



# Jan Kochanowski University Press

This is a contribution from *Token: A Journal of English Linguistics*  
Volume 12/2021.

Edited by John G. Newman, Marina Dossena and Sylwester Łodej.  
Special Editor for volume 12: Christina Samson.

© 2021 Jan Kochanowski University Press.

## Lost identity in the Bible<sup>1</sup>

Francesca Ditifeci\* and Ilde E. D. Kantzas\*\*

*\*University of Florence*

*\*\*Lacanian School of Milan*

### ABSTRACT

The current and complex framework for the study of languages, especially English, offers key insights into not only language change, but also the role of neuroscience in such change. In this study, which is part of a wider project, our aim is to trace the diachronic development of English through the textual analysis of various Bible translations, in order to verify its discursive identity. For this purpose, the 50 chapters of Genesis have been analysed in the following versions of the Bible: the Wycliffite, the Tyndale, the King James, the New King James, the 1881 English Revised Version, and the 1982 New King James Version. Several linguistic parameters have been compared through manual counting and statistical comparison. The results have confirmed our hypothesis that a deep modification of linguistic identity has occurred over the centuries.

Keywords: identity, quantitative analysis, language change, simplification, neurological reading.

### 1. Introduction

Heidegger has stated that language is ‘the house of being’ and ‘in its home, human being dwells’; the being and essence of human individuals is determined in reference to the being and essence of language (Heidegger 2008: 37-41). Our research stems from a desire to examine, through rigorous study, the symptoms that inhabit the contemporary world of language.

---

<sup>1</sup> Research for this paper has been carried out jointly by the two authors. Though the general framework has been developed together, Ilde E. D. Kantzas is responsible for section 1 and Francesca Ditifeci for sections 2-3.

Texts produced today may be seen to contain a radically different structuring of writing, which suggests orality rather than literacy, as claimed by Ong (2002). In his text, Ong provides a useful example of this by comparing two versions of the creation sequence in Genesis, one from 1610, and one from 1970, in order to show the evolution and simplification of language which has occurred over time (Brownlees – Ditifecci 2019: 157-161). The original Hebrew text is a written one which preserves noticeable oral patterning in its additive style. The 1610 Douay version, dating from a time with a still considerable oral culture keeps close to the oral additive patterning, keeping to the original Hebrew nine instances of *we* and *wa* ('and') with nine 'ands':

- (1) In the beginning God created heaven and earth. And the earth was void and empty, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the spirit of God moved over the waters. And God said: Be light made. And light was made. And God saw the light that it was good; and he divided the light from the darkness. And he called the light Day, and the darkness Night; and there was evening and morning one day.

In comparison, The New American Bible (1970) dates from a time and culture more accustomed to written texts and offers a translation where *we* and *wa* are translated by 'and' (only twice), 'when', 'then', 'thus', or 'while' to provide 'a flow of narration' more in keeping with the 20<sup>th</sup> century expectations for texts:

- (2) In the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless wasteland, and darkness covered the abyss, while a mighty wind swept over the waters. Then God said, 'Let there be light', and there was light. God saw how good the light was. God then separated the light from the darkness. God called the light 'day' and the darkness he called 'night'. Thus evening came, and morning followed – the first day.

As Ong states:

Oral structures often look to pragmatics, chirographic structures look more to syntactics (organization of the discourse itself). Written discourse develops more elaborate and fixed grammar than oral discourse does because to provide meaning it is more dependent simply upon linguistic structure, since it lacks the normal full existential contexts which surround oral discourse and help determine meaning in oral discourse somewhat independently of grammar (Ong 2002: 36-38).

Daniell also reports in his extensive study of the Bible (2003: 13-14) a striking example of this simplification, when he compares an extract (Matthew 6: 5-13) from a 1996 version of the New Testament with one from Tyndale's translation of 1534. The 1996 version reads:

- (3) When you come before God, don't turn into a theatrical production. All these people making a regular show of their prayers, hoping for stardom! Do you think God sits in a box seat? Here's what I want you to do: Find a quiet, secluded place so you won't be tempted to role play before God. Just sit there as simply and honestly you can manage. [...]

Tyndale's version seems much less immediate to 20<sup>th</sup> century readers:

- (4) And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues, and in the corners of the streets, because they would be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward. But when thou prayest, enter into thy chamber, and shut the door to thee, and pray to thy father which is in the secret: and thy father which seeth in secret shall regard thee openly. [...]

There is much critical debate around the theme of the return to orality, since some feel it can never be demonstrated, and that we should not simply hypothesize an earlier primitive and wild goodness, a Rousseauian goodness: "writing, before being the object, is the condition of the episteme" (Derrida 2006: 49). Here, once again, neurological and linguistic studies come to a fruitful meeting point.

Many questions arise in the age of digital communication with respect to the effects that this type of writing, volatile and tendentially iconic, has had on language, on mnemonic function and on learning modes. Is the 'unmaking' of language (Jakobson 1971) today a characteristic only of some pathological conditions or is it slowly invading, in a viral and almost devious way, every field of human thought? This is our point of departure for our study. We have therefore turned to psychoanalysis to find a way of approaching the issue. If until the 1970s, in the psychoanalytic clinic, there was a clear distinction in the fields of neurosis and psychosis, with respect to the emergence of the symptom, today a new reading of the contemporary symptom has been developed, stemming from the thought of Jacques Lacan,

later elaborated by Jacques Alain Miller (2009). In this new reading neurosis and psychosis are no longer seen as separate but as overlapping.

Other experts in psychopathologies have added further points for consideration. For example, Ansermet notes that in psychosis “These may be extravagances, a particular use of language, disturbances of thought” (Ansermet 2016). Shanahan draws attention to the crisis of classifications and pluralisms of identity in the contemporary world which has led to the absence of guiding established discourses to assist in choice: “In this sense, the “there is no norm for all” is followed by the fact that everyone must choose” (Shanahan 2018).

Language is the mirror through which we have chosen to read this trend, to verify it, to put it to the test. The ductility of the instrument, and the contemporary world that encourages simplification and greater comprehensibility, the use of a ready-made language, seems to mark a path that leads to a universal pathologization. “The elevation of modern individualism relates to the promotion of the category of election [...]. This is what Lacan defines in clinical terms when he affirms that the whole world is insane. Everyone from now on makes his own choice. We know that the world in which we live and will live will be animated by the frenzy of choice” (Miller 2017).

From this point of view i.e. interpreting the contemporary world as inhabited by a globalized madness, it may be useful to resort to the analysis of discourse as a fundamental landmark (in the medical sense) in the pathology of language. The bold hypothesis, which we are about to put to the test, was therefore to extrapolate from scientific literature (Jakobson 1971; Pennisi 1998), the signs and symptoms of this contemporary pathology which is largely similar to psychosis, from the point of view of linguistic expression and characteristics, namely Broca’s aphasia, to test a written text, in a diachronic comparison. It was Jakobson who first turned the attention of linguists to the aspects of aphasia, working from the findings of Goldstein. Therefore, this is common ground for neurologists, psychoanalysts and linguists. It is necessary to go back to the beginnings of modern neurology, to Wernicke, a pupil of the same master of Freud, Meynert, who proposed an associationist model of language, based on the assumption that language is not located in a single, well-defined brain area, but that it is the result of active cooperation between sensory and motor centres, according to a scheme elaborated later in the form of a diagram by Wernicke and Liechtein (Liechtein 1885).

The development of a discourse, from Jakobson’s point of view, can take place according to two different semantic directions: one theme leads to another by similarity or contiguity. The most appropriate denomination

for the first case would be metaphorical, for the second metonymic, since they find their most synthetic expression respectively in metaphor and metonymy. "In normal verbal behavior both processes are continually operative, but careful observation will reveal that, under the influence of a cultural pattern, personality, and verbal style, preference is given to one of the two processes over the other" (Jakobson 1971: 129). Keeping in mind Jakobson's recommendation, that "linguists should be familiar with the technical terms and procedures of medicine" (Jakobson 1971: 117), we can also add that on certain occasions there is a very particular fixity in the meaning. Dessal adds, with respect to ordinary psychosis:

...sometimes there is a very particular fixity in signification, cases in which the patient is able to maintain a discourse constructed out of phrases that have been selected here and there, supplementing their inability to metaphorize the Real and serving as a form of nomination. We notice this in the constant use of clichés, refrains, sayings, rhetorical turns, quotes, and even jokes, that make up a kind of verbal 'ideology' that the patient repeats to frame the void of enunciation (Blanco 2018).

We began, first of all, in order to discover the elements of the language used by everyone in today's world which would prove the contemporary pathologization of language which has attracted our critical interest and investigation, by making a comparison based on scientific literature that allowed us to make a logical assimilation among three different syndromes. Symptoms which although distinct from each other due to different clinical symptomatologies are nonetheless similar with regard to the pathologies characteristic of language, namely Broca's aphasia, autistic language, psychotic language.

## 2. Methodology<sup>2</sup>

Regarding the initial question, i.e. the search for a significant variation of certain parameters over time, we felt it was appropriate to deal with a text that remained unchanged along the diachronic axis, preferring not to compare similar texts such as novels, bureaucratic texts, or letters, to preserve the study from the hypothetical variations due to the subjectivity of the writer,

<sup>2</sup> The methodology applied in this research has been developed and utilized for the first time by I. E. D. Kantzas in her Ph.D. dissertation, forthcoming.

his/her context or culture and the recipient. The most natural choice has fallen on the sacred text *par excellence*, which, moreover, offers a wide variety of translations into British English and American English. Furthermore, as pointed out in the introduction, in many linguistic studies a comparison between different versions of the Bible is used to highlight differences and shifts in language; however, we wanted to pinpoint further the individual elements whose sum or juxtaposition is called style, and extract from this analysis a statistical inference which would prove the unmaking and shift of the language hypothesised.

English is the most translated-into language in the world. [...] since Tyndale's first printed Bible translation into English from the original languages of Greek and Hebrew, in the 1520s and 1530s, there have been published in English over 350 translations of the complete Bible (Daniell 2003: xiii).

We have therefore chosen, among the multitude of English translations of the Bible, published from 1526 onwards, five particularly significant versions, which have the characteristic of being slightly different versions of the same text. "It is important to emphasise the variety. Just as for nearly five hundred years the number of Bible translations into English has been far greater than into any other language, so, in the sixteenth century, England was unique in the number of different vernacular translations on offer" (Daniell 2003: 11). The work of selecting and skimming the most significant versions involved a considerable effort, because, if our hypotheses were confirmed, they should show the progressive shift of language, without displaying too many variations.

In fact, we can say that the choice of a text so adherent to the canon has not facilitated our work, but we deliberately tried to test an absolutely innovative method on a text that did not offer any kind of variation due to other linguistic or stylistic factors such as those related to the authors, their culture, their language, their audience, and the literary genre

While the English versions of the Bible that we have examined are among the most representative ones from a theological point of view, they by no means represent the most singular; for they are each the standard for the period in which they were published. In addition, they are not the result of the work of a single author, but the result of many contributors (Daniell 2003: 769; Volli 2011: 186-187).

This choice not only allowed us to operate on a wide diachronic axis, but also to share with the scientific community a valid and repeatable method. Statistical analyses have been carried out to explore the following research hypotheses, consistent with the linguistic characteristics of the ordinary psychosis model outlined by Miller (2009):

1. The hypothesis of decreased total number of words
2. The hypothesis of decreased total number of sentences
3. The hypothesis of decreased average number of words per sentence
4. The hypothesis of a higher percentage of words belonging to the open classes than to the closed classes
5. The hypothesis of decreased percentage of prepositions
6. The hypothesis of decreased percentage of conjunctions
7. The hypothesis of decreased percentage of pronouns
8. The hypothesis of increased percentage of nouns
9. The hypothesis of a higher percentage of non-finite verbs than finite verbs
10. The hypothesis of a higher percentage of main sentences than subordinate ones

We carried out specific statistical analyses to address the hypotheses of the present study. Initially, the main descriptive indices of the variables were calculated and evaluated for the 50 chapters of the Book of Genesis in each of the 5 Bible versions from 1526 to 1992.

Subsequently, the trends of the average values of the variables in the diachronic axis 1526-1992 were graphically shown with 95% confidence intervals to allow comparisons. Specifically, we compared the average values of the pairs of Genesis versions – *King James* of 1611 vs. *New King James* of 1982 and *English Revised Version* of 1885 vs. *Revised Today's English Version* of 1992 – through Student's test T to compare the averages of two paired samples.

### 3. Results

For each of the 50 chapters of Genesis, the variables shown in Table 1 have been taken into consideration and, subsequently, the corresponding main descriptive indices, calculated in the 50 chapters for each of the 5 editions, have been reported in Table 2.



Table 1. List of variables and corresponding labels

Label	Variable
prep	Percentage of prepositions over total number of words.
conj	Percentage of conjunctions over total number of words.
closed_classes	Percentage of words belonging to closed classes (articles, prepositions, conjunctions, interjections and adverbs) over total number of words.
fin_verbs	Percentage of finite verbs over total number of verbs.
non_fin_verbs	Percentage of non-finite verbs over total number of verbs.
subst	Percentage of nouns over total number of words.
pron	Percentage of pronouns over total number of words.
open_classes	Percentage of words belonging to the open classes (verbs, nouns, adjectives and pronouns) over total number of words.
tot_classes	Total number of words.
subord_sent	Percentage of subordinate sentences over total number of sentences.
simple_sent	Percentage of main sentences over total number of sentences.
tot_sent	Total number of sentences.
AWPS	Average number of words per sentence.
Version	Genesis Versions: 1526 – Tyndale 1611 – King James 1885 – English Revised Version 1982 – New King James 1992 – Revised Today’s English Version

In order to better appreciate the changes of the average values of the variables shown in Table 2, the diagrams of the average values have been created in correspondence with the research hypotheses referring to the time span 1526-1992.

Table 2. Main descriptive indices of the variables under study per Genesis Version

Version		N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std deviation
1526	Prep	50	.047	.198	.12291	.029190
	Conj	50	.047	.200	.11408	.027011

1526	closed_classes	50	.311	.487	.37226	.034960
	fin_verbs	50	.623	1.000	.90960	.071681
	non_fin_verbs	50	.000	.377	.09040	.071681
	Subst	50	.168	.448	.25298	.056230
	Pron	50	.021	.224	.12814	.035552
	open_classes	50	.513	.689	.62774	.034960
	tot_classes	50	406	1672	687.74	250.627
	subord_sent	50	.092	.600	.33585	.114446
	simple_sent	50	.400	.908	.66415	.114446
	tot_sent	50	15	219	96.76	42.813
	AWPS	50	5.17	33.87	8.3838	5.45737
	1611	Prep	50	.047	.202	.12596
Conj		50	.067	.217	.11969	.026413
closed_classes		50	.317	.449	.37550	.029717
fin_verbs		50	.653	.988	.91143	.056560
non_fin_verbs		50	.012	.347	.08857	.056560
Subst		50	.164	.427	.24863	.051071
Pron		50	.017	.216	.13147	.038683
open_classes		50	.551	.683	.62450	.029717
tot_classes		50	384	1691	710.06	253.918
subord_sent		50	.105	.667	.31491	.123008
simple_sent		50	.333	.895	.68509	.123008
tot_sent		50	21	224	98.78	41.747
AWPS	50	4.30	29.26	8.5028	5.53249	
1885	Prep	50	.052	.195	.12140	.026467
	Conj	50	.047	.215	.10698	.031589
	closed_classes	50	.263	.456	.35952	.044242
	fin_verbs	50	.660	1.000	.91637	.058350
	non_fin_verbs	50	.000	.340	.08363	.058350
	Subst	50	.161	.481	.25312	.058817
	Pron	50	.024	.221	.13303	.037246
	open_classes	50	.544	.737	.64048	.044242
	tot_classes	50	403	1665	702.02	252.281
	subord_sent	50	.101	.522	.31144	.107131
	simple_sent	50	.478	.899	.68856	.107131
	tot_sent	50	28	231	101.28	42.877
AWPS	50	5.00	31.57	8.1494	5.45189	

1982	Prep	50	.048	.204	.12389	.026363
	Conj	50	.051	.187	.09627	.023056
	closed_classes	50	.272	.458	.36071	.032930
	fin_verbs	50	.593	1.000	.91108	.068926
	non_fin_verbs	50	.000	.407	.08892	.068926
	Subst	50	.167	.440	.25421	.055680
	Pron	50	.025	.209	.13404	.037117
	open_classes	50	.542	.728	.63929	.032930
	tot_classes	50	383	1653	694.10	255.892
	subord_sent	50	.123	.549	.30530	.098677
	simple_sent	50	.451	.877	.69470	.098677
	tot_sent	50	21	227	98.28	41.365
	AWPS	50	4.61	31.97	8.1798	5.25090
1992	Prep	50	.069	.163	.11080	.020405
	Conj	50	.043	.133	.07782	.019862
	closed_classes	50	.269	.415	.32492	.031113
	fin_verbs	50	.640	1.000	.89830	.063749
	non_fin_verbs	50	.000	.360	.10170	.063749
	Subst	50	.173	.497	.25616	.056183
	Pron	50	.032	.233	.13868	.038874
	open_classes	50	.585	.731	.67508	.031113
	tot_classes	50	320	1498	615.66	234.905
	subord_sent	50	.124	.640	.32206	.091218
	simple_sent	50	.360	.876	.67794	.091218
	tot_sent	50	25	239	95.80	41.763
	AWPS	50	4.13	21.28	7.2552	3.87631

### 3.1 The hypothesis of decreased total number of words

This hypothesis is central to our study, because it shows clearly how language progressively forgoes complexity.

The average number of words used in the 5 Genesis versions seems to follow a parabolic trend: after an increase from the 1526 to the 1611 versions, there is an evident decrease until the 1992 version. By comparing the average values of the 1611 and 1982 *King James* versions ( $M_{1611} = 710.06$  253.92 vs.  $M_{1982} = 694.10$  255.89) with those of the 1885 and 1992 *English Versions* ( $M_{1885} = 702.02$  252.28 vs.  $M_{1992} = 615.66$  234.91) we can see, in both cases, that the decreased average number of words used in the Genesis chapters is

statistically significant (respectively  $t_{(49)} = 4.45$  con  $p < 0.001$  e  $t_{(49)} = 8.69$  con  $p < 0.001$ ), confirming our initial hypothesis.

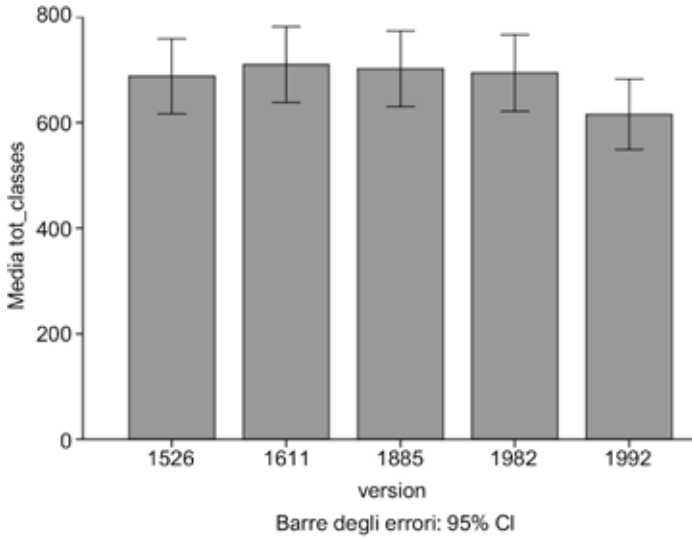


Figure 1. Diagram of the average *Number of words* per *Genesis Version*

### 3.2 The hypothesis of decreased total number of sentences

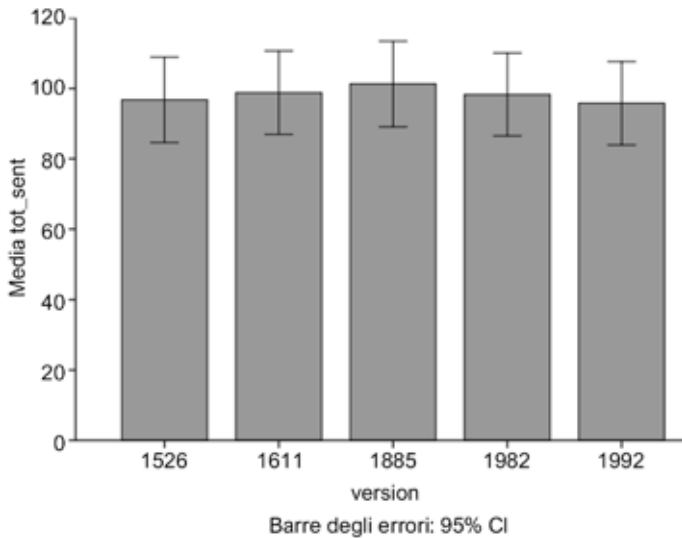


Figure 2. Diagram of the average *Number of sentences* per *Genesis Version*

The average number of sentences contained in the 5 versions increases gradually until the 1885 version and then decreases conversely until 1992. Comparing the average values of the *King James* versions ( $M_{1611} = 98.78$  41.75 *vs.*  $M_{1982} = 98.28$  41.37) we notice that this difference is almost absent and is not significant, while for the *English Versions* ( $M_{1885} = 101.28$  42.88 *vs.*  $M_{1992} = 95.80$  41.76) we observe that the average number of sentences in the examined chapters has significantly decreased ( $t_{(49)} = 2.79$  con  $p < 0.01$ ), partially confirming our hypothesis.

### 3.3 The hypothesis of decreased average number of words per sentence

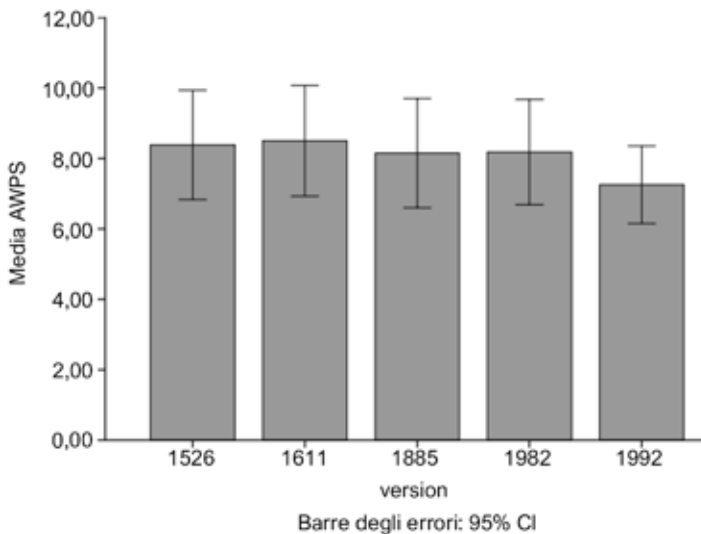


Figure 3. Diagram of the average *Number of words per sentences per Genesis Version*

By evaluating together, the number of words and sentences used in the chapters of Genesis, we can observe an overall decrease in the average number of words that make up the sentences. Looking at the corresponding averages of the *King James* ( $M_{1611} = 8.50$  5.53 *vs.*  $M_{1982} = 8.18$  5.25) and *English Versions* ( $M_{1885} = 8.15$  5.45 *vs.*  $M_{1992} = 7.26$  3.88) it emerges that they are not statistically significant (although the second comparison produces a “tendency to significance” ( $p = 0.054$ )). This lack of significance could be the result of the fact that some chapters of Genesis (Ch. 10, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28 and 36, regardless of the version) have a limited number of sentences and therefore a significantly higher average number of words per sentence.

### 3.4 The hypothesis of a higher percentage of words belonging to the open classes than to the closed classes

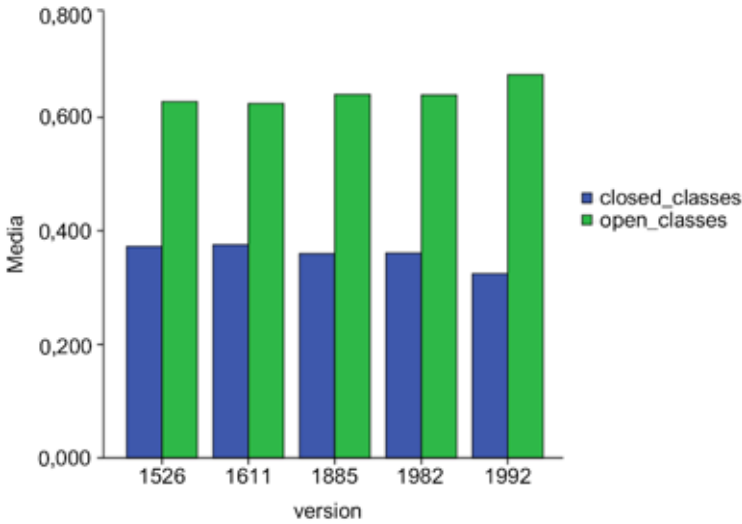


Figure 4. Diagram of *Average Percentage of Words belonging to the Open Classes and to the Closed Classes per each Genesis Version*

Fig. 4 shows how in the diachronic axis from 1526 to 1992 the word ratio belonging to the open classes tends to prevail more and more until it becomes almost twice that of the closed classes. Comparing the average values of the words belonging to the closed classes of the *King James* versions ( $M_{1611} = 37.55\%$   $2.97\%$  vs.  $M_{1982} = 36.07\%$   $3.29\%$ ) with those of the *English Versions* ( $M_{1885} = 35.95\%$   $4.42\%$  vs.  $M_{1992} = 32.49\%$   $3.11\%$ ), the result is that both reductions are not fortuitous (respectively  $t_{(49)} = 5.30$  con  $p < 0.001$  e  $t_{(49)} = 6.16$  con  $p < 0.001$ ). The results are the same if we compare the average percentages of words belonging to the open classes, thus confirming the research hypothesis.

### 3.5 The hypothesis of decreased percentage of prepositions

In the hypothesis of a decreased syntactic structure in the discourse, it is clear how prepositions play a pivotal role. Their disappearance, in a rigid text like the *Book of Genesis*, even if statistically it is only partially significant, is however particularly interesting and relevant for our pathology model.

The percentage of prepositions within the 50 chapters seems to follow a fluctuating trend, which tends to decrease over time. Comparing the average values of the *King James* versions ( $M_{1611} = 12.60\%$  2.57% vs.  $M_{1982} = 12.39\%$  2.64%) no significant difference emerges, while the difference between the corresponding averages of the *English Versions* ( $M_{1885} = 12.14\%$  2.65% vs.  $M_{1992} = 11.08\%$  2.04%), is statistically significant ( $t_{(49)} = 3.16$  con  $p < 0.01$ ), confirming partially our hypothesis.

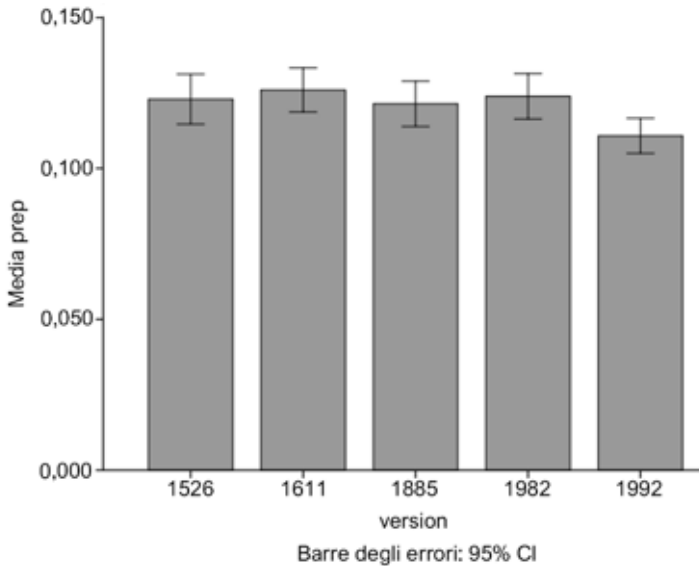


Figure 5. Diagram of Average Percentage of Prepositions per Genesis Version

### 3.6 The hypothesis of decreased percentage of conjunctions

Conjunctions are the keystone of discourse construction, syntactic bond and subordination. The clear tendency towards their reduction confirms that we are witnessing a dissolution of the context, as in the known clinical phenomenon (Frith) in autism.

Except for the increase from the 1526 version to the 1611 one, the percentage of conjunctions has fallen sharply and steadily over time. Comparing the average values of the *King James* versions ( $M_{1611} = 11.97\%$  2.64% vs.  $M_{1982} = 9.63\%$  2.31%) with those of the *English Versions* ( $M_{1885} = 10.70\%$  3.16% vs.  $M_{1992} = 7.78\%$  1.99%), it may be seen that both differences are strongly significant (respectively  $t_{(49)} = 8.58$  con  $p < 0.001$  e  $t_{(49)} = 6.37$  con  $p < 0.001$ ). Even in this case the research hypothesis is confirmed in each of the two versions of Genesis.

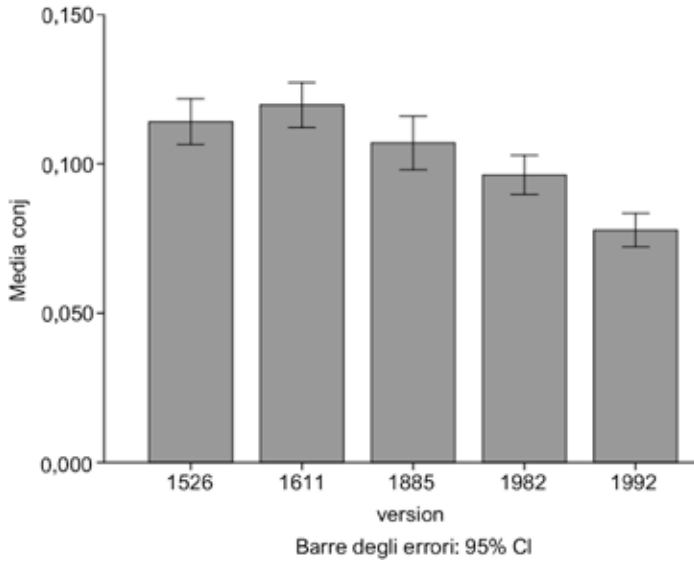


Figure 6. Diagram of the *Average Percentage of Conjunctions per Genesis Version*

### 3.7 The hypothesis of decreased percentage of pronouns

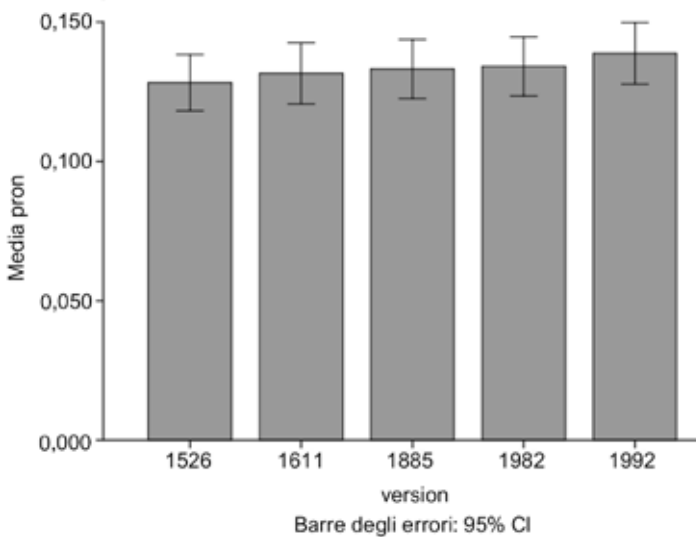


Figure 7. Diagram of the *Average Percentage of Pronouns per Genesis Version*

The percentage of pronouns seems to go against the trend of the formulated hypothesis: they increase slightly and constantly over the time axis considered. When compared, the averages of the *King James* versions ( $M_{1611} = 13.15\% \ 3.87\%$  vs.  $M_{1982} = 13.40\% \ 3.71\%$ ) are not significantly different,



underlining the fact that the percentage of pronouns remains almost stable in these versions. In contrast, the comparison between the average values of pronouns in the *English Versions* ( $M_{1885} = 13.30\%$   $3.72\%$  vs.  $M_{1992} = 13.87\%$   $3.89\%$ ), shows that this increase is not fortuitous, but is statistically significant ( $t_{(49)} = -2.05$  con  $p < 0.05$ ). Therefore, not only did the percentage of pronouns not decrease as hypothesized, but it actually increased in the *English Versions*.

### 3.8 The hypothesis of increased percentage of nouns

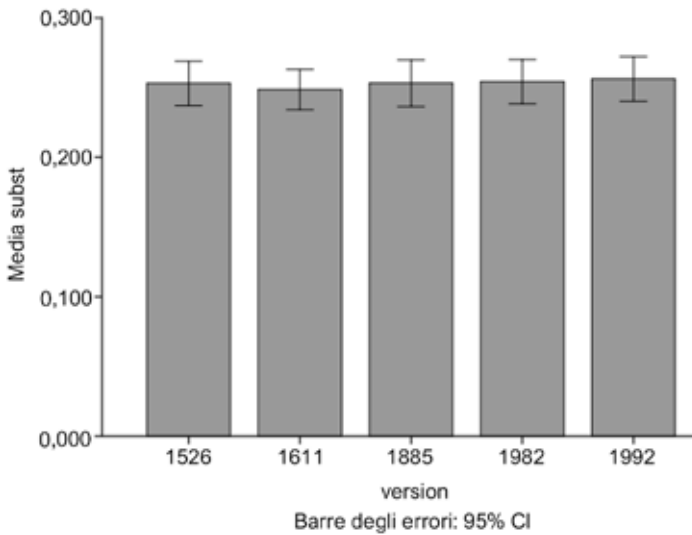


Figure 8. Diagram of the average *Percentage of Nouns* per Genesis Version

Except for the 1526 version, the average values shown in Fig.8 increase slightly over time. Specifically, the average values of the percentages of nouns in the *English Versions* ( $M_{1885} = 25.31\%$   $5.88\%$  vs.  $M_{1992} = 25.62\%$   $5.62\%$ ) seem to be due to chance, however, those of the *King James* versions ( $M_{1611} = 24.86\%$   $5.11\%$  vs.  $M_{1982} = 25.42\%$   $5.57\%$ ) are statistically significant ( $t_{(49)} = -2.70$  con  $p < 0.01$ ), thus disproving our hypothesis.

### 3.9 The hypothesis of a higher percentage of non-finite verbs than finite verbs

The trend of verb ratio in the chapters of Genesis increased significantly within the selected diachronic axis. More specifically, Fig. 9 shows the trend of the percentage of finite and non-finite verbs over the total number of verbs: the percentage of finite verbs increased from the 1526 Genesis version

to the 1885 one and then decreased conversely until the 1992 version. As a result, the percentage of non-finite verbs decreased until 1885 and then conversely increased. Comparing the average values of percentage of finite verbs in the *King James* versions ( $M_{1611} = 91.14\%$   $5.66\%$  vs.  $M_{1982} = 91.11\%$   $6.89\%$ ) we can see an almost stationary situation: the difference between the two averages is not significant. However, when we compare the average values of the *English Versions* ( $M_{1885} = 91.64\%$   $5.84\%$  vs.  $M_{1992} = 89.83\%$   $6.37\%$ ) there is a significant decrease of finite verbs ( $t_{(49)} = -2.77$  con  $p < 0.01$ ), which therefore confirms partially our hypothesis. The same results are achieved when comparing the average percentages of non-finite verbs.

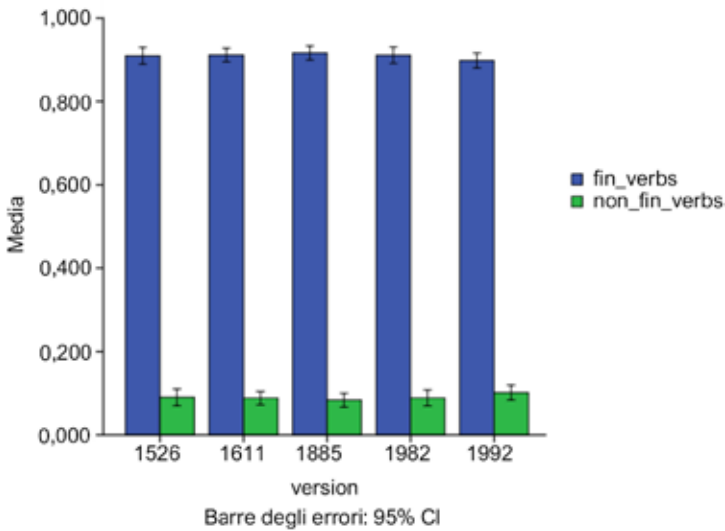


Figure 9. Diagram of the average *Percentage of Indefinite and finite verbs* per *Genesis Version*

### 3.10 The hypothesis of a higher percentage of main sentences than subordinate ones

The hypothesis is verified by the 1526 and the 1982 versions, then it goes against the trend in the 1992 version, where the percentage of subordinate sentences has increased. If we consider the average percentages of subordinate sentences in the *King James* ( $M_{1611} = 31.49\%$   $12.30\%$  vs.  $M_{1982} = 30.53\%$   $9.87\%$ ) and *English* versions ( $M_{1885} = 31.14\%$   $10.71\%$  vs.  $M_{1992} = 32.21\%$   $9.12\%$ ), it can be seen that in the former there was a decrease, while in the latter there was an increase, although in both cases it is not a statistically significant

difference. The same conclusions are reached when comparing the average percentages of main sentences.

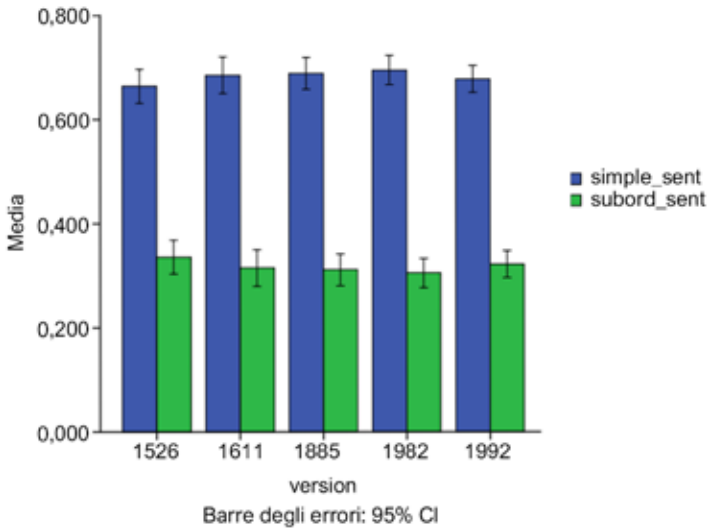


Figure 10. Diagram of the average *Percentage of Main Sentences and Subordinate ones* per Genesis Version

#### 4. Conclusions

The 1526 Genesis version of Tyndale often seems to go against the trend of our hypotheses, and this is consistent with its particular origin: it was a direct translation from Hebrew, and was firstly not approved and then excluded from the official Corpus. Table 3 summarizes which of the hypotheses were confirmed, or confuted, in the two pairs of versions of Genesis – 1611 King James vs. 1982 New King James and 1885 English Revised Version vs. 1992 Revised Today’s English Version:

Table 3. Summary of confirmed, confuted or countertrended hypotheses per revised version pairs of Genesis

Hypotheses	King James 1611-1982	English Version 1885-1992
1) Decrease in the total number of words.	✓	✓
2) Decrease in the total number of sentences.	×	✓

3) Decreased average number of words per sentence.	×	×
4) Higher percentage of words belonging to the open classes than the closed classes.	✓	✓
5) Decreased percentage of prepositions.	×	✓
6) Decreased percentage of conjunctions.	✓	✓
7) Decreased percentage of pronouns.	×	countertrend
8) Increased percentage of nouns.	countertrend	×
9) Higher percentage of indefinite verbs than finite verbs.	×	✓
10) Higher percentage of main sentences than subordinate ones.	×	×

Hypothesis 7) decreased pronoun ratio, hypothesis 8) increased percentage of nouns and hypothesis 10) a higher percentage of main sentences than subordinate ones, were not confirmed in any of the two pairs of revised versions, bearing in mind that hypothesis 3) decreased average number of words per sentence tends to be significant in the English Versions. In particular, hypotheses 7) and 8) showed a significant countertrend: the percentage of pronouns increased in the English Versions and the noun ratio decreased in the King James versions, but it should be remembered that there are few possible variations in this text especially if compared to a previous standard. Both the King James and English Versions confirmed hypothesis 1) a decrease of the total number of words, hypothesis 4) a higher percentage of words belonging to the open classes than to the closed ones and hypothesis 6) decreased percentage of conjunctions. The English Versions confirmed also hypothesis 2) a decrease of the total number of sentences, hypothesis 5) decreased percentage of prepositions and hypothesis 9) a higher percentage of non-finite verbs than finite verbs. In conclusion, we can state that, overall, statistical analyses seem to confirm an increase in “ordinary psychosis” characterized, especially in the diachronic axis 1611-1992, by a linguistic simplification and a reduction of the connective linguistic tissue, i.e. tending to the phenomenon of the dissolution of the phrase context as noted by Frith (2003) in autism.

With surprise and satisfaction, we have followed the progressive construction of this hypothesis in the unfolding of the data collection, a painstaking work for which we are grateful to the students of *Linguistic Analysis*, Master course in International Relations and European Studies, 2017-18 AY at the School of Political Science “Cesare Alfieri”, University of

Florence. Credit for the subsequent test of the data goes to Dr. Iljā Barsanti, who, as a consultant, has structured the statistical analysis.

The meticulous grammatical and syntactical examinations of a text that is fixed and not ductile such as the Bible, which is not subjected to great variations in syntax and content, that must remain within certain parameters to preserve its traditions, confirmed our hypotheses and have been so precise as to allow the isolation of the first version, considered to be heretical and expelled from the theological Corpus of the Anglican Church by Henry VIII himself, as that exception that confirms a tendency.

In fact, the hypothesis validity is confirmed for almost all the items considered, both on a grammatical and syntactical level. The shift of language towards linguistic simplification is not only detectable by the eye, but also measurable and comparable, but only comparable, as a tendency, to the pathological result of psychiatric disorders such as autism or aphasia (Pennisi 1998, Caramazza-Finocchiaro 2002).

It seems rather easy to leave to the reader the task of evaluating independently the distance between the different versions, which, it could be said, is almost tangible, as Daniell well explains (2003: 758-759). However, in this way, we would in fact have precluded access to the fibres of the text and left the readers only a vague and epidermal sensation stemming from their interpretation. Instead, we wanted to establish a deep, ductile and extremely pragmatic way of reading any type of text.

Of course, there is currently no standard of reference, but we can hope that the community will welcome our efforts and will use this tool also for further research.

## REFERENCES

### Sources

Tyndale

1526 <https://www.biblestudytools.com/tyn/>, accessed October 2020

King James

1611 <https://www.biblestudytools.com/kjv/>, accessed October 2020

English Revised Version

1870 <https://www.biblestudytools.com/erv/>, accessed October 2020

New King James

1982 <https://www.biblestudytools.com/nkjv/>, accessed October 2020

## Revised Today's English Version

1992 <https://www.bible.com/it/versions/296-gnb-good-news-bible>, accessed October 2020

**Special studies**

Ansermet, F.

2016 *"Paradojas de los signos discretos en la psicosis ordinaria"* in <http://www.psicoanalisisinedito.com/2016/09/françois-ansermet-paradojas-de-los-htm1>, accessed October 2020

Blanco, M. F.

2018 *"The time of ordinary psychosis"*, *World Association of Psychoanalysis XI Congress*. <https://congresoamp2018.com/en/textos-del-ema/tiempo-la-psicosis-ordinaria/>, accessed October 2020

Brownlees N. – F. Ditifeci

2019 *"English: Both a political choice and a political act?"*. In: L. Leonardi – G. Scalise (eds.) *Social Challenges for Europe*. Bologna: Il Mulino, 157-169.

Caramazza, A. – C. Finocchiaro

2002 *"Classi grammaticali e cervello"*, *Lingue e Linguaggio*, 1, 3-38.

Daniell, D.

2003 *The Bible in English*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press.

Derrida, J.

2006 *Della grammatologia*. Milano: Jaca Book.

Frith, U.

2003 *Autism*. London: Blackwell.

Heidegger, M.

2008 *Logica e linguaggio*. Milano: Christian Marinotti Editore.

Jakobson, R.

1963 *"Two aspects of language and two aspects of aphasic disturbance"*. In: R. Jakobson *On Language*. Paris: Mouton, 115-133.

1968 *Child Language, Aphasia and Phonological Universals*. Vol. 72. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co KG.

1971 *Il farsi e il disfarsi del linguaggio, Linguaggio infantile e afasia*. Torino: Piccola biblioteca Einaudi.

Liechtein, L.

1885 *"Über aphasie"*, *Deutsches Archiv für Klinische Medizin* 36, 204-268.

Miller, J. A.

2009 *"Effetto di ritorno sulla psicosi ordinaria"*. *La Psicoanalisi* n. 45. Roma: Astrolabio.

2017 Seminario di Politica Lacaniana. Seconda parte della Conferenza di Torino: *"Gli eretici"* (8 luglio 2017, audio Radio Lacan), [http://www.radiolacan.com/es/topic/1016/3\\_](http://www.radiolacan.com/es/topic/1016/3_) accessed October 2020

- Ong, W. J.  
2002 *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*. London: Routledge.
- Pennisi, A.  
1998 *Psicopatologia dei linguaggi: storia, analisi, filosofie della mente*. Roma: Carocci.
- Shanahan, F.  
2018 *Psicosi e contemporaneità* (nls Papers 777 n° 5 Verso Barcellona 2018)  
<http://slp-cf.it>, accessed October 2020
- Volli, U.  
2011 *Manuale di semiotica*. Bari & Roma: Editori Laterza.

Address: FRANCESCA DITIFECCI, University of Florence, Scuola di Scienze politiche "Cesare Alfieri", Via delle Pandette 21, 50127 Firenze, Italy.

ORCID code: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6702-1832>

Address: ILDE ELECTRA DAFNE KANTZAS, Scuola Lacaniana di Milano, Via Francesco Daverio 7, 20122 Milano, Italy.

ORCID code: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1959-7084>