THE MIDDLE ENGLISH PREPOSITION *IN*: A SEMANTIC ANALYSIS[1]

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents an analysis of *in*-prepositional phrases in Middle English. On the semantic level, *in*-phrases were associated with a spatial or temporal sense in Old English. However, they lost much of their original referential meaning in Middle English as they developed from a spatial or temporal sense to a figurative or abstract one. Unlike *on*-phrases, the survey of the texts available in the Helsinki Corpus of Middle English shows that the use of *in*-phrases has increased steadily and progressively throughout the Middle English period. The use of *in*-phrases to indicate a position on the surface of something and surrounded by its parts is highly represented in the corpus. *Also on the surface of something which extends in all directions: heaven, hell, earth, world, sea, field, island, country predominate within the spatial roles* (14.06% with regard to all *in*-phrases, and 42.14% within spatial sense). Unlike in Present Day English, the static location within the boundaries of space (building, house) or the meaning of "enclosed" in is not very common (7.06% with respect to all *in*-phrases, and 21.18% within the spatial sense). Unlike in the case of *on*-phrases, the data also evince that there is no significant usage of idiomatic *in*-phrases with a spatial reference. The number of temporal instances is very small as they only represent a rate of 5.15% with regard to all *in*-phrases found in the corpus. Our analysis also shows that a great number of *in*-phrases have acquired a figurative or abstract sense. Thus, nearly half of the *in*-phrases are used to express the role of a certain manner, state or condition (48.6% with regard to all *in*-phrases found in the corpus).

This paper presents an analysis of *in*-prepositional phrases (henceforth, *in-Phs*) in Middle English. It is based on the texts available in the Helsinki Corpus of Middle English (henceforth, HCME), and a quantitative approach is used.

On the semantic level, *in-Phs* were associated with a spatial or temporal sense in Old English. However, many instances of *in-Phs* found in Middle

English lost much of their original referential meaning in Middle English as they developed from a spatial or temporal sense to a figurative or abstract one. There are two contending theories about the semantic roles of topological prepositions (*at, in, on*) in Present Day English. Thus Bennet (1975: 116) considers that the meaning (locative interior *vs.* locative surface, etc.) resides in the terms of the relationship rather than in the preposition itself. By specifying the roles of the preposition *in*, Bennet states that "the componential definition of *in* as locative-interior covers not only its spatial uses but also its temporal uses" (1975: 116). Following Bennet's perspective, the topological prepositions *at, on* and *in* are not semantically distributed and therefore the choice of one of them rather than the other depends on the nature of the NP that follows. If so, we may state that the prepositional complements monitor the preposition. Thus, a large city, for example, will require *in*, a village – *at*, and a small island – *on*.[2] Leech (1969: 3), however, *considers that* the topological prepositions *at, on* and *in* indicate that they "ascribe" to the following NP a particular dimensionality. Thus, the NP that functions as a complement of the preposition *in* is seen as an area or volume, that is, as two-or-three dimensional. A similar approach is defended by Dirven (1993: 78-9) as he indicates that English *in* "conceptualises space as an enclosure or volume" and following this notional category he outlines a radial network of extensions of *in*: spatial enclosure is the centre from which other branches develop: time-span, state as enclosure, area, manner or means, circumstance and cause. The notion of physical enclosure is expanded to psychological states such as *in despair*. Similarly, other types of enclosing experiences such as manner or means, circumstance or cause denote an "enveloping" state. Bennet (1975: 71) conceptualises *in* as A [locative [interior of B]], that is, the interior of B is the location of A. So in the example 'the key is in the drawer', the message is, 'the interior of the drawer is where the key is located'. Cuyckens (1993: 32-33) considers that the notion of 'interior' of English *in* is neither necessary nor sufficient. Indeed, the notion of 'interior' is not detected in all cases, such as "he got a kick *in* the stomach". Besides, not all cases classified as "interior" are expressed with *in*, as in 'the pear is *under* the cheese-cover', in which the pear being inside is not expressed with *in*. Zelinsky-Wibbelt (1993: 7) considers that English *in* is

prototypically used in topological relations, either positional or static.[3]

In broad terms, prepositions may be viewed either as words that limit themselves to providing a given relation and mark a specific function, or as words that have their own semantic connotations such as spatial or temporal; locative interior or locative surface, etc. In practical purposes, my analysis follows the latter approach in line with the semantic classification provided by the MED for the preposition *in*.

It is widely held that *in-*, *on-* and *at-*phrases covered similar semantic roles in Middle English, as they usually overlapped in their spatial and temporal references. However, there are significant differences with regard to their use and semantic connotations. I have already undertaken an analysis of *at*-phrases (Iglesias Rábade forthcoming a) and *on*-phrases (Iglesias – Rábade forthcoming b) in Middle English and I have found 1,555 *at*-phrases and 2,691 *on*-phrases in the 608,570 words of the HCME. However, the 9,437 *in*-phrases by far outnumber those *at-* and *on*-phrases. The analysis of the HCME shows that spatial roles were dominant in *at*-phrases, with 671 examples, and in *on-Phs*, with 879 instances, whereas *in*-phrases predominate in figurative semantic roles, with 5,639 tokens.

1. Helsinki Corpus data

Unlike *on-Phs* (Iglesias Rábade forthcoming b), the survey of the corpus shows that the use of *in-Phs* has increased steadily and progressively throughout the Middle English period, at least until the mid of the fifteenth century, as the figures in Table 1 indicate:

Table 1.

Date		Nº of words	Nº of *in-Phs*	Rate %
ME1	(1150-1250)	113 010	660	0.5640
ME2	(1250-1350)	97 480	1520	1.5592
ME3	(1350-1420)	184 230	3570	1.9377
ME4	(1420-1500)	213 850	3687	1.7241
ME	(1150-1500)	608 570	9437	1.5506

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[2] Bennet (1975: 65) insists on the fact that "what matters is the way an object is thought of on a particular occasion". Thus, one may think of Coventry, for example, as an enclosed area surrounded by the city boundaries (*x lives in Coventry*), as a given point on an itinerary (*you have to change trains at Coventry*) or as a surface (*more bombs were dropped on Coventry*).

[3] From a syntactical point of view, Fillmore (1968), Dirven (1982) and Radden (1982) posit that prepositions are a manifestation of underlying verb and noun phrase relations. Thus a preposition shows a given relation and marks a given function in the framework of Case Grammar. Fillmore (1968: 367) considers prepositions as variants of inflectional units and therefore as markers on noun phrases. This view is contended by Jackendoff (1973, 1977). He posits that although "diachronically the reduction of prepositions to case markers is undeniable, it is not clear that such a process plays a role in synchronic grammar" (1977: 80).

The figures in Table 1 show that *in-Phs* were restrictively used in the first period of Middle English (1150-1250). Thus, only 0.5640 *in-Phs* are detected for every 100 words in ME1, whereas 1.5592 occurrences per 100 words are found in the second period of Middle English (1250-1350). It is worth noting, however, that the use of *in-Phs* in ME1 (1150-1250) is not homogeneous. Thus, *Bodley Homilies* and *Vespasian Homilies* have no *in-Phs* in the 11760 words of the texts and *Peri Didaxeon, Leechdoms, Wortcunning, and Starcraft of Early England* includes only 8 instances in its 7350 words (0.1088%), whereas *Juliane and Katherine (The Katherine Group)* incorporate 131 tokens (81+54) in the 12110 words (7180+4930) of the texts, with the rate of 1.0817.

1.1. Spatial sense

The term "spatial" is used to indicate tangible or physical location, position or movement in space (cf. MED). Table 2 shows the figures for spatial sense and sub-senses covered by *in-Phs* in Middle English as well as the number of occurrences of each semantic field.

The data extracted from the HCME show 3149 spatial *in-Phs*. The average rate of usage is 0.5174 spatial *in-Phs* for every hundred words in Middle English, and this represents 33.36% of the total number of *in-Phs* found in the corpus. Let us see the spatial semantic fields in detail:

S-1)   The corpus contains 667 occurrences of *in-Phs* expressing a static local position of somebody or something placed inside a solid object or immersed in a fluid substance; enclosed in (fire, air) or into (a solid, liquid) or within a building, ship, bed, bag, e.g. *in the nonry of Catysby* (CMEDMUND), *And in þe water sone slowen* (CMALISAU), *Bath in prisun stad and pin* (CMCURSOR). At first glance, the figures suggest that only 7.06% of *in-Phs* have this semantic connotation in Middle English and cover 21.18% of all tokens found for spatial sense. The complements *prisun*, with 47 instances, and *chirche/kirke*, with 46, are the most frequent for this semantic category. The third highest number of *in- Phs*, with 40 tokens, occur with *house*. Being on the surface of or immersed in *water* is accounted on 31 occasions. Staying, dwelling or being enclosed in a *halle*, with 30 examples, a *castel* (18), *the Parliament-(house)* (16), or *tower* (10) are also frequently expressed with *in-Phs*. No other complements such as *cloyster, celle, chaple hallmote (court)*, *hole, cage, temple* are used more than four times. In fact, 248 complements occur only once. Thus, the preposition *in* predominates in contexts in which somebody or something is placed inside a solid object, immersed in a fluid substance, or enclosed in a building, but this semantic field is also covered by *at-* and *on-Phs*, although with a much lower rate.

Table 2. Middle English spatial sense

Sense	Semantic fields	Tokens	Rate % (within spatial sense)	Rate % (with regard to all *in-Phs*)	Field
Spatial	Inside a solid object or immersed in a fluid substance. Enclosed in (fire, air) or into (a solid, liquid). Within a building, ship, bed, bag.	667	21.18	7.06	S-1
	In a book, document, poem, etc.	245	7.78	2.59	S-2
	In or into somebody, in one's body, in one's heart, mind, memory, thought.	389	12.35	4.12	S-3
	In the hand(s), arm(s). Also fig. in someone's hand (= in someone's possession). In chains, ropes, fetters, tied with, bound in.	167	5.30	1.76	S-4
	On or onto the surface of something and surrounded by its parts: in or into a city, town, wood, forest. Also on the surface of something which extends in all directions: heaven, hell, earth, world, sea, field, island, country.	1327	42.14	14.06	S-5
	At a place or position; at, beside.	198	6.28	2.09	S-6
	With regard to quantity, dimension, number	120	3.81	1.27	S-7
Spatial (idiomatic phrases)	Idiomatic phrases denoting position: "in the middle of"	36	1.14	0.38	S-8
Middle English/Total		3149		Rate % (with regard to the corpus words): 0.5174	

S-2) *In-Phs* expressing the appearance of certain contents in a book, document, poem, etc. account for 245 instances, that is, a rate of 7.78% within the spatial sense and 2.59% with regard to all *in-Phs* detected in the corpus. The complement *boke/book* predominates with 51 examples, e.g. *In þese same bokes* (CMCAXPRO). *Tretis/treatise*, with 6 tokens, *statute* (5) and *chronicle* (4) are also represented, e.g. *in eny commune tretys of the Astrelabie* (CMANCRE). Parts of a book, such as *chapitre/chapter*, with 16 instances, *article* (16), *prologue* (4) are also referred to with *in-Phs*, e.g. *in the 3 chapitre bifore* (CMANCRE). The second highest number of *in-Phs* in this category is found with the complement *gospel* (25); the terms *scripture(s)*, with 12 examples, *testament* (4), *evangel* (3), e.g. *And God seyd in þe gospel* (CMAELR3); *O cros in þe ald testament* (CMCURSOR) are also used. There is a stable tendency to use the preposition *in* and not *on* or *at* for this semantic category.

S-3) The corpus includes 389 instances of *in-Phs* to denote that something is located in or put into somebody. Such phrases referring to location in one's heart, mind and thought are frequently used. Thus the complement *herte* is the most common and occurs on 126 occasions, e.g. *Jn herte he gynneþ fecche mood* (CMALISAU). In one's *mynde* is found on 47 occasions, e.g. *And conceyve in your myndes* (CMDIGBY), and in one's *þouhte* 36 times, e.g. *þan ani man mai thing in thoght* (CMCURSOR). The second highest number of examples found in this category occurs with *soule*, with 76 instances such as *vertuous diuersete fourme in þy soule* (CMAELR3). Location in one's body or flesh (very often opposed to soul) tends to be expressed with *in-Phs*. Thus the complement *bodi/body* includes 49 tokens, e.g. *þe find he sal in bodi ber* (CMCURSOR) and *flesh* is found 18 times. *In-Phs* appear on 61 occasions to express position poised on some part of one's body such as the head, breast, nose, etc. On one's *hed* appears 23 times, e.g. *His eyen stepe, and rollynge in his heed* (CMTVERS); in one's *brest* 13, in one's nose, in one's forehead also occur with 6 tokens each. It is worth noting that **in fot*, **in fet*, **in kne*, **in leg* are not found. The number of occurrences in this semantic field shows a ratio of 12.35% when compared with all spatial examples and 4.12% within the whole number of *in-Phs* found in the corpus.

S-4) *In-Phs* appear on 167 occasions to express position in one's hand(s), arm(s); also figurative in someone's hand (= in someone's possession). Being bound in, tied with chains, ropes, fetters are also expressed with *in-Phs*. In this category, most instances occur with the prepositional complements *hande*, with 127 instances, e.g. *and in the hand of oure Lord God Almyghty* (CMECTPROS) and *arme* which is registered on 23 occa-

sions, e.g *Take hym in your armys* (CMDIGBY). Other prepositional complements include *pyte, cage*, etc., e.g. *For thei be as fers as a lyon in a cage* (CMDIGBY). The small number of examples under this category shows a rate of 5.30% within the spatial location and 1.76% when related to all *in-Phs* of the corpus.

S-5) The category which expresses a position on the surface of something and surrounded by its parts: in or into a city, town, wood, forest. Also the situation of something in or on a place which extends in all directions: heaven, hell, earth, world, sea, field, country, etc. This category includes 1327 examples, that is, a rate of 42.14% within the spatial location and 14.06% when related to all *in-Phs* of the corpus. The prepositional phrase *in heuen* predominates in this category. It has been detected on 162 occasions, e.g *þet he is ine heuene* (CMAYENBI). Likewise *in þe/þis werold/world* is highly represented and there are 131 examples, e.g. *Nis in þis werlde so fair quene* (CMALISAU). Each of the prepositional complements *eorþe/erþe* and *place* are found on 96 occasions, e.g. *Alle men leuyng in erþe* (CMCLOUD); *in a place beside your Castell* (CMDOCU4). The location of something or somebody *in land/lond* (of) has been found on 72 occasions, e.g. *in þe londe of Ermonie* (CMBEVIS). *In helle* follows with 71 tokens, e.g. *in helle shame and confusioun* (CMECTPROS); The complements *toune, contry*, and *felde* are also extensively used as they appear on 57, 46, and 43 occasions respectively. Examples include: *Kniʒttes hem armen in court and tounes* (CMALISAU); *in euery contre þai hade grete werre and stryfe* (CMBRUT3); *Most strong and myghty in feld for to fyght* (CMDIGBY). 36 examples are found with *see*, e.g. *trauailede half ʒere and more in þe see* (CMBRUT3). With regard to countries and cities, *in Engeland* predominates with 26 tokens and *in London* follows, with 17 examples, e.g. *in london as elles where in the rewme* (CMDOCU3). This spatial category includes many other prepositional complements that occur less than ten times, such as *wode, stret, forest*, etc. One may conclusively state that *in-Phs* still cover the roles that *at-* and *on-Phs* came to fill later on.

S-6) The 198 occurrences, with a rate of 6.28% when compared with other spatial instances and 2.09% with regard to all examples in the corpus, were also found to denote a position at, beside a place, e.g.. *in þat oþer syde of þe cros* (CMAELR3); *equaciouns in the bordure of thin Astralabie* (CMASTRO); *and in the botme of the ship* (CMECTPROS); *sitte bitwene bothe alras in his right place* (CMASTRO). The prepositional complements *line*, with 36 tokens, *centre*, with 34, *border* with 15, and *circle* with 11, predominate in this category. The remaining instances occur less than five

times for each type. Some prepositional complements in this category are overrated as many instances occur in the same text. Thus the corpus shows 36 instances of *in line* (19 of them in CMQUATO), 34 of *in center* (26 of them also in CMQUATO), 15 of *in border* (11 of them in CMASTRO).

S-7)   This category includes 120 *in-Phs*, that is, a rate of 3.81% within the spatial reference and 1.27% when related to all *in-Phs* of the corpus. They denote a specification with regard to quantity, dimension or number such as *in which fifthe partie shalt thou fynden* (CMASTRO); *Was twenti fote in lengþe be tale* (CMBEVIS). *In part* (66), in *lengþe*, (21), *in depnesse* (12), *in heiht* (7), and *in wydness* (4) are the most common.

S-8)   Under this heading I include only 36 *in-Phs* (1.55% within the spatial area and 0.51% in relation to all the other instances) denoting position in the midst of persons or things and exemplified in the middle of, e.g. *in the middel of this plate* (CMQUATO). *In mydde of* may however be used to indicate the centre of a given period of time as in *sonne in mydde of the day* (CMASTRO).

In conclusion, the most significant feature of spatial *in-Phs* is the absence of idiomatic constructions. In fact, on the semantic level the preposition *in* and its complement constitute a conceptual unit with an informative content in our corpus. However, I have already found that many *at-* (Iglesias-Rábade forthcoming b) and *on-Phs* (Iglesias-Rábade forthcoming b) develop from a spatial or temporal sense to a figurative or abstract meaning, initiating a process of idiomatisation. My data, for the Middle English period, show similar results to those shown by Lundskær-Nielsen (1993) with regard to the use of *in-, at-* and *on-Phs* in Old English. Lundskær-Nielsen compared the range of uses of these prepositions and found that in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (years 892-900) only *on*, with 9 occurrences, has a figurative or abstract sense (1993:88). His study of the *Peterborough Chronicle* for the years 1122-54 also shows that the preposition *on* is found 25 times with a figurative or abstract sense, whereas *in* presents no instances of this and there is only one example with *æt* (1993: 96). Lundskær-Nielsen's data are not so conclusive for the Middle English period, partly because his corpus is limited to three Middle English texts (*Ancrene Wise*, parts six and seven, *Vices and Virtues* and Chaucer's *A Treatise on the Astrolobe*). However, a survey of the HCME shows 151 *on-Phs* that denote an idiomatic spatial sense and account for a rate of 17.17% within the spatial sphere and 5.61% when related to all other *on-Phs*.

1.2. Temporal sense

Table 3. Middle English temporal sense

Sense	Semantic fields	Tokens	Rate % (within temporal sense)	Rate % (with regard to all *in-Phs*)	Field
Temporal	During a period of time; for the space of a period of time. At a point in time, upon a time, day, etc.; at the end, at the beginning, in the first place	456	93.63	4.83	T-1
Temporal (Phrases)		31	6.36	0.32	T-2
	Total	487	Rate % (with regard to the corpus words): 0.08		

The survey of the HCME accounts for 487 *in-Phs* with a temporal sense. The number of occurrences is much less than that found in spatial categories. For each 6.46 spatial occurrences a single token is found with a temporal sense. So the average rate of usage falls to 0.08 *in-Phs* for every hundred words in Middle English and covers only 5.16% of the total number of *in-Phs* found in the corpus. The following is a detailed account of temporal categories:

T-1)   The analysis of the corpus has shown that 456 instances (out of the 487 which were found with a temporal sense) are used to indicate that an action either takes place during a period of time or occupies the whole of a period, e.g. *In þe tyme of þe bataile* (CMCAPCHR). *In-Phs* are also used to indicate that something occurs at a point in time (week, day, etc.) as in *in þe fest of Seyn Jerom* (CMCAPCHR); *in the 13 day of Decembre* (CMASTRO). That an action occurs in a certain part of the day may be expressed with an *in-Phs*, e.g. *Many ben jolyf in þe morowenyng* (CMALISAU); *And þolen deþ in þe euenyng* (CMALISAU). *In-Phs* are also used to indicate a certain year or month, e.g. *in the ʒere of our Lord God M=l=CCC & xxij* (CMBRUT3); *In Mai, in þe formeste dai* (CMBEVIS). It is rarely used as opposed to night (1), e.g. *To morwe in þe dai* (CMBEVIS). The seasons of the year are very commonly expressed with *in-Phs*. Thus *in sumer* is found on 14 occasions, *in wynter* 12, *in spryng* 2.

The prepositional complement *tyme* predominates with 167 examples. The second highest number of occurrences (122) are found with *dai*. The complement *gere* follows with 78 tokens. *Month* is used on 22 occasions and the parts of a

day are also very often referred to with *in-Phs*: the complement *morowenyng* occurs 22 times, *nihte* 15, and *euenyng* 3. A specific day of the week is only found on one occasion, with Tuesday. At a certain *houre* is recorded 7 times and *in weke* with the meaning "per week" is found on 3 occasions, e.g. *onys or tweys in the weke* (CMEDMUND). All temporal complements tend to be used with a determiner, e.g. *in þis gere, in his tyme, in Seyn Jeromes dai*, etc.

T-2) Within this category I have classified 31 *in-Phs* (that is, a rate of 6.36% of all temporal instances and 0.32% of all examples in the corpus) which are used as composite phrases which denote a temporal relationship such as *in þe mene tyme*, e.g. *in þe mene tyme deide here Lorde Agamp* (CMBRUT3), *in the mene whyle* (CMGREGOR), *in þeende* (CMGREGOR), *in the begynnyng* (CMINNOCE), *sumer tide* (CMHANSYN), etc. Temporal phrases such as *sumer tyme, winter tyme*, are also included under this category.

Conclusively, like in spatial roles, there are no temporal *in-Phs* that could be recorded as idiomatic constructions.

1.3. Figurative or abstract sense

5639 *in-Phs* have been found which do not denote a spatial or temporal sense (refer to Table 4). The number of occurrences is surprisingly high as they exceed, for example, the figures found both in spatial and temporal categories. So, 0.92 instances were found for every hundred words in the corpus analysed. Let us consider them in detail:

F-1) In the survey of the data in this category I have found 609 examples of *in-Phs* expressing that somebody or something is engaged in an action or in a course of action. They are basically used with prepositional complements implying an action: battle, war, quarrel, fight, works, things. The examples found in this section represent a rate of 10.79% in relation to all figurative tokens and 6.45% when compared with all *in-Phs* found in the corpus. The prepositional complement *thing* (= action, activity) predominates with 74 tokens, e.g. *But [in] this thing hath ben discoveryd* (CMBOETH). 21 examples are recorded as *in bataile*, e.g. *a strong man in bataile he was* (CMCAPCHR), whereas 7 tokens were detected as *in fiht/fihting*, e.g. *in þan fihte* (CMBRUT1) and another 7 instances were found including the prepositional complement *werre*, e.g. *Lesen her lorde in þat werre* (CMALISAU). Other prepositional complements occur less than five times each.

Table 4. Middle English figurative and abstract sense

Sense	Semantic fields	Tokens	Rate % (within fig./abstr. sense)	Rate % (with regard to all *in-Phs*)	Field
In the course of an action	In an action or in a course of action, engaged in something, during an action or process. With a noun implying an action: arms, battle, war, quarrel, works, things.	609	10.79	6.45	F-1
Manner	In two parts, divisions, pieces; in a form, shape or manner; in the presence, sight, or hearing of somebody; in a language.	1811	32.11	19.19	F-2
State or condition	With a noun implying a state: faith, truth, haste, right; purpose, will, hope, point. Subject to something or somebody (under God, law, vow) e.g. in god, grace, mercy, pain, accordance.	2776	49.22	29.41	F-3
As something	As something or in the shape of something e.g. conclusion, example. As sign, token sign, cause, token, witness.	47	0.83	0.49	F-4
Benefit	On behalf of: half (behalf), name, honour, worship.	129	2.28	1.36	F-5
Idiomatic	In general, in vain, in special.	267	4.73	2.82	F-6
Total		5639			

Rate % (with regard to the corpus words): 0.92

F-2) I have identified 1811 occurrences which denote a certain form, shape or manner. Under this category I also include 'in the presence, sight, of somebody or something', and 'in a language'. The instances for this section represent the high rate of 32.11% in relation to all figurative tokens and 19.19% when compared with all *in-Phs* found in the corpus. The survey shows many examples which express a certain manner *-in (no, al, this, ani, mani) manner* (162 tokens), *wise* (126 instances), e.g. *in a ful begastfull maner* (CMEDMUND); *and seyde in this wise: "My lord,"* quod she, *"as ...* (CMECTPROS). *In degre* is found on 33 occasions, e.g. *leuyng in þe comoun degree of Cristen* (CMCLOUD). Within this category are 53 *in-Phs* which indicate the language in which somebody speaks or writes *-in Latyn* is found 22 times, *in Englisch* 12 times, written *on the godspelle* 26 times, e.g. *"bestes" in Latyn tunge* (CMASTRO), *And God seyd in þe gospel* (CMAELR3). There is a great number of *in-Phs* whose complement occurs less than 10 times, e.g. *in blod, in red, in cloþs*, etc.

F-3) There are 2776 instances expressing a certain state or condition. This number represents nearly half of all figurative examples (49.22%) and 29.41% within the whole number of *in-Phs*. They usually occur with a noun implying a state: faith, truth, haste, pain, peace, will, hope. They also occur to indicate that somebody or something is subject to something or somebody (under God, law, vow), e.g. in god, grace, mercy, etc. *In lyfe* with 96 tokens predominates in this category. To be under the rule or protection of God is expressed as *in god* on 49 occasions; under law is also found as *in lawe* 36 times. *In service* follows with 35 tokens. Each of the following is found more than twenty times: to be *in peyne* (32 occasions.), *in pes* (31), *in loue* (31) *in sorou* (24), *in grace* (24) *in joie* (24), *in will* (24), *in bliss* (23), *in spirit* (22). Examples include: *in my lyf* (CMEARLPS); *He was ydo in gode warde* (CMALISAU); *In þe ald lagh was be-for þe neu* (CMCURSOR); *and in greet peyne* (CMECTPROS); *Jn mychel loue is grete mournynge* (CMALISAU); *in þe blisse of heuen* (CMCLOUD); *he is oon in spirit wit hym* (CMAELR3).

F-4) In this category I include 47 instances of *in-Phs* which indicate that something appears in the shape of something e.g. *in conclusioun, in ensaumple, in signe, in cause, in token, in witnesse.* The phrase *in signe* predominates with 16 examples, e.g. *A cros was mad in signe o rode* (CMCURSOR), while all other phrases are recorded less than ten times. The small number of instances found in this category represent a ratio of only 0.83% with regard to the figures found in the figurative roles and 0.49% within the whole number of *in-Phs* of the corpus.

F-5) I have found 129 *in-Phs* with the sense "for the benefit of somebody, on behalf of somebody, for the service of sb", etc. These phrases represent a ratio of 2.28% with regard to all figurative *in-Phs* and 1.36% taking into account all *in-Phs* in the corpus. The most common prepositional complement is *name* with 56 examples, e.g. *Jn þe name of þe kyng* (CMALISAU). *Worscipe* follows with 35 tokens, *e.g. In whos worshippe this fest we honoure* (CMDIGBY). Other prepositional phrases such as *in honour, in behalf*, etc. are recorded less than 10 times each.

F-6) Most instances recorded in this section present a certain idiomatic sense. I have included *in deed, in doubt, in vayn, in speciall, in generall, in certayn* and *in despite*. The Phs *in deed* is the most frequent as it is found on 51 occasions, e.g. *and þis was fulfillid in dede* (CMCAPCHR). *In special* appears 23 times, e.g. *The whiche fourthe partie in speciall shal shewen a table of the verrey moeving of the mone* (CMASTRO). *In general* is found on 12 occasions, e.g. *in general his falsenesse were ayeinsaide* (CMDOCU3). *In vain* and *in despite* occur 11 times each, e.g. *þe wicked tempted my soule in vayn* (CMEARLPS); *þou has him and his in despite* (CMCURSOR). The figures under this category represent only a ratio 4.73% as far as the whole number of figurative tokens are concerned and 2.82% with regard to all *in-Phs* found in the corpus. However, it seems conclusive, in the light of the data shown by Lundskær-Nielsen (1993) for Old English, where he has not found instances of idiomatic constructions with *in-Phs*, that these structures occur as idiomatic constructions in Middle English.

1.4. Verb-dependent *in*

Table 5. Middle English verb-dependent *in*

Verb-dependent	Semantic fields	Tokens	Rate % (with regard to all *in-Phs*)	Field
Mental actions and attitudes	Indicating the object to which mental action is directed: in regard to, concerning (after verbs such *as ileuven, biliven, trouen, hopen, delite,* etc.	162		V-1
Total		162	Rate % (with regard to the corpus words): 0.0003	

The data of Table 5 include only 162 examples in which the verb monitors the *in-Phs*. The number of occurrences is very small as they represent a rate of 1.71% of all instances found in the corpus, and 0.02 tokens are found for every hundred words. This structural wording V(erb)-in-C(omplement) includes most

instances to express a mental action or attitude, e.g. *ileue in, trouen in,* etc. such as *and hise disciplis bileueden in hym* (CMNTEST); *þat man in godd haue mistrouing* (CMCURSOR); *Gode is to hopen in our Lord þan to hopen in princes* (CMEARLPS). The use of V(erb)-in-C(omplement) is very rare in Middle English, and in fact 35 occurrences out of the 162 found in the HCME appear in CMNTEST with the verb *bileuen.* Finally, it is also surprising the small number of verbs which adopt this structure.

2. Dialectal distribution

We shall now see the dialectal distribution of *in-Phs* in Middle English. By so doing, we find that the survey of the HCME shows in the four sub-periods the dialectal distribution of *in-Phs.* The figures in Table 6 show that there are significant variations depending on the dialectal area. Kentish and Southern areas hardly include *in-Phs* in ME1. The 5880 words of the *Vespasian Homilies* (the only text recorded in the corpus for Kentish dialect) do not contain any *in-Ph* and the Southern dialect records only 1 *in-Ph* for every thousand words (0.1%). The East Midland dialect, however, records 6 *in-Phs* for every thousand words and the West Midland 7.5. There is no material to measure this variable in the Northern dialect. The tabulated figures for ME2 show an important increase of *in-Phs* with regard to the earlier period. This increase is mainly detected in the Kentish dialect that shows 19.4 *in-Phs* for every thousand words. The rest of the dialects maintain a similar rate varying from 11.2 *in-Phs* to 17. This increase continues in ME3 as the rate rises to figures between 1.36% and 2.61% (the *in*-occurrences found in the West Midlands are not relevant because there are not sufficient data to measure a tendency). The data for ME4 show significant variations with regard to ME3. There is a decline which is attested in all dialects, except in the Northern dialect. The use of *in-Phs* falls to rates that vary between 0.91% in the West Midland area and 2.33% in the Northern dialect. The assessment of *in-Phs* in the course of the Middle English period proves that the West Midland dialect keeps a similar rate of usage, from ME1 (0.75%) to ME4 (0.91%) with a moderate increase during ME2 and ME3, whereas the Southern dialect increases from 0.1% in ME1 to 1.83% in ME3, falling to 1.40% in ME4. The East Midlands have the most notable increase from 0.6% to 2.61% in ME3, declining smoothly to 2.11% in ME4.

The following table (Table 7) shows the differences in frequency of *in-Phs* between prose and verse, according to the data exhibited in the HCME.

Table 6. Dialectal distribution of *in-Phs*

Date/ Dialect	M1 (1150-1250)			M2 (1250-1350)			M3 (1350-1420)			M4 (1420-1500)		
	Words	Oc.	Rate %	Words	Oc.	Rate %	Words	Oc.	Rate %	Words	Oc.	Rate %
Northern	–	–	–	–	–	–	25960	517	1.99	37090	867	2.33
Kentish	5880	0	0	14040	271	1.93	–	–	–	–	–	–
Southern	20150	21	0.10	29500	396	1.34	37140	682	1.83	27640	387	1.40
East Mid.	26760	161	0.60	48541	830	1.70	83680	2187	2.61	108690	2301	2.11
West Mid.	60220	455	0.75	4260	48	1.12	8124	111	1.36	22298	203	0.91

Table 7. *In-Phs* in prose and poetry

Date	M1 & M2		M1 & M2		Middle English	
Composition type	Prose	Poetry	Prose	Poetry	Prose	Poetry
Nº of words	105.570	104.920	334120	63960	439690	168880
Nº of *in-Phs*	1298	897	6271	971	7569	1868
Rate %	1.22	0.85	1.87	1.51	1.72	1.10

The data shown in Table 7 confirm that prose includes more *in-Phs* than poetry in the Middle English period. Thus 1.72 tokens were found for every hundred words in prose, whereas this rate falls to 1.10% in poetry. It is worth noting that the figures in Table 7 shows that the difference (0.37 for M1 & ME2 and 0.36 for ME3 & ME4) in the usage of *in-Phs* between prose and verse is kept stable in the course of the Middle English period. Table 8 (page 73) gives the frequencies of *in-Phs* according to the type of text.

Taking for granted that the average Middle English rate of *in-Phs* is 1.55%, the data shown in Table 8 do not show relevant deviations from that rate. Religious texts (homilies, the bible, religious treatises, Lifes of Saints, sermons, rules) and technical works (laws, historical documents, handbooks, philosophy, science, medicine, travelogues) show a slightly higher rate (1.77%). However, history texts offer a lower frequency as they only show one *in-Ph* for every hundred words. An equal rate is also provided by drama, and romance and fiction works (1.03% and 1.07%, respectively). The figures for letters (1.18%) are also below average. It is worth noting, however, that religious texts show a great variety of frequency. The rate of 0.84% for ME1 and ME2 triplicates in ME3 and ME4 (2.93%). It is also striking to notice the high rate (2.93%) found in Religious texts for ME3 and ME4 compared with the rates for other text types for the same period. Table 9 (page 74) includes the prepositional complements recorded more than 30 times in the HCME, headed by the preposition *in*.

Table 8. *In-Phs* and text type

Date	M1 & M2 (1150-1350)			M3 & M4 (1350-1500)			Middle English		
Text type	Nº of words	Nº of *in-Phs*	Rate %	Nº of words	Nº of *in-Phs*	Rate %	Nº of words	Nº of *in-Phs*	Rate %
Religion (Homily, Bible, Rel. Treat., Life of Saint, & Sermon, Rule).	154396	1305	0.84	124428	3658	2.93	278824	4963	1.77
History	39650	263	0.66	26930	410	1.52	66580	673	1.01
Technical (Law, Docum., Handb., Philosophy, Science, Medicine, Travelogue)	10850	15	0.13	115933	2217	1.91	126783	2232	1.76
Letters				29050	343	1.18	29050	343	1.18
Drama				25670	276	1.07	25670	276	1.07
Romance & Fiction	41434	461	1.11	50112	489	0.97	91546	950	1.03

Table 9. The most frequent prepositional complements

Prep. complement	Tokens	Prep. complement	Tokens	Prep. complement	Tokens
tyme	167	part	66	þoughte	36
heuen	162	toun	57	line	36
manner	162	name	56	midle	36
werld	131	deed	51	lawe	36
wise	126	boke	51	se	36
dai	122	body	49	worscipe	35
erþe	96	god	49	centre	34
lyfe	96	prisun	47	degree	33
soule	76	mynde	47	payn	32
yere/gere	78	contry	46	pes	31
þing	74	chiriche/kirke	46	loue	31
land/lond	72	felde	43	water	31
helle	71	house	40	hall	30

Although temporal *in-Phs* represent only 5.15% with regard to all *in-Phs* found in the corpus, the prepositional phrase *in* (*þis, þe, his, same, ure louerde*, etc.) *tyme*, e.g. *In þe tyme of þe bataile* (CMCAPCHR), is the most common in the corpus. On the surface of something which extends in all directions such as *heuen, werld, erþe, helle* is very commonly expressed with *in-Phs*. Thus the prepositional complement *heuen* predominates with 162 instances. Equally, the expression of a certain manner -*in (no, al, this, ani, mani) manner* (162 tokens), *wise* (126 instances) is profusely used in the corpus. The complements that expressed a certain state or condition are also repeatedly recorded in Middle English texts.

3. *In-Phs* structure

The analysis of the corpus shows that there is no significant variation in the structure of *in-Phs*. The preposition heads a complement that may appear as a single noun, e.g. *in heuen, in payn, in vayn*; or noun preceded by a determiner, e.g. *in þe londe of Ermonie* (CMBEVIS) or a determiner and a modifier, e.g. *in eny commune tretys of the Astrelabie* (CMANCRE). However, the 120 tokens that denote a specification with regard to quantity, dimension or number do not take determiners such as *in lengþe, in depnesse, in heiht, in wydness*, e.g. *Was twenti fote in lengþe* (CMBEVIS), and nor do the complements which express the language in which somebody speaks or writes – *in Latyn, in Englisch*, e.g. "*bestes*" *in Latyn tunge* (CMASTRO).

4. Conclusions

The use of *in-Phs* to indicate a position on the surface of something and surrounded by its parts is highly represented in the corpus: in or into a city, town, wood, forest. Also on the surface of something which extends in all directions: heaven, hell, earth, world, sea, field, island, country predominate within the spatial roles (14.06 % with regard to all *in-Phs*, and 42.14% within spatial sense). Unlike Present Day English the static location within the boundaries of space (building, house) or enclosed in is not very common (7.06% with respect to all *in-Phs*, and 21.18% within spatial sense). Unlike *on-Phs* (Iglesias Rábade forthcoming b) the data also evince that there is no significant usage of idiomatic *in-Phs* with a spatial reference. The number of temporal instances is very small as they only represent a rate of 5.15% with regard to all *in-Phs* found in the corpus. Thus *in-Phs* are not predominant in temporal senses, particularly because the preposition *at* (Iglesias Rábade forthcoming b) tends to cover this role. Our analysis also shows that a great number of *in-Phs* have acquired a figurative or abstract sense. So *in-Phs* are subject to a massive transition from a spatial referential meaning to a more abstract one from 1350. Thus, nearly half of the *in-Phs* are used to express the role of a certain manner, state or condition (48.6% with regard to all *in-Phs* found in the corpus).

Kentish and Southern dialects hardly use *in-Phs* in M1, whereas West Midlands stands in the lead. However, the Kentish dialect provides the highest rate in ME2 and West Midlands the lowest rate. On scrutinising the whole Middle English period, East Midlands is well at the top, whereas the East Midland areas show the smallest figures. Mode of composition (prose vs. poetry) provides significant variations in the assessment of the whole period of ME, as *in-Phs* are more frequent in prose. With regard to text type, it seems that religious and technical texts show more *in-Phs* than the other text types.

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