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OSCILLATORY CORPOREAL VERBS FROM A SEMANTICO-SYNTACTIC PERSPECTIVE

The aim of the present paper is to offer an analysis of some semantic and syntactic aspects of a coherent group of verbs, namely those that may be generally defined as denoting nonvolitional oscillatory movements of the body (parts): *dither*, *flutter*, *quake*, *quaver*, *quiver*, *shake*, *shiver*, *tremble*, *vibrate*, *waver* and *wobble*. In *Webster's New Dictionary of Synonyms* the verbs *dither*, *quake*, *quaver*, *quiver*, *shake*, *shiver*, *tremble* and *wobble* are described within the *shake* group, which contains verbs denoting “vibratory, wavering or oscillating” movements (1978: 729–730), whereas the verbs *waver* and *vibrate* are classified among the *swing* group, which contains verbs denoting movements “to and fro, back and forth, or up and down” (1978: 807–808). Comprehensive surveys of English verbs mention only some of the verbs from this group. Levin (1993) pays attention to classes of verbs with respect to alternations in which the verbs can participate. Of the verbs under investigation, she adduces *quake*, *quiver*, *shake*, *shiver* and *tremble* within the group of verbs of “body-internal states of existence” and states that these verbs do not participate in causative alternations (Levin 1993: 223–224). Dixon (1991: 118–119) enumerates some of the oscillatory verbs as belonging to the verbs dealing with bodily gestures. He points out, too, that they can only be used in intransitive constructions. Faber and Mairal-Usón (1999: 280) mention only *shake* as belonging to the class of verbs which they describe as “to move from side to side /back and forth/ up and down repeatedly”. Snell-Hornby mentions *flutter*, *quake*, *quiver*, *shake*, *shiver*, *tremble* and *wobble* and describes lexico-semantic features that discriminate between them (Snell-Hornby 1983: 153–155).

The first part of the paper presents a semantic analysis of transitive syntactic patterns in which these verbs may occur. The second part focuses on the difference between the progressive and the simple forms, and the last part is devoted to the operation of the evaluative component in the semantic structure of the verbs.

The analysis is based on the British National Corpus. The bracketed symbols after the examples refer to the text samples from which the examples have been taken.

I Transitive syntactic patterns

a) The transitive construction with the “possessor” of the body in the subject position

As it is commonly known, the verbs under investigation cannot, when used in a non-volitional sense, enter into a transitive construction with the subject position occupied by the person (as the manipulator) and the object position by the body (parts):

- * He shivered his body/his hands.
- * He trembled his body/his hands.

Viewed from the point of view of the argument structure, the “possessor” of the body (parts) cannot be rendered as the agent, i.e. as the participant volitionally carrying out the action. This participant cannot therefore appear as the external argument of the verb.¹

However, some of the verbs in question, namely the verbs *shake*, *flutter* and *waver*, may freely occur in transitive constructions with the body (part) in the object position and the person in the subject position, cf.:

- (1) She shook her head slowly in disbelief. (CEC).
- (2) She smiled at me as the lift doors opened, then mouthed a silent farewell and fluttered her fingers at me till the lift doors closed.
- (3) She wavered her eyes at him, but he wasn't going to hand her anything more [...] (FSP)

It is evident that a change in the syntactic behaviour of these verbs is accompanied by a change of their lexico-semantic content (by the reevaluation of certain components of their semantic structure). More specifically, the verbs displaying this syntactic behaviour fall outside nonvolitional movements. (Let me, very briefly, gloss over their lexico-semantic content: the genetic tier is marked by the presence of will controlling both the instigating phase and the course of the whole motion, which has a marked effect upon the physical tier, i.e. upon the physical properties of the motion, including the physical properties of the moving body part. In other words, a volitional movement differs in its physical shape from a nonvolitional one.)²

By way of digression, let me point out that even in their non-volitional sense the verbs can enter into intransitive (inchoative) constructions. In this case the attention is focused solely on the movement itself, i.e. on the movement as an atomized (and hence highlighted) piece of extralinguistic reality, cf.:

- (4) Heads are shaking sagely and there is some lively discussion about whose round it is [...] (CFC)

- (5) Gina's hands fluttered in a gesture of indecision. (HA5)
 (6) The grey eyes behind the spectacles wavered perplexedly from the denuded twigs to the caterpillar and hence to my face. (CG3)

These examples with the body parts in the subject position show clearly that the semantic content of the verb (i.e. its semantic status in terms of the genesis and the physical character of the respective movement) is not only an outcome of the interaction between the verbs's semantic content and the semantic potential as inherent in the particular type of construction (see esp. Goldberg 1997 on the relation between the verb and the syntactic construction), but that there is one more factor in operation here, namely the structure of the whole sentence. For example, in (6) the sequence *the grey eyes behind the spectacles wavered* might, when used in isolation, indicate nonvolitionality. However, the spatial specification describing the path that the eyes traced (*from the denuded twigs to the caterpillar and hence to my face*) points to the controlled movement.

In the light of these observations, consider the following example demonstrating that the S-V-O syntactic pattern with the person in the subject position and with the body (part) in the object position is implicative of the presence of will controlling the action in its genesis and its course:

- (7) The MI5 man seemed to suddenly shake his bulk to wake himself up [...]. (G15)

The construction implies purposive acting, in spite of the fact that a logical analysis of the situation reveals that the genesis and the actual course of the movement are not subject to the operation of will (note that the person is waking up and thus is not fully responsible for the movement in question). We see that here the type of syntactic construction runs counter to the type of movement as implied in the situation, and that this discrepancy is solved in favour of the construction. The semantic potential as borne by the syntactic construction in question asserts itself to such an extent that it enforces a semantic interpretation upon the verb. In other words, the syntactic construction, enforcing a volitional semantic interpretation, plays a decisive role in reevaluating the semantic content of the verb.³

Let me demonstrate the interaction between the verb and the syntactic construction on one more example. The syntactic construction (the S-V-O pattern with the manipulator of the body in the subject position and the body in the object position) and the verb (*shake*) are the same as in (7), but in this case the manipulator of the body is an animal:

- (8) [...] because invariably the dog will shake itself to remove water from its coat. (CJE)

Although the animal cannot be reasonably thought of as possessing free will, its movements are carried out to achieve a certain goal. It is precisely the presence

of this objective that, from the point of view of the linguistic structuration of facts of reality, puts a purposive behaviour of this sort on a par with truly volitional actions. This fact is, then, manifested in the specific syntactic pattern, which places the body in the object position and the manipulator in the subject position.

b) The causative construction with the inner state in the subject position

The transitive construction of the type discussed above is commonly classified among causative syntactic patterns (see Levin 1993 on causative/inchoative alternations). The causativity as implied in this construction is clear: the person volitionally brings about a dynamic change in his body (part), which, undoubtedly, classifies him as the Agent and his body (part) as the Patient directly affected by the action.

An explicaton of this kind treats causativity as a feature not only of agentivity but also of the relation between two states of affair. Let us concentrate on causativity in its relation to agentivity in the sphere of corporeal motion. In dealing with agentivity in bodily movements which are not caused by some force acting from outside, we move within what may be termed “autocausativity” or “internal causality”.⁴ Let me point out that causativity, no matter how treated, implies some sort of (not necessarily physical) separation between the cause and the effect. It is this presence of the link between the cause and its effect that enables linguists to analyze the relation between these two poles of the causative axis in terms of its directness or indirectness. DeLancey (1984), for example, treats directness as a scalar notion.

Whenever the movement is presented as not subject to the operation of will, the position of the participant triggering the movement may be taken over by an inner state of the person. In this case the causative verbs *make* or *cause to* are resorted to, cf.:

- (9) His cruel and callous comments about the murder made me shiver.
(CBC)

The presence of the causative *make* in the above example indicates that psychosomatic states acting as causes are linguistically rendered as involving a certain degree of indirectness, precisely on the grounds of presenting the relationship between the cause (the inner state) and the effect (the movement) as involving a functional separation. (One cannot reasonably think of any factor mediating between an inner state as the cause and its effect in the form of a movement other than the operation of will. As felicitously worded by Kenny (1963: 8), “anger may make the hand rise in order to strike; the will can ordinarily hold it back from striking”.)

When the movement is to be presented as being triggered without any causal mechanisms, the construction without a causative verb is resorted to (as is, e.g., the case of volitional movements in examples 1–3).⁵ This attests to the fact that

the operation of will and the occurrence of the movement represent a functionally nonsegmentable unity (note the nonacceptability of *He made his head shake*, *He made his hand rise* versus *He shook his head*, *He raised his hand*).⁶ In other words, the concept of person is, as it is well known, a nonanalyzable one (see, e.g., Rescher 1966).

The causative status of inner states may be indicated indirectly as, e.g., in *His voice shook with anger*. If a causative operation of the inner state is to be presented unequivocally, the cause appears in the privileged syntactic position, i.e. in the position of the subject: for example, the inner state may be relegated from the *with*-adjunct position to the subject position as is the case in the pair *Her voice shook with anger* – *Anger made her voice shake*) and the use of the causative *make* or *cause to* is resorted to. Cf. the following examples with *make* (the presence of the speaker's involvement is clearly apparent especially in example 10):

- (10) "You make me shiver when you talk like that." (G1S)
- (11) Jesus, even the words made him shiver. (G01)
- (12) "[...] My oath – how chauvinistic can you be?" Anger made her voice shake. (HHB)
- (13) [...] but as she lay down, eyes closed, on her side and facing him, something else in her, some frail, scavenging eroticism made him shake with desire. (H7F)
- (14) If the sound of hooves on the turf makes your heart flutter, you may prefer to think of chance in terms of odds. (B16)
- (15) I'd stopped opening statements ages before because they made my hand shake and my tummy wobble. (A7N)
- (16) She shivered, remembering how waking to find his face so close to hers had made her insides quake. (HHA)

The causative *cause to* occurs with the discussed set of verbs very rarely, cf.:

- (17) The sudden entrance into hot sunlight caused Paige to shiver. (JY8)
- (18) Would he kiss Doreen beneath the shelter of the tall trees? The thought caused her to quiver with a surge of jealousy that swept through her with frightening force. Matt said casually, "I think [...]" (HHB)
- (19) Her schoolmaster father had been a disciplinarian who firmly believed that sparing the rod spoilt the child and whose memory caused many a local male heart to tremble. (ASE)

A closer analysis of the examples with the causative verbs reveals that the two verbs cannot be, from a semantic point of view, put on a par and, furthermore, that this difference in meaning (however slight) may be the reason underlying a rare occurrence of the *cause to* variant. *Make*, as opposed to *cause to*, presents the operation of the cause in a less detached way, imposing a subjective (evaluative) perspective upon the facts of reality. In other words, in addition to expressing

the respective causal link it refers to the speaker's interpretation of the situation. This is the reason why *make* is typically used to present causes that underlie non-volitional corporeal movements, because the absence of wilful control on the part of the "possessor" of the body (parts) is an aspect of meaning which lends itself easily to the speaker's interpretation (evaluation).

It must be stressed that by describing the causative *make* as having an evaluative function one does not mean to say that this verb can only be used in contexts with psychic states as causes. Consider the following example, in which the movement is a necessary side-product of some other action (of sobbing, as in 20):

(20) Covering his own face with his hands, he was overtaken by silent sobs that made his shoulders shake. (CR6)

As opposed to *make*, *cause to* presents the operation of the cause in a more detached, objective-like way. In this way it puts emphasis on the mere physical outcome of the cause. Put another way, by presenting the connection between the cause and its effect in a matter-of-fact way, it enables the purely "physical" (i.e. non-evaluative) aspect of the movement to come to the fore. This is not to say, however, that the *cause to* variant implies some sort of disconnection between the cause and the effect. Such an implication would make *cause to* run counter to the nature of causation as implied in corporeal movements. The causative *make* highlights the inevitable, necessary and direct relationship between the inner cause and its effect by being devoid of an additional feature, namely of evaluation.

There seems to be one more feature that differentiates between *cause to* and *make*. On the grounds of its longer, "extended" form, encompassing two components, the verb *cause to* may be seen as implicative of a more "extended" (i.e. more remote) relationship between the cause and the effect. One might speculate that the relatively rare occurrence of this causative can be attributed not only to the purely semantic reasons discussed above, but also to the iconicity as present in the verb's form.

Let me at this point illustrate the operation of the two causatives on some more examples (note that in examples 21 and 22 the verb *waver* is used in a non-corporeal sense):

(21) She should have guessed, really, for all the clues were there. When they went after something, nothing made them waver, just as he had set after her. (JY8)

(22) More often the impact of dogmatically held relativism on other people is to cause them to waver, feel uncertain and drift into what they feel they can be sure about – mostly in Western society [...] (HYB)

(23) "The four chalets will be needed for sixteen men." Doreen's frustration made her quiver with agitation. "Now you listen to me [...]" (HHB)

(24) /.../ but his eyes, unfathomable and hypnotic, made her tremble,

made her feel time had stood still. (HGT)

c) The transitive construction with the inner state in the subject position

As mentioned above, Dixon (1991: 119) and Levin (1993: 223–224) point out that the verbs under investigation do not enter into transitive syntactic constructions. It may come as a surprise to learn that the verbs in question can (very rarely, though) appear in transitive constructions in which the position of the direct object is occupied by the body (parts) and the causatives *make* or *cause to* are not resorted to. Omitting the causative verb, i.e. omitting an explicit reference to the causative nature of the movement has the effect of foregrounding the immediateness of the link between the inner state and the occurrence of the movement.

In this type of construction the body (part) occupies the object position, i.e. the position prototypically reserved for those participants that are directly affected by the event denoted by the verb. The construction in question therefore stresses the directness of the link between the cause (the inner state) and its effect (the movement).

I have found constructions of this sort only with the verbs *shake*, *quake*, *quaver*, *shiver*, *tremble*, *quiver*, *vibrate* and *wobble*, i.e. not with the verbs *dither*, *flutter* and *waver*. Consider:

(25) Weakness wobbled her knees. (*New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* 1993: 3708)

(26) She drew in a great sharp breath, which shook her shoulders, then wiped the old man's chin with a cloth. (A0N)

(27) The bees shiver their indirect flight muscles, which ("buzz") vibration promotes the expulsion of a cloud of pollen grains from the tips of the anthers over the insects. (J18)

(28) Claudia gave up without a struggle to the sensations that were shaking her slender form. She lifted her arms to his shoulders and [...] (H8J)

(29) [...] it quaked her bowels, the steel of the cut-throat razor. (BNC)

(30) Even now the shock trembled him, and when she put her arm in his he was afraid to speak. (HRA)

(31) Horror quavered the old man's voice. (FP0)

(32) A slight smile quivered the ends of his mouth. (HGM)

(33) Her scream rang back to her in a thundering descant whose bass-line was so deep it vibrated each organ of her body and she was sick. (FP0)

II) The progressive form

a) The indexical status of the progressive

As it is well known, the progressive "indicates a happening in progress at a given

time” (Quirk et al. 1985: 197). The progressive with the verbs under investigation presents the oscillatory movement as being composed of a series of phases. This, naturally, has the effect of emphasizing the movement. The emphasis may relate to two aspects of meaning. Either the movement as a physical phenomenon is accentuated (that is, the force of oscillation comes to the fore), and/or the cause (the inner state) that underlies the movement is highlighted, i.e. its forcible operation is stressed.⁷

In the following examples the progressive implies more forcible oscillations:

(34) [...] although his knees were shaking with fear he walked calmly down the path thinking rationally. (H83)

(35) I was shaking so much that I had to lift the kettle with two hands when I staggered down the yard. (CDM)

(36) Thomas was quaking with giggles like a girl [...] (K8S)

The following examples testify to the fact that the progressive may be free from indicating forcible oscillations (note the use of *like a leaf* in example 37). In other words, that the progressive may highlight the forcible operation of the cause, without necessarily affecting the physical character of the movement. In any case, however, the movement comes to the fore, which testifies to the evaluative force of the progressive. Cf.:

(37) “What a disgusting thing to do,” and she realized that she was shaking like a leaf, and feeling close to tears herself. (CE5)

(38) [...] she said in a level voice, though her hands were shaking like puppets jerked on strings. (FU2)

(39) His head was wobbling violently and there was dribble down his chin. (HR9)

(40) Melissa’s mouth had dried out and a pulse was vibrating like a pneumatic drill somewhat near her navel. (HNJ)⁸

We may say that the progressive fulfils an indexical function because it points at the dominant role played by the cause (the indexical status of the progressive testifies to the tight bonds between the underlying cause and its outward manifestation in physical form). The fact that the choice between the simple and the progressive forms serves to indicate the character of the operation of the cause may even be seen from a broader perspective. More specifically, it shows that the English language pays considerable attention to the nature of the causation of the action. In other words, it is not only the syntactic configuration of the sentence as a whole and the choice of the verb that serve the function of indicating a type of causation, but it is also the concrete aspectual pattern that may serve this very function.

b) The simple form

Consider the use of the simple form in the following example:

(41) “No one’s going to turn you out,” mimicked a high, squeaky voice. I felt myself shake with anger. I said, as calmly as I could, “Don’t be stupid. [...]” (CEX)

Here the simple form is used instead of the progressive, because it is the type of movement that is meant to be expressed. In other words, the simple presents the movement as a fact, whereas the progressive, stressing the oscillations and/or the forcible causative operation of the underlying cause, imposes an evaluative perspective upon the kinetic situation. The matter-of-fact presentation of the movement as rendered by the simple form can also be documented by the following examples (in example 42 the speaker chose to use the simple form, in spite of the fact that the cause is clearly a forcible one).

(42) “[...]” he said, unbeknowing. She shivered in horror. It made a real holiday for Francis. (ABW)

(43) “[...] and when you rap the knocker it startles me, which is bad for my nerves.’ And she stretched out her hand for me to see it shake. “I hope you ain’t gonna have a fit.” (CDM)

(44) With her heart in her mouth she entered the imposing portals of Mon Ré, and ran the bell. In a voice that shook in spite of her efforts to control it, she asked if she could see Mrs Blessington-Dalrymple. The butler hesitated [...] (BMU)

(45) The first of the sirens sounded distantly and she ran to the kitchen, gathering up her belongings with hands that shook. Her mouth had gone dry again, fear writhed through her. (CEH)

(46) “Sally – come in here this minute!” she ordered. Sally quaked inwardly. Oh God, she must have been found out! (BMW)

(47) Though I was floundering, I did not much care. My legs dithered weakly and I was breathless. (AT3)

(48) The drunk saluted smartly. His hand vibrated. She didn’t need to be Sherlock Holmes to know how [...] (CH0)

(49) “Me?” Peter’s hand wavered. Tea spurted into the saucer. (CKB)

Let me now adduce two examples demonstrating the emphatic (and, perhaps, more expressive) force of the progressive with the more detached simple form. They employ the same verb (*quaver*) and depict the same type of situation and differ only in the aspectual form of the verb:

(50) “[...] They want to have a word with you.” Elaine’s voice was quavering. “Can I make you two gentlemen a cup of tea or coffee?” (FAB)

(51) “What do you mean consider?” Sheila’s voice quavered. “We’ll have to consider where it will all lead to,” he said. (A6N)

c) The suppression of the phasal kinetic structure in *flutter* and *wobble*

The verbs *flutter* and *wobble* have a marked evaluative character. The dominant position of the evaluative layer as present in the lexico-semantic content of these verbs has the effect of backgrounding the reference to the oscillatory movement as consisting of individual kinetic phases traversing a certain path. Put another way, the segmentation of the movement into individual kinetic phases is backgrounded. This seems to be the reason why the progressive (profiling the segmentation of the movement into individual phases) with these verbs has a metaphorical meaning (needless to say, in this extended use the verbs may combine also with the simple form). Consider:

(52) I try to suck in my cheeks like all those Donnie Munro pictures, but the jowls still wobble alarmingly. What I am doing? (K5L)

(53) His knees were wobbling as if they might collapse under the strain of holding his body upright. (ACW)

(54) She froze. Her heart was fluttering in her chest. (CR6)

(55) The shocked sense of recognition made her breathless; her heart fluttered in her breast like the trembling of a captured bird. (HH1)

III) The evaluative component in the semantic structure of oscillatory verbs

The verbs form a group of near-synonyms. That is, they share certain central semantic components and differ in peripheral ones.⁹ As to their central components, they refer to oscillatory movements of the body (parts) as are not subject to the operation of will. As to their peripheral components, they refer to more or less different kinetic patterns of this type of movement and to types of causes underlying the movement.¹⁰ It must be borne in mind, however, that due to the pronounced link with the cause (in fact, the relationship between the inner state and the movement is based on conditioning), the verbs point to the person’s inner state. That is, they have an evaluative force. In the light of this observation, consider the following examples, in which oscillatory verbs are used to indicate the person’s state of mind:

(56) “You want to do something about it?” He began to shiver. “What’s wrong?” she said. (C86)

(57) There is a noise on the other side of the door. John begins to shake. Then he understands. (HGU)

(58) “I don’t like the thorns.” Folly shivered, without knowing why. (H8S)

Example 58 shows clearly that oscillatory movements are tightly connected with their causes. Whenever the cause is missing, the narrator regards it as advisable to indicate its absence.

The potentially evaluative status of the verbs in question manifests itself clearly in sentences in which two oscillatory verbs are used to refer to one and the same movement. Cf.:

(59) Susan clasped her hands because she was trembling, but the tension in her locked fingers only made her shake the more. (FP7)

(60) Suddenly he started to shake, his whole body trembling in reaction. (JYB)

(61) She hated her home town with such violence that when she returned each vacation from University, she would shake and tremble with an ashamed and feverish fear. (EFP)

These examples indicate that *shake* refers to the movement as a physical phenomenon, whereas *tremble* presents the movement as a symptom of the person's inner state. In other words, in *shake* the link between the movement and the underlying inner state of the person is not so pronounced as in *tremble*. This suppression enables the verb to render the movement as a predominantly physical phenomenon. In *tremble* the situation is reversed: the reference to the cause (and hence to the person's inner state) weakens, to a certain degree, the reference to the kinetic aspects of the movement. This explains why in the above example two oscillatory verbs are used to denote one and the same movement. Their simultaneous presence ensures that both aspects of the movement (i.e. both the kinetic and the psychic ones) are highlighted.

It seems, then, that the presence of an evaluative meaning component in the verb's lexico-semantic content weakens the force with which the components referring to purely physical aspects of motion assert themselves. This would indicate that an evaluative meaning component is not merely added to the central components and that the verb's lexico-semantic content thus displays a hierarchical structure.

In the light of the discussion of the suppressed evaluative status of *shake*, consider the following example, in which an evaluative oscillatory variant (e.g. *tremble*) used instead of *shake* would draw the decoder's attention not only to the movement itself but also to the person's state of mind:

(62) The throaty way he said her name made her knees gently shake. Afraid she might give in quickly and completely if she stayed here any longer, she made a dash for the door. (H8F)

The backgrounding of the reference to the person's state of mind enables the verb to frequently enter into sentences describing situations in which the movement is totally free from any connections with the inner state as the cause, because the movement is a side-product of some other movement, cf.:

(63*) [...] said Betty over Lydia's shoulder, which was shaking because she was still laughing. (G0X)

This is not to say, however, that *shake* is the only verb that can be used to denote oscillatory movements of this kind, cf. example 36 and also the following example:

(63) [...] the tension drained from his face before her eyes as his muscular, beautiful torso began to vibrate with laughter. (JYC)

By way of concluding the discussion on the suppressed evaluative status of *shake*, let me briefly gloss over another feature of this verb, namely its position as “the ordinary and the comprehensive term” (*Webster's New Dictionary of Synonyms* 1973: 729). It does not seem to be a coincidence that *shake* combines precisely these two features. The backgrounded link with the state of mind of the person enables the verb to occupy a neutral position. This is not to say, however, that the verb has the status of a superordinate term, covering nonvolitional oscillatory movements as a class. Consider the following examples: in each sentence two verbs are used (*shake* plus some other oscillatory verb), but they do not refer to one and the same movement. That is, they denote slightly different types of oscillatory movement (in example 67 the oscillatory verbs are used metaphorically):

(64) 'I woke up in the middle of the night in absolute agony. I was shaking, shivering and sweating and I had the most awful pain going through my body. I really thought I was going to die.' (CH1)

(65) A fire brigade spokesman said: “We don't know how he had been there but he was shivering and shaking. He was also quite distressed.” (K47)

(66) [...] his hard, hot body supporting her as she shook and shivered against him [...] (H7P)

(67) Her lips parted eagerly to receive his kiss, and the world quavered and shook around her. (HH8)

To sum up, the discussion has shown that

- inner states fulfil a truly causative function; this fact manifests itself at the syntactic level
- a change of the syntactic behaviour of these verbs is accompanied by a change of their lexico-semantic content (by the reevaluation of certain components of their semantic structure)
- in the interaction between the semantic content of the verb and the syntactic construction it is the construction that seems to play a decisive role
- the progressive with the verbs under investigation may fulfil an evaluative function

- the evaluative component in the lexico-semantic structure of oscillatory verbs weakens the reference to the motion as a purely kinetic phenomenon

Notes

- ¹ The term “external argument” denotes the subject, i.e. the argument of the verb external to the predicate.
- ² The absence of will in the instigation phase of the movement does not mean that the movement cannot be brought under control, cf.:
He stroked a strand of hair from her face, and Robyn forced herself not to shiver with delight with delight at the gentleness of his touch. (HA5)
- ³ These remarks on the interaction between the verb and the syntactic construction receive support from Daneš’s observations concerning the back effect of form upon meaning (see, e.g., Daneš 1968). A similar standpoint is taken by Běličová, who regards the internal form as decisive, “because it structuralizes the semantico-lexical relations” (Běličová 1982: 32). Needless to say, this problem requires further investigation.
- ⁴ The term has been inspired by the term “an autocausative”, which Daneš uses to refer to certain verbs of locomotion (Daneš 1985: 13). In Levin and Rappaport Hovav the term “internal causality” is applied to entities that are capable of “self-control” (cf. Levin and Rappaport Hovav 1995: 100–101).
- ⁵ On the difficulties connected with numerous attempts to offer an explanation of corporeal movements with the help of causative paraphrases see Kudrnáčová 1997.
- ⁶ It is not without interest to mention at this point that in rendering certain body part movements English can resort to the syntactic construction with the direct object being omitted, e.g. *He blinked*.
- ⁷ Needless to say, the progressive may be used to indicate an unlimited number of kinetic phases and the simple may be used to indicate a limited (though not further specified, of course) number of phases. Let me, to clearly illustrate the point, adduce two examples which employ the same verb (*waver*):
He could see I was wavering and he held my arm tightly as the others came up. (HR9)
His hand had not wavered for a moment. (G04)
- ⁸ When used in a corporeal sense, the verb *vibrate* clearly fulfils an evaluative function (underlain, needless to say, by the verb’s reference to a strictly regular kinetic pattern of non-corporeal oscillatory movements).
- ⁹ A detailed lexico-semantic analysis of the verbs *tremble* and *quiver* with special regard to their collocational tendencies can be found in Kudrnáčová 2004.
- ¹⁰ On central and peripheral features see, e.g., Cruse (1986; esp. 287–289).

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