

SPREMI Talk, 6th Feb 2025

“There was once a Country-man, which came to London, (...)”: Some considerations on relativisation strategies in (Early) Modern English

Izabela Czerniak, Ph.D. [Project researcher, English Language & Literature, FHPT]

The present talk is a tiny part of own post-doctoral research on the system of relativisation in the English language, where both historical and modern developments around the English relative clause are investigated. For the SPREMI seminar, the discussion will focus on a special case of one of the available relative markers, namely *which*, being used for personal referents (e.g. the example included in the title of this presentation). While this usage no longer constitutes a part of Present-Day English, it would be a common practice during the Early Modern English time, and it would be traced in the texts up until the onset of what has become known as Late Modern English (see e.g. Rissanen, 1999). The relevant examples had initially been retrieved from the *Penn Parsed Corpora of Historical English* (PPCHE), at which point it became evident that more data was needed, since this peculiar use of *which* relativiser was largely associated with a specific group of human antecedents. Thus, subsequent rounds of searches were conducted on two other databases, the *Early Modern Multiloquent Authors* corpus (EMMA release 1.0) and the *Corpus of Late Modern English Texts* (CLMET version 3.1), so that comparisons could be made. It appears that this special use of *which* is not an idiosyncratic feature tied to the content of PPCHE only.

References:

- De Smet, H., Flach, S., Tyrkkö, J., & Diller, H. J. (2015). *Corpus of Late Modern English texts* (version 3.1). <<https://fedora.clarin-d.uni-saarland.de/clmet/clmet.html>>.
- Kroch, A. (2020). *Penn Parsed Corpora of Historical English* (PPCHE), LDC2020T16. Web Download. Philadelphia: Linguistic Data Consortium.
- Kroch, A., Santorini, B., & Delfs, L. (2016). *The Penn-Helsinki Parsed Corpus of Early Modern English* (PPCEME). Department of Linguistics, University of Pennsylvania. Currently distributed by the Linguistic Data Consortium <<https://www.ling.upenn.edu/ppche/ppche-release-2016/PPCEME-RELEASE-3>>.
- Kroch, A., Santorini, B. & Dierani, A. (2016). *The Penn Parsed Corpus of Modern British English* (PPCMBE2). Department of Linguistics, University of Pennsylvania. Currently distributed by the Linguistic Data Consortium <<https://www.ling.upenn.edu/histcorpora/PPCMBE2-RELEASE-1/>>.
- Petré, P., Anthonissen, L., Budts S., Manjavacas, E. & Strik, O. (2017). *Early Modern Multiloquent Authors* (EMMA). University of Atwerp: Linguistics Dept <<https://www.uantwerpen.be/en/projects/mind-bending-grammars/emma-corpus/>>.
- Rissanen, M. (1999). Syntax. In R. Lass (Ed.) *The Cambridge history of the English language: Vol. 3. 1476–1776* (pp. 187–331). Cambridge University Press.