

**The Complementation Patterns of the Verb *Promise*
in Recent Centuries**

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Tämä pro gradu-tutkielma tarkastelee englannin kielen verbin *promise* ja sen taivutettujen muotojen *promised*, *promising* ja *promises* komplementaatiota britannianenglannissa vuodesta 1710 nykypäivään. Tutkimuksen päätavoitteena on selvittää, miten verbin komplementaatorakenteet ovat muuttuneet ajan mittaan, sekä antaa kattava selvitys verbin komplementeista nykykielessä.

Tutkimusmateriaaleina käytetään korpusesimerkkejä kahdesta eri korpuksesta: lähteenä vuosille 1710-1920 on *The Corpus of Late Modern English Texts* (CLMET), ja nykyenglannin lähteenä toimii *The British National Corpus* (BNC). CLMET muodostuu enimmäkseen kaunokirjallisesta materiaalista, ja se on jaettu kolmeen osaan – CLMET 1, johon kuuluvat vuodet 1710-1780; CLMET 2, johon kuuluvat vuodet 1780-1850; ja CLMET 3, johon kuuluvat vuodet 1850-1920. BNC kattaa ajanjakson 1960-1993, ja sen sisältö koostuu monista eri tekstilajeista. Tämän takia BNC:n materiaali rajattiin kaunokirjallisuuteen siten, että molemmista korpuksista saatiin verrattain samankaltaista materiaalia.

Tutkielman ensimmäisessä osassa tarkastellaan tutkimuksen perustana toimivia korpuksia, korpuslingvistiikkaa ja komplementaatiota koskevia teorioita. Tämän lisäksi johdanto-osassa tutkitaan alustavasti verbin ominaisuuksia englannin kielen sanakirjojen ja kielioppiteosten avulla. Tähän tarkoitukseen käytetään englannin kielen laajinta ja kuuluisinta sanakirjaa, *The Oxford English Dictionary* (OED), sekä kahta englannin kielen opiskelijoille suunnattua sanakirjaa. Johdanto-osan jälkeen korpusmateriaalia käsitellään analyysiosassa. Verbin komplementaatioissa tapahtuneita muutoksia kartoitetaan kronologisessa järjestyksessä neljän korpusosan (CLMET 1, 2 ja 3, sekä BNC) avulla.

Tutkimuksella osoitetaan, että verbin *promise* yleisimmin käytetty komplementti on ollut *to*-infinitiivi vuodesta 1710 nykypäivään. Nykykielessä verbi voi myös ottaa nominilausekkeen (NP), *that*-lausekkeen, sekä niiden yhdistelmiä, esimerkiksi *NP + that*, *NP + NP*, ja *NP + to*-infinitiivi. Näistä jälkimmäisin komplementti, *NP + to*-infinitiivi, ei ole laajasti käytetty, sillä monet englannin kielen puhujat pitävät sitä kieliopillisesti virheellisenä. Tätäkin asiaa pohditaan tutkimuksessa seuraamalla sen käyttöä korpusmateriaaleissa. Verbiä *promise* käytetään tänä päivänä ilman komplementtia enemmän kuin koskaan ennen.

Asiasanat: *promise*, komplementaatio, korpus, korpuslingvistiikka, verbi

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1 Introduction

Consider the following illustrations of actual English usage of the verb *promise*, taken from the Corpus of Late Modern English Texts and the British National Corpus:

- (1) (a) I have a hundred difficulties which I have *promised* to clear up, and a thousand distresses and domestick misadventures crowding in upon me.... (Sterne 1759-67, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy*)
- (b) ...she said urgently, when her maid entered the room, “*promise* me that Sergeant Troy isn't a bad man. *Promise* me.” (FRE 1149)
- (c) ...cold night in February, and when I dismounted I found myself standing upon some wet rank herbage that *promised* ill for the comfort of our resting-place. (Kinglake 1844, *Eothen*)
- (d) ...a great Glasgow merchant, on hearing how she was left by her father, he offered to marry her, but she had *promised* herself to her cousin the captain, whose widow she was. (Galt 1821, *Annals of the Parish*)

These examples are taken from a time-frame spanning the last three centuries, and all serve to demonstrate some of the many ways in which the verb *promise* can be used. This thesis aims to chart certain aspects of the progress and development of the verb *promise* and its inflections *promised*, *promises*, and *promising* in the written British English of this period, that is, from the early 18th to the late 20th century, with the help of genuine examples of written English. The main body of the thesis will be divided into two parts: the first, introductory section, will be composed of chapters devoted to providing background information and a theoretical framework on which to proceed; the second half will comprise the analysis section, in which the corpus data of written British English will be presented and discussed, beginning with the earliest of the historical data, and progressing chronologically toward the more recent forms of English.

Complementation can be seen as the study of patterns in language, as words tend to be coupled only with certain other words when we form sentences. Languages are not likely to remain static, being tools of communication between humans, whose cultures, environments, and perspectives on the world are constantly shifting. Complementation patterns can be expected to shift and rearrange themselves over the years, and it is the documentation of this type of shift that is one of the aims of this thesis. The focus will be of a quantitative, as well as a qualitative nature, as both

the syntactic and semantic considerations of complement selection are taken into account. Thus, with this thesis, I seek to:

- i) document the syntactic types of complement patterns that co-occur with *promise* during the aforementioned time-frame.
- ii) compare the results of each time period, to determine whether any patterns are increasing or decreasing in usage, and whether new patterns appear or existing ones fall out of use.
- iii) discuss the connection between form and meaning, as different complement types may represent different meanings.
- iv) explore the effects that certain contextual constraints have upon complement selection.
- v) offer an empirically-based evaluation of the status of *promise* in Modern British English, in regard to its complement selection tendencies and semantic uses.

In addressing the above points, I aim to produce a paper that will be of benefit to students of English, both native and non-native speakers alike, and I hope to reveal new and as yet undiscovered aspects of the behaviour of this verb.

In addition, by way of offering justification for the selection of the verb which is to be under scrutiny here, my interest was aroused when the NP + *to*-infinitive¹ complementation pattern came to my attention. This is exemplified in the following illustration from the Corpus of Late Modern English Texts:

- (2) ...all the more sad because the girl had no reason to justify her, and no right to feel it. I had *promised* Mr. Franklin to speak to Rosanna, and this seemed the fittest time for keeping my word. (Collins 1868, *The Moonstone*)

As a native speaker of New Zealand English, I was quick to claim that this type of complement is not an acceptable choice for the verb *promise*. It was, and still is, my opinion that in this type of pattern it can be unclear exactly who the subject of the lower verb, in this case *speak*, is. Is it *Mr. Franklin*, or is it the speaker, *I*? As we shall see, in a section that explores this question further, I am not alone in my misgivings. This pattern, as it is of personal interest to me, shall be one of the aspects of the verb *promise* that is to receive due attention in this thesis.

¹ Noun phrase + infinitive verb form preceded by *to*.

2 On corpora and corpus linguistics

This chapter provides an introduction to the field of corpus linguistics, and explores some of the issues surrounding this topic. I first define the notion of the *corpus*, and move on to look at some of the problems encountered when relying on electronic databases in the study of language, before introducing the two corpora used in this thesis.

2.1 Preliminaries: explaining the basics

Kennedy's definition of a corpus being "a body of written text or transcribed speech which can serve as a basis for linguistic analysis and description" (1998, 1) is very similar to the description provided by the *Oxford English Dictionary*, (hereafter abbreviated to *OED*) which in essence says the same thing. Kennedy goes on to observe that a corpus can take many forms, from an immense 100 million-plus word database of written and spoken language complete with tagging and parsing facilities, to "collections of citations" (*ibid.*), or even an online dictionary. Partington (1998, 2) similarly comments on the "extremely heterogeneous" nature of the multitude of corpora available today, and notes that there is no one particular size that is considered to be standard for a corpus. Corpora are compiled and employed according to specific needs; some are for general purposes, while others are more suitable for specialised research projects. Kennedy also points out that there is a difference between a corpus and a text archive, stating that the former is "normally a systematic, planned and structured compilation of text", and the latter is a "text repository [...] huge [...] and normally not structured" (1998, 4).

Corpus linguistics, therefore, may be defined as the field of language study that utilises corpora to investigate linguistic phenomena. According to Hunston and Francis (2000, 15), corpus linguistics is "a way of investigating language by observing large amounts of naturally-occurring, electronically stored discourse". It is important to note, however, that although digital technology

has allowed corpus linguistics to “come of age” (Partington 1998, 146), it did not mark the beginning of text-based linguistic studies (Kennedy 1998, 2), as linguists have been using books and collections of texts for centuries to study language usage and change. To be sure though, “[t]he use of [modern] corpora has given an impetus to new ideas on the nature of language” (Johansson 2009, 38), and studies in this field have indeed taken on a new dimension. Mair (2002, 107) also comments that “progress has been impressive in corpus linguistics, both in terms of quantity of material available for analysis and the sophistication of recording, storage, and retrieval techniques.” Corpora are now recognised as indispensable tools in many areas of research and language learning.

2.2 Issues to be aware of when using corpora

Writing around four decades ago, at the dawn of the new era of computerised corpora, Leech (1968, 95) discusses the conflict between two schools of thought that were current at the time: the Chomskyan way of thinking, which advocated native speaker intuition as opposed to corpus data, versus the pro-corpus ideals of the linguists who were working on compiling the first of the modern corpora, the Brown Corpus. Chomsky was opposed to the use of objective corpus data, as being an “inadequate” basis for the description of natural languages (Malmkjær 2002, 85).

It should be pointed out here, that despite the rise in the popularity and use of corpora, they still have certain inherent limitations. One of the weaknesses of corpora and the use of the data obtained from them, is that no matter how large, a corpus cannot be fully representative of the infinite nature of language. On this point, Milic (1995, 328) observes that the Brown Corpus, at one million words, is nevertheless missing many words that are commonplace in the lexicon. Leech counters this problem with the comment that “this does not in any way diminish [the corpus’] importance as a tool of empirical confirmation” (1968, 94). Many historical corpora also show an (often unavoidable) sociolinguistic bias, i.e. they represent mainly the language of the upper levels

of a male-dominated society, or they tend to “sample a very restricted range of genres” (Leech and Smith 2005, 3) Some of the large modern corpora, however, address this problem by including texts by authors from all levels of society.

Turning now to certain factors that can affect the sample we extract from a corpus, it should be stated that, as yet, no tagging process is infallible, and more often than not a search will not yield perfect results. In relation to this problem, Ball (1994, 295), uses the terms *recall* and *precision*, where “precision is the proportion of retrieved material that is relevant, and recall is the proportion of relevant information that was retrieved”. Thus, a search of a tagged corpus for all verbal forms of a particular word is likely to return the occasional noun or adjective, showing imperfect precision. This can be easily dealt with by going through the results and discarding the irrelevant tokens. With recall however, the problem is that it is not possible to know, without going through the entire corpus manually, whether or not the search has missed any relevant tokens, which, in the case of a large corpus, would take a very long time. Recall can be an issue when conducting research on uncommon patterns and rarely used words, but in the case of a relatively common verb such as *promise*, it does not present a problem.

2.3 Normalising frequencies

When analysing corpus data it is essential to employ a means of examining all frequencies and occurrences of the target pattern in relation to one another, regardless of external factors such as the size of the corpus or the length of the text in which the target occurs. If we neglect to calculate an average of the raw data, we would arrive at incorrect and misleading results that cannot be applied to other studies (Biber et al. 1998, 263). *Normalisation* is the term given to the technique used when averages are calculated in corpus analysis, and it results in a number known as a *normalised frequency*.

The technique consists of multiplying the total amount of occurrences of a given pattern by a pre-ordained number – one million is frequently chosen as this number, and will be used in this study – then dividing the result by the total number of words in the relevant corpus or corpus subsection. This gives a normalised frequency (NF) of x words per million. By way of illustration, consider the following:

$$\frac{40 \times 1,000,000}{2,096,405} = 19.08 \text{ words per million (NF)}$$

This shows the calculation of 40 occurrences of a certain construction found in the first part of the Corpus of Late Modern English Texts (2,096,405 words). The resulting NF is 19.08.

2.4 Corpora used in this study

This section introduces the corpora from which I have extracted the data for this study; the Corpus of Late Modern English Texts, and the British National Corpus.

2.4.1 The Corpus of Late Modern English Texts

The Corpus of Late Modern English Texts, hereafter abbreviated to the CLMET, is one of the corpora used for this study; it is the corpus providing the Late Modern English historical data, enabling a diachronic analysis. It has been observed by Rudanko (1998, 337) that “the term ‘late Modern English’ is not entirely precise”; a point with which I agree. Rudanko goes on to state that the period is “about two hundred years” long, stretching from the early 18th, to the late 19th or early 20th centuries (ibid.). Indeed, the CLMET, assembled shortly after Rudanko’s observation, also adopts this time-frame. It is a corpus of around 10 million words selected from texts published in the years 1710 to 1920. The corpus is divided into three sections; the first covering the years 1710 to 1780, the second 1780 to 1850, and the third 1850 to 1920. These sections will be referred to as the CLMET 1, 2, and 3 respectively. There is also an extended version of the corpus which consists of roughly 15 million words. For the present study however, as the verb in question is used with

some frequency in English, I will need to use only the basic version of the corpus, that is, 9,818,326 words published during the years 1710 to 1920.

The texts that make up the CLMET were collected from *Project Gutenberg* and the *Oxford Text Archive*, and were selected with four criteria in mind:

1) The authors of the texts of each sub-section of the corpus were born within a 70 year time-frame, the starting date of which precedes the starting date of the relevant sub-section by 30 years.

This scheme is outlined in Figure 1 below, adapted directly from De Smet (2005, 71):

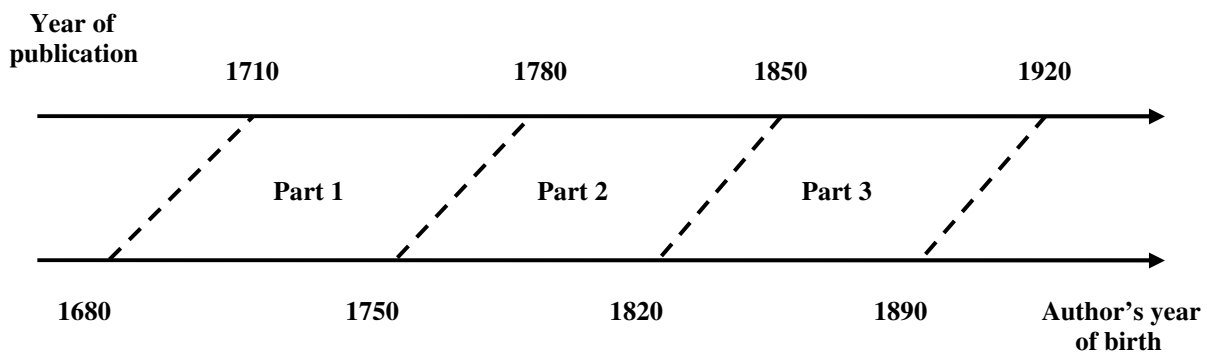


Figure 1: CLMET sub-sections.

This is intended to “increase the homogeneity within each sub-period – and accordingly, to decrease the homogeneity between the sub-periods” (ibid., 70). It also ensures that no author’s work can appear in more than one sub-section.

2) The authors are all British, native English speakers. De Smet places this restriction in order to keep dialectal variation to a minimum, thus allowing the results of analyses from this corpus to be compatible and comparable to those obtained from other corpora of British English.

3) The amount of text from any one author is limited to 200,000 words, in order to help prevent the personal style of any one writer from exerting too much influence over the overall corpus data.

4) Since the authors in question are the prominent names in British literature of the period, they are predominantly upper-class, well-educated males. Recognising this, an effort was made to reduce the inevitable bias by favouring non-literary, lower register texts whenever the opportunity arose, and by paying attention to female authors over male wherever possible. With regards to this unavoidable bias, De Smet points out that the CLMET will not be suitable for certain studies, including “fine-grained sociolinguistic analysis” (ibid., 78). Since this description does not apply to the present thesis however, the issue of bias is not of concern.

De Smet, in acknowledging the claims of various scholars that less attention has been paid to the Late Modern English period than any other, notes that this is surprising, as “the Late Modern English period is a very well-documented one” (ibid., 69). The eighteenth century in particular was an important time for the English language, as during this period there was a

[...] concern for order and clear explanation [which] took the form of two linguistic initiatives: one was to establish an academy to ‘fix’ the language [...] the other was to produce comprehensive, respected and respectable dictionaries. (Hughes 2005, 223)

Thus the eighteenth century was a time of general examination, standardisation, and lexicographical documentation of English, and it is for this reason that I consider it to be the logical starting point for a study of the English of recent centuries, with the CLMET providing an excellent platform from which to begin.

2.4.2 The British National Corpus

The British National Corpus, hereafter referred to as the BNC, provides the Present-day English data for this study. It is a corpus made up of 96,986,707 words, 90 per cent of which is written, and 10 per cent spoken. Of the written section, from which the data for this study is taken, 4049 different texts were used. Fictional texts in the BNC were published between 1960 and 1993. According to the BNC reference guide (2007), texts were chosen for inclusion on the basis of three criteria: domain (subject field), time (when published), and medium (whether book, journal etc.). It

was intended for the corpus to represent a range of language styles, so that it could be seen as “a microcosm of current British English in its entirety”, and so that “different types of text could be compared and contrasted with each other” (ibid.). The amount of words taken from each text is limited to 45,000. The different types of domain represented include fiction, non-fiction, academic, and newspaper, to name but a few. The Modern English data for this study, in order to match the domain of the CLMET as closely as possible, is taken from the Imaginative Prose section of the BNC, which is comprised of 16,496,408 words

The BNC is a tagged corpus, unlike the CLMET. This means that a search can be made for a certain part of speech only, e.g. verbal forms of a word, excluding nominal and adjectival, bearing in mind the issues of precision and recall.

3 On complementation

This chapter offers a general introduction to the study of complementation, supplemented by a discussion of the important terms and categories encountered in the field of complementation; insights into well known theoretical frameworks already in place; an introduction to control and NP movement; and an outline of various contextual constraints that influence complement selection.

3.1 Introduction to the study of complementation

It is often useful to begin with a dictionary definition of the appropriate term when attempting to define a concept. I have therefore consulted the *OED* in order to explicate the term *complement*. According to the *OED*, to complement something in a general sense is “to make complete or perfect, to supply what is wanting”. The *OED* also offers a sense which is more specific to our needs: “one or more words joined to another to complete the sense”. Turning to other sources, Quirk et al. (1972, 801) define complements as “the elements of clause structure that are obligatory for the completion of [...] meaning”, while Fillmore et al.’s observation, that the meanings of some words “are intrinsically relational, and require the support of other phrases in a sentence to be coherent” (2003, 236), effectively defines the concept we noted in the *OED* definition above; that of supplying what is needed for the completion of a whole. The study of complementation, therefore, focuses on these elements that are necessary to complete the meaning of a particular part of speech, and the relationship between this *head* and its complement. Corpora play an integral role in this field, when research is being undertaken into the changes taking place in complementation tendencies over time.

3.2 Preliminaries: explaining the basics

We have already defined a complement as an item that is intrinsically linked to its head, in a symbiotic relationship resulting in coherent meaning and grammatical completeness. Items of different syntactic categories take complements, i.e. nouns, verbs and adjectives, and complements themselves take a variety of different forms; they may be phrasal, such as NPs, AdjPs, PrepPs, or AdvPs², or clausal, either finite or non-finite (Herbst et al. 2004, xxv-xxvi; Huddleston and Pullum 2002, 224). Huddleston and Pullum (ibid. 216) go on to differentiate between core and non-core complements, and external and internal complements. The first distinction separates complements that are typically NPs from those that are typically PrepPs, as shown in the following example, from Huddleston and Pullum:

- (3) Kim gave the key to Pat.

The PrepP *to Pat* is labelled non-core, as it is only related to the verb indirectly, through the preposition. This type of division does not concern us however; in our analysis all complements are to be categorised but treated as equals, as it were³. The second division made by Huddleston and Pullum is that of internal and external complements. In brief, an internal complement is anything which is a part of the verb phrase, while an external complement is anything that is not. Thus in (3), *Kim* is an external complement, while *the key*, and *to Pat* are internal complements. We are concerned only with the so-called internal complements in this study. We are faced with similar distinctions when we look at valency theory and argument structure in later sections.

Huddleston and Pullum also note that complements are not always obligatory in a sentence, illustrating this with the following examples (ibid., 221):

- (4) (a) She perused the report.
(b) She read the report.

² *Noun phrase, adjective phrase, prepositional phrase, adverb phrase*, respectively.

³ This thesis will, however, divide complements on the basis of sententiality, a matter to be discussed below.

In (4a) the NP complement *the report* must be present, since *peruse* cannot stand alone, while in (4b) *the report* may be omitted, resulting in a grammatical construction with only the information as to what *she* was *reading* being missing.

We now turn to the category of adjuncts. While the complement is central to the completion of meaning, and its presence (or possible absence) in the sentence depends entirely on the verb, the adjunct is more peripheral, less tightly connected to the verb, and is not obligatory. Adjuncts tend to perform semantic functions within a sentence, denoting, for example, place, frequency, manner, or time (ibid., 215). Discussion of the differences between complements and adjuncts is taken up in the following section.

Finally, the head, as we have noted, is the item that selects, or licenses its complements. This is known as *subcategorisation*: heads are “subcategorised according to the complementation they take” (ibid., 219). The present study deals with a verbal head, and this is known as the matrix verb, with the higher clause in which the matrix verb is located referred to as the matrix clause.

3.3 Complements vs. adjuncts

Having outlined the categories we will be dealing with, it is vital to be able to differentiate between them. Distinguishing between complements and adjuncts is not always a straightforward matter, and therefore deserves more attention. To illustrate the difference, consider the following examples, adapted from Radford (1988, 176):

- (5) (a) A student [*of physics*] = complement
 (b) A student [*with long hair*] = adjunct

A complement has a close relationship with its governing head, and in this case it can be seen that in (5a) the PrepP *of physics* tells us what the student is studying, while in (5b) the PrepP *with long hair* gives no such information. The following paraphrasings of (5a/b) help to highlight the difference:

- (6) (a) He is a student of physics = He is studying physics.
 (b) He is a student with long hair ≠ He is studying long hair.

Herbst et al. (2004, xxiv) point out two properties of adjuncts that can help in their identification: they are not obliged to be present in the sentence (7a); and they may be easily replaced by a paraphrasing of equal meaning (7b) (examples adapted from Herbst et al.):

- (7) (a) I walked along the cliff path (last night).
 (b) I walked along the cliff path last night / during the storm / after reading the paper.

Huddleston and Pullum (*ibid.*, 219-228) also provide several criteria for enabling the differentiation of complements and adjuncts, among them position of the element within the sentence. Complements are not always in a fixed position: they may be subject to movement and extraction (as we shall see in a later section), in which case the entire character of the sentence changes, but adjuncts have far more freedom to move. If we look back to the previous examples, in (7a) *last night* may appear before the subject; between the matrix and lower clauses; or in sentence-final position, without significant change to the overall meaning or character of the sentence.

3.4 Valency theory and the obligatoriness of complements

We have already stated here that a complement is obligatory, and that it must be present in the sentence with its governing head. According to Herbst and Roe however, this is not necessarily the case, and a finer distinction can be made, with reference to obligatory, optional, and contextually optional complements (1996, 183). An obligatory complement is simply a complement that cannot be omitted without the sentence losing its grammaticality. This type has already been demonstrated (cf. (4a) above). Contextually optional complements are those which may be deleted “if and only if the argument they represent is identifiable in the context of the utterance” (*ibid.*), as shown by the bracketed material in (8a), while optional complements need not be present at all (8b):

- (8) (a) She was offered a place in Reading. I think she will accept (the place in Reading).
 (b) She was reading.

This distinction is another way of interpreting the traditional grammatical notion of transitivity, with different senses of a verb often requiring one, two, or no objects. Valency theory is a well known framework upon which many linguists base their work on complementation. The valency of a head refers to the number of dependents, or complements, it may take. Herbst and Roe defend the valency theory view, by emphasising the ability of the optional complement perspective to treat “related patterns as related and not as completely different patterns of the same verb” (ibid., 182). Similarly Allerton (1982, 2) points out that the traditional notion of transitivity “only tells one small part of the story” and that valency theory can describe “on a more comprehensive basis [...] the different potentials that individual verbs have for occurring in a variety of sentence structures”. This view is certainly worth taking into account in any study of complementation.

3.5 Argument structure and theta theory

Here we follow from the discussion of valency theory to look at the relationship between a head and its complements from a slightly different perspective, in a section that sets out to explain the concepts of argument structure and theta theory.

In argument structure, as in the previously discussed valency theory, predicates are classified according to how many, and what kind of arguments they require in order to function grammatically. As Haegeman puts it, “arguments are the participants minimally involved in the activity or state expressed by the predicate” (1991, 36). Arguments are not restricted to being NPs; they may also be clauses. Predicates requiring one argument are one-place predicates, those requiring two arguments are two-place predicates, and so on. A predicate is said to subcategorise for a certain number and syntactic type of argument. *Promise* can be seen as a three-place predicate, as there must be someone making the *promise*, something being *promised*, and a recipient of the thing *promised*. In terms of the semantic characteristics of the arguments a predicate may take, the term *selection* is used. Naturally there are restrictions on the type of argument that is eligible for

selection by a particular predicate. Radford defines selection restrictions as “semantic/pragmatic restrictions on the choice of expressions within a given category which can occupy a given sentence position” (1988, 370). Here we are referring to arguments possessing properties such as human, non-human, rational, non-rational, abstract, concrete etc. In accordance with much of the work done in this area, the notation [+/- HUMAN / RATIONAL / ABSTRACT / ANIMATE] will be adopted in this thesis when discussing these properties. To briefly illustrate what has just been discussed, consider the following example:

(9) Mr. Green killed Mrs. Green.

In (9) the predicate *kill* subcategorises for two NPs, represented by *Mr. Green* and *Mrs. Green*.

Here, *kill* has selected a subject and complement that are both [+ HUMAN], but this need not be the case. Other senses of *kill* may allow selection of entities with other semantic properties, as can be seen in the following examples:

- (10) (a) Stress killed Mrs. Green.
 (b) Mr. Green killed the conversation.
 (c) An off-colour remark killed the conversation.

It is important to note the connection between selection restrictions and the sense of a head.

This brings us to the notion of *theta-roles*, which is a term used in the literature in reference to “the [thematic] roles of the participants in the state of affairs described in the sentence” (Davies and Dubinsky 2004, 4). Although it is claimed that there appears to be “a notable absence of consensus about what thematic roles are” (Dowty 1991, 547), and that “the theory of thematic roles is still very sketchy” (Haegeman 1991, 41)⁴ it can be said that most linguists believe in their importance, and a general list of labels for different roles does exist. Some of the more widely agreed upon roles (adapted from Haegeman) include:

- 1) Agent: initiator of the action expressed by the predicate.
- 2) Beneficiary: one who benefits from the action expressed by the predicate.
- 3) Theme: the entity moved by the action expressed by the predicate.

⁴ Although both Dowty and Haegeman’s comments were made almost two decades ago, they still appear to be relevant today.

Thus, in the sentence

(11) Elsie *promised* Paul a new camera.

Elsie is assigned the theta-role of agent, *Paul* the role of beneficiary, and *a new camera* the role of theme. There are several more theta-roles in the literature that need not concern us here, with labels such as Patient, Experiencer, Source, Goal, and Instrument. Theta theory (or Θ -theory) is the term used for this aspect of the grammar, and the principle that effectively underpins the theory, known as the Theta Criterion, is as follows:

“Each argument bears one and only one Θ -role, and each Θ -role is assigned to one and only one argument” (Chomsky 1981, 36).

This principle will be used in the following section to help in explaining the notions of control and NP movement.

3.6 Control, NP movement, and *promise*

In this section I will outline the concepts of control and NP movement, and consider the implications these have on the verb *promise*, as well as undertaking a discussion of the NP + *to*-infinitive pattern and its relationship with control.

3.6.1 Control

Consider the following example:

(12) The kids *promised* to behave.

This sentence is widely assumed to be comprised of two clauses; [The kids *promised*] is the main, or matrix clause, while [to behave] is the embedded, or complement clause. Following from this, we can see that the subject of the matrix clause, *the kids*, is also the subject of the lower clause, *behave*. This is clear when we realise that it is *the kids* who *promise*, and also *the same kids* who will be doing the *behaving*. According to the theta criterion outlined in the previous section, an argument may bear only one theta-role, and each theta-role is assigned to only one argument. Thus, the lower

clause verb must have a subject in order not to violate the Theta Criterion, and, in the case of an infinitive clause, it must be implicit. To represent this subject, the literature recognises “the abbreviation PRO [which] has been devised to stand for a phonetically null [...] pronoun that occupies the subject position of infinitives in control structures” (Riemsdijk and Williams 1986, 132). PRO can be shown in the following way:

(13) The kids *promised* [PRO] to behave.

The sentence in (13) is thus a control structure. There are two types of control: subject control, where the “subject NP of the main clause is co-referential with PRO” (Carnie 2002, 267); and object control, where “the main clause object is co-referential with PRO” (ibid.). Our example sentence exhibits subject control, i.e. the matrix subject controls the reference of PRO, and indeed *promise* is generally understood to be a subject control predicate (cf. e.g. Radford 1988, 324; Farkas 1988, 30; Larson 1991, 103; Sag and Pollard 1991, 65; Hornstein 1999, 76). The following illustration demonstrates object control, using the verb *persuade*:

(14) Dad persuaded the kids [PRO] to behave.

In this case, PRO gets its reference from the matrix clause object, *the kids*. Hence *the kids* have been *persuaded*, and are also the ones who will be doing the *behaving*. Following the section on NP movement, we shall return to the topic of subject and object control, as I outline the problem of the NP + *to*-infinitive construction which was briefly mentioned in the introduction.

3.6.2 NP movement

NP movement, or raising, is the second type of structure to be looked at here, as this also has bearing on our predicate *promise*. We begin by considering an example of an NP movement structure:

(15) The kids are likely to behave.

The difference between an NP movement structure, such as example (15) above, and a control structure, is that with NP movement there is no need for PRO. It is held that in the above type of sentence, *the kids* is not actually the original subject of the matrix verb, but the “superficial” subject (Radford 1988, 436); it is the subject of the lower clause verb in a different position. As Postal puts it, with NP movement, “main clause subject NPs are actually former complement subjects which achieved their final locus through Raising” (1974, 33). The underlying structure of (15), or the structure it had prior to the raising of *the kids* to matrix subject position, is as follows:

(16) It is likely that the kids will behave.

The predicate *be likely* does not assign a theta-role to its subject; its subject here is the pleonastic, or semantically empty *it*. This is characteristic of NP movement predicates; they “permit a non-referential Subject like existential *there*” (Radford 1988, 443), or pleonastic *it*, in the example we have been discussing.

To link this with our verb *promise*, as we have already established, it is a subject control predicate. But according to Postal, and as can be seen from the apparent acceptability of sentences such as:

(17) It promises to be sunny today. (from Postal 1974, 293)

where *promise* allows *it* into the subject position, it is therefore also a raising predicate. Davies and Dubinsky state that “[t]here are verbs in English which seem to occur in both control and raising structures, albeit with slightly different meanings” (2004, 9), and *promise* is noted as being one of these verbs. Carnie concurs, noting that “a few rare [verbs] can require both [control and NP movement]” (Carnie 2002, 262). Thus, at this stage we are able to state that *promise* is one of a small class of English verbs that exhibit both subject control and NP movement properties.

This has been a necessarily brief section on a rather complex topic, so for a more comprehensive discussion of control and NP movement as it pertains to *promise*, I refer the reader to the works cited in this section.

3.6.3 Control and the *promise* + NP + *to*-infinitive pattern

In the introduction section to this thesis, it was stated that the reason for the selection of the verb *promise* as the subject of this paper was due to a curiosity about a certain complement type that *promise* selects – the NP + *to*-infinitive pattern – and a desire to investigate it further. As a reminder, the illustration provided in the introduction is repeated below:

- (18) ...all the more sad because the girl had no reason to justify her, and no right to feel it. I had *promised* Mr. Franklin to speak to Rosanna, and this seemed the fittest time for keeping my word. (Collins 1868, *The Moonstone*)

Indeed, my view that this construction is not an acceptable option for *promise* finds support in the literature (cf. e.g. Aitchison 1981, 52; Dixon 1991, 148⁵; Culicover and Jackendoff 2001, 498; Huddleston & Pullum 2002, 1229-1230), where it is stated that some speakers of English may find the sequence either ungrammatical or borderline unacceptable.

In section 3.6.1 above, I introduced the two main types of control that are relevant to our discussion – subject control and object control. We have noted that, in terms of control, *promise* is a predicate of the subject control type. Thus, in the above example, *I* is the subject of *promise*, and the controller of the understood subject of the infinitive clause, PRO. The fact that it is *I*, and not *Mr. Franklin* controlling PRO makes *promise* something of an anomaly. It has been noted that the type of construction in (18) above is “the only same-subject (equi-subject) construction [in English] containing a *to*-infinitive complement to allow the explicit mention of the addressee between the matrix verb and the complement clause” (Egan 2006, 2). Egan goes on to point out that, when the promisee, or matrix object, is mentioned explicitly, the finite complement is generally the preferred option, as is shown below in a paraphrasing of the relevant section of example (18):

- (19) I had *promised* Mr. Franklin that I would speak to Rosanna.

In the following sections, we will be discussing certain changes that have taken place in the complementation patterns of English in recent centuries, and it is against that background that we

⁵ Dixon, in fact, states that contemporary Australian English speakers are among those who do not use this pattern.

take note of the observation by Rohdenburg (2006, 145), that one of the results of these changes is a “simplification or reduction in the control potential” of certain verbs. It would seem that other verbs may have, at one time, had the same control properties as *promise*, but, due to changes over time, *promise* appears to be one of the last verbs to retain its subject control properties in the presence of a matrix object (Rohdenburg 1996, 168). This runs contrary to Rosenbaum’s Minimal Distance Principle (1967, 16-21) which proposes that PRO gets its reference from the NP to which it is closest, which would be, of course, the matrix object. Indeed, Rosenbaum’s Principle has been criticised for its inability to account for the control properties of *promise* (cf. Sag and Pollard 1991, 103).

Rohdenburg also makes a similar point to Egan; that when the object of *promise* is explicit, a finite *that*-clause complement is a far more common choice than a *to*-infinitive (Rohdenburg, *ibid.*). This is linked to cognitive complexity, and a tendency to select the more easily understood grammatical sequence (the issue of complexity is discussed in greater detail below). According to Rohdenburg, the situation concerning the finite being favoured over the infinite complement has been changing over the past few centuries, and therefore a drop in the usage of the NP + *to*-infinitive pattern ought to be discernable in our corpus data.

Furthermore, according to Visser’s Generalisation (Visser 1973, 2118), constructions such as this do not passivise, as can be demonstrated in the following (ungrammatical) version of our example:

(20) *Mr Franklin was *promised* (by me) to speak to Rosanna.

Given the unacceptability of the above example, it goes without saying that we are highly unlikely to find any such formations among any NP + *to*-infinitive tokens we may find in the corpus data.

Much research has been done on this subject, and there is a wealth of background material available. I have referred to what I feel to be the most relevant discussions on the control potential

of *promise* for our present purposes, and although there is a great deal more to be said, it shall be left for future research.

3.7 Other factors affecting complement selection

In this section I introduce several concepts, termed “extra-semantic factors” (Vosberg 2003b, 305) which have been shown to have some influence on complement selection, and which will form a part of our framework as we proceed to analyse the corpus data. I open this section by discussing a phenomenon known as “the Great Complement Shift” (Rohdenburg 2006, 143), before outlining the aforementioned extra-semantic factors that are relevant to any discussion of complementation.

3.7.1 The Great Complement Shift

English has undergone some major upheavals during its lifetime, all of which have contributed to the creation of the versions of the language spoken today. The change that is most relevant to our present discussion is the Great Complement Shift, so labelled by Rohdenburg in recent years. It has been described as a “pattern of changes affecting the system of English predicate complementation” (Rudanko 2006, 4). Much of the research on complementation in recent centuries that has focused on the effects of this shift has been aimed at describing the increased use of the gerund (*-ing* form) and the way it has encroached upon territory previously dominated by the *to*-infinitive verb form. Indeed, this can be seen as the catalyst for the shift, and is thought to have started to occur during the Middle English period, when the gerund began to take on more verbal properties (Fanego 1996a, 33). This particular aspect of the shift does not immediately concern us however, as the subject of our investigation, the verbal predicate *promise*, does not, and has never, as far as I am aware, licensed the *-ing* form as a complement. More in line with our discussion though, is the aforementioned observation by Rohdenburg (cf. § 3.6.3) concerning the effect that the Complement Shift has had on the control potential of some English verbs.

3.7.2 The Complexity Principle

Cognitive complexity is a factor that goes some way towards determining complement choice, according to Rohdenburg, whose Complexity Principle runs as follows:

In the case of more or less explicit grammatical options the more explicit one (s) will tend to be favoured in cognitively more complex environments. (1996, 151).

Cognitively complex environments may include passive constructions, discontinuous structures, and overly long subjects, objects, and / or subordinate clauses (*ibid.*). The presence of any of these factors places a burden on our ability to process what we are hearing or reading, and therefore it is claimed that, when speaking or writing, we make an effort, either consciously or subconsciously, to select the more explicit option – when there is a choice available – in order to allow communication to flow more freely.

The term *insertions* refers to extra material that has been inserted between the matrix and lower clauses, resulting in the type of discontinuous structure referred to above, and cognitive complexity (Vosberg 2003a, 210). Another general principle in this respect, as outlined by Rohdenburg, is provided below:

The less directly the dependent clause is linked to its superordinate clause, or the more complex the dependent clause turns out to be, the greater is the need to make its sentential status more explicit. (Rohdenburg 1995, 368)

Thus, in cases of inserted material, we tend to choose the more explicit options accordingly. In the case of finite *that*-clauses, where it is often acceptable to omit the *that* complementiser, it is claimed (*ibid.*) that the complementiser will tend to be retained in situations involving insertions, or, when given a choice between a non-finite and a finite clause, we tend to choose the more explicit finite clause to counter the more complex construction.

3.7.3 Extractions

Extractions are similar to insertions, in that they create a more complex environment, and tend to trigger the use of the more explicit complement. With extractions, however, we are dealing with material that has been extracted out of the lower clause and moved to the left, across the sentence boundary, to a landing site elsewhere in the sentence. Postal (1994, 162) lists nine types of extraction, which are set out below. In the accompanying illustrations, which are adapted from Postal, the bracketed material on the left indicates the element that has been extracted, and moved to a new position; and the rightmost brackets, containing *t*, represent the *trace*, or the gap left behind following the extraction:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| 1) Question extraction | [Who] did they nominate [t] to be director? |
| 2) Restrictive relative extraction | [The gun] which they claimed [t] was used in the crime. |
| 3) Pseudo clefting | [What] Ellen wants [t] is a Mercedes-Benz. |
| 4) Negative NP extraction | [No such gorilla] did I ever see [t]. |
| 5) Comparative extraction | Stella tickled more chimps than [what] I said that
Dwight tickled [t]. |
| 6) Exclamatory extraction | [What a lovely woman] he married [t]! |
| 7) Topicalisation | [Frank] I would never hire [t]. |
| 8) Nonrestrictive relative extraction | Frank, [who] they adored [t], is dishonest. |
| 9) Clefting | It was Frank [who] they hired [t]. |

Postal divides these into two groups; the first six being type A and the latter three are type B. This division seems unnecessary for our purposes, however, and shall be disregarded here. Vosberg (2003b, 307) summarises Postal's list, giving relativisation, comparativisation, topicalisation and interrogation as the major types, with clefting, pseudo-clefting, negative NP extraction and exclamatory extraction as secondary. Vosberg's categorisation will be adopted for the remainder of this thesis. Vosberg has developed an Extraction Principle, to account for the influence that extraction is claimed to have on complement selection:

The Extraction Principle: In the case of infinitival or gerundial complement options, the infinitive will tend to be favoured in environments where a complement of the subordinate clause is extracted (by topicalisation, relativisation, comparativisation, or interrogation etc.) from its original position and crosses clause boundaries. (ibid., 308)

Rudanko (2010, 10) has since expanded upon the Extraction Principle, by successfully showing that it is not only complements that are subject to extraction, but also adjuncts, as shown in the following example of topicalisation, adapted from Rudanko (ibid., 11):

- (21) Over the tundra of that vast region he was accustomed to make two trips a year by dog-team, carrying the gospel.

Extraction, therefore, of complements or adjuncts, creates a complex environment in which a suitably explicit complement form is desired in order to assist in our understanding of the sentence. The above principle refers to infinitival and gerundial complements, which, in the case of the verb *promise*, has little bearing on our discussion, given that it does not select a gerundial complement. A general introduction to the topic of extractions was, however, the goal of this sub-section, as extractions will be of interest in the upcoming analysis.

3.7.4 The *horror aequi* condition

Defined by Rohdenburg (2003, 236) as “the widespread (and presumably universal) tendency to avoid the use of formally (near-) identical and (near-) adjacent (non-coordinate) grammatical elements or structures”, the *horror aequi* condition exerts a significant influence on the choice of complement following a matrix predicate. Complement selection becomes “context-sensitive” (Rudanko 2002, 103). In practice, this means that a language user will avoid immediately following a *to*-infinitive with another *to*-infinitive, or an *ing*-form with another *ing*-form, often to the point of employing a particular form in an unexpected situation, as the following example from Fanego shows:

- (22) ...it was not safe for me to attempt doing him any good. (Defoe 1724, from Fanego 2007, 177)

According to Fanego, *attempt* has a strong preference for a following *to*-infinitive, but the *horror aequi* condition has effectively ruled this option out, and left the author with no other choice but the

gerundial complement. We shall be surveying our corpus data for violations of the principle, as well as evidence in support of it, as in examples such as (22) above.

4 *Promise* in dictionaries and the literature

In this chapter we move on to survey some of the previous work done on *promise*, by taking into account three dictionaries and a number of grammars. Following a brief account of the etymological development of *promise* from its roots in Classical Latin, I shall discuss the syntactic behaviour of the verb, before looking at the senses found in the dictionaries. Finally, consideration of the relationship between sense and structure will conclude this chapter.

4.1 Etymology

The waters of etymology are fascinating but all too often unclear, with a fair proportion of the words we use today having roots that are subject to speculation. Fortunately however, according to the two eminent sources consulted for this section, the *OED* and the *Chambers Dictionary of Etymology* (hereafter *CDE*), the verb *promise* as we know it today has an uncomplicated lineage. It is believed to have begun life as the Classical Latin verb *prōmittere* (*pro* + *mittere* = to put / send forth), whose neuter past participle produced the nominal form *prōmissum* (*CDE* 2006, 848), meaning a pledge or vow. Around 1400 this is known to have become the noun *promys*, as it is attested in Maundeville's *Travels* (*ibid.*). Another form developed from the same Latin root via French, and is known to have existed around the year 1150 (*OED*) and made its way into English as the forms *promise* / *promesse*. It is thanks to the French influence that modern *promise* gets its figurative sense of *give grounds for expectation of future events* (*ibid.*).

4.2 Syntactic characteristics: Dictionaries

The *OED* is the main lexicographical reference work used in this thesis. Two other, learner's dictionaries, will supplement the *OED* information. The *OED* includes a sizeable quotation database – roughly 2.4 million quotations are featured in the entire second edition – with the entry for the

verb *promise* alone having 127 quotes, ranging from the year 1430 to 2002. As discussed above (cf. § 2.1), the definition of a corpus is rather flexible, so with such a large repository of English language data to offer, the *OED* quotation database can certainly be said to constitute a corpus in its own right. We will not be using the entire database here, but just the 127 quotes directly linked to the entry for *promise*. Thus what follows can be viewed as a limited corpus analysis of the syntactic behaviour of the verb *promise*, based on the *OED*.

The *OED* states three main complements governed by the verb *promise*. These are given below, accompanied by illustrations from the *OED* quotation database:

- (23) (a) *to*-infinitive: The attorney *promised* to reimburse the expense... (W. Hutton 1798)
 (b) *that*-clause: I dare not *promise* that I may not abuse the opportunity so temptingly offered me. (W. Scott 1817)
 (c) NP: The nights, I *promise* you, are very cold. (C. Sorel 1665)

It is noted in the *OED* that “indirect object or [...] *to* and a noun phrase” is often used in conjunction with the above three complements, and in fact several other patterns featuring this optional extra NP / *to* + NP are evident among the quotations in the *OED*. Variations on the simple *to*-infinitive are as follows:

- (24) (a) NP + *to*-infinitive: I had *promised* Sarah to take 1000mg of VitC+Zinc every night if I went drinking. (J. Hawes 1997)
 (b) *to* + NP + *to*-infinitive: The Constable had *promised* to the kyng and the duke, to render vp to them the towne of saint Quintynes. (Hall's Union: Edward IV 1548)

The *that*-clause allows for a similar syntactic extension as the *to*-infinitive, although in the case of (25b) the preposition is *for*, instead of *to*:

- (25) (a) NP + *that*-clause: She'd have to get it done, because she'd *promised* Dad that yoga class wouldn't interfere. (N. H. Wilson 2001)
 (b) *for* + NP + *that*-clause: I dare boldly *promise* for this Play, that in the roughness of the numbers...you will see.... (J. Dryden 1690)

In the case of the NP complement, the addition of a second NP is possible (26a), but unlike the clausal complements taking prepositional additions, the extra preposition takes its place between the two NPs (26b). In example (26c) we see a further combination found among the *OED* quotations:

- (26) (a) NP + NP: A cruel blow to parents who had *promised* Junior one of the first units. (*Time* 2001)
 (b) NP + *to* + NP: All the princes *promised* free constitutions to their people. (E. A. Freeman 1872)
 (c) *for* + NP: It *promises* for another fine day to-morrow. (G. Gissing 1887)

Two additional complement constructions are found in the *OED* (27a/b), as well as the zero complement (27c), which occurs with some frequency:

- (27) (a) Adverb: Technics...does not form an independent system, like the universe: it exists as an element in human culture and it *promises* well or ill as the social groups that exploit it *promise* well or ill. (*Isis* 1992)
 (b) *Wh*-clause: She would not *promise* what she knew she could not perform. (M. Edgeworth 1801)
 (c) Zero complement: I'll be hanging around Murry's. Mind you don't tip my mitt. You *promised*. (D. Hammett 1929)

Example (27b) is the only example of a *wh*-clause complement in the section of the *OED* database we are looking at, which would indicate that it is not a common complement type. We will therefore be seeking verification on this point when we look at grammarians' comments in the next section.

Two further examples of usage are found among the quotes in the database. In the first, *promise* appears under the preposition *as* as part of an adjunct of comparison (Huddleston and Pullum 2002, 1146 ff.). Here is the only example of this type under the *OED* *promise* entry:

- (28) Desyre hym to render to you your londes as he *promysyd*. (L. D. Berners c.1533)

Admittedly, this is a very old example, but this construction is clearly possible in Modern English. Huddleston and Pullum (*ibid.*, 1147) in fact note *promise* as a predicate that commonly appears in this environment. In the second example found, *promise* is used parenthetically, (*ibid.*, 1027) as the only example of this kind in the *OED* shows:

- (29) 'My bruvver will get you,' he *promised*. (J. Townsend 1958)

A detailed discussion of these two forms, the *as*-clause and the parenthetical, is provided in the following section, and for now they are not included in our summary of complements.

To summarise, there are 12 complement structures, plus the zero complement, found in the *OED* quotation database. These are: 1) *to*-infinitive; 2) NP + *to*-infinitive; 3) *to* + NP + *to*-infinitive; 4) *that*-clause; 5) NP + *that*-clause; 6) *for* + NP + *that*-clause; 7) *wh*-clause; 8) NP; 9) NP + NP; 10) NP + *to* + NP; 11) *for* + NP; 12) Adverb; and the zero complement.

The *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary (CALD)* is the first of the learner's dictionaries consulted for this study. It is, naturally, far less detailed than the *OED*, and does not feature quotations as such; rather illustrations of possible usage, but being aimed at the advanced learner it may provide a perspective not offered by the *OED*. Found under the entry for the verb *promise* are the following complement patterns, with illustrations from the *CALD*:

- (30) (a) *to*-infinitive: He *promised* faithfully to call me every week.
 (b) *that*-clause: The government have *promised* that they'll reduce taxes.
 (c) NP + *that*-clause: *Promise* me that you won't tell him.
 (d) NP + *to* + NP: Can I have that book back when you've finished because I've *promised* it to Sara.
 (e) NP: I'll have a look, but I'm not *promising* anything.
 (f) NP + NP: Her parents *promised* her a new car if she passed her exams.
 (g) speech: "I'll come round and see you every day," she *promised*.

Interestingly, the *CALD* recognises the category of *speech*, which corresponds to the parenthetical use touched upon in the discussion of the *OED* findings above.

The *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (OALD)* is the other learner's dictionary used here. Like the *CALD* it gives examples rather than quotations. Gleaned from the examples are the following complements: 1) *to*-infinitive; 2) *that*-clause; 3) NP + *that*-clause; 4) NP; 5) NP + NP; 6) NP + *to* + NP; as well as the zero complement, *speech*, and NP + *speech*. The *OALD* mentions not only the *speech* category, but also NP + *speech*, which can be exemplified in this modified version of (30g):

- (31) "I'll come round and see you every day," she *promised* him.

The *OALD* then, gives a total of six complement patterns, plus *speech*, NP + *speech*, and the zero complement. The *OALD* differs from the *CALD* only in the former's inclusion of the zero complement, and NP + *speech* possibility.

While not strictly a dictionary in the spirit of the previous works cited, *The Valency Dictionary of English* (Herbst et al. 2004, 618-19) gives a comprehensive summary of the complements selected by *promise*, with the following listed as possibilities: 1) *to*-infinitive; 2) *that*-clause; 3) NP + *to*-infinitive; 4) NP + *that*-clause; 5) NP; 6) NP + NP; 7) NP + *to* + NP; as well as the quote/sentence; quote/sentence + NP, and zero complement. *Quote* corresponds to the *CALD* and *OALD*'s *speech* category, while in *sentence*, it is indirect, rather than direct speech being reported, as illustrated below (example adapted from Herbst et al.):

(32) Labour would cut interest rates, Mr. Kinnock *promised*.

Quote/sentence + NP simply denotes the addition of a NP directly after *promise*, as in the type of construction shown in (32) above.

4.3 Syntactic characteristics: Grammars

The most extensive treatment of the complementation of the verb *promise* in the grammars is offered by Biber et al. (1999). In a discussion based on corpus analysis, it is stated that the most common complement of *promise* is a clausal element; either *to*-infinitive or *that*-clause (all examples from Biber et al. 1999, 388-9):

(33) (a) They *promised* to write.
(b) I'll *promise* I will give you that.

Also noted as being relatively common is the NP + *that*-clause (34a) and the NP + NP form (34b):

(34) (a) I *promised* Dad that I would have a serious word with you.
(b) Well I can't *promise* you that.

While Biber et al. say that it is possible for the verb to be followed by a NP (35a/b) or to have no complement (35c), it is stated that the form NP + *to* + NP (35d) is "relatively rare" (ibid.):

(35) (a) I've already *promised* Carey.
(b) Last week Mr. Badran *promised* further amnesties for political prisoners.⁶
(c) Yes, I *promise*!

⁶ Biber et al. (1999, 389) see this complement as one NP unit, rather than NP + *for* + NP.

- (d) It is against the will of God, who has *promised* everlasting life to all who believe in His holy name.

In a later chapter Biber et al. (ibid., 695-6) note the NP + *to*-infinitive pattern as being another viable complement structure:

- (36) Ollie had *promised* Billy to take him fishing next Sunday.

In summary, Biber et al. note seven possible complements of the verb *promise*; 1) *to*-infinitive; 2) *that*-clause; 3) NP + *to*-infinitive; 4) NP + *that*-clause; 5) NP + NP; 6) NP; and 7) NP + *to* + NP.

Quirk et al. (1972, 836-849) note the *to*-infinitive, *that*-clause, NP + NP, and NP + *to* + NP as possible complements for *promise*, with no mention of frequencies or preferences.

In neither of the grammars consulted (nor in any of the dictionaries) is there mention of the possibility of the gerundial complement with *promise*.

4.4 Parentheticals and *as*-clauses

It is appropriate at this point to deal with the *speech* and *as*-clause categories mentioned in some of the works cited above, in order to allow any examples found in the analysis section to be efficiently categorised.

The type of construction we have seen labelled as *quote / sentence / parenthetical*, appears to be most commonly referred to throughout the literature by the latter term, the parenthetical construction (Huddleston and Pullum 2002, 895-97 and 1024; Noonan 1985, 113; Ross 1973, 133 ff.). Ross describes a process he calls *slifting*, or sentence lifting, to account for the formation of this structure, and includes *promise* as being among those predicates that can undergo slifting. Briefly, slifting is the leftward movement of a sentence-final *that*-clause, effecting the deletion of *that*, to produce a sentence of the form (32) above. The following example, adapted from Ross (ibid.), illustrates the process:

- (37) I feel that Max is a Martian = Max is a Martian, I feel.

Huddleston and Pullum claim that in cases like this “it would not be valid to analyse the reported speech as a preposed complement” (2002, 1024) since it has main clause, rather than subordinate clause form. As the corpus data we will be analysing in forthcoming sections is composed chiefly of imaginative prose material, we can expect to come across tokens of this type, in which case I will label them as parentheticals, and, following Huddleston and Pullum’s analysis, group them with the zero complements and discuss them in their turn.

Also counted among the zero complements will be the *as*-clause formation. This is exemplified in the following illustration, adapted from Huddleston and Pullum (*ibid.*, 1147):

(38) He phoned home every day, as *promised*.

Paraphrasing this in order to discern a possible complement for *promise* results in a sentence of the form:

(39) He *promised* to phone home every day.

It is clear that the latter does not entail the former, since in (39) the promised action has not yet occurred, and therefore it is not valid to claim that *promise* has a complement in the case of (38).

4.5 Semantic characteristics

The *OED* lists seven senses of *promise*, some of which are divided further into sub-senses. These are given in table 1: (Note that the *Complement(s)* column does not constitute a comprehensive list of all possible complements for each sense, but rather serves to label the type of complement in the structure chosen for the *Example(s)* column.)

OED entries	Example (s)	Complement (s)
1. To undertake to do or give (or refrain from doing or giving) something to someone.	1. The Baronet <i>promised</i> to take charge of the lad at school. (W. Thackeray 1848) 2. I made him <i>promise</i> he would come to see me at my House. (J. Swift 1726)	1. <i>to</i> -infinitive 2. <i>that</i> -clause
2. <i>intr.</i> To undertake to do or give something.	The point is I agreed, I <i>promised</i> , I didn't want to go back on it. (K. Ishiguro 1995)	∅
3. To convey assurance of some fact; to assert confidently or emphatically. a. Reference to the past or present. b. Reference to the future.	1. She really is, Clare, I <i>promise</i> you: she's ghastly! (C. Fremlin 1969) 2. And I <i>promise</i> you, that shot's not going to come off. (G. Naylor 1990)	1. NP 2. NP
4. To commit another person to something or someone. a. <i>archaic</i> To pledge a person (esp. a woman) in marriage to someone else. Often passive. b. <i>rare</i> To be committed to a prior appointment or engagement. Often passive.	1. Her father will not <i>promise</i> her to any man, Until the elder sister first be wed. (W. Shakespeare c.1616) 2. I'd love to, but Jack and I are <i>promised</i> home for supper. (J. Braine 1957)	1. NP + <i>to</i> + NP 2. NP + NP
5. <i>figurative.</i> a. To give strong or reasonable grounds for expecting something (future achievements or good results). b. To appear likely to turn out in a specified way.	1. An atmosphere of public discussion which <i>promises</i> future storms. (<i>Law Times</i> 1891) 2. He <i>promis'd</i> to be stout when grown up. (D. Defoe 1723) 3. The small Jefferis bomb also <i>promises</i> well. (L.D. Alanbrooke 1941)	1. NP 2. <i>to</i> -infinitive 3. Adverb
6. To undertake to provide oneself with, look forward confidently to securing (something welcome).	This, my dear friend, is the technique, and I <i>promise</i> myself unheard-of results. (H. Lowe-Porter 1927)	NP + NP
7. To make extravagant or unrealistic pledges.	The man out of office with no record can <i>promise</i> the moon with a ring around it, and the man in office must take the blame. (<i>Daily Globe</i> 1930)	NP

Table 1: Summary of OED entries for promise.

In the original OED entry, sense 1 is rather lengthy, being divided into three sub-senses on the basis of the three main complement types available (*to*-infinitive, NP, *that*-clause). I felt it unnecessary to repeat the sub-divisions here – the sense remains the same in all three – thus they are simply listed

together as one meaning. Sense 2 shares the meaning of sense 1, but with a zero complement. Sense 6 also carries the same essential meaning, but in this case the beneficiary of the *promise* is co-referential with the agent; one makes a *promise* to oneself. In light of these observations, and following a discussion of the two learner’s dictionaries’ treatment of *promise*, I will propose a summarised version of the senses outlined above.

The *CALD* lists two main senses of the verb *promise*:

- (a) To say certainly, to tell someone that you will certainly do something.
- (b) To be expected (to be good/exciting, etc)

Sense (a) is clearly similar to the *OED*’s sense 1, while sense (b) is close to, if not the same as the *OED*’s sense 5, *expectation of future achievements / good results*.

There is a footnote attached to the first sense, pointing out a “common learner error”: that when using the verb in the sense of promising someone something, “no preposition is needed after the verb”. Thus the construction shown in (40) below, taken from the *CALD*, is not considered standard in modern usage, although it is found among the *OED* quotes from Early Modern English:

(40) I *promised* to the boys I’d be home in time

Indeed a version of the above example without the preposition *to* appears to sound more natural, and I consider it to be quite in order for a learner’s dictionary to point this out. The corpus analysis will reveal whether or not the preposition is in fact used today, and whether it is falling out of use.

The *OALD* lists two main senses for the verb *promise*, and two other usages which are labelled *idiomatic*:

- (a) To tell somebody that you will definitely do or not do something, or that something will definitely happen.
- (b) To make something seem likely to happen, show signs of something.
- (idm. 1) To give assurance, encouraging, warning about something.
- (idm. 2) To make overly extravagant promises.

Sense (a) is in line with the main senses of both the *OED* and the *CALD*, while sense (b) is equivalent to that of *OED* sense 5. (idm. 1) is equal to both sub-divisions of *OED* sense 3, and (idm. 2) equals *OED* sense 7.

Having taken into account the review of the senses given by the three reference dictionaries, I propose the following four summarised senses of *promise*, based primarily on those of the *OED*:

Simplified sense	Example(s)	Complement(s)
1. To undertake to do or give (or refrain from doing or giving) something to someone.	1. I had in fact very rashly <i>promised</i> to take her with me on a business trip. (I. Murdoch 1961) 2. I dare not <i>promise</i> that I may not abuse the opportunity so temptingly offered me. (W. Scott 1817) 3. I was going to visit a family this morning, where I <i>promised</i> myself the highest joy that a human heart is capable of feeling (C. Johnstone 1760)	1. <i>to</i> -infinitive 2. <i>that</i> -clause 3. NP + NP
2. To convey assurance of some fact; to assert confidently or emphatically.	1. Sir Peter, you are come in good time, I <i>promise</i> you; for we had just given you over. (R. B. Sheridan 1816) 2. Well, I <i>promise</i> you, you shall find I do not come again. (C. Thirwall 1825)	1. NP 2. NP
3. To give strong or reasonable grounds for expecting something.	1. There is a satisfying edge of real dislike between the candidates here, which <i>promises</i> great things. (E. Pearce 1992) 2. I play'd with the girl when a child; she <i>promised</i> then to be fair. (A. Tennyson 1855)	1. NP 2. <i>to</i> -infinitive
4. To commit another person to an appointment / engagement / marriage. (often in passive form)	1. I am <i>promised</i> the whole town over for these three months. (G. Colman 1774) 2. She is still pining for the boy she was <i>promised</i> to at home. (J. Wolf 1991)	1. NP 2. NP + <i>to</i> + NP

Table2: Summarised senses of *promise*.

The *OED* senses 1, 2, 6, and 7 have been condensed into my sense 1. *OED* 3a and 3b have become sense 2 here, without the past / present / future time distinction featured in the original. *OED* 5a and 5b have been merged under sense 3, and *OED* 4a and 4b have become sense 4, the overall sense being that of commitment to an engagement of some kind, whether it be a social gathering, business appointment, or marriage. Condensation of meaning is intended to facilitate ease of reference, as I feel that the fewer overall senses there are, the easier it is for the reader to follow later discussions centred around semantics and structure. I believe that the summarised version of the senses

effectively captures the essence of the three dictionaries we have reviewed for this section, without the loss of any significant aspects of meaning.

4.6 Sense and structure

Bolinger has noted that “a difference in syntactic form always spells a difference in meaning” (1968, 127). This observation is known as Bolinger’s Principle, and at the time, the observation was made in reference to the difference in meaning between two sentences differing only in terms of the complement used; specifically the difference between the infinitival and the gerundial complement, in predicate constructions that license both types. Here I refer to Bolinger’s Principle in a broader sense, as we look at the complements that are available for selection when *promise* is used in different senses. Results in this section are based on the dictionaries and grammars of this chapter, and any examples are from the *OED*. Table 3 shows the breakdown of the compatibility of sense and structure:

Sense	Complement(s)
1	<i>to</i> -infinitive; NP + <i>to</i> -infinitive; <i>to</i> + NP + <i>to</i> -infinitive; <i>that</i> -clause; NP + <i>that</i> -clause; <i>to</i> + NP + <i>that</i> -clause; NP; NP + NP; NP + <i>to</i> + NP; <i>for</i> + NP; \emptyset
2	NP; NP + <i>that</i> ; \emptyset
3	<i>to</i> -infinitive; NP; <i>for</i> + NP; Adverb
4	NP; NP + <i>to</i> + NP

Table 3: Sense and structure compatibility according to the dictionaries.

Sense 1: *Undertake to do or give something*, being the most general sense of the verb *promise*, it also has the widest variety of permissible structures. Sense 1 may be used in conjunction with all sentential and non-sentential⁷ complements found in the *OED* except for one: the Adverb. In the case of sentential complements, there appears to be little restriction on the semantic type of lower

⁷ The Methodology section below provides an explanation of the terms *sentential* and *non-sentential*.

verb in a sense 1 context, although, among the *OED* illustrations, the verb *pay* (and other verbs from the semantic field of *business and finance*) is the one that occurs the most frequently.

Sense 2: *Convey assurance* appears to be far more restricted in its complementation. The main complement is the NP, and naturally, as assurance is something one gives to another person, the NP is predominantly either a name, or a pronominal form, as in *I promise you*. The zero complement is also possible, as shown below:

- (41) I eventually gave in and let Flora wear my jacket... She'd look after it, *promise*.
(*Punch* 1986)

Sense 3: *Give reasonable expectation* is somewhat less restricted in the complements it can take; it can be matched with sentential and non-sentential, and it is the only sense to accept the Adverb complement of *fair, well, ill*, or something similar. The main pattern here is *promise* + NP. The Prep + NP complement, with *of* as the preposition, is linked to this sense, albeit through one, very old example:

- (42) ...to be wel employed for ye behoufe of such men, as your names *promise* of you,
and as my opinion assureth me yt I shall finde you. (R. Tottell 1556)

Of the sentential sense 3 complements, the lower verb is predominantly *be*.

Sense 4: *Commit someone to an engagement* shows only two complements. This sense is notable for being used chiefly in the passive, and it generally involves an (often) unspecified agent, a [+ HUMAN] theme and a [+ HUMAN] beneficiary.

We can see, then, that according to the information gathered from the literature, complement types show varying degrees of compatibility with the different senses. Following each sub-corpus analysis, we shall discuss the results of matching sense with structure on the basis of the corpus evidence.

5 Corpus analysis

We now move on to the analysis chapter, in which the corpus data is discussed and categorised. This chapter of the thesis begins with an overview of the methods and techniques that will be employed in the analysis.

5.1 Methodology

The four sub-corpora analyses all follow the same pattern and are designed to facilitate ease of cross-reference and maximum accessibility for the reader. As is normal with a diachronic study, I begin with the oldest material, that of the CLMET 1, and work through in chronological order to the Modern English of the BNC.

Each sub-section will open with an overview of the corpus data, where I state the amount of tokens gathered from the sub-corpus in question, and the amount of those that were found to be irrelevant. I then give four examples of these irrelevant tokens; the idea being that each of the four forms of *promise* is illustrated in its non-verbal capacity. (Obviously, it is the forms *promise* and *promises* that can also be nominal, and *promised* and *promising* adjectival). Also in this introductory section I present a table showing the total number and type of complements found, and the breakdown of these across the four verb forms, with percentages and frequencies given, followed by a supplementary figure showing the main complements in order of frequency (for the sake of clarity the figures exclude those with only very few tokens). The figure is intended to give a clearer picture of the way in which the different complement types are spread out.

When compiling the tables, I have adopted the practice of listing complements in order of sententiality. According to Ross (2004, 351), *that*-clauses are at the top of the “hierarchy” of sententiality, followed by the *to*-infinitive, and from here on down the degree of “nouniness”, or

non-sententiality increases⁸. The actual analysis and discussion sections will retain this division, but the non-sentential complements will receive attention first, followed by the sentential. This is due to the fact that much of the recent work on complementation has focused on sentential complements (cf. e.g. Rudanko 2010), and achieved successful results. In using this order, the best, as it were, is left for last. Non-sentential complements will be discussed in decreasing order of frequency, followed by the zero complements. The sentential complements, by contrast, will be analysed in decreasing order of sententiality.

The overview sections lead into the discussion sections, and following these a section on the correlation between sense and structure will provide a point of reference from which notable structural and semantic changes in relation to previous sub-corpora may be tracked. A summary will comprise the final element of each section, before moving on to the same treatment of the subsequent sub-corpus.

In the illustrations that accompany the discussion, the practice of italicising the target item *promise* will continue. In addition, any examples (e.g. of movement, insertions etc.) in which the complement or item under discussion may not be immediately clear or easy to discern, the relevant section will be underlined.

It is also my intention to continue the practice of not labelling the zero complement as a complement type as such. Certainly it receives due attention, but as there is no complement, logic dictates that it is not a *complement type*. This category is to be placed at the foot of the tables, (albeit in the *Complement* column) and will also act as a receptacle for the cases discussed so far, i.e. the parentheticals and the *as*-clauses, that have been deemed non-complement types.

⁸ Note that within this hierarchy, the *to*-infinitive comes before the NP + *that*-clause, due to the latter's inclusion of a nominal element. This is not found in Ross' analysis.

5.2 *Promise* in the CLMET 1

This section discusses the data gathered from the CLMET 1, which covers the years 1710 to 1780.

5.2.1 Overview of findings

The CLMET 1 contains 2,096,405 words taken from 24 different texts of 15 authors. As previously noted, the CLMET is not a tagged corpus, so separate searches were conducted for the lexical forms *promise*, *promised*, *promises* and *promising*. This search yields a total of 470 tokens, from which all non-verbal forms then had to be identified and eliminated. The nominal use of *promise* accounted for 157 tokens:

- (1) (a) ...Cripse kindly offers all his majesty's subjects a generous *promise* of 30 pounds a year.... (Goldsmith 1766, *The Vicar of Wakefield*)
- (b) Booth then acquainted the colonel with the *promises* he had received from the noble lord, upon which James shook him by the hand.... (Fielding 1751, *Amelia*)

Adjectival forms accounted for a further 13 tokens:

- (2) (a) ...impossible that the Jews could ever have spread themselves beyond the narrow limits of the *promised* land. (Gibbon 1776, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*)
- (b) Mat of the Mint; listed not above a Month ago, a *promising* sturdy Fellow, and diligent in his way; somewhat too bold and hasty.... (Gay 1728, *The Beggar's Opera*)

After discarding nouns and adjectives, which amounted to 36.2 per cent of the total, 300 tokens of all four forms of the verb *promise* remain, which has a normed frequency of 143.1 words per million.

The number of different complement structures distinguished among the 300 tokens was 12, plus the zero complement, as shown in table 4 below.

Complement	<i>promise</i>	<i>promised</i>	<i>promises</i>	<i>promising</i>	Total	%	NF/million
<i>that</i> -clause	6	12	-	1	19	6.3	9.1
<i>to</i> -infinitive	13	80	4	9	106	35.3	50.6
NP + <i>that</i> -clause	40	6	1	-	47	15.7	22.4
NP + <i>to</i> -infinitive	3	8	-	-	11	3.7	5.2
<i>to</i> + NP + <i>that</i> -cl.	-	1	-	-	1	0.3	0.5
<i>to</i> + NP + <i>to</i> -inf.	1	-	-	-	1	0.3	0.5
NP	25	31	6	1	63	21	30.1
NP + NP	12	17	4	1	34	11.3	16.2
NP + <i>to</i> + NP	1	7	-	-	8	2.7	3.8
NP + <i>for</i> + NP	-	1	-	-	1	1.7	2.4
<i>to</i> + NP + NP	1	-	1	-	2	0.7	1
Adv + <i>for</i> + NP	-	-	1	-	1	0.3	0.5
∅ complement	2	4	-	-	6	2	2.9
Total	104	167	17	12	300	100	143.1

Table 4: Complements of *promise* in the years 1710 to 1780.

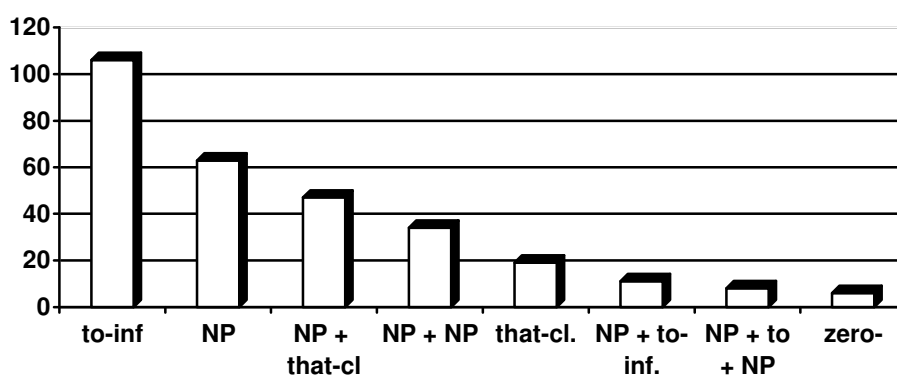


Figure 2: CLMET 1 complements in order of frequency.

Figure 2 shows a relatively even curve from the dominating *to*-infinitive down to the zero complement:

5.2.2 Non-sentential complements

The most frequently occurring non-sentential complement pattern is the NP construction, with 63 tokens:

- (3) (a) ...for thou didst not only find a horse, but a halter too, I *promise* thee.' To be sure, I shall never forget the word. (Fielding 1749, *Tom Jones*)
 (b) A large wheaten loaf was in the middle of the table; and a flagon of wine at each end of it *promised* joy through the stages of the repast: - 'twas a feast of love. (Sterne 1768, *A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy*)

This complement group is divisible into two types of NP; [+ HUMAN] and [– HUMAN]. The latter make up 47 of the 63 NP tokens, while the former are 16. Both are included under the NP rubric, but a clear difference separates the two. From the perspective of semantic roles, it can be seen that the [– HUMAN] NP complements, as exemplified in (3b), are not the benefactives of the *promise*, but rather the theme, or what is being promised. The [+ HUMAN] NPs, as in (3a), on the other hand, are all benefactives.

In addition, a significant number of the [– HUMAN] NP complements have [– HUMAN] subjects in the higher clause, while all of the [+ HUMAN] NP complements' higher clause subjects are [+ HUMAN]. The tokens that contain these two types of subject NPs fall, in most cases, into two different senses. The majority of the [– HUMAN] NP subject tokens belong to sense 3: *Give reasonable expectation*, while the majority of the [+ HUMAN] NP subject tokens belong to sense 2: *Convey assurance or emphasis*. This can be seen in the previous two examples which conform to senses 2 and 3 respectively. This type of subject for sense 3 is not a surprise, if we think that a [– HUMAN] and [– ANIMATE] agent cannot, if we appeal to logic, do anything more that give reasonable expectation of something. Consider some more examples of [– HUMAN] agent and theme:

- (4) (a) His name was dear to the senate and people; his tender age *promised* a long impunity of military license; and the submission of Rome and the provinces to the choice.... (Gibbon 1776, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire I*)
 (b) What's to be done, Marlow? MARLOW. This house *promises* but a poor reception; though perhaps the landlord can accommodate us. (Goldsmith 1773, *She Stoops to Conquer*)

I suggest that for the subject of *promise* in a sense 3 context, the theta-role of agent is perhaps not applicable in the same way it is in examples where the subject is [+ HUMAN], especially in light of Haegeman's description of the agent as "one who intentionally initiates the action expressed by the predicate" (1991, 41). The term *nonagent* has been used in the literature for this type of subject (Sag and Pollard 1991, 66), a term which seems quite suitable and will be used here in future reference to prototypical sense 3 subjects. It must be pointed out however, that there are some tokens that belong to sense 3, but which do have clearly [+ HUMAN] subjects. Consider the following (*to*-infinitive) example:

- (5) "...I have at present under my command; if so, sir, we shall very gladly receive a gentleman who *promises* to do much honour to the company by bearing arms in it." Jones answered. (Fielding 1749, *Tom Jones*)

It is not likely that the *gentleman* in question has actually made a pledge to *do much honour to the company*, rather, it is merely his presence that gives this expectation. Thus, subjects of this type remain nonagents, despite being [+ HUMAN].

Two of the four verb forms account for the majority of the NP complements; *promise* takes 25 tokens, while the past tense *promised* has 31 tokens. *Promises* and *promising* have six and one tokens respectively.

The NP + NP construction accounted for 34 tokens:

- (6) (a) "If all your fear be of apparitions," said the Prince, "I will *promise* you safety."
(Johnson 1759, *Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia*)
(b) Have not I *promised* the world a chapter of knots? Two chapters upon the right and the wrong end of a woman? (Sterne 1759-67, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy*)

The latter example is the only one where NP 1⁹ does not have direct human reference, although in this case *the world* clearly refers to the author's collective human readership. Complement to verb form ratio is remarkably similar to the NP construction, with *promised* and *promise* having 17 and

⁹ NP 1 refers to the first NP in a complement pattern containing more than one NP. NP 2 refers to the second, and so forth.

12 tokens respectively, while *promises* and *promising* have four and one. The NP + NP complement type also yielded sense 3 tokens of the [+ HUMAN] subject variety:

- (7) ...house, which was full large enough for two such little families as then occupied it. We at first *promised* ourselves some little convenience from his boarding with us; and Mr. Bennet began to lay aside his.... (Fielding 1751, *Amelia*)

There are seven such tokens in the NP + NP group, all sharing the reflexive pronoun as beneficiary.

This type of sense 3 usage appears to be a way of paraphrasing the more usual word-order, as exemplified here:

- (8) His boarding with us *promised* some little convenience at first.

Note that in this form, it is no longer NP + NP, but simply NP.

Rather less common is the NP + *to* + NP pattern, with only eight tokens:

- (9) (a) The kindness of heaven is *promised* to the penitent, and let ours be directed by the example. (Goldsmith 1766, *The Vicar of Wakefield*)
 (b) He had *promised* his sister Constantia in marriage to that prince; but the celebration of the nuptials was deferred.... (Gibbon 1776, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire I*)

(9a) is one of four examples of passivisation found with this particular structure, where, in this case the theme is fronted to pre-verb position and the agent is implicit, as is common in the passive form. Passivisation constitutes a complexity factor, and therefore use of the more explicit complement with a prepositional element is in accordance with the Complexity Principle. Example (9b) is the sole token from the CLMET 1 to fall under sense 4. Although in the data, tokens in which somebody *promises* marriage to somebody else, or *promises* to attend an engagement etc. are not rare, they do not all qualify for sense 4, as sense 4 requires a [+ HUMAN] theme. As an example, consider the following (*to*-infinitive complement) token, which is sense 1, rather than sense 4:

- (10) She therefore admitted the apologies of her bed-fellow, provided he would *promise* to atone by marriage for the injury she had sustained.... (Smollett 1751, *The Adventures of Peregrine Pickle*)

Of the eight NP + *to* + NP tokens, seven occur with the past tense *promised*, and one with *promise*.

This ratio is obviously a reflection of the proportion of passives occurring in this category.

The *to* + NP + NP complement shows only two tokens, one of which is supplied below:

- (11) Let us, therefore, *promise to all seamen that shall voluntarily engage in them*, besides the reward already proposed, a discharge from the service.... (Johnson 1740-41, *Parliamentary Debates 1*)

The pattern Adv + *for* + NP is represented by just one token:

- (12) ...what would anger her more than the neglect, ridicules the style and orthography. Nothing *promises* well for her here. (Walpole 1735-48, *Letters*)

This intriguing example shows the nonagent subject, and belongs to sense 3. A paraphrased sentence could therefore be *nothing gives reasonable expectation that things will be pleasant for her here*. *Promise* is synonymous with the verb *bode* in this example, which, according to the *OED* sense 4, means “To give *promise* of, be indicative of, betoken, portend.”

The NP + *for* + NP type is also represented by a single token, which exhibits a form of extraction that resembles relativisation:

- (13) She contented herself with doing all that her godfathers and godmothers *promised for her*--but no more; and so would go on using a hard word twenty years together.... (Sterne 1759-67, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy*)

The zero complement has just six tokens, which occur in the forms *promised* and *promise*, with four and two tokens respectively:

- (14) (a) “...and who would have given us but little interruption. However, if you have *promised*, I must undergo the penance.” (Fielding 1751, *Amelia*)
 (b) ...not be too ready to decide; a prudent man too ready to undertake; or an honest man too ready to *promise*. (Burke 1770, *Thoughts on the Present Discontents*)

Included among the zero complements is one *as*-clause example:

- (15) Here Jones wished her joy of her safe arrival, and then departed, in order, as he *promised*, to send the landlady up with some cloaths [sic]. (Fielding 1749, *Tom Jones*)

An interesting example was found in this category, an example that is identical in form to a *to*-infinitive:

- (16) Yet the arts of Severus cannot be justified by the most ample privileges of state reason. He *promised* only to betray, he flattered only to ruin. (Gibbon 1776, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire 1*)

Below is a paraphrasing of (16):

(17) He *promised*, and then betrayed...

In the paraphrased version, the status of zero complement becomes evident.

5.2.3 Sentential complements

At the top of the hierarchy of sententiality is the *that*-clause, which in the CLMET 1 data are relatively few. This is surprising when we recall Biber et al.'s observation that clausal elements are the most common form of complement with *promise* in Modern English. This is of course accurate when all clausal complements are counted as a group, but when separated it is easy to see a large difference between the occurrences of *that*-clauses and *to*-infinitives in 18th century usage. The data yields only 19 *that*-clauses, seven of which are missing the often optional *that* complementiser

(18b):

- (18) (a) Never rob other countries of rain to pour it on thine own. For us the Nile is sufficient. I *promised* that when I possessed the power I would use it with inflexible integrity. (Johnson 1759, *Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia*)
 (b) But as for your money, I must have it spent; I have *promised* your son (nay, no frowns,) shall have some.... (Walpole 1735-48, *Letters*)

Higher and lower subjects are co-referent in 10 cases, and different in nine cases. We might ask, in the cases of co-referent subjects, why the lower clause is not of the *to*-infinitive form, rather than the somewhat longer and more cumbersome *that*-clause, when it has been shown that co-referent subjects prefer the non-finite, rather than the finite complement (Egan 2006). Here are two of the 10 examples of co-referent higher and lower subjects (a third being example (18a) above):

- (19) (a) She wished Lord W-- happiness instead of joy, and was pleased to *promise*, that she would provide for her pretty beggars. (Smollett 1751, *The Adventures of Peregrine Pickle*)
 (b) ...all that irresistible force which the antients imputed to perfect oratory. In a word, she *promised* she would reward him to his utmost expectation. The lad was not totally deaf to these promises.... (Fielding 1749, *Tom Jones*)

Example (18a), according to the Complexity Principle, requires the more explicit *that*-clause, due to the fact that the material *when I possessed the power* inserted between *that* and the lower clause

subject creates a more cognitively complex environment. To use a *to*-infinitive here would produce an unusual and possibly ambiguous sentence:

(20) *I promised when I possessed the power to use it with inflexible integrity...*

Appeal to the horror aequi condition can be made in the case of (19a); while (19b) is less clear, and there seems to be no discernable reason why a *to*-infinitive was not used here.

Overall the most common form of complement for the verb *promise* in the 18th century was the *to*-infinitive; with 106 tokens it makes up 35.3 % of the total, a normalised frequency of 50.6 words per million :

- (21) (a) ...particularly a distant cousin of mine, whom my lord had engaged in his interests, by *promising* to recompense her amply, if she could persuade me to comply with his desire. (Smollett 1751, *The Adventures of Peregrine Pickle*)
 (b) ...this evening, I shall return to you with pleasure, and will *promise* not to exceed any bounds that you shall prescribe.' (Fielding 1749, *The Governess*)

Among these were four examples of negation, three with the *not* particle, as in (21b), and one with *never*. The complement to verb form ratio for the *to*-infinitive shows that 80 of the 106 tokens occur with the past tense form *promised*, 13 with *promise*, nine with *promising*, and four with *promises*.

One striking feature of the *to*-infinitive tokens is the degree to which they allow the insertion of an adverbial element between the higher and lower clauses. According to Rohdenburg (1996, 166), the use of an adverbial between matrix and lower clauses is less acceptable with infinite, and more common with the “relatively autonomous” finite clause. Interestingly, the CLMET 1 corpus data, while yielding some examples of adverbial insertion among the 19 *that*-clause tokens, also shows 13 cases of insertion among the 106 *to*-infinitive tokens. Most were relatively short (22a), but some were also rather long (22b):

- (22) (a) ...I walked on to the church before, and they *promised* speedily to follow.
 (Goldsmith 1766, *The Vicar of Wakefield*)
 (b) ...Miss Jenny readily *promised*, when they met in their arbour, to read it to them.
 (Fielding 1749, *The Governess*)

So despite the situation in Modern English, it can be seen that in the 18th century the *to*-infinitive did accept the insertion of adverbial elements to a certain degree. This is a situation that will be monitored as we progress through subsequent sections toward the Modern English period.

Extraction is evident among the *to*-infinitive tokens, with nine examples of relativisation found:

- (23) (a) This letter was addressed to the Praetorian praefect, whom (on condition of his good behavior) he *promised* to continue in his great office. (Gibbon 1776, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire I*)
 (b) ...and who, as Booth absolutely refused to dine away from his wife, to whom he had *promised* to return, had invited himself to dine with him. (Fielding 1751, *Amelia*)

The NP + *that*-clause offers 47 tokens, 19 of which include the *that* marker (24a), and 28 show *that* omission (24b):

- (24) (a) He then faithfully *promised* me that no second marriage should in the least impair his affection for me; and concluded with.... (Fielding 1751, *Amelia*)
 (b) To conclude, if little Stanhope acquires the graces, I *promise* you he will make his way; if not, he will be stopped in a course.... (Chesterfield 1746-71, *Letters to His Son*)

This construction is the only one that deviates from the general tendency exhibited by the others to appear predominantly with the past tense form *promised*. The NP + *that*-clause occurs 40 times with *promise*, while only six times with *promised*, and once with *promises*. Such a large variation from the norm may be explained by the fact that 37 of the 47 examples of this construction are of the form *I promise you (that)...*, and that the majority of examples also fall under sense 2: *Convey assurance or emphasis*. Giving one's assurance or adding emphasis is generally done first hand, by the speaker, hence the tendency for this form to appear mostly in the first person present tense, as shown in (24b).

In examining the NP + *that*-clause (and *that*-clause) complements, it is difficult to find any pattern or evidence to explain the presence or omission of a *that* complementiser. According to Biber et al. (1999, 681-682) there are environments which encourage *that* omission in Modern English, and these are: 1) when certain verbs appear in the matrix clause, e.g. *say* or *think*; 2) when

there are co-referential subjects in the main clause and the *that*-clause; 3) when a personal pronoun is used as the subject of the *that*-clause; and 4) in general casual conversation. All of these environments are evident in the data to some degree. The complementiser is retained in situations where: 1) there are two *that*-clauses in coordination; 2) the main clause is in the passive voice; and 3) when there is an NP intervening between the main clause and the *that*-clause complement (ibid.). In relation to the latter rule, the Complexity Principle also states that the presence of an intervening element between the higher and lower clauses tends to trigger the use of *that*, in order to act as a clausal boundary marker and avoid possible ambiguity. In the case of NP + *that*-clauses in the CLMET 1, the intervening NP is not consistently triggering *that* insertion, since there are approximately 50 % more of the NP + \emptyset -*that*-clauses than there are NP + *that*-clauses.

The NP + *to*-infinitive provides 11 tokens, eight of which occur with the form *promised*, and three with *promise*.

- (25) (a) ...Mr. Johnson acquainted me that he had seen Mr. Smith, who had *promised* him to speak to Mr. Clarke.... (Chesterfield 1746-71, *Letters to His Son*)
 (b) ...but that I imagine bodily exercise is more suitable to your complaint. If you would *promise* me to read them in the Temple garden.... (Walpole 1735-48, *Letters*)

As with the *to*-infinitive, the NP + *to*-infinitive admits adverbial insertion, as is shown in two tokens out of the total 11:

- (26) ...invited the princess to enter her castle...and *promised* her, on that condition, to make the idle girl restore the picture. (Fielding 1749, *The Governess*)

The *to* + NP + *that*-clause is rare, with one token:

- (27) ...but this is all suppository, dear girl; and I have sullenly *promised* to Mr Clinker, that neither man, woman, nor child shall no [sic] that arrow said a civil thing to me.... (Smollett 1771, *The Expedition of Humphrey Clinker*)

as is the *to* + NP + *to*-infinitive, also with only one token:

- (28) These authors, though they instructed me in no science by which men may *promise* to themselves to acquire the least riches or worldly power.... (Fielding 1749, *Tom Jones*)

Curiously, this sole *to* + NP + *to*-infinitive token provides an excellent illustration of the extraction of an adjunct out of the lower clause. A possible version of the unmarked word order would be:

(29) Men may *promise* to themselves to acquire the least riches or worldly power by science.

The preposition *by* is admittedly rather unusual in this context; *with* would be more suitable, at least in Modern English.

5.2.4 Sense and structure in the CLMET 1

This section discusses the correlation between sense and structure in this sub-section of the corpus.

Comparison will be made to the observations made in section 4.6 above, which examined this aspect of the *OED* data. Table 5 shows the spread of complement structures across the senses:

Complement	Sense 1 <i>Pledge to give or do something</i>	Sense 2 <i>Convey assurance or emphasis</i>	Sense 3 <i>Give reasonable expectation</i>	Sense 4 <i>Commit someone to an engagement</i>
<i>that</i> -clause	9	10	-	-
<i>to</i> -infinitive	100	-	6	-
NP + <i>that</i> -clause	7	40	-	-
NP + <i>to</i> -infinitive	11	-	-	-
<i>to</i> + NP + <i>that</i> -cl.	-	1	-	-
<i>to</i> + NP + <i>to</i> -inf.	1	-	-	-
NP	24	14	22	-
NP + NP	23	1	13	-
NP + <i>to</i> + NP	4	-	3	1
NP + <i>for</i> + NP	-	-	1	-
<i>to</i> + NP + NP	2	-	-	-
Adv + <i>for</i> + NP	-	-	1	-
∅ complement	4	2	-	-
Total	185 / 61.8 %	68 / 22.8 %	46 / 15.1 %	1 / 0.3 %

Table 5: Sense and structure in the CLMET 1.

Sense 1: *Pledge to do or give something*. 185 of the 300 CLMET tokens, or 61.8 per cent of the total, belong to sense 1. Most of the *to*-infinitives fell into this group, and the NP + *to*-infinitives belong exclusively to this group. The additional complement structures found in sense 1 are NP +

NP (23 tokens), NP (24 tokens), NP + *that*-clause (seven tokens), *that*-clause (nine tokens), NP + *to* + NP (four tokens), *to* + NP + NP (two tokens), and *to* + NP + *to*-infinitive (one token). Four of the zero complements also belong to sense 1. In the lower clause of sentential complements, verbs connected to the semantic field of *business and finance* are common, with *pay*, *reward*, and *recompense* occurring frequently. Verbs such as *return* and *visit* are also common in this position.

Sense 2: *Convey assurance or emphasis*. The majority of sense 2 tokens are of the NP + *that*-clause type, with 40 tokens. Also found here are NPs (14 tokens), *that*-clauses (10 tokens), and zero complements (two tokens).

Sense 3: *Give reasonable expectation*. 22 out of 46 tokens in this sense belong to the NP complement group. The rest of the sense consists of NP + NP (13 tokens), *to*-infinitive (six tokens), NP + *to* + NP (three tokens), NP + *for* + NP (one token), and Adv + *for* + NP (one token). Lower clause verbs, in the case of sentential complements, are assorted, but *be* occurs more frequently than any other.

Sense 4: *Commit someone to an engagement*. Only one example fell into this sense, of the NP + *to* + NP complement type. Labelled as rare / archaic in Modern English by the *OED*, it was clearly a little-used sense in the 18th century.

In comparison with the analysis of the *OED* data, it can be seen that while sense 1 is relatively consistent with the previous analysis, sense 2 in fact accepts a wider range of complement types than was previously suggested. NP + *that*-clauses are common here, and the *to* + NP + *that*-clause and NP + NP are indeed possible, if not frequent. Sense 3 shows compatibility with the NP + NP here, while according to the initial analysis of the *OED* data it did not.

5.2.5 Review

This section has analysed data from the years 1710-1780. We have classified and discussed 300 tokens, with the following main points emerging: 12 different complement patterns were found, plus the zero complement; the *to*-infinitive clearly dominates above all other complement types, followed by the NP, NP + *that*-clause, NP + NP, and *that*-clause; the NP + *to*-infinitive pattern, being of particular interest in this thesis, occurs with a NF of 5.2 words per million in this period of English; discussion of the omission of the *that* marker in the NP + *that*-clause provided few conclusions, as application of the Complexity Principle proved unsatisfactory; co-referent subjects in the matrix and lower finite clauses, on the other hand, provided interesting discussion based around horror aequi and cognitive complexity; the Adverb complement, attested in the *OED*, has not yet emerged as such, although it is found in conjunction with other elements in one token; there is no evidence of the *wh*-clause; and sense 4 is attested by only one token.

5.3 *Promise* in the CLMET 2

This section moves ahead to the years 1780 to 1850, with data from the CLMET 2 sub-corpus.

5.3.1 Overview of findings

The CLMET 2 is made up of 3,739,657 words from 40 different texts written by 30 different authors. A search for the relevant forms of *promise* returns a total of 851 tokens, of which 318, or 37.4 per cent, were either nominal (30a/b) or adjectival (31a/b):

- (30) (a) On the one hand it seems generally agreed that a *promise* is binding in the inverse ratio of the numbers to whom it is made. (De Quincey 1822, *Confessions of an English Opium Eater*)
 (b) ...that life, for which he had sacrificed so much, and still haunted by the *promises* of the Egyptian, extricated himself forcibly from the grasp.... (Bulwer-Lytton 1834, *The Last Days of Pompeii*)
- (31) (a) "Hello! there's old Dobbin," George cried, quite delighted to see his old friend perched on the roof; and whose *promised* visit to Brighton had been delayed until now. "How are you, old fellow?" (Thackeray 1847-48, *Vanity Fair*)

- (b) Such establishments and calculations may appear very *promising* upon paper, but when applied to real life they will be found to be absolutely nugatory. (Malthus 1798, *An Essay on the Principle of Population*)

A total of 533 tokens remain after discarding the irrelevant examples. This gives a normalised frequency of 142.5, which is only marginally less than the NF of 143.1 we saw with the CLMET 1, meaning that the verb *promise* is being used in the written English of this period almost as frequently as it was in the previous period. The amount of different complements in this period is two higher than the previous period, at 14. There is one CLMET 1 complement that is not found here: the *to* + NP + *to*-infinitive. Four complements new to the CLMET 2 are the *wh*-clause, NP + *wh*-clause, *to* + NP, and the Adverb. The CLMET 2 time-frame also shows an increase in the amount of zero complement occurrences:

Complement	<i>promise</i>	<i>promised</i>	<i>promises</i>	<i>promising</i>	Total	%	NF/million
<i>that</i> -clause	10	30	3	4	47	8.8	11.9
<i>to</i> -infinitive	38	147	9	19	213	40	57
<i>wh</i> -clause	1	-	-	-	1	0.2	0.3
NP + <i>that</i> -clause	14	14	-	-	28	5.3	7.5
NP + <i>to</i> -infinitive	8	11	-	1	20	3.8	5.3
NP + <i>wh</i> -clause	1	-	-	-	1	0.2	0.3
<i>to</i> + NP + <i>that</i> -cl.	1	-	-	-	1	0.2	0.3
NP	38	40	4	5	87	16.3	23.3
NP + NP	18	47	2	-	67	12.6	17.9
NP + <i>to</i> + NP	4	18	1	1	24	4.5	6.4
<i>to</i> + NP + NP	-	1	-	-	1	0.2	0.3
<i>to</i> + NP	-	-	-	1	1	0.2	0.3
Adv + <i>for</i> + NP	1	3	-	-	4	0.8	1.1
Adv	-	2	7	-	9	1.7	2.4
∅ complement	15	11	1	2	29	5.4	7.8
Total	149	324	27	33	533	100	142.5

Table 6: Complements of promise in the years 1780 to 1850.

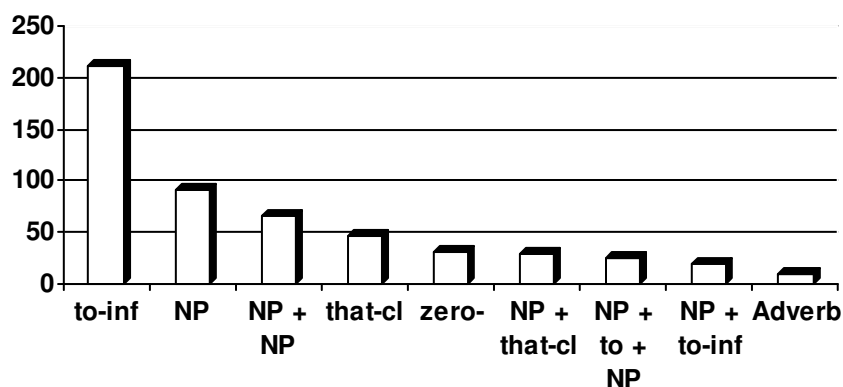


Figure 3: CLMET 2 complements in order of frequency.

Figure 3 shows a noticeably sharper descent from the *to*-infinitive in this period, as compared to the CLMET 1, to level out across the remaining complements, some of which have changed positions.

5.3.2 Non-sentential complements

The most frequent non-sentential complement in the CLMET 2 is the NP; at 87 tokens it accounts for 16.3 per cent of the total, which is significantly less than the 21 per cent it accounted for in the previous period. Here are some examples:

- (32) (a) And still the Sirens sang. Ulysses made signs, motions, gestures, *promising* mountains of gold if they would set him free; but their oars only moved faster. And still the Sirens sang. (Lamb 1807, *Adventures of Ulysses*)
- (b) ...pulled a bit of white chalk out of his pocket, and drew a broad score across the line on the board which *promised* burnt almonds gratis. “You are most impatient,” said Piedro; “I shall have a fresh stock of almonds to-morrow”. (Edgeworth 1796-1801, *The Parent's Assistant*)

These are two relatively straightforward examples, the first sense 1, and the second, with the nonagent subject, sense 3. As was the case in the CLMET 1, the NP complement continues to be the most significant contributor to sense 3, this time with 23 tokens falling into this category. As with the NP tokens of the CLMET 1, we divide these into [+ HUMAN] and [– HUMAN] on the basis of the complement NP. In this case 23 tokens are of the [+ HUMAN] type, while 68 are [– HUMAN]. The ratio in the CLMET 1 was 16 [+ HUMAN] to 47 [– HUMAN], revealing a striking similarity. Of the

former, only one is a proper noun (33a), and the remainder are pronominals, predominantly the pronoun *you* (33b):

- (33) (a) Louisa, my dear, I'm sorry I've not a seat for you in my curricle for to-morrow; but I've *promised* Lady Betty; so, you know, 'tis impossible for me. (Edgeworth 1796-1801, *The Parent's Assistant*)
 (b) "...come to a place that will not prove much to your taste, but you will not be consulted as to your quarters, I *promise* you". I was exceedingly surprised on receiving so rude an answer from a stranger... (Shelly 1818, *Frankenstein*)

The latter is a highly typical example of sense 2, where the speaker seeks to qualify, or add assurance to, a previous or upcoming statement. The former is classed as sense 1, despite not being a clear example. The theme is not made explicit, but it can be inferred that the agent has obliged his- or herself to do or give something to *Lady Betty*. As noted above, it is the only one of its type in this section of the corpus. The verb forms are distributed in a very similar ratio to that of the CLMET 1.

Extraction is found in 15 of the NP complement tokens, with relativisation (34a) being the most common with six tokens, followed by topicalisation (34b), comparativisation (34c), and interrogation (34d), each with three tokens:

- (34) (a) ...exceedingly handsome, and there were all the servants and all the articles of plate which Mr. Collins had *promised*; and, as he had likewise foretold, he took his seat at the bottom of the table, by her ladyship's desire. (Austen 1813, *Pride and Prejudice*)
 (b) ...food as Circe had stowed their vessel with when they parted from Æaea. This they man by man severally *promised*, imprecating the heaviest curses on whoever should break it. (Lamb 1807, *Adventures of Ulysses*)
 (c) ...confidence founded on certainty itself, that even much more shall come to pass than has yet been foretold or *promised*. When these principles, derived from the unchangeable laws of nature, and equally revealed to all men,... (Owen 1813, *A New View of Society*)
 (d) ...and perhaps to be advanced in time to the honour of a place in thy sty. What pleasure canst thou *promise*, which may tempt the soul of a reasonable man? (Lamb 1807, *Adventures of Ulysses*)

The NP + NP complement has 67 tokens, which projects a percentage only slightly higher than that of the CLMET 1. The verb forms are not quite on a par with the CLMET 1 however; the past tense form *promised* is somewhat higher than it was previously. This complement type lends

itself to three of the four senses. Below are illustrations of the NP + NP complement in senses 1, 3, and 4:

- (35) (a) The partners had more leisure than they had known for years; and *promised* wives and daughters all manner of pleasant excursions, as soon as the weather should become more genial. (Gaskell 1848, *Mary Barton*)
 (b) ...patches of earth of the most exquisite verdure, enamelled with the sweetest wild flowers, seemed to *promise* the goats and a few straggling cows luxurious herbage. (Wollstonecraft 1796, *Letters on Sweden, Norway and Denmark*)
 (c) ...assistance she had rendered the dear lady he so truly valued for the service she had done him that he *promised* her also a noble husband, Helena's history giving him a hint that it was a suitable reward.... (Lamb 1807, *Tales from Shakespeare*)

It is sense 1 that claims the most tokens however, at 61, with sense 3 and 4 having only three and one tokens respectively. The CLMET 1, by comparison, had 13 NP + NP tokens under sense 3.

The NP + *to* + NP contributes 24 tokens in this section of the CLMET, giving a percentage of 4.5, which is slightly higher than the 3 per cent of the CLMET 1. The past tense form *promised* continues to dominate in this time-frame. As in the CLMET 1, this complement type is the main source of sense 4 examples, this time with two tokens falling into this sense. In the previous sub-corpus there was one case of the preposition *for* being used between two NPs, but in the CLMET 2 this pattern does not occur. As in the CLMET 1, this explicit complement pattern seems to be preferred in more complex environments; 10 out of the total 24 NP + *to* + NP tokens are of a non-canonical word order, with nine of these being relativisation (36a), one being a passive construction (36b), and one is a combination of both (36c):

- (36) (a) Whilst, on the contrary, the reward which virtue *promises* to her votaries is confined, it is clear, to their own bosoms; and often must they contend with the most vex.... (Wollstonecraft 1792, *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*)
 (b) Mrs. Villars said that if the prize had been *promised* to the most amiable, it would not have been given to me. (Edgeworth 1796-1801, *The Parent's Assistant*)
 (c) Every shilling of my money is tied up. Even the hundred pounds that Jane took you last night were *promised* to my lawyer to-morrow morning, and the want of it will put me to great inconvenience. (Thackeray 1847-48, *Vanity Fair*)

The Adverb complement appears in this sub-corpus, with nine tokens. This is not an insignificant amount, when we remember that this complement type was not found at all on its own

in the CLMET 1, and there was only one token of the Adv + *for* + NP type. *Well* is the adverb used most frequently here, but *rarely*, *fair*, and *better* are also found. Here are some examples:

- (37) (a) ...but for him to read was to be content, was 'riches fineless.' The sketch *promises* well; and I set to work to finish it, determined to spare no time nor pains. My father was willing to sit.... (Hazlitt 1821-22, *Table Talk*)
 (b) "Ha! what have we here?" cried he, stopping to read what was written on Piedro's board. "This *promises* rarely. Old as I am, and tall of my age, which makes the matter worse, I am still as fond of sugar-plums as...". (Edgeworth 1796-1801, *The Parent's Assistant*)

The final non-sentential complements found in the CLMET 2 are the Adv + *for* + NP, *to* + NP, and the *to* + NP + NP, with four, one, and one tokens respectively. Here is one example of each:

- (38) (a) ...of little boys practising this art as a game of play and from their skill in hitting an upright stick, they *promised* well for more earnest attempts. My companion, the day before, had shot two large bearded monkeys. (Darwin 1839, *Voyage of the Beagle*)
 (b) ...in so sinful a world as ours, is the thing to be counted on. But above all, a People and a Sovereign *promising* to one another; as if a whole People, changing from generation to generation, nay from hour to hour, could.... (Carlyle 1837, *The French Revolution*)
 (c) Verily, the stars flatter when they give me a type in this fool of war - when they *promise* to the ardour of my wisdom the same results as to the madness of his ambition- perpetual exercise- (Bulwer-Lytton 1834, *The Last Days of Pompeii*)

The Adv + *for* + NP type, as noted above, are four in number and all of the standard word order.

The adverbs used are *well* twice, and *ill* and *fairly* once each. All complements of this type belong to sense 3, although (38a) does not have the prototypical nonagent subject often found with sense 3 examples. Example (38b) is unusual, in that the theme is not stated, and we can assume that it must have been mentioned earlier in the text, or, being a discussion of the French Revolution, is so well known that it may remain implicit. (38c) is also the only one of its kind in the CLMET 2, and unlike its predecessor, all elements of the promise are explicit.

The zero complement is more prolific in this period of the language, at 5.4 per cent, up from the 1.7 per cent of the previous period. The greater part of these are of the 'standard' type (39a), but three examples are of the *as*-clause form (39b):

- (39) (a) This is the very age of promise: To *promise* is most courtly and fashionable. Performance is a kind of will or testament.... (Smith J. and Smith H. 1812, *Rejected Addresses*)
- (b) Bouille grants an hour. Then, at the end thereof, no Denoue or Malseigne appearing as *promised*, he rolls his drums, and again takes the road. Towards four o'clock, the terror-struck Townsmen may see hi ... (Carlyle 1837, *The French Revolution*)

As yet there is no evidence of the parenthetical construction.

5.3.3 Sentential complements

That-clauses account for 8.8 per cent of the total, at 47 tokens. *That* omission occurs in 15 of these, and 22 have co-referential subjects of the matrix and subordinate clauses. Here are two of the 22 same-subject tokens:

- (40) (a) Heathcliff set a trap over it, and the old ones dare not come. I made him *promise* he'd never shoot a lap-wing after that, and he didn't. (Brontë 1847, *Wuthering Heights*)
- (b) "But bring that nice good-natured little Jane as often as ever you please." Pitt *promised* that he would do so. (Thackeray 1847-48, *Vanity Fair*)

Example (40a) is negative, thereby conforming to the Complexity Principle, which states that negation is a complexity factor, thus preferring the more explicit finite clause. In (40b) however, there is no complexity to speak of. As for *that* omission, the reader is referred to the discussion of the NP + *that*-clause of the CLMET 1 (§ 5.2.3). Here again, it is often due to lack of any complexity factors when we see *that* omission, but there are cases in which it is difficult to see why the author may have opted to omit the *that* marker, as in the following example:

- (41) Paoli now opened a correspondence with Lord Hood, *promising*, if the English would make an attack upon St. Fiorenzo from the sea, he would at the same time attack it by.... (Southey 1813, *Life of Horatio Lord Nelson*)

The use of commas certainly avoids the ambiguity that would otherwise exist, but this is nevertheless the kind of environment that does not usually support *that* omission.

The use of the *to*-infinitive is notably higher than the previous sub-corpus. It now makes up 40 per cent of the total, compared to the earlier 35.3 per cent. This group contains a remarkable four violations of the horror aequi principle – the first ones seen so far in the CLMET data:

- (42) (a) Mrs. Newington, you were so obliging as to *promise* to accommodate me with a return chaise as far as Eton. (Edgeworth 1796-1801, *The Parent's Assistant*)
 (b) If they cannot, Edward has been so good as to *promise* to take me to Greenwich on the Monday.... (Austen 1796-1817, *Letters to her Sister*)
 (c) Lord Byron (when I met him, one day, at dinner at Mr. Ward's) was so kind as to *promise* to give me a copy of it. (Byron 1810-13, *Letters*)
 (d) ...her clear, her acute judgment felt it a kind of prevarication to *promise* to write and then write nothing that was hoped for. (Inchbald 1796, *Nature and Art*)

In the first three examples, it can be seen that each of them contain the formulaic phrase *so obliging / good / kind as to...*, and in such cases it could be argued that the *to* preceding *promise*, as well as fulfilling its role as infinitival marker, is also performing a duty in the preceding phrase, and this may have, in some sense, overridden the constraints of the horror aequi principle. It is certainly a compelling discovery, and grounds for further research. Example (42d) however, is alone in this respect, and there appears to be no such explanation as to why a *that*-clause was not selected in place of the infinitive.

The verb forms are distributed in a similar way to the CLMET 1, with *promised* having far more than the other three forms. As noted with the CLMET 1 data, *to*-infinitives accept insertions between matrix and lower clauses to a certain degree, and in the CLMET 2 data there are 15 cases of negation, with an intervening *not* or *never*, and 16 cases of other adverbial insertions, many of which are single word adverbs such as *faithfully*, but longer examples are also found:

- (43) Rest that is reserved for the people of God; Had he not *promised* with such earnest purpose of soul, as makes words more Solemn than oaths, to save Mary from becoming such a.... (Gaskell 1848, *Mary Barton*)

The *wh*-clause complement is found in the CLMET 2 data, albeit in only one token (although it is also found in conjunction with an NP element, to be discussed further below):

- (44) "I now see compassion in your eyes; let me seize the favourable moment and persuade you to *promise* what I so ardently desire." "You propose," replied I, "to fly from the habitations of man, to dwell...". (Shelly 1818, *Frankenstein*)

The NP + *that*-clause is reduced to 5.3 per cent in this sub-corpus, as compared to the 15.7 per cent of the CLMET 1. Also noticeable are the two verb forms *promise* and *promised* both having 14

tokens, whereas the CLMET 1 showed a striking difference in favour of the form *promise*. There are seven cases of *that* omission, and, like the CLMET 1, there is little pattern to be found.

Certainly, in cases of complexity, *that* is generally present, as shown below:

- (45) ...a letter this afternoon from Jack Harris, to tell me our ship sails on Tuesday next; and it's long since I *promised* my uncle (my mother's brother, him that lives at Kirk-Christ, beyond Ramsay, in the Isle of Man) that I'd.... (Gaskell 1848, *Mary Barton*)

This example was by far the longest insertion found in the NP + *that*-clause data up to this point, and clearly the *that* marker is needed in such a situation, despite the fact that the extra material is enclosed within parentheses.

NP + *to*-infinitive complements are still found in the language of this period with some frequency, with 20 tokens accounting for 3.8 per cent of the total. This is marginally less than the 4 per cent noted in the CLMET 1 data. Interestingly, nine of these are negative (46a), and all 20 tokens show an unmarked word order (46b):

- (46) (a) "...and so I will when the ship is quiet again; but now I wish you would help me down below, for I *promised* mamma not to stay up long." "Then always keep your promise like a good lad," replied the old man. (Marryat 1841, *Masterman*)
 (b) In answer to your question, sir, I am to inform you that I HAVE *promised* Mr. Wheeler to vote for him. (Edgeworth 1796-1801, *The Parent's Assistant*)

As noted above, the *wh*-clause element is evident in another complement type found in this sub-corpus; the NP + *wh*-clause:

- (47) "I shall stay here, Mr. Mackintosh; and I only beg that you will *promise* me what I ask. Acquaint Mr. Seagrave's friends with what has happened...". (Marryat 1841, *Masterman*)

The final sentential complement to be discussed in this section is the *to* + NP + *that*-clause, which is found in only one token, as it was in the CLMET 1. It is therefore rarer here, as the CLMET 2 is larger. The *to* + NP + *to*-infinitive pattern, by comparison, is no longer attested in this sub-corpus. We may then tentatively predict that the *to* + NP + *that*-clause will also cease to occur as we approach Modern English. Here is the sole example found in the data:

- (48) “Hear then my determination, John. If you do not *promise* to me, in faith and honour, that you never will say, or insinuate such a thing again in your life...”. (Hogg 1824, *Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*)

Here we note the lengthy insertion, and the inclusion of the complementiser in the lower clause.

5.3.4 Sense and structure in the CLMET 2

In this section we are able to make a comparison to the conclusions reached in the previous section, and the *OED* analysis. Table 7 shows the distribution of complement types across the four senses:

Complement	Sense 1 <i>Pledge to give or do something</i>	Sense 2 <i>Convey assurance or emphasis</i>	Sense 3 <i>Give reasonable expectation</i>	Sense 4 <i>Commit someone to an engagement</i>
<i>that</i> -clause	42	4	-	-
<i>to</i> -infinitive	199	-	13	-
<i>wh</i> -clause	1	-	-	-
NP + <i>that</i> -clause	21	8	-	-
NP + <i>to</i> -infinitive	19	-	-	-
NP + <i>wh</i> -clause	1	-	-	-
<i>to</i> + NP + <i>that</i> -cl	1	-	-	-
NP	48	16	23	-
NP + NP	62	-	3	1
NP + <i>to</i> + NP	22	-	1	2
<i>to</i> + NP + NP	1	-	1	-
<i>to</i> + NP	1	-	-	-
Adv + <i>for</i> + NP	-	-	4	-
Adv	-	-	9	-
∅ complement	28	1	-	-
Total	446 / 83.7 %	29 / 5.4 %	54 / 10.1 %	3 / 0.6 %

Table 7: Sense and structure in the CLMET 2.

Sense 1: *Pledge to do or give something*. This sense has gained some ground in this period of the language; it is now up to 83.7 per cent, as opposed to the 61.8 per cent of the previous period. The only two complement types that are not found in this category are the Adv + *for* + NP, and the Adv. Aside from several minor complements represented by only one token, the type of any consequence that is found exclusively under this sense is the NP + *to*-infinitive – as it was in the CLMET 1.

Lower clause verbs of sentential complements have changed somewhat in this period. Previously the semantic category of *business and finance* was the most common; now, at the height of the Romantic period, while money still remains a dominant theme, it is verbs of the *human companionship* semantic type that are most common. Verbs such as *return, accompany, attend, remain, love, and marry* are frequent in this respect.

Sense 2: *Convey assurance or emphasis*. This sense is not as common in this period as it was previously, with a mere 5.4 per cent compared to the 22.8 per cent it held earlier. This is a sizeable difference, and can be seen as a manifestation of the changing way in which *promise* is being used. The same complements continue to dominate: NP, NP + *that*-clause, and the *that*-clause.

Sense 3: *Give reasonable expectation*. Like sense 2, this sense has also decreased due to the rise in the use of sense 1; but although its use has lessened overall, it is increasing in comparison to sense 2. Sense 3 is now the second most common sense of *promise*. Sentential lower clause verbs continue to be dominated by *be*, although several other verbs (following no apparent pattern) are in evidence, which appears to be a constant characteristic of sense 3.

Sense 4: *Commit someone to an engagement*. There are three tokens of this sense in the CLMET 2, which represents a slight increase from the previous period. Indeed, it is still a marginal sense, and the three tokens in the CLMET 2 are all in relation to marriage, rather than any other type of engagement or appointment.

5.3.5 Review

In this section we have analysed 533 tokens of written English from the period 1780 to 1850.

Notable findings from this section include: the fact that the verb *promise* is, in general, used almost as frequently as it was in the previous period, albeit with a clear shift in the arrangement of the senses; sense 1 is by far the more dominant sense, and sense 3 usage is now more frequent than sense 2; the NP + *to* + NP form continues to be associated with movement, as roughly 40 per cent

of the total are of a marked word order; the Adverb complement has become frequent during this period, having been found only as part of a larger construction represented by only one token in the CLMET 1; zero complement usage has risen noticeably in this period, from a previous percentage of 1.7, up to 5.4; the first violations of the horror aequi constraint were found among the *to*-infinitive complements – a complement type whose frequency has risen in this period; and the *wh*-clause element has appeared for the first time, once on its own, and once coupled with a NP.

5.4 *Promise* in the CLMET 3

We now enter the period 1850 to 1920, with data from the CLMET 3 sub-corpus.

5.4.1 Overview of findings

This final sub-section of the CLMET contains a total of 3,982,264 words from 51 different texts of 29 different authors. The search returns a total of 753 tokens, of which 308, or 40.9 per cent, were discarded as being either nouns (49a/b) or adjectives (50a/b):

- (49) (a) ...but she answered only in monosyllables. Had it not been for my *promise* to the innkeeper, she would, I think, have urged me to stay in Leatherhead that night.
(Wells 1897, *The War of the Worlds*)
- (b) He made a second journey through Kordofan, and received everywhere *promises* of support from all classes. The most distant tribes sent assurances of devotion and reverence.... (Churchill 1899, *The River War*)
- (50) (a) ...Catherine was not the pretty waitress, and it is time now to tell the *promised* early history of Mr. Cardew. He was the son of a well-to-do London merchant, who lived in Stockwell.... (Rutherford 1893, *Catherine Furze*)
- (b) ...some words that had casually issued from the mouth of my youngest Grandson, a most *promising* young Hexagon of unusual brilliancy and perfect angularity.
(Abbott 1884, *Flatland*)

A total of 445 tokens remain following the deletion of irrelevant tokens, which gives a normalised frequency of 111.7. Reviewing the NFs of the previous two sub-corpora – 143.1 and 142.5 respectively – this is a significantly lower number, suggesting that the word *promise* is being used less frequently in the CLMET 3 period. Also, the percentage of nominal and adjectival usages has

been gradually rising: CLMET 1 = 36.2 percent, CLMET 2 = 37.4 per cent, and CLMET 3 = 40.9 per cent. As with the NF, we see the biggest difference between the CLMET 2 and 3.

Complement	<i>promise</i>	<i>promised</i>	<i>promises</i>	<i>promising</i>	Total	%	NF/million
<i>that</i> -clause	16	15	2	5	38	8.5	9.5
<i>to</i> -infinitive	31	111	13	12	167	37.5	41.9
<i>wh</i> -clause	-	2	-	-	2	0.4	0.5
NP + <i>that</i> -clause	13	13	-	-	26	5.8	6.5
NP + <i>to</i> -infinitive	6	11	-	-	17	3.8	4.3
NP	26	47	5	5	83	18.7	20.8
NP + NP	14	30	1	4	49	11	12.3
NP + <i>to</i> + NP	4	12	1	2	19	4.3	4.8
<i>to</i> + NP + NP	1	1	-	-	2	0.4	0.5
<i>for</i> + NP	-	1	-	1	2	0.4	0.5
Adv + <i>for</i> + NP	1	1	-	-	2	0.4	0.5
Adv	-	5	1	-	6	1.3	1.5
\emptyset complement	13	17	1	1	32	7.2	8
Total	125	266	24	30	445	100	111.7

Table 8: Complements of promise in the years 1850 to 1920.

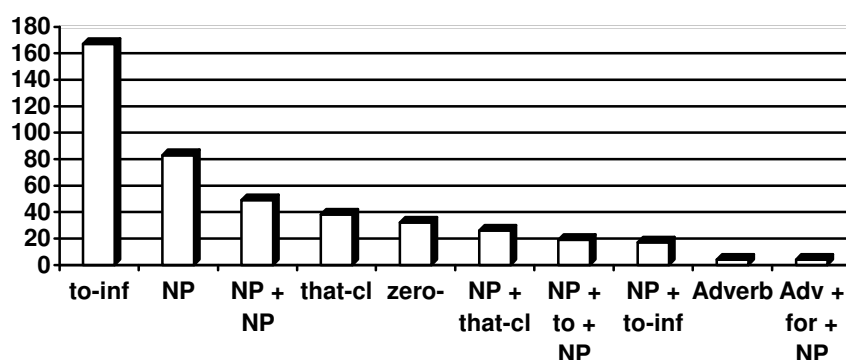


Figure 4: CLMET 3 complements in order of frequency.

The curve shown in figure 4 is similar to that of the previous period, and the main complements are in the same order.

5.4.2 Non-sentential complements

The NP complement retains its position as the most frequently-occurring non-sentential complement of the written English recorded in this period. Its use has been fluctuating somewhat, if we compare the previous sub-corpora; it began at 21 per cent, dropped to 16.3, and has now risen to 18.7 per cent. These are not robust differences however, and could be viewed as quite normal.

Again, the NP complement contributes the most tokens to sense 3, and it now also contributes tokens to all four senses. 23 of the NPs are [+ HUMAN], and 60 are [– HUMAN], showing a ratio that has remained remarkably consistent since the CLMET 1. Here is an example of each of these types:

- (51) (a) Alice uttered an exclamation of surprise. 'Yes,' said Esclairmonde, 'I was dedicated his my infancy, and *promised* myself in the nunnery at Dijon when I was seven years old.' Then, as if to turn the conversation from hers.... (Yonge 1870, *The Caged Lion*)
- (b) Such moments are still rare in the West; that they come at all *promises* a fairer future. Margaret, though unable to understand her sister, was assured against estrangement.... (Forster 1910, *Howards End*)

The former is the only NP token from this section of the CLMET to fall under sense 4. The same entity is both agent and theme, and the speaker is telling of her having committed herself to her spirituality. The latter illustration is of sense 3, but in this case there is a *that*-clause in subject position, lending an even more abstract element than normal to the sense 3 subject. As previous analysis has shown, movement is common with this complement; here there are 18 cases, of which relativisation is the most predominant type. The verb forms are not spread in a similar way to the earlier sub-corpora; use of the past tense *promised* is markedly higher than the base form *promise*, and this has not previously been the case.

The NP + NP gives 49 tokens, and at 11 per cent it is one of the complement types to retain a certain degree of consistency throughout the years 1710 to 1920 (previously 12.3 and 12.6 per cent, CLMET 1 and 2 respectively). This pattern is compatible with all four senses in the CLMET 3, as illustrated below, in numerical order of senses:

- (52) (a) Above all, he is always hungry,” said Baloo hopefully. “*Promise* him many goats.”
 “He sleeps for a full month after he has once eaten”. (Kipling 1894, *The Jungle Book*)
- (b) “If the thing must be done it SHALL be done. I *promise* you that, Merriman.” “Just so, Sir Percival, just so; but there are two alternatives in all transactions. (Collins 1859-60, *The Woman in White*)
- (c) The immortality to which I look, and which my faith doth *promise* me, shall be free from the bonds that here must tie my spirit down. (Haggard 1887, *She*)
- (d) Edwin was specially aggrieved, because the king had *promised* him one of his daughters in marriage, but had delayed giving her to him. (Freeman 1888, *William the Conqueror*)

The overwhelming majority of NP + NP tokens fall under sense 1, while the remaining three senses claim but a few tokens each.

In one token from this category, the beneficiary and theme are inverted, something which has not been found so far in the CLMET:

- (53) “He’ll want someone to help him there. I asked for the post, and he *promised* it me.” The last words were hurried, though he had resolved to speak with deliberation. (Gissing 1891, *New Grub Street*)

Interestingly, the text that follows this complement, ‘*the last words were hurried, though he had resolved to speak with deliberation*’, could point to an admission that the speaker, being in a hurry, has simply made an error either in the order of the constituents of the complement, or in omitting the preposition that would be present in a NP + *to* + NP construction.

The NP + *to* + NP has 19 tokens in the CLMET 3, or 4.3 per cent. This is comparable to the 4.5 per cent of the CLMET 2. This complement type continues to be used in cases involving movement, with some form of non-canonical word order found in nine tokens. The most frequent type of movement is extraction, namely relativisation, but passivisation is also common. Below is an illustration in which a long and complex NP complement, representing the theme, has been moved to the pre-verb position:

- (54) ...according to one version, his daughter, the betrothed of Edwin, who had never forgotten her English lover, was now *promised* to the Spanish King Alfonso, and died - in answer to her own prayers - before the marriage was celebrated. (Freeman 1888, *William the Conqueror*)

This complement type has consistently contributed tokens to sense 4, and the CLMET 3 is not an exception; four tokens belong under sense 4, the above example being one of them. Sense 4 frequency has increased since the 18th century, and the fact that the rather weighty and explicit NP + *to* + NP complement pattern remains the preferred vehicle for expressing the idea of *promising* a person to another person is worthy of further investigation.

It is also worth noting the relationship between the NP + NP, and the NP + *to* + NP¹⁰ complements. From the point of view of semantic roles, the NP + NP is NP1 = beneficiary, NP2 = theme. The NP + *to* + NP pattern is NP1 = theme, NP2 = beneficiary. The two different forms therefore present the same information, and are, in many cases interchangeable, as the following illustrations, based on a CLMET 3 NP + NP token, show:

- (55) (a) The Norman story runs that both princes *promised* William their active support.
 (b) The Norman story runs that both princes *promised* their active support to William.
 (Freeman 1888, *William the Conqueror*)

According to Huddleston and Pullum, the choice between the two patterns is “very largely a matter of information packaging” (2002, 309), and is based upon certain general tendencies. If the theme NP is a pronoun, for example, the NP + *to* + NP pattern tends to be chosen, and if the beneficiary NP is a pronoun, the NP + NP pattern is favoured. This observation, along with the aforementioned considerations such as extraction environments and cognitive complexity, obviously combine to create a rather complex interplay of factors affecting complement choice.

The Adverb and the Adv + *for* + NP patterns show six tokens and two tokens respectively in the CLMET 3. Both are somewhat less frequent than in the previous period. All belong exclusively under sense 3, as has always been the case. Here is an example of each:

- (56) (a) “...they had done nothing at all,” Jasper replied to her remark. “And the way they knocked that trifle together *promises* well. They did it very quickly, and in a far more workmanlike way than I should have thought possible.” (Gissing 1891, *New Grub Street*)

¹⁰ The NP + *for* + NP complement would also be relevant to this discussion.

- (b) Lucy soothed him and tinkered at the conversation in a way that *promised* well for their married peace. No one is perfect, and surely it is wiser to discover the imperfections before.... (Forster 1908, *A Room with a View*)

The fact that the Adverb as a complement by itself was non-existent in the CLMET 1, registered 1.7 per cent in the CLMET 2, and has now dropped to 1.3 per cent, could indicate a minor trend in the language of the 19th century.

A small number of the Adverb complements in this section of the CLMET are followed by what I have deemed to be adjuncts, although it is not always easy to make the distinction. As a general rule, the prepositions *to* and *for* tend to introduce a complement, indicating the theta-role of beneficiary to the subsequent entity, while prepositions such as *against* and *as* seem to be mostly indicative of adjuncts. Consider the following examples that were found in the data, and which I have classed simply as Adverb complements:

- (57) (a) ...referring to Cecil as the “Fiasco” – family honoured pun on fiancée. Mrs. Honeychurch, amusing and portly, *promised* well as a mother-in-law. As for Lucy and Cecil, for whom the temple had been built.... (Forster 1908, *A Room with a View*)
- (b) ...hesitated between my crowbar and a hatchet or a sword. I could not carry both, however, and my bar of iron *promised* best against the bronze gates. There were numbers of guns, pistols, and rifles. (Wells 1888, *The Time Machine*)

These are marginal cases however, and may indeed be interpreted by some as being complements. In discerning complements from adjuncts, Rudanko (1996, 12 and 95-96; cf. also Kajita 1967, 19) discusses the subject of adjunct movement, observing that “in the case of [adjunct] clauses the connection [between the head and the adjunct / complement] is looser, permitting preposing,¹¹ whereas in the case of complement clauses, the connection is tighter, which acts as a brake on preposing” (ibid., 96). The fact that the relevant sections of (57a/b) prepose relatively easily would point to their status as adjuncts:

- (58) (a) As a mother-in-law, Mrs. Honeychurch, amusing and portly, *promised* well.
- (b) I could not carry both, however, and against the bronze gates my bar of iron *promised* best.

¹¹ Not to be confused with extraction and passivisation, examples of which have been found to a considerable extent occurring with clear cases of complementation throughout the data so far.

The distinction between complements and adjuncts is not always clear; they can be said to exist on something of a continuum, and the above cases represent what could be seen as a grey area.

The *to* + NP + NP and the *for* + NP have always been very much marginal cases, with the latter not attested at all in the CLMET 1 while the former showed two tokens; both recorded one token each in the CLMET 2; and in the present section both have only two tokens each. To further emphasise the marginality, both examples of the *to* + NP + NP in the CLMET 1 are from the work of one author, Samuel Johnson, and we find the same situation in the CLMET 3 – it is the work of John Galsworthy that provides both tokens of this section. Here is one example each of *to* + NP + NP and *for* + NP:

- (59) (a) ...stare fashionably at the antlered heads which the great slow deer raised out of a forest of bracken that *promised* to autumn lovers such cover as was never seen before. (Galsworthy 1904, *The Man of Property*)
 (b) ...for the privilege of knocking Superintendent Seegrave down! As I had *promised* for them, the other servants followed my lead, sorely against the grain, of course, but all taking the view.... (Collins 1868, *The Moonstone*)

Finally under the non-sentential category we look at the zero complement, which has been rising steadily over the years. It now stands at 7.2 per cent of the total, having been previously at 1.3 and 5.4 per cent. Of the 32 tokens, 26 are zero complements proper, while four are of the *as*-clause type, and two are parenthetical constructions – the first of their kind to be found so far. Here is one illustration of each, in the above order:

- (60) (a) ...and she still kept hold of his; she had got him and she meant to keep him. The lad hung down his head and *promised*. What else could he do? “You know there is no one, dear, dear Ernest, who loves you so much as your papa.... (Butler 1903, *The Way of All Flesh*)
 (b) ...soon to be the most important town of all, and ugliest of the three. Margaret's train reappeared as *promised*, and was greeted with approval by her aunt. It came to a standstill in the middle distance.... (Forster 1910, *Howards End*)
 (c) “...as far as I have been able to notice, does neither harm nor good to anyone else.” “I'll send you up a boy,” *promised* Miss Janie. I thanked her. “And now we come to the donkey.” (Jerome 1909, *They and I*)

5.4.3 Sentential complements

As a percentage of the total, *that*-clauses occupy 8.5 per cent. This has been somewhat consistent over the period we are studying, with the lowest point evident in the CLMET 1, and the peak in usage occurring within the CLMET 2 time-frame. Still, we may say that the *that*-clause has experienced relatively little fluctuation over 200 years. Of the 38 tokens found here, 24 include the *that* marker, which shows remarkable correlation with the CLMET 1 and 2: in both previous sub-corpora, it was roughly a two to one ratio of *that* retention versus *that* omission. Here is an example of each:

- (61) (a) ...knowing how wretched she would be during all the time of my absence; and, on that account, I *promised* instead, that I would always give her a full account of my adventure upon returning. (Blackmore 1869, *Lorna Doone*)
 (b) I told her to be sure and write me how you were last night, and she *promised* faithfully she would. And it was because I got nothing by this morning's post that I decided to come over.... (Bennett 1908, *The Old Wives' Tale*)

The former illustration is typical, in that it features an insertion followed by the inclusion of the *that* marker, in accordance with the Complexity Principle. The latter example however, is unusual: the more complex environment created by the insertion of the adverb *faithfully* has not triggered *that* inclusion. We have observed similar sequences in earlier periods. It should be kept in mind, however, that the Complexity Principle is a merely a strong tendency, rather than a rule.

In the CLMET 1 sub-section, discussion of co-referential higher and lower subjects proved fruitful, in that it was possible in most instances to suggest reasons why the author may have opted for the finite rather than the infinite alternative. The CLMET 2 however, revealed several examples in which there seemed to be little explanation for the choice. It is the same in the CLMET 3, where 23 tokens out of the total of 38 have co-referential subjects; complement selection may have been affected by horror aequi in some cases (62a); cognitive complexity in others (62b); and in many instances there is little to say (62c):

- (62) (a) ...minute or two he called Tom from the counter. "Mr. Catchpole, what do you mean by taking upon yourself to *promise* you would obtain another grindstone?" "Mean, sir! I do not quite understand. " (Rutherford 1893, *Catherine Furze*)

- (b) “Well, I consent, provided that my candour be met by equal candour on the other side, and you will *promise* that if this ordeal succeeds, you will lay aside all prejudice against Mauleverer.” (Yonge 1865, *The Clever Woman of the Family*)
- (c) As her invitation was so pressing, and observing that Carrie wished to go, we *promised* we would visit her the next Saturday week, and stay till Monday. (Grossmith 1894, *The Diary of a Nobody*)

The *to*-infinitive is recorded at 167 tokens in this section of the corpus, which is a percentage of 37.5, and a NF of 41.9. As with the CLMET 2, we find violations of the horror aequi condition, this time three cases:

- (63) (a) All that Edward could really do for his kinsmen was to *promise* to make, when the time came, a recommendation to the Witan in his favour. (Freeman 1888, *William the Conqueror*)
- (b) ...between this time and harvest, that you say you are going to be away from home, I shall be able to *promise* to be your wife,” she said, firmly. (Hardy 1874, *Far from the Madding Crowd*)
- (c) Tom renewed the discussion after second lesson, and succeeded so far as to get East to *promise* to give the new plan a fair trial. (Hughes 1857, *Tom Brown's School Days*)

In the CLMET 2 cases, we found the phrase *so obliging / good / kind as to...* incorporated in the construction, and I tentatively proposed that this may have overridden the constraints imposed by the horror aequi principle. In these examples there are no such mitigating circumstances (apart from (63c), where it is not directly involved) and these are straightforward cases of the immediate succession of two *to*-infinitives.

In contrast to the *to*-infinitive examples of the earlier periods of the CLMET, the infinitives of the years 1850 to 1920 exhibit far less instances of insertion between matrix and lower clauses, the longest example being found in the following illustration:

- (64) Let me consider the second reason first. If it be that you have some plan that *promises* more directly to accomplish the deliverance of these multitudes than mine, I implore you at once to bring it.... (Booth 1890, *In Darkest England and the Way Out*)

It may be that as we approach the English of the Modern period, the observation by Rohdenburg (1996, 166) – that the non-finite is generally less tolerant of inserted material than the finite clause – appears more relevant.

The *wh*-clause is found also in this period of the CLMET, albeit in just two tokens:

- (65) (a) ...she never annoyed a customer, nor foolishly *promised* what could not be performed, nor was late nor negligent, nor disrespectful. (Bennett 1908, *The Old Wives' Tale*)
- (b) Whether Sir James, who was Garden Seeds, had *promised* what he could perform, she doubted, but so long as Henry mistook them for the county families.... (Forster 1910, *Howards End*)

These two illustrations, from two different authors, are strikingly similar in that the content of the *wh*-clause is almost the same in both cases, the only difference being that the former is a negated passive, and the latter is not. The *wh*-clause remains a very marginal complement type, if we recall that it was not touched upon in any of the grammars consulted in section 4.3, and attested in only one *OED* example.

Far more frequent at 26 tokens, and in terms of percentages very similar to the position it held in the CLMET 2, is the NP + *that*-clause. Verb form distribution also shows remarkable similarity to the CLMET 2; *promise* and *promised* here have 13 tokens each, and in the CLMET 2 they held 14 tokens each. Insertions are minimal, being restricted to adverbs such as *faithfully* and *heartily*, but in one case the NP was rather long and complex, and thus predictably triggered the use of the complementiser:

- (66) I asked if he had heard from her. He replied: “No; she *promised* that old windbag of a father of hers that she would not communicate with me. I see Frank Mutlar, of course...”. (Grossmith 1894, *The Diary of a Nobody*)

Again, inclusion of the complementiser appears to be random, since in two cases of adverb insertion the complementiser is omitted, while in non-insertion cases it is either used or omitted without any apparent pattern.

The final complement to be discussed in this sub-section is the NP + *to*-infinitive, which, at 17 tokens, is still being selected as a complement of *promise* in the English of this period. In terms of a percentage of the whole, it is roughly the same as it has been over the whole CLMET period, which shows considerable consistency. Unlike the CLMET 2, in which a high proportion of the NP + *to*-infinitives were negative, only three such examples are found in the current period. Like the CLMET 2 however, all tokens are of an unmarked word order. Here are two typical examples:

- (67) (a) “Now, there 'tis again, turn on the waterworks; that's just like you.” “But you'll *promise* me not to go to Budmouth second meeting, won't you?” she implored. Bathsheba was at the full depth for tea.... (Hardy 1874, *Far from the Madding Crowd*)
- (b) ...unless I should within a few hours obtain a show of figures at my bankers. I had *promised* Etherell to breakfast with him. A note – a faint scream – despatched by Mrs. Waddy to Mr. Temple's house.... (Meredith 1870, *The Adventures of Harry Richmond*)

One NP + *to*-infinitive token has been classified as sense 4, which is unusual, given that until now all tokens of this complement type have fallen under sense 1. The token in question is given below:

- (68) Upon this I brought her back again to Tom Faggus and his doings. “My poor Annie, have you really *promised* him to be his wife?” “Then after all you have no reason, John, no particular reason, I mean, for slighting...”. (Blackmore 1869, *Lorna Doone*)

The fact that the lower verb, *be*, denotes a state rather than an action, and this, in conjunction with the context of marriage, I felt was sufficient reason for sense 4 classification. Sense 1 would have been appropriate had the lower verb been *marry*, as in the following, rather unusual-sounding, paraphrasing:

- (69) My poor Annie, have you really *promised* him to marry him?

In (68), *Annie* has *promised* herself as a wife, rather than having *promised* to perform the action of marrying someone. The difference is subtle, but I feel that it exists nonetheless.

5.4.4 Sense and structure in the CLMET 3

The breakdown of complement types across the four senses for this period of the CLMET is given in table 9 below:

Complement	Sense 1 <i>Pledge to give or do something</i>	Sense 2 <i>Convey assurance or emphasis</i>	Sense 3 <i>Give reasonable expectation</i>	Sense 4 <i>Commit someone to an engagement</i>
<i>that</i> -clause	24	13	1	-
<i>to</i> -infinitive	145	-	19	3
<i>wh</i> -clause	2	-	-	-
NP + <i>that</i> -clause	18	8	-	-
NP + <i>to</i> -infinitive	16	-	-	1
NP	53	9	20	1
NP + NP	42	1	4	2
NP + <i>to</i> + NP	13	-	2	4
<i>to</i> + NP + NP	-	-	2	-
<i>for</i> + NP	2	-	-	-
Adv + <i>for</i> + NP	-	-	2	-
Adv	-	-	6	-
∅ complement	31	1	-	-
Total	346 / 77.8 %	32 / 7.2 %	56 / 12.6 %	11 / 2.5 %

Table 9: Sense and structure in the CLMET 3.

Sense 1: *Pledge to do or give something*. This period shows a slight decline for this sense, as compared to the CLMET 2. The CLMET 1 had 61.8 per cent, the CLMET 2 had 83.7 per cent, and now it is at 77.8 per cent. It is still by far the most dominant sense of the verb *promise*.

Complements containing the adverb element are not found under this sense, and the NP + *to*-infinitive, while no longer exclusively a sense 1 complement, are still mostly to be found here. The semantic field of *human companionship* is still the most common theme, with common lower verbs being *return*, *accompany*, *call on*, *come*, and *marry*.

Sense 2: *Convey assurance or emphasis*. The major shift in sense 2 usage that occurred after the CLMET 1 was apparently permanent, as *promise* is used in this sense to only a slightly higher

degree than it was in the CLMET 2. The complement forms *that*-clause, NP, and NP + *that*-clause however, remain the prominent patterns showing compatibility with sense 2.

Sense 3: *Give reasonable expectation*. Sense 3 has retained a certain degree of consistency over the period covered up to this point, albeit with some fluctuation. It is somewhat lower than the CLMET 1, but it has shown an increase in the amount and variety of complements with which it may be linked. It is now compatible with eight complement types, compared to the six of the CLMET 1. 13 out of the 19 *to*-infinitives under sense 3 have *be* or *become* as the lower verb, which is more than any previous section.

Sense 4: *Commit someone to an engagement*. This sense has increased in usage, and while remaining the least-used sense of *promise*, the rise from the relative obscurity of the two previous sub-corpora has shown that in the latter half of the 19th, and the early 20th centuries, it was not entirely unheard-of. A surprisingly high five complement types are connected with sense 4, with the most common one being the NP + *to* + NP.

5.4.5 Review

In this section I have analysed 445 tokens of the verb *promise* as it was used in the years 1850 to 1920. The main findings from this section include: a strikingly lower normalised frequency compared to CLMET sections 1 and 2; verbal usage of *promise* in general is giving way to a rise in the nominal and adjectival uses; certain complement types, notably *that*-clause, NP + NP, and NP *to* + NP have remained remarkably consistent in many respects over the 210 year period covered by the CLMET; there has been a rise in the use of sense 4, as well as the zero complement, since the previous period; horror aequi continues to be found in the written language of this period; and the *to*-infinitive complement begins to allow insertion between matrix and lower clauses to a noticeably lesser degree in the CLMET 3.

5.5 *Promise* in the BNC

Having worked through the data from the years 1710 to 1920, we now examine the English of the Modern period, using data obtained from the BNC.

5.5.1 Overview of findings

In order to maintain a degree of homogeneity with the predominantly fictional material of the CLMET, the sub-section of the BNC from which I have extracted data is the Imaginative Prose section. This section of the BNC is comprised of 16,496,408 words published in Britain between 1960 and 1993. Being a tagged corpus, a search for the verbal usages of *promise* was conducted using the search string {promise}_V*, and the BNC's own search facility. This returns a total of 1,865 tokens. From this, a random 426 tokens were taken, which is the number arrived at when the average number of tokens of verbal *promise* found in the three sub-sections of the CLMET is calculated. Two instances of the nominal use of *promise* were found among these, showing a less than perfect precision which is often found in tagged corpora (BNC codes given):

- (70) (a) She shivered at the *promise* explicit in his voice. A *promise* that was abundantly kept. He made love to her slowly and.... (JY2 2357)
 (b) ...light of heart. Dane was gone — he'd made that *promise* the night before, and for some reason she felt sure he.... (HA9 945)

Additional verbal examples were taken at random to replace these. The total of 426 tokens projects a normalised frequency of 113.1¹², which is slightly higher than the 111.7 of the CLMET 3. This indicates that the verbal use of *promise* in the English language has remained somewhat stable since the period of the CLMET 3. The NFs of the CLMET 1 and 2 were significantly higher. It can also be seen from table 10 below, that the overall number of complements is now less than in previous periods, with several of the more marginal patterns, such as Adv, Adv + *for* + NP, and *to* + NP + NP not attested here:

¹² As we are making use of only 22.8 % of all *promise* tokens available in the BNC, an accurate NF is obtained by adopting the figure 3,768,023 (22.8 % of the total words in the Imaginative Prose section) as the corpus word count.

Complement	<i>promise</i>	<i>promised</i>	<i>promises</i>	<i>promising</i>	Total	%	NF/million
<i>that</i> -clause	10	28	-	1	39	9.2	10.4
<i>to</i> -infinitive	24	66	8	1	99	23.2	26.3
NP + <i>that</i> -clause	24	31	-	1	56	13.1	14.9
NP + <i>to</i> -infinitive	3	4	-	-	7	1.6	1.9
NP	31	44	-	2	77	18.1	20.4
NP + NP	8	18	1	2	29	6.8	7.7
NP + <i>to</i> + NP	1	5	-	-	6	1.4	1.6
<i>for</i> + NP	1	-	-	-	1	0.2	0.3
\emptyset complement	44	68	-	-	112	26.3	29.7
Total	146	264	9	7	426	100	113.1

Table 10: Complements of promise in the BNC.

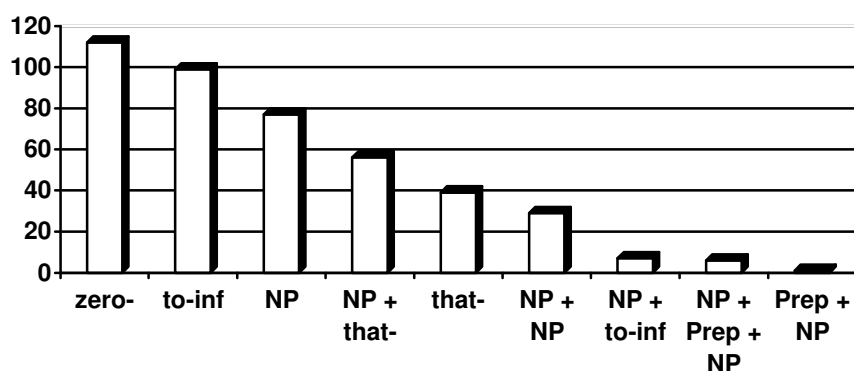


Figure 5: BNC complements in order of frequency.

The zero complement now occupies the leftmost position in figure 5, followed by the *to*-infinitive, with the downward curve noticeably shallower than those of previous periods.

5.5.2 Non-sentential complements

The NP continues to be the most common non-sentential complement in written British English.

During the first two periods covered by the CLMET its position was changeable, starting at 21 per cent, then falling to 16.3 per cent, but the 18.7 per cent of the CLMET 3 and the 18.1 per cent of the BNC suggest that it has retained a consistency for the past 150 years. In comparing the

characteristics of the NPs, we find that 41 are [+ HUMAN]¹³, while 36 are [- HUMAN], a balance that has indeed shifted in relation to the CLMET data. The ratio of [- HUMAN] to [+ HUMAN] has been consistently around 2:1 from 1710 to 1920, but this is now no longer the case. A great many of the [+ HUMAN] examples are of the type shown in (71a), in which the NP is a personal pronoun, and a typical sense 2 token; while the [- HUMAN] type (71b) is generally sense 1, with the NP not of a predictable form:

- (71) (a) ...thinking, Kathleen, I haven't done anything wrong — I *promise* you. I'm just homeless, that's all. (A0F 1900)
 (b) She swayed her hips and rolled her eyes, then *promised* love divine. Mustapha Bint, was the happiest of men. (KAS 119)

The NP remains one of the main contributors to sense 3, as this illustration shows:

- (72) The treacherous oak swayed above, the tree that had *promised* the milk of Paradise but had stood guard instead overtop the spilling.... (ADA 1623)

The NP + NP complement remains the second most frequently occurring non-sentential complement, but it has experienced a notable reduction in usage in the present period. Throughout the CLMET it had remained reasonably constant, accounting for approximately 11 to 13 per cent of the total, but now it has dropped to 6.8 per cent. Eight of the 29 tokens show some form of movement, with relativisation (73a) being the most common, followed by passivisation (73b):

- (73) (a) ...Roxie Farmer and her sister-in-law were having the bonfire they had *promised* themselves. It was a fine evening and all the gardens around.... (H85 2439)
 (b) ...to the land and ran towards him. The dragon-ships had been *promised* no opposition. They had expected some throwing of stones and worse.... (HRC 2332)

The NP + *to* + NP, having been something of a marginal but fairly consistent case throughout the period under study, is now at 1.4 per cent of the total, having peaked at 4.5 per cent during the period of the CLMET 3. Discussion of this construction has usually focused on the degree of movement with which it is associated, and of the six tokens found in the BNC, three are in the

¹³ In one case the NP is *God*, but for our purposes this will be counted as [+ HUMAN].

passive voice, and one is a case of relativisation. Below is an example of a passive; the relativised example; and one example showing an unmarked word order:

- (74) (a) ...words fell into place. ‘Marriage? But I've been *promised* to Craig for years, I can't break my word’. (CKD 973)
 (b) ...did have a few of the new German FW190S which Hitler had *promised* to Stalin as a goodwill gesture over the Poland deal. (HTW 2553)
 (c) Everyone wants me to bring them Undry, and I've *promised* it to Fand, but I don't know now whether she.... (F99 2073)

The three passive tokens of which example (74a) is one, all belong to sense 4, but it should be pointed out here that two of the three are from the same text. Throughout the CLMET, roughly 40 per cent of all NP + *to* + NP tokens showed movement, but in the Modern period, although tokens are few, a standard word order is the exception, rather than the rule.

The sole *for* + NP token is given below:

- (75) ...is about.’ She hesitated. ‘And can you so *promise* for him, my lord?’ ‘Never fear for that...’. (HGG 275)

The title of the work from which this has been extracted, *A Bloody Field by Shrewsbury*, would indicate that it is a historical novel, the author thus adopting the language of an earlier time period, thereby casting the relevancy of this token into doubt. This illustration is also unusual from the point of view of semantic roles; it would appear that *him* is not the beneficiary, but rather the *lord* is being asked to *promise* on behalf of *him*, or act as guarantor. Thus *him* may be termed a kind of second agent, or agent *in absentia*. Looking back, we may tentatively label example (59b) of the CLMET 3 as being of the same type.

The change in the zero complement position represents a major shift in the usage of *promise* in recent centuries. In the CLMET 1, 2, and 3, zero complement percentages of 1.7, 5.4, and 7.2 respectively were recorded. In the BNC it stands at 26.3 per cent of the total. It must be remembered however, that into the zero complement category are placed all *as*-clause and parenthetical examples, which in this case contribute 15 and 40 tokens respectively to the 112 token total. Below is an example each of the zero complement proper, *as*-clause, and parenthetical:

- (76) (a) ...She had been secure in her hopes. He had *promised*, had he not? But then not exactly...But perhaps exactly enough? (FPH 2207)
 (b) 'As to reading them...' They went out to drink champagne as *promised*. Lily was enjoying herself, although she thought: I am easily pleased. (FPH 3349)
 (c) 'Did you really feel nothing?' 'Really,' she *promised*. 'He doesn't feel anything for me either.' (H9V 2824)

As stated in the *Methodology* section above, tokens that fall under the zero complement title are not treated as complements, and so I do not intend to discuss this case in detail. Suffice it to say however, that a change such as this should not be ignored, and may provide an opportunity for future research.

5.5.3 Sentential complements

The *that*-clause has experienced a slight rise in usage since the CLMET 1, but overall it can be said that it has remained fairly constant. The CLMET 1 to 3 showed percentages of 6.3, 8.8, and 8.5, while the BNC records 9.2. per cent. It is currently the third most frequent sentential complement, after the *to*-infinitive and the NP + *that*-clause, a sequence that it shares only with the CLMET 1. The *that*-clause in the CLMET 2 and 3 was the second, rather than the third most frequent sentential type. A striking change has occurred in the ratio of *that* retention to *that* omission: previously it had been a steady two to one ratio in favour of *that* retention; now, of the 39 tokens, 10 retain the complementiser, while 29 do not. In general, insertions are less common in the BNC data, but the few that are found are single words, and in one case it was insufficient to trigger the use of the complementiser:

- (77) I ordered beds for you weeks ago, and the company *promised* faithfully they'll be delivered tomorrow morning, but that doesn't.... (FRS 456)

Similar examples have been noted in the CLMET data, particularly the CLMET 2 and 3.

Among the *that*-clauses of the BNC data we find 21 cases in which the higher and lower subjects are co-referential, which is a similar number to that of the CLMET 3.

The *to*-infinitive, while remaining the most frequently used sentential complement, and indeed, the most common complement type overall, has fallen to 23.2 per cent of the total, with 99 tokens. The CLMET 1, 2, and 3 registered the *to*-infinitive at 35.3, 40, and 37.5 per cent respectively. Among the BNC data was one case of horror aequi violation (78a). Following from the trend that appears to have begun with the CLMET 3, there are far less examples of insertion to be found, with example (78b) showing the most complex pattern among the BNC *to*-infinitives – a negative with an inserted adverb:

- (78) (a) He would persuade her that he loved her, ask her to *promise* to run away with him if her father refused his consent.... (HGE 2603)
 (b) ...the nieces and nephews they had produced between them. Jessamy had *promised* faithfully not to open them until the morning of her birthday. (H8F 11)

The latter example would seem to be a case where the finite *that*-clause may have been a more appropriate choice, this being a somewhat complex construction. The corresponding *that*-clause construction would be:

- (79) Jessamy had *promised* faithfully that she would not open them until the morning of her birthday.

The *to*-infinitive is now, for the first time, the most significant contributor to sense 3, with 12 tokens. Here are two examples of the *to*-infinitive in a sense 3 context:

- (80) (a) ...a cordial response followed by an unexpected invitation to lunch. It *promised* to be another brilliant day. There was little traffic on the.... (GVP 260)
 (b) ...for in Moscow Comrade Gorbachev and President Reagan were holding a summit meeting which *promised* to bear fruit in disarmament. Celebratory events were taking place all.... (AE0 534)

The former is of interest, as it is the first token found so far that actually has semantically empty *it* as subject. This example is directly comparable to (17) of the *NP movement* section (cf. § 3.6.2).

As noted above, the main sentential complements are in a sequence that we have not seen since the period of the CLMET 1. The NP + *that*-clause is recorded at 56 tokens in the BNC, or 13.1 per cent of the total, and it is the second most frequent sentential type. The percentages of the CLMET 1, 2, and 3 were 15.7, 5.3, and 5.2 respectively. In the CLMET 1, this complement type

was the main source of sense 2 tokens, and although sense 2 has experienced something of a revival in Modern English according to the BNC data, it is not the case – as it was in the CLMET 1 – that most of the NP + *that*-clause tokens fall under this sense. In the present data 37 tokens belong under sense 1, and 19 belong under sense 2.

When categorising NP + *that*-clause tokens into senses 1 and 2, the general tendency is for those with co-referential subjects of the matrix and lower clauses to be of sense 1, while non co-referential higher and lower subjects are sense 2. To illustrate, here is an example of both sense 1 (81a) and sense 2 (81b) that conform to this pattern:

- (81) (a) ...because I shall be tied up tomorrow. I *promised* Dillon I'd be around when the architect brings the plans for (FS1 2718)
 (b) ...nor just the pleasures of the table, although I can *promise* you that the chef here is superb. But I hope you.... (H8S 3157)

This is only a tendency however, and there are cases where this does not hold true. In the following two examples of the NP + *that*-clause in senses 1 and 2 use, from the BNC material, the situation is reversed:

- (82) (a) Lights flashing on and off in my head. I *promised* Swire Sugden we'd call it off. Find the Christmas card.... (ACK 1483)
 (b) 'No, no, I'm not. I *promise* you I'm not upset.' 'Then why have you...'. (F9C 929)

In the former, the matrix subject is arguably at least a part of the lower clause subject *we*, but technically the two are not co-referential. In the latter illustration the subjects are undeniably the same, but here the lower verb is *be*, the lower clause describing a state rather than an action, therefore cannot be sense 1.

The NP + *to*-infinitive is still in use in Modern English, according to the BNC data. Seven tokens are found, which represents 1.6 per cent of the total. Clearly however, these numbers are significantly less than those of the CLMET, which were 4, 3.8, and 3.8 per cent in the CLMET 1, 2, and 3 respectively. Here are two illustrations taken from the BNC:

- (83) (a) ...a drink in his hand. He had some memory of having *promised* God to give up drinking but God hadn't turned the clock.... (HR4 256)
 (b) ...the ground and puts it on my head. "You must *promise* me," he says, "never to wear mourning." (HOF 271)

The NP + *to*-infinitive of the Modern period conforms to the general pattern seen among these complements in earlier periods; there are several negatives among the examples, as in (83b) above, and all are of an unmarked word order. We recall however, that the NP + *to*-infinitive complements of the CLMET 1 allowed adverbial insertions between matrix and lower clauses, and that this tendency has not continued in subsequent periods. This is no different today – apart from the negative particles *not* / *never*, there are no insertions in the BNC data.

Since the frequency of the NP + *to*-infinitive pattern is of particular interest in this thesis, it pays to bear in mind a factor known as dispersion. According to Gries (2006, 196-198), this refers to the often overlooked fact that more than one occurrence of the target pattern may have originated from one small area of the corpus, thus leading to the conclusion that the pattern is more common than it actually is. In our case, the question is whether or not more than one of our NP + *to*-infinitive tokens (or any other rare complement type, for that matter) has come from the work of one author. It so happens that in the BNC data the authors of the seven NP + *to*-infinitive tokens are all different. Reviewing the CLMET data however, we find that this has not always been the case. Of the 11 NP + *to*-infinitive tokens in the CLMET 1, six come from the work of Horace Walpole. Four of the 20 tokens in the CLMET 2 come from the pen of Jane Austen, four are from Maria Edgeworth, and three from William Makepeace Thackeray. There is wider dispersion found in the CLMET 3, with no author contributing more than two NP + *to*-infinitive tokens to the total of 17. The relevance of dispersion is therefore an important factor when trying to accurately define the frequency of a particular pattern. Interestingly though, the target pattern in Modern English shows a satisfactory level of dispersion, with seven authors and seven tokens.

5.5.4 Sense and structure in the BNC

Table 11 below gives the breakdown of complement types of the BNC across the four senses:

Complement	Sense 1 <i>Pledge to give or do something</i>	Sense 2 <i>Convey assurance or emphasis</i>	Sense 3 <i>Give reasonable expectation</i>	Sense 4 <i>Commit someone to an engagement</i>
<i>that</i> -clause	22	17	-	-
<i>to</i> -infinitive	87	-	12	-
NP + <i>that</i> -clause	37	19	-	-
NP + <i>to</i> -infinitive	6	-	-	1
NP	46	21	10	1
NP + NP	24	-	3	1
NP + <i>to</i> + NP	3	-	-	3
<i>for</i> + NP	-	1	-	-
∅ complement	76	36	-	-
Total	301 / 70.7 %	94 / 22.1 %	25 / 5.7 %	6 / 1.4 %

Table 11: Sense and structure in the BNC.

Sense 1: *Pledge to do or give something*. At 70.7 per cent, this sense remains the primary sense of the verb *promise*. Over the period 1710 to the present day, this sense has experienced some fluctuation, with the lowest period being the CLMET 1 at 61.8 per cent, and the highest during the CLMET 2, at 83.7 per cent. Since this peak, there has been a steady decline to the statistics of today. All of the complements except the *for* + NP pattern are compatible with sense 1, and although most of the tokens of most complement types do belong under sense 1, no one type belongs here exclusively. Lower clause verbs of sentential complements are no longer predominantly of the *human companionship* type; rather, many semantic types are represented, and no one type appears to dominate.

Sense 2: *Convey assurance or emphasis*. As we have already noted, sense 2 has regained a percentage of the total that is very similar to that of the CLMET 1. The three complement types that have always been the main contributors to this sense are still found here: *that*-clause, NP + *that*-clause, and NP, but now 36 tokens of the zero complement also fall under this sense.

Sense 3: *Give reasonable expectation*. Having been at its highest point in the CLMET 1, sense 3 has since declined in usage, to occupy only 5.7 per cent of the total in Modern English. The *to*-infinitive and the NP continue to be the two main elements in this group, with the NP + NP also contributing three tokens in the latest set of data. *Be* continues to be a dominant lower verb of sentential complements.

Sense 4: *Commit someone to an engagement*. Sense 4 is, somewhat surprisingly, still experiencing a certain degree of usage in the Modern era. Indeed, the *OED*'s labelling of this sense as being archaic and rare is justified on the basis of the 1.4 per cent of the BNC data that it occupies, but it is clearly still in use in the language. Of the six tokens that fell under sense 4, only one was of the type *commit to a meeting / appointment*, and the remaining five were in the context of marriage. Here is the sole illustration of the former type:

(84) ...the Cullbridge's Athenaeum's wine and cheese party. We are *promised*. Ah — I have it. I'll ask Hilary Frome. (H8Y 1634)

Four of the six tokens in this sense are in the passive voice, in keeping with the observations of this sense in the *OED*.

5.5.5 Review

This section has analysed 426 examples of *promise* as it is used in Modern written English, which were extracted from the Imaginative Prose section of the BNC. Findings noted in this section include: the reversal in the ratio of [+ HUMAN] to [– HUMAN] NPs among the NP complements, as compared to the CLMET data; the reduction in the frequency of the NP + NP complement; the marked rise in the frequency of the zero complement, which is matched by the increase in the *as*-clause and parenthetical usage; the reversal in the positions of the *that*-clause and the NP + *that*-clause, to show a sequence of the frequency of sentential complements not seen since the CLMET 1; the substantial reduction in the frequency of the *to*-infinitive complement, and the one example of

horror aequi violation found in this group; and the resurgence in the use of *promise* in a sense 2 context.

6 Summary and concluding remarks

In this thesis I have analysed 1,704 examples of written British English usage of the verb *promise*, taken from the time period encompassing roughly the last 280 years. It was stated in the introduction that with this analysis, I would aim to provide answers to five research questions.

These are reiterated below:

- i) to document the syntactic types of complement patterns that co-occur with *promise* during the period from 1710 to the present day.
- ii) to compare the results of each time period, (CLMET 1, 2, 3, and the BNC) to determine whether any patterns are increasing or decreasing in usage, and whether new patterns appear or existing ones fall out of use.
- iii) to discuss the connection between form and meaning, as different complement types may represent different meanings.
- iv) to explore the effects that certain contextual constraints have upon complement selection.
- v) to offer an empirically-based evaluation of the status of *promise* in Modern British English, in regard to its complement selection tendencies and semantic uses.

In addition to these five goals, a further point was added; that of the investigation of the *promise* + *to*-infinitive construction's progress throughout the aforementioned time period, due to my own opinion of the validity of this pattern in Modern English.

In connection with the first point, table 12 below sets out the complement types that were found in each time period:

Time-frame + total	Complement type
<u>CLMET 1: 1710 - 1780</u> Sentential: 6 Non-sentential: 6 Zero complement	<i>that</i> -clause; <i>to</i> -infinitive; NP + <i>that</i> -clause; NP + <i>to</i> -infinitive; <i>to</i> + NP + <i>that</i> -clause; <i>to</i> + NP + <i>to</i> -infinitive NP; NP + NP; NP + <i>to</i> + NP; NP + <i>for</i> + NP; <i>to</i> + NP + NP; Adv + <i>for</i> + NP; \emptyset complement
<u>CLMET 2: 1780 - 1850</u> Sentential: 7 Non-sentential: 7 Zero complement	<i>that</i> -clause; <i>to</i> -infinitive; <i>wh</i> -clause; NP + <i>that</i> -clause; NP + <i>to</i> -infinitive; NP + <i>wh</i> -clause; <i>to</i> + NP + <i>that</i> -clause NP; NP + NP; NP + <i>to</i> + NP; <i>to</i> + NP + NP; <i>to</i> + NP; Adv + <i>for</i> + NP; Adv; \emptyset complement
<u>CLMET 3: 1850 - 1920</u> Sentential: 5 Non-sentential: 7 Zero complement	<i>that</i> -clause; <i>to</i> -infinitive; <i>wh</i> -clause; NP + <i>that</i> -clause; NP + <i>to</i> -infinitive NP; NP + NP; NP + <i>to</i> + NP; <i>to</i> + NP + NP; <i>for</i> + NP; Adv + <i>for</i> + NP; Adv; \emptyset complement
<u>BNC: 1960 - 1993</u> Sentential: 4 Non-sentential: 4 Zero complement	<i>that</i> -clause; <i>to</i> -infinitive; NP + <i>that</i> -clause; NP + <i>to</i> -infinitive NP; NP + NP; NP + <i>to</i> + NP; <i>for</i> + NP; \emptyset complement

Table 12: List of complement types occurring in each time period.

The second part of the CLMET was the period in which the highest number of complements was found. The total was 14, plus the zero complement. The period with lowest amount of complements of *promise* is the Modern English period, with only eight complement types found.¹⁴ Aside from the *for* + NP complement, all other Modern English complements have been in use in all three periods under examination, with varying degrees of frequency.

The second research question is aimed at a comparison of results from each time period, to determine fluctuations in usage, and the emergence and disappearance of complements. Figures 6 and 7 below show the seven main complement types – for the sake of clarity divided into sentential and non-sentential – that have been consistently present throughout the period under study:

¹⁴ The *for* + NP construction is doubtful in Modern English, as noted in section (5.5.2), but has been included in this table.

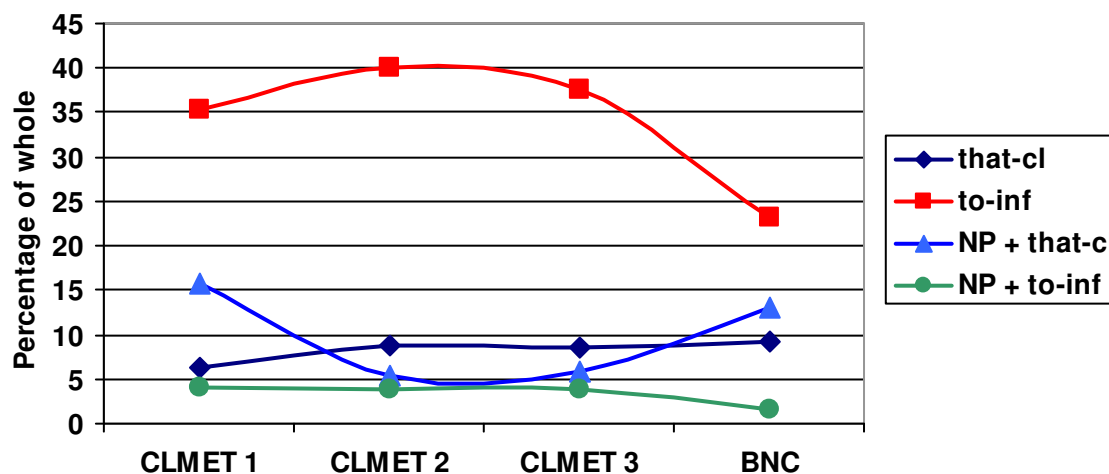


Figure 6: Progression of the main sentential complement types over the entire period.

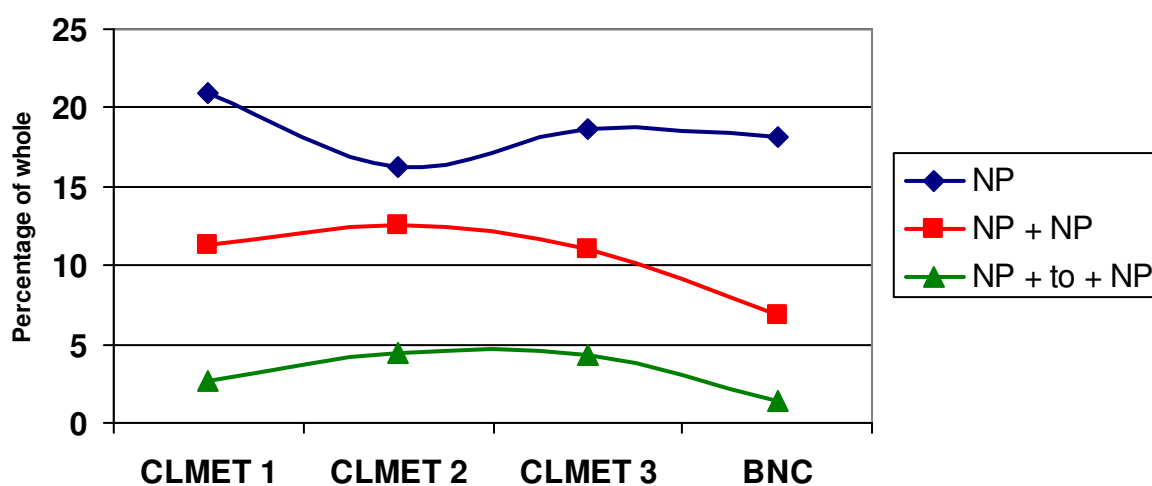


Figure 7: Progression of the main non-sentential complement types over the entire period.

The values on the vertical axes represent the percentage of the total amount of each sub-period that the complement type occupied, allowing us to see how the complement types have shifted in relation to one another. All have experienced some fluctuation, as is normal over the course of almost three centuries. The greatest degree of movement is apparent in the *to*-infinitive and NP + *that*-clause complements. The NP + *to*-infinitive pattern does indeed appear to be falling out of use, which is in accordance with Rohdenburg's claim (cf. § 3.6.3). The above figures do not show the

more marginal complement types that have come and gone since 1710. Of these there have been several, the details are to be found in table 12 above. None occupied any significant percentage of the total at any one time, and thus require little comment here.

The connection between form and meaning has been explored throughout this thesis, with the discovery that certain complements are prone to be used with certain senses of *promise*. Sense 1 is generally compatible with all complement forms with the exception of the Adverb, which is exclusively a sense 3 complement. Sense 2 shows a preference for three main types of complement: the *that*-clause, NP + *that*-clause, and the NP. The zero complement also occurs with this sense to a relatively high degree in the BNC data. Sense 3 meanwhile, prefers the *to*-infinitive, the NP, and the Adverb complements, while sense 4, rare though it is, occurs mainly with the NP + *to* + NP pattern.

The context-dependent constraints as outlined in section 3.7 were found to play a role in complement selection. It was noted that the explicit NP + *to* + NP form tends to be prone to movement, or, it is the movement itself that triggers the more explicit complement choice. In the CLMET 1, a rather high degree of insertion was noted among *to*-infinitives, a situation which changed as we approached the Modern English period. Inserted material tends to trigger the more explicit *that*-clause, rather than the *to*-infinitive. Indeed, in Present-day English, it is not common to find lengthy insertions among *to*-infinitive complements. Several violations of the horror aequi condition were discovered, mainly in 19th century English. It was noted that horror aequi may have been the cause of a number of unusual complement choices, primarily among *that*-clauses with co-referential higher and lower subjects. The question was raised as to why the *to*-infinitive was not selected in these situations, and in many cases the avoidance of successive identical patterns may have indeed been the reason.

The final goal of this thesis was to provide an empirically-based general evaluation of the status of *promise* in Modern English, as regards its complement selection tendencies and senses.

There are seven main complement types that *promise* selects¹⁵ in the English of the late 20th century. The NP + *to*-infinitive is clearly still a viable option for some speakers, although only an in-depth study of different regional variations would determine exactly where in the world it is not accepted. Written British English¹⁶ however, still uses it. The *to*-infinitive is the most commonly used complement type, followed by the NP, NP + *that*-clause, *that*-clause, and NP + NP. Usage without a complement is more common than ever in Modern English, with a frequency now exceeding even that of the *to*-infinitive. The fact that this study is based on the written form of the language no doubt plays a part in this, as the parenthetical use – a common feature of fictional writing – boosts the number of zero complements somewhat.

The four senses upon which I have based this study have proven to be a highly relevant and useful amalgamation of the lengthy *OED* entry. Sense 1 as the main sense has not changed during the period we have been looking at. Senses 2 and 3 have changed positions in recent centuries, but are now in the same order as they were in the CLMET 1 period, with sense 2 more common than sense 3. Sense 4 is indeed, as the *OED* states, a rather rare sense. It is not yet unheard of however, and the practice of *promising* a person to another in marriage is alive and well in some cultures – indeed also in some levels of Western society – and therefore I would not expect this sense of *promise* to become totally obsolete for some time yet.

With this thesis I have achieved the goals I set for myself at the outset, and several aspects of the behaviour of the verb *promise* that were unclear to me are now clarified. I have also raised certain questions that may prove to be fruitful points of departure for future research projects.

¹⁵ The *for* + NP pattern has been excluded from this statement, as only one token, from a historical novel, was found.

¹⁶ It is noted by Egan (2006, 15) that this pattern does not occur at all in the spoken dialogue subsection of the BNC.

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