

How They Agree
**A Corpus-Based Study on the Complementation of the Verb *Agree* in
Written British and American English Today and in Recent Centuries**

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Tässä korpuspohjaisessa pro gradu -tutkielmassa tarkastellaan englannin verbin *agree* komplementaatiota nykypäivän kirjoitetussa britti- ja amerikanenglannissa ja viime vuosisatojen kirjoitetussa brittienglannissa.

Tutkielmalla on kaksi päätavoitetta. Ensinnäkin annetaan perusteellinen selvitys verbin *agree* syntaktisista ja semanttisista ominaispiirteistä – teoreettisen viitekehyksen luovat valenssiteoria ja sijakielioppi, lisäksi *Oxford English Dictionary* ja alan keskeisimmät kieliopit ovat tärkeässä asemassa. Toiseksi korpuksista kerätyn autenttisen materiaalin perusteella tutkitaan, voidaanko teoreettisista lähteistä hankittua tietoa pitää oikeana ja perusteltuna. Viime vuosisatojen osalta käytettiin korpusta *Corpus of Late Modern English Texts* (CLMET), joka kattaa vuodet 1710-1920. Nykypäivän kirjoitetun brittienglannin ja amerikanenglannin vertailussa hyödynnettiin korpusta *Collins Cobuild Corpus*. Lisäksi etsittäessä syitä *to*-infinitiivi ja *to -ing* -komplementtien väliseen vaihteluun käytössä oli *British National Corpus* (BNC).

Tutkimus osoittaa, että verbi *agree* esiintyy yhdessä nominaalilausekkeiden, *to*-infinitiivilauseiden, *that*-lauseiden, *wh*-lauseiden ja prepositionaaliohjainten kanssa. Näistä viimeksi mainitut ovat yleisimmin esiintyvä komplementaatiomuoto – eri prepositionaaliverbien lukumäärä ja esiintyvyys vähenee tosin huomattavasti siirryttäessä kohti nykypäivää. Lausekomplementeista *to*-infinitiivit ja *that*-lauseet ovat yleisimmät – näistä edellä mainitut ovat erityisen vahvassa asemassa amerikanenglannissa. *Wh*-lauseita ja nominaalilausekkeita esiintyy toisaalta vain hyvin marginaalisesti – yksi selkeimmistä eroista britti- ja amerikanenglannin välillä on nominaalilausekkeiden täydellinen puuttuminen jälkimmäisestä verbin *agree* komplementtina. Lisäksi on havaittavissa tendenssi, jonka mukaan verbiä *agree* käytetään yhä enenevässä määrin ilman mitään yllä mainituista komplementeista.

Asiasanat: agree, komplementaatio, valenssiteoria, sijakielioppi, korpus, korpuslingvistiikka

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1. Introduction

This is the only point, I flatter myself, *on which we do not agree*. I had hoped that our sentiments coincided in every particular, but I must so far differ from you as to think our two youngest daughters uncommonly foolish. (Mr. Bennet to his wife in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*)

The verb *agree* is perhaps most commonly used to express a shared opinion – or dissenting views when used with a negative, as the short passage above quite aptly illustrates. Yet a brief glance at the *Oxford English Dictionary (OED)* shows that the convergence or divergence of ideas is by no means the only sense that the particular verb can convey, nor is a prepositional object its solitary possible complement. Instead, the verb *agree* is a verb of a wide semantic and syntactic spectrum and this very fact makes it an uncommonly interesting object for a closer study.

This thesis has two main objectives. Firstly, a thorough description of the syntactic and semantic core characteristics of the verb *agree* will be provided – valency theory and case grammar will form the basis of the theoretical framework, but I will also make use of the *OED* and several grammars. Secondly, the different senses of the verb *agree* and its typical complementation patterns will be discussed in the light of authentic data collected from three corpora – these include the *Corpus of Late Modern English Texts*, the *Collins Cobuild Corpus* and the *British National Corpus*. For this latter part I have set the following research questions:

1. How was the verb *agree* complemented in written British English during the recent centuries?
2. What kind of complements does the verb *agree* take in present-day written British and American English and what are the differences between these two varieties?
3. Which changes have taken place in the course of time (i.e. which patterns have become obsolete, which are on the increase and what the future prospects are)?

Moreover, I will give room for the examination of some minor – but by no means less intriguing – issues related to the complementation of the particular verb: the concepts of a corpus and corpus linguistics will be introduced, there will be one section dedicated to the exclusive features of complements and when presenting the results of the corpus data analysis, the question of the variation between the *to*-infinitive and the *to –ing* pattern will be addressed.

I have noticed that corpus-based studies are often regarded with slight suspicion: they are thought as something highly theoretical and their reliability is often questioned – after all, the results of the analysis much depend on the subjective judgments of the researcher. However, despite such doubts I am assured that a thesis like mine does not merely give an account of the complementation of the verb *agree* during the past few centuries, but also describes how language evolves and thus ultimately reflects the likings and the estimations of ours, the language users.

2. Data and Method

Corpora are a most intriguing tool: working with one opens the door to the analysis of naturally-occurring language in actual use. The concepts of a corpus and corpus linguistics being of great significance for my thesis, I will start by introducing these two and then continue discussing the requirements that a good corpus should meet. Moreover, the corpora used will be presented and a few words on the method will follow.

2.1. Corpus linguistics – investigating real language in use

When it comes to languages, for some reason people often tend to think in rather black-and-white terms. A case in point, a certain utterance can be either accepted as a fine and correct piece of a particular language or alternatively judged as ungrammatical and bad. Of course each language always – and quite rightfully – has a number of rules that are needed to form the basis of the standard norm. This particular fact, however, does not by any means bind a language to stay unchanged for centuries. Quite the contrary, language is constantly on the move – and the very essence of all the beauties that a corpus has to offer lies right here: investigating corpus data (i.e. pieces of real language in use) shows the changes that have taken place in the course of time and gives a hint which future tendencies are to be expected.

During the writing process several acquaintances of mine showed interest in my project and many of the inquirers having no considerable expertise in linguistics, I was often

challenged to come up with an illustrative explanation what a corpus is and what one can do with one. Accordingly, my admiration goes to Tognini-Bonelli (2001, 55), who succeeds in captivating the most essential features of a corpus in two sentences:

... a corpus is... a computerized collection of authentic texts, amenable to automatic and semi-automatic processing or analysis. The texts are selected according to explicit criteria in order to capture the regularities of a language, a language variety or a sub-language.

The term ‘text’ may create a misleading impression for it easily connotes with pieces of written language only – however, corpora are by no means merely restricted to written contexts. Instead, there are also corpora of spoken language, the contents varying from radio talk shows to academic lectures.

2.2. The measure of a good corpus

When choosing corpora for a study like this, there are three issues worth bearing in mind – these include authenticity, representativeness and sampling (Tognini-Bonelli 2001, 54). These three having direct relevance for my study, as well as out of personal interest, I will briefly introduce them in the following.

2.2.1. Authenticity

As Tognini-Bonelli (2001, 54) points out, the basic assumption concerning corpus data is that it is taken “from genuine communications of people going about their normal business”. To put it another way, the data should not have been produced for the purposes of a corpus in particular. Accordingly, authenticity entails reliability: if the data is authentic, it is reliable and vice versa. Although the material included in a corpus is in most cases reliable, it is always wise to go about the data with some caution. Tognini-Bonelli (2001, 56) emphasizes that even if some particular linguistic item – be it a single word or an entire sentence – should occur in a corpus, this does not automatically preordain the very item to be a good and acceptable representative of a certain

language use. Indeed, I do agree that one should beware of not going to extremes, but I would not, however, underestimate the role of a corpus as the harbinger of new winds either. In other words, if a certain linguistic item occurs in a corpus only a few times, one should neither draw a generalization of it being an acceptable piece of a language, nor disregard it as a mere happy coincidence.

2.2.2. Representativeness

Authentic data does not alone secure the good quality of a corpus-based study: if the size of the corpus is rather small, the reliability is to be called into question. Accordingly, representativeness must be counted as one of the most significant properties of a corpus: a corpus must be large enough so that the conclusions drawn and the generalizations made were justifiable (Tognini-Bonelli 2001, 57). One may wonder how large a corpus is sufficient – indeed, Tognini-Bonelli (2001, 57) refers to Leech (1991, 27) who goes as far as stating that representativeness of a corpus “must be regarded largely as an act of faith”. Leech may have a point there, but Tognini-Bonelli (2001, 57) on the other hand states that “there seems to be general agreement among scholars who choose to work on a corpus that this should be representative of a certain population and that the statements derived from the analysis of the corpus will be largely applicable to a larger sample or to the language as a whole”. Moreover, as Tognini-Bonelli (2001, 57) quite correctly points out, one would scarcely choose to use an unrepresentative corpus deliberately. In my opinion, the frequency figures of certain search items can be supposed to be a good indicator of the sufficient – or insufficient – size of a corpus. For instance, any corpus should give high frequencies for the verb *agree*, it being a basic English verb and used in colloquial as well as in formal contexts. However, if a corpus should give only a few instances of the particular verb usage, I would instantly suspect that there is something peculiar about it. This rule of thumb does not, however, apply to every English word – it is reasonable to presume that the adjective *cantankerous*, for example, does not occur too

frequently, be the corpus the *British National Corpus* or a home-made corpus compiled by some amateur.

2.2.3. Sampling

In addition to authenticity and representativeness, Tognini-Bonelli (2001, 59) emphasizes the importance of sampling: the choice of texts and the length of the text samples will directly affect the results of the analysed corpus data. For this cause the corpus users should always be informed about the origin of the text – that is, the texts should be provided with the necessary background information details so that the user might be able to evaluate authenticity and representativeness of the particular corpus (Tognini-Bonelli 2001, 59-60).

2.3. Presenting the corpora used

The aforementioned requirements do not fail to be fulfilled in the corpora chosen for this study. To begin with, the *Corpus of Late Modern English Texts* (CLMET) consists of texts taken from the *Project Gutenberg* and the *Oxford Text Archive*, both freely available on the Internet. The CLMET is a corpus of nearly ten million words and subdivided into three sections, each of them comprising a period of 70 years – these are 1710-1780, 1780-1850 and 1850-1920 (De Smet 2005, 70). All the texts selected for the particular corpus are written by native British English speakers, both male and female, and the contribution of each author is maximally 200,000 words (De Smet 2005, 71-72). Being a relatively large corpus, the CLMET well represents the time span from 1710 to 1920 and its data are taken from authentic sources – accordingly, the results of the analysis can be presumed to be reliable. The only pity is that the CLMET does not include any data written by native American English speakers and thus it is not possible to compare the differences in the complementation of the verb *agree* between the two varieties during the recent centuries.

Fortunately, American English will be a part of the discussion when presenting the contemporary written English data. This will be done with the help of the *Collins Cobuild Corpus*, which is a part of the Bank of English and massive in size: it comprises altogether 56 million words. Of its twelve subcorpora I have chosen four: these are UK Books and US Books, as well as UK Ephemera and US Ephemera – in other words, the focus will be on written British and American English. What’s more, a third corpus will also be made use of – indeed, when detecting reasons why the *to –ing* pattern is sometimes preferred to the *to*-infinitive pattern, I will analyze a small set of data taken from the *British National Corpus* (BNC), an impressive corpus of 100 million words.

2.4. On the method

This study is, for the most part, of quantitative nature – the aim is to draw conclusions on the complementation of the verb *agree* by examining a large set of data. The total number of the analysed instances amounts to 2370, of which 1132 tokens are from the CLMET and 1238 items from the *Collins Cobuild Corpus*. The data was collected by using the base form *agree* and all its inflected forms (i.e. *agreed*, *agrees*, *agreeing*) as search terms.

Furthermore, the method of the study is corpus-based. Although the *OED* and the grammars form the foundation of the analysis, it is the corpus data that gives the thesis its ultimate momentum. Tognini-Bonelli (2001, 65) defines the term ‘corpus-based’ as a methodology “that avails itself of the corpus mainly to expound, test or exemplify theories and descriptions that were formulated before large corpora became available to inform language study” – indeed, my intention is to find out whether the information given in the *OED* and in the grammars can be validated in the light of the corpus data.

3. Detecting the core characteristics of the verb *agree*

As it was already pointed out in the introduction, the verb *agree* favors quite a variety of different complements and depending on the choice of the complementing element, the particular verb can have numerous different senses. The intriguing issue here is that whichever sense be in question, certain underlying syntactic and semantic elements remain unchanged. This section is dedicated to the closer examination of these underlying and the most intrinsic syntactic and semantic features of the verb *agree*.

3.1 Introducing the two elements

I agree. A very short and plain sentence – it would definitely be hard to put it any simpler! If we omitted the subject, the sentence (i.e. **Agree*) would be incomplete and ungrammatical: indeed, the agent who performs the agreeing must be expressed. What's more, just as evidently as the particular verb requires someone to do the agreeing, it also craves an object for the agreeing. Due to the lack of additional context we cannot say for sure to what one is expressing his or her consent in our example – therefore, to highlight my point, let us presume that the following dialogue takes place:

A: I think that his plan seems quite interesting.
B: I *agree*.

We observe that *agree* requires two supplementing elements here: the first one is the subject (i.e. *I*), which must be explicitly mentioned in order to have a grammatical sentence, and the second element is the matter on which B assures his unanimity (i.e. *that his plan seems quite interesting*). Language being reluctant to accept any kind of redundancy, it is to be noted that the second element does not have to be pointedly expressed. This does not, however, evade the fact that the second element undoubtedly exists – it is the element ‘in mind’, so to speak. The following tree diagram, adapted from Tarvainen (1977, 18), exemplifies how the two elements supplement the verb *agree* in the above-given conversation (the brackets indicate that the second element is optional):

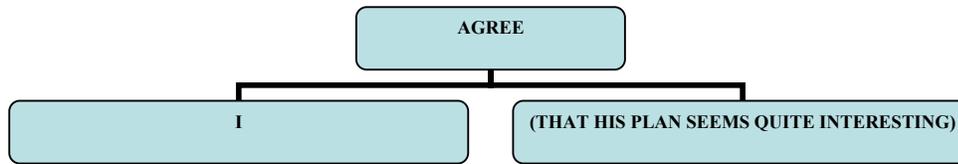


Figure 1: An illustration of the two elements supplementing the verb *agree*

Restating the fact *that his plan seems quite interesting* would certainly be unnecessary – instead, it can happily be excluded by ellipsis, which, as Quirk et al. (1985, 82) put it, is a grammatical process “whereby elements of a sentence which are predictable from context can be omitted”.

What’s more, Heringer (1968, 427)¹ emphasizes that ellipsis by no means alters the meaning, nor makes the interpretation of the utterance ambiguous: he more willingly suggests that “the missing complements are understood”.

3.2. Focus on syntax: the two elements and valency

What we have witnessed here is that the verb is the ultimate governor of the sentence that determines how many other elements must be present when forming a grammatically acceptable sentence. Using the number of these obligatory elements following the verb as a yardstick, verbs have typically been categorized into three groups: intransitive, transitive and copular ones. As Quirk et al. (1985, 53-54) point out, intransitive verbs do not necessarily need a complementing element after the verb, whereas transitive ones do call for an object – copular verbs, on the other hand, “are followed by a subject complement or an adverbial”. Indeed, this tripartite deal seems to work quite nicely with the majority of verbs: it is often fairly easy to say right off the top of one’s head whether some verb is transitive (e.g. *to visit*, *to watch*), intransitive (e.g. *to die*, *to sink*) or copular (e.g. *to become*, *to be*). The verb *agree*, however, is likely to cause a slight hesitation. It was concluded above that *agree* always needs two supplementing elements of which the first one (i.e. the subject)

¹ Quoted in Somers (1987, 11).

must be expressed, whereas the second element (i.e. the object) is not obligatory² – even if the verb may happily take one. Accordingly, it seems that the verb *agree* is both transitive and intransitive at the same time! Quirk et al. (1985, 1168) solve this dilemma by explaining that many verbs can be complemented in several different ways – in fact, they note that it is more accurate to speak of the transitive or intransitive *use* of a particular verb rather than to give verbs permanent labels on account of their transitivity or intransitivity. Interestingly, Biber et al. (1999, 141) approach the same issue from a somewhat different point of view, stating that “we should more correctly speak of verbs being ‘used with’ particular valencies”, leading us thus to the concept of valency.

3.2.1 Valency defined

It is all in the character. Verbs typically demand a certain number of complements and this tendency is called the valency of the verb (Herbst 2004, xxiv). As a matter of fact, Cook (1989, 31-32) points out that the term valency was originally used in atomic chemistry in which the atomic nucleus has the power to draw a certain number of electrons to itself. As basically the same phenomenon also occurs with verbs, the French linguist Tesnière introduced the concept of valency into linguistics (Helbig and Schenkel 1973, 13). In Tesnière’s analysis the elements that are dependent on the verb are called actants and the elements, which are not bound by the verb but rather express “temporal, locational, etc. circumstances”, are called circumstantials (Somers 1987, 5). To highlight the difference between actants and circumstantials, let us consider the following two sentences:

- (a) Charles *agreed* [to sing at Camilla’s birthday party].
- (b) Last night John *agreed* [to sign the contract right away].

In the higher clauses of sentence (a) and sentence (b), the verb *agree* holds the governing position and has two actants, the subject (i.e. *Charles; John*) and the lower clause (i.e. *to sing at Camilla’s birthday party; to sign the contract right away*). In both sentences the subject is obligatory and the lower clause optional – indeed, even if we omitted the lower clauses, the first actants and the verb

² However, it must be noted that due to the reciprocal nature of the verb *agree* the second element is mandatory in certain contexts – this will be discussed in more detail in 3.3.3.

could stand together as grammatical sentences (i.e. *Charles agreed; John agreed*). However, in sentence (b) the temporal expression *last night* is not bound by the verb in the same way as the subject (i.e. *John*) and the lower clause (i.e. *to sign the contract right away*) – accordingly, *last night* can be labelled as a circumstantial. Moreover, at first look one might think that *at Camilla's birthday party* and *right away* are also circumstantials – after all, the former expresses a location and the latter a manner! They do, however, play an essential role in the lower clauses: they modify the verbs of the lower clauses (i.e. *to sing; to sign*) and together with these verbs they are under the dominion of the matrix verb *agree* and thus they cannot be treated as circumstantials.

3.2.2. Actants and their syntactic functions

We noted earlier that verbs are typically grouped under the labels transitive, intransitive and copular and interestingly, this categorization has very much to do with the concept of valency. Somers (1987, 5) points out that verbs can be classified in terms of the number of the actants they take: verbs that do not take any actants at all (e.g. *rain*³) are called ‘avalent’, whereas intransitive verbs do require one actant (e.g. *fall*) and are thus ‘monovalent’ verbs. On the other hand, transitive verbs that take two actants (e.g. *hit*) carry the label ‘divalent’ and complex-transitive verbs (e.g. *give*) are called ‘trivalent’ for they necessitate three actants (Somers 1987, 5). As for the verb *agree*, it certainly allows the monovalent use (e.g. *I agree*) and a divalent structure works also well (e.g. *I agree to that*) – only the avalent use (e.g. **Agree*) is completely out of the question. What’s more, one can easily come up with a sentence of three actants for the verb *agree* (e.g. *I agree with Tom on this*). However, this particular sentence makes me tentative for it does not seem to fit in Tesnière’s framework.

A case in point, Tesnière has numbered and given actants certain syntactic functions: the first actant (also called the prime actant) usually serves as the subject, the second actant, on the

³ In sentences like *It rains* the formal subject *it* is not counted as an actant (Somers 1987, 5).

other hand, is the object and the third actant operates as the indirect object – the reference of these three is often to Nominative, Accusative and Dative respectively (Somers 1987, 5). Although I am well aware that these labels are ubiquitously used especially in German valency theories, I am not at ease in applying them for the English language. Fair enough, sometimes even with the verb *agree* it truly is the case that the prime actant is Nominative and the second actant Accusative (e.g. *He agreed on the plan*), but the particular verb often accepts Dative as the second and Accusative as the third actant (e.g. *I agree with Tom on this*) – notwithstanding the fact that in Tesnière’s theory Dative normally has the place of the third and Accusative the place of the second actant. Accordingly, it seems that the syntactic labels Nominative, Accusative and Dative are not particularly fit for the English language. The reason for this lies in the dual case system of a language.

Cook (1989, 3) points out that a distinction can be made between the surface case system and the deep case system of a language. The former has to do with nouns whose inflectional endings indicate whether they be interpreted as the subject, object, modifier etc. The deep case system, on the other hand, deals with the “semantic roles which these nouns play in the meaning of the sentence” (Cook 1989, 3). In other words, nouns analysed in terms of syntax belong to the surface structure and are called case forms, whereas nouns scrutinized with respect to their semantic roles belong to the deep structure and are called case uses (Cook 1989, 3). Due to the fact that the surface case systems vary greatly from language to language, the analysis of case forms would be rather infelicitous, at least for the purposes of this thesis. However, case uses are not bound to some particular language only, but are applicable to all of them (Cook 1989, 31). Consequently, I decided to delve more deeply into the world of case uses and this is where case grammar enters the picture.

3.3. Focus on semantics: case grammar and argument roles

Case grammar, originally devised by Charles Fillmore, describes the relations of different elements in a sentence within the scope of semantics. To put it bluntly, case grammar theory is a semantic valency theory, in which the verb holds the central position in a sentence and is complemented by a certain number of cases (Cook 1989, ix). Cases, also called arguments, have theta-roles that express thematic relations (such as Agent, Experiencer or Benefactive) and the essence of case grammar is to give a semantic analysis of the verbs of any language by using these case roles (Cook 1989, ix). Case grammar theory has been demonstrated in seven models, of which the last one is masterminded by Cook and which will also serve as the framework in the following discussion.

3.3.1. The case roles and verb types

The earlier case grammar models, especially those of Fillmore's, Platt's and Longacre's, favor a large number of case roles, whereas in Cook's model the number of the case roles has been reduced to five (Cook 1989, 189). These include Agent, Experiencer, Benefactive, Object and Locative, whose more detailed descriptions are given in the following table (cf. Cook 1989, 191):

Case role	Definition
Agent	The case required by an action verb. Typically a performer of the verbal action.
Experiencer	The case required by an experiential verb. The person experiencing sensation, emotion or cognition.
Benefactive	The case required by a benefactive verb. Benefactive is the possessor of an object, may be a gainer or loser.
Object	An obligatory case found with every verb. The neutral underlying theme of the state, process, or action described by the verb.
Locative	The case required by a locative verb. Restricted to physical location in space, includes both stative location with state verbs, and directional source and goal locatives with process and action verbs.

Table 1: The case roles of the case grammar matrix model

As for the different verb types, a few words might be in order: Cook (1989, 194) divides verbs into three main groups, which include state, process and action verbs. State verbs (e.g. *be*, *like*, *have*) express “a notionally stative situation” and cannot be used in the progressive form or as imperatives

(Cook 1989, 195). Process verbs (e.g. *die, enjoy, acquire*), on the other hand, describe “a dynamic nonagentive event” and unlike state verbs, they do happily accept the progressive aspect, but the imperative is out of the question (Cook 1989, 195). Lastly, action verbs (e.g. *kill, say, give*) express “a dynamic agentive event” and have no objections to the progressive use, nor to the imperative (Cook 1989, 195).

What’s more, state, process and action verbs can be each further analysed in terms of four semantic domains into basic, experiential, benefactive and locative verbs. That it is to say that each verb can be given two labels, one selected from the three main types and the other from one of the four semantic domains. To begin with, basic verbs (e.g. *be tall, die, kill*) have only the case roles Agent and Object and “include basic state, basic process, and basic action verbs” (Cook 1989, 195). Secondly, experiential verbs (e.g. *like, amuse, say*) take the case roles Experiencer, Agent and Object and despite expressing experiences of sensation, emotion and cognition, they can also “describe human communication, which always involves a speaker, a hearer and what is said” (Cook 1989, 196). Thirdly, the case roles Benefactive, Agent and Object are possible with benefactive verbs (e.g. *have, acquire, blame*), which express “the semantic domains of possession and transfer of property” (Cook 1989, 196). Finally, locative verbs (e.g. *contain, move, put*) accept the case roles Locative, Agent and Object and describe “semantic domains of location and direction” (Cook 1989, 196).

3.3.2. The verb types and the verb *agree*

Now then, how does this all come down to the verb *agree*? Starting with the three main verb types, *agree* most apparently belongs to the category of process verbs, for it can take the progressive aspect (e.g. *She is agreeing to the suggestion without any consideration*), whereas the command imperative would sound rather peculiar (e.g. **Agree with him!*). As for the semantic domain, the verb *agree* is of the experiential type: it often describes an experience of sensation or cognition (e.g.

I fully agree with you!) or a situation that involves two participants and something that is being settled (e.g. *Charles agrees with Harry on the matter*). The shadowed area in the table below shows the class, in which the verb *agree* falls into (cf. Cook 1989, 197):

VERB TYPES	EXPERIENTIAL
1. State	Experiencer, Object (e.g. <i>like</i>) Object, Experiencer (e.g. <i>be boring</i>)
2. Process	Experiencer, Object (e.g. <i>enjoy</i>) Object, Experiencer (e.g. <i>amuse</i>)
3. Action	Agent, Experiencer, Object (e.g. <i>say</i>) Agent, Object, Experiencer (e.g. <i>amuse agt</i>)

Table 2: The case frame model of experiential verbs

It was pointed out above that process verbs express *nonagentive* events – in other words, they do not take the case role Agent at all (although action verbs do gladly embrace this particular case role) and the information given in the table is in accordance with this: only the case roles Experiencer and Object should matter. However, the verb *agree* does have some objections to such a clear-cut classification! To highlight my point, let us consider the following sentences:

- (c) *Camilla agreed* that Charles is right.
- (d) “Charles is right”, *Camilla agreed*.

In sentence (c) *Camilla* is Experiencer (i.e. the person experiencing sensation, emotion or cognition), whereas in (d) I would certainly not label *Camilla* as Experiencer – instead, the case role Agent (i.e. the performer of the verbal action) would be more appropriate. Indeed, it seems that in most cases *agree* would above suspicion be treated as a process verb, but in certain narrative contexts it can be interpreted as an action verb. The borders of the different verb types being by no means too rigid, the verb *agree* can be interpreted as a fuzzy-edge case. In other words, instead of giving the verb *agree* one permanent label, I would rather treat it as a process verb with a trace of an action verb in it.

3.3.3. Case roles and the verb *agree*

By far we have noted that *agree* in most cases is a process verb that belongs to the semantic domain of experiential verbs, but it can also be used as an action verb in certain narrative contexts.

Moreover, the case roles Experiencer, Agent and Object are possible with the particular verb. It was also pointed out that the verb *agree* always requires minimally two elements, of which the first one is obligatory and the second one optional. A good rule of thumb is that the element carrying the semantic component [+HUMAN] takes the place of the first element in a syntactic structure and represents the case role Experiencer, as illustrated in (e) and (f) in bold:

- (e) **Hillary** *agreed to sing* at her election campaign.
- (f) **Mum** *agreed that* it's no use crying over spilt milk.

As for the optional second elements, in sentence (e) there is a *to*-infinitive clause (i.e. *to sing*) and in sentence (f) we have a *that*-clause (i.e. *that it's no use crying over spilt milk*) – they both represent the case role Object. There are, however, instances where the subject has non-human reference – then the first element is not Experiencer, but Object:

- (g) **This food** does not *agree with* me at all.
- (h) **That poky hole** did not quite *agree with* her idea of an ideal home.

In sentence (g) the second element (e.g. *me*) is Experiencer, whereas in sentence (h) both the first and the second element carry the label Object – according to Cook (1989, 193) two representatives of the same case role are only possible if the case role is Object, otherwise each case role can occur only once in one case frame. However, a trail can be blazed here: in the case of a reciprocal verb such as *agree*, it must be possible to have two arguments that take the case role Experiencer.

Consider:

- (i) **Charles** *agrees with* **Camilla**.

The first element (i.e. *Charles*) definitely has the case role Experiencer and that must also be the case with the second element (i.e. *Camilla*).

I have pointed out several times that when it comes to the verb *agree*, the first element is always obligatory, whereas the second one is not. However, if the first element is [-HUMAN] and if the first and the second element denote to different things, the second element must be present. Indeed, in the case of the sentences (g) and (h) it would be grammatically incorrect to say **This food does not agree* or **That poky hole did not quite agree*. On the other hand, if both elements refer to the same thing, the second element is – if not false – not obligatory:

(j) **These colors** do not quite *agree* (*with each other*), do they?

Keeping the core characteristics of the verb *agree* in mind, we will now set our course for complementation.

4. Beginning complementation

By far, a whole lot of concepts have been brought to the fore, actants marching first and the case roles bringing up the rear. To keep track of the relevant terminology, the following table serves as a brief summary:

Term	Definition
ACTANT	the subject and the non-subject elements that are dependent on the verb
CASE	the elements required by the verb that express thematic relations by specific case roles
COMPLEMENT	the non-subject elements selected by the verb
ADJUNCT (also: CIRCUMSTANTIAL)	the elements that are not governed by the verb, but express time, location, manner and other circumstances

Table 3: A summary of the relevant concepts

We note that two new concepts are being introduced, those of a complement and an adjunct. As a matter of fact, adjuncts have already been dealt with when discussing circumstantials, but complements, on the other hand, have not been considered yet. Accordingly, let us take a look at the following sentence:

(k) Max *agreed* [to pay the bill].

Applying the information given in the table, we may conclude that sentence (k) has two actants, the subject (i.e. *Max*) and the lower clause (i.e. *to pay the bill*), of which the prime actant is obligatory and the second actant is optional – their case roles are Experiencer and Object respectively.

Interestingly, the lower clause does not merely function as the second actant of the verb *agree*, but also as its complement. This may make one puzzle over whether actants and complements should be seen as synonymous concepts – this issue will be tackled in the following.

4.1. Complements vs. actants

Complementation is, at bottom, a union of two parties: there is always a head that is supported by its complements. Such alliance resembles surprisingly much that of an actant and a verb, actants being the supplementing elements chosen by the governing verb! In fact, it truly is the case that some grammarians make no distinction between these two – Herbst (2004, xxiv), for instance, uses the term complement as an equivalent to Tesnière's actant. What's more, Huddleston and Pullum (2002, 215) subscribe to Herbst's point of view: they express their awareness of the fact that although many other grammarians prefer to reserve the label 'complement' for non-subject elements only, they have chosen to use the particular term when referring both to subject and non-subject elements. Huddleston and Pullum (2002, 215) justify their viewpoint by explaining that "although subjects do have special properties, they also have important affinities with the object and other complements". Indeed, their analysis does hold some attraction for me, but endeavoring to keep mine simpler, I will treat the non-subject elements as potential complements only. The word 'potential' must be given a special emphasis: not all non-subject elements by any means are complements! Instead, adjuncts, which "can occur relatively freely" (Herbst 2004, xxiv), do also occupy non-subject positions in a sentence, although they "are not determined in their form by the governing verb" (Herbst 2004, xxiv).

Before pressing on with the different complementation patterns that the verb *agree* takes, I want to do justice to complements by bringing up some of their typical features. What follows is based on Herbst's framework and one may be surprised at the choice of the source, it having been pointed out that Herbst treats complements in the same way as Tesnière does actants. However, the discussion will be restricted to the non-subject actants only, which thus are complements.

4.2. Characteristics of complements

According to Herbst (2004, xxv), complements can be categorized in three different ways: the focus can lie on their "formal and functional properties" or one may classify them in terms of their "semantic and lexical properties" – one may also pay attention whether they are "obligatory or not". These three groups are our next object of interest.

4.2.1. Functional and formal properties of complements

Complements occupy functional positions – that is, they are given certain labels depending on the syntactic role they play in a sentence (Herbst 2004, xxv). For instance, in the sentence *They agreed to pay the car in cash* the *to*-infinitive clause (i.e. *to pay the car in cash*) is a complement of the verb *agree* and it also functions as the object of the sentence. Formal properties, on the other hand, refer to the different formal categories by which complements can be described, such as phrases and clauses (Herbst 2004, xxv). Herbst (2004, xxv-xxvi) gives six formal categories, which are listed in the following on the left-hand side – I have also provided an example of each of them using the verb *agree*:

(1) Phrases	
noun phrases	They agreed <i>the matter</i> .
prepositional phrases ⁴	They agreed <i>on the matter</i> .

⁴ As for the prepositional phrases, I will not be following Herbst's analysis – in section 5 it will be argued that *agree* is not followed by a prepositional phrase, but forms a prepositional verb together with a preposition, taking prepositional objects.

(2) Clauses	
-ing clauses	They agreed <i>in coming</i> here.
to-infinitive clauses	They agreed <i>to come</i> .
that-clauses	They agreed <i>that she could join the group</i> .
wh-clauses	They agreed <i>how to deal with him</i> .

These formal groups will be addressed when discussing the complementation patterns of the verb *agree*.

4.2.2. Semantic and lexical properties of complements

When it comes to the semantic analysis of complements, Herbst (2004, xxiv) points out two issues worth considering: firstly, one may muse about “the difference or parallels in meaning between various complements of the same word” and secondly, one can pay attention to “which lexical items can (or cannot) occur as a particular complement”. Indeed, this matter was touched upon when discussing case grammar and case roles: it was pointed out that when it comes to the verb *agree*, the second element (i.e. the complement) can carry either the semantic component [+HUMAN] (e.g. *I agree with Mary*) or [-HUMAN] (e.g. *This particular fact does not seem to agree with the statistics*). Accordingly, the verb *agree* is very tolerant indeed regarding the semantic and lexical properties of its complements.

4.2.3. Obligatory and optional complements

As it has been stated, the verb *agree* can – and often does – occur without any complement at all and stand as a grammatical sentence (e.g. *I agree*). Indeed, the complements of the verb *agree* are almost always optional⁵, notwithstanding the fact that there are also verbs that always require a complement (e.g. *prevent*). Interestingly, Herbst (2004, xxx) makes a distinction between communicative and structural necessity. The verb *prevent*, for instance, always minimally requires

⁵ As it was pointed out in 3.3.3., if the first element is [-HUMAN] and if the first and the second element denote to different things, the second element must be present. For instance, it would be incorrect to say **The hot and spicy Thai dishes did not quite agree* – instead, a complementing element is definitely required (e.g. *The hot and spicy Thai dishes did not quite agree with him*).

at least one complement (cf. **Lorna prevents*) and the reason for this lies in the structural necessity – the verb *prevent* necessitates certain complementing structures (e.g. an NP) to be present in order to have a grammatical sentence.

Although structural necessity also obliges the verb *agree* under certain specific circumstances, such instances being fairly marginal in use, structural necessity is not of a momentous importance for the verb *agree*. Instead, I would rather emphasize communicative necessity, which means that a certain context requires the presence of an element in order to form a sensible utterance. To illustrate this, let us consider the following dialogue:

A: Do you *agree with* Addison or Alex?
B: I *agree*.

From a structural point of view, B's reply is impeccable, but as for its communicative value, it is definitely insufficient: B does not merely drive A to the point of frustration, but also violates the Gricean maxim of Quantity (cf. Yule 1996, 145). Indeed, the context does definitely require B to give a more informative account of his standpoint – this is due to the communicative necessity.

5. Patterns and their meanings

The in-depth examination of the semantic and syntactic landscape of the verb *agree* given in sections 3 and 4 now leads us to the complementation patterns of the verb *agree*. The intriguing matter about complementation patterns is that they ultimately determine the meaning and the overall interpretation of the entire sentence. Indeed, by varying the choice of a pattern one can make the most of the full spectrum of the nuances that one single verb has to offer. For instance, it does most definitely make a major difference whether one says that they agree *to* the suggestion, *with* the suggestion or *on* the suggestion!

As we noted earlier, each verb has a certain, individual-specific valency and consequently, each verb has been allocated a certain amount of complementation patterns.

According to *Collins Cobuild Grammar Patterns*⁶ (1996, vii), a complementation pattern consists of “a verb and the words that come after it” – a definition that calls for greater accuracy. Indeed, complements do not by rule occur after the governing verb, but there is also the possibility of extraction that moves the complement to the sentence-initial position (e.g. *To his suggestion she willingly agreed*). What’s more, not all the words that come after the verb belong to the complementation pattern – only those elements that are governed by the verb are a part of it. Accordingly, adjuncts are excluded even though they may play an important role in the sentence as a whole (*CCGP* 1996, vii).

All in all, it seems that the form and the meaning are well mingled with each other and I do not wish to start separating such a happy match either. Accordingly, this section serves as a presentation of the complementation patterns of the verb *agree*, mirrored against the definitions given in the *OED*.

5.1. The verb *agree* in the *OED*

According to *A Concise Etymological Dictionary of Modern English* (Weekley, 1952), *agree* has its origins in the Latin adjective *gratus*, meaning ‘pleasing’. The dictionary states that in modern English the original sense is most perceptible in the adjective *agreeable*⁷. The *OED*, on the other hand, classifies the senses of the verb *agree* into five main categories, which are listed in the following table, along with exemplifying illustrations taken from the *OED*:

#	Definition	Examples ⁸	Patterns used to express the particular sense
I.	To please or to be pleased.	Yef the kynges profer might not <i>agre the lady</i> , and...hir frendes. (1450 <i>Merlin</i> 82) Finding bothe horsemete and mannysmete to youre soudeours..without contenting or <i>agreing hem</i> . (1475 <i>Bk. Noblesse</i>	NP

⁶ Henceforth referred to as *CCGP*.

⁷ Be that as it may, I would argue that the idea of pleasantness is also very well survived in some uses of the particular verb (consider, for instance: *The weather agreed with us the whole weekend*).

⁸ The verb forms of *agree* italicised for emphasis by the author.

		(1860) 30)	
II.	To make agreeable or harmonious.	Have you <i>agreed the balance</i> ? No, we <i>have not yet agreed the items</i> of the accounts. (1884 <i>Mod. Book-keeping</i>) The Russians <i>have agreed a wide list of categories</i> . (1959 <i>Bookseller</i> 13 June 1982/1)	NP
III.	To become well-disposed.	He then <i>agreed to make</i> the trial. (1860 TYNDALL <i>Glac.</i> I §16. 104) It was not possible to <i>agree to a proposal</i> so extraordinary and unexpected. (1759 ROBERTSON <i>Hist. Scotl.</i> I. II. 105) I <i>agree that</i> he is the ablest of the candidates. (1765 HARRIS <i>Three Threat. Mod.</i>)	<i>to</i> -infinitive <i>to</i> + NP <i>that</i> -clause
IV.	To come into harmony.	To <i>agree with</i> our Adversary while we are in the way to Judgement. (1723 BLACKALL <i>Wks.</i> I. 260) Terms of reconciliation were readily <i>agreed on</i> . (1876 FREEMAN <i>Norm. Conq.</i> III. xii. 104)	∅ prepositional object
V.	To be in harmony.	In ev'ry age and clime we see, Two of a trade can ne'er <i>agree</i> . (1726 GAY <i>Fables</i> I. xxi. 43) I <i>agree with</i> his opynion touchyng this mater. (1530 PALSGR. 418/2) It <i>agrees to</i> the general rules of the figure...it is also agreeable to all the general rules. (1788 REID <i>Aristotle's Logic</i> iv. §3. 77)	∅ prepositional object

Table 4: The five main senses of the verb *agree* in the *OED*

Of the above-mentioned five categories the first one (i.e. *To please or to be pleased*) includes only very old uses of the verb *agree* – although they per se make a rather interesting reading, cases that date back to the 15th century are out of the scope of this study. Accordingly, in the following we will focus on the four remaining groups.

5.1.1. Group II: *To make agreeable or harmonious*

Of all the complementation patterns that the verb *agree* takes, the one with a mere noun phrase appears to be the one most marginally used. Even the grammars that I consulted are of little help – indeed, they seem to have overlooked the entire pattern! Jespersen (1961, 202), for instance, makes

a rather interesting remark when pointing out that certain verbs (including *agree*) “which cannot take an ordinary object, but require a prepositional group, are combined with a *to*-infinitive”. *To*-infinitives are of no interest at this point, but the subordinate clause (i.e. *but require a prepositional group*) really hit my eye: Jespersen states that *agree* cannot take an ordinary object – that is, a direct object without any preposition.

Nevertheless, Jespersen’s statement is certainly not consistent with the *OED*: the first instances of the particular pattern use given in the dictionary date back as far as to the 16th century! Desiring to include examples with modern spelling only, I chose the following four *OED* quotes, given in the right-hand column:

GROUP II: <i>To make agreeable or harmonious</i>		
#	Definition	Examples ⁹
4.	To bring into harmony (things that differ); to conciliate or arrange (a difference). Now only of discrepant <i>accounts</i> and the like.	Do but <i>agree the matter</i> between you. (1706 ESTCOURT <i>Fair Example</i> V. I. 69) <i>The actual figures of profits were agreed</i> between the accountants. (1928 <i>Times</i> 15 Aug. 7/5)
5.	To arrange, concert, or settle (a thing in which various interests are concerned).	These councils should have the power to <i>agree factory rules</i> . (1928 <i>Britain’s Industr. Future (Liberal Ind. Inquiry)</i>) Miss Laski’s letter...shows once more the difficulty of <i>agreeing a definition of mysticism</i> . (1963 <i>Listener</i> 23 May 877/3)

Table 5: The two major senses of the pattern *agree* + NP

As the definitions 4 and 5 show, when used with a direct NP object the verb *agree* means to arrange or settle something. This also applies to the following examples, taken from more recent sources:

- (1) The university might acquire some more property if it can *agree a deal* with the city council. (CCGP 1996, 441)
- (2) We finally *agreed a deal*. (*Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary*)

Interestingly, the *Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary* indicates this usage with the letters ‘UK’ – consequently, it can be supposed that this pattern rarely occurs in American English. Indeed, Algeo (1988, 27) explains that “a number of verbs in contemporary British take a noun phrase complement which in American (an older British use) would normally have a prepositional complement instead”. The empirical part will reveal whether the use of the particular pattern is

⁹ The verb forms of *agree* italicised for emphasis by the author.

decreasing or enjoying a revival in British English and whether it is, despite Algeo’s argument, in use in American English as well.

5.1.2. Group III: *To become well-disposed*

The patterns belonging to the third group share the meaning “to become favourable; to give consent, to accede” and are illustrated in the following table:

GROUP III: <i>To become well-disposed</i>		
#	Definition	Examples ¹⁰
7a.	with <i>inf.</i> , or <i>subord.cl.</i>	The Act of Union <i>agrees, that</i> they shall have thirty members. (1658-9 BAYNES in Burton’s <i>Diary</i> (1828) IV. 123) The Realme...will never <i>gree to have</i> a right succession overthrowne. (1597 DANIEL <i>Civ. Wares.</i> II xli.)
7b.	with <i>to</i> (a proposal, conditions etc.)	Till he <i>agreed to</i> the hard conditions. (1876 FREEMAN <i>Norm. Conq.</i> III. xii. 193)
7d.	with <i>clause</i> : To concede, grant, accede to the opinion, <i>that</i> a thing is so; <i>formerly</i> , a thing <i>to be</i> so.	I can never <i>agree that to be</i> law which is dissonant to reason. (1658-9 MORRICE in Burton’s <i>Diary</i> (1828) IV. 190)

Table 6: The group III patterns along with examples

We note that in this group *agree* takes three different kinds of complements: *that*-clauses, *to*-infinitive clauses and prepositional objects. In the following, let us concentrate on the two former: the verb *agree* and prepositional objects will be discussed in the next chapter.

Biber et al. (1999, 660) point out that verbs expressing “speech, thoughts, attitudes, or emotions of humans” (including the verb *agree*) happily take *that*-clauses as their complements.

Accordingly, in this particular pattern the first element in most cases has the case role Experiencer:

- (3) **They** *agree that* she was misled. (Quirk et al. 1985, 1180)
- (4) **We** *agreed that* she was not to be told. (CCGP 1996, 98)
- (5) **The others** had finally gone along with him and *agreed that* Demerest would personally write the report. (Huddleston and Pullum 2002, 757)

As illustrated in bold in (3), (4) and (5), a plural subject is by no means rare with the verb *agree* followed by a *that*-clause. However, I neither had difficulty in concocting a sentence with a singular subject that has the case role Object:

¹⁰ The verb forms of *agree* italicised for emphasis by the author.

(6) We were already late for the check-in, but **the engine of our car** did not seem not *agree that* we were in a hurry to get to the airport.

Indeed, real-life experience proves that even the subjects carrying the semantic component [-HUMAN] are perfectly capable of giving their consent – or refusing to do so.

As for the *to*-infinitive clauses, at first glance it seems that when occurring in sequence with *to*, the verb *agree* has neither semantic nor syntactic thrills to offer. Indeed, its sense is always related to giving consent and as for the way this consent can be expressed, the *OED* and the grammars recognize only two possibilities, the one being “*agree* + the *to*-infinitive” and the other “*agree to* + a prepositional object”. The latter will be discussed under the prepositional verbs – accordingly, at this point the former is our only concern. The *OED* definition “to become favourable; to give consent, to accede” seems to be quite apt also in the further examples taken from grammars:

- (7) At an emergency meeting of teacher and parents, it *was agreed to send* home all 300 pupils at Chigwell county primary, Essex, until further notice. (*CCGP* 1996, 528)
- (8) It’s not clear if the two sides *have agreed to ban* the development of nuclear weapons. (*CCGP* 1996, 604)
- (9) We *agreed to set out* the following day. (Jespersen 1961, 203)
- (10) He *agreed to let* her go out. (Huddleston and Pullum 2002, 757)

Interestingly, the *CCGP* (1996, 91) points out that a structure with a *to*-infinitive often refers to the future, which is quite apparent in the examples above. What’s more, there is another pattern, called the *to –ing* pattern, that rivals the *to*-infinitive clause complementation – a fascinating issue to be discussed in section 7.

In addition to *that*-clauses and *to*-infinitive clauses, there is still one possible clause complement that the verb *agree* can take. According to Quirk et al. (1985, 1184) verbs that can be followed by *that*-clauses also often accept *wh*-clauses as their complements. However, they do not mention the verb *agree* explicitly in their discussion and as other grammars and the *OED* remain silent as for this matter, it seems that *agree* is very rarely indeed complemented by a *wh*-clause. To

my great delight, the *CCGP* (1996, 107) devotes some discussion on this issue pointing out that when complemented by a *wh*-clause, the verb *agree* often has the subject in plural:

(11) They are furious. They want action. But they don't *agree what* the problem is or *what* the action should be. (*CCGP* 1996, 107)

Moreover, Biber et al. (1999, 685) do not object to the *wh*-clause complementation of the verb *agree* as long as the verb occurs with the preposition *with*, as illustrated in example (12), quoted from Quirk et al. (1985, 1166):

(12) *With whom* did she *agree*?

There are naturally also other options when it comes to the choice of the preposition (e.g. *On what did she agree; to what did she agree* etc.) – indeed, we will next be introduced the quantity of prepositional complements of the verb *agree*.

5.1.3. Group IV and Group V: *To come into harmony; to be in harmony*

Groups IV and V are fully occupied with cases with the verb *agree* followed by prepositions. These two sets differ only slightly in meaning: the former includes instances expressing the idea of *coming* into harmony, whereas the latter describe something *being* in harmony. To provide an overall picture of these two groups, the following tables show the exact definitions of the different alternatives, along with examples. Firstly, let us take look at group IV:

GROUP IV: <i>To come into harmony</i>		
#	Definition	Examples ¹¹
9.	To come into accord or harmony, to become of one mind, make up differences, become friends. Const. <i>with</i> . Still <i>dialectal</i> 'Kiss and 'gree again.'	<i>To agree with</i> our Adversary while we are in the way to Judgement. (1723 BLACKALL <i>Wks.</i> I. 260)
10b.	To come into accord as to something. Const. <i>on, as to, (of obs.)</i> a matter of point)	It will be hard for the Committee to <i>agree of</i> names. (1657 SIR C. PACK in Burton's <i>Diary</i> (1828) II. 160) A convention <i>has been agreed on</i> relative to this subject. (1804 W. TAYLOR in <i>Ann. Rev.</i> II 273)
10c.	With <i>inf.</i> or <i>subord. cl.</i> Also spec. in phr. <i>to agree to differ</i> (or <i>disagree</i>), to agree to cease	'We shall <i>agree to disagree</i> ' a press-weary Israeli official said last week. (1977 <i>Guardian Weekly</i> 27 Feb. 9/3)

¹¹ The verb forms of *agree* italicised for emphasis by the author.

	trying to convince one another.	
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Table 7: The group IV patterns along with examples

As illustrated in table 7, when wanting to express that something comes into harmony, the choice is usually between the prepositions *with* and *on*, whereas *as to* and *of* are more marginally used.

Secondly, if the desire is to describe a state of being in harmony, the *OED* has the following supply to offer:

GROUP V: <i>To be in harmony</i>		
#	Definition	Examples ¹²
11.	To be in harmony or unison in opinions, feelings, conduct, etc.; to be in sympathy; to live or act together harmoniously; to have no causes of variance.	It is probable that in Noah's Ark the wolf <i>agreed with</i> the lambe. (1642 Holy & Prof. St. V. xix. 438) And where they once <i>agreed</i> , to cavil now. Adage 'Friends <i>agree</i> best separate'. (1807 CRABBE <i>Par. Reg.</i> I. 88)
12a.	To be of the same mind as to particular points; to concur <i>with</i> a person in an opinion, <i>as to</i> a matter, <i>that</i> such is the fact, or (<i>obs.</i>) such <i>to be</i> the fact.	Nobody supposes that the suitors in our courts <i>agree with</i> the judge when he decides against them. (1877 MOZLEY <i>Univ. Sermon</i> . V. 102) You think it's a nasty, cold-blooded business..? I couldn't <i>agree</i> more. (1960 L. COOPER <i>Accomplices</i> II. i. 77)
12b.	Hence, To agree <i>with</i> an opinion or statement.	To know any man's story that you cannot <i>agree with</i> . Mod. I do not <i>agree with</i> what has been said by the last speaker. (1781 BURKE <i>Corr.</i> (1844) II. 412)
13.	Of things: To be in harmony, to accord, to coincide in any respect. a) simply b) with <i>with</i>	Their witness <i>agreed</i> not together. (1611 BIBLE <i>Mark</i> xiv. 56) This quite <i>agrees with</i> the views now generally entertained. (1860 TYNDALL <i>Glac.</i> II § 14. 301)
14.	To be consistent, to answer <i>to</i> , correspond <i>with</i> . a) with <i>to. Obs.</i> b) with <i>with</i>	The constitution of the English government... <i>to</i> which the present establishment of the church doth so happily <i>agree</i> . (1708 SWIFT <i>Wks.</i> (1755) II. 72) He looked about to see how my Horatius <i>agreed with</i> the topography. (1838 MACAULAY in <i>Trevelyan's Life</i> II. i. 29)
15.	<i>Gramm.</i> To be in 'concord'; to take the same gender, number, case, or person; as happens in inflected languages to words in apposition, and to substantives and their attributive words, whether adjective, verb, or relative.	Pronouns must <i>agree in</i> gender, number, and person with the nouns for which they stand. (1881 MASON <i>Eng. Gram.</i> § 465)
16a.	To be suitable, appropriate, consonant <i>to. Obs.</i>	Reason <i>agreeth thereto</i> . (1671 J. WEBSTER <i>Metallurg.</i> i. 15)
16b.	To do well with: formerly said of a person agreeing or doing well with food, climate, etc. <i>Obs.</i>	Lest the Tree Translated, shou'd not <i>with</i> the Soil <i>agree</i> . (1697 DRYDEN <i>Virg. Georg.</i> II. 361)

¹² The verb forms of *agree* italicised for emphasis by the author.

16c.	now only of food, climate, work agreeing or doing well with a person, etc.	Some boil it with milk, and it is very good where it will <i>agree</i> . (1796 MRS. GLASSE <i>Cookery</i> xv. 270)
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Table 8: The group V patterns along with examples

Table 8 reveals that the preposition *with* is extremely commonly used with the verb *agree*, but that other prepositions, such as *in*, are also possible in specific uses.

All the complementation patterns presented by far (i.e. noun phrases, *that*-clauses, *to*-infinitive clauses and *wh*-clauses) have been in accordance with the *CCGP* definition stating that a pattern consists of a verb and the elements governed by the head. The prepositional complements, however, make a slight exception – in their case the verb *agree* is no longer a loner, but dominates its subordinates together with a preposition. Before examining the cases given in tables 7 and 8 more closely, let us take a look at the concept of prepositional verbs first.

5.2. On prepositional verbs

As Quirk et al. (1985, 1155) put it; prepositional verbs consist of “a lexical verb followed by a preposition with which it is semantically and/or syntactically associated”. For example, *agree with*, *agree on* and *agree to* represent such instances (cf. Quirk et al. 1985, 1178). A prepositional verb differs from a regular one in the respect that the following complements are not regarded as the direct object of the prepositional verb (Quirk et al. 1985, 1156). Instead, Biber et al. (1999, 413) point out that a prepositional verb is always followed by a prepositional object, as illustrated in bold in the following example taken from the *Collins Cobuild English Dictionary*:

- (1) Both the House and Senate *have agreed on* **the need for the money**.

Following the Quirk et al. and Biber et al. analysis, the noun phrase *the need for the money* is the complement of the preposition *on* (and not the direct object of the prepositional verb *agree on*).

However, this is just the other side of the coin. Huddleston and Pullum (2002, 274), for instance, do not treat the sequence verb+preposition as a single unit – when they use the term prepositional verb, they are referring to the verb only. For example, in the case of *agree on* the verb

agree alone is the prepositional verb, followed by “a PP complement containing a specified preposition together with its own complement” (Huddleston and Pullum 2002, 274). Moreover, Herbst (2004, xxvi) supports their view arguing that “from a valency standpoint of prepositional verbs is neither theoretically convincing nor is it economical for lexicographic purposes”. Indeed, Herbst (2004, xxiv) sees no point why the predicates *tell* and *tell about* in his example sentences *Hannah’s always told me everything* and *She’ll get him to tell her about the girls at Slade* should be treated as two different verbs, there being no semantic reason for that. This applies to the verb *agree* as well – consider, for instance:

- (m) The jury *agreed* the deal.
- (n) The jury *agreed on* the deal.

Indeed, it seems that no great semantic difference exists between sentences (m) and (n) – accordingly, one may wonder whether it truly is necessary to have a separate class for prepositional verbs. Why not simply go about the prepositional complements the way Huddleston and Pullum do?

Quirk et al. (1985, 1164) argue that prepositional verbs are not invented to make the jungle of concepts even more complex than it already is – instead, they justify the existence of prepositional verbs by offering a handful of tests. Firstly, prepositional verbs have often no objections to passivization, whereas other verbs followed by a preposition are reluctant to accept it.

Consider:

- | | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|
| (o) He <i>agreed to</i> the proposal. | → | The proposal was <i>agreed to</i> . |
| (p) He <i>went to</i> the party. | → | *The party was <i>gone to</i> . |

We note that though sentence (o) does gladly embrace passivization, the passivized version of sentence (p) is bad – it seems that *agree to* is a prepositional verb, whereas *go to* would not be labelled as one. Secondly, Quirk et al. (1985, 1165) state that when forming *wh*-questions, prepositional verbs favour the pronouns *who(m)* and *what* over “adverbial question forms such as *where*, *when*, *how*, or *why*”. Applying this piece of information to the verb *agree*, let us turn sentences (o) and (p) into *wh*-questions, resulting:

- (q) *What* did he agree to?
 (r) *Where* did he go to?

Accordingly, the second criterion is fulfilled in sentences (q) and (r). What's more, Quirk et al. (1985, 1166) point out that when dealing with prepositional verbs, one is often reluctant "to have the preposition cut off from the lexical verb by fronting the whole prepositional phrase in (eg) *wh*-questions and relative clauses". They (1985, 1166) use the verbs *wish for*, *look after* and *agree with* to illustrate their point – here is a brief summary of their examples:

?* <i>After whom</i> did she look?	<i>Who(m)</i> did she look <i>after</i> ?
? <i>For what</i> did she wish for?	<i>What</i> did she wish <i>for</i> ?
<i>With whom</i> did she agree?	<i>Who(m)</i> did she agree <i>with</i> ?

It is evident that the prepositional verb *agree with* accepts both possibilities with equal happiness, whereas *look after* and *wish for* are more choosy and "come closer to the ideal prepositional verb than does *agree with*" by being unenthusiastic about fronting the prepositional phrase (Quirk et al. 1985, 1166). However, the prepositional verbs *agree about* and *agree for*, for instance, would in my opinion fall to the same category as *look after* and *wish for*. Indeed, it seems that each prepositional verb usage of the verb *agree* (e.g. *agree with*, *agree in*, *agree on*, *agree for*, *agree about*, *agree to* etc.) take their individual place in the scale between the ideal of a 'regular' and that of a prepositional verb.

5.3. *Agree* and prepositions

Having come to the conclusion that *agree* can function as a prepositional verb, let us now dig into its most frequently occurring prepositional verb uses.

Firstly, as the tables 7 and 8 show, the prepositional verb *agree with* is given several definitions in the *OED*. Interestingly, the meaning alters depending whether the second element carries the case role Experiencer (i.e. has human reference – *I agree with you*) or the case role Object (i.e. has non-human reference – *I agree with the statement*). Let us first consider instances with the case role Experiencer as the second element, the examples are taken from the *OED*:

- (13) As to...its beginning, they *agree with* **Ingulphus and Hoveden**. (1652 NEEDHAM tr. *Selden's Mare Cl.* 267)
 (14) Nobody supposes that the suitors in our courts *agree with* **the judge** when he decides against them. (1877 MOZLEY *Univ. Serm.* V. 102)
 (15) 'I couldn't *agree with* **you** more,' he said, grinning. (1942 J0 B. PRIESTLEY *Black-out in Gretley* viii. 185)

In the *OED* these three fall into the category of 12a, expressing the idea of being “the same mind as to particular points”. It must be noted, though, that there are numerous cases in which the verb *agree* takes no pattern at all, but which nevertheless have the meaning very much like that of the prepositional verb *agree with*:

- (16) In ev'ry age and clime we see, Two of a trade can ne'er *agree*. (1726 GAY *Fables* I. xxi. 43)
 (17) And where they once agreed, to cavil now. *Adage*, 'Friends *agree* best separate.' (1807 CRABBE *Par. Reg* I. 88)

The *OED* describes (16) and (17) as instances that mean “to be in harmony or unison in opinions, feelings, conduct, etc.” (cf. #11) – this definition goes well together with the one given above for the prepositional verb *agree with*.

On the other hand, when the second element has non-human reference and thus takes the case role Object, there is more variety in meaning. Consider:

- (18) To know **any man's story** that you cannot *agree with*. *Mod.* I do not *agree with* **what has been said** by the last speaker. (1781 BURKE *Corr.* (1844) II. 412)
 (19) I find nothing that *agrees* not with **my Hypothesis**. (1661 BOYLE *Spring & Weight of Air* III. (1682) 69)
 (20) Whether a substance will *agree or disagree with* **the stomach**. (1855 BAIN *Senses & Intell.* II. ii. §5 (1864) 157)

According to *OED*, in sentence (18) *agree with* has the sense “to agree with an opinion or statement” (cf. #12b), in sentence (19) “to be consistent, to answer to, correspond with” (cf. #14b) and in sentence (20) “to be agreeable to, or in harmony with the nature or character of” (cf. #16c).

Again, it is worth pointing out that there are instances when the first element has non-human reference and which are not followed by an explicitly expressed second element:

- (21) **All the accounts** sufficiently *agree*. (1782 PRIESTLEY *Corr. Chr.* I. III. 305)
 (22) **The two scales** *agree* almost exactly at 62° while they differ sensibly at 72°. (1871 BALF. STEWART *Heat* § 70)

The sense that the verb *agree* carries in sentences (21) and (22) is defined in the *OED* as “to be in harmony, to accord, to coincide in any respect” (cf. #13a).

Secondly, the following examples illustrate cases with the prepositional verb *agree on* – the two first instances are taken from the *OED* and the third, representing a more recent case, from the *CCGP*:

(23) **A convention** *has been agreed on* relative to this subject. (1804 W. TAYLOR in *Ann. Rev.* II. 273)

(24) **Terms of reconciliation** *were readily agreed on*. (1876 *Norm. Cong.* III. xii. 104)

(25) But they rarely *agree on how to act* and often attack each other, personally and politically. (*CCGP* 1996, 218)

According to the *OED*, *agree on* means to “come into accord as to something” (cf. #10). What’s more, the reciprocal nature of the verb *agree* is especially obvious both in the constructions with the preposition *on* and the preposition *with*, but it is perhaps even stronger in the former, because in the latter the focus is on “the involvement of the first participant mentioned” (*CCGP* 1996, 455).

Compare:

(26) However, **we** *agreed on* a compromise. (*CCGP* 1996, 457)

(27) Yesterday, **Health Minister Graham Richardson** said **he** was going to *agree on* a figure with the committee. (*CCGP* 1996, 457)

Sentence (26) emphasizes the unanimity of all the participants (i.e. *we*), whereas in sentence (27) the main focus is on the involvement of one single participant only (i.e. *Health Minister Graham Richardson*). It is also worth mentioning that although used much less than *agree on*, the prepositional verb *agree about* is closely related in meaning with the former:

(28) They can’t *agree* [(*about / as to / on*) who is the best person for the job.] (Huddleston and Pullum 2002, 979)

Moreover, *agree upon* and *agree as to* also belong to the same group.

Thirdly, just like the prepositional verb *agree on*, in present-day English the prepositional verb *agree to* has very little variety to offer when it comes to the meaning:

(29) It was not possible to *agree to* **a proposal** so extraordinary and unexpected. (1759 ROBERTSON *Hist. Scotl.* I. II. 105)

(30) Till he *agreed to* **the hard conditions**. (1876 FREEMAN *Norm. Cong.* III. xii. 193)

Indeed, its sense is well summarized in the *OED* definition “to become favourable; to give consent, to accede” (cf. #7b). However, formerly *agree to* used to captivate a far more wider diversity of meanings, as the following examples show:

- (31) That Hypothesis...which will *agree* universally to **the Air**. (1662 MORE *Antid. agst. Ath.* II. ii (1712) 45)
 (32) **Reason** *agreeth thereto*. (1671 J. WEBSTER *Metallogr.* i. 15)
 (33) I must not *agree t'you*, to pass by What you have said. (1641 W. CARTWRIGHT *Lady Errant* III. i. (1651) 31)
 (34) It *agrees to the rules of the figure*...it's also agreeable to all the general rules. (1788 REID *Aristotle's Logic* iv. §3. 77)

Sentences (31) and (32) convey the meaning “to be suitable, appropriate, consonant to” (cf. §16a) – sentence (33), on the other hand, expresses the idea “to accede to the opinion of (a person); to assent; passing into the sense of *agree with*” (cf. #8). As for sentence (34), the *OED* describes it as “to be consistent, to answer *to*, correspond with” (cf. #14a) – its sense is surprisingly similar to that of *agree in*.

Lastly, *agree of* was formerly used with the meaning “to come into accord as to something” (cf. #10b) – what's more, the prepositional verb *agree for* also conveys a message of settling something:

- (35) It will be hard for the committee to *agree of* names. (1657 SIR C. PACK in Burton's *Diary* (1828) II. 160)
 (36) They *agreed for* it to be postponed. (Huddleston and Pullum 2002, 1230)

However, they no longer are very common: especially the prepositional verb *agree of* – if not become completely extinct – is extremely rarely used nowadays. *Agree in*, on the other hand, still holds its own in contemporary English: despite expressing that something is consistent with something, it also has a specific semantic task in contexts dealing with grammar. Indeed, the *OED* points out that it also means “to be in ‘concord’; to take the same gender, number, case, or person” (cf. #15). The following example illustrates this usage:

- (37) Pronouns must *agree in* gender, number, and person with the nouns for which they stand. (1881 MASON *Eng. Gram.* § 465)

Agreeing in the fact that all the complementation patterns of the verb *agree* have made themselves heard, it is high time we started poring over the authentic uses of the verb *agree*. Indeed, the empirical part of the thesis unfolds with the data taken from the *Corpus of Late Modern English Texts*.

6. Analysing the corpus data of recent centuries

As it was pointed out in section 2, the *Corpus of Late Modern English Texts* (CLMET) consists of three sections, each of them comprising a period of 70 years – these are 1710-1780 (2,096,405 words), 1780-1850 (3,739,657 words) and 1850-1920 (3,982,264 words). Using the verb *agree* and all its inflected forms (i.e. *agreed*, *agrees*, *agreeing*) as search terms, the first part gave me 303, the second one 405 and the third part 424 instances: the total number of the analysed tokens amounts thus to 1132. Having pondered how to present the findings that I made, I decided on a pattern-focused approach – that is, rather than discussing the three sets of the CLMET data each in separate chapters, I will first concentrate on the clause complements of the verb *agree* and then examine the prepositional ones, bringing all three periods simultaneously along. By this method, I believe, it is easier to see the changes that have taken place in the course of time, as well as to avoid any tediousness that might result from the inevitable repetition if the three sets were discussed individually.

6.1. An overall impression of the CLMET data

To begin with, it must be emphasized that not each and every one of the total of 1132 analysed concordance lines has relevance for my study. Indeed, there are two kinds of cases that I want to bring up at this point. Firstly, as it has been pointed out several times, the verb *agree* does not necessarily need a complement to stand as a grammatical sentence and is thus often used without any supplementing second element at all. Although such instances do represent authentic,

grammatically correct uses of the verb *agree*, they are certainly of little interest here, the focus being on the complementation. Secondly, in some of the analysed tokens *agree* is not used as a verb and the verb forms of *agree* being the very essence of the thesis, such cases are undoubtedly irrelevant. The following table shows the frequencies of these two excluded groups in each subsection – the results are given in raw numbers and their normalized frequencies (i.e. the number of occurrences per million words) have been counted to make the three periods comparable:

Pattern	Part I: 1710-1780		Part II: 1780-1850		Part III: 1850-1920	
	Occurrences (raw numbers)	Occurrences per million words	Occurrences (raw numbers)	Occurrences per million words	Occurrences (raw numbers)	Occurrences per million words
<i>agree</i> + zero complement	21	10.0	27	7.2	103	25.9
irrelevant	20	9.5	6	1.6	26	6.5

Table 9: The occurrences of the zero complements and the irrelevant cases in the CLMET data

To get some examples to illustrate these two cases, let us first consider some sentences that illustrate the verb *agree* used with a zero complement. The following two are taken from the first part (1710-1780) of the CLMET data:

- (1) We played together, and passed our time much in the common way: sometimes we quarrelled, and sometimes *agreed*, just as accident would have it. (Fielding: *The Governess*)
- (2) A better shall we have? A kingdom of the just let it be: but first consider how those *agree*. The good must merit God's peculiar care: But who, but God can tell us who they are? (Pope: *An Essay on Man*)

Indeed, sentences (1) and (2) have no explicitly expressed complements and so far so good! If one tried to add a complement – *agree with*, for instance, might theoretically work – the resulting sentences would sound rather awkward and artificial (i.e. *sometimes agreed with each other*; *but first consider how those agree with each other*). This is not, however, the case in the two following examples taken from the second part (1780-1850) of the CLMET data

- (3) ...advised that the young man should be sent to college; and Mr. Earnshaw *agreed*, though with a heavy spirit... (Brontë: *Wuthering Heights*)
- (4) This was rumoured through the town, and at last the padres and the governor consulted together, and *agreed* it must be some heresy. (Darwin: *Voyage of the Beagle*)

It is fairly easy to think of potential complements for sentences (3) and (4) – in the former *agree to* might work (i.e. *Mr. Earnshaw agreed to this*) and in the latter it seems that the conjunction *that* got swallowed in writing *zeal* (i.e. *and agreed that it must be some heresy*). The normalized frequencies show that zero complementation is on the increase: though there is a slight decrease after the first period, zero complementation is most definitely enjoying a revival toward the 20th century. Among the 103 zero complement cases of the third set (1850-1920) there are several tokens that resemble those illustrated in sentences (3) and (4) above – that is, the sentence has no complement, though there could be one. Moreover, the following examples also provide an explanation for the great number of zero complements:

- (5) "...try the faults of Miss Honeychurch; they are not innumerable." "She has none," said the young man, with grave sincerity. "I quite *agree*. At present she has none." (Forster: *A Room with a View*)
 (6) "I don't manage the Wilcoxes, I don't see where they come in." "No more do I," *agreed* Helen. (Forster: *Howards End*)
 (7) "Well," he *agreed*, with sulky resignation, "you must have it your own way, I suppose." (Galsworthy: *The Man of Property*)

As for sentence (5), for instance, *agree with* might be a possible candidate (i.e. *I quite agree with you*). However, for some reason in the third data set there are numerous tokens when *agree* is used to report direct speech, as exemplified in sentences (6) and (7). This is probably due to the fact that the texts of the third part are belletristic to a great extent.

Furthermore, table 9 shows that each set contains a handful of completely irrelevant cases. Unwilling to leave them completely out, I decided to include some examples of such cases, just by means of illustration. The following two examples are taken from the 1710-1780 data:

- (8) MISS HARDCASTLE. And as one of us must be mistaken, what if we go to make further discoveries? HARDCASTLE. [*Agreed*]. And if I find him what you describe, all my happiness in him must have an end. [Exit.] (Goldsmith: *She Stoops to Conquer*)
 (9) ...and also suppose, that after the expiration of the term *agreed on*, he demands the sum... (Hume: *Treatise of Human Nature*)

In sentence (8), *agreed* is used to give the actor playing Hardcastle a hint how to express his next line and as for sentence (9), *agreed on* is used as an adjective to post-modify the noun phrase *the expiration of the term*. Moreover, to give each section a fair hearing, the following four examples

are taken from the second (sentences 10 and 11) and from the third (sentences 12 and 13) part of the CLMET data:

(10) “Whoever first beholds him shall fire the train.” “*Agreed!*” replied Tristram. (Ainsworth: *Windsor Castle*)

(11) I *am* nearly *agreed with* Creech to print my book, and I suppose I will begin on Monday. (Burns: *Letters*)

(12) The one point the catastrophists and the uniformitarians *agreed upon*, when this Society was founded, was to ignore it. (Huxley: *Discourses*)

(13) Still more than in the more complex combinations and politics of human beings it is likely to be hard to find an *agreed* criterion for saying which nation is before another, or what age of a nation was inarching forward and which was falling back. (Bagehott: *Physics and Politics*)

Starting with sentence (10), it truly is the case that the cry of consent *Agreed!* is actually a past participle form of the verb *agree*. However, it is used in the same way as the expressions *Deal!* or *No sooner said and done!* – accordingly, we are not really dealing with a *verb* here. In sentence (11), on other hand, *agreed* is used as an adjective in a construction *be agreed with*. As for sentence (12), it may easily lead one astray for *agreed* is most evidently complemented here (i.e. *agreed upon*) – this is due to the fact that just like verbs, adjectives also have specific valencies. In the last instance – that is, sentence (13) – *agreed* is an attribute of the noun phrase *criterion*.

Fortunately enough, the rest of the analysed tokens are eligible and relevant in every respect and we do not need to exclude any further instances, nor start making up possible complements. The complementation of the verb *agree* during the recent centuries will be explored in the following, richly illustrated with quotes from the CLMET data. The focus will first lie on clause complements and then move on to prepositional ones.

6.2. Clause complements

The analysis starting with clause complements, one may wonder whether the phrasal complementation of the verb *agree* (i.e. *agree* followed by a noun phrase) is deliberately ignored. This is certainly not the case: in the analysed data there simply is not a single instance that would represent the particular pattern. As for the clause complements, *wh*-clauses are not more fortunate: the verb *agree* does not occur once in sequence with a complement of the kind. However, I was

delighted to notice that *wh*-clauses are not completely non-existent – indeed, in each of the three sets there are cases when a *wh*-clause occurs together with a prepositional verb, functioning thus as the prepositional object. Sentences (14), (15) and (16) illustrate such instances:

- (14) “So much the more inexcuseable,” answered the lady, “for whom doth he ruin by his fondness but his own child?” *To which* Blifil immediately *agreed*. (Fielding: *Tom Jones*) (1710-1780)
 (15) “If the dear child,” pursued Mrs. Chick, in the tone of one who was summing up **what** *had been* previously quite *agreed upon*, instead of saying it all for the first time, “is a little weakened by that last attack...” (Dickens: *Dombey and Son*) (1780-1850)
 (16) I told them that this state of things could be endured no longer, *on which* point they *agreed with* me, but saw no means to help it. (Blackmore: *Lorna Doone*) (1850-1920)

What’s more, sentences (14) and (16) serve as examples of extraction – that is, the preposition and the prepositional object are fronted. The following table shows the exact occurrences of extracted complements in the analysed CLMET data:

Extracted complements	Part I: 1710-1780		Part II: 1780-1850		Part III: 1850-1920	
	Occurrences (raw numbers)	Occurrences per million words	Occurrences (raw numbers)	Occurrences per million words	Occurrences (raw numbers)	Occurrences per million words
	23	10.9	6	1.6	10	2.5

Table 10: The occurrences of extracted complements in the CLMET data

We note that the first period (1710-1780) must have been especially prosperous for extracted complements, whereas the frequencies decrease toward the 18th and 19th centuries.

Though *wh*-clauses did not give a great harvest, *to*-infinitive and *that*-clause complements are well represented. The distribution of these two patterns within the three sets is illustrated in the table below:

Pattern	Part I: 1710-1780		Part II: 1780-1850		Part III: 1850-1920	
	Occurrences (raw numbers)	Occurrences per million words	Occurrences (raw numbers)	Occurrences per million words	Occurrences (raw numbers)	Occurrences per million words
<i>agree + to</i> -infinitive clause	68	32.4	99	26.5	39	9.8
<i>agree + that</i> -clause	40	19.1	82	21.9	66	16.6

Table 11: The clause complementation of the verb *agree* in the CLMET data

Interestingly, it seems that both *to*-infinitive and *that*-clause complementation are going rather strong in the first two sets, but during the third period especially the *to*-infinitive complementation suffers a severe depression and *that*-clause complements are also used less than during the first two periods, though the change is not as dramatic as in the case of the *to*-infinitives. In the following I will discuss the *to*-infinitive and *that*-clause complementation more closely in separate chapters along with illustrations from the data.

6.2.1. The *to*-infinitive complementation

A good rule of thumb is that whenever *agree* is followed by *to* – be it a *to*-infinitive clause or the prepositional verb *agree to* – it always conveys giving one’s consent to something. This is also the case in the following examples taken from the first part (1710-1780) of the CLMET data:

(17)...this gentleman has yet been only condemned by those who have not the opportunities of examining his conduct, nor the right of judging him; **I** cannot *agree to give him up* to punishment.

(Johnson: *Parliamentary Debates*)

(18) In the present case, **I** am so far from *agreeing to give* the bailiff a shilling, that, if there be any method of punishing him for his rudeness, I shall be heartily glad to see it put in execution...(Fielding: *Amelia*)

(19) In reality, B in London owes nothing to A in Edinburgh, but **he** *agrees to accept of* A’s bill, upon condition, that... (Smith: *Wealth of Nations*)

As highlighted in bold, in the vast majority of the instances with a *to*-infinitive complement the first element has human reference and thus carries the case role Experiencer (i.e. *I*; *he*). Interestingly, there are also tokens that have a non-human subject, as sentences (20) and (21) illustrate:

(20) Immediately **the birds** *agreed to divest* silly counterfeit of all his borrowed plumes, and, more abashed than the parrot, he secretly slunk away. (Fielding: *The Governess*)

(21) **The bank** *agreed to pay* to government for the renewal of its charter £110,000, without interest or re-payment. (Smith: *Wealth of Nations*)

In sentence (20) the first element (i.e. *the birds*) is [-HUMAN], but still labelled as [+ANIMATE] – accordingly, it can be given the case role Experiencer. This is not, however, the case with sentence (21): here the first element (i.e. *the bank*) is both [-HUMAN] and [-ANIMATE] and thus entrusted with the case role Object. The following sentences taken from the second part (1780-1850) of the CLMET data all exemplify the basic case with the first element carrying the case role Experiencer:

- (22) ...I was now growing old, they thought they could not testify their respect for me in a better manner than by *agreeing to get* me helper. (Galt: *Annals of the Parish*)
 (23) ...every sister except Mary *agreed to go* with her, and Mr. Collins was to attend them, at the request of Mr. Bennet, who was most anxious to get rid of him. ..(Austen: *Pride and Prejudice*)
 (24) ...I must give you warning that I feel no disposition to retain Thrushcross Grange beyond the twelve months I *agreed to rent* it. (Brontë: *Wuthering Heights*)

As it was stated above, *to*-infinitive complementation is very commonly used during 1710-1780 and remains almost as popular during 1780-1850, but as for the last part of the data, a significant decrease has taken place. This is to be explained by the great number of zero complements in the 1850-1920 data – the following examples, however, are taken from the third set, representing the *to*-infinitive complementation:

- (25) “Of course you *agree to have* a battle?” Tweedledum said in a calmer tone. (Carroll: *Through the Looking Glass*)
 (26) I remember, when they were children, her banging Dick over the head with the nursery bellows because he would not *agree to talk* in a whisper for fear of waking the cat. (Jerome: *They and I*)
 (27) Four days later York capitulated and *agreed to receive* Harold Hardrada as king. (Freeman: *William the Conqueror*)

To my utmost surprise, among the 1132 analysed CLMET instances there is not even a single individual that would represent the *to –ing* pattern. Indeed, the CLMET data is wholly devoted to the *to*-infinitives, pure and simple.

6.2.2. *That*-clause complementation

That-clause complementation, on the other hand, faces less dramatic changes than the *to*-infinitives. A slight increase takes place toward the 19th century and as for the third part, *that*-clause complements occur somewhat less frequently than in the first two sets. The following examples are taken from the 1710-1780 data:

- (28) *That* man is, ‘animal bipes, implume, risible’, I entirely *agree*; but for the ‘rationale’, I can allow it him ‘in actu primo’ (to talk logic) and seldom in ‘actu secundo’. (Chesterfield: *Letters to his Son on the Art*)
 (29) ...and **all his guests**, and with one voice *agreed that* Fidus should bear the joyful tidings; and then returned to observe the monster, and to wait the coming of Benefico. (Fielding: *The Governess*)
 (30) Though **the three historians** *agree that* it was in fact an auction, Herodian alone affirms that it was proclaimed as such by the soldiers. (Gibbon: *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*)

As shown in sentence (28), extraction is by no means restricted to prepositional verbs only – instead, a *that*-clause complement can also be extracted. The elements in bold highlight the fact that the first elements in structures with a *that*-clause are almost unexceptionally [+HUMAN] and thus carry the case role Experiencer. It must be noted, though, that in passive constructions the formal subject *it* has neither human reference, nor the case role Experiencer:

- (31) Now **it** *had been agreed* between Mrs Waters and the captain *that* she would accompany him in his march as far as Worcester, where they were to take their leave of each other... (Fielding: *Tom Jones*)
 (32) ...**it** *was* universally *agreed that* we should have a part of the venison for supper, and the girls undertook the task with alacrity. (Goldsmith: *The Vicar of Wakefield*)
 (33) ...speaking in the style of governours and dictators, by refusing that this petition should be laid on the table. The question was put, and **it** *was agreed*, by the whole house, *that* it should not lie on the table. (Johnson: *Parliamentary Debates*)

Interestingly, it seems to have a major impact on the meaning whether the sentence is in active or passive! In sentences (28), (29) and (30), which are in the active voice, *agree* expresses convergence of ideas or entering into someone's opinion. However, when it comes to sentences (31), (32) and (33), I would rather suggest that they denote settling something. Accordingly, the complementation pattern does not alone determine the meaning, but the choice between the passive and the active voice does also play a semantic role.

During 1780-1850 *that*-clause complementation flourishes – the following three examples are taken from the second data set:

- (34) As we shall all be disposed to *agree that* God is the creator of mind as well as of body, and as they seem to be forming and unfolding themselves at the same time... (Malthus: *An Essay on the Principle of Population*)
 (35) But Hastings said, that if we went back we should be laughed at, and the idea of being laughed at made us all *agree that* we would not. (Marryat: *Masterman Ready*)
 (36) ...and I shall immediately *agree that* it is woman's duty to cultivate a fondness for dress, in order to please, and a propensity to cunning for her own preservation. (Wollstonecraft: *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*)

When used with a *that*-clause, *agree* typically conveys unanimity of opinions. This is also the case with the following sentences, taken from the third (1850-1920) part of the CLMET:

- (37) I cannot *agree*, though the authorities say it, *that* no 'unconscious selection' has been at work at the breed of man. (Bagehott: *Physics and Politics*)
 (38) On the contrary, we all *agree that* England is unhealthy, but half of us would not look at her in what the other half would call blooming health. (Chesterton: *What's Wrong with the World*)
 (39) She thought a moment, and *agreed that* it did make a difference. (Forster: *A Room with a View*)

In the third set the normalized frequency of *that*-clause complementation (i.e. 16.6) is somewhat lower than that of the second set (i.e. 21.9) – it seems that *agree* used without any complements is gaining ground. This is no wonder – *that* is just sometimes simply left out, though *agree* is most apparently complemented. Consider the following instances taken from the third (1850-1920) set:

- (40) He glanced at her as if to say: “We expected this, and this is where we *agreed* it was to stop.”
(Bennett: *The Old Wives’ Tale*)
(41) But Charles and Mr. Wilcox *agreed* it was much more probably nerves in Miss Schlegel’s case.
(Forster: *Howards End*)

One can almost hear the conjunction *that* being swallowed (i.e. *this where we agreed **that** it was to stop; Charles and Mr. Wilcox agreed **that** it was much more...*) – this may also contribute to the decreasing number of *that*-clause complements.

6.3. Prepositional complementation of the verb *agree*

First and foremost, the recent centuries were very favourable for the prepositional complementation. Indeed, in each of the three data sets prepositional verb uses form the absolute majority of all the complementation patterns the verb *agree* takes:

Pattern	Part I: 1710-1780		Part II: 1780-1850		Part III: 1850-1920	
	Occurrences (raw numbers)	Occurrences per million words	Occurrences (raw numbers)	Occurrences per million words	Occurrences (raw numbers)	Occurrences per million words
<i>agree</i> preposition +prepositional object	154	73.5	190	50.8	190	47.7

Table 12: Prepositional complementation of the verb *agree* in the CLMET data

Most apparently the period 1710-1780 was the most flourishing period, but the occurrences per million words are relatively high in the two latter sets as well. What’s more, prepositional verbs do not merely blossom in number, but also in wide range of different prepositional verbs. In fact, in the three analysed sets there are instances of as many as 9 different prepositional verb uses of the verb

agree. These are listed in the following table – the normalized frequencies give an idea how common each case was:

Pattern	Part I: 1710-1780		Part II: 1780-1850		Part III: 1850-1920	
	Occurrences (raw numbers)	Occurrences per million words	Occurrences (raw numbers)	Occurrences per million words	Occurrences (raw numbers)	Occurrences per million words
<i>agree about</i>	4	1.9	1	0.3	11	2.8
<i>agree as to</i>	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	0.3
<i>agree at</i>	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	0.3
<i>agree for</i>	1	0.5	2	0.5	0	0.0
<i>agree in</i>	24	11.5	27	7.2	13	3.3
<i>agree on</i>	5	2.4	10	2.7	4	1.0
<i>agree to</i>	56	26.7	50	13.4	32	8.0
<i>agree with</i>	59	28.1	96	25.7	125	31.4
<i>agree upon</i>	5	2.4	4	1.1	3	0.8

Table 13: The prepositional complementation of the verb *agree* in the CLMET data

In all three sets, prepositional verb *agree with* is the ultimate number one and moreover, it even seems to be on the increase! On the other hand, *agree to* holds the second position, although its use is decreasing significantly. What's more, the prepositional verb *agree in* belongs to the top team, but just like *agree to*, it is also showing dramatic downturn. As for the six remaining ones, *agree about*, *agree on* and *agree upon* are the most frequently occurring ones – of them *agree about* is the only one gaining strength. *Agree as to*, *agree at* and *agree for* represent marginal cases and are used extremely rarely. In the following all nine will be examined in more detail.

6.3.1. *Agree with*

As it was pointed out in section 5, there are two kinds of prepositional objects occurring together with the prepositional verb *agree with* – some have human, the others non-human reference. Let us consider examples (42) and (43) that highlight this difference:

(42) The Duke of Argyll said, "Such a list was a libel on the government," and of all men, the Duke of Newcastle was the man who rose up and *agreed with him*... (Walpole: *Letters*)

(43) Amelia did not seem to *agree with these sentiments*, and she greatly importuned Mrs. Ellison to be more explicit, but to no purpose... (Fielding: *Amelia*)

In sentence (42) the prepositional object (i.e. *him*) has human reference and thus expresses that someone (or something) is in harmony with people. As for sentence (43), the prepositional object has non-human reference (i.e. *these sentiments*) and thus describes that someone (or something) is in unison with ideas. When analysing cases with the prepositional verb *agree with*, I sorted them into two groups using the human or the non-human reference of the prepositional object as the distinctive criterion. The results are given in the following table:

Pattern	Part I: 1710-1780		Part II: 1780-1850		Part III: 1850-1920	
	Occurrences (raw numbers)	Occurrences per million words	Occurrences (raw numbers)	Occurrences per million words	Occurrences (raw numbers)	Occurrences per million words
<i>agree with somebody</i>	32	15.3	74	19.8	106	26.6
<i>agree with something</i>	27	12.9	22	5.9	19	4.8

Table 14: The distribution of prepositional objects with human and non-human reference in the CLMET data

It seems that there are two main trends here: firstly, in each of the three sets [+HUMAN] prepositional objects are preferred to [-HUMAN] ones and secondly, cases with a human prepositional object are on the increase, whereas the occurrences of those with non-human reference are getting fewer.

What is also noteworthy about instances with the prepositional verb *agree with* is that it is often the case that the verb *agree* does not merely settle for one complement only (that is, one prepositional object), but may actually take two of them. Consider the following sentences taken from the first (1710-1780) data set:

(44) But Cleanthes will, I hope, *agree with me that* after we have abandoned ignorance, the surest remedy, there is still one expedient left to prevent this profane liberty. (Hume: *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*)

(45) He has a constitution to last some years, and enjoy some repose; and for my own part (and both my brothers *agree with me in it*), we wish most heartily to see an end of his ministry. (Walpole: *Letters*)

(46) I *agree with you extremely about* Tuscany for Prince Charles, but I can only agree with you on paper, for as to knowing anything of it, I am sure Sir Robert himself knows nothing of it... (Walpole: *Letters*)

(47) Now this last is the undisputed province of judgment, and yet some few men of wit *have agreed with all the dull fellows* in the world *in representing* these two to have been seldom or never property of one and the same person. (Fielding: *Tom Jones*)

In sentence (44) *agree with* is not just followed by a [+HUMAN] prepositional object (i.e. *me*), but it also complemented by the following *that*-clause. Sentences (45), (46) and (47), on the other hand, have each a further preposition and prepositional object (i.e. *in it; about Tuscany; in representing these two*). Such instances with two complementing elements are by no means rare with the prepositional verb *agree with*, as the following table shows:

<i>Agree with somebody</i>	Part I: 1710-1780		Part II: 1780-1850		Part III: 1850-1920	
	Occurrences (raw numbers)	Occurrences per million words	Occurrences (raw numbers)	Occurrences per million words	Occurrences (raw numbers)	Occurrences per million words
about	2	0.9	0	0.0	2	0.5
in	6	2.9	5	1.3	6	1.5
on	0	0.0	1	0.3	2	0.5
that	11	5.3	12	3.2	19	4.8

Table 15: The occurrences of further complements with the prepositional verb *agree with somebody*

It seems that *agree with* followed by two complements is less popular during the second period (1780-1850), but that since then a rise takes place. The following examples are added to give more illustrations of such cases. The three first ones are taken from the second set and the four latter instances from the third part of the CLMET:

- (48) My dear Sir, I *agree with you that* the song “Katharine Ogie” is very poor stuff, and unworthy, altogether unworthy, of so beautiful an air. (Burns: *Letters*)
- (49) One thing I *agree with you in*, it will remain there for ever, but not very long. It festers, and consumes me. (Hazlitt: *Liber Amoris*)
- (50) Oh, but you know I never *agree with you on* those pointes. (Brontë: *Agnes Grey*)
- (51) And, perhaps, you will *agree with me that* the thread of comradeship and conversation must be protected because it is so frivolous. (Chesterton: *What's Wrong with the World*)
- (52) He is a man of business. I do not *agree with him in* his choice of ends, but he is an almost perfect master of methods and means. (Bagehott: *The English Constitution*)
- (53) I told them that this state of things could be endured no longer, *on* which point they *agreed with me*, but saw no means to help it. (Blackmore: *Lorna Doone*)
- (54) I *agree with the late William Cobbett about* picking a wife. See that she chews her food well and sets her foot down firmly on the ground when she walks... (Collins: *The Moonstone*)

All these examples having a [+HUMAN] prepositional object, one may wonder whether there are such cases when *agree with something* is followed by an additional complement. Indeed, to my great delight in the second (1780-1850) data set there is one instance of this kind:

- (55)...in equal assimilation of languages to this parent stock becomes more clear and distinct; but still a dialect, *agreeing with the Sanskrit in* structure, *in* the arrangement of words, and *in* many instances in the words themselves, which, however modified, may still be... (Borrow: *Bible in Spain*)

However, this instance being the only one among all the 1132 analysed concordance lines, *agree with* seems to take rather rarely a [-HUMAN] prepositional object and an additional complement. Moreover, two complements after the prepositional verb *agree with* is, in all probability, the absolute maximum – there are no tokens with three complements in the data and it is certainly difficult to think of one.

Although *agree with something* may be left in the shadow of *agree with somebody*, in each set there are instances representing the former. Sentences (56) and (57) are taken from the second set and sentences (58) and (59) from the third:

(56)...but I cannot quite *agree with* **the admiration** expressed by some travellers. (Darwin: *Voyage of the Beagle*)

(57)...they did not, in any part of their dress, *agree with* **the picture** her imagination had formed of fashionable ladies. (Edgeworth: *The Parent's Assistant*)

(58) "Doctor," said Sophia, solemnly, impressed, "you are quite right. I *agree with* **every word** you say." (Bennett: *The Old Wives' Tale*)

(59) Every animal will choose for its sustenance exactly those animal or vegetable substances which *agree best with* **its digestive organs**...(Butler: *Unconscious Memory*)

However, the use of *agree with* together with a non-human prepositional object is getting more and more rare – in the first set there are 12.9 occurrences per million words, whereas that in the third set is only 4.8.

6.3.2. *Agree to*

Compared to the frequencies of the prepositional verb *agree with*, *agree to* comes in a good second. In the same breath it must be added, though, that of all the nine prepositional verbs presented in the table above *agree to* is decreasing most drastically. Indeed, in the first set its frequency is 26.7 occurrences per million words, whereas that of the last set is only 8.0.

In connection with the *to*-infinitive clauses it was pointed out that when *agree* is followed by *to* – be it a preposition or infinitival marker – it does, in most cases, convey giving

consent as sentences (60) and (61) taken from the first data set illustrate. Sentence (62), however, means rather being in accordance with something, shifting towards the sense of *agree in*. Consider:

- (60) ...yet I cannot *agree to* **the clause** now under our consideration; I disapprove it both from moral and political motives... (Johnson: *Parliamentary Debates*)
 (61) *To this motion* Mrs. Atkinson soon *agreed*, and offered to be her companion. (Fielding: *Amelia*)
 (62) ...I should observe, that this definition *agrees to* **every thing**, that can possibly be conceived... (Hume: *Treatise of Human Nature*)

In the following examples *agree to* has the same meaning as in sentences (60) and (61) above – sentences (63) and (64) are taken from the second set and the three latter ones represent the third one:

- (63) Mr. Collins was employed in *agreeing to* **everything** her ladyship said, thanking her for every fish he won, and apologising if he thought he won too many. (Austen: *Pride and Prejudice*)
 (64) Elinor *agreed to* **it all**, for she did not think he deserved the compliment of rational opposition. (Austen: *Sense and Sensibility*)
 (65) "And will you try the same of me, Lorna?" "Oh yes, John, if you *agree to* **it**." (Blackmore: *Lorna Doone*)
 (66) For his own sake he ought to have willingly *agreed to* **that**. He preferred to take my request as an insult. (Gissing: *The Odd Woman*)
 (67) Mr. Franklin Blake *agrees to* **Miss Clack's proposal**, on the understanding that she will kindly consider this intimation of his consent as... (Collins: *The Moonstone*)

As highlighted in bold, *agree to* very gladly takes a noun phrase as its prepositional object and this seems to be the common practice. However, I was extremely pleased to find two instances in the first set (1710-1780) that do not have noun phrases as prepositional objects, but prefer nominal clauses to them:

- (68) I have this moment received your letter of the 4th, N. S., and have only time to tell you that I can by no means *agree to* **your cutting off your hair**. (Chesterfield: *Letters to his Son on The Art of Becoming a Man of the World and a Gentleman*)
 (69) ...as your lodgings will be, I *agree to* **your removing to an 'hotel garni'**; the Abbe will help you to find one, as I desire him by the inclosed, which you will give him. (Chesterfield: *Letters to his Son on The Art of Becoming a Man of the World and a Gentleman*)

Sentences (68) and (69) being such rare individuals, I dwelt on them a while trying to replace the nominal clause by some other pattern that the verb *agree* takes without causing a major difference in meaning. The task proved to be hard: a *that*-clause might do in the last resort, but then the latter parts of the sentences should go through quite a make-over (i.e. *I can by no means agree that you may get your hair cut off; I agree that you may be removed to an 'hotel garni'*) – and the original

sense would not remain unchanged. I could more easily think of some completely different predicates taking the place of the prepositional verb *agree to* in order to preserve the meaning (e.g. *I can by no means **let / allow** you (**to**) cut off your hair; I **approve of** your removing to an 'hotel garni'*).

6.3.3. Agree in

When discussing the complementation patterns of the verb *agree* in section 5, it was pointed out that *agree in* is used to express grammatical concord. It is not, however, the only sense *agree in* may carry. For instance, in the following three examples taken from the first set *agree in* is used to express unison of ideas or opinions:

(70) Thou art to know, friend, that there are certain characteristics *in which* most individuals of the every profession and occupation *agree*. (Fielding: *Tom Jones*)

(71) Yet however opposite their characters, *in one thing* they *agreed*, both of them having a perfect correspondence between all the parts of their respective manners. (Reynolds: *Seven Discourses on Art*)

(72) This religion, under a variety of denominations *agreeing in nothing* but *in the communion of the spirit of liberty*, is predominant in most of the Northern Provinces, where the Church of England... (Burke: *On Conciliation with America*)

On the other hand, *agree in* may also convey that two things are similar or alike, as illustrated in the following – sentence (73) is taken from the second set and sentence (74) from the third:

(73) ...curiously intermediate in structure between a buzzard and the American group of carrion-feeding Polybori, and with these latter birds it *agrees* most closely *in every habit* and even *tone of voice*. (Darwin: *Voyage of the Beagle*)

(74) A great number of persons *agreeing in fundamental disposition*, *agreeing in religion*, *agreeing in politics*, form a separate settlement... (Bagehott: *Physics and Politics*)

Though *agree in* embraces noun phrases and *wh*-clauses as its prepositional objects, it is also fond of *-ing* clauses: both in the first and in the second data sets there are 7 instances with the *in -ing* pattern and the third set has three of them. The following examples are taken from the first set:

(75) Historians in general *agree in calling her a Christian*; there is no reason to believe that she had begun to have a taste for the principles of Christianity. (Gibbon: *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*)

(76) But it is sufficient to observe, that the Greek writers, who lived almost in the age of Darius, *agree in placing the aera of Zoroaster* many hundred, or even thousand, years before their own time. (Gibbon: *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*)

(77) Several other very well authenticated, though manuscript accounts, I have been assured, *agree in making this whole annual importation amount*, at an average, **to about six millions sterling**, sometimes a little more, sometimes a little less... (Smith: *Wealth of Nations*)

According to Poutsma (1907, 654), “with some verbs and adjectives with *in*...the gerund-construction varies with the infinitive-construction mostly without any appreciable difference in meaning”. I do not, however, quite agree with him: the *in –ing* pattern and the *to*-infinitive pattern are not interchangeable without a shift in meaning! For instance, let us consider sentence (75) – if we changed the *in –ing* pattern to a *to*-infinitive, we would get *Historians in general agree to call her Christian*. The *in –ing* pattern conveys unison of opinions, whereas the *to*-infinitive pattern implies that historians deliberately enter into an agreement. This is also the case in the following examples that represent the *in –ing* pattern – sentences (78) and (79) are taken from the second set and sentences (80) and (81) from the third set:

- (78)...If a whole court say the same thing, this is no proof that they think it, but that the individual at the head of the court has said it; if a mob *agree* for a while *in shouting the same watchword*, this is not to me an example of the *sensus communis*... (Hazlitt: *Table Talk*)
- (79) All that I can say is, that the wisest and best men in all ages *had agreed in giving the preference*, very greatly, to the pleasures of intellect... (Malthus: *An Essay on the Principle of Population*)
- (80) Historical oligarchy, as well as democracy, *agreed in requiring a certain established system of government*, comprising the three elements of specialised functions... (Bagehott: *The English Constitution*)
- (81) Disagreeing elsewhere, they *agreed in disowning her*, and *in keeping the administration of the millionaire’s money* in their own hands. (Forster: *Howards End*)

Again, the *to*-infinitive construction would have an immediate meaning-changing effect on these sentences – *agree to* would pass into the sense of the verb *consent*, whereas *agree in* means *to be of the same mind with someone*. Interestingly, Poutsma (1907, 654) makes roughly the same point, stating that “the construction with *in* describes an agreement concerning a sentiment, that with an infinitive an agreement concerning a course of action to be adopted” – moreover, he uses the following four sentences as to illustrate his point:

- (82) Widely as Henry’s ministers differed from each other, they all *agreed in sharing and fostering* the culture around them. (GREEN, SHORT HIST., CH. IV, Sect. IV, 313)
- (83) Now I am afraid that all the Mahomedan world would *agree in reciprocating* that appellation to Dr. Wace himself. (HUXL., LECT. AND ESS., 92a)
- (84) We *agreed* long ago never *to mention* a word about it. (PRIDE AND PREJ., CH LIII, 324)
- (85) He rejoiced that the Fates had *agreed to remove* him from the very hot neighbourhood of Lobourne. (ORD. OF RICH. FEV., CH. VII, 42)

Poutsma's statement applies well to his example sentences: indeed, sentences (82) and (83) do indicate “an agreement concerning a sentiment” and sentences (84) and (85) “an agreement concerning a course of action to be adopted” (1907, 654). In other words, Poutsma does also recognize a slight difference in meaning between sentences (82) and (83) and sentences (84) and (85). However, whether this difference is – using Poutsma's expression – *appreciable* is another matter. I would argue that it is.

6.3.4. Other prepositional verb uses

Of the six remaining prepositional verbs *agree about*, *agree on* and *agree upon* occur most frequently in the data – the two latter are on the decrease, though. The following three examples illustrate the usage of the prepositional verb *agree about*, each taken from different sets of data:

(86) ...that it is something more fixed than in reality it is, and that we always do, and ever did *agree about what* should be considered as a characteristic of genius. (Reynolds: *Seven Discourses on Art*) (1710-1780)

(87) “...we'll get the guinea-hen back again – we have all *agreed about it*...” (Edgeworth: *The Parent's Assistant*) (1780-1850)

(88) Mr. Cadbury and I would *agree about the bad public house*. (Chesterton: *What's Wrong with the World*) (1850-1920)

Agree about seems to be rather close in meaning with the prepositional verb *agree in* – it conveys convergence of ideas. *Agree on* and *agree upon*, on the other hand, express that something is being settled:

(89) ...and will, most undoubtedly, within a century, be scanted out among the great powers, who have now a footing in Italy, whenever they can *agree upon the division of the bear's skin*. (Chesterfield: *Letters to his son on The Art of Becoming a Man of the World and a Gentleman*) (1710-1780)

(90) And so it was quickly *agreed on* between them **that**, as Rosalind was the tallest, she should wear the dress of a young countryman, and Celia... (Lamb: *Tales from Shakespeare*) (1780-1850)

(91) “Have you forgotten **what** we *agreed on*, Godfrey, when you spoke to me in the country?” (Collins: *The Moonstone*) (1850-1920)

The three remaining prepositional verbs – *agree for*, *agree at* and *agree as to* – have only some sporadic instances in the data. The following sentences exemplify them:

(92)...I have *agreed for a good travelling-coach* and four, at a guinea a day, for three months certain, and next week we intend to begin our journey to the North...(Smollett: *The Expedition of Humphrey Clinker*) (1710-1780)

(93)...after waiting some weeks in vain for **the return of the Vessel** he had *agreed for*, he is gone into Cornwall to order a Vessel built for himself by a famous Man in that Country...(Austen: *Letters to her Sister*) (1780-1850)

(94)...she wanted to ytade seven cod for one fair-sized swuid, but Disko would not *agree at the price*...(Kipling: *Captains Courageous*) (1850-1920)

(95) Both *agreed as to the fine morning* was. (Meredith: *The Amazing Marriage*) (1850-1920)

Sentences (92), (93) and (94) convey the same meaning as the tokens with the prepositional verb *agree on* – that is, get something settled or arranged. Sentence (95), on the other hand, means to be of the same mind.

6.4. Summarizing the results of the CLMET data

Interestingly, in all three sets prepositional verbs form the absolute majority, *agree with* being the commonest, *agree to* and *agree in* lurking around the corner. However, compared to the data taken from the first part (1710-1780) of the CLMET, prepositional verbs are showing a somewhat decreasing trend. The same applies to the *to*-infinitive clause and *that*-clause complementation, which are also used less toward the 20th century. It must be emphasized, though, that this does not mean that *to*-infinitives and *that*-clauses were becoming marginal and rare: quite the contrary, they are still among the most important complementation patterns of the verb *agree*. Zero complements, on the other hand, are clearly gaining more ground.

7. Analysing the corpus data of present-day written English

The corpus data representing contemporary British and American English is taken from the *Collins Cobuild Corpus*. I made use of the subcorpora UK Books (5,354,262 words) and US Books (5,626,436 words), as well as of the UK Ephemera (3,124,354 words) and US Ephemera (1,224,710 words). The data taken from the UK Books consists of 442 analysed tokens and that of the US Books 399 tokens. The analysed UK Ephemera data comprises 244 and the US Ephemera data 153 instances. Accordingly, the number of all the analysed concordance lines amounts thus to 1238.

In the following I will first discuss the data taken from the UK Books and US Books, followed by the analysis of the UK Ephemera and US Ephemera data.

7.1. Analysing the UK Books and US Books data

To begin with, the results of the analysed UK and US Books sets are given in the following table:

Pattern	UK BOOKS		US BOOKS	
	Occurrences (raw numbers)	Occurrences per million words	Occurrences (raw numbers)	Occurrences per million words
<i>agree</i> preposition +prepositional object	135	25.2	115	20.4
<i>agree</i> + NP	14	2.6	0	0.0
<i>agree</i> + <i>to</i> -infinitive clause	77	14.4	85	15.1
<i>agree</i> + <i>that</i> -clause	68	12.7	73	12.9
<i>agree</i> + <i>wh</i> -clause	2	0.4	3	0.5
<i>agree</i> + zero complement	126	23.5	106	18.8
irrelevant	20	3.7	17	3.0

Table 16: The occurrences of the complementation patterns of the verb *agree* in the UK and US Books data

Compared to the results presented in the previous section, we note that prepositional verbs have kept their leading position, although their occurrences per million words are fewer than of those in the CLMET data. As for the *to*-infinitives, they are enjoying a revival: in the last part of CLMET their normalized frequency is 9.8 instances per million words – in the UK and US Books the frequency is much higher (i.e. 14.4; 15.1). *That*-clauses, on the other hand, are still strong, but have suffered a slight depression if compared to the last set of CLMET, in which their normalized frequency is 16.6 – in the UK Books there are 12.7 occurrences per million words, in the US Books 12.9. What's more, the direct NP complements, as well as the *wh*-clause complements that I missed in the CLMET data are now coming in. The increase of zero complementation within the three sets of the CLMET data suggested that the use of zero complements is gaining more ground and this

indeed is the case in the UK and US Books data. The following sentences exemplify zero complementation:

- (96) “If pretty is as pretty does, then pretty is exceedingly well. Wouldn’t you *agree*?” (UK Books)
 (97) “All right,” Blake *agreed*, “I’ll sign.” (UK Books)
 (98) She always *agrees*, of course, and then gets so excited at the idea it crooks her up. (UK Books)
 (99) They would not *agree*, and his wife would contradict him, and he would dispute and grow angry. (US Books)
 (100) Now he *agrees*! Sort of, maybe! I’ve been telling him these things for 7 years now and he’s only beginning to understand. (US Books)
 (101) Lucianus: Thoughts black, hands apt, drugs fit, and time *agreeing*, confederate season, else no creature seeing. (US Books)
 (102) At supper the night before, when Lainey was out of room, the children *had agreed* she was the ugliest baby they’d ever seen. (US Books)

Again, it is possible to imagine complements for some of these sentences – for instance, the prepositional verb *agree with* together with a prepositional object would work for sentence (96) and a *that*-clause would suit sentence (102). As for the rest of the examples, a complement would actually be quite out of place. Moreover, in both sets there are instances that are completely irrelevant. Consider:

- (103) *agree agreeable agreeably disagreement agreed agreement nonagreement agreeableness agreeing...* (US Books)
 (104) Although this does not exhaust the possibilities, diligent application of the *agreed-upon* criteria can generally filter out the inappropriate candidate and locate the apt one. (US Books)
 (105) That was the *agreed* background. (UK Books)

Sentence (103) represents a list of words and in sentences (104) and (105) *agreed-upon* and *agreed* are used as adjectives.

As for the extracted complements, the CLMET data augured a decreasing trend.

However, both in the UK and US Books data there are instances with extraction, as the following table shows:

Extracted complements	UK BOOKS		US BOOKS	
	Occurrences (raw numbers)	Occurrences per million words	Occurrences (raw numbers)	Occurrences per million words
	16	3.0	8	1.4

Table 17: The occurrences of extracted complements in the UK and US Books data

Though the number of their occurrences may not be dizzying, at least they show that extraction has not died out in literary contexts. Here are some examples from both sets:

- (106) Subsequently, the wife asked her husband to quietly join her and participate more actively if he felt like it, *to which* he readily *agreed*. (US Books)
 (107) Characters now and again will utter opinions *with which* the reader is not necessarily supposed to *agree*. (US Books)
 (108) Montini's friends were not confined to *those* he *agreed with*. (UK Books)

In the following we will first examine the direct NP complementation and then take a look at the clause complementation – finally, we will study the prepositional complementation.

7.1.1. *Agree* + NP

As it was pointed out in section 5, Algeo (1988, 27) claims that in British English the noun phrase complement is common in use, whereas in American English one would use a prepositional one instead. His argument seems to be valid: there are no instances representing the direct noun phrase complementation in the US Books data. The following examples are thus taken from the UK Books set – most apparently, in all of them *agree* conveys the meaning of getting something settled or arranged:

- (109) Spend time with your secretary or assistant at the beginning of each day (or week, as appropriate) to outline your plans, *agree tasks and priorities*, and organize yourselves jointly. (UK Books)
 (110) It would in theory be possible to devise and *agree a flexible master plan* which, with the consent of all, rationed and apportioned energy and resources according to those who needed it most... (UK Books)
 (111) The first was a meeting of all backers at Samuel Montagu at ten a.m. on Wednesday 5 April, to discuss and *agree financial estimates*, capital structure and shareholdings. (UK Books)

It must be noted, though, that this pattern is not too commonly used in British English either – there are only 2.6 occurrences of this kind per million words. Accordingly, the noun phrase complementation is overshadowed by the more dominant options.

7.1.2. Clause complementation of the verb *agree*

Both in the UK Books and in the US Books data *to*-infinitive complements are used more frequently than *that*-clause complements. Moreover, the normalized frequencies of these two complementation patterns in the US Books data beat those in the UK Books. Starting with the *to*-infinitives, in the UK Books the frequency is 14.4 occurrences per million words, whereas that in

the US Books is slightly higher (i.e. 15.1). In the following there are illustrations taken from both sets:

- (112) Both *agree to try* to keep the rules. (UK Books)
- (113) Wolfe nodded and, at his suggestion, Alexandra *agreed to have coffee*. (UK Books)
- (114) All are amazed when Merlin bursts out laughing and, after some discussion, Rodarcus *agrees to set him free* if he will explain why. (UK Books)
- (115) But the young Maxwells have shown they can both earn and save, property values are rising, and so Mom and Dad gladly *agree to co-sign*. (US Books)
- (116) McCarthy's showing finally induced the circumspect Robert Kennedy to *agree to launch* his own candidacy. (US Books)
- (117) I reluctantly *agreed to have him move* in the following week. (US Books)

Interestingly, though I could not find any examples of the particular pattern in the *OED* and grammars, there are cases when *agree* is not followed by a *to*-infinitive, but a *to –ing* clause. In the UK Books data there are two instances that represent the *to –ing* pattern:

- (118) “Do you think”, Plumer told Davidson, “that after making the vast preparation for attack on this position over a long period of months, and after sitting in the salient all this time, I am going to *agree to limiting the progress of my troops* at the outset on the first day? I say definitely no.” (UK Books)
- (119) I *agree to transferring the words ‘Mystery of Faith’* to the end, after the consecration of the chalice... (UK Books)

What captivates my interest here is whether it should be assumed that the meaning of the sentence alters depending whether one chooses the *to*-infinitive or the *to –ing* pattern. Bolinger (1968, 127) argues that it does: he claims that languages being economical and reluctant to tolerate redundancy, two syntactically divergent forms would not co-exist to express the same meaning – instead, he goes as far as to make a generalization that “a difference in syntactic form always spells a difference in meaning”. I could not help but seize the challenge to find out whether Bolinger’s claim is valid in this case and I will present my contemplations in the following.

To be able to consider Bolinger’s principle on a more practical level, let us consider the following two sentences:

- (a) Mary *agreed to sing* at the wedding.
- (b) Mary *agreed to singing* at the wedding.

We note that in sentence (a) we have the *to*-infinitive pattern and in sentence (b) the *to –ing* pattern and indeed, there certainly is a shift in meaning between these two. In the former (sentence a) it is

Mary who will do the singing, whereas the latter (sentence b) could mean either “Mary agreed she would sing” or “She agreed to (allow) singing / a sing-song at the wedding”. Compare similarly:

- (c) She agreed to making a speech and singing at the wedding.
- (d) She agreed to speeches and singing at the wedding.

Sentence (d) is clearly nominal and different in meaning from the infinitive construction, but as sentence (c) shows, the other reading is also possible and in such cases the *to –ing* pattern is an alternative to the infinitive construction with a less obvious difference in meaning. Indeed, it is this latter variation which is of real interest here.

As the grammars and the *OED* do not provide examples of the particular usage, I decided to collect some authentic data from the *British National Corpus* using the Sketch Engine. The query¹³ for the lemma *agree* used with *to –ing* clauses gave me 20 results in total, of which 16 are relevant for my study (see Appendix). I went through the data by replacing the *to –ing* pattern with the *to*-infinitive construction and judging how this affects the overall interpretation of the sentence. In some instances the change is instant and crystal clear:

- (120) “He fully *agreed to enlarging* the village”, said Mr O’Connor. “He said he understood the village needed more housing but said the council had been heavy handed.” (CFB)
- (121) “None of the farm lads really understand sheep. I wonder if Father would *agree to getting* a shepherd at t’Martinmas Hirings”, he mused. (C98)

It certainly seems that in sentence (120) the subject *he* is not the one to do the actual enlargement of the village and in sentence (121) the father, in all probability, just gives his consent to getting a new shepherd, but he will not start searching for one himself, but lets others do the job. However, if we replaced the *to –ing* patterns with *to*-infinitive constructions in the above sentences, in sentence (120) the subject *he* would enlarge the village himself (i.e. *he fully agreed to enlarge the village*) and in sentence (121) the father himself will make sure the shepherd will be found (i.e. *I wonder if Father would agree to get a shepherd*). There are, however, cases when the difference in meaning is not that obvious:

- (122) Some suggestions were instantly taken up, as in 1925, when five members asked for shorter carries and the committee *agreed to reducing* them to 120 yards... (AMY)

¹³ The search string used for the *to-ing* clauses is [lemma = “agree”] “to” [tag = “V.G”].

(123) Britain will use its presidency to get other EC heads to *agree to exempting* Denmark from a single currency and a European army... (CEN)

In my opinion in sentences (122) and (123) the consent-givers (i.e. *the committee, other EC heads*) most likely also perform the acts of reduction and exemption – in other words, this meaning is the one these sentences would have if they were used with *to*-infinitives. However, one might perhaps – with a little good will – apply the other reading to these two as well (that is, an external power would perform the tasks). Be that as it may, there are also instances when the choice between the *to*-infinitive pattern and the *to –ing* pattern makes absolutely no difference in meaning. Consider:

(124) Mr Inamura's misfortune has changed all that. Mr Kaifu has *agreed to reshaping* his cabinet, but has insisted on keeping it clean. Well, almost. He has had to accept Kazuo Aichi, the new environment minister, who took money from the Recruit company before the famous shares-for-favours scandal... (ABD)

(125) In the autumn there was a to be a break in his usual routine. He had *agreed to taking* on a reading tour in Scotland. (AC3)

Here the only reading that would work is the one conveyed by *to*-infinitives: that is, in sentence (124) Mr Kaifu will reshape his cabinet himself and in sentence (125) the person has consented to the suggestion of taking the reading tour and he will be the one to also carry it out. Moreover, applying this discussion to sentences (118) and (119) taken from the UK Books data, the *to –ing* pattern in sentence (118) implies that Plumer is the consent-giver, but he will not perform the actual limitation. As for sentence (119), it seems that someone else than the speaker transfers the words to the end. Interestingly, the meaning would instantly change if the *to*-infinitive was used instead of the *to –ing* pattern. All in all, it seems that Bolinger's claim can be validated: the meaning alters depending on the choice of the pattern. However, each instance is case-specific – sometimes the two patterns are extremely close in meaning, whereas sometimes they clearly convey different senses.

Leaving the *to*-infinitive and the *to –ing* clauses behind, *that*-clauses occur frequently both in British and American English, though in the latter slightly more often: in the UK Books there are 12.7 occurrences with *that*-clause complements per million words, whereas the frequency in the US Books data is 12.9. The following examples are taken from both sets:

- (126) *Agreeing that* the proposals were excessive, he insisted on R. and myself considering a scheme for giving effect to the War Cabinet's decision. (UK Books)
- (127) Your doctor or health visitor, who know you, your husband and your home conditions, will almost certainly *agree that* the only answer now is a hospital ward... (UK Books)
- (128) We *agree that* it is the highest truth, but what are we supposed to do about it? (UK Books)
- (129) Most experts *agree that* these are not very good investments. (US Books)
- (130) With regard to temperament, most researchers *agree that* the concept refers to an individual's general disposition or behavioral style. (US Books)
- (131) Dwight responded by *agreeing that* the first instalment was sketchy and written in an ironic and comic tone... (US Books)

What's more, to my great delight in both sets there are a few instances with the *wh*-clause

complement – in the UK Books data there are two tokens of this type and in the US books three:

- (132) First *agree how* you will run the meeting. (UK Books)
- (133) The gentle student, a woman from engineering college, a man with an unusually grubby shirt and lungi, an elderly couple with a smelly cloth bundle that leaked cockroaches and I all *agreed when* it was time to sleep. (UK Books)
- (134) If states constructed their own roads, how would they *agree where* to link up at their borders? (US Books)
- (135) Villages, truckers, farmers, urban planners, highway engineers, shippers – all had their own agendas, and no mechanism existed for them to *agree where* to build the other 93 percent. (US Books)
- (136) Helmer: Not another minute, Nora my sweet. You remember *what we agreed*. (US Books)

It seems that *wh*-clauses carry two basic senses – firstly, it can mean to settle something (sentences 132, 135 and 136) and secondly, it can also describe unanimity of opinions (sentences 133 and 134). Moreover, these few instances prove that *agree* can be followed by a *wh*-clause, although the grammars seem to have ignored the particular possibility.

7.1.3. Prepositional complementation of the verb *agree*

Compared to the CLMET data, the use of prepositional verbs seems to have slightly decreased, though it still is the absolute number one complementation pattern both in British and American English. The exact frequencies of all the prepositional verbs are given in the following table:

Pattern	UK BOOKS		US BOOKS	
	Occurrences (raw numbers)	Occurrences per million words	Occurrences (raw numbers)	Occurrences per million words
<i>agree about</i>	0	0.0	1	0.2
<i>agree for</i>	1	0.2	0	0.0
<i>agree in</i>	2	0.4	0	0.0
<i>agree on</i>	13	2.4	20	3.6
<i>agree to</i>	25	4.7	30	5.3
<i>agree with</i>	92	17.1	62	11.0
<i>agree upon</i>	2	0.4	2	0.4

Table 18: The occurrences of prepositional verb uses of the verb *agree* in the UK and US Books data

Just like in the CLMET data, *agree with* and *agree to* are the most frequently occurring prepositional verbs both in the UK and US Books sets. However, *agree in* no longer holds the third position, but it has been overtaken by the prepositional verb *agree on*. Moreover, there are no instances representing *agree at* or *agree as to*. The prepositional verb uses will be discussed in the following with illustrations taken from the analysed data.

7.1.3.1. *Agree with*

Just like with the CLMET data, I sorted the cases with the prepositional verb *agree with* into two groups: those that have a [+HUMAN] prepositional object (sentence 137) and those with a [-HUMAN] prepositional object (sentence 138):

(137) We decided that those who did not *agree with them* should have an opportunity to put their point of view as well, in epilogue form, and that Ludovic Kennedy was the man to do it. (UK Books)

(138) Although he may not *agree with all he hears*, both his family and his colleagues speak with his interests at heart and he would do well to heed what they say. (UK Books)

The exact frequencies of these two cases are given in the table below:

Pattern	UK BOOKS		US BOOKS	
	Occurrences (raw numbers)	Occurrences per million words	Occurrences (raw numbers)	Occurrences per million words
<i>agree with somebody</i>	51	9.5	30	5.6
<i>agree with something</i>	41	7.7	32	5.7

Table 19: The distribution of prepositional objects with human and non-human reference in the UK and US Books data

We note that especially in the US Books the distribution is almost fifty-fifty – in the following examples (139) and (140) illustrate cases with a [+HUMAN] prepositional object and sentences (141) and (142) instances with a [-HUMAN] prepositional object:

- (139) Anthony does not *agree with me*, of course. I was unwise enough to say something of the sort to him and he snapped at me. (UK Books)
 (140) “I’ll be your lunch did not *agree with you* today.” (US Books)
 (141) It was not quite satisfactory because though he *agrees with my views* he always seems to hark back as if something more was intended or that he was afraid that more was intended than was said. (UK Books)
 (142) Such a patient may *agree with a statement* such as ‘My family has a lot to do with my becoming sick or staying healthy’. (US Books)

Moreover, in both sets there are cases when *agree with* does not take merely a [+HUMAN] prepositional object, but is followed by two complements altogether. The figures are to be found in the following table:

<i>agree with somebody</i>	UK BOOKS		US BOOKS	
	Occurrences (raw numbers)	Occurrences per million words	Occurrences (raw numbers)	Occurrences per million words
<i>about</i>	3	0.6	0	0.0
<i>in</i>	2	0.4	1	0.2
<i>on</i>	3	0.6	0	0.0
<i>that</i>	6	1.1	6	1.1
<i>to do sth</i>	1	0.2	0	0.0

Table 20: The occurrences of further complements with the prepositional verb *agree with somebody*

The following five sentences exemplify each of them, listed in the same order as in table 20:

- (143) Our chairwoman thinks so too, though she doesn’t quite *agree with me about* it, so when she leaves I usually go round and put things back where I think they belong. (UK Books)
 (144) In ‘Advice to Youth’ he appeared to *agree with Franklin in advising aspiring boys* to get up with the birds, provided the birds slept until half past nine. (US Books)
 (145) This, they believe, was the teaching of Nichiren, but they do not always *agree with each other on* the definition of the term Original Gate.” (UK Books)
 (146) “You will I think *agree with me*”, he commented to Lonsdale Hale, “*that* the Cavalry – the despised Cavalry I should say – has saved the Empire.” (UK Books)
 (147) He *had agreed with Jerrold to hold the money* for twenty-four hours, which would mean until noon on the following day, then he would take the suitcase to Jerrold, who would return its contents to Chet. (UK Books)

What’s more, in the analysed UK Books set there are three instances when a [-HUMAN] prepositional object is followed by a *that*-clause, as exemplified in the following:

- (148) ...but more significantly we *agree with the view of Vizard* (1987, BBC Childwatch programme) *that* therapeutic use of the law is underestimated in the confrontation of abuse. (UK Books)

(149) I *agree with Mr Walgrave's idea* that all dogs should be done away with, but not, I hope, by shooting as he suggests. (UK Books)

Leaving the prepositional verb *agree with* – as well as Mr Walgrave's scheme of the canine genocide – behind, let us take a look at *agree to*, *agree on* and *agree in*.

7.1.3.2 *Agree to, agree on, agree in*

During the three periods comprised in the CLMET the prepositional verb *agree to* suffers a severe recession – in the first part of the CLMET its normalized frequency is 26.7 occurrences per million words, whereas that of the US Books is 5.3 and that of the UK Books not more than 4.7.

Accordingly, in present-day English *agree to* is more frequently used in American English than in British English. The following examples illustrate the particular pattern:

(150) There was only one man capable of helping such a programme, with his existing organisation. And he named me. I would have to *agree to a rapid expansion of my operations* in the UK. (UK Books)

(151) And really I ought to write to him and tell him that I'm sending someone to see him, and make sure that he *agrees to the scheme*. (UK Books)

(152) Third, do not *agree to an inspection* if utilities are not working. (US Books)

(153) If the lender *agrees to a delayed occupancy*, always obtain the lender's approval in writing. (US Books)

In the contemporary situation *agree on* triumphs over *agree in* – the former is especially common in American English, whereas *agree in* does not occur even once in the US Books data. In British English *agree on* is also more common than *agree in*, which occurs only twice in the UK Books data. Starting with *agree on*, here are some illustrations:

(154) We're determined to save our marriage. At least we *agree on that*. It's about **all** we *agree on* at the moment. (UK Books)

(155) Most versions of the tale *agree on these facts* and add a variety of extra details to the basic elements. (UK Books)

(156) Although various researchers have tried to measure love, not everyone *agrees on whether love is a distinct, separate entity*. (US Books)

(157) We began our work together by sorting out her motives and eventually *agreed on some goals* as priorities: first, to normalize her relationship with food and second, to focus on improving her body image. (US Books)

When discussing instances with the prepositional verb *agree with*, I pointed out that *agree with* does gladly take two complements. Interestingly, in the UK Books data there is a token that seems to have the prepositional verb *agree on* followed by an additional complement. Consider:

(158) Dependency thinkers *agree on **one point** with* other historians and analysts, and they raise two special issues. (UK Books)

On the other hand, sentence (158) might also be interpreted as a case with the prepositional verb *agree with* with an extracted additional prepositional object – one cannot say for sure. Be that as it may, here are still the two cases with the prepositional verb *agree in* that occur in the UK Books set:

(159) ...so they naturally assumed that the old chroniclers *agreed unanimously in **locating her*** reign in the ninth century. (UK Books)

(160) In general, the contributors to this volume *agreed in **several basic respects***... (UK Books)

Sentence (159) implies the idea of being of the same mind, whereas sentence (160) suggests something being in accordance with something.

7.1.3.3. *Agree about, agree for, agree upon*

Used as marginally as *agreed in*, the prepositional verbs *agree about*, *agree for* and *agree upon* represent sporadic cases:

(161) Clinicians can help families *agree about **the conditions*** under which further family discussion would be useful and whom it would be appropriate to include. (US Books)

(162) Mr McGunn here tried to persuade me to *agree for **the auction sale*** to be administered via the Tachnadray account in Dubneath. (UK Books)

(163) Organizations might *agree upon **the basic outlines of a ‘Corporate Accountability Act’*** that would provide a variety of incentives and penalties related to the need of communities for jobs... (US Books)

In each of them the prepositional verb seems to convey that something is being settled or arranged.

7.2. Summarizing the results of the UK and US Books data

Just like in the CLMET data, prepositional verb uses have kept their leading position both in the UK and US Books data. Of all the prepositional verbs *agree with* is the most frequently occurring one, *agree to* is the number two and *agree on* has beaten *agree in* and taken the third position. As for the differences between British and American English, it can be concluded that in American

English *to*-infinitives and *that*-clauses are used more often than in British English, but on the other hand in British English *agree* can be followed by a direct noun phrase object, whereas the particular usage is not acknowledged in the American variety. Moreover, zero complementation is gaining foothold both in British and as well as in American English – more than one quarter of all the analysed instances in both sets take no complements at all.

7.3. Analysing the UK Ephemera and the US Ephemera data

According to the *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary* the noun *ephemera* can be defined as “the type of objects which, when they were produced, were not intended to last a long time or were specially produced for one occasion”. Indeed, this description is very apt and to the point when it comes to the text types the subcorpora UK and US Ephemera are compiled of – these include ads, flyers, contracts, certificates, instructions etc. What is characteristic of such texts produced only for short-time purposes is that the desired issues are expressed in as a compact and informative way as possible. Accordingly, it can be presumed that the most complex structures with the verb *agree* are excluded and the most basic ones made the most of. This assumption seems to be quite accurate, considering the following results of the data analysis:

Pattern	UK EPHEMERA		US EPHEMERA	
	Occurrences (raw numbers)	Occurrences per million words	Occurrences (raw numbers)	Occurrences per million words
<i>agree</i> preposition +prepositional object	38	12.2	18	14.7
<i>agree</i> + NP	22	7.0	0	0.0
<i>agree</i> + <i>to</i> -infinitive clause	65	20.8	59	48.2
<i>agree</i> + <i>that</i> -clause	36	11.5	41	33.5
<i>agree</i> + <i>wh</i> -clause	1	0.3	0	0.0
<i>agree</i> + zero complement	33	10.6	33	26.9
irrelevant	49	15.7	2	1.6

Table 21: The occurrences of the complementation patterns of the verb *agree* in the UK and US Ephemera data

Unlike in the CLMET and the UK and US Books data, prepositional verbs no longer lead the way – instead, *to*-infinitive complements have taken a favourable turn. Moreover, in the US Ephemera *that*-clauses, as well as zero complementation have jumped the queue and left the prepositional verbs far behind. In the UK Ephemera, on the other hand, prepositional verbs stick to the second position, but *that*-clause complements and zero complementation are also fairly strong. Compared to the UK Books data, direct noun phrase complements occur frequently in the UK Ephemera set, whereas again in that of US Ephemera there are no tokens that would illustrate such usage.

The language of the ephemera data being simple and efficient, it is not a great surprise that there are no instances with extraction. Zero complementation, on the other hand, is much more popular: in the UK Ephemera data there are 10.6 occurrences per million words and that of the analysed US Ephemera set is high as 26.9:

(154) If you *agree*, you can proceed simply by completing and sending to us the data information form. (UK Ephemera)

(155) Whale watching is addictive, as anyone who went on one of our fabulous holidays last year will *agree*. (UK Ephemera)

(156) It adds to the cost of manufacture, but once you wear a Super-T, we think you'll *agree* it's worth it. (UK Ephemera)

(157) Experts *agree*: Use Your Credit Card For Reservations. (US Ephemera)

(158) I think you'll *agree*: Our Gold mastercard is one of the best values you'll find anywhere. (US Ephemera)

The style of the ephemera texts being informative and short, the sentences are not so well linked together – that is why *that* has been left out in sentences (156), (157) and (158).

As for the irrelevant cases, one may wonder the sharp gap between the British and the American English data. Indeed, in the UK Ephemera data there are 15.7 irrelevant cases per million words, whereas in the US Ephemera set there are only 1.6 occurrences within a million. This can be explained by the fact that all the excluded irrelevant tokens have the inflected form *agreed* and the UK Ephemera gave me 233 instances with this particular form, of which I analysed 50 per cent (i.e. 116 instances), whereas the US Ephemera gave me only 29 instances with *agreed*, which I naturally took all into account. However, there being almost eight times more analysed UK Ephemera

concordance lines with the inflected form *agreed* than those taken from the US Ephemera, this directly affects the number of irrelevant instances. Here are some examples of such cases:

- (159) Only the *agreed* amount can be collected from your bank or building society account. (UK Ephemera)
- (160) Unless otherwise *agreed* in writing at the time of signature of this contract, we will respond with 3 working hours of receipt of a fault report. (UK Ephemera)
- (161) The car must be returned to the *agreed* return location named in box 11 on the rental document. (US Ephemera)
- (162) If I return the car to a location different from *agreed* return location in box 11 without your written permission, I'll pay an unauthorized return location fee. (US Ephemera)

As the sentences show, in most of the irrelevant cases *agreed* is used as an adjective.

Let us now take a look at the direct NP, clause and prepositional complements of the verb *agree* in the UK and US Ephemera.

7.3.1. *Agree* + NP

The pattern *agree* + NP absolutely blossoms in the UK Ephemera data. The following examples illustrate the particular usage:

- (163) OUR COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE: We can normally *agree an amicable settlement* of the few complaints we receive. (UK Ephemera)
- (164) How does it work? Simply choose the car you want, *agree your annual mileage*. (UK Ephemera)
- (165) If you tell us you want to change the way you pay for your electricity and we cannot *agree this*, we will tell you within five working days. (UK Ephemera)
- (166) CAR PARKING – 270 spaces are provided in our own car park and *special rates can be agreed* for long term contract or block bookings. (UK Ephemera)

The reason for the large number of the direct noun phrase complements lies in the sense that the particular pattern conveys – that is, to settle or to arrange something. As many text sorts that the UK Ephemera comprises have to do with agreements and contracts (i.e. in which something is always settled), it is no wonder that the direct NP pattern is uncommonly popular in this data set.

7.3.2. Clause complementation of the verb *agree*

To-infinitives lead the way both in the UK, as well as in the US Ephemera data. In the former *agree* occurs in sequence with *to*-infinitive complements 20.8 times per million words, in the latter the figure being as high as 48.2. The following four sentences exemplify this usage:

(167) The customer *agrees to keep* his actionline Personal Number confidential and to take all other necessary precautions to prevent unauthorised use of the actionline system. (UK Ephemera)

(168) Before *agreeing to lend* you money we will want to make sure you can afford the repayments. (UK Ephemera)

(169) ... You then select whom you'd like to meet. It's a wonderfully efficient – and dignified – way to find the kind of person you prefer to socialize with, before you *agree to meet* with them. (US Ephemera)

(170) ... international corporate giants such as Revlon, Chanel, Benetton and over 500 other companies *have agreed to stop* using animals to test their products... (US Ephemera)

That-clauses are also strong: they are especially common in the US Ephemera set – 33.5

occurrences per million words represent this pattern. As for the UK Ephemera data, the

corresponding figure is 11.5. In the following examples *agree* takes a *that*-clause complement:

(171) Everyone *agrees that* a cleaner environment is an important priority. (US Ephemera)

(172) Over the centuries, her image has been studied by painters, doctors and scientists from many countries, all unanimously *agreeing that* it was “painted by brushes not of this world”. (US Ephemera)

(173) You *agree that* we may: a) include Personal Data in the Barclays Group customer systems which may be accessed by other companies... (UK Ephemera)

(174) We're so sure that you'll find this the best way to pay that we have been agreed that your bank can give you an immediate refund if an error has been made in the debiting to your account. (UK Ephemera)

Not too surprisingly, *wh*-clauses seem to be again something of a rarity – there is only one instance that has such a complement:

(175) *Agree how* much baggage, if any, the passenger wants to take. (UK Ephemera)

7.3.3. Prepositional complementation of the verb *agree*

Compared to the large number of occurrences in the CLMET, as well as in the UK and US Books data, prepositional verb uses of the verb *agree* are no longer supreme. In the UK Ephemera set there are 12.2 occurrences per million words – in the US Ephemera set the figure is slightly higher, 14.7.

What's more, the variety of prepositions is far narrower: in the CLMET data there are 9 different prepositional verbs, in the UK and US Books data 7 prepositional verbs from which to choose – however, in the Ephemera sets their number is reduced to 4. The following table shows their exact frequencies:

Pattern	UK EPHEMERA		US EPHEMERA	
	Occurrences (raw numbers)	Occurrences per million words	Occurrences (raw numbers)	Occurrences per million words
<i>agree on</i>	4	1.3	1	0.8
<i>agree to</i>	9	2.9	9	7.4
<i>agree with</i>	24	7.7	7	5.7
<i>agree upon</i>	1	0.3	1	0.8

Table 22: The occurrences of prepositional verb uses of the verb *agree* in the UK and US Ephemera data

Interestingly, *agree with* no longer is the dominant one in both sets – instead, in the US Ephemera data *agree to* occurs more frequently than the former. *Agree on* and *agree upon*, on the other hand, occur only sporadically. All these four will be presented along with illustrations in the following.

7.3.3.1. *Agree with*

Of the 24 occurrences with the prepositional verb *agree with* in the UK Ephemera data, 15 tokens take a [+HUMAN] prepositional object (i.e. *agree with somebody*) and the remaining 9 instances a [-HUMAN] prepositional object (i.e. *agree with something*). As for the US Ephemera set, of the total of 7 occurrences 5 have a prepositional object with human reference and 2 with non-human reference. The following sentences illustrate instances with a [+HUMAN] prepositional object:

(176) We *agree with* **the majority of organisations** who believe that this would not do very much for the New Forest. (UK Ephemera)

(177) I hope you read this letter and do something about it. All my friends *agree with* **me**, so you may well be getting a letter from them. (UK Ephemera)

(178) When I asked my child what she liked most about your book, she said, “I like everything in the whole book.” And I tend to *agree with* **her**. (US Ephemera)

Moreover, in both sets there are cases when *agree with* is not followed merely by a prepositional object, but also by an additional complement. In the US Ephemera set 4 instances take a *that*-clause and in the UK Ephemera set there is one token with a *that*-clause, 3 with the preposition *about* and 2 with the preposition *on*. Each of these three additional complements are illustrated in the following sentences:

(179) If you don’t *agree with* **thousands of other Globe policy owners** *that* Globe’s Birthday Life Insurance is your best life insurance value, return your policy within 30 days for a full refund plus postage. (US Ephemera)

(180) I *agree with* **you** *about* Classic FM on a Sunday. (UK Ephemera)

(181) I *agree with* **the Council** on this matter, the laying out of the field as a pitch and putt course would not affect the open character of this site. (UK Ephemera)

As for the instances with a [-HUMAN] prepositional object, some illustrations follow:

(182) I don't really *agree with* **PHAB's policies**, and wouldn't be bale to handle a regimental stuffy PHAB club like some we've seen. (UK Ephemera)

(183) I don't necessarily *agree with* **every aspect of Party policy**, and if I think it's wrong, then I'll say so. (UK Ephemera)

(184) If you do not *agree with* **the school's decision** regarding your application or the result of verification, you may discuss it with the school. You also have the right to a fair hearing. (US Ephemera)

Interestingly, in the US Ephemera set there is one instance that takes a [-HUMAN] prepositional object and is also followed by a *that*-clause:

(185) We fully *agree with* **the League of Women Voters' statement** *that* restricting the ability of our elected officials – the City Council – to make land use and zoning decisions which may become necessary... (US Ephemera)

7.3.3.2. *Agree to*

Agree to is the number one prepositional verb in the US Ephemera set and in the UK Ephemera data it has the place of the runner-up. Here are some illustrations:

(186) Winners must *agree to* **publication of their names and photographs**, if requested, as part of the publicity surrounding the promotion. (UK Ephemera)

(187) I *agree to* **the terms of the certificate**, a copy of which is available for my inspection. (UK Ephemera)

(188) By using this card you *agree to* **the terms and conditions** stated in the credit card agreement. (US Ephemera)

(189) If you use the card or authorize its use, or do not cancel your account within 30 days after you receive the card, you *have agreed to* **the terms of the offer**. (US Ephemera)

Although *agree to* is the most frequently occurring prepositional verb in the US Ephemera data, I did expect even a greater number of similar tokens – indeed, many texts included in the ephemera data are contracts and agreements in which one must express his or her consent to something.

Accordingly, I assumed that *agree to* could have been even stronger.

7.3.3.3. *Agree on, agree upon*

Not too surprisingly, *agree on* and *agree upon* are again outdistanced by the other competitors.

Here are some illustrations:

(190) They will visit your home, help you plan and *agree on the level of service* required to meet your budget. (UK Ephemera)

(191) While we may not *agree on all issues*, I support Kate Feinstein because she promises to open up the educational dialogue... (US Ephemera)

(192) ...a number of participants were interested in *agreeing on ways* of bringing relevant translator and documentation management training onstream... (US Ephemera)

(193) This constitutes his thoughts based on a combination of the action called for and his knowledge of the set **which** he and the designer *have agreed upon*. (UK Ephemera)

In sentences (190) and (192) *agree on* and in sentence (193) *agree upon* convey the idea of settling something, whereas sentence (191) expresses convergence of ideas.

7.4 Summarizing the results of the UK and US Ephemera data

The greatest change compared to the CLMET and UK and US Books data is that the prepositional verbs are no longer leading the way – instead, *to*-infinitives have taken the first position and *that*-clauses are the number two. As for the differences between British and American English, in British English prepositional verbs are used more than in American English, whereas in American English the *to*-infinitive construction is very strong. In British English the direct NP complement is used more than in the UK Books data, whereas there are no such instances in American English at all. What's more, zero complementation is also favoured, especially in American English.

8. Conclusion

The verb *agree* always requires minimally two supplementing elements, of which the first one (i.e. the subject) is obligatory, whereas the second (i.e. the complement) is not absolutely mandatory. The first element typically carries the semantic component [+HUMAN] is thus assigned the case role Experiencer. However, a subject with non-human reference is also a possibility with the particular verb – in such cases the first element takes the case role Object. The second element may also have either human or non-human reference – the possible case roles are Experiencer and Object respectively.

Although the verb *agree* can happily stand alone, it certainly proved to manifest an astounding variety of complementing structures! It accepts direct NPs, *to*-infinitive clauses, *that*-

clauses, *wh*-clauses and prepositional objects as its complements. The analysis of the corpus data shows that of these options the verb *agree* is most commonly supplemented by prepositional objects: in each part of the CLMET data, as well as in that of the UK and US Books, the prepositional verb uses of the verb *agree* are on the lead. However, the range of different prepositional verb gets more limited toward the 21st century: in the CLMET data there are altogether nine different prepositional verbs, whereas in the UK and US Books the number of them is reduced to seven – not to speak of the UK and US Ephemera data, in which not prepositional verbs, but the *to*-infinitives lead the way and the verb *agree* has only four potential prepositional verb uses. Moreover, in the CLMET data and in the UK and US *agree with* and *agree to* keep their places as the number one and the number two prepositional verb uses and in present-day written English *agree on* takes the third place, formerly occupied by *agree in* – in the UK and US Ephemera sets, on the other hand, *agree to* has beaten the prepositional verb *agree with*. As for the differences between British and American English, in the UK and US Books data prepositional verbs occur slightly more frequently in British English than in American English, whereas, oddly enough, the situation is reverse when it comes to the UK and US Ephemera data. Although still strong, it must be emphasized that the former supremacy of prepositional verbs is now challenged with the competitive complementation patterns.

Of the clause complements the ones with a *to*-infinitive occur most frequently in all the analysed data sets: although in the CLMET data the particular pattern is on the decrease, the data representing present-day English shows that the *to*-infinitives are getting stronger and are especially common in American English. The same applies to *that*-clause complements which are also enjoying a revival and widely in use both in British and American English – again slightly more in the latter. Moreover, though overlooked by grammars and the *OED*, the corpus data shows that the verb *agree* does take *wh*-clauses as its complements – they are, however, very marginally used. The *to –ing* complement is also rather rare, but as the corpus data shows, it is a possible

pattern with the verb *agree* – moreover, Bolinger’s claim can be validated, for the choice between the *to*-infinitive and the *to –ing* pattern does affect the interpretation of the sentence. As for the direct noun phrase complements, one of the most obvious differences between British English and American English is the total absence of the direct NP complements in the latter. Accordingly, Algeo’s (1988, 27) statement is correct, as he points out that in American English a preposition would precede a noun phrase object. What’s more, the CLMET data suggests an increasing trend in zero complementation and indeed, zero complements are very commonly used both in British and American English.

Potential future objectives for further study would be to investigate the rarities presented in this thesis. Indeed, it would be most interesting to learn more about the *wh*-complementation of the verb *agree*, as well as to examine the direct noun phrase complementation and to expand the discussion to spoken British and American English. On the other hand, zero complementation would also be something worth further observation: I presume that in future *that*-clauses will increasingly be replaced by zero complements – this suggestion may be especially valid when it comes to spoken British and American English. As for the prepositional verbs, it is obvious that certain uses may eventually die out (i.e. *agree upon*, *agree for*), whereas *agree with*, *agree to* and *agree on* are come to stay. Moreover, the semantic differences between the *to*-infinitive and the *to –ing* pattern would also deserve to be more closely examined.

All in all, this thesis has provided a good first glance of the complementation of the verb *agree* and given the first impulse to further investigation. Indeed, the verb *agree* offers plenty to muse on – my mind, at least, has been most agreeably engaged.

References

Corpora

The British National Corpus
The Collins Cobuild Corpus
The Corpus of Late Modern English Texts

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Appendix

Corpus: **British National Corpus**

Hits: **20** (13.19)

[conc description](#)

ABD	misfortune has changed all that . Mr Kaifu has	agreed to reshaping	his cabinet , but has insisted on keeping
AC3	be a break in his usual routine . He had	agreed to taking	on a reading tour in Scotland . Someone
ADF	suddenly stops running away from us and	agrees to being	halted .</p><p>Telepathy often seems
AMY	asked for shorter carries and the committee	agreed to reducing	them to 120 yards , and also a later suggestion
B0L	opportune for talking business , they readily	agreed to letting	him sign Jack -- and for £10,890 , which
B0S	point of order . The council should not	agree to standing	orders being ` suspended ' except in a
C98	understand sheep . I wonder if Father would	agree to getting	a shepherd at t'Martinmas Hirings , ' he
CBE	court-made promise to Bob Mays that if he would	agree to testing	to prove whose child Kim was , they would
CEN	its presidency to get other EC heads to	agree to exempting	Denmark from a single currency and a European
CFB	was the only one who came out . He fully	agreed to enlarging	the village , ' said Mr O'Connor .</p><p>
CMF	mental hospital , ever been asked if they	agree to having	a researcher about the place ? The authorities
FE2	appropriation of £6 from his wallet without	agreeing to paying	a sum in excess of the legal fare does
G29	exception of four bank staff who would not	agree to having	their discussions placed on tape .</p><p>
H9L	what I want to tell you . I wo n't even	agree to having	you partnering me at all these functions
HHB	she longed to ask whether the writer would	agree to allowing	a similar number of plants to be dug from
HHV	Friend assure the House that he will not	agree to binding	minimum rates of income tax in Europe ,
HPL	accepted the principle of job cuts and by	agreeing to accepting	the deletion of New Technology Allowance
JN6	adrift on that pay and I 've asked now to	agree to upping	the pay level and if he does we might get
K5D	in the attempted murder charge .</p>Major	agrees to meeting	with Rushdie<p>JOHN MAJOR is willing to
K5D	Thursday .</p><p>The government had already	agreed to meeting	Unita this week and the UN had been waiting

Of these 20 irrelevant are:

B0S – *agree to standing orders* (adjective)

CBE – *agree to testing* (noun)

HHV – *agree to binding minimum rates* (adjective)

K5D – *agrees to meeting with Rushdie* (noun – a newspaper headline)