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Theme: Diachronic perspectives on LSP.

Paper topic: The semantics of repetitive constructions in Renaissance legal English and Scots.

Repetition as a discourse-specific feature has long been recognised as one of the typical traits of legal language (Mellinkoff 1963, Koskenniemi 1968, Goodrich 1990, Hiltunen 1990, Bhatia 1993, Gibbons 1994, Rissanen 1999, Tiersma 1999). This phenomenon can be observed on two levels of linguistic structure: semantic, when a particular meaning is repeated, reiterated or relexicalised (see Wang 2005 for details of this distinction), and syntactic, when one considers structural parallelism in relative clauses. In the present paper, I would like to concentrate on the semantics of lexical repetition in legal texts.

Repetitive lexical constructions are usually discussed on the basis of the so-called binomials, that is word pairs exhibiting a specific semantic relationship, coordinated with *and* or *or*, as in *verified and proven*. Attention has been paid to the etymology of pair members, the traditional argument being that one lexical item "interprets" or "translates" the other, which goes back to Mellinkoff's seminal study on legal language (1963). In recent studies based on a corpus of renaissance English and Scots legal texts (Bugaj 2006 and in press, Bugaj and Włodarczyk 2006), I have shown that etymology does not provide a satisfactory explanation for the extensive use of binomials. There are also other aspects, such as the phonological properties of the pair members and, indeed, their semantic properties, which have been considered influential in the formation of binomials also by other scholars (e.g. Koskenniemi 1968, Gustafsson 1974, 1976, Hiltunen 1990, Danet and Bogoch 1992). No study, however, has checked these predictions by means of a systematic corpus research.

In this presentation, I am going to discuss the semantic relations between the members of repetitive lexical constructions, on the basis of the Helsinki corpora of two national, and genetically related, standardising languages in the British Isles: English (HC) and Scots (HCOS). The tendencies in vocabulary patterns will be grouped according to particular aspects of meaning, such as synonymy, contiguity, complementation, or even antonymy. Thus, I am hoping to discover the semantic purpose of repetition in legal discourse and establish its generality on comparative grounds.

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