

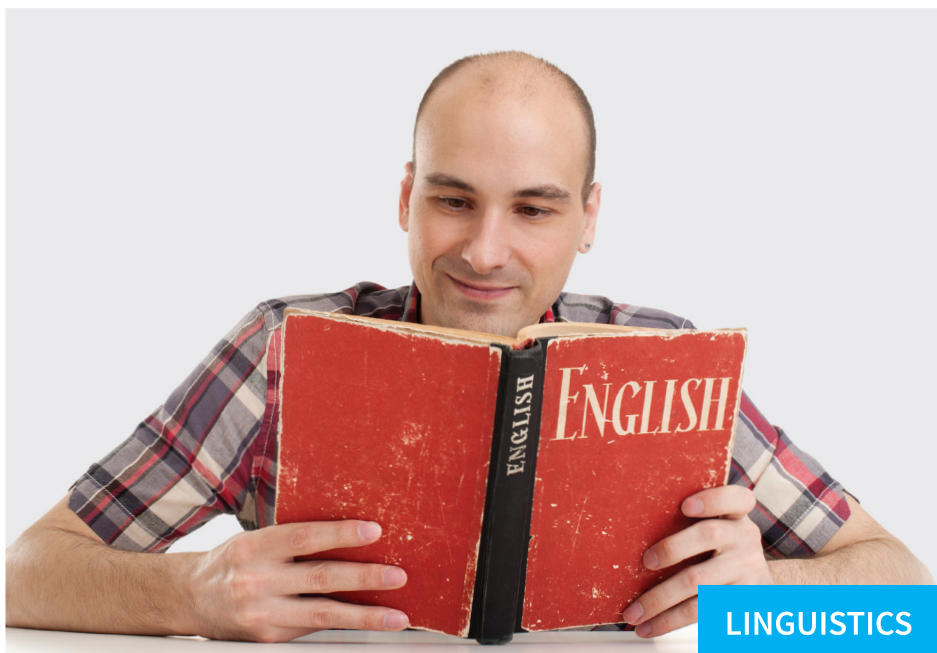
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Variability in English across time and space



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Realisations of the Word-initial Variable (th) in Selected Late Middle English Northern Legal Documents

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Michał Adamczyk

University of Lodz

Abstract

This paper is a study in Late Middle English orthography and its relationship with the phonological system. The study was conducted on a representative sample of legal documents from all core northern counties. The analysis concerned the variable (th) that stands for a systemic distinction between /ð/ and /θ/ by means of two graphemes: <þ/y> and <th> in the north of England. The results of the quantitative analysis confirmed the existence of the Northern System, however, in its decline. The analysis of discrete grammatical words proved that *the*, *that* and *they* were the most conservative words showing a significantly higher preference for <þ/y> than the remaining grammatical words examined in the present study.

1. Preliminary remarks

The study was conducted on a representative sample of texts from the *Middle English Grammar Corpus* (Stenroos et al. 2011) (later MEG-C). This recently developed corpus has proven to be a commendable source of data in the area of historical dialectology, and due to its accessibility it enabled the author of the present paper to conduct a modest study of the variable (th). According to Stenroos (2004: 257), the term variable (th) combines all Middle English spelling conventions of representing a dental fricative in writing, with the exclusion of those cases in which a graph corresponds to a word-medial /ð/ developed from earlier /d/.

Word-initially, the variable (th) has two possible spelling variants found in the Middle English period: <þ/y> and <th>. On the basis of this orthographic variance, a system distinguishing between the voiced dental fricative and its voiceless counterpart is thought to have developed in the north of England. The presence of the systemic distinction known as the Northern System is worth investigating on a representative sample of documents from all core northern counties and areas of transition between dialects: Lancashire and West Riding of Yorkshire. For this reason, the aim of the paper was to investigate the presumed relationship between the spelling variants and the voicing of word-initial fricative on a representative sample of 126 Late Middle English legal documents from Cumberland, Durham, Lancashire, Northumberland, Westmorland and Yorkshire. Legal documents used in the study were selected from the subset of the MEG-C. Documents were searched for grammatical words with word-initial /ð/ and lexical words with /θ/ in the onset. The results of the quantitative analysis of two variants of the variable (th) were subjected to statistical analysis, plotted on a map in order to account for a possible pattern of spatial distribution, arranged chronologically and divided into particular words in order to gain some insight into differences between separate grammatical words distinguished in the design of the study. Multidimensional analysis of the data was then used to support the view suggesting the existence of the separate Northern System, which distinguishes between /ð/ and /θ/ using two variants of the variable (th): <þ/y> and <th>.

2. Variable (th)

The Middle English phonetic inventory included two phonemic dental fricatives: /θ/ and /ð/, which in most cases, descended directly from the Old English /θ/. However, in the Old English phonological system, the distinction between voiced and voiceless fricatives was allophonic, hence, the allophones appeared in complementary distribution with the voiced sound occurring word-medially between vowels or voiced consonants and its voiceless reflex in the remaining positions: initially, finally and when double medially. The latter developments occurring in the Middle English period resulted in the formation of pairs of fricatives distributed contrastively.

Although dental fricatives in Middle English developed the phonemic contrast of voice similarly to other pairs of fricatives (aside from /ʃ/ and /x/), the reason be-

hind the change differed significantly. In pairs /s/ : /z/ and /f/ : /v/ the development of the phonemic contrast of voice around the year 1250 occurred as a result of the large amount of borrowings with word-initial /z/ and /v/ from French, degemination of word-medial /s/ and /f/, the loss of final /ə/, and finally voicing of word-initial fricatives in many southern dialects of Old English (Lass 1999: 59). Though in the case of /θ/ : /ð/, voicing of word-initial dental fricative appeared in low sentence stress words such as deictic expressions *the, this, that, these, there, then* and some conjunctions like *through*. A parallel process altered some other weakly stressed words: *is, of* and *was* by voicing word-final consonants (ibid.: 59–60). Because of the difference in the development of /θ/ : /ð/ compared to other pairs of fricatives, the phonemic distinction of voice between the two fricatives in the onset, however at no time discriminated totally, was reduced to a limited number of minimal pairs such as *thy* and *thigh*.

Old English, having [z], [v] and [ð] only as allophones of /s/, /f/ and /θ/, did not distinguish between voiced and voiceless sounds by the means of different graphs; <s> was used for both [s z], <f> for [f v] and <þ ð> for [θ ð]. The emergence of the final two graphs used interchangeably for a single dental fricative, however, is worth exploring for the purpose of the study. According to Quirk & Wrenn (1957: 8), in the earliest surviving Old English texts, bilateral <th> borrowed from Irish (Hogg 1992: 77) was used for [θ] and [ð]. In texts from the later eighth century, one may also encounter <d> used for a dental fricative. Some scholars claim that the use of <d>, similarly to <th>, may be a result of a borrowing from Irish scribal tradition since in Irish <d> was sometimes used to signify a voiced fricative (Quirk & Wrenn 1957: 8). As Christianity became firmly established, the previously used graphs were replaced by <þ>. It is argued that the signs of runic alphabet, especially <þ>, started to be widely employed at the time when the elements of the pagan Germanic culture stopped being viewed as a potential threat to the position of the Christian Church (ibid.). The use of the three graphs mentioned so far might be clearly seen in different spellings of the word *thought* in *Cædmon's Hymn*: *modgidanc* (Moore Bede), *modgithanc* (Leningrad Bede) and *modgeþanc* (West Saxon version, first half of the tenth century) (Hogg 1992: 76–77). By the beginning of the ninth century, the graph <þ> known by its runic mnemonic name *thorn* from *futhorc* was being used alongside with the new graph <ð>. Although it is considered uncertain (ibid.: 75), some scholars claim that <ð> is once again a borrowing from the Irish-Latin alphabet formed by drawing a line through the upper part of <d> (Quirk & Wrenn 1957: 8). The name of the graph, *eth* or *edh* is thought to

be a nineteenth-century coinage originating in the name of the corresponding Modern Icelandic letter *eð* (ibid.: 8; Fulk 2012: 23). Originally, in the Old English period, the graph was known as *ðæt* (Hogg 1992: 75). Although the interchange between <þ> and <ð> in some Old English texts seems to be regular, for example, in some of the most carefully written MSS of Ælfric where <þ> is used word-initially and <ð> word-medially or word-finally (Quirk & Wrenn 1957: 9; Upward & Davidson 2011: 56), in a broader perspective, these two graphs appeared in free orthographic variation.

While <ð> had been lost in the beginning of the fourteenth century (Jensen 2012), the graph <þ> continued to be widely used to represent both /θ/ and /ð/ throughout the Middle English period. However well-established the graph <þ> was, reintroduced <th> started to appear in writing from the beginning of the twelfth century onwards. <th> took over the role of <þ> altogether by the end of the fifteenth century (Lass 1999: 36). The modified version of <þ>, which virtually merged with <y>, was, however, still in use even in Early Modern English in forms such as *ye* or abbreviated *y^t*.

According to Jensen (2012), the usual explanation for the loss of the graph <þ> that is the introduction of print may, actually, prove to be quite inadequate. It is argued that the replacement of <þ> with <th> was a gradual process that had begun long before the arrival of the first printing press to England. The emergence of <th> in the twelfth century in the southern part of England and its steady growth in use argued by Lass (1999: 36) seem to confirm this view. Furthermore, it is claimed that printing facilities and different scribal practices existed in isolation even as late as in the end of the Early Middle English period (Scragg 1974). Finally, Jensen (2012) argues that first of all *thorn* was included in a number of types used in England, and secondly the graph <y> may have been easily employed by the printing industry in order to avoid the introduction of <th>.

In the course of time, <þ> and <th> were established as the two Late Middle English variants of the variable (th). In the South, the two variants appeared in free variation with <th> getting the upper hand over <þ>. In the North, however, the distribution was constrained by the systemic factors addressed later in this section. The distribution of <þ> and <th> was further confused by the fact that <þ> and <y> merged into a single *y*-shaped letter in many scribal hands well before the end of the fourteenth century (Fulk 2012: 23). As it was suggested (Benskin 1982: 21 ff), the merger originated in *textura* scripts and was graphic in nature. What is more, the merger may have been subjected to a spatial distribution,

with the coalesced <y> occurring, especially, in the North and in large parts of Northeast Midlands and East Anglia (Fulk 2012: 23). As a result of the change, the northern orthographic system contained one graph less when compared to its southern equivalent.

Apart from the sole number of letters available, some scholars noted that another systemic dissimilarity differentiated the two systems. Stenroos (2004: 267) argues that some Middle English texts exhibit a tendency to distinguish between voiced and voiceless fricatives by means of different graphemes. This tendency was addressed by Benskin (1977: 506–507) in a noteworthy footnote:

There thus arises a system whereby (1) words like *think, through, thousand* are spelled *th-*, but (2) words like *they, them, there* are spelled *p-* or *y-*. The use of *p* (or *y* for *p*) is hence phonetically conditioned in the orthographies of a great many scribes, an observation which seems to have eluded most scholars.

Benskin's (1977) perspective on a diachronic change of the system assumes four consecutive stages in the spread of <th> in the varieties of the Northern dialect: (1) final position occupied by a voiceless fricative only, (2) initial position when occupied by a voiceless fricative, (3) in word-medial position, (4) word-initially when voiced. Stenroos (2004: 267) points out that "between the second and third stages, there arises a system where the voiceless dental fricative is spelled *th* and the voiced one *p* or *y*." Hence, one may assume that the system no longer contained a set of graphs, but rather two separate graphemes: <th> and <p>, through which the contrast of voice between, for example, *thin* 'thin' and *pin* 'thine' may have been orthographically maintained. However, as it was noted by Jensen (2012), due to the unique development of dental fricatives, with the voiced dental fricative present usually in grammatical words and the voiceless one in lexical words, the distinction may be, as well, interpreted as purely lexical.

With the implementation of standard writing conventions, <th> grew more common; however, it did not replace <p> and <y> instantly. As it was stated (Benskin qtd. in Jensen 2012), scribes from the north of England, while adopting a new standard, had to, first of all, reincorporate the graph lost in the merger with <y>: widely used <y> had to be replaced with the earlier <p> when it represented a consonant. Secondly, they had to abandon the distinction in writing made between voiced and voiceless dental fricatives. In fact, whereas in the South the change from <p> to <th> was a matter of simple graphic replacement, in the North, it

equalled a systemic change, in which the loss of one of two graphemes corresponding separately to /θ/ or /ð/ resulted in the loss of phonologically conditioned division. It can be easily viewed as a merger.

Although the language of legal documents is often thought to be the one that is the most receptive to the standard, it might be interesting to gain some insight into some other possible factors, apart from genre, influencing the reception of the standardised forms and the retention of the original system with word-initial <th> being used for /θ/ and initial <þ/y> used for /ð/. Geographical distribution, frequencies in particular documents or lexical diffusion may be particularly interesting to explore from the point of view of historical dialectology.

3. Sources

The sample of Late Middle English texts used in the study consisted of 126 documents from the MEG-C included in the *Linguistic Atlas of Late Medieval English* (Benskin et al. 2013) (later LALME). The part of the MEG-C consisted of 76055 words. The texts were located in the counties in the area of the northern dialect: Northumberland, Durham, Cumberland, Westmorland, Yorkshire and Lancashire. The selection of texts from every county was a prerequisite for providing an all-embracing analysis of spatial diffusion of the variable (th). As for the genre of the texts selected, these were legal documents only, primarily because the study aimed at the description of the variable (th) only in this particular genre. Secondly, the analysis of differences between genres, as it was done in the research conducted by Jensen (2012), in which legal documents were set against religious prose texts, would be hardly possible for counties such as Cumberland since the MEG-C provides only documents, making this type of research anything but congruous. In the Appendix, all legal documents used in the study are listed in accordance with the codes used in the Catalogue of Sources - version 2011.1 (Stenroos 2011) accompanying the MEG-C. Figure 1 on the following page shows localisation of the legal documents, however, without initial *L* and *θ*. The MEG-C codes consist of a capital *L* followed by the LALME Linguistic Profile code made into a four-digit code by adding initial zeros as necessary, for example, L0147 used in the MEG-C corresponds to the LALME LP147. Sometimes when a complex LP had been split into smaller units by the authors of the MEG-C, for the purpose of this study, it was merged back into an original entity. Similarly, when more than one legal document was located in a single locality

from the LALME, they were structured into a single entity in the part of the research devoted to spatial distribution of the variable (th). The MEG-C included few legal documents that were not placed on maps during the process of compilation of the LALME. The design of the present study required the texts to be tied to a particular locality, be it real space or a localisation based on an assemblage of linguistic features. Hence, all the legal documents that had been used in the compilation of the LALME but had not been placed on maps were excluded from the scope of the research. Finally, in regard to spatial distribution, L1348 was the only document out of the whole material which has been moved slightly south-west on the basis of Jensen's study (2012).

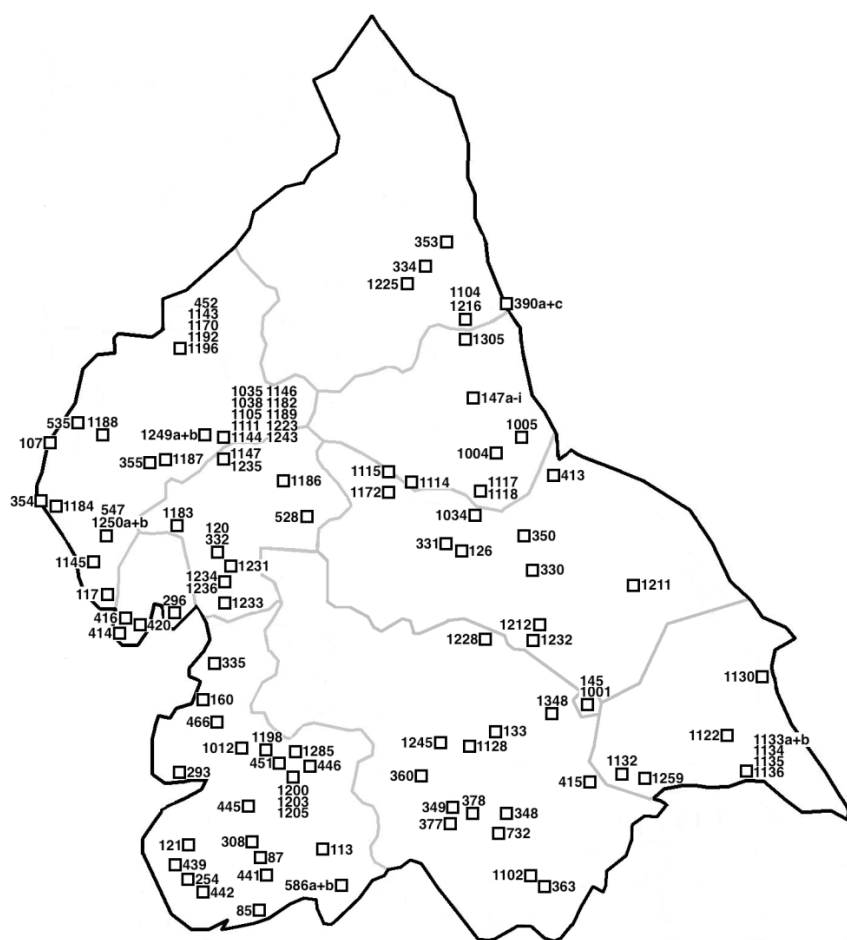


Fig. 1. Spatial distribution of the legal documents

On the basis of the explicitly dated documents, the material represents a time span of one hundred and forty-two years, with the earliest document from the year 1363 and the oldest from 1505. Yet, a substantial amount of documents used in the study dates back to the fifteenth century, with only a small number of documents from the second half of the fourteenth century or the first decade of the sixteenth century. Texts with only approximate dating were also included in the study. They are dated accordingly: four documents dated to the middle of the fifteenth century, two documents dated to the first half of the fifteenth century, one document dated to the second half of the fifteenth century, one document dated to the end fifteenth or the beginning of the sixteenth century, two documents dated imprecisely to the time between 1438–55 and 1472–83, one document with the unknown dating. The documents mentioned above were not incorporated in the diachronic analysis, which relied on precisely dated documents. Nonetheless, the design of the diachronic analysis used in the present study allowed documents, such as L0147g dated 1446–47, with a slightly imprecise dating to be included. Both explicit and approximate dates of document composition are listed in the Appendix in the right column.

4. Procedure

The process of transcription of the legal documents into a machine-readable format was thoroughly described in the manual accompanying the MEG-C (Stenroos & Mäkinen 2011). One can easily access the manual through the website of the *Middle English Grammar Project*. It is, however, worth mentioning that thanks to the authors of the corpus the annotation employed in their project enabled an in-depth analysis of late Middle English spelling conventions. As for the sampling method, longer pieces of writing, for example religious prose or verse, were included in the corpus in tranches of 3,000 words; legal documents used in the present study entered the corpus in their entirety. Hence, the material used in the study comprised of entire documents only, making it possible to reject any possible disparity with the original manuscripts.

In accordance with the theory outlined in the section devoted to the variable (th), data extracted from the part of the MEG-C were structured in relation to the word type further divided into grammatical and lexical words. Grammatical words like *the*, *that* or *they* were treated as those containing word-initial voiced dental fricative, whereas lexical words, for example *thing* or *think*, as containing

voiceless dental fricative initially. Furthermore, due to the limited occurrence in the corpus, lexical words were collected as an open category leaving out such obvious mistakes on the part of the scribe as, for instance, yAPPur[TENaNTz (L0147g), a merger of 'the' and 'appurtenance' and yEER~ (L0147g) 'peer~ > year'. Conversely, grammatical words were clearly divided into eleven subcategories corresponding to particular grammatical forms: *this, these, those, there, they, them, their, theirs, then, that* and *the*. Complex conjunctive adverbs, for example, *therefore* or unusual YANEWITH, along with adverbs such as YIDERWARD (L0586a), were excluded from the scope of the research and were not included in any type of quantitative analysis employed in the present study. The grammatical word *through* was also excluded. In terms of adverbs, it is difficult to decide whether they should be treated as grammatical or lexical words. *Through*, however, appeared in numbers too small to allow the incorporation of the word in the analysis.

Data were extracted from the MEG-C using AntConc 3.2.4m, freeware software designed for the purpose of corpus linguistic analysis. Due to a large variety of spellings available for each word, regular expressions were used to simplify the process of data extraction and to yield more precise results. Although it was possible to create a single regular expression for the most of the grammatical words provided above, in the case of *there* and *their*, whose spellings overlap in some cases, each instance found in the corpus had to be analysed separately paying special attention to their concordances. Treating lexical words as an open category required a slightly different approach, that is using a regular expression extracting all words with word-initial <th>, <y> or <þ> and selecting those which matched the word type and the remaining requirements provided above. Upon the completion of data extraction, results were quantified as numerical values separately for lexical and grammatical word; the latter type was further divided into eleven subcategories. Numerical figures obtained in the course of the study were then converted into a standardised numerical value: frequency per one thousand words often used in research conducted in the area of corpus linguistics. Converted numbers made quantitative data significantly more comparable by avoiding the negative effect of sample size on the results of the study.

Data extracted from the MEG-C and structured according to the aforementioned requirements were then checked for statistical significance using a Chi-square statistical test. After combining two possible spellings: <þ/y> and <th> with two word types: grammatical and lexical, a statistical test was applied to both the overall results from six combined counties and each of the counties separately.

It was assumed that lexical words with a word-initial voiceless dental fricative should show a significantly higher proportion of <th>, conversely, grammatical words beginning with a voiced dental fricative should exhibit a tendency for <þ> or <y>. The results of a Chi square test were presented in a form of a table in the following section devoted to the presentation of the results. *P*-values acquired in the statistical analysis were used to accept or disprove the null hypothesis stating that there is no relationship between the word type and the variant of the variable (th) for *p*-value < 0.05. If a Chi square test confirmed the statistical significance of the relationship between the variables used in the present study, it would allow to reject the null hypothesis and to validate the hypothesis stating that there is a relationship between the word type and the variant of the variable (th). Along with the table presenting the results of the statistical test, a graph showing the proportion of variants of the variable (th) for both word types was included.

Following the statistical analysis and presentation of the overall results, a number of other methods were used in order to identify the pattern of distribution of the variable (th) in the selected collection of legal documents from the MEG-C. Since the distribution of the variable (th) in the open category of lexical words in the present study proved to be fully homogeneous, with the variant <th> occurring in every instance extracted from the corpus, the remaining methods were not applied to this word type. It might be assumed that the lack of variation in lexical words reflected the state of the graphemic system described by Benskin (1977) and commented by Stenroos (2004: 267), where a word-initial voiceless dental fricative is spelled <th> and the voiced one <þ> or <y>. The distribution of the variable (th) in grammatical words, however, appeared to be visibly more varied. The following methods were employed to account for this variability. Firstly, is accordance with Jensen (2012) claiming that

Linguistic variation in Middle English texts is [thought to be] most commonly studied in terms of geography, and, [for this reason], regional patterns must be expected to account for much of the variation during the Late Middle English period. At the same time, variables other than geography must be assumed to have contributed to synchronic variation.

A spatial dispersion of the variants of the variable (th) was shown in the form of a map indicating a dominant spelling of word-initial fricative for each legal document bound to a particular locality, as they were shown in Figure 1. Having done

that, the chronological distribution of <þ/y> and <th> spellings was provided in a form of a bar plot showing changes in frequency of two variants from the year 1363 to 1505. To avoid unnecessary obscurity in the form of a bar plot, documents were grouped into intervals of one or two decades. The division into decades relied upon the number of documents available from each period to maintain the chronology, for instance, because the corpus did not contain documents from the period between 1460 and 1469, but a number of documents were dated between 1450-59, the interval used stretched over two decades, 1450-69 instead of just one followed by a lacuna. Thirdly, the frequency of two variants was set against the number of legal documents to check the distribution of frequencies of two variants across the documents. For instance, to validate the possibility of <th> being spread across a large amount of documents in relatively low frequency, whereas <þ> or <y> appearing in a significantly larger frequency in a comparable number of documents. The results of this part of the analysis were presented in a form of two histograms showing the distribution of both variants separately, which in the end were merged into a single overlapping histogram identifying differences between two patterns of distribution. Finally, a frequency of each variant was presented separately for each of the eleven subcategories of grammatical words in order to discern a possible pattern of distribution of the variable (th) across different words. The results of lexical distribution were shown in a form of eleven separate bar plots.

5. Results

Data extracted from the MEG-C and converted into a standardised value of a frequency per 1000 words rounded to units are shown in Table 1. The vertical header provides labels for two word types combined with the variants of the variable (th). Labels for the counties selected for the purpose of the study are shown in the horizontal header.

As was mentioned earlier, lexical words were fully homogenous in terms of realisation of the variable (th), and for this reason, one might assume that the state reflected in the data, with word-initial voiceless dental fricatives spelled as <th>, may correspond to the state of the system described by Benskin (1977) and specified by Stenroos (2004: 267). However, grammatical words were much more varied with respect to the occurrence of the variants of the variable (th). The entirety of the data, provided in the rightmost column, indicates that although the assumed variant <þ/y> was found dominant, <th> spelling in grammatical

words also appeared in numbers suggesting the interplay of other factors in the distribution of the variable (th) in this word type. Furthermore, the frequency of variants varied across the counties and ridings. For instance, divisions such as Lancashire, Cumberland, East Riding of Yorkshire, West Riding of Yorkshire and the City of York shown <p/y> as the dominant spelling of the word-initial variant. On the contrary, Northumberland, Durham, Westmorland and Northern Riding of Yorkshire exhibited a tendency for the initial <th> spelling in grammatical words.

Table 1. Frequencies of variants of the variable (th) matched up with word types

	Nhb	Dhm	Lancs	Cumb	Wml	Ery	Nry	Wry	York	Total
Gram. <p/y>	47	49	95	99	55	81	48	79	137	80
Gram. <th>	83	51	49	30	76	21	72	56	6	50
Lexical <p/y>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Lexical <th>	3	8	9	8	8	3	12	7	8	8

Table 2 shows the results of a Chi-square test applied to the entirety of the data as well as particular counties in order to confirm statistical significance of the data extracted in the present study. Results were treated as statistically significant when p -value < 0.05. Values were rounded to the thousandth place.

Table 2. Results of Chi-square test applied to frequencies per 1000 words

	Nhb	Dhm	Lancs	Cumb	Wml	Ery	Nry	Wry	York	Total
<i>P</i> -value	0.493	0.02	0.001	0.001	0.047	0.011	0.015	0.008	0.001	0.002

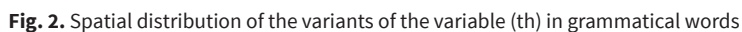
P -value for the entirety of the data extracted from the corpus proved to be statistically significant. In terms of particular counties, however, Northumberland was the only one for which the results were statistically insignificant. The failure of statistical test may suggest that the tendency observed in this particular part of the data proved the lack of relationship between the word type and spelling, in particular, grammatical word type bound with <p/y> spelling and lexical word type with <th> spelling. At the same time, by looking at the values used in the statistical analysis, one might claim that a significantly lower frequency of lexical

words per 1000 words in terms of Northumberland may have influenced the result of a Chi-square test. Nevertheless, on the basis of the result of the test performed on the totality of the data, with p -value = 0.002, the null hypothesis stating that there is no relationship between the word type and the variant of the variable (th) may be rejected. At the same time, the hypothesis stating that the relationship between the word type and the variant of the variable (th) may be accepted. It is worth to bear in mind that the results of the statistical analysis conformed to previous studies related to the distribution of the variable (th) in the north of England (Jensen 2012; Stenroos 2004).

Following the order provided in the section devoted to the procedure used in the present study, Figure 2 shows the spatial distribution of the variable (th) in grammatical words. Localities with the dominant <þ/y> variant of the variable (th) are marked with a triangular shape and localities in which <th> variant appeared as dominant are marked with a square.

Looking at the map provided, one may be relatively certain that <þ/y> proved to be a dominant variant in grammatical words. Yet, it would seem unreasonable to treat spatial distribution as homogenous. Cumberland and East Riding of Yorkshire indicate a strong preference for <þ/y> in grammatical words manifested in an unvaried distribution of this variant across localities. Two remaining ridings, namely, West and North Riding of Yorkshire seem to go in line with the dominance of <þ/y>, however, with slight variance also present. L0363, L0348, L0415, L0133 and L1232 form a line stretching across the eastern part of West Riding of Yorkshire and ending in L1232 right after the border of North Riding of Yorkshire. Two pockets, the first one extending over West Westmorland and Northwest Lancashire, and the second forming a linear shape at the border of Durham with North Riding of Yorkshire, display a preference for <th> in grammatical words.

Northumberland and, even more, Lancashire provide an indiscernible pattern of spatial distribution. In the case of Northumberland, it may be due to insufficient amount of localities, whereas Lancashire may exhibit a good example of transition area between the northern system preferring <þ/y> initially in grammatical words and the encroaching standardised spelling conventions opting for <th>. Although slightly varied, <þ/y> seems to be a dominant variant of the variable (th) in terms of spatial distribution. One should not forget that the distribution shown on the map was based on the dominance of one variant over the other. In most of the localities both <þ/y> and <th> appeared, however, with varying frequency.



The chronological distribution of both variants of the variable (th) in grammatical words is shown in Figure 3. The distribution is based on documents dated precisely enough to match the intervals used in the analysis. The variants are indicated by two colours: <p/y> by dark grey, <th> by light grey. Frequencies of both variants per 1000 words are presented for each interval. As shown in the figure, <p/y> seems to be a more frequent variant throughout the entire period of one hundred and forty-two years from 1363 to 1505. Two deviating intervals, 1400–19 and 1440–49, showing a higher proportion of <th> may be considered insufficient to reject the dominance of the presumed variant in Late Middle English north-

ern legal documents. Yet, one might observe that there is a higher proportion of <th> in relation to <þ/y> in the period from 1430 to 1469. This may be treated as a tentative indication of the new spelling convention starting to be implemented in the documents. Still, one might argue that the retreat from this tendency seen in the following intervals disproves the tentative indication in favour of <þ/y> as a dominant variant throughout the period.

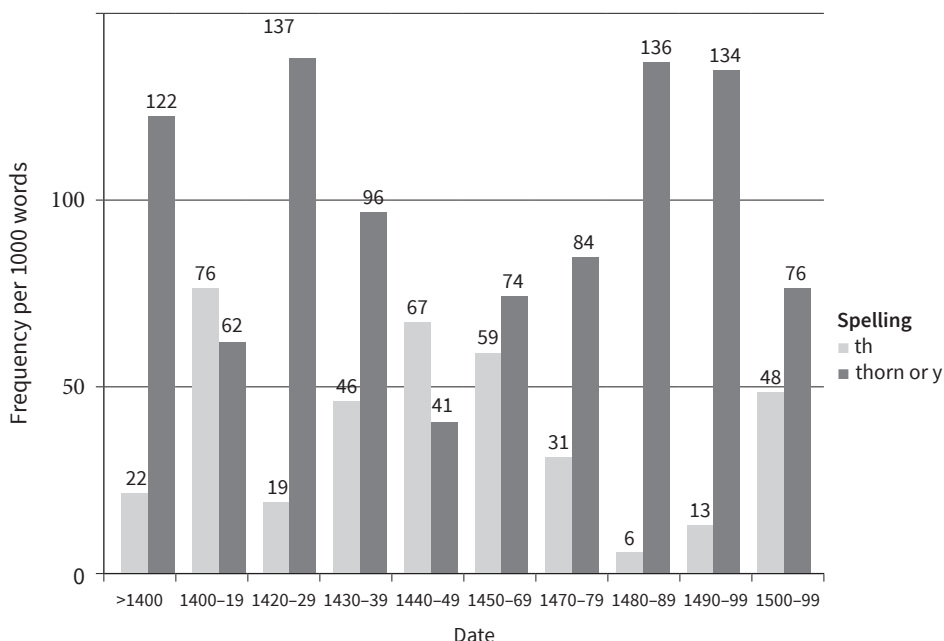


Fig. 3. Chronological distribution of the variants of the variable (th) in grammatical words

Chronological and spatial distributions seem to conform to the view that the variant <þ/y> was the dominant one in grammatical words. Having looked at two types of distribution, it may prove valuable to give some attention to the actual frequency of variants spread across the legal documents used in the study. Figure 4 shown on the following page comprises of two separate histograms displaying the number of documents according to the frequency of one of the variants in grammatical words. Vertical axis indicates the number of documents, while on the horizontal axis, growing frequencies per one thousand words are given. Histograms were set against each other in order to further check the predominance of <þ/y> in grammatical words.

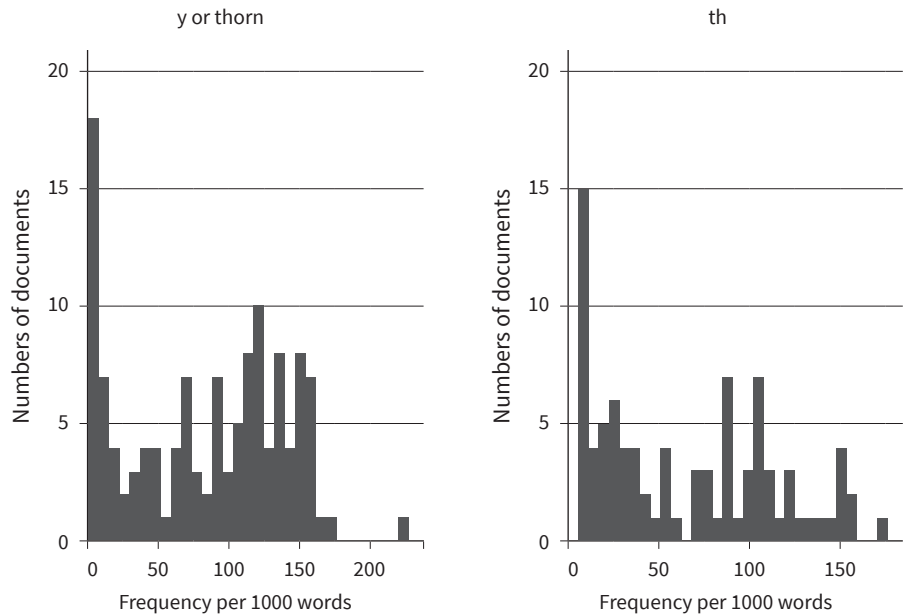


Fig. 4. Frequencies of the variants of the variable (th) in legal documents

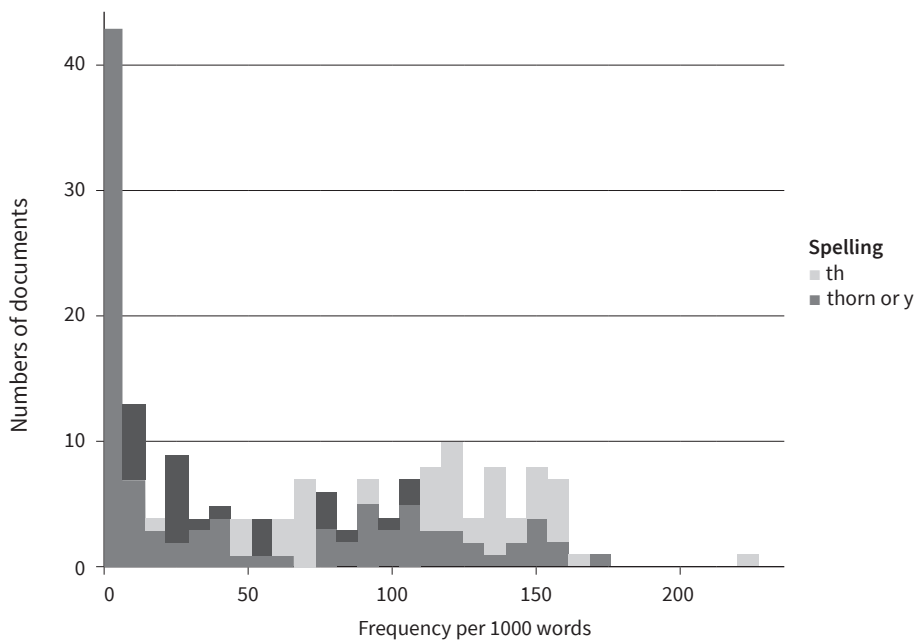


Fig. 5. Overlapping histogram of the variants of the variable (th) in legal documents

Although the variant <þ/y> of the variable (th) seems to be present in legal documents in high frequency, which is indicated in the left-hand side histogram, the <th> variant has a tendency to appear in low numbers over a large amount of documents. Almost sixty documents contain small amount of <th> or even no <th> whatsoever. In the case of <þ/y>, this number is lower by almost a half. A significant difference in the distribution of the variants across the legal documents may be considered as another sign of the preference for <þ/y> word-initially in grammatical words. The differences between the distributions of the two variants can be clearly demonstrated in a form of an overlapping histogram.

Despite the fact that the analysis of the data presented so far may seem to prove the dominance of the variable (th) realised as the variant <þ/y> in grammatical words and <th> as the only realisation of the variable in lexical words, quantitative analysis of separate grammatical words sheds new light on the distribution of the variants. Figures 6a and 6b showing the lexical distribution are presented on the following pages. Two figures comprise of eleven bar plots for eleven grammatical words showing frequencies of both variants of the variable (th) for each word separately. As shown in the legend, <th> is indicated with black and <þ/y> with light grey. For some grammatical words, realisations found in the legal documents were distributed relatively evenly between the two variants; this is the case of *this*, *these*, *them*, *their* and *theirs*. For *there* and *then* data show a higher proportion of <þ/y>, which seems to go in line with the results presented above. Because of a limited occurrence, it would be difficult to claim that *those* is the only grammatical word with <þ/y> only. For this reason, *those* was not considered a convincing piece of evidence for the preferred use of <þ/y> in grammatical words. Yet, *that*, *they* and *the* show an extraordinary preference for <þ/y> word-initially in grammatical words. The distribution of the three words might suggest that the dominance of <þ/y> is constrained lexically.

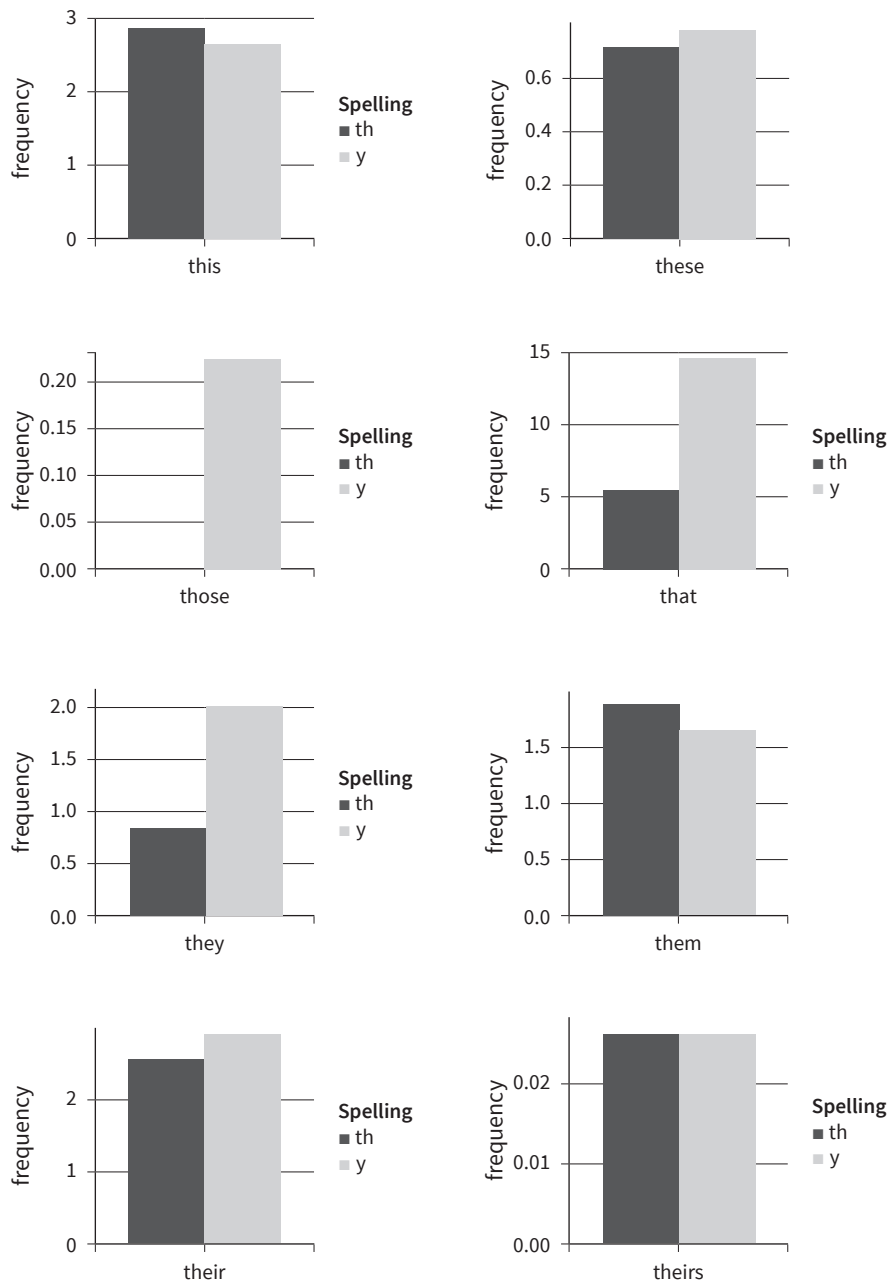


Fig. 6a. Lexical distribution of the variants of the variable (th) for *this, these, those, that, they, them, their, theirs*

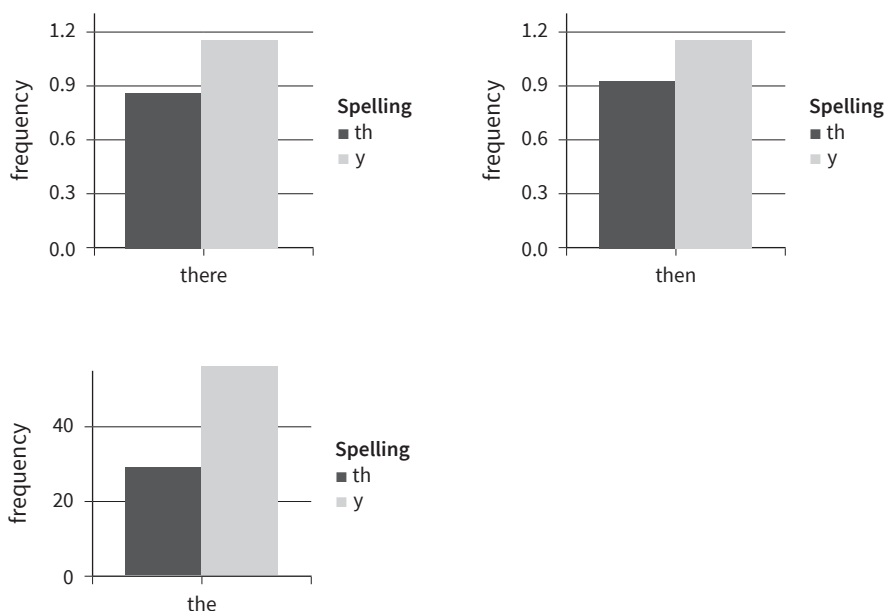


Fig. 6b. Lexical distribution of the variants of the variable (th) for *there*, *then*, *the*

6. Discussion

The Material analysed in the present study seems to indicate a strong preference for the use of <th> in lexical words and <p> or <y> in grammatical words. This was confirmed by the statistical analysis employed in the study. However indicative the test may be, it also became evident that <th> appeared in considerable amounts in grammatical words. Because one of the aims of the paper was to prove or refute the existence of the Northern System, every disparity with the systemic distinction between the voiced and voiceless dental fricative by means of different graphemes has to be addressed by analysing possible factors influencing the variance in the use of the aforementioned letters. Since the distribution of the variable (th) in lexical words was homogenous and in line with the distinction present in the Northern System, the analysis was focused on grammatical words selected for the purpose of the study.

While studying the pattern of spatial distribution of <th> and <p/y> in grammatical words, it was found that <p/y> proved to be the dominant variant. Only

a small number of localities favoured <th>. A number of them appeared in isolated linguistic pockets in Westmorland, Durham, Northumberland, Lancashire, North Riding of Yorkshire and West Riding of Yorkshire. The pattern behind these enclaves proved to be indiscernible. These localities may be worth exploring in terms of a combination of standardised features, for instance, present participle *-ing* in order to verify a possible existence of pockets showing preference for standardised written English in the fifteenth century northern England. Lancashire, however, stood as a good example of a transitional area between two dialects or two spelling conventions. It can be easily observed in a mixed pattern of localities favouring one or the other variant. Some areas were not covered in the present study. As it was stated by Jensen (2012), this may be due to two options: the reflection of demography or accidental survival of the legal documents. Furthermore, the upland character of the area known as the Yorkshire Dales may have had its impact on demography and, consequently, the survival of the legal documents.

Similarly to the spatial distribution, <þ/y> proved to be dominant throughout the entire period of one hundred and forty-two years from 1363 to 1505. Yet, the assumed dominance of one variant was not constant at all times. As was mentioned above, the period from 1430 to 1469 showed a higher proportion of <th> in comparison to the remaining intervals. It might be argued that the increase in the use of this variant may occur due to the slow incorporation of the standardised spelling conventions. Although followed by the withdrawal from this tendency, some may argue that it can be considered an indication of the standard that was to come. Conversely, it may be claimed that the retreat that followed the increase in the use of <th> may disprove the possible implementation of the standard English spelling conventions. Furthermore, it might be stated that the relatively stable dominance of <þ/y>, with <th> appearing in small quantity from the year 1363 to 1505, may reflect an in-between stage after the third Benskin's (1977) stage assuming the use of <th> word-medially and the fourth one employing <th> word-initially. Despite that, in order to arrive at the actual sequence of <th> implementation, the material used in the study should incorporate texts arranged chronologically for a longer period of time. Still, as far as one hundred and forty-two years covered in the present study are concerned, one can be relatively certain that the <þ/y> variant was dominant in grammatical words, but the state recorded in the material did not reflect the stage in which all voiced dental fricatives were spelt <þ/y>.

As far as the frequency of variants spread across the legal documents is concerned, the <þ/y> variant of the variable (th) once again proved to be dominant. A significant difference between the patterns of distribution of <þ/y> and <th>, with the variant <þ/y> appearing in larger frequencies in the legal documents, may result from the preference for <þ/y> in grammatical words over <th>. Yet, similarly to spatial and chronological distribution, one can observe that the presence of <th> in some instances may suggest that in the fifteenth century the systemic use of the two graphemes might have already been disrupted by the introduction of the standardised spelling conventions using <th> in all positions. The frequency of occurrence of the two variants may also serve as a further specification of the spatial distribution, which in the present study was focused only on the dominant variant for each locality. It clearly shows that for a large number of localities, along with the dominant variant, there were also some instances of the secondary variant. Although the situation in which <th> appears in small numbers distributed evenly across the legal documents may indicate the encroaching standard, the distribution preferring <þ/y> over <th> in grammatical words may be used as strong evidence for the existence of the Northern System.

It is possible that the distribution of the two variants may be conditioned by another factor. In fact, lexical distribution may play a vital role in the explanation of the patterns behind the occurrence of <þ/y> and <th>. As was shown in the previous section devoted to the presentation of the results, three grammatical words: *that*, *they* and *the* exhibited by far the greatest tendency for the use of <þ/y> word-initially. The remaining ones showed significantly more variance in this respect by using both variants in almost equal numbers. On the basis of the analysis, it might be argued that the three grammatical words, in the present material, can be treated as the most “conservative” lexical units retaining the assumed northern spelling convention, while the rest would exhibit more readiness for <th>. The fact that *the* and *that* proved to be most likely to retain <þ/y> may originate in them being the most often used determiners in Middle English. In the case of *that*, the tendency may be further strengthened by the fact that it was a commonly used conjunction. The predominance of the variant <þ/y> word-initially in *the* and *that* may have been caused by the fact that medieval scribes were much more punctilious in the use of the said variant in the most commonly used grammatical words. The tendency for the retention of the discussed variant may be further seen in forms *ye* and *y^e* being still in use in the Early Middle English period (Lass 1999: 36). *They*, however, proved to be much more difficult to explain. According

to Lass (ibid.: 120-121), the introduction of the Scandinavian third person plural paradigm, which replaced the Old English one, progressed in three consecutive stages: (1) *þei* / *her(e)* / *hem*; (2) *þei* / *her(e)* ~ *þeir* / *hem*; (3) *þei* / *þeir* / *hem* ~ *þem*. As the change progressed through the fifteenth century, one might see that the third person personal pronoun was the first one to adopt the Scandinavian paradigm. Hence, *they*, in comparison to *their(s)* and *them*, may be treated as the first pronoun with the word-initial voiced dental fricative. *They*, similarly to *the* and *that*, may retain the variant <þ/y> due to the fact that it appeared early in the fifteenth century, whereas the remaining *their(s)* and *them*, which appeared later in the century, were more likely to adopt the standardised spelling <th>.

Finally, looking at the analysis in its entirety, it seems that it provided strong evidence for the existence of the Northern System. The variants of the variable (th) showed a tendency to appear in word types with pre-assumed voiced or voiceless dental fricative. Although the material displayed a certain dose of variance in terms of grammatical words employing both <þ/y> and <th> word-initially to represent the voiced dental fricative, in lexical words, only <th> was used. It might be argued that the state recorded in the material showed the Northern System in its slow decline. Spatial and chronological distribution, along with the rate of occurrence of the two variants in the legal documents may be used to confirm a statement that the standardised variant <th> was already entering the system. The retention of the assumed variant in the most common and, at the same time, the earliest grammatical words used in the present study, may further validate this view.

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Appendix

The present table contains the information about the repository shelfmark for each transcription of the original scribal text used in the present study. All information given in the table was based on the *Catalogue of Sources* accompanying the MEG-C and refers only to the portions of MSS used in this corpus.

Legal Document	Source text used for the compilation of the MEG-C electronic corpus	Date
1	2	3
	NORTH	
	Cumberland	
L0107	Whitehaven, Cumbria Record Office: DCU/4/178. Lease	1435
L0117	Carlisle, Cumbria Record Office: D/Stan/21. Award	1459
L0354	Carlisle, Cumbria Record Office: D/Stan/24. Exchange	1489–90
L0355	Carlisle, Cumbria Record Office: D/Lons/L/Deeds/Lowther 116. Marriage settlement	1502
L0452	Carlisle, Cumbria Record Office: 1 Ca/Misc/Deeds/15th c. Commissioning agreement	1434
L0535	Carlisle, Cumbria Record Office: D/S/Eaglesfield Deeds/1440–41. Agreement	1441
L0547	Whitehaven, Cumbria Record Office: D/Stan/46. Grant	1503
L1035	Carlisle, Cumbria Record Office: D/Lons/L/Deeds/Askham 56. Gift	1450
L1038	Carlisle, Cumbria Record Office: Ca 5/1/20, box 1397–1794 / folder 1430–1747. Commitment to arbitration	1430
L1105	Gosforth, Northumberland Record Office: ZHW 1/85. Lease	1448
L1111	Gosforth, Northumberland Record Office: ZHW 1/76. Lease	1432
L1143	Carlisle, Cumbria Record Office: D/Lons/L/Deeds/D. 54. Lease	1429

Realisations of the Word-initial Variable (th) in Selected Late...

1	2	3
L1144	Carlisle, Cumbria Record Office: D/Mus/Penrith/Medieval Deeds. Gift	15ab
L1145	Carlisle, Cumbria Record Office: D/Penn/28 no. 20 (Bretby Bundle). Lease	1439
L1146	Carlisle, Cumbria Record Office: D/Lons/L/Deeds/Lo. 111. Marriage settlement	1456
L1170	Carlisle, Cumbria Record Office: Ca 2/15. Ordinance	1445
L1182	Kendal, Cumbria Record Office: WD/Ry/92/107. Lease	1483
L1184	Kendal, Cumbria Record Office: WD/Ry/92/93. Award	1453
L1187	Kendal, Cumbria Record Office: WD/Ry/92/87. Enfeoffment	1438
L1188	Kendal, Cumbria Record Office: WD/Ry/92/77. Commitment to arbitration	1422
L1189	Kendal, Cumbria Record Office: WDEC/2. Enfeoffment	1436
L1192	Kendal, Cumbria Record Office: WD/Ry/92/79. Surety	1425
L1196	Carlisle, Cumbria Record Office: DMus/Edenhall 2/2/100. Memorandum	15/16
L1223	Gosforth, Northumberland Record Office: ZHW 1/97. Lease	1494
L1243	Durham, Prior's Kitchen, Dean and Chapter Muniments: Misc. Charter 51. Award	1433
L1249a	Carlisle, Cumbria Record Office: D/Lons/L/Deeds/Wg.15. Marriage settlement	1472
L1249b	Carlisle, Cumbria Record Office: D/Lons/L/Deeds/Askham 68. Condition of obligation	1472
L1250a	Whitehaven, Cumbria Record Office: DSTAN/1/15 . Declaration	15a2
L1250b	Whitehaven, Cumbria Record Office: DSTAN/1/16. Memorandum	1432
	Durham	
L0147a	Durham, Prior's Kitchen, Dean and Chapter Muniments: Small Prior's Register I, ff. 101v line 19 to 102r line 14. Letter/Document	1439
L0147b	Durham, Prior's Kitchen, Dean and Chapter Muniments: Small Prior's Register I. f. 122v lines 1-18 and f. 127v. Letter/Document	1440

Cont.

1	2	3
L0147c	Durham, Prior's Kitchen, Dean and Chapter Muniments: Small Prior's Register I. ff. 142r line 18 to 149r line 5. Letter/Document	1441
L0147d	Durham, Prior's Kitchen, Dean and Chapter Muniments: Small Prior's Register I. ff. 149v line 9 to 150r line 10. Letter/Document	1442
L0147e	Durham, Prior's Kitchen, Dean and Chapter Muniments: Small Prior's Register I. ff. 152v line 8 to 154v. Letter/Document	1442
L0147f	Durham, Prior's Kitchen, Dean and Chapter Muniments: Small Prior's Register I. f. 188v lines 1-22. Letter/Document	1444
L0147g	Durham, Prior's Kitchen, Dean and Chapter Muniments: Small Prior's Register II. ff. 9v line 15 to 23v line 8. Letter, Lease	1446-47
L0147h	Durham, Prior's Kitchen, Dean and Chapter Muniments: Prior's Register III. f. 41r lines 22-39. Letter of appointment	1414
L0147i	Durham, Prior's Kitchen, Dean and Chapter Muniments: Prior's Register III. f. 273r line 14 to 273v line 15 and f. 287v line 5 seq. Letter of appointment	1440-42
L1004	Durham, Durham County Record Office: D/Ch/D 92. Bond	1433
L1005	Durham, Durham County Record Office: D/Lo/F 322. Commissioning agreement	1414-15
L1114	Durham, Durham County Record Office: D/St/D1/2/13. Attestation	1452
L1117	Durham, Prior's Kitchen, Dean and Chapter Muniments: 3.10. Spec. 45.a and 45.c. Lease	1470
L1118	Durham, Prior's Kitchen, Dean and Chapter Muniments: 3.10. Spec. 45.b. Copy of the text in 3.10. Lease	1470
L1305	Durham, Prior's Kitchen, Dean and Chapter Muniments: 2.3. Spec. 63. Lease	1448
	Lancashire	
L0085	Preston, Lancashire County Record Office: DD1b (Ireland of Blackburne of Hale). Award	1431
L0087	London, British Library: Add. Charter 17692. Lease	1420
L0113	Preston, Lancashire County Record Office: DD1b (Ireland of Blackburne of Hale). Testimonies	1411
L0121	Preston, Lancashire County Record Office: DDSc (Scarlsbrick of Scarlsbrick Deeds) 439/162. Affidavit	1445

Realisations of the Word-initial Variable (th) in Selected Late...

1	2	3
L0160	London, British Library: Add. 37769 (Chartulary of Cockersand Abbey), f. 18r. Deed	1363
L0254	London, Public Record Office: E 40/9307. Lease	1459
L0293	Durham, Prior's Kitchen, Dean and Chapter Muniments: Locellus IX.35 (recto). Complaints	<?>
L0296	London, Public Record Office: E 40/8559. Award	1450
L0308	London, British Library: Add. Charter 52290. Award	1436
L0335	London, Public Record Office: DL 25/L 691. Bond	1426
L0414	London, Public Record Office: DL 25/398 (Coucher Book of Furness Abbey). Award	1424
L0416	London, Public Record Office: E 40/10386. Award	1458
L0420	London, Public Record Office: DL 25/399. Agreement	1431
L0439	Preston, Lancashire County Record Office: DDBI (Blundell of Crosby) 55/20. Enfeoffment	1405
L0441	Preston, Lancashire County Record Office: DDSH (Crosse of Shaw Hill, Whittle-le-Woods) 1/132. Attestation	1419
L0442	London, Public Record Office: E 40/5631. Assignment	1422
L0445	Preston, Lancashire County Record Office: DDF (Farington of Worden, Leyland) 1932. Lease	1423
L0446	Preston, Lancashire County Record Office: DDPt (Petre and Walmesley of Dunkenhalth) 24 (1432). Accord	1432
L0451	Preston, Lancashire County Record Office: DDPt (Petre and Walmesley of Dunkenhalth) 24 (1432). Award	1434
L0586a	Oxford, Bodleian Library: Rawlinson B 460. ff. 91r.9-93v.11. Memorandum of evidences	1424-25
L0586b	Oxford, Bodleian Library: Rawlinson B 460 (The Black Book of Clayton). ff. 93v.12-96r.21. Award	1425
L1012	Leeds, Yorkshire Archaeological Society: DD 53/III/41 (Grantley MSS). Lease	1456
L1198	Preston, Lancashire County Record Office: DDPt (Petre and Walmesley of Dunkenhalth) 24 (1454/5). Award	1455
L1200	Preston, Lancashire County Record Office: DDPt (Petre and Walmesley of Dunkenhalth) 24 (1448). Bond	1448

Cont.

1	2	3
L1203	Preston, Lancashire County Record Office: DDpt (Petre and Walmesley of Dunkenhalth) 22 (1453). Petition	1452
L1205	London, British Library: Add. Charter 62408. Agreement	1425
L1285	Preston, Lancashire County Record Office: DDpt (Petre and Walmesley of Dunkenhalth) 24 (1430). Award	1430
	Northumberland	
L0334	Gosforth, Northumberland Record Office: ZSW 2/51. Agreement	1426
L0353	Oxford, Merton College: Merton Records 572. Memorandum	1438–1455
L0390a	Durham, Prior's Kitchen, Dean and Chapter Muniments: Locellus V.45 (dorse). Memorandum	1431
L0390c	Durham, Prior's Kitchen, Dean and Chapter Muniments: Locellus V.45 (dorse). Award	1430
L1104	Gosforth, Northumberland Record Office: ZSW 1/150. Accord	1414
L1216	Gosforth, Northumberland Record Office SANT-GUINCL-06-01-01. Ordinance	1459
L1225	Gosforth, Northumberland Record Office: ZSW 2/70. Enfeoffment	1505
	Westmorland	
L0120	Carlisle, Cumbria Record Office: D/Stn/26. Gift	1441
L0332	Manchester University, John Rylands Library: Rylands Charter 1945. Enfeoffment	1447
L0528	Carlisle, Cumbria Record Office: D/Mus/Medieval Deeds, box 'Cumberland and Westmorland - Carlisle', Nateby file. Agreement	1455
L1147	Carlisle, Cumbria Record Office: DLons/L5/1/3/82. Award	1478
L1183	Kendal, Cumbria Record Office: WD/Ry/92/101. Lease	1475
L1186	Kendal, Cumbria Record Office: WD/HH/63. Condition of obligation	1487
L1231	Kendal, Cumbria Record Office: Box A/71. Lease	1458
L1233	Sizergh Castle, Kendal: album, no. 20 of Henry VI. Commitment to arbitration	1430

Realisations of the Word-initial Variable (th) in Selected Late...

1	2	3
L1234	Sizergh Castle, Kendal: album no 21 of Henry VI. Will	1430–31
L1235	Sizergh Castle, Kendal: Album no 31 of Henry VI. Use (Indenture)	1444
L1236	Sizergh Castle, Kendal: Album no 32 of Henry VI. Commitment to arbitration	1445–46
	The City of York	
L0145	York City Archives: York Memorandum Book A/Y 255. ff. 264v-267v. Memorandum	1428
L1001	York Minster Chapter Library: Dean and Chapter H.1(3), Chapter Acts 1352-1426, ff. 100v-101r. Ordinance	1371
L1348	York, Borthwick Institute: R.I.19. ff. 332v-333v. 25. Revocation, order and confession	15ab
	Yorkshire, East Riding	
L1122	Beverley, Corporation Records: Great Guild Book, f. 23r. Award	1431
L1130	Beverley, Humberside County Record Office: DDCC/19/I. ff. 1v-6v. Boundary survey	1473
L1132	Durham, Prior's Kitchen, Dean and Chapter Muniments: 2.2. Ebor. 19.a. Declaration of gifts	15a
L1133a	Kingston-upon-Hull Corporation Archives: Bench book 1. f. 12r-v. Jurament	15ab
L1133b	Kingston-upon-Hull Corporation Archives: Bench book 2. f. 243. Award	15a
L1134	Kingston-upon-Hull, Corporation Archives: Bench Book 2. f. 212. Award	1417
L1135	Kingston-upon-Hull, Corporation Archives: Bench Book 2. f. 251. Memorandum	1413
L1136	Kingston-upon-Hull, Corporation Archives: Bench Book 2. f. 164. Enactment	1434
L1259	Nottingham University Library: Galway MSS G 9262. Marriage settlement	1477
	Yorkshire, North Riding	
L0126	Northallerton, North Yorkshire County Record Office: ZRL 1/20. Commissioning agreement	1412

Cont.

1	2	3
L0330	Northallerton, North Yorkshire County Record Office: ZDU. Partition	1451
L0331	Northallerton, North Yorkshire County Record Office: ZAZ.z. Declaration	1446
L0350	Northallerton, North Yorkshire County Record Office: ZFL 29. Lease	1430
L0413	Leeds Central Library, Archives Department: RA/M9. Exchange	1447
L1034	Northallerton, North Yorkshire County Record Office: ZQH 1. f. 55r. Grant	1449
L1115	Durham, Durham County Record Office: D/St/D1/2/12. Declaration	1449
L1172	Durham, Durham County Record Office: D/St/D1/2/17. Memorandum	1475–80
L1211	Northallerton, North Yorkshire County Record Office: ZDS I 1/56. Power of attorney	1404
L1212	Northallerton, North Yorkshire County Record Office: ZDS I 2/1. Agreement for re-enfeoffment	1431
L1232	Sizergh Castle, Kendal: Thornton Briggs box, 'Old Deeds', bundle 'Henry VI'. Will	1441
	Yorkshire, West Riding	
L0133	London, British Library: Harley Charter 112.F.1. Will	1412
L0348	London, British Library: Add. Charter 16916. Surrender (Indenture)	1432
L0349	Leeds, Yorkshire Archaeological Society: DD 12/II/3/9/16 (1). Award	15ab
L0360	Leeds Central Library, Archives Department: TN/HX/A13. Affidavit	1479
L0363	Leeds, Yorkshire Archaeological Society: DD 53/III/262. Marriage settlement	1451
L0377a	Huddersfield Central Library: WBD/VIII/10. Lease	1436
L0377b	Huddersfield Central Library: WBM/2. Affidavit	1446
L0378	Huddersfield Central Library: WBD/IX/7. Exchange	1431

Realisations of the Word-initial Variable (th) in Selected Late...

1	2	3
L0415	Hull University Library: DDLO 21/27, 21/28, 21/30, 21/32, 21/35, 21/40 (Selby Court Rolls). Court roll	1472–83
L0732	Leeds, Yorkshire Archaeological Society: DD 57/C/W.123. Award	1451
L1102	Doncaster, Bentley Library: DZ FL 1/1 and DZ FL 1/48. Lease (Two indentures)	1472, 1474
L1128	Beverley, Humberside County Record Office: DDCS 44/1. Bond	1415
L1228	Northallerton, North Yorkshire County Record Office: ZFL 59. Award	1440
L1245	Bradford Central Library: WPB 5/18. Lease	1497

LINGUISTICS

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Synchronic variability in the area of phonetics, phonology, vocabulary, morphology and syntax is a natural feature of any language, including English. The existence of competing variants is in itself a fascinating phenomenon, but it is also a prerequisite for diachronic changes. This volume is a collection of studies which investigate variability from a contemporary and historical perspective, in both native and non-native varieties of English. The topics include Middle English spelling variation, lexical differences between Middle English dialects, Late Middle and Early Modern English forms of address, Middle English negation patterns, the English used by Polish immigrants living in London, lexical fixedness in native and non-native English used by Polish learners, and the phenomenon of phonetic imitation in Polish learners of English. The book should be of interest to anyone interested in English linguistics, especially English phonetics and phonology as well as history of English, historical dialectology and pragmatics.

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ŁÓDZKIEGO

ul. Williama Lindleya 8
90-131 Łódź

tel.: 42 66 55 863
e-mail: ksiegarnia@uni.lodz.pl

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