

The Many Uses of the Finnish Verb *tahtoa* and Its Development

In this presentation I explore the Finnish verb *tahtoa* and the change in its usage over time from the dawn of written Finnish in 16th century up until start of the Early Modern Finnish in late 19th century. Primary meaning given in dictionaries for the verb *tahtoa* is 'to want', but, in some contexts, the said verb can have other meanings, such as the meaning 'to tend' (e.g., *Minä tahdon unohtaa kastella kukat ennen lomalle lähtöä*, 'I tend to forget to water the flowers before going on vacation', or *Nämä kokoukset tahtovat venyä*, 'These meetings tend to go on longer than expected'). I have a special interest in usage in the context where the subject is non-human, such as *Ovi ei tahdo aueta*, 'The door won't open' or *Haava ei tahdo parantua*, 'The wound won't heal'. Prior research (Kiuru 1977: 272, 274) on Finnish dialects has shown that 'to tend' meaning is particularly prominent in spoken Finnish in the contexts where the verb *tahtoa* is either used in negation, or the utterance is describing something negative or unwanted. The etymological equivalents for the verb *tahtoa* in Karelian and Estonian have similar usage (Karjalan kielen sanakirja: *tahtuo*, Virosuomi sanakirja: *tahtma*).

Many of the earliest texts written in Finnish are translations, most often of religious texts including, but not limited to the Bible, the law and educational texts handling various topics, such as raising children and taking care of the household. Due to the translatory nature of these text, there is semantic and syntactic transfer from the languages of the original texts, most often from Swedish or German. One such influence is using the verb "tahtoa" as an auxiliary verb in constructions describing the future, something that is not found in the Modern Finnish. Osmo Ikola (1949: 212, 217), who has studied the verb constructions in the earliest Finnish language Bible translation from the mid-17th century, has found this future construction there and deemed it to be influence of the Swedish and German Bible translations and of the usage of German and Swedish verbs *wollen* and *vilja* that are semantic counterparts of the Finnish *tahtoa* in its 'to want' meaning, too. In modern Swedish and German, unlike in modern English and Danish (*will* and *ville* respectively, see also Boye 2001: 38) no such construction stemming from that same etymological source exists, though the use of German *wollen* in future constructions, before that usage dying out in 17th century, has been documented and studied in the prior research (see Diewald & Wischer 2013: 203).

I analyze the attestations of the verb *tahtoa* as well as its collocations in annotated digital corpora of Old Written Finnish and Early Modern Finnish available online at

<https://www.kielipankki.fi/korp/> as well as variety of other sources available, such as the digitalized versions of the original texts from which the Finnish texts have been translated in the cases where the text at hand, in the aforementioned corpora, is a translation. In my analysis I take into account the discoveries in the research carried out on the Germanic contact languages as well as parallel development in Estonian (Habicht et al. 2010). All in all, the purpose of my research is to map the usage of the verb *tahtoa* in the Old Written Finnish and the Early Modern Finnish, track the change in the usage of that verb, and see what the external and internal factors might be driving that change.

LITERATURE

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