

Our Lecturer Lured Us into Doing a Project

A Diachronic Analysis of the *into*-Causative Construction

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There are several ways to express a cause-and-effect relationship in English. One of these is the so-called *into*-causative construction, illustrated in (1), which exhibits several properties worth investigating.

(1) I think we could talk her into going out with you. (COHA)

The construction suggests a causative link between the matrix verb and the following gerund. Very often, the matrix verb expresses a causative action with negative connotations (cf. e.g. Kim and Davies 2015: 57). Rudanko (2011: 38) classifies these as either *means of deception*, *exerting force*, *arousing fear*, *enticing* as well as *specific* or *unspecific means*.

In our study, we investigate the development of the *into*-causative construction in American English using the Corpus of Historical American English (COHA; Davies 2010-; see also Kim and Davies 2015). We collected data from four decades which allow us to track changes over a time span of one-and-a-half centuries (1850s, 1900s, 1950s and 2000s). Each token was manually coded following Rudanko's semantic categorization. Therefore, the data allows not only for a comparison of absolute frequencies per decade, but also for conclusions about the development of the respective semantic categories over a period of 160 years.

Preliminary results demonstrate that usage of the *into*-causative construction has significantly increased over the course of the observation period. Moreover, certain matrix verbs such as *trick* and *talk* appear very frequently and the semantic categories of *enticing* and *exerting force* are the most prominent in the examined period.

References:

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