THAT/ ZERO VARIATION IN PRIVATE LETTERS AND DRAMA (1420-1710): A CORPUS-BASED APPROACH

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1. INTRODUCTION

This study deals with the variation of the commonest complementisers in English —*that* and *zero*— in two informal registers,[1] namely drama and private letters, the former being the more informal of the two. The aim of this study is to see how *that* and *zero* behave in these registers over the particular period that has been selected, and what determinants favour the selection of one over the other. An attempt will be made to see, then, to what extent different factors, both extralinguistic and intralinguistic, have an influence on the choice of the complementiser.

The period that I have chosen to study goes from 1420-1710. It includes the last eighty years of the Middle English period (henceforth ME), from 1420 to 1500, and the whole of the early Modern English period (henceforth eModE), as delimited in The Helsinki Corpus, from 1500 to 1710.

It is generally acknowledged that in Old English (henceforth OE) and early ME, *that* is the predominant complementiser, while *zero* only appears in isolated instances (Mitchell 1985: §1976ff; Rissanen 1991: 277-278; Traugott 1992: 236). In late ME (henceforth lME), the situation changes in this respect because *zero* starts to become of more frequent use and gains ground progressively (Warner 1982: 169-170; Rissanen 1991: 278-280; Fischer 1992: 313). The rapid increase of the use of *zero* as a complementiser, started in the previous stage (late ME) continues in the next stage, eModE, when it becomes very common (Fanego 1990: 142ff; Rissanen 1991: 279; López Couso 1996: 272). Finally, in the next period

that connects with present-day English (henceforth PDE), the rapid progression of *zero* suddenly stops and *that* seems to be favoured again, although in colloquial style *zero* is still maintained as the unmarked link (McDavid 1964: 104ff; Elsness 1982: 6ff; Elsness 1984: 521; Rissanen 1991: 285-286; Finegan and Biber 1995: 247-248).

The corpus singled out for this study has been drawn from *The Helsinki Corpus of English Texts: Diachronic and Dialectal* (Rissanen *et al.* 1991), compiled at the English Department of the University of Helsinki. A limited sample of approximately 20,000 words has been selected, from private letters and drama, both types of texts that belong to the very bottom of a cline from more formal to less formal (or more informal), drama occupying an even lower position on the scale than private letters. The letters examined have been written by both men and women belonging to the same circles of correspondence. Approximately 2,500 words have been chosen from four different circles of correspondence, each of them matching chronologically with the four subperiods under study.[2] Accordingly, the first sample of letters, representative of ME4, belongs to the group of the *Paston Letters* and evidence from two men and one woman has been singled out. The second sample, corresponding to eModE1, belongs to the circle of the *Plumpton Letters*, the letter-writers being two women and two men. The next sample is from the *Barrington Letters* (eModE2) written by two women and two men. Finally, the last sample belongs to the *Oxinden* circle (eModE3) of correspondence written by a man and a woman.

An attempt was made to avoid verse in the analysed corpus as the selection of the complementiser in poetic works can be biased for metrical or prosodic reasons. However, due to the unavailability of dramatic prose texts for the last sub-period of ME and the very first sub-period of eModE in the Helsinki Corpus (Rissanen 1986: 99), use was made of some fragments in verse of a mystery play belonging to *The York Plays* and Nicholas Udall's comedy *Roister Doister*. The other two plays that the corpus includes are fragments in prose, taken from Shakespeare's *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and, finally, Farquhar's *The Beaux Stratagem*. As in letters, aproximately 2,500 words have been selected from each of the plays, corresponding to each of the subperiods included in our study.

2. COMPLEMENT CONSTRUCTIONS IN THE CORPUS

The number of complement constructions introduced by the two major complementisers —the complementisers we are interested in— amounts to 261 in both genres. The following table (Table 1) shows how they are distributed, according to genre and to complementiser:

Table 1: *That* and *zero* overall distribution

	That	*Zero*	*TOTAL*
LETTERS	102 (53.1%)	90 (46.9%)	192 (73.6%)
DRAMA	25 (36.2%)	44 (63.8%)	69 (26.4%)
TOTAL	127 (48.7%)	134 (51.3%)	261

As can be seen in the table, the sample of complement clauses in the drama section has turned out to be exceptionally low, lower than we had expected *a priori*. Due to the scarcity of examples in drama as compared to letters, the source of exemplification throughout the paper will be mainly letters. We will draw on examples from drama when available.

As had been expected with such styles —informal—, *zero* is more frequent than *that* in the corpus (51.3% *vs.* 48.7% respectively). What is more surprising is that the difference between the two complementisers is not so outstanding as had been expected, particularly bearing in mind that both styles are informal. As can be seen from the table above, *that* is even more frequent than *zero* in private letters (cf. López Couso, 1996: 275). The tendency is inverted though as far as drama is concerned, perhaps because drama is on the borderline of colloquial spoken language (Rissanen 1986: 99-100). Here a predominance of *zero* is observed, although admitedly that the percentage is not very high (cf. Fanego 1990: 5; López Couso 1996: 275).

It should be remembered that a long time span is involved —three centuries— and accordingly a table with the distribution of the two complementisers in terms of the diachronic survey above would not be out of place to see whether, in fact, a clear increase of *zero* is shown:

Table 2: *That / Zero* in different sub-periods[3]

	LETTERS		TOTAL
	That	*Zero*	
ME4	44 (57.9%)	32 (42.1%)	76
EModE1	15 (71.4%)	6 (28.6%)	21
EModE2	6 (22.2%)	21 (77.8%)	27
EModE3	4 (17.4%)	19 (82.6%)	23
TOTAL	69 (46.9%)	78 (53.1%)	147

	DRAMA		TOTAL
	That	*Zero*	
ME4	8 (100%)	-	8
EModE1	3 (16.7%)	15 (83.3%)	18
EModE2	1 (5.6%)	17 (94.5%)	18
EModE3	8 (47%)	9 (53%)	17
TOTAL	20 (32.8%)	41 (67.2%)	61

The increase of *zero* is noticeable if the earliest period under study (ME4) is compared with the latest one (EModE3), thus confirming the tradition.

Our overall count includes not only complement clauses introduced by a verbal predicate —both subject (V SUCL) and object clauses (V OBJCL)— but also complement clauses depending on a noun (NOUNCL) or an adjective (ADJCL), as a variation —although a lesser one— has also been observed in such syntactic patterns.

The following table shows the distribution of the two complementisers at competence in the most frequent syntactic structures:[4]

Table 3: *That / zero* distribution in different syntactic structures

	(it) V SUCL		V OBJCL		V OI OBJCL		ADJCL.		NOUNCL.	
	T	Z	T	Z	T	Z	T	Z	That	Zero
LETTERS	4	4	46	70	23	8	9	6	18	2
DRAMA	1	-	18	33	2	8	-	3	4	-
TOTAL	5	4	64	103	25	16	9	9	22	2
%	1.9	1.6	24.7	39.8	9.6	6.2	3.5	3.5	8.5	0.7
	9 (3.5%)		167 (64.5%)		41 (15.8%)		18 (7%)		24 (9.2%)	

Coordinate clauses have also been taken into account, but only when the subject and the predicate were explicit in second conjoin of the coordinate construction. Cases such as the one in the following example have counted as two complement clauses, the first with the complementiser *that* and the second with the complementiser *zero* (parenthesis are mine):

(1) certyfyyng ʒow ∂at I haue spok wyth John Rwsse, and (certyfyyng ʒow) Playter spak wyth him bothe, on Fryday be-fore Seynt Barthelmw. (1461, *Paston Letters*, LET. 116)

On the other hand, cases in which the subject of the second conjoin was omitted for reasons of coreferentiality or the like have been left out, such as the second conjoin of the following coordinate structure (in bold type):

(2) I am very glad you have overcom your pashon **and will see Mr Willyans.** (1629, Barrington Letters, LET. 49)

A number of dubious examples have also been excluded, among them comment clauses, such as that in (3) below, in which it was not clear whether a relation of dependence as in ordinary complement clauses obtained or, rather, a more parenthetical one. Notice how in this particular case, the sentence-medial position that the sequence *I beleeve* occupies also proves that it is a comment clause. Moreover, the intonational contour of the clause in bold type is somehow marked with respect to the rest of the clause (cf. PDE):

(3) It cost Mr Cater **I beleeve** above three pound. (1665/6, *Oxinden Letters*, LET. CXCVI)

Complement clauses with the following structure

$$NP_1 \, VP \qquad NP_2 \qquad VP$$

have also been left out. Such clauses were indeterminate between finite complement clauses with *zero* complementiser and non-finite complement clauses, at a time when the regularisation of *to*-infinitives or unintroduced infinitives (bare infinitives) had not yet been achieved (Fanego 1992: 30ff). In my corpus, a few examples with these characteristics have been found. In all of them, the NP_2 was a personal pronoun, and according to Fanego, "...a light NP_2 consisting of only a pronominal tends to correlate with *zero*..." (1992: 37). In addition, all the examples found in the analysed corpus have *pray* or *beseech* as the main verb (cf. Ando 1976: 524; Fanego 1990: 40), as illustrated in the following example:

(4) I **pray 3ow send me** it as hastely as 3e may. (1461, *Paston Letters*, LET. 116)

All these factors have led us to omit these inderterminate cases between finite complement clauses with *zero* complementiseds and non-finite complement clauses and leave them out of our analysis.

So-called knock-out contexts (López Couso, 1996: 272-3) have definitely been excluded too, as in such cases there is no variation between the two complementisers, i.e., these contexts are invariably *that* or *zero*. In accordance with this, exclamatory clauses in which the presence of *that* is mandatory have been left out, such as

(5) (^M. M. ^) That she coulde not sitte upright. (?1500-1571, Nicholas Udall: *Roister Doister*)

and similarly clauses in which the absence of complementiser or complementiser *zero* is compulsory. This refers to clauses of subject extraction by a process of relativisation, as is the case in example (6) (Bergh and Seppänen 1994):

(6) I desyre to be remembred, and so doe my wife and sisters, to owr brother Gerard and our sisters, and my neice and uncle, and cosen Brewster, **who I assure me is now with you**. (1629, Barrington Letters, LET. 94)

As mentioned at the beginning of this section, the number of complement clauses found in the corpus amounts to 261. In the next section, an attempt will be made to show in greater more detail what are the most important factors at play in determining one choice over the other and to show how the distribution of *that* and *zero* complementisers behaves in relation to these factors.

3. CONDITIONING FACTORS

As has been previously said here, we shall be concerned not only with purely linguistic factors such as the type of predicate on which the complement clause depends or the presence of intervening material between the matrix predicate and the subject of the subordinate clause, but also with factors such as style. Due to the fact that the corpus comprises material written by both men and women, we shall also study to what an extent sociological factors such as sex have an influence, if any, on the choice of the complementiser.

Although we shall deal with each of these factors individually, we must admit from the very beginning that there does not exist a one-to-one correlation between each of them and the choice of the complementiser; rather, this choice is a question of not just one factor, but of the interrelation of several factors together. We must constantly bear in mind that "factors reinforce one another" (Elsness, 1982: 31) and that "factors usually operate in combination" (Rydén, 1979: 12, fn 2). The general principle at work seems in all cases to be the avoidance of structural ambiguity in the interests of the greatest syntactic clarity.

3.1.   STYLE

The factor of style has always been considered as relevant in complementiser selection, and the majority of the descriptive studies dealing with the variation between *that / zero* as complementisers devote some lines to this factor (Elsness 1984:520ff; Fanego 1990: 143; Rissanen 1991: 284-285; Finegan and Biber 1995: 253ff; López Couso 1996: 276ff).

It has been traditionally maintained that *that* tends to be used in formal contexts, while *zero* is more frequently used in less formal ones, especially in the spoken language. According to this general assertion, *zero* should be more frequent than *that* in our corpus simply because we are dealing with two registers which would seem to be *zero* favouring contexts. As has already been seen in table 1, partially reproduced here for convenience, *zero* is more frequent in the total number than *that,* but contrary to what might be expected the difference is almost insignificant since they show an almost even distribution (cf. Table 2).

A more detailed look at the genres in particular, will reveal that percentage of occurrences of *zero* is higher in drama, but this is not surprising because, as already stated, drama approaches the spoken language. In fact, drama is generally considered to be the genre that is nearest the

spoken language. In the letters, on the other hand, it will be seen that the relation is inverted: *that* is more frequent than *zero*, despite the fact that this register is also informal.

Despite the fact that these numbers go against the general tendency, it is possible that all the syntactic patterns considered and the results may be somehow biased. Among these patterns, ditransitive constructions and nominal predicates represent approximately a quarter of the examples of the corpus, and both of them are *that* favouring contexts (Table 3). Particularly striking in this respect is the case of nominal semantic predicates, both in letters and drama, because the alternation of complementiser is very rarely found; in fact, the percentage for the *zero* complementiser is totally insignificant, being below 1%. As to the ditransitive pattern, there is more variation, although the superiority of *that* is clear in letters (23 *that*s *vs.* 8 *zero*s). Drama differs in this respect, but it must be remembered that it constitutes an especially colloquial register (2 *that*s *vs.* 8 *zero*s).

Table 4: Predicates favouring *that*

	Vb IO OBJCL			NOUNCL
	That	**Zero**	**That**	**Zero**
LETTERS	23	8	18	2
DRAMA	2	8	4	-
TOTAL*	25 (9.6%)	16 (6.2%)	22 (8.5%)	2 (0.7%)

* Notice that percentages here have been calculated by taking into account all the complement clauses in the corpus (261).

On the other hand a study of object clauses, the most frequent syntactic pattern in our corpus (64.5%) (and indeed throughout the history of English,) reveals different ratios. The situation seems to approach the general tendency, as shown in Table 5:

Table 5: *That / zero* in object clauses

	Vb OBJCL		TOTAL
	That	**Zero**	
LETTERS	46 (39.7%)	70 (60.3%)	116
DRAMA	18 (35.3 %)	33 (64.7%)	51
TOTAL	64 (38.3 %)	103 (61.7%)	167 (64.5%)

As can be seen, the percentages of complement clauses with *zero* increase considerably with respect to the overall distribution percentage (cf. Table 1).

Another possible explanation for such a deviance in the choice of complementiser from the general tendency, has to do with the fact that many of the letters are addressed to someone who is socially superior to the writer and therefore show a more careful style.[5] Letters addressed to a person considered socially inferior by the writer have been also found, some which are particularly interesting for our purposes here. In these letters, object complement clauses —the most frequent of all syntactic patterns and where the variation can be best seen— are mostly introduced by the complementiser *zero*. There are also complement clauses introduced by *that*; however they seem to be used in apparently *that*-favouring contexts. Two of them are the result of the subcategorisation of a ditransitive verb, such as:

> (7) And my brother **told Him that** hee came to acquaint him of a liveing was said lately to be fallen by the Incumbent´s decease and desired hee might have it. (1662, *Oxinden Letters,* LET. CLXXVIII)

The other example has a non-pronominal subject in the lower clause, the presence of *that* thus preventing structural ambiguity:

> (8) Whereupon the Gent replyed that **the Incumbent** was as live as either of them,[...]. (1662, *Oxinden Letters,* LET. CLXXVIII)

The omission of *that* would lead to a possible misinterpretation of *reply* as a ditransitive verb with *the Incumbent* as IO and therefore, syntactic clarity is achieved by the insertion of *that* to avoid ambiguity. Furthermore, *reply* is a low-frequency verb in our corpus, as it only appears once (cf. López Couso 1996: 276), although admittedly this should not be taken as indicative because of the small sample of words that have been used.

3.2. MATRIX PREDICATE

The matrix predicate has also been considered to play an important role in the choice of the complementiser. As is to be expected, the majority of the studies devoted to this topic refer to it (McDavid 1964: 109; Elsness 1984: 522-523; Fanego 1990: 144-145; Rissanen 1991: 284-285; Finegan and Biber 1995: 253-254; López Couso 1996: 276-279).

The matrix predicate is considered to have played a role in OE times (Mitchell 1985: 30; Traugott 1992: 236) and also in ME (Fischer 1992: 313), principally as regards its frequency. It has been traditionally acknowledged that the complementiser *that* ismore commonly used with low frequency predicates. Conversely, *zero* is more llikely to be used with so-

called high frequency predicates. The following table (table 6) shows the most frequent predicates in the corpus:

Table 6: High-frequency predicates *

	That	*Zero*	TOTAL
Believe	-	10 (100%)	10
Hear	4 (44.4)	5 (55.5%)	9
Hope	-	5 (100 %)	5
Know	2 (16.6%)	10 (83.3%)	12
Perceive	1 (20%)	4 (80%)	5
Pray	5 (71.4%)	2 (28.6%)	7
Say	8 (27.6%)	21 (72.4%)	29
Suppose	1 (20%)	4 (80%)	5
Tell	8 (61.5%)	5 (38.5%)	13
Think	3 (15.8%)	16 (84.2%)	19
Trow	1 (20%)	4 (80%)	5
Trust	1 (20%)	4 (80%)	5
Understand	6 (66.7%)	3 (33.3%)	9
Wit	4 (66.7%)	2 (33.3%)	6
TOTAL	44 (31.7%)	95 (68.3%)	139

*Five appearances or more

It can be seen that, in most cases, high frequency verbs —normally verbs with a general meaning— show a preference for *zero*, as the percentages show. It is clearer even with verbs such as *believe* or *hope*, where not a single example of a *that* complement clause has been found in the corpus. Especially noticeable as well are the high percentages of *zero*s with verbs such as *know*, *perceive*, *say*, *suppose*, *think*, *trow* and *trust*, considered as high frequency verbs too, at least in our corpus. It must be observed too that the majority of the *that*-complement clauses introduced by these matrix predicates are normally characterised by showing a *that*-favouring environment, such as the presence of an auxiliary verb:

> (9) I **cannot thinke that** he hath informed us all truely, yet not fot that we will not suffer him to disobey our writinge; (1461, Paston Letters, 116)

> (10) (^Aim.^) With all my Heart; and we have liv'd justly, (^Archer^) , we **can't say that** we have spent our Fortunes, but

that we have # enjoy'd 'em. (1707, George Farquhar: *The Beaux Stratagem*)

or the non-finite morphology of the verb in question, without an auxiliary verb:

> (11) ...I beseech the lord to give me a hart so to seeke him that I may be harde and that I may make a holy and sactified use of all his fatherly chastisments, **knowinge that** all things shall worke together for good to his children. (1629, Barrington Letters, 93)

or even the presence of intervening elements between the matrix predicate and the subject of the lower clause:

> (12) Dan I prayd here aȝyn ðat sche wuld teryn tyl ȝe kom hom, and I seyd **I trostyd veryly ðat** ȝe wuld don qhan ȝe kom hom as jtt longyth to ȝw to don; (1448, Paston Letters)

or a heavy subject in the subordinate clause:

> (13) He soposeth ðat **all ðat js don to hym** js att ðe request of ðe parson of Sparham and Knatylsale. (1448, Paston Letters)

Especially significant are the cases of verbs such as *understand* and *wit* and, to a lesser extent, *hear*, because these show an unexpected number of occurrences of *that* complement clauses. This is not so surprising as it might seem at first sight, because most of these verbs appear in non-finite forms, a context favouring *that*, as has just been seen (see example 11):

> (14) Lettyng you **to understand that** my Lord Archbishop sent one servant of his unto my son William, chardging him in the Kyngs name to sette in the tenaunts agayne; (1502, Plumpton Letters, CXXXV)

> (15) Ryth wyrchpful hwsbond, I recomawnd me to ȝw, desiryng hertyly to heryn of ȝwr wel-fare, praying ȝw **to wēte ðat** I was wyth my Lady Morley in ðe Satyrday nexst after ðat ȝe departyd from hens,[...]. *(1448, Paston Letters)*

Finally, other verbs in which the number of *that*s is greater than the number of *zero*s must be accounted for, notably the ditransitive verbs *pray* and *tell*. The fact that they are ditransitive —a context favouring *that*— explains the superiority of *that* as complementiser:

> (16) (^Arch.^) And our Horses, Cloaths, Rings, &c. why we have very good Fortunes now for moderate People; and let me **tell you**, besides Thousand, **that** this Two hundred Pound, with the experience that we are now Masters of, is a better Estate than # the Ten we have spent. (1707, George Farquhar: *The Beaux Stratagem*)

> (17) Laveraw[{n{]ce Rede of Mawthby recommaw[{n{]dyth hym to ʒu and **prayith ʒw ∂at** ʒe wyl vwchesave to leten hym byn of ʒ w ∂e ferm barly ∂at ʒe xuld have of hym,[...]. *(1448, Paston Letters)*

> (18) and with Dr. Porie who hath Ickham and is a kinsman of the Arch Bishop of Canterbury, who **tells mee that** my Lord hath set down my name in Order to somewhatt. (1662, *Oxinden Letters*, CLXXVIII)

As can be gathered from the examples above, the cooperation among factors seems to be again at work. The alternation of one or the other complementiser is not so much conditioned by the presence of one determining factor as by the combination of several of them.

As to the different categories of predicates, our examples are not numerous enough to draw definite conclusions; even so, tentative ideas will be suggested. In connection with nouns as predicates, we have already hinted that the typical determining factors do not apply here as they do to other types of semantic predicates, since the majority are *that*s. It would be risky to say that it is a knock-out context, because variation is still observed, but it is also true that it is not far from being one either (0.7% of *zero* with nominal predicates (Table 2)). It would be well to take into account at this point the possibility that stylistic reasons play a role in these specific cases in which a *zero* complement clause depends on a noun. As can be observed, in the following example the complement clause depends on a nominal phrase that is a sort of set phrase. This may also have an influence on the choice of the complementiser:

> (19) The measels have bin in most placis abowte us, but **thanks be to God** I here of none that dye of them. (1629, Barrington Letters, 49)

In the case of adjectives, once again, the scarcity of examples prevents us from drawing definite conclusions. However, one particular adjective stands out among the others: it is *glad* and it appears four times in the corpus. In accord with the frequency factor, the majority of occurrences of this adjective (3) shows the complementiser *zero*:

> (20) I am **glad** my husband sent you some of your one cheries and that they cam at soe fitt a time to my sister Robert. (1629, Barrington Letters, 49)

as opposed to one single case in which *that* is made explicit:

> (21) Deare mother I am wonderfull **gladd that** it pleaseth God to give you your health soe well at Harrow. (1629, Barrington Letters, 49)

Intimately connected to the frequency of the matrices is their meaning, as it is generally acknowledged that the more general the meaning of the predicate, the more likely it is that *zero* will be used (Table 6). Conversely, the more specific the meaning of the predicate, the more frequently *that* is resorted to.

> (22) Hodge Foke told me ∂at Sym Schepherd js styl wyth Wylly, and jf ʒe wyl I xal **purvey ∂at** he xal be broht hom ere ʒe kom hom. (1448, Paston Letters)

> (23) Sir, I **marvell greatly that** I have no word from you (and my cousin Gascoyne also) under what condition I shall behave me and my servants. *(1502-3, Plumpton Letters, CXLII)*

> (24) (^R. Royster.^) The iolyest wenche that ere I hearde, little mouse, May I not **reioyce that** she shall dwell in my house; (1500-1570, Nicholas Udall: *Roister Doister*)

(25) (^Arch.^) ...... Our Friends indeed began to, **suspect that** our Pockets were low; but we came off with flying Colours, shew'd no signs of want either in Word or Deed. (1707, George Farquhar: *The Beaux Stratagem*)

This idea of semantic specificity seems to explain why the verbs that appear in the corpus once are *that*s in their majority, rather than *zero*s, as can be seen in table 7:

Table 7: Verbs with one appearance

	That	*Zero*
Answer	1	-
Acquaint	1	-
Beg	1	-
Bid	1	-
Complain	1	-
Conceive	1	-
Confess	-	1
Deem	-	1
Deny	1	-
Ensure	-	1
Feel	1	-
Imagine	-	1
Marvel	1	-
Purvey	1	-
Rejoice	1	-
Suffice	1	-
Suspect	1	-
Take no unkindness[6]	1	-
Wish	-	1
TOTAL	14 (73.7%)	5 (26.3%)

Not only is the frequency and semantics of the matrix predicates important as to the choice of one complementiser over the other, but so is their morphology (Table 8).

Table 8: Morphology of the matrix predicate

		That	*Zero*
NONFINITE	LETTERS	13	6
	DRAMA	2	1

COMPLEX VERB PHRASES	AUXILIARY VB.+ V$_{lex}$	LETTERS	9	4
		DRAMA	3	5
	NEGATIVE VB.	LETTERS	2	-
		DRAMA	1	-
TOTAL			30 (65.2%)	16 (34.8%)

Accordingly, as we hinted before in the examples provided and as can be observed in the table, complex verb phrases (henceforth VPs), i.e., an auxiliary verb followed by a matrix verb or negative matrices —usually accompanied by an auxiliary verb in our corpus— are more frequently complemented by clauses introduced by *that* than by *zero* (Finegan and Biber 1995: 254):

(26) My child has bene very ille againe which maks me fearfull to stir from hir but, and pleas God, if the weather hold faire, I purpose to come and se you the next weeke, and then nurse Mitchell **shall see that** there is littell hope of me as yet. (1629, Barrington Letters, 31)

(27) I **cannot that** he hath informed us all truely, yet not for that we will # not suffer him to disobey our writinge; (1461, Paston Letters, 116)

(28) and we have liv'd justly, # (^Archer^) , we **can't say that** we have spent our Fortunes, but that we have # enjoy'd 'em. (1707, George Farquhar: *The Beaux Stratagem*)

Similarly, nonfinite verbs on their own, not accompanied by any auxiliary verb, more frequently require *that* than *zero* since such cases are syntactically less clear than with finite verbs (Elsness 1982: 32).

(29) Sir, in my most hartiest wyse I recommennd me unto you, desiring to heare of your prosperitie and welfaire, and of your good spede in your matters; **certyfiing you that** I, and my sone William, with all your children, are in good health (blessed be

(^Jesu^))with all your servants. (1502, Plumpton Letters, CXXXIII)

(30) (^Arch.^) ...... Our Friends indeed began to **suspect that** our Pockets were low; but we came off with flying Colours,shew'd no signs of want either in Word or Deed. (1707, George Farquhar: *The Beaux Stratagem*)

3.3. PRESENCE / ABSENCE OF INTERVENING MATERIAL

It has also been traditionally acknowledged that the presence of material between the matrix predicate and the subject of the lower clause acts against the principle of syntactic clarity and favours structural ambiguity: the greater the distance between the matrix predicate that selects for the complement clause and the subject of the complement clause itself, the more necessary the complementiser *that* is to mark a clause boundary and make the sequence clearer. Conversely, the shorter the distance between the matrix predicate and the subject of the complement clause, the more frequently will the complementiser *zero* be resorted to. The clause boundary is marked here by the subject of the lower clause and the presence of an overt marker such as *that* is not felt as necessary (McDavid 1964: 109; Elsness 1984: 523-524; Fanego 1990: 145-146; López Couso 1996: 279-282).

Table 9: Presence / absence of intervening material

	Intervening material		Non-intervening material	
	That	Zero	That	*Zero*
LETTERS	41	15	37	69
DRAMA	8	11	12	33
TOTAL	49 (65.3%)	26 (34.7%)	49 (32.5%)	102 (67.5%)
	75 (33.2%)		151 (66.8%)	

Not only object clauses, but also clauses depending on an adjective have been taken into account, as variation has been observed with respect to this factor. On the contrary, clauses depending on a noun have not been considered at this point because, as has already been observed, nouns almost invariably take *that*, irrespectively of other determining factors. Neither have subject clauses been included here since the representation of this syntactic pattern is insignificant.

It can be gathered from the table above (Table 8) that clauses without intervening material are much more frequently used than clauses in which

some material is inserted between the matrix predicate and the subject of the lower clause.

Likewise, as has been explained in the brief theoretical summary of the general tendency, *that*s dominate when some intervening material is present and, conversely, *zero*s show higher figures when there is no material between the matrix predicate and the lower clause subject.

In the table below, ditransitive verbs have been included, even though they have been traditionally considered as a *that* favouring environment, as the presence of a personal pronoun (IO) in most cases in the analysed corpus, may be erroneously taken as belonging to the lower clause.

Table 10: *That / zero* with ditransitive verbs

	DITRANSITIVE VERBS Vb IO/PO* OBJCL	
	THAT	*ZERO*
LETTERS	23 (74.2%)	8 (25.8%)
DRAMA	2 (20%)	8 (80%)
TOTAL	25 (61%)	16 (39%)

*It stands for prepositional object

In the table above, it can be observed that ditransitive patterns of complementation are preferably *that*s in the total count. Nevertheless, if the statistics for the different genres are examined, it will be seen that this tendency is notably high in letters, and notably low in drama. An explanation for the second case might be sought in stylistic factors: a check was made for examples of ditransitive clauses in the section of drama that is in verse, because metrical and prosodic factors or the like would play an important role here, but not a single example of a ditransitive pattern of complementation was found there.

It should also be highlighted that in a considerable number of complement clauses whose main verb subcategorises for a ditransitive predicate, there is another determining factor at play that may insist on the necessity of an explicit complementiser *that*, such as the presence of a ditransitive non-finite verb:

(31) Sir, in my most hartiest wyse I recommennd me unto you, desiring to heare of your prosperitie and welfaire, and of your good spede in your matters; **certyfiing you that** I, and my sone William, with all your children, are in good health (blessed be (^Jesu^))with all your servants. (1502, *Plumpton Letters*, CXXXIII)

or an auxiliary verb:

> (32) Also, he is not aqueyntyd wyth no body but wyth Wekys, and Wekys **ad told hym that** he wold bryng hym to the Kyng; (1461, Paston Letters, 116)

> (33) But my sone kepes them forth as yet, and therfor I trow my lord Archbishop will compleane of my son and you; and sath, that he **will indyte them** that was at castyng out of tham. (1502, *Plumpton Letters*, CXXXIII)

or even some intervening adverbial that, without the presence of *that*, would be ambiguous:

> (34) ∂an I prayd here a3yn ∂at sche wuld teryn tyl 3e kom hom, and I seyd I trostyd veryly ∂at 3e wuld don qhan 3e kom hom as jtt longyth to 3w to don; (1448, Paston Letters)

Indirect objects are realised mainly by means of personal pronouns in our corpus, but there is still one single case of an IO realised by an NP (Det + H) with the DO clause introduced by the complementiser *that*. The scarcity of examples makes it difficult to draw definite conclusions, but it seems that the use of the explicit complementiser in such cases is not surprising in view of the fact that NPs are heavier elements than personal pronouns:

> (35) And so I sent one servant to the schereffe, and the schereffe shewed **my servant** that my Lord had wrytten unto him for to poynt them on agayne. (1502, Plumpton Letters, CXXXV)

Likewise, most ditransitive syntactic patterns have their two arguments realised by an IO and a DO (*that*- or *zero*- clause), but there are also some examples in which a PO appears instead of an IO. In the very few cases that I have found (2) —none of them in drama— , *that* is again the choice, and the reasons for this do not seem to be very far from the ones explaining the use of *that* with NPs as IO: the heavier weight of the IO:

> (36) Wherffor, for Goddysake, late my moodre take heede[6] **to my yonge brytheryn**, that they be nat in #noon place wher that sykenesse is regnyng, nor that they dysport not wyth # noon

other yonge peple whyche resortythe wher any sykenesse is. (1471, Paston Letters, 263)

The next point to be studied was Elsness's assertion that *zero* constructions with intervening material were more frequently used "if the intervening adverbial belongs in the matrix clause" (Elsness 1982: 16). A careful examination of the corpus showed it to be valid, as can be seen in the following examples:

> (37) I xall be fayn to lend it him of myn owne siluer. If I knew **verily** 3our entent were ∂at he xwld cum hom I wold send hym non. (1461, Paston Letters, 116)

> (38) (^M. Mumbl.^) I holde **a grote** ye will drinke anon for this geare. (...) (^M. Mumbl.^) I holde **a penny**,[7] ye will drinke without a cup. (1500-1570, Nicholas Udall: *Roister Doister*)

Only one apparently divergent example was found, but it is also in agreement with Elsness's results (Elsness 1984: 524), because the intervening material is a finite clause that already functions as a clause boundary and ambiguity is consequently solved:

> (39) I pray **if you send to my brother Mewix** let him know so much. (1629, Barrington Letters, 65)

As to the *that* examples of intervening material, in some of them the presence of the complementiser is felt as needed to prevent ambiguity (*greatly* could affect both the main and the subordinate clause):

> (40) Right worshipfull Sir, in my most hartiest wyse I recomend me unto you, desiring to here of your prosperytie and welfare, and good spede in your matters, the which I marvell **greatly** that I have no word from you. (1504; Plumpton Letters, CLI)

In the other cases, this material belongs undoubtedly to the main clause, —a *zero* favouring context— but in some cases, the presence of heavy elements determines the presence of *that*, to provide syntactic clarity and to prevent that the recipient of the message from getting lost:

(41) for I ensure yow it is the most vnyuersall dethe ∂at euyre I wyst in Ingelonde, for by my trowthe I kan not her **by pylgrymes ∂at passe ∂e contre`, ner noon other man ∂at rydethe er gothe any contre`**, ∂at any borow town in Ingelonde is free from ∂at sykenesse. (1471, Paston Letters, 263)

(42) Be sure**, however you come not by my letters**, that I write constantly by every Tuesday and Fryday post. (1662, *Oxinden Letters*, CLXXVIII)

A conclusion, then, to this section would seem to be that the principle at work is that of averting ambiguity to achieve the greatest syntactic clarity.

3.5. GENDER: WOMEN *VS.* MEN

The next factor to be taken up is the gender distinction: women *vs.* men. As mentioned in the introduction, letters written both by men and by women have been studied. Accordingly then, the next few lines will be concerned with whether sex is a determining factor in the variation of the complementisers *that / zero* or not and, if it proves to be, to what extent it plays a role in such a choice.

Unlike the previous factors, this one has been neglected in the literature. It has not been so thoroughly studied. The few grammarians that have devoted some time to these sociolinguistic factors agree that women's role in linguistic change is more important; women usually take the lead in this sense (Labov 1983: 371-374; 1990: 213). Likewise, Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brungberg seem to insist on the same idea by saying that "women are generally the innovators in linguistic change" (1996:7).

Table 11 shows the figures that resulted from counting the complement clauses available in the corpus depending on whether they were written by men or women. Approximately the same number of words has been selected for each sex (ca. 5000), in the hope of reaching at least tentative conclusions.

Table 11: *That/ Zero* according to sex in all syntactic patterns

	That	Zero	TOTAL
WOMEN	45 (46%)	53 (54%)	98 (51.3%)
MEN	56 (60.2%)	37 (39.8%)	93 (48.7%)
TOTAL	101 (52.9%)	90 (47.1%)	191

As can be inferred from this table, there is not a significant difference in the number of complement clauses of each of the groups (98 for women *vs.* 93 for men). On the other hand, it is very curious to see how the variation increases a little as to the choice of complementiser. Interestingly enough, women resort more commonly to *zero* (54%) than to *that* (46%) and, conversely, men prefer to use *that* (60.2%) more often than *zero* (39.8%).

These results become all the more surprising whent it is realised that the women writers of the letters in the analysed corpus address all their letters to persons considered socially superior to themselves. This role of inferior addressing a superior applies to some men as well, when they are writing to their mother or father. However, men also send letters to persons considered by themselves as equal (friends) and as inferior (wives). The percentages even increase if object clauses, the most common syntactic pattern, are solely included (Table 12).

Table 12: *That/ Zero* according to sex in OBJCL

	That	Zero	TOTAL
WOMEN	33 (43.4%)	43 (56.6%)	76 (51.4%)
MEN	38 (52.8%)	34 (47.2%)	72 (48.6%)
TOTAL	71 (48%)	77 (52%)	148

As can be observed here, the percentages for *zero* increase in both groups, but these figures are again higher for women than for men. The expectations that women's language should be more formal since they are writing to "superior" persons are not met according to these empirical results.

It can be concluded, then, that in the increase of *zero* that was taking place particularly in the period from lME to the end of eModE, the period of this study, women seem to be responsible for or, at least, play an important role in reversing the trend that prevailed in previous stages of the language. These results concur with those of Labov (1983, 1990) and Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brungberg (1996). Admittedly, the sample in our corpus is too limited to be fully significant and so fully conclusive results must await further research.

4. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The objective of this study was to compare the variation of *that / zero* in complement clauses in two colloquial registers, namely private letters and drama. To achieve it, a selection of texts from the Helsinki corpus was made. Despite the fact that approximately the same number of words was taken

from each genre in order to obtain more accurate results, the number of complement clauses in drama turned out to be very low, against our expectations. Nevertheless, the evidence available matches the historical tendency for *zero* complement clauses to predominate over *that*s in such a colloquial register.

On the other hand the greater number of *that*s as compared with *zero*s in letters, a colloquial register too, is more confusing. No definite explanation has been found, but the fact that the addressee of most of the letters is socially superior to the writer himself/herself seems quite convincing, as the degree of formality is increased. A fact that goes some way towards explaining these is that the earliest texts of the corpus date from lME, a stage of the language in which *zero* starts to gain ground progressively.

The next step in the study was to corroborate the evidence with the so-called determining or conditioning factors. The factor of style definitely applied to drama. *A priori*, the influence of style in the correspondence was treated with certain scepticism, but if, again, the question of social superiority is taken into account, and from our point of view it must be, the factor of style definitely applies to letters, too. Complement clauses introduced by *that* have always been considered more formal than *zero*s.

As to the matrix predicate, the evidence matches the general tendency, not only as regards the frequency of the matrix, but also as regards its morphology. This is particularly operative in relation to verbal matrices.

The third factor that was taken into consideration —presence / absence of intervening material— does not behave atypically according to the restults obtained in this study. The main concern that seems to be operating at this point is clearly the avoidance of structural ambiguity in the interests of achieving syntactic clarity.

Finally, the variation of the two main complementisers has been studied according to the factor of sex, only applicable to private letters, as is self-evident. The conclusion that can be drawn from this section is that women seem to be more advanced than men in their choice of complementiser, even though most of their letters are addressed to a superior person where a certain degree of formality is expected.

In the end, the results obtained do not seem to divege a lot from the norm. Style seems to be a very powerful factor, however none of the other factors that have been studied must be disregarded, since all of them are relevant in the choice of one complementiser over the other.

NOTES

[1] It is generally acknowledged that dramas and private letters are written in an informal style. They are considered by Traugott as approaching the "conversational language['s]" (1972: 21) end of the continuum. Likewise, Rissanen includes dramas (1986: 99, 101) and private letters (1986: 100-101) within the informal style. Moreover, in the corpus used for this research, namely *The Helsinki Corpus of English Texts: Diachronic and Dialectal* (Rissanen *et al*. 1991), the texts that have been selected are described as informal in their respective reference code (<I Informal>).

[2] The process of selection of the samples of private letters has been guided by the aim of studying approximately the same number of words written by men and women of each sub-period, as it has been thought that the representativeness of such a sample and the conclusions drawn from it would be more accurate. Accordingly, the number of words selected for each of the sexes was more or less the same (c. 5000 words).

[3] In this table, only complement clauses in object function have been included as this seems the pattern best suited for a study of the variation of the two major complementisers of the English language, *that* and *zero*.

[4] Clauses with the syntactic pattern S V PC_s have been omitted in this table, because their frequency of appearance is considerably low. Only two examples have been found in the corpus.

[5] It is a well attested fact that in conversations language varies notably when speaking to a person considered inferior or equal by the speaker, and one considered superior. Likewise, letters are probably written differently too depending on the person they are addressed to.

[6] I have considered *take unkindness* as a so-called "complex predicate" (Catell, 1984: 43ff) with a complement clause depending on the whole lexicalised unit, rather than a complement clause depending on the noun *unkindness*:

He **took noe unkindnes that** I colde perceave for your not seing him, he did not speak a word of it tell I asked him. (1629; Barrington Letters, 49)

There is something syntactically odd about the construction —it is definitely neither a relative clause nor a complement clause depending on *unkindness*— and, semantically, it seems that the whole unit is highly lexicalised so as to form one of the so-called "complex predicates"; besides, the verb involved in the predicate is "semantically very light and [...] mean[s] very little more than that a verbal action

occurred" (Cattell 1984: 7). Likewise, I have also considered the similar predicate *take heed* as "complex-predicate":

> Wherffor, for Goddysake, late mymoodre **take heede** to my yonge brytheryn, **that** they be nat in noon place wher that syknesse is regnyng, **nor that** they dysport not wyth noon other yonge peple whyche resortythe wher any siknesse is. (1471; Paston Letters, 263)

I have felt more dubious about the apparently similar predicate *make vow*, considered by some grammarians to be a "complex predicate" (Catell 1984: 297),

> And ∂erwith he **made a gret a-vowe that** if ye come not at the third commandement ye xulde dye therefore. (1461, Paston Letters, 116)

but, despite this, the fact that there is some material between the "semantically very light" (Catell, 1984: 7) verb, led me to think less about cohesion between both elements and to consider the *that*-clause as a complement clause depending on the nominal matrix predicate *vow*.

[7] Predicates of this type, namely *hold (somebody) something that*-clause or the parallel *bet (somebody) something that*-clause, could either be considered as three-place predicates if the IO is present or a two-place predicate and an adverbial (*a grote* and *a penny*) in the examples above (Quirk *et al.*, 1985: §10.13). I have considered them as verbs with two objects and an adverbial on the grounds that they allow adverbial questions with *How much...?*

How much do you hold (that you will drink without a cup)?

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POLYSEMY IN THE SEMANTIC FIELD OF MOVEMENT IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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INTRODUCTION

One of the long-established misconceptions about the lexicon is that it is neatly and rigidly divided into semantically related sets of words. In contrast, we claim that word meanings do not have clear boundaries.[1] In this paper we will give proof of the fuzziness of meaning through an analysis of the semantic field of MOVEMENT in the English language. We will show that many MOVEMENT verbs belong not only to several subdomains within the field of MOVEMENT, but also to various semantic domains through metaphorical extension.

Before dealing with the double or even triple membership of MOVEMENT verbs, let us first present the model on which our description of the lexicon is based, the Functional-Lexematic Model (Martín Mingorance, 1984, 1985a,b; 1987a,b,c; 1990a,b).

1. THE FUNCTIONAL-LEXEMATIC MODEL

The FLM integrates Coseriu's *Lexematics* (1977), Dik's *Functional Grammar* (1997a) and some fundamental principles of cognitive linguistics. Following Faber and Mairal (1998: 4-5), the two main objectives of this model are, on the one hand, the construction of the linguistic architecture of the lexicon of a language, and on the other hand, the representation of knowledge based on the linguistic coding of dictionary entries.

The FLM establishes three axes of analysis: the paradigmatic, syntagmatic and cognitive axes. The elaboration of the paradigmatic axis entails the structuring of the lexicon in semantic domains —each