

SEMANTIC ROLES AND NOMINAL WORD FORMATION IN OLD CZECH



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1. SEMANTIC ROLES AND NOMINAL WORD FORMATION

According to Luján (2010) and Luján & Ruiz Abad (forthcoming), some word formation suffixes are not related to one semantic role but to various ones (e.g. the English suffix *-er*):

- Role Agent (*killer*)
- Role Instrument (*lighter*)

A research group at the Complutense University in Madrid (Spain) applies to word formation a version of the kind of analysis often employed with grammatical morphemes for functional-typological research and, especially, semantic map analysis in accordance with Haspelmath (1999, 2003) and Luraghi (2003).

2. AGENTS AND INSTRUMENTS

Luján (2010: 164) states that “**Agents** are prototypically animates, especially humans, and are characterized by control and intentionality over the action that they perform” (*killer*). On the contrary, “**Instruments** are prototypically inanimate and can be controlled” (*lighter*).

Moreover, Luján (2010) propose three more related semantic roles in word formation:

- **Force** – inanimate entities having “control over the action” but not “intentionality” such as emotions or natural forces (Old Greek *kheimón* ‘wintry, stormy weather’).
- **Means** – “Compared to Instrument, Means denotes a somewhat less manipulated and controlled entity” (Luraghi 2003: 35), such as the Latin *piaculum* ‘expiatory offering or rite’ < *piāre* ‘expiate’.
- **Location** or **Locative** – the place where the action expressed by the verb takes place (French *dortoir* ‘dormitory’ < *dormir* ‘sleep’).

Luján (2010: 169) summarises the conclusions of his analysis of the semantic roles in word formation by means of a semantic map (Fig. 1)*.

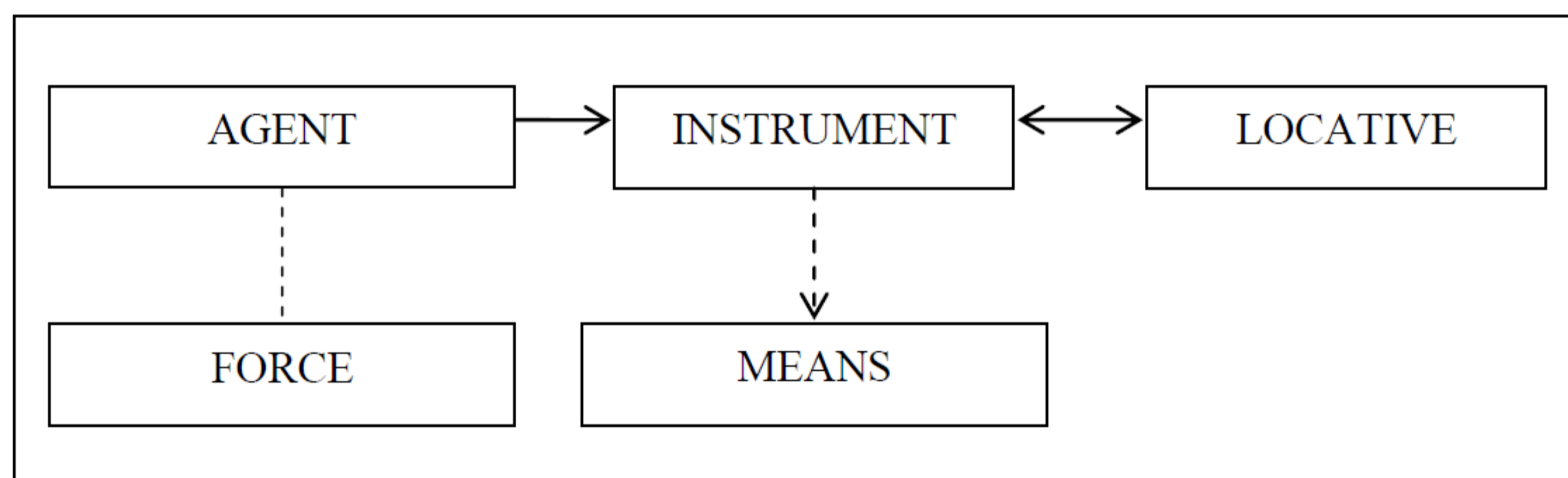


Figure 1.
Diachronic semantic map of Agents, Instruments, and related semantic roles in word-formation (Luján 2010: 169)

* There are other related semantic roles as **Intermediaries**, i.e. “prototypically animates, especially humans, but are controlled by an Agent” (Luján 2010: 164).

3. DEVERBAL WORD FORMATION IN OLD CZECH

In this analysis I only deal with six of the most relevant old Czech deverbial suffixes: *-ář/-ář*, *-tel*, *-ník* (Agent); *-č*, *-dlo*, *-nice* (Instrument). I have analysed the semantic roles associated with these suffixes in two texts belonging to the earliest stage of the written Czech culture:

- *Dalimilova Kronika* (*Chronicle of Dalimil*)
- *Bohemář tzv. Větší* (a Latin-Czech glossary)

In the following tables we can observe the results for the six suffixes:

Suffix *-ář/-ář*

Noun	Translation	Semantic Role	Verbal Base	Translation
pekař	baker	Agent	péci	bake
tesař	carpenter	Agent	tesati	hew
vládař	administrator	Agent	vládnúti	have someone in one's power
kovář	smith	Agent	kovati	forge
písař	scribe	Agent	pisati	write

Suffix *-tel*

Noun	Translation	Semantic Role	Verbal Base	Translation
krstítel	Baptist	Agent	krstíti	baptise
stvořitel	creator	Agent	stvořiti	create

Suffix *-ník*

Noun	Translation	Semantic Role	Verbal Base	Translation
krmník	(pig) sty	Location	krmiti	feed
pomocník	helper/assistant	Agent	pomoci	help
postavník	candle	Instrument	postaviti	demonstrate/ present
přivozník	boatman	Agent	převoditi	transfer
řěčník	intercessor/ advocate	Agent	řěčiti	say
řezník	butcher	Agent	řezati	cut
sledník	tracker (dog)	Intermediary	slíditi	trace
svalník	a sort of healing herb	Instrument	svaliti	roll down
zajemník	cattle thief	Agent	zajieti	take
zvonník	bell ringer	Agent	zvoniti	ring a bell

Suffix *-č*

Noun	Translation	Semantic Role	Verbal Base	Translation
bič	whip	Instrument	bíti	beat
bukač	bittern (a sort of aquatic bird)	Agent	búkati	hoot
holič	barber	Agent	holiti	shave
kopáč	digger	Agent	kopati	dig
lepač	potter	Agent	lépati	glue together
násěč	sort of axe	Instrument	nasieci	cut
opálač	one who winnows (grain)	Agent	opálati	winnow (grain)
opichač	one who grinds or crushes in a mill	Agent	opíchat	beat
oráč	ploughman	Agent	orati	plough
osladič	common polypody (a plant)	Varia	osladiti	sweeten
pohonič	oxherd, cowboy	Agent	pohoniti	order, drive up
potahač	a sort of grooved plane	Instrument	potahovati	take out/pull out
rozševač	sower	Instrument	rozševati	sow
ryč	sort of spade	Instrument	ryti	dig sth. with a spade
skladač	poet	Agent	skládati	compose
stříhač	barber	Agent	stříci	cut
trubač	trumpet player	Agent	trúbiti	blow, play
vazač	one who bandages	Agent	vázati	bandage

Suffix *-dlo*

Noun	Translation	Semantic Role	Verbal Base	Translation
bidlo	pole	Instrument	bíti	beat
bydlo	dwelling	Location	býti	be
črnidlo	ink	Instrument	črniti	make black
kadidlo	incense	Instrument	kaditi	burn incense
ličidlo	make-up	Instrument	ličiti	make up
močidlo	swamp	Location	močiti	make wet
mýdlo	soap	Instrument	mýti	clean
osídlo	loop	Instrument	osídlati (sidlo)	catch with a loop
prostěradlo	a sort of cloth	Instrument	prostřieti	spread, extend
rádlo	plough	Instrument	orati	plough
rozpínadlo	weaver's tool for stretching canvas	Instrument	rozpínati	expand
strašidlo	bogeyman/ spectre	Force	strašiti	scare
šídlo	bradawl	Instrument	šíti	sew
trdlo	threshing sledge	Instrument	tříti	rub
tvořidlo	mould for making cheese	Instrument	tvořiti	constitute, create
udidlo	part of bridle	Instrument	*o-děti	insert, put
vratidlo	capstan	Instrument	vtěti	wag
zrcadlo	mirror	Instrument	*zřkati/zřcati	look, gaze
žahadlo	sting	Instrument	žhati, žhati	sting

Suffix *-nice*

Noun	Translation	Semantic Role	Verbal Base	Translation
střelnice	embrasure, bastion	Location	střeliti	shoot
zvonnice	bell tower	Location	zvoniti (zvon)	ring a bell

4. CONCLUSION

In general there are not many unexpected phenomena. Three of the suffixes represent just 1 semantic role: *-ář/-ář* and *-tel* → Agent; *-nice* → Location. On the other hand, the majority of the nouns ending in *-ník* (6) are Agents. Nevertheless, in the corpus there is 1 Location, 2 Instruments, and 1 Intermediary ending in *-ník*. The suffix *-č* primarily forms the names of Agents (12) and Instruments (5). *-dlo* can definitely be related to Instruments (16); however, 2 Locations and 1 Force ending in *-dlo* occur in the corpus.

Except for *strašidlo* ‘bogeyman, spectre’ and one unpredictable meaning labelled Varia, all the nouns seem to respect the typological tendencies proposed by Luján (2010) and shown in Figure 1. Nevertheless, I refuse to classify *strašidlo* as Varia. I opted to apply to *strašidlo* the semantic role Force and, as a consequence of this – and since this is not an isolated example (cf. Ancient Greek *phóbētra* in Luján & Ruiz (forthcoming)) – to raise the question of the real configuration of the semantic role Force: Should not Force be defined rather as a transitional step between Agent and Instrument?

In order to give a really thorough answer to this question, further research on the semantic roles associated with old Czech nominal word formation will be needed.

5. MAIN REFERENCES

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