

Verb typology in the making: an approach to Early Modern English verb types.

The lexicon of any natural language consists of a series of phonological matrices, each of which is associated with a particular set of semantic and procedural features. Within this series of discrete lexical items, the relation between phonological and content features is highly unstable, and the very origin and evolution of this relation is the cause of such instability. Human lexicons are sociohistorical entities which can be synchronically and diachronically studied, inasmuch as they undergo, in the course of time, loss and addition of lexical items, and reconfiguration of the relation between the phonological matrices and the semantic or procedural features they may encode.

This workshop aims to provide an outline of certain syntactic phenomena present in Early Modern English. From the semantic-syntactic framework proposed by Jaume Mateu i Fontanals (2000, 2002), we consider argument structure, as defined in terms of relational-semantic construals, to be an essential component, indeed the primary one, of any morphosyntactic derivation. These construals can be represented by means of relational-semantic tree diagrams, which render visible the way the arguments are related to one another by means of a number of primitive predicates encoding relations such as cause, telicity (i.e. *change* and *state*) and direction (i.e. *terminal* and *central coincidence*). These diagrams stand for the existence of a *conceptual structure* which is relevant to syntax; thus, the very formal device used to represent argument structure conveys *meaning*, that is, meaning is inherent to the formal relations established between the elements which merge on X-bar theory tree structures.

By taking into account that a whole verb typology can be derived from this framework, we propose to extend these theoretical principles to a number of phenomena in Early Modern English (*EME*). Special attention is dedicated to the behaviour, in morphosyntactic contexts found in the original Elizabethan English version of William Shakespeare's works, of verbs which are classified in Present-day English into categories which do not correspond with their *EME* counterparts. These are mainly unaccusative, ergative, unergative and transitive verbs.

The phenomena included seem to reveal certain similarities between Early Modern English and other languages, while it also presents a number of differences from the way certain Present-day English verbs behave. These differences become clear in the behaviour of certain verbs which are now classified as "intransitive" and which were used transitively. More generally, both the syntactic and the semantic features of the verbal constructions in Elizabethan English resemble those of Romance languages like Spanish. This is made clear through the use of double negatives, the richer agreement features of that variety of English, and the movement of the verb to T°, thus allowing direct negation without auxiliary support. In Relational Semantics terms, the presence of a dative clitic and the reversed argument structure with some unergative verbs are certainly comparable to their equivalents in other languages as well.

Ultimately, we hope the analysis and the theoretical framework used here will be valuable tools in other formal diachronic studies which aim to shed light on the nature of semantic-syntactic change.

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