oxford, published a report on the use of the words *immigrants*, *migrants*, *asylum seekers* and *refugees* in British newspapers (The Migration Observatory 2013). They compared the terms, focussing on (L1²) collocates, and found, amongst other things, that *MIGRANT* often appeared with words related to economics or work, while the collocates of *REFUGEE* related to conflict, fleeing and nationalities. The research project ‘Discourses of refugees and asylum seekers in the UK press, 1996-2006’, based at Lancaster University, produced a number of studies where the use of different terms was examined using a combination of discourse analysis and corpus linguistics (for example Khosravini 2010; Gabrielatos and Baker 2008). These studies are all based on data from before 2015 and the start of what has been referred to as ‘the European Migrant Crisis’. Camilla Ruz discusses the words used to describe migrants in her article from 2015, but she does not look at actual usage (Ruz 2015). Although these studies are all interesting as a reference point, they do not illustrate what is happening in the language today, as the crisis is developing and being discussed frequently in various contexts.

For the present study, I have been fortunate to be able to use a very recent version of the *Oxford English Corpus*, (Oxford University Press n.d.) which allows me to examine data that stretches into March 2016. For comparison and reference, I have also used a well-known standard reference corpus, the *British National Corpus* (Burnard 2007)³.

The British National Corpus (BNC)

The material included in the *British National Corpus* (BNC) has been selected to jointly provide a representative snap-shot of the British English language towards the end of the 20th century. It has been used

² L1 = words appearing in the position one word to the left of the search term.

³ Text references given after a BNC example refer to text ID and sentence number, as given in the corpus manual (Burnard 2007). The sources of examples from the OEC are listed at the end of the paper.

extensively as a source of data upon which to base observations about contemporary language. The corpus contains samples of written and spoken language from a range of contexts. They date from 1960-1993, with the bulk of the material from the period 1985-93. As such, the corpus may today be considered not so much a mirror of the language as it is today but as a historical reference to the language of the recent past against which new features or trends may be pitted. This is particularly useful when examining very recent developments, such as the potential change in patterns of use of *REFUGEE* and *MIGRANT* happening in the last year.

When comparing two similar words, differences in frequency can be revealing. Looking at *MIGRANT* and *REFUGEE* in the BNC, one immediate observation is that the frequencies differ: there are only 681 instances of *MIGRANT* compared to 2,723 occurrences of *REFUGEE*. The proportion of singular uses is somewhat higher for *MIGRANT*: 40% compared to 31% of *REFUGEE* (see *Table 1*).

Table 1. Frequencies and proportions of *MIGRANT* and *REFUGEE* in the BNC.

	<i>MIGRANT</i>	<i>REFUGEE</i>	% <i>MIGRANT</i>
Singular	274 (40%)	834 (31%)	25%
Plural	407 (60%)	1889 (69%)	18%
Total	681 (6.8 pmw)	2723 (27 pmw)	20%

Most of the singular instances of *migrant* (over 90%) are used as pre-modifiers to nouns. Some of these nouns are birds or other animals but more common are instances with *worker(s)* or *labour(ers)*. Many of the instances of *MIGRANT* are found in contexts relating to a foreign country or another time.

1. Indeed, the records would suggest that this *turtle* is a regular *migrant* in British and Irish waters. (EFF 2289)
2. 'Any port in a storm' is an often-quoted truism, and for *migrant birds* this is certainly the case. (CRJ 1137)
3. Thus the rural culture brought by *migrant labour* to West Ham during rapid growth was fatalistic and ideologically subordinate. (CCR 392)
4. A joint system of security for *migrant workers* had been introduced in 1958. (CLR 901)
5. Chavez spent his life fighting for the *migrant* Latino *labourers* who toil in California's dusty vineyards and lettuce fields. (CR7 1176)

6. There are believed to be anywhere between 50,000 and 100,000 *migrant labourers* from the Philippines, Indonesia and Thailand working illegally in Taiwan and helping to keep down wage levels. (HH3 14782)

The plural form *migrants* is more frequent than the singular: 407 in the corpus as a whole. These are not used as pre-modifiers but are often preceded by a number of different adjectives, the most common being *economic* (33 instances). This frequent collocation also features in the Migration Observatory report referred to above (The Migration Observatory 2013). The only other adjective modifying *migrants* more than ten times is *illegal* (12 instances)

7. As the number of former South Vietnamese army majors and persecuted intellectuals drifted down to infinitesimal proportions and the number of economic migrants grew, the United States looked the other way. (AA1 28)
8. Illegal migrants who hide from authorities often became victims of crime or criminals, he said. (K5D 3067)

Interestingly, no lexical verbs are used with *migrants* as subject or object more than ten times. The most frequent are seven instances with *came* and five with *attracted*.

9. Migrants came in waves with their babble of tongues. (HH3 9352)
10. York had a stronger pull than smaller towns and attracted migrants over much longer distances than most places. (HWD 754)

Like *migrant*, the singular form *refugee* is mostly used as a pre-modifier to a noun. The most frequent nouns are *camp/camps*, which make up nearly one in five of the instances (19%, 160 instances) and *child/children* (65 instances).

11. There were similar jubilant scenes in refugee camps in Lebanon. (AJM 617)
12. The first thing a refugee child learns is the name of his or her home village in Palestine. (APD 885)

There are no instances of *refugee labour* and only five of *refugee worker*. The phrase *refugee problem* is found 32 times, but there are no instances of *migrant problem*.

13. It was, as one refugee worker put it, 'the easy way out' and it solved nothing. (BNN 1696)

14. But it will not be contained effectively if we do not deal with the refugee problem immediately.' (AJ6 775)

Among the plural instances of *REFUGEE*, a relatively large proportion is used in the name *The United Nations High Commission for Refugees* (126 instances⁴). Although the phrase *economic refugees* is found, it is rare (8 instances, compared to 33 instances used with the less frequent *migrants*). A number of instances of *REFUGEE* are preceded by words denoting nationalities, including *Kurdish*, *Somali*, *Vietnamese*, *Bosnian*, and *Iraqi*. The number of *genuine refugees* is three times higher than the number of *bogus refugees* (34 compared to 11)

15. The United Nations High Commission for Refugees in Geneva called the British action 'premature' while other avenues were still open. (A9W 420)
16. Some are economic refugees who came to Britain seeking a better life; the rest are trying to escape oppression and even torture. (A59 711)
17. A group of Bosnian refugees has said a tearful farewell to charity workers after spending a week in their care. (K22 922)

Lexical verbs used with *REFUGEE* include forms of *flee*, *help*, *arrive*, *seek* and *return*, all natural to the situation in which refugees find themselves.

18. During the whole of the 1980s, refugees fled from the wars in Chad and in Ethiopia. (B12 50)
19. We hope to help refugees from any war, any country. (K1Y 2952)
20. Recently a 17-year old refugee arrived in England with her three-year-old sister and applied for asylum. (A7G 783)

To sum up, this brief look at of the instances of *MIGRANT* and *REFUGEE* in the BNC shows that *REFUGEE* is about four times as frequent as *MIGRANT*. The most common use of *MIGRANT* is to refer to working people that move: *migrant labour/labourers* or *migrant worker/s*. Some instances also refer to migrating birds or animals. Frequent adjectives preceding *MIGRANT* are *economic* and *illegal*.

⁴ Excluding these makes the proportions of *MIGRANT* increase slightly (to 19% plural, 21% overall) but does not notably alter the proportions given in Table 1 or the relative frequency (26 pmw).

There are no particularly noticeable patterns where *MIGRANT* is used with certain verbs.

REFUGEE seems to be used more in relation to the situation of refugees, for example *refugee camps* and *refugee children*. There are also references to the origin of the refugees. The phrase *refugee problem* is also found, usually in relation to something happening abroad, not in the UK. Refugees are seen to *flee* and *arrive*. The word also co-occurs with *return* where *REFUGEE* is either the subject or object, and *help*, where *REFUGEE* is the object.

The Oxford English Corpus (OEC)

Although the BNC contains material that is now at least 20 years old it can still be used as a reference source to get an understanding of general language use. To be able to examine recent linguistic development and current use of vocabulary, however, another corpus is needed.

The Oxford English Corpus is a very large collection of language data collated by Oxford University Press, mainly to be used as a resource for their dictionary makers and writers of language textbooks (Oxford University Press n.d.).

While the reference corpus BNC was created to be a sample of language from a point in time, with carefully documented and published sampling criteria and composition of the corpus, the OEC is a monitor corpus which grows with time as additional material is added. It contains a large proportion of material that can be found and used relatively easily, for example by harvesting material from online newsfeeds and similar. That means that the proportion of news material in the corpus is considerable, while types of text that are not generally found online are less prominent, such as spoken language and private correspondence. Little information is available about the sampling strategies used for the OEC, and no detailed break-down of the composition of the material is published.

Users of the OEC have access both to a stable ‘frozen’ version of the corpus and to more recent updates. The current study uses the *New Monitor Corpus, March 2016 (n6)* which according to the corpus site contains over 6.6 billion words (7.7 billion tokens) from over 23 million

documents. Searches have been restricted to material classified as ‘British English’ with a creation date between March 2012⁵ and March 2016. This material comes to just over 740 million tokens. Unless otherwise specified, the term *OEC* will henceforth be used to refer to this material, excluding non-British material and material from other or unknown periods. Searches are made using the Sketch Engine tool (‘Sketch Engine’ n.d).

Searching this version of the OEC retrieves 23,737 instances of *MIGRANT* and 24,306 of *REFUGEE* (using the ‘simple query’⁶). That means that there is hardly any difference in the overall frequency of the two words. Although the BNC and OEC are not necessarily suitable for comparison in every respect it may be interesting to note that in the BNC, *REFUGEE* is approximately four times more frequent than *MIGRANT*. Comparing relative frequencies is difficult as corpus size is calculated differently, but a rough estimate suggests that the terms are more frequent in the OEC overall.⁷

As the OEC is a monitor corpus, with new material added for each month, it is feasible to look at the frequency of the two words across time. *Figure 1* shows the relative frequency of *REFUGEE* and *MIGRANT* for each month from May 2012 to March 2016.⁸

What is immediately obvious from the diagram is that at the beginning of this period, frequencies for both words are low with little difference between them, *REFUGEE* being slightly more frequent. From April 2015, the relative frequency of *MIGRANT* increases, to peak in September 2015 when the relative frequency is nearly eight times higher than it was six months earlier. The use of *REFUGEE* also increases, but

⁵ Searches in the corpus do not retrieve any results from material classified as ‘British English’ for March and April 2012, which means that in practice the corpus covers the period from May 2012.

⁶ The Sketch Engine manual specifies that “Simple query tries to find all word forms including inflected variants” <https://www.sketchengine.co.uk/simple-query/>

⁷ The calculation is based on the relation between OEC tokens and words (7.7 billion tokens and 6.6 billion words according to the corpus site), suggesting the component examined here is roughly equivalent to 630 million words. That means the frequency of either of the two terms in the OEC is around 38pmw. That is higher than in the BNC, but comparisons may be skewed by different definition of the concept ‘word’.

⁸ As the corpus searches do not retrieve any material from March or April 2012 with the classification ‘British English’, these months have been excluded from the graph.

not until August 2015, when there is a substantial change. Use of both words seems to decrease slightly after September 2015, but it is still much higher than it was a year earlier or at any time before that.

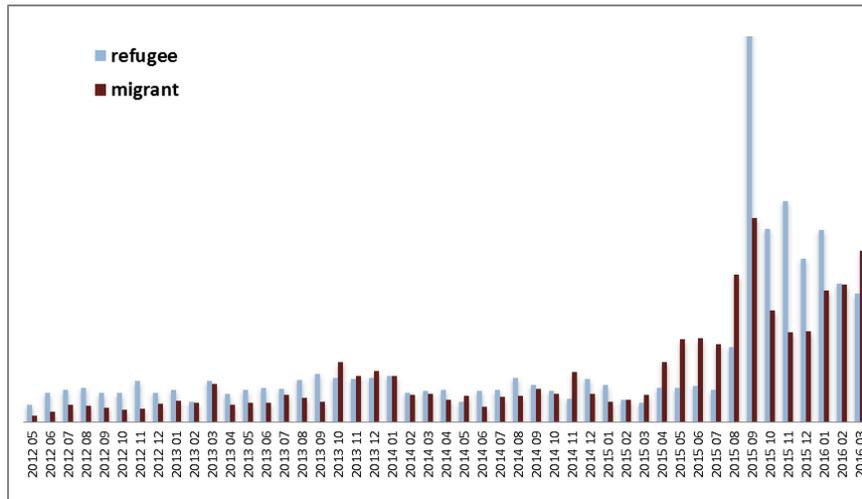


Figure 1. Variation in relative frequency per month⁹

So, what is the explanation to this increase? There are two likely reasons why such a significant change can be seen. What may seem most interesting is the idea that something has affected the language use so that these words are now used more frequently. That would not necessarily be because users suddenly develop a particular fondness for these words but would also be seen if topics referring to migrants and refugees were discussed more. If such topics feature more in newspapers and general discourse, the frequency of these terms would also increase. It has been suggested that the ‘European Migrant Crisis’ started in April 2015 (Wikipedia 2016). At that time, many news outlets started reporting more on people trying to cross the sea to reach Europe. This correlates with the pattern in the graph which shows that *MIGRANT* is used more frequently from April 2015.

⁹ The figure illustrates the relative scale of variation, not exact frequencies, which is why the vertical axis is un-labelled.

Another possible explanation to the increase relates to the composition of the corpus. If the corpus contains roughly the same kinds of texts in equal proportions for each month, we would not expect the composition as such to affect the frequency of various words. However, if different kinds of material are included in different periods, this could affect what is found when the distribution of an item is examined across time.¹⁰ There is little information about how material for the OEC is selected, and how similar or different sections may be. It is, thus, not possible to say to what extent differences in the composition of the corpus parts affects the distribution of instances of *MIGRANT* and *REFUGEE*. It is an interesting question, and cannot be disregarded completely, but for the current study looking at how the words are actually used in the corpus may be more rewarding.

To see if the increased frequency of the two terms coincides with changes in the use of certain linguistic patterns, the OEC material has been divided into two sub-sets, earlier (2012-14) and later (2015-16). The size of the two sub-sets is, approximately, 580 million and 160 million tokens respectively. Reference will at times be made to patterns found in the BNC, recognising that the corpora are very different in composition and not necessarily suitable for detailed comparisons.

Comparing use in the BNC and OEC

In the BNC, a large proportion of *MIGRANT*, especially the singular form, was used as a pre-modifier with the nouns *labour(ers)* and *worker(s)*. In the OEC, a similar pattern is found in the material from 2012-2014. Over half the instances of *MIGRANT* used to modify a noun are found with *worker* (1,200 instances), which makes it ten times as common as any other noun in this context. *Labour* and *labourer* are also found with *MIGRANT*, as are *boat*, *child*, *population* and *community*. There are only 16 instances of *migrant crisis*.

21. Researchers found migrant workers living in squalid, overcrowded accommodation (doc#3519964)

¹⁰ There is nothing to suggest that this is the case. Considering that the corpus is created for lexicographic work, it seems natural to assume there is an inclination to keep the various sub-sets comparable.

22. Indeed, one likely consequence would be to divert yet more jobs to unscrupulous firms employing migrant labour at rock-bottom wages. (doc#1895565)

Looking at the data from 2015-16, *migrant worker* and *migrant labour/er(s)* are still found, but the noun most frequently modified by *MIGRANT* is *crisis*. *Migrant crisis* occurs 685 times in the material from January 2015 to March 2016, compared to only 16 in the earlier, larger subset. There are no instances in the BNC. Taking into account the difference in corpus size, *migrant crisis* appears to be about 150 times more frequent in the later OEC material. Other differences between the 2012-4 and 2015-6 data is that *camp* and *benefit* are more frequent in the later material.

23. The migrant crisis in Europe has dominated headlines for much of 2015. (doc#2503725)
24. Cameron has been advised that some limits on migrant benefits may require changes to the EU 's treaties. (doc#3678241)

In the BNC, *REFUGEE* is found modifying the nouns *camp/s* and *child/ren*. These are also found in the OEC in both sub-sets. *Camp* is the most frequent noun in the earlier material, used more than four times as much as the next most frequent (*agency*). It is also frequent in the 2015-6 data, but not found as often as *refugee crisis*, which can be seen 938 times, compared to 137 occurrences in the larger 2012-14 set. Other words used with *REFUGEE*, in both sub-sets of the OEC, relate to the reception of refugees, such as *agency*, *status*, *centre*.

25. The Syrian refugee crisis escalates as some 100,000 refugee fled Syria, the highest monthly total since the hostilities started 17 months ago, U.N. figures reveal. (doc#1932600)

MIGRANT and *REFUGEE* are not only used as modifiers of nouns, but can also be modified themselves. Looking at the most frequent patterns, it seems obvious that the two words have different uses. *REFUGEE* is often found with words denoting someone's origin: *Syrian*, *Palestinian*, *Jewish*. Other modifying adjectives include *political*, *vulnerable*, and *genuine*. Although *MIGRANT* is also used with words referring to someone's origin, such as *African*, *European*, and *Romanian*, other frequent uses include terms relating to their status: *illegal*, *economic*,

skilled, temporary. A difference between the earlier and later OEC material is that in the 2015-16 material, both *REFUGEE* and *MIGRANT* is used frequently with the adjective *desperate*. *Many* and *more* are also found among the ten most frequent modifiers for both words in the newer material.

26. Protests have swelled among desperate migrants stranded for days in squalid tent camps (doc#3678433)

The British Prime Minister David Cameron has been heavily criticized for his use of language when referring to groups of migrants, using the phrases “a swarm of people” and “bunch of migrants” (see, for example, Elgot and Taylor 2015; Freedland 2016). Looking at what words are used for groups of refugees and migrants, we find that there are considerable similarities between *REFUGEE* and *MIGRANT*. Among the most common patterns are uses with seemingly neutral words like *number* and *group*. Other include words relating to movement of water: *flow, influx, wave, flood, and surge*. There are few instances where *bunch* or *swarm* are used, other than those that refer to the Prime Minister’s usage.

27. Greece struggles to cope with large flows of refugees driven to the European Union by war and (doc#3689596)
28. European countries have taken in waves of migrants fleeing violence. Germany allowed 20,000 (doc#3743191)
29. Asked if he considered the phrase "bunch of migrants" to be pejorative the spokesman said " (doc#7422058)

Where patterns including verbs are concerned, the BNC material suggests that refugees are found to *flee* and *arrive*, and they are *helped* or *returned*. There are no very frequent patterns including *MIGRANT*. In the OEC, frequencies are much higher overall so more co-occurrence patterns are found. Where *REFUGEE* is used as the object, many of the verbs can be seen to suggest that there is a willingness to assist and support refugees, such as *help, accept, welcome, and support*. The need for a home can also be seen, and problems finding somewhere to stay is expressed with verbs such as *resettle, house, relocate, accommodate, and host*.

30. But more than this, people are taking control. One speaker asked the crowd gathered outside the historic Sheldonian Theatre: 'How many of you are ready to welcome and help refugees here?' A sea of hands went up. (doc#3028450)
31. Spain said it was ready to accept as many refugees as the Commission proposes, reversing course after saying it was being asked to take too many. (doc#3624184)
32. Thousands have offered to house refugees in their own homes, signing up to an online (doc#7408738)

MIGRANT is found with verbs that may illustrate a divided attitude to migrants and how to receive them or not, for example *stop*, *allow*, *prevent*, *accept*, and *deter*. Other frequent verbs indicate that migrants, just like refugees, need help and support, for example *rescue* and *help*. There are but small differences between the earlier and later material where the use of the two words as objects is concerned.

Looking at *REFUGEE* and *MIGRANT* as subjects, some interesting patterns can be seen. Refugees *flee*, *live*, *face*, *cross*, *leave*, *seek* and *escape* - verbs that may be seen illustrative of the plight of people forced to leave their homes and seek a new existence. Where *MIGRANT* is concerned, many instances are used with verbs that mainly show that they move, such as *arrive*, *come*, *enter*, and *cross*. There are also examples of verbs that can be used to illustrate the difficult journey, such as *try*, *die*, *flee*, and *attempt*.

33. More than half a million migrants and refugees fleeing war and poverty in the Middle East (doc#3603608)
34. More than half a million migrants have entered the European Union this year (doc#3688134)

The range of verbs found with the two terms does not differ much between the sub-sets of the corpus; the main difference is in the frequency of occurrences, with a considerable increase in the frequency of constructions including *MIGRANT* and *REFUGEE* in the material from 2015-16.

Concluding remarks

As noted at the beginning of this paper, it has been suggested that there is a clear difference between the terms *REFUGEE* and *MIGRANT* (for example Edwards 2015). A *migrant* is someone who chooses to move in

order to find work or a better life, while a *refugee* is forced to move because of threat to life or freedom. A more detailed study of more examples would be needed to determine exactly how the two terms are used today, but the current overview suggests that this distinction is largely maintained. Phrases such as *migrant labour*, *economic migrant* match the idea that *MIGRANT* refers to people moving for work or in search of a different existence, while patterns including *REFUGEE* more often refer to someone who is fleeing or needing help. What is interesting to note, however, is that this distinction may have become slightly less evident recently, as the European Migrant Crisis becomes more pronounced and the focus is drawn to the difficulty and suffering of people on the move and the effect of the mass-movement on Europe. Further observation of developments is planned and it is believed that the future studies, made possible by the existence of the monitor corpus OEC, will cast a light not only on new developments but also on the factors that affect the use of the two terms today.

Corpus examples

The *British National Corpus* was accessed through the local installation of the BNCweb online interface (Hoffmann et al 2008) for the BNC XML corpus (Burnard 2007). Text references refer to text ID and sentence number (<http://www.natcorp.ox.ac.uk/docs/URG/bibliog.html>).

The *Oxford English Corpus* was accessed through the online service provided by Oxford University Press (access on application, see <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/media/words/assets/OEC-Proposal-Application.doc>). Examples from the OEC are given with a document reference, which is expanded here using the information provided in the corpus. The format is: document id : title of document, date, URL.

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A proposed method of clarifying the meaning of contentious political-cultural words: The case of *country* and *nation*

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Abstract

This article discusses how linguistic-combinatory methods can be used to add precision to our understanding of contentious words from the political-cultural field. Eleven English authors' use of the words *country* and *nation* has been investigated and the focus is placed on two authors who show an especially frequent use of *nation* relative to *country*, Shakespeare and Marie Corelli. It is shown that *nation* tends to select human negative-emotional lexical companions to a higher degree than *country*, and that this difference between the two words reflects their original etymological meanings. It is proposed that a more developed test design could be fruitfully used on a larger material.

Keywords: country, nation, nationality words, collocation, etymology, word frequency, Shakespeare, Marie Corelli

1. Preamble

Some ten years ago, I was invited by Solveig Granath and some of her colleagues to be a contributor to a festschrift in honour of Solveig's predecessor, Moira Linnarud, who was then about to retire. My contribution sought to explore how words derived from the names *Britain* and *England* were used by a selection of authors, from Shakespeare to Virginia Woolf (Mobärg 2005). Now I have had yet another invitation from Karlstad, the city of my youth, this time to be part of a festschrift project in honour of Solveig herself. Having the opportunity to celebrate Solveig is something I cherish very much, not least because we were undergraduates together in the friendly study atmosphere of Karlstad in the early 1970s.¹

¹ I would like to thank Professors Sölve Ohlander and Ronald Paul for valuable comments on earlier versions of this article. Any remaining shortcomings are mine alone.

2. The Present Study

This study will replicate some of the method of the previous one, but instead of focusing on specific nationality words, I shall try this time to shed some light on two more general words from the same semantic field, viz. *country* and *nation*, words which are sometimes used as synonyms or near-synonyms, sometimes with more specific and different meanings, as well as being highly contentious words in the current debate on globalisation and similar issues.² Therefore, apart from the two words in themselves, I also would like to explore certain methods in trying to pinpoint differences between contentious, closely related political-cultural words, methods that might be useful in elucidating some of the ideas associated with them.

3. Country and Nation: Etymology³

Both *country* and *nation* are Latin-based words which have entered into the English language via Norman French during medieval times, but whereas *nation* is a ubiquitous international loanword, *country* is far more restricted in its international dissemination and use. It originates from the Latin preposition *contra* ('opposite'), and its suffixed form *contrata* ('that which lies opposite'), and has cognate forms such as Old French *cuntree*, Old Occitan *encontrada*, Italian *contrada*. The typical early meaning appears to be 'the land, area or region that lies before us'. Interestingly, Middle High German has a corresponding word *gegende* (> Ger. *Gegend* 'area' etc.) from the preposition *gegen* ('against'), which is thought to be a calque of Old French *cuntree* or Medieval Latin *contrata* (cf. Duden.de: "Gegend").

The word *nation* has its origin in the Latin stem *nat-* (from *nasci* 'to be born') and the nominal suffix *-io(n)*. Early French forms include *nacion*, *nacioun*, *nation*. The prototypical early meaning appears to be 'people united by language/culture/lineage' etc.⁴

² For the contentiousness of *nation*, see e.g. Anderson (2006), a groundbreaking work which attaches great importance to language as a factor in "imagining" the existence of nations, but which, interestingly and somewhat surprisingly, does not discuss how the word is used.

³ Sections 3 and 4 are largely based on OED.

⁴ For a fuller treatment of the etymology of *nation*, see Kjellmer (1973:61f).

4. Country and Nation: Meanings

Both *country* and *nation* have multiple meanings, some of which are still current in present-day English, whereas some have become obsolete or relegated to certain varieties of the language. Here follow lists of some of the most central meanings according to OED:

Country

Land of one's birth, citizenship, residence; homeland (often preceded by a possessive pronoun: *my, our, their*, etc)⁵, e.g. "Richard's first duty was to his country..." (Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway*)

Land, terrain, region, e.g. "...torrential rain fell, laying whole tracts of country under water." (Corelli, *Innocent*)

Areas away from conurbations; rural areas (normally preceded by *the*), e.g. "...to be at least equally safe in town as in the country." (Austen, *Sense and Sensibility*)

The territory of a political state, e.g. "By this time the king of the country had notice of their arrival..." (Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*)

Nation

A people; a political state; people united by descent, language, culture, history, ethnicity, territoriality, etc., so as to form a distinct unit. Political statehood and territoriality do not always coincide with the meaning of *nation*.

It will be obvious that the original basic meanings of the two words, *country* and *nation*, where the former often refers to the physical territory – the *land*, to use a Germanic word (which might also have been investigated here), whereas the latter has more to do with the communality of people, are still intact in many

⁵ It is certainly true that *country* is often preceded by a possessive pronoun, but it may be more interesting to see to what extent the various possessive pronouns are used in this connection. Here are the number of occurrences in the British National Corpus (BNC; 100,000,000 words) of possessive pronoun + *country* in falling order: *his country* (586), *their country* (426), *our country* (363), *my country* (172), *your country* (133), *her country* (68). By comparison, *nation* occurs very rarely together with a possessive pronoun. *My nation*, for instance, does not occur at all in BNC. The only possessive pronoun to be used more often with *nation* than with *country* (corrected for *country* being six times as common as *nation* in BNC) is *our*, *our nation* having 91 occurrences. This suggests that *nation*, more than *country*, is a word that is typically used to emphasise the belonging-togetherness of the speaker/writer and their recipients.

cases; but also that the two words have come to influence one another, or overlap, so that in present-day English, they may sometimes be used synonymously, as in the title and content of Michael Porter's seminal book, *The Competitive Advantage of Nations* (Porter 1998), where the reference clearly is to 'political state'.⁶

5. Investigation

In this study, we shall, to begin with, see how often the words *country* and *nation* (including plural and genitive forms) are used in a selection of writings by eleven English authors who together cover most of the Early Modern and Modern English period up until the mid-twentieth century: William Shakespeare, Daniel Defoe, Jonathan Swift, Samuel Richardson, Jane Austen, the Brontë sisters, George Eliot, Marie Corelli, Virginia Woolf. The selection of authors is the same as in Mobärg (2005) and has been retrieved from the same database: the "Hyper-Concordance" of *The Victorian Literary Studies Archive* of Nagoya University.⁷ It goes without saying that this "corpus" cannot pretend to be statistically representative of 350 years of English language development, and so the analysis, while offering some crude quantitative information, will necessarily be quantitatively indicative at most.

5.1 Country and Nation: General Frequencies

Before looking into the corpus statistics, it should be noticed that while both words clearly belong to the central vocabulary of English, *country* is a more common word than *nation*. In the British National Corpus (BNC), *country* (the lemma) has a frequency of 521/m, which means that it is on a par with words such as *house*, *different*, *week*, taking the 193rd position

⁶ An interesting detail is that words ultimately derived from *nation*, such as *national*, *nationalism*, *nationality* often carry more specific, narrower, meanings than the word *nation* itself, *national* and *nationality* being mainly concerned with nation as political state, *nationalism* with culture, ethnicity etc.

⁷ <http://victorian.lang.nagoya-u.ac.jp/concordance/>. (The database is called "Victorian", but has greater coverage than that.) All texts by each respective author made available in the database have been used, totalling some 8,758,000 tokens, which does not necessarily mean the complete writings by the authors, but a very substantial selection. The database has been added to since my 2005 article, so the text coverage is marginally greater now than it was then, but the authors investigated are the same.

in the frequency ranking of English. *Nation*, on the other hand, has a frequency of 85/m, similar to e.g. *obvious* and *confirm*, holding position 1,192 in the same ranking.⁸ Thus, other things being equal, we should on average expect *country* to appear about six times as often as *nation* in English text. Notwithstanding the fact that BNC is based on relatively modern text material, whereas the present material is historical, BNC frequencies will be used as points of reference.

5.2 Quantitative Observations of the Corpus as a Whole

Table 1. Sample sizes, frequency of *country* and *nation* and *nation/country* quotient per author in the material

	<i>tot tokens</i>	<i>country</i> (freq/m)	<i>nation</i> (freq/m)	n/c
Shakespeare	890,063	172	43	0.25
Defoe	467,381	920	75	0.08
Swift	144,665	1,659	145	0.09
Richardson	652,609	93	15	0.16
Austen	834,828	283	10	0.04
Brontës ⁹	1,102,698	159	24	0.15
Eliot	1,740,411	206	21	0.10
Corelli	1,739,498	233	125	0.54
Woolf	1,186,086	257	16	0.06
BNC	100,000,000	521	85	0.16

As expected, all the authors use *country* more frequently than *nation*, but there is a great deal of variation between them. Swift is something of an outlier in having a particularly high frequency for *country*, 1,659/m, which is more than three times higher than the BNC frequency for that

⁸ Word frequency is in this article expressed per million words of running text. BNC frequencies and ranks have been retrieved from <http://www.kilgarriff.co.uk/BNClists/lemma.num> (access date 15 April 2015).

⁹ The Brontë sisters, Anne, Charlotte and Emily, have here been treated as one statistical unit. It is Charlotte who has the clearly greatest use of both *country* and *nation*. Her frequency of *country* is 108 (Anne: 33, Emily: 18) and all Brontë instances of *nation* are by her.

word. In fact, he is the only author in this selection who has a higher frequency for *country* than BNC. *Nation*, too, is especially frequent in the Swift texts, although not quite as much as *country*. This state of affairs could be attributed to *Gulliver's Travels*, which makes up almost the entire Swift sample. That book famously describes journeys to "several remote nations", which will naturally invite the abundant use of both *country* and *nation*. We also note that Austen's use of *nation* is remarkably small; in fact, in all but three of her texts, she does not use the word at all, which is a nice reflection of the fact that in literary texts, subject matter obviously affects the choice of words, Austen's textual microcosm very rarely touching on issues of nation.¹⁰

More interestingly, two authors, Shakespeare and Corelli, stand out from the rest in having a larger relative proportion of *nation* than expected. Shakespeare's use of *nation* in frequency terms is about a quarter of his use of *country*. But the clear top scorer in relative use of *nation* is Corelli, whose use of that word amounts to more than half of her use of *country*. The following discussion will therefore concentrate on these two authors.

5.3 Nation and Country in Shakespeare

5.3.1 Nation

Out of the total of 38 *nation* in the Shakespeare texts, more than half (20) come from four plays, *Henry V* (7), *Henry VI part 1* (5), *The Merchant of Venice* (4), and *Hamlet* (4). Almost all of the instances in *Henry V* come from one and the same exchange, where the stage Irish speaking Captain MacMorris famously exclaims:

What ish my nation? Ish a villain, and a basterd, and a knave, and a rascal. What ish my nation? Who talks of my nation? (Act III Sc. 2)

¹⁰ Austen's use of *country* also appears to consist predominantly of *country* = 'rural area'. Incidentally, one of Austen's few uses of *nation* refers very clearly to people, witness the use of a predicate verb in the plural: "...and it will, I believe, be everywhere found, that as the clergy are, or are not what they ought to be, so are the rest of the nation." (*Mansfield Park*). Cf. also Austen's scant use of words derived from *Britain* (Mobärg 2005:135f.)

This oft-quoted passage seems to place the concept of nation in a surprisingly modern (or post-modern) relativistic position which implicitly problematises nationality and nationalism (cf. Holderness 1991:86f.). On the other hand, it is not clear to what extent Irishness in Shakespeare's days – and in this quotation – was mainly considered a political-territorial matter, or an ethnic-linguistic one, i.e. whether *my nation* is here referring to 'my country' or 'my people'.¹¹ Also in *Henry V*, the Arch Bishop of Canterbury advises the king, saying that if we cannot defend our homeland, “[I]et us be worried, and our nation lose the name of hardiness and policy” (Act I Sc. 2), an indication of existing national traits, which might suggest the existence of 16th-century nationalism in England, something which has been proposed as well as contested by scholars for a long time (cf. Kumar 2003, ch. 5). In *Henry V*, there is also a reference to the “law of nature and of nations” (Act II Sc. 4), an expression which is mirrored in *Troilus and Cressida* (Act II Sc. 2). “Law of nations” was an expression which began to be used in the 16th century, forestalling the modern concept of international law (Hood Phillips 2005 [1972]:129), where *nation* must be understood as synonymous with *state*. In *Henry VI part 1*, all instances of *nation* represent the country personified as an agent or a human aggregate of some kind:

Nor should that nation boast it so with us (Act III, Sc. 3)
 a lordly nation (Act III Sc. 3)
 a fickle wavering nation [about France] (Act IV Sc. 1)
 Our nation's terror (Act IV Sc. 2)
 Betwixt our nation and the aspiring French (Act V Sc. 5)

This is in fact the case for about a third of Shakespeare's uses of *nation*. Here are examples from other plays:

an impudent nation (*All's Well that Ends Well*)
 The courtesy of nations (*As You Like It*)
 such a gentle nation (*The Comedy of Errors*)
 and the nation holds it to no sin to tarre them to controversy (*Hamlet*)
 This heavy-headed revel [...] Makes us traduc'd and tax'd of other nations
 (*Hamlet*)

¹¹ Henry VIII made himself King of Ireland in 1542, which was the starting-point of strongly increased English dominance over Ireland.

permit the curiosity of nations to deprive me (*King Lear*)
 O nation miserable! (*Macbeth*)
 O nation, that thou couldst remove! (*King John*)
 our tardy apish nation (*Richard II*)
 But it was always yet the trick of our English nation, if they [N.B plural pronoun]
 have a good thing, to make it too common. (*Henry IV* part 2 Act 1 Sc. 2)

The special use of *nation* which OED defines as “people having a single ethnic, tribal, or religious affiliation, but without a separate or politically independent territory” (OED *nation* 1.c), is duly represented in *The Merchant of Venice*, where all four instances of the word have this meaning, in particular the first three:

He hates our sacred nation (Act I Sc. 3)
 He [---] scorned my nation, thwarted my bargains (Act III Sc. 1)
 the curse never fell upon our nation till now (Act III Sc. 1)

These quotations are all from lines spoken by Shylock, “a rich Jew” according to the play’s *Dramatis Personae*, and indeed, OED has a special note mentioning that *nation* is “[f]req. used of the Jewish people in the Diaspora.” Other examples of the same use of the word, although not from Shakespeare, are e.g. “the Zulu Nation” (124,000 Google hits) and “the Navajo Nation” (453,000 Google hits). Compare also the quotation from *Henry V* above (“What ish my nation?”), which might carry some of that meaning.¹²

5.3.2 Country

The word *country* is predominantly used by Shakespeare in two senses, both fully productive even today: (1) ‘political state’, ‘homeland’; (2) ‘countryside’, ‘rural area’. Here are two examples of either use:

What country, friends, is this? (*Twelfth Night* Act I Sc. 2)
 Wit shall not go unrewarded while I am king of this country. (*The Tempest* Act IV Sc. 1)

¹² Even though *nation* is a ubiquitous international loanword, all potential meanings of the word need not be present in all languages using the word. This particular “ethnic” use of the word is listed by SAOB as obsolete in Swedish, the examples supplied being from the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries (SAOB *NATION* 1.c).

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Good husband, let us every one go home, And laugh this sport o'er by a country fire – Sir John and all. (*The Merry Wives of Windsor* Act V Sc. 5)

Those that are good manners at the court are as ridiculous in the country as the behaviour of the country is most mockable at the court. (*As You Like It* Act III Sc. 2)

Associated with the 'rural' category is also Hamlet's bawdy pun when teasing Ophelia while they are waiting for the play within the play to begin (*Hamlet* Act III Sc. 2).

Hamlet. Lady, shall I lie in your lap?

Ophelia. No, my lord.

Hamlet. I mean, my head upon your lap?

Ophelia. Ay, my lord.

Hamlet. Do you think I meant country matters?

Ophelia. I think nothing, my lord.

Here the double entendre in *country* refers both to rough country behaviour and to the female pudenda, "the one unfailing lodestar" among female sexual features in Shakespeare according to Partridge (1968:21, cf. also *ibid.* p. 87).

There are also cases in the Shakespeare material where *country* takes on a personalised function in a way similar to *nation*, but in no way as often and in as obvious a fashion:

... when it shall please my country to need my death (*Julius Caesar* Act III Sc. 2)

Bleed, bleed, poor country! (*Macbeth* Act IV Sc. 3)

... base lackey peasants, whom their o'er-cloyed country vomits forth ... (*Richard III* Act V Sc. 3)

A further meaning of *country*, 'land', 'terrain', 'region' (OED, cf. above), finds some limited representation in Shakespeare, e.g.

The undiscovered country, from whose bourn no traveller returns (*Hamlet* Act III Sc. 1)

5.4 Nation and Country in Corelli

Marie Corelli (pen name of Mary Mackay 1855–1924) is one of the now all but forgotten success stories of English literature. Her literary career

coincided with the peak period of the British Empire, when she outsold most other novelists, only to be left in oblivion by posterity.¹³

5.4.1 Investigating the Corelli Sample

The Corelli sample is one of the biggest in this investigation, numbering well over 1.7 million words. In addition, as noted, Corelli stands out as the clearly most lavish user of *nation*, relative to *country*, in the present material. It is therefore of particular interest to try and see what semantic (or stylistic; or rhetorical) needs are fulfilled by these two words, respectively, which might help to explain the author's choice.

One way of doing that is to apply a contextual-collocational approach to the two words, i.e. to know them by the company they keep, to paraphrase Firth.¹⁴ We have already seen that in terms of dictionary definitions, *country* and *nation* can sometimes be used as near-synonyms, but often they have meanings which refer back to their etymological origins; *country* is a more concrete word, which can represent the land, the countryside, and the terrain, as well as the political state, whereas *nation* is typically associated with some kind of human communality.

The method I propose, and will be testing on the Corelli sample, is to investigate how *country* and *nation* (including inflected forms), behave in the following contextual-semantic roles/situations:

- (1) What *country/nation* 'is', i.e., what adjectival modifiers, etc., the word is used together with, e.g. 'a strong country'; 'the country is strong' etc. Reporting results, I will call this category 'descriptive'.
- (2) What *country/nation* can 'do', i.e. what predicate verb the word is used together with when it is 'agentive', most typically as subject, e.g. 'the nation accepts...'

¹³ For substantial information about the life and works of Marie Corelli, see e.g. Ransom (1999).

¹⁴ Referring to Firth does not imply that I am subscribing to his semantics, that the meaning of a word is determined by its "company", but rather that its company may add stylistic, rhetorical, ideological, etc., nuances to our understanding of the word, which may secondarily rub off onto the word itself.

- (3) What you can ‘do to’ *country/nation*, i.e. what verb is used with *country/nation* when the latter is ‘patientive’, most typically as direct object, e.g. ‘to love one’s country’.¹⁵

Henceforth, I will use the expression ‘companion’ as a common term for whatever word co-functions with *country/nation* in these three ways, thus avoiding the term ‘collocate’, which may carry too many implications of prefabricated or fixed expressions to suit my purpose. The syntactic relationships that make up these co-functions may vary; a nominalisation like ‘her love for her country’ would here count for the same as ‘she loves her country’. In the same vein, a genitive construction such as ‘a country’s honour’ will here be equated with ‘the country has/shows/displays honour’.¹⁶ The identified companions will then be classified according to whether they have a predominantly positive, negative or neutral meaning (e.g. ‘support’ [pos.]; ‘enslave’ [neg.] ‘do sth to’ [neut.]).

In addition, it will also be investigated whether the companions of *country/nation* are prototypically ‘human’ (e.g. ‘astonished’) or ‘non-human’ (e.g. ‘decaying’). In a few cases it will not be possible to make that distinction and so a neutral category will be used wherever necessary (e.g. ‘known’).

It goes without saying that there is an element of uncertainty and subjectivity in making these kinds of distinctions, but in view of the fact that this is merely an explorative investigation partly set up to test a way of approaching the meaning of contentious words, we need go no further into technical detail in the present context.

5.4.2 *The Corelli Sample: Results*

5.4.2.1 *Overall Quantities*

Table 2 shows those particular instances of *country* and *nation* which occur with descriptive, agentive and patientive companions according to the method presented above. Thus, we see that even though Corelli in her

¹⁵ Cf. Quirk et al. (1985:741), who use the term “affected” rather than “patientive”.

¹⁶ This is the analysis chosen, but it is of course not self-evident. ‘A country’s honour’ could also be seen as semantically deriving from/related to ‘an honourable country’, which would be a descriptive companion in the terminology used here.

total sample uses *country* almost twice as often as *nation* (rightmost column), the present method elicits a much larger share of her *nation* than of her *country*: As much as two-thirds of her total *nation* surfaces in this investigation, compared to less than a fifth of her total *country*. There appears to be a particularly strong tendency in Corelli's texts for *nation*, relative to *country*, to 'do' things; a strong, but less so, tendency for *nation* to 'have something done to it', again relative to *country*; whereas the two words are equal in number of descriptive companionships (adjective modifiers etc.).

Table 2. Number of occurrences of *country* and *nation* per category of companionship in the Corelli sample. Number of occurrences unique to either *country* or *nation* in brackets. For comparison, the total number (tokens) of *country* and *nation* in the Corelli sample is given far right.

	<i>Descriptive</i>	<i>Agentive</i>	<i>Patientive</i>	<i>Total D/A/P</i>	<i>Corelli tot</i>
<i>Country</i>	32 (30)	24 (21)	20 (16)	76 (67)	405
<i>Nation</i>	32 (30)	67 (64)	45 (41)	144 (135)	217

5.4.2.2 Country/Nation Overlapping

In only a few cases do *country* and *nation* share the same companions. Here is the full list:

Descriptive: *strong, worthless*

Agentive: *accept, fight, vote*

Patientive: *destroy, love, put something to, rule (over)*

These overlapping words, interesting as they may be, will be disregarded in the following discussion as our main interest is to trace combinatory differences, rather than similarities, between *country* and *nation*. Thus, it is the numbers in brackets in Table 2, i.e. companions unique to either *country* or *nation*, that form the basis of the following discussion.

It would take up too much space to list all words relevant to the following sections. Instead I will concentrate on the main tendencies, while offering a few illuminating examples.

5.4.2.3 Descriptive: Companions Unique to Country

There are 30 instances in all in the Corelli sample of the “descriptive” type *country* used uniquely (multiple instances only counted once here and throughout). The largest homogeneous group ($\approx 40\%$) concerns *country* as ‘land’, ‘terrain’, where among the companions used we find *far-off*, *green*, *tropical* and *undiscovered*.

About a third of the descriptive companions are positive, e.g. *civilized*, *healthy*, *prosperous*. Less than a handful are negative: *cheerless*, *inglorious*, [subject to] *curse* making up the full list. There are also a few companions that defy the positive/negative classification, e.g. *old*.

As could be expected, “non-human” companions tend to coincide with *country* as ‘land’, ‘terrain’, even if some such companions could have a secondary meaning that is potentially human, e.g. *fair*, *sweet*. There are altogether nine companions that have been marked as “human”, most of which are positive (e.g. *at peace*, *healthy*); only a couple are negative (e.g. *cheerless*) or unclassifiable.

5.4.2.4 Descriptive: Companions Unique to Nation

By coincidence, Corelli’s unique use of *nation* with “descriptive” companions amounts to the same number of instances as for *country*: 30. With *nation* we do not need to consider a physical sense of the word (‘land’, ‘terrain’), since such a meaning has never been available for that word. On the other hand, there are a couple of examples of a very special type of companion to go with *nation*: nationality adjectives (*American*, *French*). Such words would not easily collocate with *country*, other than in phrases including the “rural” sense of the word (*French country cooking*). In other words, a country as a whole does not have a nationality, but a nation does – a good reflection of a case where the original distinction between place and people is maintained.

The clearest tendency to come out here is that the majority of the unique descriptive companions of *nation* are human (e.g. *astonished*, *dying*, *hypocritical*, even *unmusical*), whereas only a couple of them are non-human (e.g. *decaying*). About a third of the companions cannot be classified according to human/non-human (e.g. *known*).

Unlike the situation for *country* above, where positive companions were more numerous than negative ones, it is somewhat more common

($\approx 40\%$) for *nation* to take negative descriptive companions (e.g. *degenerate, as frightened children*), but there are also several cases ($\approx 30\%$) with positive companions (*friendly, happy*).

Comparing Corelli's *country* and *nation*, therefore, appears to suggest that *nation*, more than *country*, invites negative descriptive companions, whereas the two words appear to be more similar in attracting positive companions.

5.4.2.5 Agentive: Companions Unique to Country

Out of the 21 combinations where *country* is uniquely used agentively (typically as subject), two-thirds take human companions (e.g. *claim, go mad over something, breathe freely*) and one-third non-human ones (e.g. *remain*). Over half take positive companions (e.g. *get on without, have honour, wish*) and only very few take negative ones (e.g. *abuse*). Just under a third cannot be judged by positive-negative (e.g. *find*).

5.4.2.6 Agentive: Companions Unique to Nation

As already noted, agentive *nation* in Corelli is three times as common as agentive *country*. This circumstance in itself is probably the most important finding: *nation* appears to be a clearly more natural choice than *country* when it comes to “doing” things. Furthermore, unique companions to agentive *nation* are overwhelmingly human ($\approx 85\%$; e.g. *love, praise, shudder*). On the other hand, even though there is a certain majority ($\approx 40\%$) for positive companions with agentive *nation* (e.g. *bless, have/show heart and soul, revere*) compared to negative companions ($\approx 30\%$; e.g. *decay, hate*) the majority is clearly less marked than was the case for *country*.

5.4.2.7 Patientive: Companions Unique to Country

There are 16 unique cases in Corelli where *country* is patientive. All but one have human companions (e.g. *be true to, love, save*). Positive companions (like the ones just mentioned) are somewhat more common ($\approx 50\%$) than negative ones ($\approx 35\%$; e.g. *betray, enslave*).

5.4.2.8 Patientive: Companions Unique to Nation

Overall figures (Table 2) show that not only does *nation* seem to be a more attractive choice than *country* for “doing things”, but also for “having things done to it”, even though the difference is less extreme in the patientive context. On the other hand, unlike the situation for *country*, there is a clear dominance of negative companions with patientive *nation* ($\approx 50\%$; e.g. *cripple*, *exterminate*, *put in peril*), the remaining cases being shared equally between positive companions ($\approx 25\%$; e.g. *bless*, *rely on*) and such as could not be classified for positive/negative ($\approx 25\%$; e.g. *manage*, *return to*). Human companions outnumber non-human ones by nine to one.

5.4.3 Final Remarks

A breakdown of these findings would suggest the following:

- (1) When *country* is used with a descriptive companion, it is predominantly the “rural” meaning of the word that we find, as in the example, “... who has never visited wide-spreading country, over-canopied by large stretches of spreading open sky”, where furthermore the companion is practically always, and expectedly so, non-human;
- (2) A descriptive companion together with *nation* is most likely human, and there is a tendency for it to be negative, a typical example being, “... England is running a neck and neck race with other less hypocritical nations in pursuit of social vice”;
- (3) When used agentively (typically as subject), the main tendency for both *country* and *nation* seems to be to combine with human and positive companions, but that human companions are far more common with *nation*, e.g. “A veritable queen, to whom nations shall pay homage”;
- (4) When used patientively (typically as direct object), there is a strong tendency for both *country* and *nation* to combine with human companions, but the most conspicuous finding is the strong dominance of negative companions with *nation*, e.g. “No need to exterminate nations with your destructive stuff”.

This in turn suggests that *nation*, more than *country*, does maintain more of a human-related quality of meaning, but also that it might have a greater emotional potential than *country* in inviting negative companions. In any case, the method employed would seem to constitute a feasible way of investigating the relative meaning of contentious political-cultural words with related meanings, to the benefit of enhanced semantic

precision in general, and, from a practical perspective, lexicographical work. Including further words from the semantic field studied here, e.g. *state, land, realm, dominion*, maybe *kingdom*, etc., expanding the corpus of study, and refining the criteria for co-functioning as well as the semantic classification would seem to be useful ways forward.

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‘You’re absolutely welcome, thanks for the ear’: The use of *absolutely* in American soap operas

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Abstract

The aim of the paper is to discuss the syntax and uses of *absolutely* in recent American soap operas. It is shown that *absolutely* can be used both as an intensifier and with an emphasising meaning where it has scope over the entire clause. *Absolutely* was also found as a stand-alone marker with the function to respond to *yes-no* questions and to speech acts such as requests and thanking.

Keywords: *Absolutely*, soap opera, American English, intensification, emphasis, response marker

1. Introduction

Intensifiers are typically adverbs such as *very*, *really* and *so* which convey a degree of a property on a scale (e.g., Paradis 1997, 2001). They have received a great deal of attention because of their flexibility and tendency for rapid change associated with semantic and pragmatic developments (e.g., Ito and Tagliamonte 2003, Tagliamonte and Roberts 2005). Intensifiers do not only express degrees of a property but can also be used to indicate different degrees of what Labov calls ‘intensity’ (Labov 1984). According to Labov, ‘intensity operates on a scale centered about the zero, or unmarked expression with both positive (aggravated or intensified) and negative (mitigated or minimized) poles (Labov 1984: 44).

The aim of this study is to discuss the syntax and uses of *absolutely* in present-day spoken American English. *Absolutely* seems to be a typical intensifier expressing a high degree of emotion on a scale. However, *absolutely* can also modify the whole sentence with an emphasising function. Moreover, it can be a stand-alone marker, pointing backwards in the discourse, with the function of agreement:

J.R: Remember when you taught me how to use this?

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Tad: Absolutely. I had to pull your video game out of the wall to do it.
(*Corpus of American Soap Operas*)

The analysis of *absolutely* in this paper will be both quantitative and qualitative. The aim of the quantitative analysis is to investigate the frequencies of the different patterns with *absolutely*. The qualitative analysis will be concerned with the formal and functional properties of *absolutely* as a degree intensifier and an emphatic discourse marker.

The assumption is that uses where *absolutely* is associated with epistemic modality and discourse function have become more frequent as a result of an increase in subjectivity. Developments in the uses of intensifiers have generally been difficult to study because of the absence of up-to-date corpora of spoken language. For this study I have therefore used conversational data from American soap operas. Although initially scripted, the dialogue in the soap operas can be assumed to give a good representation of ‘relaxed informal style’ where changes are initiated and spread to new contexts.

The article is structured as follows. I will first discuss the intensifier *absolutely* on the basis of how it has been analysed in previous work (Section 2). This will be followed by a description of the material and a rationale for using soap operas to study spoken phenomena (Section 3). Section 4 contains the quantitative analysis on the basis of *The Corpus of American Soap Operas*. In the qualitative analysis (Sections 5–7), I will discuss the functions of *absolutely* both as an intensifier of adjectives (and other single elements) and as an emphasiser expressing the speaker’s subjective involvement and commitment. Section 8 contains the conclusion.

2. *The intensifier absolutely*

In its traditional use, *absolutely* is referred to as a maximizer operating on certain lexical elements ‘to express degrees of increasing intensification upwards from an assumed norm’ (Quirk et al 1985: 445). The intensifying use is illustrated in:

What it’s like when it’s just Liam and me, and it is absolutely amazing. (*Corpus of American Soap Operas*)

Elements having the effect of intensifying adjectives or other words are also subjective, that is they mark the speaker's attitudes, view-points and emotions (Claridge 2011: 74). Subjectivity is associated with the aims and goals of the interaction. The speaker can, for example, choose to 'become more subjective.' As a result, *absolutely* can lose its meaning as a degree-modifying adverb and be used from the speaker's perspective to express the extent of his/her involvement with what is said. The 'new' function depends on what it collocates with, its position in the clause or the larger discourse and the genre.

The relation between intensification and emphasis has also been studied by Carretero (2010). Carretero (2010) analysed developments of *absolutely* and its Spanish cognate *absolutamente* characterised by the widening of scope to the clause or 'parts of minor clauses' (*absolutely* as an independent or free-standing element). When *absolutely* (or *absolutamente*) modified the whole clause it had discourse functions associated with an increase in subjectivity and assertiveness. The discourse functions are similar to those of adverbs of certainty:

the meaning differences between 'absolutely' and adverbs of certainty are perceivable when the degree adverbs have smaller scope and modify (part of) the proposition, but tend to be blurred when "absolutely" is used, above all, to perform discourse functions associated with assertiveness. (Carretero 2010: 219)

Since Carretero has studied *absolutely* in the (spoken part) of the British National corpus it will be possible to compare *absolutely* in soap operas with its use in informal conversation.

3. Material

The spoken corpora we have are getting increasingly outdated for the study of linguistic phenomena such as intensifiers. In order to get a better view of today's linguistic reality I have chosen to use *The Corpus of American Soap Operas* (Davies 2012). The corpus consists of 100 million words from ten different soap operas collected between 2001 and 2012. Soap opera can be regarded as a genre of its own associated with specific situational characteristics. For example, the dialogues are scripted and the shows are directed to a broad audience who watch the soap because they want to be entertained. The genre is closely associated with high emotions and melodrama and speakers use an emotionally-

loaded language. However, the dialogues also share certain features with face-to-face conversation such as informality, topic, and face-to-face contact. Given the popularity of the genre, we can expect the dialogues to capture the style of speakers using using a conversational type of American English (cf. Tagliamonte and Roberts 2005, Quaglio 2009).

The three soap operas used in the present study are ‘All My Children’ (AMC), ‘Bold and Beautiful’ (BB), and ‘Days of our Lives’ (Days).

4. Frequency and distribution of *absolutely* in the corpus

In order to study the functions of *absolutely* I selected 300 examples for a quantitative and qualitative study (200 examples representing the two soap operas from 2011 (AMC and BB) and 100 examples from the soap opera from 2012 (Days)). The examples were collected from the beginning of the soaps. Table 1 shows the frequency of *absolutely* in the material (frequency per million words):

Table 1. Frequency of *absolutely* in three sub-corpora in The Corpus of American Soap Operas

Soap Opera	Corpus size	Freq per mil
All My Children, 2011	857,417	233
Bold and Beautiful, 2011	574,282	348
Days of Our Lives, 2012	600,322	166
Total	2,032,021	246

Absolutely is used with different frequencies in the three sub-corpora. It is, for example, more than twice as frequent in ‘Bold and Beautiful’ as in ‘Days of Our Lives’. However, we can assume that the differences would have been smaller if the situations described in the three corpora had been the same.

The examples of *absolutely* can be grouped according to whether *absolutely* modifies a lexical expression or a clause, or whether it is used as a stand-alone marker (see Table 2).

The prototypical use of *absolutely* as an intensifier is as a modifier of an adjective. This pattern constitutes nearly a third of the examples. However, *absolutely* can modify many other elements, in particular verbs, pronouns and determiners.

Table 2. The distribution of *absolutely* in different syntactic contexts, in absolute frequencies and as percentages

Syntactic context	N	%
<i>Modifier of lexical expression</i>		
Adjective	81	27.0
Verb	14	5.6
Modal auxiliary	6	2.0
Noun	4	1.3
Pronoun	24	8.0
Determiner	14	4.7
<i>Modifier of clause</i>		
Clause	6	2.0
Other ¹	5	4.3
<i>Sub-total</i>	162	54.0
<i>Stand-alone</i>	138	46.0
Total	300	100.0

As shown in the table, 46% of the examples of *absolutely* are independent items. This means that stand-alone *absolutely* is more frequent than has been shown in earlier studies. Carretero (2010: 204) found that *absolutely* was an independent item in 20% of the examples in the spoken component of the British National Corpus, while Tao (2007: 11) observed that ‘at 35 percent, the independent uses are substantial’ on the basis of data representing several corpora of spoken American English. The differences in frequency can be seen as evidence of the influence of the genre. For example, Quaglio (2009:92) found that intensifiers (with the exception of *very*) were more frequent in the American television show ‘Friends’ than in a comparable corpus of American face-to-face conversation.

5. The meanings of *absolutely* in American soaps

Absolutely is used in the data both as an intensifier and in emphasising functions to express stronger subjectivity.

¹ In these examples it was difficult to decide what *absolutely* modified.

212). Example (2) would represent a correct example of *absolutely* since *love* is hyperbolic:

2. Jane: Oh, I'd love that. Absolutely love that—right after the news conference.
(AMC 2011)

Absolutely pale heightens the emotional effect of the simple 'they'll pale':

3. Opal: So when is the fantabulous nuptial date?
Erica: May 14, at the Shorewood Gardens.
Opal: Perfect. That's perfect! The Gardens, May 14. The lilacs will be in their full glory. But they'll pale. They'll absolutely pale next to you, the gorgeous bride!
(AMC 2011)

In example (4), *absolutely* can be interpreted as maximizing the semantic features of the metaphoric expression *ripped your heart out* ('to make someone very sad'):

4. Liza: Jesse, saying good-bye to Lucy must have absolutely ripped your heart out.
Jesse: Well, the only thing harder was saying good-bye to Ellie. "And whose fault is that?" I'm sure you're thinking.
(AMC 2011)

However, in example (5), *absolutely* is used 'incorrectly' before a verb such as *promise* which is not part of a scale and therefore 'not eligible for' a hyperbolic interpretation (cf. Claridge 2011: 33). *Absolutely* has the function to emphasise the speaker's commitment.

5. Jake: I understand. I know. Everything's gonna be ok. I promise you.
Amanda: Promise?
Jake: I absolutely promise.
(AMC 2011)

The example illustrates what Carretero (2010: 219) refers to as the 'blurred' meaning of *absolutely*. *Absolutely* is used with assertive or emphatic meaning (just like *certainly* or *definitely*) rather than to express a degree of a property. It performs different discourse strategies in the interaction.

In (6), the speaker uses *absolutely* rhetorically in a concessive environment. *Certainly* or *definitely* would be a close synonym but they would be less strong and express less involvement. The speaker takes up a position agreeing to a view-point attributed to the hearer ('I absolutely understand') in order to contrast it with her personal opinion ('but let me just say that I think...'). The situation described is that Sami and Kate haven't got along in the past but now they want to put that behind them:

6. Sami: Okay. Look, it's fine. I mean, obviously we have a history. It's just that we're working together now and I sort of thought we were past all that, that we had trust between us.
- Kate: Totally. And I absolutely understand your suspicions, but let me just say that I think my actions should speak louder than my words here. I mean, I did hire you. And after I hired you, I continued to give you more and more important projects, and obviously, at the very least, I trust you, Sami.
(Days 2012)

In (7), the speaker brings up the idea that Katie and Bill should go to the therapist in order to reject it (they shouldn't go because the speaker's daughter has interfered in the proposed marriage between Bill and Katie). *Absolutely* emphasises the speaker's view-point (also expressed by 'I think'):

7. Nick: Katie, whatever Storm did had nothing to do with you.
- Katie: Well, I think we were all in denial about how serious the situation was, and I don't want that to happen again. That's why I think Bill and I need to work through this together with a therapist.
- Taylor: Oh, I agree. I-I absolutely think that you should. But ... it's just that my daughter has interfered in your marriage in the past, and I haven't exactly had the best relationship with your sister Brooke.
(BB 2011)

In (8), Madison is not sure if he should accept the top position he has been offered. *Absolutely* does not only mean emphasis but also suggests that the speaker is aware of other viewpoints. The hearer (Brady) rather than the speaker expresses a contradictory view-point in the *but*-clause:

8. Brady: So, are you any closer to accepting the top dog position at Titan, or what?

- Madison: Victor's really been pressing me about it, but—
 Brady: Of course he has.
 Madison: Look, part of me thinks I should absolutely take it, and I would be crazy not to.
 Brady: But... being the CEO of Titan means giving up day-to-day control of Mad World, and that's tough for you to do.
 Madison: Short of cloning myself, I can't think of anyone I would let run my company
 (Days 2012)

The modal auxiliaries which are emphasised by *absolutely* are *have to*, *must*, *will* and *would*. Example (9) illustrates the use of *absolutely* emphasising obligation:

9. Erica: Jack and I have agreed that we don't care about superstition. And we just don't want to be apart for any longer than we absolutely have to.
 (AMC 2011)

The examples given seem to suggest that *absolutely* can be used in two distinct ways. In the 'correct' use it is found with verbs signalling an 'extreme' quality. However it is also used in a different way where *absolutely* is more closely associated with the illocutionary force of the sentence. In concessive contexts it was typically used to take up a position (*I understand, I think, I take it*) which is turned down in a following *but*-clause. With a modal auxiliary the emphasising use is the only possible alternative.

5.3 Absolutely *modifying a noun*

Absolutely modifying a noun was used as a discourse strategy with concessive meaning in the soaps. In (10), *absolutely* emphasises that something is a (huge) surprise. *But* in the following clause is concessive, that is, it claims the opposite of what has been said in the first clause.

10. Ryan: OK, can you stop acting like this is horrible news for me, ok? It's a huge surprise, absolutely a surprise, but this is not something I need to be lied to about. It really isn't. You just gotta be honest with me, all right.
 (AMC 2011)

5.4 Absolutely *modifying a pronoun or determiner*

Absolutely modifying a pronoun or determiner is found mainly in negative contexts. The pronoun most frequently used with *absolutely* is *nothing* (16 instances). *Absolutely nothing* can be regarded as a rather conventional way of exaggerating. The same tendency to use *absolutely* in negative contexts has been noted by Carretero for Spanish *absolutamente* and for *absolutely* in the (spoken and written) BNC (Carretero 2010: 208). This is illustrated in example (11):

11. Marissa: Talk about what?
Annie: Me and J.R. There's absolutely nothing going on between us. I was devastated when my marriage to Scott ended.
(AMC 2011)

Compare also the following 'extreme formulation' with *absolutely* and a negative determiner:

12. Lexie: Every time I think you can't sink any lower, you find yet a deeper cesspool to swim in.
EJ: Alexandra, I have absolutely no idea what you're talking about.
(Days 2012)

5.5 Absolutely *modifying the whole clause*

In (13) and (14), initial position signals that *absolutely* modifies the whole clause. However, *absolutely* is still integrated in the proposition. *Absolutely* correlates with discourse strategies and an increase of subjectivity (cf. Carretero 2010: 213). In (13), *but* in the following clause has concessive or adversative meaning. The speaker first emphasises what she is going to do but then takes up an opposing point of view:

13. Krystal: Yeah, but what about Kathy? I mean, don't you want to spend every second of every day with her?
Dixie: I do. Absolutely I do. But I have to take this situation with Cara seriously. Her life is in danger.
(AMC 2011)

In (14), *actually* in the following clause introduces an opposing point of view:

14. Greenlee: So you're sticking around this time?
 Kendall: Yes. Absolutely I am, and I'm ready to go. Actually, I have a few new ideas for a campaign to offset the whole toxic blush and lipstick nightmare.
 (AMC 2011)

Absolutely is flexible with regard to its position. In (15), *absolutely* is followed by the verb phrase 'gonna keep this baby' which is difficult to interpret as intensifiable. *Absolutely*, like *of course*, emphasises the strength of the illocutionary act (a decision or intention by the speaker to do something). The second occurrence of *absolutely* is found in clause-initial position which indicates that it modifies the whole clause. *Absolutely* is used in a negative context to express refusal to do something:

15. Griffin: And David's the father. You're gonna keep it?
 Cara: Of course. I'm absolutely gonna keep this baby.
 Griffin: Cara, you need to think about this.
 Cara: I've been thinking about it. Since I was 8, I've been thinking about this. This is like a dream of mine, to become a mother. Griff, I didn't think this was gonna happen, and it has. I'm not giving this—absolutely, I am not gonna give this baby up. I can't.
 Griffin: Ok. Ok.
 (AMC 2011)

In (16), *absolutely* is used emphatically by Tad to convince Cara that 'the future bride' had to accept his proposal of marriage. The following clause ('I was irresistible back in those days') introduces an additional argument why she had to accept the proposal.

16. Cara: Ok, so you actually proposed to her in a chicken suit?
 Tad: Oh. You heard about that one, did you?
 Cara: I did.
 Tad: Eh, guilty as charged. But I was a lot younger then, so—
 Cara: And of course, she accepted?
 Tad: Oh, she had to. Absolutely. I was irresistible back in the day. But all our memories aren't that nice.
 (AMC 2011)

In example (17), *absolutely* in the answer to the judge's question emphasises that the couple are 'all set in heart and mind' to get married:

17. Judge: Are we all set?
 Tad: In heart and mind, absolutely. Unfortunately, my bride is running a little late.
 Krystal: Yeah, but she's gonna be here any second now.
 (AMC 2011)

In the rest of the article I will deal with examples where *absolutely* has developed discourse functions and is used as an independent discourse item.

6. Stand-alone *absolutely* with discourse functions

When *absolutely* occurs alone, it has lost its intensifying or degree-modifying meaning and is used with discourse functions. The free-standing *absolutely* is a 'response item' reacting in a positive way to the preceding utterance (McCarthy 2003: 36). Response items have in common with intensifiers that they are 'subject to fashion' (Peters 1994, Tagliamonte and Roberts 2005: 281). *Absolutely* is chosen rather than a different response item because it is 'new' and can express more of the speaker's attitude and emotion. Free-standing *absolutely* performs a number of discourse functions which are summarised in Table 3.

Table 3. Discourse functions of the free-standing *absolutely* in the three sub-corpora, in absolute frequencies and as percentages

Discourse function	N	%
Responding to a request for agreement	51	37
Responding positively to an information question	43	31
Responding positively to a request	11	8
Emphatic disagreement or rejection (<i>absolutely not</i>)	25	18
Responding positively to an act of thanking	5	4
<i>Absolutely</i> as part of a ritual ending the conversation	3	2
Total	138	100

Let us look at some examples of how *absolutely* is used to point backwards in the context:

Responding to a request for agreement

A frequent meaning of stand-alone *absolutely* is agreement. Erica agrees with the previous speaker (Opal) that the last marriage is the one leading to ‘happily ever after’:

18. Opal: It has to be that kind of wedding! Are you kidding? This is the last one, the last marriage, the one that leads straight to happily ever after. Right?
Erica: Absolutely.
(AMC 2011)

Responding positively to an information question

In (19), *absolutely* marks the emphatic and enthusiastic positive answer to a *yes–no* question:

19. Angie: Does she have Jesse’s long, dark eyelashes?
Frankie: Oh, yes. Absolutely.
(AMC 2011)

The stand-alone *absolutely* combines with (other) discourse markers such as *oh, right, yeah, yes, no* and *of course* reinforcing the positive response. It also co-occurs with vocatives (*oh, honey, absolutely; absolutely, babe*) and it can be repeated for more emphasis (*absolutely, absolutely*).

Responding positively to a request

Absolutely is found in the answer to a request in which the speaker asks to talk to someone:

20. Stephanie: I am. I... well, I don’t want to be rude, but, Owen, could I just talk to Jackie for a moment alone?
Owen: Yeah, absolutely.
(BB 2011)

Oh absolutely (of course) expresses more emphasis than the simple *absolutely*:

21. Sami: EJ, I need to talk to my son. Can you please just give us a minute?
EJ: Oh, absolutely. Of course.
(Days 2012)

Emphatic disagreement or rejection

Speakers use *absolutely not* (*absolutely no way*) to signal rejection of a preceding request and to disagree with the hearer. In example (22), Bianca says that she can get a babysitter for the children and that Marissa therefore does not have to babysit. This offer is emphatically rejected by Marissa's *absolutely not*:

22. Bianca: You don't have to be the babysitter. If I was here by myself, I would get a sitter to watch them. I can still do that.
Marissa: Absolutely not. It's the least I can do after inviting myself along.
(AMC 2011)

Responding positively to an act of thanking

Absolutely (unlike *certainly* or *definitely*) can constitute the response part in a thanking exchange at the end of a conversation:

23. Carrie: Well, I hope everything works out for you, Abigail.
Abigail: Thanks. Me too. And thank you for letting me talk to you about it. It really helps.
Carrie: Absolutely. Sorry we have to run, but if you want to continue talking at some point, let me know.
Abigail: Yeah, I'll definitely take you up on that.
(Days 2012)

Thanking can be part of a ritual exchange where the interactants make preparations to leave the conversational floor. In (24), the two speakers work hard at closing the conversation ('thank you' – 'thanks for sharing that' – 'thanks for having me' – 'absolutely'):

24. Jack: Okay. Yeah.
Paco: I feel you. You'll be all right.
Jack: Oh, yeah. You too, Paco. Yeah. Yeah.
Rob: It'll be okay, brother.
Jack: Thank you. Yeah, yeah.
Pat: Good luck.
Jack: Thank you.
Leslie: Thanks for sharing that.
Jack: Thank you. Thanks for having me.
Leslie: Absolutely. I'm so proud of you. Hang in there. See you again.
(Days 2012)

In example (25), ‘Thank you for your time’ signals that the speaker wants to end the conversation. *Absolutely* is both a response to thanking and a closing signal:

25. Mrs Johnson: Well, we should get out of your way. Thank you for your time.
Hope: Okay. No, absolutely. I-it was my pleasure, seriously. I mean, talking to you really reinforces what this line is about.
(BB 2011)

Absolutely as part of a ritual to end the conversation

Absolutely can be part of a little farewell ritual at the end of the conversation. In example (26), Erica confirms that the speakers will be in touch (‘we’ll be in touch’ – ‘absolutely’). After this the conversation can end (‘bye’):

26. Liza: It doesn’t matter what I think. You obviously needed to express yourself.
Colby: Well, I have things to do, but, Erica, we’ll be in touch.
Erica: Absolutely. I’m looking forward to it.
Colby: Thank you. Bye.
Erica: Bye.
(AMC 2011)

Jack’s ‘if you’ll excuse us’ signals to the hearer that he wants to end the conversation:

27. Jack: If I have any questions, I’ll ask Erica. Now, if you’ll excuse us.
David: Absolutely. But before I go, I just want to assure you this partnership is a good thing. It’s a very good thing, hugely beneficial for everyone involved. Isn’t that right, Erica?
(AMC 2011)

In sum, *absolutely* as an independent item has lost the intensifying meaning and developed functions many of which are characteristic of epistemic adverbs. According to Tao (2007: 26), it is typical of many corpus-based studies ‘that *absolutely* is commonly compared with its so-called synonyms such as *completely* and *entirely*, ignoring other lexical items such as *definitely* and *certainly*’. The intensifier has developed

discourse-organizing functions such as agreement, emphasising an affirmative response to a question, responding to thanking (and apologising) and organizing the closing of the conversation.

8. Conclusion

Absolutely is semantically an intensifier typically collocating with a set of extreme or superlative adjectives and expressing a maximally high degree of property on a scale. This study has shown that *absolutely* can also be used in syntactic environments where it modifies the proposition rather than a single element. When it has the whole proposition as the target of intensification it has discourse functions associated with emphasis and the strengthening of illocutionary force. *Absolutely* is also used as an independent item with the function of pointing backwards in the context. When *absolutely* stands alone it performs functions in discourse such as responding to *yes-no* questions and to speech acts such as requests or thanking.

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Genres show distinctive patterns of use and frequency. The characters in the soap operas express feelings and attitudes to actions and events in an exaggerated way. This is reflected in the frequent use of emotionally loaded language such as the highly subjective uses of *absolutely*. The percentage of *absolutely* as an independent item was, for example, higher than the use of *absolutely* with adjectives. However, more research needs to be carried out on other data with a focus on the frequencies and uses of *absolutely* and how it changes over time.

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Conditional clauses in novice academic English: A comparison of Norwegian learners and native speakers

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Abstract

This study concerns the syntactic, semantic and pragmatic features of conditional clauses in novice academic English. The material comes from the VESPA corpus, representing Norwegian advanced learners of English, and the BAWE corpus, representing English L1 students in British universities. The learners are shown to overuse conditionals in general, but to mostly master their syntactic and semantic features. The overuse may be associated with the interpersonal functions of conditionals. The epistemic use in argument building is more apparent among the native speakers.

Keywords: conditional clauses, academic writing, advanced learners of English

1. Introduction

This article studies conditional clauses introduced by *if* and *unless* in two corpora of novice academic English. The investigation includes a comparison between English as a first and a second language. The conditionals are analysed for syntactic, semantic and pragmatic features, i.e. syntactic position of the conditional clause, verb forms used in the conditional and its matrix, and whether the conditional is open, hypothetical or pragmatic (see below for definitions). The aim is to survey how conditionals are used and whether there are any differences between native and non-native usage of conditional clauses in (novice) academic texts. As a corollary, I will also discuss any learner problems appearing in the material.

According to Declerck & Reed (2001: 9), conditional constructions are two-clause structures “in which one of the clauses is introduced by *if* [...] or by a word or phrase that has a meaning similar to *if*”. The construction relates two situations to each other in such a way that one clause contains a condition for some aspect of the situation referred to by the other clause. Conditional constructions can be paratactic (e.g. *Do that and I'll beat you*), but are typically hypotactic (ibid: 8). In a hypotactic construction the conditional can be headed by a conjunction, as in (1), or

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it can be marked by subject-operator inversion, as in (2). The present study includes only the conjunction-headed type, mostly due to the difficulty of retrieving the inverted type in an untagged corpus.

- (1) If the viewer loses interest in the character, the story itself will be pointless. (VESPA)¹
- (2) I do not feel for example, that the poem would have been as effective had she initially applauded her work. (BAWE)

Gabrielatos (2013) argues that not all types of conditionals are well explained in coursebooks and learner grammars, which prompts him to hypothesize over- or under-representation of certain patterns in learner English. His investigation, based on the International Corpus of Learner English compared to the British National Corpus (BNC), produced inconclusive results, and Gabrielatos (*ibid.*: 164) recommends that future studies should take the learners' L1 background into account, and that the L1 reference corpus should be more similar to the learner corpus. This study follows both of his recommendations.

2. *Material and method*

The material for the investigation comes from two sources: the *Varieties of English for Specific Purposes dAtabase* (VESPA), which contains discipline-specific academic texts written by advanced learners of English, and the *British Academic Written English* corpus (BAWE), which similarly contains discipline-specific academic texts written by British university students. From both corpora, I selected the English literature discipline and limited the material to texts written by students whose first language was Norwegian or English, respectively. Both corpora include BA- and MA-level texts (with a predominance of undergraduate texts), but this distinction was not counted as a variable in the present study. The selections differ in size, with 100,073 words from VESPA and 292,021 from BAWE.

VESPA was accessed by means of WordSmith Tools 6 (Scott 2012), and BAWE via SketchEngine (<https://the.sketchengine.co.uk>). Searches were made for the items *if* and *unless*. The resulting concordances were

¹ All corpus examples are quoted verbatim, with any infelicities intact.

reviewed manually to exclude the following: *if* introducing a nominal clause, *if* as part of a complex conjunction (*as if, even if*), *if* as a misprint for *of, if* introducing a phrase (e.g. *if any*), and subordinate clauses not attached to a matrix clause. Furthermore, I excluded quoted material from literary texts and secondary sources. The VESPA texts have been tagged in such a way that WordSmith searches can ignore quoted material (see Paquot et al 2013: 379), and for BAWE this was done manually by checking the context.

In the spirit of Contrastive Interlanguage Analysis (Granger 1996, Hasselgård & Johansson 2011) this study involves comparison between first- and second-language use. The native speaker corpus (BAWE) is not seen as a target norm—the BAWE writers too are novice academic writers—but as a background against which it is instructive to view the writing of the advanced learners of English represented in VESPA.

3. Analysing conditional clauses

Dancygier & Sweetser (2005: 4) state that “there is something about *if* which engages the curiosity of the analyst”. Indeed, conditionals have been thoroughly examined from a variety of angles, including logic, semantics, syntax and pragmatics. In this short article, I cannot give a fair representation of previous research, but see Traugott et al. (1986), Athanasiadou & Dirven (1997), Dancygier & Sweetser (2005) and Gabrielatos (2010) for relevant overviews. This section will outline the features of conditionals that are analysed below, with frequent reference to previous studies.

3.1 Syntax

A conditional clause functions as an adverbial in its matrix clause, in which it can occur at the beginning or end, and occasionally in the middle. The positions are referred to as *initial* (before the matrix), *medial* (within the matrix; i.e. between its subject and a last obligatory argument) and *end position* (after the matrix), following the analysis of Biber et al. (1999) and Hasselgård (2010). Examples are given in (3)-(5). The same positions are used in Norwegian (Hasselgård 2014), which may be helpful to Norwegian learners.

- (3) If you have a book with detailed descriptions, and endless events, you cannot include everything in a two-three hour movie. (VESPA)
- (4) The individual, if Foucault is right, is left to act alone in a bleak world that has become incommunicative, de-stabilised and seemingly meaningless... (BAWE)
- (5) Clearly she would never have been able to marry John if she had come forward. (VESPA)

In contrast to other types of adverbial clauses, conditional clauses prefer initial position (cf. Diessel 2005: 454; Hasselgård 2010: 89). According to Diessel (2005: 461) this is because conditionals “describe a contrastive situation that establishes a specific framework—a specific semantic constellation—for the discourse that follows”. Similarly, Ford argues that “the use of *if*-clauses in initial position has to do with the fact that their meaning lends itself inherently to discourse organizational work. *If*-clauses, at the content level alone, function primarily to limit the framework of interpretation for an associated main clause” (1993: 133). Diessel suggests that the use of end position for conditionals requires special motivation, e.g. if it is a kind of afterthought or for some reason “does not affect the semantic interpretation of the main clause” (2005: 463). Hasselgård (2014: 193) found a certain association between placement and semantic type of conditional: while initial position is generally the most frequent option, a higher percentage of hypothetical than of open conditionals occurs in end position.

Conditional clauses may be attached to different types of matrix clause. Examples (3)-(5) all have a declarative main clause as the matrix. Example (2) above shows a *that*-clause containing a conditional, and the present material also contains examples of interrogative and imperative main clauses, as well as several types of finite and non-finite subordinate clauses as matrixes for conditionals. See further Section 4.1.

3.2 *Verb forms in conditionals*

The prototypical combinations of verb forms in a conditional construction, often found in pedagogical grammars, are the following (cf. Römer 2007: 357): Type 1: *if* + simple present → *will* + inf.; Type 2: *if* + simple past → *would* + inf.; and Type 3: *if* + past perfect → *would* + perfect inf. Römer (ibid.) describes these combinations as the “teaching norm”. To this set is sometimes added a “Zero conditional” with the combination *if* + simple present → simple present (Gabrielatos 2013:

156). Carter & McCarthy (2006: 747) note that modals other than *will/would* are used, as well as different future-referring expressions, including the simple present.

In general, past tense forms in the *if*-clause are associated with a greater degree of hypotheticality (Comrie 1986: 94), e.g. *If he comes, I'll run away* vs. *If he came, I would run away*. It has also been noted that the Zero conditional is used for habitual situations (ibid.) and for generic meanings (Dancygier & Sweetser 2005: 95), as illustrated by (6), from Dancygier & Sweetser (ibid.).

- (6) In fact if you bring any reading matter they confiscate it.

Non-corpus-based accounts of conditionals are often restricted to the prototypical verb-form combinations, while usage-based accounts display a much higher degree of variation (e.g. Römer 2007). Reporting on a study of conditionals in the BNC, Römer states that “the usage norm allows for a variety of tense form sequences in *if*-clauses [...] with combinations of simple present + simple present being the most frequent type, followed by Type 1 conditionals” (2007: 359). Studying tense forms in conditionals in two corpora of EFL writing by German advanced learners, Römer discovers no clear mirroring of the teaching norm, but finds that the learners, despite being advanced, “seem to be confused about the choice of appropriate tense-form sequences in conditionals” (ibid: 360).

3.3 Semantic types of conditionals

Conditional constructions are usually described in terms of a *protasis* (the conditional adjunct) and an *apodosis* (the matrix clause); see e.g. Comrie (1986), Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 738). Conditionals are generally divided into *open* and *hypothetical*, depending on whether the condition in the protasis can be fulfilled or not (e.g. Biber *et al.* 1999: 819).² According to Huddleston and Pullum, open *if*-conditionals (‘If P, then Q’) exclude the possibility of a true P and a false Q, and also imply that Q is a consequence of P (2002: 739). This cause-effect relationship (ibid.) can be direct or inferred. A hypothetical conditional, on the other

² Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 739) use the term “remote” instead of “hypothetical”.

hand, “differs from the open in that it entertains the condition as being satisfied in a world which is potentially different from the actual world” (ibid: 748). Open conditionals are exemplified by (1), (3) and (4) above, while (2) and (5) illustrate hypothetical conditionals.

As pointed out by a number of scholars (e.g. Comrie 1986; Sweetser 1990; 1996), not all conditional adjuncts fit neatly into this distinction. The protasis may “specify the condition under which the speaker makes the utterance” (Quirk *et al.* 1985: 1096); i.e. it does not specify a condition under which the proposition in the matrix clause is true, but rather a condition under which the proposition or proposal in the matrix clause applies. These were called “proposition-related” in Hasselgård (2010: 229) and correspond roughly to Sweetser’s (1990: 128) *epistemic* conditionals. An example is given in (7), where the protasis specifies a necessary condition, but no cause, for the validity and relevance of the proposition. Another type specifies the condition for making a speech act, as illustrated by (8). These are called *speech-act* conditionals following Comrie (1986: 81) and Sweetser (e.g. 1990: 123).³ Epistemic and speech-act conditionals are similar in that both types express “conditions on the relevance of the main proposition” (Haegeman 1984: 500). Gabrielatos (2013) uses the term “indirect conditionals” for both types, following Quirk *et al.* (1985: 1089). Besides stating the condition (or reason) for making the utterance, indirect conditionals can give a metalinguistic comment on part of the utterance (Sweetser & Dancygier 2005: 18), e.g. *if you see what I mean*. The corpora did not contain any very clear examples of such metalinguistic conditionals but a related use is illustrated in (9).

- (7) If nonsense verse is its own structure with its own set of rules, then 'slithy' exists in that structure not as a nonsense word, but as a perfectly valid, if you like, portmanteau word. (BAWE)
- (8) If we look back to the episode when Irene was visiting Clare, Irene was raging inside her when she realized how such a racist Jack was. (VESPA)
- (9) If you look up the word in the Oxford Dictionary of English, its meaning will be defined as having or showing compassion or benevolence. (VESPA)

³ Example (8) is less clear than the type *There is cake in the kitchen if you want it*, where the *if*-clause specifies the condition for making the statement, whose truth does not depend on the conditional at all. However, even in (8) the apodosis holds regardless of the condition in the protasis being fulfilled.

3.4 Pragmatic functions of conditionals

The pragmatic functions of conditionals have already been touched upon in the above discussion of semantic types. However, some studies of conditionals, e.g. Ford (1996), Carter-Thomas (2007) and Warchal (2010) make further distinctions of pragmatic functions in specialized contexts (conversation, medical discourse and research articles, respectively). Of particular interest are the interpersonal functions that can be ascribed to epistemic and speech-act conditionals. Warchal (2010: 142) argues that conditionals “can have a potential interpersonal function aimed at establishing agreement between the writer and the reader of an academic text”. Examples (8) and (9) illustrate a type of “rhetorical” conditional which allows “the writer to share with the receiver the responsibility for the claim made in the main clause” (ibid.: 147). That is, the reader is included or addressed in the conditional and thus invited (or expected) to concur with the proposition in the matrix clause.

Carter-Thomas (2007: 150) discusses the potential of conditional constructions to act as “polyphonic operators”. She argues that the “non-assertive value of the operator, *if* [...] leaves a space open for the reader to question or reject” the proposition of the Q-clause (ibid.: 159). An example is given in (10). The label “refocusing conditionals” is assigned to “those occurrences which have a marked argumentative function” (ibid.: 160), as in (11).

- (10) It makes sense then, if the modern present is so different from the past, to use a different quality of form to express our experience of it. (BAWE)
- (11) If the many characters Neo is helped by along his journey are constructs of the psyche, then it is possible that they represent aspects of the self. (BAWE)

The present study will not include a detailed analysis of pragmatic functions, but will use insights from the cited studies in the discussion of individual examples.

4. Corpus investigation

This section presents the corpus analysis of conditionals, discussing both quantitative and qualitative features while comparing learner and native speaker usage.

4.1 Frequencies and structural properties of conditionals

Table 1 shows that the two corpora contain similar numbers of conditionals. However, relative to corpus size (cf. Section 2), the conditional clauses under study are more than three times as frequent in VESPA as in BAWE, with 124.9 and 39.4 *occurrences* per 100,000 words, respectively. The learners' overuse of conditionals may be related to the pragmatic functions of the constructions, but may also reflect an influence from conversational English, where conditionals are more frequent than in academic prose (Biber et al. 1999: 820).

Table 1. Frequencies of conditional clauses and distribution of conjunctions in VESPA and BAWE (raw frequencies and percentages).

	VESPA		BAWE	
	N	%	N	%
if	114	91.2	97	84.3
if-then	8	6.4	17	14.8
unless	3	2.4	1	0.9
Total	125	100	115	100

The proportional distribution of conjunctions is similar between the corpora: *unless*-clauses are marginal, and *if*-clauses dominate. The use of *unless* is illustrated in (12). Due to their low frequency, they will not be given particular attention in this study.

- (12) But when the original is a great classic, it might prove prudent not to add to the discourse unless you consider yourself of the same calibre as the original author. (VESPA)
- (13) If Mrs Alving represents modernism, then Pastor Manders is the voice of Victorian values. (BAWE)

If-clauses co-occur with a *then*-clause more frequently in BAWE than in VESPA. As (13) suggests, the *if-then* construction tends to convey explicit argumentation. The less frequent use of *if-then* clauses in VESPA is surprising, both because of its explicitness, which should in principle appeal to learners, and because it should be familiar to them as Norwegian has an equivalent combination (*hvis-så*).

The majority of conditionals occur with main clause matrixes, as shown in Table 2. There is little difference between the corpora. A

slightly higher percentage of the matrixes in BAWE are subordinate clauses, which might indicate a higher degree of syntactic complexity. However, the difference is not statistically significant according to a chi square test comparing subordinate and main clauses ($p=0.5922$).

Table 2. Matrix clause types occurring with conditionals.

	VESPA		BAWE	
	N	%	N	%
main declarative	87	69.6	77	67.0
main interrogative	7	5.6	4	3.5
<i>that</i> -clause	14	11.2	17	14.8
other nominal	4	3.2	2	1.7
adverbial	4	3.2	7	6.1
relative	7	5.6	2	1.7
other	2	1.6	6	5.2
Total	125	100	115	100

Most of the examples given above have a main declarative as matrix, but (2) has a *that*-clause and (12) has an infinitive clause. Example (14) shows the typical use of conditionals with an interrogative matrix: the conditional appears in initial position and establishes a relevant framework for asking (and interpreting) the question.

- (14) If African American experience is like a jazz record, what is being done when it hits scratches? (VESPA)

4.2 Positions of conditionals

As Table 3 shows, the placement of the conditionals is similar between the corpora, with initial position being most frequent, and medial position least frequent.⁴ While initial position is dominant for conditionals in general, it is the only available position in the *if-then* structure. The *unless*-clauses in the material are all in end position, as in (12). Although such clauses in initial position are not hard to come by, a

⁴ Norwegian learners were in fact expected to overuse end position, as Norwegian was found to use this position more frequently than English by Hasselgård (2014: 189).

spot check in the BNC suggests that *unless*-clauses are more apt than *if*-clauses to take end position.

Table 3. Positions of conditionals

	VESPA		BAWE	
	N	%	N	%
initial	80	64.0	70	60.9
medial	4	3.2	4	3.5
end	41	32.8	41	35.7
Total	125	100.0	115	100.1

Positional freedom seems to correlate with matrix clause type. There is practically no difference between the corpora in this respect. It is only in main declarative matrixes that all three positions are used for conditionals, and initial position is by far most common, with 70% in BAWE and 78% in VESPA. In interrogatives, all but one conditional (in VESPA) are initial. In subordinate matrixes, however, only *that*-clauses and adverbial clauses seem to offer initial position as a real alternative, though even here, end position is used slightly more often than initial position. In all other subordinate matrix clauses, end position predominates. Medial position is generally rare for long adverbials (Hasselgård 2010: 107), and occurs only with parenthetically inserted conditionals, as in (4) above and (16) below.

Ford & Thompson (1986: 359) found that relative matrixes favoured end position of the conditional. While they tried to find discursive motivations for this, I believe the reason is purely syntactic. In this clause type initial position is not available for the conditional because it is obligatorily taken by the relative pronoun (even in its zero realization). An example is given in (15). Medial conditionals, however, are found in relative clauses, in which case the conditional is bracketed by punctuation, as in (16).

- (15) We have to ask ourselves if child murder is something we all are capable of if we are pushed as far as Sethe (or Margaret)? (VESPA)
- (16) Once we look at Merry we might conclude that the Swede failed. Which, if we look at the society during the 1960s, was something many Americans felt they did. (VESPA)

Non-finite matrixes invariably have the conditional in end position in the present material, thus supporting Ford & Thompson's observation (ibid.) that infinitive clauses favour this pattern. Again the main reason may be the rather restricted word order flexibility of most types of subordinate clauses cf. Givón (1979: 83).

4.3 Semantic types of conditionals

The analysis of semantic types of conditionals involves some degree of subjective interpretation, thus other analysts might have analysed some of the clauses differently. While I was unable to provide a second opinion, the analysis should be indicative of the distribution of the semantic types in the two corpora.

Table 4. Semantic types of conditionals

	VESPA		BAWE	
	N	%	N	%
open	69	55.2	58	50.4
hypothetical	27	21.6	14	12.2
epistemic	27	21.6	40	34.8
speech act	2	1.6	3	2.6
Total	125	100.0	115	100.0

As Table 4 shows, the two writer groups have roughly equal proportions of open and speech-act conditionals, but the learners have more hypothetical conditionals, and the native speakers have more epistemic conditionals.⁵ It is not immediately clear why this should be so. Hasselgård (2014: 193) found a lower proportion of both hypothetical and epistemic conditionals in Norwegian than in English, so the learner behaviour is not likely to be L1-induced.⁶ Note that the material has been categorised on the basis of meaning and context, not formal features. Thus, examples (17) and (18) have both been analysed as hypothetical,

⁵ Only the epistemic conditionals differ significantly ($p < 0.05$) according to a 2x2 chi square test.

⁶ Divergent results may be text-type related: the material for Hasselgård (2014) was the non-fiction part of the English-Norwegian Parallel Corpus, whose miscellany of text types does not include academic writing.

despite not having the prototypical verb forms (past perfect + *would have* –*en*). The events reported in (17) clearly did not take place “in the present day”, thus the construction must be hypothetical. Similarly the *then*-clause in (18) is counterfactual; hence the construction must be hypothetical.

- (17) The victim, however, would in the present day have the law on her side, if she found the strenght to fight and leave her violent relationship. (VESPA)
 (18) In effect, if Foucault's theory were true, then we would not be able to read his own essay and understand it so coherently. (BAWE)
 (19) If we accept stereotypical definitions of male speech, this masculine core may be why her discourse is characterised by eloquence. (BAWE)

Epistemic conditionals often appear as part of argument building as in (19). The conditional gives the premise for the argument in the matrix clause. This type of conditional also occurs relatively often with interrogative matrixes in examples such as (14) above. Example (19) has a first-person pronoun in the conditional, which is another common feature of the epistemic conditionals; cf. Section 4.5.

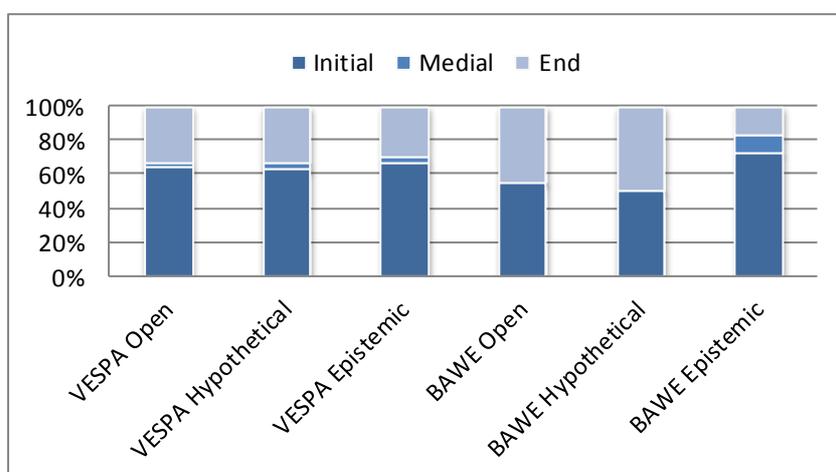


Figure 1. Semantic category and syntactic position (percentages)

Figure 1 correlates the semantic types of conditionals with placement. Speech-act conditionals have been left out of the figure since they are so

few. The columns show the proportional distribution across positions for each semantic type in both corpora. It must be recalled that the numbers are low in some of the categories, cf. Table 4. Still, Figure 1 indicates that the Norwegian learners apply the same principles for placement regardless of the semantic type of conditional. The BAWE writers appear more likely to use end position for hypothetical conditionals, though this is one of the categories where numbers are low and percentages may be deceptive. Medial position contains only epistemic conditionals in BAWE in contrast to VESPA, but again the numbers are too low to suggest a trend.

4.4 Verb forms in conditional constructions

Figure 2 shows that the use of verb forms in conditional clauses does not differ much between the learners and the native speakers. In both corpora the present tense dominates, followed by the past tense. Note that both categories contain cases of present and past with perfect and progressive aspect. Modalised verb phrases are rare in the conditional clauses, as are nonfinite verb forms.

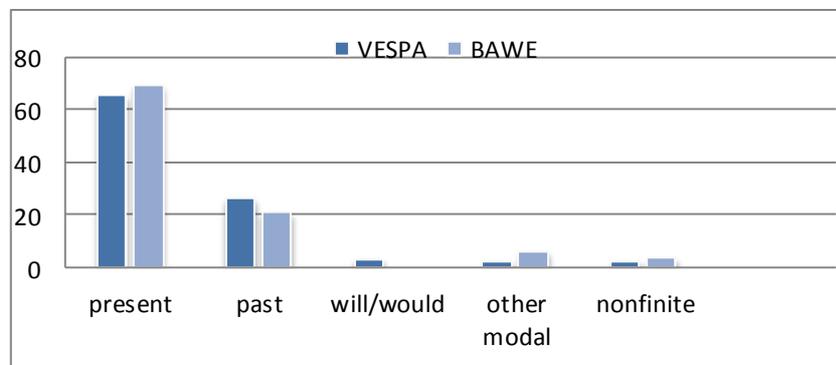


Figure 2. Verb forms in conditional clauses (percentages)

Figure 3 shows the use of verb forms in the matrix clauses of the conditionals, revealing slightly greater differences between the corpora than was the case for conditional clauses in Figure 2. The most striking difference is the more frequent use of *will/would* in VESPA, which might

be related to the “teaching norm” (Römer 2007), but also to the greater frequency of hypothetical conditionals in VESPA. Among the “other modals”, *can* is most frequent in both corpora: twice as frequent as the second most frequent, which is *could* in BAWE and *might* in VESPA.

The high frequency of the simple present in both conditionals and matrixes reflects a high number of zero conditionals (present + present combinations): 41 (32.8%) in VESPA and 40 (34.8%) in BAWE, which is high compared to Römer’s (2007: 358) frequencies for any of the corpora she investigated. The zero conditionals are open, epistemic or speech-act conditionals, i.e. they fulfil all the semantic functions except hypothetical. The pattern is similar between the corpora.

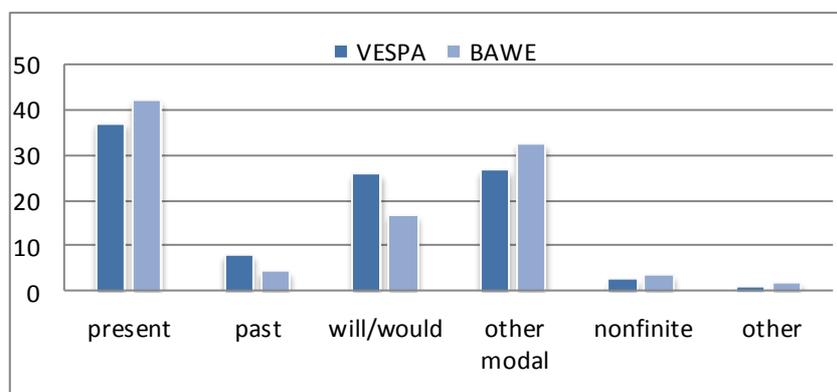


Figure 3. Verb form in matrix clauses of conditionals (percentages)

4.5 Pragmatic functions of conditional constructions

As noted in Section 4.1, a major difference between the corpora is what seems to be a massive overuse of conditionals among the learners compared to the native speakers. It is reasonable to link the overuse to the interpersonal functions of conditionals (Carter-Thomas 2007; Warchal 2010). Previous studies of other interpersonal features, e.g. Fossan (2011), Paquot et al. (2013), Hasselgård (2009; 2015) have shown that Norwegian learners are highly visible authors and favour an interactive style of writing. (In this light it may be surprising that they do not overuse epistemic and speech-act conditionals; however, the

learners' frequencies of pragmatic conditionals mirrors a difference between English and Norwegian reported in Hasselgård (2014: 192.)

Space does not permit an exhaustive analysis of the pragmatic functions of conditional clauses. However, I will briefly comment on some features of reader reference in the conditional. First, interrogatives with conditionals are more frequent in VESPA than in BAWE, which may be related to a generally higher occurrence of questions (Paquot et al. 2013: 384).

- (20) If the main argument of the book is to be mindful of the slippery slope, why does the post-pandemic scenario seem preferable to the pre-pandemic scenario? (VESPA)

However, the readers of these texts are addressed not only by means of questions, but also by pronominal reference, cf. (16) and (19). The learners and the native speakers use *we* in conditionals with almost the same frequency. But in addition the learners frequently use *if one* (rare in BAWE) as well as *if you* (absent from BAWE), see (21) and (22).

- (21) One might fail to see all of this if one is not also critical of the way the Swede lives, ... (VESPA)
- (22) That means that if you are a man you will act and dress the way we are taught from birth men are supposed to do. (VESPA)

Although the reference of *you* and *one* is generic rather than personal, the pronouns, like the inclusive *we* illustrated in (19), draw in the readers and allow them to share “the responsibility for the claim made in the main clause” (Warchal 2010: 147), and also to take part in—and agree with—the argument.

A less interactive use of conditionals, the *if-then* structure, is more popular with the native speakers (cf. Table 1). This is the refocusing structure used in conditional constructions with a “marked argumentative structure” (Carter-Thomas 2007: 160). As noted in section 4.3, the higher frequency of epistemic conditionals among native speakers can probably also be related to argumentative uses.

4.6 Conditionals and learner problems

There are more similarities than differences between the corpora, indicating that the learners have few problems with the use of

conditionals. However, one particular area of difficulty was identified during the analysis: the use of verb forms in hypothetical conditionals.⁷

- (23) We cannot know this, but there is a possibility that Dr. Luce would change his diagnosis if Cal had been honest about his sexual desires. (VESPA)
- (24) In addition, she joined the organization which would have risked her marriage if Jack would know about it. (VESPA)
- (25) If such changes are made, it can be difficult to give the viewer the same sense of realism which the novel provided. (VESPA)

In (23), the matrix seems to require a perfective *would have changed* to match the past perfect in the conditional. Example (24) presents a more serious problem with verb forms. Though not widespread, the problem of using the hypothetical *would* in the conditional was found in several texts. The problem in (25) is that the present tense forms conceal the fact–evident in the context–that the situation described is counterfactual. Thus, the use of verb forms in hypothetical conditionals remains a problem for some of the learners in VESPA, even at this advanced level of proficiency.

5 Concluding remarks

The study has shown that Norwegian learners are not only prolific, but also quite proficient, users of conditional clauses. In general, there are more similarities than differences between the two writer groups, with the major exception of the frequency with which conditionals are used. Section 4 has shown that both syntactic and semantic features of conditionals have similar proportional distributions across the material. The learners appear to master the expression of all semantic types of conditionals as well as their placement and their integration in a range of matrix clause types. Section 4.3, however, noted a certain overrepresentation of hypothetical conditionals with a corresponding underrepresentation of epistemic ones. Both groups use conditionals for expressing arguments, but this is more widespread in BAWE.

The learner data indicated problems with verb forms in hypothetical conditionals. It might be useful for learners to study hypothetical contexts in order to learn not only how to use verb forms correctly but

⁷ Römer (2007: 359) also noted learner problems with tense sequences.

also to find other means of expressing hypothetical meaning. The learners' overuse of conditionals is believed to be related to their interpersonal uses. A closer look at the pragmatic functions of the constructions may shed more light on this issue.

A limitation of this study is its restriction to conditionals marked by *if* and *unless*. Other studies report that alternative realizations of conditionals are rare, but the possibility remains that they might alter the picture of how conditionals are used in novice academic writing. More importantly, the inclusion of causal and concessive clauses would complement the account of how these writers construct their arguments.

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Corpora used

- British Academic Written English corpus (BAWE),
<http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/al/research/collections/bawe/>
 Varieties of English for Specific Purposes dAtabase (VESPA),
<http://www.hf.uio.no/ilos/english/services/vespa/>
 British National Corpus, <http://www.natcorp.ox.ac.uk/>

Equity in L2 English oral assessment: Criterion-based facts or works of fiction?

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Abstract

For assessment to be equitable, it is central that teachers/raters perceive and apply grade criteria similarly. However, in assessing L2 oral proficiency in paired tests, raters must grade test-takers individually on a joint interaction performance. With a conversation analytic approach, we examine closely one recording from a 9th-grade national test of L2 English with an aim to uncover some aspects that underpin vastly divergent assessments (as assigned by three raters) of one test-taker. Findings pointing to issues such as moral stance, rater experiences, and the interlocutor effect are discussed in light of equity in L2 oral proficiency testing and assessment.

Keywords: L2 oral proficiency, interactional competence, morality, turn-taking, language assessment, equity

1. Introduction

Whether being involved in English language teaching at the university level or in compulsory school, testing and assessing students' oral and written proficiency is central. In dedicating this paper to Solveig Granath's career, we know that even though her own research interests lie outside the scope of second/foreign (L2) language testing and assessment, Solveig is a passionate teacher, loved by her students (evidenced not least in her repeated nominations to the Student Association's Best Teacher Award), and partly, we believe, because of her dedication to making each examination task an opportunity for learning. Feedback from Solveig on examination tasks is always rich and detailed, so issues on assessment and equity seem close to Solveig's heart in her professional practice.

Having said this, however, for many teachers formal assessment is a time-consuming task and assigning a grade to a student's test performance in alignment with externally set criteria is a challenge, not least with regard to mandatory national tests in school. With the national

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tests in English and other core subjects in focus, reports from the Swedish Schools Inspectorate have indicated that equity in assessment is a problem (e.g., Skolinspektionen 2012). Re-assessments of student performances in English (including tests of reading/listening comprehension and writing) have revealed diverging views between external raters and the students' own teacher. While the teacher obviously has more knowledge about each student's abilities as compared to an external rater, the reports show that criteria for assessment may not be interpreted in the same way by different raters. In this paper, we wish to bring the issue of equity in assessing English oral proficiency out of the woodwork, and discuss some of the issues that may come into play in diverging assessments. We examine one recording from the speaking part of the mandatory high-stakes, summative, 9th-grade national English test in this case study, and set out to locate some reasons for *why* particular students' oral proficiency may be difficult to assess, resulting in different grades assigned by different raters. We wish to contribute to an ongoing debate on L2 assessment equity (see, e.g., Moss, Pullin, Gee, Haertel, & Young 2008) with this study and to problematize the paired oral proficiency test format in relation to assessment criteria.

2. Literature review

In honor of Solveig and her scholarly interests, this literature review begins with a brief etymological account of the key terms from the title, before relevant academic work related to the topic of this paper are discussed.

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (2016), the general meaning of the noun *equity* is '[t]he quality of being equal or fair; fairness; impartiality; even-handed dealing'. The first record of *equity* (from Latin *aequitas*) dates back to the early 14th century (Shoreham: "Thet hys hys pryvete Of hys domes in equyte"). The first record of the noun *assessment* (probably of Anglo-Norman origin) appears about a century later in reference to the determination or adjustment of taxation. In its educational use, however, there is no record of *assessment* until in 1956 (attributed to H. Loukes). The dictionary defines *assessment* as '[t]he process or means of evaluating academic work; an examination or test'. In this paper, the evaluative aspect of assessment is focused.

In applied linguistics and second language acquisition studies, research on L2 oral language is a fairly recent phenomenon, gaining scholarly interest from the 1950s and onwards (Fulcher 2003). L2 oral language has been defined as learners' ability to converse with one or several interlocutors (cf. 'interactional competence' in an L2, Kasper & Ross 2013: 9). Whereas external examiners are frequently used internationally in speaking tests, in Sweden – the setting for our study – test-takers' own English teacher acts as the examiner. From an international perspective it is also more common to adopt a test format in which there is a native-speaker examiner together with only one test-taker, the oral proficiency interview, OPI (see, e.g., Fulcher 2003). The test examined here differs in that it involves two or sometimes more test-takers. It can be noted that paired L2 OP tests have grown increasingly popular and it has been argued that such tests reflect natural conversation better than OPIs (Ducasse & Brown 2009). When Brooks (2009: 341) compared the two test formats (OPI versus dyadic), she found that dyadic tests resulted not only in higher scores for test-takers, but also in "more interaction, negotiation of meaning, consideration of the interlocutor and more complex output." From an assessment perspective, however, using two (or more) test-takers may be problematic due to the fact that the spoken output is a joint product (He & Young 1998) by individuals who later are assessed individually (May 2011; Sandlund & Sundqvist 2011). A general finding appears to be that paired tests allow for more flexible test-taker contributions and a wide range of complex actions. Not surprisingly, then, the role of the interlocutor is highly important because s/he is likely to influence both scores and interaction – sometimes positively, sometimes negatively (Davis 2009; Iwashita, Brown, McNamara, & O'Hagan 2008; Lazaraton & Davis 2008). Galaczi (2008) suggests that test-takers with limited L2 skills are not very involved in interactions with their interlocutors, a topic she further explores in Galaczi (2014), where a broader view on interactional competence is recommended. Regardless of test format and group sizes, research has shown that preparation affects test results (Farnsworth 2013), and it appears that gender may also play a role in L2 speaking tests (Amjadian & Ebadi 2011).

In a study of our own, we focused on how test-takers managed interactional trouble connected to the test tasks (Sandlund & Sundqvist 2011). The findings indicated that some task management strategies

appeared to be rated less favorably than others, even though some (for instance, negotiation of understanding of the test task) were perfectly productive for the students themselves in terms of test-wiseness. Being test-wise has to do with, among other things, the willingness to play along in a test situation (Bachman 1990). In tests where stakes are high for test-takers, having such an ability may prove rewarding in terms of assessment and, needless to add, in such tests, the issue of equity is essential. Equity is particularly important when the construct of interest is complex and comprises a number of different variables, as is the case with a construct such as OP. It can be noted that Sandlund and Sundqvist (2011) demonstrate that the validity of the English speaking test may be threatened by demands of topical knowledge irrelevant to the intended construct, and that the teachers'/examiners' objective to elicit enough assessable talk result in differing and unwanted patterns of interaction (Sandlund & Sundqvist 2013). Finally, Ducasse (2010) argues that there is a need for more research on what takes place in the interaction between test-takers in dyadic L2 speaking tests; for example, no rating scales have been developed based directly on empirical data from observed performances of such interactions. Although we do not center on developing rating scales here, this study makes a sought-for contribution in that it is based on exactly the type of interaction test data Ducasse (2010) is referring to.

3. Research question

We are interested in exploring reasons for diverging assessments of L2 English oral proficiency and, therefore, ask: What possible reasons for raters' diverging assessments of oral proficiency can be found in the interaction between students in a paired oral proficiency test? A few possible answers will be provided through detailed examination of one test.

4. Method and materials

4.1 Data and participants

Recordings and assessment data were collected as part of a research project (*Testing Talk*, the Swedish Research Council, Reg. no. 2012-4129) on the speaking part of the 9th-grade national test of English in

Sweden. In *Testing Talk*, 71 recordings of paired/small group tests were collected at four schools. In total, 161 students (aged 15–16) from ten classes participated. For the assessment part of the project, three separate assessments of student performances were collected: one from the students' own English teacher (in total, six certified teachers with more than ten years work experience were involved in these assessments) and one each from two external raters (equally qualified). Provided with audio recordings of all speaking tests, the external raters assessed and scored student performances independently. They were instructed to follow standard procedure, that is, the instructions included in the materials provided by the Swedish National Agency for Education. Raters' commenting in writing on test performances on the score sheets was optional but encouraged. In addition to the speaking test assessment data, students' scores on the other parts of the national English test (see below), the global national test grade, and the final grades in all school subjects were also collected.

Some additional data could also be collected. For instance, External Rater 2 handed in copies of her original scribbles on which she based her "official" comments. As it happened, during the course of the project, it also came to our knowledge that some teachers employed self- or other teacher-created matrices for assessment of OP, and these documents were shared with the project team.

For two participating classes, the teachers first assessed test performances independently for students in their own class and provided us with documents of student grades; these teachers then collaborated in co-assessing some performances with the help of the recordings. In only a few cases, the initially assigned grade was changed; the grade *after* co-assessment became individual students' official test grade. It ought to be mentioned that these two classes differed from the others in that they were Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) classes (see, e.g., Dalton-Puffer 2007), which means that the participating students had been exposed to English as the medium of instruction in other subjects than English throughout grades 7–9 and, in addition, they had had English lessons on a daily basis for three years.

For the purpose of this paper, a targeted search was conducted for students where there was considerable divergence between the grades assigned. The criterion for *diverging assessments* was that at least two out of the three assessments differed with at least two grades (for

example, from A to C or from B to D). This search helped identify test recordings deemed as relevant for the scope of the study of which one, for several reasons, was selected for detailed scrutiny. For instance, in the selected test recording, the teacher and External Rater 2 had assessed one of the students, Leo, with a C-, whereas External Rater 1 had evaluated Leo's performance as an A. Moreover, the selected test happened to be from one of the CLIL classes and Leo's originally assigned grade by his own teacher was, in fact, a D. Moreover, all three assessors were experienced teachers of English but only one of them (Leo's teacher) knew the student and had performed additional classroom-based assessments that could possibly color her assessment, as indicated in tendencies observed by the Schools Inspectorate (2012) for writing (which, as speaking, is a multifaceted language ability leaving room for interpretation on the part of the assessor).

The analyzed test recording was 23 minutes and 6 seconds. The involved students are Leo and Magnus (pseudonyms). Magnus' performance was awarded a B by the teacher and both raters. External Rater 2 had commented on this specific test (see Table 1).

Table 1. External Rater 2's comments on Leo and Magnus (translated from Swedish).

Student	Grade	Comment
Leo	C-	<i>Good fluency and relatively good vocabulary + idiomaticity Somewhat poor in terms of content, briefly explains what he means, does not deepen his contribution, does not interact particularly well</i>
Magnus	B	<i>A lot of production Fluency disrupted at times Reformulates, clarifies Adapts <u>somewhat</u> to his interlocutor, communicative strategies to lead the <u>conversation</u> forward can be developed more Good vocabulary and rather sure of accurate grammar use</i>

4.2 Test instructions and text details

In Sweden, national tests are summative and share a twofold purpose: (i) to contribute to equity in assessment and grading and (ii) to yield data for evaluation of goal-attainment (www.skolverket.se). The present paper is particularly relevant in light of the former purpose. The national test in

English is a typical proficiency test which does not assume prior knowledge of a specific content. It consists of three parts: Part A focuses on oral interaction and production (“speaking”), Part B on receptive abilities (reading/listening comprehension), and Part C on written production. In this study, data are drawn from the 2014 speaking test.

In preparing for test administration and examination, teachers receive a booklet with detailed instructions and a CD with sample test recordings for different grade levels commented on in the booklet with references made to relevant grade criteria. During the test, teachers may prompt students if they run into difficulties but, generally, the present teacher/examiner should remain in the background (Swedish National Agency for Education 2013).

Over the years, instructions regarding the number of students per speaking test has varied and, at times, instructions have been unclear in this regard (Sundqvist, Sandlund, & Nyroos 2014). In any case, regardless of whether there are two or more test-takers involved, the speaking test adopts a three-step format, beginning with a rather monologic warm-up section before moving on to step two, which involves more of dialogic speech between test-takers, and step three, where even more interaction between test-takers is the aim. This type of design in which the level of difficulty increases gradually is typical for speaking tests, as shown in a recent research overview of L2 oral testing (Sandlund, Sundqvist, & Nyroos 2016). In the test examined here, pictures were used for warm-up. In the next phase, one at a time, test-takers drew so-called topic cards (blue) from a stack of cards. On each card, there is a statement and some questions to be read aloud and discussed. After that, yellow topic cards were used in a similar fashion, again with statements serving the purpose of triggering further test-taker interaction. It needs to be mentioned that because of a 6-year secrecy put on the 2014 national test, the first sentence on the topic cards has been concealed in the transcripts below, and we are only at liberty to discuss the topic card formulations in general terms.

Since teachers act as examiners for the speaking test, specific information regarding how to assess students’ output in relation to relevant grade criteria are given in the booklet. More specifically, teachers/examiners are instructed to focus on *content* and *language and ability to express oneself* in the assessment. As regards content, assessment should focus on the following variables: (i) intelligibility and

clarity, (ii) rich and varied content (providing different examples and perspectives), (iii) context and structure, and (iv) ability to adapt to the purpose, the interlocutor(s), and the situation. For language and ability to express oneself, assessment should focus on: (i) the use of communicative strategies (developing the conversation and leading the conversation forward as well as solving linguistic problems with the help of reformulations, explanations, and clarifications), (ii) fluency and ease of speaking, (iii) variation, clarity, and accuracy (vocabulary, phraseology, and idiomaticity; pronunciation and intonation; grammatical structures), and (iv) ability to adapt to the purpose, the interlocutor(s), and the situation (Skolverket, 2013: p. 28).¹ After the completion of a test, the teacher assigns a grade to each student test performance by checking the appropriate box (see Figure 1), and as mentioned, scores on the test are interpreted in relation to criteria.

Delprov A – Focus: Speaking					
F	E	D	C	B	A

Figure 1. Grade grid for Part A, Speaking (Skolverket, 2013).

There are six grades, A–F, where F is assigned when criteria are not met. To a large extent, the criteria for English are aligned with the communicative abilities described in the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (Council of Europe 2001), and a passing grade (E) corresponds to level B1.1 (Council of Europe 2001).

4.3 Analytic procedure

Adopting a conversation analytic (CA) approach to the test interaction data (e.g., Sidnell & Stivers 2013), we are particularly interested in how the interaction unfolds in situ, and how participants format their

¹ Before the curriculum implemented in 2011, another variable (*willingness and ability to interact and talk*) was also included; this variable still remained on one sheet in the 2014 test materials. Thus, it is possible that teachers/raters included it in their assessments.

contributions in relation to immediately prior talk. For this paper, we look specifically at the organization of turns and turn shifts, and the ways in which students orient to each other's prior turns. Transcriptions presented below use standard CA conventions for depicting turn features and sequential organization (Sidnell & Stivers 2013).

Due to space limitations, the full transcript cannot be included here. Instead, having analyzed the entire recording, we selected three sequences, presented in chronological order. Extract 1 occurs 11 minutes into the test and Extracts 2a and 2b at the end. All sequences are from the third "interactive" part of the test.

5. Findings

5.1 Extract 1: Turn-taking and moral dilemmas

In the first fragment, it is Leo's turn to draw a topic card. It presents a moral dilemma dealing with how to act when an elderly person boards a full bus:

(1) [Rec 11011181, 11.21–13.19]

51 LEO should I?
 52 TEA () (.)
 53 LEO eh:m (0.9) ((reads test card aloud)) (2.0)
 54 hh we:ll (0.3) I::: (.) wouldn't really do:
 55 (1.0) s (0.4) s- so much for that person (.) if
 56 that person didn't r- really: (0.2) >come up to<
 57 me and ask for the seat (0.6) b'cause then I
 58 could stand up a:nd (.) let her sit down? (0.6)
 59 because the elderly (0.7) n- needs it (1.2)
 60 a::n (1.1) o:r if it's like (1.5) a djounger
 61 person (0.2) siddin' next to me (1.0) I would
 62 tell (.) that person maybe yump u:h (0.4) stand
 63 up? (0.6) and give that (person) to theu:h (0.2)
 64 elderly; (1.6)
 65 MAG *myeah* (1.6) I I I w- I have actually (0.4)
 66 been in kindof that situation (0.3) .hhh but I'm
 67 not sure IF ifsh if (.) the person
 68 didn't †Ask for the seat (0.7) I- I-
 69 don't think I really would dare I- I would
 70 feel embarrassed by standing up an'like
 71 (0.2) but I- I know it's the right thing to do;
 72 .hh (0.4) and of †course if they asked I would

73 (.) e:h (.) of course give them my seat
74 anduh (1.1) but I'm not sure e:hm (0.7) if
75 (.) if there-or if †there is really a full
76 bus I would s- probably stand up (0.8) or I
77 would a:sk the person would you like to
78 sit here (1.2) an'uh (.) if they say (.) yes
79 please I would of course stand up (0.3) a:n hh
80 (1.1) but e:h .hh (0.8) I'm not really that
81 s:ocially (0.4).hh I'm a liddl: (0.7)uhd h(0.3)
82 shy? so I (.) it would beu:h (.) >yeah (0.5) I
83 wouldn't be very (0.5) brave (0.2) and (0.2) but
84 I I would try to ask them at least try to
85 have the courage to ask them (1.3) andu::h (.)
86 ↓yeah
87 (4.9)
88 this (side) yeah?
89 LEO yeah.
90 MAG (.) should I take a third one?

A first observation is that the turn-taking pattern observed is rather common in the paired tests in our corpus. It generally consists of relatively long turns prior to turn transition, few (if any) overlaps between the speakers, and test-taker orientations to the activity as a conversation where one party 'exhausts' his viewpoints on the topic before a co-participant offers his (or hers). As compared to everyday conversation, this pattern is strikingly different.

As Leo embarks on his first response, the turn-initial, drawn-out "w:ell" in 54 can be heard as projecting an upcoming disagreement or disaffiliation (Heritage, 2015; Pomerantz 1984). As a "departure-indicating" particle (Heritage 2015: 89), *well* in turn-initial position has also been shown to project upcoming "'my side' responses to descriptions and evaluations in which the speaker's perspective becomes a new point of departure for subsequent talk" (2015: 101). In the remainder of the first part of Leo's turn in 54–64, he does indeed account for his own perspective, and one that could be seen as socially problematic – i.e., that he would not offer his seat to an elderly person unless directly prompted to do so. Even though openly formulated as a 'what would you do' question, the test topic bears with it, like all morally charged issues, a preference toward responding in a particular, morally appropriate way, and it is to be expected that diverging from this underlying preference will require additional interactional work on part

of the speaker. Turn-initial *well* may be one such indicator, and indeed, Leo also states that he would ask a younger person to stand up for the elderly, thereby positioning himself as not first in line to give up his seat.

Magnus, however, takes a different stance in his account (65–86). While he also indicates that he would not necessarily offer his seat to an elderly person, Magnus gives a different account for why – he puts forth his own shyness and social ineptness and that he “wouldn’t be very brave” (81–83) as reasons for not verbally offering his seat. His highly personalized account, which he states relates to first-hand experience, contains multiple angles on the topic, such as knowing “the right thing to do”, a detailing of his personal reasons for being unable to abide by the moral code, and a desire to “have the courage to ask”. In direct adjacency with Leo’s turn, Magnus’ account stands out as more exhaustive but also, possibly, as morally superior. In terms of grammar, lexis, and tempo, both students produce their turns with few production problems, and both contributions are clearly ‘on task’. In sum, this fragment shows lengthy ‘monological’ accounts from both speakers, but they take different moral stances on the topic.

5.2 Extract 2a: Delimiting a topic

Extract 2a is the last topic card of this test, and the recording stops when the full sequence ends after Extract 2b (below). This fragment also shows Leo as the topical talk initiator, albeit prompted by Magnus’ directive in line 111. The topic card is formatted as a statement proposing that people do “too much” of something (in this case, care too much about clothes and fashion). This means that an agreeing (*yes*-type) response would align with the formulation, whereas disagreeing with the statement (in part or fully) would require a first turn displaying some version of a negative response. Leo’s first turn unit is *well*-prefaced, indicating at least partial disagreement (see Extract 1). He also makes a selective characterization of “some people” and “mostly teenagers” as indeed representing a citizen category that “cares too much” (115–116), which supports partial disagreement:

(2a) [Rec 11011181, 20.40–21.56]

```
91   MAG   °>pick a c(h)ard any c(h)ard<° ((whisper voice))
92   LEO   e:hm (.) ((reads topic card formulation))
93           (1.0)
```

124 *Erica Sandlund & Pia Sundqvist*

94 LEO well (.) some people la- mostly
 95 †teenagers does? (0.8) e::hm (0.5) if
 96 somebody like (.) doesn't have afford
 97 for (0.9) some kind of clothes (h) then they
 98 shouldn't buy it (0.3) they should just go
 99 with their (.) clothes that they have (0.9)
 100 afford for (0.6) or >yeah< (ff) ande:h (.)
 101 some people care just too much like (1.5) pushing
 102 some people out (0.2) b'cuz (0.7) they don't
 103 havu:h (0.7) fashion clothes (.)they
 104 but >whaddif they can't< afford it (0.4)
 105 an' it's not (.) their fault;
 106 (1.7)
 107 MAG yeah. (.) I agree (1.1) hh (.) u::h (0.3) I like
 108 nice clothes though bud I don't really care if
 109 people >wearitornot< (0.9) I don't alwe-
 110 always wear fashionable clothes bud (1.3) I
 111 like it bu::t SOme people care (0.8) too
 112 much (0.9) you shouldn't be pushing anyone
 113 out or something like that .hhh because
 114 they're not wearing (0.8) nice clothes (0.3)
 115 cuz as you said peop- all >not everyone can
 116 afford (1.1) .hh really nice clothes so:, (1.7)
 117 TEA °good?°=

Leo's first turn (114–125) brings up two related aspects of the topic of fashion in the form of an unspoken contrast to the topic card, in which he lets on that 'not caring' may not necessarily be the case; instead, that someone who may come across as not caring about fashion may care, but be limited by economic means. He further links limited financial resources to the possibility of social exclusion (122–124), and condemns people who 'care too much' and resort to "pushing some people out" for something children from low-income homes cannot change. His turn shows a few grammatical errors, such as "most teenagers does" (concord) and "if somebody like (.) doesn't have afford for". It is likely that the turn design shows an L1 transfer: in Swedish, it is common to say *om någon inte har råd med*, and a possible direct translation would be "if somebody doesn't have afford with" (Leo's selected option). The construction "afford for" re-occurs in 120, produced in an unmarked manner, indicating that Leo does not spot a potential problem. However, a correct expression using the same verb surfaces in the hypothetical question in 124: "but what if they can't afford it". Thus, although Leo

does not display obvious repair strategies, the construction eventually becomes grammatically accurate.

In line 127, Magnus aligns with Leo's claims ("yeah I agree") and recycles Leo's formulation about not "pushing" individuals out of social groups and "not everyone can afford" (135–136). Such recycling could be viewed differently in terms of assessment: on the one hand, Magnus does not go far beyond what Leo has already said but merely restates issues in Leo's contribution; on the other, such recycling can also be heard as displays of interactional competence – Magnus displays attentiveness to Leo's turn and is able to build upon prior talk. This is also visible in his direct reference to Leo's preceding turn, where Magnus indicates reporting prior talk with "as you said".

Another feature of Magnus' turn, which echoes his treatment of the bus dilemma, is that he begins on a personal note. Instead of treating the topic in general terms, like Leo does, Magnus begins his turn with a "my side" telling (cf. Heritage 2015) where he admits to liking nice clothes. He immediately adds, however, that his preference does not entail a comparably strong interest in what other people wear. He elaborates on this point in the admission that he does not always wear fashionable clothes himself, but that even so, it would not be an appropriate reason for excluding others. It is possible that Leo's rather forceful statements about social class and fashion occasion Magnus' extended accounts of agreeing with the gist of Leo's contributions, while also mitigating his own standpoint, but that remains speculative. Regardless, we would like to emphasize that Magnus, again, treats a topic in relation to his personal experiences, which is one notable difference between his and Leo's contributions. As we move through the second part in Extract 2b, we begin with line 137 (also above) which is a positive assessment from the teacher after Magnus' turn.

5.3 Extract 2b: Competing angles

(2b) [Rec 11011181, 21.58–23.04]

```

118 TEA °good?°=
119 MAG =A:E:h the latest fashion that's (1.0) it
120     differs a lot (0.8) as the most questions
121     (1.5)
122 LEO well I think it's pretty (.) pathetic that
123     some people (0.3) care about (.) fashion

```

126 *Erica Sandlund & Pia Sundqvist*

124 (1.0)
 125 MAG [y e a h]
 126 LEO if like (0.2) >[a person on] school<
 127 (0.6) doesn't (.) have uh (0.4)
 128 MAG °oj°
 129 LEO the latest fashion (.) then you shouldn't
 130 be mean to that person (0.8)
 131 MAG no of course not nej no
 132 LEO mm
 133 MAG (1.9) but fashion could mean (0.3) a lot
 134 of things=
 135 LEO =yeah
 136 MAG it could mean like catwalks with
 137 ridiculous clothes (0.8)
 138 LEO HHHhhh
 139 MAG like no one would wear
 140 (0.3) in public (1.3) and it could be
 141 just (.) the brands (0.5) and the brands
 142 doesn't really matter (0.9) but it does
 143 madder (0.3) for a loddof people (0.7) but
 144 it shouldn't madder. (0.9) although it's (0.5)
 145 a lotta times there it's (0.5) better quality
 146 with brands but hh (1.4) .h they are also a
 147 lot (1.2) u::h (.) expens- (0.4) more expensive
 148 so (2.1) (hhh) yeah, (0.6)
 149 TEA o↑kay
 150 MAG is that it? (0.5)
 151 TEA you're done?
 152 LEO yeah.

The assessment *good* does not reveal the exact assessable object. Nevertheless, Magnus does not treat the teacher's *good* as an indication that they are finished and, instead, he latches on with a more general statement regarding what 'counts' as fashion. His turn (138–139) opens up for a broader set of possible responses ("it differs a lot (.) as the most questions"), but formatted as a claim, it is still tilted towards a structural preference for an agreeing response. Again, Leo's response is *well-*prefaced, which may be his diversion from this new possible trajectory. Leo disattends to the new angle and instead reconnects to his own earlier talk about social exclusion and bullying (148–149). Leo's claim, including the rather strong assessment "pretty pathetic", links caring about fashion to the school context only, and takes a stand against 'fashion-based meanness'. Magnus emphatically agrees (150), but like

Leo, does not elaborate on Leo's topical trajectory. The turn-initial *but* in 152 displays that he will not completely align with Leo's claim, and Magnus' turn reaches backwards to his own prior contribution about fashion being a matter of definition (138–139). Leo provides minimal acknowledgement in anticipation of more talk from Magnus, who in turn elaborates on different ways of defining fashion (high fashion, brands, quality, and cost). The teacher offers an *okay*, which Magnus treats as a pre-closing signal, and the test interaction is brought to a close.

There are a few things to pay particular attention to in the examination of Extracts 2a–b. First, (2b) shows a different sequential organization as compared to (1) and (2a), with more turn shifts, shorter contributions, and also attempts by both students to set the topical agenda and sticking to it. Both students display fluency and use some relatively advanced idiomatic expressions (*pretty pathetic*, *catwalks*, *ridiculous clothes*), and both show slight production troubles on certain words. One of the differences observed is that Magnus, yet again, begins his first topical contribution on a personal level, whereas Leo maintains a more abstract, non-personalized approach, but also makes strong personal value claims on his selected topical perspective. Notably also, the teacher's positive assessment comes in adjacency to Magnus' turn, which occasions further elaboration. In sum, what makes (2b) stand out is that it shows heightened involvement or increased participation (Sandlund 2004), but also, a competition for a topical angle.

6. Discussion and conclusion

Having examined the test recording in its entirety, did we find any explanations for why Leo received diverging assessments while Magnus was assigned the same grade by the teacher and the raters? In terms of the criterion *language and ability to express oneself*, both test-takers display similar competence, for instance, in terms of fluency and accuracy. In terms of the interaction as such, and assessment criteria like *content* and *communicative strategies*, a few observations deserve further discussion, and so do some issues related to the test format, the criteria, and the raters in question.

Even intuitively, readers will be able to spot differences between this test interaction and naturally occurring conversation. First, to a great extent the topic cards determine topical content, and it is rather obvious

that card topics make possible different degrees of involvement from the students. Having personal experience of something, as opposed to discussing something on an abstract and speculative level, is bound to have an effect on the type of interaction that unfolds. Magnus' ability to draw on personal experiences and claim *epistemic access* to the topic (cf. Stivers, Mondada, & Steensig 2011) (whether evidence of true experience or plain test-wiseness, cf. Bachman 1990) may make his performance come across as more varied and rich. Also, the test format, where students take turns reading and commenting on each new card, establishes a specific turn-taking pattern where test-takers tend to exhaust their commentary on a topic before a turn shift is made relevant. This leads to extended, less co-participant-oriented turns with few overlaps and interjections, making each test-taker's contribution stand out almost as a miniature monologue. This sequential organization highlights differences between a first and second turn on a given topic, for example, in terms of length and topical richness. Possibly, then, 'going first' could be an advantage, and Magnus' extensive turns when 'going first' in other parts of the test (not shown here) may restrict the kinds of contributions Leo can make without coming across as repetitive. As such, being paired with a slightly more proficient *or* more talkative interlocutor may be a challenge, as a degree of competitiveness over the floor may come into play, and perhaps especially so for CLIL students. Also, it is possible that students of slightly different proficiency levels, accomplishing test interaction jointly, are compared *against each other in situ* (rather than against assessment criteria) and differences in conduct and proficiency may stand out more.

Furthermore, discussing moral issues, especially in the presence of one's teacher, can be a risky affair. As members of a community, norms are shared and people generally know what the morally appropriate stance would be when presented with a moral dilemma. When diverging from such expected moral stance-taking, the speaker may be held accountable. When comparing our focal students, both are open about dilemmas in the hypothetical situations, but Leo's approach does on occasion deviate more from the expected norm. We cannot claim with certainty that moral stance influences assessment, but note the fact that this is one of the ways in which the two test-takers differ.

In the assessment instructions, two typical features of interactional competence are included: the *ability to adapt to the interlocutor* and the

ability to use communicative strategies for leading the conversation forward. In an ongoing study on collaborative assessment of the speaking test (Sandlund & Sundqvist, forthcoming), preliminary findings suggest that the use of communicative strategies is a criterion that teachers seem to find very important, but also that being ‘too talkative’ and ‘taking over’ is viewed as undesired. As assessment criteria are rather abstractly phrased, teachers will inevitably have personal interpretations of them, and perhaps unintentionally value some more highly than others. It is possible that Leo’s slightly shorter contributions and infrequent orientations to Magnus’ prior turns are heard as less communicatively oriented in contrast to Magnus’ use of phrases like “as you said”, and that some raters over-value such conduct. However, Magnus’ relative talkativeness may explain some of these differences in situ.

In terms of factors possibly impacting assessment equity, we also need to comment on the different raters in relation to their perceptions of Leo’s performance. As mentioned, re-assessments of, for instance, writing have revealed that students’ own teachers tend to assign higher grades than external raters do. This study has shown the opposite, as the teacher originally assigned a far lower grade than both external raters. The Swedish system with teachers assessing their own students is unusual internationally, but regardless of whether one believes this system has consequences for assessment equity or not, it is obvious that a teacher has knowledge of each student’s general performance, personality, and communicative style. Such knowledge probably generally benefits students, as it relaxes the pressure to perform perfectly on one test occasion. A teacher has several opportunities to assess a student’s oral proficiency in school and can therefore overlook minor problems that can be related to, for example, unfortunate pairings or test anxiety. However, it is just as plausible that Leo actually performed ‘better than usual’ together with a more talkative and proficient student like Magnus, and that this improvement goes unseen by the teacher, who is so familiar with Leo’s performance on other occasions. Consequently, in terms of equity, teachers’ knowledge of individual students’ abilities may be a double-edged sword.

Finally, as the particular teacher here teaches CLIL classes, she can be expected to be used to high-performing students. A rater’s experiences of homogenous and heterogeneous student groups may be

one aspect that comes into play in assessing the national test; the external rater who assigned an A to Leo had no experience of teaching CLIL classes, which most likely made both Magnus and Leo stand out as highly proficient students.

Equity in assessment, well, is it a criterion-based fact? Or is a belief in assessment equity for the national English speaking test a fiction-like utopia, like our somewhat provocative title indicates? Clearly, assessing oral tests of the kind examined here is a challenging and complex task where many factors come into play. While the optimal conditions for assessment equity for speaking tests remain to be demonstrated, we hope this case study raises some issues worthy of further discussion.

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The fact of metafiction in nineteenth-century American children's literature: Nathaniel Hawthorne's *A Wonder Book* and Elizabeth Stoddard's *Lolly Dinks's Doings*

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Abstract

This article examines two American books for children: Nathaniel Hawthorne's *A Wonder Book for Girls and Boys* (1851) and Elizabeth Stoddard's *Lolly Dinks's Doings* (1874). In both books, fairy tales or myths are framed by a contemporary American setting in which the stories are told. It is in these realistic frames with an adult storyteller and child listeners that metafictional features are found. The article shows that Hawthorne and Stoddard use a variety of metafictional elements. So, although metafiction has been regarded as a postmodernist development in children's literature, there are in fact instances of metafiction in nineteenth-century American children's literature.

Keywords: metafiction, children's literature, nineteenth-century American literature, Nathaniel Hawthorne, *A Wonder Book*, Elizabeth Stoddard, *Lolly Dinks's Doings*

My introduction, in 1996, to nineteenth-century American children's books and, subsequently, to the emergent research field of children's literature was Elizabeth Stoddard's quirky book for children: *Lolly Dinks's Doings* (1874).¹ The reason for more or less stumbling over this book was my interest in Stoddard's novels and nineteenth-century American literature in general. At that point, works of American literary history did not include many references to children's literature,² and there was virtually no literary criticism on Stoddard's *Lolly Dinks's Doings*. Indeed, Stoddard belonged to the group of nineteenth-century

¹ See Sarah Wadsworth's review essay (2015: 331) on the development of the academic study of children's literature in the last twenty years.

² See, for instance, Beverly Lyon Clark (2003: 68-69) on the "eclectic" *Columbia Literary History of the United States* (1988). Clark concludes: "By 1988 children's literature was, if anything, even more invisible in the academy than it had been in 1948" (2003: 69). She also notes that, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, "none of the literature of the [wide-ranging] *Heath Anthology [of American Literature]*, the fourth edition, is addressed specifically to children [...]" (Clark 2003: 3).

women writers that was being recovered by feminist scholars in the 1980s, and only her first novel, *The Morgesons* (1862), was readily available in the mid-1990s. However, Stoddard's foray into children's literature after writing three novels and numerous short stories for adults was not as unusual for a nineteenth-century American author as it first occurred to me. The period after the American Civil War is considered to be "'The Golden Age of Children's Literature' because of its pride of place in the culture" (Lundin 2004: 61), a time when renowned authors wrote for children. A well-known author who started to write for children even earlier, in the antebellum USA, was Nathaniel Hawthorne, who wrote for children in the 1830s, 1840s, and 1850s.³

One of the aspects of *Lolly Dinks's Doings* that intrigued me was its metafictional features. In *Children's Literature Comes of Age* (1996), Maria Nikolajeva draws on Patricia Waugh's *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction* (1984) to discuss what she sees as the increasing use of metafiction in late-twentieth-century children's literature. In Waugh's definition metafiction is "fictional writing which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artifact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality" (Waugh 1984: 2).⁴ Although Nikolajeva acknowledges that they "can be found in much earlier periods," she sees metafictional elements in children's literature as first and foremost a "feature of its postmodern phase," and most of the examples that she has found are "quite recent, primarily from the 1980s and 1990s" (Nikolajeva 1996: 190, 191). However, after having increased my acquaintance with nineteenth-century American books for children that can be categorized as books of fairy tales, I actually found metafictional traits not only in Stoddard's book for children, but also in Hawthorne's *A Wonder Book for Girls and Boys* (1851).⁵ In what follows—twenty years after I first read *Lolly Dinks's Doings* and Nikolajeva published her comments on

³ For discussions of Hawthorne's writings for children throughout the three decades, see Laura Laffrado (1992) and Patricia D. Valenti (2010).

⁴ Waugh points out that the term *metafiction* appears to have been coined by William H. Gass in a 1970 essay (Waugh 1984: 2).

⁵ It was published under the title *A Wonder Book* in volume 7 of *The Centenary Edition* (1972), which is the edition referred to in this article.

metafiction in children's literature—I will revisit the concept and examine metafictional elements in these two books for children.⁶

To discuss metafiction in the context of fairy tales may seem like a contradiction in terms since metafiction is typically concerned with exposing the conventions and limitations of realistic representation in fiction. Fairy tales—including Hawthorne's retellings of Greek myths for children in *A Wonder Book*—are generally not expected to adhere to realistic verisimilitude and, thus, would not appear easily to lend themselves to metafictional effects. However, both Hawthorne's and Stoddard's books for children use realistic frames for the telling of their fairy tales. These frame narratives have a contemporary American domestic setting, and they include the storyteller and the narratee(s), the latter in the form of children or a child. It is in relation to these frames that I will discuss metafictional elements in these books.

Before a more careful examination of the narrative frames and some of the metafictional aspects of these two children's books, an update on metafiction may be in order. Reviewing the concepts of metafiction and metanarration, which are “umbrella terms designating self-reflexive utterances, i.e. comments referring to the discourse rather than the story,” Birgit Neumann observes, “[t]he functions of metafiction range from undermining aesthetic illusion to poetological self-reflection, commenting on aesthetic procedures, the celebration of the act of narrating, and playful exploration of the possibilities and limits of fiction” (Neumann 2014). She argues that although these two umbrella terms are related and often used as synonyms it makes sense to distinguish between them: “metanarration refers to the narrator's reflections on the act or process of narration; metafiction concerns comments on the fictionality and/or constructedness of the narrative” (Neumann 2014). I will use both terms but try to make clear distinctions between them.

Focusing on the storytelling situation, the frames of the two books highlight the act of narration as well as the American setting in which the framed stories or fairy tales are told. In *A Wonder Book*, the storytelling

⁶ There is not a great deal of scholarly work done on these books: there is only one full-length book chapter to date on *Lolly Dinks's Doings* (Troy 2008), and relatively few articles and book chapters on *A Wonder Book for Girls and Boys*, considering the academic interest in most of Hawthorne's novels and short stories.

situation, in which ancient Greek myths are retold for children, is set in an 1850s American landscape, more specifically in the Berkshires with named landmarks such as Monument Mountain and the Dome of Taconic. The frames are titled “Tanglewood Porch,” “Shadow Brook,” “Tanglewood Play-Room,” “Tanglewood Fireside,” “The Hill-Side,” and “Bald Summit,” which indicates where the storytelling takes place inside and outside the house. The apparently extradiegetic first-person frame narrator describes Tanglewood as a “country-seat” set in a pastoral American landscape (Hawthorne 1972: 5).⁷ Each frame appears both before and after each story or myth that the storyteller, Eustace Bright, tells the children, which firmly locates the storyteller and his audience as well as the narrator and the reader in an American nineteenth-century setting, celebrating the landscape and the imaginative playfulness of American childhood and youth.

In Hawthorne’s book for children, the storyteller’s audience consists of a number of children whom the frame narrator gives the names of native plants such as Primrose, Sweet Fern, Clover, Huckleberry, and Butter-cup, which “might better suit a group of fairies than a company of earthly children” (Hawthorne 1972: 6). Making a metafictional comment that jolts the reader out of the realistic depiction of the surroundings and the children, the narrator states that the reason for doing this is that, “to my certain knowledge, authors sometimes get themselves into great trouble by accidentally giving the names of real persons to characters in their books” (Hawthorne 1972: 6). Eustace Bright is an eighteen-year-old student at Williams College, whom the narrator introduces by name by, again, metafictionally breaking the realistic illusion: “In the first sentence of my book, you will recollect that I spoke of a tall youth, standing in the midst of the children. His name—(and I shall let you have his real name, because he considers it a great honor to have told the stories that are here to be printed)—his name is Eustace Bright” (Hawthorne 1972: 6-7). These metafictional statements undercut the apparent realism of the

⁷ The narrator appears to be extradiegetic throughout most of the frames, but at the end of the first “The Hill-Side” frame the narrator states: “As for the story, I was there to hear it, hidden behind a bush, and shall tell it over to you in the pages that come next” (Hawthorne 1972: 117). Here the narrative levels are collapsed: the narrator suddenly emerges as a character in the frame story but, at the same time, refers to the printed pages of the book in the direct address to the reader.

frame by commenting on the first sentence of the book and on the printing of the stories that are told by Eustace Bright, and by unsettling the boundaries between characters and “real persons” through the frame narrator’s contradictory comments on the naming of different characters in the frame. These statements are metanarrational, too, in that they are instances of the narrator’s reflections on the act of narration.

The storytelling situation in Elizabeth Stoddard’s *Lolly Dinks’s Doings* is also located in the USA, but in the 1870s, and most of it is set in a New York City apartment where the Dinks family live—when they do not vacation in the countryside in Massachusetts. Mrs. Dinks is the apparently intradiegetic first-person frame narrator and storyteller and her six-year-old son, Lolly, is the active and unruly addressee. However, exactly on which narrative level the narrator is located is made uncertain already by the title page of the book, which ascribes *Lolly Dinks’s Doings* to “his mother, Old Mrs. Dinks *alias* Elizabeth Stoddard.” The chapters of this book consist of a diverse collection of stories and sketches with unusual twists of plot and dialogue. The frame narrative is not as clearly set off from the tales as it is in Hawthorne’s *A Wonder Book*, partly due to Lolly’s intrusive responses during his mother’s storytelling.

In both books, storytelling is a topic on which the storyteller and the narrator explicitly ruminate, sometimes with the help of the narratees. In the first “Tanglewood Porch” frame in *A Wonder Book* the question about storytelling and repetition is brought up as the children beg Eustace Bright to tell them a story. He replies that there is not one single fairy tale “which you have not heard at least twice over,” but a number of the children cry, “We like a story all the better for having heard it two or three times before” (Hawthorne 1972: 8). The frame narrator then muses, “it is a truth, as regards to children, that a story seems often to deepen its mark in their interest, not merely by two or three, but by numberless repetitions” (Hawthorne 1972: 8). This comment is in line with one of Nikolajeva’s general observations in *Children’s Literature Comes of Age*: “The fascination of traditional children’s books is based on their predictability, the ‘joy of recognition.’ It is also here that fairy tales and classics play their decisive role [...]” (Nikolajeva 1996: 54). She suggests that “[l]istening to a folktale—or a children’s book—is more like listening to a musical piece than reading a modern novel. It is normal to to listen to musical pieces more than once, under different

circumstances, and performed by different musicians” (Nikolajeva 1996: 55). In *Lolly Dinks’s Doings*, however, the reader encounters a child narratee who incessantly demands new stories and shows the very opposite of “joy of recognition”; six-year-old Lolly Dinks always wants “a new story; not an old one you know” (Stoddard 1874: 32). As I have discussed elsewhere, his objections to “old” stories concern both form, and content; he also often has the last word on his mother’s stories (Troy 2008: 156-57).

Twelve-year-old Primrose, the oldest member of the child audience in *A Wonder Book*, is Eustace Bright’s worst critic until her father, Mr. Pringle, who is a classical scholar, insists on hearing one of the stories. His verdict is harsh: “Pray let me advise you never more to meddle with a classical myth. Your imagination is altogether Gothic [...]. The effect is like bedaubing a marble statue with paint.” Eustace Bright, however, defends his right to “re-model” these myths as they do not belong to the ancient Greeks but instead are “the common property of the world, and of all time” (Hawthorne 1972: 112). The storyteller’s defense in the “Tanglewood Fireside” frame largely repeats that of the “author” in the preface of *A Wonder Book* where he claims that “[n]o epoch of time can claim a copyright in these immortal fables” and that “they are legitimate subjects for every age to clothe with its own garniture of manners and sentiment [...],” while admitting that in the process of his transforming them into “very capital reading for children” they may “perhaps” have “assumed a Gothic or romantic guise” (Hawthorne 1972: 3, 4).

The question about the appropriation and retelling of stories is also brought up in the introductory “Bald Summit” frame in which Eustace Bright comments on the Catskills that he and the children see in the west when they have reached the summit of the hill: “Among those misty hills, he said, [...] an idle fellow, whose name was Rip Van Winkle, had fallen asleep, and slept twenty years in a stretch. The children eagerly besought Eustace to tell them all about this wonderful affair. But the student replied that the story had been told once already, and better than it ever could be told again [...].” (Hawthorne 1972: 142-43). According to Hawthorne’s storyteller, then, American author Washington Irving’s tales should not be tampered with—at least, one may presume, until they reach the venerable age of the myths that Hawthorne romanticizes and domesticates for an American child audience in *A Wonder Book*.

Since most of these ruminations on storytelling refer to the tales that are embedded in and are part of the world of the frames, they may perhaps be seen as metanarrational rather than strictly metafictional (Neumann 2014). However, as it to some extent complicates the relation between fiction and reality, Eustace Bright's reference to Irving's short story "Rip van Winkle" (1819) could be regarded as an introduction to more obviously metafictional elements in the "Bald Summit" frames that frame the retelling of "The Chimaera" at the end of *A Wonder Book*.

Both Hawthorne's and Stoddard's books for children metafictionally break the frames by blatantly bringing up the issue of publishing the stories that are told in those frames. After Eustace Bright's retelling of the myth of "The Chimaera," Primrose makes a laurel wreath and crowns him, while observing that nobody else is likely to do so for his stories. He tells her not to be too sure: "Mr. J. T. Fields (with whom I became acquainted when he was in Berkshire last summer, and who is a poet, as well as a publisher) will see their uncommon merit, at a glance. He will get them illustrated, I hope, by Billings, and will bring them before the world under the very best of auspices, through the eminent house of TICKNOR & Co." (Hawthorne 1972: 170-71). Here Eustace Bright names the illustrator of the first edition of *A Wonder Book for Girls and Boys*, Hammatt Billings, whom Hawthorne mentions that he wants to employ for this purpose in a letter to J. T. Fields dated 23 May, 1851, in which Hawthorne presents his ideas for this children's book project (Idol 2014). Hawthorne is also unashamedly advertising his publisher—"the eminent house of TICKNOR & Co."—within the frame story.⁸ This mention of the publisher draws attention to the double audience of children's literature (adult reader and child listener) and the fact that children's literature is, as Jacqueline Rose puts it, "an essentially adult trade" (1994: 88). In *Lolly Dinks's Doings*, the storyteller and narrator Mrs. Dinks's occupation as a writer, her "cogitating over Dinks material" with the purpose of publishing it (Stoddard 1874: 16), is highlighted very early in this book. When Mrs. Dinks tells Lolly the first story, she explains that it is not much of a story and that "all the editors, and the

⁸ Richard Henry Stoddard's *Adventures in Fairyland* was published by the same publishing house the year after Hawthorne's *Wonder Book*; and Richard, the first-person narrator and storyteller, brings up the publisher TICKNOR, REED, & FIELDS at the end of *Adventures in Fairyland* as a reliable provider of stories for children (1853: 236).

publishers, and the readers, and everybody but Lolly Dinks, will see as I do” (Stoddard 1874: 8), which means that the whole process not only of writing, but also of publishing is explicitly emphasized. Hence, the commerce of children’s literature is brought to the fore in both books as an additional complication of the relation between fiction and reality.

There is, indeed, a high degree of self-consciousness about the fictionality or constructedness of the frame narratives in *A Wonder Book* and *Lolly Dinks’s Doings*. In the closing “Bald Summit” frame, after Eustace Bright has told the children the story of “The Chimaera,” he mentions a number of authors associated with the Berkshires, including the poets Longfellow and Holmes and “Herman Melville, shaping out his conception of the ‘White Whale’” (Hawthorne 1972: 169). When Eustace enumerates the American authors, Primrose asks, “Have we not an author for our next neighbor?” and describes a “silent man” with two children whom they sometimes meet “in the woods or at the lake” (Hawthorne 1972: 169). Eustace warns her not to mention that man—whom the reader easily recognizes as Hawthorne himself—as he has the power to annihilate them all by “fling[ing] a quire or two of paper into the stove” (Hawthorne 1972: 169). Here Eustace Bright shows awareness of being one of Hawthorne’s characters and alerts another character about this perilous state of affairs.

An equally obvious metafictional instance occurs in the third chapter of *Lolly Dinks’s Doings*. This chapter starts with Mrs. Dinks commenting on Lolly Dinks’s distaste for socially and morally educational books and goes on to describe the Dinks family leaving their city dwelling for the countryside and seaside in Massachusetts. In other words, this passage seems to be part of the familial frame narrative. However, on the fourth page of this chapter it is revealed to be part of a manuscript that Mrs. Dinks is reading to Lolly Dinks when he interjects with a factual correction: “‘No, mother,’ interrupted Lolly, to whom I read this paper, ‘it was the spring sea. It was not summer when we went’” (Stoddard 1874: 29). Consequently, the first three pages of the chapter are not on the narrative and temporal levels that the reader has initially assumed, and these pages are surprisingly addressed to Lolly as well as the book’s readers. This textual turnabout startles the reader out of any complacency based on what first appears as realistic representation of the frame narrative’s here and now. It is a clear example of a metafictional move in that it draws attention to the discourse rather than the story.

To conclude, I would like to return to Nikolajeva's 1996 discussion of metafiction in children's literature in *Children's Literature Comes of Age* where she claims that "[m]ore and more children's books consciously pose questions about the relationship between the writer, his [sic] creations and his readers. Such texts have been named *metafiction*, books about books and the writing of books, books which somehow explain themselves, investigating the essence of writing by describing the creative process itself" (Nikolajeva 1996: 190). However, as I hope to have shown, the presence of metafictional elements in children's literature is not just a recent, postmodern development: Hawthorne and Stoddard use an impressive range of metafictional features in *A Wonder Book* and *Lolly Dinks's Doings*. Although their use of metafictional devices should not be taken as representative of nineteenth-century American children's literature in general, there are certainly other examples of metafictional moves. The very first lines of the most well-known book published during the Golden Age of Children's Literature, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1885), testify to the fact of metafiction in nineteenth-century writings for children in the USA. As the intradiegetic first-person narrator and protagonist Huck Finn puts it in his direct address to the reader: "You don't know about me, without you have read a book by the name of 'The Adventures of Tom Sawyer,' but that ain't no matter. The book was made by Mr. Mark Twain, and he told the truth, mainly" (Twain 1987: 17).

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Reading literature rhetorically in education: Nathaniel Hawthorne's 'The Prison-Door' as an exercise in close reading

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Abstract

Despite the many historical links between literature and rhetoric, teachers of literature have made relatively few attempts to draw on rhetoric for teaching purposes. The present article suggests how this may be done, and argues for the pedagogical benefits of taking a rhetorical approach to literature. By means of a close reading of the first chapter of Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, I demonstrate how a text may be systematically explored through the five steps (partes) of the classical rhetorical process. In conclusion, it suggests that rhetoric may be a means to bridge the gap between the many facets of English as a second language subject, as rhetoric provides a holistic framework allowing us to study literature and culture as language, and vice versa.

Keywords: rhetoric, literature, English education; Hawthorne

1. Introduction

Rhetoric and literature have been deeply associated throughout Western history. It is commonly held that it is only toward the end of the eighteenth century that this long-standing association begins to break down (Gossman 1990: 228). While the link between the two disciplines has never been completely disowned, rhetoric and literature have come to be seen as contrasting rather than complimentary practices, and as a rule organized as distinct departments in the academy.¹ The consequence of this division is the curious separation of what might reasonably be seen as one subject into two separate ones: Literary departments typically

¹ From a "neo-sophistic" (Walker 2000: xi) perspective, Jeffrey Walker calls on us to "rethink some key assumptions on which our histories of rhetoric have traditionally been based" (3), such as "that poetic, epideictic, or 'literaturized' forms of rhetoric are 'secondary,' derivative manifestations" (4) of a primary civic rhetoric. For examples of this view, see Baldwin 1924 and 1928. As Walker documents, this predominant view has been heavily critiqued by rhetoricians at least since the 1990s and also questioned by literary theorists and historians.

proceed hermeneutically, teaching students the art of interpretation, while rhetoric is treated as a form of applied linguistics, often in relation to composition courses in the art of writing. Much would be gained if this gap between the practices of writing and reading could be overcome.

Attempts to make rhetoric a resource for literary studies have conceived of the relation between the two fields in very different ways. A case in point is the different reception histories of the works of Kenneth Burke and Wayne C. Booth, both of whom explicitly grounded their thinking in rhetoric, but are now influential in other spheres. For Burke, the rhetorical nature of literature must be seen in the light of its function as a socially symbolic act (Burke: 1966) and as a form of rhetorical discourse among others; for Booth, the relevant rhetorical aspect of literature derives from its fictional status (Booth: 1983), which makes it a rhetorical discourse distinct from other kinds of communication.²

And yet, in-between these two seemingly mutually exclusive ways of articulating the rhetorical dimension of literature, and independently of both, literary studies in general have taken a distinctly rhetorical turn in recent decades.³ Literary criticism has gradually come to realize that literary history is “the history of the *situations* of the texts, and not some ‘history’ of the texts themselves” (Jameson: xxvi), as Fredric Jameson put it a quarter of a century ago. Despite this rhetorical turn of much recent literary criticism, literary studies have shown relatively little interest in actively pursuing rhetoric.

The lack of interest in rhetoric among teachers of literature is all the more surprising considering the methodological importance courses in literature to this day accord to close reading, a critical procedure that

² One subfield of literary theory drawing on rhetoric is narratology; see, for instance, Phelan 1996 and Walsh 2007. However, work in this area is largely concerned with only the fifth of the five canons of rhetorical pedagogy: invention, arrangement, style, memorization, and delivery. Yet, the potential of rhetoric as a method lies in its holistic nature. Rhetoric can provide a lasting meta-language to totalize many aspects of literary studies and clarify the relation between reading and writing.

³ See, for instance, Paul de Man’s pioneering work on the tropological nature of language and literary language specifically, Judith Butler’s inquiries into the performative nature of gender, the New Historicist stress on the importance of historical contextualization, and feminist, post-colonial, and queer theory insistence on the importance of situating the reading of literature.

grew out of the rhetorical practice of New Criticism, which isolated the text from history and context, thus forcing us to focus on particular words and their arrangement.

But if there are pedagogical benefits in isolating the text from the context, the drawbacks of doing so are also well-known. Once the text is separated from the context of its writing and reading, the question is how one can re-establish a connection to that larger context, which can now no longer be taken for granted. This is the moment where close reading, which starts off as a simple methodology, calls for the intervention of theory, because we have reached a point where we have to *account* for the concepts we make use of: *author, society, meaning, interpretation*, and even *text*, must be justified. As the manifold perspectives of literary theory make evident, there are many ways of doing so. Here I only sketch the advantage of taking a rhetorical approach to literature, the benefit of which is twofold. Firstly, we avoid the theoretical complexities that come with having to account for the relation between the text and the context since the two are never separate in the rhetorical model, in which they are seen rather as two facets of the rhetorical situation that is our real object of analysis. Secondly, and equally important to teaching, rhetoric offers a set of conceptual tools for systematically exploring the manifold aspects of the text.

I shall demonstrate this by means of a close reading of the first chapter of Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*. This text was chosen partly because the novel is standard reading for university level courses in English, and partly because the opening chapter is brief enough to allow for a relatively thorough discussion. However, any passage in any text could in principle be approached in a similar manner. My purpose is pedagogic rather than hermeneutic – I make no claims to originality here, but seek merely to illustrate how rhetoric can be used to untangle the persuasive dimension of a literary text, just as it can help us approach more openly rhetorical discourses like speeches. In the process, I hope to hint at another benefit of bringing rhetoric into the English classroom in a second language setting such as Sweden. Rhetoric, it will be seen, allows us to turn the study of literature into an exercise in linguistic analysis rather than in aesthetic appreciation, and could thus potentially bridge the two major facets of English as a discipline, namely literature and linguistics.

2. The text

Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* is a novel virtually read by every American college student. It tells the story of Hester Prynne and her troubled relationship to the Puritan community of colonial Boston. Set in the 1640s, it is a story about the infancy of the American nation, to some extent based upon historical records. Hester, who has come to the new world ahead of her husband, has been found guilty of adultery; there is no question of her guilt, because she has given birth to a baby that must have been conceived in America. The story opens with Hester being brought out of jail carrying her baby in her arms to be publicly displayed on the scaffold, as was the custom of the Puritan community. To make evident the nature of her crime, she has been sentenced to sew onto her breast the letter A, for adulterer. She does so, but to the dismay of the crowd gathered to watch her public humiliation, it turns out that she has embellished the letter so that it looks like a symbol of glory and beauty rather than a badge of shame, and she stands on the scaffold unrepentant.

Through the rest of the story, we follow the different interpretations engendered by the letter A. It is suggested in the text that it may as well mean Able, or even Angel, as Hester conducts her life in great humility and is always ready to help those in need. Ironically, the man that the community looks to as their spiritual leader, a young priest, Arthur Dimmesdale, is in fact as guilty of sin as is Hester, for unbeknownst to everyone, he is the father of her child. Although plagued by a bad conscience, he keeps this secret for seven years. When he finally confesses his sin, he does so by entering the very scaffold Hester had stood upon alone seven years earlier, baring his chest before the crowd. And there, "imprinted in the flesh" (Hawthorne 1962: 258), the astonished crowd sees – well, it's anyone's guess. The implication is that Dimmesdale reveals a scarlet letter of his own, but whether he really does so is impossible to say, because Hawthorne refuses to enlighten us. Instead, he offers a number of accounts of what people claim to have seen, stating: "The reader may choose between these theories" (Hawthorne 1962: 259). This novel thus invites interpretation, as suggested already by its short opening chapter. Since we will be concerned with textual detail throughout, here is the chapter in full:

I. THE PRISON-DOOR

A throng of bearded men, in sad-coloured garments and grey steeple-crowned hats, inter-mixed with women, some wearing hoods, and others bareheaded, was assembled in front of a wooden edifice, the door of which was heavily timbered with oak, and studded with iron spikes.

The founders of a new colony, whatever Utopia of human virtue and happiness they might originally project, have invariably recognised it among their earliest practical necessities to allot a portion of the virgin soil as a cemetery, and another portion as the site of a prison. In accordance with this rule it may safely be assumed that the forefathers of Boston had built the first prison-house somewhere in the vicinity of Cornhill, almost as seasonably as they marked out the first burial-ground, on Isaac Johnson's lot, and round about his grave, which subsequently became the nucleus of all the congregated sepulchres in the old churchyard of King's Chapel. Certain it is that, some fifteen or twenty years after the settlement of the town, the wooden jail was already marked with weather-stains and other indications of age, which gave a yet darker aspect to its beetle-browed and gloomy front. The rust on the ponderous iron-work of its oaken door looked more antique than anything else in the New World. Like all that pertains to crime, it seemed never to have known a youthful era. Before this ugly edifice, and between it and the wheel-track of the street, was a grass-plot, much overgrown with burdock, pig-weed, apple-pern, and such unsightly vegetation, which evidently found something congenial in the soil that had so early borne the black flower of civilised society, a prison. But on one side of the portal, and rooted almost at the threshold, was a wild rose-bush, covered, in this month of June, with its delicate gems, which might be imagined to offer their fragrance and fragile beauty to the prisoner as he went in, and to the condemned criminal as he came forth to his doom, in token that the deep heart of Nature could pity and be kind to him.

This rose-bush, by a strange chance, has been kept alive in history; but whether it had merely survived out of the stern old wilderness, so long after the fall of the gigantic pines and oaks that originally overshadowed it, or whether, as there is fair authority for believing, it had sprung up under the footsteps of the sainted Ann Hutchinson as she entered the prison-door, we shall not take upon us to determine. Finding it so directly on the threshold of our narrative, which is now about to issue from that inauspicious portal, we could hardly do otherwise than pluck one of its flowers, and present it to the reader. It may serve, let us hope, to symbolise some sweet moral blossom that may be found along the track, or relieve the darkening close of a tale of human frailty and sorrow.

3. Partes – the rhetorical process

The starting point of rhetorical analysis is the assumption that literary texts like other cultural discourses seek to persuade us of something. As rhetoricians it is our job to establish what the literary text seeks to persuade us of, how it does so, and why. To this end, we may start from Aristotle's definition of rhetoric as the art of "observing in any given

case the available means of persuasion.” While the actual means will vary from situation to situation, they can in principle be reduced to three: the speaker’s own character (*ethos*), the words used (*logos*), and finally the feelings of the auditors (*pathos*). By combining these means, the speaker may fulfil three duties: to instruct, to entertain, and to move the feelings of the auditor (Quintilian, 3.5.2-3). It is our job to unveil what means of persuasion the rhetor (the practitioner of rhetoric) – whether a speaker or a writer – has made use of, and to ask why the rhetor observed these particular means. We thus end up with three questions to guide the analysis:

- What does the text try to persuade us of?
- How does it do so? (What means of persuasion does it employ to that end?)
- Why does it draw on these particular means, to this particular end, in this particular situation?

The overall aim of the work in question may be provisionally determined by the situation it grew out of, and hence in some sense responds to. One will want to consider, that is, what cultural work the text in question is designed to perform. In texts that are closely associated with rhetorical discourse, such as speeches or ads, the overall rhetorical intent is often fairly easy to establish. Ads want us to buy the product on offer, speeches to take the point of view of the speaker. With literary texts, the situation is more complicated, not only because they are generally more multifaceted than non-literary texts, but because they stay relevant over time in a way that non-literary texts as a rule do not. Despite this transtemporal complication, relating literature to the specific historical and social environment it was conceived in remains useful.

Still, talking about the aim of a literary text means talking about its rhetorical aspect in a wide sense – similar to the overall aim or thesis of a speech. Identifying such a thesis is a very important step of the rhetorical analysis, but it does not tell us much about how the speech really works. To find out, we need to provide an account of how we arrive at the thesis. A good way to begin is to approach the text in terms of the five canons, often spoken about as the five interdependent steps of the rhetorical process: *inventio* (coming up with something to say); *dispositio* (arranging it in a specific order); *elocutio* (fashioning the individual words and sentences to the overall purpose); *memoria* (memorizing the discourse); and finally *actio* (delivery), the actual

rhetorical performance. In the following discussion, each aspect is considered in turn.

3.1 Inventio – the rhetorical situation

The first step is to consider what type of text we are dealing with, and remind ourselves of the greater whole of which our passage is a part. This is tantamount to considering the text as a rhetorical situation, a concept introduced by American rhetorician Lloyd Bitzer (1968). In Bitzer's definition, a rhetorical situation is one that can be altered by the use of rhetorical discourse, and it always features three constitutive factors, namely:

- 1) an *exigence*, that is, an imperfection or urgent matter inherent in the situation that prompts the rhetorical discourse
- 2) an *audience*, or more specifically the people addressed by the speech who by moving on it might take care of the problem; and
- 3) a set of *constraints*, which may include anything that may prevent the speech from being persuasive.

The question, then, is what *exigence*, *audience*, and *constraints* the text as it stands responds to. The *exigence* is a pressing circumstance that can be alleviated through rhetorical discourse. In terms of literature, we may have in mind the reason for writing it. This means thinking of exigence in external terms, and hence we need to take in other factors than the text as such makes available to us.

But we can also think of its exigence more locally, in relation to each chapter, and internally to the text. What is the job of this particular chapter in the story as a whole? What urgent requirement of the *narrative* is met by the chapter? What exigence of the unfolding chain of events of the story does it address? In the present case, the chapter obviously opens the story, as the reference to “our narrative” in the final paragraph reminds us. Yet, it is a pretty strange opening, since the story does not really get going. The first paragraph places us in a situation, but the rest of the chapter would seem to stall the story rather than to further it.

Why that is may be answered by taking into account the *audience* of the literary work. Again, this may be conceived in (at least) two ways, as we should distinguish between the contemporary audience of the text, known to the author, and its subsequent audience(s), made up of later or geographically distant audiences unknown to the writer. Hawthorne, we

may assume, primarily addressed an American mid-nineteenth century audience with moral standards different from ours.

Even if we ignore the distance between audiences, we can hardly fail to notice that Hawthorne consciously thematizes the issue of its importance, since the first paragraph draws attention to the fictional audience of Hester Prynne's release from prison. This audience, composed of non-identified men and women of the Puritan community, are present not only in the first but also in the concluding scaffold scene, and while they are absent from the central scaffold scene in chapter 12, they are invoked intermittently throughout the novel. Equally important, the chapter ends with a direct address to the external audience of the text, namely the reader. Evidently, the audience, fictional and real, or the transhistorical audience that includes all the subsequent readers of the novel, was of great importance to Hawthorne, since he framed the chapter in this manner.

Consequently, we must ask: what is the (rhetorical) function of the audience that figures in the text as such? While it figures only briefly in the present chapter, its importance is underscored by being the first thing mentioned. If we glance ahead in the book, two things can be noted: 1) initially, the stance of this audience is almost entirely condemnatory – yet their view would not seem to be shared by the narrator (Hawthorne). Rather, the function of the audience is largely to suggest how *not* to read Hester and the scarlet letter she wears. 2) Their view of Hester – and the letter – changes in the course of the story. For that reason, they clearly serve not only the negative function of telling us how not to read, but the positive one of bringing home the point that meanings are not permanently fixed, but liable to change with time and circumstance.

Our understanding of the audience will inevitably be affected by our account of the *constraints* that Hawthorne has to deal with in this novel, that is, the aspects that might prevent him from persuading the audience to deal with the exigence the way he wants them to deal with it, and that he must try to turn to his advantage. The most obvious constraint in this case is that it is an historical novel, as some knowledge of the historical setting is vital to a full appreciation of the story. In the fashion of the good rhetor, Hawthorne turns the constraints into an advantage, by including enough historical detail to make his story work, and by presenting it in such a manner that his story benefits from it.

If we keep in mind that the fictional audience is faulted by Hawthorne for judging too rashly, and that the overall aim of the novel would seem to be to teach us not to jump to conclusions but make due allowance for the complexity of life, the rhetorical strategy of the first chapter becomes clearer: its function is precisely to stall the story, to provide the reader with a context of the coming events that will dispose us to see them the way Hawthorne wants us to see them.

3.2 Dispositio – the structure of the text

Literary texts do not come with formulaic dispositions of the kind that can be used when analyzing speeches, which as a rule follow a set order: *exordium*, *narratio*, *propositio*, *argumentatio*, *peroratio*. But this is not to say that they lack structure. The three scaffold scenes at the beginning, middle, and end of the novel are the most prominent structuring device of the novel as a whole, but once again, keep in mind that the disposition of the text can be considered locally (in terms of a single chapter, a single paragraph, or even a single sentence) as well. Disposition, moreover, is studied not just in terms of order, but in terms of function. One way to display the functional organization is to consider the movement of the chapter. What happens in the chapter? How does it start, and how does it end, and in what way is the ending connected to the beginning? Has the story moved forward? Has the tone changed?

In the present case, the chapter consists of three paragraphs that vary in length as well as in content. The first paragraph places us immediately in the story – or so it may seem – in the form of the crowd of Puritans waiting outside “a wooden edifice” – the paragraph significantly fails to specify that this is a prison. It is very brief, a mere single sentence.

The second paragraph, by far the longest, does not continue but abandons the situation established in the opening paragraph. This circumstance is emphasized through the change of tense, from the past tense characteristic of the narrative situation (or the situation of the story), to the present tense characteristic of the narrating situation (or the situation in which the story is narrated). To be sure, the tense switches back into the past already in the second sentence, but the change of tone will already have been felt: for the rest of the paragraph, we are no longer in the immediate vicinity of the story, but removed from it, as suggested by the narrator’s account of the historical context.

The third paragraph, finally, brings us into immediate contact with the narrative situation once again, when the narrator plucks a flower from the rose-bush that grows outside the prison and “present[s] it to the reader” – an impossible gesture, as it reaches across the boundary between the fictive universe of the story and the real universe we are in. Yet it is performed (it even has a name; see below). But even if we are again close to the story, we are close in a different sense than in the first paragraph. The first paragraph places us in the Puritan crowd; the third paragraph places us next to the narrator. The disposition of this first short chapter thus prefigures the double perspective that runs throughout the novel. For in the novel, too, we see things both from the (narrative) perspective of the Puritans and from the (narrating) perspective of the narrator.

The movement of the chapter could be described as movement from identification with the Puritan perspective, to identification with the narratorial perspective, mediated by the historical objectivism of the second paragraph. In other words, it is by means of historical distance that this text seems to achieve its end of teaching us not to judge too rashly.

3.3 *Elocutio* – style and figures of speech

The fourth step of the rhetorical process involves the study of figures of speech (schemes and tropes), or, more generally, of style: how does the style of the text further its rhetorical intent? How does the style of the text contribute to persuading us to see things the way the writer wants us to see them? The three paragraphs of the opening chapter are stylistically distinct. The first is straightforwardly descriptive of the crowd, and the prison-door. The situation comes across as curiously frozen, because of the unconventional grammatical construction of the sentence, which notably lacks an active verb. The crowd “was assembled”, almost as if the people were there involuntarily, suggesting that free will is curbed in this community. In addition, this first description of the crowd portrays a “throng of bearded men [...] intermixed with women”, almost as if the Puritans lacked individuality.

The second paragraph, as noted above, removes us from the story, by means of a historicizing excursion. Its first sentence contains an *antithesis*, contrasting the utopian hopes of the “new colony” with the

practical necessity of setting off some part of that colony to those old reminders of the difficulty of realizing utopian ventures: a prison and a cemetery. This antithesis between the utopian hopes attached to what is new and the dismal reminders of the past is reinforced throughout the paragraph, through the emphasis on factors complicating the utopian scheme. The jail is described as “marked with weather-stains and other indications of age”; its rust looking “more antique than anything else in the New World”, as if “never to have known a youthful era.” The net-effect of this imagery is to suggest that human depravity is an inescapable, natural component of humanity, a suggestion which culminates in the sentence describing the prison metaphorically as “the black flower of civilised society,” that is, as something sprung from human culture as inevitably as the weeds have sprung from the grass-plot upon which the prison has been erected. However, even while the paragraph is dominated by imagery suggesting that nature will impede all plans to perfect human culture, it ends with a sentence suggesting that nature – or more precisely, Nature, in the form of a *personification* – may nevertheless prove sympathetic to human suffering. The personification is no mere embellishment but performs an important function: the “fragrance and fragile beauty” offered to the “prisoner [...] and to the condemned criminal” is offered not by nature, but by Nature, imaginatively transformed by human consciousness – something in-between nature and culture, partaking of both while not being reducible to either. It inhabits that “neutral territory, somewhere between the real world and fairy-land, where the Actual and the Imaginary may meet, and each imbue itself with the nature of the other” (Hawthorne 1962: 36) mentioned in the sketch that introduces the novel. Since this neutral territory is also the space of romance, the last sentence of the second paragraph can be said to subtly prefigure the message of *The Scarlet Letter*, or at least to suggest why it would seem to put such tremendous weight on interpretation.

The third paragraph is a result of this imaginative transformation of nature into Nature. Hawthorne pretends to be talking about a real rose bush, as is confirmed when he performs the gesture of plucking a flower and presenting it to the reader. This represents the trope called *meta-*

lepsis, which is rarely seen in realist fiction, precisely because it breaks the realist illusion by calling attention to the story as story.⁴

Another conspicuous aspect of the style is the complex construction of the sentences. There are only eleven sentences, ranging in length from 15 to 73 words. As a rule, each sentence contains several subordinate clauses, contributing to the stately, somewhat archaic tone. The oratory quality is further underlined by the color imagery that reinforces the somber tone of the situation depicted in this opening chapter, and by its highly effective use of alliteration. The joint effect is that of a text that speaks clearly, if gravely, about complex matters, a text that calls for the pause that allows for reflection.

3.4 *Memoria (Medium)*

The significance of the fourth step of the rhetorical process, memorization, or *memoria*, is apparent to anyone who has given a speech. It is still treated at length in courses on public speaking, but the advice is predictably of a practical nature. In courses centering on rhetorical analysis rather than rhetorical performance, however, memorization is often side-stepped, for apparent reasons, giving us the impression that *memoria* is a somewhat antiquated category, of relevance, perhaps, for the practical purposes of public speaking, but of little analytical import.

I would suggest, however, that *memoria* does indeed identify a central aspect of rhetorical communication. Only, in order to see this, we need to rename it: what is at stake is not memorization (only) but rather the particular constraints that come with the *medium* of the rhetorical discourse. When the *partes* were developed, *memoria* was clearly an attempt to render the medium transparent, or even invisible, so that the audience would mistake rehearsed speech for spontaneous speech. While this is not the case anymore, the question of the medium of the rhetorical discourse remains central.

In the present case, we are reminded of this circumstance by the very fact that Hawthorne explicitly addresses “the reader” in this chapter, as

⁴ Which is not to say that it is uncommon in other forms of fiction – think for instance of Woody Allen’s *The Red Rose of Cairo*, where an actor steps out of the movie screen, having fallen in love with a woman in the audience.

he does from time to time throughout the novel. Another indication of Hawthorne's awareness of the importance of the medium is of course that we are dealing with a book (composed of letters) about the significance of a letter – the letter A, which happens to be the first letter of the Alphabet, and because it is the first, it suggests all that follow.

3.5 *Actio – delivery, the actual presentation of the rhetorical discourse*

Once we realize that the fourth stage of *partes* concerns medium rather than memory, it also becomes apparent that delivery is not just a question of the speaker's performance of the speech. Rather, what is at stake in the fifth step of the process is the way the medium articulates the rhetorical discourse. When the medium is a speaker, then pronunciation, movements, dress etcetera naturally carry all the weight that classical rhetoricians such as Quintilian attributed to them.⁵ But when the medium is a text, whether verbal, visual or aural, other matters take precedence: the discipline of narratology is all the evidence we need to conclude that attention to textual delivery may be just as detailed as was ancient rhetoricians' attention to oratorical delivery.

There are at least two aspects of the textual delivery of fictional texts that must be considered: point of view and voice – who sees, and who speaks? The first aspect is unusually easy to determine in this particular chapter, since the point of view throughout is that of the narrator, that is, of the Hawthorne who tells us the story.⁶ Saying that means acknowledging that it is his voice we hear throughout. Yet, what is important is not primarily whose voice we hear, but what that voice is like – how the story is being told. One of the most striking features is the equivocating nature of many of the statements in the passage: “it may safely *be assumed* that the forefathers of Boston had built the first prison-house somewhere in . . . ;” “it *seemed* never to have known a youthful era;” “such unsightly vegetation [...] *evidently* found something

⁵ While Quintilian devotes only a small section – some 30 pages – to delivery in his *Oratoria*, he still adamantly refutes those who “have asserted that the study of delivery is useless” (11.3.10-13).

⁶ The question to what extent, if at all, the voice of the narrator coincides with that of the author is a tricky one that space does not allow me to discuss here. Suffice it to say that one should be as careful not to rule out the possibility that they coincide, as one should be wary of confusing them.

congenial in the soil;" "a wild rose-bush [...] which *might be imagined* to offer their fragrance and fragile beauty to the prisoner;" "*whether* it had merely survived out of the stern old wilderness, [...] or *whether*, as there is fair authority for believing, it had sprung up under the footsteps of the sainted Ann Hutchinson as she entered the prison-door, *we shall not take upon us to determine*;" "we could *hardly* do otherwise than pluck one of its flowers;" "It *may* serve [...] to symbolise *some* sweet moral blossom that *may* be found along the track" – very few things are stated as indisputable facts in this novel. Again, this circumstance suggests the necessity of interpretation, that is to say, the co-operation of the reader.

4. Conclusion

It remains to pull the above observations together to show how the analysis may suggest a reading of the novel as a whole. Considering the occasion for this text, we found that it fills the office of opening an historical novel, and is marked by the exigence of establishing a relation between the audience of the present and the events of the past through the medium of the story. This much is subtly suggested through the very disposition of the chapter, which moves from the past of the narrative events to the present of the act of narration. It is brought to the fore more dramatically by means of the concluding metalepsis, the figural gesture in which the narrator leans into the story and plucks a rose from a bush within its fictional space and hands it over to the reader. As this trope suggests, we are dealing with a text that is very aware of itself as a medium, a text that is delivered in a narrative voice designed to co-opt the reader into taking an active part in the story.

It is thus a fitting opening for the subsequent narrative, which in various ways extends the opening strategy of involving the reader in the story. In the chapter following, Hester emerges from the prison with the luxuriously embroidered scarlet letter upon her breast, and we witness the different reactions of the seventeenth century Boston audience. In the final chapter, the reader is placed in a situation strikingly similar to that of the audience within the story, when the narrator refuses to make clear whether Arthur Dimmesdale actually reveals a letter "imprinted in the flesh" or not. This recourse to indirection at the very moment when facts crucial to the case are to be revealed is highly characteristic of Hawthorne's writings. In fact, it is arguably his most important rhetorical

strategy. Every time the A is mentioned, we know that it stands for something, but we are not told what, because Hawthorne's strategy is to force us to work things out for ourselves. By withholding essential information, Hawthorne forces us to go over the text again, or at least, to reflect on our reading, and ask ourselves upon what evidence our understanding of the story is built. Thus, he inculcates the lesson that what we think of as history is not so much a series of facts as a series of interpretations, and that we need always to be prepared to go back to history and read it anew. Perhaps that is why *The Scarlet Letter* has been enshrined as well-nigh the model American literary text. For this novel does not only provide America with an imaginative account of the nation's history; it provides a model for reading that goes hand in hand with the democratic spirit that America prides itself of – or so critics have been want to argue (see, for instance, Bercovitch 1991). According to this model, there is no one way to understand the past, nor is just one way to understand the present and the future. The world is complex, requiring constant renegotiation of our relationship to it. This calls for debate, discussion, and a multitude of voices – and it calls for works of literature that allow for a multitude of interpretations.

This is hardly a controversial conclusion. But, then, all I have attempted to do here is to demonstrate how rhetoric allows us to approach texts in a systematic manner, fine-tuning our eye for detail in the process. Reading rhetorically entails re-directing focus from *what* the text means to *how* it means. More pointedly, it can be seen as a means to redirect focus from our aesthetic experience of the text to the text as linguistic structure. I do not mean to imply that aesthetic experience is not important, only that it would be useful for students to direct their attention to the text rather than to their own experience of it, especially since research has shown that in comparison with students in Russia, Finland, and France, Swedish students tend to focus less on formal aspects of the text, and more on extrinsic factors, or on simply recapitulating the story (Torell 2002; Johansson 2014).⁷

⁷ Whereas Swedish students are prone to focus mainly on their own interpretation regardless of its basis in the text, French students, Johansson remarks, run the opposite risk of focusing on formal aspects to such an extent that they neglect to reflect upon a text's overarching purpose. Her suggested remedy is to find a balance between the French focus on *explication de texte* and the Swedish focus on reader response (Johansson 2014,

The approach presented here suggests that literature should or at least could be taught less as a specific type of discourse, than as an occasion to discover language. Rather than teaching literature as an exploration of the self in the tradition of Louise Rosenblatt (1938), literature could be taught instead to help students become aware of the effects that can be achieved by the manipulation of its linguistic building-blocks, from minutiae like punctuation marks, over larger units such as sentences and paragraphs, to complex entities such as genres and formal registers. To that end, rhetorical analysis comes with the additional benefit of not discriminating between different types of texts. In contradistinction to literary analysis, rhetorical analysis does not depend upon any preconceptions about the nature of the object studied – any discourse can profitably be analyzed from a rhetorical perspective. Rhetoric can thus be a means to help us understand what is distinct about the discourses generally classified as “literature” in contemporary society, while at the same time helping us see the ways in which the functions of literary works overlap with those of other kinds of discourses, such as newspaper articles, political or religious pamphlets, academic textbooks, ads, or whatever.

Incidentally, a rhetorical turn in the teaching of literature would be especially useful in a second language learning environment. As practiced in the Nordic countries today, second language teaching risks coming across as a series of separate subjects – linguistics, literature, as well as social and cultural history, and often pedagogical content knowledge to boot – that may seem only contingently related to each other. Rhetoric, which as part of the *trivium* along with grammar and logic made up the foundation of Western schooling for the better part of a millennium (Joseph 2002), provides something of a sociolinguistic platform for dealing with language and communication, reminding us that “there can be no social man without language, and no language without social man” (Halliday 1978: 12). As such, it would make it easier for students and teachers alike to see the many points of contact between the various aspects of English as an academic discipline.

254). As I hope to have demonstrated, rhetorical analysis may be a more efficient means of rectification, as it combines close scrutiny of the text with an explicit injunction to relate it to its social situation.

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No one is “pro-politically correct”: Positive construals of *political correctness* in Twitter conversations

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Abstract

This study investigates use of the contested term *politically correct* (PC) in written conversational exchanges on Twitter. PC is sometimes assumed to be entirely a fabrication by conservatives or the far right, not a label that anyone would voluntarily attach to themselves. This study focuses on discursive instantiations of PC that challenge this assumption by construing PC favorably. To this end, a small set of conversations featuring more-or-less clearly positive construals of PC, selected from an initial material of 184 Twitter conversations containing the target phrase “politically correct,” are analyzed in detail. The aim is to see how such construals appear and function in everyday discourse.

Keywords: political correctness, PC, social media, discourse, Twitter

1. Introduction

Certain contested terms seem to function primarily as labels to stick to one’s ideological others, and rarely, if ever, as labels to stick to oneself. Few people, for instance, would be happy to self-identify as *racist*. It is not uncommon to view *political correctness* (PC) in such a manner. To label someone else *politically correct* is to question the legitimacy of their values, to dispute their integrity, or to accuse them of intellectual dishonesty. Or so we may assume. For this reason, PC has been described as a kind of myth (Wilson, 1995) or “spurious construct” (Fairclough, 2003, p. 25). Granath and Ullén (2016) have identified this as the “denier” position in popular and academic accountings of PC. An instance from the material used in the present study, Example (1), shows a conversational exchange of messages between two users of the microblogging service and social networking service Twitter, jointly adopting such a denier position:¹

¹ Usernames have been replaced with alphabetical labels. See Section 2 for further notes on how examples from the material are represented in this article.

- (1)
- A every time I rise above and don't engage in an argument abt political correctness on a comedian's IG photo an angel gets it's wings
 - B @userA are you pro-political correctness?
 - A @userB no one is "pro-politically correct" because it's a stupid buzzword conservatives propagated that doesn't even mean anything
 - B @userA that's my girl

In this exchange, the initial tweet by user A seems to be a complaint about attitudes concerning PC in the Instagram (“IG”) posts of comedians. User B replies to A’s tweet asking whether A is “pro” PC. User A expresses the view that no one is for PC, as the very notion is a conservative fabrication. User B affiliates with this view. But is it really the case that no one is pro-politically correct?

The notion of PC has emerged as a contentious emblem of polarized political discourse in the Left–Right and progressive–conservative interfaces. In the era of social networking, the contested status of PC is perhaps especially evident in the light of the discourses of and the discourses surrounding social media movements for social justice such as the #BlackLivesMatter campaign. As the OED notes, PC may in contemporary, typically depreciative, usage be taken to mean “conforming to a body of liberal or radical opinion, esp. on social matters, usually characterized by the advocacy of approved causes or views, and often by the rejection of language, behaviour, etc., considered discriminatory or offensive” (“Politically, adv. [def. C2],” n.d.). Commentators, critics, and scholars exhibit a range of perspectives on the meanings and functions of PC (see, e.g., D’Souza, 1991; Fairclough, 2003; Lakoff, 2000; Wilson, 1995), but naturalistic empirical work on PC as a discursive entity in everyday language use is largely lacking (Granath & Ullén, 2016).

The present study aims to contribute to an empirically grounded understanding of PC via analysis of the meanings and functions of labeling something or someone as politically correct in everyday written interaction on Twitter, with a special focus on instances where Twitter users seem to be affiliating with PC or associating PC with positive qualities. A dataset of Twitter conversations featuring the exact phrase “politically correct” was collected and analyzed in terms of the situated meaning and function of the phrase on a case-by-case basis. The discourse-analytical approach taken in this study skirts the emic–etic

boundary: while the analyses are primarily directed at understanding the perspectives of discourse participants, the research project is ultimately motivated by a critical political engagement (Bucholtz & Hall, 2008). It may be argued that empirical attention paid to the functional flexibility of the PC label in a social media context may help elucidate, if not resolve, the apparent intractability of both public and private ideological disputes which are variously viewed as stifled by political correctness or stifled by accusations of political correctness.

2. Material and method

A material of 184 conversational exchanges was collected from Twitter for the purposes of this study. The material was gathered using the advanced search interface provided on Twitter's website (www.twitter.com/search-advanced). All instances of the exact phrase "politically correct" from one particular date were retrieved (October 20, 2015; N = 628).² The particular date was chosen not to coincide too closely with any particular major holiday or news event, but was otherwise arbitrary.³ Out of the total number of tweets featuring the target phrase, 184 were automatically labeled by Twitter as "conversations." This means that the tweet is part of a reply-chain (typically, a conversational-style interaction formed by users replying to one another's tweets), which can be expanded and viewed within the list of search results. After collection, some of the conversations were filtered out due to irrelevance or unanalyzability. Ten conversations were discarded because the conversations were mainly or entirely conducted in some language other than English (apart from code-switching on the item "politically correct"). A further nine conversations were discarded because one or more interlocutors were evidently missing from the retrievals (likely due to them having subsequently deleted their accounts

² No other variants of phrases referring to PC, e.g. "political correctness" or "PC," were included.

³ The most major events reflected in the material are the incipient primary season in advance of the 2016 US presidential election, the incumbency of Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (who assumed office on November 4), Halloween (which was celebrated on October 31), and the rapper Jeezy's EP titled "Politically Correct" (which was released online in mid-October to promote a later full album release). None of these events occupy more than a handful of tweets each out of the material.

or made them private). Finally, three conversations were discarded because the target phrase occurred only within a linked URL, not within the actual body text of the retrieved tweets. Thus, the final conversational dataset comprises 162 conversations.

These 162 conversations feature a broad range of construals of PC, ranging from non-contentious to highly contentious, from sincere to ironic, and from playful to aggressive. To a cursory, rough analysis, the stereotypical function of the PC label – to dismiss a person or perspective that you disagree with – seems in fact to be the most frequent function in the material. However, for the purposes of this study, there was no systematic attempt to identify and quantify the functions of PC in a manner that would permit such characterizations of the material to be made with any rigor. The analyses below present a set of instances some of which were selected based on featuring relatively clear positive construals of PC, and some of which were selected to illustrate ambiguous or borderline cases.

In the presentation of examples, participants' usernames are replaced with alphabetical labels. Each line prefaced by such a label represents one tweet. A tweet that begins with “@username” is addressed at or posted as a reply to the user with that username. Note that in some instances, participants reply themselves to extend an utterance beyond the 140-character limit of a single tweet. Emoji smiley faces and other symbols are reproduced as pictures of Twitter's own Twemoji 2.0 versions, which is how they will commonly appear to users viewing tweets on Twitter's website. Further, the target phrase has been italicized to highlight where in the conversations it appears. Beyond this, the tweets are presented as they were retrieved (with one exception noted below).

3. Analysis

Example (2) shows an exchange of 6 tweets between two users, A and B. The first two tweets are both from A, who without addressing anyone in particular asks whether people are born gay, and then replies to himself to qualify and contextualize the question. After this, B replies with her opinion, and A and B briefly discuss the issue.

- (2)
A Are people born gay????

- A @userA sorry if I did not word this politically correct but I want to hear what people think (-:
- B @userA i definitely believe they are, just might take a while to find themselves is all
- A @userB okay so you believe it is hereditary?
- B @userA not necessarily im not fully informed in the biology about to say anything, but i definitely don't think people choose to be
- A @userB not so much as coming from parents but genetics... If that makes sense 😂

In this conversation, there is no sign that the label PC disrupts the exchange of ideas, nor that it is used to attack anyone. To the contrary, the apparent function of A's use of the phrase is to preempt negative responses or to prevent anyone from taking offense. While A is not exactly ascribing PC to himself, he is construing PC as a desirable quality – something to apologize for not accomplishing. While the popular debate about whether homosexuality is hereditary or a “choice” is often seen as a sensitive of hot button topic, this exchange between A and B seems measured and non-contentious, partly due to hedging features (“just might,” “not necessarily,” “If that makes sense”) and the smiley faces.

Example (3), below, is comparable to (2) in that PC is construed as a desirable quality. In the first tweet of this exchange, A is complimenting B for an online article that B wrote, documenting his experience of running a Kickstarter crowd-funding campaign. The quote comes from a section of the article that rather harshly expresses dissatisfaction with a courier service contracted for the campaign.

- (3)
- A @userB Brilliant #kickstarter debrief article "I know not to give any tasks to couriers that I wouldn't trust an ape to do" Thank you!
- B @userA I should probably change that to something more politically correct. Was so angry at time I wrote this.

In his reply to A, B does not address the positive review of the article as a whole, but rather focuses on the quote. B characterizes the quote's implicit comparison of couriers to apes as the regrettable result of being angry, and thus associates non-PC with irrational temperament. By suggesting that he “should” change the quoted sentence into something

“more politically correct,” B positions PC as a local improvement of discourse. Arguably, this conceptualization of PC falls in line with the understanding of PC as a form of “decorum” (see Granath & Ullén, forthcoming).

Example (4) shows an extended conversation between two users about what to call American Indians (*Native Americans* or *Indians*).⁴ User A is initially bothered by how characters on the crime drama series *Longmire* repeatedly say “Indian.” User B, who is taking a class in Native American literature, informs A that “Indian” is okay according to her professors, and, later in the conversation, that the notion of “Indian culture” is problematic, since the various Native American groups have quite distinct cultures.

- (4)
- A Native American culture is so interesting
 - A I'm watching this Netflix show called Longmire and it bothers me they always say "Indian" but they go into the Native American reservations
 - B @userA most Native American groups identify by the word "Indian"
 - A @userB really? I thought it wasn't politically correct to call them Indian since that's what the settlers called them and that
 - B @userA idk I'm currently taking my 2nd class about native American literature & both professors have told us that most say Indian
 - A @userB if that's the case, then the show is doing it right. Every time a white guy say Indian I cringed but I noticed the native
 - A @userB American characters were calling themselves Indian too. It's actually really interesting how much they go into Indian
 - A @userB culture but it's also like a crime drama at the same time
 - B @userA well I really hope the show isn't calling it "Indian culture" because there's many diff cultures within the Indian peoples
 - B @userA that's like saying "African culture". There is no single Indian culture that's, like, shared btwn all Indian groups
 - B @userA cultural practices and traditions differ a lot from group to group so I really hope they're not saying "Indian culture"

⁴ In the presentation of this example, the ordering of the tweets has been changed from how it appears in the search results. The tweets appeared out of chronological order in the reply chain because the two users apparently replied to the same tweet several times on some occasions, and thus did not always reply to the last tweet in the chain. The order of the tweets here presumably better represents the chronological sequential flow of the conversation as it was happening, but does not correspond exactly to the reply-chain as archived on Twitter.

- A @userB no, that was me generalizing. They usually refer to the Cheyenne culture (idk if I spelled that right)
- B @userA oh awesome, that's exactly what we're told to do in class lol always refer to them by their tribe name when possible

In this exchange, it is plain to see that both interactants are repeatedly displaying a concern for taking an interest in minority cultures, respecting the self-understandings of other cultures, and wanting to use social or cultural labels in a respectful way. That is, these two Twitter users are aligning positively with values of diversity, tolerance, and multiculturalism – values stereotypically associated with PC. The fourth tweet of the exchange reproduces this association: A's account of why it bothers her when characters on the show use the term *Indian* is because she believes it not to be the politically correct nomenclature. Once more, there is no indication that the use of the PC phrase functions to denigrate the values that it is associated with. To the contrary, the orientations of the participants in this exchange jointly construe PC as a desirable quality. The further association between PC as a positive trait and higher education resonates with a history of American campus activism being "P.C. and Proud" (Gibson, 2016).

Example (5) shows user A, a contributing author to the *Washington Post's* "PostPartisan" blog, tweeting a quote from and link to his own article. The article criticizes some recent (at the time) comments by Republican Party presidential hopeful Ben Carson regarding race and PC (Capeheart, 2015). The tweet reproduces a quote from Ben Carson.

- (5)
- A "I will speak the truth regardless of what media and the PC police say is 'controversial.' It's time for honesty" <http://wapo.st/1RUm7S1>
- B @userA:Beaause there is no politically correct manner in which wapo knows how to present truth? What a waste that guy is w-o a scalpel.

User B replies to A with a supposedly sarcastic question, implying that the conflict between PC and honesty proposed by Carson in the quote is false. The understanding of B's question as sarcastic is most plainly justified by B's criticism of Carson as a "waste" without his scalpel (referring to Carson's background as a surgeon), which clearly positions B as critical of Carson's political perspective. User B thus comes across

as a defender of PC, suggesting via sarcasm that one can in fact present truth in a PC manner.⁵

Example (6) illustrates an analytical complication when it comes to evaluating ambiguity. In the initial tweet, A reminisces fondly about the summer of 2014, which was spent “stream sniping” a player called “marine” in the video game *Day-Z*.⁶

- (6)
- A summer of 2014 none of us did anything except stream snipe marine in dayz
good fuckin times
- B @userA glory days of the squad
We pretended to be politically correct but absolutely shit on other people most of the time

User B replies to A by calling these the “glory days” of the group of their group of friends, recalling that they “pretended” to be PC while actually behaving horribly. The problem that this instance poses for the purposes of this study is that on the one hand, being PC is contrasted with behaving in a mean-spirited way, but on the other hand, the mean-spirited behavior is remembered fondly. Thus, PC is positioned as “good” in a conventional moral sense, but it is nevertheless the contrary to PC behavior that is being explicitly positively evaluated. Thus, (6) presents a positive construal of PC in one regard, but without framing PC behavior as necessarily being preferable or desirable. Given the

⁵ There is a minor ambiguity in B’s reply: While the second sentence of B’s tweet is clearly condemning Carson, the first sentence refers to *wapo*’s (that is, the *Washington Post*’s), rather than Carson’s, supposed inability to combine political correctness and truthfulness. It is unclear whether B is understanding *wapo* as endorsing Carson’s view by quoting it, and thus condemning both *wapo* and Carson, or whether B is suggesting that Carson was complaining about the political correctness of *wapo*. Arguably, however, this ambiguity does not pose an analytical problem for the sake of understanding the evaluative construal of PC here.

⁶ “Stream sniping” is jargon from the video game livestreaming community of *Twitch.tv*. When someone is broadcasting themselves in real time over the internet, playing an online multiplayer game, to “stream snipe” them typically means to try to get into their gameworld to disrupt whatever they are trying to accomplish in the game. It is often considered to be a form of ‘trolling’. *Day-Z* is a massively multiplayer online game taking place in a zombie-ridden post-apocalypse, and the players can either help or prey on one another to survive.

conversational topic of “stream sniping,” typically a ‘trolling’ behavior, User B may be characterized as employing a positive construal of PC, by distancing himself from it, as a way of performing a troll persona.

Example (7) features a similar type of ambiguity. This conversation begins with a playful exchange between A and B about being up too early in the morning (note, for instance, the playful hashtag #AintNotSleepBih, where *bih* is likely the conventional shortening of *bitch*, and abbreviations such as *lmbo* ‘laughing my butt off,’ and *smh* ‘shaking my head’). After the first seven tweets, the topic turns metapragmatic, with B evaluating A’s tweets as “hilarious.” User A suggests she would probably come across as even more funny “in person,” as she only expresses a small portion of her “real thoughts” online.

- (7)
- A I'm such an old lady. Why am I up thinking about food? And mimosas? And shopping? #AintNoSleepBih #AlwaysHungry
- B @userA lmbo
- A @userB just grown. Smh. Woke up at 445. Smh.
- B @userA Day's half done already. Lmbo
- A @userB lol! No it hasn't even started. It's jammed packed today.
- B @userA lol
- A @userB I'm just wondering.
- B @userA you're hilarious
- A @userB you should hear me in person. I don't post 1/3 of my real thoughts. 😞😂
- B @userA Likewise, this place isn't always the best venue for certain schools of thought.
- A @userB not mine at all. I have NO filter. On here I'm politically correct. And sweet. 😊
- B @userA Yeah, this I will have to see.

User B also claims to filter himself on Twitter, because “this place isn’t always the best venue for certain schools of thought.” User A in turn associates this kind of selective self-presentation with being PC. The ambiguity of this construal of PC resides in how User A seems to be reproducing a commonly disparaging notion of PC as a kind of filter or (self-)censorship – thus contrasting PC discourse with expression of

one's "real thoughts." However, A is apparently not framing this notion of PC in a disparaging way, but rather associating it with being "sweet" and with the expression of the cheery, rosy-cheeked emoji. This construal can perhaps also be related to the notion of PC as a form of 'decorum,' mentioned in relation to Example (3) above.

In addition, (7) also hints at a further complication for any attempt to straight-forwardly define what constitutes a positive construal, namely that many of the conversations in the material introduce the notion of PC in a context of playfulness and irony. Another playful interaction between two users is illustrated in (8), where, despite the apparently friendly and positively charged quality of the exchange as a whole, it is difficult to assign any clear-cut evaluative polarity to the PC phrase.

- (8)
- A People always out to offend...
- B @userA 🖍️ that's what this emoji is for
- A @userB ily Dan
- B @userA 🏳️🗍️ got this here politically correct ass emoji for you now too bro

User A initially tweets the observation that there are people who are always "out to offend." B replies to this by suggesting that one should respond to offensive people with the emoji of nails being painted with nail polish. Among other potential functions, the nail care emoji is frequently used to dismissive, superior attitude, or a playful devil-may-care attitude.⁷ User A indicates appreciation by telling B that he loves him (*ily* 'I love you'). B requites A's appreciation, calling A *bro*, 'brother,' and using the emoji of two males figures kissing with a heart in between them. B himself refers to this as a "politically correct ass emoji." The emoji in question is one out of a line-up of new, more diverse and inclusive, emoji which were released in 2015. These emoji were met with mixed with reactions, and sometimes denigrated as overly PC (see, for instance, Maloney, 2015). However, in the context of this particular exchange, it seems that B is not so much dismissing the emoji by labeling it PC, but rather playing upon such views to make something

⁷ See, for instance, Jewell (2014), for an entertaining, if unsystematic, mapping of some common functions of the nail care emoji.

of a joke out of his brotherly affiliation with A, perhaps with the face-saving function of making the display of affection defeasible. Be that as it may, the analytical point to make here is that the situated function of the PC phrase in this conversational exchange may be too particular or too ambiguous for a gross categorization of it as a 'positive' or 'negative' construal of PC to be possible. As noted, the material was not categorized so as to permit quantification for the purposes of this study, but it is safe to say that evaluatively ambiguous, playful or joking, uses of the target phrase were more frequent than positive construals.

4. Discussion and conclusion

What the material collected for this study shows above all else is that even in a relatively small corpus, a great conceptual complexity emerges, which the analyses presented above capture only some of. While there may be some truth to the perspective, cited in the introduction above (Example 089), that PC is a "stupid buzzword" propagated by conservatives to silence progressives and liberals, it is definitely not the case that it "doesn't even mean anything." As it turns out, PC tends to mean rather many things. The small selection of (more-or-less clearly) positively valenced instantiations of the phrase "politically correct" analyzed above shows PC being used to pre-empt potentially offensive understandings, to perform considerate and respectful personae, to project a more desirable state of discourse, to do playfully affiliative interpersonal bonding, and to serve as a vehicle for irony. These positive construals of PC occurred in contexts ranging from highly personal communication – e.g., friends sharing memories – to public commentary on current events – e.g., responding to a *Washington Post* bulletin. The ambiguous or borderline cases also show that while a particular situated construal of PC may be favorable in some respect, it may still retain depreciative connotations or functions in other respects. Further research with a larger material and wider selection parameters is certain to uncover even more complex situated functions of PC phrases. It may, for instance, be the case that the more frequently occurring derogatory uses of PC phrases have in their own right been underestimated in terms of the diverse functions they may be able to perform in actual interaction.

For those who support the liberal, inclusive, and progressive agendas typically associated with PC, the question is perhaps which project is

more politically productive – to reject the term together with the strawman it often denotes, or to appropriate the term and instill it with actual progressive values. While positive construals of PC still demonstrably happen, however, it has been suggested that maybe the connotations of derision and ridicule have become too entrenched for PC terms to be salvageable (Gibson, 2016). But even if PC is destined to some extent to remain, as one Twitter user, not cited above, puts it, “the go to complaint for the bigots to justify their weak shit,” it is also, plainly, more than merely that.

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Three types of zoological common names and their formation-processes

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Abstract

Known biological species have a standard international scientific name, and many species also have more or less fixed common names in one or more languages. We can identify three groups of common names in terms of their form and formation-processes, here called *folk*, *collector*, and *popularizing*. The folk names have long been studied in detail. The collector names have attracted little attention although they show an interesting variety of formation processes and cross-linguistic contrasts reveal interesting social differences. The popularizing names are the most mechanically formed, but the naming patterns reflect interesting aspects of their origin in a nineteenth-century liberal project, in particular nationalism. In this study I examine these types of name and naming process. Comparisons are made among English, French, German, and Swedish, elucidating the formation processes and the differences in word-formation traditions, entomological history, and society they may reflect.

Keywords: terminology, biology, butterflies, vernacular names, history of science, English, French, German, Swedish

Introduction

Known biological species have a standard, if frequently adjusted, international scientific name. Many species (or genera or families) also have more or less fixed common, vernacular or trivial names in one or (usually) more languages. Thus the common butterfly called Näselfjäril [nettle butterfly¹] in Swedish has the scientific name *Aglais urticae* and is called Petite Tortue [small tortoise], or Vanesse de l'ortie [nettle Vanessa] in French, Kleiner Fuchs [small chestnut horse] in German, and

¹ Following biological usage, scientific names are given in italics with the genus capitalized. Vernacular names in all languages are given in normal print with the first word or all words capitalized. Some English names are provided with Swedish glosses in single inverted commas for the convenience of readers familiar with Swedish butterfly names. Where non-English names are translated literally into English, square brackets and no capitals are used.

Small Tortoiseshell in English. There are obviously relationships of meaning and form across languages, but also striking differences.

Creating a research space in this area is not an easy task. First of all, it is hard to show the topic's importance, since bugs and butterflies have a long history of symbolizing the trivial. Secondly, there is no coherent body of research to add to, and hence no gap to fill. The disparate literature on the topic falls into at least four mutually unaware categories:

- Proposals for new or improved names by biologists (for example Scudder 1877, Murphy and Ehrlich 1983, Duckworth and Pine 2003), usually designed for popularization, that is to provide an accessible nomenclature for non-professionals that mirrors the scientific system and its underlying concepts.
- Histories of the development of the names by language historians or antiquarian-minded natural historians (for French Cordier's extensive blog, eg. Cordier 2014a, for English Salmon 2000 and Gabb 1988). The first group are simply examining the vocabulary of an earlier period, and hence the knowledge and conceptual framework of the period. The second are essentially studying the history of science from a linguistic angle, though Cordier uses the specific term *zoononymie*, saying that it is a branch of onomastics.
- Synchronic views of name types by linguists with reference to metaphor and metonymy, (such as Singnoi 2011, Ureña 2012 and Persson 2000). These are part of the general revival of interest in metaphor studies and investigate the domain of biological names to pursue goals of understanding cognition and language.
- And, probably the largest group, ethnobiological studies by linguistic anthropologists (Casagrande 2004), often concerned to show that indigenous classification systems mirror the international scientific system and hence 'species' or 'genus' is a semantic universal.

Terminologists do not seem to have tackled the area but terminology is relevant because there is a strong tradition struggling to make the names into terms which meet the prescriptive demands of terminology.

The aim in this study is to use the criteria and concepts that have arisen from these fields to produce a linguistically and biologically (or terminologically) motivated model of vernacular biological names, and to test it on a sample of names – those of most of the butterflies found in the UK. The model's applicability is tested by looking at names in four languages. English, French, German, and Swedish.

In several of these research traditions a distinction is made or proposed in this research, between two types of vernacular names: folk and learned, distinct if not always clearly distinguishable (cf Singnoi

2011). Our concern is with learned names, but folk names are of interest because they show the social rootedness of names.

Folk names

Folk names are old words coined by people who actually worked with species of economic, medical, or agricultural importance, the type of names investigated by ethno-biologists and possibly language historians. Creatures which are the focus of activity and have high utility value have long had folk names at the species level. Given the proverbial non-utility of butterflies, folk-names are not of interest here, except in so far as they illustrate the way different discourse communities use different names because they have different purposes. Wells (1958) gives a variety of fishermen's names for fish and *Chef's resources* (2015) gives several different market names for many fish, different from both the fishermen's names and the standard vernacular names.

The only current English folk name for butterflies is Cabbage White, referring to any one of three species which are indeed of economic or practical importance for gardeners. However the name Painted Lady for *Cynthia cardui* 'tistelfjäril' [thistle butterfly] was recorded by Charles du Bois in 1692 according to Salmon (2000) and seems likely to have a folk origin too.

Formal types of learned names

Learned names have been devised since the Renaissance by educated observers whose interest in the species was independent of their practical uses. Species of butterflies and moths, dragonflies, and most other insects only have learned names, if they have vernacular names at all.

Butterfly names can consist of one semantic element, which may be represented by one or more words (Peacock, Ringlet, Painted Lady, Camberwell Beauty) (compare Singnoi 2010). However, most (like Green Hairstreak) consist of two elements: what Duckworth and Pine (2003) call a group name, sometimes corresponding to the genus or the family and often vaguely suggesting some characteristic, and one or more modifiers identifying the particular species by appearance, habits, abundance, or location. Singnoi (2011) uses the terms 'core' and 'modifier'. The head, core or group name is usually one word but can be

two, as in the case of the fairly numerous species of Clouded Yellows ‘höfjárilar’, where Clouded has to be taken as part of the group name, since there are no European plain Yellows.

The names themselves can be classified by the criterion of systematicity and their elements by that of descriptiveness. Systematicity is conformity to the standard taxonomy or via some other pattern, relating the referent to other species. Alternatively the name may be unsystematic, not placing its referent in relation to other species. Descriptiveness is the extent to which the element gives information about the referent. First, an element may be arbitrary or motivated. If motivated, it may also be descriptive. If descriptive, it can be literal or metaphorical.

The last distinction is not simple, although this is not the place to discuss the theory of metaphor. Singnoi (2011) classifies Thai plant name elements by the relation of the meaning of the plant name to the features of the plant. She uses the categories ‘proper name’ ‘metonymy’ and ‘metaphor’, treating any element non-metaphorically referring to an aspect of the plant as metonymous. English examples would be *gentian*, *meadowsweet*, and *harebell* respectively. However, any description is only of a part or aspect of an organism, and metaphor is usually based on a part or aspect (Radden 2003) of the source and target, so I have decided not to use ‘metonymy’ but merely consider whether the aspect referred to in the name is described literally or metaphorically

Table 1 shows and exemplifies these distinctions. The systematic names consist of a modifier and a group term. Group names may refer to appearance (White, Brown, Blue) or behaviour (Skipper). The reference to appearance may be concealed in word-formation as in Fritillary from Latin *fritillus* ‘dicebox’, understood as ‘chessboard’, referring to the chequered wings. They may or may not correspond to biological taxonomic groupings: various unrelated butterflies are grouped as Arguses and the uniquely English grouping of Admirals (Red, White, Poplar) has no taxonomic coherence. The unsystematic names do not categorize their referents, they merely label them.

The first element of Sooty Copper is descriptive because the butterfly is blackish but metaphorical, since it does not actually have soot on it. The name Sooty Copper is systematic and taxonomically (and terminologically) appropriate, since all and only Coppers are members of the genus *Lycaena*. The first element of Marbled White can probably be

treated as metaphorical too, and the name is systematic, since there are other Whites with different patterns. However this name is not taxonomically appropriate, since although the butterfly is white, it is not a member of the Pieridae family like other Whites. The unsystematic name Peacock is descriptive because the butterfly has a large 'eye' on its wing like the marks on a peacock's tail, and is metaphorical.

Table 1. A model for describing the vernacular biological names of butterflies

	+Motivated (refers to the element in ital.)			-Motivated (element in ital.)
	+Descriptive		-Descriptive	
	+Metaphorical	-Metaphorical		
+Systematic +Taxonomically compatible (whole name)	(Sooty Copper)	Large Blue Lulworth Skipper	Adonis Blue Arran Brown Bath White Berger's Clouded Yellow	Thor's Fritillary
+Systematic -Taxonomically compatible (whole name)	?Marbled White Scotch Argus Red Admiral	-	-	Duke of Burgundy Fritillary
-Systematic (whole name)	Peacock	Orange Tip	Camberwell Beauty	Duke of Burgundy

The elements listed as descriptive but not metaphorical can refer to a number of different aspects of the insect. The most common are appearance (e.g. Silver-spotted), supposed or actual larval food plant (e.g. the folk name Cabbage White), habitat (Heath, Wood), and size (Large, Small) or a location (Lulworth) where it is frequent in England. Metaphorical descriptive names often refer to appearance (Peacock), and sometimes to behaviour (Gatekeeper) or size (Emperor).

The elements listed as motivated but not descriptive refer to a beautiful mythical figure (Adonis), a place where the butterfly was supposedly first seen but may not be particularly, or at all, frequent

(Arran Brown²), or the naturalist who first identified it (Glanville Fritillary).

The fourth column lists names which are not motivated, that is arbitrary. Three Northern European butterfly names illustrate how a name can be systematic but arbitrary: Frejya's Fritillary *Boloria freija* 'Frejas pärlemorfjäril', Frigga's Fritillary *Boloria frigga* 'Friggas pärlemorfjäril', and Thor's Fritillary *Boloria thore* 'Bäckpärlemorfjäril'. The English names and two of the Swedish are based on the scientific names and the modifiers have been given on the same principle as warships or railway engines are named. A class of proper names is chosen and member names are assigned arbitrarily to members of the class to be named. The modifier is arbitrary but the name is systematic, in that only butterflies of the genus *Boloria* are named after Germanic deities, and the head of the phrase refers to a recognizable group of genera. Many scientific names were coined by Linnaeus on this principle.

Popularizing and collectors' name types and naming communities:

Many systematic-descriptive names have been devised, often quite recently, by biologists who know the scientific names and want to popularize the field. They normally meet the prescriptive demands for terms, in that each form corresponds to a well-defined concept in the theory constituted by biological nomenclature.

The English names in use for dragonflies in Britain are examples. They were first formulated (publicly) by Longfield 1937 but quite drastically revised by Hammond 1977 (both cited in Corbet and Brooks 2008). The names are systematic and the elements descriptive: all members of the *Sympetrum* genus, for example, are Darters (vaguely related to their hunting techniques) and modifiers give aspects of appearance to distinguish species: Black Darter, Ruddy Darter, etc. The aim of this typical popularizing set of names has been to find vernacular names which meet terminological requirements by mirroring the biological classification and provide a helpful characterization of the insect's appearance, habits, abundance, or location.

² The Arran Brown has probably never lived in Britain, but has, perhaps mistakenly, been recorded once or twice, first on Arran.

However popularizing names do not always use descriptive elements. A nineteenth-century set of vernacular dragonfly names, found by Gabb and first published by him in 1988, used systematic arbitrary rather than descriptive group names, calling groups Fay, Elf, Sylph, Fairy, Sphinx and Nymph rather than Bluet, Darter or Hawker (inspired perhaps by *νύμφη*, said to be the Greek word for dragonfly). While these appear odd in an insular British context, it has been quite common in France and in the former British Empire for authorities to assign even vernacular names on an arbitrary-systematic or descriptive-unsystematic basis, and, as noted above, many of Linnaeus' scientific names are on this basis.

For at least a century and a half biologists have complained that vernacular names are necessary for popularization, but existing forms are not fit for their purpose, either because they are unsystematic, or, worse, because they are wrongly systematic. Thus Scudder (1877:2) says "In our own country [the US] all the common birds and flowers have [...] received such names, and it is my belief that the study of butterflies would be far more popular, if they also had common names." but continues (3), when proposing to call *Megisto eurytus* The Little Wood Satyr, "Gosse named it the dusky Argus, but it is not an Argus". Similarly, over a century later, Duckworth and Pine (2003:152-3) say "When non-biologists need to refer unambiguously to a given species, many tend to feel more comfortable using their own language." However, they say, (154) their aim is to make English names more informative and useful in the future. "There is no reason for authors of [vernacular-name] checklists merely to follow. They can and should lead." Like Scudder on *M. eurytus*, they object to existing names as misleading (159) "Among Indochinese mammals, 'Large Indian Civet' *Viverra zibetha* and 'Small Indian Civet' *Viverricula indica* are not close relatives, one large and one small".

Thus we have biologists seeking to impose standardized term-like names which reflect true systematic relationships, as shown in international scientific names and thus guide lay people to a correct understanding. But where do the unruly 'wrong' names they complain of come from and who coined them? Cordier (2014a) and Salmon (2000) show that at least for butterflies the answer is clear: most names were invented in the very late seventeenth century, and in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, by collectors. They either predate or are

independent of the Linnean names; the coiners of the English names were concerned to identify their finds but not necessarily to classify them scientifically.

Table 2. Some names used by Petiver (1695)

The Brimstone Butterfly
The small white Butterfly
The small Heath Butterfly
(<i>Oculus pavonis dict</i>) The Peacock's eye
(<i>Papilio testudinarius major</i>) The greater Tortoise-shell Butterfly
(<i>Papilio testudinarius minor</i>) The lesser Tortoise-shell Butterfly
The little Blew-Argus
The greater silver-streaked Fritillary
The Painted-Lady
The Admiral

The colours of dragonflies fade when they die, so they are unsatisfactory objects for collectors. By contrast, pinned butterflies and moths retain their colours and patterns for hundreds of years and thus provide excellent material for discussion, admiration, and general gloating. Consequently dragonfly names are recent coinages while butterfly names go back to the beginning of collection and enthusiasm. A substantial number were invented in English by Petiver (1695 and later publications). Table 2 (adapted from Cordier 2014a) shows some names devised by Petiver which are still in use. As well as being older than most popularizing names, they also more varied. Some were unsystematic and un-descriptive, though motivated (Painted Lady, Admiral) while others were highly descriptive and systematic, like Greater Silver-streaked Fritillary.

According to Cordier (2014a) names like Painted Lady and Admiral whose equivalents occur in other European languages (Belle-Dame, Amiral) originated in England. Peacock is an exception that can be traced back to the early seventeenth century in Dutch and somewhat later in German.

The relationship of systematic to unsystematic names

Unsystematic descriptive names do not necessarily antedate systematic descriptive popularizing ones. The most collectable of living things are sea-shells and as such they have long had vernacular names. An extremely revealing source here is de Roissy (1802), who gives names for each species of up to three types. Each species has an entry with a heading giving names and scientific synonyms, followed by a descriptive text. In the heading the species has an international scientific name such as *Monodonta pharaonis*, based on Lamarck and Linnaeus, and a French popularizing name, highly systematically in two parts with a group name corresponding to the genus and a modifier defining the species, such as *Monodonte Bouton*. But for many species we are also told in the heading what they are called *vulgairement* and these are unsystematic collectors' names, in this case *le bouton de camisole*. This work shows that the distinction between popularizing, collectors', and folk names has long existed and that scientists have been proposing not only new vernacular names where none exist but also reformed ones alongside those used by lay experts for at least two centuries. It does not appear that de Roissy's French names were adopted, perhaps because his genus *Monodonta* did not survive. The shell is still called Bouton de Camisole today.

A further discourse community once involved in the naming is suggested by the entries in volume 56 of the *Dictionnaire de Sciences Naturelles* (1828) shown in Figure 1. Some vernacular names are ascribed to naturalists (*nom vulgaire*), others to dealers (*nom marchand*), and *le bouton de camisole* is identified as the naturalist's name for what the dealers call *turban de pharaon* (now in the genus *Trochus*). Dealers want an attractive name that emphasizes the uniqueness of their wares. In lepidoptery they were influential in nineteenth-century Britain, but now sell only exotic species, not West European insects of the type discussed here.

While in these examples multiple names used by different communities seem to be accepted, nowadays terminologically unsuitable naturalists' names are sites of struggle. The traditional name of *Hamearis Lucina*, 'gulvivefjäril' [primrose butterfly] – the Duke of Burgundy Fritillary – is such a case. It is so called because it looks like a fritillary, with the typical chequerboard pattern of these genera. In fact it belongs to a completely different family, of which it is the only European representative. Collectors only want a label but biologists want names to

be terms reflecting the real taxonomy. In this case the biologists seem to have won a partial victory and the insect is now sometimes simply called Duke of Burgundy. An unsystematic and non-descriptive³ name is replacing one which, although partially descriptive (to anyone who knows what a fritillary looks like), committed the terminological crime of suggesting a wrong concept. But this is a rare example of a possible victory for the purists. Murphy and Ehrlich (1983) denounce many such deviances from taxonomic logic, most of which seem to continue unrepressed.

TUR

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TURBAN DE PHARAON. (*Conch.*) Nom marchand d'une petite coquille, plus connue sous la dénomination de bouton de camisole; *trochus Pharaonis*, L., type du genre Bouton; *Clangulus* de Denys de Montfort. (DE B.)

TURBAN ROUGE. (*Nématopodes.*) Nom vulgaire du *balanus tintinnabulum*, Linn. (DE B.)

TURBAN TURC. (*Conch.*) Nom marchand de la même espèce de coquille. (DE B.)

TURBANS. (*Nématopodes.*) Dénomination empruntée par M. de Lamarck aux anciens conchyliologistes et même aux marchands d'objets d'histoire naturelle, pour désigner une division de véritables oursins à tubercules perforés, dont M. de Lamarck a fait son genre Cidarite. Leur forme élevée leur a sans doute valu ce nom.

Figure 1. Extract from *Dictionnaire de Sciences Naturelles* illustrating names given by different communities

There is a powerful and knowledgeable community behind traditional names. The present-day descendants of the lay expert collectors are on-line gurus. If a picture of an insect appears on <http://www.wildaboutbritain.co.uk/> it will be identified within a few hours and if it is a butterfly or macromoth the identifier will give its English name. This community both uses vernacular names and has strong conservative and nationalistic views on them. The biologists obviously have trouble imposing their will on them.

³ Cordier considers that when Moses Harris invented the name in 1776 he had in mind Burgundian court dress, and thus that the name is metaphorically descriptive like Fritillary.

A cross-linguistic sample of butterfly names

To test or exemplify the model just developed, I selected butterfly names in four languages: English, French, German and Swedish. I took a list of 59 butterflies which occur or have occurred in the British Isles, all of which also occur in France and Germany and looked at their names in English, French and German. Most of them also occur in Sweden. The total number of names examined in the different languages varied slightly because of confusion in the lists around Wood Whites, of which several cryptic species have recently been discovered.

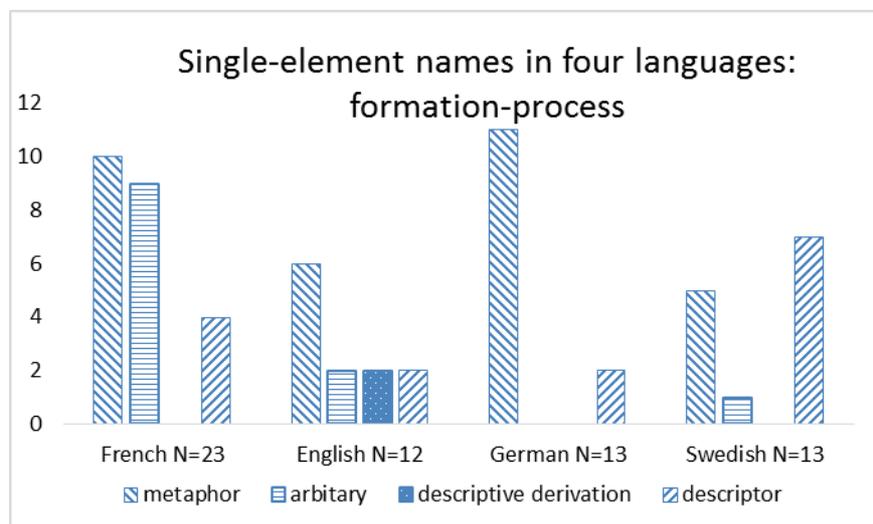


Figure 2. Formation process of single-element butterfly names in four languages

Figure 2 shows the relations between names counted as having just one distinctive element and their referents. There were similar numbers of single-element names in the Swedish (13), German (13) and English (12) samples but substantially more in French (23). Figure 2 shows that this is because French has both many metaphorical and many arbitrary names. Among the metaphors, Robert-le-Diable for the ragged-winged *Polygonia c-album* Comma ‘vinbärsfuks’ and Tabac d’Espagne for *Argynnis paphia*, the Silver-washed Fritillary ‘silverstreckad pärlemorffjäril’ stand out. The arbitrary names are classical borrowings in the spirit of Linnaeus, like Tircis for *Pararge aegeria*, the Speckled

Wood ‘kvickgräsfjäril’ and Myrtil for *Maniola jurtina* the Meadow Brown ‘slattergräsfjäril’. In German metaphors predominate among the single-element names: *Maniola jurtina* is Grosses Ochsenauge and *Argynnis paphia* is, appropriately, Kaisermantel. Swedish has an unusually high proportion of single-element names which are literal descriptors because of more prosaic forms giving the supposed or actual larval food plant like Nässilfjäril (Small Tortoiseshell) and Aspfjäril [poplar butterfly] for *Limenitis camilla*, the White Admiral. English has two single-element names which are descriptive derived forms: Grayling and Ringlet.

Some names have spread: Painted Lady and Belle-Dame; English (Red) Admiral and German and Swedish Amiral; French Aurore and Swedish and German Aurora; French Citron, German Zitronenfalter, and Swedish Citronfjäril (for *Gonepteryx rhamni*, the Brimstone [sulphur] butterfly). The continental languages have vernacular words that cover all Lepidoptera (*papillon*, *Falter*, *fjäril*) while English lacks a superordinate to (typically night-flying) *moth* and (day-flying) *butterfly*. Consequently the butterfly that has to be called Paon du Jour and Tagpfauenauge [day peacock] in French and German to distinguish it from the night-flying Peacock Moth can just be called Peacock Butterfly in English.

The two-element names can be compared in terms of the systematicity of the groups formed or in terms of what is described by the modifiers. Table 3 shows what vernacular group names correspond to taxonomic groups in the four languages.

Table 3 shows the relations between the vernacular group names and the taxonomy. The group names merge taxonomic categories in slightly different ways. For example Swedish distinguishes Hesperinae and Pyrginae, which the other languages merge, and English merges Heliconiinae and Melitainae, which are distinct in other languages. No language has a vernacular group name for the large, common and brightly coloured Nymphalinae, and only Swedish has a consistent group name for the Satyrinae. One counter-taxonomic category exists in both English and French: Argus for butterflies in several different families or subfamilies. English is alone in also having the counter-taxonomic Admiral category (Red Admiral, White Admiral, Poplar Admiral) and the anomalous grouping of the one European member of the Riodinae (Duke of Burgundy) with the Fritillaries and of one member of the

Satyrinae with the Whites. Most of the group names are literally descriptive, often via compounding or derivation. Argus and the names for the Heliconiinae and Melitainae are metaphorical, and several French group names are adaptations of the scientific names or otherwise arbitrary in terms of modern French.

Table 3. Vernacular group names in four languages compared with biological taxonomic groupings

Latin name of taxon	English	French	German	Swedish
Hesperiinae	Skipper	Hesperie	Dickkopffalter	smygare
Pyrginae	Skipper	Hesperie	Dickkopffalter	visslare
Polyommagini	Blue (Argus)	Azuré (Argus)	Bläuling	blåvinge
Lycaenini	Copper	Cuivré (Argus)	Feuerfalter	guldvinge
Theclini	Hairstreak	Thécla (Argus)	Zipfelfalter	Snabbvinge
Riodininae	(Fritillary)	–	–	–
Colias	Clouded Yellow	–	Gelbling	höfjäril
Pieridae	White	Piérïde	Weissling	vitvinge*
Heliconiinae	Fritillary	Nacré	Perlmutterfalter	pärlemorfjäril
Melitaeinae	Fritillary	Melitée	Scheckenfalter	nätfjäril
Nymphalinae	(Admiral, Tortoiseshell, etc)	(Tortue, etc)	(Fuchs, etc)	(fuks, etc.)
Limenitinae	Admiral	Sylvain	Eisvogel	–
Apaturinae	Emperor	Mars changeant	Schillerfalter	Skimmerfjäril
Satyrinae	Brown (White, Argus)	(Moiré, arbitrary)	(Waldteufel, Waldvogel, Ochsenauge etc)	gräsfjäril
Coenonymphini (a subgroup of Satyrinae)	Heath	Fadet	Wiesenvögelchen	gräsfjäril

Table 4 shows the (first) modifiers of these group names in the four languages, classified by their referents. Almost all the German and Swedish modifiers are descriptive in some way, while in English especially there are motivated modifiers (Glanville Fritillary first observed by Lady Glanville, Queen of Spain Fritillary, etc) which are not

descriptive. In the continental languages a substantial proportion of the modifiers give a plant name which is or was formerly supposed to be the larval food plant, but there are no such modifiers in the English sample. In German, French and English it is more frequent for two similar insects to be distinguished by size; in Swedish habitat or food plant is used as the distinguisher. (Thus the pair Small Tortoiseshell, Large Tortoiseshell are *Petite Tortue* and *Grande Tortue*, *Kleiner Fuchs* and *Grosser Fuchs*, but *Nässelfjäril* and *Körsbärsfuk*s [Cherry Chestnut-horse”] in Swedish.)

Table 4. Modifiers of selected butterfly names in four languages, by aspect of referent invoked

	% of modifiers in each reference category					
	N	Appearance	Larval food plant	habitat	size	Non- descriptive
French	36	17	42	6	22	14
English	47	36	0	17	21	28
German	45	29	31	7	27	7
Swedish	39	26	31	28	8	8

Discussion

So the English names focus more on appearance than the others and are less well adapted to the demands of terminology, favouring appearance over taxonomy in several cases. Larval food plants are not used as modifiers but non-descriptive items of various kinds are rather frequent. The French names are less transparent than the others, being more likely to be arbitrary, metaphorical or unsystematic and to use obsolete colour terms like *moiré*. In French, too, there are some untaxonomic categories. The German and Swedish names do not come into conflict with taxonomy, but the German ones are more inclined than the Swedish to create small subcategories within taxonomic groups, frequently with metaphorical reference to birds. The Swedish modifiers are the most descriptive and prosaic, with few metaphors, and very frequent reference to larval food plants even when the name is not systematic (as illustrated for the Tortoiseshells).

These tendencies are not merely historical. Two species of butterflies have been identified in Western Europe in the last seventy years. *Colias alfacarensis*, was distinguished from the Clouded Yellow in 1948 (by

Lucien Berger) and was given the motivated and systematic but not descriptive name Berger's Clouded Yellow in English. In French it was called Fluoré, descriptive but not systematic, and in German and Swedish the names are descriptive and systematic: Hufeisenklee-Gelbling and Kronillhöfjäril (giving the larval food plant, as in the scientific name). *Leptidea reali*, was distinguished from the Wood White in 1988. It is called Real's Wood White in English and La Piéride de Réal in French - motivated but not descriptive names. In Swedish the name is systematic and descriptive: Ängsvitvinge [meadow white] as opposed to Skogsvitvinge [wood white]. No widespread German name seems to have been given.

Part of the explanation for the pattern might be that English and French names were coined by collectors or connoisseurs and German and Swedish ones by scientists popularizing their field. I have as yet no evidence as to the coining of German and Swedish names, and the history of the names in English and French suggests a partly different or complementary explanation.

Many of the modern English names were formulated late in the seventeenth century or early in the eighteenth, by naturalists who simply did not know the food plants or usual habitats of the insects they saw. They gave names on the basis of appearance or where the insect was first observed. The names they gave were entrenched early and have survived partly because enthusiasts are attached to names which they have learned with some difficulty and which are marks of their identity and group membership. These names also established a naming tradition maintained in the recent names for the Wood Whites and Clouded Yellows.

The French names are formulated in accordance with the generally rather opaque pattern of word-formation in French, and in particular with a uniquely French preference for attractive over systematic names shared by popularizing experts. The relatively recent name Fluoré for Berger's Clouded Yellow shows that this is a living tradition, not a historic remnant. Similarly, Cordier (2013b) credits G. Chr. Luquet with coining the beautiful and descriptive but unsystematic metaphorical name Collier de Corail [coral necklace] for the Brown Argus *Aricia agestis* 'rödfläckig blåvinge' as late as 1986.

Thus it seems that these two sets of names maintain traditions going back several hundred years. In English the tradition goes back to a time

before naturalists knew the food plants of the species and appearance was all that was available. In French the word-formation tradition is tolerant of lack of transparency and the naming tradition seems to have been rather conscious of the competition between the scientific and the popular and aimed at the picturesque rather than the instructive.

In the absence of work like Cordier's and Salmon's on early German and Swedish vernacular names, one can only speculate that either scientific biologists have had more influence over names, or that a tradition of more descriptive names was set up earlier, particularly in Swedish. While the naming systems look broadly independent of one another, it would be interesting to know more about the direction of influence in particular cases.

It can be concluded that the categories developed in the first half of this paper are at least capable of describing the differences between sets of vernacular names in illuminating ways, and that differences between sets of well-entrenched vernacular names like those for butterflies are due as much to traditions of naming as to the dominant community of namers. Vernacular names, once formed, are well enough entrenched to resist the efforts of terminologists.

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Translating in and for higher education in Sweden: Some reflections from a practitioner

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Abstract

The English language plays an increasingly important role in Swedish higher education—and not just in English studies. More and more types of university-related documents are either written in English from the outset or translated into the language, for the benefit of students, employees and other interested parties not fluent in Swedish (and far from always native speakers of English either). This brings about an increased need for translation and review services, which are often provided in-house. The present contribution offers a few reflections regarding these types of services, covering some general issues as well as a number of concrete challenges for the translators.

Keywords: Translation, language review, Swedish, English, higher education, in-house, translation strategies, translation norms, translation challenges, Sweden

1. Introduction: Who am I to address translation in higher education?

Since the completion of my Ph.D. at Karlstad University in 2005,¹ I have, over the years, spent varying percentages of my working time as a senior lecturer in English linguistics, first at Karlstad, later at Mälardalen University (MDH), on translating university-related documents (usually from Swedish into English) as well as reviewing other people's translations into—or original texts in—English. I am currently one out of two in-house translators at MDH, with about ten percent of my full-time

¹ My doctoral thesis (Schröter 2005) deals with the analysis of dubbing and subtitling of language-play in film and is thus only loosely related to my efforts as a practicing translator and language checker of university documents, since the latter are not normally written for entertainment or as works of art. I mention my thesis here because Solveig Granath, although not my supervisor at the time, was one of those who, by subjecting my manuscripts to critical scrutiny, contributed to making the final outcome better than it would have been otherwise. But even before, as the highly respected teacher of several of my English linguistics courses at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, Solveig helped forming me with regard to who and where I am today, for which I am grateful.

employment reserved for these kinds of tasks.² Like many, if not most, active translators, I have no formal education, let alone a degree or official authorisation, *as a translator*. However, among the other characteristics I am likely to share with most of my translating colleagues in Swedish higher education and beyond are successfully completed language studies of a more general nature, a certain amount of interest and (I hope) talent, as well as years of experience.^{3,4}

What I intend to offer here is a few ‘notes from the field’ about the types of tasks, challenges and solutions that we who engage in translation, especially Swedish–English translation in Swedish higher education, are dealing with on a regular basis, but that all those who are not directly involved in this line of work may not be aware of. I will start with a general overview over our role and efforts, then discuss a few concrete translation issues that I have encountered over the past years, touch upon the translation aids I am using, and conclude with a couple of reasons why working as a translator can be enjoyable despite the occasional frustration—and even though the types of texts I am dealing

² The other person is working sixty percent of full-time with *nothing but* translation and review. With more abundant time and funding, we could quite easily fill a whole full-time position together, so as to keep a close eye on *all* the translations and other English texts produced at our university, which is not quite possible at the moment, even if theses and other research publications were to receive no attention at all from us.

³ That said, in at least one important respect I work under conditions that are atypical among translators and that might raise an eyebrow among some of those who are concerned about translation quality: more than 99% of the time I translate between Swedish and English or proofread texts in either of these two languages, yet neither is my mother tongue or first language (which is German). In fact, neither English nor Swedish was even the first *foreign* language I started to learn in school (which was French), so I am certainly not following the general view or recommendation that translators should work into their first language, and much of the discussion on “directionality” between first and second language in e.g. Beeby Lonsdale (2009) does not even apply to me at all.

Suffice it to say, with regard to the oddity of my translating almost exclusively between languages that I have not become fluent in, more or less, until being an adult, that it is Swedish and English I use by far the most in my professional life, which obviously also makes it less unnatural to work in and with those languages when it comes to translating and language-checking documents having to do with my workplace.

⁴ Another, if rather unrelated, circumstance that may make me somewhat unusual is that I have been able to ‘translate’, as it were, my interest in the theory and practice of translation into an introductory 7.5-ECTS-credit course in translation studies, offered at irregular intervals as part of the English studies curriculum at MDH, which in turn has informed my translation practice to some extent.

with now are so much less entertaining than the family films I analysed in my doctoral thesis.

2. Translation at MDH and in Swedish higher education: What and why?

Higher education in Sweden, as in the rest of the Nordic countries and in many other parts of the world where English does not already enjoy the status of a first or official language, has increasingly come to embrace and rely on English in its communication, to the extent that certain university-related domains, if not higher education per se, are sometimes predicted to be the first that the national languages will ‘lose’ to English, thereby initiating or accelerating the demise of the former (cf. e.g. Melchers and Shaw 2011: 210). Whether this fear is justified or not, English has acquired a strong position in the universities’ research, education and even community activities, as well as in internal communication among employees, and this affects translation and publication practices and policies.

For example, all course and program syllabuses⁵ for education offered in English at MDH are supposed to have an English version, apart from a Swedish one, even though it is still the Swedish one that is legally binding and also normally constitutes the source text (ST). Many other documents of general interest and most webpages come in two language versions as well, whether the target audience is students, employees and/or external parties. After all, not only does MDH have a sizeable number of students and faculty who do not speak or understand Swedish well: globalisation, including the enhanced international contacts between universities, also increases the number of visits by external non-Swedish speakers to the university homepage, among other things.

Most of the official translation work at MDH is based on a formal decision taken by the vice-chancellor⁶ several years ago, after a satisfactory trial period of a semester or so, that henceforth certain types

⁵ For a discussion of the Swedish terms *kursplan* and *programplan* and their possible English counterparts, see below.

⁶ The Swedish *rektor* is another one of those terms for which there is no one, self-evident English counterpart. The same applies to a significant share of the specific terminology used in Swedish higher education (cf. below).

of documents should primarily be translated or, if already in English, reviewed *within* the university, by members of the English department given time for this in their job descriptions. It was considered to be the better alternative to having such tasks consistently be done either by a broad range of inexperienced employees or by external translation bureaus, whose services were often more expensive, at least in the long run, and at the same time less satisfactory quality-wise, partly due to external translators' frequent lack of familiarity with the realities and terminology of higher education.

Among the so-called 'prioritised' types of texts covered by the new policy, the most commonly translated ones include the above-mentioned course and program syllabuses, regulatory documents such as research and education strategies, equal treatment plans and examination rules, as well as external press releases and news items for the intranet. However, research presentations, the various schools' own webpages, and even study guidelines for courses are also supposed to be translated without the person requesting the service having to worry about the cost. Most of these jobs are forwarded to us, the MDH translators, via our contact person at the Division of Communications and External Relations, though many times we get them directly from colleagues for whom we had completed an assignment previously.

When time permits, i.e. when there are no prioritised documents or other work tasks (e.g. teaching-related ones) awaiting our immediate attention, we the MDH translators can also accept requests, submitted via a special e-mail account, for reviewing or translating scientific articles, posters or (parts of) licentiate and doctoral theses. However, these jobs are not 'free', and doctoral students and other researchers need to pay for them from their annual allocations for travels, literature and special services. Another precondition is that the texts remain within certain quantitative limits (2,000 words for translations and 10,000 words for reviews) and that the deadline be reasonable.

As far as I am aware, most if not all Swedish higher education institutions have, like MDH, some routines for translation and language review that involve, among other things, both in-house expertise and lists of university-specific English terms to be used in English-language contexts. Of course, they also have access to nationally procured external bureaus if and when required. Some have more advanced language policies than others, including regulations that may be intended to protect

the status of Swedish in their education and research, threatened as it may appear by internationalisation. Many are also represented in the English-Language Professionals in Swedish Higher Education network, where translation and terminology issues of common concern can be ventilated and coordinated (for more information, see *Elps.se* (n.d.)).

3. Text types in relation to target audiences and degrees of freedom

Does the MDH translation policy have anything to say about *how* texts should be translated, about target readerships, translation strategies, faithfulness and equivalence? Of course not. While there are some internal guidelines for how to write for publication *in Swedish* on the university website (though how well known these guidelines are among the employees or to what extent they are adhered to remains an open question), there are no recommendations about translation. That is understandable, for who would have written them? Very few non-practitioners spend much thought on the possibility that there may be different ways to translate a text, both as a whole and with respect to its details, and even if they had a vague idea that there can be several solutions to a given translation challenge, what should a communications officer or other coordinator of language-related activities tell the translators about how to do their job? Not even the translators themselves may be aware of how they are translating and why they are doing it that way. Nor are they necessarily consistent in their approach over time or across different documents, and certainly not between themselves, even if they may have agreed on some details (e.g. how to write dates in English or how to spell certain words).

Obviously, our MDH target texts (TTs) are always ‘free’ in the sense that they are not word-for-word translations (for this classical distinction, see e.g. Dryden 1680/2004), and there is a general, if not explicitly expressed, expectation that they should be accessible and idiomatic, while otherwise remaining as close to the ST as possible. One of the advantages of working with Swedish–English translations of university-related prose is that some of the most notorious translation challenges, which tend to either result in some kind of loss or require a particularly creative solution, do not normally occur with great frequency. These include humour, especially the type that is based on language-play, as well as expressions of fundamental differences between source and target

cultures.⁷ Still, we the translator can always choose to take some extra liberty—or not—with sentence structure, word choice, idiomatic expressions, punctuation, deletions, clarifications, etc.

A cursory and completely subjective comparison between my colleague's translations and my own suggest that, generally speaking, his remain closer to the STs while I am more likely to rearrange clause elements, reduce redundancies, render formulations more explicit, etc. Without wishing to enter into an extended discussion regarding translation norms (e.g. Toury 1995), approaches depending on text types (e.g. Reiß 1971), the purpose or *skopos* of translations (e.g. Reiß and Vermeer 1991), equivalence (e.g. Nida 1964/2004), and/or the relative invisibility of the translator (Venuti, in Inghilleri and Maier 2009: 100), it seems, if my impressions were to prove true in a more thorough investigation, that my colleague often shows more respect for the properties of the ST than I do. Many, including some influential translation scholars, would consider this appropriate.

However, I think that occasional deviations of the types described above are justified by the nature of the documents we translate, as well as the rather weak status of the TTs: in Reiß' English terms (in Munday 2012: 111ff), the texts are rarely "expressive", i.e. with a focus on form, but rather "informative" with occasional "operative" elements, e.g. when intended to help 'sell' the university in some respect, and the translations are essentially derivative offers of information aimed at mostly non-native speakers of English, with little legal or artistic weight on their own. There is, in any case, some room for us to follow our personal preferences as translators, and while we may not have tested the limits of what our clients would accept (and we do not have any ambitions in this respect either), it virtually never happens that anybody would express a negative opinion about any particular choice we have taken, provided they had an opinion at all.

⁷ It is of course hardly permissible to speak of *a* target culture when the target language is English, especially if most of the readers of the TT cannot be expected to have English as their first language, but perhaps rather Kannada, Russian or Swahili.

4. *Problems with source texts*

Before discussing a couple of typical translation challenges that are more closely related to the source and target language pair Swedish–English, it may be worth pointing out that the STs we are dealing with are rarely impeccable in the sense that they contain no errors in terms of spelling, punctuation, grammar or omitted words, let alone represent models of style. As pointed out above, they are usually informative ‘utility’ texts, possibly composed by someone whose strengths lie in other areas than formal writing (e.g. a course syllabus written by an educator of nurses or engineers) and/or at short notice and with little time for review (e.g. a news item—or some other type of text finalised close to a deadline).

In cases where we think an ST would benefit from having some obvious mistake pointed out and corrected, we take the time to write a comment in the margin, urging the author or commissioner to consider a revision. When it comes to stylistic problems, we are working on a scale from ignoring and even replicating an unfortunate formulation, via silently improving on it in the TT, to pointing it out explicitly. Here is a rather straightforward example of an ST oddity I recently encountered in an internal news item regarding the proposed external members of the new MDH university board:

Den nya styrelsen väljs därför för ett år och tillträder den 1 maj 2016. [‘The new board will therefore be elected for one year and constitute itself on 1 May 2016.’]

The problem with this sentence, which is not obvious when taken out of its context like here, is that the inclusion of *därför/therefore* is unjustified, as the preceding sentences do not provide a reason for the board being elected for one year. I wrote, in English translation, “Unclear why it says *därför* here. I chose not to have any corresponding word in English.” Apparently, this met with agreement, for the *därför* is now gone from the ST published on the university’s internal portal.

A second and last example of this type comes from the list of intended learning outcomes for a course in public health science, where the introductory standard formulation (in English usually ‘Upon completion of the course, students are expected to be able to’) clashes with part of the seventh point on the list:

Efter avslutad kurs ska studenten kunna:
[...]

7 utifrån folksjukdom/folkhälsoproblem identifiera bestämningsfaktorer för uppkomsten av ohälsa med hänsyn till ett livscykelperspektiv, föreslå åtgärder på befolkningsnivå, samt ha kunskap om uppföljnings- och utvärderingsmetoder på befolkningsnivå

The actual translation of this complex learning outcome as proposed by me was:

Upon completion of the course, students are expected to be able to:

[...]

7 identify, with regard to widespread diseases/public health problems, factors influencing the emergence of ill-health from a life-cycle perspective, suggest interventions on the population level, and give an account of follow-up and assessment methods on the population level

A lot could be said about this intended learning outcome (and others like it), where the author(s) tried to include rather too much information from the point of view of readability. There are challenges regarding sentence structure and word order,⁸ as well as terminology. The issue I wish to raise here, however, regards the part after the last comma, in particular the words *ha kunskap om* [‘have knowledge of’]. The problem is that *being able to have knowledge* does not make much sense and that a more active verb than *have* would be required, which I pointed out in a comment to the commissioner of the translation assignment.⁹ While my proposed English TT has by now been accepted and published on the university website without changes, no adjustment of the ST was made, due to reasons that I can only speculate about.

5. Translation challenges related to the language pair Swedish–English

While I was still at Karlstad, one of the Swedish words I came to detest as a translator was *verksamhet*, which is a vague all-purpose term that

⁸ Note, for example, the heavy adverbial *utifrån folksjukdom/folkhälsoproblem* between the auxiliary *kunna* and the main verb *identifiera* (remember that they belong together even though in the original, they are separated by a dozen lines of text). It would have sounded unidiomatic (even more than now) to retain the original word order in the TT.

⁹ In fact, the guidelines for learning outcomes in course syllabuses stipulate the use of active verbs that can be linked to examination. It is, strictly speaking, not possible for teachers to check that their students *have* knowledge, only that they can, e.g., *give evidence/an account of* or *discuss* their knowledge.

has plenty of approximate English counterparts,¹⁰ but none that can be used as ubiquitously as the Swedish one. I can see why it would be used in Swedish, as it frees the writer from the need to be specific (e.g. *det gäller att utveckla verksamheten på ett effektivt sätt* [‘it’s important to develop XXX in an effective manner’]), but the English translation of *verksamhet* will always have to depend on the context and often be less than satisfactory.

Among the tricky terms more specifically related to Swedish higher education are *kursplan* and *utbildningsplan*, denoting the official descriptions of aims, contents, regulations etc. regarding individual courses and entire study programmes, respectively. I have referred to the former as *course syllabuses* above, as that is the top suggestion—the only alternative being *course specifications*—in the *Swedish–English Dictionary* (n.d.) by the Swedish Council for Higher Education (UHR), a government agency providing coordination and support to higher education institutions. However, the description of *syllabus* provided by e.g. *Wikipedia* (n.d.) corresponds more to the course or study guidelines provided by teachers to students at the start of a course, i.e. a document clearly distinct from the more formal, static and usually much shorter *kursplan*. Similarly, UHR’s top suggestion for *utbildningsplan* in its dictionary is *programme syllabus*, but that exact phrase only yields some dozen hits in an internet search, almost all of which from Sweden. And even though the less British *program syllabus* yields many more hits, it is doubtful whether the world at large understands the same by this term as do parts of Swedish higher education.¹¹

There are also words and concepts that seem more specific to MDH, but that have not found their way into the in-house wordlist, e.g. the *chefsdialog*, which is a regular get-together of all the university’s managers/executives/superiors (the Swedish *chef* by itself is not always easy to render into English either). When I encountered *chefsdialog* in a document to be translated, I chanced on *management dialogue*, but also

¹⁰ The free online dictionaries *Tyda.se* (n.d.) and *Ord.se* (n.d.) list six and seven respectively, e.g. *activity*, *business*, *operation* and *work*, with *ord.se* also suggesting translations for more or less fixed expressions involving *verksamhet*.

¹¹ Another type of awkward Swedish *plan* is the *arbetsplan*, which specifies a university teacher’s work tasks during a given semester (courses, research, professional development, administrative duties). In how far a *work plan* (or *workplan?*), rather than, say, a *job description*, can be said to correspond to an *arbetsplan* must remain open here.

wrote a comment that it ought to be substituted by a more established English expression, should it exist.

A problem that is thankfully on its way to becoming obsolete at my school, due to an administrative reorganisation, is that study programmes used to have both a *programansvarig* [literally ‘programme responsible’] and a *programsamordnare* [literally ‘programme coordinator’]. The problem is that *programme coordinator* is the translation given by the MDH wordlist for *programansvarig*, while there is none for *programsamordnare*. What if both roles are referred to within a couple of lines, as was the case not so long ago, in a document to be translated by me?¹²

I could go on like this, but do not want to neglect another big area of potential challenges: technical and subject-specific terminology that is independent of higher education per se, but does occur in course syllabuses (or whatever they ought to be called; cf. above), descriptions of research environments etc. For example, one of the intended learning outcomes of a course in social work is for students to be able to:

5 reflektera över åldrandets psykosociala och existentiella aspekter i relation till biståndsbedömningens praktik

What is *biståndsbedömning* in English again? Unable to find *the* obvious equivalent, I came up with the following solution, while pointing out in a comment that some expert in the field ought to revise it if appropriate:

5 reflect upon the psycho-social and existential aspects of ageing in relation to the practices of aid assessment

As a more extreme example, I cannot help sharing the course content specified in an aeronautical engineering syllabus, which I translated some years ago. It would hardly matter, I think, whether I quoted the Swedish or the English version, as they would be equally opaque to the average reader. Suffice it to say that I hardly knew what I was doing as I produced the following:

¹² Both roles are now going to be conflated into that of *programföreträdare* [literally ‘programme representative’]. What the official English translation is going to be is as yet unclear.

Course content

single-axis stress and deformation analysis

normal and shear stress

Saint-Venant's principle for equations of equilibrium in two and three dimensions

Mohr's stress circle and main stresses

normal and shear strain

the relationship between stress and deformation, as well as between materials; the

modulus of elasticity and Hooke's Law

floating conditions, fracture mechanics, limits for fracture and stretching

two-dimensional equilibriums

statically determined and undetermined supportive bar structures

torsion and bending of a massive axle with arbitrary cross-section

fracture and torsion of thin-walled pipes

bending and torsion of thin sheet metals

Sometimes, we get to translate more unexpected texts, such as the menu for a semi-formal evening event, which happened to contain both culture-specific (Swedish) and topic-specific (food) terms. Both aspects came together in *löjrom*, to be served as a starter. By itself, a supposed equivalent I could identify (*vendace roe*) might have stumped most of the non-Swedish English-as-a-foreign-language speakers as much as the Swedish term, which, after all, refers to a *Swedish* specialty, while a more descriptive variant (e.g. *eggs from a Northern European fish called siklöja in Swedish*) would have been stylistically out of keeping with the rest of the short menu and perhaps insulting to those familiar with the concept. In the end, it became a possibly lame compromise: *löjrom (vendace roe)*.

6. *A few words about translation aids*

Personally, I am not a professional translator in the sense that I would make use of modern computer-aided translation (CAT) tools such as translation memories (cf. O'Hagan 2009) or regularly communicate about tricky cases within networks of practitioners. The first stops when I am uncertain about an English word or expression are the free online dictionaries mentioned above, or the in-house wordlist if it can be expected to provide an answer.¹³ There are also other online dictionaries that may come in handy, as well as the old-fashioned printed ones. In

¹³ Actually, the wordlist is partly based on UHR's *Swedish–English Dictionary*.

fact, I can sometimes zoom in on the most suitable target-language option by not only checking Swedish–English dictionaries, but also my German–English or French–English ones (or even start with a Swedish–German one and then take it from there). Of course, the synonyms function in Word is often useful, too. For some reason, I do not use the translation function in Word, just as I do not use automatic translation services online.

In theory, I could make use of free English internet corpora, notably those provided by *corpus.byu.edu* (n.d.), though in practice it often feels faster to use an internet search engine. This is also the only way to look for the English names of Swedish laws and organisations, for example. In the future, I am likely to make greater use of the government-funded and freely accessible *Rikstermbank* (n.d.) by the Swedish Centre for Terminology, which contains much technical terminology in Swedish and usually other languages too, notably English. *Wikipedia* (n.d.), finally, is often very useful when it comes to establishing the currency of a certain English term found in some other way, since the name of an entry in the English version can usually be assumed to reflect frequent usage.

7. What's in it for me?

I am far from certain that I would want to be a full-time translator, especially if it were to be on a freelance basis. While it remains an option for the future, the stress level might be high, with often tight deadlines, and the pay would likely be low. Translation can be tedious too, especially if the ST is long and difficult or poorly written, and the content uninspiring. Furthermore, translation is not for everybody: not only is proficiency in one or more foreign languages an absolute requirement, it is only one of the facets of *translation* competence (Hansen 1999: 341), and it would still remain for me to prove, e.g. by trying to become an authorised translator, that I actually have what it takes on the open market.

As it is, focusing on translation and language review during some of my working time as a university lecturer suits me just fine. Not only does it sometimes bring enjoyment for its own sake, as well as a break from other, potentially more stressful activities such as teaching and research, for which the allocated time never seems to be quite sufficient.

Translation also helps me a) to keep updated on what is going on at the university (in the case of news or information directed at employees, which I may get to see before others do, if they read it all) and b) to broaden my knowledge and competence in terms of both subject matter (e.g. aeronautical engineering; cf. above) and English usage. I also like the fact that translation assignments tend to be concrete, limited and well-defined tasks, where the time I put down equals the time I am paid for. It is not normally that way when it comes to teaching a course, for example.

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Ex uno plures: A case for monosemy

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Abstract

In this article I address the issue of word meaning: Do lexical items have many meanings or do they have one basic meaning which speakers exploit in various contexts to achieve their communicative goals? While most cognitivists assume the former, there are some others who opt for basic meanings. In what follows I propose that both analyses can be used to advantage if the semantic variation that exists among linguistic items is considered. In effect, I suggest that while semantically rich words *do* exhibit polysemy, more schematic, semantically sparse items are best explained in terms of basic meanings.

Keywords: Monosemy, polysemy, lexical sign, grammatical sign, trajectory, landmark, basic meaning, message

1. Introduction

In his introduction to *Foundations of cognitive grammar* (1987: 28), Ronald Langacker introduces the notion of the **exclusionary fallacy** and discusses its role in linguistic analysis. Essentially, the exclusionary fallacy is the tendency on the part of linguists to assume that one analysis or explanation of a given linguistic phenomenon of necessity “precludes” or rules out the possibility of any other. As an example he cites the case of those who take a non-functional approach to language ruling out a functional approach on the grounds that the latter does not explain everything when, in reality, the two alternative approaches might be seen as complementary facets of a full description. The exclusionary fallacy is operative in many areas of linguistic analysis, one of which I will discuss in this article: word meaning.

A perennial issue in semantics has to do with the nature of word meaning: Are lexical items to be understood as having more than one meaning or sense – **polysemy**, or should they be understood as having one basic meaning which applies in all contexts – **monosemy**? Do speakers store the various senses of words separately in a mental dictionary or lexicon, or do they work with basic meanings, pressing them into service according to the particular message they wish to

communicate on a given occasion? Cognitive linguists in general tend towards the former, assuming that few, if any, words have one sense only. On the other hand, those who assume the latter take the view that senses posited for lexical and grammatical items can, at least theoretically, be reduced to single invariant meanings, the job of the analyst being to discover just what those meanings are. Given this tension between the two approaches, I would like to propose a middle path between the two extremes: Perhaps both analyses can be accommodated in an approach to word meaning that takes into consideration the semantic variation that exists among linguistic items as well as speaker motivation, human problem solving ability, and the communicative function of language.

Both the advocates of polysemy and of monosemy generally agree that the meaning of complex expressions (e.g., sentences) amounts to more than the sum of the grammatical and semantic components which make them up. Moreover, there is general agreement that all linguistic items ranging from lexical words through function words and inflectional morphology to syntactic structures are meaningful. These items can be said to form a cline with the most semantically rich open class forms at one end and closed class forms approaching “near semantic emptiness” (Weinreich 1963: 180) on the other. Often, the proponents of both approaches to word meaning struggle to apply their particular analyses to all items on this continuum, irrespective of the varying degrees of semantic content or schematicity these items exhibit.

In what follows, I will refer to what are usually called content words as **lexical signs** and to traditional function words as well as inflectional morphemes as **grammatical signs**.¹ I will have nothing to say about syntax. Here I note that this division does not represent a strict dichotomy since there is much overlap.

2. Polysemy

Technically considered, the term polysemy is used to designate a situation where a linguistic item, i.e., a lexical or grammatical sign,

¹ A sign is a form–meaning pair (*cf.* Saussure’s *signifiant/signifié*). It roughly corresponds to Langacker’s ‘symbolic structure’ (2013: 15) which comprises both a phonological and a semantic pole.

exhibits more than one meaning or sense. These senses are, as John Taylor observes, “felt to be related in some non-trivial way” (1995: 103), i.e., speakers can recognize a connection even though the senses are distinguished semantically and refer to different domains. A good example of a polysemous word cited by Taylor is the noun *school* which can refer to an establishment for the education of young people, the place where such education takes place, an administrative department at a university (e.g., *School of Pharmacology*), a circle of scholars who share similar ideas (e.g., *Columbia School of Linguistics*), and even a group of fish.² Another example is *chip* which can refer to, among other things, both a small disk used in poker and a fried potato slice, as well as, prototypically, to a small shred of wood, glass or stone. For communication to take place, both speakers and hearers must be aware of such distinctions, the latter choosing the correct sense when prompted by the appropriate context. These senses are not constructed on-line, i.e., speakers must have learned them previously in order for there to be stored knowledge to draw upon when required in a particular communicative situation. The hearer is, accordingly, cued as to the sense intended by the speaker both by context and, as is frequently the case, by an adjectival modifier (‘poker chip’) or a prepositional phrase (‘school of...’), at least on first mention. Both memory and problem solving ability play an important role in sorting out senses and constructing messages. This notion that items are stored in a mental lexicon does not necessarily reduce communication to a mere mechanical exercise. Rather, the mental lexicon is the result of the active learning and classifying of word senses on the part of language users while it is problem solving ability which enables them to make the proper selections and construct appropriate messages.

The polysemy of such lexical items as *school* or *chip* is normally the result of speakers originally extending a basic prototypical meaning to other, often, but not necessarily, more abstract domains. Sometimes this extension is clearly metaphorical as in the case of *foot* whose basic meaning “lower part of the leg below the ankle joint” (*OED*) has been metaphorically extended to refer to, for example, the end of a bed, a

² Note that the many types which can be cited for words like ‘thing’ (virtually any entity) and ‘bird’ (robin, owl, etc.) are not word senses; rather, they are hyponyms which share the same domain as the superordinate.

grave or to the base of a hill. Meaning extension is a diachronic process by which a new usage becomes conventionalized in a particular community and entrenched in the minds of the individual speakers who make up that community. The directions such extensions can take are not inevitable but rather, a function of individual creativity as well as of the culture and *Weltanschauung* shared by members of a speech community, which condition how they construe their world. Consequently, they cannot be predicted.

3. A polysemic analysis of *in*

In the discussion that follows, the focus will be on the preposition *in* as representative of grammatical signs³ in general.

A number of polysemic analyses by cognitive linguists (Lakoff 1987, Taylor 2003, Tyler & Evans 2006) have focused not on lexical signs such as nouns or verbs, but on grammatical signs, particularly prepositions. The aim has been to show that spatial particles such as *over* and *in*, for example, have more than one sense, these usually derived from a hypothesized proto-sense or -scene. A good example of a polysemic analysis of prepositions is that offered by Andrea Tyler and Vyvyan Evans.

In *The semantics of English prepositions*, the authors hypothesize a proto-scene for *in* which “constitutes a spatial relation in which a TR is located within a LM which has three salient structural elements – an interior, a boundary and an exterior. In addition to the spatial relation designated, the proto-scene for *in* is associated with the functional element of containment” (183).⁴ This proto-scene lies at the center of a network of distinct senses, twenty-seven in all, which derive from it. The fact that Tyler and Evans, applying what they refer to as their “principled polysemy” methodology, end up with so many senses for this preposition is ironic since one of their stated aims is to rein in the rampant

³ Grammatical signs include, among other items, prepositions and articles as well as inflectional morphemes (e.g., *-ing*, *-ed*, *-s*) and infinitival *to*.

⁴ TR stands for **trajector** and LM for **landmark**. The TR generally refers to a mobile, relatively smaller entity than the LM. The LM represents a more permanent entity, often a location, with respect to which the TR moves. The terms derive from Langacker (1987).

proliferation of senses which characterize, for example, Lakoff's "full-specification" approach (see Lakoff 1987: 420–438).

Before discussing the individual senses of *in*, Tyler and Evans cite several "non-canonical bounded LM" (184) usages in the light of the hypothesized proto-scene. Accordingly, in the utterances "The tiny oasis flourished in the desert" and "She lives in New York City", *in* is chosen since both 'desert' and 'New York City' have boundaries (somewhere) and, accordingly, function as containers, even though the LM itself (i.e., the ground, earth's surface) is physically planar. More complete containment is involved where an entity is conceptualized as 'enveloped' by something as in "The flag flapped in the wind" and "The child shivered in the cold". In all of these examples, *in* is to be understood against the background of the proto-scene.

Tyler and Evans go on to propose a number of distinct senses for *in* which ultimately derive from the proto-scene. Among them they list, to name only three, an *In Situ Sense* ("He stayed in for the evening"), a *State Sense* ("She is in prison") and an *Activity Sense* ("She's in medicine").⁵ Through a process of conventionalization and entrenchment, such distinct senses become, according to the authors, "instantiated" in the language user's semantic memory. In other words, they become, as in the case of the various distinct senses of *school*, *chip* and *foot*, stored as separate items in the mental lexicon. At this point, however, one becomes aware of a certain 'asymmetry' between the senses of these lexical signs and those posited here for *in*. It is difficult to imagine speakers choosing from the various senses of such a grammatical sign in the same way they do lexical senses. In fact, that language users are aware on any level of the distinct senses of *in*, as posited by Tyler and Evans, seems highly questionable. As a test, I would predict that while a non-linguist, in the absence of context, would probably be able to name several senses for *school*, *chip* or *foot*, s/he would be hard pressed to give more than one, if even one, sense for grammatical signs like *in*.

Recall that linguistic items can be arranged on a cline or continuum ranging from those lexical signs with the most to those grammatical signs with the least semantic content. Accordingly, lexical signs tend to

⁵ Some others are a Means Sense, a Perceptual Accessibility Sense, an In Favour Sense, and an Arrival Sense.

be more specific and informationally rich than grammatical signs whose meanings are quite underspecified and schematic. Interestingly, there appears to be a loose correlation between the frequency of occurrence and the degree of schematicity of linguistic items, and the number of senses linguists and lexicographers assign to them. Tyler and Evans posit twenty-seven senses for *in*, as we have seen, while the *OED* lists thirty-eight, and no fewer than seventy-seven senses for another high frequency semantically underspecified grammatical sign: *to* (preposition, infinitival). On the other hand, the dictionary gives only seven and eight senses for such lexical signs as *chip* and *foot*, respectively. Of course there is great variation in the number of senses lexical signs can have owing to their differing availability for metaphorical extension by a given language community. Nevertheless, a trend is observable: the more frequently occurring and schematic a sign, the more senses both linguists and lexicographers will be inclined to assign to it. This accords with Charles Ruhl's observation that "A mistaken attribution of multiplicity is likely with the most general words in the language" (1989: 9).

Given the above observations, a polysemic treatment of grammatical signs seems counter-intuitive and inappropriate as a model of how the language user's linguistic knowledge is organized and what goes on in the communicative situation. Moreover, it is uneconomical in that it entails excessive demands on speaker-hearer memory while it understates the role of human problem solving ability. An alternative analysis of the semantics of grammatical signs would appear to be in order.

4. Monosemy

According to Ruhl, "a linguistic theory must have ways of determining when multiplicity is inherent in a word and when it is supplied by other words, or even extralinguistically" (1989: 4). He recommends that initially researchers should direct their analyses toward determining a single or unitary meaning for any word under investigation. Only failing that, should they posit more than one related sense – polysemy. Finally, if the senses cannot be shown to be related, separate words should be assumed – homonymy. Ruhl accepts the possibility of polysemy in the case of the noun *orange* and homonymy in that of the noun *bank*. However, he argues that certain verbs like *bear* and *hit* are monosemic.

(Observe that that these two verbs, like grammatical signs, have quite general meanings and occur with relatively high frequency).⁶ Here Ruhl clearly wishes to avoid semantic overloading, the common tendency in semantic analysis to build too many meanings into linguistic items, meanings which can better be explained as coming from other components in an utterance. In other words, the various senses posited for lexical and grammatical signs are, he argues, often contextually induced and the result of a certain amount of “pragmatic modulation”.

Ruhl does not quite take an all or nothing stand on the nature of word meaning since he is willing (though grudgingly, I suspect) to allow polysemy in those cases where, after rigorous analysis, it is not possible to assign a single, unitary basic meaning to a word. In this respect he differs from Wallis Reid who, while allowing for monosemy and homonymy, does not admit polysemy. This stance can be said to hold true for the New York based *Columbia School of Linguistics* of which Reid is representative.

5. *A monosemic analysis of in*

Most of the work done by Reid and his colleagues has focused on the analysis of grammatical signs. Relevant to our purposes here is his 2004 article entitled “Monosemy, homonymy and polysemy”. In this article, Reid presents a detailed monosemic analysis of the three prepositions *at*, *on*, and *in* whose basic meanings divide up the semantic field of spatial LOCATION. These basic meanings together form a mutually defining system of value relations by which each is defined, at least partially, by its distinction from the other two. This interrelatedness is captured in Figure 1.

	<i>at</i>	=	0 DIMENSIONS
LOCATION:	<i>on</i>	=	MORE THAN 0 AND LESS THAN 3 DIMENSIONS
	<i>in</i>	=	3 DIMENSIONS

Figure 1. Dimensions of the prepositions *at*, *on*, and *in*

⁶ The *OED* gives 44 senses for *bear* and 22 for *hit*.

As can be seen, Reid posits one basic or core meaning for each preposition. In the case of *in*, such parsimony stands in stark contrast to the prodigality of senses hypothesized by Tyler and Evans. For Reid, as for those who take a monosemic approach in general, a **basic meaning** is the synchronically invariant underspecified semantic component of a linguistic form which remains operative in all communicative contexts.⁷ Since, owing to their indeterminateness and imprecision, there is no perfect fit between basic meanings and the **messages** they wish to communicate, speakers must press these meanings into service by selecting the one least inappropriate to the intended message.⁸ For example, in “She left her briefcase *in* the car”, the speaker chooses *in* with its meaning 3 DIMENSIONS as it is less inappropriate for highlighting the interior of the car than would be either of the other prepositions with which it shares semantic space (*on*, for example, would direct the focus to the car’s roof or hood). Accordingly, 3 DIMENSIONS is the best choice for communicating a message of containment. Here it is important to observe that the message of containment is not to be regarded as a component of a proto-sense or as a derived sense for *in*. Rather, a message of containment is inferred by the hearer from the basic meaning of *in* used in the context of a car. Reid gives the following two examples to further illustrate how the imprecision inevitable in language contributes to message construction.

1. He threw the keys *on* the grass.
2. He threw the keys *in* the grass.

In (1), the grass is clearly understood as being short whereas in (2) it is tall. What accounts for these two interpretations? Since it does not seem reasonable to posit two senses for ‘grass’ i.e., ‘short grass’ and ‘high grass’, the explanation must lie in the speaker’s choice of preposition, the only distinguishing feature in this minimal pair. Close analysis reveals that this is indeed the case and that the interpretation is being shaped by the basic meanings of the two prepositions: 3 DIMENSIONS is more

⁷ Basic meanings may be considered as so entrenched as to be essentially intuitive. They are only recoverable by analysis based on their distribution. All basic meanings are hypotheses.

⁸ Messages are not encoded in linguistic forms; rather, they are inferences made by the hearer as to the communicative intentions of the speaker.

appropriate than MORE THAN 0 AND LESS THAN 3 DIMENSIONS for suggesting a message of ‘partial immersion’ which thereby cues the hearer to interpret the grass as high. On the other hand, the basic meaning of *on*, by evoking the notion of a planar surface and, accordingly, ‘non-immersion’, prompts a ‘short grass’ interpretation. Here I note that ‘immersion’ and ‘non-immersion’ are not senses of *in* and *on* respectively. Rather, they are inferences made by the hearer, inferences which are ultimately answerable to the basic meanings which set the semantic boundaries between the two signs. In other words, the messages ‘high grass’ and ‘low grass’ are answerable via an inferential chain to the basic meanings of *in* and *on* respectively. Another point: it is precisely owing to their lack of specificity that the applicability of these prepositions is clearly not limited to the case of grass and that they are available as interpretative prompts for a variety of messages in an unlimited number of contexts.

6. *Monosemic vs polysemic analysis of in*

A monosemic analysis can be applied to the “non-canonical LM usages” (184) of *in* cited by Tyler and Evans above and repeated here: “The tiny oasis flourished in the desert” and “She lives in New York City”. Recall that their argument for the choice of *in* in these examples was that in both cases the planar areas designated are conceptualized as bounded and that boundedness is a component of the proto-scene for this preposition. As against this I would argue that in both cases what motivates language users’ choice of *in* is that they conceive of environments such as deserts and cities as 3 dimensional. In other words, speakers see environments not primarily as bounded 2 dimensional but rather as ‘containing’ 3 dimensional spaces. Moreover, of the three prepositions which carve up the semantic space LOCATION, *in*, with its meaning 3 DIMENSIONS, is the least inappropriate (*cf.* ‘*on/at* the desert/NYC’ which would either be uninterpretable or prompt the construction of a different message, depending on context). If indeed ‘boundedness’ determined choice in this case, why wouldn’t speakers normally say ‘*standing *in* the floor’ where the referent is both planar and bounded? A similar analysis can be applied to “The flag flapped in the wind” where 3 DIMENSIONS provides enough information to prompt the hearer to infer a message of envelopment, but not necessarily boundedness (whether or not the LM,

the air, is bounded is irrelevant). In all three examples, the choice of *in* is motivated by a message of at least partial containment which is a function of how the speaker conceptualizes the particular place or situation referred to while, from the hearer's perspective, it serves as a prompt for the construction of a message in line with the speaker's conceptualization.

Moving on to the senses posited by Tyler and Evans, the question is whether it is necessary to hypothesize so many, or even any, for grammatical signs in general.⁹ Perhaps a monosemic analysis can provide a more viable, more economical explanation of what language users are doing when they select such forms in the communicative situation. Beginning with the In Situ Sense as exemplified by "He stayed in for the evening", Tyler and Evans maintain that this sense "crucially" conveys the notion that the TR "*remains* in a particular location" (186), i.e., the space designated by the LM, for an extended period of time. As against this, I would argue that in the example cited, the basic meaning of *in*, 3 DIMENSIONS, prompts the hearer to construe the subject as located in an enclosure, in this case conventionally understood as the home, nothing more. The idea of remaining for an extended period of time, however, comes from the linguistic context, specifically, the verb *stayed* and the prepositional phrase *for the evening*.

As regards the second sense cited above, the State Sense, as exemplified by "She is in prison", Tyler and Evans argue that such states are conceptualized as "constraining" (188) owing to the "tight correlation between being located within a bounded LM and the state experienced". It is this fact that motivates "a distinct State Sense having become conventionally associated with *in*." (188). As against this it can be argued that while *in* is clearly appropriate when referring to a bounded LM like a prison, it is the 0 article which prompts the generic interpretation that gives the phrase its – now conventionalized – State Sense (*cf.* 'she is in *the* prison'). Moreover, the notion of 'constraint' clearly comes from 'prison'. As another example of the State Sense, Tyler and Evans cite the expression 'in trouble' where a TR is conceptualized as in a state difficult to leave, i.e., a constraining state. The question here is, does the same analysis hold for 'in luck'?

⁹ Due to limitations of space, only three of Tyler and Evans' 27 senses can be examined here.

The third sense, the Activity Sense, also involves, according to Tyler and Evans, a tight correlation, this time between an activity and a bounded LM. Accordingly, in such utterances as “She’s in medicine” (i.e., ‘works in medicine’), “the notion of an activity can come, through pragmatic strengthening, to be reanalyzed as a distinct meaning associated with *in*” (189). Moreover, once this distinct meaning has been instantiated in semantic memory, it can mean the activity associated with a variety of LMs, ‘work’ in this case or, for example, ‘study’ in “She’s in graduate school”. As against this I would argue that *in* is chosen because it is the least inappropriate of the location prepositions for directing the hearer to construe the LM, in this case metaphorically, as a container, and, accordingly, suggest a message of involvement. As far as an Activity Sense is concerned, the notion of activity does not reside in *in*, but rather, in the hearer’s encyclopaedic knowledge; people know that one ‘works’ in medicine and ‘studies’ in graduate school.

In the foregoing, I have chosen the preposition *in* as a representative grammatical sign in order to demonstrate how a monosemic analysis might be more appropriate than a polysemic analysis when applied to such signs. Because grammatical signs are highly schematic, as opposed to lexical signs which are far richer in content, positing a basic invariant meaning for such signs, a meaning which language users press into service to construct and interpret messages in varying contexts, seems to be a more economical and realistic model of speaker linguistic behaviour than does the positing of several senses. Being highly schematic, the meaning of a grammatical sign, in its capacity as a speaker-intended prompt, can only provide a hint as to the overall message which the hearer ultimately constructs in the light of the immediate context as well as his/her life experience and encyclopaedic knowledge. In the case of lexical items, on the other hand, once prompted by a speaker’s choice of a particular word, e.g., *school*, in a specific context, the hearer is able to determine the sense meant and to construct a message in which the informational contribution of the word itself is considerably richer than in the case of grammatical signs. Accordingly, there is a greater fit between lexical senses stored in the mental lexicon and messages than there is between grammatical meanings and messages owing to the former’s greater specification. On the other hand, in the case of the latter where problem solving ability comes to the fore, the hearer must make

inferences as to the message based on limited, non-specific semantic input.

7. Conclusion

To conclude, I believe it is possible to avoid the exclusionary fallacy in the case of word meaning analysis if one considers speaker motivation, the types of linguistic items involved, and the roles played by memory and human problem solving ability. As I hope to have demonstrated above, a polysemic analysis works best for those open-class, semantically rich items on the lexical end of the continuum while a monosemic approach is more suitable for those more schematic, semantically impoverished items on the grammatical end. Of course, as we move from one end of the continuum to the other, categories often overlap and there will be great variation in word and particle semantics to the point where a traditionally lexical word like *go* or *hit* might prove more susceptible to a monosemic than to a polysemic analysis while that old chestnut *over* might ultimately be convincingly shown to exhibit limited polysemy.

A final observation: the degree to which messages might become conventionalized and understood directly, i.e., no longer inferred from the individual semantic components present in an utterance, is often a highly individual matter that cannot be predicted by either model. As Robert Kirsner (2002: 352), observes, “We do not know which units the speaker himself or herself is operating with: whether he or she works at the level of the meaning, or the level of the message, at some intermediate level, or at all possible levels at different times.” This observation is a sobering reminder of the limitations inherent in word meaning analysis.

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