

On the Complementation of the Verb *Threaten* from the 18<sup>th</sup> Century to  
the Present Day

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Tässä korpuspohjaisessa pro gradu -tutkielmassa tarkastellaan englannin kielen verbin *threaten* ja sen taivutettujen muotojen *threatened*, *threatening* ja *threatens* komplementaatiota kirjoitetussa britannianenglannissa diakronisesti vuodesta 1710 nykypäivään. Tutkimuksen pääasiallisena tavoitteena on kartoittaa verbin ja sen valitsemien komplementaatorakenteiden ominaisuuksia sekä niissä mahdollisesti tapahtuneita muutoksia edellä mainittuna aikavälinä.

Tutkimuksen empiirinen aineisto on kerätty kahdesta elektronisesta korpuksista. *The Corpus of Late Modern English Texts, extended version* (CLMETEV) sisältää tutkimuksen historiallisen materiaalin vuosilta 1710-1920 ja se on jaettu kolmeen, 70 vuotta kattavaan, pääosin kaunokirjallisuudesta koostuvaan osaan. *The British National Corpus* (BNC) puolestaan toimii lähdemateriaalina nykypäivän englannin tutkimiselle sisältäen eri tekstilajeista koostuvia kirjallisia ja suullisia tallenteita vuosilta 1960-1993. Verrattain samankaltaisen lähdemateriaalin takaamiseksi BNC:n materiaali rajattiin koskemaan kaunokirjallisia tekstejä.

Tutkielman teoreettisen viitekehyksen muodostavat pääasiassa sanakirjat, englannin kielen kattavin sanakirja *The Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) ja kaksi englannin opiskelijoille suunnattua sanakirjaa, sekä kielioppiteokset ja muut aiheeseen liittyvät tieteelliset julkaisut. Niiden avulla luodaan tutkielman teoriaosuus, missä tarkastellaan tutkimuksen perustana toimivia korpuksia, komplementaation käsitettä ja siihen olennaisesti liittyviä syntaktisia ja semanttisia piirteitä sekä tutkimuksen kohteena olevan verbin erityisominaisuuksia. Teoriaosaa seuraa korpusmateriaalin perusteelliselle käsittelylle omistettu analyysiosa, missä *threaten*-verbin käyttöä ja siinä tapahtuneita muutoksia tutkitaan autenttiossa kielessä teoreettisen viitekehyksen pohjalta.

Tutkimuksessa todetaan, että verbi *threaten* valitsee komplementeikseen sekä lausekkeellisia että nominaalisia komplementteja, joista jälkimmäisiin kuuluva nominilauseke (NP) hallitsi CLMETEV-korpuksen aineistoa ja ensiksi mainittuihin lukeutuva *to*-infinitiivi nykyenglannin aineistoa. Tämän muutoksen ohella yhtenä merkittävimmistä *threaten*-verbin käytössä tapahtuneista muutoksista voidaan pitää verbin luonteen kieliopillistumista. Verbi on saanut suppean ja kirjaimellisen merkityksensä ohien laajan, abstraktin ja kieliopillisen merkityksen.

Asiasanat: threaten, komplementaatio, korpus, korpuslingvistiikka, verbi, kielen muutos

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## 1 Introduction

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the complementation structures of the verb *threaten*, and more precisely their meanings and development from the 18th century to the present day. This thesis is a corpus study, which means that the data for the analysis is gathered from different corpora. The corpora which are consulted in this study are the extended version of the Corpus of Late Modern English Texts and the British National Corpus. Consider the following authentic written English sentences (1-4) taken from those corpora:

- (1) ... I WILL NOT entertain them with my music, which makes me say that I CANNOT; and they have imprisoned me, and threaten to put my son to death if I persist in my stubbornness any longer. (Inchbald 1796, *Nature and Art*)
- (2) He had broken a blood-vessel and was threatened with consumption, but his case was not considered dangerous. (Caine 1897, *The Christian*)
- (3) She pulled herself up sharply, realising that tears were threatening right now and she wasn't even home yet. (HGK 4472)
- (4) ... he had just seen Mr Barton alight from his chariot at lady Griskin's door -- This incident seemed to threaten a visit from her ladyship, with which we were honoured accordingly, in less than half an hour... (Smollett 1771, *The Expedition of Humphrey Clinker*)

These sentences serve as a demonstration of some of the ways in which the verb *threaten* is used during this three-century period. All the uses of *threaten* in the above sentences differ slightly in meaning, and what is even more obvious, in their complement selection. At the beginning of the theory part of this thesis, I will provide a more thorough explanation for complements and complementation, but at this point, it is sufficient to note that, in this thesis, a complement indicates a word or a phrase which (in canonical word order<sup>1</sup>) comes after the verb in question (referred to as the *head*<sup>2</sup> of the sentence), and which is selected<sup>2</sup> by the verb. In this thesis, my aim is to discover which complementation patterns are or have been possible and frequently used with the verb *threaten* during the time frame indicated above. Additionally I will study whether there are semantic differences between the structures, and whether there has been any changes concerning the

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<sup>1</sup> i.e. syntactically more basic or elementary order - a declarative sentence, which does not include negation, interrogation, passivisation, just to mention a few (Huddleston and Pullum 2002, 46).

<sup>2</sup> This is a concept used by most of the linguists in the field, e.g. Chomsky (1965), Sag and Pollard (1994), and McCloskey (1993).

complementation of *threaten*. Next I will list the goals of the thesis more precisely as the research questions. In this study, I aim to:

- i) document the patterns used with the verb *threaten* between the time span of 1710 and 2003;
- ii) observe the syntactic and semantic features of the different complementation patterns, and to compare the results with each other;
- iii) discuss the connection between structure and meaning;
- iv) study whether there has been any changes in the use of the verb *threaten* during the aforementioned time frame, and if yes, what kind of changes appear.

By providing the answers to the above points, I aim to produce a study which will serve both myself and other language teachers and future language teachers, and the students of English. I anticipate that some new and undiscovered points will be revealed, and that this thesis introduces and explains them so that advantage can be taken of the results.

This thesis will be divided into two parts: the first part serves as an introduction to the theory, and the second part comprises the actual analysis of the data collected from the corpora. I will begin the study with providing some literary sources which discuss the nature and behaviour of *threaten*. First, I will introduce a number of dictionaries, and then comment on the use of the verb in some grammars. After setting the stage, I will move on to the authentic data and show how well it corresponds to the facts pointed out in the theory part.

## **2 On Corpora**

In this chapter, I will provide an introduction to corpus linguistics and some issues that it involves. I will start by dealing with corpora and corpus linguistics in general, and move on to consider some issues to be aware of when using corpora. The end of this chapter introduces the two corpora used in this study.

### **2.1 Corpora and Corpus Linguistics: Some Basic Principles**

In general, corpora are used to find information of some (usually) linguistic phenomenon, i.e. corpus can be counted as one source of data (Leech 1968, 88). Corpus linguistics is seen as a subfield of linguistics, and it has taken huge steps of development since the early 1960's when the Brown corpus was created. It can be seen as an opposite to the formalists' way of thinking, challenging Chomsky's embrace of the intuition of the native speaker analyst as a suitable source of data. Corpus linguistics has gained its popularity partly at formalists' expense, but Fries (2010) claims that the opposition was not the actual starting point of corpus linguistics. He gives the credit to the older traditions - such as philology and dialect geography - which "required the gathering and study of some coherent body of data", and this is also how he defines the concept of *corpus* (Fries 2010, 90).

According to Hunston and Francis (2000, 15), corpus linguistics can be used as a way of observing a natural language which has been stored in electronic form. In comparison with the earlier corpus-based studies, research is made easier for today's linguists because of the electronic material and tools available. Although there have been some corpora before the electronic era, the increasing number of electronic texts and text analysis tools has made it possible to analyse more data in a shorter amount of time, and it offers improvements not only in speed but also in accuracy (Ball 1994, 295).

## 2.2 Factors Bearing on Corpus Usage

In addition to their several helpful features, these more recent methods of using corpora also involve some problems to be taken into account. Some decades ago, Chomsky (1965) criticised corpora and corpus evidence as a way to observe linguistic competence. According to him, human languages include certain nuisance variables, such as false starts and hesitation, which have an effect on the rules of grammar and their realisations in linguistic performance, making these two things remote from each other. This means that the authentic (spoken) language may differ to a great extent from the actual rules of (written) grammar. Chomsky's argument has gained approval among linguists who claim that corpus data cannot be directly used to create the formal characterisation or explanation of human language (Chomsky 1965, 3-4). I consider Chomsky's criticism valid, however it does not have a negative bearing on this thesis, because the corpus evidence used here is restricted to written language, and although the aim is to observe the linguistic phenomenon in authentic context, no native speaker analyst is needed to do the research.

Another problem with corpora as a source of data that has been pointed out e.g. by Leech (1968) is that no corpus, however large, can be sufficient enough. Because a language contains uncountable number of sentences and because it is continuously in change, it is impossible for a corpus to contain all the sentences of a language. Leech continues that the place of corpora used "as a tool of empirical confirmation" is nevertheless justified (Leech 1968, 94).

When choosing the corpus or corpora for a study, other factors need to be kept in mind as well. According to Leech and Smith (2005, 3), extracting a sample from a historical corpus may include tokens that are not easy to compare with other findings because of the corpus' sociolinguistic bias towards upper class male writers or because of its narrow range of genres. The research may also suffer from the fact that not all relevant corpora are generally available. However, these facts have been taken into account in several modern corpora by deliberately adding texts by female authors as well as authors from different social groups (Leech and Smith 2005, 3).



In this particular project, phenomenon indicating recall and precision problems is considered to be relevant. Because of these problems with electronic material, it is sometimes recommended to use automated methods and manual methods side by side. According to Ball (1994, 295) recall and precision are terms which are related to information retrieval studies, and they are used to measure the effectiveness of retrieval. Precision means "the proportion of retrieved material that is relevant", whereas recall stands for "the proportion of relevant information that was retrieved". Precision is usually easier to handle, since it is rather simple to select by hand the tokens which are relevant to the study in question (Ball 1994, 295). In my study, I could encounter a precision problem where I have tokens of the verb *threaten* used as an adjective instead of a verb. I can exclude those examples and carry on with the study, although several precision errors may lead to a very narrow search criteria.

Ball (1994, 295-296) goes on by explaining that the recall problem is of the more difficult type to deal with. It means that the researcher should go through the whole corpus to make sure that there are no relevant tokens left outside the search (Ball 1994, 295-296). This problem comes up especially with very complex linguistic phenomena, which however is not the case in this study. Nevertheless, it must be kept in mind that there might be relevant information missing in the study.

### **2.3 Normalising Frequencies**

A common feature of a corpus-based study on some linguistic phenomenon is to present the result in numbers. To provide a reliable and comparable study, it is important to make sure that the results that are based on data from different sources, in this case from different corpora, are in balance and compatible with each other. If the sizes of the corpora or the length of the texts are not the same, the raw frequencies, i.e. the number of the tokens, are not comparable.

To avoid the bias towards tokens from a certain corpus, e.g. Biber et al. (1998) introduce a technique called *normalisation*. It is based on the total number of words in each text, and it is used

to count the average of the raw data. Counting these *normalised frequencies* (hereafter referred to as NF), the raw number of tokens should be divided by the number of the words in the text, and then multiplied by any pre-ordained number (Biber et al. 1998, 263). One million is frequently used, as in the example below, and it will be used in the analysis part of this thesis as well. If the size of the corpus is 1,500,000 words and the number of the studied tokens 25, consider the following:

$$(25 / 1,500,000) \times 1,000,000 = 16,67 \text{ words per million}$$

The NF of this example is then 16,67.

## **2.4 Corpora Used in This Study**

This section will provide an overview of the two corpora from which the data for the analysis is extracted. The first sub-section introduces the extended version of the Corpus of Late Modern English Texts with its more historical approach, whereas the second sub-section concentrates on the British National Corpus which is collected from Modern English.

### **2.4.1 The Extended Version of the Corpus of Late Modern English Texts**

The extended version of the Corpus of Late Modern English Texts (hereafter the CLMETEV) is one of the corpora used in this study, and it has its roots on the original version of the same corpus. According to De Smet (2005, 69-70), it is a corpus of roughly 15 million words, and it is compiled from the texts published between 1710 and 1920 and drawn from the *Project Gutenberg*, the *Oxford Text Archive*, and the *Victorian Women Writers* project. The corpus is divided into three sub-sections, each covering 70 years: the first period (hereafter the CLMETEV part I) includes the years from 1710 to 1780, the second part (hereafter the CLMETEV part II) covers the period from 1780 to 1850, and the third period (hereafter the CLMETEV part III) is from 1850 to 1920 (De Smet 2005, 69-70).

What makes this corpus relatively easy to use is the fact that the corpus has a free access to it on the Internet. In contrast, more effort and time is needed for working on this corpus, because it is not a tagged one, which means that different search strings must be separately formulated for each verb form (*ibid.*). According to De Smet (2005), there are four principles which guided the collection of data for the original version, and thus apply also in connection with the CLMETEV. The following points (1-4) are formulated according to De Smet (2005, 70-78):

1) To increase the homogeneity within each sub-section and, contrastively, the heterogeneity between each part - and thus, to highlight the historical trend in question - the texts that are accepted into each sub-section are written by authors born within a 70 year time-span, which starts 30 years before the starting date of the sub-section itself. Additionally, this principle ensures that each author can be represented only in one sub-section.

2) To minimise dialectal variation, and thus to allow comparison between the CLMETEV and other corpora of British English, the authors selected to this corpus are all British, native speakers of English.

3) To prevent some author's personal style from affecting the overall material too much, the amount of text from one author is restricted to 200,000 words.

4) To counteract the sociolinguistic bias typical of many corpora, De Smet has deliberately favoured female writers and authors from lower classes. Additionally, he had paid more attention to include non-literary texts and texts from different genres, to ensure variation. This conscious decision to favour some groups makes the CLMET unsuitable for certain studies, such as sociolinguistic analysis.

As mentioned at the beginning of this sub-section, the CLMETEV consists of 14,970,622 words compiled from 176 different texts which are written by 120 authors (De Smet 2005, 69-70). Because my intention is to create a study which enables the comparison between data gathered within a rather long time frame, and the CLMETEV covers satisfyingly the period of the Late

Modern English, I found it justifiable to use it as one of the primary sources for my research. According to De Smet (2005, 69), although the Late Modern English period is fairly well documented, it is paid less attention than many other periods, which means that there are not many corpora providing information of this period available.

#### **2.4.2 The British National Corpus**

Another corpus used as a primary source in this thesis is called the British National Corpus (hereafter the BNC), and its function is to enable me to provide information of Present-Day English, since it is "a balanced reference corpus of late 20th century British English" (Hoffmann et al. 2008, 28-29). According to Hoffman et al (*ibid.*), the BNC is a corpus made up of 98,313,429 words, and it contains both written and spoken material. However, written section has a clear emphasis comprising 87,903,571 words (roughly 90 per cent of the total), and it will be the basis for this study as well. Hoffmann et al. (*ibid.*) continue that the written texts for the corpus were selected on the basis of domain ("subject field or broad topic area"), time ("when they were produced") and medium ("the type of publication in which they appeared"), and they were taken from books, newspapers, magazines, and school essays, just to mention few. Those texts in the BNC were published between 1960 and 1993 (Hoffmann et al.2008, 28-29). The purpose of the BNC is to provide approach opportunities as broad as possible, and thus, it is not restricted to any particular field, register or genre (*ibid.*, 29).

Because of its amplitude, richness and ease of use, I feel this corpus is suitable for the purposes of this study. Additionally, the possibility to restrict it to correspond with the historical corpus chosen for the analysis of this thesis, does not diminish its value.

### **3 On Complementation**

In this chapter, I will concentrate on the syntactic and semantic nature of complements and complementation. The chapter begins with an introduction to the basics of syntactic complementation research, and then moves on to explain the features of complements and adjuncts. This will be followed by some semantic theories concerning complementation.

#### **3.1 Syntax**

This sub-section will study the syntactic features concerning and providing the basis for the complementation research. I will start by introducing probably the most significant syntactic theory, the valency theory, which will serve as the first step towards the concept of *complement*, and another concept often discussed in connection with it, namely *adjuncts*. After that it is reasonable to highlight the differences between those two terms, and this is then followed by some factors concerning complements and complement use especially in the thesis.

##### **3.1.1 Valency Theory as an Introduction to the Concept of Complement**

In general, valency theory is a theory of the use of verbs, more specifically a theory of the "relationship between the verbal predicate and the other elements making up a predication" (Somers 1984, 308). It is not a theory concerning English particularly, but for an obvious reason, this thesis focuses on valency of English verbs. According to Allerton (1982, 1-2), a verb has an important role in language forming, and it is "needed as an essential nucleus for the major type of sentence pattern", since the verb chosen for a particular sentence is the one to determine the basic structure of that sentence, i.e. the verb selects the other elements of the sentence. Allerton (*ibid.*) points out that because of that great and important role, verbs need to be classified into smaller groups; although they are a part of the same category, not all verbs behave similarly (Allerton 1982, 1-2). Some ways of classifications are presented in sub-section 3.1.3 below.

The elements selected by the verb are called *complements* (e.g. Somers 1984, 308; Herbst et al. 2004, xxiv). However, Allerton (1982, 32-33) notes that there are two different ways of using this term: the one used in traditional grammar, where it has a broader use as a verb companion of *be* and other copulative verbs<sup>3</sup>; and the transformational grammar one, where it accompanies verbs and nouns as an embedded sentence. Here, the latter stance will be followed.

According to Allerton (1982, 32), any verb valency structure can be broken down into a sequence of verb plus one or more elements, i.e. complements. Those cases in which no complements are present are discussed later in sub-section 3.1.3. There are also elements which are not dependent on the valency of the governing verb, and they are referred to as *adjuncts* (e.g. Somers 1984, 308; Herbst et al. 2004, xxiv). As already noted, complements are those elements of the sentence which are selected by the verb, or which "are expected to [...] complete its meaning" (Somers 1984, 308). On the other hand, according to Somers (*ibid.*) adjuncts are "essentially optional elements which can be said to complete the meaning of the central predication as a whole". The valency of a certain verb is then the "number of complements it governs" (Somers 1984, 308). In a broader sense, subjects are also considered as complements (cf. e.g. Herbst et al. 2004, xxv), but here the proposition that regardless of the head verb, all English sentences have a subject<sup>4</sup> - i.e. that the matrix verb does not select the subject - is followed and used to justify the exclusion of subjects as complements (Haegeman 1991, 68).

### 3.1.2 Complements vs. Adjuncts

As briefly mentioned in the previous sub-section, there are certain features which distinguish complements from adjuncts. The main difference is indeed the selection, i.e. the subcategorisation (cf. e.g. Haegeman 1991, 34 ), by the head. The following examples illustrate how different verbs select different complements:

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<sup>3</sup> To read more about copulative verbs, see e.g. Huddleston (1984, 185).

<sup>4</sup> This statement is known as the Extended Projection Principle, introduced in Haegeman (1991, 68).

- (5) (a) My uncle was using an electric drill.  
 (b) \*My uncle was arriving an electric drill.<sup>5</sup> (Huddleston 1984, 178.)

Sometimes it is claimed that the distinction between complements and adjuncts lies in obligatoriness; complements seem to be obligatory, whereas adjuncts are optional, and can be omitted from the sentence. However, this statement is not sufficient, since there can be optional complements as well. Somers (1984, 309) refers to these as *valency-bound* complements, because, although being optional, they are closely connected with the verb. Consider the following examples from Somers (*ibid.*, 308):

- (6) (a) He looked for his friend [*in London*]. (= Adjunct)  
 (b) James lives [*in London*]. (= Complement)

Here, both of the sentences include the phrase *in London*, which is omissible and has adjunct status in (6a), but in (6b) it cannot be freely omitted, and thus is the complement of the verb *live*. (*ibid.*)

Herbst (2004, xxxi) provides a discussion about optional complements. He states that although those complements have a close relationship to their heads - i.e. "they demonstrate the characteristics of complements" - their omission from the sentence does not affect the grammaticality of the sentence. Consider:

- (7) Wallis painted, as he said, simply to keep himself company. (Herbst 2004, xxxi)

Huddleston (1984, 179) suggests that the class of the phrases might be used as a way to distinguish between complements and adjuncts. He claims that, prototypically, complements are noun phrases [hereafter referred to as a NP] and adjectival phrases [AdjP], whereas adjuncts prefer prepositional phrases [PP] or adverb phrases [AdvP]. However, this is not a waterproof test, as becomes clear in the examples below:

- (8) (a) He died *the following morning*.  
 (b) He wasted *the following morning*.

Problems arises also in connection with adverbs. They are easily counted as adjuncts, but in some cases they can be "obligatory elements of the valency pattern of the verb" (9a), or they might have

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<sup>5</sup> The asterics at the beginning of the sentence indicates that the sentence is grammatically incorrect.

such strong semantic bonds with the verb that it is appropriate to consider them as a part of the valency of the verb (9b) (Herbst 2004, xxviii). Consider the following examples from Herbst (*ibid.*)<sup>6</sup>:

- (9) (a) I put paper and kindling by the fire last night.  
 (b) I walked along the cliff-path.

Herbst (2004, xxviii) explains that the verb *put* always selects at least two complements, the one denoting the object of putting, and the one denoting the place where the object is put. Thus, *by the fire* is an obligatory element, and must be seen as a complement in sentence (9a). In sentence (9b), the adverbial phrase *along the cliff-path* is not obligatory, but it still has a very close semantic connection to the verb, and for that reason might be considered as a complement (Herbst 2004, xxviii).

Huddleston and Pullum (2002, 222) introduce the concept of one anaphoric expression, more precisely the expression *do so*, as a way of identifying complements and adjuncts. They point out that "anaphoric expressions are those which derive their interpretation from an antecedent", and the antecedent of the expression in question must embrace all the complements of the selective verb<sup>7</sup>. The benefit of using this expression to distinguish between complements and adjuncts becomes clear from the following examples from Huddleston and Pullum (*ibid.*, 223):

- (10) (a) \*Jill keeps her car in the garage but Pam does so in the road.  
 (b) Jill washes her car in the garage but Pam does so in the road.

Huddleston and Pullum (*ibid.*) point out that, in sentence (10a), the verb *keep* takes two complements: NP and the PP *in the garage*. This means that *do so* in the following clause should embrace the whole entity, which does not happen. In that sentence, *Pam does so* can be rephrased with *Pam keeps her car in the garage*, and another PP indicating place is not possible. On the other

<sup>6</sup> The underlines refer to the complements of the sentences. Herbst considers the subject as one of the complements, but as it is not the practice in this thesis, the subjects will not be underlined.

<sup>7</sup> Again, the term *complement* is used to refer to the items selected by the head verb, thus the subject is excluded, although it is not the style of Huddleston and Pullum.



hand, in (10b) *in the garage* is an adjunct of the verb *wash*, and thus is not included in the anaphoric expression. Hence, this sentence is perfectly right (*ibid.*).

### 3.1.3 Classification of Complements

Now that we are aware of the basic nature of a complement, it might be justified to take a look on different types of complements. Although the governing element may also be something else than a verb (e.g. a noun or an adjective), this thesis will concentrate only on verbs subcategorising for complements, which can be either phrases, such as NPs, AdjPs or PPs; or clauses, either finite, like *that-* or *wh-*clauses, or non-finite, such as *-ing* or *to-*infinitive clauses (Herbst et al. 2004, xxv-xxvi).

Throughout this study the complements are divided into sentential and non-sentential constructions.<sup>8</sup> Sentential complements are those labelled as clauses above, while non-sentential ones include different phrases listed in the previous section. However, the abovementioned complements are of a very simple type; there can be different variations, which combines e.g. NPs and *to-*infinitives, forming the pattern NP + *to-*infinitive. Sentential complements can be divided further into finite and non-finite clauses (cf. e.g. Huddleston 1984, 207), and the kinds of complements mentioned above comprising finite or non-finite clauses are still categorised as sentential complements. Other combinations, such as a NP + NP or a NP *for* NP, are non-sentential, since there are no clausal elements (cf. e.g. Ross 2004, 351).

In addition to the above-mentioned categorisation, transitivity and intransitivity of verbs play a role in complementation discussion. According to Huddleston and Pullum (2002, 216), intransitive verbs are those which do not take an object, whereas transitive verbs can take one or more objects. Some verbs are intransitive in nature, but sometimes the intransitivity is only one of the uses of a verb (*ibid.*), as is the case with *threaten*. In this project, the intransitive use of *threaten*

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<sup>8</sup> Ross (2004) introduces an extensive account on sententiality.

will be included in the discussion and it is referred to as *zero complementation*<sup>9</sup> (cf. e.g. Quirk et al. 1985).

### 3.2 Semantics

This chapter will supplement the theoretical framework given in the previous sub-section by adding semantic background to the study.

#### 3.2.1 Predicates and Argument Structure

In sub-section 3.1.1, the elements of a sentence were classified according to their syntactic features. The head verb was said to be the core of the sentence selecting the other participants, or at least some of them, for the sentence. According to Haegeman (1991, 35), these participants are called arguments, and different verbs select different number of arguments, i.e. they have different kinds of argument structures. The role of the subject as a complement can be disputed, but when it comes to arguments, there is no disagreement: the subject is one of the arguments of a sentence. Similarly, the role of adjuncts is clear - they are not part of the argument structure (*ibid.*, 37). Consider Haegeman's (*ibid.*, 35) example:

(11) Mavigret imitates Poirot.

The above sentence has the head predicate *imitate* and two NP arguments; i.e. the predicate takes two arguments, being a two-place predicate (*ibid.*). However, arguments are not restricted to NPs. According to Haegeman (1991, 36), the arguments are "the participants minimally involved in the activity or state expressed by the predicate". In its most typical meaning, the verb *threaten* can be considered as a two-place predicate, since it need someone who *threatens* and something which is *threatened*. As can be seen later, different senses of the verb affect the number of arguments it selects. Thus, arguments are closely related to the meaning of the verb.

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<sup>9</sup> The status of the zero complement as one of the complementation patterns is disputed by some linguists. Since there is no complement following, logic dictates that it is not a complement type. However, in this thesis, it will be counted as one of the patterns selected by *threaten*, because it is one of the factors defining the use of the verb in question.

### 3.2.2 Semantic Restrictions of Expressions

The selection of arguments by a verb is not arbitrary. No verb can select whichever argument, because there are certain restrictions to that. Radford (1988, 370) points out that those restrictions are based on semantic (or pragmatic) features of the predicate and the arguments. According to Huang (1997, 73), these semantic features of NPs are such as human or non-human, animate or inanimate etc. When discussing these properties in the analysis of this thesis, they will be marked as [+/- HUMAN / ANIMATE]. Huang (*ibid.*) states that these features are of importance because making up the sense of a NP, they are one of the factors limiting its possible denotations, which are discussed below.

### 3.2.3 Theta Theory

When considering the semantic relationships between the predicate and its arguments more closely, it can be noticed that they differ from each other. Haegeman (1991, 41) provides the following example:

(12) *Maigret* killed *Poirot*.

In sentence (11) above, *Maigret* is the subject of the sentence, an entity that is "the agent of the activity of *killing*" (Haegeman 1991, 41). On the other hand, the direct object, the NP *Poirot* indicates the patient of the same activity. Thus, these arguments are in different semantic relationships with the verb. According to Haegeman (*ibid.*), these relationships are referred to in terms of thematic roles or theta roles. The verb is then said to not only select the number of arguments, but also to assign them a theta role, i.e. verbs have both argument and thematic structures (*ibid.*).

Haegeman (1991, 41) states that there is an agreement among linguists about the importance of this theta theory, but the number and labels of the different theta roles vary depending on the

linguist using them. However, Haegeman (*ibid.*) distinguishes eight of them, of which I will illustrate the most widely agreed and most relevant in connection with this project:

- 1) Agent: the one who intentionally initiates the action expressed by the predicate.
- 2) Patient: the person or thing undergoing the action expressed by the predicate.
- 3) Theme: the person or thing moved by the action expressed by the predicate.
- 4) Experiencer: the entity that experiences some (psychological) state expressed by the predicate.
- 5) Benefactive: the entity that benefits from the action expressed by the predicate.

Some linguists prefer combining the roles of patient and theme under the one role of theme, but throughout the thesis, I will adopt the practice presented in the list. Thus, in the following *OED* sentence

(13) The party that has lost the election threatens a petition. (Burke, 1774)

*the party that has lost the election* (considered as one NP) is assigned the theta role of agent, and the other NP *a petition* the role of theme, because it resembles the meaning of a phrase *with a petition*.

There are some rules for the use of the above-mentioned theta roles, and one of them is summed up in the theta criterion:

Each argument is assigned one and only one theta role. Each theta role is assigned to one and only one argument (Haegeman 1991, 45).

## 4 *Threaten* in Dictionaries and the Literature

This chapter will introduce the verb *threaten* in the earlier literature, including three dictionaries and grammars. I will begin with a brief account of the etymology of the verb, and then move on to present the syntactic and semantic features of *threaten* found in the dictionaries and grammars. Finally, the chapter will end with the analysis of the relationship between sense and structure.

### 4.1 Etymology

Because of the slight differences of the senses of *threaten*, which will be illustrated in the following section, it is interesting to take a quick look on the origin of it. The *Chambers Dictionary of Etymology* (hereafter the *CDE*) shows that *threaten* is formed from the noun *threat* (*thrēat*) + *-nian*, and before the year 1200 it was found in the form *threatenen*, which has developed from Old English word *thrēatnian* (*thrēat* + *-nian*), meaning *to press, urge, force*. According to the *CDE*, the word *threat*, on the other hand, is related to the verb *thrēotan*, which means *to trouble, weary*, and has its roots in Old High German, Old Icelandic and Gothic, in which the corresponding words indicated verbs such as *to trouble, struggle* and *threaten*.

### 4.2 Dictionaries

Dictionaries provide the most natural and solid grounding when studying the meaning of a word. Because the purpose of this thesis is to create as comprehensive a picture of the verb *threaten* as possible, to survey the meaning of the verb is one the most fundamental factors in the thesis. The *Oxford English Dictionary* (hereafter the *OED*) is regarded as one of the most authoritative dictionaries of the English language, and it is used as the main source for the background information of the verb. It will be supplemented with two learner's dictionaries.

The reason for the leading position of the *OED* becomes evident when comparing the amount of information it includes with other dictionaries. The second edition of the dictionary provides not

only the meaning of 600,000 words but also their history and pronunciation, and its 3 million quotations' database is gathered from different literary genres, such as classic literature, specialist periodicals, films scripts and cookery books covering over 1000 years of English language. For the verb *threaten* alone, the *OED* has 7 senses and 56 quotes comprising the period circa from year 1000 to 1928.

As can be seen from the paragraph above, the quotations of the verb *threaten* are somewhat historically centred, and thus, not all the example sentences and senses are relevant for this thesis. Therefore, I will not include the obsolete meanings and quotes in the study, which will leave us with 48 quotations under five different senses and their sub-senses, and a time frame from circa 1290 to 1928.

The following table presents the selected senses, gives examples of them, and classifies the complementation patterns used in the examples. In the table, I will follow the numbering of the *OED*, although excluding the obsolete meanings. Thus, some numbers are not listed.

SENSE	QUOTE	PATTERN
<p>2.a. To try to influence (a person) by menaces; to utter or hold out a threat against; to declare (usually conditionally) one's intention of inflicting injury upon; to menace.</p> <p>c. <i>fig.</i> To be likely to injure; to be a source of danger to; to endanger actively.</p>	<p>a. <b>1816 SCOTT</b> In vain his wife..hung by his skirts, <i>threatening</i> him with death..for meddling with other folks' matters.</p> <p><b>1834 <i>Picture of Liverpool</i></b> All classes were <i>threatened</i> to be overwhelmed in one universal ruin.</p> <p>c. <b>1725 DE FOE</b> The wind..blew very hard, <i>threatening</i> us with a storm.</p> <p><b>1835 THIRLWALL</b> Where one <i>threatens</i> the existence of another.</p>	<p>_NP <i>with</i> NP</p> <p>_NP <i>to</i>-infinitive</p> <p>_NP <i>with</i> NP</p> <p>_NP</p>
<p>3. To hold out or offer (some injury) by way of a threat; to declare one's intention of inflicting.</p> <p>a. with infin. or clause as obj.</p>	<p>a. <b>1682 BUNYAN</b> They <i>threatened</i> also what men they would be.</p> <p><b>1748 <i>Anson's Voy.</i></b> <i>Threatning</i> to murder all who should oppose them.</p> <p><b>1855 MACAULAY</b> He was at last forced to</p>	<p>_wh-clause</p> <p>_to-infinitive</p> <p>_that-clause</p>

b. with sb. or pron. as obj.	<i>threaten</i> that he would immediately make the whole matter public. b. <b>1774 BURKE</b> The party that has lost the election <i>threatens</i> a petition.	_NP
4. <i>fig.</i> To give ominous indication of (impending evil); to presage, portend. b. with infin.: To appear likely <i>to do</i> some evil.	<b>1863 W. C. BALDWIN</b> The weather constantly <i>threatens</i> rain. b. <b>1848 DICKENS</b> It <i>threatens</i> to be wet to night.	_NP  _to-infinitive
5. <i>absol.</i> or <i>intr.</i> To utter or use threats; to declare one's intention of injuring or punishing in order to influence. a. <i>lit.</i> b. <i>fig.</i> To portend evil.	a. <b>1774 GOLDSM.</b> If too closely pursued, they [snakes] hiss and <i>threaten</i> . b. <b>1793 MANN</b> Our political horizon blackens and <i>threatens</i> more and more.	_Ø  _Ø
7. In weakened use: to express an intention <i>to do</i> something, not necessary evil.	<b>1928 A. HUXLEY</b> [He] was lunching here today and broached a notion about a preliminary limited edition... He <i>threatens</i> to come and talk to you about it.	_to-infinitive

**Table 1: Senses of the verb *threaten* with complementation patterns in the *OED***

As can be seen in table 1, the original meaning of *threaten* illustrated in the previous sub-section has gained different and more figurative meanings next to it. Many of the above-mentioned senses take similar patterns, but only a few examples are introduced here. To draw a clearer picture of all the complements (but the obsolete ones) found in the *OED*, here is a list of them: 1) *to*-infinitive; 2) *that*-clause; 3) *wh*-clause; 4) NP *to*-infinitive; 5) NP *that*-clause; 6) NP; 7) NP *with* NP; 8) zero complement (referred to as Ø in tables and figures; 9) NP *for to*-infinitive<sup>10</sup>.

The *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (hereafter the *CALD*) is the first learner's dictionary consulted for this study. In many ways, it is very different from the *OED* and its detailed and sensitive way of illustrating the fine differences between the senses. Being an advanced learner's dictionary, it is not surprising that it does not provide as many senses and give as old examples as the *OED*, but focuses on a condensed content with structures and examples as clear as

<sup>10</sup> This pattern seems to appear in the 15th century, and to disappear after that. It might be replaced by the NP + *to*-infinitive pattern.

possible. The examples are not quotations similar to those in the *OED*, rather illustrations of possible usage of *threaten*. Under the entry for the verb *threaten*, three senses are found, with examples following:

- 1) to tell someone that you will kill or hurt them, or cause problems for them if they do not do what you want: *They threatened the shop-keeper with a gun.*<sup>11</sup>
- 2) If something bad threatens to happen, it is likely to happen: *Look at those clouds! There's a storm threatening.*
- 3) to be likely to cause harm or damage to something or someone: *Changing patterns of agriculture are threatening the countryside.*

It is made evident in the *CALD* that the verb in the first sense is transitive and can also select the *to*-infinitive. This first sense is similar to the *OED* sense 2a. The second sense presented in the *CALD* is used intransitively, and resembles the meaning of the fourth *OED* sense, whereas the third sense here indicates the same as the *OED* sense 2b. According to the *CALD*, the verb *threaten* selects the NP, *to*-infinitive and zero complement patterns.

Another learner's dictionary used to deepen the understanding of *threaten* is the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (hereafter the *OALD*). It is very similar to the *CALD*, since it also gives very straightforward illustrations and rules for the use of the senses and structures it provides. Like the *CALD*, it lists three main senses for *threaten*, which do not differ from the ones given in the *CALD*. However, the *OALD* recognises more options for the use of each senses, and provides more examples of them: the first sense is said to allow the NP, NP *with* NP, *to*-infinitive, and *that*-clause complements; the second sense (in which the verb can be either transitive or intransitive, unlike in the *CALD*) appears with the zero complement, NP, and *to*-infinitive patterns; and in the third sense the verb is implied to select the NP complement. The third sense is presented in the form "*~sth to be a danger to sth*", and it is claimed to be synonymous to verbs such as *endanger* and *put at risk*. Below, there is an example of each sense, taken from the *OALD*:

- (14) (a) He was threatened with dismissals if he continued to turn up late for work.
- (b) This dispute threatens to split the party.
- (c) Pollution is threatening marine life.

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<sup>11</sup> The underlines have been added for the examples presented in this sub-section.



The *OED* provides the most extensive variation of different senses, but for the purposes of this thesis, these senses are rather complex and detailed. Thus, it would be useful to simplify them, with the help of the two other dictionaries' condensed senses. My suggestions for the senses are:

- I 'to try to influence (a person) by menaces; to declare conditionally one's intention of inflicting injury upon; to make a threat',
- II 'to put in danger; endanger',
- III 'to give ominous indication of (impending evil); to portend evil; be likely to happen (something bad, negative, evil)', and
- IV 'to express an intention to do something, not necessarily evil'.

The first simplified sense includes the *OED* senses 2a, 3 and 5a, being the most popular sense, and providing 28 examples. The second simplified sense consists of 2c alone, and in the *OED* data there are five examples of it. The third simplified sense is also quite popular with 13 examples from the *OED* senses 4 and 5b. A couple of examples of the simplified sense four are also found, comprising the *OED* sense 7. The table below will illustrate the numbers of different patterns found in particular senses<sup>12</sup>:

Pattern	Sense				Total
	I	II	III	IV	
<b>to-infinitive</b>	<b>3</b>	-	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>NP + that-clause</b>	<b>1</b>	-	-	-	<b>1</b>
<b>that-clause</b>	<b>2</b>	-	-	-	<b>2</b>
<b>NP + to-infinitive</b>	<b>2</b>	-	-	-	<b>2</b>
<b>wh-clause</b>	<b>1</b>	-	-	-	<b>1</b>
<b>NP</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	-	<b>17</b>
<b>NP + with+ NP</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	-	-	<b>4</b>
<b>NP + for to-infinitive</b>	<b>2</b>	-	-	-	<b>2</b>
<b>∅ complement</b>	<b>5</b>	-	<b>5</b>	-	<b>10</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>28 / 58,3%</b>	<b>5 / 10,4%</b>	<b>13 / 27,1%</b>	<b>2 / 4,2%</b>	<b>48</b>

**Table 2. The dissolution of the complementation patterns and senses in the *OED*.**

The NP seems to dominate other complements, and it is most frequently found in the first sense.

Only the fourth sense with very few examples was not found with the NP. The second place is taken

<sup>12</sup> Hereafter, I will use the term *sense* to refer to these simplified *OED* senses.

by the zero complement, immediately followed by the *to*-infinitive. The zero complement is only found in senses I and III, while the *to*-infinitive appears in all senses but the second. Other patterns are quite rare and they are mainly found in the first sense.

To put it another way, sense I *to try to influence (a person) by menaces; to declare conditionally one's intention of inflicting injury upon; to make a threat* seems to have more variety in the complementation patterns than any other sense, since it can select all the patterns found in the *OED* under *threaten*. Additionally, it seems to be the most frequent sense, mostly taking the NP complement. Some of these examples are very old, starting from year 1290. Most often, the subject in these examples is [+HUMAN], which without an exception accepts the theta role of agent, and in all cases in which the subject is visible, it is at least [+ANIMATE], because this sense demands very literal interpretation of *threaten*. Although sense I allows one to express the threat by an *if*-clause, it is only found in two examples, such as the following, quite an old example:

- (15) Traian, commaunded hym to speke no more of it, thretnyng hym, that if he dyd, he shulde lese his heed. (W. Bonde, 1526)

Sense II *to put in danger; endanger* is rather rare, and allows mainly NP complements. One example with the NP *with* NP construction is found. In the *OED* data, this sense is not found with sentential complements. This sense always uses *threaten* figuratively, although the subject may be either [+/-HUMAN] and [+/-ANIMATE]. Usually it includes words in the semantic field of weather, or collective nouns, such as countries, where it is actually about the people of that country. In this, and the following sense, the number of the arguments the verb selects can vary from one to three.

Although sense III *to give ominous indication of (impending evil); to portend evil; be likely to happen (something bad, negative, evil)* is quite common, it is only found with the NP, *to*-infinitive and zero complement patterns, which all seem to be equally common. Interestingly, the NP complements appearing in this sense resembles the meaning of the NP *with* NP pattern. Consider:

- (16) The weather constantly threatens rain. (W. C. Baldwin, 1863)

Like sentence (16) above, the examples of sense III very often indicate weather observations, *illness* or *destruction*. In all examples, the subject is [-ANIMATE], and it is always the case of the figurative use of *threaten*. Inanimate subjects are somewhat difficult in sense of thematic roles. If the verb has a NP complement, as *rain* in the sentence above, it is assigned the role of theme. However, the role of the subject is not clear. Although the role of agent involves *intention* which is not a feature of inanimate items, I would suggest that *the weather* in sentence (16), and in other similar cases, is assigned the theta role of agent. The meaning of *threaten* in this sentence differs from the literal interpretation of it, and the meaning *to be likely* does not demand for *intention* as such.

The most significant fact to be noted with the last sense, sense IV *to express an intention to do something, not necessarily evil* is that it exists. It broadens the general meaning of *threaten*, and will be considered in the corpus analysis sections, regardless of its low frequency in the *OED*. As already indicated, this sense was only found with the *to*-infinitive, and semantically it approaches the meaning of *promise*, as in the following example:

(17) ... as, he threatened to give me money. (Dialect Notes 5, 1925)

As shown above, there is a lot of variation among patterns, and the senses also have certain features which are worth taking into consideration. Thus, the same kind of analysis will continue in the corpus analysis part, and some comparison to this section will be provided in the second part of this thesis. Now, it is time to take a look at *threaten* in grammars and other earlier literature.

### 4.3 Literature

According to the corpus findings of Biber et al. (1999, 370) the verb *threaten* is not a very common verb in the language use. In their statistics, *threaten* occurs over 20 times per million words, but compared to some similar, more common verbs, such as *say*, *tell* or *ask* with the occurrence of many thousands per million words, *threaten* cannot be regarded as a prototypical verb. In their

study of verb complementation, Biber et al. (*ibid.*) categorise *threaten*, on the one hand, as a *communication verb*, and on the other hand, as a *verb of intention or decision*. The latter category is one of the ten semantic classes in which verbs taking *to*-infinitive in post-predicate position can be grouped (*ibid.*). To define more specifically the group in which *threaten* appears, Biber et al. (1999, 703) claims that the plain *to*-infinitive is the only complementation pattern selected by it. For example, there is no evidence of the NP + *to*-infinitive pattern found in the *OED*, or any other complementation pattern on the whole.

The most extensive treatment of the complementation of the verb *threaten* in the grammars is offered by Huddleston and Pullum (2002), although it is also inadequate, as can be seen when studying the complements of *threaten* found in the *OED*. According to them, *threaten* accepts both finite and infinite clauses as its complements, but only in their simplest form. Consider the following *that*-clause and *to*-infinitive examples provided by Huddleston and Pullum (2002, 958-959, 1227):

- (18) (a) He threatened that the meeting would be disrupted.  
 (b) Kim threatened to leave.<sup>13</sup>

In the case of a *that*-clause, Huddleston and Pullum (2002, 958-959) claim that the passive construction is questionable, and they provide a comparison between sentence (18a) and the following:

- (19) ?It was threatened that the meeting would be disrupted.<sup>14</sup>

Interestingly, Huddleston and Pullum (2002, 1228) take into account the change in the meaning of *threaten*, at least when it subcategorises for the *to*-infinitive complement. They note that *threaten*, similarly to the verb *promise*, illustrates "the *bleaching*, the partial loss of primary meaning".

Consider the examples provided by Huddleston and Pullum (*ibid.*):

- (20) (a) He threatened to tell the police.  
 (b) The weather threatened to change.

<sup>13</sup> Modified by the original example in which the verb was *decide*.

<sup>14</sup> The question mark in front of the sentence illustrates the questionableness of the sentence.

According to them, an ordinary subject is clearly found in the former sentence, but in the latter, "the meaning of making a (characteristically verbal) threat has been lost and the meaning is reduced to approximately *look likely*, together with a [...] unfavourable view of the likely event" (*ibid.*).

The status of *threaten* as not being a prototypical verb becomes evident at the latest, when looking for the verb in one of the most comprehensive grammars, compiled by Quirk et al. (1985). Slightly surprisingly, there is no index for the verb *threaten*, which indicates that it is not considered as a typical verb of any grammatical patterns, including complementation.

#### 4.3.1 Parentheticals and *as*-clauses

*Threaten* in its lexical meaning is a way of expressing oneself, i.e. it can be called a reporting verb, which forms constructions of reported speech. According to Huddleston and Pullum (2002, 1024) reported speech can be divided into two groups: embedded and non-embedded reported speech. Consider the following examples from Huddleston and Pullum (*ibid.*), of which the latter is of interest in this thesis:

- (21) (a) She said that she lived alone.  
 (b) She lived alone, she said.

Huddleston and Pullum (*ibid.*) explain that in sentence (21b), the reported speech is in the form of a main clause, and syntactically, it is not a complement of the reporting verb. Thus, it is separated from the reporting frame (i.e. *she said*), which functions as a parenthetical, or "a kind of supplement" (Huddleston and Pullum 2002, 1024). In other words, parenthetical indicates an expression which is possible to be parenthetically appended to an anchor clause (*ibid.*, 895). In the above example, the parenthetical follows the reported speech, but Huddleston and Pullum (*ibid.* 1024) note that it may also take a mid-sentence position. Although Huddleston and Pullum do not consider this phenomenon as a complement construction, I will include them in the analysis following this theory part. They will be labelled as parentheticals, and will be included in the zero complement pattern.

Another feature included in the group of the zero complement is *as*-clauses. Huddleston and Pullum (2002, 1147) provide the following example:

(22) He phoned home every day, as he'd promised to do.

The *as*-clause here can be shortened in the form "as promised", which illustrate a more ambiguous case, and which does not entail the example (22). Thus, these two cases cannot be considered as one and the same. However, these kind of examples can be found in connection with *threaten*, and since it is not valid to claim that *threaten* has a complement in such a situation, they will be included in the zero complement pattern.

#### 4.3.2 Gradience of Passives

Some complex constructions of the English language (as seen in previous sub-sections) might appear in the analysis of the corpora, and thus it is important to shortly introduce the theory behind them. One of the possible causes for confusion in the analysis part is passivisation. Passive, in its simplest, inflicts no problems, since it is easily interpreted as a verbal construction, and can be turned into active form. However, some cases might involve ambiguity. Quirk et al. (1985, 167) talk about the passive gradient, according to which different passive-like constructions can be given different points on a gradient or scale running. Consider the following examples by Quirk et al. (*ibid.*):

- (23) (a) This violin was made by my father.  
 (b) The building is already demolished.

The former sentence can be counted as the 'ideal' passive, because it fulfils the conditions mentioned above. On the contrary, the latter sentence is not as straightforward. It depends on the verb's function and meaning, whether it is to be considered as a verb or an adjective.

Huddleston and Pullum (2002, 1436) state that there is a "large-scale overlap between adjectives and the past participle forms of verbs". It is often ambiguous, because both of these forms can appear with the verb *be*, making the forms very similar to each other. Huddleston and

Pullum (*ibid.*) distinguish two different passive-like construction: a verbal passive (24a), which is the only "real" passive, and a complex-intransitive clause containing an adjectival passive as predicative complement (24b), which itself is not an adjectival passive, but rather contains one. In addition to those, there are ambiguous cases (24c). Here are examples of each, provided by Huddleston and Pullum (*ibid.*):

- (24) (a) The kitchen window was broken by the thieves.  
(b) They were very worried.  
(c) They were married.

According to Huddleston and Pullum (2002, 1436), in sentence (24c) the meaning of the construction depends on the interpretation: in the verbal one this sentence is dynamic, "describing an event", whereas in the adjectival one it is static, "describing the resulting from some prior event". This division between the dynamic and stative interpretation determines the status of the construction, and an ambiguity appears when a construction allows both interpretations, as in the previous example (*ibid.*). Although some tests are provided to ease the decision making, such as adding modifiers or negative prefixes typical of adjectives, it must be accepted that some cases remain ambiguous, regardless of the context in which they appear. Thus, this feature of passivisation will be noted in the analysis parts where it emerges, and the division between the three possible solutions will be made.

## 5 Factors Bearing on Complementation

Earlier in chapter 3, I introduced the basics of the nature of complements and complementation, and now I will move on to more specific theories and principles concerning complement selection, and specifically the verb *threaten*. Vosberg (2003b, 305) calls these "extra-semantic factors". I will start with the concepts which will form a part of the framework when analysing the corpus data. First, I will introduce the control and NP movement theories which play a special role in connection with *threaten*, and two characters in close connection to them. Then, I will move on to present the account of one of the most significant changes concerning complementation patterns in the history of the English language, the Great Complement Shift, which will be followed by two principles dealing with concepts, such as insertions and extractions, as well as some other principles.

### 5.1 Control and NP movement

Since the verb *threaten* is shown to select *to*-infinitive complements by the *OED*, and listed among other verbs to do so in grammars, like the *CALD* and the *OALD*, an interesting point concerning infinitival complement rises. Infinitival constructions can be classified by their nature into two categories: control and NP movement<sup>15</sup>. Consider the following examples taken from Davies and Dubinsky:

- (25) (a) Barnett seemed to understand the formula.  
 (b) Barnett tried to understand the formula. (Davies&Dubinsky 2004, 3.)

The sentence (25a) is an example of NP movement, and the sentence (25b) one of control. The difference of these two sentences lies intuitively in their meanings, since it looks like in the NP movement example the subject is linked only to the lower verb<sup>16</sup> *understand*, while in control construction it is linked to both the matrix verb *try* and the lower verb. (*ibid.*)

<sup>15</sup> I will use the term NP movement (cf. e.g. Radford 1988), since I am more familiar with it, although Davies and Dubinsky use the term Raising.

<sup>16</sup> Davies and Dubinsky use another term - *embedded verb* - for what I chose to call *lower verb*, since it occurs in the lower clause.



Carnie (2002, 255) presents the structural difference between control and NP movement sentences with his examples:

- |      |     |   |             |
|------|-----|---|-------------|
| (26) | (a) | Jean <sub>i</sub> is likely [ t <sub>i</sub> to leave]. <sup>17</sup> | NP movement |
|      | (b) | Jean <sub>i</sub> is reluctant [[PRO <sub>i</sub> ] to leave].        | control     |

The control sentence does not involve any movement, but there is a link between the subject *Jean* and the verb in the lower clause which bonds them together. The appearance of the co-referential subjects in both sentences is made overt by [PRO], a term that Carnie (*ibid.*) calls "a special kind of null NP" (Carnie 2002, 255). These examples also prove the abovementioned intuition in that the intimate link between the subject and the lower verb in sentence (26a) is formed by the movement, whereas in sentence (26b) there should be the link between the subject and both of the verbs, so that the subject is needed for both places, and no movement exists.

To prove the above-mentioned features of the *to*-infinitive sentences, it would be wise to consider the underlining structure of the NP movement sentence (26a) from Carnie (*ibid.*, 256):

- (26a') It is likely [that Jean left].<sup>18</sup>

The above sentence is thematically identical to its counterpart in (26a); in both cases, the subject of the lower clause, *Jean*, gets its agent theta role from the verb *leave* (*ibid.*, 259). However, the subject position at the beginning of the sentence "is not assigned a theta role and it is filled by the expletive *it*" (Haegeman 1991, 308). Because of that semantically empty position, *Jean* can be moved in the subject position without violating the theta criterion, but satisfying the Extended Projection Principle (Carnie 2002, 257).

This movement construction can be contrasted with the control sentence (26b) above. When considering the predicate *is reluctant*, Carnie (2002, 259) states that it can be seen to take two arguments: the person who *is reluctant* and what they *are reluctant* about. It was already suggested that in this sentence, the subject *Jean* is the subject of both *is reluctant* and *leave*, and indeed, the

<sup>17</sup> I will follow the marking system of Carnie: the marking *t<sub>i</sub>* indicates the movement, which leaves behind a trace from the element moved. The moved element is illustrated with *i*. Otherwise, *i* illustrates the co-referentiality of two items.

<sup>18</sup> (x') indicates that the sentence is a rewritten version of sentence (x).

predicate *is reluctant*, unlike *is likely*, assigns an experiencer theta role to its subject, and thus, the place cannot be taken by any empty subjects, as was the case in sentence (26a') above. It is not possible, because otherwise it would violate the theta criterion (*ibid.*).

However, this is not enough, since the sentence still has the lower sentence, which, according to the Extended Projection Principle, should also have the subject. The lower predicate *leave* assigns the theta role of agent to its subject, which also appears to be *Jean* (*ibid.*, 260). The theta criterion says that one theta role can only be assigned to one argument, and in this case, this seems to be violated. Thus, another argument - namely [PRO], which is normally not visible and which in this case refers to *Jean* - is needed, and no movement is either possible or needed (Carnie 2002, 260-261).

As mentioned above, [PRO] in sentence (26b) refers to *Jean*, i.e. the subject of the matrix clause is also the controller of the covert subject of the lower clause (Haegeman 1991, 277-278). This phenomenon is called subject control, and it only covers one side of a coin. There are also cases where [PRO] is controlled by the object of the matrix clause (*ibid.*). Consider the following example from Haegeman<sup>19</sup> (1991, 278):

(27) Poirot<sub>i</sub> ordered Miss Marple<sub>j</sub> [[PRO<sub>j</sub> to go on her own]].

The verb *threaten* is regarded as a subject control verb.

Why is this subject then important in connection with the verb *threaten*? According to Davies and Dubinsky (2004), there seems to be cases in English where a verb occurs in both structures, but may differ slightly in meaning (Davies&Dubinsky 2004, 9). *Threaten* falls under this category. It depends on the role of the subject, whether it is about NP movement or control.

- (28) (a) Several downtown businesses threaten to go bankrupt.  
 (b) Several downtown businesses have threatened to take the city to court over the new parking regulations. (Davies&Dubinsky 2004, 10.)

When the subject takes part in the event of *threatening*, as in (28b), i.e. “a conscious threat has been made by the representatives of these businesses” (*ibid.*), the structure illustrates control. On the

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<sup>19</sup> I will follow Haegeman's marking system.

other hand, in sentence (28a), these downtown businesses do not participate in the action, the situation plainly “describes a likely scenario”. In these cases where no volition is present, it is about NP movement. (*ibid.*) To analyse these two structures in connection with the *OED* senses, control can be seen mainly to appear in sense 1, whereas sense 3 may probably represent NP movement.

### 5.1.1 Grammaticalisation

In the case of *threaten*, it seems that the lexical meaning (*make a threat*) is accompanied by a more grammatical and abstract meaning (*a threatening possibility*), when comparing control and NP movement. Mair (2002, 123) found a similar development in his analysis of the verb *help*, and refers to that phenomenon as *grammaticalisation*. Consider the following examples from the *OED*:

- (29) (a) God threatneth terribly to shake the earth. (E. Reynolds, 1649)  
 (b) It threatens to be wet to night. (Dickens 1848)

As noted in the sub-section 4.1, etymologically, *threaten* has developed from words which indicated a physical threat and somebody's threat to do something negative to somebody else. Sentence (29a) illustrates that case, being an earlier example. On the contrary, two centuries later, in sentence (29b), the meaning of the verb is broader and more abstract in meaning. This phenomenon will be taken into account in the corpus analysis, and after analysing all the periods chosen for this project, I will make a note whether the verb *threaten* is going through this change or not.

### 5.1.2 The NP + *to*-infinitive Complement

Although representing opposing actions, the similarity of the verb *threaten* with the verb *promise* is pointed out by Huddleston and Pullum (2002, 1227), and briefly introduced in sub-section 4.3.1. In addition to that, it is worth mentioning that *promise* is included in the list of verbs allowing the NP + *to*-infinitive complement by Huddleston and Pullum (2002, 1229). This fact, together with the findings in the *OED* analysis, suggests that this pattern might be, to some extent, found in the corpus analysis part in connection with *threaten* as well. However, Huddleston and Pullum (*ibid.*,

1230) note that this factor is rather marginal, and is found to be unacceptable by many speakers of English. Thus, the finite complement with a *that*-clause (sentence (30b) below) would be much more usual in this connection (*ibid.*). Consider their examples:

- (30) (a) Liz promised me to phone at six.  
 (b) Liz promised me that she would phone at six.

Sentence (30a) illustrates the case where the NP following the head (*me* in this example) is the addressee of the action. It takes the theta role of benefactive, and because the addressee does not take the role of the subject in the lower clause, this structure represents subject control.

## 5.2 The Great Complement Shift

According to Rohdenburg (2006, 143), there is a massive, on-going reorganisation concerning the system of sentential complementation in the English language, which he refers to as the Great Complement Shift. As the name suggests, it describes a movement from the use of some complement into the use of some other. Indeed, it involves an increase of one complement at the expense of another. Probably the most important and most extensive phenomenon involved by this shift is the rivalry between the *to*-infinitive and the *-ing* form, provided by "the establishment of the gerund<sup>20</sup> as a second type of non-finite complement" (Rohdenburg 2006, 143). Rohdenburg (*ibid.*, 143-144) illustrates this with the following examples:

- (33) (a) She delighted to do it. → She delighted in doing it.  
 (b) He was accustomed to do it. → He was accustomed to doing it.  
 (c) She avoided to go there. → She avoided going there.

According to Rohdenburg (*ibid.*), some of the changes have by now reached completion, whereas some are still in progress.

Because no evidence of *-ing* forms is found in the *OED*, it suggests that this shift is less relevant in connection with the verb *threaten*. It will nevertheless be kept in mind during the analysis in case of any *-ing* forms appearing.

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<sup>20</sup> i.e. the *-ing* form

### 5.3 The Complexity Principle

According to e.g. Rohdenburg, complement selection is sometimes affected by factors concerning cognitive complexity. Having studied the connection between the pattern selection and complexity, he states the following, which nowadays is known as Rohdenburg's Complexity Principle:

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. (Rohdenburg 1996, 151.)

This means that if the lower clause is not clearly and directly linked to its matrix clause, or if the lower clause is very complex, the connection between those two clauses needs to be made clear one way or another. In these cases, the more explicit constructions tend to be favoured. The complex environments which tend to trigger the choice of more explicit grammatical option may include e.g. several kinds of discontinuous constructions, heavy and complex subjects, objects or subordinate clauses, or passive constructions. However, Rohdenburg (1996) points out that the more explicit variant is "generally more formal than its less explicit counterpart", and additionally, a weaker semantic link between two expressions may be found, because different patterns imply different meanings, and in these cases, a construction with different meaning may be chosen. These are facts that we need to be aware of, if some examples turn out to be against the complexity principle (*ibid.*, 173).

As mentioned above, cognitively complex environments may develop if a construction is made discontinuous, e.g. by inserting certain elements between the matrix and lower clauses. According to Vosberg (2003a, 210-211), this is a case of *insertion*. The influence of insertions on the complexity of the sentence is affected by their length, so that even one-word insertions (e.g. *ever*) "can be considered a complexity factor, but they are processed much more easily than longer insertions" (*ibid.*). Consider the following examples illustrating complexity factors in the form of structural discontinuity (32a), negation (32b) and the contrast between finite and infinite complements (32c), provided by Rohdenburg (2006, 148-150):

- (32) (a) He promised his friends when he was challenged about it that he would return immediately / to return immediately.<sup>21</sup>  
 (b) She advised not to do it / not doing it / that it (should) not be done in advance.  
 (c) They gave us directions (on) how things should be done / how to do it.

In the above sentences, the finite complement options (i.e. those with overt subjects and finite verb forms, presented e.g. with *that*) tend to be the most suitable constructions to clarify the sentential status of the complement. On the contrary, if the element signalling the lower clause (e.g. *that*) is omitted, the finite structure is expected to be less explicit (Vosberg 2003a, 210-211).

#### 5.4 The Extraction Principle

Now that we are aware of some complexity factors, it is possible to deepen our knowledge by adding one phenomenon that also inflicts more complex environments - namely, extractions.

Extractions share the feature of insertions in that they tend to prefer the more explicit complements where there are different options. However, the difference between these two concepts is that while the one already introduced in the previous sub-section involves inserting something between the matrix and the lower clause, in this case, some element is extracted from the lower clause and moved to the left, leaving a gap behind (cf. e.g. Rudanko 2006, 36; Vosberg 2003a, 201).

Extractions always involve movement (cf. e.g. Huang 1997), and that movement makes the structure more complex. Taking these facts into account, Vosberg (2003b, 308) has formulated a proposition called Extraction Principle:

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

However, this principle has been proved insufficient by e.g. Rudanko (2010, 10), who has shown that also adjuncts can be extracted.

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<sup>21</sup> In sentences (32a) and (32b) the insertions are underlined afterwards.

After giving the principle for the use of extraction, I will now present some classifications of different types of extracted elements. Postal (1994, 160-162) lists nine different extraction types, which are presented below<sup>22</sup>:

(a) Question extraction	<u>Who</u> did they nominate [t] to be director?
(b) Restrictive relative extraction	the gun ( <u>which</u> ) they claimed [t] was used in the crime
(c) Pseudo clefting	<u>What</u> Ellen wants [t] is a Mercedes-Benz.
(d) Negative NP extraction	<u>No such gorilla</u> did I ever see [t].
(e) Comparative extraction	Stella tickled more chimps than ( <u>what</u> ) I said that Dwight tickled [t].
(f) Exclamatory extraction	<u>What a lovely woman</u> I found out that he married [t]!
(g) Topicalisation	<u>Frank</u> , I would never hire [t].
(h) Non-restrictive relative extraction	<u>Frank</u> , <u>who</u> they adored [t], is dishonest.
(i) Clefting	It was Frank <u>who</u> they hired [t].

Formerly, each extraction type was seen to have its own particular movement rule, but since 1980s it has been assumed that above-mentioned extractions all behave similarly, and no separate rules are needed. Commonly, these are analysed as involving "trace-leaving movements to non-argument position" (Postal 1994, 160-162).

Postal (*ibid.*) divides these extraction types into two categories: *A-extractions* including the first six (a-f), and the last three (g-i) belonging to *B-extractions*. Since Postal's list and his division are rather complex and detailed, I will adopt the summarised version of it in the analysis part of the thesis. That categorisation is based on Postal's list, and presented by Vosberg (2003a, 201-201), and it lists topicalisation, relativisation<sup>23</sup>, clefting, comparativisation and interrogation<sup>24</sup> as the main extraction types, and pseudo-clefting, negative NP extraction and exclamatory extraction as secondary (Vosberg 2003a, 201-201).

It was stated in the extraction principle above that the richest environment for the principle to be tested is the one where the choice between *to*-infinitive and the *-ing* clause complements is

<sup>22</sup> In each example, the underlined word or phrase is the constituent moved, and the marking [t] (derived from the word *trace*) indicates the place from which the constituent is moved, i.e. the gap which it leaves behind.

<sup>23</sup> This type combines Postal's restrictive and non-restrictive relative extractions.

<sup>24</sup> This basically means the same as Postal's question extraction.

possible. Although there was no evidence found in the *OED* part that *threaten* would appear with gerundial complements, extractions will nevertheless be of interest in the following parts of the thesis.

### **5.5 The Horror Aequi Condition**

In addition to above-mentioned principles affecting the complement choice, Rohdenburg (2003, 236) introduces one more, the horror aequi condition which "involves the widespread (and presumably universal) tendency to avoid the use of formally (near-) identical and (near-)adjacent (non-coordinate) grammatical elements or structures". Basically, this means that the language user tries to avoid using a *to*-infinitive immediately after a main verb in a marked infinitive, or, which is even more likely, an *-ing* form after another *-ing* form. Sometimes this tendency provides structures, which are unusual with certain verbs.

This condition will also be taken into account when analysing the different sub-corpora in the second half of the thesis.

### **5.6 Bolinger's Generalisation**

Most of the studies dealing with complementation approach the subject from a syntactic point of view. More recently, there have also been studies which focus on semantic features of complement selection. This means that the linguists try to point out that the selection is not arbitrary, but that the meaning of the predicate and the complement affects the result (Smith 2009, 360). Probably the topic receiving most attention has been the difference between the *to*-infinitive and the gerundial *-ing* form, since they have been noticed to vary depending on the context they emerge. This has also been studied by Bolinger (1968), and according to his findings, he stated that "a difference in syntactic form always spells a difference in meaning", which is widely known as Bolinger's Generalisation (Bolinger 1968, 127).



### 5.6.1 The Meaning of the *to*-infinitive

In connection with this particular study, it is interesting to take a deeper look at the possible meaning of *to*-infinitive, since it is a very common complement, and it is expected to be found as one of the most typical complements of the verb *threaten*. Some linguists (cf. Smith 2009, 368) argue that the infinitival *to* has its roots in the prepositional *to*, although, syntactically observed, it has long been regarded as “a meaningless infinitival marker”, which is strictly distinguished from the prepositional one.

In his study, Bolinger (1968) - among many other linguists - found out that whenever the context deals with imaginative or unreal situations, the infinitive seems to be the construction chosen, if there is the possibility of choosing. Another point he made was that the *to*-infinitive is usually used when it is about “the actuality of the present telling”. He refers to that as an aspect of *hypothesis* or *potentiality*. Consider the following example:

- (34) Can you remember to do that?

This example from Bolinger (*ibid.*, 123) indicates the forward-looking aspect, implying that the person in question should remember to do something in the future. Similarly, the following examples imply the reference to the future:

- (35) (a) He started to get mean.  
(b) I sensed him to be a bit uncertain.

The former sentence could be embedded with the phrase *but thought better of it*, and it would only be possible in this *to*-infinitive context. The latter sentence involves an unconfirmed suspicion, which could be made clear by adding a phrase *and sure enough he told me later he had been* (Bolinger 1968, 123- 124).

The actuality perspective in connection with the past becomes evident in the following examples, also by Bolinger (1968, 124):

- (36) (a) To wait would have been a mistake.  
(b) \*To wait has been a mistake.

If the event actually happened in the past, the *to*-infinitive is not the right structure to use. On the other hand, it is perfectly okay in the context, such as in the sentence (36a) (*ibid.*).

This discussion shows that certain meanings can be given to the infinitive form, and in general, it has to do with the future reference. However, this cannot be taken as the only truth, and, indeed, cannot always be realised. Nevertheless, it is worth taking into account in the analysis section.

### 5.6.2 The Meaning of the *-ing* form

Although no evidence of *-ing* clauses were found in connection with the verb studied in this thesis, it is interesting to discuss shortly the meaning of this construction to contrast it with the common *to*-infinitive, and possibly to find some reasons for why it does not seem to appear with *threaten*.

Continuing with Bolinger's (1968, 123-124) remarks, he contrasts the earlier presented *hypothesis* or *potentiality* aspect with the *reification* aspect, which he uses to describe the *thing*-like gerundial form. While the infinitive had the reference to the future, the *-ing* form looks backwards. Thus, the following example by Bolinger (*ibid.*) is about "the recollection of telling", and refers to a past event where something is actually done:

(34') Can you remember doing that?

(35a') He started getting mean (so I got out of there).

(35b') I sensed his being a bit uncertain (and acted to reassure him immediately).

The examples (35a') and (35b') are embedded with phrases which show the realised inception in the first one, and the awareness of the fact in the second one. The following examples illustrate the hypothetical and actual past events, which both can be presented by *-ing* form, unlike was the case with the infinitive:

(36a') Waiting would have been a mistake.

(36b') Waiting was a mistake.

(Bolinger 1968, 123-124.)

Again, this analysis is not applicable in all cases, but it nevertheless provides a good background information of the subject. When considering the backward-looking aspect of the *-ing* form, it could

be possible to draw a weak conclusion that, because of the forward-looking nature of *threaten* (cf. e.g. Huddleston and Pullum (2002, 1241), the gerundial form is not found with it. However weak, this remark could be at least one of the reasons for the lack of *-ing* clause complements in the *OED* analysis, and should be kept in mind when analysing the corpus data.

## 6 Corpus Analysis

After setting the stage in the previous chapters of this thesis, I will now move on to a fairly extensive analysis of the data gathered from two different corpora: the extended version of the CLMET (covering its three sub-corpora) and the BNC.

### 6.1 Methodology

I will use certain techniques to classify and analyse all the corpora and sub-corpora, so that the different parts of the analysis would be as easy to follow and compare with each other as possible. Because this study is a diachronic study, it is natural to start with the oldest material, i.e. the CLMETEV part I, and then proceed in chronological order towards Present-Day English illustrated in the BNC.

At the beginning of each sub-section, I will introduce an overview of the findings, including a brief presentation of the sub-corpus and the data gathered from it; the number of tokens before and after manually removing the irrelevant tokens (i.e. the adjectival or nominal forms of the verb); and two examples of those irrelevant tokens (one of each form: *threatened* and *threatening*) in order to illustrate the case for the reader as well as to give the reader a possibility to disagree with the analysis. The numbering of the examples will be started from the beginning to keep the numbers simpler. In the overview part, I will also present a table showing the types of complements and their total number sorted by the different verbal forms of *threaten*, and also the frequencies in percentages as well as the normalising frequencies (NF). Because the patterns in the tables are not systematically arranged according to their frequency, figures will be presented to make the results shown in the table more understandable. Only those complementation patterns which achieved a number of tokens relevant for later comparison will be illustrated in the figures.

After giving an overview of the sub-corpus, the analysis moves on to discussion sections, concentrating on remarks made in the theory part of the thesis in connection with non-sentential and

sentential complements of the verb *threaten*, and providing comparison between the different sub-corpora. As mentioned above, the frequency of a pattern is not the whole truth when compiling the tables. Instead, the sententiality of the construction is the first criterion. Thus, the patterns are listed according to whether they are sentential or non-sentential, and only after that, they will be in decreasing order of frequency. Because the sentential complements have deserved more attention in public discussion due to several phenomena concerning them (e.g. complexity factors and the horror aequi condition), they will be presented in the tables first, and they will begin the discussion section as well, followed by the non-sentential complements. The zero complement will be an exception to this rule; although quite common in some sub-corpora, it will always be the last in tables and discussions, resulting from its debatable position among complement patterns. As mentioned earlier in chapter 4.3.1, the *as*-clauses and parentheticals are grouped with the zero complements, and will be discussed in their turn.

This discussion will lead into a chapter which deals with the relationship between the senses formulated in chapter 4.2 and the different structures found in the data. In this chapter, a comparison with the *OED* results and the findings of the earlier sub-corpora will be provided.

To conclude the analysis of each sub-corpus, I will provide a short summary of the findings at the end of each sub-section. After this, I will move on to repeat the same operation with all the other sub-corpora.

## **6.2 CLMETEV part I**

This section presents the results of data collected from the first part of the CLMETEV, which includes the years 1710 to 1780.

### 6.2.1 Overview

The CLMETEV part I consists of 3,037,607 words which are taken from 32 different texts written by 23 authors. Because of the non-tagged nature of this corpus, a search string needs to be separately formed for all the four verb forms: *threaten*, *threatened*, *threatening* and *threatens*. These search strings provide altogether 152 tokens. To evade the precision problem, all the tokens have to be identified and the non-verbal forms need to be eliminated. Although the non-verbal forms include both nominal and adjectival forms of the verb, in the case of *threaten*, none of the verb forms is used as a noun in this sub-corpus. This means that all the excluded tokens are identified as adjectives, expressed by forms *threatened* and *threatening*, and 6 of them (3,9% of the total) are found in this part of the CLMETEV:

- (1) (a) ... for the first time of his life, he suffered a dejection of spirits; and resolved, at any rate, to avoid the threatened persecution of to-morrow. (Smollett 1751, *The Adventures of Peregrine Pickle*)  
 (b) Consider, Pamela, said he, in a threatening tone, consider where you are! (Richardson 1740, *Pamela*)

After eliminating the unwanted tokens, we are left with 146 relevant tokens, which has the NF of 48,1 words per million.

Table 3 below shows the statistics of the 10 complement patterns found in the sub-corpus.

Pattern	Verb form					Total	%	NF/million
	-	-ed		-ing	-s			
		Active	Passive					
<i>to</i> -infinitive	2	19	-	6	1	28	19,2	9,2
NP + <i>that</i> -clause	-	3	-	-	-	3	2,1	1,0
<i>that</i> -clause	-	2	-	-	-	2	1,4	0,7
NP + <i>to</i> -infinitive	-	2	-	-	-	2	1,4	0,7
NP + <i>wh</i> -clause	-	1	-	-	-	1	0,7	0,3
NP	23	18	6	5	7	59	40,4	19,4
NP + <i>with</i> + NP	6	9	13	1	3	32	21,9	10,5
NP + <i>to</i> + NP	-	5	-	-	-	5	3,4	1,6
NP + <i>upon</i> + NP	-	1	-	-	-	1	0,7	0,3
∅ complement	6	6	-	-	1	13	8,9	4,3
<b>Total</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>48,1</b>

Table 3. Complement patterns of the verb *threaten* in CLMETEV part I sorted by different verb forms.

Figure 1 illustrates the structures found in the corpus most frequently:

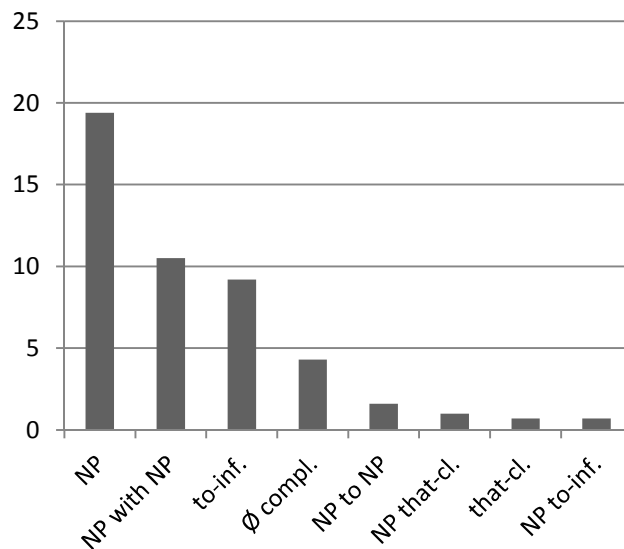


Figure 1. Complements of *threaten* in CLMETEV part II in order of frequency (NF).

The figure demonstrates the remarkable dominance of the NP as the complement of *threaten* during this period. The difference between the patterns NP *with* NP and *to*-infinitive is not notable, and they, together with the zero complement, form the rest of the significant patterns of this period.

### 6.2.2 Sentential Complements

The *to*-infinitive accounts for 28 tokens in the CLMETEV part I, being clearly the most common sentential complement with 19,2 per cent of the total. This gives it the NF of 9,2. Below are two examples of the *to*-infinitive complements:

- (2) (a) He forthwith leaped up in a fury, and snatching one of his pistols, threatened to put the ostler to death, when another squall from the women checked his resentment. (Smollett 1771, *The Expedition of Humphrey Clinker*)
- (b) "My little hero being refused admittance, went away, threatening to return speedily with a reinforcement; and during this interval, I provided myself with a soldier, whom I ... (Smollett 1751, *The Adventures of Peregrine Pickle*)

The majority of the *to*-infinitive tokens fall under the first sense: *To try to influence (a person) by menaces; to declare conditionally one's intention of inflicting injury upon; to make a threat*, which is also the case in sentence (2b) above. Thus, the subject of the sentences is mainly [+ HUMAN]. In

some cases, the subject is not a human, but nevertheless [+ANIMATE], involving collective NPs, such as *the discomfited faculty*. It is the nature of sense I that it chiefly accepts animate subjects, but there are two exceptional tokens, such as the following sentence, in which the 'human voice' is given to the subject in a letter, assigned also the theta role of agent:

- (3) My reproaches to him for his revealing himself to Mrs. Jewkes; and his letter to me in answer, threatening to expose my master, if he deceived him; mentioning in it John Arnold's correspondence with him ... (Richardson 1740, *Pamela*)

Another typical feature of sense I is found in the above example: the conditions of the threat are made visible by the *if*-clause. During this period, however, not more than five examples of this phenomenon are found.

The other three senses are not very common with the *to*-infinitive, but when they appear, they often take [-ANIMATE] subjects. Consider the following example:

- (4) The animosities of the palace, by irritating the ambition and alarming the fears of Plautianus, threatened to produce a revolution, and obliged the emperor, who still loved him, to consent with reluctance to his death. (Gibbon 1776, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire I*)

This token is one of the four examples in the CLMETEV part I belonging to sense III: *To give ominous indication of (impending evil); to portend evil; be likely to happen (something bad, negative, evil)*. Because this sense usually involves implications of a likely scenario in which the verb does not take part in the action, all but one of these examples represent NP movement. In the above sentence, the animosities do not participate in the action of producing a revolution, the scenario merely exists. In addition to those examples, some tokens falling under sense II involve NP movement. NP movement is clearly a rarity during this period, since only five examples of it are found. On the contrary, all other tokens involve control, as is the case in above-mentioned sentences (2-3), as well as in the following one, which also functions as an example of sense IV: *To express an intention to do something, not necessarily evil*:

- (4) Wenlock tried all his eloquence to get him into a good humour, but in vain; he threatened to acquaint his uncle with all that he knew, and to exculpate himself at the other's expence. (Reeve 1777, *The Old English Baron*)



Interestingly, four examples of *to*-infinitive complements involving insertion appear in the data, although they are considered rather rare with these clauses by some linguists. According to Rohdenburg (1996, 166), an insertion can be expected to appear with "the relatively autonomous finite clause", which does not demand "immediate relationship between the superordinate and subordinate actions involved", but is suggested to be less common with non-finite clauses. Consider two of the four tokens:

- (5) (a) ... his aspect was so hideous, that she dreaded a miscarriage every hour, until she threatened in plain terms, to dispute the sanity of his intellects, and apply to the chancellor for a committee. (Smollett 1751, *The Adventures of Peregrine Pickle*)  
 (b) It was no longer ago than last night that I threatened, if she disobeyed me, to confine her to her chamber upon bread and water as long as she lived. (Fielding 1749, *Tom Jones*)

In sentence (5a), an adverbial phrase is inserted between the matrix and the lower clause, whereas in the other example, the *if*-clause functions as an insertion. Both cases repeat themselves in the other two examples. Where insertions appear, we would expect to find a *that*-clause complement, rather than a *to*-infinitive one, because of the complexity principle, which, in these cases, is violated. No other examples involving complexity factors, such as extractions, are nevertheless found in this sub-corpus.

Other sentential complements are not frequently used, and those five different patterns together produced only 8 tokens. The *that*-clause with (example (6) below) and without (example (7) below) the preceding NP comes next in row, with three and two tokens respectively:

- (6) Not long after, the two principal incendiaries came to an open rupture, and Markham threatened Wenlock that he would shew his uncle what a serpent he had harboured in his bosom. (Reeve 1777, *The Old English Baron*)  
 (7) ... and as he could seldom restrain his passions, he loudly threatened, that he would commit to the flames both the letter and the messenger. (Gibbon 1776, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire I*)

In examining the two *that*-clause complements, one token is found, from which the word *that* is omitted. Any particular reasons for this is hard to find, but Biber et al. (1999, 681-682) suggest some possible grounds, which might work here as well. According to them, Modern English provides some environments where *that* omission is encouraged: 1) when certain verbs appear in

the matrix clause, e.g. *say* or *think*; 2) when there are co-referential subjects in the main clause and the *that*-clause; 3) when a personal pronoun is used as the subject of the *that*-clause; and 4) in general casual conversation (Biber et al 1999, 681-682). Now consider the example from the CLMETEV part I:

- (8) I do nothing but long to go back again to my poverty and distress, as he threatened I should; for though I am sure of the poverty, I shall not have half the distress I have had for some months past, I'll assure you. (Richardson 1740, *Pamela*)

Sentence (8) indeed illustrates some of the above-mentioned environments; the most clear case would be the condition three because of the personal pronoun subject in the lower clause.

Furthermore, this token is classified to belong to sense IV, in which *threaten* only indicates an intention to do something which is not necessarily negative. I interpreted the verb here to approach the meaning of *say*, thus, the first condition is also fulfilled. With the NP + *that*-clause pattern, there is no omission of the *that* element, which goes nicely together with the Complexity Principle.

The CLMETEV part I data, while yielding some examples of insertion among the *to*-infinitive tokens, shows none among the two *that*-clause patterns, where they would have been expected. However, complexity factors come up when considering the subjects of the higher and lower clauses of these two *that*-clause patterns. In one of the two *that*-clause and in two of the three NP + *that*-clause tokens, the higher subject was co-referential with the lower one. This raises the question of why the *to*-infinitive is not used instead, since it more naturally represents the case where the subjects are co-referential with each other. Sentence (9) below, presents one of the NP + *that*-clause examples, and there the presence of the *that*-clause instead of the *to*-infinitive could be explained in terms of the Complexity Principle: the descriptive relative clause preceding the *that*-clause is so complex that the meaning of the sentence would obscure in case of the *to*-infinitive. Consider:

- (9) The directors of some of those banks sometimes took advantage of this optional clause, and sometimes threatened those who demanded gold and silver in exchange for a considerable number of their notes, that they would take advantage of it, unless such demanders would content themselves with a part of what they demanded. (Smith 1766, *Wealth of Nations*)

This sentence is also the only example of the *if*-clause found in this sub-corpus, although the word *if* is replaced by a similar word *unless*. When it comes to the other NP + *that*-clause example and the only *that*-clause example illustrating this phenomenon, the case is not so clear. In the latter case, (illustrated in sentence (7) above) the explanation could be found in a condition approaching the horror aequi condition: the use of *to*-infinitive would provide an environment in which two *to* elements would be close to each other, although one is the infinitival form and the other the preposition. Another reason for the two *that*-clause examples could simply be the meaning of the sentences: these sentences - as well as two other tokens - comprise modal verbs. If the modality of the sentence needs to be highlighted, it requires the use of a finite clause.

The remaining two patterns are both in the form NP + clause; there are two tokens of the NP + *to*-infinitive construction, and one example of the NP + *wh*-clause pattern. Here is one example of each:

- (10) They have threatened one gentleman to have a reversion cut off from his son, unless he will vote with them. (Walpole 1735-48, *Letters 1735-1748*)
- (11) But your honour went farther, so you did; and threatened me what you would do, and talked of Lucretia, and her hard fate.--Your honour knows you went too far ... (Richardson 1740, *Pamela*)

Both patterns have only [+HUMAN] subjects and objects, and they all fall under sense I. One token of the *to*-infinitive declares the threat *conditionally*, including an *unless*-clause.

Complexity factors do not play a role among these constructions, but the *wh*-clause complement might have same reasons for its appearance as the *that*-clause ones had in the previous paragraph; it includes modality, which is hard to express, unless it is made visible by a modal verb.

### 6.2.3 Non-sentential Complements

In the first part of the CLMETEV, there are several non-sentential complements, of which clearly the most common is the NP construction, with 40,4 per cent of the total amount and the NF of 19,4:

- (12) (a) As soon as the ambitious mind of Artaxerxes had triumphed over the resistance of his vassals, he began to threaten the neighboring states, who, during the long

slumber of his predecessors, had insulted Persia with impunity... (Gibbon 1776, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire 1*)

- (b) The establishment of the army, my lords, is an innovation, and, as the noble lord has justly represented it, an innovation that threatens nothing less than the destruction of our liberties, and the dissolution of our government. (Johnson 1740-1, *Parliamentary Debates 1*)

All four forms of the verb are found with this pattern, although *threaten* and *threatened* are more frequent than the two others. Six of the 24 *-ed* forms have a passive voice, half of which includes the *by*-phrase expressing the agent:

- (13) My maid was brought to the question, and grievously threatened; but, like all the women I ever had, remained unshaken in her fidelity. (Smollett 1751, *The Adventures of Peregrine Pickle*)

The remaining half of the examples of the passivisation are in the form of the sentence above, where the patient (or the theme) is fronted to pre-verb position and the agent is not visible. Whether or not the agent is implicit, all passive constructions constitute a complexity factor. Considering further the complexity factors, one example of both insertion and extraction is found in the data, although their status is not as significant with non-sentential complements as it is with sentential ones. Take a look at the following extracted sentence, which is an example of relativisation:

- (14) ... they would have improved every opportunity of retarding the vengeance which they were forced to threaten ... (Johnson 1740-1, *Parliamentary Debates 1*)

Although not exactly a type of extraction in the sense of complementation, one phenomenon repeating itself among the tokens needs to be taken into account. 19 out of the 59 tokens involved the extraction of the subject of *threaten*, i.e. the subject was moved into a higher clause and the one with *threaten* becomes its relative clause. Very often the extracted subject is *danger* or *calamity*, as in the following example:

- (15) At length being wearied with persecution and poverty, and foreseeing the calamity which threatened and afterwards fell upon his church and country, by the unbounded fury of the Presbyterians, he changed his ... (Cibber 1753, *The Lives of the Poets 1*)

These kinds of extracted elements are especially common with the third person singular form: six out of seven tokens involve it. One other feature found with this pattern is also illustrated with the above sentence. Another verb is inserted between *threaten* and its complement, but I will not

consider this as an insertion in the sense they have appeared in the data so far, because these two coordinated predicates have the same complement, and the order in which they appear might as well be the other way round, removing this insertion.

The NP complement constructions accept both [+HUMAN] and [-ANIMATE] subjects and objects. In fact, the [-ANIMATE] ones are slightly more frequent than the [+HUMAN] ones, which might be explained by the fairly high number of tokens falling under sense II and III, which both admit non-human participants. Whether this would also explain the relatively high number of the NP complement used in a way which resembles the one including the *with* construction is unclear, but in any case, 15 examples of this phenomenon are found in the data, 9 of which appear with sense II and III. Another fact worth noting is that all five cases in which the agent is [+HUMAN] and the NP complement is [-ANIMATE], being assigned the theta role of theme, allow this *with* interpretation (sentence (16b) below). Consider two of the tokens:

- (16) (a) The failing, or rather escape of the Ferrol squadron, and departure of the French fleet, are the most important events of the present war; events that threaten very dangerous consequences, no less than descents upon our American colonies, [...], and perhaps the destruction of the brave Vernon ... (Johnson 1740-1, *Parliamentary Debates 1*)
- (b) ... he had no occasion, and as a civil legislator could not with propriety, threaten punishments in another world. (Gibbon 1776, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire 1*)

In one case, the NP is followed by the *for -ing* construction, but since *for* is somewhat ambiguous word, I decided to include this example in the pure NP pattern, i.e. not considering it as a complement of *threaten*:

- (17) ... and having given me a caution to avoid some people, by whom I was threatened, for exposing them in my letters, we went to take a bottle together. (Cibber 1753, *The Lives of the Poets 3*)

Clearly, the *for -ing* clause is really close to the head verb, but as it can be rephrased as "because I exposed them in my letters", it is probably not a typical case of a complement. Later on, I will use the same division, if these examples keep emerging in other sub-corpora as well.

With 32 tokens, the NP *with* NP complement is the second most frequent non-sentential pattern in the first part of the CLMETEV. It composes 21,9 per cent of this period's tokens, and it has a normalised frequency of 10,5. Below, there are some examples of the pattern:

- (18) (a) She would again have fled if Theodore had not made her observe that they were unarmed, and had not threatened them with instant death if they should dare to seize the Princess. (Walpole 1764, *The Castle of Otranto*)  
 (b) ... but the other part of this clause is more seriously to be considered, as it threatens the sailors with greater injuries ... (Johnson 1740-1, *Parliamentary Debates I*)

The former sentence is one of the two examples in which the threat is made apparent by an *if*-clause. However, with this construction, it is not commonly used. Sentence (18a) also represents a case with [+HUMAN] subject and object, which is clearly the most frequent style in this sub-corpus. It might arise from the popularity of sense I, as well as from the frequency of collective NPs favoured by other senses and expressed by words, such as *the court* and *the world*, which can be assigned the theta roles of agents and patients. In some rather rare constructions the NP follows the means of threat, like in the sentence (19) below:

- (19) Under the reign of a just and virtuous prince, the tyranny of the army threatened with instant death his most faithful ministers, who were suspected of an intention to correct their intolerable disorders. (Gibbon 1776, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire I*)

Three examples of relativisation extraction are found with this pattern in the first part of the CLMETEV. They all indicate cases, in which the *with* construction is extracted from the lower clause and moved to the matrix clause, as in sentence (20) below:

- (20) ... I will now communicate to you, in your slumbering condition, the news with which I threatened you. Your good mother, you are to know, is dead at last, and hath left her whole fortune to her elder daughter ... (Fielding 1751, *Amelia*)

The NP *with* NP pattern has examples of all the forms of *threaten*, but the *-ed* form, with 22 tokens is significantly more common than the others, which can be seen as a reflection of the proportion of the passive sentences: notably high number of 13 examples is found in this sub-corpus. Most of them are cases where the agent is not expressed, as in the following examples:

- (21) (a) ... that Tabby's arms could be untwisted from his neck; Liddy's teeth chattered, and Jenkins was threatened with a fit as usual. (Smollett 1771, *The Expedition of Humphrey Clinker*)
- (b) How much, my lords, is the forbearance of that people to be admired, [...] who have continued patiently to hope for legal methods of redress, at a time when they saw themselves threatened with legal slavery, when they saw the legislative power established only for their protection ...(Johnson 1740-1, *Parliamentary Debates I*)

The *by*-phrase is explicit only in one passive example, and a possible reason for its omission in connection with this pattern could be that sometimes the thought expressed by the *with* construction resembles the cause of the threat, i.e. the agent, as is the case in sentence (21a) above. Sentence (21b) illustrates one of the five examples among the total of the 13 passive cases which can be counted as a stative passive. There the meaning of the construction approaches the adjectival use of the verb; the sentence describes the state of the events, thus no real action is expressed by the verb.

An interesting example is found in the category of non-sentential complements which deserves closer observation:

- (22) ... she fell upon him with a certain weapon, which, though it be neither long, nor sharp, nor hard, nor indeed threatens from its appearance with either death or wound, hath been however held in great dread and abhorrence by man ... (Fielding 1749, *Tom Jones*)

This sentence is actually closer to an adjectival sentence, since *threaten* is equal to the other adjectives in the description of the appearance of the weapon. The only thing that makes it belong to the group of verbs is the *-s* inflection. Another feature to consider is the complementation pattern. This seems to be the only case in which the *with* construction follows the head without a NP expressing the target of the threat. Thus, I decided not to treat it as an independent pattern, but to include it in the group of NP *with* NP, in which the first NP is omitted. This interpretation is due to the fact that the target NP is still implied by the *with* construction, since there must be someone or something to be killed or wounded.

The NP *to* NP contributes 5 tokens (examples (23a) and (23b)), which is 3,4 per cent of the total, and gives the NF of 1,6. Additionally, one example of the similarly behaving pattern NP *upon* NP (example (24)) is found in the CLMETEV part I. The latter construction is not very significant

in connection with the whole analysis because of its small frequency of 0,7 per cent. Here are examples of both constructions:

- (23) (a) Such was the fortunate issue of this perilous adventure, which threatened abundance of vexation to our family... (Smollett 1771, *The Expedition of Humphrey Clinker*)  
 (b) He judged all resistance to be a diminution of his power, and threatened excommunication to the whole State, if a revocation was not instantly made, ... (Cibber 1753, *The Lives of the Poets I*)
- (24) ... the mob besieged the two Houses, and threatened vengeance upon the bishops, whenever they came out. (Cibber 1753, *The Lives of the Poets I*)

The NP *to* NP pattern, as well as the NP *upon* NP pattern, behaves like those examples of *threaten* with a NP complement which nevertheless approach the meaning expressed by the NP *with* NP pattern, since all the tokens of these constructions represent the case. What is threatened, is always [-ANIMATE], words such as *destruction*, but the subject can be either [+HUMAN] or [-ANIMATE], as can be seen in the above examples (23a) and (23b). Sentence (23b) is the only token in which the *if*-clause is present. The target of the threat (i.e. the NP following *to*) is always [+ANIMATE], mostly also [+HUMAN], apart from some collective NPs, such as *our family* and *the whole State* in (23a) and (23b).

It needs to be noted that 50 per cent of the non-sentential complement patterns not appearing very frequently is found among the texts of one and the same author, namely Cibber, and in fact, the examples are always from the same book *The Lives of the Poets I*.

The last member in the non-sentential complement section of the CLMETEV part I, is the zero complement. With 8,9 per cent of the sub-corpus and the NF of 4,3, it is not very frequent construction, and it includes no parentheticals or *as*-clauses. Furthermore, although it appears with all forms but the *-ing* form, only the uninflected form and the past tense form are common:

- (25) He deliberated, he threatened, but he could not punish ... (Gibbon 1776, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire I*)  
 (26) We soon, however, found that he had not threatened in vain; for the very next morning his steward came to demand my annual rent, which, by the train of accidents already related, I was unable to pay. (Goldsmith 1766, *The Vicar of Wakefield*)



All of the 13 tokens behave very similarly: they all fall under the first sense indicating clear intention of inflicting injury, but because of the nature of this patterns, the target is not explicit. Furthermore in all cases, the subject is [+HUMAN]. In seven tokens out of the 13, the head verb was followed by an adverbial element, such as *in vain* in sentence (26) above.

#### 6.2.4 Sense and Structure in the CLMETEV part I

This section is devoted to the correlation between sense and structure in the first part of the CLMETEV, completed with some comparison to the analysis of the *OED* data. The table below presents the spread of complement patterns across the senses:

Pattern	Sense				Total
	I	II	III	IV	
<i>to</i> -infinitive	20	2	4	2	28
NP + <i>that</i> -clause	2	-	1	-	3
<i>that</i> -clause	1	-	-	1	2
NP + <i>to</i> -infinitive	2	-	-	-	2
NP + <i>wh</i> -clause	1	-	-	-	1
NP	24	15	19	1	59
NP + <i>with</i> + NP	16	9	4	3	32
NP + <i>to</i> + NP	2	-	3	-	5
NP + <i>upon</i> + NP	1	-	-	-	1
∅ complement	13	-	-	-	13
<b>Total</b>	<b>82 / 56,2%</b>	<b>26 / 17,8%</b>	<b>31 / 21,2%</b>	<b>7 / 4,8%</b>	<b>146</b>

Table 4. The dissolution of the complementation patterns and senses in CLMETEV part I.

Sense I: *To try to influence (a person) by menaces; to declare conditionally one's intention of inflicting injury upon; to make a threat.* 82 (56,2%) of the 146 tokens of the CLMETEV part I belong to the first sense. In many cases, this sense is the only one in which the pattern emerged, e.g. all the zero complement examples fall into this group. Obviously, being over half of the total, this sense is the most common sense found in this sub-corpus, and the only sense in which all patterns appeared. Most of the *to*-infinitive and NP *with* NP complements emerged in this sense.

Sense II: *To put in danger; endanger.* The second sense is found in 26 tokens, or in 17,8% of the total. Although it appears quite frequently, it is found only with the three most common

patterns, namely the NP, the NP *with* NP and the *to*-infinitive complements, and additionally, the *to*-infinitive pattern is very rare.

Sense III: *To give ominous indication of (impending evil); to portend evil; be likely to happen (something bad, negative, evil)*. 31 tokens, with the percentage of 21,2 of the total, fall into this sense. 19 out of the 31 tokens belong to the NP complement group, and the rest of the sense consist of the *to*-infinitive, the NP + *that*-clause, the NP *with* NP and the NP *to* NP complements. Although rare, this sense forms the majority of the NP *to* NP pattern, with 3 tokens. Typically, the subject of the sentences allowing this sense is connected to the semantic field of *calamity* or *danger*. The objects were mostly personal pronouns, or words indicating *ruin* and *destruction*, or (somebody's) *domain*.

Sense IV: *To express an intention to do something, not necessarily evil*. With only 7 tokens and 4,8% of the total, the fourth sense is the less frequently found sense in this sub-corpus. Nevertheless, it appears in many different structures: the *to*-infinitive, the *that*-clause, the NP and the NP *with* NP patterns are found with two, one, one and three tokens respectively. In the case of the *that*-clause, this sense is one of the two senses in which it appears.

In comparison with the *OED* analysis, it can be seen that the first and the fourth sense are in line with the previous analysis, although the fourth sense is only found with the *to*-infinitive pattern in the *OED*. However, the second sense is less frequent in the *OED* analysis, and the third sense accepts a wider range of complement types than is suggested in the *OED* part. The patterns in the previous analysis also follow quite fluently the order of frequency in the *OED* data, the NP dominating and appearing in different senses, followed by the zero complement and the *to*-infinitive, which nevertheless is less common than in the CLMETEV part I. In the *OED*, the first sense forms only 50 per cent of the senses in which the zero complement is found, unlike in the previous analysis. There, it also accepts the third sense. Noteworthy is that the NP *with* NP construction has increased both in number and in senses accepted.

### 6.2.5 Review

Now we have studied the complementation in the 18th century, and it is time to draw a conclusion of it. The material for this part of the study included 146 tokens with 10 different complementation patterns: the NP was clearly the one to dominate this period, followed by the NP *with* NP complement, the *to*-infinitive complement, and the zero complement, which did not include any examples of *as*-clauses or parentheticals, unlike could have been expected.

This sub-corpus showed some evidence of the existence of the NP + *wh*-clause complement, although such a construction was not found in the *OED* data. On the contrary, the *wh*-clause without the preceding NP did occur in the *OED*, but not in this part of the CLMETEV. Likewise, the NP *to* NP and NP *upon* NP constructions found in this sub-corpus were absent in the *OED* data, which nevertheless did include the pattern NP *for to*-infinitive. However, this pattern appeared only in very old language usage, and it is probably replaced by the *to*-infinitive in more modern language.

The occurrence of the senses was somewhat expected on the basis of the *OED* analysis: the first sense dominated the tokens, while sense IV was fairly rare.

The complexity factors turned out to behave interestingly, although not much evidence of them was found. Insertion appeared with non-finite clause complements, but not with finite clause complements. Additionally, the co-referential subjects with *that*-clause patterns provided some good discussion concerning the Complexity Principle and partly also the horror aequi condition.

### 6.3 CLMETEV part II

In this section, I will introduce the findings from the data gathered from the CLMETEV part II, covering the years 1780 to 1850.

### 6.3.1 Overview

The size of the CLMETEV part II is 5,723,988 words which are retrieved from 64 texts written by 46 different authors. A search for all the relevant forms of *threaten* provided 327 tokens, from which 46 tokens, i.e. 14,1 per cent of the total amount, are removed because of their non-verbal nature. Although the most frequently used nominal form derived from *threaten* is undoubtedly *a threat*, in some cases the *-ing* form of the verb was found in the place typical of NPs, which is illustrated in (27a). Likewise, some tokens appeared as a part of a NP, i.e. forming a compound noun together with the following NP (sentence (27b) below). Here are examples of nominal and adjectival use (28a-b) of the forms *threatened* and *threatening*:

- (27) (a) It is very possible this may excite a smile, as the threatening of a necessity or a danger to these privileged persons, which it is thought they may be comfortably assured ... (Foster 1821, *An Essay on the Evils of Popular Ignorance*)  
 (b) Upon this he replied, "The sort of threatening letter which Mrs. Newton's is, will never succeed with me ... (Cottle 1847, *Reminiscences of Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Robert Southey*)
- (28) (a) They have nobly struggled with their threatened destiny, and have overcome it. (Foster 1821, *An Essay on the Evils of Popular Ignorance*)  
 (b) A long and narrow passage overhung on either side by a stupendous barrier of black and threatening rocks. (Borrow 1842, *Bible in Spain*)

After deleting the non-verbal forms, 281 tokens remain, which has the NF of 49,1. The use of the seems to be slightly higher than it was in the previous analysis, but no significant change has happened since the previous period. In addition, two more complementation patterns are found in the CLMETEV part II: two completely new constructions, the NP *for* NP and NP *into* NP complements, appear. Furthermore, the NP + *wh*-clause pattern found in the first part of the CLMETEV, is not found in this data, but instead, a *wh*-clause without the preceding NP emerges. The table 5 below will introduce the division of the 12 complementation patterns:

Pattern	Verb form				Total	%	NF/million	
	-	-ed		-ing				-s
		Active	Passive					
<i>to</i> -infinitive	9	39	-	22	14	84	29,9	14,7
<i>that</i> -clause	1	4	-	2	-	7	2,5	1,2
NP + <i>that</i> -clause	1	1	-	-	-	2	0,7	0,3
NP + <i>to</i> -infinitive	1	-	1	-	-	2	0,7	0,3
<i>wh</i> -clause	-	-	-	1	-	1	0,4	0,2
NP	26	40	12	15	6	99	35,2	17,3
NP + <i>with</i> + NP	8	15	20	4	3	50	17,8	8,7
NP + <i>to</i> + NP	1	1	1	1	-	4	1,4	0,7
NP + <i>for</i> + NP	-	1	-	-	-	1	0,4	0,2
NP + <i>upon</i> + NP	-	-	1	-	-	1	0,4	0,2
NP + <i>into</i> + NP	-	-	2	-	-	2	0,7	0,3
∅ complement	4	15	-	4	5	28	10,0	4,9
<b>Total</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>281</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>49,1</b>

Table 5. Complementation patterns of the verb *threaten* in CLMETEV part II sorted by different verb forms.

Figure 2 clarifies the differences between the complementation patterns:

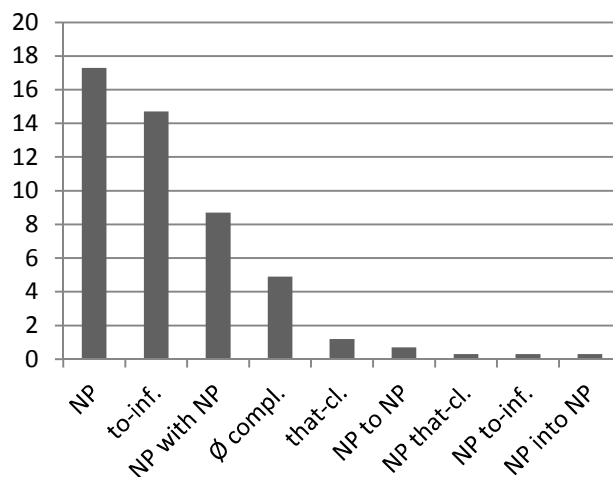


Figure 2. Complements of *threaten* in CLMETEV part II in order of frequency (NF).

During the time-frame from 1780 to 1850, no one pattern is clearly predominant, as there is no significant difference between the NP and the *to*-infinitive complements. The *to*-infinitive is the only pattern which has changed remarkable in comparison with the first corpus analysis: it is used much more frequently, leaving behind the NP *with* NP pattern, which used to precede it. There are four patterns whose numbers are noticeable compared to the others and which seem to be the most

frequently used, following the trend shown in the CLMETEV part I: among the two first mentioned, there are the NP *with* NP and zero complement patterns.

### 6.3.2 Sentential Complements

The most frequently used sentential pattern in the CLMETEV part II is the *to*-infinitive. With 84 tokens, which is 29,9 per cent of the total, its use is notably higher than the use of any other sentential complement. The NF of the *to*-infinitive accounts for 14,7, which is notable higher than the NF of 9,2 found in the first analysis. Below are two examples of the pattern:

- (29) (a) After another of the lectures, he called me on one side, and said, "My dear friend, a dirty fellow has threatened to arrest me for ten pounds." (Cottle 1847, *Reminiscences of Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Robert Southey*)
- (b) We have constructed a pyramid, which throws into unspeakable contempt the vestiges of ancient Egyptian industry: but it stands upon its apex; it trembles with every breeze; and momentarily threatens to overwhelm in its ruins the fearless undertakers that have set it up. (Godwin 1831, *Thoughts on Man*)

Sentence (29a) is an example of sense I, which keeps the number of [+HUMAN] subjects emerging in the data high, and which continues to be favoured by the *to*-infinitive complements, though remarkably losing ground to sense III, illustrated in sentence (29b). This sense is now the most frequent sense with this pattern, favouring [-ANIMATE] subjects with 25 out of 36 tokens. One consequence arising from this change is the increasing amount of NP movement among the *to*-infinitive tokens, which is also the case in sentence (29b). Nearly 40 per cent of the total number of tokens is featured by this phenomenon leading to the grammaticalisation of the verb. As suggested in connection with the discussion of control and NP movement in section 5.1, NP movement seems to correlate with sense III.

*If*-clauses have also increased in number, but in fact decreased in percentage, when compared to the first period of the CLMETEV. 14 out of 84 tokens include an *if*-clause, one of which is inserted between the head verb and its complement:

- (31) ... she cursed him most immoderately in the country language, which was the only one she spoke, and threatened, if he attempted to breed any disturbance in her house, to turn the horses, himself, and his master forthwith out of doors. (Borrow 1842, *Bible in Spain*)

As noted with the previous analysis, the *to*-infinitive seems to allow insertion, and 14 examples of it appear also in this data. Interestingly, two of these tokens include a *with* construction, as if forming a *with* NP + *to*-infinitive complement, which I decided was not the case, since it is more like an annotation to the action in question. Negation, which was not apparent with this pattern in the first part of the CLMETEV, now appears once. The same happens with extractions, of which there are two examples. Although these relativisation extractions are not strictly connected to the complement itself, they do appear in the *to*-infinitive clause. Below are illustrations of the insertion involving a *with* construction (sentence 32), the negation (sentence 33) and the extraction (sentence 34, which also involves an insertion):

- (32) I disencumbered myself by main force and fled, but he overhied me, knocked me down, and threatened, with dreadful oaths, to throw me from the cliff. (Hogg 1824, *Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*)
- (33) Viola hastened from her presence, threatening never more to come to plead Orsino's love ... (Lamb 1807, *Tales from Shakespeare*)
- (34) ... wishing you and she were to make two at the ensuing lying-in, with which Mrs. B. threatens very soon to favour me ... (Burns 1780-96, *Letters 1780-1796*)

One case appears in the data which, although not a very good example, could be interpreted as an example of saving the horror aequi condition:

- (35) ... but should inimical circumstances forbid me closing with your kind offer, or enjoying it only threaten to entail farther misery ... (Burns 1780-96, *Letters 1780-1796*)

Because of the *-ing* form in the verb *enjoy* (which otherwise would demand an *-ing* form from the following verb), *threaten* appears in its basic form. Or, the other way round, because *threaten* is followed by the *to*-infinitive complement, the infinitival marker of *threaten* is not present.

Although not many, *that*-clauses are found in this sub-corpus, both with and without the preceding NP: the *that*-clause complement slightly increasing, the NP + *that*-clause decreasing in comparison with the previous analysis. The seven tokens of the plain *that*-clauses (only 2,5 per cent

of the total) in all but the third person present tense form are enough to take the second place in order of frequency among sentential complements:

- (36) (a) Cathy threatened that his library should pay for hers, and smiling as she passed Hareton, went singing up-stairs, ... (Brontë 1847, *Wuthering Heights*)  
 (b) 'This man came to threaten that he would make against me the charge he has now made, unless I would purchase his silence with half my fortune ... (Bulwer-Lytton 1834, *The Last Days of Pompeii*)

Appeal to the horror aequi condition can be made in the case of (36b). The reason for not using the *to*-infinitive instead of the *that*-clause complement is the environment which the *to*-infinitive would provide: two identical and adjacent non-coordinated grammatical structures, which should be avoided.

The NP + *that*-clause produces two tokens, one with the form *threaten* and the other with *threatened*. Here is one of them:

- (37) ... and I counsel you to keep them still in view.' 'Trust me, I will. I threaten mamma sometimes, that I'll run away, and disgrace the family by earning my own livelihood, if she torments ... (Brontë 1848, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*)

The Complexity Principle plays a great role with these two *that*-clause patterns. Amazing 6 out of 7 *that*-clause tokens and both NP + *that*-clause tokens include *if*-clauses, which are inserted between *threaten* and its complement in five cases, two of which are illustrated below:

- (38) Polixenes then reproached his son for daring to contract himself to this low-born maiden, calling Perdita "shepherd's brat, sheep-hook," and other disrespectful names, and threatening if ever she suffered his son to see her again, he would put her, and the old shepherd her father, to a cruel death. (Lamb 1807, *Tales from Shakespeare*)  
 (39) ... he dropped his threats and bio words and would have fled, but lord Antinous stayed him, and threatened him that if he declined the combat, he would put him in a ship, and land him on the shores ... (Lamb 1808, *Adventures of Ulysses*)

Sentence (38) is an example of the *that*-clause complement, whereas sentence (39) demonstrates the NP + *that*-clause pattern. Because of the long *if*-clauses inserted between the verb and the complement, the use of *that*-clause instead of the *to*-infinitive is justified, although the co-referential subjects of three tokens would suggest something else. However, the omission of *that* in sentence (38) seems deviant, since it violates the Complexity Principle. One additional insertion is presented in sentence (37) above.



The last two sentential complementation patterns found in the CLMETEV part II were the NP + *to*-infinitive and the *wh*-clause, which was also found in the *OED*, but not in the first part of the CLMETEV, with one and one token respectively. Interestingly, the *wh*-clause was found with the *-ing* form, and NP + *to*-infinitive with the basic form *threaten*. Here are examples of these two patterns:

- (40) Nay, this was so notorious, that many of my auditors used to threaten me, when they saw any number of written papers on my desk, to steal them away ... (Gillman 1838, *The Life of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*)
- (41) While he was thus idly threatening what his weak arm could never execute, night came on, and a loud storm of thunder and lightning with rain ... (Lamb 1807, *Tales from Shakespeare*)

The NP + *to*-infinitive illustrated in sentence (40) involves quite a long insertion, which would suggest the use of the *that*-clause according to the Complexity Principle. Instead, the *to*-infinitive is found, which can only be supported by the co-referential subject in the matrix and the lower clause which it would provide. The other NP + *to*-infinitive example is also interesting, because it involves a passive:

- (42) ... and that Lear was no longer Lear, but the shadow of Lear; for which free speeches he was once or twice threatened to be whipped. (Lamb 1807, *Tales from Shakespeare*)

### 6.3.3 Non-sentential Complements

The second part of the CLMETEV is dominated by the NP complement, with 99 tokens. This is 35,2 per cent of the total number of the tokens, and it gives a normalised frequency of 17,3, which is a couple of units lower than in the previous analysis. Below there are a couple of examples:

- (43) (a) 'Don't threaten me, sir,' said Mrs. Cadurcis, with violent gesture. (Disraeli 1837, *Venetia*)
- (b) He prayed earnestly and fervently that they might be delivered from the danger and sufferings which threatened them, and became calm and tranquil ... (Marryat 1841, *Masterman Ready*)

The former sentence is a sole token found in the data representing a command, and thus not clearly pointing the subject of the sentence. Otherwise this pattern follows the footsteps of the previous part of the CLMETEV, allowing both [+HUMAN] and [-ANIMATE] subjects and objects, which both

are equally common. As presented in the previous analysis, cases with [+HUMAN] subject and [-ANIMATE] object seem to allow the interpretation close to the *with* construction. The number of these cases is slightly higher than in the CLMETEV part I, and, there are some ambiguous cases, with objects which are [-ANIMATE] in appearance, but can be interpreted to have [+HUMAN] meaning. This is illustrated in the below example, which is probably the most ambiguous token found in the data:

- (44) ... the strange old viceroy of Goa, who pawned the hairs of his dead son's beard to raise money to repair the ruined wall of a fortress threatened by the heathen of Ind ... (Borrow 1842, *Bible in Spain*)

Here, the threatening does not indicate a threat for the fortress, but rather, that the people inside the fortress are threatened. Thus, this case would be considered to have both [+HUMAN] subject and object.

In this sub-corpus, little more than one tenth of the total number of the tokens involves passivisation, and 23 per cent of the frequent *-ed* form can be explained by the passive voice of the sentence, a feature also illustrated in sentence (44) above. The percentage of passive cases remain the same as in the CLMETEV part I. 3 out of the 12 passive tokens are to be interpreted as stative, a feature not found in the previous analysis. Below are two passive examples, sentence (45b) illustrating the stative passive:

- (45) (a) When threatened by danger, the best policy is to fix your eye steadily upon it, and it will in general vanish like the morning mist before the sun ... (Borrow 1842, *Bible in Spain*)  
 (b) ... and, although none of my father's property was threatened, yet several of our servants had joined the rioters, who, we were informed, were assembled to the number of two or three hundred. (Hunt 1820-2, *Memoirs of Henry Hunt 1*)

Sentence (45a) also functions as an example of an abbreviated clause beginning with *when*. The beginning of the sentence could be rephrased as "When you are threatened by danger,...", which clearly exposes the passivisation.

Other features involving complexity factors are also found in the data. Two cases of insertion appear, both of which represent negation. Additionally, extractions are present in five tokens, all

being examples of relativisation. Following examples illustrate a negation realised by *nothing* (46) and an extraction (47):

- (46) ... and to that end, I must be cautious to threaten and promise nothing that I could not perform. (Brontë 1847, *Agnes Grey*)
- (47) ... for these she could bear all hardships which London threatened; and for these, she at length undertook a three weeks' journey to that perilous town on foot ... (Inchbald 1796, *Nature and Art*)

The kind of extraction (not so much considering the complementation), where the agent is raised in the higher clause taking the *threaten*-clause as its relative clause appears in 35 tokens, i.e. in more than one tenth of the total, repeating the frequency of the first analysis, and being particularly popular with tokens falling under sense II.

Two tokens with the following *for (poss)-ing*<sup>25</sup> construction are also found, but as explained in connection with the previous analysis, these will not be considered as an independent complement pattern. Here is an example of the case:

- (48) ... he once laid hold on Iago's throat and demanded proof of Desdemona's guilt, or threatened instant death for his having belied her. (Lamb 1807, *Tales from Shakespeare*)

The NP *with* NP was also relatively common in this period, with 50 tokens in all the verb forms. It forms 17,8 per cent of all tokens, which gives it a NF of 8,7 decreasing slightly from the previous period. The *-ed* form was clearly the most frequently used verb form, involving more passive constructions than active ones. Here is an example of both:

- (49) (a) Cymbeline granted her this boon, and threatened Iachimo with the torture if he did not confess how he came by the diamond ring on his finger. (Lamb 1807, *Tales from Shakespeare*)
- (b) ... and that he and his companions had been plundered by them of various articles, and threatened with death if they attempted to complain. (Borrow 1842, *Bible in Spain*)

Sentence (49a) is very straightforward example of the use of this pattern, representing sense I, in which the *if*-clause is also present, like in 6 other cases. It has both [+HUMAN] subject and object,

<sup>25</sup> The pattern *for (poss)-ing* means that the structure in question is immediately followed by *for*, which is then followed by the pure *-ing* form of the verb or alternatively by a possessive pronoun and the *-ing* form of the verb.

which is often the case with this sense. The high number of sense I tokens in this sub-corpus may for one explain the clear dominance of above-mentioned agents and patients.

As already mentioned, sentence (49b) indicates a passive voice. Passives continue to be notably frequent in this part of the CLMETEV as well, with 20 tokens, of which 3 are stative (sentence (50a) below). *By*-phrase is not typically found, but the agent is often implied by the *with* construction, which is illustrated in sentence (50b):

- (50) (a) ... nor could she secretly forbear repining that at the very moment she found herself threatened with a necessity of foregoing the society of her new favourite, Miss Belfield ... (Burney 1782, *Cecilia 1-2*)  
 (b) Pradon is now forgotten: and the whole French poetry of the Augustan age of Louis the Fourteenth is threatened with the same fate. (Godwin 1831, *Thoughts on Man*)

Worth noting is that 8 out of the 10 extractions found in the CLMETEV part II emerge in passive sentences. Typically, it is the *with* construction, which is moved in the pre-verb position, although one example is found in which the first NP complement is extracted. All the extractions are examples of relativisation. The sentences below present the object extraction in a passive sentence (51a) and the *with* construction extraction (51b):

- (51) (a) Virtuous Petion sees himself a kind of martyr, or pseudo-martyr, threatened with several things; drawls out due heroic lamentation ... (Carlyle 1837, *The French Revolution*)  
 (b) "I already feel some of the torments with which she threatened me. And she suspects Norris. I must impress more caution on him. (Ainsworth 1843, *Windsor Castle*)

In one example, the *with* construction precedes the NP, but the word order is canonical, so no extraction or passive constructions appear. Furthermore, one NP *with* NP complements is found which is followed by *for -ing* construction indicating reason - i.e. it could be rephrased by *because*. Another construction is found which deserves some attention. It could be interpreted as an individual complementation pattern, but being an ambiguous adverbial element, I do not consider it as one, but rather include it in the group of NP *with* NP complements. The case is presented below:

- (52) If his servants oppose me I shall threaten them off with these pistols. (Brontë 1847, *Wuthering Heights*)

In addition to above-mentioned patterns, four more non-sentential patterns are found in the CLMETEV part II, three of which are very close to each other - namely, NP + *to* + NP, with 4 tokens; NP + *for* + NP, with 1 token; NP + *upon* + NP, with 1 token - and additionally two tokens of a pattern denoting direction, NP + *into* + NP. Here is one example of each:

- (53) ... among them were a great number of French privateers, some of which were of such force as to threaten the greatest mischief to our commerce, and about seventy sail of vessels belonging to the Ligurian republic ... (Southey 1813, *Life of Horatio Lord Nelson*)
- (54) You are much indebted to some indispensable business I have had on my hands, otherwise my gratitude threatened such a return for your obliging favour, as would have tired your patience. (Burns 1780-96, *Letters 1780-1796*)
- (55) This danger [...] is threatened upon no stronger presages than the following:--Allow us first to take it for granted, that it is not a very ... (Foster 1821, *An Essay on the Evils of Popular Ignorance*)
- (56) ... he wanted a distinct answer to this last supposition. None came; so he began to imagine he was to be threatened into some engagement, and his angry spirit rose. (Gaskell 1848, *Mary Barton*)

As mentioned in the overview part, the NP + *for* + NP and NP + *into* + NP patterns were not found in the CLMETEV part I. The other two above turned out to be slightly less frequent than in the previous analysis. Remarkably many passives were found among these patterns, since half of the tokens involve it. That is the reason for the relatively high number of *-ed* forms, although the NP + *to* + NP pattern also emerges in other forms. There was also variation among the senses allowed: all but sense III could be found, and a little surprisingly, sense II was the most common sense. Sentences (53) and (55) above illustrate that sense, whereas sense IV is presented in sentence (56). Sense II tokens always have [-ANIMATE] objects and where they can be seen, also [-ANIMATE] subjects. Both tokens of the NP + *into* + NP pattern fall under sense I with [+HUMAN] objects, and involves passivisation in which the theme is threatened to some state.

The last pattern counted in this category of non-sentential complements in the CLMETEV part II is the zero complement. It is the fourth pattern in the list of decreasing frequency, with 28 tokens and 10,0 per cent of the total. It has the NF of 4,9, which does not differ significantly from the NF of this pattern in the CLMETEV part I. Here are some examples of the pattern:

- (57) (a) ... in fact, he tried every thing that man could do; he begged, he prayed, and he threatened. (Hunt H 1820-2, *Memoirs of Henry Hunt I*)
- (b) 'If you deny it, I won't tell you my secret,' threatened he; and I did not interrupt him again ... (Brontë 1848, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*)
- (c) He was feverish and ill, and no wonder. So he turned to go homewards; not, as he had threatened, to the police-office. After all (he told himself), that would do in the morning. (Gaskell 1848, *Mary Barton*)

With this pattern, sense I is clearly more frequent than any other sense. It also produces a high number of [+HUMAN] subjects. Additionally, some kind of an adverbial element follows the verb in 9 out of 28 tokens, being mostly typically the phrase *in vain*.

As can be seen in the example (57b) above, parentheticals were found in this material, albeit in only that one token. However, it is worth noting, since none of them emerged in the first analysis. In addition, six *as*-clauses appeared in the data in forms *threatened* and *threatening*, another phenomenon not found in the CLMETEV part I. This is illustrated in sentence (57c) above.

#### 6.3.4 Sense and Structure in the CLMETEV part II

Next, it is time to take a look on the comparison between the sense and structure correlation in this sub-corpus and in the *OED* data. Table 6 below illustrates the division of the complement patterns across the four senses:

Pattern	Sense				Total
	I	II	III	IV	
<i>to</i> -infinitive	35	6	36	7	84
<i>that</i> -clause	6	-	-	1	7
NP + <i>to</i> -infinitive	1	-	-	1	2
NP + <i>that</i> -clause	2	-	-	-	2
<i>wh</i> -clause	1	-	-	-	1
NP	32	37	26	4	99
NP + <i>with</i> + NP	28	11	9	2	50
NP + <i>to</i> + NP	1	3	-	-	4
NP + <i>for</i> + NP	-	-	-	1	1
NP + <i>upon</i> + NP	-	1	-	-	1
NP + <i>into</i> + NP	2	-	-	-	2
∅ complement	24	1	2	1	28
Total	132 / 47,0%	59 / 21,0%	73 / 26,0%	17 / 6,0%	281

Table 6. The dissolution of the complementation patterns and senses in CLMETEV part II.

Sense I: *To try to influence (a person) by menaces; to declare conditionally one's intention of inflicting injury upon; to make a threat.* This sense has been losing some ground to the other three senses. Nevertheless, with 132 tokens and 47,0%, it is clearly the most common sense found almost in every structure, only the very rare patterns of NP *for* NP and NP *upon* NP do not appear in this sense. Especially zero complement and *that*-clause patterns tend to emerge in this sense relatively often. However, the majority of this sense is formed by *to*-infinitive, NP, NP *with* NP and zero complement patterns, as was also the case in the previous sub-corpus. Anyhow, this time the numbers do not explicitly favour this sense: in connection with these four patterns, other senses are frequently found as well. Still, sense I is the only sense found in some more rare patterns, but compared to the previous time frame, more variety of senses appears among some patterns.

Sense II: *To put in danger; endanger.* In this sub-corpus, sense II has increased from 17,8 per cents up to 21,0 per cents, which might be explained by the wider range of structures that it seems to accept, when compared to the previous sub-corpus. Some of the more rare patterns, such as NP *to* NP and NP *upon* NP, seem to appear in this sense as well, although this sense is still dominated by NP and NP *with* NP patterns. For NP *to* NP pattern this sense is the most frequent one with 3 tokens, and for NP *upon* NP it is the only sense in which this pattern is found.

Sense III: *To give ominous indication of (impending evil); to portend evil; be likely to happen (something bad, negative, evil).* The third sense has lost some of the patterns in which it appeared in the first part of the CLMETEV, but nevertheless it has increased in percentage. In this period, sense III only seems to accept the four most common patterns: *to*-infinitive, NP, NP *with* NP and zero complement patterns. While being slightly the most frequent sense with *to*-infinitive, with zero complement this sense only has two tokens. Still, *danger* continues to be one of the most frequently appearing separate subject in this sense. It is joined by *weather* and *sky* and some words describing natural phenomena, such as *storm*. Likewise, different words in the semantic field of *nature* appear in the object position, usually being assigned the role of theme. Other singular words in this place

are mostly personal pronouns, like in the previous analysis, and *destruction* or (*serious*) *consequences*.

Sense IV: *To express an intention to do something, not necessarily evil*. Like in the previous sub-corpus, sense IV is not very commonly found, but it nevertheless has improved its status. Although it accepted quite a wide range of patterns in the CLMETEV part I, this time it has even more: only some very rare patterns and NP *to* NP pattern do not emerge in this sense. In the case of NP *for* NP, this sense is the only one appearing, and for NP + *to*-infinitive pattern it is one of the two senses, in which this pattern is found. The majority of this sense is formed by *to*-infinitive, followed by the NP complement, but in the total amount of those patterns, these numbers are quite small.

In comparison with the *OED* analysis, mainly the same factors come up as in the CLMETEV part I. The first and the third sense have lost some ground, while the two others have made some improvement. A wider range of complement patterns is found, and they also seem to be accepted more freely by the senses.

### 6.3.5 Review

This section consists of the analysis of the material from 1780 to 1850 written British English. I have analysed 281 tokens taken from the CLMETEV part II, and found 12 different complementation patterns. In general, the use of *threaten* has increased, but the NP complement has slightly decreased, being nevertheless the most frequently used complement. It was followed quite closely by the *to*-infinitive, with a remarkable increase, before the NP + *with* + NP and the zero complement, the former slightly decreasing and the latter remaining much the same in comparison with the previous analysis. Among the zero complement pattern, some examples of *as*-clauses and parentheticals were present. Additionally, one example of the *wh*-clause was found, as it appeared also in one sentence in the *OED* data, but not in the first part of the CLMETEV, which nevertheless



included the NP + *wh*-clause pattern not found here. Furthermore, two additional, completely new patterns were found: the NP *for* NP and NP *into* NP patterns.

The grammaticalisation of the verb *threaten* showed some proof, since the NP movement was found more often within the *to*-infinitive pattern in this sub-corpus than in the previous one. The complexity factors played greater role in this data than in the CLMETEV part I: more evidence of insertions, including negation, and extractions, as well as the horror aequi condition were found. Furthermore, insertions appeared this time with both finite and non-finite clause complements and the number of *if*-clause insertions in *that*-clause tokens was significant.

## 6.4 CLMETEV part III

This section deals with the time frame from 1850 to 1920, with data obtained from the third and last part of the CLMETEV.

### 6.4.1 Overview

The last section of the CLMETEV is made up of 6,251,564 words taken from 80 texts written by 51 different authors. The search for all the verb forms of *threaten* gives 317 tokens, of which 67, or 21,1 per cent are discarded as non-verbal. In this sub-corpus, there are a couple of examples of the nominal use of the form *threatening* (58). The other sentences are examples of the adjectival use of *threatened* (59a) and *threatening* (59b):

- (58) "Christal saw me to-day. Her eye was almost demoniacal in its threatening. Perhaps the pity she must have read in mine only kindled her wrath the more. (Craik 1850, *Olive* 1-3)
- (59) (a) ... reconstruction would not only secure the future of European civilization, but would save the world from the threatened catastrophe of seeing the great nations of the East building their new social order also upon the sand, ... (Cheyne 1914, *The Reconciliation of Races and Religions*)
- (b) ... and I was in no condition to dwell on them with any useful reference to the doubtful present or the threatening future. (Collins 1859-60, *The Woman in White*)

A total of 250 tokens remain after deleting the irrelevant tokens, and it has the NF of 40,0, which is notably lower than in the previous two analysis, indicating the decrease in the use of *threaten*.

Furthermore, the number of different complementation patterns has witnessed the same destiny - only 8 patterns are found in this sub-corpus. Compared to the previous data, this period lacks four patterns: the NP + *to*-infinitive, the *wh*-clause, the NP *upon* NP and the NP *into* NP pattern do not appear anymore. The division of the patterns found can be seen in the table below:

Pattern	Verb form					Total	%	NF/million
	-	-ed		-ing	-s			
		Active	Passive					
<i>to</i> -infinitive	5	44	-	12	5	66	26,4	10,6
<i>that</i> -clause	2	1	-	-	-	3	1,2	0,5
NP + <i>that</i> -clause	-	-	1	-	2	3	1,2	0,5
NP	21	49	25	15	4	114	45,6	18,2
NP + <i>with</i> + NP	4	10	8	7	3	32	12,8	5,1
NP + <i>to</i> + NP	-	2	1	1	-	4	1,6	0,6
NP + <i>for</i> + NP	-	1	-	-	-	1	0,4	0,2
∅ complement	6	13	-	8	-	27	10,8	4,3
<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>40,0</b>

Table 7. Complementation patterns of the verb *threaten* in CLMETEV part III sorted by different verb forms.

The constructions found in the CLMETEV part III are illustrated in order of decreasing frequency in figure 3 below:

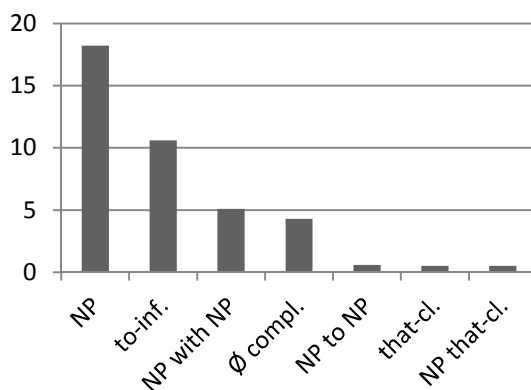


Figure 3. Complements of *threaten* in CLMETEV part III in order of frequency (NF).

As can be seen in the figure above, the division between the four most frequently used patterns and the four not so common ones is quite clear. Also the dominance of NP complement is striking, and

it is the only complement, along with the NP + *that*-clause, which has increased in frequency. The most remarkable decrease in frequency is met by the *to*-infinitive and the NP *with* NP constructions.

#### 6.4.2 Sentential Complements

The sentential complement dominating this period is again the *to*-infinitive pattern, with 66 tokens (26,4 per cent) and the NF of 10,6. As noted in the above section, the use of this pattern has decreased, but it still remains one of the most significant ones. Below are two examples:

- (60) (a) 'But who's to hear of the story?' said I. Janet gave an impatient sigh. 'Do you mean that my father has threatened to publish it, Janet?' 'I won't say he has. He has made the prince afraid to move: that I think is true. (Meredith 1870, *The Adventures of Harry Richmond*)
- (b) Troy was weary and it being now not far from midnight, and the rain threatening to increase, he resolved to leave the finishing touches of his labour until the day should break. (Hardy 1874, *Far from the Madding Crowd*)

The former sentence describes a situation in which a real, verbal threat is in the air, declared by [+HUMAN] subject, and thus it is an example of sense I. With 22 tokens, three of which include *if*-clauses, this sense is still rather common, although sense III (illustrated in sentence (60b) above) has been increasing in its expense, gaining the number of 31 tokens in this sub-corpus.

Grammaticalisation, the change in the nature of *threaten* from purely lexical into more grammatical verb, was noted to begin during the previous time frame, and it is continuing its increase together with the popularity of senses II and III. In this period, the number of NP movement tokens exceeds the number of control examples, consisting 39 out of the total of 66 tokens. NP movement is presented in sentence (60b) above.

The Complexity Principle still plays a role in this data, although not necessarily as great as in the previous analysis. Two extracted elements, both being examples of relativisation, and three inserted ones are found among the *to*-infinitive tokens. Furthermore, one example of horror aequi violation appears, which could have been prevented by using the *that*-clause instead. Below, there are examples of all the three phenomena:

- (61) "They have seen the Moonstone on Miss Verinder's dress," he said. "What is to be done?" "What your uncle threatened to do," answered Mr. Murthwaite. "Colonel Herncastle understood the people he had to deal with. (Collins 1868, *The Moonstone*)
- (62) But he was in truth all the time struggling hard with the strong, well-nigh overpowering emotion, which threatened every moment to overflow its bounds. (Blind 1885, *Tarantella I*)
- (63) Any open assertion of the infinitely superior importance of such a ministry as mine, [...], would only have provoked the doctor to practise on the human weakness of his patient, and to threaten to throw up the case. (Collins 1868, *The Moonstone*)

The two other sentential patterns consist of both *that*-clause constructions, having three tokens each, with the percentage of 1,2 and the NF of 0,5. This means that the use of the *that*-clause pattern has slightly decreased, whereas with the NP + *that*-clause the situation is the other way round. Below, there are examples of both, the plain *that*-clause (64) and the NP + *that*-clause (65):

- (64) ... write that letter with the intention of drawing her over here to have her in your power, so that you might threaten you'd blow on her reputation if she or her father held out against you and all didn't go as you fished for ... (Meredith 1870, *The Adventures of Harry Richmond*)
- (65) ... so much so, that He threatens these Ephesian backsliders that, unless they repent, notwithstanding all their good works, He will come unto them in judgement, and remove their candlestick out of its place. (Booth 1879, *Papers on Practical Religion*)

Both examples are found with form *threatened*, but otherwise they appear with a little surprising forms; the NP + *that*-clause has two cases with the third person singular present tense, and the *that*-clause two tokens of the form *threaten*. The above sentence (64) is an example of the omission of *that*, which seemed to be quite common, since two of the three tokens demonstrate the same thing. Because the constructions of these sentences are not very complex, the omission of *that* complies the Complexity Principle - in fact, the use of *that* in sentence (64) above would have provided a violation of the horror aequi condition. However, both cases, as well as the third *that*-clause token and one of the NP + *that*-clause tokens (sentence (65) above), have co-referential subjects in the matrix and the lower clause, so the question rises, why the *to*-infinitive is not used instead of the *that* construction. In two of these four tokens the *that* construction could be explained by the inserting *if*-clauses between the head verb and the lower clause (cf. sentence (65) above). However, the latter sentence above could be said to violate the horror aequi condition, the problem which would have been removed with the *to*-infinitive.

### 6.4.3 Non-sentential Complements

In the CLMETEV part III, the non-sentential complements were altogether much more frequent than the sentential ones, and the NP was the most common pattern of this period, since there were 114 tokens found. The NP pattern forms almost half (45,6 %) of the total number of the data, and its NF has increased from 17,3 to 18,2, in comparison with the earlier part of the CLMETEV. Here are two examples:

- (66) (a) There is really no need to threaten me. Shattered by my miserable health and my family troubles, I am incapable of resistance. (Collins 1859-60, *The Woman in White*)
- (b) With Rischenheim silent, Bauer was the only man, save Rupert himself, who knew the truth, the only man who threatened that great scheme which more and more filled our thoughts and grew upon us with an increasing force of attraction as every obstacle to it seemed to be cleared out of the way. (Hope 1898, *Rupert of Hentzau*)

Sentence (66b) is again an example of a token which includes [+HUMAN] subject and [-ANIMATE] object. Earlier, these cases were said to have a meaning similar to the *with* construction. However, in this sub-corpus this pattern does not seem to be followed, since the above example, together with six other tokens challenge it. Many times, the object, representing the theta role of patient, is nevertheless in close connection to a human or humanity; they may express things like somebody's right, or supremacy, or luck. Otherwise the situation remains the same as in the previous sub-corpora; both [+HUMAN] and [-ANIMATE] subjects and object are found equally often, and the former ones are usually favoured by the first sense, whereas the second and third sense are most often organised by the latter ones. A couple of examples are found without a clear subject, a situation illustrated in sentence (66a).

Passivisation and other complexity factors appear to some extent, but in a decreasing number. 25 out of the 114 involve the passive voice, with three examples of the stative passive. Five tokens with relativisation extraction and one with an inserted element are also found. Likewise, five tokens include *if*-clauses. Sentence (67) below is an example of both the relativisation and the passive voice:

- (67) According to him, it was Şubh-i-Ezel whose life was threatened. (Cheyne 1914, *The Reconciliation of Races and Religions*)

The next most common non-sentential construction found in the last part of the CLMETEV is the NP *with* NP, with 32 tokens, i.e. 12,8 per cent of all the tokens. This pattern has the NF of 5,1,

which has remarkably fallen from 8,7, which was the NF of this pattern in the previous analysis.

Like the NP complement, this pattern was also found in all the verb forms of *threaten*, the *-ed* form being clearly the most frequent, which is partly explained by the eight passives appearing in the data (68b):

- (68) (a) Then he became insolent, and challenged my motives for coming, and threatened me with tragic, half-insane and impotent bluster; and finally he broke down into hysterical weeping, ... (Linton 1885, *The Autobiography of Christopher Kirkland 1-3*)
- (b) 'The legacy affair? Why, yes, it was a pity. Especially now that her father is threatened with blindness.' (Gissing 1891, *New Grub Street*)

None of the passive examples include a *by*-phrase, but the cause of the threat is nevertheless implied in all the cases. The above sentence (68b) shows how the *with* construction is actually the reason for the patient to feel or be threatened. Sentence (68a) presents the most typical case found in this data in connection with semantics: it has [+HUMAN] subject and object, and it falls under sense I. On the contrary, the number of [-ANIMATE] subjects and objects is notably low, which might be due to the low number of sense III examples.

In addition to the passive, other complexity factors are also found in the data. Three extractions appeared, two illustrating relativisation and one interrogation, which will be presented in sentence (69) below. Two tokens include insertion, of which one is an inserted *if*-clause. This token also involves passivisation, and it is presented in sentence (70):

- (69) "You know what you have suffered at his hands. What things have his vile lips threatened you with to-night? His life is in your hands. Speak, and the world shall be well rid of him." (Brebner 1910, *The Brown Mask*)
- (70) I am threatened if I fail to exert myself in the manner required, with consequences which I cannot so much as think of without perfect prostration. (Collins 1859-60, *The Woman in White*)

The next two fairly rare non-sentential patterns in this sub-corpus are complements very similar to each other: the NP + *to* + NP and the NP + *for* + NP patterns, with four and one tokens respectively. Both complements appear most frequently in *-ed* form, the NP + *to* + NP allowing the passive voice in one example. Both patterns are illustrated below:

- (71) Any unexpected prolongation of a cruise threatened a reduction to short commons.  
(Bridge 1899-1902, *Sea-power and Other Studies*)
- (72) A danger to the public peace was threatened, and the man who was chiefly to blame for it should be dealt with at once. (Caine 1897, *The Christian*)

As can be seen in the both examples above, these patterns imply the meaning similar to the *with* construction. All five tokens express this feature. In fact, it is not a surprise, because no examples of the first sense are found in this sub-corpus; instead, all the other senses appear involving mostly [-ANIMATE] subjects and only [-ANIMATE] objects, which is shown to be a premise for this interpretation.

The last pattern discussed in this section is the zero complement, found in all but the *-s* form. It is the fourth most common pattern of this period, with 27 tokens, or 10,8 per cent of the total. It has the NF of 4,3, which has decreased in the level found in the first part of the CLMETEV. Here are three examples:

- (73) (a) As the rain was still threatening, it was the close carriage that had been appointed to take Miss Rachel to Frizinghall. (Collins 1868, *The Moonstone*)
- (b) ... or else, in her sullen misery, the girl would, as she threatened, have starved herself to death. (Craik 1850, *Olive 1-3*)
- (c) 'I'll put you down and be off,' she threatened. (Meredith 1870, *The Adventures of Harry Richmond*)

As can be noticed in the example (73b) above, the zero complement pattern also includes one case with an *as*-clause. Additionally, one of the 27 zero complement tokens belongs to the group of parentheticals, illustrated in sentence (73c). This means, that 25 out of the 27 indicate cases, in which *threaten* simply does not select a complement without any particular reason. 11 of these cases appear with [+HUMAN] subjects, and the same tokens fall under sense I. Similarly, the remaining 14 tokens have [-ANIMATE] subjects and emerge in sense II and III. These subjects can roughly be divided into two groups: nature words, or some kind of words indicating danger. Nature

is present in nine of the 14 tokens. Additionally, five out of the eight *-ing* form examples approach the meaning of an adjective, illustrated in sentence (73a) above.

#### 6.4.4 Sense and Structure in the CLMETEV part III

In this section, the correlation between the four senses and the various structures of this time frame will be presented, and some comments are made in comparison with the analysis of the *OED* data.

The following table will illustrate the spread of complement patterns across the senses:

Pattern	Sense				Total
	I	II	III	IV	
<b>to-infinitive</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>66</b>
<b>NP + that-clause</b>	<b>2</b>	-	-	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>that-clause</b>	<b>3</b>	-	-	-	<b>3</b>
<b>NP</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>114</b>
<b>NP + with+ NP</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>NP + to + NP</b>	-	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>NP + for + NP</b>	-	-	-	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>∅ complement</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>94 / 37,6%</b>	<b>80 / 32,0%</b>	<b>64 / 25,6%</b>	<b>12 / 4,8%</b>	<b>250</b>

Table 8. The dissolution of the complementation patterns and senses in CLMETEV part III.

Sense I: *To try to influence (a person) by menaces; to declare conditionally one's intention of inflicting injury upon; to make a threat.* This period includes fewer complementation patterns than the two previous ones, thus it is not exceptional that, though the most commonly found sense with 37,6 per cent of all, there is less variety in structures in comparison with the earlier periods. This sense has also decreased remarkably, as well as lost its position as the leading sense with patterns, such as *to-infinitive*, *NP* and zero complement. On the contrary, it still dominates *NP with NP* and *that-clause* patterns. *NP to NP* and *NP for NP* are the only patterns not found in this sense.

Sense II: *To put in danger; endanger.* This sense has significantly increased during the time frame of the CLMETEV, now reaching the stage of 32,0% of all the data in the third historical sub-corpus. It has taken the leading position among the senses with *NP complement*, including over half of the tokens. Otherwise it continues the trend shown in the two previous sub-corpora analyses.



Sense III: *To give ominous indication of (impending evil); to portend evil; be likely to happen (something bad, negative, evil)*. The third sense has retained its frequency around 26 per cent of the total, although it has diminished in number in all the cases but zero complement, with which it has increased from two to thirteen tokens. Still, it is the dominating sense with *to*-infinitive, and also very common with the NP complement. Additionally, NP *to* NP is again found in this sense, after momentarily vanishing in the second part of the CLMETEV. This sense has gained some variety to its typical subjects; among nature words and words describing *danger*, there are words indicating *difficulty or trouble, sickness, disaster, war* and *emotions*. The objects contain nature words and *privacy or secret*, but most often personal pronouns, as has been the case in the earlier analyses.

Sense IV: *To express an intention to do something, not necessarily evil*. Sense IV returns to the stage found in the first historical sub-corpus, slightly decreasing, but continues to accept a wide range of complementation patterns. It is found with all the patterns appearing during this period, except *that*-clause and zero complement, being even the only sense with NP for NP pattern. Nevertheless, in case of the patterns with high number of tokens, such as NP or *to*-infinitive complements, this sense is comparatively rare.

Compared to the *OED* analysis, the second sense is the only one which has increased significantly. The patterns have remained much the same, regardless of few exceptions. Also the amounts of different patterns have stayed mainly unchangeable: NP complement dominating, and forming the top four together with *to*-infinitive, NP *with* NP and zero complement patterns. The difference is that NP *with* NP has become much more common than it used to be. Additionally, the first sense is not as predominant as it was in the *OED* analysis, but more variety can be seen in patterns and structures with which they are linked.

### 6.4.5 Review

The analysis of British English in 1850-1920 provided 250 tokens with eight different complementation patterns. The NP construction turned out to be clearly the most popular pattern, followed by the *to*-infinitive, and little later by the NP *with* NP and the zero complement constructions.

In general, the use of *threaten* has decreased significantly: a lower number of different complementation patterns is found than in the two previous analyses, and the NP *to*-infinitive, *wh*-clause, NP *upon* NP and NP *into* NP patterns have disappeared completely. Although the use of the *to*-infinitive has decreased, many important elements appearing in connection with it keep its status significant. Grammaticalisation of *threaten* continues gathering ground, and the Complexity Principle and the horror aequi condition still plays a role with the *to*-infinitive, as well as with the two *that*-clause patterns. The situation is the other way round with the NP complement: its number has increased, but the complexity factors which it includes have diminished.

The similarity between the meanings of the *with* construction and the sentence involving NP complement with [+HUMAN] subject and [-ANIMATE] object noticed earlier was not as straightforward as it has been; some cases were found which did not follow this trend.

In addition to above-mentioned facts, it seems that the passive examples with the NP *with* NP pattern did not consist *by*-phrases, the cause for the threatening was rather implied by the *with* construction. Also, *as*-clauses and parentheticals were found among the zero complement pattern, but only with one token of each.

### 6.5 BNC

After analysing the Late Modern English period from 1710 to 1920, I will move on to introduce the Present-Day English findings based on the data from the BNC.

### 6.5.1 Overview

To keep the statistics between all the periods comparable, I found it important to restrict the material drawn from the BNC. Since the BNC is a very large corpus compared to the CLMETEV, and additionally, it is quite well organised according to a different kind of genres, it is possible to choose the one which is the closest to the material taken from the CLMETEV. Because that data was drawn from literary texts - mainly fictional books - I decided to extract the data for this chapter from Imaginative Prose section of the BNC. This section is 19 per cent of the total number of the written component of the corpus, and it comprises of 16,496,408 words taken from 476 texts.

Doing a search with the BNC is facilitated with its characteristic of being a tagged corpus. This means that no different searches for all the verb forms need to be made; one lemma search is enough. By choosing a right search string, it is possible to restrict the search for the verbal use of *threaten*, and for that I used a string {threaten/V}, which returns a total of 864 tokens. However, this number is too high in comparison with the numbers of CLMETEV sections, thus it needs to be thinned randomly. Taking the half of the data results in 432 tokens, of which 46, or 10,6 per cent, were clearly identifiable as non-verbal, since the tagging feature does not completely remove the precision problem. Two examples are provided below:

- (74) (a) The sky was dark and threatening and Felipe had looked like that as he'd left the house. (HGK 3874)  
 (b) Have you, at any time, sent threatening letters to members of the Bamford Hunt or people connected with it? (CEB 2035)

Interestingly, all the non-verbal tokens found in this sub-corpus were in *-ing* form; no ordinary adjectives (nor nouns, which is not so exceptional) appeared in the form *threatened*. Since those forms have been quite common in other sub-corpora, they would have been expected in this one as well, regardless of the tagged corpus. However, a phrase *feel threatened* is found in the BNC data rather frequently, and at first glance, it would be a clear case of an adjectival use of *threaten*, but a closer look reveals that sometimes this form is used very dynamically. Thus, it deserves not to be discarded as a prototypical type of an adjective, and will be observed more closely in its turn, in

chapter 6.5.4. However, being so close to the adjective, it will be excluded from the tables and figures, because its biased use would damage the statistics.

The removal of the 46 adjectives and these 26 above-mentioned tokens, i.e. 6,0 per cent of the total, leaves 360 tokens. It projects a normalised frequency of 43,6, which is counted by using the half of the total of the Imaginative Prose section, because the number of tokens chosen for this study is also 50 per cent of the total. The use of *threaten* has increased when compared to the historical data, but it is still lower than it used to be at the beginning of the time frame analysed in this thesis. Again, the number and form of the complement patterns vary; there is one complement less than it was in the CLMETEV part III. The NP + *to*-infinitive returns in use, but the NP *to* NP and NP *for* NP patterns do not exist anymore. The table below demonstrates the seven patterns:

Pattern	Verb form					Total	%	NF/million
	-	-ed		-ing	-s			
		Active	Passive					
<i>to</i> -infinitive	9	95	-	41	5	150	41,7	18,2
<i>that</i> -clause	-	2	-	-	-	2	0,6	0,2
NP + <i>that</i> -clause	-	1	-	-	-	1	0,3	0,1
NP + <i>to</i> -infinitive	-	-	-	1	-	1	0,3	0,1
NP	31	38	27	23	3	122	33,9	14,8
NP + <i>with</i> + NP	9	8	8	11	1	37	10,3	4,5
∅ complement	11	27	-	7	2	47	13,1	5,7
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>171</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>360</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>43,6</b>

Table 9. Complementation patterns of the verb *threaten* in BNC sorted by different verb forms.

Because of the low number of complementation patterns, all of them are presented in figure 4 below, in order of decreasing frequency:

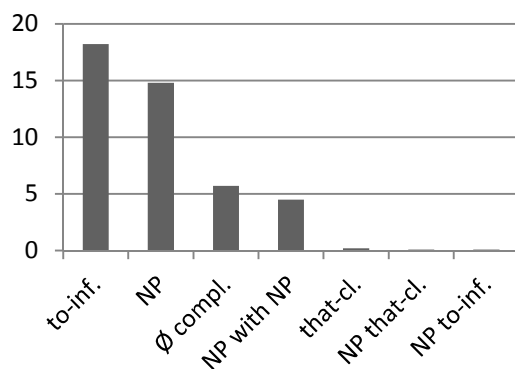


Figure 4. Complements of *threaten* in the BNC in order of frequency (NF).

In the BNC, the pattern slightly dominating others is the *to*-infinitive, which takes a giant leap at the NP complement's expense when compared to the previous analysis, and which is then followed by the NP structure. Those two still have a quite clear lead before the next two: the zero complement and the NP *with* NP, whose numbers are nevertheless rather significant and remains in the level of the earlier analysis. However, the zero complement has exceeded the NP *with* NP pattern, being now the third most frequently used construction. The rest three patterns are very rare, and cannot compare to the four most common constructions.

### 6.5.2 Sentential Complements

It is no surprise that the *to*-infinitive is the one dominating sentential complements of the Present-Day English. With 150 tokens, or 41,7 per cent of the total, it reaches the NF of 18,2, and thus it deserves the leading position among all the complements of *threaten* in this sub-section of the BNC. As noted in the previous section, the *to*-infinitive pattern is increasing notably. Below there are some examples:

- (75) (a) Panic threatened to engulf him again, and the terrible desolate coldness was like an icy vice about his heart, and he knew he had never been so completely alone. (G10 909)
- (b) She turned to stare fixedly out of the window, furiously blinking away the moisture which was threatening to fill her eyes, and trying to ignore a large lump which seemed to have become stuck in her throat. (JXX 537)

Both of these examples fall under sense III which is the leading sense with this pattern.

Interestingly, the BNC examples illustrating this sense seem to take slightly new features considering their meaning. The subjects of these sentences are often in connection with more mental issues, like emotions or a person's mental state. Additionally, more variation among these subjects can be found; they can be almost everything from body parts to nature words.

NP movement seems to have established its position, since clearly over half of the tokens demonstrate that feature. Both of the above sentences also represent NP movement. The Complexity Principle is topical in connection with this pattern, although not many tokens are found.

However, two cases of the relativisation extraction and three of insertions are present. Additionally, the horror aequi condition is violated in two tokens without any proper reason for not using the *that*-clause instead. Nine examples of *if*-clauses appear as well. Below sentences illustrate all these phenomena:

- (76) She ought to hate him for what he threatened to do, yet inside she felt a treacherous excitement at the fact that he wanted to keep her close. (HGM 863)
- (77) He had threatened on more than one occasion to reveal details of their love-making to Stephen. (C98 2045)
- (78) A man like that didn't have to threaten to be an enemy, he was ready-made for it, especially with her. (HGK 454)
- (79) After a while I started to get official letters threatening to send me to prison if I didn't find work. (FYY 1059)

Sentence (79) presents the only case in which a token falling under sense I has the [-ANIMATE] subject, still considered to be assigned the role of agent. The word *letter* can be seen to indicate the "human voice" in such a manner that it forms an actual threat declaring somebody's intention to inflict injury upon somebody else.

One token with rather interesting structure is found in this data. Although being a *to*-infinitive example, which does not allow passivisation, because it does not take an object, this sentence has the form giving the sentence a passive meaning:

- (80) I did not throw the papers away. They accumulated beneath the television until they threatened to be seen, at which point I smuggled them out of the house in my knapsack. (HGL 1722)

Obviously, *the papers* do not provide an actual threat, but the situation plainly describes that scenario in which *the papers* are likely to be seen.

Three more sentential complements are found in this sub-corpus, but their numbers are rather low, repeating the ones in the previous analyses; the *that*-clause having two tokens, the NP + *that*-clause and NP + *to*-infinitive having only one token each. The following examples illustrate the complements:

- (81) Then he became angry, and threatened that he would silence me forever, if I would not agree. (APR 1517)

- (82) 'So you threatened Riddle that you would tell your mother about his visits to that house?' (GW3 2126)
- (83) The incisors bared to the night spaces, threatening the constellations, The glitterers in the black, to keep off, Keep their distance, While it works this out. (H8R 1453)

Both of the pure *that*-clause tokens are examples where the conditions of the threat are made clear by the *if*-clause. The one in sentence (81) also illustrates the case found earlier: all the tokens of both *that*-clause constructions have co-referential subjects, and there appears to be no reason why the *to*-infinitive is not used instead. In one case, the *that* is omitted, which is supported by the co-referential subjects. Sentence (83) provides an example of the case where an insertion is present. The phrase *the glitterers in the black* is inserted between the actual NP (giving a description of it) and the *to*-infinitive, so that they are not right next to each other. To some extent, this violates the Complexity Principle, because being a rather complex structure, a finite clause complement would have been expected.

### 6.5.3 Non-sentential Complements

Only three non-sentential complements were found in the BNC data. The most frequently used pattern is the NP construction, with 122 tokens and the percentage of 33,9, which has the NF of 14,8. This is notably lower than it was in the CLMETEV part III. As usual, this pattern occurs in all verb forms, *-ed* form being the most common, and the passive forming almost half of those. Here are two examples of the pattern:

- (84) (a) "There are witnesses here seeing you threaten me." (J2G 614)
- (b) You were threatening the whole of your investigation, weren't you?' (G1W 3015)

Sentence (84b) presents the trend which was also noted in connection with the previous analysis: the sentence with [+HUMAN] subject, but [-ANIMATE] object has changed from being semantically similar to the *with* construction into something which does not realise this meaning. [+HUMAN] subjects are more common with this pattern than they were in the previous analyses, which is rather surprising, because the number of sense I tokens and sense II and III tokens are quite

even. This means that the second and third sense sentences unusually often take [+HUMAN] subjects and objects, representing the theta roles of agent and patient.

Every fifth of the tokens appear in the passive construction, as implied above. Eleven of these are considered to be stative. Little surprisingly, passivisation seems to be the only complexity factor playing a role in this data. Only two tokens of extraction and one of an insertion in the form of negation is found, and thus, it might be suggested that complexity factors are more of an issue with sentential complements than of non-sentential ones. Here are nevertheless examples of a stative passive structure, an extraction, again illustrating relativisation, and a negation:

- (85) She was happy, but she felt immediately that it was threatened. (HJH 3547)
- (86) As Guido stepped on to the garden path, Ronni stepped forward and called after him, 'I won't be staying on now, whatever you threaten!' (JXT 2251)
- (87) If they threatened no one ... ' (G04 831)

The plain NP pattern is followed by NP + *with* + NP complement, although it is far behind the leading non-sentential complement, with 37 tokens, or 10,3 per cent of the total. Its NF has decreased from 5,1 to 4,5, which suggests that its use have slightly diminished in the Modern English. A striking feature of this period among this pattern is the fact that hardly no other senses appear in the data than sense I. Its dominating number supports also the autonomy of [+HUMAN] subjects and objects; only one passive token involves [-ANIMATE] NP complement with the theta role of patient, and it, too, is close to humanity. Consider it and one other example:

- (88) (a) It would be the way of our century to say that I was suffering from time-shock, no doubt; since our personality is largely built and buttressed by our environment, and the assumptions environment and society force upon us, one has but to tip away that buttress and at once the personality is threatened with dissolution. (HGS 647)
- (b) 'What will you threaten me with, Wallace? (FP7 3433)

As already noted, the former sentence is one of the eight illustrations of passivisation. Continuing the trend of previous analyses, not many *by*-phrases are present, but the agent is implied by the *with* construction. The latter sentence is one of the two extractions appearing in the data. It is an example of interrogation, whereas the other one expresses the already familiar relativisation extraction. No other complexity factors are found, so the generalisation made in connection with the NP



complement discussion that complexity factors are not as common with non-sentential complements as they are with sentential ones during this period.

The last pattern discussed in this category is the zero complement, which has slightly increased since the previous period, having 47 tokens, i.e. 13,1 per cent of the total. The increase might be explained by the notable number of parentheticals in the data: almost half of the zero complements are either *as*-clauses (sentence (89b) below) or parentheticals (sentence (89c) below).

Here, I provided some examples of different zero complements:

- (89) (a) A dove cannot threaten. (HGK 3127)  
 (b) A call to the hospital established that he had, as threatened, checked out. (CS4 1929)  
 (c) ‘Oh, Doctor,’ threatened Fakrid, ‘you'd better have come up with something. (FR0 909)

Sentence (89a) is the only example of [+ANIMATE], but [-HUMAN] subject found among these tokens. Otherwise [-ANIMATE] subjects are dominating, which agrees with the high number of sense III, when comparing with sense I in which the number of parentheticals is excluded. These subjects can be relatively easily be divided into two groups: nature words and *tears*. As it is typical of parentheticals in general, all the examples in this material are in the past tense form, and they have [+HUMAN] subjects representing sense I. Many of them are followed by *with* + NP, however, different to the NP + *with* + NP pattern, since here it expresses the way of threatening, as is the case in the example (100) below:

- (90) ‘I might sue for damages,’ he threatened with vindictive relish, disregarding her complaint. (HA6 1158)

#### **6.5.4 *Feel threatened***

The structure *feel threatened* was only found in the BNC sub-corpus. In many cases, it is reasonable to consider it to be an adjective, but there are several tokens which are not easy to analyse. As mentioned before, this construction forms 6,0 per cent of all the BNC data, and it may also be

regarded as at least one of the reasons for the lack of adjectives in *-ed* form. Cases such as the following example (91), are clearly adjectival, since *threatened* is parallel to another adjective:

(91) She felt protective and threatened. (FET 555)

Other cases are more like passivised verbal forms, where the agent is also visible:

(92) Feeling in no way threatened by Ven, or anybody else, she then began to realise that if she was going to be assertive about anything, then it was about Ven Gajdusek answering one or two questions. (JYF 1091)

Two of these *feel threatened* constructions can be analysed as adjectives and seven as verbs.

However, 17 out of the 26 tokens representing this phenomenon remain unclear.

### 6.5.5 Sense and Structure in the BNC

The breakdown of complement types across the four senses for Modern English period is given in table 10 below:

Pattern	Sense				Total
	I	II	III	IV	
<i>to</i> -infinitive	53	24	63	10	150
<i>that</i> -clause	2	-	-	-	2
NP + <i>that</i> -clause	1	-	-	-	1
NP + <i>to</i> -infinitive	-	1	-	-	1
NP	58	48	12	4	122
NP + <i>with</i> + NP	29	6	1	1	37
∅ complement	26	5	15	1	47
<b>Total</b>	<b>169 / 46,9%</b>	<b>84 / 23,3%</b>	<b>91 / 25,3%</b>	<b>16 / 4,4%</b>	<b>360</b>

**Table 10. The dissolution of the complementation patterns and senses the BNC.**

Sense I: *To try to influence (a person) by menaces; to declare conditionally one's intention of inflicting injury upon; to make a threat*. Modern English seems to favour fewer complementation patterns than any other period studied in this thesis. Nevertheless, it accepts a wide range of different patterns, especially in this first sense. Although being the dominating sense since the *OED* data analysis, this sense has been in a constant recession, and this is the first time it seems to be increasing. With 169 out of 360 tokens, it forms nearly half of the total. All patterns but NP + *to*-infinitive are compatible with this sense, and for *that*-clause with or without the preceding NP, it is

the only sense in which those patterns are found. It also dominates NP, NP *with* NP and zero complement patterns.

Sense II: *To put in danger; endanger*. Unlike sense I, the second sense has increased continuously, and seems to have reached the peak in the last period of the CLMETEV, since its amount has fallen from 32% to 23,3%. The majority of tokens under this sense is formed by *to*-infinitive and NP patterns, but it is favoured by all other constructions but the two involving *that*-clauses. The one and only token of NP *to*-infinitive pattern is also found in this sense. With NP construction, sense II seems to have lost some ground, since in the CLMETEV part III it was the leading sense with that pattern, but here the place is taken by the first sense. Otherwise the amounts seem to follow the trend of historical analysis.

Sense III: *To give ominous indication of (impending evil); to portend evil; be likely to happen (something bad, negative, evil)*. With 25,3% of the total amount, sense III has regained a percentage that is very similar to that of the last period of the CLMETEV. However, it has improved its position, being now the second most frequently found sense. Interestingly, this period follows the continuum of the *to*-infinitive being the only sentential complement found in this sense. Only one token in this sense was found with some other sentential pattern in the CLMETEV part I, otherwise they do not appear. This sense seems to allow more variation in the subjects and objects than in the earlier analyses. Still, personal pronouns and nature words are popular in both places, but they are accompanied by words denoting emotion and person's mental stage, and many others.

Sense IV: *To express an intention to do something, not necessarily evil*. Sense IV has been rather constant during the whole time frame, which is fairly surprising, since in present day, language is often used more freely than in older times, and it would have suggested the increase in this sense usage. *To*-infinitive is the main element in this group, as was the case in all but the first part of the CLMETEV, with the non-sentential complements also contributing some tokens in the latest set of data: NP has four tokens, and NP *with* NP and zero complement have one token each.

### 6.5.6 Review

The Present-Day English data taken from the BNC provided an analysis of 360 tokens. In the BNC data, the use of *threaten*, in general, increases to some extent, but does not reach the numbers of the earlier periods of this analysis. However, the number of different complement patterns continues to diminish; although the NP + *to*-infinitive pattern returns in use, the NP *to* NP and NP *for* NP patterns disappear. During this period, the use of the *to*-infinitive complement has increased remarkably, and NP movement keeps dominating the *to*-infinitive tokens over control, strengthening the position of the grammaticalisation of *threaten*. It seems that the NP complement has lost ground chiefly for the *to*-infinitive, and the zero complement and the NP *with* NP patterns have changed their places.

When it comes to the relationship between senses and structures, sense III sentences seemed to allow more variation and imagination among their subjects than earlier. The sentences with [+HUMAN] subjects and [-ANIMATE] objects do not share the meaning of the *with* construction anymore, and the latter NP was assigned the theta role of patient. For some reason, the NP *with* NP complement had hardly any evidence of other than sense I, and all the subjects and objects, in the sentences with this pattern were [+HUMAN], expressing the theta roles of agent and patient.

Those sentential complements which are not very common seemed nevertheless include interesting facts considering complexity factors, e.g. the Complexity Principle violation, co-referential subjects in the higher and the lower clause, and *that* omission. Otherwise, complexity factors did not play as great a role among non-sentential complements as they used to.

Additionally, an interesting construction *feel threatened* was found, and it seems to be a typical feature of the Present-Day English.

## 7 Summary and Concluding Remarks

In this thesis, I have analysed 1,037 examples of written British English usage of the verb *threaten*, taken from the time frame covering years 1710-1993. In the introduction, I listed the aims of this project, and to summon up, they will be reiterated below:

- i) document the patterns used with the verb *threaten* between the time span of 1710 and 2003;
- ii) observe the syntactic and semantic features of the different complementation patterns, and to compare the results with each other;
- iii) discuss the connection between structure and meaning;
- iv) study whether there has been any changes in the use of the verb *threaten* during the aforementioned time frame, and if yes, what kind of changes appear.

In connection with the first point, table 11 below illustrates all the complements which were found in each time period:

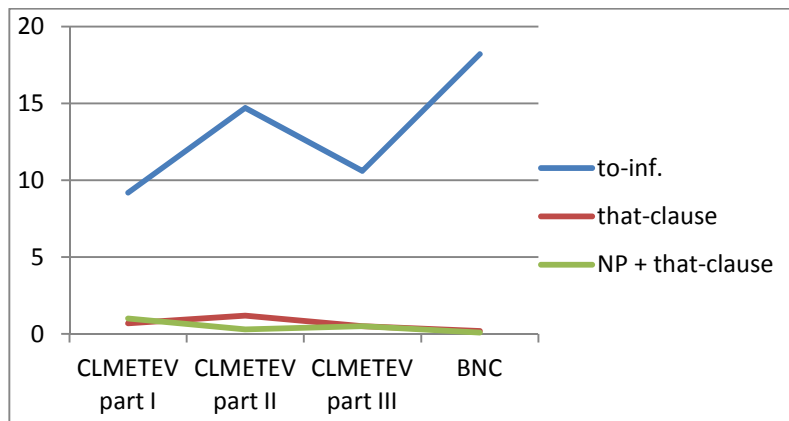
Time frame	Total	Complement type
<b><u>CLMETEV part I: 1710-1780</u></b> Sentential: 5 Non-sentential: 5	<b>10</b>	<b><i>to</i>-infinitive; <i>that</i>-clause; NP + <i>that</i>-clause; NP+ <i>to</i>-infinitive; NP + <i>what</i>-clause  NP; NP <i>with</i> NP; zero complement; NP <i>upon</i> NP; NP <i>to</i> NP</b>
<b><u>CLMETEV part II: 1780-1850</u></b> Sentential: 5 Non-sentential: 7	<b>12</b>	<b><i>to</i>-infinitive; <i>that</i>-clause; NP + <i>that</i>-clause; NP+ <i>to</i>-infinitive; <i>what</i>-clause  NP; NP <i>with</i> NP; zero complement; NP <i>for</i> NP; NP <i>upon</i> NP; NP <i>to</i> NP; NP <i>into</i> NP</b>
<b><u>CLMETEV part III: 1850-1920</u></b> Sentential: 3 Non-sentential: 5	<b>8</b>	<b><i>to</i>-infinitive; <i>that</i>-clause; NP + <i>that</i>-clause  NP; NP <i>with</i> NP; zero complement; NP <i>for</i> NP; NP <i>to</i> NP</b>
<b><u>BNC: 1960-1993</u></b> Sentential: 4 Non-sentential: 3	<b>7</b>	<b><i>to</i>-infinitive; <i>that</i>-clause; NP + <i>that</i>-clause; NP+ <i>to</i>-infinitive  NP; NP <i>with</i> NP; zero complement</b>

**Table 11. List of complement types occurring in each time period.**

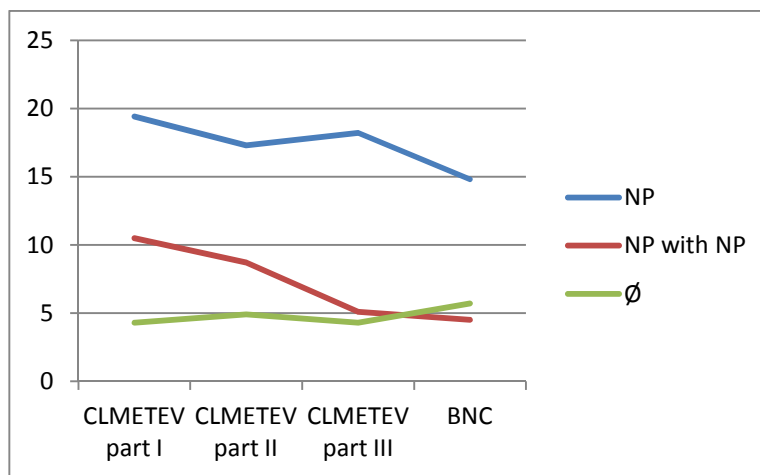
As can be seen in the table, the second period was the most successful in connection with *threaten*, at least in the number and variation of complements. Since then, the number has decreased, finally reaching the number of seven complements in the Modern English period. Between the periods, no significant differences were found in the normalised frequencies of the total data, which means that

the usage of the verb *threaten* in written British English has not changed much during the time frame. However, in the first two periods the use was most frequent.

The following figures present the progression of the three main sentential and non-sentential complement patterns, which have been present throughout the period under study:



**Figure 5. Progression of the main sentential complement types over the entire period.**



**Figure 6. Progression of the main non-sentential complement types over the entire period.**

All of the patterns have experienced some fluctuation, and the greatest degree of movement is apparent in the *to*-infinitive complement. Also, the NP and NP *with* NP complements have experienced visible decrease. The two *that*-clause patterns were rather infrequent during the whole time frame.

Certain syntactic and semantic factors were found to be connected to particular patterns. For example, complexity factors found out to be of importance with both sentential and non-sentential complements, but mostly only with the *to*-infinitive, NP and NP *with* NP complements. However, the number of finite sentential complement was very low during the whole period under scrutiny, which might affect the results. The control and NP movement are features only connected to the *to*-infinitive pattern. The question was raised whether the verb *threaten* is going through the phenomenon of grammaticalisation, and indeed, it seems that *threaten* has changed from having only a concrete, lexical meaning into being used broader and more grammatically, allowing wider range of contexts.

Passive constructions brought about discussion with the NP and NP *with* NP complements. They were not very frequent, but systematically appeared in each sub-period. They also included stative passives, and sometimes involved ambiguous cases. Many times, extractions emerged in passive constructions. Extractions were also very popular with the NP *with* NP pattern, in which the *with* construction was the extracted element. The NP complement often included lots of tokens where the complement approached the meaning of the *with* construction in the NP *with* NP pattern.

With the zero complement, *as*-clauses and parentheticals were of interest. They were not frequent within the early periods, but became more common towards Present-Day English. Especially parentheticals gained more ground in Modern English, in comparison with the earlier periods.

The connection between form and meaning has been explored throughout this thesis, with the discovery that none of the patterns seem to favour certain senses. It can be noted that the rarer patterns are more likely to appear in sense I than in any other sense, although that happens as well. The zero complement used to prefer sense I, but in Modern English it allows more variation, especially sense III is common along with the first one. During the entire time span, non-sentential

patterns seem to appear in a wider range of senses, compared to sentential complements. Towards Modern English, the patterns, in general, accept more variety among the different senses.

The NP + *to*-infinitive complement was said to be of special interest because of its disputable status. As Huddleston and Pullum stated, the pattern is very marginal, but nevertheless, it has survived during the whole time span. Though no examples of it was found in the third part of the CLMETEV, it returns in use in Modern English.

The benefit of this thesis for teachers and learners of English lies in the awareness which it rises. In advanced learner's dictionaries the number of the complements selected by *threaten* was restricted to five, and in grammars only to two. Thus, this thesis shows that the case is not that straightforward: 13 different patterns were found during the past circa three hundred years. Nowadays, still seven complementation patterns seem to be possible. In addition to the syntactic features of *threaten*, the semantic factors and the different senses of the verb presented here can provide deeper awareness of the use of the verb. However, it must be kept in mind that the data used in this study is gathered from written English, which no doubt affects the results, since at least parentheticals and the past tense form are common features of fictional writing.

With this thesis I have achieved the goals I set for myself at the beginning of the thesis, and clarified several aspects of the use of the verb *threaten* that was not clear for me. I have also tried to raise the readers awareness towards the verb in question, as well as some possible questions for future research projects.



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