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This journal article engages in the search for the Old English exponent of the semantic prime MOVE as described within the Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM) model. For the semantics of movement and motion, this study draws on the NSM model, which selects the term MOVE as the proper primitive to express the different meanings related both to translational and internal motion. With this background, this study describes the semantic and syntactic properties of the main Old English verbs related to motion in order to select the best candidate for the exponent of MOVE. The analytical part comprises the application of four criteria of prime identification, including the textual, the morphological, the semantic and the syntactic criterion. The conclusion is reached that the verb *(ge)styrian* is the Old English exponent for the semantic prime MOVE.

Keywords: Old English, Natural Semantic Metalanguage; semantic primes, motion

**1. Aims and methodology**

This article engages in the search for semantic primes conducted by the *Natural Semantic Metalanguage* (NSM) model as put forward, among others, by Goddard (1997a, 1997b, 2007, 2008, 2010, 2011, 2012) and Wierzbicka (1996, 2002, 2003). Its aim is to identify the exponent for the semantic prime MOVE in Old English[[1]](#footnote-1). As such, this research intends to be a contribution in two directions. In the first place, this work discusses additional evidence and criteria of prime identification of Old English, which may bring about some advances in the application of the NSM model to historical languages. Secondly, the research reported here is relevant to the lexicology of Old English because it puts forward criteria of lexical organization different from hyponymy, the relation on which dictionaries and lexica are frequently based.

The main hypothesis of the NSM model is that every complex meaning in any given natural language can be decomposed and explained by means of simpler indefinable units of meaning -semantic primes- if the appropriate grammatical rules are applied. For the last 40 years, the aim of the NSM researchers has been to identify the exponents for universal semantic primes thus defined in the natural languages. The initial inventory of primes was proposed by Wierzbicka in the 1970’s. Since then, the set of semantic primes has been enlarged and refined. Figure 1 presents the updated list of semantic primes, which consists of sixty-five elements.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| I~ME, YOU, SOMEONE, SOMETHING~THING, PEOPLE, BODY | Substantives |
| KIND, PARTS | Relational substantives |
| THIS, THE SAME, OTHER~ELSE | Determiners |
| ONE, TWO, SOME, ALL, MUCH~MANY, LITTLE~FEW | Quantifiers |
| GOOD, BAD | Evaluators |
| BIG, SMALL | Descriptors |
| KNOW, THINK, WANT, DON’T WANT, FEEL, SEE, HEAR | Mental predicates |
| SAY, WORDS, TRUE | Speech |
| DO, HAPPEN, MOVE, TOUCH | Actions, events, movement, contact |
| BE (SOMEWHERE), THERE IS, BE (SOMEONE)’S, BE (SOMEONE/SOMETHING) | Location, existence, possession, specification |
| LIVE, DIE | Life and death |
| WHEN~TIME, NOW, BEFORE, AFTER, A LONG TIME, A SHORT TIME, FOR SOME TIME, MOMENT | Time |
| WHERE~PLACE, HERE, ABOVE, BELOW, FAR, NEAR, SIDE, INSIDE | Space |
| NOT, MAYBE, CAN, BECAUSE, IF | Logical concepts |
| VERY, MORE | Intensifier, augmentor |
| LIKE~AS~WAY | Similarity |

**Figure 1** Inventory of semantic primes by category (based on Goddard and Wierzbicka 2014:12).

The combination of semantic primes is based on the principle of reductive paraphrase, which stipulates that the semantic primes in the metalanguage can combine with each other to express complex meanings with the same expressive power as a natural language. The semantic analysis resulting from reductive paraphrase is described in terms of *explications*. Explications are expected to describe meanings in an exhaustive way and to be translatable across languages (Goddard 2011). Explications result from the combination of different semantic primes, although they may also include *semantic molecules* to describe more complex meanings.[[2]](#footnote-2)

In order to combine primes, it is necessary to consider not only their lexical meaning but also at their grammatical patterns. Apart from the canonical syntactic configuration of each prime, semantic primes have other alternative *valency options* (Wierzbicka 1996, 2003; Goddard 2011). Such valency options are universal possible manifestations of a single prime that complete some aspects of the situation predicated by the linguistic expression. In other words, quantitative and qualitative differences can be identifed between the minimal and the maximal expansion of a prime in general and a verb in particular: on the semantic side, the number and the type of participants in the frame determine the quantitative and qualitative valency, while on the syntactic side this is given by the number and type of arguments comprised by the complementation pattern. Thus, the minimal frame of a prime can be expanded to include, among others, patient, instrumental or addressee options. For instance, the valency options of the semantic prime SAY (Goddard 2008: 14) are displayed in (1):

(1)

a. someone SAYS something

b. someone SAYS something to someone [addressee]

c. someone SAYS something about something [locutionary topic]

d. someone SAYS something in some (other) words [verbal means]

e. someone SAYS: "--" [direct speech]

The exponents of semantic primes have been identified for a significant number of contemporary languages (see Goddard 2002), but until now, not much work on historical exponents of primes has been undertaken. For these reason, the present paper is a contribution to identification of an “Old English NSM”. This diachronic stage of the English language, which belongs to the West Germanic branch of the Germanic languages and was spoken in Britain between the Germanic invasions of the fifth century and the Norman Conquest, is characterized by the coexistence of SVO and SOV order, full inflection of pronouns, nouns, adjectives and verbs, as well as a consistently Germanic lexicon in which transparent formal and semantic relationships hold (Kastovsky 1992)[[3]](#footnote-3).

The search for the exponents of primes in Old English does not seem to have been priority for NSM linguists in Australia. However, a European-based group of Old English scholars, mainly from the University of La Rioja, have long worked with the idea of identifying an Old English NSM. In the search for the exponents of semantic primes in Old English, Martin Arista and Martin de la Rosa (2006), de la Cruz Cabanillas (2007) and Guarddon Anelo (2009) select text-frequency as the central criterion, although the syntax of the candidates for prime is occasionally taken into account (Martin Arista and Martin de la Rosa 2006; de la Cruz Cabanillas 2007). More recent studies have been conducted in the category “actions, events, contact, movement”, in which the Old English exponents for the primes TOUCH (Mateo Mendaza 2013) and HAPPEN (Mateo Mendaza fc.) have been identified. In contrast to previous studies, these articles select prime exponents through an array of criteria, namely, textual, morphological, semantic and syntactic criteria. These criteria ultimately draw on the concept of markedness (Croft 1991; Givón 1995, 2009; Martín Arista and Ortigosa Pastor 2000), which resembles the principle of reductive paraphrase given that marked concepts can be explained on the basis of unmarked concepts because the latter are less complex, more frequent and more iconic than the former. By couching the discussion in terms of such criteria, the selection of the exponent for a given semantic prime in a historical language like Old English not only depends on the textual frequency of exponents in the written records, as is predictable from a linguistic stage that excludes translation by native speakers and usage-based analysis, but also hinges upon the morpho-syntactic and semantic organization of the language under analysis.

While previous studies dealing with motion in Old English have engaged in translation from one place to another only (thus Weman 1933; Ogura 1997; Ogura 2002; Cortes Rodríguez and Torres Medina 2002), the search for the Old English exponent of MOVE carried out in this paper aims to identify a simpler term by which all different kinds of movement can be expressed.

With the background reviewed above, the methodology of this undertaking comprises four steps of analysis: the identification of the best candidate for the exponent of MOVE in Old English, the quantification of the textual occurrences of the candidate, the analysis of patterns of lexical inheritance of the verb under analysis and the analysis of its syntactic behaviour. Regarding the data of analysis, the lexical database of Old English *Nerthus* ([www.nerthusproject.com](http://www.nerthusproject.com); Martín Arista *et al.* 2009) has been searched in order to retrieve the morphological and semantic information on the meaning, category and status of the candidate. *The* *Dictionary of Old English Corpus* (DOEC, Healey et al. 2012), which contains all surviving Old English texts making a total of about three million words, has been used to quantify the types and tokens corresponding to the candidate, as well as to check the syntactic behaviour of the verb in question. When reference is made to Old English fragments, the same titles and numbers as in the DOEC are used. Together with the textual sources, some lexicographical sources have also been consulted, including the dictionaries by Bosworth and Toller (1973), Sweet (1987) and Clark Hall (1996), which have been checked to obtain information on semantics and on the syntactic complementation of the exponent.

The article is organized as follows. Section 2 draws a distinction between movement and motion by making special emphasis on the contribution of the NSM model in this area. Then, section 3 defines the parameters of motion in Old English, including transitivity, telicity, reflexivity and location. With these parameters and the help of some lexicographical sources, a candidate for exponent of the prime is selected. In section 4 the different criteria of prime selection are applied mainly to *(ge)styrian* ‘to move, to be in motion’ but also to *(ge)brēdan* ‘to move quickly’, *(ge)stīgan* ‘to move; go up; descend’ and *(ge)wendan* ‘to turn’. The main conclusion is drawn in section 5.

**2. The semantics of movement and motion**

In this section, a distinction is made between motion and movement, with special emphasis on the NSM model contribution to this question. In general, the semantics of motion and movement reflects the semantics of possession, which conveys inalienable possession and alienable possession depending on whether the possessed entity can be dissociated from the possessor or not (as, for instance, an arm vs. a pair of shoes). Movement, then, is restricted to inalienable parts of the mover, whereas motion relates the whole mover to its spatial setting through a certain volitional action. This raises other points of divergence between movement and motion. Firstly, movement usually affects just one part of the mover whereas motion, as has just been said, is a wholistic activity. Secondly, movement can be involuntary, while motion can hardly take place without a conscious act of the mover. This points to different semantic roles. On the one hand, a patient seems the relevant semantic role in expressions like *he trembled with cold* and, on the other hand, the semantic role that applies in expressions such as *we had to swim to the shore* is clearly an agent.

The NSM research programme has attempted to find a term that expresses the different situational events that these concepts can encode. Following Locke (1976, in Goddard 1997a: 152), the NSM model selects the term ‘move’ as a simple and indefinable idea, in contradistinction to other proposals that opt for terms such as ‘go’ or ‘change’ (Goddard 1997a: 150). The former implies the idea of motion as deictic projection, this is, it refers to a change from one place to another, but it does not convey the sense of movement or internal motion. The main argument against the latter is, basically, that ‘go’ or ‘move’ seem more semantically simple than ‘change’ (Goddard 1997a: 150). By elaborating on this idea, Goddard (1997a: 153) describes the semantic prime MOVE as a neutral term that represents both the meaning of ‘internal motion’ (movement) and ‘translational motion’ (motion). Goddard argues that MOVE can express, within the NSM model, the different meanings of directional movement conveyed by any natural language. The notion of time is said to be inherent to any motion situation, since movement implies duration; whereas location is only required in some contexts. For any translational situation, the term MOVE can combine with other semantic primes to express the full meaning of the sentence/verb. Referential primes like THIS or SOMETHING, and location and durational primes, such as BE (SOMEWHERE) and FOR SOME TIME, are the most frequent elements found in translational motion explanations, as can be seen in (2):

(2) (Goddard 2011: 247)

*Something X moved from place A to place B*

something X moved for some time

before this, it was somewhere (place A)

after this, it was somewhere else (place B)

Similarly, more complex expressions make use of spatial primes such as NEAR, INSIDE, ABOVE, and several primes, such as IF or WAY, to describe the meanings of the whole situation:[[4]](#footnote-4)

(3) (Goddard 2011: 247)

*Something X is moving towards A:*

something X is moving

if it moves in the same way for some time more, after this it will be near A

Overall, most of the efforts made to explain motion within the NSM model have focused on translational motion rather than on internal motion. A straightforward way to describe internal motion verbs characterized by the feature of ‘manner’ could be *something X is moving in this way*. However, given the high degree of specialization required by these verbs, this explanation seems too vague because it does not distinguish, for instance, the meaning of *to* *wiggle* from that of *to* *shiver*. In most cases, the concept of manner of motion is linked to time. Goddard (1997a: 154) indicates that adverbs of speed such as *quickly* and *slowly* can be defined by the primitives A SHORT TIME and A LONG TIME, as well as by other elements, which have drawn little attention.

In order to describe the meaning of internal motion, explications containing semantic primes such as FEEL and/or BECAUSE, among others, would explain most of the meanings involved. For instance, the verbs *to shiver* and *to tremble* describe an action in which *someone/something moves in this way/like this; someone/something moves because someone/something feels something*. A more complex explication is required to define verbs such as *to rattle*, with respect to which the primitives HEAR, A SHORT TIME and WHEN seem to describe manner of motion: *someone/something moves in this way/like this; something/something moves for a short time; when someone/something moves in this way/like this someone hears something*. In the case of *to vibrate*, the primitives IF and CAN are also included: *someone/something moves in this way/like this; something/something moves for a short time; if someone/something moves in this way/like this, someone can feel or hear it*. As illustrated with the previous examples, internal motion can be explained in terms of the NSM model by means of the prime MOVE in combination with other primitives. Unlike other translational-oriented theories, the prime MOVE can express the various types of movement.

Turning to the cross-linguistic search for exponents of the prime MOVE, the fact that MOVE refers to two different motion situations entails that certain languages do not exhibit a single term to refer to both meanings. Thus, languages such as Mangaaba-Mbula or East Cree make use of two different exponents (Goddard 2002, 2008).

**3. The parameters of motion in Old English**

As in other languages, in Old English motion can be either non-induced or induced. The construction of non-induced motion is intransitive, as in (4.a), while the construction of induced motion is transitive, as is the case with (4.b), or passive.[[5]](#footnote-5)

(4)

a. [ÆCHom II, 28 001400 (221.20)]

*Hi eodon forð oð þæt hi comon to anre wic*.

They-NOM went-PAST forth until then they-NOM came-PAST to a street.

‘They went forth until they came to a street.’

b. [Gen 002000 (1.20)]

*God cwæð eac swylce: Teon nu ða wæteru*

God-NOM said-PAST also in such manner: bring-IMP now the waters-NOM

*forð swymmende cynn cucu on life & fleogende cynn*

forth swimming kinds of living things-ACC to life and flying kinds-ACC

*ofer eorðan under þære heofonan fæstnysse.*

above earth under the-GEN heaven-GEN dome

‘God also said: Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and species of birds that fly above the earth under the dome of heaven.’

Both non-induced and induced motion constructions usually display the origin, the path or the destination of the motion, as can be seen in examples (5.a), (5.b) and (5.c) respectively:

(5)

a. [ChronC (O’Brien O’Keeffe) 078800 (1050.1)]

*Her on þysum gere comon þa bisceopas ham fram Rome.*

Here in this year came-PAST the bishops-NOM home from Rome.

‘This year the bishops came home from Rome.’

b. [Or 4 034400 (10.107.5)]

*Þa he hamweard seglde, þa het he ænne*

When he-NOM homewards sailed-PAST, then ordered-PAST he-NOM one

*mon stigan on þone mæst, & locian hwæþer he þæt*

man-ACCSUB go-INF on the mast, and see-INF whether he-NOM that

*land gecneowe þæt hie toweard wæron.*

land-ACC knew-SUBJ that they-NOM towards were-PAST.

‘When he was sailing home, he ordered one man to go up the mast and see whether he knew that land that was in front of them.’

c. [Or 1 029400 (10.29.7)]

*& þa hie hamweard wendon be westan þære ie Eufrate...*

And then they-NOM homewards went-PAST along west of river Eufrates...

‘And they went home along the west of the river Eufrates...’

Whereas in examples (4) and (5) motion implies a change in location, in Old English there is also the kind of internal motion that takes place in a given location. A typical instance of this construction is a change of posture like the one depicted in example (6.a) or the movement of an object described in example (6.b):

(6)

a. [CP 205200 (52.405.30)]

*Ac ða hie wendon hiera bæc to him, ða hi*

But then they-NOM turned-PAST their back-ACC to him that they-NOM

*ofermodgiende his gebod forhogdon*.

proudly his command-ACC disregarded-PAST

‘But then they turned their back to him, so that they proudly disregarded his command.’

b. [And 035800 (1139)]

*Þrymman sceocan, modige maguþegnas, morðres on luste...*

Warriors-NOM shook-PAST, determined thanes-NOM, murder-GEN on lust...

‘Warriors shook, the determined thanes lusting for murder...’

In the terminology of Van Valin and LaPolla (1997) and Van Valin (2005), Old English verbs of movement partake in Activity (-static, -punctual, -telic) and Active Accomplishment (-static, -punctual, +telic) constructions. Whereas activities of motion do not have a definite spatial goal, active accomplishments express telicity by means of a noun phrase or a prepositional phrase of direction. In example (7), the contrast is illustrated with reference to the verb *swimman* ‘to swim’. The movement in a location coded with the atelic preposition *on* ‘in’ is different from the motion to a specific location expressed with the telic preposition *to* ‘to’.

(7)

a. [Æ LS (Christmas) 002600 (56)]

*Sume fleoð mid fyðerum, sume on flodum swimmað.*

Some-NOM fly-PRES with feathers, some-NOM on water swim-PRES.

‘Some fly with feathers, others swim in water.’

b. [Alex 009700 (15.10)]

*& hie on sunde to þære byrig foron & swumman ofer æfter*

And they-NOM by sea to that town went-PAST and swam-PAST beyond along

*þære ea to þæm eglande.*

the stream to that island.

‘...and they went to that town by sea and swam on beyond the stream to that island.’

Syntactically, verbs of internal motion seldom take accusative or dative objects in co-reference with the subject, whereas verbs of translational motion can be reflexive. This is illustrated by Ogura (2002: 32) with the following fragments (emphasis as in the original):

(8)

a. ChronD(Classen-Harmer) 1016.1.29

*and syððan wende him suðweard oðres weges,*

And then went-PAST him-REFLDAT southwards other-GEN route-GEN,

*ealswa bewestan.*

further to the west

‘and then (the king) went southwards by another route, and further west’

b. ChronD(Classen-Harmer) 894.1.37, 59

*Þa se cyning þæt gehyrde, ða wende he*

When the king-NOM that-ACC heard-PAST, then went-PAST he-NOM

*hine west wið Exanceastres mid ealre þære fyrde...*

him-REFLACC west towards Exeter with all the levy...

*Þa se cyning hine west wende myd þære fyrde*

Then the king-NOM him-REFLACC west went-PAST with the levy

*wið Exanceastres, swa ic ær sæde;*

towards Exeter, as I-NOM early said-PAST.

‘when the king heard that, he went west towards Exeter with all the leavies...Then the king went west with the levies towards Exeter, as I said earlier’

As in other languages, the main parameters of motion in Old English are the abovementioned internal motion vs. translational motion and, within the latter, motion forward, back, up and down. According to the entries to the lexical database of Old English *Nerthus* and the attestations gathered in the DOEC, *(ge)brēdan* ‘to move quickly, pull, shake, swing, throw (wrestling), draw (sword), drag; bend, weave, braid, knit, join together; change colour, vary, be transformed; bind, knot; move, be pulled’ specializes in internal motion, while the most frequent verbs that can convey the various types of translational motion are *(ge)styrian* ‘to move, stir, remove, agitate; to be in motion; to disturb, trouble; to rouse, excite, urge, incite; to handle, treat, deal with; to cause; to tell; to rehearse’; *(ge)stīgan* ‘to move, go, reach; go up, spring up, ascend, rise, mount, scale; go down, descend’; and *(ge)wendan* ‘to turn, direct; wend one’s way, go; return; change, alter, vary, restore; happen; convert; translate’. This can be represented graphically as in figure 2:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| *(ge)styrian* | *(ge)wendan* | *(ge)stigan* | *(ge)stigan* | *(ge)wendan* |

**Figure 2** The parameters of translational motion in Old English.

While the four verbs selected on the grounds of the expression of translational motion convey at least two of the basic parameters defined in this section (for instance *(ge)stigan* means ‘to go up’ and ‘to go down’ and *(ge)wendan* ‘to turn’ and ‘to return’), the only one that is consistently used to entail the meaning of both internal motion and translational motion is *(ge)styrian*. Therefore, *(ge)styrian* can be considered a good candidate for the exponent of the semantic MOVE in Old English.

**4. Applying the criteria of prime selection**

As has been remarked above, the selection of the exponent for a semantic prime in a historical language has to be done indirectly, on the basis of a set of criteria that include the textual, the morphological, the semantic and the syntactic criterion. Beginning with the textual criterion, it stipulates that the most frequent verb should be considered the best candidate for semantic prime. The reason for this criterion is straightforward: for semantic primes to be used by speakers to define other meanings, they must be maximally available to the speakers of the language or, in other words, they must belong to everyday vocabulary. This goes hand in hand with textual frequency. In the context of this research, frequency is understood as type frequency, that is, the number of different inflectional forms of the verb in question, rather than token frequency, which comprises all the repetitions of every paradigmatic form. TheDOECevinces the results that can be seen in table 1 of the attestations of *(ge)styrian*, *(ge)stīgan* and *(ge)wendan,* by type and token. Whereas there is a significant difference between the textual types of *(ge)wendan,* on the one hand, and *(ge)styrian*, *(ge)stīgan,* on the other, the latter verbs throw practically the same figures. The type/token frequency ratio as proposed by Fernández-Domínguez et al. (2007) and Trips (2009) is relevant for this question in the sense that the index of productivity of a morphological process is directly proportional to the ratio of types to tokens. If this ratio is taken into account, it turns out that *(ge)styrian* (0.18)clearly stands out because it nearly duplicates the type/token frequency ratio of *(ge)stīgan* (0.1)and is six times the one of *(ge)wendan* (0.03). In terms of the textual criterion, therefore, *(ge)styrian* is the exponent for MOVE in Old English.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Predicate** | **Occurrences** | **Types** | **Tokens** |
| *(ge)styrian* | *gestireð* (1), *gestired* (2), *gestiredum* (1), *gestirod* (2), *gestyrað* (1), *gestyran* (11), *gestyrde* (6), *gestyre* (1), *gestyreð* (1), *gestyred* (36), *gestyrede* (5), *gestyredo* (3), *gestyredum* (3), *gestyrege* (1), *gestyrige* (1), *gestyrod* (3), *gestyrud* (1), *gestyrude* (1), *gistyred* (5), *stereð* (1), *stired* (1), *stirede* (1), *stirian* (2), *stirienda* (1), *styra* (2), *styrað* (9), *styrde* (18), *styre* (42), *styreð* (11), *styred* (5), *styrede* (11), *styredon* (4), *styrest* (2), *styreþ* (1), *styrgendne* (1), *styriað* (10), *styrian* (14), *styriaþ* (2), *styrien* (2), *styriendan* (3), *styriende* (6), *styriende* (7), *styrigan* (1), *styrige* (3), *styrige* (8), *styrigean* (1), *styrigean* (1), *styrigende* (2), *styrigendum* (1), *styrigenne* (2), *styrode* (5), *styrud* (1), *styrþ* (1) | 52 | 272 |
| *(ge)stīgan* | *gestag* (12), *gestah* (17), *gestig* (1), *gestigað* (2), *gestigan* (17), *gestige* (7), *gestigeð* (2), *gestigen* (1), *gestigest* (1), *gestigon* (3), *gestihð* (3), *gestihst* (1), *gestihþ* (1), *gestygan* (1), *stæg* (4), *stag* (5), *stah* (20), *steah* (5), *stig* (15), *stigað* (9), *stigæ* (6), *stigæn* (1), *stigan* (22), *stigas* (4), *stigaþ* (1), *stigð* (1), *stige* (136), *stigeð* (6), *stigen* (2), *stigende* (25), *stigendne* (1), *stigendum* (13), *stiges* (1), *stigeþ* (1), *stigo* (2), *stigon* (13), *stigu* (4), *stigynde* (2), *stih* (3), *stihð* (5), *stihþ* (1), *styge* (7) | 41 | 384 |
| *(ge)wendan* | *gewænd* (6), *gewændan* (2), *gewænde* (30), *gewænded* (1), *gewændeð* (1), *gewænden* (2), *gewændon* (5), *gewænt* (2), *gewænte* (1), *gewænton* (2), *gewend* (49), *gewendað* (8), *gewendan* (22), *gewende* (256), *gewended* (5), *gewendeð* (2), *gewenden* (3), *gewendenne* (1), *gewendon* (56), *gewendst* (2), *gewendum* (1), *gewennde* (1), *gewens* (1), *gewent* (8), *gewentst* (2), *wænd* (5), *wændað* (1), *wændan* (62), *wænde* (15), *wændeð* (1), *wændenne* (1), *wændon* (5), *wænt* (1), *wend* (22), *wenda* (1), *wendað* (22), *wendan* (62), *wendaþ* (3), *wende* (376), *wended* (6), *wendedne* (1), *wendeð* (8), *wenden* (19), *wendende* (6), *wendenes* (1), *wendenne* (1), *wendest* (24), *wendon* (217), *wendst* (1), *wennde* (1), *wens* (1), *wenst* (78), *wensð* (1), *went* (43), *wentst* (1) | 54 | 1445 |
|  |  |  |  |

**Table 1** Occurrences of the verbs *(ge)styrian*, *(ge)stīgan* and *(ge)wendan* in the DOEC.

As regards the morphological criterion, it requires that the exponent for the semantic prime is a base of derivation rather than a derivative. This criterion is based on Bauer (2001: 49), who distinguishes between two aspects of productivity, namely availability and profitability. Availability makes reference to whether a given process can be used for producing new words, while profitability is concerned with the frequency of a given morphological process. On the synchronic axis, the assessment of productivity focuses on availability and puts aside diachronic processes like bleaching, loss of semantic analysability and lexicalization, while, on the diachronic axis, the assessment of productivity revolves around profitability. If this distinction is applied on a local basis, productive items should be more profitable, as bases of derivation, than non-profitable items. Given the centrality of semantic primes in lexical organization and semantic architecture in general, they should give rise to larger lexical paradigms (a set of derivatives that share a lexemic root and a core meaning) than other lexical items. Put in other words, the semantic prime is expected to constitute the primitive element of a lexical paradigm or, at least, to have a significant number of derivatives of its own. This is not the case with *(ge)wendan*, for instance. As shown in figure 3, the number of derivatives that are morphologically related to the stem *wend-* is rather low.[[6]](#footnote-6) *Wend*- itself is probably related to *wand*, the preterite of the strong verb *(ge)windan* ‘to wind’.[[7]](#footnote-7)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Status** | **Predicate** | **Category** | **Meaning** |
| Zero derived | *(ge)wendan* | Verb | to turn, direct; wend one’s way, go; return; change, alter, vary, restore; happen; convert; translate. w. on to turn against |
| Suffixed | *wendedness* | Noun | alteration |
| **Base**  (zero derived) | *wend* | Noun | what turns up, an event |
| Suffixed | *wendedlic* | Noun | changing |
| Suffixed | *wendend* | Noun | that which turns round |
| Zero derived | *wendende* | Adjective | movable, resolving |
| Suffixed | *wendere* | Noun | translator, interpreter |
| Suffixed | *wendsum* | Adjective | winding |
| Suffixed | *wendung* | Noun | change, turning, rotation |

**Figure 3** *Wend-* and its derivatives.

While *wend-* produces a restricted lexical paradigm, assuming that it is the base of the paradigm at all, *stīg-* and, above all, *styr-* clearly constitute bases of derivation that yield large lexical paradigms. This is shown in figure 4 and figure 5 respectively.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Status** | **Category** | **Predicate** | **Meaning** |
| Prefixed | verb | *Āstīgan* | to proceed, go; rise, mount, ascend, descend; be puffed up |
| Suffixed | noun | *Āstīgend* | rider |
| Zero derived | verb | *Āstigian* | to ascendí, mount |
| Suffixed | noun | *Āstīgnes* | accent |
| Prefixed | verb | *Forestīgan* | to excel |
| Zero derived | noun | *Forestige* | vestibule |
| **Base** (primitive) | verb | *(ge)stīgan* | to move, go, reach; go up, spring up, ascend, rise, mount, scale; go down, descend |
| Prefixed | verb | *Ofāstīgan* | to descend |
| Prefixed | verb | *Oferstīgan* | to surmount, overcome; surpass, excel, exceed |
| Zero derived | noun | *Oferstige* | astonishment |
| Suffixed | noun | *Oferstigennes* | passing over |
| Suffixed | noun | *Ofgestīgnes* | descent |
| Prefixed | verb | *Ofstīgan* | to descend; ascend; depart |
| Suffixed | noun | *Onstīgend* | mounted man |
| Zero derived | noun | *Stīg* | narrow path, way, footpath, track, road, course, line |
| Zero derived | noun | *Stige* | ascent, descent |
| Suffixed | noun | *Stīgend* | sailor; rider; stye (on the eye) |
| Suffixed | noun | *Stīgnes* | descent |

**Figure 4** *Stīg-* and its derivatives.

From the qualitative point of view, *stīg-* is a strong verb stem and, as such, the starting point of lexical derivation (Kastovsky 1992). Indeed it organizes its own paradigm and constitutes a primitive of lexical derivation, on which derivatives like *stīg* ‘narrow path’, *āstīgan* ‘to proceed’, *stīgnes* ‘descent’, etc. have been formed. However, also in qualitative terms, the lexical paradigm of *stīg-* consists of nouns and verbs only as opposed to the one of *styr*-, which also displays adjectives such as *styrigendlic* ‘moving’. From a quantitative point of view, *styr-,* in spite of being a noun stem to which the weak verb *styrian* is related morphologically,gives rise to a larger lexical paradigm than *stīg-* and can therefore be said to represent the Old English exponent for the semantic prime MOVE from the morphological point of view.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Status** | **Category** | **Predicate** | **Meaning** |
| Prefixed | verb | *āstyrian* | to move, stir, agitate; to raise, move forward; to be roused; to become angry |
| Suffixed | noun | *āstyrigend* | one stirring up |
| Suffixed | noun | *āstyrung* | motion, stirring, removal |
| Prefixed | verb | *bestyrian* | to heap or pile up |
| Suffixed | noun | *eorðstyrennes* | earthquake |
| Suffixed | noun | *eorðstyrung* | earth-stirring, earthquake |
| Prefixed | verb | *framāstyrian* | to remove |
| Zero derived | verb | *(ge)styrian* | to move, stir, remove, agitate; to be in motion; to disturb, trouble; to rouse, excite, urge, incite; to handle, treat, deal with; to cause; to tell; to rehearse |
| Prefixed | verb | *geondstyrian* | to move or stir violently, agitate |
| Suffixed | noun | *gestyrenes* | trouble, tribulation |
| Suffixed | noun | *onstyrednes* | movement |
| Prefixed | verb | *onstyrian* | to move, stir, agitate, excite, disturb; to rouse |
| **Base**  (zero derived) | noun | *styr* | action, movement, stir |
| Suffixed | noun | *styrenes* | power of motion, movement, stirring; commotion, tumult, agitation, disturbance, perturbation |
| Suffixed | adjective | *styrigendlic* | moving; mobile |
| Suffixed | noun | *styrung* | moving, motion; disturbance, agitation, commotion; disturbance, tumult; emotion, agitation, perturbation; exercise, practise; shaking, quaking, convulsive movement; stir |
| Prefixed | adjective | *unāstyred* | unmoved |
| Prefixed | adjective | *unāstyriende* | firm, motionless, immovable |
| Suffixed | adjective | *unāstyrigendlic* | firm, immovable, motionless |
| Prefixed | adjective | *unonstyred* | unmoved |
| Prefixed | adjective | *unonstyrigendlic* | motionless |
| Prefixed | adjective | *unstyrendlic* | immovable, not to be stirred or carried, hard to carry |
| Prefixed | adjective | *unstyriende* | not moving, immovable, stationary |
| Prefixed | verb | *ymbstyrian* | to stir about, overturn, upset |

**Figure 5** *Styr-* and its derivatives.

The semantic criterion of prime selection stipulates that the exponent for the semantic prime should conform as much as possible to the prototype of the semantic prime. Given the nature of the semantic prime MOVE, this question is twofold. In order to identify the exponent for MOVE in Old English, it is necessary not only to decide which verb reflects the semantic prototype in the most faithful way but also to determine if this historical stage of the English language presents one exponent to code both internal motion (movement) and translational motion (motion) or, rather, if it expresses the senses of MOVE by means of different exponents. As *The Historical Thesaurus of the Oxford English Dictionary* (HTOED, Kay et al. 2009) puts it, *(ge)styrian* conveys both to meanings of internal motion and translational motion.

01. The World

01. 05. Existence in time and space

01. 05. 08 (vi.) Move/be in motion *(ge)styrian*

01. 05. 08 (vt.) Cause to move/set in motion *(ge)styrian*

01. 05. 08. 01 (vi.) Move the body/a member *(ge)styrian*

01. 05. 08. 01 (v. refl) Move body/members *(ge)styrian*

**Figure 6** Sections, categories and subcategories of the HTOED for the different meanings of *(ge)styrian*.

Clark Hall (1996) classifies *(ge)styrian* as an intransitive and transitive verb with the meaning ‘to stir, move’. Sweet (1976) adds the reflexive use and the meaning ‘to set in action’ to the previous definition. On the other hand, in the Bosworth-Toller Dictionary (1973) only the simplex verb is considered with the motional sense, both in intransitive (‘to be in motion’) and transitive (‘to put in motion’) constructions.[[8]](#footnote-8) The verb *(ge)styrian*, therefore, can be considered a neutral motion verb in terms of NSM model (Goddard 1997a), since it conveys both the meaning of internal motion as well as translational motion. The DOEC provides evidence for the use of the verb *(ge)styrian* with the prototypical intransitive form conveying the general meaning ‘to move, be in motion’, as, for instance in example (9):

(9) [Gen 017200 (7.21)]

*Wearð ða fornumen eal flæsc ðe ofer eorðan*

Became-PAST then destroyed-PP all living creature-NOM that over earth

*styrode, manna & fugela, nytena & creopendra.*

moved-PAST, man-GEN and birds-GEN, cattle-GEN and creepers-GEN.

‘Every living creature that moved on the earth was destroyed, of men and birds and cattle and the creeping things. ’

Moreover, it also appears in the Corpus as a transitive verb with the meaning ‘to cause to move, set in motion’, as can be seen in example (10a), as well as with different degrees of affectedness, as the reflexive pronoun *hie* in example (10b) demonstrates:[[9]](#footnote-9)

(10)

a. [Rid 40 000400 (12)]

*Þisne middangeard meahtig dryhten mid his onwalde æghwær styreð...*

This world-ACC mighty Lord-NOM with his power everywhere moves-PRES.

‘The mighty Lord moves this world in every direction with his power...’

b. [LS 32 (Peter&Paul) 001700 (47)]

*& hie hie styredan & urnon him sylfe...*

and they-NOM them-REFLACC moved and ran them-REFLDAT selves.

‘And they moved and ran’

Given that the other verbs of motion discussed in this section cannot convey the meaning of internal motion, *(ge)styrian* reflects more faithfully than the others the semantic prototype of motion as defined by the NSM model, this is to say, an intransitive verb, particularly in its translational sense. From the semantic point of view, then, *(ge)styrian* can also be considered the Old English exponent for the semantic prime MOVE.

Finally, the syntactic criterion gives priority for prime exponent to the verb with direct rather than oblique complementation patterns (understood as morphological case government), or to the prime exponent with the widest choice of complementation patterns. According to Goddard and Wierzbicka (2002: 283), the basic syntactic structure of MOVE - this is, its minimal frame - is an intransitive verb with a slot for an animate or inanimate agent or mover. This corresponds to internal motion, for which Goddard (2010) finds the following valency options: someone moves (in this place), something moves in this place, parts of this someone’s body move. These valency options can be called, respectively, indefinite locus, definite locus and body part. The Old English verb *(ge)styrian* shows instances of the three valency options, such as the ones in example (11):

(11)

a. Locus (indefinite)

[Æ Hom I 006200 (280)]

*& he is ure lif on þam we lybbað & styriað,*

and he-NOM is-PRES our life on that we-NOM live-PRES and move-PRES

*& on þam we syndon, swa swa us sæde Paulus.*

and on that we-NOM exist-PRES, as us said-PAST Paul-NOM.

‘And he is our life, on which we live and move and exist, as Paul told us’.

b. Locus (definite)

[Æ Creat 004100 (107)]

*& habbað eow ofer þa eorðan & ofer sæfyxum & ofer þam*

and have-IMP for you over the earth and over fish of the sea and over the

*fleogendum fugelum eallum þam nytenum þe styriað ofer eorðan.*

flying birds, all the creatures that move-PRES over earth.

‘And rule over the earth and the fish of the sea and over the flying birds and over all the creatures that move on the earth.’

c. Body part

[Leof 004200 (77)]

*...& wæs seo bletsiende hand styriende.*

...and was-PAST the blessing hand-NOM moving-PRESPART.

‘..and the blessing hand was moving.’

The indefinite and definite locus valency options have reflexive variants such as the one shown in example (10b) above. In terms of the parameters of motion in Old English proposed in section 3, internal motion vs. translational motion and, within the latter, motion forward, back, up and down, both with the Activity and the Active Accomplishment variant, the valency options considered in example (10) correspond to internal and translational motion of the Activity type. The Active Accomplishment *Aktionsart* can be found in the intransitive path, the transitive path and the origin/destination valency types presented in (12):

(12)

a. Path (intransitive)

[LS 32 (Peter&Paul) 009400 (198)]

*Simon cwæþ, Hat þu me anne heahne tor*

Simon-NOM said-PAST, order-IMP you-NOM me a high tower-ACC

*of mycclum beamum getimbrian, þonne gestige ic ofer þone...*

of great beams build-INF that go up-PRES I-NOM over it.

‘Simon said, order to build for me a high tower of great beams so that I go up on it...’

b. Path (transitive)

[GenA,B 088900 (2854)]

*Siððan þu gestigest steape dune, hrincg þæs hean landes,*

When you-NOM climb-PRES steep hill-ACC, border the high lands,

*þe ic þe heonon getæce, up þinum agnum fotum, þær þu*

that-ACC I-NOM from here show-PRES, up your own feet, there you-NOM

*scealt ad gegærwan...*

shall-PRES pyre prepare-INF…

‘When you have climbed the steep hill, the border of the highland, which I show you from here, up on your own feet, there you shall prepare a pyre...’

c. Origin/destination

[GDPref and 4 (C) 077500 (49.338.11)]

*Þisum breðer wæs æteowed on nihtlicre gesihðe, þæt sum beah*

This brother was-PAST revealed-PP on nocturnal vision, that some crown-NOM

*of hwitum blostmum geworht gestige of heofonum on his heafod.*

of white flowers wrought-PP descend-SUBJ from heaven on his head.

‘To these brothers it was revealed on a nocturnal vision that a crown made of white flowers came down from heaven upon his head.’

Examples (10) and (11) indicate that *ge(styrian)* is the exponent for the prime MOVE as far as the syntactic criterion is concerned: indeed, it selects direct (nominative, accusative) arguments rather than oblique ones (genitive, dative) and shows a wider choice of valency options than the other verbs discussed in this section. However, since the valency options presented in example (11) fall out of the scope of the semantic prime as defined by the NSM model (Goddard 2010), it does not seem out of place to draw the conclusion that the intransitive variant of *(ge)styrian* conforms to the requirements of the prime. This has the additional advantage of excluding the figurative uses of this verb, which are usually transitive.

**5. Concluding remarks**

This article has addressed the semantics of motion and, more specifically, the main parameters of motion in Old English, which include internal motion vs. translational motion (motion forward, back, up and down) both with the Activity and the Active Accomplishment variant. The main verbs that specialize in the expression of these meanings are *(ge)brēdan*, *(ge)styrian*, *(ge)stīgan* and *(ge)wendan*. After applying a set of textual, morphological, semantic and syntactic criteria of exponent selection, *(ge)styrian* qualifies as the best candidate for prime on the grounds of all the criteria of exponent selection.

From the methodological point of view, this research has pointed to the necessity of adapting the general criteria of prime identification to the semantics of the prime in question. In the case of MOVE, the valency options as defined in the NSM model advise us to consider the intransitive variant of *(ge)styrian*, rather than all the variants, the exponent for the prime.

Finally, this article raises the issue of the replacement of exponents for semantic primes on the diachronic axis. Indeed, the exponent that has been selected after the application of the criteria has undergone a process of semantic restriction (from ‘to move’ to ‘to stir’) and has been replaced by a loanword such as *to* *move* as the English exponent for the semantic prime under analysis. This evolution poses questions related to language contact, lexical borrowing, linguistic prestige and others aspects that advise to leave this matter for future research.

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2. For further information on semantic molecules see Goddard (2007, 2008, 2011, 2012). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The Germanic verbal prefixes *a-*, *be-*, *for-*, *ge*-, *on-* and *to-* represent an exception to the overall regularity of Old English word-formation. These prefixes have undergone a process of semantic bleaching and are largely interchangeable (Hiltunen 1983, Ogura 1995). The prefix *ge*- raises additional issues because it is the most frequent in the language and performs several functions. It is attached to nouns, adjectives and, above all, verbs. The reason for its generalization is that, as a marker of the past participle of verbs that function as base of lexical derivation, it spreads across the lexicon and enjoys both an inflectional and a derivational status. Given that it undergoes the same semantic weakening as the other prefixes mentioned above, it turns out that in many instances no difference in meaning is attributable to its attachment. In this article, this is indicated with brackets, as in *(ge)stīgan.* See Martín Arista (2010, 2012, 2014) on the prefix *ge*- in inflection and derivation and the consequences of its attachment for morphological relatedness in the Old English lexicon. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. For further examples on motion explications see Goddard (1997a; 2011). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. In the Old English examples that follow a gloss is provided consisting of a word-by-word translation and the syntactic skeleton (NOM stands for nominative, subject; ACC stands for accusative, object, except in infinitive constructions that take an accusative subject, which is marked as ACCSUB); INF, IMP, PRES, PAST, PRESPART, PP and SUBJ stand, respectively, for infinitive, imperative, present, preterite, present participle, past participle and subjunctive from the verbal conjugation). The reflexive accusative and dative is indicated by means of the abbreviations REFLACC and REFLDAT, respectively. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. As Kastovsky (1992) explains, a typological change starts taking place in the lexicon of Old English whereby stem-based morphology (or variable base morphology) is replaced by word-based morphology (or invariable base morphology). For this reason, in this discussion the lexical paradigms under scrutiny are based on the stem, thus *wend-*, rather than on the corresponding verb (*wendan*) or noun (*wend*). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. The proto-Germanic reconstruction for the strong verb is \**wenđanan* (Orel 2003: 454), and for the weak verb \**wanđjanan* (Orel 2003: 446). The attested forms of the proto-Germanic strong verb are Gothic *us-windan* ‘to twine, to plait’, Old Norse *vinda* ‘to wring, to twist’, Old English *windan* ‘to twist, to roll’, Old Frisian *winda* ‘to twist, to roll’, Old Saxon *windan* ‘to twist, to roll’ and Old High German *wintan* ‘to twist, to roll’ (Orel 2003: 454). The attested forms of the weak verb include Gothic *wandjan* ‘to turn’, Old Norse *venda* ‘to turn’, Old Frisian *wenda* ‘to turn’, Old Saxon *wendian* ‘to direct’ and Old High German *wenten* ‘to turn’ (Orel 2003: 446). Under the strong verb stem WEND-A-, Seebold (1970: 555) lists Gothic *windan, wand, wundun, wundans*, Old English *windan, wand, wundon, wunden* and Old Frisian *winda*, among others, all with the meaning ‘to wind’. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. In Present-Day English *to move* is polysemous (motion and emotion). The Old English verb *(ge)styrian* also conveys both senses, the motional and the emotional. Bosworth-Toller (1973) point out that the figurative meaning is only found in transitive formations and that this sense if often expressed by the *ge-*prefixed verb. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. It must be borne in mind in this respect that the meaning ‘to move in a specific manner’ is not attested in English until 1500. This is the reason why specific meanings are subsumed under the general intransitive construction ‘to move, be in motion’ in Old English. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)