

Variation between Comparative Inflectional and Periphrastic Adjectives in the Bibles of John Wycliffe and King James

Variación entre la formación del adjetivo comparativo inflexivo y perifrástico en las biblias de John Wycliffe y del Rey Jacobo

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The present paper is a corpus-based study exploring the two grammatical resources (*more/-er*) available for comparative formation of adjectives in John Wycliffe's Bible translation of 1385 and in the King James Bible of 1611. The first part of the analysis is devoted to the classification of the synthetic and analytic comparative adjectives according to the number of syllables to ascertain ratios of the periphrastic and inflected comparative adjectives employed in each Bible. Secondly, differences in comparative formation in a certain group of adjectives showing variation are examined contrastively in the translations of the Bibles of Wycliffe from the 4th c. Latin source – St. Jerome's Bible (*Vulgate*), and of the King James from Tyndale's (1525), Geneva's (1560) and Bishop's Bible (1568), which let us explore the comparative strategies used in the 14th and 17th century through translation and adaptation of Latin-based forms. This allows us to observe the development of this grammatical construction over the period when a sense of incipient linguistic codification began to spread, which would mark the beginning of standardisation in the English language.

Keywords: *Middle English; language contact; adjective comparison; Latin influence; corpus linguistics*

Este artículo es un estudio de corpus que explora los dos recursos gramaticales (*more/-er*) para la formación de adjetivos comparativos en inglés en las traducciones de la Biblia de John Wycliffe (1385) y del Rey Jacobo (1611). La primera parte del análisis se centra en la clasificación de los adjetivos comparativos sintéticos y analíticos de acuerdo con el número de sílabas para determinar la proporción de adjetivos perifrásticos e inflexivos empleados en cada Biblia. En segundo lugar, se examinan diferencias en la formación del comparativo de un cierto grupo de adjetivos que muestra variación en la Biblia de Wycliffe, traducción inglesa de la Biblia de San Jerónimo del siglo IV (*La Vulgata*), y en la Biblia del Rey Jacobo, basada en las Biblias de Tyndale (1525), Ginebra (1560) y de los Obispos (1568), lo cual nos permite explorar la elección del tipo de comparativo usado durante el siglo XIV y XVII mediante la traducción y adaptación de los adjetivos comparativos que provienen del latín. Esto nos lleva a observar el desarrollo de esta construcción gramatical durante el periodo en el que una incipiente codificación lingüística empezó a expandirse y que marcaría el comienzo de la estandarización de la lengua inglesa.

Palabras clave: *inglés medieval; contacto de lenguas; adjetivo comparativo; influencia del latín; lingüística de corpus*

1. INTRODUCTION

During medieval times there was a sociolinguistic situation of multilingualism in Britain

mainly due to the Norman Conquest and the spread of Christianity. This led to a situation of increased contact among English, French and Latin in which Latin served as a High Language used primarily in written documents. French boasted of occupying a prominent position being the official language of the king, court and English nobility whereas English was socially stigmatized spoken primarily by peasants or labourers (Haugen, 1972; Machan, 2003). This linguistic situation resulted in some variation and change in the English system due to language transfer and language contact (Croft, 2001; Jones & Esch, 2002). The main linguistic changes undergone in these high-contact situations are based on *simplification*: changes from synthetic to analytic structures, reduction in redundancy, increases in regularity, and proliferation of hybrid forms as *interlanguage* (in Selinker's 1972 sense). One of the linguistic changes that have been attested is the influence of Romance analytic comparatives in the English comparative system (Pound, 1901; Mustanoja, 1960; Kytö, 1996; Kytö & Romaine, 1997; Terasawa, 2003; González-Díaz, 2008: 51-73). The types of comparative patterns available during Middle English and Early Modern English were mainly inflectional or synthetic comparison (as in *stronger*) and periphrastic or analytical comparison (like in *more important*). So far, it has been acknowledged that the choice between both of them is subject to different forces that shape this field of study continually and methodologically. Among these main factors we find the length and origin of the adjective, syntactic factors or complex environments (Pound, 1901; Kytö, 1996; Kytö & Romaine, 1997; González-Díaz, 2008; Hilpert, 2008; Mondorf, 2009).

This paper is concerned with the use of the synthetic and periphrastic comparative constructions in the digital versions of John Wycliffe's Bible translation from the Latin *Vulgate* Bible (1385) and of the King James Bible (1611) from Tyndale's, Geneva's and Bishop's Bibles which occupied a relevant position in the 14th and 17th centuries. The main focus of this article is to provide a quantitative analysis of the amount of synthetic and periphrastic adjectives used in both Bibles and to show differences in the comparative formation in a certain group of adjectives showing variation which are examined contrastively in both Wycliffe's and the King James' translations. The aims of the present paper are thus twofold: 1) to ascertain ratios of the entrenched synthetic way of comparing adjectives versus their analytical counterparts in Wycliffe's and the King James' English translation of the Bible; and 2) to contrast Wycliffe's comparative forms showing variation with those of the King James Bible with the original Latin version *The Vulgate*. This would allow for the exploration of the comparative strategies used in the 14th century through translation and adoption as well as adaptation of Latin-based forms, and also the observation of the development and fixing of this grammatical construction over the period when the English language was standardised.

2. ENGLISH COMPARATIVE STRUCTURES

2.1 Comparative forms in OE, ME and EModE

The topic of adjective comparison in English has been examined and considered in many grammars of contemporary English (see e.g. Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech & Svartvik, 1985) as well as in books about the history of English (Blake, 1992; Lass, 1999; Kytö, Rydén & Smitterberg, 2006; Barber, Beal & Shaw, 2009). The English language resorts to two different ways of forming the comparative adjective: a synthetic/inflectional form (*'happier'*) and an analytic/periphrastic form (*'more important'*).

So far, most of the research carried out deals with the history of inflectional comparison and the progressive introduction of English periphrasis constructions. However,

much of the information compiled about the evolution of the English adjective comparison comes from written corpora, due to the lack of vernacular speech from the past. Therefore, as Hernández-Campoy and Schilling point out (2012: 66):

[t]he most important disadvantage of datasets of historical documents is that they very often lack representativeness and possibly also validity, since, [...] the historical record is incomplete, and written materials may or may not be reflective of the spoken language of the time period under study.

Consequently, the job of the historical linguist is “to make the best of this bad data, ‘bad’ in the sense that it may be fragmentary, corrupted, or many times removed from the actual productions of native speakers” (Labov, 1972: 98, in Hernández-Campoy & Schilling, 2012: 66).

In Old English, the comparative system for adjectives was almost wholly inflectional (-(*o*)*ra*/-*ost* from the Germanic suffixes */*iz*/ and */*oz*/) because it was a highly inflected member of the West Germanic language group. As a result of the Viking wars and the subsequent settlement of native speakers of Old Norse, the introduction of new words and a simplification of the grammar started to take place. As noticed by Hogg (1992: 141), the normal method to compare adjectives was through suffixation with the periphrastic form being quite rare and more restricted to later texts.

Since the Middle English period, the synthetic forms of adjectives (-*er*) have been competing with the innovative periphrastic forms (*more*). According to Lass (1999: 156-157), during the last part of the Middle English period the use of periphrastic forms became more productive in the English language ending up in complementary distribution with suffixation. He even mentions that during this period “textual evidence and grammarians’ comments suggest that analytic and synthetic comparison were simple alternatives, with little if any conditioning” (1999: 157). Although English has strived for many centuries towards a more analytical syntax, the majority the comparative forms in Modern English are inflected (Kytö & Romaine, 1997: 331- 335). The two forms competed quite uniformly in the Early Modern English period, though by late Modern English the inflectional or synthetic comparison outnumbered the periphrastic or analytic forms.

This competition also resulted in a hybrid form based on the combination of the two forms together. Thus, multiple or double comparatives (*‘more easier’*) emerged as a result of a process of linguistic change in which two forms coexisted at the same time. As a consequence, three forms of comparison for an adjective existed during the Middle English and Early Modern English periods (synthetic, periphrastic and double forms). Regarding double comparatives, González-Díaz’s analysis of materials from the *Old English Dictionary Corpus* (2008: 137-158) reveals that double comparatives could have already appeared in Old English (in texts from the second half of the ninth century), and they were formed by the combination of the adverbial intensifiers *ma*, *bet* and *swiþor* with adjectives in comparative degree: *ma wyrse*, *mare heare*, *swiþor bettra*. As she points out: “[o]ne may argue that [...] the use of a double comparative in the OE rendering is the result of the translator’s intention to create a perfect structural correlation between the English translation and the Latin original” although, “[t]hese examples are too limited to draw any definitive conclusions, yet one may suggest that the coming into the language of the double periphrastic forms may have been a native process” (2008: 137). She has noted that these double forms were not frequent in the language until Late Middle English. She also found that double forms of comparison were more frequent with a second term of comparison.

The decrease of this type of adjective comparison started in Early Modern English due to the influence of standardisation and prescriptivism. Kytö and Romaine (1997) have proved

that the low incidence of double forms in their study was due to the influence of standardisation around the 18th century, since modern grammarians could treat them as a non-standard construction. As double comparison was not described at all in Latin grammars, it is not surprising, then, that the English grammars also started to neglect the double forms of comparison. González-Díaz (2008: 158) has noted that these forms tend normally to show a more emphatic meaning than their simple counterparts in Middle and Early Modern English. However, these double forms have always been marginal: “[a]lthough once used in the literary language, they gradually disappeared from the written language under the influence of standardisation” (Kytö & Romaine, 2000: 173). Therefore, due to the influence of standardisation and modern grammarians, they gradually disappeared from standard written English, and today, they are most likely to be found in colloquial registers of spoken English. As a mode of conclusion, these changes reflect the state of the English language at the time and probably the result of an accidental combination of the existing and the new comparative form.

2.2 Theories on the origin and expansion of the periphrastic form

Scholarly interest in English adjective comparative has considered the synthetic and analytic mechanisms (Kytö, 1996; Kytö & Romaine, 1997, 2000; Leech & Culpeper, 1997; Lindquist, 2000; Mondorf, 2000, 2002, 2003, 2007, 2009; Suematsu, 2004; González-Díaz, 2008; Hilpert, 2008; Breban, 2010) with no consensus yet about the origin and development of the analytic-based periphrastic comparison system in Middle English. The opposing views are that it either came from an already existing Middle English native resource, or that it entered Middle English via external influences.

In the 20th century, some controversies arose regarding the origins of the periphrastic forms; in González-Díaz’s words (2008: 15): a ‘chronological’ and a ‘philological’ controversy, which have to do with the beginning of periphrastic forms and whether periphrastic constructions appeared as a result of internal changes or due to language contact. Wright’s study (1913) proved that in Late Modern English inflectional forms for adjectives were preferred in almost all English dialects. In trying to propose a rigorous analysis of this perspective, Mustanoja (1960) stated that the reluctant attitudes towards the use of a periphrastic mode of comparison in English dialects might suggest that this was not present in the original repertoire of English linguistic structures, and, probably, these forms gained ground as a result of the influence of French during the 13th and 14th centuries, by analogy with French periphrastic constructions like *plus miser sim*, i.e. ‘*I am more miserable*’ (see Danchev, 1989: 170, 172–173). However, other authors, such as Pound (1901), resort to the influence of Latin as the most plausible reason behind the rise in periphrastic forms of adjectives in Middle English, a period in which Latin was considered the language of culture and civilisation, and was mainly used by educated classes of society. Pound found that English and Latin shared a similar structural construction regarding analytic forms (for instance, the relative use of superlatives, e.g. *most brave man*, which she considered a calque on Latin absolute constructions ‘*vir fortissimus*’). Accordingly, she believes that this might have been the case with the English periphrastic mode of comparison.

By contrast, other scholars point that English periphrastic forms come from a native development (Mitchell, 1985). Despite these claims, some Old English grammars do not deal with the analytic form of adjectives for the comparative; such is the case of Quirk and Wrenn (1955) who only mention the synthetic form of adjective comparison in Old English. Moreover, as Kytö and Romaine assert, there are some ambiguous comments that reflect the controversial nature of this topic of research:

The periphrastic construction first appeared in the thirteenth century, more probably under Latin than French influence. At the same time, the construction seems to have been of native origin and arisen from the need for emphasis and clarity felt by the speakers. (Kytö, 1996: 123)

According to Mitchell (1985: 84–5), who lists the few attested possible examples in Old English, the periphrastic forms first appeared in the thirteenth century, possibly under the influence of Latin (and to a lesser extent French). Their use increased steadily after the fourteenth century until the beginning of the sixteenth century [...] As with other syntactic innovations in the history of English, historians appealed to foreign influence as an explanatory factor. Some have also mentioned stylistic factors such as speakers’ needs for emphasis and clarity. (Kytö & Romaine 2000: 172)

Previous research on this issue was just based on hypotheses, and more recent investigations are of a corpus-based nature, although the latest work either does not seem to reach a clear conclusion about this or falls back on the same claims made by previous authors. Therefore, as a result of the lack of consensus on previous studies and a need for further scrutiny, González- Díaz (2008: 20-34) investigated the beginnings of periphrastic comparison and the establishment of ‘*more + adj*’ as the standard form in the *Helsinki Corpus of English Texts*. After examining collocations of adverbs *swiðor*, *ma* and *bet* with participial constructions, she points out that English periphrastic comparison was already in use in the 9th century. According to González-Díaz (2008: 30), “*Bet* seemed to be the least used particle (with 11% of the total number of examples) in OE. *Swiðor* was attested in 39% of the cases, while *ma* was the most frequent marker, with 50% of the total number of forms analysed”.

OE	Translation
<i>Ma gode</i>	More good
<i>Bet wyrðe</i>	More worthy

The adverb *ma* is said to be the preferred comparative marker and it was combined more freely with both adjectives and participles. González-Díaz also found that the development from participles to adjectives had already begun in the late Old English period. Despite the fact that these periphrastic forms were considered as native constructions, doubt may be cast on the origin of the analytic form for adjective comparison since 24 out of 39 examples are attested to be translations of Latin texts. In addition to the origin, it is unclear why these new periphrastic forms developed since inflectional forms were already part of the system and there was therefore no need for them. Additionally, Kytö and Romaine (1997: 347) suggest that the change from inflectional to periphrastic comparison may have first occurred in written language, since speech may have used other means to express explicitness and emphasis.

It is also important to take into account that the increase of English periphrastic comparatives did not appear until the late Middle English period, when the influence of French was mainly restricted to written registers and in mixed-language accounts. Heine and Kuteva (2005: 170) suggest the concept of ‘contact- induced change’ as the main precursor for the replacement of inflectional to analytic modes of expressing the comparative. Taking this into account along with some other claims by other authors about this process of change, González- Díaz (2008: 48) asserts that the rise of the periphrastic construction might be explained as a process of ‘*grammaticalisation*’ since it seems that the collocation of ‘*intensifier + participle/adjective*’ became a standard for expressing comparison and because Old English inflectional forms decreased at the expense of the new analytic forms. However, the new form did not oust the old one since the synthetic pattern is still used in the English comparative system. Kytö and Romaine (2000: 172) convincingly argued that the new periphrasis eventually ousted the deep-rooted inflectional forms from Old English, but not in

all environments. In fact, in Present-day English, the majority of both comparative and superlative adjectives are inflectional. These two scholars also resort to the influence of Latin and French as the main influence for the spread of the periphrastic forms, after the 14th century until the beginning of the 16th century.

The influence of French may have reinforced the insertion of ‘more’ in the English system of comparison and its use increased in the second half of the Middle English period. According to Kytö and Romaine (1997), there was a gradual increase in inflectional forms for both comparatives and superlatives, and that from the 1420s on, inflectional forms prevailed. From the end of the Early Modern English to the Modern English period, both forms of the comparative started to proceed along ‘divergent tracks’ (Figure 1).

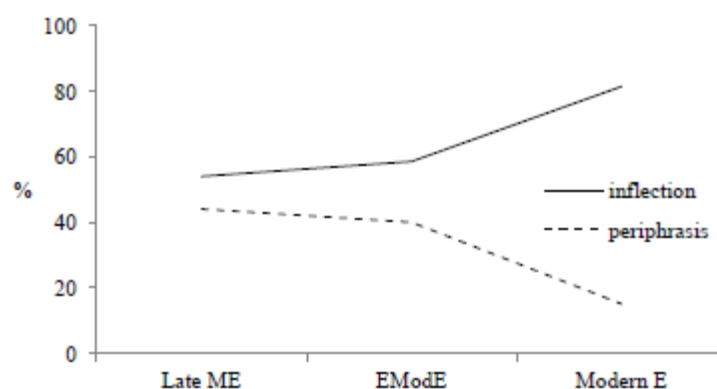


Figure 1: *Historical trajectories of inflection and periphrasis, comparative (from Kytö & Romaine, 1997: 336, Fig.2)*

The significant period during which the inflectional forms increased, and the periphrastic forms decreased, reaching their Present-day distribution, is 1570–1640 in the Helsinki Corpus of English Texts. Therefore, following this line of reasoning, the analytic patterns in adjective comparison increased during the second half of the Middle English period at the expense of inflectional patterns. Kytö and Romaine show how the increase in number of periphrastic constructions was at its peak in the last part of the Middle English period, when the influence of French loanwords was quite crucial and notable. This coincided with the period in which the influence of French on the English language was at its peak with regards to loanwords and more analytical syntax, making French the likely external factor fostering the spread of the periphrastic construction. The new analytic patterns would have been more salient and marked than the native English inflectional (-er, -est) counterparts, and it was not until the last part of the Middle English period that periphrastic constructions became consolidated as a standard comparative option (Kytö & Romaine, 1997).

2.3 Theories on the factors that condition the variation between the synthetic and the analytic forms

English comparative structures have been the focus of attention during the last century. Thanks to the spread of electronic corpora, the analysis and variationist approach to them have been carried out in different studies. However, little has been argued about the factors that have been historically associated with the choice of the earlier synthetic form and the analytic variant for adjective comparison in English since this issue has been mainly studied synchronically. The periods that have been mostly studied are the Early/Late Modern English and Present-day English periods (Jespersen, 1956; Quirk et al. 1985; Fries, 1993; Kytö &

Romaine, 1997; Leech & Culpeper, 1997; Lindquist 1998, 2000; González-Díaz, 2008; Mondorf, 2003, 2007, 2009 among others). Most of these studies deal with the treatment of adjective comparison by focusing on the factors that may determine the choice of comparative structures, such as word length, stress of the syllable, addition of affixes, syntactic factors, phonological properties, and final segment.

It was not until the last part of the Middle English period that periphrastic constructions became a standard comparative option in the English language (Kytö & Romaine, 1997). Some scholars have pointed to phonological or morphological factors as the reasons for the difference in distribution and use between inflectional and periphrastic comparative forms. At the end of the nineteenth century, Sweet (1891: 326) stated that during the first part of the Modern English period both methods of comparison were used indistinctly but that there were some restrictions in that suffixation was more common with short adjectives and periphrasis with longer ones. In line with this idea, Quirk et al. (1985: 461-462), suggest that the choice between inflectional and periphrastic constructions is determined by the length of the adjective, as established in current standard English: monosyllabic adjectives take the inflectional form except for *real*, *right* and *wrong*. The centre of variability falls in disyllabic adjectives (Sweet, 1891; Leech & Culpeper, 1997). According to Sweet (1891: 326-327) disyllabic adjectives take suffixation when the stress falls on the first or last syllable, when they end in *-ly* and in some adjectives such as *able*, *simple*, *wholesome* and *cruel*. However, adjectives that prefer the periphrastic comparison usually end in a “heavy consonant-group”, such as *-st*, or in *-ish*, *-s*, *-ful*, *-ed* or *-ing*. He betokens some exceptions to this rule, as is the case with the adjective *pleasant* which takes *-er* because it is very frequent in the English language. As for trisyllabic or longer adjectives, these tend to take periphrastic forms as well as those participle adjectives that are monosyllabic, since they are said to have features which are considered alike from prototypical adjectives (González-Díaz, 2006).

González-Díaz (2008: 78-82) also studied the syntactic factors that condition the choice of both forms of adjective comparison (2008: 78-82). Using the *Helsinki Corpus*, the *Corpus of Early English Correspondence*, the *Lampeter Corpus*, the *Corpus of English Dialogues* and self-compiled corpus of Early Modern English drama for the analysis of the Early Modern period and *A Representative Corpus of Historical English Registers (ARCHER)* for the Late Modern one, the results show a preference for inflectional forms in all positions:

This is not surprising if one takes into consideration that inflectional comparison was the first strategy attested in the language and that, after an initial increase in the use of periphrastic forms, it has “been reasserting itself since the Early Modern period” (Kytö & Romaine, 2000: 172). It should nevertheless be pointed out that the preference for inflectional forms is less marked in predicative (and postpositive) slots, especially once one moves closer to the Present-day (i.e. in the LModE period). (González-Díaz, 2008: 82)

Another significant factor that has been historically associated with the preference of periphrastic versus synthetic adjectival comparison is the origin of the word. During the first part of the twentieth century, Pound (1901: 18) makes reference to the influence of origin on the choice of any of these forms of adjective comparison during the 15th century, suggesting that the use of *more* is mainly restricted to words of Romance origin.

Kytö and Romaine (1997: 346) point out that the choice between the two alternatives is not only made according to the length of the adjective but also to the origin: native adjectives tend to be compared by inflection and foreign adjectives by periphrasis. The influence of French may have reinforced, or provoked, the use of periphrastic comparison, as they increased in the second half of the Middle English period (Kytö, 1996; Kytö & Romaine, 1997). More recently, González-Díaz (2008: 61-71) has studied the connection of Romance adjectives with periphrastic comparatives in the *Penn-Helsinki Parsed Corpus of Middle*

English, Ancrene Wisse, Malory's Le Morte Darthur and Dan Michell's Ayenbite of Inwyt. In general terms, she indicated that the use of periphrastic forms with Romance adjectives is higher throughout the corpora but that there is a significant increase in the last part of the ME period. Her results show that periphrastic constructions were usually found to be associated with Romance adjectives in Middle English while, conversely, native adjectives were more usually found with the inflectional comparison:

... the nature of the (compared) adjective could have had an influence on the selection of comparative strategy, in such a way that those comparative constructions wherein the adjective was of foreign (i.e. Latin and French) origin would more likely be of the periphrastic type; native adjectives being the ones that most easily selected inflectional forms. (González-Díaz, 2008: 60)

In line with this, Sweet (1891: 327), Bolinger (1968: 120) and Quirk et al. (1985: 463) studied the regular frequency of native origin adjectives to take inflectional comparison at the expense of periphrastic comparison. In this sense, the morphological comparative is not a choice with low-frequent adjectives. However, again, disyllabic adjectives are prone to show a deviant behavior in comparison. Mondorf (2009: 41) identified that disyllabic adjectives ending in <-y> show different patterns of behaviour according to frequency. For example, when it comes to comparison, the highly frequent adjective *likely* is normally compared with the analytical variant *more*. Finally, she states that “the less entrenched an adjective [...], the more likely it is to require *more*-support”.

The concept of *more*-support was developed by Mondorf (2003, 2009), based on Rohdenburg's *Complexity Principle* (1996), in order to explain why the analytic variant of comparative alternation favours contexts of cognitive complexity over the synthetic variant when these are more complex or less frequent. The theory of *more*-support operates in different domains such as phonology, lexicon, morphology, syntax, pragmatics and semantics. In the realm of phonology, the complexity is produced with “marked consonant clusters, minimally distinct phoneme sequences, or if its stress pattern is likely to cause a stress clash with a following lexeme” (Mondorf, 2003: 296). Morphological complexity tends to be measured by resorting to the number of morphemes that constitute a lexeme and by determining if they are morphologically simple or complex, such as the bimorphemic lexemes ending in *-l* or *-le* which display variation (Mondorf, 2009: 35). As for lexicon, complex comparative structures come mostly with compounds, the length of the adjective or frequency. In the case of semantics, semantical complexity is gauged by figurative or abstract meanings (Mondorf, 2003: 297). Regarding pragmatics, the analytic variant is used when complexity arises mainly due to the presentation of new information. Finally, we can also find syntactically complex comparative structures, which tend to favour the analytic variant with the presence of infinitival complements, prepositional complements or the position of the comparative adjective in a sentence.

González-Díaz (2008: 98) also found that in Early Modern English, periphrastic forms of comparison tend to be more frequent when a new quality is introduced in discourse, and, conversely, inflectional forms tend to be associated with given information that has already been established in discourse. However, in Late Modern English, periphrastic forms were more frequent in the same established environments. In a similar vein, González-Díaz (2008: 61) has investigated inflectional and periphrastic construction in the *Penn-Parsed Corpus of Middle English* in order to look for Romance and native adjectives. The results show that periphrastic constructions were preferred with Romance adjectives in Middle English. This also suggests that there was a preference of native adjectives for inflectional comparison. Therefore, it seems that the development of the periphrastic construction may have been linked to combinations with Romance adjectives by analogy with French and Latin

periphrastic comparative structures; as González-Díaz states:

[t]he nature of the (compared) adjective could have had an influence on the selection of comparative strategy, in such a way that those comparative constructions wherein the adjective was of foreign (i.e. Latin and French) origin would more likely be of the periphrastic type; native adjectives being the ones that most easily selected inflectional forms. (González-Díaz 2008: 65)

Therefore, it seems that the development of the periphrastic construction may have been linked to combinations with Romance adjective loanwords by analogy with French and Latin periphrastic comparative structures.

2.4 *Wycliffe's and the King James' Bibles: contextualization*

Although portions of the Bible had already been translated during the Old English period, John Wycliffe's translation is credited as being the first complete Bible rendered into English. Wycliffe, a priest and notable scholar, translated the Latin version by St. Jerome commonly known as the *Vulgate*, which was the official Bible in Western Europe at the time. His main motivation for translating the Bible into English was his belief that ordinary people should have direct access to the word of God in a language they could understand. Wycliffe and his followers, known as Lollards, inspired a spiritual revolution, asserting the necessity for access to an English Bible in order to avoid the influence of then-current Church interpretations. However, because of this, Wycliffe was expelled from public positions at Oxford and denounced as a heretic in 1415. His Bible was condemned and burned, although “[m]ore than 300 of his discourses survive, with some 170 manuscript copies of his Bible, circulated from Lutterworth, where he was rector (1374-84)” (McArthur, 1992: 1135). Thus, Wycliffe's translation was widely circulated and read, and it became predominant throughout the 15th century and the beginning of the 16th (Lampe, 1969). By reading the English Bible aloud to local people, Wycliffe disseminated his translations with the help of Lollards preaching around the country.

The first English translation of the Bible from the original Greek and Hebrew manuscripts is attributed to William Tyndale (1495-1536), and much of his translation was used in the official King James Version of 1611. At the time of James' accession, Tyndale's Bible (1525) was the most popular in England. However, it became a threat to the Anglican bishops since it appeared to challenge the primacy of secular rulers and the bishops' authority. Having himself re-translated some of the Psalms in 1604, John Reynolds, a puritan and English academic, inspired King James to authorise a new translation of the Bible. Many translators, divided into six companies, participated in this ambitious project (McGrath, 2001: 218), and the outcome was a Bible based on the redaction of previous ones, including Tyndale's (1525), Geneva's (1560) and Bishop's Bible (1568).

These two Bibles had a great impact on the English language; in fact, Wycliffe's Bible helped to make English compete with Latin and French during the medieval period (Aston, 1987), making people believe that English did not lack potential to express the word of God. His contribution helped to raise the English vernacular and helped to promote a uniform English language, which stemmed from the London and Midlands dialects in a time when there was a huge need to lay the foundations for an English standard accessible to all. Therefore, Wycliffe's linguistic and stylistic repertoire was a crucial influence to the common people in England.

The impact of the King James Bible is considered to have had a major influence in the English language, most of all on everyday expressions used by common people (Crystal, 2010). However, Crystal (2010: 262) emphasizes that “[...] the myriad contributions of Wycliffe, Tyndale, and many others also need to be remembered” since “[...] linguistic

fingerprints are to be found in pages of the King James Bible”. It has always been considered as an important piece of culture, which contributed to the development of the English language. Its main aim was to make the old Bibles better, by updating the previous language used. It helped in the formalization of the English language by elevating, standardizing and shaping it.

3. METHODOLOGY

The primary sources for this study come from the electronic translated versions of the Bible by John Wycliffe (1385) and King James (1611). The ones used in this study are Forshall and Madden’s version (1879) based on Wycliffe’s Bible (1385) and the King James’ on the authorized King James version by Zondervan Bible Publishers (1995). These two sources have been selected for the present study because of their prominent position in the 14th and 17th centuries. In the first part of the analysis, the distribution of the comparative forms in the corpora is presented. For the automatic retrieval of all the synthetic and analytic comparative adjectives, the concordance programme *WordSmith 5.0* was used. In order to find all forms of adjective comparison within the corpora, the *Middle English Compendium* electronic resource was employed so as to look for the most common possibilities used at the time for synthetic and analytic adjectives. As for the synthetic adjectives, the search elements **ra*, **re*, **er(e)*, **er* were keyed in order to retrieve all possible spellings. With respect to the search of analytic adjectives, the following spelling variants used at the time of the adverb “*more*” were also keyed to retrieve them: *mar(e)**, *mor**, *moore*, *moare*, *moch*. All those words ending in **er* which were not inflected comparatives were discarded from the tally. The first part of the analysis was to classify all the adjectives according to: i) the number of syllables (mono-, di, and polysyllabic), and ii) the nature of the comparative (inflectional or periphrastic) in order to ascertain ratios of the adjective comparison system employed in each Bible and the possible influence of word-length. As for the second part of the study, an analysis is carried out on a group of adjectives showing variation which are examined contrastively in both Wycliffe’s and the King James’ translations to contrast Wycliffe’s comparative forms showing variation with those of the King James’ version, together with the original Latin version *The Vulgate*.

4. ANALYSIS

4.1 *Distribution of synthetic and analytic adjectives*

In this section, the distribution of the comparative forms in the corpora (Wycliffe’s and the King James Bibles) is presented and assessed. In Table 1, the distribution of the total number of words in both corpora is displayed:

Table 1: Word count for corpora

Corpus	Year	Total number of words
Wycliffe’s Bible	1385	954.507
The King James Bible	1611	969.909

Figure 2 reproduces the total amount of synthetic and analytic instances of comparison in

English for each corpus both in percentages and raw figures. As for inflectional forms, a total of 443 synthetic forms of comparatives were obtained from Wycliffe’s Bible, thus representing 89.1% of the total comparative adjectives found in this corpus. In the King James Bible, 377 tokens of inflectional forms of comparative adjectives were found amounting to 77.1% of the total amount of comparatives adjectives in this corpus. In general terms, we can observe a slight decrease in the synthetic way of comparison in the King James’ translation of the Bible.

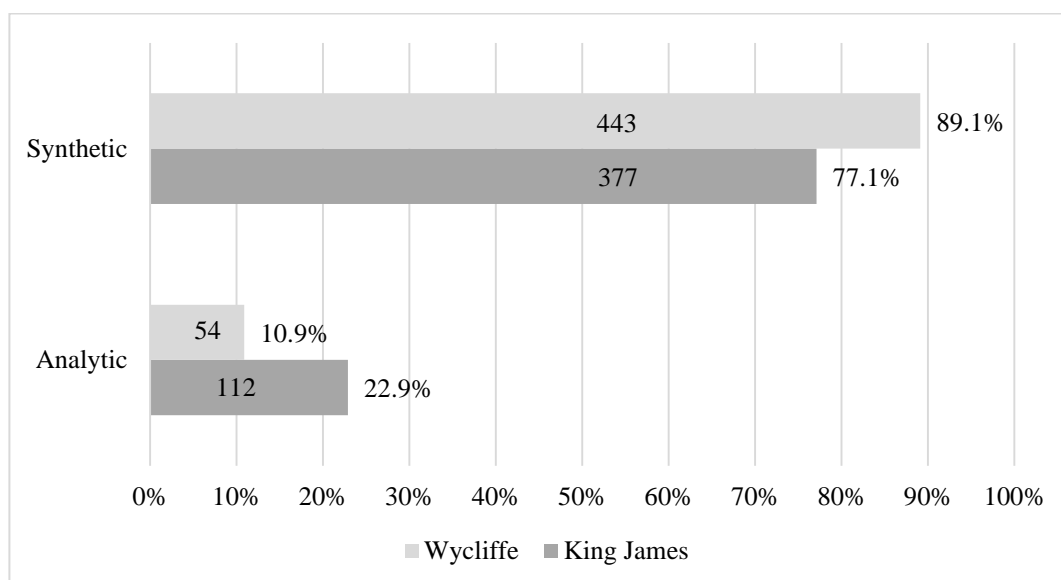


Figure 2: Distribution of the synthetic and analytic comparative (percentages and raw figures)

With respect to analytic comparative forms, only 54 tokens were found in Wycliffe’s Bible, accounting for 10.9% of the comparative adjectives found in this corpus. The King James Bible has 112 tokens, representing then 22.9% of the total amount of comparative adjectives for this corpus. We therefore see an increase in the use of analytic comparative adjectives. A statistical test is employed through the use of a non-parametric Pearson’s Chi-square test (Cantos Gómez, 2013: 75-80) to compare the difference between the observed and expected frequencies of synthetic and analytic comparatives in both corpora. This confirms that the difference in both Bibles regarding the use of inflected and periphrastic forms of comparison is statistically significant at $p < 0.01$ ($\chi^2 = 25.51$; $df = 1$).

Figure 3 provides the distribution of the inflectional comparison construction in monosyllabic, disyllabic and polysyllabic adjectives so as to ascertain whether the number of syllables had an influence on choice, as in Present-day English. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test to measure any divergence of sample distribution from the normal distribution (see Cantos Gómez, 2013: 45) for the synthetic syllable number groups suggests that data are normally distributed, exhibiting no significant skewness ($D = 0.39439$; $p = 0.23785$; Mean = 136.6; Median = 36; SD = 180.17; Skewness = 0.9827; Kurtosis = -1.6330). In Wycliffe’s Bible, the synthetic form is diffused more substantially with monosyllabic adjectives (89.2%), followed by disyllabic (7.9%) and then by polysyllabic (2.9%). On the other hand, the number of monosyllabic adjectives formed synthetically in the King James Bible increases slightly with 90.2% of the total amount found in this corpus. Moreover, a slight increase in inflectional forms is also noticed within the disyllabic group with respect to Wycliffe’s Bible (9.8%). Finally, we could observe that there were no synthetic polysyllabic forms in the King James Bible. The Pearson’s Chi-square test to compare the difference between the observed and expected frequencies for the synthetic construction of comparison in monosyllabic, disyllabic and polysyllabic adjectives in both corpora confirms that the difference in both Bibles is

statistically significant at $p < 0.01$ ($\chi^2 = 11.93$; $df = 2$).

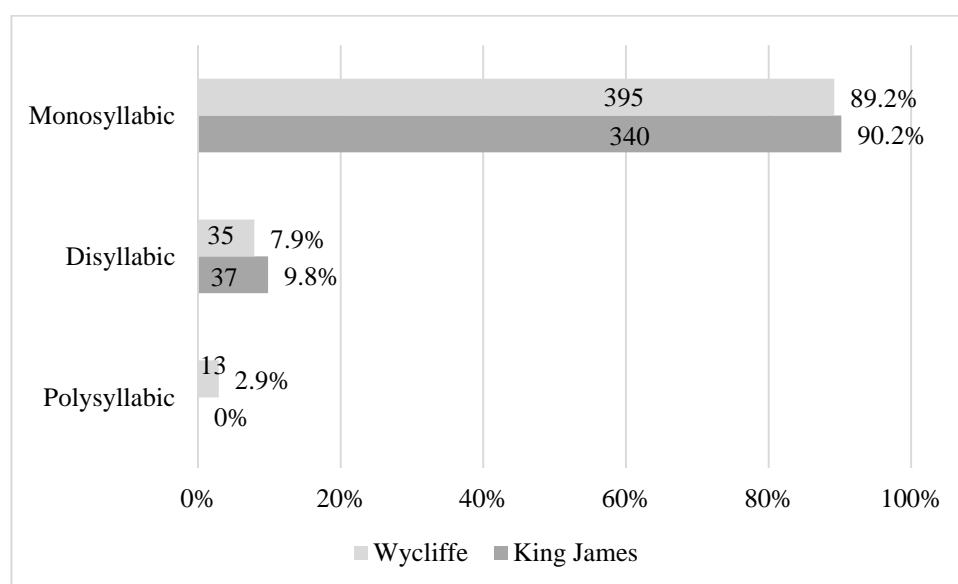


Figure 3: Distribution of the synthetic construction of comparison in monosyllabic, disyllabic and polysyllabic adjectives (percentages and raw figures).

Figure 4 illustrates the tendencies for analytic adjectives in both corpora. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test for the analytic syllable number groups suggests that data are normally distributed, exhibiting no significant skewness ($D = 0.23784$; $p = 0.817$; Mean = 27.6; Median = 22.5; SD = 15.35; Skewness = 0.5705; Kurtosis = -1.8658). The Pearson's Chi-square test to compare the difference between the observed and expected frequencies for the analytic construction of comparison in monosyllabic, disyllabic and polysyllabic adjectives in both corpora confirms that the difference in both Bibles is not statistically significant at $p < 0.05$ ($\chi^2 = 1.693$; $df = 2$). However, the analytic construction in Wycliffe's Bible seems to preponderate with disyllabic adjectives with 48.1%, followed by polysyllabic adjectives with 31.5% and finally by monosyllabic adjectives with 20.4% of the total amount of adjectives compared with periphrasis. The King James Bible presents an increase in the use of comparative adjectives formed periphrastically with disyllabic and polysyllabic adjectives in contrast with those adjectives compared synthetically. 41% of those analytic adjectives compared periphrastically were disyllabic adjectives, which increases with polysyllabic adjectives up to 42%. As for monosyllabic adjectives, a decrease of 17% is clearly shown of the total amount of adjectives compared with *more*.

A contrast of the behaviour of synthetic and analytic comparison in both Bibles according to syllable number independently through a Chi-square test suggests that the distribution is not statistically significant in monosyllabic ($p > 0.05$; $\chi^2 = 3.37$; $df = 1$) and in disyllabic adjectives ($p > 0.05$; $\chi^2 = 2.30$; $df = 1$). Nevertheless, given its small sample size (77 tokens in total), the application of Fisher's statistical test of exact inference for 2 x 2 tables (Agresti, 1992) to the distribution of polysyllabic comparative forms indicates an extremely statistically significant relationship ($p < 0.0001$ [2 tailed test: 0.00000065]). Therefore, we may then hypothesise that during the initial period of competition between the two forms of comparison there was more free variation in Wycliffe's Bible for the use of synthetic and analytic patterns with comparative adjectives, which contrasts with the total absence of synthetic polysyllabic adjectives in the King James Bible. It somehow mirrors the spurt of analytic polysyllabic adjectives during the 17th century which also proves to be more faithful to prescriptivism patterns.

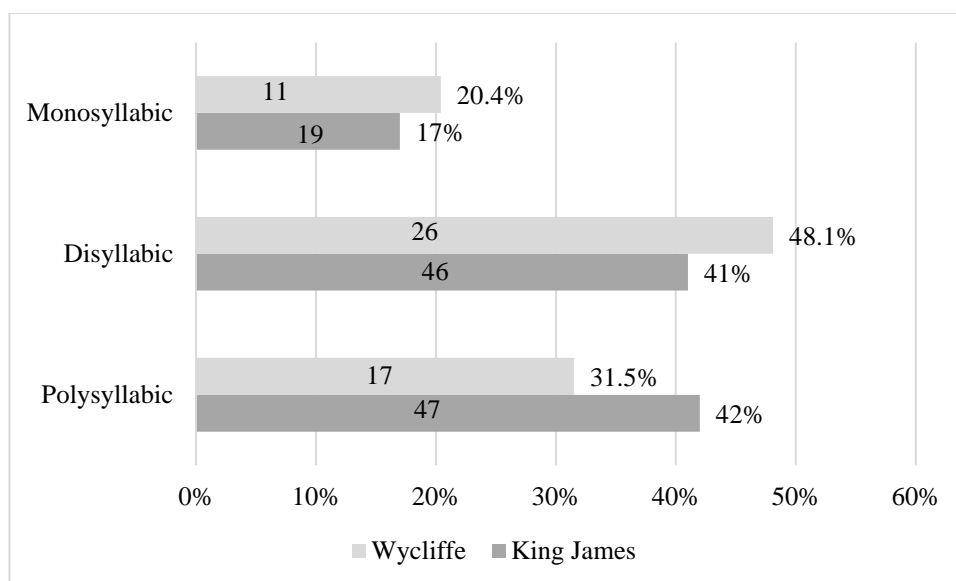


Figure 4: *Distribution of the analytic construction of comparison in monosyllabic, disyllabic and polysyllabic adjectives (percentages and raw figures).*

With the aim of attesting whether the origin of the comparative adjective has an influence on the choice of comparative forms, an empirical analysis was carried out and percentages are shown in Table 2. It displays the distribution of inflectional and periphrastic comparisons for native and Romance adjectives in both corpora. Native adjectives tended to take the inflectional comparison in both corpora. With Romance adjectives, although the periphrastic way of comparing adjectives prevails, in Wycliffe's Bible the difference is slight, with 48.3% compared synthetically and 51.7% analytically. These adjectives were first attested 13th-15th century. However, three (*easy*, *feeble* and *noble*) show slight variation and were borrowed earlier, during the 12th century. One might hypothesize that those adjectives that were recently introduced into the English lexicon during Wycliffe's time were more likely to be compared by means of the entrenched *-er* suffix than those introduced in later centuries. This suggestion is confirmed by the data analysis which shows that in the King James Bible, just 18.6% of Romance adjectives were compared synthetically and 81.4% analytically. This is a considerable difference as compared to Wycliffe's Bible and indicates incipient stages of standardization and accommodation to the Romance, analytic, system of comparing adjectives.

Table 2: *Distribution of tokens of inflected (I) and periphrastic (P) comparative adjectives for native and Romance adjectives in Wycliffe's and the King James Bible*

	Native English origin		Romance origin	
	Inflected	Periphrastic	Inflected	Periphrastic
Wycliffe	414 (94.7%)	23 (5.3%)	29 (48.3%)	31 (51.7%)
King James	359 (91.6%)	33 (8.4%)	18 (18.6%)	79 (81.4%)

4.2 Close-up on individual profiles of adjectives showing variation

This section presents an individual analysis for adjectives showing variation in both Wycliffe's and the King James' translations to shed some light on the differences in comparative formation. These adjectives (those from Wycliffe and King James) were then compared to the Latin Vulgate Bible.

Table 3 illustrates those adjectives showing variation in Wycliffe's Bible. These same adjectives were also found in the King James Bible. The adjectives *mighty*, *high* and *good* are

the most frequent and also the ones that show the least variation. The others shift more frequently between the two possible options (*-er* or *more*). Seven out of twelve of the adjectives showing variation between inflectional or periphrastic comparison are loanwords except for *mighty*, *worthy*, *busy*, *high* and *good*.

Table 3: Adjectives types in Wycliffe’s and the King James Bible taking both inflectional and periphrastic comparison.

Adjective	Wycliffe		King James	
	I	P	I	P
Profitable	1	6	0	1
Mighty	6	1	16	1
Clear	3	1	1	0
Worthy	2	1	0	2
Honest	1	2	0	0
Patient	1	1	0	0
Precious	5	1	0	3
Feeble	1	1	0	1
Glorious	1	1	0	1
Busy	2	1	0	0
High	28	1	24	0
Good	159	1	162	0

Some of the examples found are illustrated in Table 4. As we can notice, Wycliffe’s translation of the Bible seems to be more faithful to the original Latin Vulgate when contrasting both comparative adjectives used for the same passage (*profitablere*, *preciosere*, *more hiye* and *more betere*) whereas in the King James Bible the choice for the comparative adjective is more adapted to prescriptive rules (*more profitable*, *more precious*, *higher* and *far better*).

Table 4: Samples for synthetic and analytic comparative alternation

Source	Latin	Wycliffe	KJ
Wisdom 8:7	<i>utilius</i>	<i>nothing is profitablere than</i>	<i>nothing more profitable in</i>
Isaiah 13:12	<i>Pretiosior</i>	<i>man of full age schal be preciosere than gold</i>	<i>make a man more precious than fine gold</i>
Ecclesiastes 5:7	<i>eminentiores</i>	<i>and also othere men ben more hiye about these men</i>	<i>there be higher than they.</i>
Philippians 1:23	<i>Magis melius</i>	<i>it is myche more betere</i>	<i>which is far better</i>

For the sake of comparison and analysis, those adjectives in Table 3 were grouped together to analyse and show percentages of variation in both Bibles. Table 5 summarises the total amount of tokens in both Bibles which show variation between the synthetic and analytic mechanism to form adjectives in English.

Table 5: Pooled results for adjectives types in Wycliffe’s and the King James Bible according to synthetic and analytic comparative construction

Adjectives per syllable number	Wycliffe		King James	
	Synthetic	Analytic	Synthetic	Analytic
Monosyllabic	190	3	187	0
Disyllabic	13	7	16	4
Polysyllabic	7	8	0	5
Total	210	18	203	9

When these individual scores are pooled in groups of syllable number (Table 5), the application of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test for the syllable number groups in adjectives showing variation suggests that data are normally distributed, exhibiting no significant skewness both in Wycliffe ($D=0.47669$; $p=0.0894$; Mean=38; Median=7.5; SD=74.533214; Skewness=2.43938; Kurtosis=5.961185) and King James' scores ($D=0.44519$; $p=0.13303$; Mean=35.33; Median=4.5; SD=74.53232; Skewness=2.416214; Kurtosis=5.86768). Also, as Figure 5 shows, a positive correlation pattern is obtained, which is also statistically significant at $p<0.05$ ($\chi^2=7.218$; $df=2$) in synthetic forms but not in analytic ones ($p>0.05$; $\chi^2=1.699$; $df=2$), probably due to the small number of tokens (27 tokens in total). The Pearson correlation coefficient (Cantos, 2013: 58-63) indicates that the patterns of comparison in Wycliffe's and the King James Bible are very strongly correlated, showing a monotonic increasing relationship between the use of synthetic mechanisms for comparative formation in 1385 and 1611 ($R^2=1$).

As Figures 5-6 illustrate, the patterns of comparison in Wycliffe's and the King James Bible are somehow related in terms of the expansion of the new grammatical rules after the incipient standardisation in progress throughout this period as data from 1385 and 1611 show. This means that there is a clear growth in the increasing consolidation of synthetic-based mechanisms (100%) for comparative formation in monosyllabic adjectives as well as of analytic-based mechanisms in polysyllabic ones (100%), which are the marked and thus unquestionable patterns. However, the number of unmarked cases increase from the 14th to the 17th centuries: there is a higher presence of synthetic-based disyllabic comparative forms in the King James Bible than in Wycliffe's when it comes to adjectives showing alternative patterns of comparative forms, which might be due to the extensive amount of loanwords from foreign languages that took place during those centuries.

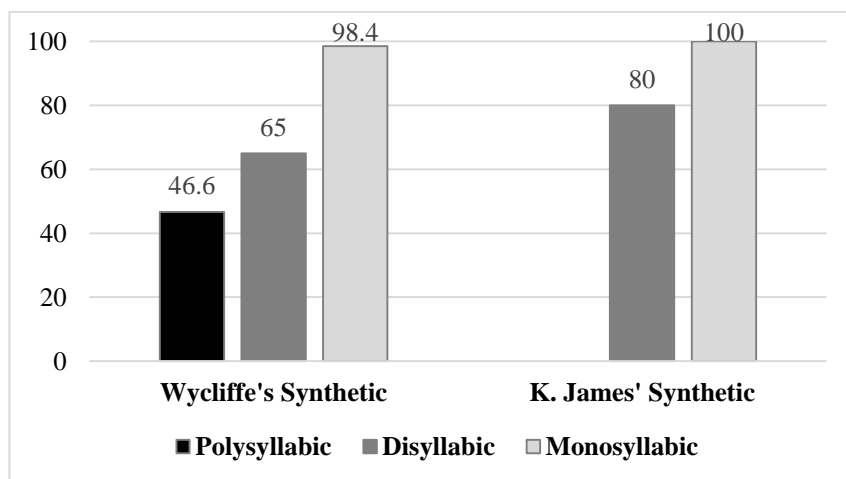


Figure 5: Use of synthetic comparative formation in Wycliffe's (1385) and the King James (1611) Bibles according to syllable number

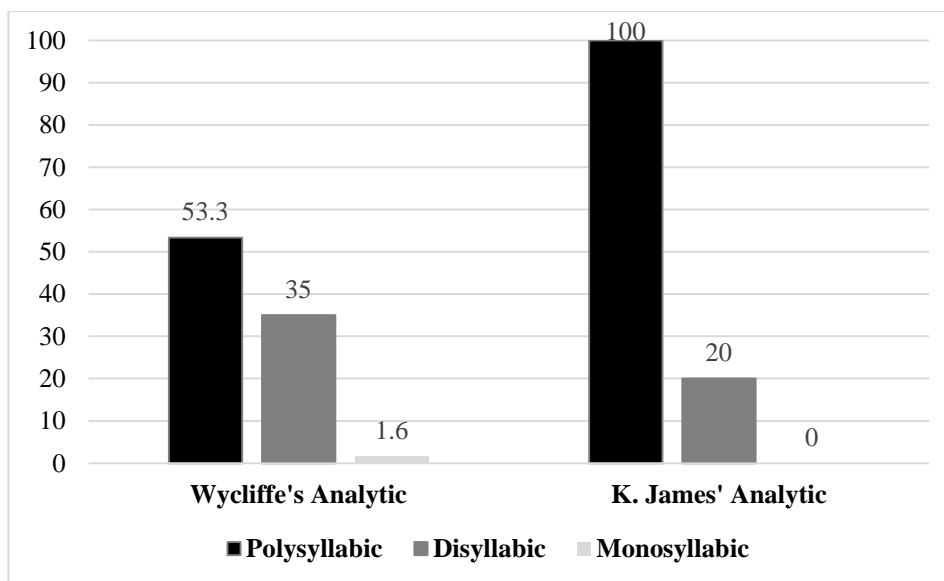


Figure 6: Use of analytic comparative formation in Wycliffe's (1385) and the King James (1611) Bibles according to syllable number

The Middle English ages have been considered as the period of greatest influence on the English language. During this period a series of great important events in the history of English took place, which would leave their mark on the English language. This fact has been attested in many available materials which confirm the exact periods when the influence of French on English vocabulary was at its highest. Baugh (1935) carried out a statistical study of nearly one thousand French loanwords by classifying them according to the period they were introduced in English. After the Conquest there is hardly any increase in the number of French words adopted. However, during the middle of the 12th century, there is a slight increase in loanwords which seems to be much more significant from 1200 to 1250. It becomes greater after 1250 which culminates at the end of the 14th century. However, it is quite noticeable the sharp drop found during the 15th century. Therefore, it is undeniable that the introduction of French vocabulary into English mirrors the progressive adoption of romance-based words after the period of the Norman influence (1251-1550).

Regarding EModE, the major introduction of Romance loanwords into the English language during this period took place from 1510 to 1674, but more significantly during 1560 to 1574 (see Table 6). Among them, the most notable ones are Latin (54.4%) and French loanwords (31.8%). This clear evidence emphasises that the presence of the great volume of romance loanwords shaped the English language from Middle English to Early Modern English. This could have also led to variation, which is clearly attested, in the English comparative system with no clear-cut distinction whatsoever among the difference in the use of synthetic or analytic comparative patterns. This may reflect the “confused situation” (Barber, 1993: 60) which arose after the introduction of the new analytical way for comparing adjectives. This assumption fits nicely with Hickey's article (2012: 387-407) in which he explains the process of change in a language. For this, some internal or external factors must take place. The new patterns are then salient and marked in the process of change. Therefore, one may assume that French could have influenced the English comparative system acting as an external factor that fostered the spread of the periphrastic construction since it was more salient than the native English inflectional counterparts.

Table 6: *The Sources of EModE Borrowings (source: adapted from Görlach 1978: 167)*

Periods	Latin	Greek	French	Italian	Spanish	Dutch	Other	
							European	Overseas
1510-1524	47.8%	0.6%	40.7%	0.9%	0.9%	3.4%	5.3%	0.3%
1560-1574	54.4%	3.8%	31.8%	2.4%	1.4%	1.8%	2.8%	1.7%
1610-1624	60.7%	5.2%	19.3%	2.3%	2.6%	1.3%	1.7%	6.9%
1660-1674	57.7%	5.9%	22.5%	3.1%	1.4%	1.4%	3.4%	4.6%
1710-1724	37.9%	6.9%	25.7%	14.2%	1.7%	1.7%	6.6%	5.2%

5. CONCLUSION

The present paper has shown results of those adjectives showing variation between inflectional and periphrastic adjectives used in translations of the Bible by Wycliffe (1385) and King James (1611). The results obtained in the first part of the study reveal a higher use of synthetic comparative adjectives in Wycliffe's Bible, and a corresponding increase in the use of analytic comparative adjectives in the King James Bible. The quantitative part of this study that focuses on the division of all occurrences into mono-, di- and polysyllabic adjectives and inflectional and periphrastic forms reveals a steady adaptation to the regularised grammar system reinforced during the EModE period. This mirrors the application of periphrastic forms to more polysyllabic environments, since in Wycliffe's Bible, periphrastic forms were more widely used at the expense of inflectional forms in monosyllabic adjectives, but this situation had changed in the King James Bible.

An individual analysis of the adjectives showing variation in Wycliffe's Bible was carried out in order to reveal to what extent alternative comparative alternation play a role when translating the Bible from the Latin text. Some tentative conclusions can be drawn on the present analysis: we could state that Wycliffe's Bible proved to be more faithful to the Latin text than King James', in such a way that we could find literal translations in some passages, including (*magis bonus-more good/ magis satagite-more bisi/ gloriosissimam mortem magis- more glorious/*). It is then suggested that, as regarding comparative adjectives, Wycliffe's Bible shows a higher use of comparative alternation mainly in adjectives of a foreign origin which may elucidate that the choice of comparative forms during medieval times is subject to i) the origin of the word (or less entrenched adjectives in the English word stock) and ii) literal translations from Latin-based texts.

This study has offered new insights into the historical development of the periphrastic comparative adjective in English in translations from Latin-based texts. It has also reinforced the idea that the English system for comparison has suffered from a statistically significant change in the adoption and adaptation of the analytic form of comparative adjectives mainly from medieval times onwards. This clearly suggests that the periphrastic form to compare adjectives in English was progressively and more frequently used from the transition of

Middle English to Early Modern English and that it diffuses more substantially with disyllabic and polysyllabic adjectives as it is attested in the data under study.

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