

Anthropocentrism as Implementation of a Testator/Testatrix's Communicative Goal

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Abstract

The research focuses on anthropocentric vocabulary of Last Wills and Testaments. The corpus of the research contains 400 wills written in England between 1837 and 2015 (525 023 characters). Anthropocentric paradigm is of great importance for modern Linguistics. The research is based on the role of language in institutionalization of a human being (how a human perceives the world through language), the study of language as the main factor of human being in perspective for providing with social activity (how an individual identifies himself/herself through the language). Anthropocentrism is considered in terms of entering different lexical-semantic groups which are determined by the achievement of communicative goal of bequest. A structural method has been applied to single out lexical-semantic groups of verbs on the basis of common semantic features. The group of words have common categorical meaning (belong to one part of the speech) and are characterized by common semantic features in the semantic structure of components. The novelty is provided by the fact that Last Will and Testament has been studied as an object of the research for the first time in linguistics. Novelty is also given to the analysis of Last Will and Testament as a socio-communicative phenomenon which is generated in the situation of bequest and implement a testator (testatrix)'s communicative goal. The electronic form of the experimental array of texts enabled the usage of a method of automated searching of certain linguistic units (MathLab) and the establishment of the frequency of their usage.

Keywords 1

Anthropocentrism, lexical-semantic group, Last, Will and Testament, common semantic features, communicative goal, MathLab (software for automated searching).

1. Introduction

In the history of linguistics, anthropocentrism has been thought as a key factor of cognitive perception. The human factor is of great importance in the process of learning about the world. Human being is the central figure in this process; he/she is the centre of the construction of the universe. Anthropocentric approach as a general style of thinking is an increasingly important area in linguistics and is gaining recognition in other fields. Its principles are related to many areas of knowledge. Anthropocentric linguistics sees language primarily as a manifestation of a person in all aspects of their life.

The purpose of the article is to show the anthropocentric orientation of innovation processes in language and to show that human cognitive activity is aimed at it. The **aim** of this article is to provide the detailed analysis of verbs used in English Last Wills and Testaments and to show that they are means of implementation of a testator/testatrix's communicative goal within the anthropocentric paradigm.

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The study's main aim is to set out the following tasks:

1. To identify the notion of anthropocentrism in linguistics and to analyse the main approaches to the study;
2. To provide the insights into the classification of words based on semantic features;
3. To analyse verbs used in English Last Wills and Testaments with regards to lexical-semantic groups;
4. To use a method of automated searching of certain linguistic units (MathLab) to establish the frequency of usage;
5. To prove that verbs are means of anthropocentric implementation of a testator's communicative goal in the texts of English Last Wills and Testaments.

The **object** of the research is texts of Last Will and Testament written in England in the period between 1837 and 2015.

The **subject** of the research is lexical-semantic groups of verbs which express a testator/testatrix's communicative goal from view point of anthropocentric paradigm in English Last Wills and Testaments.

The **corpus of the research** contains 400 Last Wills and Testaments written in England between 1837 and 2015 (525 023 characters). Last Wills and Testaments written before 1859 were obtained from National Archive of Great Britain (www.nationalarchive.gov.uk). Last Wills and Testaments composed after 1858 were gained at government website of the United Kingdom (www.gov.uk/search-will).

The **novelty** is provided by the fact that lexical-semantic verbs in English Last Wills and Testaments are means of implementation of a testator's communicative goal from view point of anthropocentric paradigm.

2. Proposed Methodology of the Research

General scientific methods such as descriptive, modelling and contextual-interpretation analysis have been used in the research. The deductive method is used to observe and analyse data in order to predict the outcome. Methods of observation, comparison, classification, generalization and interpretation which are essential for a descriptive method are used to provide classification of verbs based on semantic features. The electronic form of the experimental array of texts enabled the usage of a method of automated searching of certain linguistic units (MathLab) and the establishment of the frequency of their usage, the results of which, however, required further manual processing (Excel). Calculation and means of systematization played an important role to help analyse the corpus of the research.

3. Related Works

A considerable amount of literature has been published on the issue of anthropocentrism. W. von Humboldt is considered to be the creator of the idea of anthropocentrism in linguistics. This topic is of extreme importance now and a great number of modern researchers have devoted to identify language as the "spiritual creative work" and argued that the spirit determined the people's worldview, which is reflected in the language. Language is a kind of "intermediate world" that exists between the people and the objective world around them: nation's dependence or independence from their language, the influence of language on the nation is an open field of activity [1, p. 199-205; 2, p. 9; 3, p. 6; 4; 5, p. 2; 6, p. 4716-4728; 7, p. 30-35]. Language as an external manifestation of the nation's spirit is the activity itself, not its product [cited in 1, pp. 88-91].

In Ukrainian linguistics, similar views were expressed by O. Potebnia. He called language "divinely free," which flows from itself. He notes that the relation between language and spirit has a higher internal unity, and language is nothing but a reflection of personality and people [8, p. 16-21].

The idea of anthropocentrism, where a human being is the centre of the universe, is generally accepted. Anthropocentrism has become a guiding principle based on the study of linguistic phenomena in relation to their creator and speaker – a person (and ethnos), in most areas of modern linguistics [9, p. 9].

In particular, N. Andreichuk noted that the main parameters of homo lingualis correspond to the main programs in the modern linguistic anthropocentric paradigm:

1. **Existential paradigm** involves the study of a set of mental mechanisms which generate speech and provide its comprehension.
2. **Cognitive paradigm** focuses on the study of linguistic world picture as the product of a person or ethnos.
3. **Identification paradigm** is related to the description of the personality expressed through language.
4. **Communicative paradigm** outlines the language space reflected in the text and conditioned by extra lingual factors of oral and written speech [10, p. 6].

Within the framework of the cognitive program the "naive picture of the world" is investigated [cited in 11, p. 111]. Yu. Apresian believes that it can be considered in two directions. The first direction studies language-specific concepts (linguistic and cultural). These include stereotypes of speech and cultural cognition and specific connotations of non-specific concepts. The second direction searches for and reconstructs the language's inherent naive view of the world [cited in 11, p. 111]. Yu. Apresian singled out eight systems through which the image of a person is constructed in language. He believes that the semantic sphere of the human can be divided into the following groups: **physical perception** (sight, hearing, senses, taste, touch; semantic primitive – to perceive); **physiological states** (hunger, thirst, desire, etc.; semantic primitive – to feel); **physiological reactions** to external and internal stimuli (cold, sweat, heat, heartbeat, grimace, etc.; there is no semantic primitive); **physical actions and activities** (walk, stand, lie, etc.; semantic primitive – to do); desire (wish, give preference, strive, etc.; semantic primitive – to wish; **thinking, intellectual activity** (understand, remember, know, guess, etc.; semantic primitive – to think; **emotions** (fear, joy, anger, love; semantic primitive – to feel); **speech** (announce/report, promise, ask, demand, etc.; semantic primitive – to speak) [cited in 11, p. 111-112]. It will be shown further that anthropocentric "testamentary" verbs ensure the action to come into force.

4. Results and Discussions

Let us consider anthropocentric vocabulary in terms of belonging them to various lexical-semantic groups. Modern linguists use a number of different terms to group vocabulary based on semantic content. In particular, *semantic field* [12; 13; 14; 15; 16; 17, p.108-109]; lexical field [18; 19; 20], lexical set [21; 22; 23; 24; 25] and *lexical-semantic group* [26; 27, p. 24-25; 28; 29, p. 129-130].

We understand the lexical and semantic group as a group of words that have a common categorical meaning (belong to one part of speech) and are characterized by the presence of common semantic features in the semantic structure of components.

A structural method was used to divide testamentary verbs into lexical-semantic groups. The division is based on the basis of common semantic features, which are identified with relations to dictionary definitions in Longman Exams Dictionary, 2006.

The first lexical-semantic group is represented by the verbs of bequest, the common semantic feature of which is "to give". Such verbs include: *to give* (to let someone have something as a present or to provide something for someone [30, p. 643]), *to bequeath* (to officially arrange for someone to have something that you own after your death [30, p. 123]), *to direct* (to aim something in a particular direction or at a particular person [30, p. 414]), *to leave* (to deliver a message, note, package etc for someone or put it somewhere so that they will get it later (30, p. 867)), *to dispose* (to arrange things or put them in their places; to get rid of something [30, p. 426]), *to devise* (to plan or invent a new way of doing something [30, p. 405]), *to will* (to officially give something that you own to someone else after you die [30, p. 1759]), *to advance* (to give someone money before they have arranged it [30, p. 22]), *to declare* (to state officially and publicly that a particular situation exists or that something is true [30, p. 382]), *to further* (to help something progress or be successful; promote; related to forth [30, p. 621]), *to commit* (to give someone your love or support in a serious or permanent way [30, p. 286]), *to commend* (to praise or approve of someone or something publicly) [30, p. 285].

For example:

I give my daughter Elizabeth Moore my Mahogany desk and drawers (Mary Yearsley, 1837);

First I commend my soul into the hands of Almighty God that gave it hoping for a happy resurrection in and though the merits and mediation of my Blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and my body commit to the earth from where it came (John Smith, 1839);

I devise unto my nephew James Whitlow of Crowley Farmer and my nephew John Barber of Crowley aforesaid Farmer all my real estate subject so far as relates to the property at Stretton to the said annuity or rent charge and bequeath to them the residue of all the personal estate to which I shall be entitled at my decease (Hugh Barber, 1857);

And I give and bequeath to my son Francis Darwin my scientific library that is all books relating to science. And I declare that in case any doubt shall arise as to what articles are included in either of the said bequest the decision in writing of my executors or acting executors respecting such doubts shall be conclusive. I give and devise and by virtue and in exercise and execution of every power and authority in anywise enabling me in this behalf appoint all the messuages land... (Charles Robert Darwin, 1882);

I A. J. Maybrey will and bequeath all my wordly goods whatsoever of which I die possessed to my mother Emma Elizabeth Maybray (Arthur James Maybrey, 1916).

The **second lexical-semantic** group consists of verbs that denote the execution and confirmation of a will. It consists of three subgroups:

1. Words that express nomination of fiduciaries (executor (trix) and trustees: *nominate* (to officially suggest someone or something for an important position, duty or prize [30, p. 1035]), *constitute* (to be considered to be something [30, p. 313]), *appoint* (to choose someone for a position or a job [30, p. 60]), *empower* (to give a person or organization the legal right to do something [30, p. 485]); *vest* (to give someone the official right to do or own something [30, p. 1709]); *entitle* (to give someone the official right to do or have something [30, p. 494]); *assign* (to give someone a particular job or make them responsible for a particular person or thing [30, p. 75]);

2. Verbs that reveal the act of revocation of a previous will: *revoke* (to officially state that a law, decision or agreement is no longer effective [30, p. 1316]), *(make/consider null) void* (law to make a contract or agreement void so that it has no legal effect [30, p. 1718]), *rescind* (to officially end a law, or change a decision or agreement [30, p. 1303]), *annul* (to officially state that a marriage or legal agreement no longer exist [30, p. 51]), *disallow* (to officially refuse to accept something, because a rule has been broken [30, p. 417]);

3. Verbs to express self-proving affidavit: *subscribe* (to agree to buy or pay for shares or support it [30, p. 1542]), *set sb's hand* (to sign a document [30, p. 1399]), *sign sb's name / sign* (to write your signature on something to show that you wrote it, agree with it or were present [30, p. 1431]), *acknowledge* (to admit or accept that something is true or that a situation exist [30, p. 13]).

For example:

And lastly I nominate constitute and appoint my said wife Sarah Birchall and my son in law Thomas Thornhill of Crewe near Nantwich in the County of Chester farmer Executrix and Executor of this my Will hereby revoking all Wills and Testamentary Dispositions by me at any time made (Charles Birchall, 1839);

I appoint my step mother Jane Garner and Charles Phillip of Suffolk Street, Wheelwright and Coachbuilder to be my Executors (Edward Garner, 1916);

To my dear wife I leave the sum of five hundred pounds (Arthur Frank Roberts, 1916);

I hereby revoke and make void all former wills by me at any time heretofore made and do declare this only to be and contain my last will and testament (Ann Hubbard, 1840);

I revoke all other Wills and testamentary dispositions heretofore made by me (Winston Leonard Spencer Churchill, 1963);

In witness whereof I have hereunto set my hand this 13th day of August 2015 (Boris Jony Jones, 2015).

As demonstrated by Figure 1 8696 verbs have been singled out to express a testator/testatrix's communicative goal from the view of anthropocentrism in the texts of English Last Wills and Testaments. Verbs of bequest have the largest number 6062 items which is 69,71 %.

The second come verbs to denote appointment of fiduciaries (1462 which is 16, 81 %), the third – verbs for self-proving affidavit (834 which is 9, 59 %) and verbs to show the act of revocation are the smallest in number (just 338 which is 3,89 %). One of the reasons for that might be the fact that a

revocation part is the smallest in a Last Will and Testament and is optional (a testator/testatrix includes it only in the case of his/her willingness to revoke the previous will).

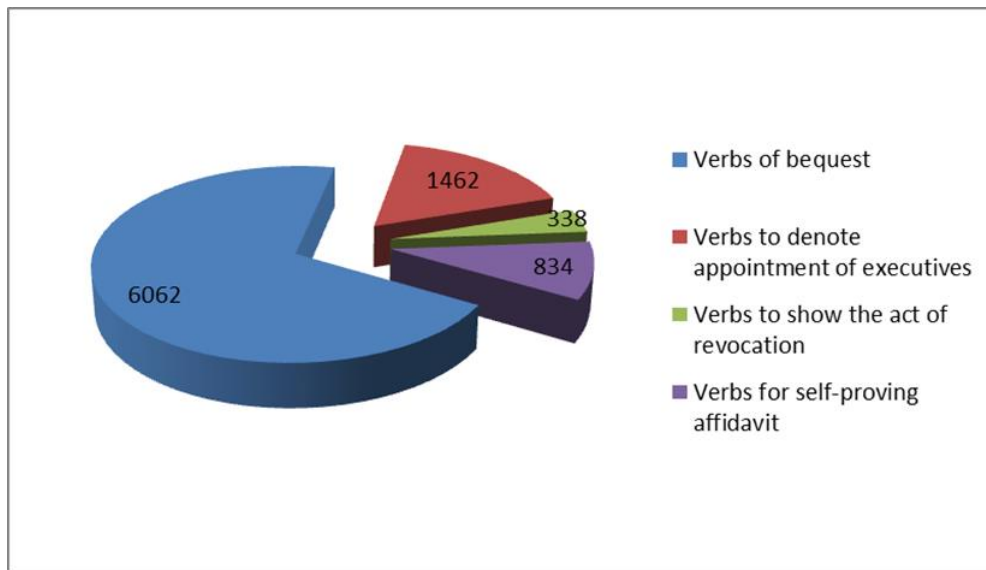


Figure 1: Lexical-semantic groups of verbs in English Last Will and Testament

Let us consider each lexical-semantic group to understand the interaction of a testator’s communicative goal and its implementation with a choice of verb.

Figure 2 demonstrates verbs of bequest and their usage. Twelve verbs are used in this lexical-semantic group (total amount – 6 062): give (1720, 28,3%), dispose (1595, 26,5 %), bequeath (1086, 17,8 %), declare (765, 12,7 %), direct (356, 5,8 %), further (159, 2, 6 %), devise (144, 2,4 %), leave (122, 2 %), will (61, 1 %), commend (29, 0,5 %), commit (13, 0,2 %), and advance (12, 0,2 %). Verbs give, dispose, bequeath and declare are considerably larger in number than other verbs to denote the act of disposing money or other type of property.

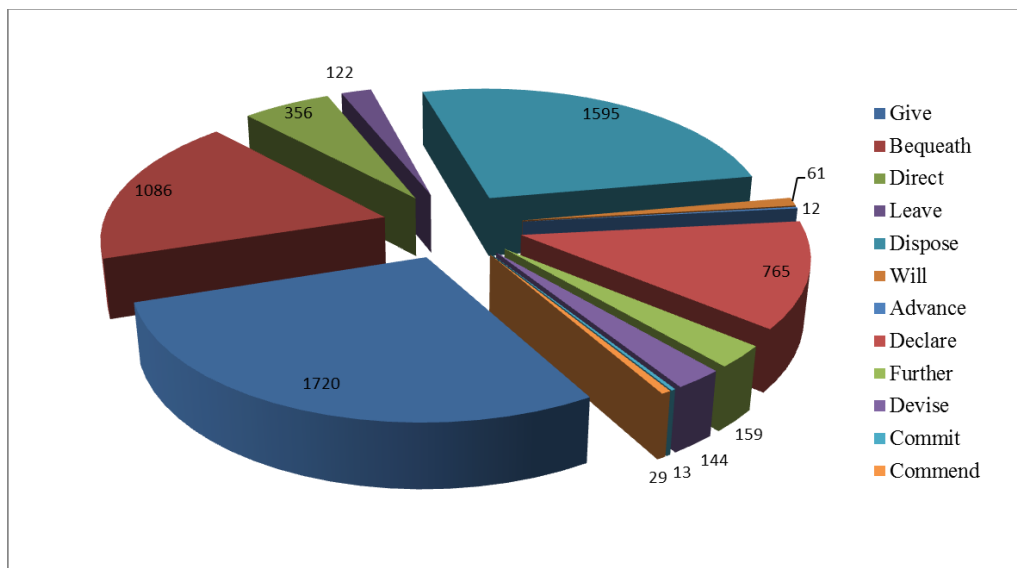


Figure 2: Lexical-semantic group of verbs to express the action of bequest

Figure 3 presents verbs to denote appointment of fiduciaries. Verbs appoint (677, 46,3 %), entitle (397, 27, 1 %) and vest (151, 10, 5 %) are used the most frequently in the text of English Last Wills and Testaments. Other verbs in this group are approximately the same in number: assign (83, 5,7 %), constitute (59, 4 %), nominate (58, 3,9 %) and empower (37, 2,5 %). The total number of verbs in this category is 1462.

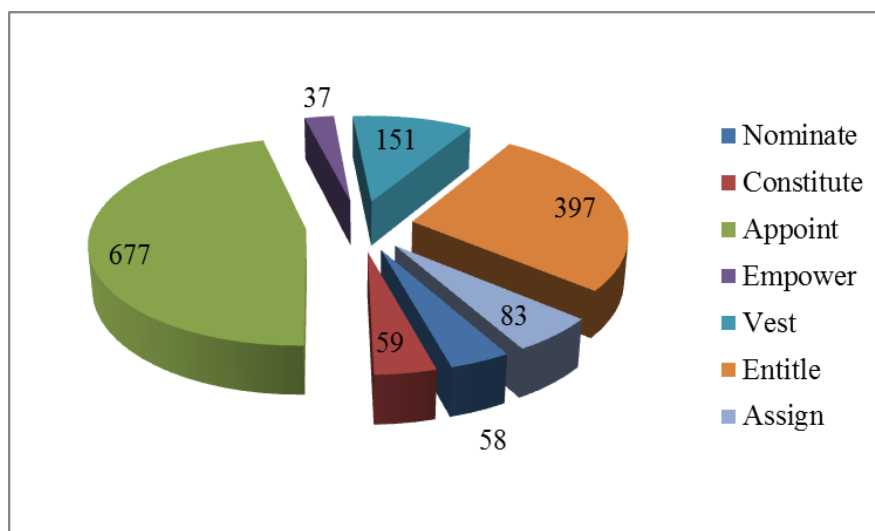


Figure 3: Lexical-semantic group of verbs to denote appointment of fiduciaries

As demonstrated by Figure 4, verbs for self-proving affidavit is seven times as small as verbs of bequest and almost twice as small as verbs to denote appointment of fiduciaries. Figure 4 presents the quantitative statistic of verbs for self-proving affidavit in Last Will and Testament investigated in the article. In this lexical and semantic group, we only have four verbs which consist of 834 items: sign (361, 43, 2 %), subscribe (264, 31, 6 %), set (171, 20,5 %), and acknowledge (38, 4,7 %).

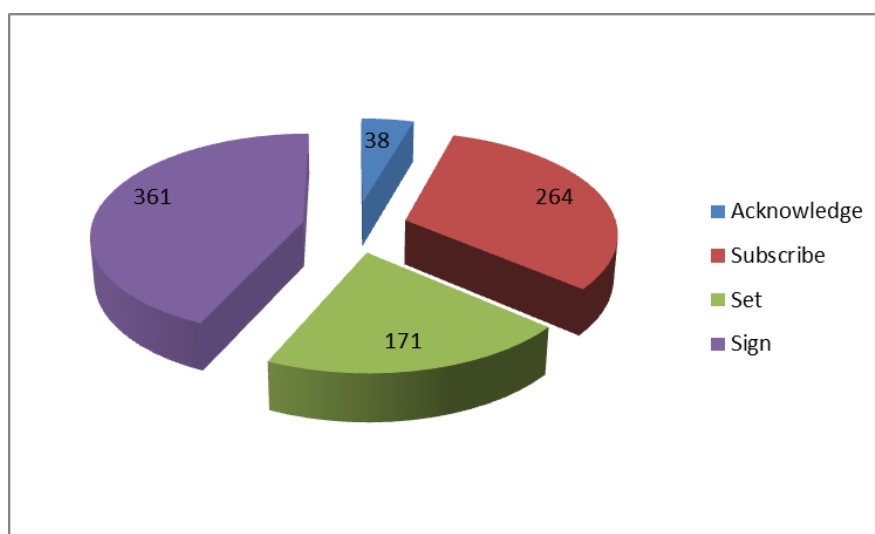


Figure 4: Lexical-semantic group of verbs used for self-proving affidavit

The smallest in number is a group of verbs to show the act of revocation (only 338 verbs). Figure 5 provide information about the usage of verbs which denote the act of revocation. Revoke is most used in this lexical and semantic group (240 time which is 71 %). The number of other verbs used in this category is quite different: (make) void (43, 12, 7 %), rescind (21, 6,2 %), annul (19, 5,6 %) and disallow (15, 4,5 %).

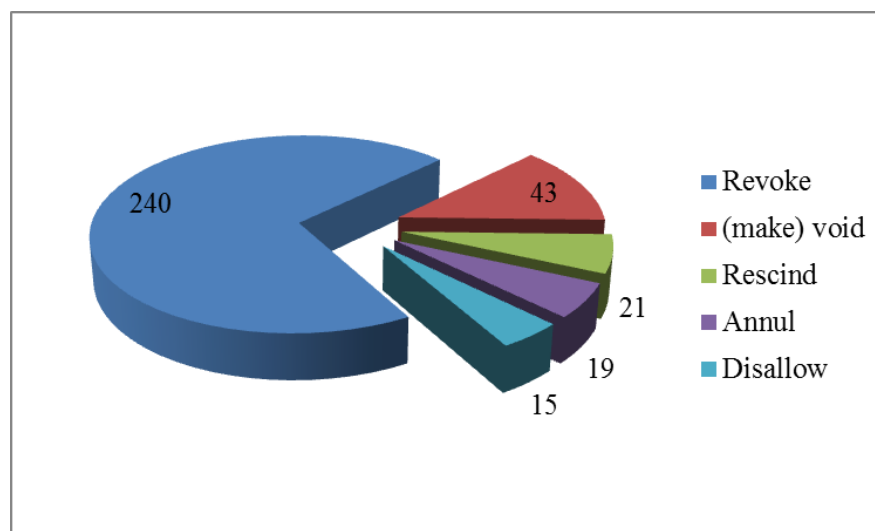


Figure 5: Lexical-semantic group of verbs used to show the act of revocation

The act of bequest, execution and self provement in English Last Wills and Testaments is expressed by a pronoun in the first person singular I. Actually, the testator/testatrix focuses all their attention on own personalities and on what they own. All communicative aims in wills are accompanied by a pronoun I: 1) disposal of property: I give and bequeath, I order, I direct, I do hereby direct, I declare, I will and desire, I have advanced to, I give, I request; 2) appointment of the executors: I empower, I nominate, I appoint; 3) revocation of the will: I revoke; 4) self-proving affidavit: I have set my hand and seal, I have subscribed my name and affixed my seal. The pronoun I presupposes a certain reality (individual experience of the speaker, his/her subjective perception of the world), concentrating on his/her personality.

Only in the act of communication does a person express himself/herself by linguistic means as a subject (“ego”) [31, p. 41]. Communication is possible only if there is at least one point of contact between the speakers, a common point of reference – a communicative act. In the process of communication, the idea of a common reality is formed, which has an objective rather than a subjective nature, as it unites different speakers. Reality common to the speaker and his addressee can be achieved through deictic speech signs (especially personal pronouns), the main function of which is to create a common (for different speakers) image of reality [31, p. 39-41].

Attention should be paid to the automated searching of certain linguistic units, singling them out into categories and creating graphs presented in the article. The algorithm for extracting data from the text, preliminary data analysis and subsequent visualization of the results in the form of graphical diagrams was as follows:

1. Initially, data were retrieved by reading text files that contained different data types, as well as headers and delimiters.
2. Then the import of heterogeneous data types took place. They were extracted from arbitrarily formatted text files.
3. The next step was to import the required columns of data from a text file.
4. If the data were stored in different files, but belonged to the same class, the next step was to import and merge data from multiple files.
5. The purpose of processing "raw" imported data was to classify them according to certain features by extracting, converting, aggregating and determining the percentage in accordance with the full text (there was no data with missing elements, so processing with such data was not conducted).
6. The results of previous actions allowed to create a categorical data set with the possibility of further editing.
7. Then aggregation, arrangement and recalculation of the available groups of data (if necessary) took place.
8. The next step was to customize the visualizations by viewing and converting standard graphs to create informative user information in a convenient format.
9. Next, certain properties of graphic objects and their associated values were determined.

10. Selection and transformation of graphic objects was done empirically.
11. The last step was the final adjustment of the graphs by changing the local properties.
12. As a result, the diagrams presented in the article were obtained.

The program MathLab was chosen compared to other as it allows to use and process a large database, computation is done easily as well as data analysis and visualization are performed extensively.

5. Conclusions

Language is the result of human activity as well as the activity of institutions that produce norms and rules. Language reflects reality, interprets it, and forms the environment in which a person lives. Language is also a mean of communication. English Last Wills and Testaments are seen as an implementation of a testator/testatrix's communicative aim through anthropocentric paradigm.

A person uses lexical-semantic groups of verbs to express a testator/testatrix's communicative goal: to communicate the last will. He / she performs the action of bequest, appoints fiduciaries, self-proves and performs the act of revocation using anthropocentric verbs of speech and relying on clearly established by law forms of expression, which are common for the texts of inheritance law: *I give and bequeath (to, unto); I hereby declare it to be my anxious wish and desire, I give, devise and bequeath unto to my said, I give and bequeath the same unto, first I will that, I hereby order and direct; then I order and direct; I order and direct that, I do give and bequeath all that, I do also give to, I order and direct, I hereby declare that, I give the sum of, I declare that, I hereby authorize, I leave the whole of my property to, I direct; I appoint; I do appoint, I appoint as, I give to; I hereby declare that; I subject all my other property to; I revoke all former wills by me heretofore made; I rescind all former wills, I revoke and make void all my former wills, I hereby revoke all former wills and testamentary dispositions made by me, I declare that, I have hereto set my hand and seal, in witness whereof I have to this my will set my hand.*

This research shows that English Last Will and Testament contain four communicative goals by which a testator/testatrix implements their last wish. These goals include: 1) action of bequest; 2) appointment of fiduciaries; 3) self-proving affidavit; and 4) revocation of a previous will. Lexical-semantic groups of verbs are used to implements a testator/testatrix's goal. It should be noted that these verbs are analysed from the anthropocentric viewpoint. The electronic form of the experimental array of texts enabled the usage of a method of automated searching of certain linguistic units (MathLab) and the establishment of the frequency of their usage.

Give, dispose and *bequeath* are the most frequent verbs of testamentary vocabulary (frequency of use is given in Figure 1) and belong to the anthropocentric vocabulary of "speech" according to Yu. Apresian's classification.

Keeping to certain norms ensures the information balance of the communicative act. In order for a will not to contradict the norms and principles of law established in English society, the action of bequest must be performed by all participants correctly and consistently. The further research should be done to investigate the gender aspect of an implementation of a testator/testatrix's communicative goal in the texts of English Last Wills and Testaments.

These findings suggest that further research should be conducted to assess Last Wills and Testaments from the view point of philosophy and psychology. In further investigations, it might be possible to use the latest research in philosophy to determine the reasons for existence of such a document, its role in the person's life and great need for it when reaching the end. Last Will and Testament as a document of legal doctrine can be regarded as a significant material to study the author's personality. It would give us a deeper dive into the insights of personality types, individual strengths and weaknesses and communication style.

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