BOOK REVIEW

Landert, D. (2024). *Methods in Historical Corpus Pragmatics: Epistemic Stance in Early Modern English.* Cambridge University Press. 314 pp.

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In her monograph, Landert presents a comprehensive qualitative and quantitative corpus-driven study of lexical markers of epistemic stance in Early Modern English, i.e. ones that are not (fully) grammaticalized and that express certainty and reliability. The latter are typically context-dependent for their interpretation at a micro, meso, and macro level. Landert presents innovative methodological insights into historical corpus pragmatics in general, especially for qualitative research and the retrieval of data, using a cluster-based approach. Both explicit and implicit stance marking are taken into account. The book also offers a useful inventory of all retrieved stance markers in Early Modern English.

The book is divided into three parts. Part 1 gives the theoretical background to historical corpus pragmatics and stance in Early Modern English. Part 2 discusses the methodology with respect to the compilation of inventories of lexical stance markers and the retrieval of markers in high-density passages. Part 3 presents empirical studies on lexical stance markers in high-density passages, contextual factors and rhetorical strategies, meta-communicative expressions and the expression of certainty linked to different genres. Next, there is the conclusion and two appendices containing a list of high-density passages, as well as an inventory of stance markers.

The first chapter of Part 1 discusses the challenges that come with doing corpus research in historical linguistics, especially when studying meaning in context on a micro, meso, and macro level. Those include the scarcity of data, the use of scalable methods for qualitative approaches to big data, and the lack of a stable relation between forms and functions of pragmatic variables. The second section looks into corpus approaches to the study of stance in historical data. Landert's main aim is to expand and explore the range of corpus methods for the study of historical pragmatics and epistemic stance in particular, for which reliable inventories are missing in the literature. She proposes a cluster-based approach in which reliable and known stance markers are used to retrieve passages that are rich in stance marking. This is combined with a more traditional approach involving the form-to-function mapping of lexical items across different contexts, as well as a so-called philological approach that consists of reading texts and analyzing

all stance markers that occur in them. She acknowledges that each method has its advantages and drawbacks, but together they seem to work well for the topic at hand.

Landert then discusses the corpora used for her study, which amount to a representative compilation of four different Early Modern English corpora that cover a broad range of contexts. The corpora included are *The Corpus of English Dialogues 1560–1760* (CED), *The Early Modern English Medical Texts Corpus* (EMEMT), *The Lampeter Corpus of Early English Tracts* (LC) and *The Parsed Corpus of Early Modern English Correspondence* (PCEEC).

Chapter 3 in Part 1 addresses stance in Early Modern English. It zooms in on epistemic stance, i.e. the speaker's attitude towards the degree of certainty, likelihood and reliability to what is being said. It is rightly emphasized that the micro and macro level of context are important for the analysis of an epistemic stance marker.

The next section presents an inventory of stance markers which are not morphologized in English. A lot of work has been done on modal verbs in English as a grammatical marker. In addition, there are studies on *I think*. Section 3.4 goes into the frequency of stance markers across time. Modal verbs are looked into first, the developments of which seem register-dependent. Section 3.5 deals with the role of modal verbs in epistemic stance marking and the difficulty of assessing this quantitatively. Section 3.6 targets the role of context, which plays a central role in this monograph, and which involves the utterance itself as well as surrounding cotext, but also the social, cultural and situational context. In addition, the position of markers within texts has to be taken into account, for instance in 'paratexts', which are, however, excluded from most corpora. Section 3.7 puts forward some open questions, including the scarcity of information we have on the Early Modern English speaker's way of expressing attitudes towards uncertainty. It is said that compiling an exhaustive list of all epistemic stance markers is an impossible task given their context-dependent nature. In the remainder of the monograph, the author aims to answer how, when and by whom stance is expressed so as to gain a better understanding of how communicative practices and genres as such have developed.

Part 2 is methodological in nature and addresses the problem of looking for pragmatic expressions as constrained by the fact that corpus studies rely on the use of search terms. Section 4.1 presents four complimentary approaches to the collecting of stance markers. These include the consultation of previous research, dictionaries and thesauri, corpus searches and a philological approach. For the corpus searches the syntactically parsed Penn-Helsinki Parsed Corpus of Early Modern English (PPCEME) was used and searched for present-tense verb forms that have a *that*-complement or zero complementizer. These results were analyzed

semi-manually and categorized in keeping with Gray et al. (2011). Results show that 15 verbs express epistemic stance as well as 11 communication verbs, which are discussed in more detail, such as *behold, question* and *account* for epistemic stance and *appeal, plead* and *subjoin* for the communicative verbs.

The philological approach consists of reading through texts and identifying relevant instances manually, for which a sampler corpus was used including the four Early Modern English corpora, amounting to 140,000 words, covering the time span 1640–1680. This led to the identification of lexico-grammatical patterns expressing authorial stance left undiscovered in previous studies. An example is a conditional clause marking strong commitment to the truthfulness of the proposition and also containing two nouns that mark epistemic stance, i.e. *observation* and *memory*. In other examples the epistemic marking cannot be attributed to any specific part of the clause or word in it, but results from the non-compositional meaning of the entire clause. Close reading also led to the discovery of some lexical items and fixed phrases that mark epistemic stance that have not yet been discussed in the relevant literature or the OED, such as *conceit* in '*tis my conceit that*, meaning 'it is my opinion', expressing evidential meaning as well as likelihood. An avenue for further research might be the search for so-called meta-communicative expressions, which often cite the source of information or indicate to what extent an author is committed to the truth of a proposition, such as production-related expressions like *I say* or *I tell (you)*. The pilot corpus also provided more insight into how stance markers can be used, for instance as text insertions, which are structurally independent from the main clause and often separated from it by means of punctuation and are variable in form. They can take the form of the much-discussed comment clauses, but also longer and more variable clauses. In general stance clauses are often set apart from the proposition that they help to modify, even though the exact syntactic parsing of such stretches of discourse is not always very clear. A last observation pertains to the distribution of stance markers, for which the author notes that you often get passages with a very high density of lexical stance marking.

Section 4.2 tackles the classification of stance meanings, which crucially depends on the type of definition of stance. A first issue that is addressed is that of the polysemy of stance markers such as *think* and *observe*, adjectives like *clear* or nouns such as *truth* and *claim*. For the latter, this can be solved by restricting searches to contexts that are prone to stance marking, such as: nouns that control *that* or *to*-complement clauses, referring expressions combined with a stance noun, demonstrative pronouns with a copular verb and a stance noun, and stance nouns in subject position followed by a copular verb and a *that/to*-complement clause. For stance adjectives, good contexts would be predicative uses with first person singular subjects and uses that control a

that-complement clause. In addition, there are subject-position clauses with a copular verb and adjective, demonstrative pronouns followed by a copular verb and stance adjective, demonstrative determiners with a shell noun, copular verb and predicative stance adjective, as well as attributive stance adjectives followed by a stance noun and an optional complement clause or prepositional phrase. The author adds that some adjectives always mark epistemic stance and are best studied in all contexts, such as *(im)probable, (im)possible* and *(un)likely*. This relates to the competition between having good recall or precision when formulating a research question in corpus studies.

A second issue concerns ambiguity in the classification of individual instances, which is due to the context-dependent nature of their status. An example is *methinks*, which can mark both epistemic and evidential stance in a context in which it is followed by *it cannot be by any probability denied*, but when followed by an evaluative clause like *it looks better* it marks the source of the information and acquires an evaluative sense according to the author, which can be paraphrased as 'according to my judgement'. The latter would no longer mark likelihood or probability. Admittedly, the difference in meaning is gradual, since both mark the source of the information, but with regard to the epistemic meaning the examples are more difficult to classify. Speech act verbs like *counsel* display a similar problem in that its stance meaning can only be implied in the act of giving sound advice, but in other contexts the evidential meaning can be foregrounded, when advice is attributed to a third party for instance. Essentially, the interpretation depends on how much context is taken into account. The author argues that the larger context should be taken into account when possible. This includes the genre, setting and social roles.

A third issue concerns the inclusion of explicit versus implied and performative versus descriptive uses of stance markers. The most prototypical instances of stance marking are overt ones as exemplified in stance verb expressions such as *I believe* and *I doubt*, attributively used adjectives as in *I am sure*, impersonal constructions such as *it is true*, and adverbs such as *certainly*. First-person uses in the present tense are considered to be performative uses, following Nuyts (2016) and are taken to mark stance in the literature. The author states that there are arguments for including descriptive expressions too, since they can affect authorial stance and because the distinction between performative and descriptive is sometimes fuzzy. This means that stance expressions attributed to third parties can be relevant as well for the study of stance marking. Next, indirect speech is looked at. The author explains that by excluding third-person uses, stance expressions in indirect speech are excluded too, whereas they are included in the present monograph. In addition to person, tense also affects the fluidity of different forms of speech representation. Tense switches between past and present are not uncom-

mon in indirect speech in Early Modern English and need to be taken into consideration. Moreover, past tense in general does not always lead to descriptive uses. *I thought*, for instance, provided relevant hits for stance marking in the author's data set, though it is not very common. Only including present tense contexts is also problematic for the study of instructive texts, such as medical ones. For instance, *you shall find* as a future prediction can express stance when expressing the represented author's belief that the medical rules and recipes presented are correct as well as reliable. A third type of indirect performative stance marker is meta-communicative expressions such as *I say* or *I tell (you)*. The emphasis on the author's act of speaking contributes to marking the degree of commitment to the propositional content. Epistemic stance, however, is not explicitly expressed. Then, the author turns to epistemic stance marking by expressions referring to frequency and duration, such as *always* and *never*. In the present study those are not included and neither are expressions of extent and degree, unless they are accompanied by epistemic markers as in *you shall find this always*.

The author then turns to the selection process of a set of universal and context-independent stance markers, using a data-driven approach resulting in a small set of frequent adverbial and adjectival stance markers. *Truly, verily* and *plainly* are part of this set and as yet under-researched.

The second methodological chapter presents a scalable qualitative method of retrieving high-density passages, meant as complementing existing quantitative corpus methods. It allows researchers to study context-dependent stance markers and previously neglected lexical stance markers that combine with well-known and frequent ones. The latter were searched for to obtain passages rich in both types of stance markers. These high-density passages are the basis for the empirical studies presented in Chapters 6 and 7.

Chapter 6 discusses all of the 33 lexical stance markers identified in the 42 high-density passages and not included in earlier quantitative research. These include verbs, such as *collect* in the sense of 'to conclude', but also *credit, esteem, invalidate, mistake, plead, propound, question, rehearse* and *talk*. Nominal stance markers include *absurdity, asseveration, certainty, (in) earnest, fancy, (in my) hearing, judgement, meaning, mind, observing, persuasion, prophecy, remembrance, saying, supposition, talk, testimony* and *unbelief*. For adjectives, *conclusive* was infrequent and deemed unlikely to contribute to major insights into epistemic stance marking. *Remote* was used in the sense of 'far-fetched' in the context at hand, but, again, the low frequency of this use might not make it tremendously important for stance marking in Early Modern English. Adverbial stance markers are *confessedly* as in *'tis confessedly granted on all hands*, expressing reluctant acceptance of the proposition in the complement clause. In addition, there is *forsooth*, which has been studied in the past, but is included in the study because it

does not appear in the quantitative studies by Biber (2004) and Gray et al. (2011). Finally, there is *seriously*, as in *to speak seriously* or *what I seriously thinke*, which the author argues deserves further attention.

Chapter 7 provides a detailed analysis of the 42 high-density passages from the four corpora studied, with a focus on the EMET-dependent nature of the identified stance markers, their functions and rhetorical strategies. The results showed similarities as well as differences between the four corpora. For the CED, most passages derived from trial proceedings, while in the EMET there is a wider spread across the different corpus sections. No clear preferences showed up for the LC and in the PCEEC there was a marked bias towards female writers, writers with literary training and writers in difficult personal situations.

Chapter 8 studies meta-communicative expressions and stance by means of an analysis of context-dependent *I say* and *I tell (you)*, which can be used in many contexts, such as with complement clauses, modal verbs and in the affirmative and negative. The author wants to find out what their functions are in Early Modern English dialogues from trial proceedings and comedy plays, as implied stance markers. She also wants to gain insight into the situational variation of stance marking in general. The analysis provides evidence for the context-dependency of the expressions with differences across different text types, such as trial proceedings and comedy plays.

Chapter 9 looks into the expression of certainty across three different genres: medical treatises, political pamphlets and trial transcripts. It hence takes the wider context or macro-context, of a text into account. This involves a rethinking of the function of certainty markers and providing a solution for the paradox that the use of certainty markers does not always lead to an increased level of certainty or reliability of a statement. It is observed that certainty markers can indeed develop interpersonal and rhetorical functions, but their main function is to express certainty, the author argues, as a response to perceived challenges of certainty. It is also shown that each genre has its preferences for specific stance markers.

In conclusion, this monograph is an excellent introduction into the qualitative methodological issues encountered in historical corpus pragmatics in general and sheds light on the under-researched topic of context-dependent lexical stance marking in Early Modern English in particular. Although the topic of the monograph is quite specific, the combined methodology could benefit both researchers in historical pragmatics as well as corpus linguists in general. It presents a good balance between more theoretical and descriptive chapters and provides many convincing examples in context. Context-dependency is addressed in a comprehensive way by carefully including the micro, meso, and macro level.

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