THE SEMANTIC DISSOLUTION OF THE STRUCTURE IN ME *SHULEN* ON ITS PATH TO EPISTEMICITY

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ABSTRACT

The present paper based on Chaucer's "Canterbury Tales" offers a historical analysis of the semantic development of ME *shulen* with particular attention paid to the emergence of its future and epistemic senses. The study will juxtapose the analysis of OE *sculan* with ME *shulen*. In the drawn comparison, the paper will indicate that OE *sculan* was contextually contingent and constituted a structure, contrary to ME *shulen* which was contextually free. Moreover, the development of the ME sense of futurity when compared with the OE sense of prophecy, is to be viewed as the increase in the level of abstractness via defocusing of the divine conceptual subject.

Furthermore, the present study will illustrate that the mechanism that affected the changes and led to the grammaticalisation process where neither purely metaphorical nor metonymic but metaphorical perspectivised metonymically thereby giving rise to "the emerging metaphor" (Radden 2003).

1. Introduction

The present paper offers a historical analysis of the semantic development of the ME verb *shulen* with particular attention paid to the emergence of its future and epistemic senses.

The present study, by drawing on theories represented by Traugott (1989), Barcelona (2003) and Radden (2003) illustrates the analysis of ME *shulen* in the light of its rise to futurity and epistemicity. The aims of the paper are the following.

To begin with, the study will attempt to prove that the sense of prophecy in OE *sculan* and of futurity in ME shulen, though semantically linked, were related to different conceptual structures. Hence, the emphasis will be put on the mechanisms involved in the modification of the structure in ME *shulen* when

compared with OE *sculan*. Consequently, even though the study aims to illustrate the semantic development of ME *shulen*, yet a brief characterisation of OE *sculan* seems a necessary tool to pinpoint all the modifications in the conceptual structure of *shulen* that emerged not until ME period.

The paper will indicate that OE *sculan* was contextually contingent, and formed a conceptual structure contrary to ME *shulen*, which was contextually free and ceased to constitute a structure. Moreover, the development of ME sense of futurity is to be viewed as the increase in the level of abstractness, hence as the evolution of former conceptual structure via defocusing of the divine conceptual subject.

Furthermore, the present study will illustrate that the mechanisms that affected the changes in the analysed structures, and led to the grammaticalisation process, were metaphorical based on metonymy, thereby giving rise to the "emerging metaphor" Radden (2003). Therefore, the study will emphasise that the development of ME *shulen* should neither be viewed in terms of purely metaphorical nor metonymic changes but rather as the interaction between these apparently opposite mechanisms. Thus, the paper will confirm the latest theories on metaphor/metonymy continuum represented by Barcelona (2003), Radden (2003), Koivisto-Alanko (2000), Cruse (2004) among others.

> Metonymical change is prototypical flexibility producing meanings and meaning nuances, some transient, some resulting in lasting metonymous meaning and some leading to actual metaphorical change. The metaphorical level of change can be observed only in "the big picture" not on the semantic micro-level
>
> (Koivisto-Alanko 2000: 10).

Consequently, the present study of *shulen* will indicate that even if a shift looks like metaphorical, it may have a metonymic basis. One of the tools used in the paper is *emerging metaphor* Radden (2003), hence metonymy-based metaphor, or metaphor perspectivised metonymically. For this reason, Radden points to a conceptual relationship between a named and an implicated entity, which is based on contiguity, thereby on metonymy. Therefore, the analysis will indicate that it is metaphorical based on metonymy transfers that are activated at different stages to the emergence of the subjectivity and the subsequent grammaticalisation process.

Furthermore, the study will illustrate that the gradual change corresponds to the three tendencies of grammaticalisation advocated by Traugott (1989), thereby accounting for the shift from an ordinary verb to an attitudinal modal operator.

Tendency I:

Meaning based in the external described situation >
meaning based in the internal (evaluative/perceptual/cognitive) situation.
Tendency II:

Meaning based in the external or internal situation >
meaning based in the textual situation.

Tendency III:

Meanings tend to become increasingly situated in the speaker's subjective belief state, attitude toward a proposition.

Before starting the analysis of *shulen*, there are two more terms that need to be defined as they constitute the key tools in the conceptual structures. Namely, the grammatical subject is defined syntactically, while the conceptual one semantically, thus it is the one to whom the grammatical subject refers to. Therefore, a person (the grammatical subject) refers to ideas, plans imposed by God (divine conceptual subject). He/she does not speak about the events that emerged in his/her own mind but voices the plans created by God.

The semantic analysis of ME *shulen* is based on Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* from the *Works of Geoffrey Chaucer* edited by Fred Norris Robinson (Cambridge, 2nd edition).

2. The semantic analysis of *sculan* in OE: Brief description

The analysis of OE *sculan*, based on all texts from *the Toronto Corpus*, is conceptually contingent, hence the verb constitutes a structure rather than randomly occurring senses.

- Contexts, whose grammatical subject is humans (first person singular/plural indicative) instantiate obligation. Regarding the contexts whose subject is first person singular indicative, there is no concept of foretelling events. In other words, *ic sceal* always instantiate the concept of obligation, and never of prophecy. In the first person plural indicative, the concept of prophecy is marginal and restricted to contexts where grammatical subject refers to plans established by God. The rest is covered by obligation sense.
- Contexts, whose conceptual subject is God, divinity, and the grammatical subject is a third person pronoun or a person, instantiate the concept of prophecy.

- Contexts, whose conceptual subject is addressee second person singular, though imperative in mood, are prophetic in nature. God reveals the hearer what plans he/she has for him/her. These contexts show that God does not tell the hearer what he/she must do but rather predicts what he/she will do.
- Past subjunctives *sceolde/sceolden*, when in reported speech, referred to future events. Yet, the future sense was analogous to the two axes of either obligation or vision planned by God. In other words, when the event in proposition was the result of a settled purpose, *sceolde/sceolden* corresponded to PDE would, thus to the event taking place independently of a speaker's will and planned by God. However, when the conceptual subject is human, past subjunctive correspond to PDE should.
- Present subjunctives apply only to contexts underlying prophecy/vision.

3. The semantic analysis of the concept of ME *shulen*

The semantic analysis of ME *shulen* based on *Canterbury Tales* will cover the following spheres:

–	prophecy	2	2%
–	obligation	34	36%
–	futurity/destiny	33	35%
–	subjective senses	5	5%
–	speech-act verbs	19	20%

The first two concepts (prophecy, obligation) will be referred to as root senses, the concept of futurity/destiny as intermediary to the epistemicity, while subjective senses and speech-act verbs will be named epistemic senses.

3.1. The semantic analysis of the concept of prophecy

The ME sense of prophecy in *shulen* should be viewed as the relict of the OE central meaning, where God was a conceptual subject. Such statements, via a direct reference either to God or other divine beings, reflect God's will. Moreover, the above sense is never recorded with a first person pronoun. The grammatical subject (person) is not the initiator of the event but serves only as a conceptual tool to illustrate the will of God.

The above concept can be illustrated by the following contexts:

1)   Thy body and his panne be right.
     Thou shalt to helle yet to-nyght

(*The Friar's Tale*: 1635-1636).

2)   Thanne shal youre soule up to hevene skippe

(*The Merchant's Tale*: 1672).

3.2. The semantic analysis of the concept of obligation

The concept of obligation in *shulen* constitutes the older, root sense, when human being was a conceptual subject. It should be emphasised that initially, before any modifications in the conceptual structure of the analysed verb took place, there were two types of conceptual subject, namely a divine one initiating a concept of prophecy, and a human one giving rise to the obligation concept. Given the obligation concept, the event is viewed as appropriate, essential for the speaker and reflects moral undertones.

The analysed sphere can be exemplified by the following contexts:

3)   Men sholde wedden after hire estaat

(*The Miller's Tale*: 3228-3229).

4)   That if you list I shal wel have my love.
      Thy temple wol I worshipe evermo,
      And on thyn auter, where I ride or go,
      I wol doon sacrifice and fires beete

(*The Knight's Tale*: 2250-2253).

It should be emphasised that these two concepts should not be viewed as homonymous but as semantically related ones.

The concept of prophecy evokes such attributes as certainty of a future event due to a settled decision. The utterer predicts a course of events, foretells future.

Similarly to the concept of prophecy, the concept of obligation is also future--oriented. Obligation, just like prophecy, relies on the concept of a settled decision. The utterer is convinced that he/she should and hence will act as he utters, I should hence I will. The speaker thus predicts how he/she will behave, how his/her course of events will look like to reflect God's will. The only difference is that *shulen* denoting obligation is conceptually construed either with someone else's will, or moral norms. Hence, the element of authority is in built in the conceptual framework of obligation. If, however, this element of external authority is not included in the scope, *shulen* evokes into a marker predicting future events to reflect one's own will (prophecy) rather than the authority's will (obligation).

3.3. The semantic analysis of two concepts; futurity/destiny and subjective senses

The concept futurity/destiny emerged not until Middle English. It reflects defocusing of the divine conceptual subject and its substitution for the more abstract concept of destiny, thereby being the indicative of the increase in the level of abstractness. In Old English, prophecy sense was more concrete and linked with God, who is perceived holistically as one being who directs everything. In Middle English, after defocusing of the divine conceptual subject, the new conceptual subject – destiny evokes more abstract associations of a force, or a predictable fate rather than of a being. This sense becomes central in Middle English. Furthermore, it can be linked with the first person pronoun, unlike Old English when *Ic sceal* expressed only obligation. The semantic content in sentences illustrating futurity/destiny concept is of an existential character and reflects unquestionable truth rather than events planned for individuals by God and voiced by divine beings.

Such a concept can be viewed as constituting the intermediary stage to the way of epistemicity.

To begin with, the event reflected in the proposition is not imposed but voiced by the individual. In other words, it emerged in the mind of an individual. Yet, it should be emphasised that the events in futurity/destiny concept are not fully subjective but reflect system of values and beliefs shared by humanity and perceived as unquestionable truths. Therefore its undertones are not individual, subjective but humanity-shared.

The futurity/destiny concept can be exemplified by the following senses:

5)   It fel that in the seven the yer of May
     The thridde nyght,
     Were it by avenger or destynee –
     As, when a thyng is shapen, it shal be –

(*The Knight's Tale*: 1462-1466).

6)   Yet somtyme it shal fallen on a day
     That falleth nat eft withinne a thousand yeer

(*The Knight's Tale*: 1669-70).

7)   Ech of yow shal have his destinee

(*The Knight's Tale*: 1842).

8)   And al so certein, as we knowe echoon,
     That we shul deye

(*The Man of Law's Tale*: 971-972).

The mechanism that should be viewed as accountable for the emergence of the above concept is metonymic, where the result stands for the cause. The reason for such an approach lies in the distinction put between the two terms: prophecy and destiny. Namely, *prophecy* denotes the initial act, the activity, the broad process, while *destiny* stands for the effect, the consequence of a prophecy.

Consequently, the mechanism underlying the defocusing of the divine conceptual subject, and hence the increase in the level of abstractness is metonymic, where the result (destiny) stands for the cause (prophecy). The emerged concept is partly subjective, and constitutes the intermediary stage to the way of epistemicity.

The next step is the subjective stage, which emerged via defocusing of the concept of destiny. Thus, at that point, the event stated does not only emerge in the mind of the individual but is fully subjective, logical thereby constituting an inference, opinion rather than a statement of fact. The subjective, epistemic sense can be illustrated by the following contexts:

9) He was a gentil harlot and a kynde;
    A better felawe sholde men nought fynde

                                               (*General Prologue*: 652-53).

10) I sholde have dyed longe tyme agon

                                               (*The Prioress's Tale*: 1841).

The above two-fold shift (the defocusing of the divine conceptual subject and of destiny) corresponds to Traugott's Tendency I (1987):

Meaning based in the external described situation >
meaning based in the internal (evaluative/perceptual/cognitive) situation.

Consequently, what takes place is the process of mapping of a concrete domain upon the abstract one, yet the step that led to the bridging of the two domains was metonymic. In other words, the entire mechanism should be referred to as an emerging metaphor Radden (2003), thus metaphor perspectivised metonymically, or metaphor based on metonymy.

To put it in Radden's terms:

PRECEDENCE   PLUS   CAUSE >   SUBSEQUENCE +   RESULT,
which can be referred to as a CAUSAL PRECENCE.

3.4. The semantic analysis of speech-act function

The analysis of *shulen*, records specific semantic connotations which occur in conversational world and are classified as speech-act verbs. These will be contexts containing the phrase: *as ye shal heere.*

11) They been accorded as ye shal heere

<div align="right">(The Man of Law's Tale: 238).</div>

12) And with that word he, with a sobre cheere,
     Bigan his tale, as ye shal after heere

<div align="right">(The Man of Law's Tale: 98).</div>

The analysis indicates that such statements are introductory, automatic and fixed, whose function is purely emphatic. They illustrate a change from a mental state to a speech-act verb meaning. Moreover, as Aijmer (1972: 2) maintains such contexts are pragmaticalised since they involve speaker's attitude to a hearer. They correspond to Traugott's Tendency II:

Meaning based in the external or internal situation >
meaning based in the textual situation.

The above change should also be viewed as an "emerging metaphor" as it originated in discourse situations, which according to Radden (2003: 94) is a metonymic process based on contiguity of senses.

4. Conclusion

To conclude, the present paper has been an attempt to carry out an analysis of the concept of *shulen* and to emphasise that its epistemic use emerged from the mechanism of the "emerging metaphor", hence metaphor based on metonymy.

Besides, the aim of the study has also been to show that the process of the presented shift is consistent with the long lasting assumption of the gradual accretion of subjectivity as it illustrates all its stages on the path to epistemicity.

Furthermore, the study also indicates that the semantic path of ME *shulen* corresponds to the three tendencies of grammaticalisation advocated by Traugott. Hence, combining the two types of emerging metaphor, one based on metonymy – result for cause (Tendency I), and the other originating in discourse situations (Tendency II), what takes place is the modification of the former Old English structure and the increase in the level of abstractness. Moreover, the paper has also been built on the distinction between Old and Middle

English semantic attributes in the analysed verb. It should be emphasised that while in Old English, *sculan* constituted a structure based on conceptual subject (divine or human), in Middle English the process of defocusing of divine conceptual subject changed the overall semantic dimension of *shulen*. Consequently, the verb no longer constituted a structure but can be used freely in different contexts with all pronouns.

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