Textual Transmission and Language Change in the Fifteenth Century: John Trevisa's Middle English Translation of Higden's *Polychronicon*[1]

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1. Introduction

The majority of Middle English texts are anonymous, and they do not provide information as to when and where they were produced. It is, therefore, often necessary for Middle English text editors to date and localize the language by analyzing its various features. Fortunately, for late Middle English, the existence of *A Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English* (*LALME*) (see McIntosh, Samuels, and Benskin 1986) is now a great help. By using the "fit-technique" of *LALME*, one can reach a fairly accurate localization of the language of the scribe at issue.[2] The dating of language, by contrast, is not an easy task, unless some reliable external pieces of evidence are available. In relation to medieval works in general, Damian-Grint (1996: 280) states: "Philological evidence will give a rough approximation of the period in which a work was composed but can rarely indicate a possible date of composition to within even half a century". When a particular manuscript is concerned, the nature of the script together with codicological information can suggest the approximate date of its production, but I have long wondered how linguistic analyses can make a further contribution to this area than they do now. The aim of the present study is to see if some linguistic features can function as linguistic scales to make the "chronological fit" possible. I will analyze for this purpose two different versions of a single text: MS Cotton Tiberius D. VII (MS

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2 Iyeiri (forthcoming) illustrates the use of *LALME* by analyzing the language of the parchment section of MS Pepys 2125, Magdalene College, Cambridge, and shows that there are some caveats to be taken into consideration in *LALME*'s "fit-technique". For details of the "fit-technique" of *LALME*, see Benskin (1991) among others.

C) and Caxton's edition (1482) of John Trevisa's translation based upon Ranulph Higden's *Polychronicon*. They are reasonably distant in terms of textual tradition, and therefore should show differences in terms of their linguistic behaviours. The present paper investigates which linguistic features are likely to be altered in the process of textual transmission and which are not, and thereby infers which linguistic features may be used in estimating the date of language.

In the following discussion, I will explore Book VI only, which is available in Waldron's (2004) edition based upon MS C. For Caxton's edition, I will use the text provided by the Early English Books Online.[3] The fifteenth century is, in my view, a good start for a project of this kind, as it provides a number of late Middle English texts whose date of publication is known. In other words, it is an exceptional century during the Middle English period, in that there are already many potential anchor texts available for the "chronological fit".

2. MS Cotton Tiberius D. VII and Caxton's edition of John Trevisa's *Polychronicon*

John Trevisa's Middle English translation is based upon the *Polychronicon* written in Latin by Ranulph Higden, a Benedictine monk of Chester, who died in 1363/1364.[4] Apparently, it was one of the most widely read texts in the Middle English period, as it survives in "more than 120 manuscripts of the fourteenth century and later" (Waldron 2004: xiii).[5] Trevisa's Middle English translation also survives in multiple copies (fourteen full manuscripts plus three early printed editions including Caxton's),[6] which is not always the case with Middle English writings. The Middle

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3 <http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home> (3 September 2011).

4 It is commonly stated that Higden died in 1363 (e.g. Brown 1998: 115). Waldron (2004: xiii, n. 4) notes, however, that he died in 1364 according to modern chronology.

5 See also Kennedy (1989: 2657) for how popular the text was in the past.

6 Trevisa finished his translation of this text in April 1387 (see Waldron 1991: 67; 2004: xvii). For the extant versions of the *Polychronicon*, see Edwards (1984: 143).

English version as well as the Latin one must have been popular in the past. While Trevisa's date of birth is estimated to be in 1342, he is known to have died in 1402. He was most probably a vicar of Berkeley from 1374 to 1379 (see Waldron 2004: xvi).

The two texts I intend to explore in the present paper are fairly distant in manuscript tradition. MS C dates from around 1400 or a little earlier, while Caxton's edition was published in 1482 (see Waldron 1991: 75; 2001: 270; 2004: xxxix). The stemma of the extant manuscripts of the Middle English versions also shows that they are distant from each other. MS C is independent of the Manchester manuscript, whereas Caxton's edition, like many of the extant manuscripts, descends from the Manchester manuscript (Waldron 2004: xxiii).[7] Moreover, MS C was perhaps produced "in the Berkeley neighbourhood" (Waldron 1991: 68), which is not far from the likely place of the original translation, and reveals linguistic features of the South Western and South-West Midlands.[8] Caxton was, by contrast, based in London, though his language often shows some reflections of Kentish features.[9] In addition, the following comment by Caxton, which is often quoted in the literature, is of interest:

> Therfore I William Caxton a symple persone haue endeuoyred me to
> wryte fyrst ouer all the sayd book of proloconycon / and som what haue

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7 The Manchester manuscript here means MS 11379, Chetham's Library, Manchester. See the following comment by Waldron and Hargreaves (1992: 276) on MS C and the Manchester manuscript: "The earliest of the fourteen are probably British Library, Cotton Tiberius D. VII (C), and Manchester, Chetham's Library 11379 (M), both dated to about 1400 by palaeographers and assigned on ground of dialect by the *Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English* to the locality of Berkeley, Gloucs., where Trevisa was vicar, under the patronage of the fourth Sir Thomas Berkeley, between approximately 1374 and his death in or near 1402". Waldron (2004: xxxix) also states: "... *LALME* locates both MS C (with two scribes) and MS M (with one scribe) at Berkeley itself, and palaeographic opinion dates them to the late fourteenth century".

8 See also Waldron (2004: xliv-xlviii) for details.

9 See Samuels (1981: 45-46).

chaunged the rude and old englyssh~ / that is to wete certayn wordes / which in these dayes be neither vsyd ne vnderstanden / & furthermore haue put it in emprynte to thende that it maye be had & the maters therin co~prised to be knowen / for the boke is general touchyng shortly many notable maters（Caxton 1482: 390r）

This passage, which is found in Caxton's *Polychronicon*, shows that he deliberately altered the text and modernized it.[10]

From these pieces of information, it is appropriate to assume that comparative analyses of MS C and Caxton's edition of the *Polychronicon* will yield some interesting insights as to which features of language are likely to be altered in textual transmission and which features are not. *LALME* is based upon the assumption that medieval scribes often "translate" the language of the exemplar into their own language.[11] This may be the case with spelling forms, which are directly or indirectly related to phonological differences and eventually to different dialects and which are frequently above the awareness of language users. In the dating of texts, however, it is also necessary to consider other features of language, some of which can take a longer time to shift from one variant to another. In such cases, language users may not always be aware of ongoing changes. To illustrate this point, I will investigate in the following discussion:（1）the adverbial suffixes *–liche* and *–ly*,（2）infinitival forms, and（3）negative constructions. Despite the reasonable distance as mentioned above between MS C and Caxton's version in textual tradition, the content itself is fairly consistent between them. Hence, a linguistic comparison between them is appropriate.[12]

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10 The fact that he added the final book to the *Polychronicon* is also often commented upon within the context of his having been a compiler of the text. See, for example, Matheson（1985: 601）.

11 See McIntosh（1963: 9）, who states: "... the majority of later Middle English manuscripts which are not originals（or copies made near the place of origin）tend to be what I call translations ...".

Before embarking upon the discussion, I would like to stress once again that the goal of this paper is to clarify some possible tendencies in textual transmission, hoping that such information will be of help in dating texts. To ascribe the differences between the two texts of the *Polychronicon* to a particular scribe or a particular compiler like Caxton, it would be necessary to conduct further detailed research into additional manuscripts.[13] This is not the intent of the present paper.

3. The adverbial suffixes *–liche* and *–ly*

The first issue to be explored is the relationship between the adverbial suffix *–liche* and its reduced form *–ly*, as in:

(1) Thare Dunston was *strongliche* despysed & ychyd.（MS C, 223r）

(2) But the kynge pursued hym soo *strongly* that he forsoke Englond（Caxton 1482: 286v）

MS C provides variant forms of *–liche* as illustrated below（e.g. *–lich*, *–lyche*, and *–leche*）. All these examples are counted under the category of *–liche* in the following discussion:

(3) & as he com in þe wey a voys spak to hym *clerlich* and seyde（MS C, 218r）

(4) He enquirede & aspyede *bysylyche* þe doynge & dedes of hys offysers &

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12 There are two versions of Chapters 14-16 in Book VI. While a number of versions descended from the Manchester manuscript, of which Caxton's version is one, present the so-called Minor Version, both MS C and Caxton yield the Major Version. See Waldron（1990）among others, for further details on this textual problem.

13 As mentioned above, Caxton's print does not descend from MS C. See the stemma of the extant manuscripts represented in Waldron（2004: xxiii）.

seruauntes & *namlyche* of iuges & of domesmen（MS C, 209v）

（5）þanne he wente *stilleche* awey（MS C, 242r）

As the *Oxford English Dictionary*（*OED*）states, the –*ly* forms go back to Old English –*lic*(*e*), which appears as "–*lik* in northern dialects and –*lich* in southern dialects"（s.v. –*ly*）. Furthermore, the *OED* states that both –*liche* and –*ly* are attested in the fifteenth century, although the latter became universal by the end of the century. This is largely confirmed by *LALME*: Dot Maps 608 and 609 display that both forms are attested fairly widely in England in late Middle English, although –*liche* is more southerly and less widespread than –*ly*.[14] Thus, in theory both forms could be expected in MS C and Caxton's edition of the *Polychronicon*. An analysis of Book VI of the text, however, reveals a striking contrast between the two versions. MS C provides 154 relevant examples, all of which occur in the form –*liche*, whereas Caxton's edition gives 158 relevant examples, all of which appear in the form –*ly*.[15] It is most likely that –*liche* was altered consistently to –*ly* somewhere in the process of textual transmission to Caxton's print.

In view of the fact that both –*liche* and –*ly* are widespread in the relevant Dot Maps in *LALME*, the contrast between MS C and Caxton's edition can most probably be ascribed to the difference in dates: as mentioned above, MS C dates back to around 1400, whereas Caxton's text was printed in 1482. To confirm this, I have investigated two additional West Midland texts included in the Prose Corpus of the Innsbruck Computer Archive of Machine Readable English Texts（ICAMET）:[16] *Three Middle English Sermons from the Worcester Chapter Manuscript F. 10*（1st

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14 The ending –*leche* is rare and attested only once in MS C. Caxton's edition does not provide any examples of this form. *LALME*（Dot Map 604）also shows that its use is quite restricted in later Middle English in general.

15 These figures include only adverbial forms. Some adjectives also end with –*liche* and –*ly*, but they are not included here.

16 For details, see Markus（1999）.

sermon only) [17] and *St Nicholas*. The bibliographical information of ICAMET shows that the former is dated to around 1400, while the latter to around 1450. Some illustrative examples in these texts are:

(6) I seide te secunde time *principaliche* & a gredel schorter ... (*Three Middle English Sermons from the Worcester Chapter Manuscript F. 10*)

(7) and he anone *mekely* ansuered and said ... (*St Nicholas*)

Three Middle English Sermons from the Worcester Chapter Manuscript F. 10 (1st sermon only) (around 1400) provides 112 examples of the *–liche* type but only three examples of *–ly*, whereas *St Nicholas* (around 1450) presents 32 examples of *–ly* only. [18] Here again, the contrast between the two texts is fairly consistent. The earlier text shows a predominant use of the *–liche* type, whereas the later one provides *–ly* only. I would surmise that even in the West Midlands, the *–liche* type quickly became archaic sometime in the first half of the fifteenth century. Hence, this is a fairly powerful scale for dating language, although its usability is limited to the earlier period of the fifteenth century. Judging from the almost categorical distribution of *–liche* and *–ly* in fifteenth-century texts, the alteration from the former to the latter form, when it occurs, may be a conscious activity of scribes. Windeatt's (1979: 122) remark that "[s]cribal transcribing is a form of writing which constitutes an 'active reading'" is applicable not only to the content but also to the linguistic forms they employ.

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17 The later part of this text is Northern in dialect, and therefore not included in the present study.

18 The orthographic variant *–li* also occurs commonly in this text. It is included under the category of *–ly* in the present investigation.

4．Infinitival Forms

The second point to be considered concerns the infinitival forms in MS C and Caxton's edition. Here the contrast between the two versions is not as striking as in the case of the adverbial suffixes discussed above. Both MS C and Caxton's version display the loss of final –*n* fairly consistently, while –*e* is still retained where appropriate to a notable extent. In other words, the loss of the infinitival ending –*en* is only half complete in the two versions of the *Polychronicon*.[19] This is the case both when the infinitive occurs in the bare form and also when it occurs in the prefixed form, namely with *to* or *for to* （*vor to* in MS C).[20] The following are typical examples found in the texts under consideration:

(8) and he made hem alle *lerne* gramer and other fre artes and scyences （Caxton 1482: 281v)

(9) Men of old tyme wend & t<rowe>de tresor thare *to vynde* （MS C, 226v)

(10) On a tyme Conradus come thyder *for to hunte* （Caxton 1482: 306v)

Caxton's edition gives the following exceptional example, where infinitival –*n* seems to be retained:

(11) therfor what she myght not *done* in her owne persone ／ she dyd by another （Caxton 1482: 297r)

The existence of –*e* after –*n* suggests that the possibility of this form being a past participle cannot be eliminated.[21] In any case, this is the sole example that shows

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19 The present discussion is concerned with the orthographic forms only, and not with the question as to whether –*e* was pronounced.

20 MS C employs the voiced form *vor to*, whereas Caxton consistently uses the unvoiced form *for to*.

21 The form *done* is available in the list of infinitives in the *OED* （s.v. *do*).

the retention of –*n* in the two versions at issue, and therefore it is safe to state that the loss of final –*n* was more or less complete by the time they were produced.[22]

While the ending –*e* is most frequently retained, both texts provide examples which have undergone the complete loss of –*en*, namely the loss of –*e* as well as the loss of –*n*, as in:

(12) Þarevore *vor to pot* awey that temptacyon of vleschlyche lykynge (MS C, 209v)

(13) he shold *tell* that he had sene fendes bere the duc to heuen ward (Caxton 1482: 308r)

These examples are clearly in the minority, but not at all uncommon, especially in Caxton's version. The table below demonstrates the frequencies of the presence and absence of the infinitival ending –*e* in MS C and Caxton's edition of the *Polychronicon*. The figures here exclude verbs whose stem ended with a vowel and therefore had the ending –*n* (rather than –*an*) in Old English (e.g. *be*, *do*, *go*).[23]

Table 1. Infinitival endings in the two versions of the *Polychronicon*

	–*e* retained	zero ending (loss of –*en* complete)	Totals
MS C	554 (97.54%)	14 (2.46%)	568
Caxton's version	523 (87.31%)	76 (12.69%)	599

The statistics are entirely dependent upon the orthographic forms, and do not take into account whether the ending –*e* was in fact pronounced in the texts.[24] Still,

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22 This does not necessarily imply that –*n* is totally absent in the fifteenth century. Davis (1959: 100) shows that the ending is on occasions preserved in the Paston letters, especially "in native monosyllables with stems ending in a vowel, also in other short native words and some French words". His examples include: *ben*, *comyn*, and *knowyn*. On the whole, however, the use of –*n* was very restricted in the fifteenth century. See also Note 25.

23 Since –*en* is a development from –*an*, the existence of –*e* is practically impossible with these verbs. Hence the exclusion of them from Table 1.

24 See Note 19 above.

Table 1 displays a notable distinction between MS C and Caxton. While both texts have undergone the recession of –*en*, it has left the trace –*e* to differing degrees: MS C retains –*e* almost fully, while –*e* shows further recession in Caxton, resulting in the expanded occurrence of the zero ending.

Considering the fact that the loss of –*e* takes place in a gradual manner between the two texts, it is possible that neither the scribe of MS C nor Caxton was aware of this linguistic feature while producing the text. Certainly, this is unlike the situation of the adverbial suffixes discussed above, in which the shift from the –*liche* type to –*ly* was more abrupt and more categorical. Supposing that the language user does not consciously manipulate the forms, the infinitival endings can actually be a better scale by which to judge the dates of Middle English texts. (Deliberate archaizing is less likely to take place with infinitival forms.) Also, the scale is applicable to a longer span of time than the shift from –*liche* to –*ly*, as the ending –*e* is retained to a considerable extent even in Caxton's text, which was published in 1482. Combined with the loss of –*n*, the subsequent loss of –*e* is a powerful scale to measure the state of language in the late Middle English period. On the other hand, the obvious drawback here is that two texts under comparison need to be reasonably distant in dates for this scale to be effectively used.[25] Otherwise, the difference in the proportions of the retention of –*e* would be slight and it would be difficult to tell whether the gap is indeed due to the difference of dates. It may simply be accidental or due to differences in content matter.

Incidentally, there is an additional feature related to infinitival forms: the contrast between *for to*-infinitives (*vor to*-infinitives in MS C) and *to*-infinitives.

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25 Lass (2006: 80) delves into the contrast between the –*en* ending and the zero ending in some Middle English texts, showing that –*en* is retained 100% in the *Peterborough Chronicle*, while it has been lost at the ratio of 98% in Caxton's *Prologue* (1473). Apparently, the loss of –*en* took the entire period of Middle English. Unfortunately, however, he concentrates upon the contrast between –*en* and zero, and does not mention the retention of –*e*. Further analyses of the process of the loss of –*en* by detailing the loss of –*n* and the subsequent loss of –*e* would help to estimate the date of language more accurately.

Examples include:

(14) Anon he trossede hys fardels & arayede hym *vor to go*. (MS C, 235v)

(15) For the twey partyes of the kynges ministres were at home *for to ordeyne* for homly thynges (Caxton 1482: 281v)

(16) And were compellyd by honger *to leue* the Cyte (Caxton 1482: 285r)

Both are prefixed infinitives, and occur more or less as free alternatives in the same syntactic environments.[26] In the historical development of infinitives, the former type with *for to* is considered to rise in Middle English, undergoing a sudden decline thereafter, since it is already uncommon, though attested, in the early Modern English period.[27] Apparently, the recession of *for to*-infinitives is already underway in the fifteenth century. See the following table, where the use of *for to*-infinitives is retained more extensively in MS C than in Caxton:

Table 2. *For to*-infinitives and *to*-infinitives in the two versions of the *Polychronicon*

	for to-infinitives	*to*-infinitives	Totals
MS C	63 (31.34%)	138 (68.66%)	201
Caxton's edition	46 (20.18%)	182 (79.82%)	228

While *for to*-infinitives are retained to some notable degree in both versions, the

26 See Fischer (1992: 324), who remarks: "So far we have mainly set off the bare infinitive against the *to* and *for to* infinitive together. I think this is correct. All the evidence shows that there is much less difference, especially in Late Middle English, between *to* and *for to* than between zero and (*for*) *to*".

27 Fischer (1992: 317) notes that there are a few examples of *for to*-infinitives in Old English but that their occurrence is essentially a feature of Middle English. The use of *for to*-infinitives "steadily increases in the Middle English period until 1500" and thereafter declines, although it is not unattested in the early Modern English period (see Fischer 1999: 358-359). For the earlier period of Middle English, see van Gelderen (1996: 111-113), who refers to the existence of *for to* in the Caligula manuscript of *Brut*. She also notes that *for to*-infinitives increase in the Otho manuscript of the same text, which often shows newer linguistic features than the Caligula manuscript. *For to*-infinitives are retained in some varieties of English even today (see Beal 2010: 38; Levey 2010: 124; Clarke 2010: 99-100; among others).

contrast between the two infinitival forms is certainly a good scale by which to judge the date of late Middle English texts. There is a clear recession of *for to*-infinitives in Caxton's edition when compared with the situation in MS C. This is again a scale usable for a longer span of time than the shift from *–liche* to *–ly*, since, as the above table shows, *for to*-infinitives were relatively common even in the late fifteenth century. Here again, language users were probably rather unconscious about the choice between the two forms, at least in comparison to the case of the adverbial suffixes. As mentioned above, *for to*-infinitives and *to*-infinitives are encountered in similar syntactic environments. On the other hand, the drawback of using this scale for chronological assessments is the same as in the case of the infinitival endings: two texts to be assessed should be reasonably distant in date, since otherwise the difference may not always be clearly discernable. As discussed above, the difference is not categorical but appears only in the form of difference in frequency.

5．Negative Constructions

Finally, I would like to probe into some syntactic features of negation and see whether MS C and Caxton's edition present any notable differences. In my previous publications, I have shown that some aspects of negation are likely to function as a scale in the dating of Middle English texts.[28] The proportion of the form *ne* as opposed to the forms *ne … not* and *not* is one example. The three forms of negation are illustrated by（17)-(19）below:

(17) that he *ne* hadde his payne（Caxton 1482: 287v)

(18) Þou *nost noȝt* what ys yordeynd vor þe aȝenes tomorwe.（MS C, 215v)

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28 Iyeiri（2010), for example, investigates negation in different versions of Chaucer's *Boece*, discussing different editorial practices.

(19) But for the blewe man chaungeth *not* lyghtly his skynne (Caxton 1482: 283v)

The form *ne*, as in (17), is the oldest of the three, going back to the Old English period, whereas the form *ne ... not*, as in (18), is a development from later Old English onwards. Here, the finite verb is preceded and followed by negative adverbs, but the negative sense is not cancelled out. Then, the negative adverb *ne*, which is redundant in a way, disappears. The decline of *ne* in later Middle English yields the form *not* alone as illustrated by (19) above (see Jespersen 1917: 9-11). Although Jespersen considers that *ne ... not* is typical of Middle English, I have shown on other occasions that the occurrence of *ne ... not* is more limited than previously considered during the Middle English period. It is certainly a transitional form between *ne* alone and *not* alone, and quickly recedes at some time in Middle English. Towards the end of the Middle English period, *not* alone predominates and *ne* alone is retained to some extent, but *ne ... not* tends to be extremely rare (Iyeiri 2001: 26).

In counting examples, it is essential to exclude examples with other negative forms like *neuer*, *no*, etc., as their existence is strongly inclined to influence the choice of the three negative forms under consideration. More specifically, *neuer*, *no*, etc.[29] tend not to co-occur with the negative adverb *not*, thereby avoiding the forms *ne ... not* and *not* (Jack's Law).[30] The negative conjunctions *ne* and *nor* are, however, exceptional, in that they freely co-occur with the three forms *ne*, *ne ...*

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29 All negative forms other than *ne* (adverbial and connective), *nor*, and *not* are included under the category of *neuer*, *no*, etc. in the present paper: *nowhere*, *nothing*, etc.

30 I have borrowed the term "Jack's Law" from Laing (2002: 303-306), who uses it in a slightly limited sense, i.e. the exclusive occurrences between *ne ... not* and *neuer*, *no*, etc. in early Middle English. However, the gist of Jack's contention is that the negative adverb *not* scarcely occurs with *neuer*, *no*, etc. While this rule leads to the mutual exclusiveness between *ne ... not* and *neuer*, *no*, etc. in early Middle English, it leads to the strong tendency for the forms *ne ... not* and *not* not to co-occur with *neuer*, *no*, etc. in later Middle English. See Jack (1978a: 62; 1978c: 62, 72) and Iyeiri (2001: 24).

not, and *not*. In other words, their existence does not affect the choice from among *ne*, *ne … not*, and *not*. Hence the table below displays the frequencies of *ne*, *ne … not*, and *not*, with or without conjunctive *ne* and *nor* but without *neuer*, *no*, etc., in the two versions of Trevisa's *Polychronicon*:

Table 3. The forms *ne*, *ne … not*, and *not* in the two versions of the *Polychronicon*

	ne	*ne … not*	*not*	Totals
MS C	8 (5.33%)	1 (0.67%)	141 (94.00%)	150
Caxton's edition	7 (4.70%)	0	142 (95.30%)	149

The result given in this table is in accordance with the development of the three negative forms in the history of English. Both versions of the *Polychronicon* display the predominant use of *not* alone together with some marginal retention of *ne* alone. On the other hand, the employment of *ne … not* is extremely limited: it is evidenced only once in MS C, while it is not attested at all in Caxton's edition. Thus, the relationship among the forms of *ne*, *ne … not*, and *not* in the *Polychronicon* is typical of the late Middle English state of affairs.

As for the relationship between the two texts, the linguistic situation in Caxton's text is indeed more advanced than that in MS C, in that the form *not* is more extensively employed in the former than in the latter. Also, the form *ne … not* has disappeared by the time of Caxton. At the same time, however, the difference is very slight. Apparently, Caxton did not feel the need to alter negative forms in preparing the text despite his declaration that he changed the language for ease of reading. As often mentioned in previous studies, syntactic choices are likely to be made below the level of consciousness, at least more so than linguistic choices related to phonology and morphology.[31] It is possible that Caxton more or less

31 As Fischer (2008: 58-59) discusses, syntactic changes are likely to manifest themselves in the form of shift in frequencies, and therefore they are less visible than the changes in phonology, etc. This is the case not only for researchers but also for language users. See also Miranda-García, Calle-Martín, and Marqués-Aguado (2008: 212), who state: "An author's style may be characterized by his/her syntactic constructions, which involve a less conscious activity than the lexical one when choosing the appropriate terms".

automatically transcribed the three negative forms, perhaps without feeling the need to update them, although in the end he produced a slightly advanced state of negation as the table above reveals. In other words, the order in date between two texts can be accurately represented when syntactic features are considered, since conscious and manipulative alterations are unlikely to interfere in the field of syntax. In this sense, the forms *ne*, *ne … not*, and *not* can be used as a scale for dating texts. It is again an appropriate scale for a longer span of periods than the shift from the adverbial suffixes discussed above, but in a different way from the case of infinitival forms. The fact that *not* is already predominant in the two texts of the *Polychronicon* shows that the scale is more usable in a slightly earlier period of Middle English.[32]

The same is largely applicable to the contrast between single and multiple negation, which I have shown on various occasions also functions as a linguistic scale.[33] Examples of single and multiple negation in the *Polychronicon* include:

(20) that he sholde *not* be vnprofytable to worldly dedes （Caxton 1482: 281r）

(21) whanne þe oþer dude *neuer noþer* （MS C, 221r）

(20) is an example of single negation, whereas (21) illustrates multiple negation. Here, I count those clauses with more than one negative item as examples of multiple negation, so long as the negative sense is not cancelled out.[34] By contrast, those with only a single negative item are counted as examples of single negation. The later Middle English period is considered to have experienced the decline of multiple negation,[35] and indeed its occurrence is already restricted in the two

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32 The adverb *ne* undergoes a sharp decline after 1400. See Jack （1978a: 306; 1978c: 59） among others.

33 Cf. Note 28 above.

34 In the discussion of single and multiple negation, I explore all types of negative clauses including those with *neuer*, *no*, etc.

35 Multiple negation declines to a significant extent towards the end of the Middle English period

versions of the *Polychronicon*, as exhibited in the table below:

Table 4. Multiple and single negation in the two versions of the *Polychronicon*

	Single negation	Multiple negation	Totals
MS C	230 （87.79%)	32 （12.21%)	262
Caxton's edition	234 （88.30%)	31 （11.70%)	265

Indeed, the proportion of single negation rises in Caxton's edition side by side with the slight recession in consequence of multiple negation in the same text. The gap between MS C and Caxton's text is, however, very marginal. Again, the chronological order of the two versions under analysis is accurately represented by this linguistic scale. The table also reveals that this is usable as a linguistic scale only when two texts under consideration are reasonably distant in chronology. The shift from multiple negation to single negation occurs, taking a long span of time. This is again similar to the situations of various linguistic features discussed above, particularly to the situation of *ne*, *ne ... not*, and *not*.

One thing to note about the contrast between single negation and multiple negation is that it is usable as a linguistic scale for fifteenth-century texts in general: the proportion of multiple negation is still over ten percent in the above table. This is different from the case of *ne*, *ne ... not*, and *not* discussed above, where the predominance of *not* alone is more or less established by the time of the fifteenth century.

6．Conclusion

The present paper has hitherto discussed several linguistic features in MS C and Caxton's edition of the *Polychronicon* to see how likely they are to be altered in the process of textual transmission. The ultimate aim of this analysis was to see if they

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(see Iyeiri 2001: 127-155), though it still continues in early Modern English (cf. Blake 2002: 215-216).

could be used as linguistic scales in judging dates of late Middle English texts. The above discussion has demonstrated that the shift from the adverbial suffix *–liche* to *–ly* was fairly abrupt, perhaps because language users were aware of the difference between these forms and actively chose the form which they regarded as most appropriate. MS C constantly employs the older form *–liche*（and its spelling variants）, whereas Caxton consistently uses *–ly*. The contrast between the two forms is a fairly powerful scale for the dating of texts, in that the choice of these forms displays the change of attitude of the language user. This is so, however, only when the text under consideration goes back to the most appropriate date, after which the newer form *–ly* is consistently employed and further detailed dating is impossible.

To turn to infinitival forms, the linguistic activity of the language user seems to be less conscious. The decline of infinitival endings manifests itself, taking a longer time. Both texts of the *Polychronicon* display the decline of final *–n* but the orthographic retention of *–e*, although infinitives with zero endings are also available. This is certainly usable as a linguistic scale, even in the later part of the fifteenth century, but the texts under comparison need to be fairly distant in chronology, since the shift is at a slower pace than the shift from *–liche* to *–ly* and texts of similar dates can provide very similar situations. The same applies to the shift from *for to*-infinitives to *to*-infinitives.

Finally, I analyzed two aspects of negation: the relationship among the three negative forms *ne* alone, *ne … not*, and *not*; and the shift from multiple negation to single negation. Although Caxton's intention was to alter the text into a readable form for his contemporary readers, he did not actively change negative constructions. Hence the difference between MS C and his edition of the *Polychronicon* in respect of negation is very slight, although the chronological order between them is accurately represented in the slightest differences. This is a reliable scale in a different way from the adverbial suffixes discussed above, since

language users' conscious activity is not involved. They cannot damage the natural shift of language by manipulating their linguistic forms. Artificial archaization is, for example, impossible. On the other hand, the change tends to manifest itself in a very modest way, which implies that the chronological distance between the texts under comparison should again be reasonably large. Furthermore, the decline of the forms *ne* and *ne … not* is already at the final stage in the two versions of the *Polychronicon*. The scale is, therefore, more usable for a slightly earlier period of Middle English. By contrast, the shift from multiple negation to single negation is appropriate for fifteenth-century texts in general.

Waldron (1991: 67) states: "When the manuscripts of Trevisa's Middle English version of the *Polychronicon* have been fully transcribed and collated, they will yield (it can safely be said) a good deal of information on scribal attitudes to the language of the text being copied and on movements towards standardization in the written forms of English". I fully agree with his opinion. The date and the provenance of the original translation are known. Some of the extant manuscripts are fairly confidently dated and localized. The date of Caxton's edition is known. Thus, there are a number of factors which function as anchors in linguistic analyses. And the result of further research will function as an additional anchor for future investigations. The present paper concentrated only upon two extant texts, i.e. MS C and Caxton's version. This is merely the beginning step towards further research.

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