

Complementation of the Verb *Aspire* from the 18th Century to the Present Day

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Tässä pro gradu –tutkielmassa tarkasteltiin englannin kielen verbin *aspire* komplementaatiota diakronisesti aikavälillä 1710-1993. Tutkimuksen pääasiallisena tavoitteena oli kartoittaa verbin ja sen yhteydessä esiintyneiden komplementtirakenteiden ominaisuuksia sekä verbin komplementaatioissa mahdollisesti tapahtuneita muutoksia, ja arvioida tuloksia englannin kielen komplementaatiojärjestelmässä 1600-luvulta lähtien nykypäivään saakka vaikuttaneen laaja-alaisen muutosprosessin (The Great Complement Shift) näkökulmasta.

Aineisto kerättiin kolmesta korpustietokannasta. Historiallinen tutkimusmateriaali (1710-1920) koostui CLMETEV-korpuksesta (The Corpus of Late Modern English Texts, Extended Version) ja *Oxford English Dictionary* –sanakirjan sähköisestä lähdetietokannasta (tässä tutkimuksessa OEDQ) kerätyistä näytteistä, ja nykyenglantia koskeva aineisto saatiin BNC-korpuksesta (The British National Corpus).

Tutkimuksen päätavoitteen kannalta tärkeimpänä havaintona voitaneen pitää sitä, että verbin historiassa yleisin - ja käytännössä ainoa - lausekkeellinen komplementti, *to*-infinitiivi, näyttäisi saaneen rinnalleen The Great Complement Shift –ilmiön mukaisesti gerundiaalisen *to –ing* –komplementin 1800-luvun loppupuolella. Komplementti on kuitenkin erittäin harvinainen, ja historiallisen aineiston verrattaisen suppeuden takia on vaikea sanoa, onko se mahdollisesti esiintynyt verbin yhteydessä jo aikaisemminkin.

Lisäksi tutkimuksessa havaittiin, että 1900-luvun lopulle tultaessa suurin osa verbin *Oxford English Dictionary*:ssa mainituista merkityksistä on joko jäänyt tai jäämässä pois käytöstä.

Asiasanat: komplementaatio, korpuslingvistiikka.

Table of Contents

1 Introduction	1
2 Corpus linguistics.....	2
2.1 Advantages and shortcomings of corpus linguistics	3
2.2 Corpora in a pedagogical context.....	6
3 Corpora.....	8
3.1 The Corpus of Late Modern English Texts, Extended Version.....	8
3.2 The Oxford English Dictionary Quotations Database	10
3.3 The British National Corpus	14
4 Complementation.....	16
4.1 Valency and argument structure	16
4.2 Theta roles and selectional restrictions	19
4.3 Control and NP Movement	21
4.4 Complement or Adjunct?	24
5 Factors Bearing on Complementation.....	28
5.1 The Great Complement Shift	28
5.2 The Complexity Principle	29
5.3 Extractions and Insertions.....	30
5.4 The Horror Aequi Principle	33
6 <i>Aspire</i> in the <i>OED</i> and Other Dictionaries.....	34
6.1 Etymology.....	34
6.2 The <i>OED</i>	35
6.3 Other dictionaries	38
7 <i>Aspire</i> in the Literature	39
8 Semantic Features of Complement Constructions	40
8.1 To-infinitive vs. to -ing	40
8.2 After / at / for / to + NP.....	42
9 Methodology	43
9.1 Limitations of the study	43
9.2 Data retrieval.....	45
10 CLMETEV Part 1 and OEDQ 1710-1779	46
10.1 Sentential complements	48
10.2 Nonsentential complements	49
10.3 Senses.....	52
11 CLMETEV Part 2 and OEDQ, 1780-1849	55
11.1 Sentential Complements	57
11.2 Nonsentential Complements	58
11.3 Senses.....	60
12 CLMETEV Part 3 and OEDQ, 1850-1920	62
12.1 Sentential Complements	63
12.2 Nonsentential Complements	65
12.3 Senses.....	66
13 The British National Corpus	68
13.1 Sentential Complements	69
13.2 Nonsentential Complements	73
13.3 Senses.....	75
14 Conclusion	77

1 Introduction

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the complementation patterns and meanings of the verb *aspire* between the early 18th and late 20th centuries. More specifically, I will conduct a diachronic corpus-driven study that is focused on changes in the British English usage of the verb.

The Late Modern English period has so far been largely neglected in linguistic research in spite of the fact that the era is a well-documented one (De Smet 2005, 69). It also seems to be the case that *aspire* has not received much attention in the literature. Examining the verb in this context is thus both important and fascinating. Moreover, investigating complementation is appealing from an educational point of view as well. For example, Herbst et al. (2004, vii) note that complementation is a common source of errors in foreign language learning, and thus a very important factor in teaching English as a foreign language. My own experience in EFL teaching supports this observation. As learning materials usually contain little or no information on the matter, teachers and learners alike often have to rely on their personal knowledge and intuition in the classroom. Therefore, shedding light on the complementation of even a single word can be beneficial.

The central aims here are:

- i) to find out what kind of constructions have complemented the verb in its various senses in the recent three centuries
- ii) to decide whether there was any agreement between certain senses of the verb and certain complement types
- iii) to examine the role of two complexity factors, extractions and insertions, and the *horror aequi* principle in the selection of nonfinite complements of the verb in the given period
- iv) to form some insight on how the above relate to the ongoing spread of sentential *-ing* complements at the expense of infinitival ones, a process belonging to the phenomenon known as the Great Complement Shift

While the main emphasis will be on the goals above, some attention will also be paid to the characteristics of the matrix subjects in relation to the complement types and senses of the verb.

I will begin by introducing some ideas relating to corpus linguistics and its role in language education in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 covers the main features of the three corpora utilised in the current study and addresses some complications related to the use of differing corpora within one analysis. Chapter 4 deals with the central basic concepts of complementation theory and the issue of distinguishing complements from adjuncts, while chapter 5 concerns a number of theoretical factors associated with historical developments in the selection and distribution of non-finite complement types. Chapter 6 provides an overview of the different senses and complements of *aspire* found in the Second Edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED* hereafter), along with supplementary data from other dictionaries. Additional information concerning *aspire* and its complementation, drawn from major grammars and other literature, will be offered in Chapter 7. Chapter 8 concentrates around the semantic features of some of the complement constructions identified in the previous chapters. Chapter 9 is a review of the methodology used in this thesis. The findings in the corpus data will be displayed and discussed in detail in chapters 10-13, and some concluding remarks will be made in Chapter 14.

2 Corpus linguistics

Sylviane Granger (2002, 14) neatly encapsulates in one sentence the two key definitions that form the methodological backbone of this study (emphases mine): “*Corpus linguistics* can best be defined as a linguistic methodology which is founded on the use of electronic collections of naturally occurring texts, viz. *corpora*”. She also contends that while corpus linguistics is not to be considered “a new branch of linguistics or a new theory of language...the very nature of the evidence it uses makes it a particularly powerful methodology, one which has the potential to change perspectives on language” (ibid.,14). Indeed, because of the possibilities it offers, corpus linguistics has become “a major methodological paradigm in applied and theoretical linguistics over the past few decades” (Gries 2006, 192). In the following sections I will give a brief account of the

advantages and shortcomings of corpus linguistics, and offer a glimpse of what corpus linguistics has to offer to language education.

2.1 Advantages and shortcomings of corpus linguistics

Utilising corpora as the primary source of data for a linguistic analysis is contrary to the traditional transformationalist view, which holds that the only means of attaining reliable linguistic data is by turning to the subjective introspections of trained linguists (cf. Leech 1968). Hence, the applicability of corpora in linguistic research has been subject to debate, and discussion on the theoretical and methodological implications of corpus linguistics in relation to introspective methods continues to this day.

One of the main advantages of corpus linguistics, compared to that produced by intuition-based or other approaches, is that it furnishes information on an aspect of language of which we have very little intuitive awareness, namely the frequency of linguistic phenomena (Granger 2002, 14). In fact, according to Gries (2010b, 1), “it has been argued that corpora as such contain nothing but distributional frequency data...of two or three types, depending on how one wants to look at it”.

Gries lists the data types as follows (ibid.):

- frequencies of occurrence of linguistic elements, which can be studied from two different perspectives:
 - how frequent are morphemes or words or patterns/constructions in (parts of) a corpus?
 - how evenly are morphemes or words or patterns/constructions distributed across (parts of) a corpus?
- frequencies of co-occurrence: how often do linguistic elements such as morphemes, words, patterns/constructions co-occur?

The quantifiability of the data comes with a number of advantages that introspective judgments alone do not allow. For instance, the researcher can identify which elements or phenomena are statistically important, and which more marginal; also, because corpus analyses are replicable, they can be tested reliably, and different studies can be compared more readily (Gries 2006, 192). In general, corpus-based approaches often allow for “empirically more versatile and methodologically

more valid studies than does investigation of language produced in isolation and devoid of any context” (ibid, 193). Because corpora consist entirely of naturally-occurring language, produced by a relatively large number of people, the data is considered to reflect the actual usage of language far more accurately than the subjective intuition of any one individual can. The fact that large electronic corpora can in many cases reveal unexpected details about any given part of language is a case in point. For example, Berez and Gries (2009, 158) note that “...a comprehensive corpus search typically results in data that introspection alone could not have yielded...The richness and diversity of naturally-occurring data often forces the researcher to take a broader range of facts into consideration”.

Though the advantages of corpus linguistics are apparent, it is by no means a flawless methodology. According to Gries (2010a, 1-2), the inherently complex and variable nature of language dictates that corpora cannot reflect all its nuances completely; corpora are

- never infinite although language is in principle an infinite system
- never really representative in the sense that they really contain all parts or registers or genres or varieties of human language
- never really balanced in the sense that they contain these parts or registers or genres or varieties in exactly the proportions these parts make up in the language as a whole
- never complete in the sense that they never contain all the contextual information that humans utilize in, say, conversation; etc.

Thus, at least in terms of distributional frequency among varieties of language and the extralinguistic elements of human communication, the data obtained from any given corpus never portrays the linguistic phenomena under scrutiny in full accuracy. The issue of limited representativeness becomes particularly relevant when the corpus is comparatively small in size, as is the case with most historical corpora: the more marginal items such as obsolescent or emerging complement patterns of infrequent words may remain undiscovered because the data represents, metaphorically speaking, only the tip of the iceberg. These imperfections unavoidably reduce the generalisability of search results to some extent. Nevertheless, as Leech (1968, 94) stated in the early days of computerised corpus linguistics, the fact that corpora contain “only an inconsiderable

subset of the set of possible sentences of a language...does not in any way diminish [their] importance as a tool of empirical confirmation.”

Data retrieval can also be problematic. Gries (2010a, 2) lists three types of obstacles that may hamper the researcher’s work:

- the relevant pattern is hard to define and/or can take on many different realizations
- linguistic patterns can be messy
- the corpus/corpora to be searched come in not-so-easily handable formats and/or contain errors of annotation, transcription, etc.

Ball (1994, 295) invokes the terms *precision* and *recall* in reference to the potential inaccuracy of search results. The former denotes “the proportion of retrieved material that is relevant”, while the latter refers to “the proportion of relevant information that was retrieved” (ibid.). In other words, a given search procedure may bring up irrelevant tokens together with the relevant ones, or it may not always produce all the instances of the item sought for in the corpus.

Data obtained from unannotated corpora typically exhibit the lowest degree of precision, for a simple reason: because items can be searched by word-form alone, the results always contain all items that share the requested lexical form, regardless of their meaning or syntactic class. For instance, if one wishes to examine verbal gerunds, the word-form query will very likely produce a significant number of nominal and adjectival tokens in addition to the relevant ones. This can make the initial phase of analysis quite burdensome, particularly when the amount of data is large, as the researcher will have to sort out the irrelevant data manually.

The problem of inaccurate recall is usually associated with erroneous (automated) corpus annotation. In most cases, thanks to the advanced state of current tagging software, the amount of mislabeled items is usually very low (cf. section 3.3). However, as long as only advanced search strings are used, there is no way of knowing exactly how many or what kind of relevant items will be excluded in each search. Search methods that rely solely on annotation are therefore not optimally suited for the study of less frequent patterns or words. Naturally this does not mean that

annotated corpora should not be utilised in such cases, as the recall problem can be countered by reverting to the basic word-form searches.

The above discussion of introspection- and corpus-based methodologies involves an apparent dichotomy of subjective intuition versus objective observation. However, as pointed out by Berez and Gries (2009, 158), the difference is not so clear-cut: if one wishes to make sense of frequency data, some degree of subjective intuition and decision-making is required. In fact, Mair (2002, 109) warns against taking a purely empirical stance towards analysing corpus data; in his view, abandoning the “theoretical linguistic tradition in the study of linguistic change...would degenerate [corpus linguistics] into data-driven positivism with counting as its only methodology.” Hence, despite all their advantages, corpora should be “complementing rather than replacing other data sources such as introspection and elicitation” (Granger 2002, 14).

2.2 Corpora in a pedagogical context

The authors of the BNC note that their corpus, “and corpus methods in general, have had a far wider impact than anticipated, notably in the field of language teaching”¹. Indeed, there are numerous ways in which corpora can be used to enhance language learning. For example, various grammatical features can be exemplified in an authentic context instead of the often abstract or ‘artificial’ textbook examples. Likewise, learners can be encouraged to look for evidence in a corpus for themselves, exposing them to ‘raw’, pedagogically unprocessed language, and possibly heightening their curiosity and sense of achievement in the process. Development of learning materials may also benefit from corpus-based studies; this subject warrants further discussion as it is closely tied to the study of complement patterns.

While traditional language learning materials and teaching approaches may fulfil their purpose of introducing the grammar and vocabulary to the learner quite efficiently, they often offer little

¹ <http://www.natcorp.ox.ac.uk/>

information about the ways native speakers actually use the language in real-life situations. Thus, people visiting English-speaking countries soon notice that the kind of English they have learned at school does not really exist outside the EFL classroom. This issue has long been acknowledged among researchers and teachers, and new pedagogic approaches have been developed (and are continuously being developed) to better prepare the learners for actual communication situations. For one reason or another, however, development of learning materials towards increased authenticity has so far been slow. The situation is obviously paradoxical: teachers are expected to pass information about actual language use to the learners while the materials they are using do not necessarily reflect this need. In her list of “some of the most important strengths of corpora in a pedagogical context”, Ute Römer echoes the advantages discussed in the previous section (Römer 2005, 2-3):

- (i) they cover the actual language use of thousands of expert speakers,
- (ii) they give objective evidence since individual speaker preferences are equalled out in a large collection of text,
- (iii) they provide us with masses of natural language examples, and
- (iv) they highlight what is common and typical in the language.

Recent research has shown that traditional textbooks and other classroom material are often lacking the above qualities (*ibid.*). McEnery and Wilson (2001, 120) emphasise the crucial role corpus linguistics has in bringing the language of learning materials closer to authentic language usage. They note that “...non-empirically based teaching materials can be positively misleading” because they may focus too much attention on the less common features of language at the expense of more important ones. Therefore, “corpus studies should be used to inform the production of materials” (*ibid.*).

Another shortcoming of traditional teaching materials is that they tend to put much more weight on individual words than word patterns. Textbooks, for instance, typically list the meanings of full lexical words and prepositions separately, but information relating to their combinations is rarely given (apart from the occasional isolated idiomatic expressions). Thus, learners are often left

guessing which preposition to use in a certain expression. Hunston and Francis (2000, 271) maintain that patterns are “essential to fluency as well as to accuracy”, and learners aiming for a high level of proficiency should learn to “...use the collocations, the phraseologies and the patterns of English that native speakers automatically choose” (ibid., 268). The study of complementation can undoubtedly be of great value in this context. With the aid of corpora, people learning or working with a language can gain information not only on the usage of different patterns, but also the reasons leading to the selection of certain particles or other elements:

...we find out not only that the answer to most questions about language use is “it depends,” but we also can answer the question “What does it depend on?” This is the question that teachers, materials writers, and students should be asking when they wonder about the use of a language structure (Conrad 2004, 80).

3 Corpora

The data for analysis in this study was drawn from three corpora. The historical tokens were obtained from the Extended Version of The Corpus of Late Modern English Texts (CLMETEV henceforth), and the online quotations database of the *OED*. The Present-Day English data was collected from the British National Corpus (BNC). Some of the central characteristics of these corpora will be introduced in this chapter.

3.1 The Corpus of Late Modern English Texts, Extended Version

The CLMETEV is a compilation of texts drawn from three electronic archiving projects that provide authentic historical material of written English, namely the *Project Gutenberg*, the *Oxford Text Archive*, and the *Victorian Women Writers Project*. It encompasses a period of 210 years (1710-1920), which is divided into three 70-year sub-periods²:

² <https://perswww.kuleuven.be/~u0044428/>

Sub-period	Part 1, 1710-1780	Part 2, 1780-1850	Part 3, 1850-1920	Total
Number of words	3,037,607	5,723,988	6,251,564	14,970,622

Table 1. The CLMETEV word count.

The creator of the corpus, Hendrik De Smet, adhered to four principles in the compiling process (De Smet 2005, 70). First, the selection of texts was limited according to the authors' date of birth in order to "increase the homogeneity within each sub-period, and...decrease [it] between the sub-periods", so that historical trends would be more visible in the data (ibid.). Figure 1 illustrates the arrangement (ibid., 71):

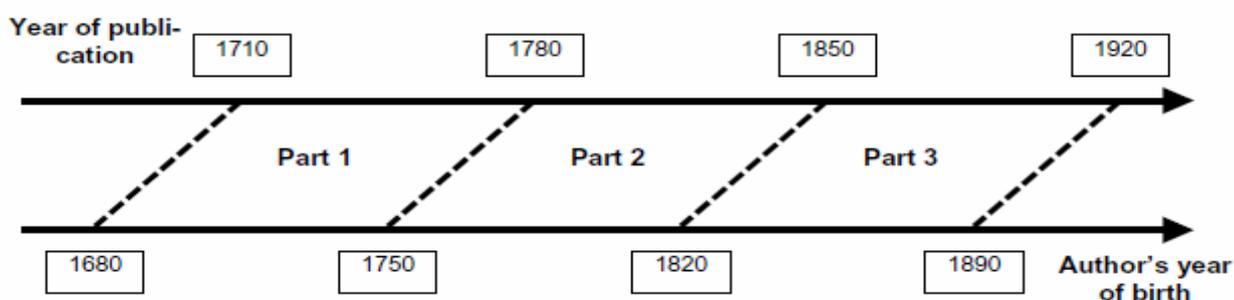


Figure 1. CLMETEV sub-periods.

Second, for the purposes of suppressing dialectal variation and facilitating comparison between the CLMET and other corpora of British English, De Smet only incorporated texts by British native speakers of English into the corpus. Third, he limited the maximum amount of text by any one author down to 200,000 words to avoid skewing the data "by the idiosyncracies of individual authors" (ibid.). Fourth, because the source material for the corpus largely represents "literary, formal texts, mostly written by men who belonged to the better-off layers of 18th and 19th century English society", De Smet sought to even out the evident bias by favouring "non-literary texts over literary ones and texts from lower registers over texts from higher registers" in each author's bibliography whenever possible. As a further measure of balancing the corpus make-up, he "paid some special attention to including texts written by women authors" (ibid., 71-72).

However, De Smet concludes his account of the corpus by stating that despite the application of the above criteria, the CLMETEV still remains biased to literary texts written by upper-class male authors. Because of this, the corpus is “unfit for fine-grained sociolinguistic research”; instead, it has proven its worth as a corpus research tool in “the study of lexicogrammatical phenomena that are somewhat less frequent, and for which smaller corpora tend not to provide sufficient data” (ibid., 78-80).

3.2 The Oxford English Dictionary Quotations Database

The database is, as the name suggests, essentially a collection of quotations built specifically for the purpose of illustrating the various meanings of the words in the English language, and ultimately, compiling the *OED*. It is the largest single body of historical English texts currently in existence, containing approximately a total of 33–35 million words (Hoffmann 2004, 125). The material covers a period of nearly nine hundred years; the earliest quotations date back to the year 1150, and the latest were collected around 1928 (Brewer 2007, 104). There are currently two versions of the database available online: the one described above belongs to the Second Edition of the *OED*, originally published in print in 1989, and another, expanded version belongs to the forthcoming Third Edition (titled *OED3*, or *New Edition* on the online search page). The latter is still decades away from completion, but it already surpasses the Second Edition in the number of quotations from the Late Modern era, in particular the early 18th century (ibid., 122-129). It was thus selected as the second major source of historical data in this thesis. Incidentally, neither version of the database apparently has not yet received a common abbreviation in the corpus linguistics literature. For convenience, then, I will refer to the *New Edition* version here by the abbreviation OEDQ.

The database does not fulfil all the criteria needed for it to be considered a corpus in the strictest sense of the word, i.e. it is not “sampled in order to be maximally representative of the language variety under consideration” (McEnery and Wilson 2001, 32). This is not surprising, as its intended

primary function is entirely different. However, given that the database is called a corpus and treated as one in this study, a closer look at its characteristics is called for. As Mair (2004, 123) puts it,

Treating an — admittedly vast — collection of dictionary citations as a corpus will come as a provocation to many who have come to see corpora as structured and balanced collections of texts compiled for linguistic analysis.

Hoffmann (2004) assesses the usefulness of the *OED* quotations database as a corpus. He directs attention to four aspects, the first of which is the selection criteria for the quotations (ibid., 19):

The principal stumbling block for counting the *OED* quotations as a corpus is posed by the selection criteria. Although the individual quotations were indeed selected according to explicit linguistic criteria, their main purpose is to exemplify the meaning and use of a particular word with a minimal amount of context. Thus, the material was obviously not collected with a view to creating a representative sample of the language for a particular period of time...[T]he quotations were specifically selected to display the whole range of possible uses for a single word. These uses may include idiosyncrasies and relatively obscure variants. A correlation with actual currency in such circumstances is highly unlikely.

In other words, as Brewer (2007, 107) points out, “[i]f there is one quotation per century, then a rare word will receive the same number of quotations (namely one per century) as a ubiquitous word. Words at the margins receive the same treatment as those at the centre”. The problem of uncertain currency is, however, for some part alleviated by the fact that the quotations database as a whole is made up of naturally occurring language (Hoffmann 2004, 20). In practice this means that the bulk of the samples brought up in a search for a certain word consists of quotations that are linked to other headwords than the one under inspection, i.e. the word occurs freely as a by-product of the lexicographers’ work in most cases, in all kinds of contexts that were selected to highlight the properties of other items. It may therefore be assumed that the more current words will occur at least slightly more frequently than the rare ones in the data.

The second aspect under Hoffmann’s consideration is the representativeness and balance of the material. He explains that the quotations cover a wide range of sources, from periodicals to Shakespeare, but warns against regarding them as a “reasonably balanced representation of the

English language” because of heavy over- or underrepresentation of certain authors and genres (ibid., 21).

Third, Hoffmann expresses some concern over the reliability of the data format. A proportion of the quotes were edited to a shortened form; for example, as much as 24% of the quotes from the year 1751 were shortened in some way. For this reason, essential information needed for a correct interpretation of a given headword may sometimes be missing. Moreover, the deletion of elements was not always consistently marked. Thus, it may be assumed that the material does not lend itself particularly well to the investigation of larger constructions that span over clause boundaries (ibid., 22-23).

Finally, Hoffmann examines the quantification of results. He notes that raw frequencies for lexical items or phrases can be obtained easily, but they cannot be used as a reliable indicator of diachronic change because the total number of quotations per year varies considerably. As the average number of words contained in each quotation and the number of quotations per year in the Second Edition of the *OED* are known (see Figure 2), it is possible to calculate normalized frequencies. The resulting figures, however, “should only be interpreted as an indication of possible trends” for the reasons outlined above (ibid., 24-25).

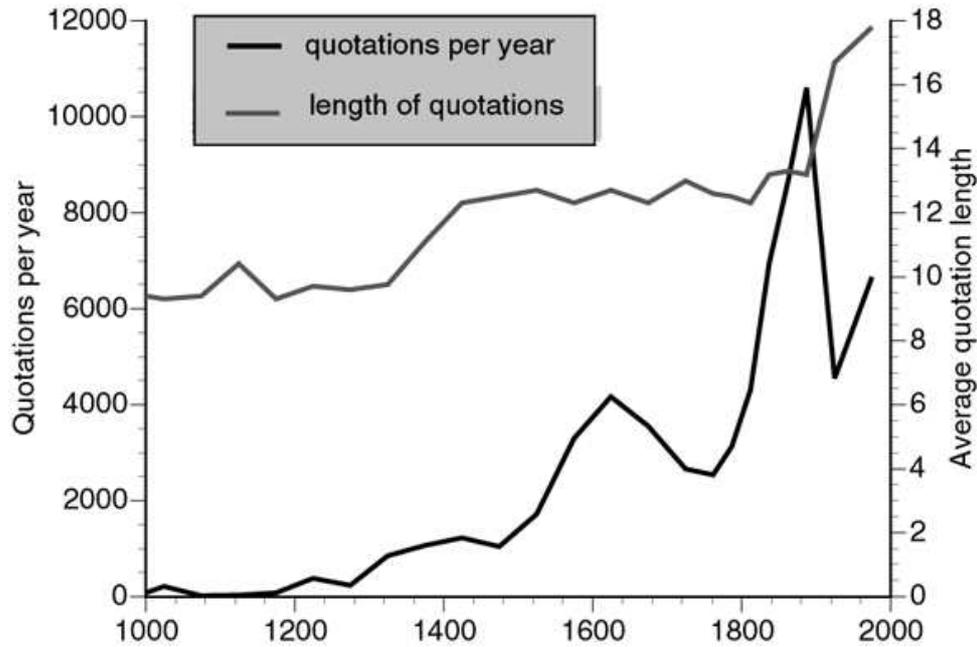


Figure 2: The number of quotations in the OED Second Edition per year (averages over periods of 25–50 years) and their average word length (Hoffmann 2004, 25).

The above diagram is obviously not in accordance with the newer version of the database utilised here. Assuming that the average length of quotations has not changed much, it is still possible to arrive at a highly approximate word-count for each year since the number of quotations per year can be attained via the OEDQ search interface. Table 2 displays the estimated word-count of the periods corresponding to the CLMETEV³ :

Sub-period	1710-1779	1780-1849	1850-1920	Total
Number of words	2,661,321	5,025,995	8,477,989	16,165,305

Table 2. Approximate OEDQ word-count according to the CLMETEV sub-periods.

Of course, since the actual number of words per quotation may already have changed somewhat as a result of the ongoing work on the third edition of the *OED*, this estimation can only be taken to be very rudimentary. Normalised frequency calculations based on these figures may thus result in slightly less accurate results than those based on Hoffmann's figures above.

³ The transition point between the periods here is at the end of the years 1779 and 1849 to prevent overlap in the data. The figures are based on the average of 13 words per quotation except for the third sub-period, which is a combination of 13 words per quotation for the years 1850-1899 and 16 words per quotation for the years 1900-1920 (cf. Hoffmann 2004, 25).

Hoffmann (*ibid.*, 26) sums up his analysis as follows:

Although the *OED* quotations database is not a completely balanced and representative corpus, it can nevertheless provide the linguist with a wealth of useful information. The data it contains chiefly represents naturally occurring language, and the time-span covered is unmatched by any other source of computerized data. Even though over 20 per cent of all its quotations have been shortened, the large majority of these deletions is unlikely to distort the results of many diachronic studies of linguistic features. Given the nature of the data, normalized frequency counts might suggest an inappropriate level of precision, but tendencies in the development over time can nevertheless be expressed in quantitative terms.

3.3 The British National Corpus

The BNC is a large collection of texts and spoken material collected during the latter half of the 20th century, or more precisely, between the years 1960-1993. It contains nearly 100 million words in 4049 texts, far surpassing the aforementioned historical corpora in size⁴:

	Texts	W-units	%
Unknown	162	1831585	1.86
1960-1974	46	1718449	1.74
1975-1984	169	4730889	4.80
1985-1993	3672	90082860	91.58

Table 3. BNC texts by publication date.

The material for the BNC was gathered according to carefully planned selection criteria, with two overall aims: first, the corpus should be representative enough for it to be regarded as “a microcosm of current British English in its entirety”, and second, it should permit comparison of texts.

As a first measure of promoting representativeness, both written and spoken texts were selected for the corpus. The relative amount of these types came to be quite unequal, though: roughly 90 per cent of the corpus texts are written, and the remaining ten per cent constitute the spoken part of the BNC. The authors note that while such an imbalance is not ideal for a general-purpose corpus, reaching a less disproportionate make-up was not possible due to the high cost of collecting and transcribing spoken language. Nonetheless, they conclude, the current amount of spoken data is

⁴ This section draws solely on the BNC homepage, available at <http://www.natcorp.ox.ac.uk>. The term ‘w-unit’ in Table 3 refers to “full orthographic words and abbreviated or enclitic forms, such as the auxiliary verb *is* in ‘he’s’ or the genitive marker in ‘dog’s’”.

significant enough for the purposes of empirical research. Furthermore, in order to reach a high level of heterogeneity, the corpus was not restricted to “any particular subject field, register or genre”. Thus, it contains a wide variety of material extracted from numerous differing sources, such as brochures, company memoranda, spoken discussions, periodicals, magazines, and books of various sorts. Lastly, the extracts were limited to a maximum size of roughly 45,000 words to avert overrepresentation of certain texts.

In an effort to advance comparison between text types, the samples were tagged according to various categories and subcategories such as *author type (corporate, multiple, sole)*, *sex of author*, *author age-group*, *intended target audience*, *written medium (book, periodical, to-be-spoken)*, *written domain (imaginative, informative: arts/leisure/applied science)*, and so forth. All words in the corpus were also tagged according to grammatical class by an automated annotation program.

As was mentioned in the previous chapter, computerised tagging procedures always involve some degree of inaccuracy. The capability of the tagging software is often measured in terms of precision and recall (cf. section 2.1) or estimated error rate, i.e. amount of mislabeled words⁵. Table 4 displays the estimated rates for the BNC:

	Precision	Recall	Error rate
Written texts	96.17%	98.86%	2.01%
Spoken texts	97.00%	98.83%	1.92%
All texts	96.25%	98.85%	2.00%

Table 4. Estimated rates of precision, recall and error for the BNC.

Needless to say, the figures above show a considerably high level of accuracy. Regardless, it is important to note that the error rate represents an average of all the mistakes in the corpus, and the amount of error varies between different grammatical tags. Even though most tags have an extremely low rate of error (below one per cent or zero), some exceed the average rate by several per cent. It is therefore likely that some search strings will yield at least moderately lower than estimated recall percentage. A certain tag in particular may bear significance in a study of verb

⁵ The error rate can be calculated in various different ways. The figures here display the least forgiving estimate.

complementation: the one marking finite base form of lexical verbs (including the imperative and present subjunctive) has a far greater error percentage than the other tags in the BNC (17.39%). Also, verbal *-ing* forms are mistagged slightly more often than the average (3.98%). While the lower-end error percentages may be of little statistical importance overall, the slight chance of missing a rare complement construction still makes plain word-form searches a more attractive option in studies of more infrequent verbs.

4 Complementation

The first three sections of this chapter aim to explain some of the basic concepts and terminology associated with complementation theory. The fourth section centres on different complement types and the important yet sometimes elusive distinction between complements and adjuncts.

4.1 Valency and argument structure

Complementation literature holds that the constituents occurring within a sentence are not in free variation. Instead, the verb largely determines the structure of the sentence, because it may require certain supporting elements that are specific to the sense of the verb and necessary for the sentence to be grammatically and semantically coherent. Since these elements make the sentence ‘complete’, they are called complements (Fillmore et al. 2003, 236; Herbst et al. 2004, xxiv). In terms of sentence hierarchy, the verb is considered a superordinate or governing element, and complements are dependent on it. Thus, the verb is said to *select* or *subcategorise for* a particular complement configuration (Haegeman 1991, 34).

Before moving further, it should be pointed out that there are currently two differing views in the literature regarding the dependency relationship of the subject and the governing verb. Some authors assign complement status to the subject (cf. for instance Somers 1987, 24; Huddleston and Pullum 2002, 215-216; Herbst et al. 2004, xxv). According to another interpretation, however, the

verb does not subcategorise for the subject. This view is based on the proposition that all English sentences have a subject⁶, regardless of the characteristics of the governing verb (Haegeman 1991, 59). The latter stance will be followed here.

The complement patterns that may occur with a verb constitute its *valency*⁷. As the verb designates both the number and character of its complements, valency may be described in quantitative and qualitative terms, respectively (Herbst et al. 2004, x-xi). Quantitative valency is sometimes expressed with the terms *mono-*, *bi-*, and *trivalent*, depending on how many complements a verb takes⁸. For example, the verb *put* selects two complements (example adapted from Herbst et al. 2004, xxiv):

- (1) I put paper and kindling by the fire.
- (2) *I put by the fire.
- (3) *I put paper and kindling.

Qualitative valency entails the syntactic properties of complements and the semantic roles they play in respect to the head of the sentence (i.e. semantic valency), the latter of which will be discussed in the following section. Syntactic valency information is usually specified in terms of form (noun phrase, prepositional phrase, etc.) and sometimes also in terms of function (subject, object, etc.) (Fillmore et al. 2003, 236). Syntactic functions, however, need not be dealt with in detail here. Huddleston and Pullum (2002, 219) show evidence of verbs selecting complements of only certain syntactic class:

- (4) She mentioned the letter.
- (5) *She alluded the letter.

⁶ This statement is known as the Extended Projection Principle (Haegeman 1991, 69). The subject may be overt or non-overt, i.e. it is not always realised phonetically (cf. 4.3).

⁷ The usage of the term valency varies somewhat in the literature. For example, Huddleston and Pullum (2002, 219) see it as referring only to the number of possible complements in a sentence, but note that for some authors the term covers also the kind of complements, and for others, it denotes the number of semantic arguments rather than syntactic complements.

⁸ Only few verbs, such as *bet*, can occur with more than two complements: *I bet you \$10 that it rains* (Huddleston & Pullum 2002, 219).

Both *mention* and *allude* need one complement for the sentence to be grammatical. Even though this requirement is satisfied in both examples, sentence (5) is ungrammatical because *allude* only subcategorises for a *to*-PP.

The elements governed by the verb in a sentence are sometimes represented in the form of *argument structure*. Argument structure describes “the participants minimally involved in the activity or state expressed by the predicate” (Haegeman 1991, 36). For example, the verb *imitate* involves two participants, namely the imitator and the object being imitated. Therefore, the verb takes two arguments, a subject argument and an object argument (ibid., 35):

(6) Maigret imitates Poirot.

Argument structure is notated in terms of number and syntactic class. Verbs taking one argument are called one-place verbs, those taking two are two-place verbs, etc. So, *imitate* is a two-place verb, both arguments of which are realised as noun phrases (ibid., 37):

(7) *imitate*: verb; 1 2
 NP NP

The concepts of valency and argument structure describe the same linguistic phenomenon from slightly different angles, and are thus closely related. Indeed, if the subject were treated as a complement, the terms argument and complement would be practically synonymous, as would the terms referring to the number of constituents the verb governs (monovalent/one-place, etc.).

Accordingly, Huddleston and Pullum note that “[p]rototypically, the semantic predicate corresponds to the syntactic predicator, and the arguments correspond to complements” (2002, 226). However, since the subject is not considered a complement in this thesis, the term valency in its quantitative and syntactic senses can only refer here to non-subject elements that are governed by the verb⁹.

Semantic valency will still refer to all the elements that are semantically bound to the verb.

⁹ Consequently, the terms mono-, bi- and trivalent will not be utilised in this thesis because they are usually associated with analyses where subjects do count as complements.

4.2 Theta roles and selectional restrictions

The semantic relationship between verbs and their arguments are referred to in terms of thematic roles, also called *theta roles* (Haegeman 1991, 41). The verb is seen as assigning the roles to its arguments, and the type of available roles depends entirely on the meaning of the verb. For example, the action denoted by the verb *kill* in (8) entails two participants – the killer and the person being killed. Thus, the verb assigns the corresponding theta roles AGENT and PATIENT to its arguments (ibid.,41):

- (8) Maigret killed Poirot.
 AGENT PATIENT

According to the view adopted here, the number of roles per argument is limited, as stated in what is known as the Theta Criterion: each argument is assigned one and only one theta role, and each theta role is assigned to one and only one argument (ibid., 46). It should be noted that the rule applies to deep structure only - in certain situations involving sentential complements, elements of the higher sentence may have two roles on the surface level (cf. section 4.3).

Various different theta roles and role labels have been put forward in the literature, but no agreement has so far been reached on what a ‘correct’, conclusive inventory should look like, or whether it is even possible to come up with such a list (Somers 1987, 111ff.; Cook 1989, 189; Huddleston and Pullum 2002, 228-233). Certain roles have nonetheless become more or less commonly recognised among linguists, even though their exact definitions often vary according to the analyst. Attempting a full review of these roles is far beyond the scope of this thesis; instead, a brief discussion on a few roles that may pertain to the complementation of *aspire* will be provided in this section.

Returning to example (8), AGENT is prototypically defined as “the one who intentionally initiates the action expressed by the predicate”, that is, an animate entity that acts on purpose (Haegeman 1991, 41). While this interpretation certainly fits the subject argument in (8), it runs into

trouble when the action is unintentional, or the end result is caused by an inanimate participant (examples from Huddleston and Pullum 2002, 230-231):

- (9) I coughed [involuntarily].
 (10) The rain ruined the crop.

Huddleston and Pullum (*ibid.*, 230) accommodate for cases such as (9) and (10) by suggesting that AGENT, as defined above, is a subtype of CAUSER, a more general role that denotes “direct or immediate causation of an action or event”, intentional or not, by any type of subject. While this system of classification is useful in that it covers non-human subjects and the intentionality of the action, it is incompatible with the Theta Criterion: AGENTs are simultaneously CAUSERs (*ibid.*, 230-231)¹⁰. Cook (1989, 191), on the other hand, views the concept of AGENT from a slightly broader perspective, prescribing agentivity to “physical objects, machines, communities, and natural forces, anything capable of producing the action described by the verb”. This definition both adheres to the Theta Criterion and covers practically all types of subjects.

PATIENT, prototypically defined as “the person or thing undergoing the action expressed by the predicate”, has sometimes been replaced by THEME, which denotes “the entity affected by the action or state expressed by the predicate” (Haegeman 1991, 42). THEME coincides very closely with OBJECT, a role elaborately defined by Cook (1989, 191) as “the neutral underlying theme of the state, process, or action described by the verb...[the OBJECT] is the thing being described, [or] the moving object or the thing undergoing change”.

The third theta role introduced here, EXPERIENCER, relates to verbs of cognitive processes, as illustrated below (adapted from Haegeman 1991, 41):

- (11) Maigret loathed Poirot.
 EXPERIENCER THEME

Cook (1989, 191) defines EXPERIENCER as follows:

Experiencer is the case required by an experiential verb. Experiencer is the person experiencing sensation, emotion, or cognition. In verbs of communication the experiencer

¹⁰ Also, Huddleston and Pullum do not readily subscribe to the second requirement posited in the Criterion, that a certain theta role may be assigned to only one argument in a sentence (p. 228).

is the hearer. Experience deals only with the inner life of man, not with experience in its more general sense.

Other roles include SOURCE, GOAL, and LOCATION (Haegeman 1991, 42):

(12) Poirot bought the book from Maigret.

AGENT THEME SOURCE

(13) The ball rolled towards the pigsty.

THEME GOAL

(14) Maigret is in London.

THEME LOCATION

In addition to assigning specific theta roles on its arguments, the verb may also prefer arguments of certain semantic type to others, or to use a different expression, it may impose selection restrictions on its arguments (Huddleston and Pullum 2002, 227). For instance, *enjoy* usually selects an animate subject, and *frighten* normally occurs with an animate object (ibid.):

(15) Kim enjoyed the concert.

(16) *The cheese enjoyed the cool breeze.

(17) They frightened the cat.

(18) *They frightened the ironing-board.

The semantic type of arguments is marked with the symbols ‘+’ and ‘-’ in the literature (for example, +animate or -human). This convention will be followed in this thesis.

4.3 Control and NP Movement

Consider the following sentences (Davies and Dubinsky 2004, 3):

(19) Barnett seemed to understand the formula.

(20) Barnett tried to understand the formula.

While the two sentences appear to be nearly identical on the surface, they are dissimilar in terms of thematic and underlying structure.

In sentence (19), *Barnett* is linked semantically to the subordinate verb *understand*, but not to the matrix verb *seem* (ibid.). To put the point differently, *Barnett* refers only to the subject of *understand* even though it occupies the matrix subject position, and the referent of the subject of

seem (i.e. the entity observing *Barnett*) is not located within the sentence. It may thus be assumed that the underlying structure of (19) is written as follows (example from Davies and Dubinsky 2004, 4):

(21) It seemed that Barnett understood the formula.

Sentences (19) and (21) are identical in their thematic structure. *Barnett* receives a theta role (EXPERIENCER in this case) from *understand*, whereas *seem* does not assign a role to its subject (ibid.). Because the subject position of the matrix sentence is occupied by an expletive *it*, that is, a semantically empty pronoun (cf. Haegeman 1991, 62), the subject NP of the lower sentence can be freely moved from its original position to the corresponding slot in the higher sentence¹¹, producing surface structure (19). Accordingly, the process is known as ‘Subject-to-Subject Raising’ (Soames and Perlmutter 1979, 96) or ‘NP Raising’ (Haegeman 1991, 285).

In sentence (20), *Barnett* is semantically linked to both the matrix verb *tried* and the subordinate verb *understand* (Davies and Dubinsky 2004, 3). Following the Extended Projection Principle (“sentences must have subjects regardless of their argument structure”, Haegeman 1991, 69), it is assumed that the lower sentence has an ‘understood’, non-overt subject, also known as PRO in the literature (ibid., 262). Both the matrix subject and PRO refer to *Barnett*; that is, they are coreferential. For this reason, the matrix subject is seen as ‘controlling’ the reference of PRO¹², and verbs governing constructions of this type are said to exhibit ‘Subject Control’ (Davies and Dubinsky 2004, 3). Notwithstanding PRO, the underlying structure of (20) is similar to its surface structure (example modified from Davies and Dubinsky, 3). The indexes indicate the coreference of the subject arguments:

(22) Barnett_i tried to PRO_i understand the formula.

¹¹ In other words, movement into the matrix subject position is possible because the requirement that an argument may be assigned only one theta role (as posited in the Theta Criterion) is not violated in the process.

¹² PRO may also occur in structures where there are no elements, overt or non-overt, controlling its reference. In such cases it can have an arbitrary reading, marked by the index ‘arb’ (Haegeman 1991, 263-264):

PRO_{arb} to abandon the investigation would be regrettable.

The matrix verb *tried* assigns a theta role to *Barnett* (AGENT), and the subordinate verb *understand* assigns a role to its understood subject (EXPERIENCER) (ibid., 4). However, the thematic structure of the construction is notated slightly differently on the surface level: because PRO is always non-overt, the role it receives cannot appear in the surface structure representation of the sentence. Instead, it is attached to the matrix subject, and the subject thus has two ‘coreferential roles’ on the surface level (Cook 1989, 203).

Davies and Dubinsky (2004, 4-10) provide a number of tests for distinguishing between raising and control verbs, two of which involve the *it* of meteorological expressions and existential *there*. While either can be the subject of an intransitive raising predicate such as *seem*, neither is possible with control predicates (ibid., 7). Applying the test strings to *aspire* confirms its status as a control verb:

(23) It seemed to be raining.

(24) *It aspired to be raining.

(25) There seems to be a unicorn in the garden

(26) *There aspires to be a unicorn in the garden.

Subject-to-Subject Raising and Subject Control occur with intransitive verbs only. There are two additional types of control and raising that are associated with transitive verbs, namely Object Control and Object-to-Subject Raising¹³. However, it is not necessary to discuss their properties here because *aspire* is strictly a subject control verb (cf. chap. 7). Control verbs may also govern a certain type of infinitival construction that does not involve control. Rudanko (1989, 3) notes that in the pattern Verb + *for* + NP + *to*-infinitive the subordinate subject is a full lexical NP, not PRO. For this reason it cannot be coreferential with the matrix subject, as can be seen in *Harry preferred for him to leave early* (ibid.)¹⁴.

¹³ Cf. Davies and Dubinsky (2004).

¹⁴ According to Rudanko, the *for...to* pattern occurs mainly in American English, but it is becoming increasingly common in British English (ibid., 5). As there is plenty of evidence of *aspire* selecting this pattern in the Internet, it might be expected that *aspire for NP to* would occur at least in the BNC. However, the subject will be set aside here as the data used for this study did not contain any instances of the said construction.

4.4 Complement or Adjunct?

Complements can be either phrases or clauses (Herbst et al. 2004, xxv-xxvi). I will refer to them with the terms ‘nonsentential’ and ‘sentential’, respectively¹⁵. Nonsentential complements are typically NPs, AdjPs and PPs, while sentential complements include *to*-infinitive and *-ing* clauses, *that*-clauses and *wh*-clauses (ibid.). Huddleston (1984, 205-210) provides examples:

- (27) I broke the glass.
- (28) He was furious at this deception.
- (29) John went into the kitchen.
- (30) Ed hoped to repair it.
- (31) Ed remembered repairing it.
- (32) She assumed that he was right.
- (33) She remembered what a struggle it had been.

Additionally, Herbst et al. (2004, xxviii) show examples of an AdvP acting as a complement:

- (34) I put down the paper.
- (35) We used to walk up here, you know.

Both *down* and *up here* are adverbs of place, expressing direction and position, respectively (Biber et al. 1999, 552). Other types of AdvP may also act as complements. For instance, Radden (2007, 307-308) provides an example of an extent phrase complement:

- (36) How far did you go? / Where did you go?
- (37) We went from Buena Vista (up) to Cottonwood.

Furthermore, Jackendoff (1972, 64-65) shows a manner adverb complementing a verb:

- (38) The job paid us handsomely.
- (39) *The job paid us.
- (40) *The job handsomely paid us.

Most verbs can also occur without a complement. In this thesis the term zero complement, marked by the symbol \emptyset , will be used to denote such cases. Zero complement will be treated as a complement category in its own right in the analysis, as its occurrence is equally dependent on the subcategorisation of the verb. Examples (34) and (35) are rewritten here to illustrate the point:

- (41) *I put.

¹⁵ Cf. Ross (2004) for an extensive account on sententiality.

(42) We used to walk.

For reasons of economy, however, zero complement constructions will not receive separate sections in the following chapters. They will be discussed together with nonsentential complements instead.

Complements may be classified as obligatory, optional or contextually optional, according to their level of omissibility. If an element cannot be omitted from a sentence without loss of grammaticality or an unsystematic change of meaning, it is an obligatory complement¹⁶ (Huddleston and Pullum 2002, 221):

(43) She perused the report

(44) *She perused.

(45) She ran the business.

(46) She ran.

Optional complements, despite being governed by the matrix verb, can be omitted without compromising the grammaticality or meaning of a sentence (ibid.):

(47) She read the report.

(48) She read.

A complement is contextually optional if it can only be left out in cases where its referent can be identified from the context (Herbst et al. 2004, xxxii):

(49) But where is he now? Does Hannah know (where he is now)?

Adjuncts, on the other hand, are categorised according to their semantic function (for example, indicating time or place). Huddleston (1984, 223) provides a comprehensive list of different adjunct types:

¹⁶ This method of determining the obligatoriness of an element is known as the Elimination Test (Somers 1987, 12-13).

a. He drives <i>very carefully</i> .	Manner
b. I opened it <i>with the master key</i> .	Instrument
c. Liz came <i>with John</i> .	Comitative
d. She died <i>in 1942</i> .	Time
e. They rested <i>for a few minutes</i> .	Duration
f. She <i>often</i> faints.	Frequency
g. He was reading <i>in the bath</i> .	Place/Locative
h. He worked late <i>to impress the boss</i> .	Purpose
i. They stayed in <i>because it was raining</i> .	Reason
j. I enjoyed it <i>very much</i> .	Degree
k. <i>From a philosophical point of view</i> , it is quite unsound.	Viewpoint
l. <i>Perhaps</i> he likes her.	Modal
m. She resigned, <i>however</i> .	Connective

Adjuncts are prototypically AdvPs or PPs (ibid., 179). Looking at the distinction between complements and adjuncts from a semantic perspective, Somers (1984, 508) states that complements are elements which complete the meaning of a verb, while adjuncts can be said to complete the meaning of the central predication as a whole. Consider the following sentence (Somers 1987, 24):

(50) On behalf of the Commission the committee yesterday granted Portugal
100 000 EAUS for her disaster victims.

Here the underlined elements are directly pertinent to the verb *grant* and are therefore complements¹⁷, whereas the remaining elements *On behalf of the Commission*, *yesterday* and *for her disaster victims* provide the context for the whole predication, and are thus adjuncts (ibid.).

Herbst et al. (2004, xxiv) define the difference in terms of valency: adjuncts are not dependent on the valency of the governing verb, while complements are. As a result, adjuncts can occur relatively freely, and they are not determined in their form by the governing verb. This can be exemplified as follows: first, an adjunct such as *last night* can be easily added to the sentence below (ibid.):

- (51) I walked along the cliff-path.
(52) I walked along the cliff-path *last night*.

Second, the fact that the noun phrase *last night* can be replaced by a PP, an AdvP or an adverbial clause shows that the form of the adjunct is not determined by the governing verb (ibid., xxv):

¹⁷ Somers also classifies *the committee* as a complement to *grant*. Herbst et al. follow the same convention. As was mentioned above, subjects are not considered as complements in this thesis.

(53) I put paper and kindling by the fire at 5 p.m. / then / before I went to bed.

Determining the status of a constituent can sometimes be slightly more complicated. This is especially true in case of AdvPs and PPs. Sentences (34) and (35) above are reproduced here to illustrate the point:

(54) I put down the paper.

(55) We used to walk up here, you know.

According to Herbst et al. (2004, xxviii), the complement status of *down* and *up here* “can only be justified on the grounds that they are either obligatory elements of the valency pattern of the verb (as in the case of *put*) or that the semantic bonds with the verb are so strong that it seems appropriate to consider them as a part of the valency of the verb (as in the case of *walk*)”. While the complementhood of these elements is not instantly obvious, their status as obligatory complements is evident: leaving out the AdvP would produce ungrammaticality in (54) or alter the meaning of the sentence in (55). However, the situation is different in case of optional elements (Bowen 2005, 17):

(56) I received two letters from my cousin.

Eliminating *from my cousin* from (56) would not render it ungrammatical, nor would it change the essential meaning of the sentence. One possible way of determining the complementhood of optional elements is available in the form of the ‘do-so test’, introduced by Somers (1987, 18). The phrase *do so* is used as a proform for a predication:

(57) Bill bought Gladys a present in Manchester today on an impulse, and Roger did so too.

The proform can include anything up to the whole predication, but the minimum element that can be substituted is the predicate plus any complements. Thus, if an element cannot occur alongside the proform, it is a complement (ibid.):

(58) *I live in Manchester and Jock does so in Salford.

(59) John took a trip last Tuesday, and I’m going to do so tomorrow.

The working principle of the test may be further clarified by unpacking the proforms:

(60) *I live in Manchester and Jock lives in Manchester in Salford.

(61) John took a trip last Tuesday, and I'm going to take a trip tomorrow.

As only adjuncts may be added freely to sentences, the unacceptability of (58) indicates that *in Salford* is a complement. Correspondingly, because (59) remains acceptable, *tomorrow* is an adjunct.

The tests introduced in this section represent only a small part of the diagnostic devices that have so far been developed to determine the complement status of constituents. However, a conclusive one still remains to be devised (cf. Somers 1987, 8-18; Huddleston and Pullum 2002, 219-228; Bowen 2005, 15-30). Somers (1987, 25-28) asserts that the difficulty of finding a fully satisfactory method arises from the fact that there is no clear-cut division between complements and adjuncts; instead, they are part of a continuum of valency-boundness extending beyond their respective categories.

5 Factors Bearing on Complementation

In this chapter I will present a number of significant factors relating to verb complementation, all of which will be taken into account in the analysis of the corpus data.

5.1 The Great Complement Shift

Research has shown that English sentential complementation has undergone major changes over the past few centuries. These processes have been collectively referred to as The Great Complement Shift (Rohdenburg 2006, 143). Perhaps the most prominent type of change – and also the most relevant to the subject at hand - is the rise of gerundial complements at the expense of infinitival ones, as shown in the examples below (ibid., 143-144):

- (1) She delighted to do it. → She delighted in doing it.
- (2) She avoided to go there. → She avoided going there.

There are three important factors, or “extra-semantic constraints” that have played a role in the process, and still continue to have an effect on complement selection: the complexity principle, extractions, and horror aequi (ibid., 160). These will be reviewed below along with another related factor, namely insertions.

5.2 The Complexity Principle

Earlier work on the psychological dimension of language processing has suggested that the cognitive complexity of an utterance may have an effect on the choice of syntactic elements in a sentence (Rohdenburg 1996, 150). The Complexity Principle, posited by Rohdenburg (ibid., 151), elaborates on this premise:

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.

The distinction between the more explicit and less explicit alternatives may in most cases be determined by comparing their length: the bulkier element or construction generally represents the more explicit option (ibid., 152). The addition (or deletion) of the optional infinitive marker *to* constitutes the simplest case of grammatical variation (ibid., 151):

- (3) I helped him to write the paper.
- (4) I helped him write the paper.

However, Rohdenburg stresses that the principle represents a tendency, not an absolute rule; it may sometimes be “in conflict with other factors, in particular with stylistic and semantic tendencies” (ibid., 152). Examples (3) and (4) are a case in point: the more explicit marked infinitive is generally understood as being more formal than the unmarked alternative. Furthermore, in certain varieties of British English the two sentences are understood to have a difference in meaning - the main subject *I* in (4) is playing a direct role in the writing of the paper, whereas in (3) he or she is exerting an indirect influence on the process (ibid., 159).

Several kinds of grammatical environments have so far been identified as being cognitively complex. For example, Rohdenburg (ibid., 173) lists the following:

- discontinuous constructions of various kinds
- (the presence of) more or less complex surface objects preceding finite and non-finite clauses
- heavy subject expressions (including subordinate clauses)
- complex subordinate clauses
- passive constructions

Recent research has confirmed that in cognitively more complex environments the more explicit novel constructions are established earlier and faster, and more explicit recessive constructions tend to be preserved for longer periods of time (Rohdenburg 2003, 243). This fact obviously connects the Complexity Principle to the Great Complement Shift. As regards the spread of the *-ing* form in the area of non-finite complementation, two complexity factors have influenced the process significantly. These will be discussed next.

5.3 Extractions and Insertions

In Transformational Grammar, the term ‘extraction’ refers to a situation where the object of a sentence is moved from its assumed canonical position (Vosberg 2003b, 201). Postal (1994, 160-162) identifies eight types of extraction, all of which are shown below¹⁸:

topicalization	<u>Frank</u> _i , I would never hire t _i .
restrictive relative extraction	<u>The gun</u> _i (which) they claimed t _i was used in the crime.
nonrestrictive relative extraction	<u>Frank</u> _i , who they adored t _i , is dishonest.
question extraction	<u>Who</u> _i did they nominate t _i to be director?
pseudo clefting	<u>What</u> _i Ellen wants t _i is a Mercedes-Benz.
clefting	It was Frank <u>who</u> _i they hired t _i .
negative NP extraction	<u>No such gorilla</u> _i did I ever see t _i .
exclamatory extraction	<u>What a lovely woman</u> _i I found out that he married t _i !

¹⁸ Following the notation utilised by Vosberg (2003b) and many others in the literature, the extracted element (also termed ‘filler’) and the extraction site (‘gap’, indicated by ‘t’) are marked here with the index ‘i’.

Extractions can occur both within and across sentence boundaries, or in other words, they can be sentence-internal or sentence-external. The latter type bears on the selection between infinitival and gerundial alternatives in non-finite complementation. Vosberg (2003a, 308), in what is known as the Extraction Principle, states that

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 topicalization, relativization, comparativization, or interrogation etc.) from its original position and crosses clause boundaries.

Referring to Postal's aforementioned list, Vosberg illustrates cases of extraction out of non-finite sentences complementing the verb *remember* (2003b, 201-202):

(5) TOPICALIZATION: even her acquaintance with the Belfield's_i she remembered not ever mentioning t_i (Fanny Burney, *Cecilia*, 1782)

(6) RELATIVIZATION: it is the worthy Spencer_i, whom_i I'm sure you remember to have often heard me mention t_i in the relation of my private misfortunes, (John Dauncey, *The English Lovers*, 1622)

(7) CLEFTING: It was the bangle_i that she remembered having seen t_i on Francie's wrist, (Edith Ænone Sommerville, *The Real Charlotte*, 1894)

(8) COMPARATIVIZATION: 'Twas her Charming Face and modest Look, that represented to him a thousand more beauties and taking Graces_i, than he remembered ever to have seen t_i in his Unconstant and Faithless Mistress: (Philip Ayres, *The Revengeful Mistress*, 1696)

(9) INTERROGATION: Now, how many_i do you remember to have heard named t_i? (Sabine Baring-Gould, *In the Roar of the Sea*, 1892)

Vosberg (ibid.) also mentions the last three types in Postal's classification (pseudo-clefting, negative NP extraction and exclamatory extraction) in the same context, but does not give examples. Postal's example sentences above (1994, 160-162) are modified here for the purpose of exemplifying negative NP extraction and exclamatory extraction out of non-finite complement clauses:

(10) No such gorilla_i did I ever dread to see t_i.

(11) What a lovely woman_i I found out that he dreaded to marry t_i!

As there are more than one basic types of pseudo-cleft constructions, it might be beneficial to consider the available options for a moment¹⁹. Heycock and Kroch (1999, 393) give the following examples:

- (12) What John hit was Fido.
- (13) What John did was hit Fido.
- (14) What happened was that John hit Fido.

The corresponding structures in the context of non-finite complementation may be illustrated as follows²⁰:

- (15) What he dreaded to see was that scene.
- (16) What he dreaded was to see that scene.
- (17) What happened was that he dreaded to see that scene.

Provided that the initial *what* is accepted as the complement of *to see* in (15), the construction can be said to involve extraction out of the lower sentence²¹. Sentence (18) can be analysed similarly:

- (18) What he dreaded to do was to see that scene.

The strings surrounding the copula *be* can also occur in the opposite order, resulting in a reversed pseudo-cleft. Thus, in case of verbs that allow both infinitival and gerundial complement clauses, at least eight different pseudo-cleft constructions may be considered in analysing extractions out of subordinate clauses. However, as far as *aspire* is concerned, not all of them are applicable:

- (19) What_i he aspired to see t_i was that scene.
- (20) What_i he aspired to do t_i was to see that scene.
- (21) That scene was what_i he aspired to see t_i.
- (22) To see that scene was what_i he aspired to do t_i.
- (23) *What_i he aspired to seeing t_i was that scene.
- (24) *What_i he aspired to doing t_i was seeing that scene.
- (25) *That scene was what_i he aspired to seeing t_i.
- (26) *Seeing that scene was what_i he aspired to doing t_i.

¹⁹ The subject of pseudo-cleft structures is highly controversial and complex (cf. for example Heycock and Kroch (1999)), and I can under no circumstances claim knowledge of all the alternative construction types that may be available for analysis in the present context. However, the variations offered in (19)-(22) can perhaps be considered as representing the prototypical cases of sentence-external extraction in pseudo-cleft constructions.

²⁰ Examples (15)-(26) adapted from Rohdenburg (2006, 153).

²¹ This analysis follows Postal (1994) and Huddleston and Pullum (2002, 1020). For a somewhat different analysis of pseudo-clefts, see for example Quirk et al. (1985, 1387-89).

What is notable here is that the sentences become unacceptable if the verb governed by *aspire* is gerundial²². The questions of why the *-ing* form cannot be substituted for the infinitive in (19)-(22), and consequently, what role the Extraction Principle plays in these examples cannot be pursued in this thesis. Nonetheless, it is clear that pseudo-cleft environments of this kind show a very strong preference for the infinitival form in this case.

Insertions, i.e. intervening material between the matrix verb and the complement clause are similar to extractions in that they presumably add to the cognitive effort required to interpret the sentence, and thus tend to trigger the more explicit complement option (Vosberg 2003b, 217-218). In the following sentence, the verb *recollect* selects the highly sentential *that*-clause instead of the gerundial *seeing* because the latter, "...deriving from a noun, is less suited for making the sentential status [of the complement clause] explicit" (ibid., 211):

(27) I *recollect*, as I passed by one of the pier-glasses, that I saw in it his clenched hand offered in wrath to his forehead. (Samuel Richardson, *Clarissa*, 1st ed., 1748)

Vosberg (ibid., 218) notes that, in light of the Complexity Principle, the *-ing* form can be assumed to be less explicit than the infinitive since the latter is preferred over the former in constructions involving extractions or relatively long insertions. It comes as no surprise, then, that both of these complexity factors have delayed the advancing of the *-ing* form in verb complementation (ibid., 217-218).

5.4 The Horror Aequi Principle

Rohdenburg (2003, 236) describes the principle as follows:

...the *horror aequi* principle involves the widespread (and presumably universal) tendency to avoid the use of formally (near-) identical and (near-)adjacent grammatical elements or structures...

In the context of verb complementation, the *horror aequi* principle is often linked to the selection between *to*-infinitive and gerundial complements. Vosberg (2003a, 315) points out that English

²² I am thankful to the three native speaker informants who assisted me in determining the acceptability of (19)-(26).

“...presumably has always shown an aversion not only to immediately successive *-ing* forms, but also to sequences of (non-coordinated) *to*-infinitives”. The preferred choices of complement are highlighted below (adapted from Rohdenburg 2006, 157):

(28) a. to dread	to-inf./- ing
b. dreading	to-inf. /-ing
(29) a. to delight	to-inf./ in -ing
b. delighting	to-inf. /in -ing

As was the case with the other principles introduced here, *horror aequi* must also be regarded as a strong tendency rather than an absolute rule. While counterexamples are few and far between²³, they still exist (examples from the BNC):

(30) FTW Perceptions of Nizan's character are widely diverging; “arrogant, thin-skinned, secretive, fond of wealth, ambitious, a tactician *delighting in outmanoeuvring* opponents, honest, gentle, generous, brusque, cheerful, tormented, astute, surprisingly uncompromising”.

(31) K9J It is number one nylon producer in Europe and second in the world and *looking to narrowing* the gap between itself and world leader Du Pont, says Coleman.

6 *Aspire* in the *OED* and Other Dictionaries

6.1 Etymology

According to the *Chambers Dictionary of Etymology*, *aspire* has its roots in the Latin verb *aspirare*, or *adspirare*, which is translated as ‘breathe upon, seek to reach’ (*ad-* to, upon + *spirare* breathe).

The Latin form was adopted into Old French as *aspirer*, ‘aspire to, inspire’, and somewhere before the beginning of the 15th century it was borrowed into English in its present-day form. The only meaning given for the English verb in the dictionary, ‘desire earnestly’, is mentioned to have first appeared in conjunction with the nominative form *aspiration* (‘an earnest desire’) in Shakespeare’s

²³ Counterexamples of *-ing* + *-ing* are extremely rare in the BNC, whereas instances of *to-inf* + *to-inf* occur even in hundreds in conjunction with a small group of verbs. This may be connected to the argument that in some cases sequences of two *to*-infinitives, such as *to help* + *to-inf*, should be analysed as forming single semantic units, or ‘auxiliates’ instead of two separate clauses (Mair 2002, 125).

Troilus and Cressida in 1606, but there is no information on when the verb gained this sense in English.

6.2 The *OED*

The *OED* contains eight different senses for *aspire*, five of which are considered obsolete. The senses and some of the example sentences accompanying them in the dictionary are displayed in the first two columns of the table below. The third column shows the complements I found in the full set of examples given in the entry.

I. To breathe into or forth.		
†1. <i>trans.</i> To breathe (breath or spiritual influence) <i>to</i> or <i>into</i> ; to inspire. <i>Obs.</i>	1633 P. FLETCHER <i>Purple Isl.</i> Thereto may he his grace and gentle heat aspire.	NP + <i>to/into</i> + NP/AdvP
†2. <i>intr.</i> To breathe forth, exhale. <i>Obs. rare.</i>	c1750 SHENSTONE <i>Wks.</i> (1764) In what lonely vale Of balmy med'cine's various field, aspires The blest refrigerent?	∅
II. To breathe desire towards.		
3. <i>intr.</i> To have a fixed desire, longing, or ambition for something at present above one; to seek to attain, to pant, long. a. with <i>to</i> . b. with <i>after, at; for</i> , <i>obs.</i> c. with <i>inf.</i> d. <i>absol.</i>	a. 1781 GIBBON <i>Decl. & F.</i> The Barbarian still aspired to the rank of master-general of the armies of the West. b. 1794 SULLIVAN <i>View Nat.</i> To aspire after a more perfect knowledge of his nature. 1788 V. KNOX <i>Winter Even.</i> He who aspires at the character of a good man. 1649 LOVELACE <i>Poems</i> (1659) [Thou] Aspiredst for the everlasting Crowne. c. 1605 BACON <i>Adv. Learn.</i> Aspiring to be like God in power. d. 1877 E. CONDER <i>Bas. Faith</i> Man aspires. An immense instinct in his nature points upward, like a spire of flame.	a. <i>to</i> + NP b. <i>after/at/for</i> + NP c. <i>to-inf.</i> d. ∅
†4. <i>trans.</i> To have an ardent desire for, to pant or long for, to be ambitious of, aim at. <i>Obs.</i>	1816 SOUTHEY <i>Lay of Laureate</i> And Love aspired with Faith a heavenward flight.	NP
III. To rise, mount up.		
5. <i>intr.</i> To rise up, as an exhalation, or as smoke or fire; hence <i>gen.</i> to mount up, taper up, tower, ascend, rise high, become tall.	1591 SPENSER <i>Ruins of Time</i> Pyramides, to heauen aspired. 1676 WORLIDGE <i>Cider</i> (1691) The Tree is more apt to aspire than any other Apple-tree.	<i>to</i> + NP ∅
6. <i>fig.</i> (with some sense of 3 combined.)	1768 BEATTIE <i>Minstr.</i> Let thy heaven-taught soul to heaven aspire. 1832 WORDSW. <i>Poems of Imag.</i> Mount from the earth; aspire! aspire!	<i>to</i> + NP ∅
†7. To grow up <i>to</i> (the age of). <i>Obs. rare.</i>	1596 SPENSER <i>F.Q.</i> To ryper yeares he gan aspire.	<i>to</i> + NP
†8. <i>trans.</i> To mount up to, soar to, reach, attain. Also <i>fig.</i> <i>Obs.</i>	1596 CHAPMAN <i>Iliad</i> Forth went they..and presently aspir'd The guardless Thracian regiment fast bound with sleep, and tir'd.	NP

Table 3. OED senses and complementation for *aspire*.

According to the *OED*, *aspire* has selected both nonsentential and sentential complements through the course of history. It has also occurred without a complement. The only type of sentential complement found among the example quotations was the *to*-infinitive, which occurred with sense 3 alone. Interestingly, at least four alternative prepositions have appeared in the nonsentential pattern *aspire* + preposition + NP in conjunction with sense 3: *after*, *at*, *for*, and *to*. Such abundance of alternatives naturally raises the question of whether any subtle differences in meaning can be found between these variations of the pattern (cf. chap. 8). Moreover, *after* + NP, *at* + NP and *to* + NP were found in quotations originating from the period covered in the present study, whereas the only quotation containing *for* + NP was from the year 1649. This suggests that the pattern may already have been obsolescent by the early 18th century.

Five nonsentential patterns occurred with the other senses: *to* + NP (senses 5, 6 and 7) and the transitive ‘bare’ NP (senses 4 and 8), NP + *to* + NP, NP + *to* + AdvP and NP + *into* + NP (sense 1). However, it seems unlikely that the last three of the above patterns should be found in the corpus data as the most recent quotation exemplifying sense 1 dates back to the year 1633. Finally, all of the senses associated with intransitive complements (2, 3, 5, 6 and 7) also occurred without a complement.

The differences between the various (sub)senses of the verb are rather intricate. Senses 3 and 4 differ only in that sense 4 seems to lack the meaning of ‘upward movement’ associated with sense 3. Likewise, sense 6 is very nearly identical to sense 5, with the only differences being that the former is used figuratively and can incorporate an element of desire. All the quotations in which *aspire* denoted sense 6 had only +human subjects, while all but one of the subjects that appeared in conjunction with sense 5 were –animate (one quotation contained a +animate subject, *the tree*). In fact, all the text passages in which the verb denoted senses other than 5 had +animate subjects, of which the great majority were +human.

On a further note, the poetic example sentence associated with sense 2 above, ‘to breathe forth, exhale’, proved somewhat difficult to interpret. According to the *OED*, *refrigerent* denotes a medical agent or a medicinal plant that obviously is not capable of exhaling, at least in the sense of ‘breathing out air’. There is no mention of *aspire* being used figuratively in this sense either, so it would seem to me that it is possible to interpret *aspire* in the above quote as denoting sense 5, as in ‘to become tall, rise from the ground’. In either case, no preliminary assumptions about the nature of the subjects associated with sense 2 can be made as the quote in question is also the only one given in the *OED*.

6.3 Other dictionaries

Even though the other dictionaries consulted for this thesis did not have much to offer in terms of adding to what was already discovered in the *OED*, two additional pieces of information were found. First, and most importantly from the viewpoint of examining the possible influence of the Great Complement Shift on the complementation of *aspire*, the *Collins Cobuild English Dictionary* lists the gerundial *to –ing* construction as another sentential complement for the verb, but no examples are given. Fortunately, *aspire to –ing* did receive some attention in the complementation literature (cf. chap. 7 and 8).

Second, unlike other dictionaries, the *Longman Dictionary of the English Language* (*LDEL*) associates the verb in its present-day usage with not only desiring for something, but also actually fulfilling that desire:

aspire 1 to seek or attain or accomplish a particular goal – usu. + *to* < ~d *to a career in medicine*>

That the sense ‘to attain a goal’ is listed as current in the *LDEL* is very interesting, as the most recent example of the verb in this sense in the *OED* (sense 8) dates back to the year 1596.

7 *Aspire* in the Literature

It seems that *aspire* receives attention in only a handful of grammars, and they describe its features quite concisely. According to Poutsma (1904, 669-672), *aspire* is intransitive and takes *to*-infinitives as complements. Poutsma shows an example (year of publication not given):

(1) I really should not *aspire to share* his poverty. W.E. Norris, *An Eclipse*, Sc. I.

Similarly, Quirk et al. (1985, 1187-88) place *aspire* in a group of verbs that take only “subjectless infinitive clauses as direct object”. Finally, Huddleston and Pullum (2002, 1227) assert that the verb takes only *to*-infinitival complements with ordinary (as opposed to raised) subjects.

Elsewhere in the literature, Rudanko (1989, 21-22) places *aspire* in a class of subject control verbs that, save for metaphorical or metonymical expressions, generally take a +human subject as they “express a decision or an intention which is not necessarily communicated”. He further divides this class into verbs that “imply a reaching of a decision, or an arrival at a decision (*choose, determine, decide* etc.)” and those that “refer to the intention only, not to its formation (*aim, intend* etc.)” (ibid., 33). In this classification, *aspire* belongs to the latter subgroup. Sag and Pollard (1991, 65-66), correspondingly, categorise *aspire* as belonging to a group of subject control verbs that “involve desire, expectation, or similar mental orientation toward a given state of affairs”.

Returning to the topic of gerundial complements (cf. section 6.3), Egan (2008, 325) shows evidence of *to -ing* constructions occurring in Present-Day English. He quotes the British National Corpus:

(2) They are the ones who *aspire to being* hooligans but lack the ‘bottle’ to succeed in such a role.

Egan also points out that the *aspire to -ing* construction is relatively rare, and it has so far not received much attention in the literature (ibid., 138). His observations on the structure will be looked at in more detail in the next chapter. Another gerundial form is brought up by Rudanko (1996, 99), who mentions in passing that *aspire* has been complemented by *at -ing* in earlier times,

forming the construction type *aspire at doing something*. Unfortunately no further information about this now obsolete form was found in the literature.

It is apparent that the qualities of *aspire* discussed in this chapter apply only to the *OED* sense 3, ‘to have a fixed desire for something above oneself’, as it is the only one taking sentential complements. As was attested in the *OED* (cf. section 6.2), nonsentential complements have occurred in conjunction with all of the eight senses listed in the dictionary, but constructions involving them were not discussed in the literature.

8 Semantic Features of Complement Constructions

Following the generalisation posited by Bolinger (1968, 127), “a difference in syntactic form always spells a difference in meaning”, it may be worth the effort to examine the semantics of the complement structures identified so far. Since the emphasis of this study is on sentential complementation, I will first focus on the differences in meaning between the *to*-infinitive and the *to -ing* forms in conjunction with *aspire* in Present-Day English. Some notions on a number of nonsentential complements will then conclude this chapter.

8.1 *To*-infinitive vs. *to -ing*

Allerton (1988, 21) sums up the differences between the infinitive and the gerund in various contexts as follows:

INFINITIVE	GERUND
infrequent activity	regular activity
intermittent activity	continuous activity
interrupted activity	continuing activity
uncompleted activity	completed activity
contingent/possible event	event presented factually
particular time and place	neutral time and place
specific subject	non-specific subject
more verbal character	more nominal character

It has been suggested that in case of volitional verbs, the two complement types differ in terms of the perceived duration of the action denoted by the subordinate verb. Much in agreement with Allerton's notion of intermittent vs. continuous activity in the list above, Dirven (1989, 117-119) states that the *to*-infinitive denotes a single occurrence of events or states, whereas the (bare) gerund implies unbounded duration. He assumes, however, that the *to*-infinitive is the only available option with verbs of volition²⁴, because they "...imply in their complement the potential occurrence of a new act, event or state and thus presuppose a single occurrence of them" (ibid., 119). On the other hand, Dirven continues by pointing out that many verbs of volition may take a slightly different meaning, in which case other constructions are possible; for instance, the infinitive may be associated with a definitive will to realise something, whereas the gerund expresses a mere suggestion of such an action (ibid., 120):

- (1) I intend to go tomorrow. (= I want to, this is what I have decided).
- (2) I intend going tomorrow. (= It's what I have vaguely planned).

Whether this difference in explicitness and vagueness applies to *aspire to -ing* constructions is unclear, as Dirven does not make any comments on either the verb or the complement in this context. The semantic features of the verb seem to point toward some other explanation, though, as the notion of vagueness seems incompatible with the *OED* definition of *aspire* (sense 3) which quite clearly denotes a fixed and lasting desire.

Egan (2008, 279) contends that in case of verbs such as *aspire*²⁵, the difference between the *to*-infinitive and *to -ing* structures generally lies in the expected duration of the action in question. The *to*-infinitive denotes a "complement situation profiled as a unitary whole", i.e. an event whose beginning and ending are defined, while *to -ing* expresses a situation "profiled as extended", i.e. its

²⁴ Dirven includes *aspire* in his list of volitional verbs. This assumption was, of course, made before the arrival of large electronic corpora.

²⁵ In Egan's terminology, *aspire* is a 'same-subject', 'forward-looking' 'attitude' verb (2008, 325), that is, a verb that occurs in constructions in which a) PRO is coreferential with the subject of the higher sentence, b) "the situation in the complement clause is located in the projected future vis-à-vis the time of the matrix verb", and c) "the matrix verb formulates an attitude towards a situation which either involves him- or herself or some other on-stage participant". Needless to say, this definition is very close to that of a 'volitional subject control verb'.

temporal boundaries are undefined. Interestingly, Egan expresses doubts about whether there actually is any difference in meaning between the two forms of complement in conjunction with *aspire* (ibid., 138-140). He compares the *to*-infinitive and *to -ing* complements in terms of several distributional criteria, such as genre and register, but states that if differences are to be found, they must be sought elsewhere (ibid., 138). Finally, he arrives to the following conclusion: “The question is whether the right-hand temporal boundary is defocused in the *to -ing* complements, as it is in ordinary *-ing* complements...There is no test that will provide us with a clear answer” (ibid., 140). Nonetheless, Egan (ibid.) still proposes that the *to -ing* complement in this context may in fact express indefinite duration, as well as a “targeted alternative connotation” (i.e. “a scenario focused upon in preference to other potential situations, such as *not* being and *not* coming” (ibid., 96)) usually associated with the *to*-infinitive. In other words, both forms are seen as expressing an equally strong preference for the realisation of the action described in the complement, but the *-ing* form leaves the duration of the said action undefined.

8.2 *After / at / for / to + NP*

The *OED* lists four nonsentential complement forms as having occurred in conjunction with sense 3 of *aspire* (cf. section 6.2): *after / at / for* and *to + NP*. Regrettably, it seems that nothing has so far been written on the possible semantic distinctions between these alternatives in the context of *aspire*. It is also likely that the situation cannot be improved much by turning to native speakers’ intuition, because *aspire to + NP* is the only construction that, according to the *OED*, has remained in active use after the end of the 19th century. Still, some clues on the matter can be found by looking at what grammarians have said about the general properties of the prepositions in question.

According to Schibsbye (1970, 312), *after* and *for* are largely similar in meaning in cases where the complement expresses something that is desired. However, whereas a *for*-PP simply denotes the

object of desire, an *after*-PP “contains an idea of distance from the complement...that it is more difficult to attain [the desired goal]”, as can be seen in *hanker after the pleasures of one’s youth* and *hanker for food when one is hungry* (ibid.).

Schibsbye also notes that *to*- and *at*-PPs differ in that the latter may signal an intent to influence the complement, as attested in *these women will talk to you politely* vs. *he had no intention of talking at her, but the words had struck home* (ibid., 376). It stands to reason that, for example, if the object being *aspired at* were a person, the subject could perhaps have been understood as wishing to convince that person to accept his or her company. What is problematic here is that *aspire to him/her*, at least in the modern-day sense of the expression, can be perceived as conveying the same meaning. Provided that the *to*-PP is accepted as the more neutral alternative, one might still suggest that these complement forms denote different levels of commitment to reaching the goal: in case of *at* the subject would be actively seeking to influence the object, whereas in case of *to* he or she would be more passive.

Lastly, Schibsbye states that *for*- and *to*-PPs are essentially similar in meaning, both indicating that “what is denoted by the complement is the goal of the action expressed by the verb” (ibid.). All in all, then, it would seem that while all four complement forms carry the same basic meaning in the present context, *after*- and *at*-PPs may differ slightly from the others in the ways mentioned above. Of course, this suggestion is almost entirely speculative, and more evidence must be attained before anything conclusive can be said about the matter.

9 Methodology

9.1 Limitations of the study

The corpora utilised here differ from each other in many respects. The material for each corpora was selected according to different criteria, they are largely dissimilar in their respective general

make-up, and – perhaps most importantly from the viewpoint of alleviating the disparities - only the BNC is annotated, making it impossible to extract sociolinguistically matching material from the historical corpora by means of refined search strings. These factors inevitably impose limitations as to how the data might be combined or contrasted to each other in a methodologically sound way. Admittedly, sociolinguistic comparison between data from the well-documented CLMETEV and the BNC can be facilitated to some extent by looking only at the BNC genres that correspond the most to the overall make-up of the CLMETEV, but otherwise there is little one can do to take considerations of register, genre, gender or other such factors into account. Thus, it was necessary to limit the comparison of historical and present-day data to syntactic and semantic features only.

The situation is even less optimal with the OEDQ; as Mair (2004, 123-124) writes, using the database as a corpus not only rules out the sociolinguistic dimension but also hinders the investigation of any “...macrolinguistic phenomena above the clause level, as the textual input into the corpus is so fragmented”. To put the point differently, the fact that the database contains incomplete quotations may pose a serious problem to anyone wishing to examine, for instance, sentence-external extractions. However, since many historical texts are currently available for viewing in their original form on various Internet sites, this deficiency may often be remedied to some extent, or even fully, as was the case here.

Determining the currency of items in the OEDQ is also problematic for two reasons (cf. section 3.2). First, the total number of words in the database is not readily available, and cannot be determined very accurately. Consequently, normalised frequency calculations are based only on an estimation of the total number of words in the corpus, not accurate figures as is the case with the CLMETEV and the BNC). Second, very rare or idiosyncratic words may be overrepresented in the results. It was therefore not possible to compare the frequencies of complement types found in the OEDQ directly with those attained from the other two corpora, and the main emphasis had to be placed on the CLMETEV findings as regards the analysis of development in the currency of

complement forms in the historical data. Nevertheless, the figures obtained from the OEDQ were included in the statistics in order to enable comparison of the approximate currency of the more frequent items within that corpus.

While the applicability of the frequencies obtained from the OEDQ was limited, the database proved to be a valuable asset to this study in terms of exploring the contexts and complement patterns of *aspire* in the past centuries. The amount of tokens in the CLMETEV turned out to be quite low, so additional data was needed to decrease the chance of missing rare complement constructions and to increase the overall reliability of the analysis. Searching the OEDQ practically doubled the volume of the historical data: roughly one half (50.8%) of the historical tokens under examination came from the CLMETEV, and the rest (49.2%) were acquired from the OEDQ.

9.2 Data retrieval

The historical data was retrieved from both the CLMETEV and the OEDQ by means of plain word-form searches (i.e. *aspire*, *aspires*, *aspired*, and *aspiring*), as neither corpora are annotated, and thus do not allow more sophisticated search strings. Although this method was the only one available, it was also the preferred one; advanced search methods, while certainly useful, always involve a small risk of excluding some relevant tokens due to erroneous annotation (cf. section 3.3). In this case the main goal was to map the complement types occurring with the verb as accurately as possible, and avoiding any level of imprecision was desirable. Compared to more refined methods, the simple search was more cumbersome in that all adjectival and nominal instances of the form *aspiring* in the data would appear in the results together with the verbal tokens. As non-verbal items were irrelevant for the purposes of this study, they were manually discarded.

Absolute frequencies obtained from the CLMETEV and the OEDQ were combined for the purpose of forming a rough estimation of the general order of frequency of the attested complement structures in the periods under investigation. Since both sets of data represent the same period of

time, there was an increased chance that some texts would have ended up serving as a source of material for both corpora, causing a portion of the tokens appear twice in the combined total. Rather unexpectedly, a comparison of the data sets revealed that only one token appeared in both the CLMETEV and the OEDQ.

The Present-Day English tokens were obtained from the BNC using the Brigham Young University search engine²⁶. Although the engine features many advanced search options, including lemma search, a decision was made to look for tokens by plain word-form in order to account for possible mistagged tokens and thus ensure the inclusion of all relevant material contained within the corpus. The distribution of tokens among text types was also examined in order to form a more comprehensive picture of the complementation of *aspire* in present-day English.

10 CLMETEV Part 1 and OEDQ 1710-1779

The CLMETEV search produced 51 tokens, 17 of which represented the adjective *aspiring*. Fortunately, the OEDQ yielded 43 additional tokens, 12 of which were adjectival. The total number of verbal tokens thus amounted to 65. The overall frequency of the verb was low in both corpora²⁷.

Altogether twelve different complement constructions were found in the data. The parenthetical figures in Table 4 below represent the normalised frequencies of items:

²⁶ Available at <http://corpus.byu.edu/bnc/>

²⁷ It must be borne in mind here that it is currently not possible to attain fully accurate normalised frequencies of complements in the OEDQ. Therefore the figures are not as reliable as those obtained from the CLMETEV or the BNC (cf. sections 3.2 and 9.1).

Complement	CLMETEV	<i>aspire</i>	<i>-ed</i>	<i>-es</i>	<i>-ing</i>	OEDQ	<i>aspire</i>	<i>-ed</i>	<i>-es</i>	<i>-ing</i>	Total
	Part 1					1710-1779					
<i>to</i> + NP	19 (6.25)	11	3	3	2	15 (5.64)	9	2	1	3	34
<i>to</i> -infinitive	8 (2.63)	1	3		4	5 (1.88)	4			1	13
∅	2 (0.66)	1			1	4 (1.50)	4				6
<i>so</i> + AdvP + <i>as</i> + <i>to</i> - infinitive	2 (0.66)	1	1								2
<i>at</i> + NP						2 (0.75)	1		1		2
<i>at</i> - <i>ing</i>	1 (0.33)	1									1
<i>after</i> + NP	1 (0.33)	1									1
<i>from</i> + NP						1 (0.38)	1				1
AdvP + <i>over</i> + NP						1 (0.38)	1				1
<i>towards</i> + NP						1 (0.38)				1	1
AdvP						1 (0.38)	1				1
NP	1 (0.33)				1	1 (0.38)			1		2
Total	34 (11.19)	16	7	3	8	31 (11.65)	21	2	3	5	65

Table 4. Complement types by order of frequency, 1710 -1780.

Even though the number of samples was modest, the data shows a notable consistency between the two corpora as regards the order of frequency of complement types: *to* + NP dominates over other types of complement, the *to*-infinitive holds the second place and the rest are more or less marginal. The zero complement, though, is nearly as frequent as the *to*-infinitive in the OEDQ.

The number of different constructions was higher than what was expected. With the exception of *for* + NP, *to* -*ing*, and the three structures that were associated solely with the most archaic sense of *aspire* in the OED (NP + *to* + NP, NP + *to* + AdvP and NP + *into* + NP), all complement types that were brought up in the literature and dictionaries were found in the data (*to*-infinitive, *at* -*ing*, *to* + NP, *at* + NP, *after* + NP, NP and zero complement). Additionally, the OEDQ contained four previously unmentioned complement constructions (*so* + AdvP + *as* + *to*-infinitive, *from* + NP, AdvP + *over* + NP, and AdvP), and another ‘new’ complement was found in the CLMETEV (*towards* + NP).

10.1 Sentential complements

The *to*-infinitive was the dominant sentential construction type with 13 tokens (20% of the total).

Note that example sentences extracted from the OEDQ will be marked with the label [OEDQ] from this point onward:

(1) What if the foot, ordained the dust to tread, Or hand, to toil, *aspired to be* the head? (Pope, *An Essay on Man*, 1733-4)

(2) Very different was the reasoning of our devout predecessors; vainly *aspiring to imitate* the perfection of angels, they disdained, or they affected to disdain, every earthly and... (Gibbon, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, 1776)

(3) [OEDQ] Whatever Person would *aspire to be* completely witty, smart, humourous, and polite. (Swift, *Pol. Conversat.*, 1731-8)

The *at -ing* construction occurred only once. Nevertheless, its appearance confirms that it continued to exist at least until the latter half of the 18th century (cf. chap. 7):

(4) Such a person, too, though he cannot *aspire at being* a proprietor, will often disdain to be a farmer. (Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, 1766)

There was also a third, previously unmentioned kind of sentential complement in the data, *so + AdvP + as + to*-infinitive, which occurred twice:

(5) George of Denmark, the earl of Mulgrave, a nobleman of Singular accomplishments, both of mind and person, *aspired so high as to attempt* to marry the lady Anne; but though his addresses... (Cibber, *The Lives of the Poets*, 1753)

(6) But whether landscape painting has a right to *aspire so far as to reject* what the painters call accidents of nature is not easy to determine. (Reynolds, *Seven Discourses on Art*, 1769-76)

Biber et al. (1999, 549-550) include *so + AdvP + as + to*-infinitive among a group of complement constructions that describe the degree or extent of the action depicted by the matrix verb (cf. section 4.4). In conjunction with *aspire*, they can be thought of as answering the question ‘how far (up)?’. Biber et al. note also that the whole string functions as a single AdvP, in which the position between *so* and *as* is most commonly occupied by the adverb *far*. Other adverbs and adjectives can also occur in the same spot (ibid.). It should perhaps be mentioned here that Huddleston and

Pullum (2002, 1134) identify another construction which at first glance resembles *so* + AdvP + *as* + *to*-infinitive closely:

(7) He *went so/as far as to compare* the proposal to a tax on sunshine.

However, according to Huddleston and Pullum (ibid.), *go so/as far as* + *to*-infinitive is a fixed expression which carries the meaning of “[the action in the subordinate sentence] is a relatively surprising or extreme thing to do”.

The two complexity factors considered in this thesis, insertions and sentence-external extractions, were rare in this period. No instances of extraction from the lower sentence were attested, and only one token contained a single-word insertion which was, as predicted by the Complexity Principle, followed by a *to*-infinitive complement:

(9) The haughty Agripina *aspired*, indeed, to share the honors of the empire which she had conferred on her son; but her mad ambition... (Gibbon, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, 1776)

Only one violation of the *horror aequi* principle was attested:

(8) ...conduct, that it would be presumptuous in any man, however endowed by nature, or accomplished by study, *to aspire to surpass* him; nor can a higher encomium be easily conceived, than this house bestowed upon that person... (Johnson, *Parliamentary Debates*, 1740-1)

This token was also exceptional in that it was the only one in which *aspire* occurred as a marked infinitive when it selected a sentential complement. Without additional examples of such cases, it is unfortunately impossible to say how frequently *to aspire* was followed by another *to*-infinitive instead of the generally more regular *-ing* form in the period under examination.

10.2 Nonsentential complements

The most common nonsentential complement type was *to* + NP (52% of the total number of tokens):

(10) ...Since I have mentioned Bassano, we must do him likewise the justice to acknowledge that, though he did not *aspire to the dignity* of expressing the characters and passions of men, yet, with respect to the facility and... (Reynolds, *Seven Discourses on Art*, 1769-76)

(11) ...revolted province; and loudly complaining of the protection afforded by the Romans to rebels and fugitives, *aspired to the conquest* of the East. (Gibbon, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, 1776)

(12) ...force of genius, that neither this, nor his poverty, which was very deplorable, could suppress his ambition: *aspiring to reputation*, and *distinction*, rather than *to fortune* and *power*. (Cibber, *The Lives of the Poets*, 1753)

The zero complement was the third most common type overall (11%). It was also the only one that showed significant adherence to a certain word-form in the data; six out of the seven attested tokens occurred with the base form *aspire*. Additionally, one could argue that the single case of *aspiring*, presented in (13) below, is not a case of zero complementation because it could perhaps be rephrased as *aspiring to you*, in the sense ‘feel a desire towards someone’.

(13) ...drawing a deep sigh, "beauteous and all perfect as your form is, and though my wishes are not guiltless of *aspiring*, know, my soul is dedicated to another; and although--" (Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto*, 1764)

(14) [OEDQ] Orgilio sees the golden pile *aspire*. (Johnson, *London*, 1738)

(15) [OEDQ] Ye powers of truth, that bid my soul *aspire*. (Goldsmith, *The Traveller*, 1764)

While the data suggests that the verb may most likely have occurred without a complement when it was in the base form, the very low number of tokens prevents making any such generalisations.

There were altogether seven nonsentential complement types that occurred only once or twice.

Two of them, namely AdvP and AdvP + *over* + NP, can be classified as degree complements:

(16) [OEDQ] Your Party Politicians will *aspire A little*, and indeed but little, *higher*. (S.Wesley, *To Sir Herbert Powell in Poems Several Occasions* (1743), 1739)

(17) [OEDQ] *High o'er the poop* th' audacious seas *aspire*, Uproll'd in hills of fluctuating fire. (Falconer, *Shipwr.*, 1762)

While the sentential degree construction *so* + AdvP + *as* + *to*-infinitive is clearly an obligatory complement, it is more difficult to decide whether AdvP and AdvP + *over* + NP are optional or obligatory. Though the problem is certainly worth addressing, it suffices to say here that both constructions are complements.

The *at* + NP construction occurred twice, and only in the OEDQ. Note that the first token is from a later edition of a text originally published in 1709; it was accepted as qualifying for the study at hand because it is chronologically so close to the period under examination that it can be included without affecting the reliability of the analysis significantly. It should also be mentioned that the token in question represents the only occurrence of *aspire* in the quotations originating from that year. The corpus data indicates that the construction continued to exist well beyond the early years of the 18th century, even though it is rare:

(18) [OEDQ] To put forth Your Hand to the utmost Stretch, and reach whatever You *aspire at*. (Felton, *Diss. Classics* (1718), 1709)

(19) [OEDQ] That power at which he had *aspired*. (Watson, *Philip II* (1793), 1777)

Sentence (19) is actually a shortened quote. A quick online search revealed more context: “...*which might have realized that power at which he had aspired...*” Interestingly, both tokens exhibit sentence-internal extraction: *wh*-movement in (18) and relativization in (19).

The remaining rare construction types, *after* + NP, *from* + NP, *towards* + NP and plain NP occurred once in the data:

(20) It gives to both rich and poor the same happiness hereafter, and equal hopes to *aspire after it*; but if the rich have the advantage of enjoying pleasure here, the poor have the endless... (Goldsmith, *The Vicar of Wakefield*, 1766)

(21) [OEDQ] From the cleft wood the crackling flames *aspire*. (Pope, *Iliad*, 1715-20)

(22) [OEDQ] Kept the fire always burning, always in ascension, always *aspiring towards heaven*. (Ken, *Serm.*, a1711)

(23) ...attention therefore was now to bring down the pride of my family to their circumstances; for I well knew that *aspiring beggary* is wretchedness itself. (Goldsmith, *The Vicar of Wakefield*, 1766)

It is not possible to ascertain much about the nature of these constructions with such a limited amount of data. One or two remarks can be made, though. First, while *from* + NP closely resembles a locative adjunct, the *do so* test reveals it is an optional complement (cf. section 4.4). Second, the

complement status of the plain NP in the last quotation is subject to question, and will be discussed in the following section.

10.3 Senses

Except for senses 1 and 4, all meanings of *aspire* given in the *OED* were found in the data. Sense three was prevalent with 47 tokens (72% of the whole sample):

3. intr. To have a fixed desire, longing, or ambition for something at present above one; to seek to attain, to pant, long.

(24) ...his ambition had already *aspired* to the heart of a young handsome duchess dowager, to whose acquaintance he had found means to be introduced; (Smollett, *The Adventures of Peregrine Pickle*, 1751)

Sense 6, the near-equivalent of a figurative use of sense 5, occurred ten times (15%):

6. fig. (with some sense of 3 combined.)

(25) [OEDQ] To Psalms and Hymns we may *aspire*, If Anthems are too high. (Wesley, *Hymn, Lift up your Heads*, 1738)

Sense 5 was attested six times (9%).

5. intr. To rise up, as an exhalation, or as smoke or fire; hence *gen.* to mount up, taper up, tower, ascend, rise high, become tall.

(26) The grounds which on the right *aspire*, In dimness from the view retire. (Parnell, *Night-Piece on Death*, 1717)

Senses 2 and 8 occurred only once each:

†2. intr. To breathe forth, exhale. *Obs. rare.*

(27) In what lonely vale Of balmy med'cine's various field, *aspires* The blest refrigerent? (Shenstone, *Wks.* (1764), 1750)

†8. trans. To mount up to, soar to, reach, attain. Also *fig. Obs.*

(28) ...attention therefore was now to bring down the pride of my family to their circumstances; for I well knew that *aspiring* beggary is wretchedness itself. (Goldsmith, *The Vicar of Wakefield*, 1766)

The frequencies of the various sense-complement combinations are presented below:

Complement	CLMETEV Part 1					OEDQ 1710-1779					Combined				
	S.2	S.3	S.5	S.6	S.8	S.2	S.3	S.5	S.6	S.8	S.2	S.3	S.5	S.6	S.8
<i>to</i> + NP		19					10		5			29		5	
<i>to</i> -infinitive		8					5					13			
∅		1	1					2	2			1	3	2	
<i>so</i> + AdvP + <i>as</i> + <i>to</i> -infinitive		2										2			
<i>at</i> + NP							2					2			
<i>at</i> -ing		1										1			
<i>after</i> + NP		1										1			
<i>from</i> + NP								1					1		
AdvP + <i>over</i> + NP								1					1		
<i>towards</i> + NP								1					1		
AdvP									1					1	
NP					1	1					1				1
Total	0	31	1	0	1	1	16	5	8	0	1	47	6	8	1

Table 5. Distribution of complements between senses, 1710-1780.

The three senses that were not listed as obsolete in the *OED* (3, 5, and 6) were the most frequent in both corpora, although senses 5 and 6 were marginal in the CLMETEV. It was already established in the literature (cf. chap. 7) that *aspire* takes sentential complements only when it denotes the *OED* sense 3, ‘to have a desire for something’. The results corroborate this observation.

The complement-sense connection was less clear-cut among the nonsentential complements. Curiously, the numerous examples of *to* + NP in the data were linked to the two senses involving desire (3 and 6) but not to the one describing movement only (sense 5), while the one case of the semantically similar *towards* + NP was found in a sentence denoting the latter sense. The zero complement occurred with all three senses, but mostly with senses 5 and 6. The two nonsentential extent complements (AdvP + *over* + NP and AdvP) occurred only with senses 5 and 6, correspondingly, while the sentential *so* + AdvP + *as* + *to*-infinitive obviously appeared with sense 3 alone.

Except for *landscape painting* in example (6), the subject of *aspire* was +human in all sentences where the verb denoted sense 3. Interestingly, while the majority of subjects in this group were either pronouns or proper nouns, a small number of *to* + NP and *to*-infinitive tokens had the NP *my* / *his ambition* in the subject slot, as exemplified in (24) above, reproduced here for convenience:

(29) ...his ambition had already *aspired to the heart* of a young handsome duchess dowager, to whose acquaintance he had found means to be introduced;
(Smollett, *The Adventures of Peregrine Pickle*, 1751)

As the meaning of the phrase is equal to *he had aspired to...*, subjects of this type were analysed as +human. The sentence displayed here also shows a special sub-sense for *aspire* not mentioned in the *OED*, namely ‘to attempt or wish to woo someone’. Variations of the expression denoting this meaning in the data include *aspire to her* / *her company* / *the hand of...* Contrary to my preliminary speculations presented in section 8.2 above, none of the complements were of the form *at* + NP. As regards sentences where the complement was not identifiable as +human, no such specific meanings for *aspire* could be detected.

Unsurprisingly, most of the sentences denoting the figurative sense 6 represented poetry and had both –human and +human subjects. Perhaps equally predictably, all but one of the few tokens denoting sense 5 had –animate subjects, and the +animate one was –human (a plant).

The *OED* senses 2 and 8 were found occurring once, but both tokens were slightly ambiguous. The token denoting sense 2 was already dealt with in section 6.2 above, as it was part of the entry for *aspire* in the dictionary. It would seem to me that *aspiring beggary* in sentence (28), also reproduced here, can be interpreted as denoting the *OED* sense 8, ‘to reach something’:

(30) ...attention therefore was now to bring down the pride of my family to their circumstances; for I well knew that aspiring beggary is wretchedness itself.
(Goldsmith, *The Vicar of Wakefield*, 1766)

Below is a fuller quotation from the original text:

Having taken this resolution, my next care was to get together the wrecks of my fortune; and all debts collected and paid, out of fourteen thousand pounds we had but four hundred remaining. My chief attention therefore was now to bring down the pride of my family to their circumstances; for I well knew that *aspiring beggary* is wretchedness itself. 'You cannot be ignorant, my children,' cried I, 'that no prudence of ours could have prevented our late misfortune; but prudence may do much in disappointing its effects. We are now poor, my fondlings, and wisdom bids us conform to our humble situation. Let us then, without repining, give up those splendours with which numbers are wretched, and seek in humbler circumstances that peace with which all may be happy.'

According to my suggestion, the narrator is telling his family to cut their costs lest they '(unintentionally) reach an economic state' where they would have to resort to beggary. An alternative interpretation is that *aspiring* is an adjective modifying *beggary*, in which case the token would have to be abandoned. While there is no absolutely certain way of determining which meaning is correct here, I have given the token the benefit of doubt and included it in the analysis.

11 CLMETEV Part 2 and OEDQ, 1780-1849

The amount of tokens increased significantly from the first period (CLMETEV 34 to 75, OEDQ 31 to 41, total 65 to 116). The more common complements' order of frequency and relative frequencies remained largely similar to the data presented in the previous chapter. Altogether 14 complement types were attested:

Complement	CLMETEV	<i>aspire</i>	<i>-ed</i>	<i>-es</i>	<i>-ing</i>	OEDQ	<i>aspire</i>	<i>-ed</i>	<i>-es</i>	<i>-ing</i>	Total
	Part 2					1780-1849					
<i>to</i> + NP	41 (7.16)	23	11	3	4	18 (3.38)	8	7	1	2	58*
<i>to</i> -infinitive	19 (3.32)	11	4	3	1	7 (1.39)	4	2	1		26
∅	6 (1.05)	3	1	1	1	4 (0.80)	2		1	1	10
<i>at</i> + NP	1 (0.17)			1		5 (0.99)	1	2	2		6
<i>after</i> + NP	4 (0.70)	4				1 (0.20)	1				5
AdvP	1 (0.17)			1		2 (0.40)	1		1		3
<i>above</i> + NP	1 (0.17)				1						1
<i>beyond</i> + NP						1 (0.20)	1				1
<i>from</i> + NP						1 (0.20)		1			1
<i>towards</i> + NP	1 (0.17)				1						1
<i>unto</i> + NP						1 (0.20)	1				1
NP						1 (0.20)		1			1
Total	74 (12.9)	41	16	9	8	42 (8.36)	18	13	6	3	115*

Table 6. Complement types by order of frequency, 1780-1850. * The combined total of tokens is lower than the actual sum because one token occurred in both corpora.

Recall that four of the eight complement types that were considered obsolete in the literature and the *OED* (cf. section 6.2 and chap. 7) were found occurring in the previous period of time: *at* –*ing*, *at* + NP, *after* + NP, and NP. Of these, all but *at* –*ing* were also found in the present period. Even though the relatively modest size of the sample bars definite conclusions, the continuing absence of the other four obsolete complement types, *for* + NP, NP + *to* + NP, NP + *to* + AdvP and NP + *into* + NP implies that they may have become obsolete earlier than the aforementioned four.

There were six complement types in the data that did not make an appearance in the *OED* and were not discussed in conjunction with *aspire* in the literature: *towards* + NP, *beyond* + NP, *above* + NP, *unto* + NP, AdvP + NP, and AdvP. Three of these were not found occurring in the previous period: *above* + NP, *beyond* + NP, and *unto* + NP. Two of the ‘new’ complement types of 1710-1780, AdvP + *over* + NP and *so* + AdvP + *as* + *to*-infinitive were not found in the present set of texts.

11.1 Sentential Complements

Only one type of sentential complement was attested in the data, namely the *to*-infinitive, which occurred 26 times (23% of all tokens):

(1) Most of these instances are recent, and sufficiently shew that the enterprising adventurer, who would *aspire to emulate* the illustrious men from whose writings these examples are drawn, has no cause to despair. (Godwin, *Thoughts on Man*, 1831)

(2) ...acquirement of knowledge and how much happier that man is who believes his native town to be the world, than he who *aspires to become* greater than his nature will allow. (Shelly, *Frankenstein*, 1818)

One apparently sentential token was particularly difficult to classify:

(3) [OEDQ] Her breast of native plumpness ne'er *aspires* To swelling merry thoughts of gauze and wires. (Wolcot, *Lousiad*, 1816)

It was unclear whether the element *swelling* was a participial modifier of the noun phrase *thoughts*, or a gerundive verb acting as a head of the lower clause *swelling merry thoughts*. While the latter seemed a more attractive explanation, the former turned out to be correct. The word appears under the following definition in the *OED*²⁸:

(4) merrythought, *n.* **2.** A construction of wire worn to increase the apparent size of a woman's bust; a false bust. *Obs.*

Thus, the lady in the poem does not need merrythoughts that would 'swell her breast'. The complement was analysed as a *to* + NP.

The *horror aequi* principle, as expected, was rare. It was violated on one occasion only:

(8) ...name he regarded with the same disdain as that which Rome herself lavished upon the barbarian), did not permit him to *aspire to sway* over others, for that would render him at once the tool or creature of the emperor. (Bulwer-Lytton, *The Last Days of Pompeii*, 1834)

²⁸ I am indebted to Ian Gurney of the Tampere University for pointing this out. Also, I wish to extend my thanks to the two anonymous informants for their kind assistance.

As was the case in the previous period, the absence of further instances of *to aspire* complemented by a sentence leaves open the question of whether or not the verb tended to prefer a *to*-infinitive complement even when it was in the marked infinitive form.

Extraction over sentence boundaries occurred only once, in the form of relativisation:

(5) The unmatched brown and gold feathers of the game-cock's neck_i, which that ambitious embroideress Lady Delaney *aspired to imitate* t_i in a table-carpet. (M. R. Mitford, *Belford Regis*, 1835)

Moreover, four cases of (short) insertions were found:

(6) Arbaces thus addressed his beautiful guest: 'Hast thou never in this dark and uncertain world- hast thou never *aspired*, my pupil, to look beyond... (Bulwer-Lytton, *The Last Days of Pompeii*, 1834)

(7) 'Aye, if we were not weak—and we *aspire* How vainly to be strong!' said Maddalo: 'You talk Utopia.' (Shelley, *Julian*, 1818)

Again, it is difficult to assess to what extent extractions and insertions may have contributed to the dominance of the *to*-infinitive because of a complete drought of *-ing* form complements in the data. For the same reason it goes without saying that these findings are in full accordance with the Complexity Principle.

11.2 Nonsentential Complements

The most frequent complement type far and wide was *to* + NP, which occurred 58 times (50% of the total number of tokens):

(9) ...from Zacynthus twice ten ; of our native Ithacans, men of chief note, are twelve who *aspire to the love and crown of Penelope*, and all these under one strong roof, a fearful odds against two! (Lamb, *Adventures of Ulysses*, 1808)

(10) ... in their departments, that he would be likely to hear of them among the first of the authors to be sought, if he were *aspiring to something* beyond his previously humble and abridged reading. (Foster, *An Essay on the Evils of Popular Ignorance*, 1821)

Ten examples of zero complementation were found (7%):

(11) 'That ridiculous old spectacle, Sir,' pursued the Major, *aspires*. (Dickens, *Dombey and Son*, 1848)

(12) [OEDQ] The red-berried bryony..forms a beautiful drapery of lively green, with the hop, and lady's-seal, and others equally *aspiring*. (M. Roberts, *Flowers of Matin & Even Song*, 1845)

At + NP occurred six times in the data (5%):

(13) But this way comes another, who, though in a different manner, labours with the same view, and *aspires at the same reward*, which stimulate the ambition of this happy Triplet... (Burney, *Cecilia*, 1782)

(14) [OEDQ] If he *aspires at higher honours*. (V. Knox, *Ess. in C. Wordsw. Schol. Acad.*, 1782)

Five instances of *after* + NP were attested (4%):

(15) ...and we are bound also to be generously ambitious, to *aspire after excellence*, and to undertake such things as may reflect honour on ourselves, and be useful to others. (Godwin, *Thoughts on Man*, 1831)

(16) The attention he had drawn to himself in his native city soon induced him to *aspire after higher notice*. (Cary, *Lives of the English Poets*, 1846)

Plain AdvP occurred only three times (2%), always involving some form of the distance adverb *high*.

(17) [OEDQ] Chaining to earth..Hearts that would highest else *aspire*, And o'er the tenderer sex usurping ever most. (Keble, *Chr. Year, Sexagesima Sunday*, 1827)

(18) She *aspires sky-high*, Sir. Matrimonially, Dombey.' 'I am sorry for her,' said Mr. Dombey. (Dickens, *Dombey and Son*, 1848)

Six constructions were marginal, each occurring once and constituting less than one percent of the total: *above* + NP, *beyond* + NP, *from* + NP, *towards* + NP, *unto* + NP, and NP.

(19) ...the young priest had thought little of his sister; in truth, men, perhaps of that fervent order of mind which is ever *aspiring above earth*, are but little prone to the earthlier affections... (Bulwer-Lytton, *The Last Days of Pompeii*, 1834)

(20) [OEDQ] To *aspire Beyond this nether sphere*. (S. Rogers, *Ode Superstit.*, 1786)

(21) [OEDQ] From the plain, Upwafted by the winds the smoke *aspired*. (Cowper, *Iliad*, 1791)

(22) Rocks *aspiring towards the heavens*, and, as it were... (Wollstonecraft, *Letters on Sweden, Norway and Denmark*, 1796)

(23) [OEDQ] *Aspire Unto the calms and magnanimites*..To which thou art elect. (E. B. Browning, *Drama of Exile*, 1844)

(24) [OEDQ] And Love *aspired* with Faith a heavenward flight. (Southey, *Lay of Laureate*, 1816)

It should be mentioned that the complement status of *above earth* is not altogether clear, as it could perhaps be interpreted either as a complement denoting the goal of *aspiring*, or, if the verb is understood as meaning ‘to soar’ (*OED* 8), a locative adjunct. Here it was analysed as a complement.

11.3 Senses

Four of the *OED* senses were found in the data, one of which the dictionary lists as obsolete (sense.

4). Sense 3 was again the most frequent with 78 tokens (67% of the whole sample).

3. intr. To have a fixed desire, longing, or ambition for something at present above one; to seek to attain, to pant, long.

(25) ...mistakes, and to correct the evil habits to which we are prone; and we are bound also to be generously ambitious, to *aspire after excellence*, and to undertake such things as may reflect honour on ourselves, and be useful to others. (Godwin, *Thoughts on Man*, 1831)

(26) ...less ordinary and the bolder natures of men; to love her was to unite two passions, that of love and of ambition- you *aspired* when you adored her. (Bulwer-Lytton, *The Last Days of Pompeii*, 1834)

Sense 6 was the second most frequent meaning for *aspire*. It occurred 27 times (23%).

6. fig. (with some sense of 3 combined.)

(27) [OEDQ] The..artist, whose nice toils *aspire To fame eternal* by encaustic fire. (Hayley, *Tri. Temper*, 1781)

(28) [OEDQ] William *aspired* sometime ago to the honour of winding up the chronometers, when Mr. Graves, the regular winder, happened to be absent. (Mrs. Smyth, in J. A. Heraud *Voy. & Mem. Midshipman* viii. (1837), 1823)

Eleven tokens (9%) represented sense 5.

5. intr. To rise up, as an exhalation, or as smoke or fire; hence *gen.* to mount up, taper up, tower, ascend, rise high, become tall.

(29) His mind is a wilderness, in which the cedar and the oak, which might *aspire to the skies*, are stunted in their growth by underwood, thorns, briars, and parasitical plants. (Cottle, *Reminiscences of Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Robert Southey*, 1847)

(30) This object was the goal to which I *aspired*; and redoubling my activity, I made the best of my way over rude ledges of rocks, and crumbled fragments of the mount ... (Beckford, *Dreams, Waking Thoughts, and Incidents*, 1783)

Finally, only one token represented sense 4. It was also the only one taking the bare NP complement, as witnessed in (24) above. For convenience, the token is reproduced below.

†4. trans. To have an ardent desire for, to pant or long for, to be ambitious of, aim at. *Obs*

(31) [OEDQ] And Love *aspired* with Faith a heavenward flight. (Southey, *Lay of Laureate*, 1816)

Table 7 below shows the distribution of complement types among the four senses. The one *to + NP* quotation occurring in both corpora represented sense 3; one token was therefore subtracted from the combined total frequency of S.3.

Complement	CLMETEV Part 2				OEDQ 1780-1850				Combined			
	S.3	S.4	S.5	S.6	S.3	S.4	S.5	S.6	S.3	S.4	S.5	S.6
<i>to + NP</i>	29		3	9	10			7	39		3	16
<i>to</i> -infinitive	19				7				26			
∅	1		3	2			2	2	1		5	4
<i>at + NP</i>	1				4			1	5			1
<i>after + NP</i>	4				1				5			
AdvP				1			1	1			1	2
<i>beyond + NP</i>					1			1	1			1
<i>above + NP</i>				1								1
<i>from + NP</i>							1				1	
<i>towards + NP</i>			1								1	
<i>unto + NP</i>								1				1
AdvP + NP					1				1			
NP						1				1		
Total	54	0	7	13	24	1	4	13	78	1	11	26

Table 7. Distribution of complements between senses, 1780-1850.

The overall situation did not change very much from the period 1710-1780. The verb still selected sentential complements only when it denoted sense 3, and *to* + NP showed a marked tendency towards sense 3; however, *to* + NP complemented *aspire* in sense 6 quite more often. Also, three examples had the complement occurring in connection with sense 5, which combination was not attested in the previous period. Again, *towards* + NP was very rare and occurred only in conjunction with sense 5. The zero complement continued to occur mostly with senses 5 and 6, as did most of the extent complements (AdvP, *beyond* + NP and *above* + NP in this period). As a novelty, the nonsentential extent complement AdvP + NP appeared with sense 3 once, while in the previous period only the sentential extent complement *so* + AdvP + *as* + *to*-infinitive would occur in that context.

All but one (of the subjects of *aspire* were either pronouns or proper nouns in the context of sense 3, and again a small number of *to* + NP and *to*-infinitive tokens had the NP *my* / *his ambition* as their subject. The sub-sense of ‘to attempt or wish to woo someone’ was also detected in conjunction with sense 3 again, once more expressed by complements such as *the daughter or the hand of.../ my hand*.

Similarly, the subjects occurring in sentences in which the verb denoted sense 5 were again –animate, except for one token (*the cedar and the oak*), and those appearing in the context of sense 6 were –animate or +human.

12 CLMETEV Part 3 and OEDQ, 1850-1920

The number of tokens decreased rather dramatically from that of the period 1780-1850. This was partially due to the make-up of the OEDQ, as texts by non-British authors began appearing in the data starting from the year 1850. Altogether 15 OEDQ tokens had to be discarded for this reason. 14 quotations were by American authors, and one by a Swiss author. However, this does not explain the equally dramatic decrease in the CLMETEV. Thus, it may well be the case that the verb did

actually become less frequent in British English of the era – at least in the genres best represented by the CLMETEV. Additionally, 18 CLMETEV and 14 OEDQ tokens containing the adjective *aspiring* were left out of the analysis. All in all, nearly half of the material from this period was irrelevant for the purposes of this study for the above reasons.

The data contained nine types of complement:

Complement	CLMETEV					OEDQ					Total
	Part 3	<i>aspire</i>	<i>-ed</i>	<i>-es</i>	<i>-ing</i>	1850-1920	<i>aspire</i>	<i>-ed</i>	<i>-es</i>	<i>-ing</i>	
<i>to</i> + NP	12 (1.91)	6	4	1	1	12 (1.42)	7	5			24
<i>to</i> -infinitive	5 (0.79)	2	2	1		16 (1.89)	3	7	5	1	21
∅	3 (0.48)	3				6 (0.71)	4		1	1	9
<i>towards</i> + NP	2 (0.32)		1		1	1 (0.12)				1	3
<i>at</i> + NP						1 (0.12)	1				1
<i>after</i> + NP	1 (0.16)				1						1
<i>beyond</i> + NP						1 (0.12)	1				1
<i>beyond</i> - <i>ing</i>						1 (0.12)			1		1
<i>to</i> - <i>ing</i>						1 (0.12)	1				1
Total	23 (3.67)	11	7	2	3	39 (4.60)	17	12	7	3	62

Table 8. Complement types in order of frequency, 1850-1920.

Five of the complement types observed in the last chapter were not attested in this period: *above*+ NP, AdvP, *from* + NP, *unto* + NP and NP. Two previously unseen kinds of complement were found, both of which were gerundial: *beyond* -*ing* and *to* -*ing*. In addition to *beyond* -*ing*, *beyond* + NP and *towards* + NP represented the types which had not been mentioned in the literature or dictionaries. The order of frequency of the topmost three complement types in Table 8 remained the same as in the earlier periods, but their relative frequency sank to a new low.

12.1 Sentential Complements

The *to*-infinitive was the most frequent sentential type again, occurring 21 times (34% of the total number of tokens):

(1) "It is well. But you have now shown humility enough: more would be disobedience. I accept you as my daughter-in-law. *Aspire to be* as nearly worthy of me as your unfortunate birth out of Croäxaxica permits. (Webster, *Daffodil and the Croäxaxicans*, 1884)

(2) [OEDQ] There are some firms who to this day have the words 'Sworn brokers' printed upon their business cards... All who *aspired to carry on* business as brokers had to attend the Court of Aldermen and be formally sworn. (*Westm. Gaz.* 15 Aug., 1901)

Compared to the *to*-infinitive, *to -ing* was marginal in frequency; no more than one token was found:

(3) [OEDQ] These can *aspire to kicking* through a Gaiety *pas de quatre*. (G.B. Shaw, *London Music 1888-89*, 1890)

One token showcased another new sentential type, *beyond -ing*:

(4) [OEDQ] The education of most bears seldom *aspires beyond teaching* the animal to stand on its hind legs, and raise each foot alternately, a performance popularly entitled 'dancing'. (Wood, *Anim. Life*, 1854)

Extraction from a lower clause took place on four occasions, of which three were cases of relativization, and one a case of topicalization:

(5) [OEDQ] ...the offer with apparent delight, but he professed himself unable to spare any rifles for the army_i which Ali-Wad-Helu *aspired to lead* t_i. (Churchill, *The River War*, 1899)

(6) [OEDQ] ...Dancing-mistress_i though in her limited ambition she *aspired to be* t_i. (Dickens, *Bleak Ho.*, 1852)

The Extraction Principle held true as no extraction out of a gerundive clause occurred. One token exhibited a short insertion fronting - as predicted by the Complexity Principle - a *to*-infinitive:

(7) [OEDQ] He *aspires only to re-Christianize* the masses. (*Times* 15 Jan., 1900)

Yet again, it is difficult to say whether the dominance of the *to*-infinitive may have been furthered by extractions and insertions to some extent. No violations of *horror aequi* were encountered.

12.2 Nonsentential Complements

As could be expected, *to* + NP was the most common nonsentential complement with 24 tokens (39%):

(8) ...to answer with spirit: 'My lord, I will meet them if needed. This lady is so affianced, that it is sacrilege to *aspire to her*.' (Yonge, *The Caged Lion*, 1870)

(9) [OEDQ] Mr. Bankhead, knowing the sweets of office, again *aspired to high places*. (R.S. Surtees, *Ask Mamma*, 1858)

Zero complement occurred nine times (15%):

(10) ...back to Flatland, I could hear the mild voice of my Companion pointing the moral of my vision, and stimulating me *to aspire*, and to teach others *to aspire*. (Abbott, *Flatland*, 1884)

(11) [OEDQ] There are some soft-soapers who never advance and never *aspire*. (*Blackw. Mag.*, May 1904)

Once more, *towards* + NP was rare, complementing *aspire* in only 3 tokens. The complement *cloudwards* in the example below was considered a paraphrase of *towards the clouds*.

(12) [OEDQ] This mutilation for ever prevented it from *aspiring cloudwards*. (De Quincey, *Wks.*, 1859)

Three constructions occurred just once: *after* + NP, *at* + NP and *beyond* + NP.

(13) (Pater, *Marius the Epicurian*, 1885) ...school to which the young man might come, eager for truth, expecting much from philosophy, in no ignoble curiosity, *aspiring after* nothing less than an "initiation."

(14) [OEDQ] He does not lead the learner to *aspire at any thing higher*. (F. Newman, *Misc.*, 1869)

(15) [OEDQ] You cannot sink Below our partnèred light, nor I, alone, *Aspire beyond it*. (B. Taylor, *Prophet*, 1874)

12.3 Senses

None of the senses that are considered obsolete in the *OED* were represented in the findings (1, 2, 4, 7 and 8). Sense 3 continued to be the most frequent meaning for *aspire* with 49 tokens (78%).

3. intr. To have a fixed desire, longing, or ambition for something at present above one; to seek to attain, to pant, long.

(16) ...old thing," he said suddenly, with a long sigh, for in reality he was deeply disappointed at his failure, and had *aspired to be* their story-teller as well as playmate. (Blackwood, *The Extra Day*, 1869)

(17) ...lapse of centuries, of a Jewish state; singular, when one considers that many of the most eminent Jews, far from *aspiring towards such an event*, hardly seem to have contemplated it as a desirable or possible prospect. (Blind, *George Eliot*, 1883)

Sense 6 remained the second most frequent sense, occurring ten times in the data (17%).

6. fig. (with some sense of 3 combined.)

(18) Many parents who had become wealthy, and who hardly knew the manners and customs of the class to which they aspired, sent their daughters to the Limes. (Rutherford, *Catherine Furze*, 1893)

(19) [OEDQ] He had to serve other three years..before he could *aspire to freemanship*. (W. McDowall, *Hist. Dumfries*, 1873)

No more than three tokens (5%) denoted sense 5.

5. intr. To rise up, as an exhalation, or as smoke or fire; hence *gen.* to mount up, taper up, tower, ascend, rise high, become tall.

(20) [OEDQ] The great plumes far and wide of the sword-grass *aspire*. (A. Domett, *Ranolf*, 1872)

The frequency of each sense and the complements associated with them are shown below:

Complement	CLMETEV Part 3			OEDQ 1850-1920			Combined		
	S.3	S.5	S.6	S.3	S.5	S.6	S.3	S.5	S.6
<i>to</i> + NP	6		6	10		2	16		8
<i>to</i> -infinitive	5			16			21		
∅	3			3	2	1	6	2	1
<i>at</i> + NP				1			1		
<i>after</i> + NP	1						1		
<i>towards</i> + NP	2				1		2	1	
<i>beyond</i> + NP						1			1
<i>beyond</i> -ing				1			1		
<i>to</i> -ing				1					1
Total	17	0	6	32	3	4	49	3	10

Table 9. Distribution of complements between senses, 1850-1920.

Apart from a few minor alterations, the overall picture of the complementation of *aspire* is similar to the last period. Sentential complements were associated strictly with sense 3 again. The sub-sense ‘to attempt or wish to woo somebody’ occurred only in conjunction with the nonsentential *to* + NP (*aspire to a lady / a woman*) this time. As regards *to* + NP, no significant changes took place. While *towards* + NP was once more rare, it appeared for the first time in conjunction with senses other than 5. The zero complement shifted away from senses 5 and 6 in favour of sense 3; however, three of the six tokens came from one text passage in which the verb is repeatedly used in sense 3.

All subjects of *aspire* were +human when the verb denoted sense 3. Unlike in the previous periods, one sentence in which the verb denoted sense 5 had a +human subject:

(21) [OEDQ] Chamois-like dost thou aspire? (B. Taylor, *Faust III.*, 1875)

In this passage, *aspire* refers to climbing a mountain. However, it is important to acknowledge that the source text is a translation, and the translator’s choice of verb in this case may have been influenced by the original text.

The subjects in sentences denoting the figurative sense 6 once again ranged from –animate to +human.

13 The British National Corpus

The BNC data was obtained by the same method as was used in the historical part, i.e. plain word-form search. The figures were checked against lemma search results, and it turned out that 21 adjectival instances of *aspiring* were mistagged as verbs:

(1) HAF Pukar, is selling strongly and she makes her acting debut soon, playing an *aspiring* young musician in the Asian TV soap Family Pride.

Additionally, five tokens represented older texts that the author was quoting. One of them was a passage by Dickens, which also appeared in the CLMETEV, 1780-1850:

(2) FAG incompleteness, wildly mingled out of their places, upside down, burrowing in the earth, *aspiring* in the air, mouldering in the water, and unintelligible as any dream.

One token appeared twice in the BNC, in separate text categories:

(3) AA1 W_newsp_brdsh_t_nat_misc In short, professional regulation for a rough trade *aspiring* to become a profession (with the professional responsibilities invoked above).

(4) A9W W_newsp_brdsh_t_nat_report In short, professional regulation for a rough trade *aspiring* to become a profession (with the professional responsibilities invoked above).

Finally, three tokens contained an abbreviation instead of the verb:

(5) AR7 The Association for Spinal Injury Research Rehabilitation and Reintegration (*ASPIRE*) aims to use sport to further integrate disabled and able-bodied people.

Altogether eleven types of complement were found occurring in the BNC:

Complement	BNC	<i>aspire</i>	<i>-ed</i>	<i>-es</i>	<i>-ing</i>
<i>to</i> + NP	319 (3.19)	153	88	29	49
<i>to</i> -infinitive	139 (1.39)	46	47	18	28
<i>to</i> -ing	12 (0.12)	8	2	2	
<i>towards</i> + NP	9 (0.09)	3	5		1
∅	3 (0.03)	2	1		
AdvP + <i>than</i> + <i>to</i> -inf.	1 (0.01)		1		
<i>as</i> + AdvP + <i>as</i> + NP	1 (0.01)	1			
<i>above</i> + NP	1 (0.01)			1	
<i>beyond</i> + NP	1 (0.01)				1
<i>for</i> + NP	1 (0.01)	1			
AdvP	1 (0.01)				1
Total	488 (4.88)	214	144	50	80

Table 10. Complement types in order of frequency, Present-Day English.

Three new complement forms were attested: AdvP + *than*+ *to*-infinitive, *as* + AdvP + *as* + NP, and *for* + NP, the last of which was deemed obsolete in the *OED*. One of the complement types found in the period 1780-1850, namely *above* + NP, resurfaced again. Of the forms observed in the period 1850-1920, *after* + NP, *at* + NP and *beyond* -ing were not found in the BNC.

Compared to the period of 1850-1920, *to* + NP and the *to*-infinitive further increased their frequency in relation to other complements. The gerundial form *to* -ing and all nonsentential forms were statistically even more marginal than before.

13.1 Sentential Complements

The *to*-infinitive continued to be the most frequent sentential complement, occurring 139 times (28% of the total amount of tokens):

- (1) G0G authority already established over the Angles of the east and the midlands that Eadwine also *aspired to subject* to his rule the Saxons of the upper Thames valley.
- (2) A1B Schniedau allows for, especially if the Englishman in question defines himself as, or *aspires to be*, an English artist.

The number of *to -ing* complements increased from the previous period, but the structure still remained rare (2%):

(3) AJ2 You should *aspire to being* a specialist in the central nervous systems of business, which is what its accounts should depict.

(4) FYW In Britain the majority of people *aspire to owning* their own home and those who do acquire a certain position in society.

It was stated earlier in chapter 8 that according to Egan (2008, 138), the *to*-infinitive and *to -ing* complements do not appear to differ in terms of genre or register in the BNC. A more detailed look at the data corroborates this observation²⁹:

²⁹ The results for the category ‘spoken texts’ are omitted from Table 11. The verb occurred only eight times in the roughly ten-million word subcorpus of spoken texts.

Text type	<i>to</i> -infinitive	<i>to -ing</i>	Subtype	<i>to</i> -infinitive	<i>to -ing</i>
Fiction	9 (0.55)	2 (0.12)	W fict drama W fict poetry W fict prose	1 8 (0.50)	2 (0.12)
Magazine	16 (2.15)	1 (0.13)	W pop lore	16 (2.15)	1 (0.13)
Newspaper	10 (0.94)	1 (0.09)	W news script W newsp brdsht nat: arts W newsp brdsht nat: commerce W newsp brdsht nat: editorial W newsp brdsht nat: misc W newsp brdsht nat: report W newsp brdsht nat: science W newsp brdsht nat: social W newsp brdsht nat: sports W newsp other: arts W newsp other: commerce W newsp other: report W newsp other: science W newsp other: social W newsp other: sports W newsp tabloid	1 5 (4.80) 1 1 1 (0.37) 1 (0.87)	1
Non-acad.	39 (2.40)	1 (0.06)	W nonAc: humanities arts W nonAc: medicine W nonAc: nat science W nonAc: polit law edu W nonAc: soc science W nonAc: tech engin	15 (4.01) 2 (0.79) 12 (2.65) 10 (2.70)	1 (0.27)
Academic	38 (2.36)	4 (0.25)	W ac:humanities arts W ac:medicine W ac:nat science W ac:polit law edu W ac:soc science W ac:tech engin	21 (6.25) 1 (0.70) 10 (2.13) 6 (1.25)	4 (0.84)
Misc.	24 (1.13)	3 (0.25)	W admin W advert W biography W commerce W email W essay school W essay univ W hansard W institut doc W instructional W letters personal W letters prof W misc W religion	8 (2.25) 6 (1.58) 2 (1.71) 7 (0.76) 1 (0.88)	1 (0.11) 1 (0.85) 1 (0.28)

Table 11. Frequency of to-infinitive and to -ing by text type and subtype. The bracketed figures indicate frequency per one million words within the (sub)category in question. The frequency is not given in categories that consist of considerably less than one million words.

In all but one case the *-ing* form occurs in subcategories in which the *to*-infinitive is also found.

It appears that the two sentential complement types occur more often in text categories other than those most closely resembling the contents of the CLMETEV and, to a large extent, the pre-mid-20th century OEDQ material, namely fictional and religious texts. Looking at the BNC findings as a whole reveals that the verb is used most frequently in the field of humanities and arts (W_ac: humanities arts, 21.24 tokens per one million words and W_nonAc: humanities arts, 14.41 tokens per one million words). Seeing that the corresponding figures for religious and fictional texts (W_religion and W_fict_prose) are 12.56 and 2.94 tokens per one million words, and taking into account the fact that the gerundial form *at -ing* was attested in the 18th century material (cf. chap. 10), it might be reasonable to assume that the structure *aspire to -ing* may have existed alongside the *to*-infinitive earlier than what the historical data in the current study indicates. However, testing this hypothesis must unfortunately be left for future research.

In addition to the two sentential forms discussed above, one new form was found. One token contained the extent complement AdvP + *than*+ *to*-infinitive:

(5) EA6 Lacking economic dynamism and political weight, the townsmen *aspired no higher than to become* a closed caste heavily burdened by duties to the State.

Sentence-external extraction was rare, as it was found occurring in no more than eight quotations. Five cases exhibited relativisation, two pseudo-clefting and one comparativisation.

Here are examples of each type:

(6) HRM But the general point is that this hierarchy represents a ladder_i up which "lower" groups *aspire to climb* t_i .

(7) C90 ...traits in Gandhi were no accident: he was profoundly a creature of the Anglo-Indian interaction, and a worthy adversary_i was indeed just what he *aspired to be* t_i .

(8) GUJ It is still in its infancy and not as abstract_i as it *aspires to be* t_i .

Insertions were equally rare, occurring in five tokens:

(9) GVD Ad hoc reports are an essential part of any system that *aspires* not merely to process data routinely but to permit management information to be creamed off the top.

As was the case in the previous periods, no insertions or extractions out of gerundial complement clauses were found, as predicted by the Extraction Principle.

Only two *horror aequi* violations were attested:

(10) HPW Only considerably later were the Commons to *aspire* to comment and participate in any other sense.

(11) ABG Though both may now be too old to *aspire* to run the company (they are 59 and 60, respectively), they...

Once more, no instances of the marked infinitive *to aspire* followed by a gerundial complement were found.

13.2 Nonsentential Complements

Again, *to* + NP was the most frequent nonsentential complement. It appeared in 314 tokens (64% of the total).

(15) ASV It seemed to me that all surfers *aspired* to the condition of divinity.

(16) CDV But then they fall asleep, and Gollum returns, to see and for a moment to love and *aspire* to the "peace" he sees in their faces.

The other nonsentential types were extremely marginal. *Towards* + NP occurred nine times:

(17) K35 The British Government recognises the democratic right to *aspire* towards Irish unity but also accepts that until a majority here wishes otherwise, Northern Ireland's status will be unchanged.

Zero complement appeared in 3 tokens :

(18) ANT ... "Nations" seem to be historically supersubjects with attributes of agency and action: they "mobilize", "*aspire*", "propel themselves forward", "react" and they even have atavistic, irrational "ideas" with traumas which explode periodically.

The remaining constructions, *as* + AdvP + *as* + NP, *above* + NP, *beyond* + NP, *for* + NP and AdvP all occurred once:

(19) F9D ...it is quite tempting to study in detail an ad for an expensive car, or browse through the "houses for sale" columns, even if you *aspire* only as far as a second-hand Escort and have no intention of moving house within the next 10 years.

(20) EFT Only when man *aspires* above his station and wants to be like God does he fall to a lowlier position in which all his relationships are soured.

(21) C90 It went without saying that the truly self-respecting native was the one who understood the indecency of *aspiring* beyond his station.

(22) FB6 In general, the lower an individual's class position, the more likely he or she is to leave school at the minimum leaving age and the less likely to *aspire* and strive for a highly rewarded position.

(23) CRY Haley cheerfully explained, as no successor could have dared after, say, 1965, that he saw society as a cultural pyramid, slowly *aspiring* upwards.

The occurrence of *for* + NP was unexpected, as it was deemed obsolete in the *OED* and was not attested in the historical data. However, the surface construction in (22) is actually a result of two higher verbs being complemented by the same element. An unpacked version of the sentence would be ...*to aspire to a highly rewarded position and to strive for a highly...*

Contrary to the historical data, *aspire* also appeared in passive constructions. Five such tokens were attested, each complemented by *to* + NP:

(24) HY6 Scale 1 concentrates more on the image of sickness, its diagnosis and treatment, but all the time it is informed by a vibrant sense of the health aspired to; whereas Scale 2 is concerned with the nature of the experience by which the image of sin is transfigured to a likeness of the being of God.

(25) K5C His determination to deny them the "improved living and working conditions, proper social protection, dialogue between management and labour" *aspired to* by the Maastricht social chapter suggest he may have had a different community in mind from the sort outside the gates of Timex.

However, according to the common convention in the literature, these were analysed as active sentences.

13.3 Senses

Sense 3 gained more ground at an overwhelming rate by the late 20th century. It was represented by 452 tokens (94% of the whole sample).

3. *intr.* To have a fixed desire, longing, or ambition for something at present above one; to seek to attain, to pant, long.

(26) B3C Surveys have shown that a "relevant degree", one which includes a high proportion of accountancy subjects in its content, is the best entry method to the profession for students *aspiring to a professional accountancy qualification*.

(27) A1A Poststructuralists *aspire to remove* what they regard as the arbitrary distinctions between literature, criticism, theory, and philosophy, and Geoffrey Hartman has made it clear that he believes what he writes to be worthy of the esteem and attention normally given to "creative" writing.

Sense 6 occurred 29 times (6%).

6. *fig.* (with some sense of 3 combined.)

(28) HR3 Not all of us can *aspire to this level* but we can ask questions such as "what would be the effect of building a motorway between towns A and B?"

(29) AJ3 Admittedly, Peak District was following in the wake of Star Player, who had won the same Beverley event last season, but it is most unlikely that this fully-exposed six-year-old [...] will ever *aspire to the achievements* of Star Player, who went on to win three other races, including the Chester Cup.

(30) CGY With the separation of mental and manual labour, thought could *aspire to a "pure" form*, free from the constraints of practical action.

Finally, sense 5 was almost extinct, appearing only twice – and one token makes a reference to past language use:

5. *intr.* To rise up, as an exhalation, or as smoke or fire; hence *gen.* to mount up, taper up, tower, ascend, rise high, become tall.

(31) FAE Its structures, moreover, are irregular, supposedly answering to the needs of those within, not dictated from without by the demands of symmetry; their emphasis is vertical, *aspiring heavenwards* (as the Victorians frequently remarked), where that of the classical house is horizontal, connecting with the values of this earth.

(32) AMC I marvelled at the stone coloured like golden honey, the crockets and pinnacles, the needle-points *aspiring to heaven*, the bosses and badges blazoned in gules, azure, or...it was all very heady stuff.

The results show a marked drop in the frequency of senses 6 and 5. Especially the latter seems to have declined rapidly, to the point of obsolescence. Consequently, few complements in the data occurred with senses other than 3:

Complement	BNC		
	S.3	S.5	S.6
<i>to</i> + NP	289	1	27
<i>to</i> -infinitive	139		
<i>to</i> -ing	12		
<i>towards</i> + NP	8	1	
∅	2		1
AdvP + <i>than</i> + <i>to</i> -inf.	1		
<i>as</i> + AdvP + <i>as</i> + NP	1		
<i>above</i> + NP	1		
<i>beyond</i> + NP	1		
<i>for</i> + NP	1		
AdvP			1
Total	455	2	29

Table 12. Distribution of complements between senses, Present-Day English.

The amount of –human subjects seemed to be on an increase in cases where *aspire* denoted sense 3 and was complemented by a sentence. 20 such tokens had a –animate subject, and one had a –human/+animate subject (*an animal*):

(12) HH0 The Mesquite main strip *aspires to being* Las Vegas without anything like the money or the reputation.

(13) CM8 An animal does indeed strive instinctively to keep alive [...] but, lacking language, it is unduly anthropomorphic to describe this as hoping or *aspiring to live* to a ripe old age; except perhaps as a joke.

Instances of the indirectly expressed subsense ‘to attempt or wish to woo someone’ were no longer found, but three *to*-infinitival tokens were of the form *to marry her*.

Both of the two tokens denoting sense 5 had –animate subjects. As was the case in all of the previous periods, the subjects ranged from lifeless things or abstract entities to persons when *aspire* denoted sense 6.

14 Conclusion

The present study investigated the development in the complementation of the verb *aspire* in the period between the years 1710-1993. The main focus was twofold: to measure the extent to which the *to*-infinitive had given way to the gerundive complement types as predicted by the Great Complement Shift theory, and to explore the types of complement structures that have occurred with the verb in the past three centuries.

The advancing of the *-ing* forms at the expense of the *to*-infinitive does not appear to have proceeded very far in the case of *aspire*. Gerundial complements were extremely rare in the historical data, and even though a handful of *to –ing* complements emerged from the BNC material, the *to*-infinitive still remained dominant by a very large margin in the 20th century.

Extractions, insertions and *horror aequi* violations were rare, but they may still have contributed somewhat to the overwhelming frequency of the *to*-infinitive as none of the attested cases contained *-ing* forms. Interestingly, one token in the first part of the CLMETEV had *at –ing* complementing the verb. This confirmed the observation made by Rudanko (1996, 99) that the structure *aspire at doing something* had indeed existed earlier.

The findings are summarised as follows:

Complement	CLMETEV Part 1	CLMETEV Part 2	CLMETEV Part 3	OEDQ 1710-1779	OEDQ 1780- 1849	OEDQ 1850- 1920	BNC
<i>AdvP + than+ to-inf.</i>							1 (0.01)
<i>at -ing</i>	1 (0.33)						
<i>beyond -ing</i>						1 (0.12)	
<i>so + AdvP + as + to- infinitive</i>	2 (0.66)						
<i>to -ing</i>						1 (0.12)	12 (0.12)
<i>to-infinitive</i>	8 (2.63)	19 (3.32)	5 (0.79)	5 (1.88)	7 (1.39)	16 (1.89)	139 (1.39)
<i>above+ NP</i>		1 (0.17)					1 (0.01)
<i>AdvP</i>		1 (0.17)		1 (0.38)	2 (0.40)		1 (0.01)
<i>AdvP + over + NP</i>				1 (0.38)			
<i>after + NP</i>	1 (0.33)	4 (0.70)	1 (0.16)		1 (0.20)		
<i>as + AdvP + as + NP</i>							1 (0.01)
<i>at + NP</i>		1 (0.17)		2 (0.75)	5 (0.99)	1 (0.12)	
<i>beyond + NP</i>					1 (0.20)	1 (0.12)	1 (0.01)
<i>for + NP</i>							1 (0.01)
<i>from + NP</i>				1 (0.38)	1 (0.20)		
<i>NP</i>	1 (0.33)			1 (0.38)	1 (0.20)		
<i>to + NP</i>	19 (6.25)	41 (7.16)	12 (1.91)	15 (5.64)	18 (3.38)	12 (1.42)	319 (3.19)
<i>towards + NP</i>		1 (0.17)	2 (0.32)	1 (0.38)	7 (1.39)	1 (0.12)	9 (0.09)
<i>unto + NP</i>					1 (0.20)		
∅	2 (0.66)	6 (1.05)	3 (0.48)	4 (1.50)	4 (0.80)	6 (0.71)	3 (0.03)
Total	34 (11.19)	74 (12.9)	23 (3.67)	31 (11.65)	42 (8.36)	39 (4.60)	488 (4.88)

Table 12. Summary of complement types and their frequencies in the data.

To + NP, zero complement, *towards* + NP and AdvP were the only nonsentential complement types that occurred in each of the time periods under examination. *To* + NP was by far the most frequent complement type overall in each of the time periods under investigation, while the other three always remained more or less infrequent or even marginal. The *to*-infinitive was the dominating sentential complement, and also the only one attested in every period.

Several highly infrequent complement constructions occurred more or less sporadically in the research material, many of which described the extent of the action with the adverbs ‘far’ or ‘high’ (AdvP + *than*+ *to*-infinitive, *beyond* –ing, *so* + AdvP + *as* + *to*-infinitive, *above* + NP, AdvP + *over* + NP, *as* + AdvP + *as* + NP, *beyond* + NP).

Sentential complements occurred only when *aspire* denoted the *OED* sense 3. Not counting a very small number of deviations in the BNC and the historical corpora, they had +human subjects throughout the periods examined. Nonsentential complements were generally not restricted to one certain sense of the verb; only *after* + NP occurred with a single sense. As with the sentential complements, very nearly all subjects were +human, except when *aspire* denoted sense 5.

All in all, information on the frequency of items was limited in reliability both by the small size of the data and the restricted applicability of the OEDQ figures. These limitations dictate that the results of the present study must be regarded as being more of an indicative than definitive nature. However, the study did yield new information regarding the types of complement *aspire* has selected over the past three centuries, and the BNC data indicated that more could perhaps be obtained by probing into historical texts that resemble the types of writing found in the field of modern-day humanities and arts, as represented in the correspondingly named BNC subcorpora.

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