

**The Verb *Delay* and its Complements in Written British English Texts (1710-1993):**

**A diachronic corpus study**

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Tässä korpuslingvistiikkaan pohjautuvassa pro gradu –tutkielmassa tarkastellaan verbin *delay* käyttöä, merkityksiä ja komplementaatiota sekä niiden muutoksia 1710-luvulta 1990-luvulle. Tutkielmassa keskitytään erityisesti tutkimaan verbin komplementaatiota. Tavoitteena on selvittää mitä komplementteja verbi *delay* saa ja tutkia verbin komplementaatiossa tapahtuneita mahdollisia muutoksia viime vuosisatojen aikana.

Tutkielman teoreettinen viitekehys luodaan esittelemällä korpuslingvistiikkaa ja korpuksia sekä niiden käyttöä lingvistisessä tutkimuksessa. Lisäksi tarkastellaan verbin komplementaatioteorioita, varsinkin ne teorit, jotka tavalla tai toisella liittyvät verbin *delay* komplementaation tutkimiseen. Verbin käyttöä, merkityksiä ja rakenteita tarkastellaan mm. sanakirjan *Oxford English Dictionary* avulla ja myös muiden sanakirjojen ja kielioppikirjojen avulla.

Tutkielman ensimmäisenä tavoitteen oli selvittää minkälaisia komplementteja esiintyy verbin *delay* kanssa. Toisena tavoitteena oli tutkia mahdollisia merkityseroja eri komplementaatorakenteiden välillä. Bolingerin periaatteen mukaan oletetaan, että pienetkin rakenteelliset erot muuten samankaltaisissa lauseissa aiheuttavat myös merkityseron. Tällöin eri komplementaatioiden välillä voi olettaa olevan jonkinlaisia merkityseroja.

Korpusaineistoa hankittiin käyttäen kahta korpusta. Historiallinen aineisto kerättiin korpuksesta *Corpus of Late Modern English Texts* (CLMET), joka sisältää kirjallista aineistoa vuosilta 1710-1920. Nykyenglannin aineistoa kerättiin korpuksesta *British National Corpus* (BNC), joka puolestaan kattaa vuodet 1960-1993. BNC:n osalta aineistoa hankittiin pääosin korpuksen tekstityyppi fiktiivinen proosa (imaginative prose) -osiosta.

Tutkimus paljasti muutoksia verbin komplementaatiossa. Suurimpana diakronisena muutoksena verbin komplementaation rakenteessa voidaan pitää komplementtirakenteen *-ing* ylivoimaista yleistymistä komplementtirakenteen *to*-infinitive kustannuksella. Toiseksi, verbin intransitiivinen käyttö on yleistynyt nykykielessä verrattuna menneisiin vuosisatoihin.

Avainsanat: korpustutkimus, komplementaatio, verbi, diakroninen tutkimus, *delay*

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## 1 Introduction

The aim of this corpus-based diachronic study is to examine complementation patterns of the verb *delay* in historical corpora and present day British English. The complements of the verb *delay* can vary, sometimes this verb takes a Noun Phrase as a complement, but it is sometimes complemented by a gerund (*-ing* clause) or by an infinitive (*to*-infinitive clause).

The primary research question of my thesis is, using corpus data, to discover all the possible patterns which are used with the verb *delay* today, and what complementation patterns were used with this verb in the past, and then compare different time periods with each other in order to discover how the use of different complementation patterns has developed in the history of British English. Special attention will be given to the examination of sentential complementation patterns of the verb *delay* (*-ing* clauses and *to*-infinitive clauses) and change in their use through centuries in relation to the linguistic theory called The Great Complement Shift.

For my research, I will use data extracted from two corpora: CLMET (the Corpus of the Late Modern English Texts), extended version, and the BNC (the British National Corpus). The CLMET is a historical corpus, it contains British texts dated 1710-1920, and it is divided into three parts, each covering a period of time of 70 years. The BNC, on the other hand, represents British English as it is used now, since it consists of texts from the later part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (1960-1993).

The secondary research question I pose for this study is to discover contexts and grammatical environments in which different kinds of complements occur. I will also try to explain what factors possibly influence the choice of each kind of complement for this verb.

My thesis is divided into two main parts. In the first part I will first present some theoretical concepts and linguistic theories relevant to my study of verb complementation,

then I will proceed to investigate the earlier, already existing works on the verb *delay*, namely what dictionaries and grammar books say about the complementation of the verb *delay*.

In the second part of my study, I will focus on analysing authentic data from two corpora. I will study what kind of complements the verb *delay* takes in my corpus data, and after that will proceed to investigate diachronic changes which happened with the choice of complementation for this verb.

## 2 Corpus Linguistics

A corpus is “a body of written or spoken material upon which a linguistic analysis is based” (*the OED, corpus*, sense 3b). Corpus linguistics is “the study of language in use by analyzing occurrence and frequency of forms in a large collection of texts typically stored in a computer” (Yule, 2006, 240). The history of corpus linguistics begins in the 1960’s, together with the developments of computer science. The application of computer technology makes it possible to process and analyze incredibly vast amounts of texts fairly easily. One of the important ideas of corpus linguistics is the authenticity of analyzed text samples. The aim of this field of linguistic research is to represent the real-life language. “Corpus work can be seen as an *empirical approach* in that, like all types of scientific enquiry, the starting point is actual authentic data” (Tognini-Bonelli 2001, 2).

Whether corpus linguistics is a theoretical approach or just a methodology for gathering data has been debated by linguists. “It has been argued that corpus linguistics is not really a domain of research but only a methodological basic for studying language” (*ibid*, 1). Many linguists working with a corpus, however, tend to agree that corpus linguistics goes beyond pure methodological role, that it “unites data gathering and theorizing (...) the use of computational, and consequently algorithmic and statistical, methods on the one hand, and the qualitative change of the observation that derive from this approach on the other” (*ibid*, 1). Tognini-Bonelli states that corpus linguistics “had become a new research enterprise and a new philosophical approach to linguistic enquiry” (*ibid*, 1).

A corpus is not just a random collection of texts, it is a collection of texts specially selected with a certain linguistic research idea in mind. According to Biber et al., “the appropriate design for corpus depends upon what it is meant to represent” (1998, 246). The texts of a corpus should be selected “according to explicit criteria in order to capture the regularities of a language, a language variety or a sub-language” (*ibid*, 55). Some corpora are

compiled to represent some regional variety of language, for example, its certain dialect. Corpora could be synchronic (representing language of approximately the same, relatively short period of time, usually such corpora deal with present day language) or diachronic (which are meant to represent the historical use of language and its development through time).

Other important factors that need to be taken into account while designing a new corpus are: the diversity of texts it includes (according to register, dialect variation, variation of subject matter), the total size of the corpus (number of words within a corpus), as well as “the number of texts from different categories, the number of samples from each text, and the number of words in each sample” (ibid., 248-249). While compiling diachronic corpora, the time span is also an important component that needs to be represented with special accuracy.



### 3 The characteristics of the corpora used

#### 3.1 CLMETEV

In my study, I am going to use The Corpus of Late Modern English Texts (CLMET), an extended version of it, CLMETEV. The CLMET is a fairly large corpus, it consists of slightly fewer than ten million words. The size of the extended version of the CLMET is 15 million words. The CLMET is a historical (or diachronic) corpus which was compiled by Hendrik De Smet on the basis of texts drawn from *Project Gutenberg* and *Oxford Text Archive*. The texts are dated 1710-1920. The corpus is suitable for diachronic linguistic research, since it is divided into three subparts, each part covering a period of seventy years. The first part is dated 1710-1780, the second part 1780-1850, and the third part 1850-1920 (de Smet 2005, 70).

The following table represents number of words in each subpart in both original and extended versions of the CLMET (ibid., 72-78):

	CLMET (original version)	CLMET (extended version)
I part (1710-1780)	2,1 million	3,0 million
II part (1780-1850)	3,7 million	5,8 million
III part (1850-1920)	4,0 million	6,3 million
Total	9,8 million	15 million

Table 1. The sizes of different parts of the CLMET.

The compiling of the CLMET was guided by four principles. The first principle was that “the texts included within one sub-period are written by authors born within a correspondingly restricted time-span” (de Smet 2005, 70). So, for example, the authors included into Part 1 of the corpus (texts written in 1710-1780) are born 1680-1750. The purpose of this measure is “to increase the homogeneity within each sub-period. Historical trends should, as a result, appear more clearly” (de Smet 2005, 70).

The second principle of compiling the corpus was that all the authors were native speakers of English. The third principle was that the contribution of one author in the corpus was restricted to 200 000 words; this was done to minimize the influence of idiosyncratic language of a single author into corpus data search results. The fourth principle was to include in the corpus texts with a maximum variety of different genres and the texts of authors of different backgrounds to counteract the fact that the texts found on *Project Gutenberg* and *Oxford Text Archive* are “typically literary, formal texts, mostly written by men who belonged to the better-off layers of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century English society” (de Smet 2005, 71). Thus, while compiling this corpus, non-literary texts were favored over literary ones and texts from lower registers over texts from higher registers. Special attention was paid to include texts written by women authors into the corpus.

De Smet points out that the CLMET, due to its fairly large size, is suitable for “the study of relatively infrequent syntactic patterns, or borderline phenomena between grammar and the lexicon, such as lexico-grammatical patterning, grammaticalisation and lexicalization” (de Smet 2005, 78). He also admits that the weakness of the CLMET is its “particular tendency (...) to be largely made up of formal writings by highly schooled (and linguistically self-conscious) authors (...), because these are exactly the type of texts where one expects language change to be kept at a tight leash” (de Smet 2005, 79).

The extended version of the CLMET, CLMETEV, contains almost fifteen million words. The CLMETEV contains the full version of the CLMET, but is expanded with extra five million words of texts drawn from *Project Gutenberg*, *Oxford Text Archive* and the *Victorian Women Writers Project*. The compiling of the CMETEV was guided by the same principles, thus CLMETEV has the same characteristics as the CLMET (de Smet 2005, 70).

### 3.2 The BNC

In my research, I am going to compare historical use of the verb *delay* with its use in a Present Day English, and for this purpose I also intend to employ a corpus which deals with a contemporary language. The corpus I have chosen for my research is the British National Corpus (BNC). The British National Corpus (BNC) is a synchronic corpus that represents the use of British English during the late 20<sup>th</sup> century (it covers years 1960-1993). The total size of the BNC is 100 million words (Burnard 2009).

Similarly to the CLMET, the BNC is a monolingual corpus, which represents only British English. The BNC, also similarly to the CLMET, is a general sample corpus, meaning that it includes a wide range of texts, texts of different styles and varieties of British English. The contribution of one author into a corpus is restricted to 45,000 words (Burnard 2009).

The BNC consists of written and spoken parts. Its written part (90 % of the corpus) contains the following kinds of texts: extracts from regional and national newspapers, specialist periodical and journals, academic books and popular fiction, published and unpublished letters, school and university essays, and other kinds of text (Burnard 2007).

The spoken part of the BNC, which comprises 10 % of the corpus, “consists of orthographic transcriptions of unscripted informal conversations (recorded by volunteers selected from different age, region and social classes in a demographically balanced way) and spoken language collected in different contexts, ranging from formal business or government meetings to radio shows and phone-ins” (Burnard 2007).

Since the BNC is a huge corpus of 100 million words, I will have to choose only part of it in order to limit the number of tokens to analyze. In my work, I am going to use only the written part of the BNC, the “Imaginative prose”-section of it, the size of which is 16,5 million words. The size of the “Imaginative Prose”-section of the BNC is almost the same as the size of the CLMET. Also, the type of texts from this section is stylistically similar to the

texts of the CLMET, which makes the results from the two corpuses comparable with each other.

### 3.3. Normalized frequencies

Normalized frequency count is a way to adjust the immediate results of corpus search (or so called raw frequency counts) to a size of a corpus. In this way, the results of searches from corpuses of different lengths can be compared accurately. The number of raw frequency count must be divided by the number of words in the text, and multiplied by a number which is chosen for norming (for example, per 100 words, or per 1,000 words, or per 1,000,000 words) (see Biber et. al. 1998, 263).

For example, if the size of the corpus I am going to use in my work is 5,800,000 words, the basis number can be per million words. If the raw count frequency in my case is 123 tokens, so the normalized frequency per million words will be:

$$(123/5,800,000) \times 1,000,000 = 21,2.$$

This number denotes the number of instances per one million words

## 4 Complementation

### 4.1 Complements vs. adjuncts

Since this thesis focuses on the complementation patterns of the verb *delay*, it is important to define the term *complement* and to be able to make a distinction between complements and adjuncts. Generally speaking, complements are elements that are more closely tied to the verb than adjuncts, they are also said to complete the meaning of a verb (Somers 1984, 508).

Adjuncts, on the other hand, are used to give some additional information to the sentence (usually about time, place and manner) and can be more easily added to or omitted from the sentence than complements. However, the distinction between complements and adjuncts is not that clear-cut and in some cases one can have difficulties to decide whether it is a complement or an adjunct in question. According to Huddleston & Pullum (2002), there is some uncertainty and disagreement between different grammarians as to how much should be subsumed under the function of complement.

Huddleston & Pullum (2002) define as many as seven properties of complements, the first and the most important of which is that complements “require the presence of an appropriate verb that licenses them” (219).

- 1 (a) *She answered the question.*
- 1 (b)\* *She referred the question.*

The verb *answer* in 1(a) licenses a noun (object) as its complement, while the verb *refer* does not, that is why the sentence 1(b) is ungrammatical. In other words, certain verbs allow only certain types of elements as their complements. This phenomenon is often referred to as *subcategorisation*: verbs are subcategorized according to the complementation they take/license. Different patterns of complementation are found with different subcategories (classes) of verb, such as: *intransitive*, *monotransitive*, *intransitive*, etc. The verb *answer* belongs to the category of monotransitive verbs, which means that this kind of verbs allows an object as its complement, while the verb *refer* belongs to the category of verbs which allow

a prepositional phrase as its complement. Most verbs allow more than one pattern of complementation.

Huddleston & Pullum also points out that only few very general verb subcategories (such as *intransitive* and *monotransitive*) have established names. Some of the names of verb subcategories are not well-established. For example, there is no name for the subcategories of verbs which take interrogative clauses as complement: *He wondered whether it was fine*.

According to Huddleston & Pullum, “a second important property of complements is that they are sometimes obligatory, whereas adjuncts are always optional” (221). It means that complements cannot be omitted from the sentence without loss of grammaticality or change of meaning.

- |                                       |                        |                         |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| 2. (a) He used a dictionary.          | (b) *He used.          | [obligatory complement] |
| 3. (a) She didn't answer the letter.  | (b) She didn't answer. | [optional complement]   |
| 4. (a) The train leaves at 7 o'clock. | (b) The train leaves.  | [optional adjunct]      |

Obligatory complements are always easy to distinguish from adjuncts, because leaving them out of the sentence produce ungrammatical sentences (which is demonstrated in the example sentences 1(a) and 1 (b)), but this is not the case with optional complements. As we can notice from the example sentences 3(a) and 3(b), it is possible to leave the object out from 3(a), the resulting sentence 3(b) is not ungrammatical. Instead, the meaning of the sentence in 3(b) changes in such a way that core meaning of the sentence is now different. Sentence 3(b) can be used in a completely different context while it would mean something else than sentence 3(a), for example: *I asked her where she was. She didn't answer*. In the case of sentences 4(a) and 4(b) the leaving of an adjunct *at 7 o'clock* produces only the loss of additional information in the sentence, while the meaning of the sentence itself does not change.

Huddleston & Pullum suggest a *do so* diagnostic test for distinction complements from adjuncts; this test uses the fact that complements are more closely tied to the verb than

adjuncts. *Do so* is an anaphoric expression which derive its interpretation from an antecedent.

The relevance of *do so* to the distinction between complements and adjuncts is seen in the following examples (examples are taken from Huddleston & Pullum, 223):

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

In 5(a) *in the garage* is a complement of *keep*, and in 4(b) *in the garage* is an adjunct of place.

#### 4.2 Types of complements

Complements can be divided into two major groups: sentential and non-sentential complements. Huddleston & Pullum list the following types of complements: NPs, AdvPs, PPs, subordinate clauses and AdjPs. The examples are:

6. (a) I saw her. (NP)  
 (b) They treat us quite abominably. (AdvP)  
 (c) He relied on his mother. (PP)  
 (d) I hadn't notice that she was looking so worried. (subordinate clause)  
 (e) She was disgusted at his betrayal. (AdjP)

Four of the five types of complements listed above (NPs, AdvPs, PPs and AdjPs) are so called non-sentential complements (let us note here, that PP can sometimes be a sentential complement, but in the sentence (c) here it is a non-sentential complement). The major property of non-sentential complements is that they do not form a clause.

Subordinate clauses from the list of Huddleston & Pullum, on the other hand, belong to the group of the sentential complements (they are also called complement clauses). Biber et. al. give the following definition of sentential complements: “complements clauses are a type of dependent clause used to complete the meaning relationship of an associated verb or adjective in a higher clause” (1999, 658). According to Biber, the major groups of sentential

complements are: *to*-infinitive clauses, *ing*-clauses, *that*-clauses and *wh*-clauses (Biber et. al., 1999, 658). Examples are from Biber et. al.:

7. (a) We wanted to talk in front of my aunt. (*to*-infinitive clause)

(b) He began crunching it gently but firmly. (*ing*-clause)

(c) They warned him that it's dangerous. (*that*-clause)

(d) I couldn't think what it was. (*wh*-clause)

*That*-clause and *wh*-clause as listed above in sentences (c) and (d) are finite, meaning that they include tense and modality distinctions and must have a subject. *To*-infinitive clauses and *ing*-clauses are non-finite and do not include tense distinctions.



## 5 Some relevant linguistic theories and grammatical concepts

### 5.1 Introduction

In this subsection, I will briefly introduce some linguistic theories and grammatical concepts that are relevant in my study. The purpose of my theses is to examine the complements that the verb *delay* takes in the authentic material (corpus). Then, the real point of my work is to examine in what kind of environments different patterns of complements occur and whether there is difference in meaning, for example, between cases when the verb *delay* takes a *to*-infinitive and the cases when it selects *ing*-clause as its complement.

### 5.2 Bolinger's principle

The key principle by which my whole study is guided is Bolinger's principle. According to it, "a difference in syntactic form always spells a difference in meaning" (Bolinger, 1968, 127). This means that when the verb is used with different pattern of complementation, there should be a difference in meaning to look for.

### 5.3 The complexity principle

The complexity principle is an interesting theory concerning complementation which was formulated by Rohdenburg in 1996. According to it, "in the case of more or less explicit grammatical options the more explicit one(s) will tend to be favored in cognitively more complex environments" (Rohdenburg, 1996, 151). By the more explicit element Rohdenburg means the "bulkier" element, the one which contains more morphosyntactic elements. Consider, for example, following sentences (the example sentences are from Rohdenburg, 151):

7. (a) I helped him to write the paper.
- (b) I helped him write the paper.

The complement *to write a paper* in 7(a) is more explicit since it contains the infinitive marker *to* while in the complement in 7(b) this marker is left out.

The more complex environments that trigger the choice of more explicit elements include, according to Rohdenburg (1996, 173):

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

#### 5.4 The *horror aequi* principle

The *horror aequi* principle “involves the widespread (and presumably universal) tendency to avoid the use of formally (near-)identical and (near-)adjacent (non-coordinate) grammatical elements or structures” (Rohdenburg 2003, 236). It, for example, means that two subsequent *-ing* forms in line will be avoided (as in *laying claim to doing*).

#### 5.5 The extraction principle

*The extraction principle* was formulated by Vosberg as follows : “In the case of infinitival or gerundial complement options, the infinitive will tend to be favoured in environments where the object of the independent verb is extracted (e.g. by topicalization, relativization, comparativization, or interrogation) from its original position and crosses clause boundaries” (Vosberg, 2003, 202).

#### 5.6 The Great Complement Shift

The verb *delay* can take both *-ing* clauses and *to*-infinitive clauses as its complement. These two forms of sentential complements are considered as competing ones in the literature, and being involved in a phenomenon known as the Great Complement Shift. For example,

according to Vosberg, the general tendency was that “alongside finite clauses and *to*-infinitives, this verbal *-ing* form has increasingly been used since the late seventeenth century, resulting in a re-arrangement of the entire system of verb complementation” (2003, 197).

### 5.7 Theories concerning differences in semantic meaning of *-ing* vs. *to*-infinitive complements

According to *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language* by Quirk *et al.*, in PDE the infinitival complement is used to indicate an action or event which “takes place after (and as a result of) the mental process denoted by the matrix verb has begun” thus involving future reference (Quirk *et al.* 1985, 1193). Gerund complements, on the other hand, “refers to a preceding event or occasion coming to mind at the time indicated by the main verb” (Quirk *et al.* 1985, 1993) – the reference is therefore to the past.

Bolinger in his article *Entailment and the meaning of structures* (1968) makes an effort to distinguish a difference in semantic meaning between *to*-infinitive and *-ing* complements.

He says:

On first looking *for-to* and *-ing* complements it is easy to fall in with the impression that their difference is only mechanical, with no freedom of choice and hence no meaning. Main verbs such as enjoy, relish, anticipate, approve, hate, witness, condemn, etc. take *-ings*, while *want*, *tell*, *expect*, *hope*, and a few others take the infinitive. The question is whether this is a matter of entailment to be handled by attaching a *grammatical* label (“*-ing-taking*” and “*for-to-taking*”) to an arbitrary set of word, or rather has to do with some semantic feature that the verbs have in common. (Bolinger 1968, 123).

Bolinger further analyses minimal pairs of sentences with verbs taking both *to*-infinitives and *-ing*'s as complements. These example sentences are:

1. I like him *to be* nice to you.

2. I like his *being* nice to you.

and:

3. Can you remember *to do* that?
4. Can you remember *doing* that?

Bolinger concludes that *to*-infinitive complements (as in example sentences 1. and 3.) are used when the speaker expresses wish, projection or hypothesis for something to happen in the future. *-Ing* complements (in example sentences 2. and 4.), on the other hand, refer to actual behaviour or something actually done. “The conclusion seems reasonable that there is a properly semantic contrast between the nominalizations carried by *-ing* and those carried by the infinitive. It is a contrast between two aspects: *reification* versus *hypothesis* or *potentiality*” (Bolinger 1968, 124).

The article ‘*Infinitivitis*’ in *English* by Allerton gives some additional viewpoints on the use of infinitival versus gerundial complements. One of these points is that infinitival complements are preferred over the gerundial complements by native English speakers in the cases of formal context: “The common linguistic condition of ‘infinitivitis’ (...) appears in its most acute form when they (British English speakers) are speaking in a formal context or using the written medium. The condition is characterized by frequent over-use of the infinitive, particularly in contexts in which unaffected speakers would use the gerund” (Allerton 1988, 11).

Allerton proves his point that the gerund behaves more like a nominal than does the infinitive by pointing out that infinitives and gerunds have different syntactic nature in English (in the way of marking of subjects and objects; in the use of frequency adverbials *never*, *often*, *sometimes* (they are used with infinitives, but not with gerunds); in taking prepositions in gerundial, but not by infinitival complements). All these points make the infinitive appear relatively verbal, and the gerund more nominal (ibid, 11-12).

Allerton states that “given that the infinitive differs in its syntactic nature from the gerund (...), it should be not surprising that they have differing semantic values and indeed can provide a minimal contrast in many cases”. Yet, he notices that ‘in some of these cases there appears to be free variation, but in fact there is simply a stylistic convention that prefers the infinitive in formal English, thus blurring the potential contrast’ (ibid, 13).

After analysing differences in semantic meaning in a set of *minimal pair* sentences, Allerton, too, makes a conclusion, that “while the infinitive typically refers to something infrequent, unlikely, or even hypothetical, the gerund refers either to a factual event or regular series of events in the past, or to a likely future event” (ibid. 14).

Allerton sums up a subtle semantic distinction between infinitive and gerund in the following table (ibid, 21):

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

Table 2. Difference in semantic meaning between infinitival and gerundial complements (Allerton 1988).

In his article *Cognitive Complexity and the Establishment of –ing Constructions with Retrospective Verbs in Modern English* (2003), Vosberg focuses on a historical development of use of the *–ing* and *to*-infinitive complements, making an effort to trace their evolution in English language. “As is well-known, the so-called *–ing* form evolved from the (de)verbal

noun. This was originally a pure noun, formed by adding the suffix *-ing* to the verb stem. However, in the course of time, this nominal form has developed more and more verbal properties. Thus, unlike all other European languages, English has had the unique possibility of establishing a third sentential variant in the complementation of many verb classes” (Vosberg, 2003, 197).

Many linguists have pointed out that the particle *to* which is normally understood as a mere function word (infinitive marker) has actually “regained a good deal of its original meaning of movement and direction to or towards a goal, physical or psychic” (Visser 1972, 1090, through Rudanko 1998, 346). According to Vosberg (2003) this phenomenon was first described by Bolinger (1968, 115), for Bolinger “contributed to the concept of a degrammaticalization or resemanticization of the *to* formerly denoting direction” (Vosberg 2003, 200). Rudanko (1998, 346) also refers to this original meaning of the preposition *to* as a preposition of direction and therefore purpose.

Another interesting point highly relevant for this particular study has to do with the results of Rudanko’s research (1989), which prove (on the basis of data drawn from corpora), that verbs of positive volition (such as *adore, learn*) prefer to take an infinitive as a complement, while verbs of negative volition (e.g. *refuse*) tend to take the gerundial complements (see Rudanko 1989, 45-46).

## 5.8 Semantic roles

The choice of a certain type of complement for the predicate may possibly be influenced by semantic roles of its arguments. Arguments of the predicate (subject and object) bear different semantic roles in the situation described in the sentence. In some literature they can also be referred to as *thematic roles* (see Haegeman, 1991, 41). Semantic (or thematic) roles are, for example, AGENT and PATIENT. For instance, if we take a sentence *A man killed a dog* the

argument *a man*, which is in a subject position, is an AGENT of the activity described by the verb *kill*. Another argument, *a dog*, which is in an object position in this sentence, is a PATIENT of the same activity (killing).

Although the theory of semantic roles is quite clear on the intuitive level, it is still slightly unsettled. As Haegeman says, “although many linguists agree on the importance of thematic structure for certain syntactic processes, the theory of thematic roles is still very sketchy. For example, at the present stage of the theory there is no agreement about how many such thematic roles there are and what their labels are” (1991, 41).

The most inclusive list of semantic roles is presented in Huddleston and Pullum (2002). Huddleston and Pullum list altogether 11 semantic roles for arguments of the sentence: Causer; Agent; Instrument; Patient; Experiencer and Stimulus; Theme; Primary and Secondary theme; Factitive theme; Path, source, goal, and location; Recipient, Beneficiary.

According to Haegeman (1991) there are eight thematic roles: Agent, Patient, Theme, Experiencer, Beneficiary, Goal, Source and Location. (Haegeman 1991, 41-42) Such semantic roles as Causer, Instrument, Primary and Secondary theme, Factitive theme and Recipient, given in Huddleston and Pullum, are not found in Haegeman’s list. Haegeman’s definitions of the semantic roles are also briefer, than Huddleston and Pullum’s, Huddleston and Pullum also give a lot of examples to illustrate their definitions.

Huddleston and Pullum’s definition for Agent is following: “The prototypical agent is animate and acts consciously, volitionally” (Huddleston and Pullum 2002, 230). Haegeman defines Agent as “the one who intentionally initiates the action expressed by the predicate” (Haegeman 1991, 41). A Causer role in Huddleston and Pullum, is the semantic role which “involves direct or immediate causation of an action or event – the role of the subject argument in *Kim sighed the letter, The dog snarled, The rain ruined the crop*” (Huddleston

and Pullum 2002, 230). The Causer can be inanimate operator or an animate operator who act involuntarily. The semantic role of Caser is not found in Haegman's list.

Another semantic role, which is missing from Haegman's list, is an Instrument. The Instrument is defined in Huddleston and Pullum as "the role of an entity prototypically used by an agent in performing an action: *I cut the lace with the knife.*" (Huddleston and Pullum 2002, 231):

Patient is, according to Haegeman, "the person or thing undergoing the action expressed by the predicate". (Haegeman 1991, 41). Huddleston and Pullum define Patient as following: "A prototypical patient is affected by an action performed by some causer, especially an agent – the agent (or causer) does something to the patient. As in *They hit me. They kissed us. They did cruel things to him*" (Huddleston and Pullum 2002, 231).

## 5.9 Control and NP movement

There are two kinds of predicates in English: subject control predicates and NP movement predicates. These predicates may superficially look quite similar to each other, as in the following two sentences (examples are from Davis and Dubinski (2004,3)):

- (1) *Barnet seemed to understand the formula.*
- (2) *Barnet tried to understand the formula.*

Nevertheless, sentence (1) is an example of a NP movement construction with the NP movement verb *seem* as a matrix verb of a sentence, and sentence (2) is an example of a subject control construction the subject control verb *try* as a matrix verb. Both sentences have the same structure NP-V-to-VP. How are these two kinds of predicates different?

There are essential differences between the sentences (1) and (2) that "center on the subject of the matrix clause" (Davis and Dubinski 2004,3). The difference is that in the sentence (1) the subject *Barnet* is semantically linked only to the embedded verb *understand*,



while in sentence (2) it is semantically linked to both the matrix verb *try* and the embedded verb *understand*. “The subject in (2) is said to ‘control’ the reference of the subject of the embedded clause and the construction has come to be referred to as “Subject Control” with a matrix verb” (Davis and Dubinski 2004, 3).

Davis and Dubinski (2003, 4) list several arguments proving that subject control and NP movement verbs differ from each other. First of all, control and NP movement verbs differ in that they have different thematic structures. For example in the sentence:

(3) It seemed that Barnett understood the formula  
(which is truth-conditionally equivalent to sentence (1)), *Barnett* is assigned the thematic role of ‘experiencer’ as the subject of *understand*. It is a semantically empty element and has no thematic role, showing that the predicate *seem* do not assign a thematic role to its subject. On the contrary, in (2) *Barnett* has two thematic roles, one as experiencer of *understand* and one as agent of *try*. Thus, control verbs, unlike NP movement verbs assign a thematic role to their subject.

Secondly, control and NP movement verbs behave differently when the complement clause is passive (ibid, 5). NP movement predicates allow passivisation of the complement clause, while the passivized sentence has the same meaning as the original one. For example:

(4) Barnett seemed to have read the book.

(5) The book seemed to have been read by Barnett.

The meaning of the sentences (4) and (5) is the same. For control predicates the situation is different in that either a passivized sentence does not have the same meaning with the original one, or is not possible.

(6) a. The doctor tried to examine Tilman.

b. Tilman tried to be examined by the doctor.

(7) a. Barnett tried to read the book.

b. \*The book tried to be read by Barnett.

Sentences (6) a. and b. are not identical in meaning. The passivised sentence (7) b. is not a possible sentence.

There are two more arguments for distinction of control and NP movement structures: existential *there* and ‘weather *it*’ (*it* of meteorological expressions). Both of them can be used with NP movement predicates, as in examples from Davis and Dubinski (2003, 14):

(8) It *seemed* to be raining.

(9) There *seems* to be a unicorn in the garden.

However, these expressions are not possible to be used with control predicates:

(10) \*It *tried* to be raining.

(11) \*There *tried* to be a unicorn in the garden.

### 5.10 Extractions and Insertions

Extractions are “deviations from the canonical sentence structure” (Vosberg 2003, 201).

Huang (1997, 123-129) mentions several common types of extractions: wh-questions, topicalized sentences and relative clauses. Vosberg (2003) lists more extraction types (in addition to just mentioned): Clefting, Pseudo-clefting, Comparativisation, Negative NP Extraction, Exclamatory Extraction (201-202). Here are some examples (examples (1)-(3) are from Huang):

(1) What have you done this week? [Wh-questions]

(2) John’s article, I will never read. [Topicalised sentences]

(3) The man who you saw yesterday is my brother. [Relative clause]

(4) What he wanted to buy was a car. [Wh-cleft]

Insertions are discontinuous constructions, with a material inserted between the verb and its complement (Vosberg 2003, 210). The first example is from Vosberg, and the two others are from my own corpus search results:

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

(6) Now, he could not **delay** *any further* in telling her what had to be told. (BNC)

(7) ... "I should ill return the proofs I have received of your generous disinterested friendship, to **delay** *one moment that I had it in my power*, in endeavouring to convince you that it was a quite contrary motive than ingrat ... (1744 Haywood *The Fortunate Foundlings*)

## **6 *Delay* in dictionaries and grammar books**

### 6.1 *Delay* in dictionaries

#### 6.1.1 Introduction. Range of dictionaries

In this subsection, I am going to examine all possible semantic meanings of the verb *delay* using four dictionaries: the first one is the classic Oxford English Dictionary, and three others are learner's dictionaries: Collins Cobuild Advanced Learner's Dictionary, Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2007), and Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2008). Special attention will be given to what different dictionaries say about complementation patterns of the verb *delay*.

#### 6.1.2 The verb *delay* in the OED

The OED lists seven meanings of the verb *delay*, which can be grouped into three main meanings. According to the OED, the verb *delay* can be used both as a transitive and as an intransitive verb. The complements of the verb *delay* listed by the OED are: noun phrases and infinitives.

The main semantic meanings of the verb *delay* in the OED are represented in the following table:

OED entries	Example(s)	Complement patterns
<p>1. <i>trans.</i> To put off to a later time; to defer, postpone.</p> <p>b. with <i>infin.</i> To defer, put off.</p> <p>c. with personal object (now obsolete). To put (any one) off, to keep him waiting.</p>	<p>1 Th' unprofitable moments.. That still <b>delay</b> Life's instant business to a future day. (1737 Pope <i>Hor. Epist.</i>)</p> <p>b. Some succour.. [they] <b>Delayed</b> not to bestow. (1799 Cowper <i>Castaway</i>). Delaying as the tender ash <b>delays</b> To clothe herself, when all the woods are green. (1847 Tennyson <i>Princ.</i>)</p> <p>c. It was not fit shee should <b>delay</b> him with faire wordes. (1639 Du Verger <i>Camus' Admir. Events</i>) Where judges of any court <b>to delay</b> the parties. (1768 Blackstone <i>Comm.</i>)</p>	<p>---[NP]</p> <p>---[to+infinitive]</p> <p>---[NP]</p>
<p>2. To impede the progress of, cause to linger or stand still; to retard, hinder.</p>	<p>Joy and Grief can hasten and <b>delay</b> Time. (1709 Steele <i>Tatler</i>)</p>	<p>---[NP]</p>
<p>3. <i>intrans.</i> To put off action; to linger, loiter, tarry.</p> <p>b. To tarry in a place. (now only poetic)</p> <p>c. To be tardy in one's progress, to loiter.</p>	<p>3 O sweet new-year <b>delaying</b> long.. <b>Delaying</b> long, <i>delay</i> no more. (1850 Tennyson <i>In mem.</i>)</p> <p>b. Wind of the sunny south! or still <b>delay</b>, In the gay woods and in the golden air. (1878 Bryant <i>Poems, October</i>) Paris being.. in his way to Spain, he delaid there one day. (1654 H. L'Estrange <i>Chas.</i>)</p> <p>c. There seem to be certain bounds to the quickness and slowness of the succession of those ideas.. beyond which they can neither <b>delay</b> nor hasten. (1690 Locke <i>Hum. Und.</i>)</p>	<p>---</p>

Table 3. The main semantic meanings of the verb *delay* according to the OED.

The use of the verb *delay* with *-ing* complements is not mentioned separately in the OED.

6.1.3 The verb *delay* in Collins Cobuild Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2003)

According to Collins Cobuild Advanced Learner's Dictionary the verb *delay* can be used in three different senses:

Collins Cobuild entries	Example(s)	Complement patterns
1. If you <b>delay</b> doing something, you do not do it immediately or at the planned or expected time, but you leave it until later	For sentimental reasons I wanted to <b>delay</b> <i>my departure</i> until June.  She would <b>delay</b> <i>starting</i> divorce proceedings for six months.  If you <b>delay</b> <i>in claiming</i> they won't pay you.	---[NP]  ---[-ing]  ---[in -ing]
2. To <b>delay</b> someone or something means to make them late or to slow them down	Can you <b>delay</b> <i>him</i> in some way?  <i>The passengers</i> were <b>delayed</b> for an hour.	---[NP]
3. If you <b>delay</b> , you deliberately take longer than necessary to do something	If he <b>delayed</b> any longer, the sun would be up.	---

Table 4. The main semantic meanings of the verb *delay* according to the Collins Cobuild Advanced Learner's Dictionary.

Collins Cobuild's entry for the verb *delay* seems to differ from the one suggested by the OED. According to Collins Cobuild Dictionary, *delay* can be used with *-ing* complements, but not with *to+infinitive* complements. Also, the use of *delay* with personal object is not considered as obsolete in Collins Cobuild, contrary to the information in the OED.

6.1.4 *Delay* in Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2007)

Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary lists only two senses for the verb *delay*:

Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary's entries	Example(s)	Complement patterns
1. To not do something until a later time or to make something happen at a later time (synonym: DEFER)	<p>The judge will <b>delay</b> <i>his verdict</i> until he receives medical reports on the offender.</p> <p>He <b>delayed</b> <i>telling</i> her the news, waiting for the right moment.</p> <p>Don't <b>delay</b> – call us today!</p>	<p>---[NP]</p> <p>---[-ing]</p> <p>---</p>
2. To make somebody late or force them to do something more slowly (synonym: HOLD UP)	<p><i>Thousands of commuters</i> were <b>delayed</b> for over an hour.</p>	<p>---[NP]</p>

Table 5. The main semantic meanings of the verb *delay* according to the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary.

According to the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, the complementation pattern ---[to-infinitive] is not possible for the verb *delay*. Three complementation patterns (NP, -ing -clause and zero complement) are found in the description of this verb.

### 6.1.5 *Delay* in Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2008)

Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary lists three senses for the verb *delay*:

Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary's entries	Example(s)	Complement patterns
1. To make something happen at a later time than originally planned or expected	<i>My plane was <b>delayed</b> by an hour</i>  <i>Could we <b>delay</b> the meeting a few days?</i>  <i>I think we should <b>delay</b> deciding about this until next year.</i>	---[NP]    ---[-ing]
2. To cause someone or something to be slow or late.	<i>I was <b>delayed</b> by traffic.</i>	---[NP]
3. To not act quickly or immediately.	<i>If you <b>delay</b> now, the opportunity might be lost.</i>	---

Table 6. The main semantic meanings of the verb *delay* according to the Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary.

The complementation patterns used with the verb *delay* found in the Cambridge Advanced Learners' Dictionary are: NP, *-ing* -clause and zero complement. Again, according to this dictionary, similarly to the information given by the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, this verb is not used with a *to*-infinitive as a complement.

### 6.2 *Delay* in grammar books

I examined five grammar books to discover what they say about the use of the verb *delay*.

These are: Poutsma (1914), Jespersen (1965), Biber et al. (1999), Huddleston and Pullum (2002), and Quirk et al. (2004). Only three out of these five grammar books mention the verb *delay*. Poutsma (1914) gives several examples of the use of this verb both with a gerund and an infinitive, and notes that: "Apparently the two constructions are used indifferently". The examples Poutsma gives are the following (Poutsma 1914, Part One: the Sentence, 621):

- i. Faulkland will ever *delay assuming* the right of a husband (Riv., I, 2).

*I delayed going* to my usual place of business (Glow-Worm Tales, II, Q, 265).



- ii. Meer Jaffier *delayed to fulfil* his engagements (Clive, 517b).

Delaying as the tender ash *delays To cloth* herself, when all the woods are green  
(Princ., IV, 1.88).

Jespersen's *A Modern English Grammar* (1965), mentions that the complement of the verb *delay* is "now generally gerund" but also quotes an example with the use of *delay* with an infinitive as a complement. (Jespersen 1965, Part five. Syntax, 200).

The example Jespersen quotes is:

- i. He still *delayed to send* for my ransom (Johnson R 133).

This contradiction is not, however, properly explained in Jespersen, probably the use of the verb *delay* with an infinitive is seen as a rare one.

Another grammar book, a *Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English* (1999) contains a more detailed explanation on the complementation of the verb *delay*. The verb *delay* is defined there as "a verb of aspect and manner" (together with *begin, come, go (around/on), keep (on), sit, spend (time), start, stop*, etc.). It is also said that "verbs of aspect and manner are the most common verbs controlling post-predicate *-ing*-clauses". In this grammar book, it is mentioned that the verb *delay* takes following patterns of complementation: "verb+*-ing*-clause" and "verb+NP+ *ing*-clause". The use of *delay* with infinitives is not mentioned.

The information on the verb *delay* in grammar books is quite inconsistent. In the older grammars, the use of *delay* with infinitives is considered as possible, while according to the information in newer grammar books, *delay* is complemented only by *-ing* constructions and its use with *to-infinitives* is not even mentioned.

The situation with dictionaries is the same as with the grammar books: the *OED*, the older dictionary, mentions the use of *delay* with *to*-infinitive complementation pattern.

Contrary to that, the three newer learner's dictionaries do not mention

*to*-infinitive complementation pattern as a possible one, even as a rare one. Instead, according to them, *delay* is used with *-ing* complements.

## 7 Delay in the CLMET

### 7.1 Delay in the first part of the CLMET (1710-1780)

The size of the extended version of the first part of the CLMET is 3,000,000 words. Words used for the corpus search were the following: “delay”, “delays”, “delayed” and “delaying”.

The search in the corpus returned the results of 69 tokens of the verb *delay*. All the complement types (*NP*, *-ing*, *to+infinitive*) mentioned in the OED are found in the extracted data. By far the most used pattern with the verb *delay* is its use as a transitive verb complemented by a Noun Phrase (56 examples of such use are found in the data (81,2 %)).

The examples with *to+infinitive* complements were also found in the data, but they were quite rare: only 3 examples (4,4 %). A little more common pattern was the use of the verb *delay* with *-ing* complements: it was found in 7 examples (10,1 %). In two examples, the verb *delay* was found with *in -ing* complement. The examples of the verb’s intransitive use were quite rare as well: only one examples of the intransitive use were found (1,4 %).

The distribution of different types of complements of the verb *delay* in the corpus data is summed up in the following table:

Complementation pattern	Number of examples	%	Normalised frequency (per 1,000,000 words)
---[NP]	56	81,2	18,7
---[- <i>ing</i> ]	7	10,1	2,3
---[in <i>-ing</i> ]	2	2,9	0,7
---[ <i>to+infinitive</i> ]	3	4,4	1
Absolute/intransitive use (without complements)	1	1,4	0,3
All the verbs <i>delay</i>	69	100	23

Table 7. The distribution of different types of complements of the verb *delay* in the first part of the CLMET.

### 7.1.1 An intransitive use of the verb *delay*

There was only one example of the intransitive use of the verb *delay* in this part of the corpus:

1. ... My dear Constance, why will you deliberate thus? If we **delay** a moment, all is lost forever. Pluck up a little resolution, and we shall soon be out of the reach of her malignity. ... (1773 Goldsmith, *She Stoops to Conquer*)

In this example of the intransitive use, the verb *delay* is used with a personal pronoun as a subject, so that the subject of the sentence is animate ([+]Human).

According to the OED, intransitive use of the verb *delay* is possible both with [-]Human (senses 3a and 3b) and [+]Human (sense 3c) subjects. However, in the only example of the intransitive use of the verb which was found in this part of the corpus, it occurs with an animate subject (a personal pronoun). However, this example from the corpus supports the Collins Cobuild's, Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary and Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary view on the intransitive use of the verb *delay*, since they exemplify the intransitive use of the verb *delay* as being used with [+]Human subjects.

### 7.1.2 Non-sentential complements

The complementation pattern ---[NP] is by far the most common pattern in my corpus data.

This pattern was used in 56 examples out of total 69 tokens of this verb (in slightly more than 80 % of all the examples). Out of these 56 examples of use of the verb *delay* with NP

complements, in as many as 18 examples (or 26 %) it was used in passive constructions.

Some examples of the passive use are the followings:

2. ... Mr. BURREL then spoke as follows:--Sir, if *this law* be necessary at any time, *it* cannot now be **delayed**, for a few days spent in deliberation, may make it ineffectual, and that evil may be past of which we sit here...  
(1740-1 Johnson, *Parliamentary Debates*)

3. ... I then took coach for London, pretending, at my arrival, that *I* had been **delayed** by sickness, and to excuse my nurse's absence, said she had caught the fever of me;--so no farther enquiry was made...  
(1744 Haywood, *The Fortunate Foundlings*)

4. ... But, added he, pray, Pamela, do not take beyond Thursday. She was pleased to say, Sure *it* will not be **delayed** by you, madam, more than needs!--Well, said he, now you are on my side, I will leave you with her to settle it...  
(1740 Richardson, *Pamela*)

The use of the verb *delay* with a personal object as a complement is found in only three examples. This use is marked as obsolete in the OED, and this statement is supported by my findings; all the three examples are dated by the 1740's, and two of them are of the same text (Haywood, *The Fortunate Foundlings*, 1744). Here are two of the three examples of this use:

5. ... I shall be soon ready; for I have but little to take with me, and no kind friends in this house to take leave of, to **delay** *me*.  
(1740 Richardson, *Pamela*)

6. ... shes, without any confirmation of the repeated vows he had made; and receiving from him no account of the reasons that **delayed** *him*, she began to reproach herself for having placed too much confidence in him.  
(1744 Haywood, *The Fortunate Foundlings*)

Here are several example sentences of the use of the *delay* with NP as a complement:

7. ... wave this ceremony, but he would not a second time dispute the commands of such a father. But wherefore should I **delay** *the attention* of my reader, who, I doubt not, but easily perceives by this time how things will end: so...  
(1744 Haywood, *The Fortunate Foundlings*)

8. ... to other friends, as well as from what they more circumstantially knew concerning him. I therefore determined to **delay** *the execution* of my promise till I could enjoy these advantages for performing it in the most satisfactory manner; nor ... (1750 Doddridge, *The Life of col. James Gardiner*)

9. ... know that she was in love with him. Vanity and interest both uniting to persuade Farquhar to marry, he did not long **delay** *it*, and, to his immortal honour let it be spoken, though he found himself deceived, his circumstances embarrassed, and ... (1753 Cibber, *The Lives of the Poets*)

10. ...beautiful; the moral being to give us an example, in the punishment of Martian, that no consideration ought to make us **delay** *the service* of our country.  
(1753 Cibber, *The Lives of the Poets*)

11. ... his curiosity for a short time, as we are obliged, for some very good reasons which hereafter perhaps he may guess, to **delay** *his satisfaction* a little longer. Mr Jones and his fair companion no sooner entered the town, than they went direc ... (1749 Fielding, *Tom Jones*)

12. ... I wish I had no greater reason to be angry with her than that." "For Heaven's sake," cries Amelia, "do not **delay** *my request* any longer; what you say now greatly increases my curiosity, and my mind will be on the rack till you... (1751 Fielding *Amelia*)

13. ... months' absence from civilization must have been to get back to it, and to take things for granted that would otherwise **delay** *their progress*. At Noon our Latitude by observation was 40 degrees 55 minutes South, which is 21 Miles to the Southw ... (1768-71 Cook *Captain Cook's Journal*)

14. ... got the Ship's head round to the Northward, which seemed to be the best way to keep her off the Reef, or at least to **delay** *time*. Before this was effected it was 6 o'clock, and we were not above 80 or 100 yards from the breakers. The same se ... ((1768-71 Cook *Captain Cook's Journal*)

As we can notice from these examples, when used with NP's as complements, the verb *delay* typically selects abstract objects (e.g. *time*, *progress*, *request*, *satisfaction*, *service* and so on). This use corresponds to the OED senses 1a and 2 (which are, in fact, very close to each other).

Only in one case was *delay* used with a nominal *-ing* form:

15. ... affect any person very much by a matter of fact, of which they intend to inform him, first to excite his curiosity; **delay** as long as possible *the satisfying* it; and by that means raise his anxiety and impatience to the utmost, ... (1739-40 Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature*)

### 7.1.3 Sentential complements: *-ing*-clauses

The pattern --[*-ing*] was found in seven tokens in the corpus data. The examples of the use of *-ing* complements are:

1. ... our letters of the 4th and 11th, N. S., and being much more careful of my commissions than you are of yours, I do not **delay** one moment *sending* you my final instructions concerning the pictures. (1746-71 Chesterfield, *Letters to His Son on the Art*)

2. ... Though you may expect my attorney with you soon, I would not **delay** *sending* this, as I hope the news will be agreeable to you. (1751 Fielding, *Amelia*)

3. His lordship soon addressed himself to Booth, saying, "As I have what I think good news for you, sir, I could not **delay** *giving* myself the pleasure of communicating it to you....(1751 Fielding, *Amelia*)

4. ... relate the history of her life. The queen, overjoyed that her curiosity might now be gratified, begged her not to **delay** *giving* her that pleasure one moment; on which our little fairy began in the following manner. But there Mrs. Te ... (1749 Fielding, *The Governess*)

5. ... that I have not been unobserving of those kind fears you have had on my account; and the reason I have so long **delayed** *speaking* was, my resolution, if possible, never again to deceive you. I can with pleasure now assure you, that nothing ... (1749 Fielding, *The Governess*)

6. ... betwixt the two ladies; and, at length, could distinctly hear certain terms of altercation, which we could no longer **delay** *interrupting*, with any regard to decorum. When we entered the scene of contention, we found Liddy had joined the disp ... (1771 Smollett, *The Expedition of Humphrey Clinker*)

7. ... LETTER LVII LONDON, November 29, O. S. 1748. DEAR BOY: I **delayed** *writing* to you till I could give you some account of the motions of your friend Mr. Eliot; for whom I know you have, a ... (1746-71 Chesterfield, *Letters to His Son on the Art*)

In five out of the seven examples of the use of the *delay* with *-ing* complements, it is found more complex grammatical environment, namely with negative constructions (in sentences 1, 2, 3, 4, 6). We also find it accompanied by an insertion in one example out of the seven (sentence 1).

In this part of the corpus, there were also two examples of the use of the *delay* with the pattern --[in *-ing*]. The two examples are:

8. ... "I should ill return the proofs I have received of your generous disinterested friendship, to **delay** one moment that I had it in my power, *in endeavouring* to convince you that it was a quite contrary motive than ... (1744 Haywood *The Fortunate Foundlings*)

9. ... valiant soldier. That the reader, therefore, may not conceive the least ill opinion of such a person, we shall not **delay** a moment *in rescuing* his character from the imputation of this guilt. Mr Northerton then, as we have before observe ... (1749 Fielding *Tom Jones*)

In the use of this verb with *in -ing* complements, we find it accompanied by insertions in both the examples. Additionally, it is used with a negative construction in (9).

#### 7.1.4 Sentential complements: *to*+infinitives

Sentential complements with *to*+infinitive complements were quite rare, with only three tokens. Two of the three examples are of the same writer, and one is from the poetic text. The examples are:

10. ... and restraints, and that we never can be too early in the prevention of pernicious practices, though we may sometimes **delay** *to punish* them. The law will be known to-morrow, to far the greatest number of those who may be tempted to defeat i ... (1740-1 Johnson *Parliamentary Debates*)

11. ... some degree of cheerfulness, he returned to me, and I could not forbear to despise my former uneasiness. "He still **delayed** *to send* for my ransom, and would perhaps never have determined had not your agent found his way to him. (1759 Johnson *Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia*)

12. I sing of food, by British nurse design'd, To make the stripling brave, and maiden kind. **Delay** not muse in numbers *to rehearse* The pleasures of our life, and sinews of our verse. Let pudding's dish, most whol ... (1753 Cibber *The Lives of the Poets*)

In one case out of three, the verb *delay* is used with an infinitival complement in a negative construction (sentence 12). The use of the verb *delay* with an infinitival construction is mentioned in the OED, and I expected to find more tokens of this use in this part of the corpus. On the other hand, all three Learners' Dictionaries, which I examined, do not mention the use of the *delay* with an infinitival complement at all.

All the subjects of the sentential complements of the verb *delay* here (both *-ing* and *to*-infinitive complements) are Agents, because we observe that they refer to an animate who acts consciously, volitionally, deliberately initiates an action. With respect to Control, all the subjects here are control subjects.

#### 7.2 *Delay* in the second part of the CLMET (1780-1850)

The size of the extended version of the second part of the CLMET is 5,800,000 words. The corpus inquiry returned 398 tokens altogether. Out of them, only 123 were the examples of



the verb *delay*, the rest of the found tokens were mostly nouns (“delay” and “delays”). All the complement types (*NP*, *-ing*, *to+infinitive*) mentioned in the dictionaries were found in the extracted data. By far the most common pattern with the verb *delay* is its use as a transitive verb complemented by a Noun Phrase (94 examples of such use are found in the data (76,4 %)). The examples with *to+infinitive* complements were also found in the corpus, but they were quite rare: only 4 examples (3,3 %). A little more common pattern was the use of the verb *delay* with *-ing* complements: it was found in 12 examples (9,7 %). The examples of the verb’s intransitive use were found in 13 examples (10,6 %).

The distribution of different types of complements of the verb *delay* in the corpus data is summed up in the following table:

Complementation pattern	Number of examples	%	Normalised frequency (per 1,000,000 words)
---[NP]	94	76,4 %	16,2
---[- <i>ing</i> ]	12	9,7 %	2
---[ <i>to+infinitive</i> ]	4	3,3 %	0,7
Absolute/intransitive use (without complements)	13	10,6 %	2,2
All the verbs <i>delay</i>	123	100 %	21,2

Table 8. The distribution of different types of complements of the verb *delay* in the second part of the CLMET.

### 7.2.1 Intransitive use of the verb *delay*

The verb *delay* was used intransitively (or as taking no complements) in 13 examples from the corpus. Here are some examples to illustrate this use:

1. ... my union with Elizabeth should take place immediately on my return. My father's age rendered him extremely averse to **delay**. For myself, there was one reward I promised myself from my detested toils--one consolation for my unparalleled suff ...  
(1818 Shelly *Frankenstein*)

2. ...I cannot think what keeps Mary Barton. She's quite grand with her late hours, said Alice, as Mary still **delayed**. The truth was, Mary was dressing herself...

(1848 Gaskell *Mary Barton*)

3. ... I am actually granting him further time as a favour, I hear from all quarters that I have acted unfairly. Pray do not **delay** on this point; see him, and let a proper and true statement be drawn up of the sale, etc., and inserted in the papers. ...

(1810-3 Byron *Letters 1810-1813*)

4. ... and was alone utterly in the world for the first time, he bent his steps towards the locksmith's house. He had **delayed** till now, knowing that Mrs Varden sometimes went out alone, ...

(1841 Dickens *Barnaby Rudge*)

It should be noted here, that the example sentence 1 is ambiguous, because the verb *delay* can be interpreted both as an NP and a verb in this construction. The examples show that the verb *delay* was used intransitively in the corpus data in declarative sentences (examples 1, 2 and 4), as well as in sentences with negative structures (example 3). In all of the 13 examples, the subject of the sentence had the property [+]Human.

According to the OED, intransitive use of the verb *delay* is possible both with [-]Human (senses 3a and 3b) and [+]Human (sense 3c) subjects. However, the verb *delay* was not found in the corpus with inanimate subjects. On the other hand, the data from the corpus fully supports the Collins Cobuild information on the intransitive use of *delay*, as Collins Cobuild claims that *delay* is used intransitively with [+]Human subjects.

### 7.2.2 Non-sentential complements

The complementation pattern ---[NP] is by far the most common pattern in my corpus data.

This pattern was used in as many as 94 examples out of total 123 tokens of this verb (in about 77 % of all the examples). Among these 94 examples of use of *delay* with NP complements, the passive construction was found in 42 examples (or 44,6 %). Some examples of the passive use are following:

5. He himself had read only the privy council report, and he wished for no other evidence. The question had then been **delayed** two years; had the abolition been so clear a point as it was said to be, it could not have needed either so much...  
(1839 Clarkson *The history of the abolition of the African slave-trade*)

6. ... attorney, and four more, provided with serviceable weapons, to demand my young lady of her gaoler. Both parties were **delayed** very late. The single servant returned first. He said Mr. Green, the lawyer, was out when he arrived at his house...  
(1847 Brontë *Wuthering heights*)

7. ... was a traitor. But for him, perhaps, this severance need never have taken place. Why had not George's marriage been **delayed**? What call was there to press it on so eagerly? He felt that George would have parted from Amelia at any rate...  
(1847-8 Thackeray *Vanity fair*)

The use of the verb *delay* with a personal object as a complement is found in as many as 16 examples (almost 13 % of all tokens with NP as a complement of the verb *delay*). This use is marked as obsolete in the OED, and the example sentences of this use quoted in the OED were dated by the 17th and 18th centuries, but apparently this use was also quite popular in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and the early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Here are two examples of the use of the verb *delay* with the personal object:

8. ...I knew the horse would carry you the sixty miles in six hours; and I also knew that nothing on earth would **delay** you when your father's health, probably his life, was at stake. Well," added he, "what says Mr. Grant, will he come?"  
(1820-2 Hunt *Memoirs of Henry Hunt*)

9. ...My dearest Cassandra. Our journey yesterday went off exceedingly well; nothing occurred to alarm or **delay** us. We found the roads in excellent order...  
(1796-1817 Austen *Letters to her sister*)

In the cases while the verb *delay* is not used with personal objects as NP complements, it is typically used with abstract objects. This use corresponds to the OED senses 1a ("to put off to a later time; to defer, postpone") and 2 ("to impede the progress of, cause to linger or stand still; to retard, hinder"). For example:

10. ...And 'till that time I defer your marriage with my daughter. Would you **delay** her happiness so long?  
(1798 Inchbald *Lovers' vows*)

11. ...We ought to count the days, nay the very hours, which intervened **to delay** *the accomplishment* of such a work.  
(1839 Clarkson *The history of the abolition of the African slave-trade*)

12. ...With some difficulty, and chiefly by assuring him that I could not **delay** *my departure* beyond an early hour in the afternoon, I induced him to allow my dining with his family instead of ...  
(1844 Kinglake *Eothen*)

However, in some very rare cases the verb *delay* is also found with non-abstract objects.

The two examples from the corpus are:

13. ...I believe you are right in proposing to **delay** *the Cambric muslin*, & I submit with a kind of voluntary reluctance.  
(1796-1817 Austen *Letters to her sister*)

14. ...only in the Sophia Pass, which I followed, there is no narrow defile, and no ascent sufficiently difficult to stop, or **delay** for long time, *a train of siege artillery*.  
(1844 Kinglake *Eothen*)

The use of the verb *delay* with NP complements found in the corpus conforms completely to *the Collins Cobuild Advanced Learner's Dictionary's* senses 1 and 2.

### 7.2.3 Sentential complements: *-ing*-clauses

The complementation pattern --[*-ing*] was found in 12 tokens in the corpus data. All of the examples from the corpus data are quoted below:

15. ... I feel so very happy to have the pleasure of hearing from you that I will not **delay** a moment *answering* it, altho' I am in all the delights of 'unpacking', and afraid of being too late for the Post. ...  
(1810-3 Byron *Letters 1810-1813*)

16. ... I really wrote in such a hurry that I did not say half I wished; but I did not like to **delay** *telling* you how happy you made me by writing. I have been dwelling constantly upon the idea of going to Newstead...  
(1810-3 Byron *Letters 1810-1813*)

17. ... hip's opinion respecting the Austrian troop at the New House, and that Von Konigstein and his English friend would not **delay** *letting him see* them there, his Imperial Highness, followed by his silent suite, left the gardens. "I am afraid ...

(1826 Disraeli *Vivian Grey*)

18. ... conversation, betrayed the total want of all knowledge in respect to religion or futurity, and the dean for this reason **delayed** *taking* him to church, till he had previously given him instructions wherefore he went. A leisure morning arrived, (1796 Inchbald *Nature and Art*)

19 ... Honoured Sir, --I have purposely **delayed** *writing* in the hope that I should have the pleasure of seeing you on New Year's day; but work comes so hard upon us t ...

(1780-96 Burns *Letters 1780-1796*)

20. ... My Dearest Love,--I **delayed** *writing* until I could tell you what effect sea-bathing was likely to produce. It would be injustice to deny that it h ...

(1780-96 Burns *Letters 1780-1796*)

21. ... an of life, or some little narrow consideration of future interest, would prevent him from giving his testimony, and I **delayed** *asking* him for many days. During this time, however, I frequently visited him; and at length, when I thought I was...

(1839 Clarkson *The History of the Abolition of the African Slave-Trade*)

22. ... than when it is the necessary tribute to justice or candour. So strongly did Cecilia feel this truth, that she even **delayed** *making* any apology, or coming to any explanation with Leonora, until success should once more give her the palm.

(1796-1801 Edgeworth *The parent's assistant*)

23. ... his going higher up the mountain. He and his companions had to walk round the foot of it as many years as they had **delayed** *repenting*; unless, as in the case of Manfredi, their time was shortened by the prayers of good people.

(1846 Hunt *Stories from the Italian poets*)

24. ... avenge her on the brutal ruffian who had plundered her little property. She promised me often that she would, but she **delayed** *taking* the steps I pointed out from time to time, for she was timid and dejected to a degree which showed how deeply...

(1822 De Quincy *Confessions of an English opium eater*)

25. ...together, and he must not be sitting wanting me any longer. She rose up from her seat, but still **delayed** *going*. Mary! I've somewhat else I want to say to you, and I don't rightly know how to begin.

(1848 Gaskell *Mary Barton*)

26. ... another moment, and she tapped at the door. John Barton gave an anxious, uneasy side-glance. Mary knew that if she **delayed** *answering* the knock, Sally would not scruple to enter; so as hastily as if the visit had been desired, she opened the ...  
(1848 Gaskell *Mary Barton*)

Out of all twelve examples, *ing*-complements are found in three sentences in negative constructions (sentences 15, 16 and 17), and in the rest of the examples (in nine sentences) they are found in positive constructions. In all of the cases of the use of the verb *delay* with sentential complements, the subject of the verb carries the property [+]Human.

#### 7.2.4 Sentential complements: *to*+infinitives

Sentential complements with *to*+infinitive clauses were quite few, only 4 tokens were found in the data. The examples of this use from the corpus are:

27. ... I have not **delayed** so long *to write* you, my much respected friend, because I thought no further of my promise. I have long since given up ...  
(1780-96 Burns *Letters 1780-1796*)

28. ... suffer, when in the act of obeying his commands; and she urged so many pious reasons to shew the necessity of her not **delaying** *to perform* what she termed her indispensable duty, that my father silently, but very reluctantly, submitted to her de ...  
(1820-2 Hunt *Memoirs of Henry Hunt*)

29. ... when she was dressed to go to church of a Sunday evening), the others no longer grumbled at the sound of her bell, or **delayed** *to answer* that summons. The coachman, who grumbled that his 'osses should be brought out and his carriage made into a...  
(1847-8 Thackeray *Vanity Fair*)

30. ... If we refused even this degree of compensation, how aggravated would be our guilt! Should we **delay**, then, *to repair* these incalculable injuries? We ought to count the days, nay the very hours, which intervened to del ...  
(1839 Clarkson *The History of the Abolition of the African Slave-Trade*)

Interestingly enough, in three of these cases (in examples 27, 28 and 29) the verb *delay* is used in negative structures, and in one case (in example 30) it is used in an interrogative structure. As is the case with *-ing* complements, the verb *delay* used with *to*+infinitive complements is a control predicate, and its subject carries the property [+]Human. Also in this

part of the corpus, all the subjects of the verb *delay* are Agents (an animate who acts consciously, volitionally, deliberately initiates an action).

### 7.3 *Delay* in the third part of the CLMET (1850-1920)

The size of the extended version of the third part of the CLMET is 6,251,564 words. The corpus search returned 362 tokens altogether. Out of them, only 136 were the examples of the verb *delay*, the rest of the found tokens were mostly nouns (“a delay” and “delays”). All the complement types (*NP*, *-ing*, *to+infinitive*) mentioned in the dictionaries were found in the extracted data.

By far the most common pattern with the verb *delay* is its use as a transitive verb complemented by a Noun Phrase (109 examples of such use were found in the data (78 % of all the tokens with verbs)). The next most common pattern of complementation of the verb *delay* in the corpus data was *to+infinitive*: it was found in eight examples (5,7 %). The use of *delay* with *-ing* complement was less common: only four examples were found (3 %) The examples of the verb’s intransitive use were found in 18 examples (13 %).

The distribution of different types of complements of the verb *delay* in the corpus data is summed up in the following table:

Complementation pattern	Number of examples	%	Normalised frequency (per 1,000,000 words)/6,25
---[NP]	109	78,4 %	17,4
Absolute/intransitive use (without complements)	18	12,9 %	2,9
---[ <i>to+infinitive</i> ]	8	5,7 %	1,3
---[ <i>-ing</i> ]	4	2,9 %	0,6
All the verbs <i>delay</i>	139	100 %	22,2

Table 9. The distribution of different types of complements of the verb *delay* in the third part of the CLMET.

### 7.3.1 An intransitive use of the verb *delay*

The verb *delay* was used intransitively (or as taking no complements) in 18 examples from this part of the corpus. Here are some examples to illustrate this use:

1. ... I whispered very softly, 'you know what I am come to ask.' 'If you are come on purpose to ask anything, why do you **delay** so?' She turned away very bravely, but I saw that her lips were trembling....  
(1869 Blackmore *Lorna Doone*)

2. ... generally cautious men; they are taken from a most cautious class; in consequence they are very apt to temporise and **delay**. But almost always the delay in creating a stringency only makes a greater stringency inevitable ...  
(1873 Bagehot *Lombard Street*)

3. ... but it was unavoidable. He had kept Lord Arundale waiting already, and it would not be courteous to **delay** another day. You will not mind?" "Oh no! oh no!" The hand was pressed down closer over the eyes.....  
(1850 Craik *Olive*)

4. ... I was unaware of his condition: the things I heard were incredible. I hope the doctor will not **delay**. Now go. Beg to retire soon.' Livia spoke under her breath; she had fears....  
(1895 Meredith *The Amazing Marriage*)

5. ... but it was unavoidable. He had kept Lord Arundale waiting already, and it would not be courteous to **delay** another day. You will not mind?" "Oh no! oh no!" The hand was pressed down closer over the eyes.....  
(1850 Craik *Olive*)

6. ... heard them singing in the garden, and their song seemed to be of her. "She has opened the gate, And she must not **delay**, Every step she may take On the wonderful way. Through the land and the sea....  
(1904 Radford *Sea-Thrift*)

7. ... . That beside her was for the last comer, who was expected to vacate it when another visitor entered. If he **delayed**, he was ordered off without ceremony. She called women by their Christian names, and men by their.....  
(1822 Linton *The Autobiography of Christopher Kirkland*)

8. ... . But his northward march had left southern England utterly unprotected. Had the south wind **delayed** a little longer, he might, before the second enemy came, have been again on the South-Saxon coast. As it was, three ...  
(1823 Freeman *William The Conqueror*)

In as many as 17 examples out of 18, the subject of the sentence had the property

[+]Human. Only in one sentence (the example sentence 8) was it used with the subject with



the property [-]Human. According to the OED, intransitive use of the verb *delay* is possible both with [-]Human (senses 3a and 3b) and [+]Human (sense 3c) subjects. According to Collins Cobuild, the verb *delay* is used intransitively only with [+]Human subjects. We can conclude that, if *delay* is still sometimes used intransitively with inanimate objects in this part of the corpus, such use was very rare.

### 7.3.2. Non-sentential complements

The complementation pattern ---[NP] is by far the most common pattern in my corpus data. This pattern was used in 109 examples out of total 140 tokens of this verb (in about 78 % of all the examples). Out of these 109 examples of use of the verb *delay* with NP complements, the passive construction was used in almost half of them, or in 52 examples (48 %).

Some examples of the passive use are following:

9. ... miles wide, conveying the English mail; but sometimes all the circumstances are not favourable, and the letters are **delayed** for a month--the poor islanders being locked meanwhile in their icebound prison, ignorant of the events which may...

(1856 Bird *The English Woman in America*)

10. ... continued Henry, coughing between his sentences, and almost in spite of himself, putting his hand to his side. 'I was **delayed**. There was a life to save: a gentleman who lay sick and stifled in a burning house.' 'And what was it to you,'...

(1823 Yong *The Caged Lion*)

11. ... in the sacred interests of humanity," said the Count. "And in the same interests, if the coming of the physician is **delayed**, I will enter it again. I warn you once more that the fever has turned to typhus, and that your treatment is...

(1856-60 Collins *The Woman in White*)

12. ... "So you're come at last!" said Lady Muriel, in a tone of playful reproach. "I was **delayed**," I stammered. Though what it was that had delayed me I should have been puzzled to explain! Luckily no questions we...

(1832 Carroll *Sylvie and Bruno*)

13. ... the boat was so full that many people had to sleep on sofas, no one would share a state-room with me. We were **delayed** by fog, and did not reach Montreal till one in the morning. I found Montreal as warm and damp as it had been cold and...

(1831 Bird *The English Woman in America*)

14. ... several pilots which were dismissed became, at no great height, carried away due south. On this account the start was **delayed** till 1 p.m., by which time the sky had nearly filled in, with only occasional gleams of sun between the clouds. ...

(1902 Bacon *The Dominion of the Air*)

As we can notice from the examples from the corpus, the verb *delay* was used in passive constructions with both animate (*I, we*) and inanimate (*the letters, the coming, the start*) subjects. Inanimate subjects were mostly abstract (*the coming, the start*) and in some very rare cases non-abstract (*the letters*).

The use of the verb *delay* with a personal object as a complement is found in eight examples. Here are some examples of this use:

15. ... She began to dread some breakdown which might **delay** *her* and cause her to arrive too late. "Shall we be in time?" she asked more than once...

(1910 Brebner *The Brown Mask*)

16. ... If any unforeseen accident **delayed** *him*, I was to accompany her to the station, and to take special care that she was in time for the train.

(1859-1860 Collins *The Woman in White*)

Such use is marked as obsolete in the OED, and my findings from the corpus conform that this use was quite rare during the period 1850-1920.

### 7.3.3 Sentential complements: *-ing*-clauses

Sentential complements with *-ing* complements were quite few in the corpus data, with only four tokens. Two of the examples are from the same text of the same writer (Webster *Daffodil and the Croäxaxicans*).

I quote all the four sample sentences here:

1. I was forgetting that harm might come of it to you." "Dreadful harm, if you **delay** *being* ready to marry me too long," said Prince Brekekex. "It's a fearful risk for me. Of course, if you went to the...

(1884 Webster *Daffodil and the Croäxaxicans*)

2. ...information of the event they expected to surprise her as them, and to rejoice her still more than them, must not **delay** *making* their report of it to Her Majesty. (1884 Webster *Daffodil and the Croaxaxicans*)

3. ... movement. Edwin was specially aggrieved, because the king had promised him one of his daughters in marriage, but had **delayed** *giving* her to him. The English formed alliances with the dependent princes of Wales and Scotland, and stood ready ... (1888 Freeman *William the Conqueror*)

4. ... ey sent; but declaring that she was ready to fulfill her promise to marry him. After this letter had been written she **delayed** *posting* it-- although never ceasing to feel strenuously that the deed must be done. Several days passed. ... (1873 Hardy *A Pair of Blue Eyes*)

In one sentence out of four the *-ing* complement is found in a negative construction (in example sentence 2).

#### 7.3.4 Sentential complements: *to*+infinitives

The pattern ---[ *to*+infinitive] was found in eight tokens in the corpus data. The examples are:

1. ... she would not tell me another word until all the pigs were served. And in truth no man could well look at them, and **delay** *to serve* them, they were all expressing appetite in so forcible a manner; some running to and fro, and rubbing, and ... (1869 Blackmore *Lorna Doone*)

2. ... times, as we know, the panic terror at eclipses has been the ruin of the armies which have felt it; or has made them **delay** *to do* something necessary, or rush to do something destructive. The necessity of consulting the auspices, while it ... (1869 Bagehot *Physics and Politics*)

3. ... She cannot quit the island, because she has given Prince Ernest immediate rendezvous here. You must not **delay** *to go*. Yes, the Countess of Delzenburg shall have your excuses... (1870 Meredith *The Adventures of Harry Richmond*)

4. ... up the river, not a single Dervish was to be seen. Having thus collected a great deal of negative information, and **delaying only** *to burn* Adarama to the ground, the column returned to Berber. It was now November. The Nile was falling fast ... (1899 Churchill *The River War*)

5. ... some lines of Tennyson come to my memory.' 'Which are those?' 'Delaying, as the tender ash **delays** *To clothe* herself when all the woods are green, somewhere in the "Idylls."...

(1891 Gissing *New Grub Street*)

6. ... even score thousand of the Criminal Class slain by one another's angles attested the triumph of Order. The Circles **delayed** not *to push* their victory to the uttermost. The Working Men they spared but decimated....

(1884 Abbot *Flatland*)

7. ...The author has observed that those who have written about the facts of their own childhood have usually **delayed** *to note* them down until age has dimmed their recollections.

(1907 Gosse *Father and Son*)

8. ... could do was to trust to our sense of feeling, and attempt the passage in the dark, so in we crept, fearing that if we **delayed** *to do* so our exhaustion would overcome us, and we should probably lie down and die where we were.

(1887 Haggard *She*)

In three cases out of eight, the *to*-infinitive complementation pattern was used in negative constructions (examples 3, 5 and 8), which represent more complex grammatical environment. In five sentences out of eight the *to*-infinitive complementation pattern was used in a positive construction (examples 4, 6, 7, 9 and 10). In only one sentence (example sentence 6) was it used with insertion (*only*). All the subjects of the verb *delay* are Agents (an animate who acts consciously, volitionally, deliberately initiates an action).

#### 7.4 Summary for the CLMETEV

In this subsection I will represent data concerning the complementation of the verb *delay* in the whole three parts of the CLMETEV. In table 1, numbers of tokens from all three parts the CLMETEV are summed up together and their normalized frequencies are calculated for the whole corpus. In table 2, I will represent diachronic changes in the use of complementation of the verb *delay* in different centuries, according to the CLMETEV.

Complementation pattern	Number of tokens	%	Normalised frequency (per 1,000,000 words)
---[NP]	259	78 %	17,3
---[- <i>ing</i> ]	23	6,9 %	1,5
---[in+ <i>ing</i> ]	2	0,9 %	0,2
---[ <i>to</i> +infinitive]	15	4,5 %	1
Intransitive	32	9,6 %	2,1
All the verbs <i>delay</i>	331	100 %	22,1

Table 10. Summary of data for the whole CLMETEV (all three parts).

Complementation pattern	I part (1710-1770)	II part (1770-1850)	III part (1850-1920)	All CLMETev
---[NP]	18,7	16,2	17,4	17,3
---[- <i>ing</i> ]	2,3	2	0,6	1,5
---[in - <i>ing</i> ]	0,7	-	-	0,2
--[ <i>to</i> +infinitive]	1	0,7	1,3	1
Intransitive	0,3	2,2	2,9	2,1
Total	23	21,2	22,4	22,1

Table 11. Diachronic changes in the use of different kind of complements of the verb *delay* in three parts of the CLMETEV (in normalized frequencies/per 1 mill. words).

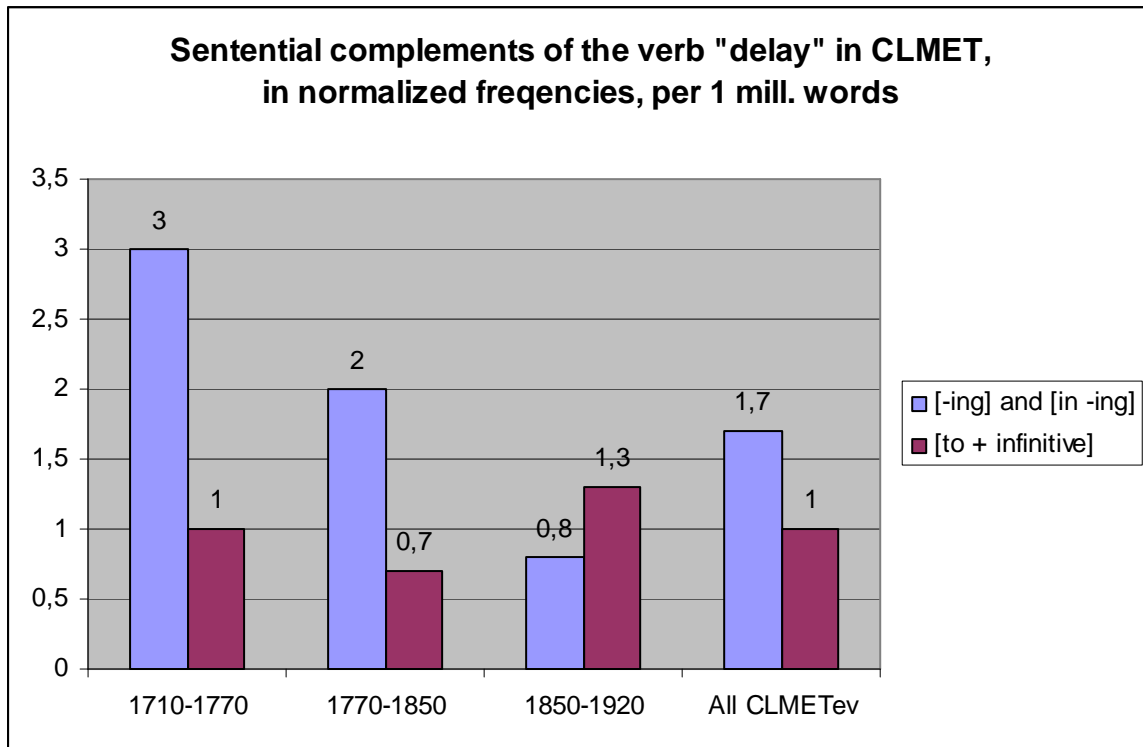


Chart 1. Diachronic change in the use of sentential complements of the verb *delay* in different parts of the CLMET.

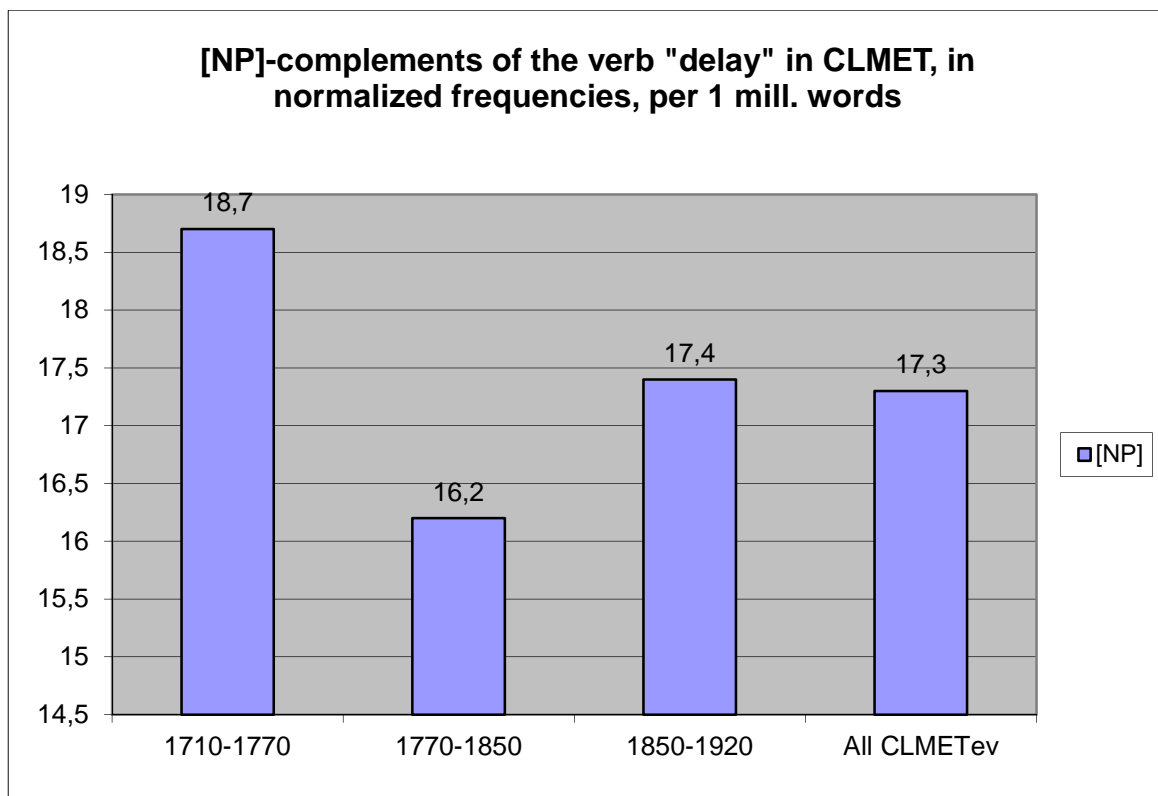


Chart 2. Diachronic change in the use of NP-complements of the verb *delay* in different parts of the CLMET.

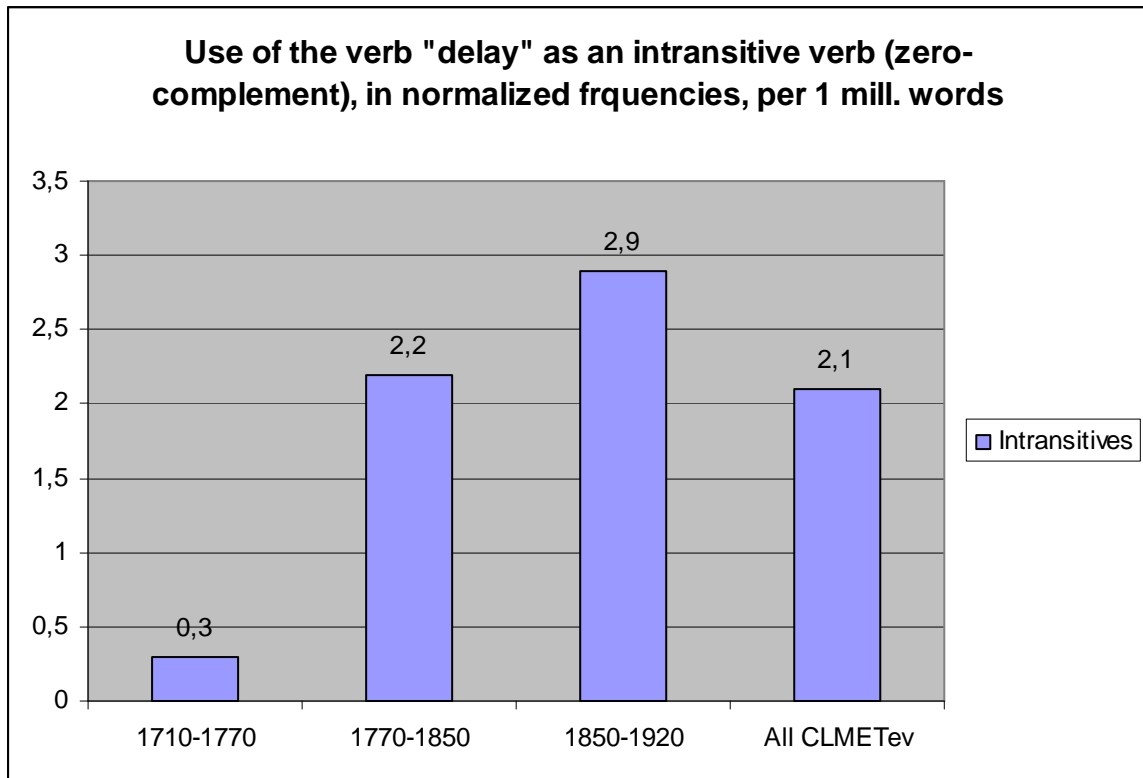


Chart 3. Diachronic change in the intransitive use of the verb *delay* in the different parts of the CLMET.

As a summary for the whole CLMET data, we can note that at least the intransitive use of the verb *delay* has clearly increased through time. As for sentential complements, we can conclude that gerundial complements were used approximately twice more often than infinitival ones. In the first part of the CLMET, gerundial complements were used even three times more often than infinitives, and in the second part of the corpus twice as often, although data from the third part of the CLMET although, quite surprisingly, contradict this tendency, since the use of infinitival complements increases during this period, apparently at the expense of the use of gerundial complements (their number, in turn, decreases). Still, numbers concerning all the three parts of the corpus demonstrate that on average *-ing* complements were still more common than *to-infinitive* complements (they were used 1,7 times as often than infinitival ones).

## 8 Delay in the BNC

### 8.1 Delay in the *Imaginative Prose* section of the BNC

In order to compare the historical use of the verb *delay* (results withdrawn from the CLMET) to a use of this verb in a contemporary language, I will now investigate the use of the *delay* in another corpus, the BNC (the British National Corpus), which is a general corpus of contemporary British English. Since the whole BNC is too large (100 million words), I am going to examine only one part of it, the *Imaginative prose* section whose size is 16,5 million words. The size of the *Imaginative Prose* section of the BNC is close to the size of the CLMET. Also, texts from this section are stylistically similar to the ones of the CLMET.

The results of a corpus search for the verb *delay* are described in the following table:

Complementation pattern	Number of examples	%	Normalized frequency (per 1,000,000 words)/16,5
---[NP]	187	79	11,3
---[- <i>ing</i> ]	9	3,8	0,5
---[in - <i>ing</i> ]	1	0,4	0,06
---[ <i>to</i> + <i>infinitive</i> ]	3	1,3	0,2
absolute use (without complements)	36	15,2	2,2
All the verbs <i>delay</i>	236	100	14,3

Table 12. The distribution of different types of complements of the verb *delay* in the *Imaginative Prose* section of the BNC



8.1.1 Intransitive use of the verb *delay*

The verb *delay* was used intransitively (or as taking no complements) in 36 examples from this part of the corpus. Here are some examples to illustrate this use:

1. He did not **delay**, just took his wedge, aimed once, then executed the stroke. (253)
2. But she discovered she had **delayed** too long, for as she reached the hall, there before her, and as cool as you like, was Naylor. (278)
3. If she **delayed** another moment — (281)
4. 'This pilot won't **delay**. (247)
5. Please don't **delay**. (240)
6. Maybe if he could **delay** a little longer, Springfield would discover his sweep had failed to capture the ringleader and send men in to flush him out. (239)
7. We haven't time to visit it now — we'll miss the tide if we **delay** much longer.' (204)
8. 'Mes amis, do not **delay**.' (197)
9. At the same time, the more he **delayed**, the greater Surere's danger was. (195)
10. Rachaela **delayed** at the shop, later than she had intended. (163)
11. As they dismounted it crossed Floy's mind that the longer they could **delay**, the better chance Fenella and Caspar had of catching them up. (148)
12. She wanted to marry him and she could see no reason to **delay** simply because of religious differences. (79)
13. If they **delayed** any longer they'd be trapped. (57)
14. But please do not **delay** too long. (52)
15. In his view Fraser had **delayed** because he didn't want to face the truth. (72)

In all 36 examples the subject of the sentence had the property [+]Human. According to the OED, intransitive use of the verb *delay* is possible both with [-]Human (senses 3a and 3b) and [+]Human (sense 3c) subjects. According to Collins Cobuild, the verb *delay* is used intransitively only with [+]Human subjects.

### 8.1.2 Non-sentential complements

The complementation pattern ---[NP] is by far the most common pattern in my corpus data.

This pattern was found in 187 examples out of total 237 tokens of this verb (in about 79 % of all the examples). Out of these 187 examples of use of the verb *delay* with NP complements, the passive construction was used in almost half of them, or in 83 examples (44 %).

Here are some examples of the passive use:

16. The desired *outcome* is **delayed**.
17. The roads are full of snow and *the coach* is **delayed**.
18. *She's* been **delayed** - she doesn't think she'll get back to London until Thursday, now.
19. 'Why is *Francesca* **delayed**?'
20. If I fall, Isabel thought suddenly, I am alone in the house, there will be nobody to hear me cry out, *Kathleen* will be **delayed**, she wanders around the shops, gossiping everywhere.
21. The roads are full of snow and *the coach* is **delayed**.

The verb *delay* was used in passive constructions with both animate and inanimate objects. It was used with an animate/personal object in 29 examples out of 83, and it was used with an inanimate object in 54 examples.

Inanimate objects were mostly abstract (*the coming, the start, the arrangements, the end*) – in 29 cases out of 54, and in some, not very rare, cases (13 cases out of 54) they were non-abstract (*the coach, the ships, the plane, the bus, the cake*).

The use of the verb *delay* with a personal object as a complement is found in as many as 31 examples (out of total 104 examples of the use of the verb *delay* in active constructions) .

Here are some examples of this use:

15. Sitting on the ground in front of it were the two constables who had **delayed** *him* at the dovecot during the arms search.

16. 'Don't let me **delay** *you* further.
17. I have been **delaying** *you*.
18. But this time the pink tinge to her face and the open-mouthed gasping which **delayed** *her* were not due to her dining companion's impudence.
19. It is only ten thirty, and there were thunderstorms all night, which would **delay** *him*.
20. But something did **delay** *her*; she stopped and stood to stare at a marvel of nature, so strange as to suspend belief.

Such use is marked as obsolete in the OED, but my findings from the BNC actually do not support this, since such use seems to be quite common in contemporary English.

### 8.1.3 Sentential complements: *-ing*-clauses

The complementation pattern --[*-ing*] was found in nine tokens in the corpus data. All of the examples from the corpus data are quoted below:

1. She alighted after him, and she crossed the footbridge too, but **delayed** *stepping on* to the platform until the train for Waterloo came in.
2. He **delayed** *going* upstairs for as long as possible, partly in a hopeless pretense of getting the papers finished with, and partly to avoid Sara.
3. Huy had **delayed** *telling* Merymose about Surere, waiting for the right moment to come.
4. 'Doctor, may I suggest you **delay** *doing* that till you have contacted the Home Office.
5. I suggest that we **delay** *announcing* our existence to the press until we have a name and clearly stated function.
6. I suggest that we should **delay** *submitting* this to Number Ten until you have had a chance to draft the actual terms of reference, as you propose.
7. That's why I **delayed** *coming* home.
8. Eventually the time came when she couldn't **delay** *going* downstairs any longer, and when she reached the kitchen she discovered that the visitor had left, and that Silas was examining the contents of the fridge.

9. 'I hope he wasn't **delayed** *rameishing on* with some customer today of all days,' Benny heard her mother say to Patsy.

The example 9 differs from other patterns, since it is in the passive. The sentence is a little obscure, though, because of the meaning of *rameishing*, which could not be found in dictionaries I examined.

In one sentences out of eight, the *-ing* complement is found in a negative construction (in example sentences 8). In the rest of the examples (in seven sentences), this type of complement is found in positive constructions. Insertions are not found in any of these eight sentences. In all of the cases of the use of the verb *delay* with sentential complements, the subject of the verb carries the property [+]Human.

A more rare complementation pattern --[in *-ing*] was found in only one example:

10. Now, he could not **delay** any further *in telling* her what had to be told.

Once more, like in other examples from the CLMET corpus, this type of complement appears in a negative construction and with an insertion (*any further*), which represents a more complex grammatical environment.

#### 8.1.4 Sentential complements: *to*+infinitives

Sentential complements with *to*+infinitive clauses were comparatively rare in the imaginative prose section of the BNC - only three tokens of this complementation pattern were found out of the total 236 tokens of the verb *delay*. The examples of this use from the BNC are:

10. I trust to have word from you by this messenger, and **delay** only *to know* that you wish me to proceed.
11. In no manner could they have **delayed** *to ambush* poor Irvine.'
12. 'I must get a move on too,' declared Travis, and while he **delayed** *to exchange* one or two pleasantries with his cousin, Leith hotfooted it out of there.

In example sentence 10 *to*+infinitive complementation pattern is used with an insertion (*only*). In example sentence 11 it is used in a sentence with a negative structure, and in example sentence 12 this complement is used in a subordinate clause. All these three cases represent sentences with a more complicated grammatical environment. As is with *-ing* complements, the verb *delay* used with *to*+infinitive complements is a control predicate, and its subject carries the property [+]Human.

## 8.2 Sentential complements in a written part of the BNC

To investigate the frequency of use of sentential complements more widely, I made a search for gerundial and infinitival complements of the verb *delay* in the whole written part of the BNC, which consists of approximately 90 million words. For the search of *-ing* complements, I used the search string “{delay}\_V\* \*\*\* \_V\*G”, and for the search of *to*-infinitive complements I used the search string “{delay}\_V\* \*\*\* \_V\*I” (the search was made in March 2012).

The search for gerundial complements returned result of as many as 121 tokens of *-ing* complements and 21 tokens of *in -ing* complements. The search for infinitival complements however returned only three examples, all of them belonging to the *Imaginative Prose* text domain. The results of the search are represented in the following table:

Complementation pattern	Number of examples	Normalized frequency (per 1,000,000 words) /90
---[ <i>-ing</i> ]	121	1,3
---[ <i>in -ing</i> ]	21	0,2
---[ <i>to+infinitive</i> ]	3	0,04

Table 13. The distribution of sentential complements of the verb *delay* in a written part of the BNC.

In addition to these three examples from Imaginative Prose section, there was one example, which may look as a *to*-infinitive complement, but, in fact, more probably is an adjunct. This example is quoted below:

1. The MNR responded with a statement issued in Nairobi saying that it had accepted the mediators' invitation to direct talks but that Chissano was **delaying** "*to extend* his time in power. (HKV 2186)

Some examples of sentences with *-ing* complements from other parts of the BNC then

Imaginative Prose section are below:

2. GIRA SIC stated that it was a reflection of the UK market that McDonald's **delayed** *setting up* its own franchise scheme in the UK. (A0C 142)
3. Mr MacGregor said that he would **delay** *introducing* the scheme because of the demands made on teachers by other educational reforms. (A3W 64)
4. If a band **delayed** *signing* a publishing contract until the singles from their album had obtained some success, it was because they believed, not unreasonably, that they could negotiate a better contract by demonstrating their chart success to a publisher. (A6A 2417)
5. If I analyse the bosses I've worked for, the ones who irritated me the most were the ones who were indecisive and who constantly asked for more information just **to delay** *making* a decision. (A6L 1271)
6. Meanwhile, European monetary experts fear that sterling's latest slide will strengthen Mrs Thatcher's determination **to delay** *joining* the exchange rate mechanism of the EMS. (A8K 117)
7. Spracklen believes the ARA deliberately **delayed** *answering* his inquiry until he had left for his interview in Canada. (A90 484)

Some examples of ---[*in -ing*] complements found in the BNC are:

1. The Emergency Medical Rescue Units that the city maintains to deal with such accidents were unavoidably **delayed** *in getting* to the scene. (ABD 704)
2. PRESIDENT Mikhail Gorbachev has warned his Communist Party colleagues that if they **delayed** *in dealing* with 'overdue changes,' they could suffer the same 'excesses' as their brothers in Eastern Europe. (A9M 105)
3. ...you did not **delay** too long *in leaving*. (B08 1136)

Thus, we can conclude that the use of *to*-infinitive complements for the verb *delay* is extremely rare, almost negligible in present day English. Instead, *-ing* complements are very commonly used. However rare the use of *to*-infinitive complements is, it is strongly restricted only to the *Imaginative prose* text domain.

## 9 Development of the use of the verb *delay* in 1710-1993

As the following chart demonstrates, the total number of instances of the verb *delay* has experienced quite notable (about 30%) a decline if we compare historical data to the BNC data. On the other hand, the occurrence of instances of *delay* in the first, second and third part of the CLMET was about the same (23 instances per one million words, 21 instances and 22 instances respectively).

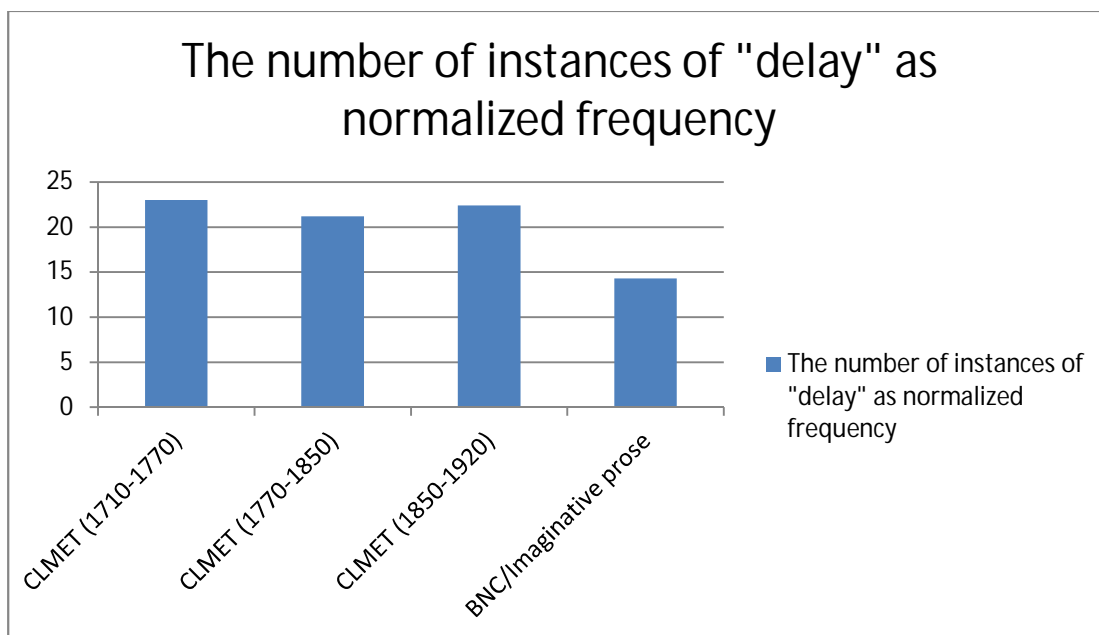


Chart 4. The occurrences of *delay* in different time periods as normalized frequency/ per 1 million words.

There was no noticeable change in the semantic meaning of the verb *delay*. In present day English, it is still used in the same meanings and contexts as it was used in the 18<sup>th</sup> and the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

### 9.1 The development of intransitive use of *delay*

As it is shown in chart 5, the number of instances of intransitive use of the verb *delay* has increased quite considerably since 1710, from only 0,3 instances per million words in the first part of the CLMET to 2,9 instances in the third part of the CLMET and 2,2 instances in the *Imaginative Prose* section on the BNC.



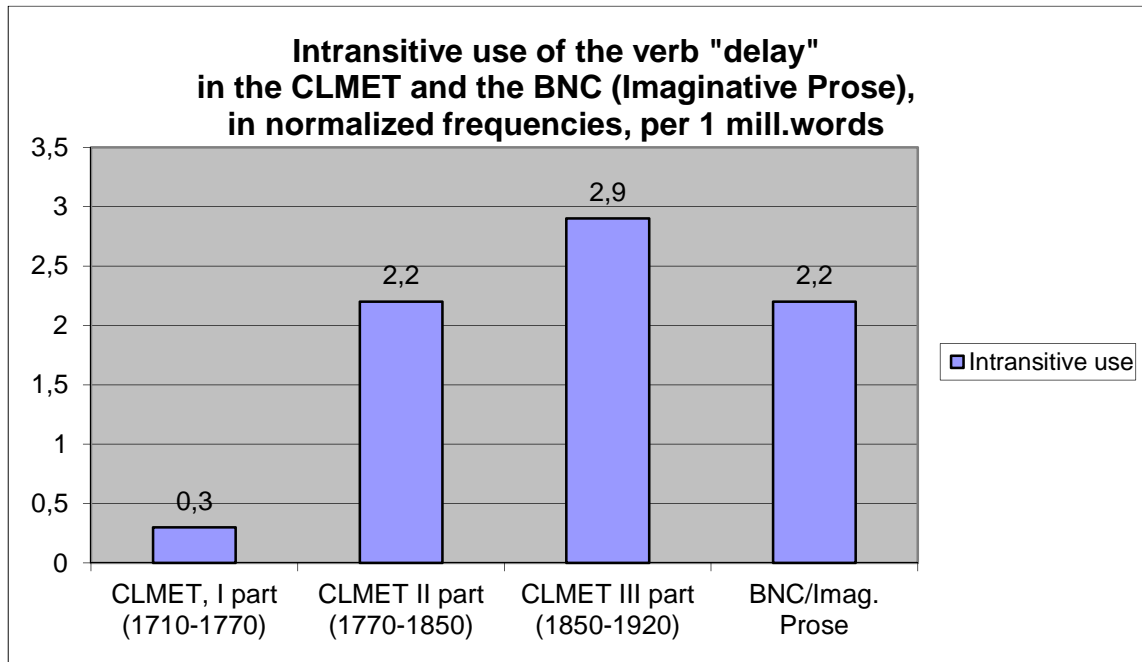


Chart 5. Intransitive use of the verb *delay* in the CLMET and the Imaginative Prose section of the BNC.

In almost all the examples from the corpus, with an exception of only one sentence, *delay* was used intransitively with animate subjects. Since, according to information given in the OED, the intransitive use of this verb is possible with both [+]Human and [-]Human subject, and yet only one example of [-]Human subject was found in the corpus, we can conclude, that this use has become obsolete in 18<sup>th</sup> century English already.

## 9.2 The development of use of non-sentential complements

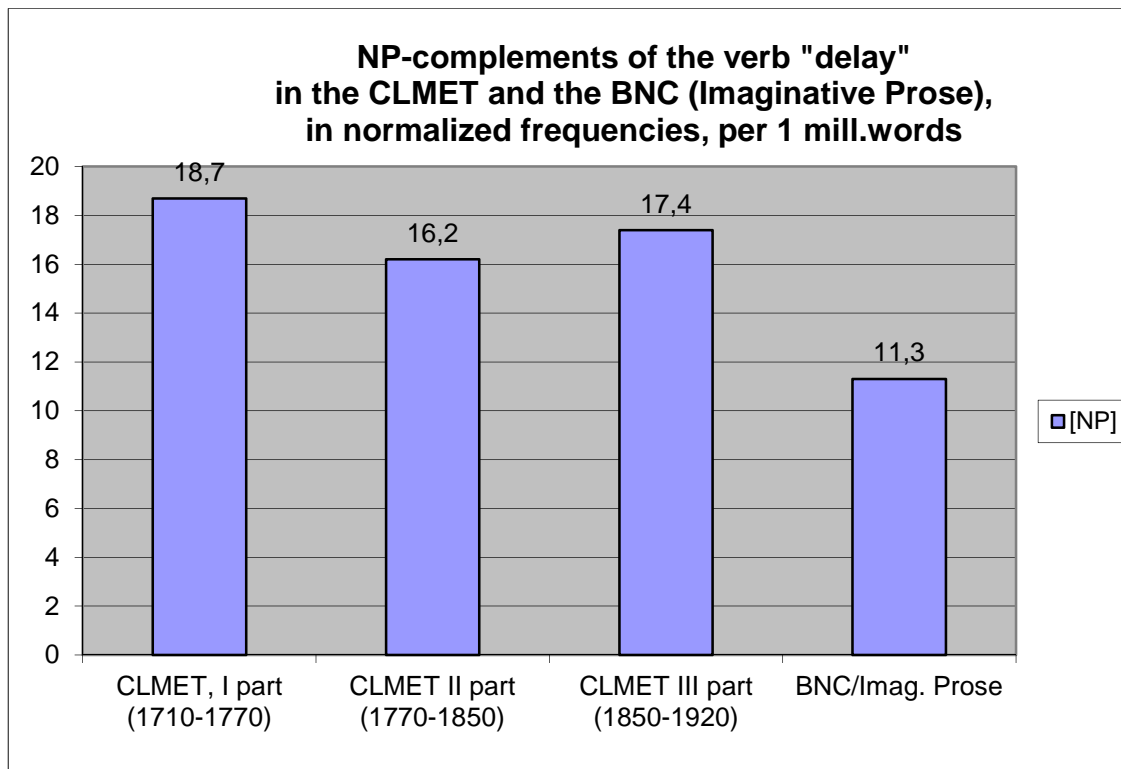


Chart 6. NP-complements of the verb *delay* in the CLMET and the *Imaginative Prose* section of the BNC.

NP-complements were the most common type of complements of the verb *delay* in the corpus data (with 81 % of all the examples in the first part of the CLMET, 76 % in the second part of the CLMET, 78 % in the third part of the CLMET and 79% in the *Imaginative Prose* section of the BNC).

In quite a considerable number of the instances, NP-complements were used in passive constructions: in the first part of the CLMET in 26 % of examples out of all the examples of NP-complements, in the second part of the CLMET in 45 % of examples, in the third part of the CLMET in 48 % of examples, in the *Imaginative Prose* section of the BNC in 44 % out of all the examples of NP-complements.

### 9.3 The development of the use of sentential complements

The comparative analysis of the corpus data shows that the verb *delay* was used with *to*-infinitives in all three parts of the CLMET and in *Imaginative Prose* section of the BNC (though its use there was quite marginal), but not in the other text domains of the written part of the BNC. Compared with *to*-infinitive complements, the use of *-ing* forms with the verb *delay* was, however, three times more common in the first part of the CLMET (1710-1780) and the *Imaginative Prose* –section of the BNC, and 2,8 more common in the second part of the CLMET (1780-1850). The third part of the CLMET (1850-1920) is exceptional in this aspect, since infinitival complements were used slightly more often than *-ing* complements (1,6 times more often).

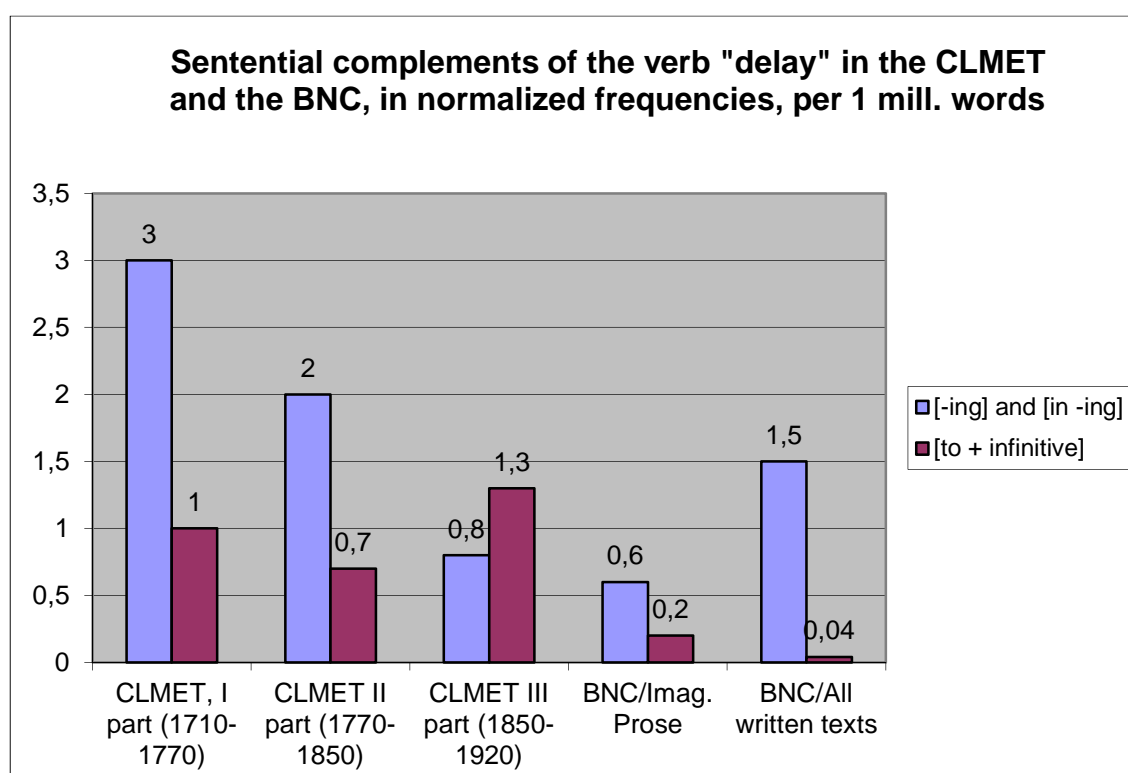


Chart 7. Sentential complements of the verb *delay* in the CLMET and the BNC.

Generally speaking, if we count all the sentential complements together (*to*-infinitives and *-ing* complements), the use of sentential complements altogether has been in steady decrease since 1710.

The data from the corpus supports Vosberg's claim that "*-ing* form has increasingly been used since the late seventeenth century" (Vosberg 2003, 197), since *-ing* clause complements were more common than *to*-infinitive complements with the verb *delay* in the first and second parts of the CLMET (texts dated 1710-1780 and 1780-1850) and also in the *Imaginative Prose* section of the BNC. The third part of the CLMET (1850-1920) was, however, a deviation from this trend. However, infinitival complements were almost totally missing (with the exception of only one example) in all other text domains of the written part of the BNC than *Imaginative Prose* section, which means that if infinitival complements are still used in present day English, their use is restricted only to imaginative prose. Imaginative prose can be considered as more conservative a type of text.

In addition, the analysis of the sentence structure reveals that infinitival constructions were used in negative or interrogative sentences in 42 % of the instances. On the other hand, *-ing* clause complements were also used in negative or interrogative constructions, only slightly less frequently (in 30% of instances). In 21 % of the example sentences, infinitival complements were used with insertions, while *-ing* complements were used with insertions in 28 % of examples. According to the complexity principle, formulated by Rohdenburg (1996), the more explicit complements (*to*-infinitive complements in this case) are preferred in more complex grammatical environments, represented by insertions and extractions (interrogations and negative constructions). Data from the corpus support this claim, although not very strongly. There is a slight preference or inclination to use infinitives in negative and interrogative constructions. On the other hand, in the case of insertions, the complexity principle is not supported by the corpus data, since number of gerundial complements used

with insertions was slightly higher than the number of infinitival complements used with insertions.

Another linguistic theory is supported by the findings from the corpus, namely the theory suggested by Rudanko (1989) that verbs of negative volition prefer *-ing* complements, while verbs of positive volition prefer *to*-infinitives as its complements. *Delay* can be considered as a verb of negative volition, since the subject of *delay* always bears a semantic role of Agent, and *delaying* is normally interpreted as something rather negative than positive.

## 10 Summary and concluding remarks

The complements of the verb *delay* found in the corpus data are: Noun Phrases, sentential *-ing* clause complements, *in –ing* complements and *to*-infinitive complements. Noun Phrases are the most common complements of this verb and were found in 76-79 % of all the examples.

The information on the verb *delay* in grammar books is quite inconsistent. In the older grammars, the use of the verb *delay* with infinitives is considered as possible, while according to the information in newer grammar books, *delay* is complemented only by *-ing* constructions and its use with *to-infinitives* is not mentioned.

The situation with the description of the verb *delay* in dictionaries is about the same as it is in the grammar books. In newer dictionaries (*Collins Cobuild Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary*) the use of *delay* with infinitives is not mentioned, and according to these dictionaries, the verb *delay* is complemented by *-ing* constructions. On the contrary, according to the older and more traditional *OED* the use of the verb *delay* with *to*-infinitives as complements is possible. I found numerous examples from the corpora with the verb *delay* complemented by *in –ing* pattern, which is mentioned only in *Collins Cobuild Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, but is not mentioned at all in *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary* and the *OED*.

The total number of instances of the verb *delay* has experienced quite notable (about 30%) a decline if we compare a data of a historical corpus to the data of corpus of present day English (the BNC). No change in the semantic meaning of the verb *delay* was detected. In present day English, it is still used in the same meanings and contexts as it was used in the 18<sup>th</sup> and the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The number of instances of intransitive use of the verb *delay* has increased quite considerably since 1710, from only 0,3 instances per million words in the first part of the CLMET to 2,9 instances in the third part of the CLMET and 2,2 instances in the *Imaginative Prose* section on the BNC.

In almost all the examples from the corpus, with an exception of only one sentence, *delay* was used intransitively with animate subjects. This information does not confirm the information given by the OED, according to which intransitive use of this verb is possible with both [+]Human and [-]Human subject. Since only one example of [-]Human subject was found in the corpus, we can conclude, that this use has become obsolete in 18<sup>th</sup> century English already. The use of the verb *delay* with a personal object as a complement is marked as obsolete in the OED, but my findings from the BNC does not support that, they show that such use is quite common in contemporary English.

The comparative analysis of the corpus data shows that the verb *delay* was used with *to*-infinitives in all three parts of the CLMET and in *Imaginative Prose* section of the BNC (though its use there was quite marginal, with only three examples). Compared with *to*-infinitive complements, the use of *-ing* forms with the verb *delay* was, however, three times more common in the first part of the CLMET (1710-1780), in the second part of the CLMET (1780-1850) and the *Imaginative Prose* section of the BNC. However, infinitival complements were almost totally missing in all other text domains of the written part of the BNC than *Imaginative Prose* section, which means that if infinitival complements are still used in present day English, their use is restricted only to imaginative prose. Imaginative prose can be considered as more conservative a type of text.

All in all, the data from the corpus supports Vosberg's claim that "*-ing* form has increasingly been used since the late seventeenth century" (Vosberg 2003, 197), since *-ing* clause complements were more common than *to*-infinitive complements in the three parts of

corpus out of three. The third part of the CLMET (1850-1920) can be considered as an interesting deviation from this general trend.

According to the complexity principle, formulated by Rohdenburg (1996), the more explicit complements (*to*-infinitive complements in this case) are preferred in more complex grammatical environments, represented by insertions and extractions (interrogations and negative constructions). The analysis of the sentence structure of the example sentences reveals that infinitival constructions were used in negative or interrogative sentences in 42 % of the instances. On the other hand, *-ing* complements were also used in negative or interrogative constructions, only slightly less frequently (in 30% of instances). In 21 % of the example sentences, infinitival complements were used with insertions, while *-ing* complements were used with insertions in 28 % of examples.

We can conclude that data from the corpus support the complexity principle to some extent, since there is a slight preference or inclination towards the use of infinitival complements in more complicated grammatical environments. In the case of insertions, the complexity principle is not confirmed by the corpus data, since number of gerundial complements used with insertions was even slightly higher than the number of infinitival complements used with the same constructions.

Another linguistic theory is supported by the findings from the corpus, namely the theory suggested by Rudanko (1989) that verbs of negative volition prefer *-ing* complements, while verbs of positive volition prefer *to*-infinitives as its complements. *Delay* can be considered as a verb of negative volition, since the subject of *delay* always bears a semantic role of Agent, and *delaying* is normally interpreted as something rather negative than positive.

The analysis of more data from other corpora would be interesting in giving more samples of the patterns of the use of the verb *delay*, so that there would be more evidence for drawing final conclusions on the complementation of *delay*.



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