Mapping the history of language-related terminology in English (1500-1700): A corpus-based collocate approach

Daniel Russo, University of Insubria, daniel.russo@uninsubria.it
Angela Andreani, University of Milan, angela.andreani@unimi.it

Abstract

As part of our corpus-based study of early modern English texts dedicated to or including discussions of vernacular languages (MetaLing project), we propose to test a method for the retrieval of the metalanguage that was created to analyse, compare, appraise and classify vernacular languages between 1500 and 1700. Our aim is to observe the development and adaptation of terminology (often not canonical, 'pre-scientific' or 'unscientific') across a variety of early modern English sources, adopting what we have termed an "onomasiology-oriented corpus-based collocate method". In fact, various studies in the last two decades (e.g. Grzega 2002; Geeraerts 2009; Fernández-Domínguez 2019; Keersmaekers and Van Hal 2022) show the potential of syntactic relations as a way to expand our lexicological knowledge starting from context rather than from lexical items intended as lemmas. One way to apply this approach to our project is to browse an existing corpus of historical texts of the period under investigation (i.e. EEBO) using corpus linguistics tools to find collocates of the terminology that have emerged from the use of traditional lexicographical methods. EEBO is available on the corpus manager and text analysis software Sketch Engine (Kilgariff et al. 2004, Kilgariff et al. 2014). By analysing the word 'sketches' (collocates) and the concordances of terms, we will illustrate how a corpus-based approach can be employed effectively in mapping the history of language-related terminology and concepts.

Selected references

Grzega, Joachim. 2002. 'Some Aspects of Modern Diachronic Onomasiology'. *Linguistics*, 40 (5): 1021–1045.

Geeraerts, Dirk. 2009. *Theories of Lexical Semantics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Fernández-Domínguez, Jesús. 2019. 'The Onomasiological Approach.' In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Linguistics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780199384655.013.579.

Keersmaekers, Alek and Toon Van Hal 2022. "In Search of the Flocks: How to Perform Onomasiological Queries in an Ancient Greek Corpus?". *Proceedings of the Second Workshop on Language Technologies for Historical and Ancient Languages*: 73–83. Marseille: European Language Resources Association. https://aclanthology.org/2022.lt4hala-1.11.

Kilgarriff, Adam, Pavel Rychlý, Pavel Smrž, and David Tugwell. 2004. 'The sketch engine'. *Proceedings of the 11th EURALEX International Congress*: 105–116.

Kilgarriff, Adam, Vít Baisa, Jan Bušta, Miloš Jakubíček, Vojtěch Kovář, Jan Michelfeit, Pavel Rychlý, and Vít Suchomel. 2014. 'The Sketch Engine: ten years on'. *Lexicography* 1: 7–36.