

Tracing the evolution of free adjuncts in English: a diachronic corpus-based description

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Outline

- Introduction to research topic
- Goal
- Data
- Analysis of variables
 - Frequency
 - Semantics
 - Syntax and structure
 - Text type dependency
- Summary and concluding remarks

Research topic

- Free adjunct (FA):

but I was now too old for the navy, *being sixteen years of age*.
(FAYRER-1900,7.150)

- Absolute construction (AC):

Then I rode off alone, *Monty having thrown me over*;
(BENSON-190X,116.333)

Introduction

- Main features: ‘extra-clausal constituents’ (Dik 1997: 381) or ‘supplements’ (Huddleston and Pullum et al. 2002: 1250ff)
 - detached from the main clause (intonationally or by punctuation)
 - positional mobility: occupying different positions in clause structure

Introduction

- syntactically independent: lack full integration in the syntactic structure of the clause
- semantically dependent:
 - establishing (usually) coreference with a constituent in the main clause
 - holding an (unspecified) adverbial relation to the main clause

Introduction

Origin of FAs and ACs:

ACs

(i) Latin origin: Latin Ablative →

- Callaway (1889): OE Dative (closest in meaning to Latin Ablative) (not productive)
- Ross (1983): ME Nominative case (Ross' 1983: 294 'dative absolutes in disguise')
- foreign influence (mainly from Old French) "increased the occurrences of the AC and enlarged its scope and meaning" (Ross 1983: 268)
- Ross (1983): ModE: not a natural form, limited to some authors >
> 16th century: productive and natural

Introduction

Origin of FAs and ACs:

ACs

(ii) native Germanic origin:

- van de Pol (2012): consistent use of Dative in OE => not a borrowing; otherwise more variation would be expected
- OE inherited via Germanic a construction already present in Indo-European. It was disappearing when translations from Latin made it reappear as a productive pattern (“selective frequential copying”).

Introduction

Origin of FAs and ACs:

FAs

•Visser:

- *-ing* FAs: “with great frequency in Old English (...) as well as in Middle and Modern English. The ending is originally *-ande*, *-ende*, *-inde*, but is gradually ousted by the ending *-ing*” (1972: 1132)
- past participle FAs: “indigenous origin, did not frequently occur in Old and Middle English, but afterwards became considerably more common, especially in translations from Latin, and in the writings of those authors who allowed themselves to be influenced by Latin syntax” (1972: 1252)

Introduction

- Two main types of FAs/ACs:

- verbal construction:

They were going away, and we were going after them, *firing at them too*.
(HOLMES-TRIAL-1749,69.1289)

- non-verbal construction:

He looked towards the Presidential Suite, *his expression a mixture of anxiety and resentment* (Kortmann 1991: 10)

Introduction

- Formalisation as a “nonfinite-periphery construction” (Constructional Grammar)

- syntax:

[(Introducer) Subject_i NP/pronominal/∅ V_{nonfinite}]nonfinite periphery [,]

[... X_i ...]_{(orthodox) clause}

(and reversed version)

- semantics:

[nonfinite periphery] R [clause]

Goal

- To analyse the distribution of FAs in LModE paying attention to:
 - Frequency
 - Control
 - Text-type dependency
 - Type of FA: head element
 - Semantic meaning
 - Position
 - Augmentation
- Scope of the study: verbal FA constructions
- To compare with previous studies based on different periods (EModE, PE): diachronic evolution

Data

- Early Modern English (EModE): Río-Rey (2002)
- **Late Modern English (LModE)**: our research, with data retrieved from *Penn Parsed Corpus of Modern British English* (PPCMBE):
 - 1700-1769 (298,764 words)
 - 1770-1839 (further research)
 - 1840-1914 (281,895 words)
- Present-Day English (PE): Kortmann (1991)

Data

- Precision/recall study concerning FAs:

Function	Example	PPCME2	Mod. Eng.
Matrix subject	<u>Reading books</u> is a great pleasure.	IP-PPL-SBJ	
Complement of V	They don't <i>like</i> <u>doing the dishes</u> .	<u>IP-PPL</u>	IP-PPL-OB1
Complement of P	the idea <i>of</i> <u>doing the dishes</u>	IP-PPL	
Adjunct	<u>Turning the page</u> , she began to read. <u>Overcome by remorse</u> , he gave up the throne.		

(from <http://www.ling.upenn.edu/hist-corpora/annotation/index.html>)

- sample of 51,545 words from subperiods P1 and P3
- automatic retrieval of *IP-PPLs*: 677 examples, of which 263 were correct
- manual analysis of FAs: 267 examples

So... **recall: 99.4 percent**; precision: 38.8 percent

Frequency

- LModE (this study):

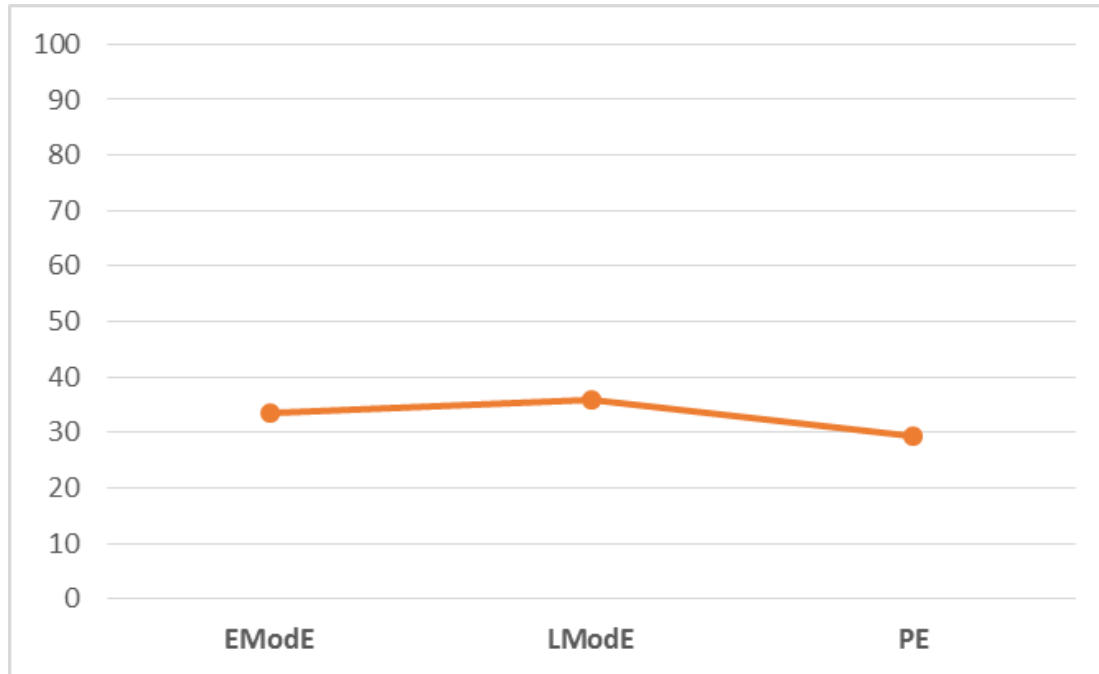
PPCMBE	P1	P3	P1+P3
FAs (/10,000w)	1076 (38.7)	859 (33.0)	1935 (36.0)

- EModE--LModE--PE:

n.f. (/10,000w)	EModE (Río-Rey)	LModE (my data)	PE (Kortmann)
FAs	33.6	36.0	29.5

Frequency

- EModE--LModE--PE (n.f./10,000w)

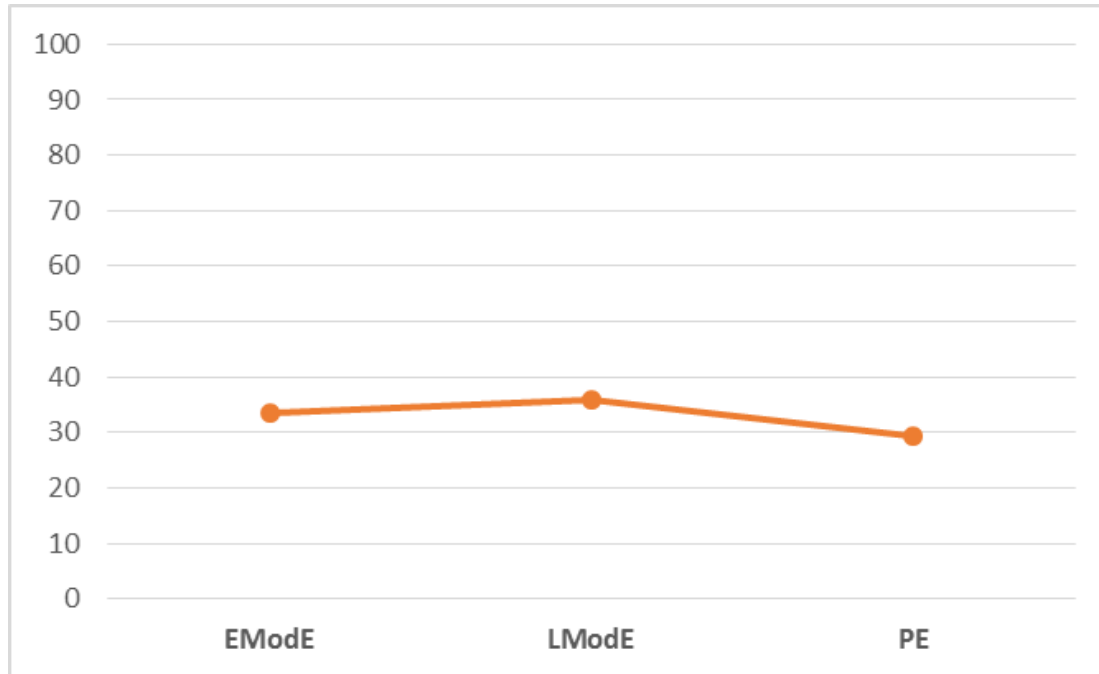


Remark:

The concept of FA is not identical in the three studies, so the results are tentative.

Frequency

- EModE--LModE--PE (n.f./10,000w)



Some preliminary conclusions:

FAs maintain a low frequency from Early to PE

They constitute a stable strategy in the language across time

Head elements: verbal FAs

Speaking with Divine power, they brought over the world to God; (PUSEY-186X,306.379)

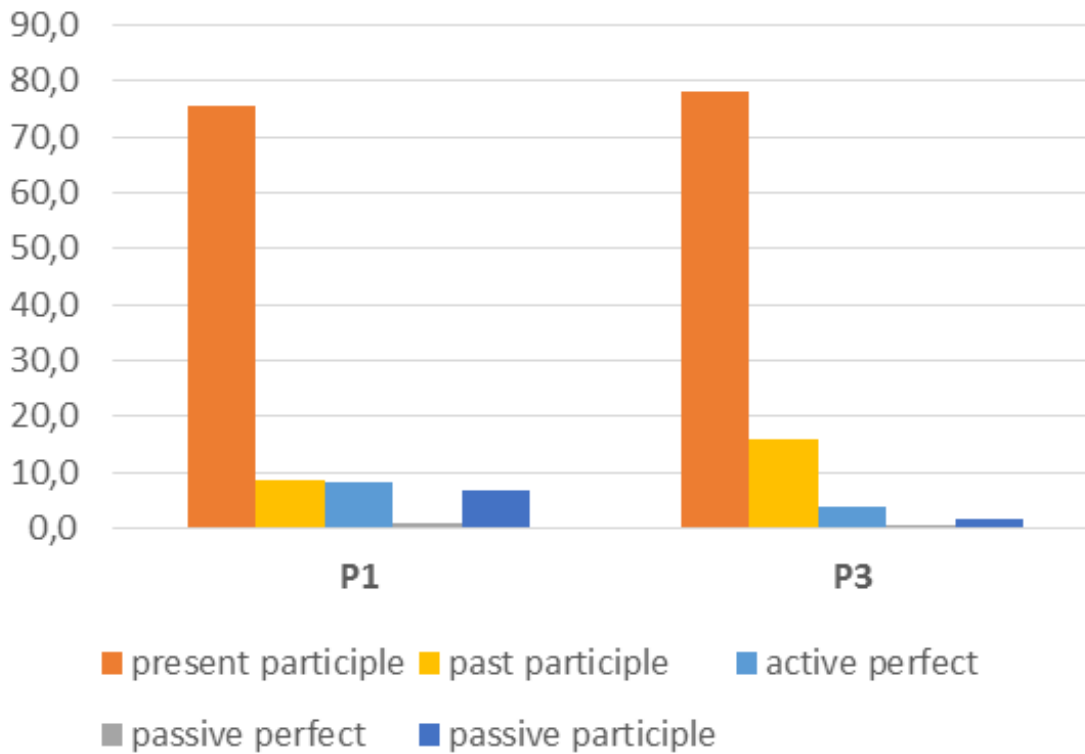
Carried in a sling across the breast, or perched on a bustle behind, it is exposed to all weathers; (READE-1863,205.42)

To finance these adventurers, Americans are digging deeper into their pockets. (Kortmann 1991: 6)



Head elements: verbal FAs

- LModE:



Some preliminary conclusions:

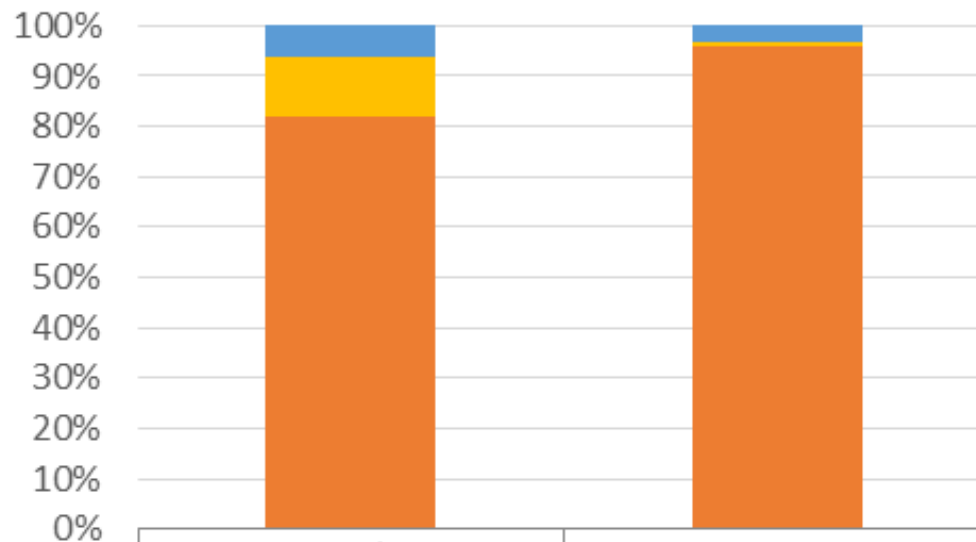
Corroborating previous claims (Kruisinga 1932: 276):

-ing forms are by far the most frequent



Head elements: verbal FAs

- LModE--PE:



	LModE	PE
perfect participle	121	41
past participle	230	16
present participle	1584	1269

Some preliminary conclusions:

Present participles:

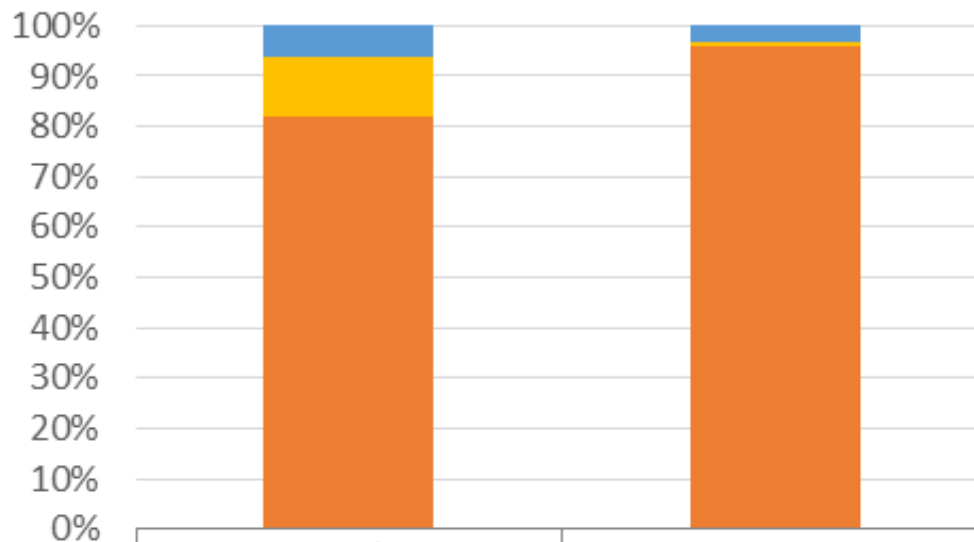
- More than 80 percent of the examples in LModE

- In PE, *-ing* forms exceed 95 percent



Head elements: verbal FAs

- LModE--PE:



Some preliminary conclusions:

Statistically significant evolution with respect to head elements ($\chi^2(2)=152.02, P<.0001$)

perfect participle	121	41
past participle	230	16
present participle	1584	1269



Syntactic structure: position

- LModE – PE:

	P1	P3	PE (Kortmann)
initial	349	289	455
medial	182	98	97
final	545	472	860

* There is no data for EModE.

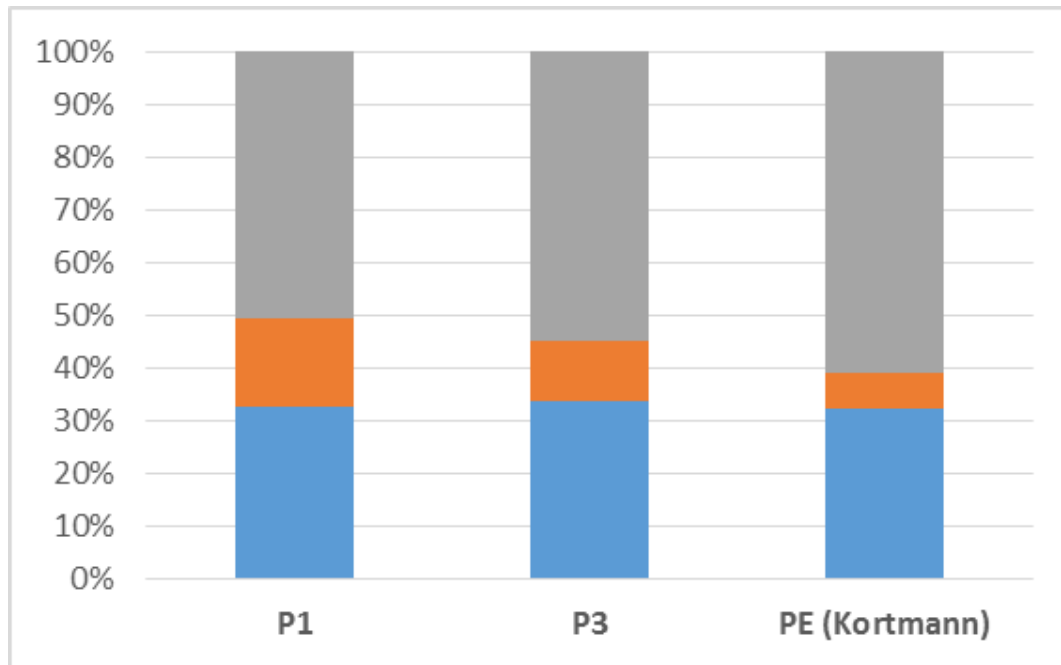
* The results for PE are based on Kortmann's (1991, 1995) frequencies of verbal and non-verbal FAs.

Syntactic structure: position

- LModE--PE:

Some preliminary conclusions:

slight (statistically-significant) increase of sentence-final FAs across time ($\chi^2(2) = 66.79, P < .0001$), up to 60.9 percent of the examples in PE



Semantics

- Control:
 - Related/unrelated typology

- Content:
 - Semantic classification: most/least informative

Semantics: subject control

Subject control in FAs:

•related:

– fully related: $\text{subject}_{\text{FA}} = \text{main cl. subject}$

(...) , my Father, *not being willing to let me lie too long idling in London*, sent for me down to Chatsworth, to be under his Eye, (...)
(CIBBER-1740,37.49)

– partially related: eg. $\text{subject}_{\text{FA}} = \text{main cl. constituent}$

We found Warre in the garden, in high spirits, *trampling among the flower-beds*. (BENSON-190X,139.926)

Semantics: subject control

Subject control in FAs:

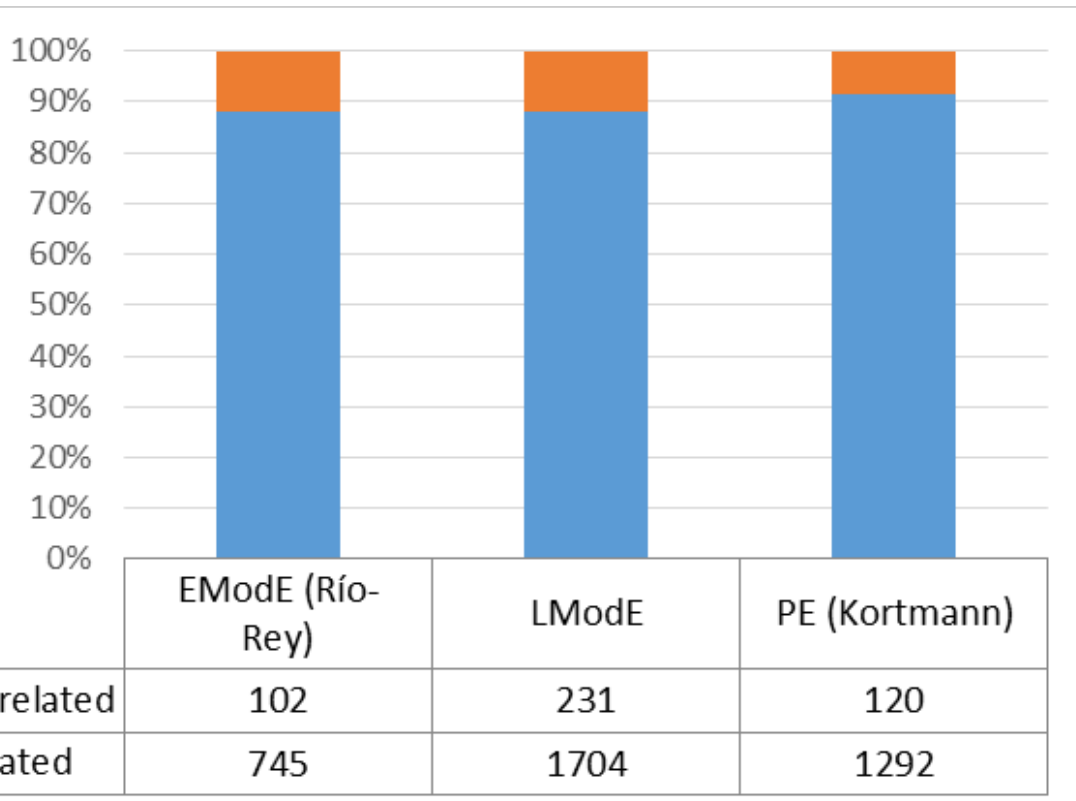
- unrelated:

and hearing nothing of them, the next Morning, the Boat went off again,
(COOKE-1712,1,441.338)

Therefore *having prepared the Rent-Book for the succeeding Year*, the Rests come to be the first Article, as a Charge upon the Tenant in his next Accompt. (DRUMMOND-1718,11.113)

Semantics: subject control

- EModE—LModE--PE:

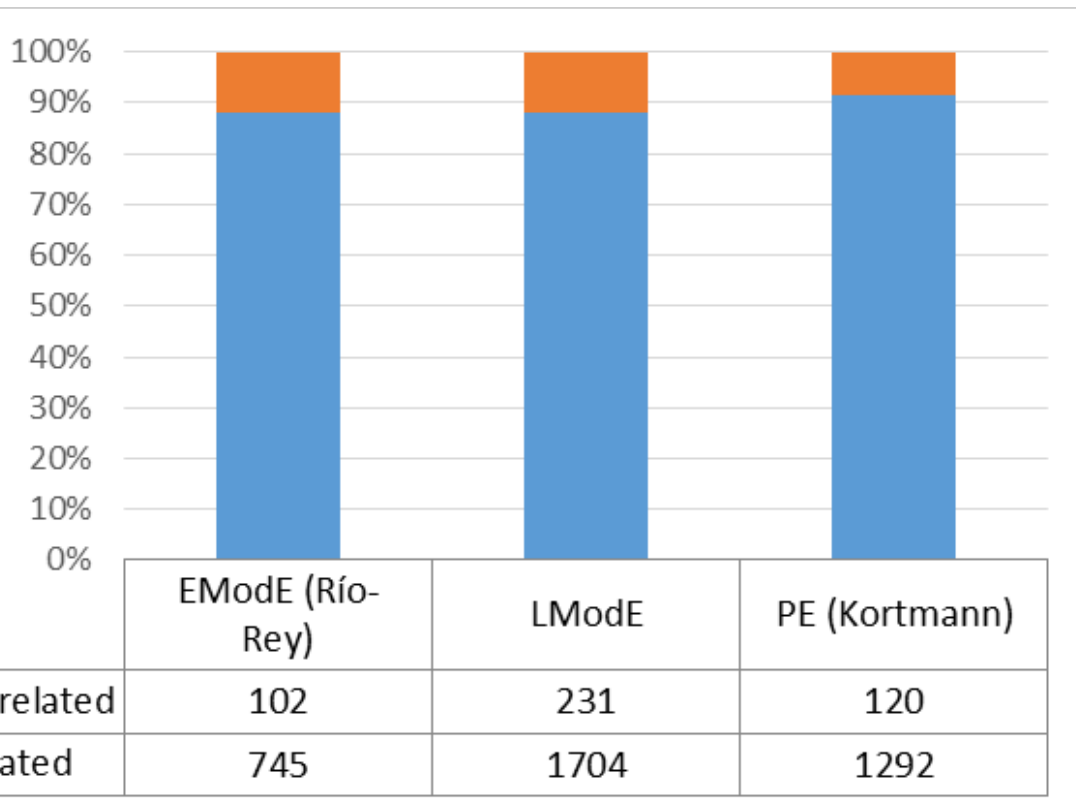


Some preliminary conclusions:

Most subjects in FAs are semantically controlled by their matrix clauses, and this is a consequence of their syntax (lack of explicit subject and need for semantic saturation of the empty subject position).

Semantics: subject control

- EModE—LModE--PE:

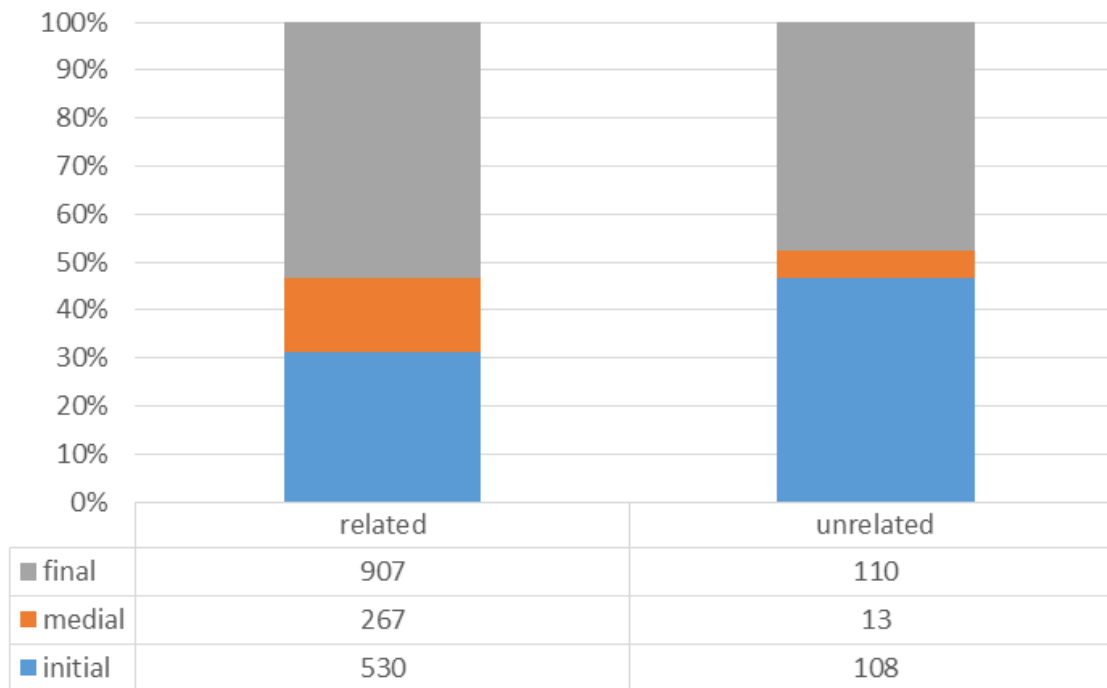


Some preliminary conclusions:

No statistically significant changes across time ($\chi^2(2)=11.72, P=0.0029$)

Subject control and position

- LModE:



Some preliminary conclusions:

Final position is favoured when there is subject identity (related FAs).

Both initial and final positions are feasible when there is no subject identity (unrelated FAs).

Semantics: content

Semantic classification: most/least informative

Classification of the examples according to Kortmann's (1991: 121) scale of informative relations:

cause *result*
concession *condition*
contrast *purpose*
time after *time before*

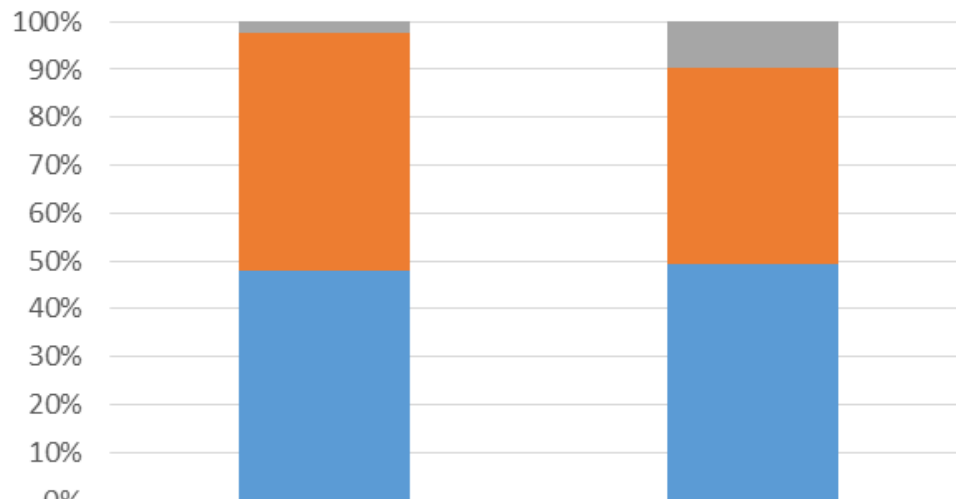
most informative

addition
accompanying circumstance
exemplification
specification
same time
manner

least informative

Semantics: content

- LModE--PE:



	LModE	PE
other	44	135
least informative	960	582
most informative	931	695

Some preliminary conclusions:

Similar proportions of FAs as regards semantic content in LModE.

The frequencies for most informative relations are maintained in PE.

Semantics: augmentation

- Introductory elements: conjunctions

These, *when corrected*, not only serve as the best versions to be translated back into Latin, but bring children to a greater proficiency in their own language. (BARCLAY-1743,99.325)

for, though directed to Downing-street, it would not, as other letters would have done, address itself to the present possessor. (WALPOLE-174X,5,18.439)

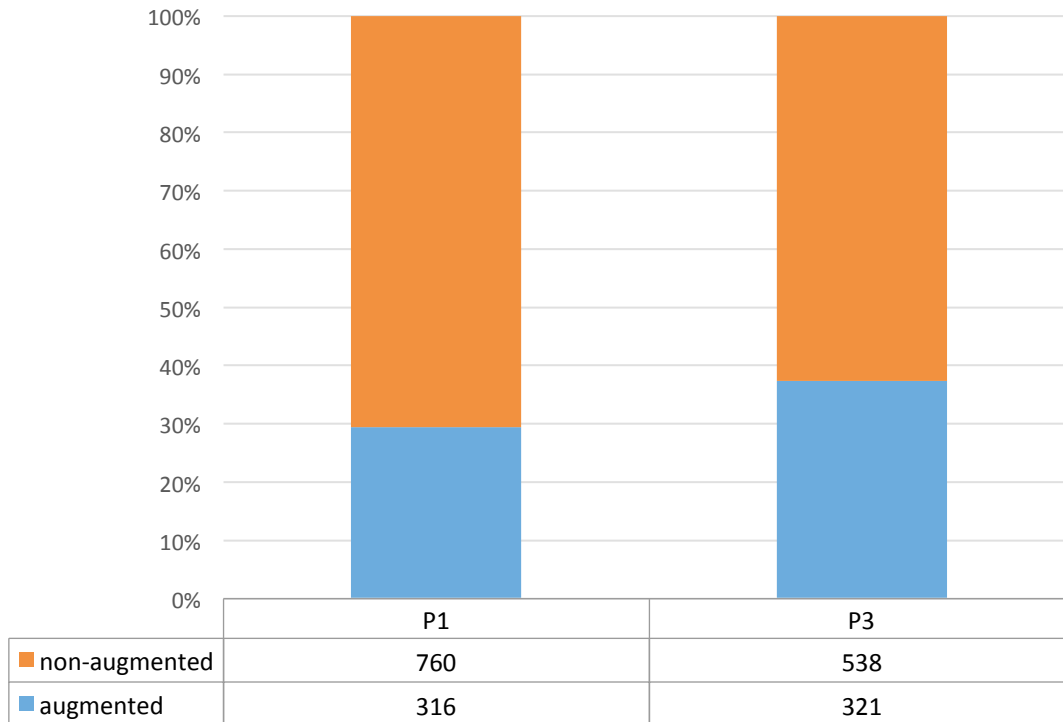
Semantics: augmentation

- Introductory elements: prepositions
 - Of the type of *after* or *before*: Kortmann (1991), Stump (1985)
Before returning home, she bought presents for her parents.
(Kortmann 1991: 8)
 - Of the type of *on, in, by, etc.*: Kruisinga (1932: 277), Visser (1972: 1133ff), Declerck (1991: 36, 457)

On stepping out of the car she felt a fine rain in her face.
(Visser 1972: 1136)

Semantics: augmentation

- LModE:



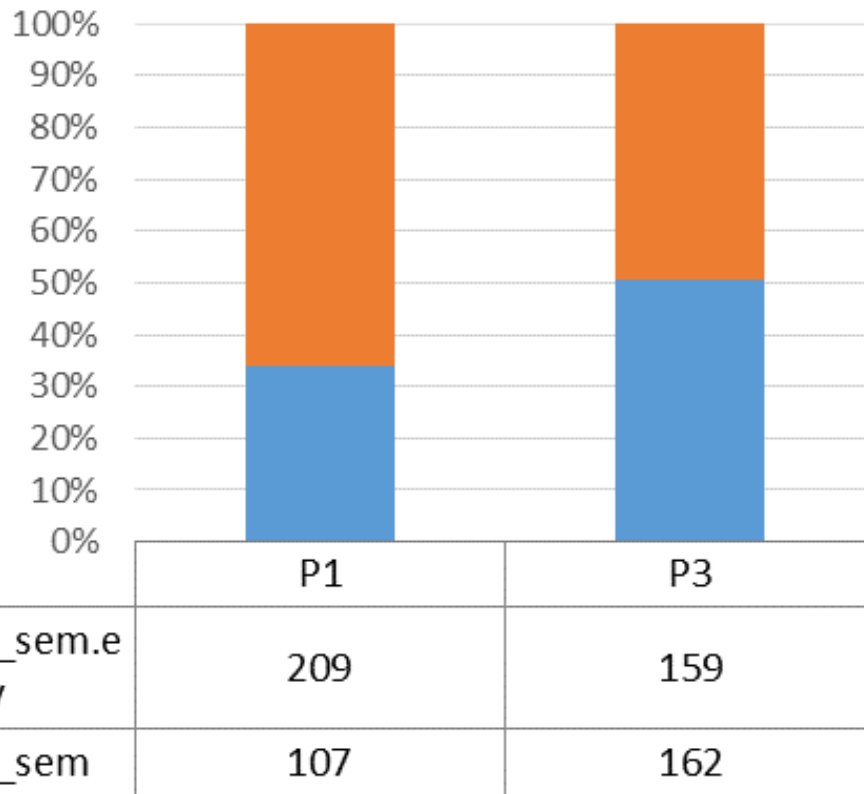
Some preliminary conclusions:

Not the preferred option (Kortmann 1991: 195).

My data support this claim:

Only 29.4 percent of the examples in P1 and 37.4 in P3 are introduced by augmentors.

Semantics: augmentation

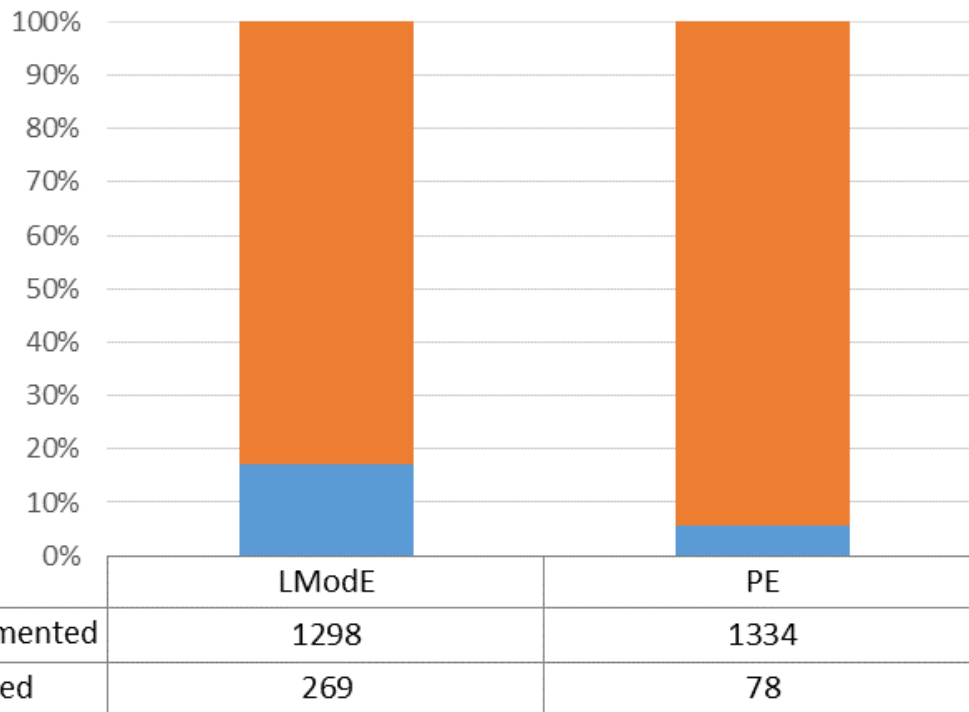


Some preliminary conclusions:

FAs augmented by semantically loaded items increase significantly in the last period of LModE ($\chi^2(1)=17.33, P<.0001$)

Semantics: augmentation

- LModE--PE:



Some preliminary conclusions:

Prepositionally augmented examples have been excluded for comparison.

Augmented FAs decrease significantly in PE ($\chi^2(1) = 96.7, P < .0001$)

Text type dependency

- The literature:

FAs are clearly preferred in written discourse rather than in spoken language (Thompson 1983: 45-46, Kortmann 1991: 38, Río-Rey 2002: 315)

Text type dependency

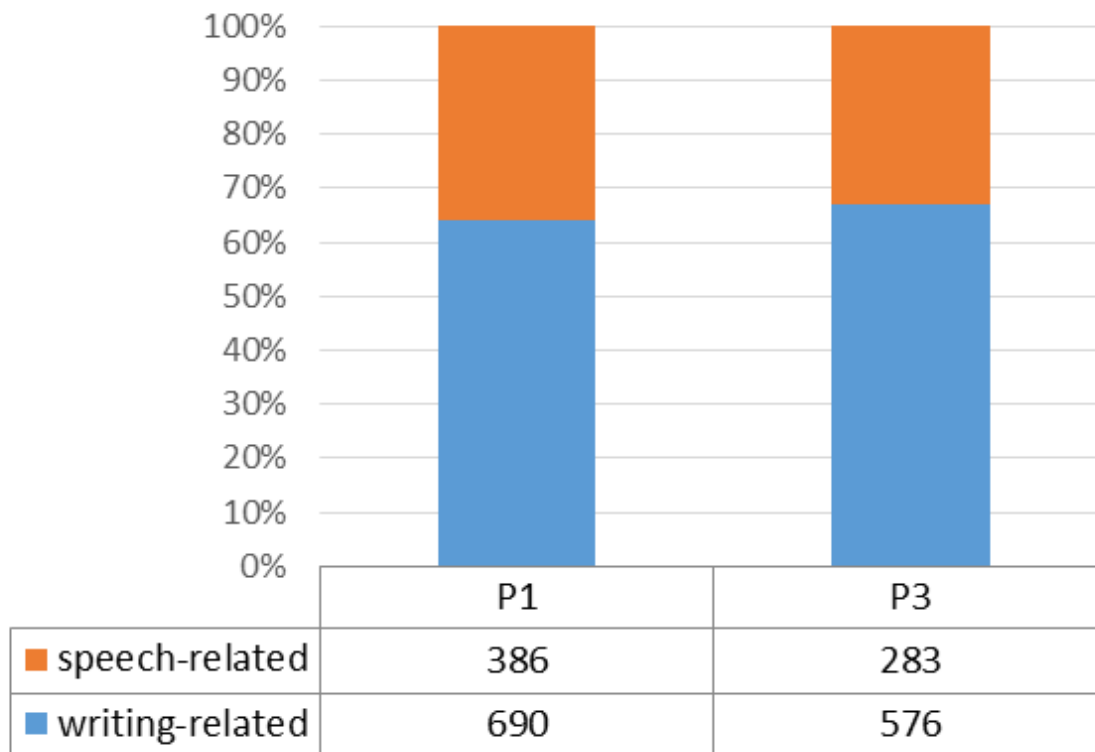
- Genre-based study:
 - productivity of FAs per text-type
 - writing- vs. speech-related broad classification:

Writing-related (formal; to be read)	Speech-related (speech-like/purposed/based)
biography_auto, biography_other, education_treatise, handbook_other, history, law, philosophy, science_medicine, science_other, travelogue	diary, drama_comedy, fiction, letter_non- private, letter_private, proceedings_trial, sermon

(adapted from Culpeper and Kytö 2010: 18)

Text type dependency

- Genre-based study: writing- vs. speech-related



Results for LModE corroborate previous claims.

FAs are more productive in written discourse.

No significant changes from P1 to P3 ($\chi^2(1) = 1.68, P=0.1949$)

Summary and Conclusion

- The frequency counts for FAs show that:
 - (i) FAs maintain a relatively low frequency from Early to PE
 - (ii) FAs constitute a stable strategy in the language across time
- Type of verbal FA: *-ing* forms are by far the most habitual
- Position: [clause]+[FA] prototypical design
- Control:
 - (i) Most FAs are controlled (consequence of their syntax)
 - (ii) No statistical differences across time

Summary and Conclusion

- Content:
 - (i) Similar proportions of most/least informative FAs in LModE
 - (ii) Frequencies for most informative FAs are maintained in PE
- Introductory elements:
 - (i) Augmentation is not the preferred option
 - (ii) FAs with introductory elements decrease significantly in PE
- Text type dependency:
 - (i) FAs are more common in writing-related text types

Further study

- Analyse the examples belonging to P2 (1770-1839)
- Work on a more specific taxonomy for a genre-based description
- Analyse the current state of FA by carrying out a corpus study based on very recent English

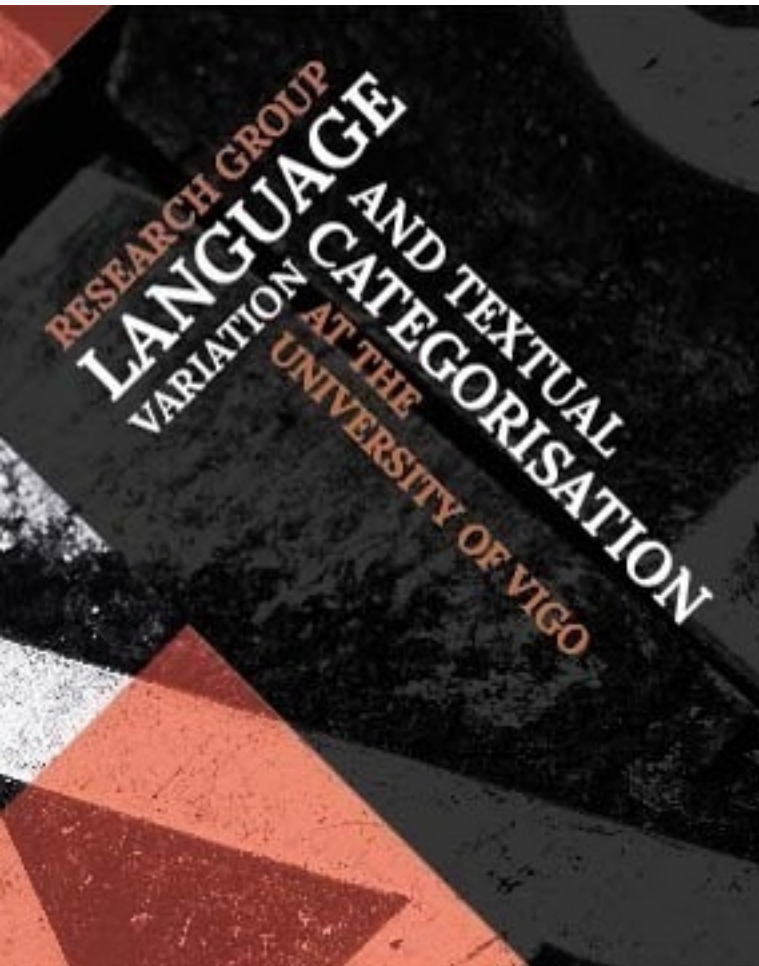
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THANKS!

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