

Abs-14

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The constructional approach to the historical corpus: the Casket Letters attributed to Mary, Queen of Scots

This study focuses on the constructional approach to the authenticity of the Casket Letters, the discovery of which helped Mary Stuart's forced abdication. The originals disappeared, so the Letters' authenticity can be judged only by the surviving copies which were repeatedly treated from different points of view: historical, psychological, etc. Analyzing the letters from the position of linguistics using the traditional statistical methods isn't supposed to be justified because of their comparatively small size, but the method of grammatical analysis can be successfully applied to texts of rather small size. Two corpuses were taken into consideration in this study of the Casket Letters' authenticity. The first one included four out of eight Casket Letters attributed to 24-year-old Mary Stuart. These four letters survived in the original French version. The texts were taken from [MacRobert 2002]. The second corpus consisted of 30 authentic Mary Stuart's letters which she wrote at the age of 18-26. The texts were taken from [Labanoff 1844]. The letters were analyzed on the basis of five parameters and resulted in revealing the following structures in the Casket Letters which weren't found in Mary Stuart's texts:

I. subject-predicate agreement: 1) the subject and the predicate don't agree in number and person; 2) the predicate agrees in number not with the subject but with the preceding complement; 3) the subject is used with the preposition *de*; 4) the absence of a finite verb predicate;

II. coinstantiation in the participial complement 'control' structures: 1) the implicit/explicit subject of the participial phrase doesn't coincide with that of the main clause; 2) the absence of the main clause on which the participial complement depends;

III. theta-criterion: Letters 3, 5, 6 have structures in which the predicate has two complements with one and the same semantic role;

IV. negative constructions: 1) the absence of the first *ni* in the construction *ni...ni...ne+V* or its substitution with *ou*; 2) the negative meaning of the construction *ne faire que*; 3) *V1...ni+V2*, where it is *V1* that has the negative meaning; 4) *...ne+ V1... V2+ou+ V3*, where verbs *V2* and *V3* have the negative meaning;

V. Constructions with conjunctions *que/qui*: 1) *...tell...qui +S+Pred*, where *qui* is used as a complement and refers to an inanimate object; 2) *que* is repeatedly used after the participial phrase.

Thus, though we can't faultlessly judge the Casket Letters' authenticity/forgery in the absence of the originals, there is no doubt that the Casket Letters possess some constructs passing on from one letter to another and having rather high frequency for texts of such a small size, but not occurring in Mary Stuart's authentic texts which outnumber the Casket Letters greatly.

#### References

1. Labanoff, A., ed. (1844). *Lettres, instructions et memoires de Marie Stuart*. Paris.

2. MacRobert, A. E. (2002). *Mary, Queen of Scots and the Casket Letters*. London/New York: Tauris.