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THE MULTILINGUAL APPENDIX OF LE RICCHEZZE DELLA LINGUA VOLGARE (1543) BY FRANCESCO ALUNNO

A lexicographer's "service list" and an intercomprehension tool

Keywords Decameron concordance; multilingual appendix; intercomprehension

Francesco del Bailo (1474–1556), alias Francesco Alunno, was a humanist: born in Ferrara, he spent most of his life between Udine and Venice. Alunno is best known as author of *La fabrica del mondo* 'The texture of the world' (1548), which was considered the first onomasiological dictionary in Italian. Here, we try to stress the value of *Le Ricchezze della lingua volgare* as an accurate concordance of Boccaccio and focus on its multilingual appendix.

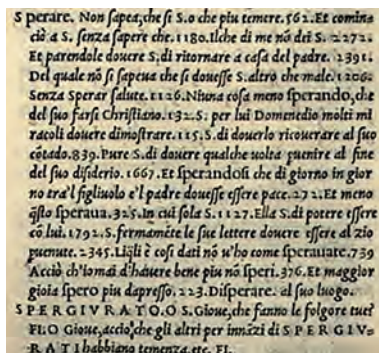


Fig. 1: Entry *sperare* 'to hope' (Alunno 1543, p. 171)

At page 3 recto Alunno explains his lemmatisation rules and his nested microstructure for the *Decameron* concordances: derived forms are in the microstructure of their "primitives"; conjugated verb forms are given under an entry in the infinitive; contexts both for the singular and for the plural are grouped under an entry in the singular. An example of some of these details is visible in the microstructure of *sperare* 'to hope' in Figure 1: the forms of the verb *sperando*, *sperandosi*, *sperava*, *speravate*, *spero* are in the same font as the entry *sperare* and assume the role of subentries.



Fig. 2: List of Spanish words (Alunno 1543, p. 215)

The lists of “words used by Latins, Greeks, Provençals, Frenchmen, Spaniards, Germans, Englishmen, Goths and other nations of which we list only those which best conform to our vernacular Italian and were used by Boccaccio, Dante, and Petrarca” cover about twenty pages in two columns. Alunno seems to adopt an Italian-centric perspective and a synchronic approach in compiling lists of Italian words which correspond to remarkably similar lexical items in Latin, Greek, Spanish, French, German and English. Alunno lists corresponding vernacular words for Romance languages, while for non-Romance languages he lists borrowings of Latin origin.



Fig. 3: List of French words (Alunno 1543, p. 217)

If we consider the way in which Alunno reports Spanish and French words we find similarities with Nebrija's *Spanish and Latin dictionary* (1492) or Estienne's *French and Latin dictionary* (1538). As for Latin and Greek, an Aldine edition of *Calepinus* had just appeared in 1542 by the same printer of Alunno (Manutius). Alunno might very well have adopted as a source the above-mentioned bilingual Latin-Vernacular: Latin was the right bridge language to easily find words for his lists. For non-Romance languages the *Quinque* (or *sex*) *linguarum* lists are a more probable source, but we cannot exclude some oral informants.

Since *Le ricchezze della lingua volgare* is a single author's dictionary, microstructures gather all the contexts in which Boccaccio used the word corresponding to the entry. Alunno does not provide a definition and does not suggest an etymology. Today, however, we can appreciate the multilingual appendix not only as a curiosity, but as a sort of forerunning experiment of intercomprehension, in a broad sense.

Alunno was aware of some spelling regularities in graphic differences between Italian and Spanish and he reports them at the beginning of the list. We contrastively analysed these differences with the other word lists in other languages through the intercomprehensive principle of the "seven sieves" of the EuroCom project (Meissner et al. 2004) and if we consider the lists consulted in connection with the concordance, we also have contexts. Those who study intercomprehension know that context is one of the basic elements that enable the use of different strategies to understand language and texts. These considerations encourage us to figure the use of Alunno's lists within the frame of the concordance at his time and that of similar lists supported by a corpus today. It is important to stress that Alunno's lists can be seen as an example of a primitive attempt to make intercomprehension possible as early as the XVI century.

The work of a lexicographer like Alunno embodies an approach which, if considered in scientific terms, is neither top-down like Bach et al. (2008) nor bottom-up. Although he lacked a strong philological awareness, he cannot be said to be naïve. His point of view was closer to that of a present-day cultivated practitioner of intercomprehension.

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