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Stress-placement in etymologically prefixed disyllabic noun/verb pairs revisited : a semantic and diachronic approach



Current state of N/V pairs

- Majority stressed on 2nd syll. /01/ : CON'CERN → 59%
A minority stressed on 1st syll. /10/ : 'COMMENT → 13%
Alternating pairs with verb /01/ and noun /10/ : OBJECT → 28%
(figures according to Abasq *et al.* (2014))
- Why alternating stress?
Why synchronic stress variation (eg. N *dispute* /01/ or /10/)?
Why diachronic change ?
 - Vb *perfect*: 10 > 01
 - Vb *discount*: 01 > 10
 - N *alloy*: 01 > 10
 - N&Vb *research*: 01 > 01/10
- Trevian (2003: 167-168): *Si l'on s'en tient aux schémas accentuels principaux, sans tenir compte des variantes, la part des mots dits de type abstrait est passée de 27% des items pertinents dans EPD à 46% dans LPD et/ou EPD15, ce qui n'est pas négligeable mais pas assez significatif pour conclure que les préfixés dissyllabiques plurifonctionnels se laissent inexorablement gagner par l'opposition accentuelle.*

- Subject of many studies: 18th-19th c. orthoepists, Bradley (1922), Hill (1931), Sherman (1975), Abasq. *et al.* (2012, 2014), Svensson & Hering (2014), etc.
- Specific and statistical studies about change in stress-placement in such pairs: Sonderegger & Niyogi (2013), Phillips (2014), etc.
 - influence of noun frequency, noun+verb frequency, and noun/verb ratio ; but never fully satisfactory
 - but the meaning of these words is hardly taken into account
 - alternative and/or complementary approach

- Corpus of 105 Latin-type etymologically prefixed 2-syll. pairs :
 - Comprehensive comparison of 5 dictionaries : Wright (1852-56), EPD1-12-17 (1917, 1963, 2006), LPD3 (2008) and collection of items exhibiting stress-placement change and/or variation
 - Then collected words looked up in 55 dictionaries from 1727 to present (including all 18 EPD editions)
 - list of items to be largely expanded

Stress-placement in verbs

- Stress on 2nd syllable, as in Latin
→ a few exceptions with 10>01, eg. *perfect* (OED: verb 1st attested 1398 is a conversion from adjective 1st attested 1300, then relatinisation)
- 01>10: N>V conversions, eg. *perfume* & *detail* (late 19th c.), *contact* (20th c.), etc.
- 01>10: semantic specialisation, eg. *discount* (19th c.), *relay* (EPD10 = 1949), etc.
- 01>10: special cases, eg. *prefix/suffix* (conversion) but *infix* (copy) VS *affix*; *convoy* & *ally* (cultural).

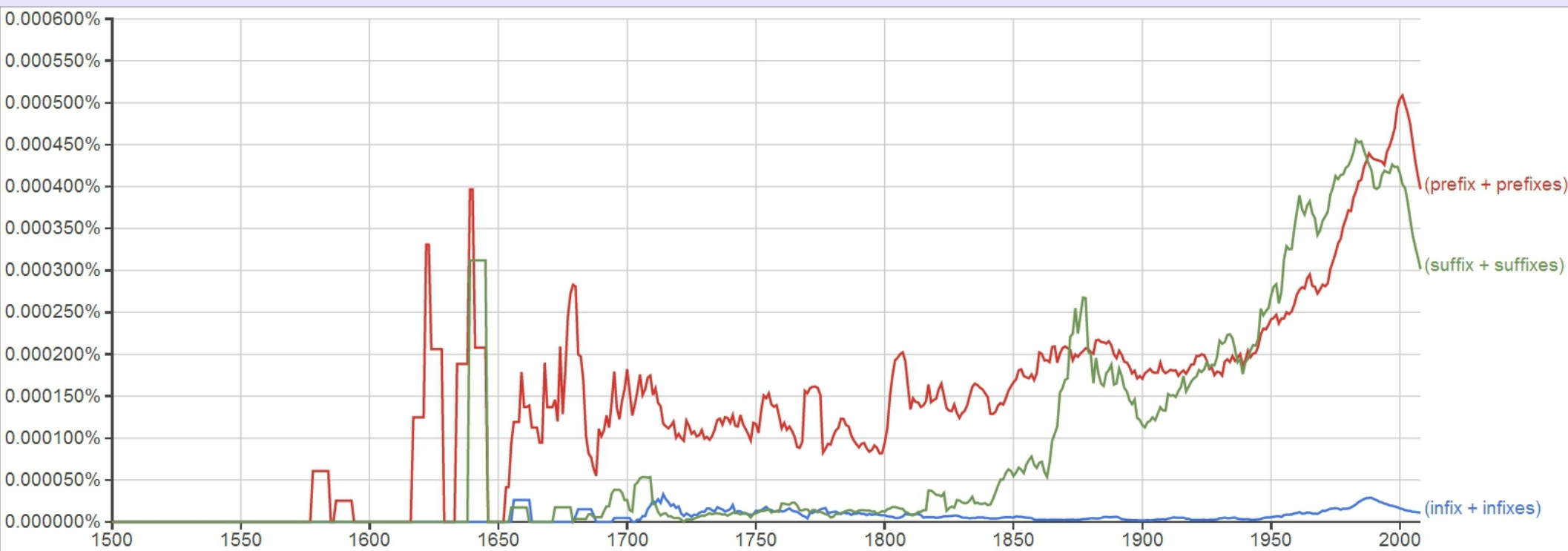
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According to OED, 1st attested:

-Prefix : N 1646 (gram. ditto), V 1415 (gram. 1605)

-Suffix : N 1778 (gram. ditto), V 1604 (gram. 1778)

-Infix : N 1611 (gram. 1881), V 1504 (gram. 1868)



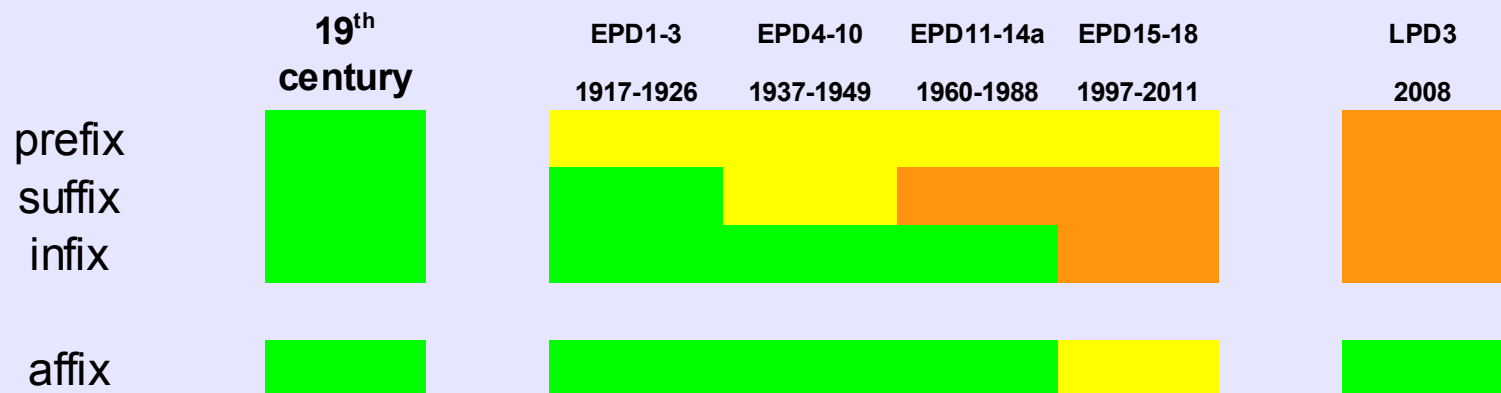
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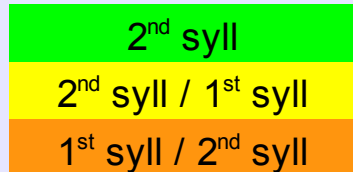
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placement of stress:



- CONVOY:
 - Noun has always been stressed 10
 - Verb: 01 until EPD6 (1944) then 10 since EPD7 (1945)
 OED : *The shift of the main stress to the first syllable results from association with convoy n.*



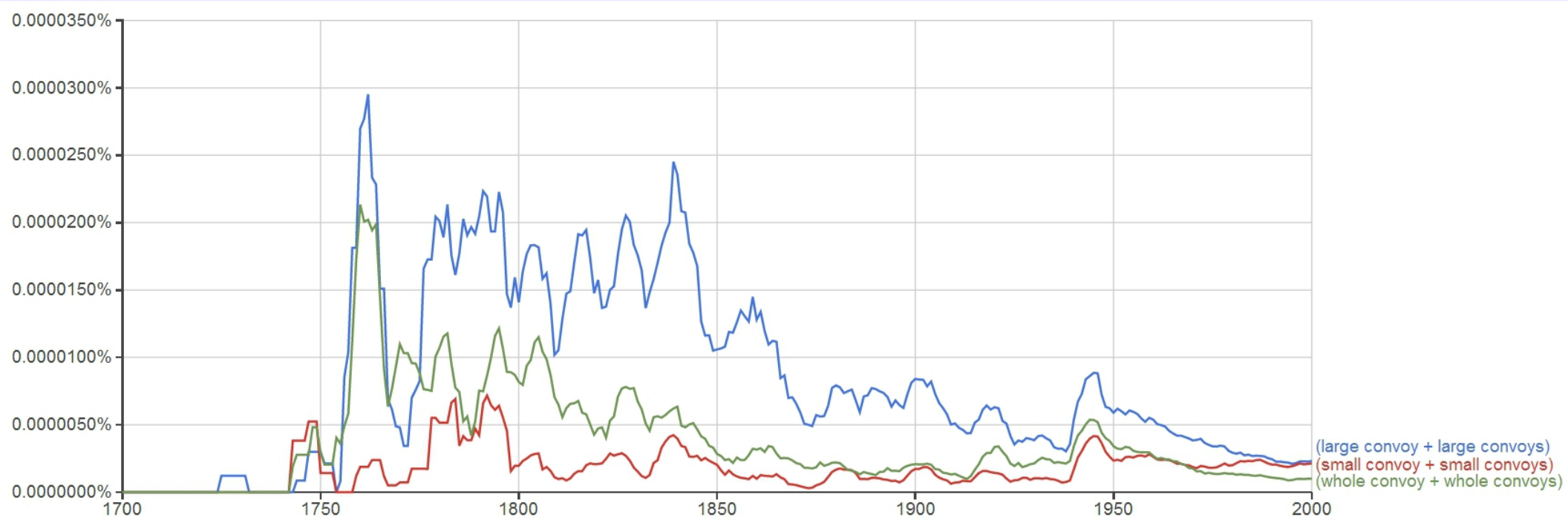
OED : most recent meanings = vehicle convoy + military protection

- CONVOY:
BNC confirms meaning is now mainly military

1	<input type="checkbox"/>	AID	16	<div style="width: 100%;"></div>	1	<input type="checkbox"/>	MILITARY	10	<div style="width: 100%;"></div>
2	<input type="checkbox"/>	RELIEF	14	<div style="width: 87.5%;"></div>	2	<input type="checkbox"/>	SMALL	7	<div style="width: 43.75%;"></div>
3	<input type="checkbox"/>	ARMY	6	<div style="width: 37.5%;"></div>	3	<input type="checkbox"/>	RUSSIAN	6	<div style="width: 37.5%;"></div>
4	<input type="checkbox"/>	VEHICLE	4	<div style="width: 25%;"></div>	4	<input type="checkbox"/>	NUCLEAR	3	<div style="width: 18.75%;"></div>
5	<input type="checkbox"/>	POLICE	3	<div style="width: 18.75%;"></div>	5	<input type="checkbox"/>	WHOLE	3	<div style="width: 18.75%;"></div>
6	<input type="checkbox"/>	FOOD	3	<div style="width: 18.75%;"></div>	6	<input type="checkbox"/>	ARMED	3	<div style="width: 18.75%;"></div>
7	<input type="checkbox"/>	DAWN	3	<div style="width: 18.75%;"></div>	7	<input type="checkbox"/>	BRITISH	3	<div style="width: 18.75%;"></div>
8	<input type="checkbox"/>	HIPPY	3	<div style="width: 18.75%;"></div>	8	<input type="checkbox"/>	LARGE	2	<div style="width: 12.5%;"></div>
9	<input type="checkbox"/>	WEAPONS	1	<div style="width: 6.25%;"></div>	9	<input type="checkbox"/>	JEWISH	2	<div style="width: 12.5%;"></div>
10	<input type="checkbox"/>	WARTIME	1	<div style="width: 6.25%;"></div>	10	<input type="checkbox"/>	BIG	2	<div style="width: 12.5%;"></div>
11	<input type="checkbox"/>	TRUCK	1	<div style="width: 6.25%;"></div>	11	<input type="checkbox"/>	NAVAL	2	<div style="width: 12.5%;"></div>
12	<input type="checkbox"/>	TROPHY	1	<div style="width: 6.25%;"></div>	12	<input type="checkbox"/>	SLOW-MOVING	1	<div style="width: 6.25%;"></div>
13	<input type="checkbox"/>	TROOP	1	<div style="width: 6.25%;"></div>	13	<input type="checkbox"/>	SIX-VEHICLE	1	<div style="width: 6.25%;"></div>
14	<input type="checkbox"/>	SUPPLY	1	<div style="width: 6.25%;"></div>	14	<input type="checkbox"/>	TYPICAL	1	<div style="width: 6.25%;"></div>
15	<input type="checkbox"/>	REFUGEE	1	<div style="width: 6.25%;"></div>	15	<input type="checkbox"/>	TIGHT	1	<div style="width: 6.25%;"></div>
16	<input type="checkbox"/>	GUARD	1	<div style="width: 6.25%;"></div>	16	<input type="checkbox"/>	THREE-TRUCK	1	<div style="width: 6.25%;"></div>
17	<input type="checkbox"/>	GORAZDE	1	<div style="width: 6.25%;"></div>	17	<input type="checkbox"/>	TEN-TRUCK	1	<div style="width: 6.25%;"></div>
18	<input type="checkbox"/>	CAMPAIGN	1	<div style="width: 6.25%;"></div>	18	<input type="checkbox"/>	TEESSIDE-BASED	1	<div style="width: 6.25%;"></div>
19	<input type="checkbox"/>	PEACE	1	<div style="width: 6.25%;"></div>	19	<input type="checkbox"/>	STATELY	1	<div style="width: 6.25%;"></div>
20	<input type="checkbox"/>	PARK	1	<div style="width: 6.25%;"></div>	20	<input type="checkbox"/>	STALLED	1	<div style="width: 6.25%;"></div>
21	<input type="checkbox"/>	NATIONS	1	<div style="width: 6.25%;"></div>	21	<input type="checkbox"/>	REMARKABLE	1	<div style="width: 6.25%;"></div>
22	<input type="checkbox"/>	MORNING	1	<div style="width: 6.25%;"></div>	22	<input type="checkbox"/>	RAMSHACKLE	1	<div style="width: 6.25%;"></div>
23	<input type="checkbox"/>	LORRY	1	<div style="width: 6.25%;"></div>	23	<input type="checkbox"/>	RAG-TAG	1	<div style="width: 6.25%;"></div>
24	<input type="checkbox"/>	LAND	1	<div style="width: 6.25%;"></div>	24	<input type="checkbox"/>	PROTECTED	1	<div style="width: 6.25%;"></div>
25	<input type="checkbox"/>	INBOUND	1	<div style="width: 6.25%;"></div>	25	<input type="checkbox"/>	OFFICIAL	1	<div style="width: 6.25%;"></div>
		TOTAL	69						

- CONVOY:

control queries (*large/small/whole convoy(s)*):



• CONVOY :



• CONVOY :



Stress-placement in nouns

For most N/V pairs, noun is stressed 10: *object, contest, discourse, dispute, increase, present*, etc.

→ but nearly all of them stressed 01 a few centuries ago (18th century or earlier; cf. also Sherman (1975));

→ prosodic pattern growing steadily since second half of 16th c. (Minkova (2014:311));

→ why 01 > 10 for some of the nouns only ?

cf. CONCERN (isotonic) vs CONTEST (diatonic)

What about meaning ?

Minkova (2014:311-312): *In addition to differentiating word-class, **stress-shifting can involve semantic differentiation, with or without word-class change.** There is nothing surprising about variant pronunciations of polysemous words resulting in the split of the original base into two separate lexical entries. A famous case in point is the semantic bifurcation in the pair palace-palate < Lat. Palātum. [...] 'human-hu'mane, [etc.]*

N-V semantic asymmetry:

→ if verbal noun (**the act of V-ing ; the state of being V-ed**), then 01: CON'CERN (*attack, defeat, desire, embrace, reproach, revolt, support, etc.*)

→ otherwise, 10 :

- no obvious semantic link between N and V
- N = semantic specialisation, does not correspond to general meaning of V
- N = physical object/person, not an action/state

Obvious or possible N-V semantic asymmetry:

Abstract, alloy, compact, compress, discount, discourse, dispute, extract, object, perfume, present, record, protest, etc.

→ diachronic survey of dictionaries may allow us to link appearance of new meaning to appearance of new stress-patterns

SUSPECT :

→ 01 in 18th-19th centuries (+ variant in EPD1-3) = suspicion (= act of suspecting)




→ 10 in 20th century = suspected person

PERMIT :

→ 01 in 18th & early 19th c. = permission

→ 10 in 19th-20th c. = document giving permission

CONTROL : semantic symmetry, hence 01, except:

control noun   kən'trəʊl
in machinery also: 'kɒn.trəʊl  kən'trəʊl

OED 1st attested 1908

Nouns in 18th century (Johnson, Dyche...):

- 'EXPORT = 10 = 'exported goods' ('act of exporting' attested later)

- IM'PORT = 01 = 'act of importing' ('imported goods' attested later)

→ then both stressed 10 as of 19th century

n. DECLINE stressed 01: *The process of declining or sinking to a weaker or inferior condition* (OED)

n. INCLINE stressed 10: *An inclined plane or surface; a slope, declivity (esp. on a road or railway)* (OED)

Worcester (1860)

† RE-FŪSE' (rē-fūz'), *n.* Refusal; denial. *Fairfax.*

RE-FŪSE' (rē-fūz'), *v. a.* [It. *rifiutare*; Sp. *rehusar*; Fr. *refuser*. — From L. *refuto*, to repress, to refute. *Menage.*] [*i.* REFUSED; *pp.* REFUSING, REFUSED.]

1. To deny, as something solicited or required; to decline. "To make them give or *refuse* credit." *Locke.*

2. To reject; to repudiate; to exclude. "The stone which the builders *refused*." *Ps. cxviii. 22.*

Refuse profane and old wives' fables. *1 Tim. iv. 7.*

Syn. — A person *refuses* what is asked of him for want of inclination to comply, *declines* what is proposed from motives of discretion, and *rejects* what is offered because it does not fall within his views. To *repel* is to *reject* with violence; to *rebuff*, to *refuse* with contempt. *Refuse* assent or a request; *deny* a claim; *decline* an offer; *reject* a proposal; *repel* a foe; *rebuff* an intruder.

RE-FŪSE', *v. n.* 1. To decline to accept; not to comply.

Too proud to ask, too humble to *refuse*. *Garth.*

2. (*Mil.*) To keep out of that regular alignment which is formed when troops are upon the point of engaging an enemy. *Stocqueler.*

REF'ŪSE (rĕf'ūs, *W. J. F. Ja. K. Sm. Wr. Wb.*; rĕf'fūz, *S. P. E.*), *n.* [Fr. *refus.*]

1. † A refusal. *Fairfax.*

2. That which is left or rejected as worthless after the rest is taken; waste or worthless matter; dregs; lees; dross; scum. *Bacon.*

The scum and *refuse* of the people. *Gov. of the Tongue.*

Syn. — See DREGS.

- *In fact this dwindling remnant of **nouns [are] often more or less dissociated in meaning from their verbs.***

Bradley (1922: 15)

- *Dictionaries still give 'address (n.) and ad'dress (vb.), for all the various meanings of this word. My own usage, however, and so far as observation and questioning of students and friends can tell me, the usage of many if not most **Americans** is thus – I **'address a letter, and I put the 'address on the letter, but I ad'dress the meeting and I deliver an ad'dress.** Here if my observations are correct, the differences in the meaning of the word have brought about a tendency to sort out the stress forms to correspond to differences in meaning.*

Hill (1931: 447)

- ***The same word, when it signifies an action, is accented upon the last syllable, as to con'tract, to re'bel: when it signifies a thing, the accent is sometimes transferred to the first, as a 'contract, a 'rebel.***

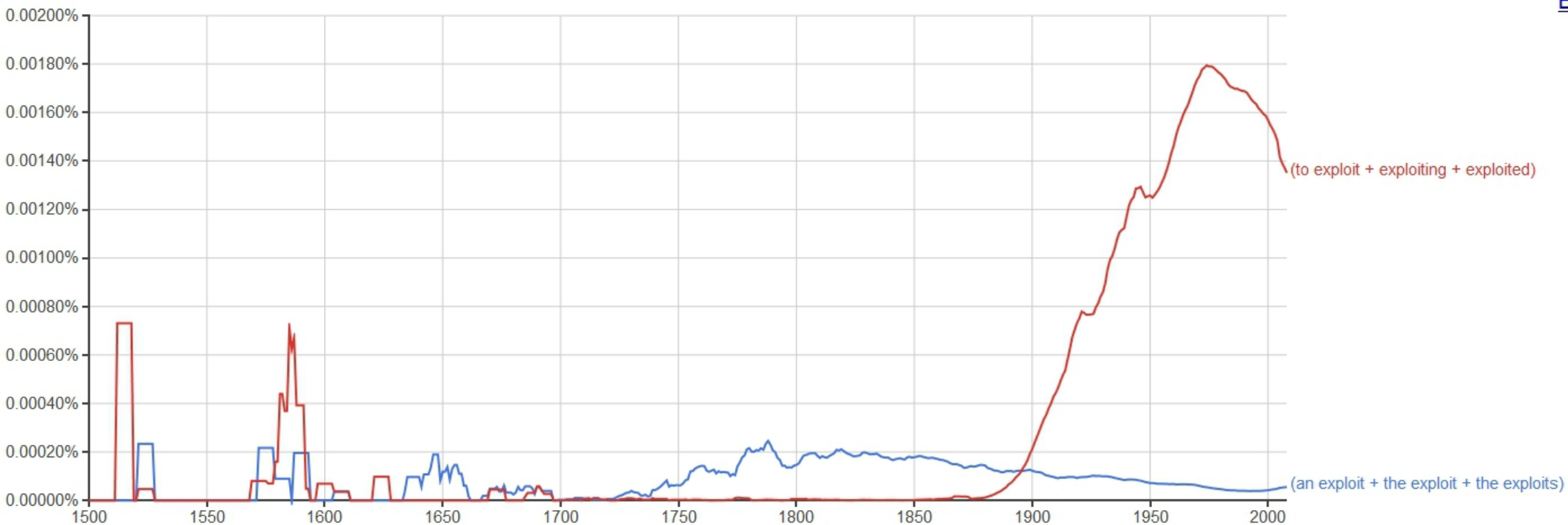
Watts (1721: 34-35).

- Zumstein (2007:253-367) already pointed out the semantic drift in some pairs

From semantic to syntactic opposition ?

EXPLOIT (unrelated N&V):

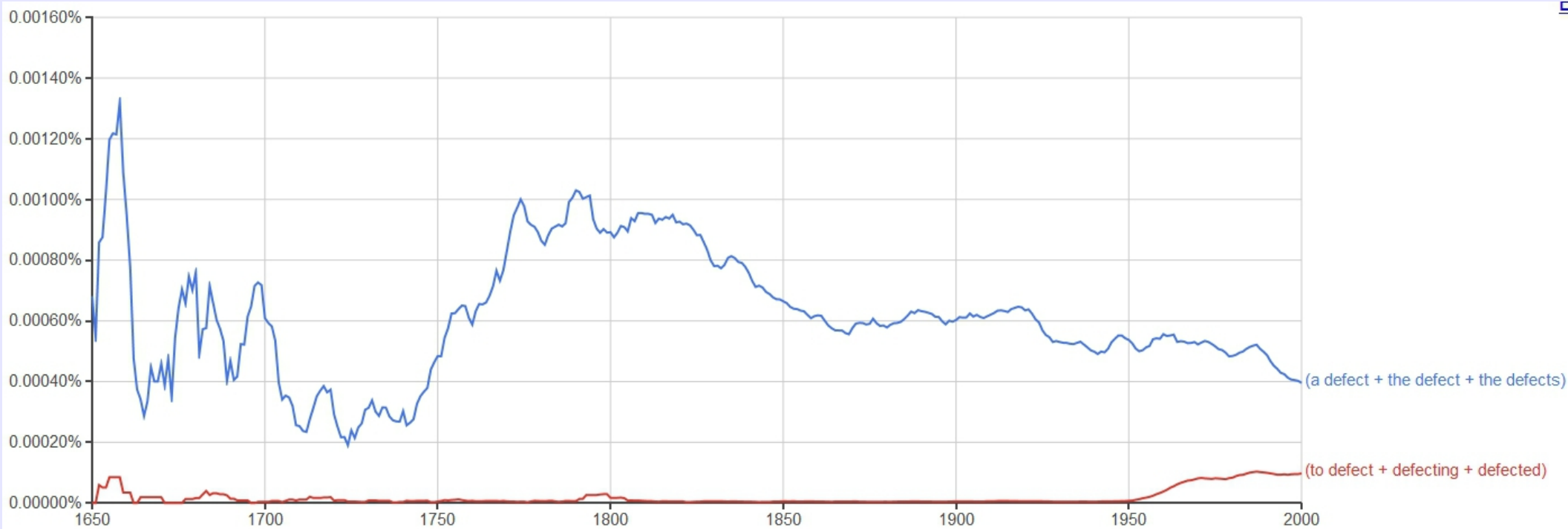
- Before 20th c., noun 01, then > 10 during 20th c. in dictionaries
- Verb in sense of "accomplish, achieve, perform" (OED) almost non-existent until 1900
- During 20th c., verb in sense of 'utilize for one's own ends' (OED) develops rapidly



→ development of verb (01) turns noun from 01 into 10

From semantic to syntactic opposition ?

- DEFECT (unrelated N&V): same thing, noun stressed 01 in all dictionaries until unrelated verb appears



→ development of verb (01) turns noun from 01 into 10

From semantic to syntactic opposition ?

- Same thing is possible for *increase*, *decrease*, *research*, *refund*, etc. whereas nouns are verbal nouns ! Happens in 20th c. only when frequency booms



- could semantic marking system turn into syntactic marking system in 20th c. ?
- cf. frequency effect found in recent studies ?

From semantic to syntactic opposition ?

→ possibly affecting non-prefixed pairs in 20th. c ?

- FINANCE: N & V = 01 until EPD11 (1960). Then verb develops while noun turns into 10.



→ parasitic phenomenon found as variant stressings in *asphalt*, *chagrin*, etc. (noun 10, verb 10 but also 01 since 20th c.)

CONCLUSION

- Standard stressing of V = 01 but conversions and specialised meanings: 01 → 10
- Some words have a history that needs to be taken into account (*convoy, ally, cement, etc.*)
- Isotonic & diatonic pairs : no systematic link between order of 1st appearance of noun and verb in language
- Alternating stress mostly comes from N/V semantic asymmetry (some true exceptions remain: *address* (Brit.), *disguise, preserve, reserve...*
(but also *expand/se, extend/t, expend/se, intend/t* → because morphological difference is enough?)
- This semantic system may have started turning into purely functional system as of 20th c. with help of word-frequency (cf. above-mentioned studies)
→ may also happen to be found as a rule or parasitically in non-prefixed pairs (*finance, asphalt...*)
- Needs to be confirmed by studying all other pairs (done but not formalised yet)

THANK YOU

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