PERSONAL ENDINGS OF ABLAUT VERBS
IN EARLY AMERICAN WRITINGS

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ABSTRACT

The present paper deals with verbal endings in seventeenth and early eighteenth century American English. Since it is a corpus-based study, a collection of early American texts was compiled and afterwards processed manually. The major guidelines adopted in the process of corpus collection are as follows: the chosen texts represent diverse types of formality and different relationships to the spoken medium.

In order to facilitate the discussion of the development of the third person indicative present singular verb inflection as well as the subjunctive in the new variety of English, the American findings are related to the contemporary developments recorded in the British corpus tailored as a supplementary collection aiming to parallel the American texts.

The following personal endings are touched upon in the present article: second person singular (*-st*), third person singular (*-th, -s*, and zero endings), third person plural (zero vs. *-s*), and, finally, the subjunctive.

1. Periodization

This paper concentrates on verbal endings in seventeenth and early eighteenth century American English. The time span between 1620-1720 has been picked for the purpose of the present analysis, as this century constitutes a perfect period for the linguistic study of the beginnings of American English. Although it is apparent that the foundations of American English (in the present article, the New England-based variety is labeled early American English[1]) lie in the British variety of English of the late 1500s and early 1600s, the language, once in America, starting from the third decade of the seventeenth century, can be per-

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[1] Cf. Kytö (1989), quoted in Montgomery (2001: 117).

ceived to have evolved autonomously (Kytö 1991: 3). This period can be further subdivided into three sub-periods in order to trace the diachronic change taking place among the verbal endings. The subdivision is based on a number of external factors. The beginning of the first sub-period, embracing the time span 1620-1650, is set by the arrival of William Bradford and the separatists in Plymouth in 1620. As for the language of the first Colonists, it was British rather than American English. The time limits of the second sub-period (1662-1692) are set by the Synod of 1662, dubbed the "half-way covenant", which, to a certain extent, was the embodiment of the onset of the decline of the Puritan doctrine. The beginnings of the last decade of the seventeenth century witnessed the secularization of life and the disintegration of the old social order (Kytö 1993b: 116). Linguistically, the new generation, born in America, started to shape the new offshoot of English. The last period (1700-1720) bears witness to a feeling of national independence which increased due to further changes in social order, the shifted life-focus from England to America, and, finally, the diminishing importance of the puritan doctrine.

2. Corpus of Early American and British English

The Northern American English section of the *Helsinki Corpus* is not accessible yet, therefore, the corpus of American texts was compiled for the purpose of this research and afterwards processed manually. Since the study of the language of the Northern Colonies presents a more rewarding starting point for a study of early American English (Kytö 1991: 186, Rissanen 1985),[2] the current analysis is focused on writings produced in New England. A number of factors determined the choice of the Northern material. As the Southern colonies maintained closer bonds with their British homeland, one can assume that works written in this region might have been more influenced by British English than the ones written in New England. Furthermore, the advancement of New England at the time (as compared to Virginia) in the matter of education, faster spread of print in the North, and, finally, the mere availability of the New England material justify the choice of the seventeenth and early eighteenth New England idiom as the object of linguistic scrutiny.

As for text types, the corpus under discussion is based on different texts representing diverse types of formality and different relationships to the spoken medium. Ten types of texts are included in the corpus: letters (private and official), diaries, historical writings, sermons, town records, journals, trials (deposi-

tions), prose of persuasion (embracing captivities, apologiAs, and essays), and, finally, poetry. The major handicap of the compiled corpus is the lack of travel accounts from the middle period published in the colonies as well as trials (depositions and appeals) from the time span 1700-1720.

As observed by Rissanen (1986), the judgments of style or levels of formality and informality are based purely on intuition, hence the categories formal/informal, speech-based/non-speech-based, are nondiscrete. It can be assumed, however, that to the more informal end of the stylistic continuum embracing texts reflecting the written medium belong such texts as informal letters, diaries, and journals, while the more formal end is represented by formal letters, historical writings, poetry, and essays. It is also assumed that texts recording speech (records of meetings, transcripts of sermons, witnesses' depositions) are closer to the spoken than written medium.

In order to facilitate the discussion of the development of the third person indicative present singular verb inflection in the new variety of English, the *findings are related* to the contemporary developments recorded in the Mainland language. The British corpus was tailored as a supplementary collection aiming to parallel the American texts, and thus the selection depended upon two major factors: the date of composition or publication and the purpose of a given text (text type). It should be noted that in the case of the British corpus, the adopted sub-periodization does not reflect the language-external conditions in England, but corresponds to the three sub-periods distinguished in the first century of the development of American English.

For the sake of comparability, the selection of British materials was restricted to the same text types as the ones comprising the American corpus. However, one problem that emerged was with matching suitable texts from the British counterpart of the American town records. Most of the materials found by the author were 'calendared' rather than transcribed and therefore of no use for linguistic purposes. Moreover, even the so-called "transcriptions" turned out to be deficient for the purpose of this study. In view of this, nine text types, instead of ten, are included in the collection of British texts.

It has also to be stated that both corpora are not entirely parallel. Firstly, the greater body of British texts preserved and published in the period in question allowed, wherever possible, for, at least, partial avoidance of possible idiolectal influences through the use of more than one text within a given genre. Secondly, some of the texts that made their way into the American corpus are characterized by a very close resemblance to the spoken medium; they oftentimes come from under the pen of non-elite classes and are characterized by a straightforward style, which seems unparalleled by the writings composed and published in contemporary Britain.

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[2] As argued by Kytö (1991:12): "Though the texts ... derive from the Massachusetts, Connecticut, New England and Rhode Island colonies, accounting for the intercolonial or other local variation was considered to be beyond the scope of the present study (one reason for this was the insufficient number of candidates for systematic coverage of text types within each colony)."

3. Introductory remarks on personal endings

It must be noted here that only inflexional endings attached to verbs forming their preterite and past participle forms by means of vowel gradation are taken into consideration. It must also be remarked that, regrettably, an unsatisfactorily low data input for the *-th* ending will make it impossible to analyze its textual distribution according to such criteria as the level of formality and speech relatedness.

Kytö (1993b: 113) rightfully states: "The later stages of the rivalry of the third-person singular ... endings coincide with the beginnings of early American English, the first major transoceanic variety of English to emerge in the 17th century". As expected, during the period under study, the main line of development is the replacement of the *-th* by the *-s* ending in the third person present singular. The minor role of zero forms that are occasionally encountered is also taken into consideration. Instances of the second person singular ending *-st* are observed quite frequently, however they are limited exclusively to the solemn style and used with *thou*.

Endings attested in the American part of the corpus show the basic present indicative paradigm:

1 sg	- Ø
2	- st (with *thou*)
3	- s / -th
3	- Ø / -s

4. Secondperson singular

The second-person forms with *-st* are marked for concord with *thou*. They become rarer as the pronoun *thou* falls into disuse in the course of the seventeenth century (Barber 1976: 237). In the corpus, the *-est* morpheme appears both in its full form (*givest, knowest*), and with syncope of the vowel (*giv'st, know'st*). Moreover, in the three sub-periods under analysis, two isolated cases of *-est* following the past tense forms were identified as in:

1)   Thou hast upheld mee from the womb, thou art he that *tookst* mee out of
      my mothers belly...

      (*The Bay Psalm Book*, 1956)

In the first sub-period almost every instance out of twelve forms marked for concord with *thou* is used in addressing or referring to God. A similar scenario is observed in the time span 1662-1692, where seven out of the eight occurrences appear in the elevated prose (sermons) and poetry, and only one is used in the "prose of persuasion" genre to address the reader:

2)   Reader, if thou gettest no good by such a Declaration as this, the fault must
      needs be thine own.

      (*Narrative of the Captivity of Mrs Mary Rowlandson,* 1946: 117)

As expected, in the last sub-period, embracing the first two decades of the eighteenth century, such forms are confined to poetry. Twelve occurrences appear in Edward Taylor's poems.

In summation, it is legitimate to conclude that in the first century of the development of American English, the use of *thou*+verb marked with *-est* fell into abandonment. Its use was confined predominantly to writings in solemn or archaizing style, especially sermons and Puritan poetry.

5. Third person singular and plural

5.1. Introductory remarks

The change in the third person singular from *-th* to *-s* is "an interesting testing ground and touchstone for any theory of morphological change. The complexity of the replacement process is compounded by the advent of the written register in English in which an autonomous development towards *s* is checked and by which *th* receives an added register or sociolinguistic dimension as a marker of written language" (Stein 1988: 271).

There is no need to repeat the entire history of the rivalry between the two endings, however, a concise outline of their situation is warranted.

In terms of the fifteenth century, it is postulated that the difference between the *-th* and *-s* ending was regional: whereas the Southern paradigm embraced the first ending in the third person singular indicative, in the East Midland dialects the *-es* ending originated. Wyld (1920: 336) refutes this supposition and puts forward the following scenario of proliferation of the *-es*, and ultimately *-s* ending: "It is possible (...) that the starting point of the *-s* forms has nothing to do with regional influence, but that the extremely common Auxiliary *is* may have provided a model." He sums up his allegation by arguing that *is* might be the *bona fide* explanation of the third-person singular indicative in *-s* in the spoken dialect of London, the South and, finally, the literary English.[3]

In the early sixteenth century the preponderant form is *-eth*, although *-es* does appear in educated speech, even in the South (Barber 1976: 239). In the second half of the century *-es* gains complete acceptance to presumably become the norm by about 1600. As argued by Lass (1999: 164), in the earlier part of the

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[3] Barber (1976), among others, suggests a slightly different scenario, namely that the *-s* ending spread from poetry to other genres as a convenient metrical device.

sixteenth century forms in *-s* were possibly the informal variants, whereas third-person indicative singular in *-th* "*neutral and/or elevated*".

At the end of the sixteenth century *-s* might have belonged to the spoken norm among the educated, with *-th* being a metrical variant or the embodiment of the conservatism of the written language. The first half of the seventeenth century still bears witness to considerable fluctuation, however, the phonetic realization of the *-th* variant is uncertain. Lass (1999: 164) quotes the passage from Richard Hodges' *Special help to orthography* (1643: 26-27): "Therefore, whensoever *eth*, cometh in the end of any word, wee may pronounce it sometimes as *s* & sometimes like *z* as in these words, namely in *bolteth* it and *boldeth* it, which are commonly pronounc't, as if they were written thus, *bolts* it, *bolds* it...". Accordingly, one may assume that in the late stages of the rivalry between the *-s* and *-th* endings, the latter was already pronounced as /s/ or /z/. Finally, in the middle of the century in question, the occurrence of the *-th* ending witnesses less frequency, to become sporadic toward the end of the seventeenth century.

As far as the linguistic factors that might have influenced the choice of forms (ending in *-s* or *-th*) are concerned, the number of instances in *-th* remains too low in the studied period to allow for the discussion on the impact of such aspects as negation, furthermore, the array of the cases attested is too scant to ponder on the influence of stem-final sounds on verb endings.[4] However, the present paper is an attempt to utilize the corpus data in view of socio-stylistic factors which influenced the distribution of the *-s* and *-th* endings.

5.2. Discussion

In terms of the extralinguistic factors influencing the fall or rise of linguistic forms, the textual genre might have considerable influence on the choice of the form. As Devitt (1989: 298) points out, the *-th/-s* variation is possibly "most revealing of differences across genres in the American study." Accordingly, the analysis of the data within the framework of textual distribution is necessary. Since, on the one hand, the results for the *-th* ending are so scarce that it is hardly possible to analyze their emergence in "formal" or "informal" context, on the other – the *-s* ending prevails regardless of the level of formality, accordingly, this criterion will not be taken into account in further discussions. Finally, due to the lack of the adequate amount of data, such an author-related parameter as gender of the writer is not applicable in the current study.

5.2.1. Overall distribution of forms

Comparisons between the developments recorded in the Colonial language and the mother tongue are of major interest. In this section, the developmental trends attested in the use of the third person present inflection in both varieties of English are compared in order to contrast linguistic change in the transplanted variety with what takes place in the Mainland language. It should be mentioned here that the discrepancy in the textual basis (the lack of suitable texts corresponding to American town records) is taken into consideration in the present analysis.

As for the Colonial variety of English, out of a total of 615 examples found in the analyzed material, 86.7% (533 instances) occur with the *-s* ending; only 13.3% (82 cases) – with the *-th* ending. The overall distributions of the forms by the three sub-periods under discussion are given in Table 1 (the figures are calculated into normalized frequencies per 1,000 words).

Table 1. The *-s* and *-th* endings in third-person present singular inflection in early American writings

TT	LF	TEXTS	1620-1650		1662-1692		1700-1720	
			-s	*-th*	*-s*	*-th*	*-s*	*-th*
S-B	I	town records	20 / 1.4492	4 / 0.2898	8 / 0.4444	4 / 0.2222	20 / 0.9569	13 / 0.6220
		trials	6 / 0.6		8 / 0.2702	3 / 0.1013	–	–
	F	sermons	86 / 2.8382	5 / 0.165	30 / 1.2244	29 / 1.1836	21 / 1.1931	
non S-B	I	diaries	48 / 1.7778	3 / 0.1112	26 / 1.238		4 / 0.3333	
		travel	1 / 0.2		–	–	10 / 0.9803	
		letters (informal)	15 / 1.0714	2 / 0.1428	14 / 3.889		9 / 2.8125	
	F	letters (formal)	5 / 0.4032	1 / 0.0806	10 / 0.6944		9 / 0.625	1 / 0.0694
		history writing	10 / 0.3571	4 / 0.1428	3 / 0.1886		20 / 0.4167	
		prose	26 / 0.625	1 / 0.0240	15 / 0.7142		14 / 0.8	1 / 0.0571
		poetry	30 / 1.6759	3 / 0.1676	20 / 1.6667	4 / 3.3333	45 / 3.5714	4 / 0.3174
TOTAL: 615			247 / 1.235	23 / 0.115	134 / 0.8375	40 / 0.25	152 / 0.9718	19 / 0.1214

TT = text types, S-B = speech-based, I = informal, F = formal
*/ empty cells indicate the absence of the *-th* form in a given text; dash indicates the lack of a given text type;

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[4] The phonotactic factor which might have also influenced the choice of a variant form – the unstressed syllables following the verb – was discussed by Samuels (1972: 174 -175).

The figures for the period under study confirm the prevalence of the -s ending in third-person singular. It is noteworthy that incidental instances of the marked -th are dispersed across the majority of genres (except trial records and travel accounts) in the period 1620-1650. From the second half of the seventeenth century onwards, the number of marked -th endings dwindles rapidly and the -s establishes its even more solid position. Figure 1 illustrates the preponderance of -s in three sub-periods under discussion.

Figure 1. The distribution of the -s and -th endings in early American writings
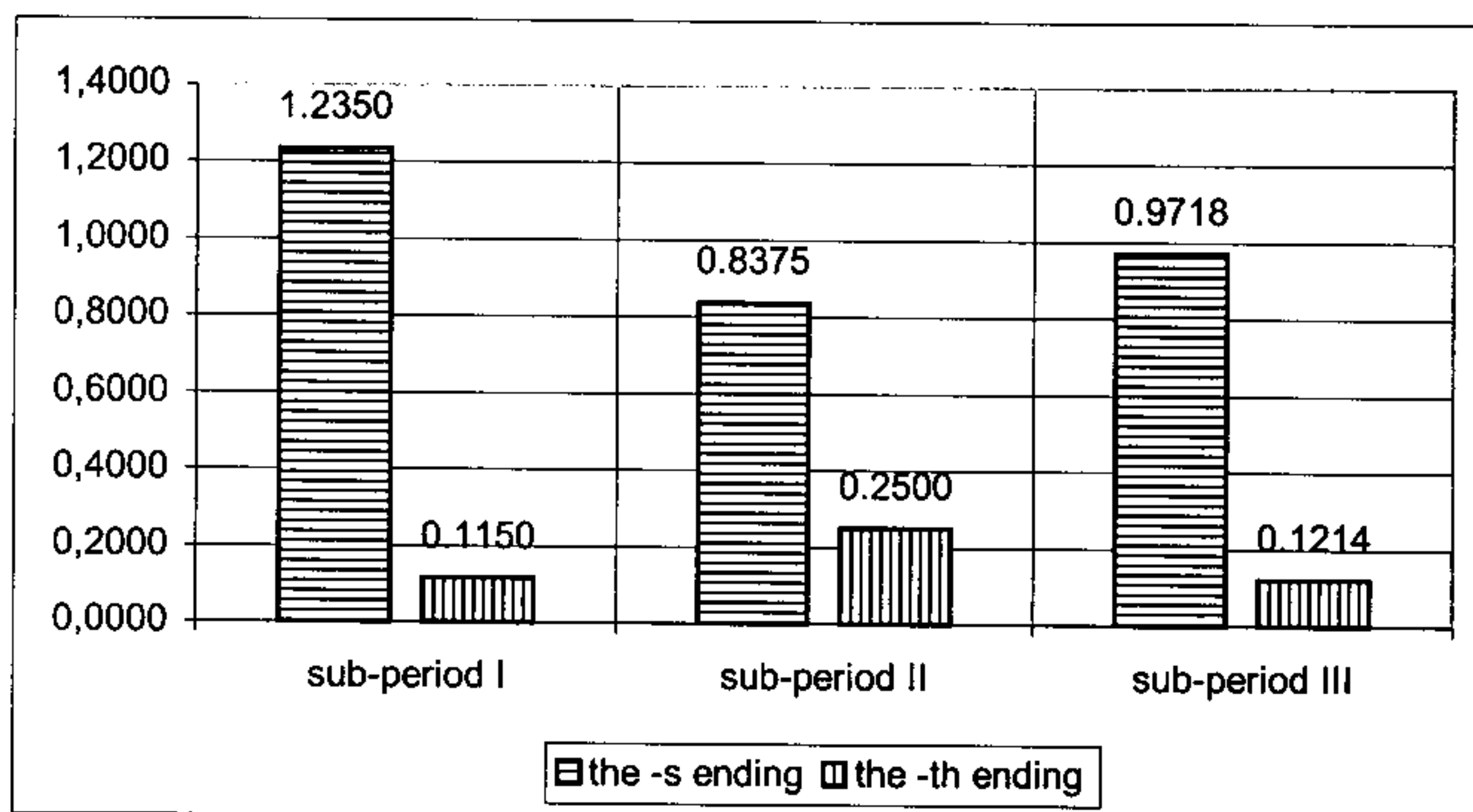
On the basis of the diagram above it is possible to state that through the century under discussion -s was the predominant form. The rise in figures for -th in the second sub-period, where the ratio of -th to -s approximates one to three, is predominantly due to the extensive choice of this ending by Increase Mather, as shown in the section to follow.

In terms of the rivaling -s and -th endings attested in the corpus of British writings analyzed, out of a total of 637 examples found in the material covered, 94% (598 instances) occur with the -s ending, only 6% (39 cases) − with the -th ending. The distribution of both forms across text types comprising the corpus of British writings is set out in Table 2.

Table 2. The -s and -th endings in third-person present singular inflection in early British writings

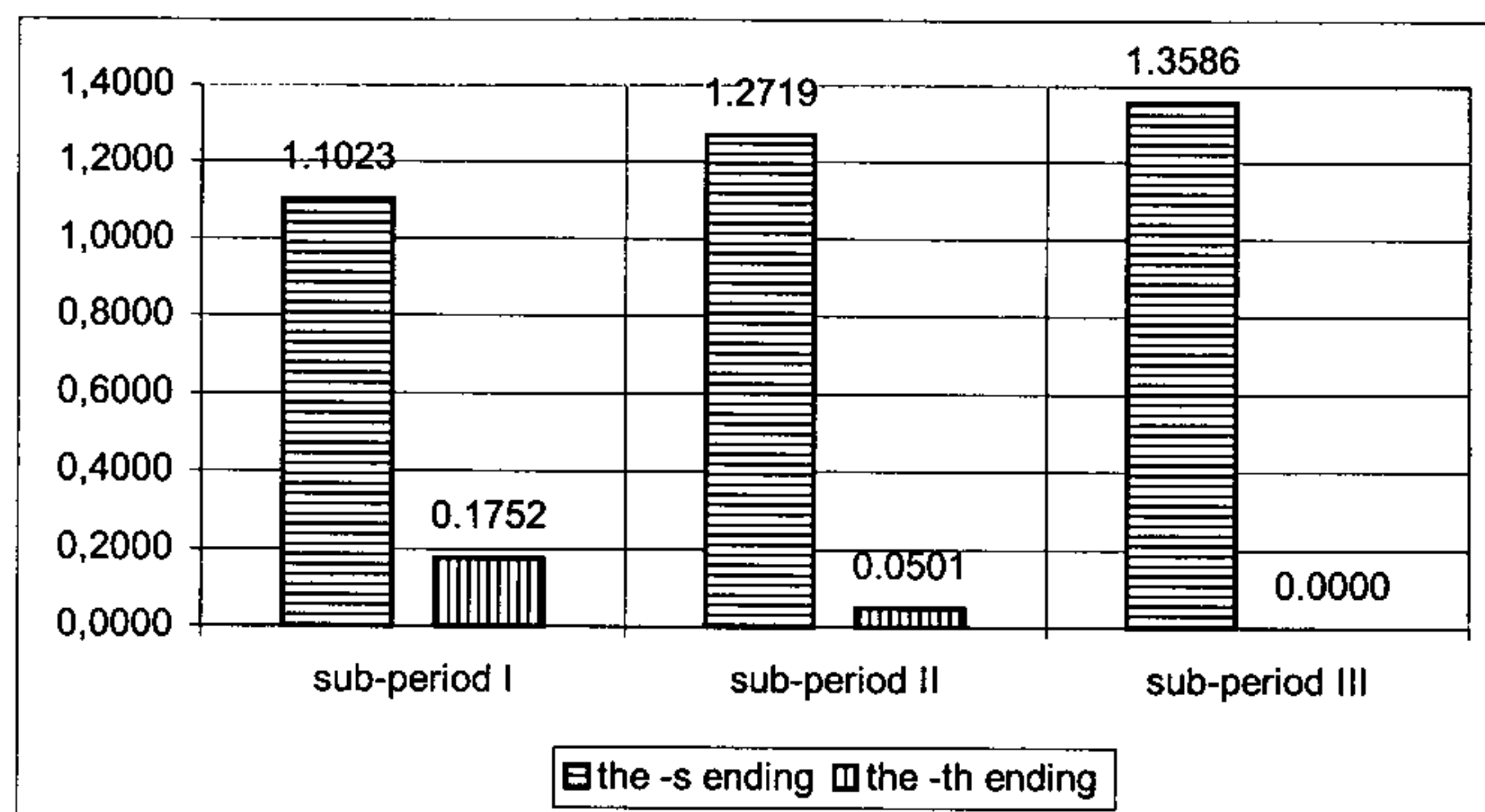| TT	LF	TEXTS	1620-1650 -s	1620-1650 -th	1662-1692 -s	1662-1692 -th	1700-1720 -s	1700-1720 -th
S-B	I	trials	23 / 0.8041	2 / 0.0699	49 / 1.3960		−	−
	F	sermons	25 / 1.3020	2 / 0.1041	10 / 0.5714	2 / 0.1142	21 / 1.0194	
non S-B	I	diaries	4 / 0.2222	2 / 0.1111	31 / 0.9480		11 / 0.4824	
		travel	18 / 0.6792	11 / 0.4150	−	−	42 / 1.5384	
		letters (informal)	18 / 2.4324	1 / 0.1351	12 / 1.3636		9 / 1.0843	
	F	letters (formal)	12 / 0.9756	2 / 0.1626	11 / 1.279		14 / 1.5053	
		history writing	29 / 1.1068	8 / 0.3053	25 / 0.9469		7 / 0.35	
		prose	24 / 1.7142	1 / 0.0714	32 / 2.0253	6 / 0.3797	21 / 1.0447	
		poetry	42 / 1.7004	2 / 0.0809	33 / 2.2448		75 / 3.9893	
TOTAL: 637			195 / 1.1023	31 / 0.1752	203 / 1.2719	8 / 0.0501	200 / 1.3586	0

TT = text types, S-B = speech-based, I = informal, F = formal
*/ empty cells indicate the absence of the -th form in a given text; dash indicates the lack of a given text type;

The stages of rivalry of the -s vs. -th endings in early British writings under scrutiny present a different scenario from that exhibited in their American counterparts. Whereas in the period 1620-1650, a small number of the -th endings was attested in all text types analyzed, in the second sub-period (embracing the years 1662-1692) the declining importance of the ending in question is immediately obvious since only in two genres does the marked -th emerge. It should be remarked that six occurrences spotted in Bacon's writings (representing the prose of persuasion genre) seem to have been a means of imparting a more solemn tone to the style of his essays.

In the last sub-period, the preponderance of the -s form is strongly felt irrespective of text type, for no case of the th-forms was recorded in the corpus. Nonetheless, it must be remarked that the scarce number of the -th endings (six cases) was attested in the biblical quotations. The gradual disappearance of th-forms from British writings is illustrated by the following diagram:

Figure 2. The distribution of the -s and -th endings in early British writings

	sub-period I	sub-period II	sub-period III
the -s ending	1.1023	1.2719	1.3586
the -th ending	0.1752	0.0501	0.0000

□ the -s ending   □ the -th ending

All in all, the conclusion with regard to the rivalry of the *s*-ending with the *th*-ending in both American and British English seems to be that in the language of the American settlers the -*th* ending lingers longer than in the contemporary Mainland language, which may testify to the conservative traits of the language of the early Colonists.

5.2.2. Textual distribution of personal endings in early American materials

The textual distribution observed for the variant forms in -*th* and -*s* are given in Table 3 and 4, respectively.

Table 3 shows that next to sermons, being the major source of the marked -*th* (especially in the second sub-period in question), this third-person singular ending was used quite consistently in both poetry and town records. It has to be remembered that some low figures are dependable on genre, therefore, the analysis of such text types as history writing, witnesses' depositions or the reports of travels will *ipso facto* result in the scarcity of examples of present tense verbs. Nonetheless, on the basis of the table presented above, one can attempt to draw a diachronic conclusion concerning the textual distribution of the third-person singular indicative in -*th*.

In the writings of the settler generation, the scattered instances of -*th* endings appeared in the majority of text types, with the exception of trials and travel. In the writings of the subsequent, American-born generation, the text types which witnessed the appearance of the marked -*th* dwindled to the following four: town chronicles, trials, sermons, and poetry.

Table 3. Textual distribution of the -th ending in early American writings

sub-period	town records	trials	sermon	diaries	travel	letters (I)	letters (F)	history writing	prose	poetry	Total
I	4 / 0.2898		5 / 0.165	3 / 0.1112	—	2 / 0.1428	1 / 0.0806	4 / 0.1428	1 / 0.0240	3 / 0.1676	
II	4 / 0.2222	3 / 0.1013	29 / 1.1836		—					4 / 0.3333	
III	13 / 0.6220	—					1 / 0.0694			4 / 0.3174	
Total	21	3	34	3	0	2	2	4	1	11	102

I = informal, F = formal
* / empty cells indicate the absence of the -*th* form in a given text; dash indicates the lack of a given text type;

Interestingly enough, as the seventeenth century wears on, the great majority of forms appear in the elevated style of sermons. A great number of instances emerged in the sermon of Increase Mather, where the largest number of the *-th* ending appear with *speak* (*speaketh* – thirteen occurrences), (*be*)*come* (*cometh* – eleven instances), *go* and *know* (three occurrences of *goeth* and *knoweth*, respectively). It is apparent that the longer preservation of the *th*-forms in church preaching must be ascribed to influence of the biblical language (Jespersen 1942: 20).

It is tempting to state that in the last sub-period the use of the marked *-th* utterly covaries with religiously motivated content or the purposes of stylistic decorum. Indeed, this claim holds true for the poetry of Edward Taylor, where rare instances of, for example, *shineth* or *tareth* do appear. As for sermons, no instances of *-th* used by either Mather or Green were attested; however, it should be mentioned that some occurrences were recorded in both sermons, however each case of the *th*-forms emerged in passages cited from the Bible. In view of that, it can be argued that the last period scrutinized witnessed even more stringent limitation and even scantier appearance of the *-th* ending.

Setting aside the isolated cases spotted in the prose of persuasion and formal correspondence, at the beginning of the eighteenth century the greatest number of third-person singular in *-th* was channeled through town records. The most common variants spotted in this genre are *runeth, cometh,* and *goeth*. The alternating forms either with *-th* or *-s* are used quite haphazardly, hence *goeth* is used alongside *goes, cometh* alongside *comes, runeth* appears in the same line as *runs*, see example (3).

3)   ... the ... said Lot *Runs* through the Second devision then the
      Line that *Runeth* betwen the Sequestred Land and the half devision
      Land...

              (*New Haven Town Records, 1649-1769*, 1962: 370)

Such a usage may suggest that the spelling *-eth* came to be pronounced as [əz]. This claim can be supported by another citation from Hodges', this time from the final edition to his guide to writing (1653: 63-64, quoted in Kytö 1993b: 134, fn. 10): "howsoever wee write many words as if they were two syllables, yet wee doo commonly pronounce them as if they were but one, as for example, these three words, *leadeth, noteth, taketh,* we doo commonly pronounce them thus, *leads, notes, takes,* and so all other words of this kinde".

Considerably more instances of the *-s* ending were recorded in the early American writings. Their textual distribution is set out in Table 4.

Table 4. Textual distribution of the *-s* ending in early American writings

sub-period	town records	trials	sermon	diaries	travel	letters (I)	letters (F)	history writing	prose	poetry
I	20	6	86	48	1	15	5	10	26	30
	1.4492	0.6	2.8382	1.7778	0.2	1.0714	0.4032	0.3571	0.625	1.6759
II	8	8	30	26	—	14	10	3	15	20
	0.4444	0.2702	1.2244	1.238		3.889	0.6944	0.1886	0.7142	1.6667
III	20	—	21	4	10	9	9	20	14	45
	0.9569		1.1931	0.3338	0.9803	2.8125	0.625	0.4167	0.8	3.5714
Total 533	48	14	137	78	11	38	24	33	55	95

I = informal, F = formal

All the texts show overwhelming preference for the -*s* form as compared to the scantily represented -*th* endings, appearing mostly in the period 1620-1650. As can be seen in Table 3, sermons, poetry, and town records, in which a relatively consistent use of the relic marked -*th* was attested, are simultaneously the locus of progressiveness, since the largest number of the -*s* ending was recorded in both genres in question.

5.3.1. Plural -*s* ending

The main method of marking third-person-plural present-tense indicative verbs in Early American English was the base form of the verb plus a zero morpheme. The rare plural -*s* forms (no plural -*th* attached to an ablaut verb was attested in the corpus) are scattered throughout the century. The corpus examples are given below:

4)

     a) ... my prouisiones *grows* skant: though I husband them the best I cane.

                       (*Winthrop Papers*. III, 1943: 22-23)

     b) Itt is ordered thatt Mr. Evance shall have the 2 trees wch *stands* before his house, in lew of 2 peeces of timber thatt brother Andrews had of his about the meeting house.

         (*Records of the colony and plantation of New Haven, from 1638 to 1649*, 1857: 74)

     c) ... many here *knowes* how deeply many have suffered ...

                       (*The apologia of Robert Keayne*, 1886: 49)

     d) I thinke it wilbe his wisdome to pay them, especially the smaller giftes as fast as he can by degrees, as debts or pay *comes* in though somewhat before the time mentioned ...

                   (*The apologia of Robert Keayne*, 1886: 18-19)

The use of the plurals in -*s*, is by no means peculiar to American writings. The projection of the third-person singular indicative ending to the third-person plural was closely connected with establishing -*s* in third person singular in colloquial usage. Wyld (1920: 340-341) gives examples of sixteenth century instances emerging from under the pen of the cultivated writers, giving credence to the notion that such usage was not confined to the speech of those less educated.

In terms of the subject type, in the examples (4a) through (4c) the noun appears in plural. In the next example (4d) the plural and singular nouns are coordinated by the conjunction *or*. The presence of the singular noun adjacent to the

verb can serve as an explanation for the choice of the marked variant instead of the zero form (Kytö 1993b: 119). In the latter example the situation is similar, where the proximity of the singular noun triggered the use of the -*s* ending.

Similar situation is manifested in the British material, where several occurrences of the plural -*s* form were found, as illustrated by the following example:

5)

     a) The Bridge is a stately building all stone with 18 arches most of them bigg enough to admit a large barge to pass it; its so broade that two coaches *drives* a breast, and there is on each side houses and shopps just like any large street in the Citty...

                 (*The Journeys of Celia Fiennes*, 1947: 290)

     b) ... then *goes* the Privy Councellors that are not Peers of the realme, then two Pursuivants *goes*.

                 (*The Journeys of Celia Fiennes*, 1947: 296)

The appearance of these *s*-forms in third person singular is influenced by the indiosyncratic usage of one author, *Celia Fiennes* (all nine instances were recorded in her travel account).

The scarcity of such forms prevents wider discussion or observations concerning the sub-period distributional patterns. Nevertheless, isolated appearances of the plural -*s* endings in the corpus as well as data emerging from the scrutiny carried out by Kytö (1993b: 119-120), allows the assumption that such forms were in decline in both varieties of English in the century under discussion.

5.3.2 Zero forms in third person singular indicative

Only one undisputable zero form was found in the American sources covered:

6)   ... betwixt itt and the river where the land *fall* narrow ...

         (*Records of the colony and plantation of New Haven, from 1638 to 1649*, 1857: 63)

This rare example indicates that this form is a relic that practically disappeared form American writings (note that no instances of zero forms emerge from the British materials). As indicated by Kytö (1993b: 118), the decline of the zero form in the third person singular indicative can be explained in the light of the heavy functional load the form had obtained over the centuries as a marker of the third person present subjunctive, present indicative, and, especially, the third person present plural form.

6. Subjunctive

The subjunctive is far more common in the American English of the century under discussion than it is in Present-day English. Three examples from three consecutive sub-periods researched are grouped under (7):

7)

a)   ... although my lord bear with my dulness, and take pains himself to teach me.

(*The Diary of Michael Wigglesworth*, 1942-1946: 323)

b) ... if the sword *come* and *take* him away, his blood shall be upon his own head.

(*Increase Mather: Jeremiads*, 1985: 11)

c) Remember I told you so, and that many Months will not pass *before* this *come* to pass.

(*Magnalia Christi Americana*, 1702 [1972]: 38)

In the data, the subjunctive appears most frequently in subordinate clauses introduced by subordinate conjunctions: *if, (al)though, before, lest, till, until, unless, when*, etc.. The majority of the cases (48) occur after *if*, the rest is quite evenly distributed among forms appearing after various conjuncts, with the slight preponderance after *till / until*.

The subjunctive (70 cases) noted in the early American writings[5] is variable. In the third person singular appearing in the clause following the above-mentioned subordinate conjunctions, by and large, one finds the preponderant base-forms – 94% (66 occurrences out of 70 examples), however, this is not always the case, as evident from the -*s* and -*th* forms emerging in the subjunctive (6%) and grouped under (8):

8)

a) ... *unlesse* the King *comes* in by way of Conquest and Tyranny...

(*Christ the fountaine of life*, 1972: 34)

b) ... *before* she *comes* to receive her portion ...

(*The apologia of Robert Keayne*, 1886: 20)

c) ... if when he *seeth* the sword come upon the land, and he blow the trumpet, and warn the people ... his blood shall be upon his own head...

(*Increase Mather: Jeremiads*, 1674: 11)

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[5] For a more explicit discussion on the formal subjunctive in early American writings, see Abbott (1953, 1961).

d) ... if the child be then liveing to be kept & imprved for hir *till* she be marryed or *comes* of age to receive it her selfe ...

(*The apologia of Robert Keayne*, 1886: 24)

Such instances support the argument put forward by Barber (1976: 246-247), who claims that in Early Modern English in the context suggesting doubt, hypothesis, or volition, especially after *if, though, whether, till* and so on, one can find either the subjunctive (*if he come*) or the indicative (*if he comes*). However, the latter phenomenon applies to a minority of forms in the corpus: out of eighty-nine instances, only in four the inflected form appeared in subordinate clauses introduced by the conjuncts, dispersed in the seventeenth century writings. It should also be noted that as for early American writings, the subjunctive was found in a number of contexts: for instance, introduced by an indefinite relative pronoun or adjective and after an adverb, in main clauses expressing wish or purpose, and, finally, after "verbs of commanding and entreating" (Barber 1976: 247).

9)   God *give* him to see the evil in his failings.

(*Bradford's History of Plymouth Plantation, 1606-1646*, 1964: 278)

On the basis of these examples, it is safe to conclude that the subjunctive was by no means vestigial in early American English and its appearance was by far more frequent than in Present-day American English. However, as pointed out by Abbott (1953: 116), as early as the seventeenth century modal auxiliaries took over many functions of the subjunctive, which ultimately led to the prevailing contemporary way of expressing the subjunctive idea.

In the British texts under analysis, so intensive a usage of the subjunctive was not recorded, as indicated by the lower figures (39 instances). In terms of vacillation between the usage of either the subjunctive or the indicative in subordinate clauses introduced by subordinate conjunctions, the subjunctive appeared in 69% of cases (27 instances) and the indicative occurred in 31% (11) (the indicative existed by the side of the prevalent subjunctive through the century). It must be noted that the corresponding figure for the American English texts is 94%.

Figures obtained for both American and British English point to the fact that the mother tongue, in terms of the subjunctive, was further on its way toward the situation of the Present-day English than its colonial variety.

7. Concluding remarks

In view of the results discussed above, the following conclusions can be formulated. The inflectional system of early American English, especially toward the end of the seventeenth century, was on its way to becoming what it is today,

with the exception of the subjunctive, which was firmly established in the speech of American colonists. However, when compared with the contemporary British variety, it exhibits some conservative traits in the prolonged use both of the -*th* ending and the subjunctive introduced by subordinate conjunctions.

The second person singular ending -*st*, marked for concord with *thou*, is confined solely to the stylistic purposes and manifests itself in the writings representing solemn style or in the poetic genre. Other endings being on a verge of disappearance are the zero forms and the plural -*s* ending whose importance, according to the corpus data, was practically insignificant in early American writings.

In terms of the third person singular, the attempt to utilize the corpus data in view of socio-stylistic factors led to the following conclusions: the -*s* ending was firmly established in the first century of the existence of American English. Whereas in the first half of the seventeenth century the marked -*th* witnessed relative popularity in the majority of texts under research, toward the end of the century it was mainly pushed to religious and archaizing writings or poetry. In the less cultivated speech, the only exception are the town chronicles, through which the third-person singular indicative in -*th* was channeled to the first two decades of the eighteenth century, nonetheless, it was already a relic and rare form pushed aside by the dominant -*s* ending.

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Appendix I: Classification of early American texts on the basis of their type and date of composition or publication.

The following tables present the structure of the corpus arranged according to the text type type, date of composition or the span time covered by a given text. The word counts are based on estimates carried out manually.

THE FIRST SUB-PERIOD: 1620-1655

TEXT TYPE	AUTHOR	YEAR	TITLE/TEXT	WORDS
letters	*Various authors*	1630-1639	formal	12 400
			informal	14 000
travel	Francis Higginson	1630	*A true relation of the last voyage to New England*	5 000
historical writings	William Bradford	1620-1631	*Bradford's history of Plymouth Plantation*	23 800
	Francis Higginson	1630	*New England's plantation*	4 200
poetry	Samuel Danforth	1647	*Poems*	2 200
		1640	*Booke of psalmes*	15 700
prose of persuasion	Robert Keayne	1653	*The apologia of Robert Keayne*	41 600
trials		1651	*Witchcraft annals*	10 000
town records		1639-1642	*New Haven Town Records*	13 800
sermons	John Cotton	1639	*Sermons*	30 300
diaries	Michael Wigglesworth	1652-1653	*Diary*	27 000
			Total: 200 000	

THE SECOND SUB-PERIOD: 1662-1692

TEXT TYPE	AUTHOR	YEAR	TITLE/TEXT	WORDS
letters	various authors	1670-1690	formal	14 400
			informal	3 600
travel	–	–	–	–
historical writings	William Hubbard	1677	*A narrative of the troubles with the Indians*	15 900
poetry	Micheal Wigglesworth	1662	*The day of doom*	12 000
prose of persuasion[1]	Mary Rowlandson	1675	*Narrative of the captivity of Mrs Mary Rowlandson*	21 000
trials		1692	*Salem Trials*	14 700
		1671-1680	*Suffolk Records*	12 300
		1679-1680	*Witchcraft annals*	2 600
town records		1670-1673	*New Haven Town Records*	18 000
sermons	Increase Mather	1674	*The day of trouble is near*	9 700
	Samuel Parris	1689	*The sermon notebook*	14 800
diaries	Samuel Sewall	1674-1682	*Diary*	21 000
			Total: 160 000	

[1] This category embraces narratives, apologies, and prose of persuasion

THE THIRD SUB-PERIOD: 1700-1720

TEXT TYPE	AUTHOR	YEAR	TITLE/TEXT	WORDS
letters	*Various authors*	1705-1719	formal	14 400
			informal	3 200
journals	Sarah Knight	1704	*The journal of Madam Knight*	10 200
historical writings	Cotton Mather	1702	*Magnalia Christi Americana*	48 000
poetry	Edward Taylor	1708-1719	*The poems*	12 600
prose of persuasion	Cotton Mather	1710	*Bonifacius*	17 500
trials	–	–	–	–
town records		1710-1719	*New Haven Town Records*	15 200
		1702/3-1706	*Boxford Town Records*	5 700
sermons	Henry Flynt	1714	*The doctrine of the last judgment*	7 500
	Increase Mather	1700	*The order of the gospel*	10 100
diaries	Joseph Green	1700-1715	*Diary of Rev. Joseph Green*	12 000
			Total: 156 400	

Appendix II: Classification of early British texts on the basis of their type and date of composition or publication

THE FIRST SUB-PERIOD: 1620-1655

TEXT TYPE	AUTHOR	YEAR	TITLE/TEXT	WORDS
letters	*Various authors*	1705-1719	formal	14 400
			informal	3 200
journals	Sarah Knight	1704	*The journal of Madam Knight*	10 200
historical writings	Cotton Mather	1702	*Magnalia Christi Americana*	48 000
poetry	Edward Taylor	1708-1719	*The poems*	12 600
prose of persuasion	Cotton Mather	1710	*Bonifacius*	17 500
trials	–	–	–	–
town records		1710-1719	*New Haven Town Records*	15 200
		1702/3-1706	*Boxford Town Records*	5 700
sermons	Henry Flynt	1714	*The doctrine of the last judgment*	7 500
	Increase Mather	1700	*The order of the gospel*	10 100
diaries	Joseph Green	1700-1715	*Diary of Rev. Joseph Green*	12 000
			Total: 156 400	

THE SECOND SUB-PERIOD: 1662-1692

TEXT TYPE	AUTHOR	YEAR	TITLE/TEXT	WORDS
letters	*Various authors*	1670-1690	formal letters	8 600
			informal letters	8 800
travel	–	–	–	–
historical writings	John Milton	1670	*The history of Britain*	26 400
poetry	John Dryden	1685	*Poems*	11 100
	John Milton	1667	*Poetical works*	3 600
prose of persuasion	Francis Bacon	1673	*Essays*	5 600
	Izaak Walton	1676	*The compleat angler*[1]	10 200
trials		1685	*The trial of Titus Oates*	19 600
		1685	*The trial of the Lady Alice Lisle*	15 500
sermons	John Tillotson	1682	*A sermon preached at the funeral of the Reverend Mr Thomas Gouge*	17 500
diaries	Bulstrode Whitelocke	1667-1673	*Diary*	20 000
	Samuel Peppys	1669	*Diary*	12 700
				Total: 159 600

THE THIRD SUB-PERIOD: 1700-1720

TEXT TYPE	AUTHOR	YEAR	TITLE/TEXT	WORDS
letters	*Various authors*		formal letters	9 300
			informal letters	8 300
journals	Celia Fiennes	1701-1703	*The journeys of Celia Fiennes*	27 300
historical writings	Brunet	1703	*Burnet's history of my own time*	20 000
poetry	Pope	1715	*Poems*	18 800
prose of persuasion	Anthony Cooper	1711/1714	*The moralist; Reflections*	20 100
trials	–	–	–	–
sermons	Samuel Clarke	1704-1705	*A discourse concerning the being and attributes of God...*	20 600
diaries	John Evelyn	1703-1706	*The diary of John Evelyn*	22 800
				Total: 147 200

[1] Since only a small excerpt of Bacon's *Essays* was available, the prose of persuasion category was supplemented with the excerpts of Walton's instructional book.