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The comparative and superlative formation patterns in Early Modern English

A corpus-based analysis

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1.   Introduction

The main concern of this paper lies in the linguistic investigation of the development of the comparative and superlative formation patterns used during the Early Modern English period.

The study is based on sample texts gathered by the compilers of the Helsinki Corpus of English texts which cover a period of approximately 200 years. This computerised corpus contains a number of texts with different kinds of purpose and various styles. Additionally, the subdivision of the Early Modern English period into three sub-periods enables a diachronic study.

The first part, the theoretical part, of this paper provides a short introduction of the Helsinki Corpus which will be followed by a historical overview, in order to present possible changes and events responsible for the development of the English Standard. Subsequently, I will direct my attention to certain linguistic studies concerning the use of comparatives and superlatives during the Early Modern English period.

In the empirical part, I will first describe the selection of data used, then present all occurrences of adjectival comparison and their distribution into the older synthetic method and the newer analytical one found in the three sub-periods of Early Modern English. This will be done in order to show possible tendencies in association with the number of syllables.

The next step will be a comparison of all found variant forms of adjectival comparison of the Early Modern English period with the Present Day equivalent to show the development towards the standard forms used nowadays.

During the Early Modern English period there also existed a third form of adjectival comparison, apart from the inflectional and periphrastic method, the so called double form. As the use of this hybrid form is rather uncommon in Present Day English, especially in the written language, a close examination of this striking form will follow.

Finally, my last corpus based analyses will be concerned with the comparison of disyllabic adjectives found in the Early Modern English part of the Helsinki Corpus as it is this category of adjectives which has always been subject to more variation. The analyses will look at the nature of word endings, word stress and the context in

order to see if these linguistic criteria might have been influential factors in choosing a suitable method of comparing adjectives.

In the final conclusion I will try to interpret the obtained results and I will also mention some points worthy of further investigations.

2.   The Helsinki Corpus

2.1. Corpus linguistics

The introduction of machine-readable text corpora has opened up a new field for linguistic research. Corpus linguistics has made the study of extremely large data possible as far as linguistic variation and change are concerned. The areas of application are diverse and have provided new insights into different fields of study related to language. Computational linguistics is not only of interest to modern linguists, but also historical linguists use this fairly new branch for their linguistic investigation.

2.2. General introduction

This paper is based on an extensive analysis of the so-called *Helsinki Corpus of English Texts Diachronic and Dialectal*[1], a computerized collection of extracts of continuous English texts. This project, of compiling a historical corpus, was initiated by Matti Rissanen in 1984 and carried out in the English Department of the University of Helsinki[2]. The compilation was completed in 1991 and consists of a total of 1,572,200 million words taken from 400 samples of continuous texts.

Consisting of this relatively small 1.6 million words, it is, however, sufficient for presenting the process of language change and development in a reliable and consistent way.

The Helsinki Corpus consists of a diachronic part, the main interest of my study, and a dialectal part, which was based on transcripts of interviews carried out in rural areas in Great Britain in the 1970s. Furthermore, there are two corpora which complement the basic corpus, namely the Corpus of Early American English and the Corpus of Older Scots English.

First of all, a brief description of the overall structure of the diachronic part will be presented in order to convey a general idea of the entire Helsinki Corpus.

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[1] Henceforth the *Helsinki Corpus*.
[2] For a detailed discussion on the Helsinki Corpus refer to Kytö, Ihalainen & Rissanen 1991; Rissanen, Kytö & Palander-Collin 1993.

Subsequently a more detailed account exclusively of the Early Modern English period will follow, as this period is of major importance for this paper.

2.3. The diachronic section

2.3.1. Introduction

The diachronic part covers one thousand years, starting in AD 750 and stretching over the Old, Middle and Early Modern English periods. The Old and Middle British English sections are again divided into four sub-periods each, whereas the Early Modern (Southern) British English section (Rissanen, Kytö & Palander-Collin 1993: 2) only consists of three sub-periods. Table 1 shows the distribution of words and the chronological subdivision of each period.

Sub-period		Words
Old English		
OE1	-850	2,190
OE2	850 – 950	92,050
OE3	950 – 1050	251,630
OE4	1050 – 1150	67,380
Total		413,250
Middle English		
ME1	1150 - 1250	113,010
ME2	1250 – 1350	97,480
ME3	1350 – 1420	184,230
ME4	1420 – 1500	213,850
Total		608,570
Early Modern English, British		
EmodE1	1500 – 1570	190,160
EmodE2	1570 – 1640	189,800
EmodE3	1640 – 1710	171,040
Total		551,000
Total (Basic corpus)		**1,572,820**
Supplementary parts		
Older Scots		c. 600,000
Early American English		c. 300,000

Table 2.1.: The diachronic part of the Helsinki Corpus: size and period divisions (source: Rissanen, Kytö & Palander-Collin 1993: 3)

The table above illustrates that the number of words per sub-period in the Old and Middle English periods are fairly irregularly distributed and the sub-periods of Old English and early Middle English are grouped into century-long subsections. The

later Middle English sub-periods extend over seventy to eighty years each. In the Early Modern English period the number of words is comparatively evenly distributed, the first and the second sub-periods cover 70 years and the last one 80 years.

2.3.2. Selection of texts

As pointed out by Merja Kytö and Matti Rissanen, there are four aspects to consider when compiling a diachronic corpus, that is to say

- [c]hronological coverage: the corpus should be representative of all parts of the period(s) it is intended to cover.
- Regional coverage: the corpus compiler should pay attention to the regional varieties of the language.
- Sociolinguistic coverage: the texts of the corpus should be produced by male and female authors representing different age groups, social backgrounds and levels of education.
- Generic coverage: the corpus should contain samples representing a wide variety of genres or types of texts. (Rissanen, Kytö & Palander-Collin 1993: 7)

First of all, the Helsinki Corpus offers text samples in their chronological order, which makes diachronic study and consequently analysis of linguistic development as well as comparison within several periods feasible.

Up to 1500 all samples show regional coverage and provide information on the regional dialect distribution, whereas the Early Modern English section of the Helsinki Corpus only offers samples representing "some stage[s] of development in the Southern standard" (Rissanen, Kytö & Palander-Collin 1993: 8), as too many dialects existed and their collection would have been beyond the scope of the compilation of the Helsinki Corpus.

Nevertheless, it is the Early Modern English period that provides us with a number of parameters giving some information on sociolinguistic factors. The most important parameters include among others the author's name, title of text, author's age (in twenty-year age groups) and status, which is classified under 'high/professional [or] other scale' (Rissanen, Kytö & Palander-Collin 1993: 9).

Furthermore, correspondence is divided into *private* and *official* and the relationship between sender and receiver can be *intimate* or *distant*. Additionally, according to Kytö and Rissanen

> [t]he writer and the addressee may be ranked as "equal", or the letter may be addressed to a person in a higher ("up") or lower ("down") social position. All official letters are "distant" by definition and those by core family members, "intimate" (Rissanen, Kytö & Palander-Collin 1993: 9).

Thus, in consideration of the social hierarchy existing at that time, a wife's letter to her husband, for instance, is coded as *up*, whereas a correspondence between two members of the gentry is *equal*.

The scientific and instructive writings are subdivided into *professional* and *non-professional readers,* which is simultaneously an indication of the occurrence of texts representing various styles, as the quality of vocabulary and sentence structure, for instance, may have been adapted by the author according to the intended readership.

The final relevant socio-linguistic parameter treated in the Helsinki Corpus is the level of formality, which is mainly defined on the basis of the discourse situation. According to Kytö and Rissanen "sermons, trial records and official correspondence have been coded as [']formal['] and private correspondence and comedy as [']informal[']" (Rissanen, Kytö & Palander-Collin 1993: 10). Also Early Modern English light fiction has been coded as informal.

According to the fourth and last aspect relevant to the compilation of a corpus, generic coverage, the Helsinki Corpus offers a great variety of different text types, although it does not represent all types and levels of written English of the Old, Middle and Early Modern English periods.

Furthermore, no theoretically satisfactory classification by text types for the compilation of corpora has been developed so far. However, one possibility is to develop diachronic text type definitions by means of extra-linguistic criteria, such as "subject matter, and purpose of the text, […] discourse situation and […] the relationship existing between the writer and the receiver" (Rissanen, Kytö & Palander-Collin 1993: 10).

Table 2.2. shows all text types presented in the Helsinki Corpus and their occurrences per sub-period. The selection of texts is wide-ranging, and therefore

categorization and codification were the most difficult aspects in the compilation of the Helsinki Corpus. For this reason it is important to keep in mind that

> text type codings do not indicate linguistic or discursive uniformity of the texts grouped under one and the same category. [...]. [However] [i]t is fair to assume, [...], that the texts included in the same category show some common features. (Rissanen, Kytö & Palander-Collin 1993: 10).

Old English	Middle English	Early Modern English
Law	Law	Law
Document	Document	
Handbk. Astronomy	Handbk. Astronomy	
Handbk. Medicine	Handbk. Medicine	
	Handbk. Other	Handbk. Other
Science Astronomy		
	Science Medicine	Science Medicine
		Science Other
		Educat. treatise
Philosophy	Philosophy	Philosophy
Homily	Homily	
	Sermon	Sermon
Rule	Rule	
Relig. treatise	Relig. treatise	
Preface/Epilogue	Preface/Epilogue	
	Proceed. Deposition	
		Proceed. Trial
History	History	History
Geography		
Travelogue	Travelogue	Travelogue
		Private diary
Biog. Saint's Life	Biog. Saint's Life	
		Biog. Auto
		Biog. Other
Fiction	Fiction	Fiction
	Romance	
	Drama Mystery	
		Drama Comedy
	Private correspondence	Private correspondence
	Non-private correspondence	Non-private correspondence
Bible	Bible	Bible

Abbreviations

Handbk.	= handbook
Educat.	= educational
Relig.	= religious
Proceed.	= proceeding
Biog.	= biography
Biog. Auto	= autobiography
Drama Mystery	= mystery play

Table 2.2.: Text types occurring in the Old, Middle and Early Modern English periods (source: Rissanen, Kytö & Palander-Collin 1993: 11)

The Helsinki Corpus includes both literary and non-literary texts as well as private and public writing; priority was definitely given to the non-literary genres.

The inclusion of translations was more or less avoided, though translations of two texts, namely the *Bible* and Boethius` *De Consolatione Philosophiae*, can be found in all three sub-periods.

Moreover, it is important to mention that the bulk of samples are written in prose, however, a comparatively small number of texts written in verse are presented in the Old, Middle and Early Modern English periods, because they were either of great importance or because there was no other existing sample of this text type written in prose. Those occurrences can be found, for instance, in the earlier Middle English romances, Late Middle English and early sixteenth-century drama

2.4. Early Modern English period of the Helsinki Corpus[3]

2.4.1. Introduction

As a result of the invention of the printing press, a greater number of texts and also a wider range of text types became available in the Early Modern English period. Furthermore, the process of standardization of the English language led to the disappearance of regional dialects in their written form.

These factors, and also temporal proximity, made "a more systematic application of the overall compilation principles" (Rissanen, Kytö & Palander-Collin 1993: 53) possible in the Early Modern English section of the Helsinki Corpus than in the Old or Middle English sections.

The Early Modern English period comprises a total of 551,000 words[4] and is divided into three sub-periods.

The first two sub-periods extend over a seventy-year span, while the last covers 80 years. This division may seem arbitrary at first as no drastic changes can be recognised which could have called for the termination of one sub-period and the beginning of the next one. However, after a closer look[5] it becomes evident that each sub-period mirrors certain social conditions typical of this period and additionally definite states of language change. So, according to Rissanen, Kytö & Palander-Collin, within the three sub-periods of Early Modern English, England's society changed from a

> fairly static, sparsely populated Catholic peasant society into an increasing stratified and economically diversified Protestant society, whose population more than doubled […]. (Rissanen, Kytö & Palander-Collin 1993: 54)

This development of England's society went hand in hand with language change which can be recognized in all three subsections of the Helsinki Corpus: the samples of subsection I reflect the acceleration of changes; subsection II presents their culmination and subsection III shows the stabilization of the state of affairs (for the whole paragraph see Rissanen, Kytö & Pallander-Collin, 1993: 54).

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[3] For detailed information see Rissanen, Kytö & Palander-Collin 1993: 53-73.
[4] cf. Table *2.1. The diachronic part of the Helsinki Corpus: size and period divisions.*
[5] Also see chapter *3. Historical overview.*

2.4.2. Text type continuity and variation

The three general principles of compilation were also followed in the Early Modern English period of the Helsinki Corpus, that is to say

- the avoidance of translations: only two translations are included, the Bible (Tyndale's and the *Authorized Version*) and Boethius' *De Consolatione Philosophiae* (translations by Colville, Queen Elisabeth I, and Preston).
- The concentration on prose. However, it was impossible to avoid verse texts completely, as early comedy is only available in verse and had to be included in the Helsinki Corpus in order to enable text type continuity.
- The use of printed or edited material. (For the whole paragraph see Rissanen, Kytö & Palander-Collin 1993: 61).

Furthermore, direct text type continuity was of great importance, which did not cause difficulties for non-private genres, such as law, handbooks, early science, sermons, history, biography or fiction. However, it became problematic with less public writings, like drama and correspondence.

The reason for this was on the one hand the development of completely new genres of both public (educational treatises and proceedings of state trials) and private (personal diaries and travelogues) writing, and on the other hand the emergence of new sub-genres or related text types. These were, for example, early comedies, which replaced Middle English mystery plays, and biographies of poets and statesmen, which followed the tradition of saints' lives. Thus, medieval religious subjects were abandoned in favour of secular themes.

Consequently, as a result of the enormous development of textual diversification, and thus the essential inclusion of new variations in register between 1500 and 1700, it was no longer possible to represent all previous genres of the Old and Middle English periods to the same extent. However, what the compilers of the Early Modern English period could achieve was that all text types were represented by two different text samples in each sub-period, with the exception of translations and correspondence.

2.4.3. Standardness of texts

Along with extra-linguistic changes[6] the use of Standard English became of vital importance, which gradually led to the disappearance of local varieties in writings. This fact explains why "[o]ne of the guiding principles for the compilation of the Early Modern English period corpus has been the standardness of texts" (Rissanen, Kytö & Palander-Collin 1993: 66). However, this does not mean that the Early Modern English section of the Helsinki Corpus represents only texts written in Standard English; instead

> [i]n general, the corpus user is given the choice between texts that strictly represent the standard language (documentary and other nonprivate material; written by gentlemen or professional men) and texts with potential dialectal features (entertainment and private writings; written by men of middle ranks, or by women). (Rissanen, Kytö & Palander-Collin 1993: 68)

Due to the illiteracy of the lower ranks, no texts could be included representing the language of this social stratum.

2.4.4. Authorship

The compilers of the Helsinki Corpus did not have to face many problems as far as the identification of the authors of the Early Modern English texts is concerned. There are only a few exceptions, like "the official document […] *The Statutes of the Realm*, which represent the anonymous continuity of the Chancery Standard" (Rissanen, Kytö & Palander-Collin 1993: 68), or the jests and merry tales, where no author could be identified.

2.4.5. Editions

Text samples were, if possible, taken from standard editions with original spellings. Early printed books were available from the Scolar Press (English Linguistics) and the English Experience facsimile reprints.

However, texts taken from the private domain, like diaries or correspondence, were accepted in the given form, as editions were not available (Rissanen, Kytö & Palander-Collin 1993: 69).

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[6] cf. Chapter *3. Historical Overview*

The compilers of the Helsinki Corpus avoided modernized editions, which is the reason for linguistic variation as far as spelling is concerned.

3.   Historical overview[7]

3.1. Introduction

The Early Modern English period extends from about 1500 to 1800[8] and marks a significant era for the development of a standard form of the English language. According to Görlach (1991: xv) "it was the period when many of the characteristic structures of the modern written language developed".

In order to establish the necessary framework for a diachronic study, it is of vital importance to point out the most crucial events or factors happening during this period. As mentioned by Görlach

> die diachrone Linguistik [vergleicht] die Strukturen zweier Sprachstufen und versucht, aus den Unterschieden der Systeme auf Gesetzmäßigkeiten des Wandels zu schließen. Da die Entwicklung einer Sprache entscheidend von ihrem Gebrauch abhängt, ist der Vergleich der Sprachsysteme zu erweitern durch Einbeziehung außersprachlicher historischer Fakten. Diachrone Linguistik ist so eingebettet in die Sprachgeschichte, die auch Fragen nach der politischen Geschichte, der Wirtschafts- und Kulturgeschichte einschließt und nach den außersprachlichen Bedingungen und Gründen von Sprachwandel fragen kann. (Görlach 2002b: 8)

Thus, according to the Early Modern English period Görlach presents important extra- as well as intra-linguistic criteria which distinguish the Early Modern English period from the Middle English one

- The expansion of a written standard form and its increasing homogeneity (after 1450, English texts can no longer be localized); book printing began in England in 1476.
- Inflexion is restricted to /s, əθ, əst, ər, ıŋg, əd, ən/.

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[7] For a detailed discussion of the Early Modern English period refer to Burnley 1992, Barber 1993, and Görlach 1991, 1994, 1999, 2002.
[8] For a detailed explanation of the periodisation of Early Modern English see Görlach 1991: 9-10, 1994: 8-9.

- The end of the medieval feudal system and the rise of Renaissance dukes and courtiers (the Wars of the Roses ended in 1471, and the Tudors came to the throne in 1485).
- The beginning of humanism in England (Oxford Reformers 1485-1510).
- The breakaway of the English church from Rome in 1534.
- The discovery of America in 1492 […]. (for the whole list see Görlach 1991: 10).

Consequently, this chapter is dedicated to putting forward the most important extra-linguistic criteria which are supposed to be jointly responsible for the development of the English language during the Early Modern English period.

3.2. Changes during the Early Modern English period

During the Early Modern English period there were not only linguistic changes, as mentioned above, but also changes as far as attitudes in English society are concerned. Nationalism[9] became of vital importance and manifested itself in the growing desire of England's population for the establishment of the English language as a literary medium, and consequently the displacement of French and Latin (for the whole paragraph see Barber 1993: 176).

Consequently, an intensive study of the English language started during the Renaissance period and as Görlach points out

> [t]his study was partly prompted by comparison with Latin and the resulting impression was that English lacked order, a full vocabulary and stylistic elegance. (Görlach 1991: 4)

This led to a division between literary men. On the one hand there were the puritans who were against all foreign influence, and on the other hand there were those who made strong efforts to retain the Latin language. A variety of opinions and views were discussed during what was known as the *Inkhorn Controversy*, which consumed much of the sixteenth and early seventeenth century. The aim of this debate was "to perfect English in its role as a national language and a means of literary and individual expression" (Burnley 1992: 197).

However, the introduction of Latin borrowings was favoured not just because they were necessary as new words were required, but also because its usage was regarded by England's higher ranks as "a sign of education or of social superiority, marking them off from the common herd" (Barber 1993: 179). Society was highly stratified and hierarchical during the Early Modern English period and a strict line was drawn between the rich and the poor. Some who wanted to acquire prestige and to demonstrate that they belonged to the higher ranks tended to use strange and pompous Latin words, called *inkhorn terms*, in order to impress others, although there was a perfectly good English expression at hand. This overuse of Latin was of course often ridiculed (for the whole paragraph see Barber 1993: 179-180).

The Renaissance was the period of the rediscovery of classical Greek and antiquity (Barber 1993: 177). Classical Latin, which was of major importance, was

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[9] Also see chapter 3.2.2. *Nationalism.*

taken as a model for language study, as it was regarded as a pure and logical language. An enormous number of translations were made from Latin, which also resulted in the introduction of a large number of borrowings (Barber 1993: 177-178).

However, as Charles Barber (1993: 176f) pointed out, there were three major contributing factors in favour of the English language. These factors were

1)   the Reformation
2)   nationalism, and
3)   the claim of books written in English

3.2.1. Reformation

The Reformation took place between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries and was a popular movement of people who were disillusioned with the Roman Catholic Church. Not only Catholic and even more Protestant believers, but also people engaged in the *Inkhorn Controversy* wanted to spread their attitudes and opinions to the vast majority of England's ordinary men. For this reason, a great number of controversial books and pamphlets were written in English from that time onwards (for the whole paragraph see Barber 1993: 176). The Protestants, in particular, were supporters of the translation of the Bible, as they wanted their followers to be able to read the Bible themselves, and

> [t]he translation of the Bible into English, moreover, and the changeover from Latin to English in church services, raised the prestige of English. The more extreme Protestants, indeed, regarded Latin as a 'Popish' language, designed to keep ordinary people in ignorance and to maintain the power of priests. (Barber 1993: 176)

Also King Henry VIII, who ruled the country from 1509 till 1547, promoted the rise of an English standard language. Under his reign the English language was established as the language of religious service and the so-called *Great Bible*, whose style and vocabulary strongly influenced the English literature of the following centuries, was published in 1539. *The Book of Common Prayer*, a service book which became obligatory during the reign of Edward VI (1547-1553), also had a strong impact on the English language.

3.2.2. Nationalism

As already mentioned[10], the feeling of nationalism was growing during the Early Modern English period. As pointed out by Barber

> The medieval feeling that a person was a part of Christendom was replaced by the modern feeling that a person is English […]. (Barber 1993: 176)

This modern nationalistic feeling resulted in an active interest and pride in the English language and consequently in the creation of a vernacular literature, in order to compete on equal terms with works written in Latin or Greek.

3.2.3. Books in English

As a result of the introduction of the printing press in 1476 by William Caxton, book production was steadily growing and England's society became more and more literate (Görlach 1991: 6). According to Cressy (1980: 77; quoted in Rissanen 1993: 67) the overall literacy of men increased from about 10 % to 45 % during the Early Modern English period.

Nevertheless, it is important to mention that the literacy rate differed according to social group, sex and geographical area, for mainly the higher ranks of the population living in London and town dwellers were well educated in comparison with the remaining population, and in addition to this there was always a greater number of literate men than women. However, literacy also extended to the lower classes, which went hand in hand with the foundation of a great number of grammar schools. (for the whole paragraph see Rissanen 1993: 68).

Furthermore, the new interest in language, literature and rhetoric encouraged people to read books dealing with these subjects, which consequently called for the production of books written in English

As a result the regularisation of the spelling system increased rapidly during this period, but especially in private literature, like letters or diaries, irregularities were still the rule.

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[10] See chapter *3.2. Changes during the Early Modern English period*

London became the printing centre and the language used by its citizens became the model. At the beginning of the sixteenth century the language used by the clerks of the Chancery[11] was regarded as the standard form for official correspondence, but this form soon lost its status and became a special language.

From the early seventeenth century onwards grammars and dictionaries appeared. Regulated grammar and defined vocabulary were the main interests of literary men.

The first dictionary of English, *A Table Alphabeticall*, was compiled by Robert Cawdrey and appeared in 1604 (Burnley 1992: 198)[12]. Before this publication there were only bilingual dictionaries, most of them written in Latin and English.

In 1586, William Bullokar published the first grammar, called *A Brief Grammar of English*, which was followed by Paul Greaves' *Grammatica Anglicana* in 1594, and Alexander Gil's *Logonomia Anglica* in 1619 (Burnley 1992: 198).

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[11] The Chancery was a medieval writing office for the king (Wright 2000: 1)
[12] Also see Pyles & Algeo 1993: 206.

4.   Studies of the comparative and superlative formation patterns in the Early Modern English period and the presentation of Present day grammar rules

4.1. Introduction

Before presenting the results of my corpus-based analyses concerning the development of the comparison of the adjective during the Early Modern English period, I will briefly outline what linguists, like Charles Barber (1997) and Manfred Görlach (1991) have written in order to obtain a general idea of the development of this linguistic category.

Following this, it is necessary to describe the most important present day rules of the comparative and superlative formation patterns[13] to provide the basis for later comparisons of the older and present day forms, thus illustrating more clearly the language's development from the Early Modern English period to how it is used today.

I will also present certain corpus-based studies concerning the comparative and superlative formation patterns carried out by Merja Kytö and Suzanne Romaine in order to compare their results to my own corpus-based investigation and look for further factors which might have influenced the use of adjectival comparison during the Early Modern English period.

4.2. Development of the comparative and superlative formation patterns during the Early Modern English period according to Charles Barber (1997) and Manfred Görlach (1991)

During the Old English period, the adjective was declined for number, case and gender, but its inflections disappeared in the course of the Middle English period and the adjective thus became indeclinable, as it is today. During the Middle English period the periphrastic or analytic method of comparison[14], using the adverbs *more*

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[13] For detailed information see Greenbaum & Quirk 1990; Swan 1991, Leech & Svartvik 1994, Quirk et.al 2000
[14] Henceforth periphrastic comparison.

and *most*[15]*,* became more and more common and consequently rivalled the older inflectional method.

Although the formation patterns of the comparative and superlative used during the Early Modern English period seem to be quite similar to the present day situation, there is according to Barber a difference, namely "that today there is a fairly strict regulation of the two methods" (Barber 1997: 146) whereas

> [i]n eModE, […] the two methods of comparison were very nearly in free variation: as in so many things, the eModE speaker or writer had greater freedom of choice. (Barber 1997: 147)

However, as also pointed out by Barber (1997: 147) it was the level of formality which apparently influenced the choice of either the inflectional or the periphrastic method. In colloquial situations the inflectional method seemed to be used more often whereas in written or educated language preference was apparently given to the the periphrastic method (Görlach 1991: 83). But as there were no fixed regulations, both methods could be used interchangeably even by the same speaker or writer. Examples presented by Barber were Ben Jonson's use of both *fitter* and *more fit*, or Shakespeare's usage of *sweeter* and *more sweet* (Barber 1997: 147). Görlach shares this opionion for the time around 1600, but also mentions that "by the late seventeenth century the *–er/-est* comparison had been established for monosyllabic words" (Görlach 1991: 84).

As far as disyllabic adjectives are concerned, Barber presents Early Modern English examples of adjectives compared by inflection which are rather uncommon in present day English, where the periphrastic method is now preferred.
Such examples are

> *perfecter, perfectest* (Shakespeare), *learneder* (Jonson), *cursedst* (Shakespeare), *pacienter* (Gabriel Harvey), *auncientest* (Spenser), *frequentest* (Locke), *shamefuller* (Spenser), *careful'st* (Queen Elisabeth I), *willinger* (Ascham), *ragingest* (Nash), *greuouser* (Latimer), and *famousest* (Milton). (Barber 1997: 147)

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[15] For further information on the development of the periphrastic comparison see Knüpfer's study (1921).

However, as Görlach (1991: 84) points out, the rules concerning the comparison of disyllabic adjectives seem to have been established by eighteenth-century grammarians.

Another uncommon usage of the comparison for a present-day speaker is the inflectional comparison with polysyllabic words, where nowadays the periphrastic method is normally used. This form was especially common with the superlative, as the following examples show

> *naturalest* (Sir Thomas Smith), *delicatest* (Lyly), *magnificentest* (Nash), *rascalliest* (Shakespeare), *notoriousest* (Archbishop Laud), *difficultest* (Milton), *ungratefull'st* (Otway). (Barber 1997: 147)

Another familiar method of forming an adjectival comparison at that time was the so called double comparison, which is the use of both the inflectional and the periphrastic method simultaneously[16]. One famous example given by Barber is in Julius Caesar

> This was the most vnkindest cut of all. (Barber 1997: 147)

Other examples, pointed out by Barber (1997: 147) can be found in Shakespeare's Hamlet *more nearer,* and Antony and Cleopatra *more larger*, as well as in the King James Bible, namely *most straitest* [17]*.* Accoding to Görlach the use of the double comparison

> was frequent in colloquial speech, in which it could serve to express emphasis. Such forms became more frequent in the sixteenth century and were accepted in respectable prose, too. Ben Jonson praised them as a special virtue of the English language (Görlach 1991: 84).

However, by the end of the seventeenth century this form was "condemned as being illogical" (Görlach 1991: 84).

Furthermore, in the sixteenth century there were some individual forms which differ from present-day comparatives, namely *lenger* and *lengest* which are occasionally found as the forms of comparison of *long*, or *strenger* and *strengest* were found as the forms of *strong* (Barber 1997: 147). Additionally, according to

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[16] For further examples concerning the double comparison also see Jespersen 1949: 367f.
[17] Also see chapter 3.2.1. Reformation*.*

Barber (1997: 147-148) "[…] *more* and *most* could be used to mean 'larger, largest' [and] *less* and *least* could mean 'smaller, smallest'. The words *later* and *latter* as well as *latest* and *last* could be used interchangeably (Barber 1997: 148).

Summing up, it may be said that the speakers and writers of the Early Modern English period could more or less personally opt for one of the three constructions. In some cases the choice between the inflectional, the periphrastic or the double comparison depended on the word, text type and metrical/rhythmical context. Nevertheless it is also probable to assume that authors often used one of these three forms of comparing adjectives unconsciously, purely accidentally.

4.3. The comparative and superlative formation patterns of Present Day English

4.3.1. Introduction

In order to take a close look at the development of the comparative and superlative formation patterns used during the Early Modern English period it is necessary to point out what contemporary grammar books say on this subject[18]. As my historical analysis will only be concerned with adjectival comparison to a higher degree, the following description also concentrates on this type.

Basically, there are three different methods for comparing adjectives to a higher degree

- comparison expressed by the inflected forms *–er* and *–est*
- comparison expressed by the periphrastic forms using *more* and *most*
- or comparison expressed by irregular forms[19].

4.3.2. The choice between inflectional and periphrastic comparison

According to Quirk et al. (2000: 461) "[t]he choice between inflectional and periphrastic comparison is largely determined by the length of the adjective". Thus, monosyllabic adjectives are normally compared by inflection, disyllabic adjectives can have both the inflected or periphrastic forms, and tri-syllabic or longer adjectives can only be compared by the periphrastic method using *more* and *most*. However, the usage is not as distinct as it might first appear and so additional information is necessary.

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[18] For detailed information see Swan 1991; Greenbaum & Quirk 1990; Leech & Svartvik 1994, Quirk et.al 2000

[19] Since I am not going to include these forms to my historical analysis, as they would most likely be beyond the scope of this work, I also do not discuss them in the present chapter.

4.3.2.1. Monosyllabic adjectives

First of all it is important to mention that occasionally monosyllabic adjectives can be compared with the help of the periphrastic forms, like

> *more true~most true, more proud~most proud* (Leech & Svartvik 1994: 255)

and there are even some monosyllabic adjectives, namely *real*, *right* and *wrong*, and the preposition *like* which take only the periphrastic forms (Quirk et al. 2000: 461). However, generally monosyllabic adjectives are compared by inflection and there are even some adjectives which seem to be exclusively compared with *–er* and *-est*. These are:

bad	*big*	*black*	*clean*
fair [colour]	*far*	*fast*	*good*
great	*hard*	*high*	*low*
old	*quick*	*small*	*thick*
thin	*tight*	*wide*	*young* (Quirk et al. 2000: 463).

4.3.2.2. Disyllabic adjectives

There are many disyllabic adjectives, like "*quiet, common, solid, cruel, wicked, polite, pleasant,* [and] *handsome*" (Quirk et al. 2000: 462) which can take either the inflected or the periphrastic form as illustrated in the following example

[h]er children are
  politer/more polite.
  (the) politest/(the) most polite. (Quirk et al. 2000 : 462)

Other common adjectives which can have either form of comparison are mentioned in Cobuild's grammar. These are *gentle, handsome, likely, mature, narrow, obscure, remote, shallow, simple, stupid* and *subtle* (Cobuild 1995: 441).

Nevertheless, there are some adjectives which are more likely to be compared by inflection. These are adjectives ending in an unstressed vowel, /l̩/ or /əʳ/, for example:

-y:	early, easy, funny, happy, noisy, wealthy, pretty
-ow:	mellow, narrow, shallow
-le:	able, feeble, gentle, noble, simple (Quirk et al. 2000: 462).

However, it is important to mention that adjectives ending in *–ly,* and not just *–y*, for instance *friendly*, or *lonely*, favour the periphrastic form of comparison and so do *eager* and *proper*, two adjectives ending in *–er* (Quirk et al. 2000: 462).

All other two-syllabic adjectives are, according to Cobuild, also more likely to take the periphrastic way of comparison, for example

careful → more careful → the most careful
famous →more famous → the most famous (Cobuild 1995: 441).

4.3.2.3. Trisyllabic adjectives

As mentioned above, trisyllabic or longer adjectives, as well as participle forms used as adjectives, are normally compared by the periphrastic forms. Exceptions are adjectives with the negative *un*-prefix, such as *unhappy*, which take only inflectional comparison.

5. Corpus-based studies concerning the comparison of adjectives

5.1. Introduction

The study of the development of the comparative and superlative formation patterns from the Old English period to Present day English is not a new field of investigation. One piece of historical evidence dealing with this grammatical category is given in an article written by Kytö & Romaine (2000) where Lindley Murray's opinion about the comparison of adjectives, taken from his book on *English Grammar* from the year 1795, is presented. In this prescriptive work Murray puts together certain rules which should help "to produce the agreement and right disposition of words in a sentence" (Murray 1795: 87, quoted in Kytö & Romaine 2000: 190). In Rule VIII, for example, Murray states that

> Double comparatives and superlatives should be avoided, such as, 'A worser conduct;' 'on lesser hopes;' 'A more serener temper;' 'The most straitest sect': It should be 'worse conduct'; 'less hopes;' 'a more serene temper;' 'the straitest sect'. (Murray 1795: 103-4, quoted in Kytö & Romaine 2000: 191)

Another rule concerning the comparison of adjectives established by Murray is as follows

> Adjectives that have in themselves a superlative signification do not properly admit of the superlative form superadded; such as 'Chief, extreme, perfect, right; universal,'&c.; which are sometimes improperly written 'Chiefest, extremest, perfectest, rightest, most universal,' &c. The following expressions are therefore improper. 'He sometimes claims admission to the chiefest offices.' 'The quarrel was become so universal and national;' '*become universal.*' 'A method of attaining the rightest and greatest happiness.' (Murray 1795: 104, quoted in Kytö & Romaine 2000: 191)

Besides, there are also many modern discussions on the development of adjectival comparison "in the standard handbooks on the history of English (see e.g. Jespersen 1949), as well as in a few specialist works (see e.g. Pound 1901, Knüpfer 1922 and Rohr 1929)" (Kytö & Romaine 1997: 330). The most recent corpus-based studies on this topic were written by Merja Kytö and Suzanne Romaine (1997, 2000). One article

is concerned with the "Adjective comparison and standardisation processes in American and British English from 1620 to the present" (Kytö & Romaine 2000: 171-194), and the other deals with the "Competing forms of adjective comparison in modern English: what could be *more quicker* and *easier* and *more effective*?" (Kytö & Romaine 1997: 329-352). My focus of attention was of course the historical aspect rather than the present-day situation.

5.2. Merja Kytö and Suzanne Romaine – an approach to adjectival comparison[20]

Both Merja Kytö and Suzanne Romaine have tried to give a detailed description of some aspects of the development of adjectival comparison on the basis of their findings from their corpus-based analysis.

Although their earlier study[21] mainly examines adjectival comparison in present-day English, many historical aspects are included, as their results were compared with an earlier diachronic study carried out by Kytö in the year 1996 in order to "[…] yield[…] a broad overview of the main lines of historical development" (Kytö & Romaine 1997: 329). For the research on contemporary English their main source of data was the British National Corpus[22], which contains 100 million words of contemporary spoken and written English. For the historical study Kytö also used the Helsinki Corpus, where some 950,000 words were investigated, although this covered both the Late Middle as well as the entire Early Modern English periods.

Their later study[23] is concerned with the standardisation process in American and British English with reference to competing forms of adjectival comparison. Their main focus of attention was on the "competition […] between the older inflectional comparative […] and the newer periphrastic construction […], with the much less frequent double comparative" (Kytö & Romaine 2000: 171). For this study their "sources of data […] [were] the pilot version of the Corpus of Early American English [covering the period from 1620 to 1720] and ARCHER [which is] [a] Representative Corpus of Historical English Registers" (Kytö & Romaine 2000: 171). All in all they brought together a corpus of nearly a million words, which was sufficient for their purpose of looking at "similarities and differences in standardisation processes" (Kytö & Romaine 2000: 171) of American and British English.

In the following chapters I want to point out the most important investigations carried out and results obtained by Kytö and Romaine presented in both articles.

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[20] See bibliography: Kytö & Romaine 1997, 2000
[21] From the year 1997
[22] The British National Corpus consists of a 90-million-word collection of written texts and of a 10-million-word collection of spoken texts. The written texts included were sampled from the period 1960-1993, and the spoken texts were collected during the project from 1991 to 1994. The size and structure of the British National Corpus is described in the User's Reference Guide for the British National Corpus (Version 1.0). For further information, see http://info.ox.ac.uk/bnc/bncman.html.
[23] From the year 2000

Various aspects, such as the influence of text types, genres and word structure on the choice of inflectional, periphrastic or double comparison, and also stylistic factors, will be discussed.

5.2.1. General aspects

In the course of history the English language changed from a syntactic to an analytical one. This trend can also be observed in the case of adjectival comparison, namely the introduction of the analytical method of comparing adjectives using *more* and *most*[24]. Possible reasons for this change were foreign influences as well as "stylistic factors such as speakers' needs for emphasis and clarity (Kytö & Romaine 1997: 330; 2000: 172).

According to Bruce Mitchell, the first occurrences of the periphrastic form were found during the thirteenth century. Thus, it becomes interesting to look at the development of this coexistence of the newer periphrastic form and the then prevailing inflectional way of comparing adjectives. As pointed out by Kytö and Romaine, the use of these two forms side by side was not fixed, regular or clear immediately after the introduction of the newer analytical form, as can be seen in the following description

> [a]fter an initial spurt in the use of the new periphrastic type of comparison in some environments, the newer forms eventually oust the older ones completely. In other environments, however, the newer forms recede in favor of the older inflectional type (Kytö & Romaine 1997: 330-331).

However, according to Kytö and Romaine, the distribution of the inflectional and periphrastic forms is quite equally balanced during the Early Modern English period (Kytö & Romaine 1997: 335). In the case of the superlative it is pointed out that

> the drop in the use of the periphrastic form takes place in the second subperiod (1570-1640). Thus, the crucial period during which the inflectional forms increase and the periphrastic forms decrease to achieve their present day distribution occurs during the late modern English period, i.e. post 1710. (Kytö & Romaine 1997: 335)

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[24] Also see chapter *7. Conclusi*on.

Additionally, the introduction of the new periphrastic form led to the third construction of comparing adjectives, namely the double comparison[25]. However, this form was not very frequently used during the Early Modern English period and "gradually disappeared from the written language under the influence of standardisation" (Kytö & Romaine 2000: 173).

Thus, as mentioned above, there were three possibilities of comparing adjectives during the Early Modern English period, and early scholars such as Pound believed that

> [t]hroughout the [fifteenth] century when both methods are used, the form of comparison is governed by no fixed principle, such as length, ending, accent, or the source of the word. Instead the two methods are used quite indiscrimately, according to the author's choice. (Pound 1901: 18, quoted in Kytö & Romaine 1997: 338)

Thus, according to Pound, the inflectional and the periphrastic forms were in free variation and only individual choice was responsible for giving preference to one of the two main variants.

However, modern linguists as well as Kytö and Romaine's data revealed that three main influencing factors could be made responsible for the choice of one of the competing forms of comparison, namely text type, word structure and stylistic factors. Let us now turn to these linguistic conditioning factors.

5.2.2. Influence of text types

All corpora used by Kytö and Romaine comprise various text types which made it possible to explore the question to what extent the use of the three ways of comparing adjectives can be linked with different genres or text types.

Kytö found out that in rather formal text types which do not closely reflect spoken language, the periphrastic forms are more frequently used. In text types likely to present language typical in oral speech, like handbooks or private letters, inflectional comparison prevailed (Kytö & Romaine 1997: 185). Also the results of the present-day study are analogous to the historical investigation, as inflectional forms are mainly found in a language written to reflect spoken or colloquial registers,

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[25] Compare chapter *6.5. Double comparison*

whereas periphrastic forms are typically found in texts dealing with philosophy or religious treatises.

The results of the Early Modern English period could also disclose the possibility that the introduction of the periphrastic form, might have begun in the written language and spread to the spoken, rather than the other way round. But as we do not have any records of the spoken language of the Early Modern English period this idea remains speculative.

Unfortunately there is an uneven distribution of text types to be found in all corpora. In Kytö and Romaine's data, for example, fiction, journals and drama were better represented than letters and sermons, which makes it somewhat difficult to provide reliable information about how text types influenced the regularisation of adjectival comparison.

5.2.3. Influence of word structure

In contemporary grammar books there are generally two major linguistic factors which determine the use of either the inflectional or the periphrastic way of comparing adjectives. These two are word length and the nature of the word ending.[26]

According to Kytö and Romaine's investigations (1997: 339, 2000: 180) word length seems to be quite influential and a powerful factor. Their studies revealed that monosyllabic adjectives favoured the inflectional forms, as 70 % of all instances of both comparative and superlative were compared in this way from the 1350s on. By the early 1700s 90 % of all monosyllabic adjectives were compared by inflection.

In the case of adjectives with four or more syllables the periphrastic way was always preferred for the comparative and only four out of 51 superlatives were compared by inflection (Kytö & Romaine 1997: 339).

As far as tri-syllabic adjectives are concerned the data showed some variation "with 5 out of 100 examples forming comparatives inflectionally and 13 out of 152 examples forming the superlative inflectionally" (Kytö & Romaine 1997: 339).

Additionally, Kytö and Romaine's data shows in the case of the comparative that by the Late Middle English period the periphrastic way of comparing adjectives was not completely established for adjectives ending in *–ous* and *–ful*, as some

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[26] Also see chapter 4.2. *Development of the comparative and superlative formation patterns according to Charles Barber (1997) and Manfred Görlach (1991).*

incidences were still compared by inflection. However, during the Early Modern English period the periphrastic comparison was exclusively used for such words, as it is today.

In the case of superlatives Kytö and Romaine's data (1997: 343-344, 2000: 181) reveal a similar trend, as 100 % of adjectives ending in –*ous* were compared periphrastically right from the beginning of the Early Modern English period. With adjectives ending in –*ful* periphrastic comparison was more frequent than inflectional comparison, but there was still some variation till the 19th century.

In the case of disyllabic adjectives ending in –*y/-ly* and –*le/-er* a different development can be observed. After a first peak during the Late Middle English period of comparing these adjectives periphrastically, there was a steady decline for both comparatives and superlatives during the Early Modern English period as the inflectional type reasserted itself (Kytö & Romaine 1997: 345).

5.2.4. Stylistic factors

As can be seen in the previous chapter, already during the Early Modern English period word length, as well as the nature of word-ending were important factors for the choice of either the inflectional or the periphrastic way of comparing adjectives. But there is still another factor, namely the stylistic factor, which should be taken into consideration. However, what is meant by stylistic factor, or rather style? According to Görlach

> [s]tyle is the (usually deliberate) characteristic selection of linguistic means of expression made by an individual or a group from the alternatives that the linguistic system or the norm allows. […] Style is subject to changing fashions to an even greater degree than other aspects of the language. Such change appears to have been especially rapid in the last decade of the sixteenth century […] (Görlach 1991: 29).

Thus, during the Early Modern English period, the stylistic factor seems to have some influence, although this has not been systematically investigated. Nevertheless, as pointed out by Kytö and Romaine, scholars like Curme and Jespersen also claimed that the stylistic factor to put emphasis on the comparing element may influence the choice of either the inflectional or the periphrastic way of comparison. However, their opinions differ widely from one another as can be seen as follows.

According to Jespersen (1949: 356) the inflectional forms rather than the periphrastic forms "are generally felt as more vigorous [and] more emphatic" especially in longer words and superlative forms, which can be seen in an example taken from the book *Mark Twain* "*the confoundedest, brazenest, ingeniousest* piece of fraud" (Jespersen 1949: 356). Additionally, in contrast to Kytö and Romaine's data mentioned above, Jespersen found more superlatives which were of the inflectional type than comparatives in disyllabic words ending in *–sh* or *–ous*, like *foolishest* or *famousest*, too. In such cases the periphrastic way would normally be used in order to avoid the co-occurrences of two sibilants, but according to Jespersen the unusual inflectional way was given preference in order to highlight these words (Jespersen 1949: 354-355).

On the other hand, Curme was of the opinion that the newer periphrastic form was of "stylistic advantage" (Curme 1931: 504, quoted in Kytö & Romaine 2000: 185), because

> the use of a separate word (*more/most)* instead of an inflectional ending allows the speakers/writers to place additional stress on the comparative element, if they want to emphasise the idea of degree, or on the adjective to emphasise the meaning. (Curme 1931: 504, quoted in Kytö & Romaine 2000: 185)

Also Kytö and Romaine mention the periphrastic form as an important innovation to express emphasis in the written language, which is explained as follows

> [a]lthough speakers can always rely on prosody to indicate which parts of the utterance they wish to emphasise, writers must rely on other cues such as word order, punctuation, word choice, etc. Periphrasis may possibly have emerged as a stylistic option first in the written language to emphasise and focus on the comparison itself rather than the quality referred to in the adjective (Kytö & Romaine 2000: 185).

5.2.5. Conclusion

Summing up, it may be said that according to Kytö and Romaine's study several factors were responsible for the choice of one of the three ways of comparing adjectives in Early Modern English.

For this reason I can no longer agree with Pound's theory[27] about adjectival comparison, as actual usage was apparently not just the result of free variation or individual choice as Pound claims. Instead, a combination of several factors influenced the speaker or writer during this period. Pound's theory could hold true for the period directly after the initial spread of the newer periphrastic form, at the turn of the Middle English to the Early Modern English period, as suddenly two forms existed side by side and it probably took some time to get used to the new possibilities of comparing adjectives.

However, after discussing all those different factors which might have influenced the use of adjectival comparison it is about time to start with my investigations and look for similarities which support these studies mentioned above or bring new results to light concerning this linguistic research.

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[27] For further details see chapter *5.2.1. General aspects.*

6.   Corpus-based analysis

6.1. Introduction

The following part of this study is concerned with the detailed investigation of all examples of comparatives and superlatives found in the Helsinki Corpus from 1500-1710. This corpus-based analysis aims at a fuller understanding of the factors that conditioned the different ways of comparing adjectives during the Early Modern English period. Additionally, it traces back the development of all variants of adjectival comparison within this period which was very much simplified by the sub-division of the Early Modern English section into three periods.

In order to achieve this objective it is first of all necessary to show how mono-, di-, and polysyllabic adjectives, compared either by inflection or periphrasis, of both comparative and superlative, are distributed across the three sub-periods. The total number of occurrences of both ways of comparing adjectives will be assessed in order to show possible tendencies towards the inflectional or periphrastic comparison which can be associated with the number of syllables.

Following this, all compared adjectives of the Early Modern English period will be viewed in light of Present Day English, in order to investigate the development of this grammatical category.

Moreover, the double comparison will be examined in detail and finally all disyllabic forms will be looked at.

One major problem of this historical study is of course the lack of recordings of speech acts. There is an inevitable temporal gap between the possible introduction of new forms in the spoken language and their first recordings in written texts. However, the development of many changes can only be explained with reference to the spoken language. For this reason, in order to find a solution to this problem, Rissanen (1986: 98ff) proposes the examination of text types which mirror spoken language. These text types include records of meetings, sermons, depositions of witnesses or private diaries, as well as texts representing imagined speech, used as, for example, in dialogues in drama or narration. This imagined speech differs of course from real speech in many respects, but the authors included many features typical of authentic spoken language. In addition, according to Rissanen it is important to look at texts written in informal or colloquial language, like private letters,

as they also contain characteristics of spoken language.

Another problem was the question of literacy, which is of great importance as it sets limits to social representation. The texts of the Helsinki Corpus do not represent authentic data from the language of the lower social strata, as the vast majority of such people could not read and write. Consequently all samples were written by authors belonging to the middle or upper classes, who benefited from the increased educational opportunities around the turn of the 16th century.

6.2. Selection of data

The collection of the data included in this study was very much facilitated by the use of the computer. The concordance program MicroConcord was essential for searching through the large amounts of texts listed in the Helsinki Corpus. In order to find all forms of adjectival comparison within all three sub-periods of the Early Modern English period, the following steps were required.

Firstly, periphrastic comparisons were found using single-word searches for the letter strings *more, moore, mor, mo, moe, most, mooste, moost,* and *moste*, while adjectival comparisons by inflection were found by using the wild card * and adding either *er* or *est*. The wild card stands for any number of letters coming before the inflectional endings. However, as will be discussed later, not just compared adjectives are listed, but all words ending, for example, in *–er*.

The next step was to enter the file name and to choose one of the three sub-periods.

After that you get a maximum of 1664 entries including the search word. The maximum number of entries depend on the computer and the software. Thus, the comparative formed by the inflection *–er* led to some difficulties as this ending appeared in more than the presented 1664 entries.

In the case of the superlative formed by inflection 511 to 688 entries were returned, depending on the sub-period. The word *more* appeared 331 to 390 times per sub-period and *most* was found 152 to 232 times within the three sub-periods of Early Modern English.

The next step was to look through the given examples and separate the relevant from the irrelevant, as not only compared adjectives are presented, but all different word categories (for example, ending in *–est* or following the word *most*).

Special care was required in the case of adverbs as they often lacked the derivational suffix –*ly* during the Early Modern English period. Additionally, certain cases of adjectival comparison had to be excluded from the discussion. These were

- negative adjectives compared with *less* or *least*, since there is no corresponding inflectional form
- *more/most* + noun
- comparatives without positive (e.g. former, further, farther) and
- the group of defective adjectives (e.g.: good – better – best), as these forms would have gone beyond the scope of this paper.

Afterwards all relevant examples were listed in Excel sheets, according to the type of comparison and sub-period. In addition to the compared adjective, the following parameters are listed in these Excel sheets:

1 **Cite:** you get an extract of around six words on the left and six words on the right of the search word
2 **Variant A and variant B:** the table of variant A marks those examples which seem to be compared in conformity with Present Day rules. Variant B lists those examples which deviate from Present Day use.
3 **Number of syllables:** all examples are divided according to their number of syllables into *mono-, di-,* and *polysyllabic.*
4 **Double Comparison:** all occurrences of a double comparison are listed in this table
5 **Translation:** this table marks those texts which are translations
6 **Foreign origin:** in the case of translations the table *foreign origin* indicates the original language, which was either *Latin* or *other*
7 **Source**: gives the title of the work were the compared form was found
8 **Author:** presents the author's name
9 **Text type:** each example is assigned to the appropriate text type
10 **Sex**

11 **Age:** this parameter is subdivided into four columns, namely *–20:* stands for authors who were younger than twenty when they wrote the piece of work, *20-40:* are for those authors who were between twenty and forty, *40-60:* for authors between forty and sixty and *60-:* includes authors who were sixty and older

12 **Author's status:** this parameter is subdivided into five columns: *prof, prof high, high, high prof* and *other*.

13 **Audience description:** gives some information about the intended audience and is subdivided into: *prof*(essional) and *non-prof*(essional).

14 **Level of formality:** this parameter is divided into *formal* and *informal*

15 **Prototypical text category:** this parameter indicates the purpose of a text and is subdivided into: *expos*(ition), *stat*(ute), *instr*(uction) *rel*(igious), *instr*(uction) *sec*(ular), *narr*(ation) *non-imag*(inative) and *narr*(ation) *imag*(inative).

After all relevant examples were collected and recorded in the Excel sheets I had to find a satisfactory way of dealing with the problem of the inflectional comparison of the comparative, as my computer only presented 1664 examples of words ending in *–er* and I quickly found out that there were many more. For this reason I entered every single adjective, which I had previously found in the texts of the Helsinki Corpus, as the search word to find further examples. Especially in the case of *greater* I additionally discovered many other occurrences of this adjectival comparison.

Finally I completed the Excel sheets with those forms of the inflectional comparison using *-er* and started with the corpus-based analysis.

6.3. Illustration of the total number of occurrences of the comparative formed by –er and *more* and the superlative using *-est* and *most,* according to the number of syllables, found within the three sub-periods of Early Modern English

6.3.1. Introduction

The following chapters deal with the presentation of the total number of compared adjectives found in the Early Modern English section of the Helsinki Corpus.

The data found comprises 1,252 examples of comparatives, superlatives and double forms altogether which are distributed as follows.

547 comparatives								
E1 172			**E2** 143			**E3** 232		
infl.	**periphr.**	**DC**	**infl.**	**periphr.**	**DC**	**infl.**	**periphr.**	**DC**
99	70	3	76	64	3	141	91	0

Table 6.1.: Distribution of the total number of comparatives, found in the Helsinki Corpus, within the three sub-periods E1, E2 and E3, and furthermore the division into inflectional, periphrastic or double forms.

As can be seen in table 6.1, 547 examples of comparative forms were found in the texts presented in the Helsinki Corpus. During the first sub-period of Early Modern English I came across 172 compared adjectives of which 99 were compared with the help of the inflection –er, 70 were periphrastically formed and three adjectives were forms of the double comparison.

During the second sub-period I found 143 comparatives altogether. Of them 76 adjectives were inflectionally formed, 64 periphrastically and again there were three double forms.

The last sub-period included 232 comparatives: 141 compared adjectives were formed by inflection and 91 adjectives were compared periphrastically. There was no example of a double comparison.

705 superlatives								
E1 201			E2 264			E3 240		
Infl.	Periphr.	DC	Infl.	Periphr.	DC	Infl.	Periphr.	DC
73	119	9	153	108	3	130	110	0

Table 6.2.: Distribution of the total number of superlatives, found in the Helsinki Corpus, within the three sub-periods E1, E2 and E3, and furthermore the division into inflectional, periphrastic or double forms.

In the case of the superlative I found 705 examples altogether: 201 compared adjectives were found in the first sub-period, 264 in the second sub-period and 240 examples were found in the last sub-period (see table 6.2, above).

Of the examples listed in E1, 73 were of the inflectional type, 119 were periphrastic and nine were examples of the double comparison.

During the second sub-period 153 adjectives were compared with the help of –est, 108 were formed with *most* and three compared adjectives were double forms.

During E3 I did not find an example of a double comparison, but 130 inflectionally compared adjectives and 110 periphrastically compared examples.

After presenting the total number of all comparative and superlative forms found in the Helsinki Corpus I want to look at the distribution of occurrences across the three sub-periods in more detail, as the number of syllables will be taken into consideration. First of all I am going to show all comparative forms of either mono-, di-, or polysyllabic adjectives and secondly the same will be done for all superlative forms. Additionally, each analysis will present the number of occurrences of both the inflectional and the periphrastic way of comparing adjectives side by side, in order to examine whether the number of syllables had an influence on the choice of either the inflectional or periphrastic way of comparing adjectives, as is the case in Present – day English.

6.3.2. The Comparative

6.3.2.1. Comparison of monosyllabic adjectives

Monosyllabic adjectives								
E1			E2			E3		
infl.	periphr.	dc	infl.	periphr.	dc	infl.	periphr.	dc
94	14	0	73	12	1	127	12	0

Monosyllabic *-er* vs. *more* vs. *dc*

Table and figure 6.3.: Distribution of monosyllabic adjectives formed by either the inflectional, the periphrastic or the double comparison across the three sub-periods of Early Modern English.

Table 6.3. shows the distribution of the total number of monosyllabic adjectives compared either by inflection using *-er* or periphrasis using *more,* or the combination of both methods between 1500 and 1700. As can be seen, 333 monosyllabic adjectives were found altogether. The first sub-period contains 108 comparatives; of them 94 examples are formed by inflection and the remaining 14 occurrences are formed periphrastically. In the second sub-period 86 forms of comparatives could be found in the Helsinki Corpus; 73 of them were compared with *–er* and 12 with *more*. Furthermore there was one example of a double comparison. During the last period I came across 139 monosyllabic compared adjectives; in this case 127 adjectives were compared by inflection and 12 by periphrasis.

Figure 6.3. illustrates the percentage of the division, of all monosyllabic adjectives, into one of the three methods of comparing adjectives during the Early

Modern English period. As can be seen, around 87 % of all monosyllabic adjectives found during the first sub-period were compared by inflection. Only around 13 % were compared with the extra word *more*.

During the second sub-period nearly 85% of monosyllabic adjectives were of the inflectional type and consequently about 14% of the periphrastic one and a bit more than 1% were forms of the double comparison.

The last sub-period shows a slight decline of the periphrastic method as just 8.63% of all monosyllabic adjectives were formed with *more*, and 91.37% were already formed by inflection.

6.3.2.2. Comparison of disyllabic adjectives

Disyllabic adjectives								
E1			E2			E3		
infl.	periphr.	dc	infl.	periphr.	dc	infl.	periphr.	dc
5	27	2	3	29	2	14	31	0

Table and figure 6.4.: Distribution of disyllabic adjectives formed by either the inflectional, the periphrastic or the double comparison across the three sub-periods of Early Modern English.

The second corpus based analysis is concerned with the total number of all disyllabic adjectives, compared by –er, *more,* or the double comparison, found within the three sub-periods of Early Modern English.

As can be seen in table 6.4., the number of disyllabic comparatives found in

the Helsinki Corpus is relatively small in comparison with monosyllabic adjectives, as only 113 examples of compared adjectives occurred altogether. In the first and second sub-periods I came each time across 34 forms of adjectival comparison and in the last sub-period there were another 45 adjectives to be found.

The division into inflectional, periphrastic or double comparison per each sub-period is as follows: of the 34 adjectives found during the first period, five were of the inflectional type, 27 periphrastic and the remaining two were forms of a double comparison. During the second sub-period I came across three adjectives which were formed with –er, 29 adjectives were compared with *most* and two adjectives were again examples of the double comparison. The last sub-period shows an increase of the inflectional type as nearly one third of all adjectives (14) are compared with –er and 31 are of the periphrastic type. No example of a double comparison could be found.

Figure 6.4. presents the distribution of disyllabic adjectives within the three sub-periods even more clearly: during the first sub-period nearly 80% were of the periphrastic type, 14.71% of the inflectional and 5.88% of all compared disyllabic adjectives were forms of a double comparison. During the second sub-period the number of periphrastically compared adjectives increased to 85.29%, 8.82% of all adjectives were still inflectionally compared and again 5.88% were of the double form. The last sub-period shows a decrease as far as the periphrastically compared adjectives are concerned as only around 69% were of this type. As no example of a double comparison was to be found the remaining 31% were consequently of the inflectional type.

6.3.2.3. Comparison of polysyllabic adjectives

Polysyllabic adjectives								
E1			E2			E3		
infl.	periphr.	dc	infl.	periphr.	dc	infl.	periphr.	dc
0	29	1	0	23	0	0	48	0

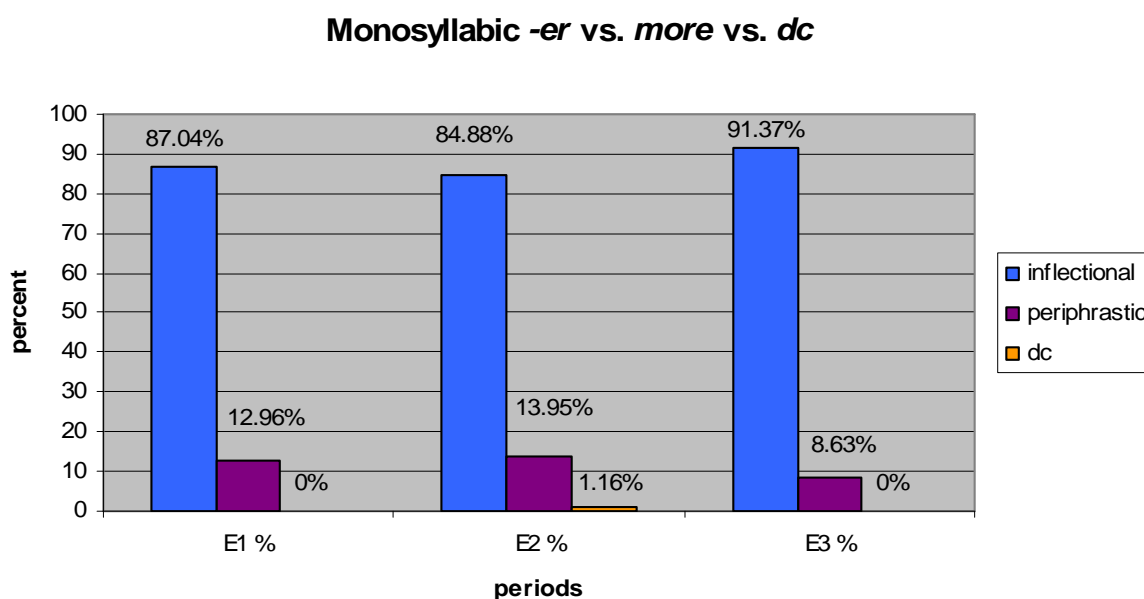**Polysyllabic adjectives *-er* vs. *more* vs. *dc***
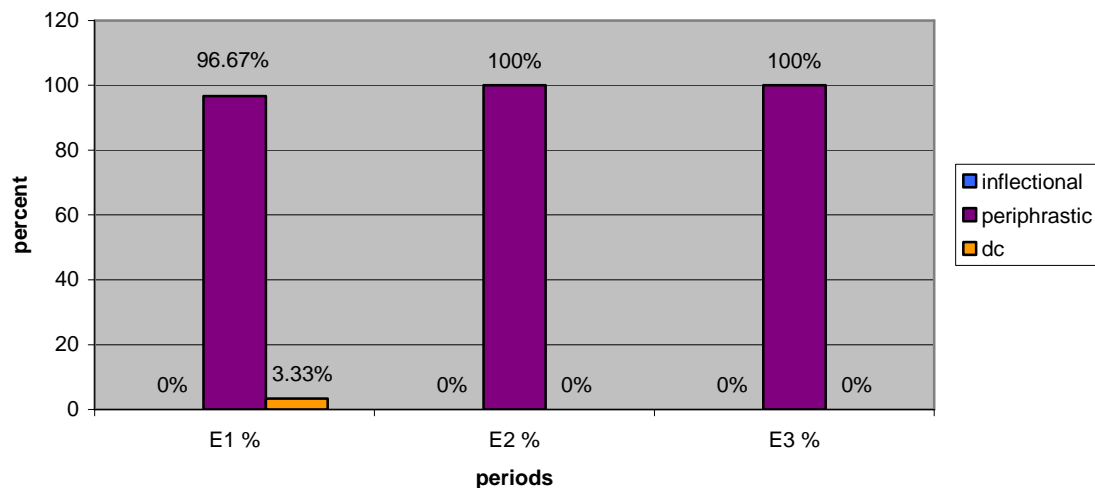
Table and figure 6.5.: Distribution of polysyllabic adjectives formed by either the inflectional, the periphrastic or the double comparison across the three sub-periods of Early Modern English.

The division of polysyllabic comparatives into the inflectional, the periphrastic or the double form, found during the Early Modern English period, presented in table 6.5. shows a different tendency. Altogether I found 101 polysyllabic adjectives in the Early Modern English section of the Helsinki Corpus and nearly all of them were compared periphrastically. During the first sub-period only one example of a double comparison was found. No inflectionally compared adjective was to be found. During the second and third sub-periods all compared adjectives were formed periphrastically.

6.3.3. The Superlative

6.3.3.1. Comparison of monosyllabic adjectives

Monosyllabic adjectives								
E1			E2			E3		
infl.	periphr.	dc	infl.	periphr.	dc	infl.	periphr.	dc
60	8	3	40	27	0	110	6	0

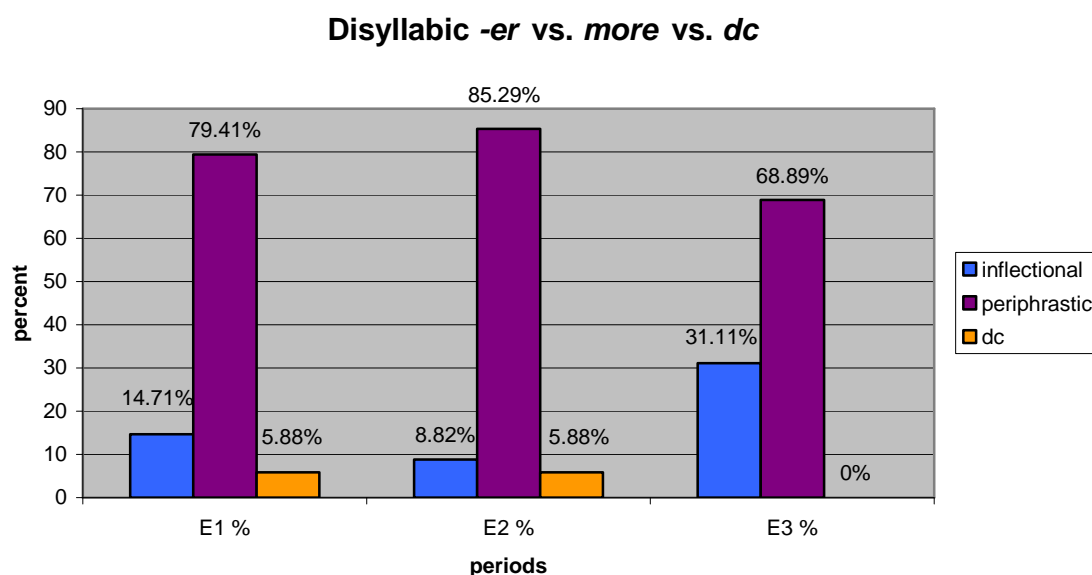**Monosyllabic *-est* vs. *most* vs. *dc***
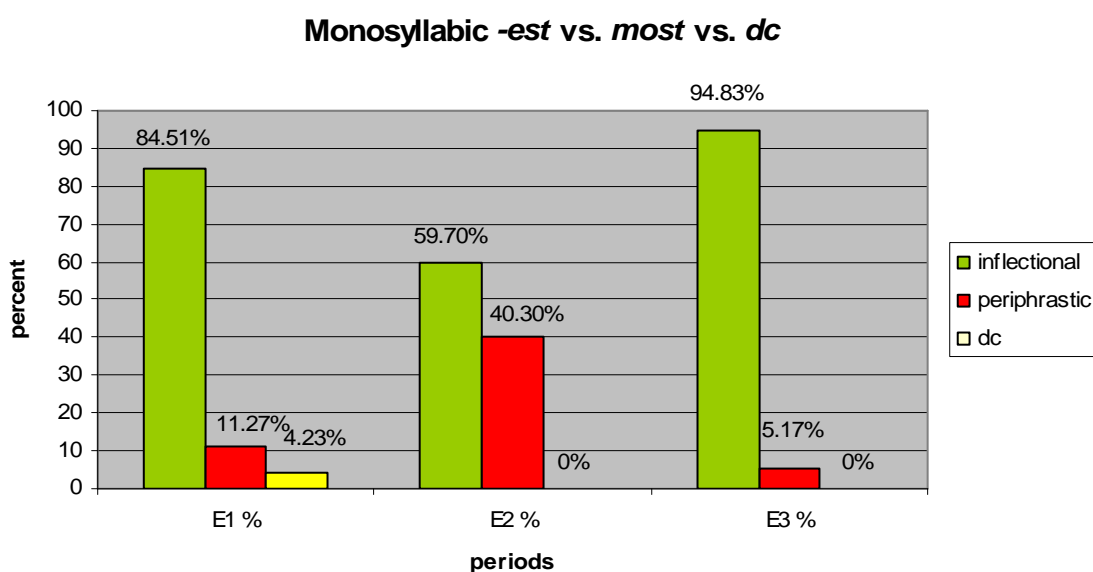
Table and figure 6.6.: Distribution of monosyllabic adjectives formed by either the inflectional, the periphrastic or the double comparison across the three sub-periods of Early Modern English.

This analysis is concerned with superlative forms of either the inflectional, the periphrastic, or the double form of all monosyllabic adjectives found within the three sub-periods of Early Modern English. The total number of monosyllabic superlatives found in the Helsinki Corpus from 1500 – 1700 was 347.

As can be seen in table 6.6., there are 60 superlatives of the inflectional type, eight superlatives formed with *most* and three forms of a double comparison between 1500 and 1570. So, about 85% of these monosyllabic adjectives were already formed by inflection during the 1st sub-period, which can be seen in figure 6.6.

During the second sub-period I came across 67 superlatives. Of them 40 adjectives were compared inflectionally and the remaining 27 superlatives were formed periphrastically. No example of a double comparison could be found. In terms of the percentage only about 60% were compared inflectionally, and nearly 40%

were compared with the help of *most*.

Finally, during the last sub-period, the majority of all 116 found adjectives, namely 110 monosyllabic adjectives were compared by inflection and only six monosyllabic adjectives were formed with *most*. Again no double comparison was found. Thus, during the last sub-period authors compared nearly 95% of all monosyllabic superlatives inflectionally. Only the tiny number of about 5% was compared periphrastically.

6.3.3.2. Comparison of disyllabic adjectives

Disyllabic adjectives								
E1			E2			E3		
infl.	periphr.	dc	infl.	periphr.	dc	infl.	periphr.	dc
13	71	5	14	34	2	18	39	0
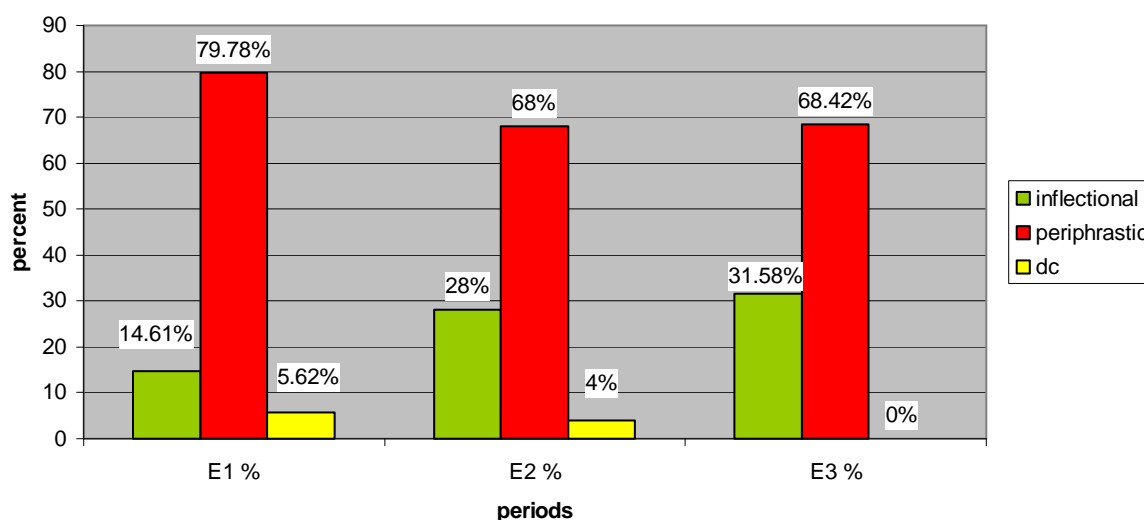
Table and figure 6.7.: Distribution of disyllabic adjectives formed by either the inflectional, the periphrastic or the double comparison across the three sub-periods of Early Modern English.

Table 6.7. is concerned with the distribution of superlative forms of 196 disyllabic adjectives. During the first sub-period I found 13 superlatives of the inflectional type, 71 adjectives which were compared by *most* and five examples of a double comparison. During the second sub-period I came across 14 inflectionally compared adjectives and 34 superlatives formed by the periphrastic method. Additionally, there were two forms of a double comparison. In the third sub-period there were 18

inflectionally formed superlatives and 39 periphrastically compared adjectives.

Thus, as can be seen in figure 6.7. nearly 80% were of the periphrastic type during the first sub-period. Of the remaining 20%, 14.61% were inflectionally compared superlatives and 5.62% were forms of a double comparison. During the second sub-period there was an increase of the inflectional comparison as 28% were compared by this method. 68% were still periphrastically formed superlatives and 4% were again examples of a double comparison. The last sub-period presents a similar division: 68.42% were of the periphrastic type and since there was no form of a double comparison the remaining 31.58% were of the inflectional type.

6.3.3.3. Comparison of polysyllabic adjectives

Polysyllabic adjectives								
E1			E2			E3		
infl.	periphr.	dc	infl.	periphr.	dc	infl.	periphr.	dc
0	40	1	9	47	1	2	65	0
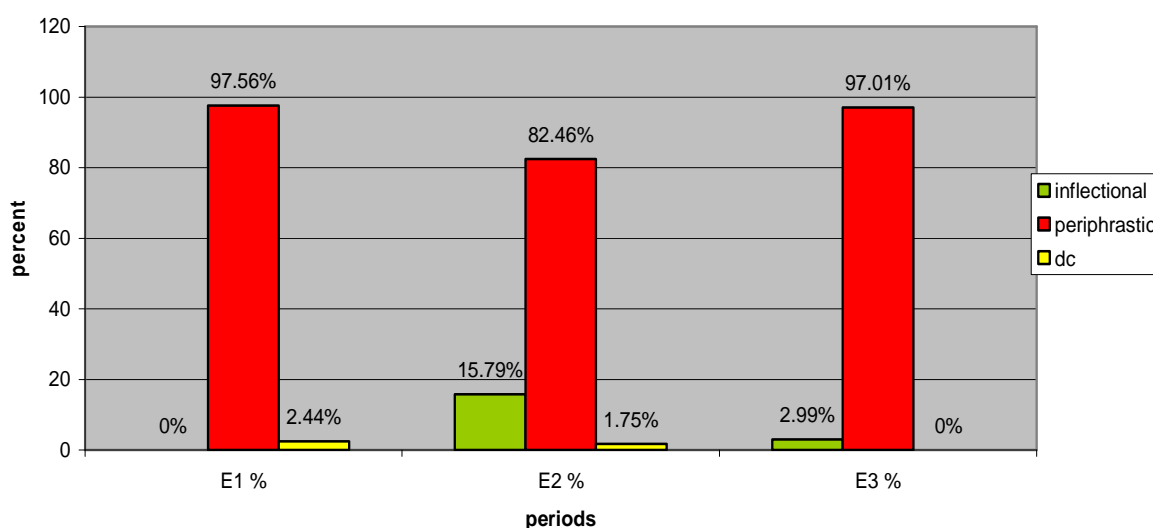
Table and figure 6.8.: Distribution of polysyllabic adjectives formed by either the inflectional, the periphrastic or the double comparison across the three sub-periods of Early Modern English.

In the last table of this analysis I am going to present the division of the total number of polysyllabic adjectives of either the inflectional, the periphrastic or the double form within the Early Modern English period. Altogether I came across 165 polysyllabic superlatives.

As can be seen in table 6.8. the majority of all polysyllabic adjectives found within all three sub-periods are of the periphrastic type. During the first period I came across 41 polysyllabic adjectives and of them only one adjective was an example of a double comparison. The remaining 40 superlatives were all formed with the help of *most*.

The second sub-period shows a slight increase of the inflectional type as nine of the 57 adjectives were compared by *–est*. One example was a form of a double comparison and the remaining 47 superlatives were formed periphrastically.

The largest number of polysyllabic adjectives was found in the last sub-period of Early Modern English as I got a total of 67 superlatives. Of them only two adjectives were of the inflectional type and 65 of the periphrastic one, which shows a similar tendency to the first period.

In terms of the percentage it can be seen in figure 6.8. that during the first and third sub-periods about 97% of all polysyllabic superlatives were formed with *most*. Consequently, only about 3% were either forms of a double comparison (E1) or of the inflectional type (E2).

The second sub-period, however, deviates a bit from the first and third ones, as only 82.46% of these superlatives were of the periphrastic type and roughly 16% were compared inflectionally and 1.75% were forms of a double comparison.

6.3.4. Discussion

After presenting the distributions of all comparatives and superlatives into the inflectional, periphrastic or double comparison according to the number of syllables found in the Helsinki Corpus, I finally want to compare the analysis of the comparatives and the superlatives in a few words in order to look for similar tendencies or possible differences as far as the three competing forms of adjectival comparison are concerned.

In the case of monosyllabic adjectives, of both the comparative and the superlative, it can be said that the majority was of the inflectional type. During the first sub-period roughly between 85% (superlative) and 87% (comparative) were of this type. Also double forms were found, but only in the case of the superlative which amounted to 4.23% of all compared monosyllabic superlatives found in this sub-period. The third sub-period even shows a further increase of the inflectional

comparison as 91% (comparative) to about 95% (superlative) were of this type. The second sub-period appears to be an exception, however, only as far as the superlative is concerned, as only about 60% of all found monosyllabic adjectives were of the inflectional type and the remaining 40% were compared periphrastically. In the case of the comparative again 85% were inflectionally compared.

In contrast to this, an analysis of disyllabic adjectives from the period reveals a predominance in the use of the periphrastic type. In the first sub-period, nearly 80% of all found disyllabic adjectives were compared periphrastically and in the last sub-period this figure was just under 70% for both the comparative and the superlative. During the second sub-period, although only 68% of the superlative forms of disyllabic adjectives were compared by periphrasis, the periphrastic form was used in over 85% of cases of comparatives. Forms of the double comparison could also be spotted for both the comparative and the superlative, although only in the first two sub-periods of Early Modern English.

As far as polysyllabic adjectives are concerned the use of the inflectional, the periphrastic or double comparison present a similar development in the first period, as the majority were compared periphrastically and just a tiny number were examples of the double comparison (3.33% were double forms of the comparatives and 2.44% of the superlatives). No examples of inflectionally compared adjectives could be found. However, again in the second sub-period almost 16% of polysyllabic adjectives which were compared by inflection in the case of the superlative were found, whereas all comparatives consisting of three or more syllables were exclusively compared with *more*. Additionally, only in the case of the superlative 1.75% were still examples of a double comparison. During the last sub-period the periphrastic method was used in all occurrences in order to form the comparative. Although, in the case of superlatives, still about 3% were of the inflectional type.

After comparing the comparative and superlative formation patterns it is of course essential to look for possible reasons which might have influenced the authors by choosing one or the other form of comparing adjectives. Were the word endings responsible for the use of one of the methods of comparing adjectives, or were the number of syllables the reason for the consciously or unconsciously preferred use? Additionally, could the prosodic environment have been an influencing factor, or could it be that there were simply more variant forms used for one and the same adjective for no apparent reason? Especially in the case of disyllabic adjectives they

"have always been subject to more variation" according to Kytö and Romaine (2000: 180).

Given these questions, it is clear we must look at all forms in detail in order to find out how the comparative and superlative formation patterns developed within the Early Modern English period. For this reason it is important not just to present the distribution of mono-, di- and polysyllabic adjectives into the inflectional, periphrastic and double type as done before, but also to draw a comparison between the found Early Modern English comparatives and superlatives and those Standard forms of Present Day English. This will be the subject of the following chapter.

6.4. Present Day English vs. Early Modern English

6.4.1. Introduction

The focus of this chapter is now to try to understand the extent to which the ongoing standardisation process of the Early Modern English period affected the comparative and superlative formation patterns within the three sub-periods.

People's attitudes towards the English language only gradually changed during the Early Modern English period which was also pointed out by Baugh & Cable as follows

> [at the beginning of the 16th century] interest had been shown chiefly in such questions as whether English was worthy of being used for writings in which Latin had long been traditional, whether the large additions being made to the vocabulary were justified, and whether a more adequate system of spelling could be introduced. [From 1650 onwards] […] attention was turned to the grammar, and it was discovered that English had no grammar. At any rate its grammar was largely uncodified, unsystematized. The ancient languages had been reduced to rule; one knew what was right and what was wrong. But in English everything was uncertain. One learned to speak and write as one learned to walk, and in many matters of grammatical usage there was much variation even among educated people. (Baugh & Cable 2002: 256)

For this reason regulated grammar became of vital importance in the early seventeenth century. The first grammar books appeared[28] and more and more people turned to the English language which called for a more or less fixed grammar and consequently a unified system.

However, a certain degree of free variation existed throughout the Early Modern English period and it is exactly this free variation that

> makes a proper linguistic evaluation of many EmodE texts so difficult for modern readers […] [as] we would now expect orderly heterogeneity, that is, where the choice of a variant has either a semantic or stylistic 'meaning' or can be classified as 'correct' vs. 'incorrect' – or at least is regarded as more or less acceptable. (Görlach 2002c: 140)

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[28] Also see chapter *3.2. Changes during the Early Modern English period*

For this reason the focus of attention of the following study is to look at all comparatives and superlatives found in the Helsinki Corpus and examine how the formation patterns of these forms changed within the course of the Early Modern English period. Additionally, I want to check to what extent they approached the standard forms used nowadays. Thus, in order to achieve this objective a parallel will be drawn between the inflectional and the periphrastic way of comparing adjectives used between 1500 and 1710, and the Present Day forms of adjectival comparison considered as Standard English forms.

Hence, all variant forms of comparatives or superlatives, found in the Helsinki Corpus of Early Modern English, will be divided into two categories[29], namely the category of *variant A*, containing those comparatives and superlatives nowadays regarded as conforming to the grammar rules of contemporary English and the category of *variant B* which includes those compared adjectives labelled deviant to Present Day English rules[30].

The above mentioned comparison of Early Modern English forms and their Present Day equivalent forms will first be done for the comparative, then for the superlative, and a detailed discussion will be given subsequently. Moreover, the division into mono-, di-, and polysyllabic adjectives will again be taken into account for these investigations.

For the following analysis a type/token analysis had to be done as there were some common adjectives which occurred much more frequently than others. Especially in the case of monosyllabic adjectives which formed the comparison inflectionally there were sometimes three times as many tokens as types. These adjectives are *great*, *low*, *high*, *big*, *long*, and *young*. For this reason I am going to present the total number of each adjectival comparison at the beginning of every analysis, however the tables and figures exclusively deal with all found types and the tokens will not be taken into further consideration as they would show the results in a different light.

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[29] See columns C and D in the Excel sheets on the CD Rom
[30] This investigation is going to be based on chapter *4.3. The comparative and superlative formation patterns of Present Day English*

6.4.2. The Comparative

6.4.2.1. Monosyllabic adjectives

Monosyllabic adjectives															
E1					E2					E3					
infl		periphr		dc	infl		periphr		dc	infl		periphr		dc	
A	B	A	B	B	A	B	A	B	B	A	B	A	B	B	
31	0	5	8	0	25	0	3	7	1	36	0	4	8	0	

Monosyllabic comparatives

*Table and figure 6.9.: Division of monosyllabic adjectives compared with –*er *or* more *into* variant A *and* variant B *within the three sub-periods of Early Modern English.*

In the case of monosyllabic adjectives which formed the comparison with either *–er* or *more* I came across 333 tokens. However, a good deal of those compared adjectives was covered by *great*, *hot*, *low*, *high* and *long*. Thus, my results presented in table and figure 6.9. only rely on 128 relevant types found in the Early Modern English part of the Helsinki Corpus.

During the first sub-period I came across 44 compared adjectives, during the second sub-period I found 36 examples and during the last sub-period I got 48 compared monosyllabic adjectives.

As can be seen in table 6.9. the majority of all found monosyllabic adjectives were compared inflectionally which conforms to Present Day English grammar rules.

Thus, all 31 inflectionally compared adjectives found in the first sub-period belong to the category of variant A. However, in the case of the remaining 13 periphrastically compared adjectives only five forms of comparisons are applicable today, for example *more sad* or *more drawen*, and the other eight, like *more firme* or *more large*, consequently belong to the category of *variant B*.

During the second sub-period 25 adjectives were compared inflectionally and all of them conform to Present Day grammar rules. Of the ten periphrastically compared adjectives only three belong to the category of *variant A*, like *more true* or *more urged*, and the other seven forms are part of the examples representing *variant B*, for example, *more fat*, *more hard*, *more fit.* Additionally, one form of a double comparison was found, namely *more neerer* which had to be assigned to the category of *variant B* as such a form is nowadays regarded as a colloquialism.

Finally, I found 48 monosyllabic adjectives during the last sub-period which are divided as follows: 36 of them were compared by inflection and all examples belong to the category of *variant A*. Four of the 12 periphrastically compared adjectives make up the category of *variant A (more just, more sad, more vexed and more sure)* and the remaining eight compared adjectives belong to the *variant-B-category (*like *more short* or *more soft).*

Figure 6.9. shows the division of all found monosyllabic adjectives into *variant A* and *variant B* even more clearly. During the first sub-period of the Early Modern English period nearly 82% make up the category of *variant A* and only about 18% belong to the category of *variant B*. Between 1570 and 1640 nearly 78% of all monosyllabic compared adjectives conform to Present Day grammar rules. However, about 22% are not applicable nowadays. During the last sub-period the number of compared adjectives belonging to the category of *variant A* rises to 83.33% and consequently 16.67% belong to the category of *variant B*. As mentioned above the examples which make up the *variant-B-category* are entirely monosyllabic adjectives which were compared periphrastically.

6.4.2.2. Disyllabic adjectives

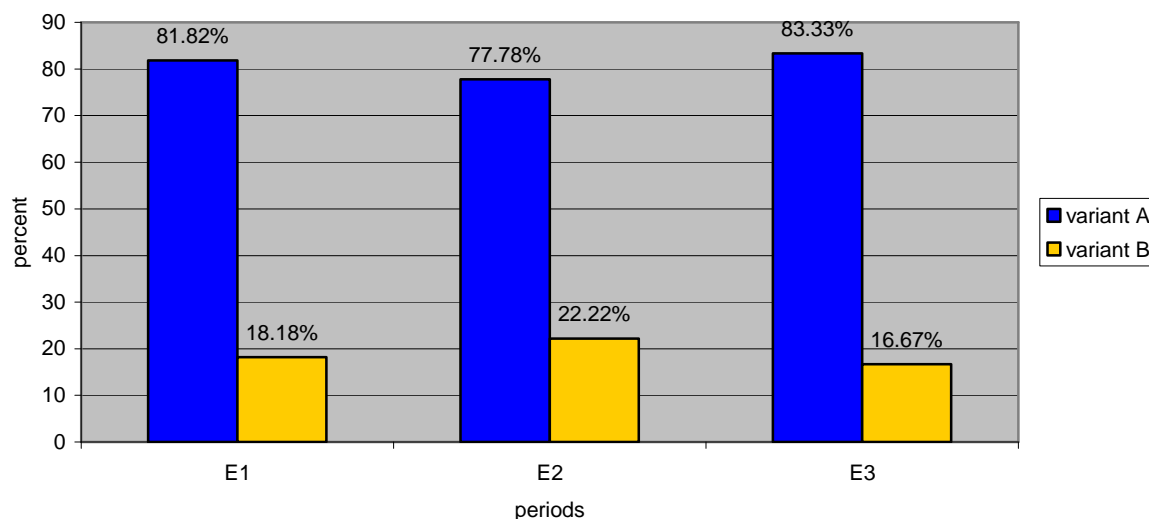| Disyllabic adjectives														
E1					E2					E3				
infl		periphr		dc	infl		periphr		dc	infl		periphr		dc
A	B	A	B	B	A	B	A	B	B	A	B	A	B	B
5	0	13	6	2	3	0	23	3	2	5	0	23	3	0

Disyllabic comparatives

Table and figure 6.10.: Division of disyllabic adjectives compared with –er *or* more *into* variant A *and* variant B *within the three sub-periods of Early Modern English.*

The total number of disyllabic adjectives compared with *–er* and *more* is much smaller in comparison with monosyllabic adjectives as I only found 113 examples altogether. Also the number of types and tokens is not that different as it is the case with monosyllabic adjectives as I still got 88 relevant types.

During the first sub-period I came across 26 compared disyllabic adjectives, of which 5 were of the inflectional type, like *abler* or *readier*, and belonged to the category of *variant A*, and 19 were compared periphrastically. 13 of those periphrastically compared adjectives conform to Present Day grammar rules, like *more wretched* or *mo perfite*, and 6 are deviant, for example *more happy* or *more noble*. Moreover, there were two forms of a double comparison (*more feebler* and *more redyer*) which had to be assigned to the category of *variant* B.

During the second sub-period only three disyllabic adjectives were formed by inflection which would also be done today and consequently belong to the category

of *variant A*. However, 26 adjectives were compared periphrastically of which only three examples, *more merry*, *more severe* and *more stable*, had to be assigned to the category of *variant B*. The remaining 23 disyllabic forms (for example, *more faithfull* or *more pleasant*) are all likely to be used nowadays. Again there were two forms of a double comparison (more easier and more happier) and both belong to the *variant-B-category*.

During the last sub-period of Early Modern English I came across 31 compared disyllabic adjective types. Of these, five examples were of the inflectional type and they were all classified as belonging to the *variant-A-category*. The remaining 26 forms of adjectival comparison were of the periphrastic type of which 23 forms belong to the category of *variant A,* like *more fearfull* or *more gracious,* and three forms (*more easy, more happy* and *more speedy*) were considered to be uncommon in Present Day English usage.

Figure 6.10. illustrates the development of disyllabic forms of comparatives within the three sub-periods of Early Modern English more clearly. In the first sub-period the number of what nowadays would be regarded as unusual forms of adjectival comparison in written English was nearly 31%, which greatly diminished during the second sub-period to about 16% and finally to 9.68% during the last sub-period.

6.4.2.3.   *Polysyllabic adjectives*

Polysyllabic adjectives														
E1					E2					E3				
infl		periphr		dc	infl		periphr		dc	infl		periphr		dc
A	B	A	B	B	A	B	A	B	B	A	B	A	B	B
0	0	24	1	1	0	0	18	1	0	0	0	37	1	0

Polysyllabic comparatives
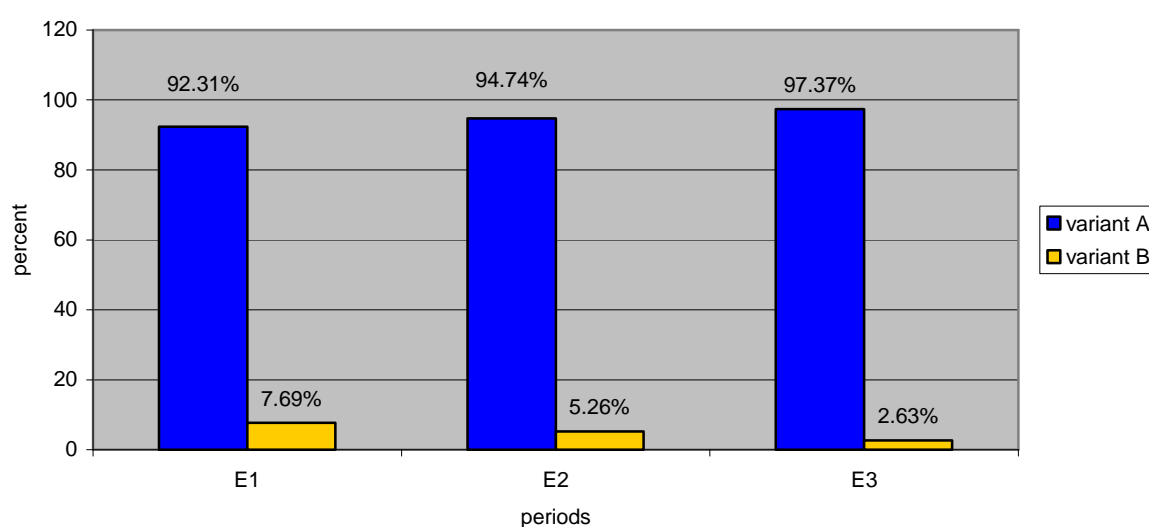
*Table and figure 6.11.: Division of polysyllabic adjectives compared with –*er *or* more *into* variant A *and* variant B *within the three sub-periods of Early Modern English.*

The last analysis of the comparative deals with 101 polysyllabic adjective tokens, forming the comparison entirely with the help of *more,* with the exception of one example of a double comparison, namely *more indifferenter*. All in all I got 83 relevant types, the vast majority of which were of *variant A* - i.e. 24 adjectives or 92.31% in the first sub-period, 18 compared adjectives (94.74% of all polysyllabic adjectives) found in the second sub-period and 37 adjectives (97.37%) occurring in the last sub-period. In the category of *variant B* I got two examples during the first sub-period. One example was an adjective with a negative *un*-prefix, namely *unhappy*, and the other example was the double form, *more indifferenter*, mentioned before.

In the other two sub-periods there was always one adjective type which had to be assigned to the category of *variant B* and this was again *unhappy*. Thus, in terms of the percentage the first period included 7.69% of adjectives belonging to the

variant-B-category, which was followed by 5.26% during the second period and a final drop to 2.63% of all compared forms in question during the last period.

6.4.3. The Superlative

6.4.3.1.   Monosyllabic adjectives

Monosyllabic adjectives														
E1					E2					E3				
infl		periphr		dc	infl		periphr		dc	infl		periphr		dc
A	B	A	B	B	A	B	A	B	B	A	B	A	B	B
21	0	4	3	1	39	1	4	14	0	36	0	3	3	0

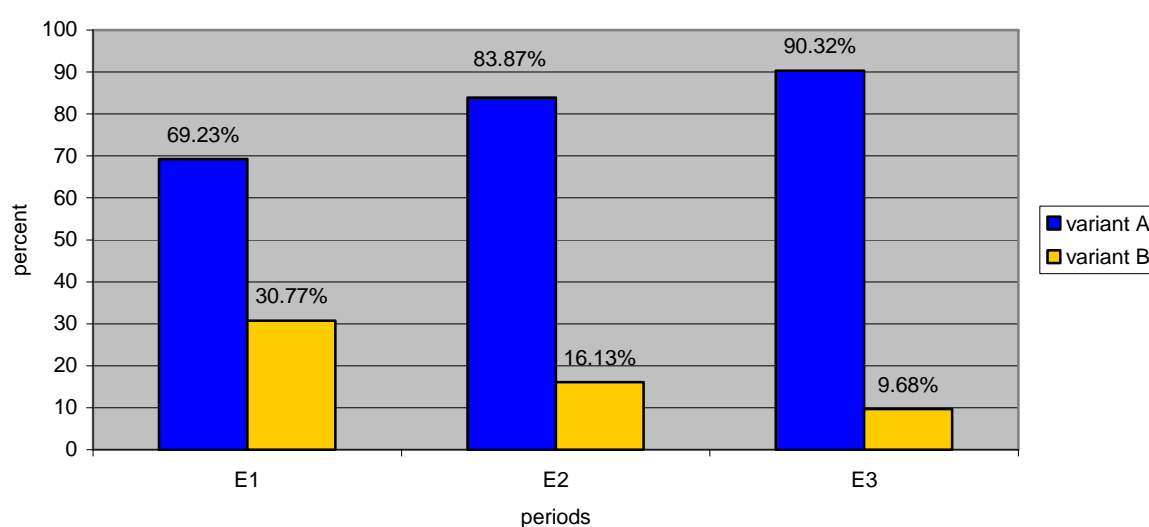**Monosyllabic superlatives**
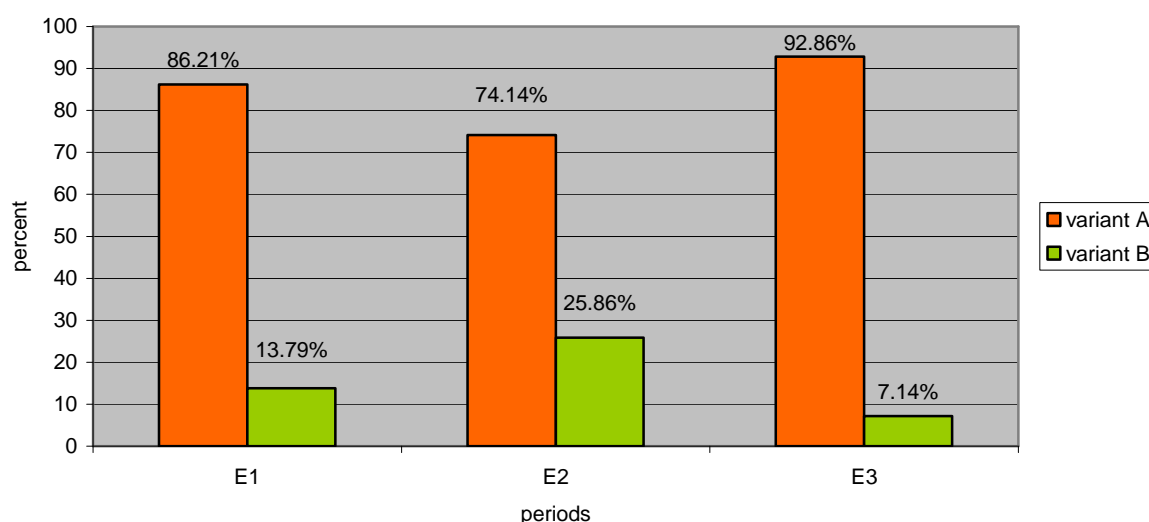
*Table and figure 6.12.: Division of monosyllabic adjectives compared with –*est *or* most *into* variant A *and* variant B *within the three sub-periods of Early Modern English.*

The following analysis deals with the superlative formation of monosyllabic words using the endings –*est* or *most*. In the Early Modern English part of the Helsinki Corpus I came across 344 tokens. Of them quite a large number were forms of *great,* as it was the case with the comparative[31], but also other adjectives like *high*, *dear*, *chief*, *fair*, *or fine* occurred quite often. Hence, the number of relevant types of monosyllabic superlatives is 129 altogether.

Of these 129 types I found 29 during the first sub-period, 21 of which were of the inflectional type (i.e. *thickest, greatest, largest*) and all corresponding to Present Day Grammar rules. There were another seven periphrastically formed superlatives.

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[31] See chapter *6.4.2. The Comparative*.

Of these, four were of the *variant-A-category* (*most true, most right, most sure* and *most dread*) and three were of the *variant-B-category (most dear, most thin* and *most pure).* Finally, I got one example of a double comparison, namely *most highest*, which was also assigned to the category of *variant B.*

During the second sub-period 58 relevant types were found. Of them 40 adjectives were compared with *–est* and all could be assigned to the category of *variant A*, with the exception of one example namely the adjective *right*[32]. In the case of the remaining 18 periphrastically formed superlatives only four examples , i.e. *most like, most true, most just* and *most sad*, could be assigned to the category of *variant A* with the other 14 classed as *variant B (*like *most dear, most fair, most great* or *most pure) .*

During the last sub-period I came across 42 compared adjectives of which all 36 inflectional forms were of the *variant-A-category*. In the case of the six periphrastically compared adjectives three forms belonged to *variant A* (*most apt, most just* and *most sad*) and three to *variant B* (*most dear, most fresh* and *most grave*).

In terms of percentages, figure 6.12. shows that a little more than 86% of all compared adjectives found during the first sub-period of the Helsinki Corpus were assigned to the category of *variant A*. Around 14% are nowadays regarded as being rather uncommon forms of compared adjectives and make up the category of *variant B.* During the second sub-period the number of deviant forms rose to nearly 26% with around 74% applicable nowadays. But this development changed during the last sub-period as nearly 93% of all found superlatives were already compared in the Present way. Thus, only about 7% are rather uncommon nowadays.

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[32] For detailed information see chapter *4.3.2.1. Monosyllabic adjectives.*

6.4.3.2. Disyllabic adjectives

Disyllabic adjectives														
E1					E2					E3				
infl		periphr		dc	infl		periphr		dc	infl		periphr		dc
A	B	A	B	B	A	B	A	B	B	A	B	A	B	B
11	0	25	7	3	10	1	17	5	2	10	4	25	3	0

Disyllabic superlatives

*Table and figure 6.13.: Division of disyllabic adjectives compared with –*est *or* most *into* variant A *and* variant B *within the three sub-periods of Early Modern English.*

The number of disyllabic superlatives found in the Early Modern English period of the Helsinki Corpus is again much smaller in comparison with monosyllabic compared adjectives, as I only came across 196 examples of disyllabic superlatives altogether. However, the difference between types and tokens is also not that large as of those 196 tokens 123 relevant types could be taken into consideration for the following analysis.

During the first period 11 adjectives were compared by inflection and all of them conform to Present Day use. 32 adjectives were formed with the help of *most*, however, seven of them should be classified as being deviant from Present Day use, like *most humble* or *most worthy*. The same holds true for all three forms of a double comparison, namely *most easiest*, *most humbliest*, and *most hartiest*, which have to be assigned to the category of *variant B*.

Also 11 inflectionally compared adjectives were found during the second sub-period. With the exception of one example, namely *learneddest*, all forms of superlatives belong to the category of *variant A*. In the case of periphrastically compared adjectives I came across 22 examples. Of them 17 forms of comparison are still common nowadays (for example, *most fearfull* or *most loving*), the remaining five compared adjectives (like *most happy*, *most holy*, or *most humble*) are rather unusual forms of superlatives in Present Day English. Moreover, two examples of a double comparison (*most humblest* and *most pleasantest*) were found in this sub-period and both belong to the *variant-B-category*.

During the last sub-period 14 inflectionally formed superlatives were found, of which ten belong to the category of *variant A (*like *pretties* or *easiest)* and four (i.e. *slenderest or joyfullest*) make up the category of *variant B*. Additionally, I came across 28 periphrastically compared superlatives; of them 25 are still common nowadays and consequently belong to the *variant-A-category* and three forms should be classified as being unusual forms and are therefore assigned to the *variant-B-category (most happy, most humble* and *most worthy)*.

Figure 6.13. illustrates the development of the superlative formation patterns of disyllabic adjectives within the three sub-periods of Early Modern English. As can be seen the division into *variant A* and *variant B* is quite equal in terms of the percentage within the first two sub-periods. In the first sub-period 78.26% of all found disyllabic superlatives belong to the category of *variant A* and consequently 21.74% to the category of *variant B*. During the second sub-period the *variant-A-category* comprises 77.14% and the *variant-B-category* 22.86%. This division however, slightly changed during the last period to 83.33% for the *variant-A-category* and 16.67% for the *variant-B-category*.

6.4.3.3.   *Polysyllabic adjectives*

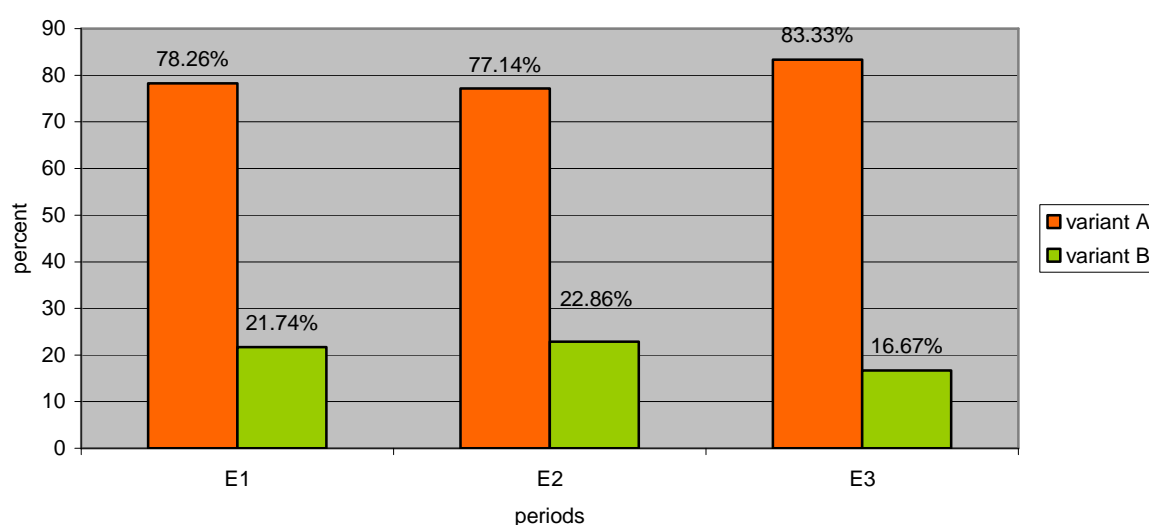| Polysyllabic adjectives														
E1					E2					E3				
infl		periphr		dc	infl		periphr		dc	infl		periphr		dc
A	B	A	B	B	A	B	A	B	B	A	B	A	B	B
0	0	31	1	1	0	9	31	0	1	0	2	46	1	0

Polysyllabic superlatives
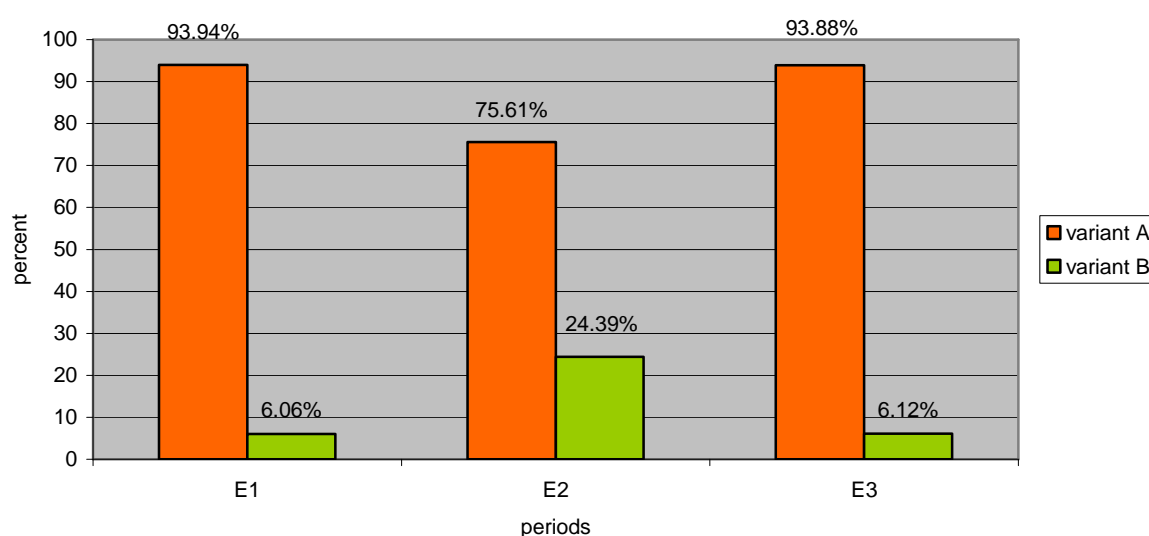
*Table and figure 6.14.: Division of polysyllabic adjectives compared with –*est *or* most *into* variant A *and* variant B *within the three sub-periods of Early Modern English.*

The last corpus-based analysis of this chapter deals with the division of polysyllabic adjectives compared with *–est* or *most* into *variant A* and *variant B*. Altogether I came across 165 tokens within the entire Early Modern English period and of them 123 types were taken into consideration. Of these 123 types 33 were found in the first sub-period of Early Modern English and these were, with the exception of one example of a double comparison, namely *mooste profytablest*, all periphrastically formed superlatives. Of them only one example has to be assigned to the category of *variant B*, namely the adjective *unhappy*. All other periphrastic forms of superlatives are still common nowadays.

During the second sub-period I found 41 compared adjectives. Nine adjectives were compared by inflection (for example, *difficultest, notoriousest*, or *lamentablest*) and consequently assigned to the category of *variant B*. 31 adjectives were of the

periphrastic type and are all common in Present Day English. The final example is again a form of a double comparison, *most excellentest*, which has to be assigned to the category of *variant B* as it is nowadays rather uncommon in formal English.

Between 1640 and 1710 I found 49 examples of superlatives and the majority, namely 46 examples, are common forms of adjectival comparisons. The other three compared adjectives, which had to be assigned to the category of *variant B*, were two inflectionally formed superlatives, i.e. *dangerousest* and *eminenest,* and again one periphrastically formed example of *unhappy*.

The development of polysyllabic compared superlatives can be seen more clearly in figure 6.14. During the first sub-period nearly 94% of all found examples of superlatives are still common nowadays. However, there is quite a decrease to mention during the second sub-period as only 75.61% could be assigned to the category of *variant A*. Finally, during the last sub-period of Early Modern English the percentage of nowadays commonly compared superlatives again rise to nearly 94% and only about six per cent had to be assigned to the category of *variant B*.

6.4.4. Discussion

> Correctness has been a vital concern of all of the major post-medieval speech communities in Western Europe. In England the combination of social awareness of a linguistic norm on various levels among the educated increased from the Renaissance onwards, but became widespread only after 1700, the individual areas of spelling, pronunciation, syntax and lexis, for obvious sociolinguistic reasons, being affected at different times. (Görlach 2002c: 137).

Along with this new sense of awareness of the English language, as pointed out by Görlach above, literary men were busy with the production of the first dictionaries and grammar books[33] for their native language and "by 1770 English had a standard written form almost as invariable as today's, its norms were not universally embraced" (Kytö & Romaine 2000: 189). Hence, the standardisation process of the English language was going on during the Early Modern English period which possibly also affected the comparative and superlative formation patterns.

As can be seen in the analysis of the comparative in chapters 6.4.2.1. to 6.4.2.3. the way of comparing adjectives became more and more adjusted to the

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[33] Also see chapter *3.2.3 Books in English*.

well-known present-day grammar rules. Hence in the case of monosyllabic adjectives 18.18% made up the category of *variant B* during the first sub-period which slightly rose to 22.22% during the second sub-period and finally dropped to 16.67% during the last sub-period. In the case of disyllabic adjectives the number of nowadays uncommonly compared adjectives is much higher during the first sub-period in comparison with monosyllabic adjectives as 30.77% had to be assigned to the category of *variant B*. However, during the second sub-period the percent of the *variant-B-category* already goes down to 16.13% and finally drops to 9.68% during the third sub-period. This steady development towards the standard form known in present-day English is quite similar in the case of polysyllabic adjectives, although the number of deviant forms is much smaller right from the beginning of Early Modern English as there are just 7.69% belonging to the category of *variant B* during the first sub-period, which goes even further down to 5.26% during the second sub-period and finally drops to 2.63% in the last sub-period of Early Modern English.

More variation was found in the case of periphrastically compared adjectives than inflectionally formed comparatives. There were some one-syllabic adjectives which were compared periphrastically although they are more likely to be compared inflectionally, for example, *large, firm,* or *hard*[34]. In the case of disyllabic adjectives some adjectives, like *easy, worthy, noble* or *stable*, which actually prefer inflection, because of their endings, were also compared periphrastically. In the last category, the polysyllabic adjectives, variation was to be found in the case of adjectives with the negative *un*-prefix, for example, *unhappy*, which were compared periphrastically although these adjectives are more common to be compared inflectionally. Moreover, there were examples of the double comparison, for example, *more neerer*, *more redyer*, or *more indifferenter* which also had to be assigned to the category of *variant B* as these forms are not regarded as Standard forms of the English language.

Chapters 6.4.3.1. to 6.4.3.3. deal with the development of the superlative formation patterns during the Early Modern English period Also in this case the analysis show the steady adaptation of the authors, done consciously or unconsciously, to a regularized grammar system. During the first sub-period 13.79% of monosyllabic adjectives were compared uncommonly, according to Present-day grammar rules, which even rose to 25.86% during the second sub-period, but finally dropped to 7.14% during the last sub-period. In the case of disyllabic adjectives the

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[34] For detailed information see chapter *4.3.2. The choice between inflectional and periphrastic comparison.*

number of deviant forms just slightly changes within the three sub-periods: there are 21.74% belonging to the *variant-B-category* during the first sub-period, 22.86% during the second sub-period and 16.67% during the last sub-period. Of all found polysyllabic adjectives of the first sub-period only 6.06% had to be assigned to the category of *variant B*. This number strongly increased during the second sub-period namely to 24.39% which finally drops to 6.12% during the last sub-period.

In the case of the superlative the largest source of variation is no longer the periphrastic comparison, but also several inflectionally compared adjectives had to be assigned to the category of *variant B* as they are defiant to the standard forms. For example, in the second sub-period, the adjective *right* was compared by inflection which is normally compared by periphrasis. During the last sub-period I came across *joyfullest* or *lovingest,* to name just a few disyllabic adjectives which prefer the periphrastic comparison instead, because of their endings. In the case of polysyllabic adjectives several inflectionally compared adjectives were found in the second sub-period, like *difficultest, notoriousest,* or *absolutest.* Additionally, there were again some examples of the double comparison, like *most hyghest*, *mooste profytablest. most easiest*, or *most excellentest.*

Moreover, it is worth mentioning that it is the second sub-period that shows the greatest number of variation in the case of the superlative which could be put down to the fact that during this time authors wanted to experiment with language which consequently resulted in a great number of variation.

To sum up, it becomes apparent with the help of the preceding analyses that the English language developed from a language where lots of variation was common towards a language with a more or less fixed grammar system. As there was always some variation to be found during the first two sub-periods, the last sub-period shows that the authors were apparently familiar with certain grammar rules which resulted in a more unified system of both the comparative and superlative formation patterns and consequently less variation. "Modern grammarians generally recognize the length of the adjective and the nature of the word ending as the primary linguistic factors determining the choice between inflectional and periphrastic comparison" (Kytö & Romaine 1997: 339) and this apparently also holds true for the Early Modern English period. As presented in the tables above, the majority of monosyllabic words were already compared with the help of inflection and polysyllabic adjectives were in the case of the comparative to 100% formed with

more. In the case of the superlative some variation could be spotted, however, of all found 123 polysyllabic adjectives just 11 forms of superlatives were compared inflectionally. "Disyllabic words, however, present more fertile ground for variation both then and now" (Kytö & Romaine 1997:339). Therefore, further investigation is required to try to uncover why authors during the Early Modern English period chose one or other of the three competing forms of disyllabic adjectives[35.]

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[35] Compare chapter *6.6. Detailed investigation of disyllabic adjectives.*

6.5. Double comparison

6.5.1. Introduction

As already mentioned in the preceding chapters, apart from the inflectional and the periphrastic comparison there has always existed a third form of adjectival comparison, which was a combination of both forms. Thus, as pointed out by Pyles and Algeo, "[t]he general rule was that comparison could be made with the ending or with the modifying word or, for emphasis with both" (Pyles & Algeo 1982: 189). The introduction of this new hybrid form into the system leads to the so-called double comparison[36].

Although these double forms have always been marginal they have consistently attracted attention and have continually been under discussion by linguists[37]. During the Early Modern English period the double comparison was used in the literary language (Kytö & Romaine 1997: 338), but it gradually disappeared from the written language under the influence of standardisation. According to Kytö & Romaine "[t]he low incidence of double forms overall is due at least partly to the continuing influence of standardization, particularly 18th century and modern grammarians' condemning of the construction as non-standard" (Kytö & Romaine 1997: 338).

Of all 1252 forms of adjectival comparison, comparatives and superlatives found in the Helsinki Corpus, I only came across 18 examples of the double comparison altogether which account for 1.44% of all found forms of compared adjectives.

The main concern of the following analysis is to find possible reasons and factors which introduced and influenced the use of this peculiar form. The examination of some relevant parameters given in the Helsinki Corpus, such as text types, author's sex, author's age, social rank and the level of formality, will help us here. In addition, the spread of the double comparison will be examined, separately for the comparative and the superlative, in order to observe its development within all three sub-periods of the Early Modern English period.

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[36] Various names can be found for this form, such as double, multiple, pleonastic or hybrid comparison; source Kytö & Romaine 2000: 192, note 3.
[37] Also see chapter *3. Historical overview*.

6.5.2. Presentation of all examples of the double comparison within the Early Modern English period

In the following two chapters, *6.5.2.1. Double comparatives* and *6.5.2.2. Double superlatives*, the incidence of double comparison, found within the entire Early Modern English period will first be given. Secondly, all occurrences of either double comparatives or double superlatives will be listed as well as the author`s name and the title of the text in question, in order to obtain a general overview. Subsequently, all other parameters relevant to this study and serving as the basis for the ensuing analysis are specified. In the case of the double comparison only five of 25 parameters in all are examined in detail, as these are essential for this investigation. These parameters are: text type, author's sex, author's age, social rank and level of formality. In cases where the level of formality was not indicated, the parameters *audience description* and *prototypcical text category* will also be taken into consideration.

These data contain only texts written in prose, and all examples, except William Tyndale's translation of the Bible and Queen Elizabeth's I translation of *Boethius*, are of English origin.

6.5.2.1.   Double comparatives

In the Early Modern English part of the Helsinki Corpus I came across six examples of a double comparative altogether, which make up 1.1% of all found examples of adjectives compared either with *–er* or *more*. According to every single sub-period the first sub-period included 1.74% of all found examples of comparatives, which slightly rose to 2.10% during the second sub-period. No example of a double comparative could be found during the last sub-period of Early Modern English.

6.5.2.1.1.   Occurrences of double comparatives during the first sub-period

The following *table 6.15.* presents the examples of all double comparatives found in the first sub-period, the texts where the double forms were found and of course the author's names of the text in question.

Examples	Author's name	Title of text
• more redyer	Fitzherbert, Anthony	The Book of Husbandry (1534)
• more feebler	Vicary, Thomas	The Anatomie of the bodie of man (1548)
• more indifferenter	Vicary, Thomas	The Anatomie of the bodie of man (1548)

Table 6.15.: Occurrences of double comparatives in the 1ˢᵗ sub-period

As can be seen in *table 6.15.,* two examples, namely *more feebler* and *more indifferenter*, occurred in *The Anatomie of the bodie of man*, written by Thomas Vicary. As the parameters for these double forms are of course identical, they are counted as one example, as it would not make sense to treat them separately for the present analysis. The third double form, *more redyer*, occurred in Fitzherbert's book *The Book of Husbandry*. Consequently, the parameters of these two written works will be taken into consideration in the following table 6.16.

Example	Text type	Author's sex		Age	Social rank		Level of formality	
		male	female		prof	high	form.	inf.
more feebler, more indifferenter	science medicine	x		40-60	x		x	
more redyer	handbook other	x		40-60	x			x

Table 6.16.: List of occurrences of double comparatives in the 1ˢᵗ sub-period and relevant parameters

As can be seen in table 6.16., all examples were written by male authors, at the age of 40-60, who belonged to the professional class. The division into formal and informal posed a problem, as no example was assigned to either category. However, in both cases the readership to which the work was dedicated was described: *professional* in the case of Thomas Vicary, *non-professional* in the work of Anthony Fitzherbert. Additionally, the parameter *prototypical text category (Z)* is of some help

as the medical text was coded as *exposition* and the handbook as *instruction secular*. For these reasons Vicary's text is assigned to the formal category, and Fitzherbert's work to the informal group.

6.5.2.1.2.   Occurrences of double comparatives during the second sub-period

As with the early sub-period analysis, here, the examples, author's name and the title of text (table 6.17.) will first be given and subsequently the necessary parameters (table 6.18.).

Examples	Author's name	Title of text
• more neerer	Markham, Gervase	Countrey Contentments (1615)
• more easier	Clowes, William	Treatise for the Artificiall Cure of Struma (1602)
• more happier	Elizabeth I	Boethius (1593)

Table 6.17.: Occurrences of double comparatives in the 2nd sub-period

In the second sub-period we are confronted with the same two text types, namely a medical text and a handbook. The same problem concerning the level of formality had to be solved. However, the same criteria were applied to the division into formal and informal as done for the first sub-period. Additionally, a third text type, namely philosophy, occurs, which is assigned to the formal category.

Example	Text type	Author's sex		Age	Social rank		Level of formality	
		male	female		prof	high	for.	inf.
more neerer	handbook other	x		40-60	x			x
more easier	science medicine	x		60-		x	x	
more happier	philosophy		x	40-60		x	x	

Table 6.18.: List of occurrences of double comparatives in the 2nd sub-period and relevant parameters

Gervase Markham's social rank was related to the professional class, whereas the readership was assigned to the non-professional group. Moreover, the *prototypical text category (Z)* was *instruction secular*. For this reason this text was assigned to the informal category. He wrote *Countrey Contentments* between the age of 40 and 60.

William Clowes belonged to the upper class and wrote this text at the age of 60 and older. The readership to which the work was dedicated is described as professional, the *prototypical text category (Z)* is *exposition,* thus the setting is formal.

The only female author, Queen Elizabeth I, wrote the translation *Boethius* while between the age of 40 to 60 and, obviously, was of upper class origins. As mentioned above this text was assigned to the formal category, as it is likely to assume that Queen Elizabeth's I writing was an example of an elaborate style.

6.5.2.2.   *Double superlatives*

In the case of the superlative twelve double forms were found altogether, which make up 1.70% of all occurrences of adjectival comparison found during the Early Modern English period. During the first sub-period the examples of double superlatives made up 4.48%, which decreased to 1.14% during the second sub-period and finally completely disappeared during the last sub-period.

6.5.2.2.1.   Occurrences of double superlatives during the first sub-period

The following table presents all nine occurrences of double superlatives, which were found in works dating from the first sub-period of Early Modern English of the Helsinki Corpus.

Examples	Author's name	Title of text
• most easiest	Harman, Thomas	A Caveat or warening for commen cursetors vulgarely called vagabones.
• mooste profytablest	Fitzherbert, Anthony	The Book of Husbandry (1534)
• most hyghest	Tyndale, William	The Old Testament
• most hyghest	Tyndale, William	The Old Testament
• most humbliest	Scrope, Katherine	Letter to Father
• most hyghest	Tyndale, William	The Old Testament
• most hartiest	Plumpton, Agnes	Letter to Husband
• most hartiest	Plumpton, Agnes	Letter to Husband
• most hartyest	Plumpton Isabel	Letter to Husband

Table 6.19.: Occurrences of double superlatives in the 1st sub-period

As can be seen in table 6.19., there are three occurrences of the double form *most highest* and all of them were written by William Tyndale in his Bible translation. The double superlative *most hartiest* also occurred three times, however this form was written twice by Agnes Plumpton and once by Isabel Plumpton, in private letters. This

results in a total of nine examples of double superlatives occurring in six different pieces of writing, the details of which are listed below in table 6.20.

Example	Text type	Author's sex		Age	Social rank		Level of formality	
		male	**female**		**prof**	**high**	**for.**	**inf.**
most easiest	fiction	x		-		x		x
most profytables	handbook other	x		40-60	x			x
most hyghest	Bible	x		20-40	x		x	
most humbliest	letter private		x	20-40		x		x
most hartiest	letter private		x	40-60		x		x
most hartyest	letter private		x	-		x		x

Table 6.20.: List of occurrences of double superlatives in the 1st sub-period and relevant parameters.

Double superlatives occurred in works written by three male authors, as well as three female authors. Furthermore, we can see that these double superlatives were found in works which are categorised according to four different text types: fiction, handbook, the Bible and private letters. The age group varies between 20-40 and 40-60 (in one case the writer's age was not indicated).

Social origins of authors are also divided into the professional and upper classes. The compilers of the Helsinki Corpus ranked William Tyndale and Anthony Fitzherbert as professional, and all other authors as belonging to the upper-class.

There remains the question of the level of formality, as again not all examples were assigned to either the formal or informal category. We find that the letters written by Katherine Scrope, Agnes Plumpton and Isabel Plumpton were assigned to the category *informal*. This is because all private letters were regarded as informal pieces of writing. Moreover, the fictional text written by Thomas Harman was classified as informal and also Anthony Fitzherbert's *The Book of Husbandry* is assigned to the informal category[38], as done before. What is left over is Tyndale's translation of "The Old Testament" which can be classified as formal, as the Bible is generally considered as being very conservative and a serious piece of writing.

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[38] In the case of Fitzherbert's text the same criteria were applied as in chapter *6.5.2.1.1. Occurrences of double comparatives in the 1st sub-period*

6.5.2.2.2.   Occurrences of double superlatives during the second sub-period

During the second sub-period of the Early Modern English period three examples of a double superlative were found, which can be seen in table 6.21.

Examples	Author's name	Title of text
• most pleasantest	Taylor, John	The Pennyles Pilgrimage (1630)
• most humblest	Ferrar, Nicholas	Letter to Mother
• most excellentest	Markham, Gervase	Countrey Contentments (1615)

Table 6.21.: Occurrences of double superlatives in the 2nd sub-period

All three examples occurred in three different works and the following parameters were indicated:

Example	Text type	Author's sex		Age	Social rank		Level of formality	
		male	female		prof	high	for.	inf.
most pleasantest	travelogue	x		20-40	-	-		x
most humblest	letter private	x		20-40	x			x
most excellentest	handbook other	x		40-60	x			x

Table 6.22.: List of occurrences of double superlatives in the 2nd sub-period and relevant parameters.

In the second sub-period three examples of a double superlative are on hand, all written by male authors. John Taylor and Nicholas Ferrar were in their 20's to 40's when they wrote these texts, whereas Gervase Markham was already in his 40's to 60's. Ferrar and Markham belonged to the professional class, but we have no information about Taylor's social rank than *other*. As far as the level of formality is concerned, only the private letter written by Nicholas Ferrar is assigned to the informal category. In the case of Taylor's travelogue *The Pennyles Pilgrimage* the parameter *level of formality* was quite difficult to handle, as no information was given about his social rank, nor a description of the target audience. The only parameter that was indicated was the parameter *prototypical text category* which grouped this text as *narration non-imaginative*. For this reason this text was assigned to the informal category. Markham's *Countrey Contentments* was again regarded as informal, according to the same criteria mentioned above[39].

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[39] See chapter *6.5.2.1.2. Occurrences of double comparatives in the 2nd sub-period.*

6.5.3. Discussion

It is now time to investigate the information presented in detail in order to find some influencing factors which were responsible for choosing a form of the double comparison. In this analysis I will try to apply some ideas from Kytö's and Romain's study[40] to my own investigation in order to find possible influencing factors.

Unfortunately, the total of eighteen occurrences of double comparison found in the Helsinki Corpus is not very representative, as it accounts for only 1.71 % of all examples presented in both periods. However, this tiny number mirrors the fact that the use of double comparison has always been marginal[41].

Additionally, as can be seen in the preceding chapters, all examples of the double comparison originate from the time between 1500 and 1640. No form of double comparison, either of the comparative or of the superlative, is found in the last sub-period, which again reflects the fact that the Helsinki Corpus contains only written material. In the course of the Early Modern English period this form was apparently banned from written English, but it is fair to assume that this form was still used in the spoken or colloquial language, as it is today.

Furthermore, as a result of this small number it is difficult to categorise the use of the double comparison, as no clear factors could be found which may have influenced the choice of this form. As the preceding lists reveal[42], double comparison was used by both male and female authors of any age. Of course the male sex predominated, but that does not prove anything, as the bulk of all written texts are due to male authors during the Early Modern English period.

In addition, the examples of double comparison occurred in several different text types which cannot all be associated with the spoken or rather informal language, but also represent formal language. It would have been quite easy to suggest that double comparison was just a sign of colloquialism, as it seems to be in present-day English, and therefore occurred only in text types such as private letters, diaries or fictional texts, for instance. However, it also occurred in the Bible, and in Elizabeth I's translation of *Boethius*, which consequently defeats the whole theory.

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[40] See chapter *5.2. Merja Kytö and Suzanne Romaine - an approach to adjectival comparison.*
[41] See also Kytö & Romaine 1997: 337
[42] See chapter *6.5.2.1. Double comparatives* and *6.5.2.2. Double superlatives*

Word-length as well as word-endings were mentioned by Kytö and Romaine[43] as being important factors influencing the choice of either the inflectional or periphrastic way of comparing adjectives. But how do these linguistic factors influence the choice of the double comparison? According to the present data these factors are completely irrelevant in this case, as mono-, di-, and polysyllabic adjectives were compared by the double form, and word-endings also seem to be disregarded.

Another influencing factor mentioned by Kytö and Romaine is of course the stylistic factor[44], which is apparently in fact the most important and only factor which influenced the choice of double comparison as there is considerable evidence to support this theory.

As pointed out by Jespersen (1949: 356, quoted in Kytö & Romaine 1997: 347)[45], the inflectional forms seem to be more emphatic in longer words and superlative forms. On the other hand, Curme was of the opinion that the periphrastic form was of "stylistic advantage" (1931: 504, quoted in Kytö & Romaine 2000: 185), as the use of *more* and *most* allows the speaker or writer to place additional stress on the comparing element. So why not combine both forms as a stylistic option, in order to place additional stress on the comparing adjective as a result of emphatic need? The best examples supporting this idea of emphasis were found in the Bible. The following text sample is an extract from William Tyndale's translation of the *Old Testament*, Genesis chapter XIV, which contains the three forms of the double comparison *most hyghest*

> And as he retourned agayne from the slaughter of kedorlaomer and of the kynges that were with him, than came the kynge of Sodome agaynst hym vnto the vale of Saue which now is called kynges dale.
> Than Melchisedech kinge of Salem brought for the breed and wyne. And he beynge the prest of the *most hyghest* God, blessed hym saynge.Blessed be Abram vnto
> And blessed be God the most hyghest, which hath delyvered thyne enimies in to thy handes. And Abram gaue hym tythes of all (Genesis, chapter XIIII).

As can be recognized from this text, the double comparison of *most hyghest* was always used in connection with God. Tyndale probably wanted to emphasise that God is the *Lord of the universe* and omnipotent. The noun phrase '*the most hyghest*

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[43] See chapter *5.2.3. Influence of word structure.*
[44] See chapter *5.2.4. Stylistic factors.*
[45] Cf. chapter *5.2.4. Stylistic factors.*

God, possessor of heaven and erth' emphatically expresses God's uniqueness. Tyndale was perhaps of the opinion that with the help of the double comparison the absolute highest degree of comparison could be achieved which even surpasses a superlative form.

Other examples representing the idea of emphasis are the forms of double comparisons occurring in private letters, written by Katherine Scrope, Agnes and Isabel Plumpton and Nicholas Ferrar. In these cases the double forms are found in the salutations, either at the beginning or the end, which were integral parts of a personal letter and clearly reflect the actual relationship between sender and recipient. So we find in Scrope's letter right at the beginning

> (Lady Katherine Scrope to the first Earl of Cumberland, 14 October 1536):
> My dewty promysed unto your Lordship in my *most humbliest* maner; (E1, 246).

In Agnes Plumpton's letters to her husband we get the salutations

> (To the worshipful Sir Robart Plompton, kt. be thes delivered in hast):
> Sir, in my *most hartiest* wyse I recommend me unto you, desiring to heare of your prosperitie and welfare, and of your good spede in your matters; (Letter CXXXIII) (E1, 560).
>
> (To the worshipfull Robart Plompton, knight, be these delivered in hast; 19 March 1503):
> Right worshipfull Sir, in my *most hartiest* wyse I recommend 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 (Letter CLI) (E1, 561).

In the letter written by Isabel Plumpton we get a similar beginning

> (To Sir Robart Plompton, kt. be thes letter delivered. 26 April 1504):
> Sir, in the *most hartyest* wyse that I can, I recommend me unto you. (E1, 562).

In all these letters the only reason for using this double form was again to add extra emphasis to the salutation, in order to express their love and affection to the greatest extent. According to Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg (1996: 175) the husband was regarded as the head of the family and the wife as being inferior to him, which can also be seen in the following description of letter salutations

> [i]n the nuclear family parents receive more deferential forms from their children than children from their parents, elder brothers from their younger brothers, and husbands from their wives. (Nevalainen&Raumolin-Brunberg 1996: 175).

This fact is also confirmed in the Helsinki Corpus with the help of the parameter *participant relationship* which is in all cases intimate up[46] as women wrote letters to their husbands.

However, it could have also been the case that women were less well educated at that time and simply did not compare adjectives in the nowadays regarded standard way.

Finally, another example of a double superlative was found in a letter written by Nicholas Ferrar to his mother, with the following ending

> And soe agayne with my most humblest prayers to Almighty God for your happines I rest your most bounden and obedient son. (E2, 424)

In this case Ferrar probably also expresses with the help of the double form his inferiority to his mother and also his modesty. But again it could have also been the case that Ferrar used this double superlative unconsciously.

After representing and discussing all possible factors which could have influenced an author during the Early Modern English period to use a form of the double comparison, I came to the conclusion that either emphasis or persuasion were probably the most important factors. In the cases of the Bible and of private letters, emphatic need probably led to the use of double comparison. In all other examples no definite factors could be found, except the wish to persuade the readership at the emotional level.

In addition, as already mentioned, the possibility should not be disregarded that the use of this peculiar form might just have been pure chance, as is often the case in Present-day English. It could have been that these authors were not at all aware of their interesting or peculiar use of combining the inflectional as well as the periphrastic form, as the bulk of all the examples found appeared in the first period, when grammatical rules were not at all fixed and discussion of them was just getting under way, and the periphrastic form was something rather new.

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[46] For detailed information see chapter *2.3.2. Selection of texts*.

On the other hand authors started to be keen on experimenting with language and the use of double comparison could have been a sign of involvement in such experiments and therefore stylistically marked, but as no reliable evidence does exist these ideas remain mere speculation.

6.6. Detailed investigation of disyllabic adjectives

6.6.1. Introduction

The following analyses look at all occurrences of disyllabic adjectives found in the Early Modern English part of the Helsinki Corpus. As mentioned before[47], due to the variation in their formation patterns, the comparison of disyllabic adjectives has always been a point of discussion and debate. For this reason it is important to look at some linguistic conditioning factors, namely the nature of word endings, stress patterns and context, in order to discover possible reasons for the development of either the inflectional or periphrastic form of adjectival comparison.

To do this it is necessary to try to categorise all found disyllabic adjectives according to whether they are, first of all, vowel-final or consonant-final, and secondly according to the word stress and context.

As some disyllabic adjectives occurred more frequently than others in the texts of the Helsinki Corpus a type/token analysis had to be done. For this reason the final number of occurrences will be given at the beginning of each analysis, but the following table, diagram and discussion will entirely deal with the relevant types.

Any forms of a double comparison formed with disyllabic adjectives will not be treated in this chapter as these special forms have been discussed in the preceding chapter.

Hence, each analysis will start with a short introduction, including the table listing all found disyllabic adjectives of all three sub-periods, followed by a discussion of any results found. After this has been done with the inflectional and periphrastic forms of the comparative and the superlative, a final discussion will follow each investigation.

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[47] Compare chapter 6.3. Illustration of the total number of occurrences of the comparative formed by –*er* and *more* and the superlative using -*est* and *most*, according to the number of syllables, found within the three sub-periods of Early Modern English

6.6.2. Word endings

6.6.2.1. Introduction

The present analysis deals with the classification according to the endings of each relevant disyllabic adjective. All compared disyllabic adjectives have to be divided into those which were vowel-final and those which were consonant-final adjectives of both the comparative and the superlative in order to find possible explanations why authors chose the inflectional or the periphrastic type of comparing adjectives.

6.6.2.2. Disyllabic comparatives

6.6.2.2.1.   Introduction

The following investigation looks at the word-endings of all disyllabic comparatives found in the Early Modern English part of the Helsinki Corpus. The first analysis deals with all vowel-final comparatives and their division into the inflectional and periphrastic method of adjectival comparison. The ensuing part, consequently, looks at all consonant-final adjectives and their respective division according to the given method of comparison. Table 6.22 and table 6.23 list apart from the actual examples in the first column, the cites where the adjectives occurred and the division into inflectional (i) and periphrastic (p) comparison.

6.6.2.2.2.   Vowel-final adjectives

During the entire Early Modern English period 23 examples of vowel-final adjectives were found in the Helsinki Corpus, all of which are listed below in table 6.22.

Division of all vowel-final adjectives into the inflectional and periphrastic method of comparison			
Example	**Cite**	**i**	**p**
E1			
narrower	1327 d the nether mouth of the stomacke is narrower then the vpper, and that for thre	x	
readier	1465 est and of worse iuice, and therefore readier to breede the stone, (\Nam vbi suc	x	
goodly	118 d certes ! P76 nothyng is fayrer, or more goodly then this thyng, that reason		x
happy	121 he wretchednes of any man, is not he more happy then the man, whose myserye is		x
happye	122 PHIL: Certes the sayd wycked folke be more happye and |P100 blessed that be pon		x
harty	124 your Grace his moost harty, and not more harty than highly well-deserved thanks		x
redy	225 nd for asmuch her semed the Cardinall more redy to depart, # then some of th		x

worthie	315 for the making, whe~ the master were more worthie to be beat for the mending, o		x
worthy	316 he towne, which of these two me~ were more worthy to haue the office and name of		x
worthy	317 answeryd and sayd nay by the mas I am more worthy to haue a rewarde than he/ fo		x
E2			
shallower	694 sell, which the broader it is and the shallower it is, the better it is, and yee	x	
happier	stance. (^Mis. Ford.^) You are the happier woman. (^Mis. Page.^) Let's consult	x	
merry	164 st Intreating the to be merry and the more merry to think thou hast |P57 h		x
E3			
easier	666 r this way is begun with children the easier it will be for them and their g	x	
easier	(4) government was a much safer and easier thing where the authority was believed	x	
easier	ng of our duty, nothing # can be easier: Nothing will give us that pleasure	x	
easie	71 o they have been, and that also in a more easie manner. And forasmuch as I ob		x
easie	72 oon as they can fit themselves for a more easie profession, or obtain a more pro		x
easy	76 both by diet and medecine being much more easy then the contrary evill there nee		x
easy	77 by any method that was more sure and more easy, than by going in to the stream,		x
happy	113 is that? (^Ph.^) That wicked Men are more happy when they are punished according		x
speedy	247 lately found out for the better and more speedy makeing and knitting of worst		x
speedy	248 imes the same (^year^). 4. It's more (^speedy^), (^easie^), and (^ delig		x

Table 6.22.: List of all disyllabic vowel-final comparatives compared by inflection or periphrasis within all three sub-periods of Early Modern English.

During the first sub-period, ten vowel-final adjectives were found (two inflectionally and eight periphrastically compared adjectives), however there were some adjectives in the case of the periphrastic comparison like *happy* or *worthy* which were better represented than others. Consequently, only seven types of the ten tokens were taken into consideration, two of which were of the inflectional and five of the periphrastic type of comparison. During the second sub-period three vowel-final examples were listed, two of the inflectional and one of the periphrastic type. The last sub-period reveals ten compared vowel-final adjectives, however the majority were made up by the adjective *great* which was three times compared by inflection (one type) and four times by periphrasis (another type). Thus there is one type of an inflectionally compared adjective and three types of the periphrastic method of comparison of the ten tokens.

6.6.2.2.3.   Consonant-final adjectives

In the case of the consonant-final adjectives 22 comparatives occurred in the first sub-period of Early Modern English, 29 were found during the second sub-period and 35 examples turned up in the last sub-period, which makes a total of 86 forms of comparatives for the time span of 1500 to 1700. The following table 6.23 lists all examples and their division into those consonant-final adjectives which were compared by inflection and those which were compared with the help of *more*.

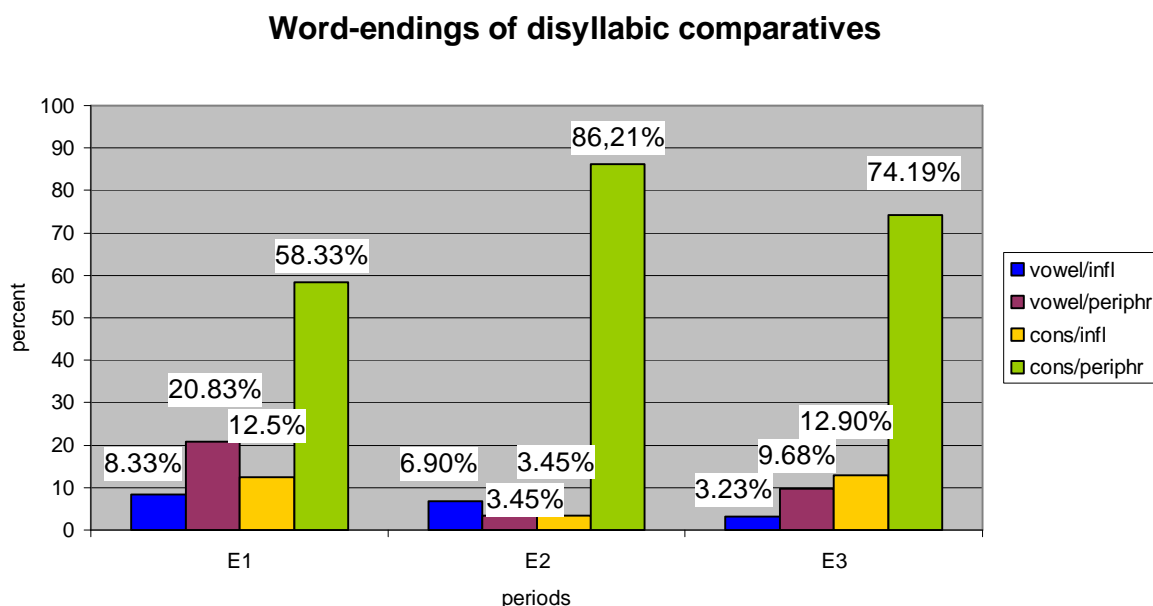| Division of all consonant-final adjectives into the inflectional and periphrastic method of comparison			
Example	**Cite**	**i**	**p**
E1			
singler	169 inke convenyent to were all and suche singler apparell on his body or his horses	x	
subtiller	1334 spirit that is *clearer, brighter*, and subtiller then any corporal or bodely thin	x	
abler	1419 should be the more indifferenter and abler to euery thing that shoulde be reser	x	
ample	13 # Fourthly, he shuld come with more ample commission from the same states		x
blessed	54 ed folke that be iustlye ponyshed be more blessed after another maner, the~ fo		x
displeased	89 repente repente, for I thynke God is more displeased wyth London then euer he		x
facile	101 ntly, and made his exile to be to hym more facile and easy: whiche courage and w		x
facile	102 at this day better introductions, and more facile, than euer before were made, c		x
greuous	119 st the wycked folke be turmented with more greuous ponyshments, when they seme		x
greuous	120 to say, but inwardly mourning is much more greuous bicause I perceue thou arte t		x
inward	140 and is, I faithfully assure you, much more inward comfort vnto me, then my penne		x
noble	175 : they somtyme purposely suffring the more noble children to vainquysshe, and,		x
piercing	209 owlie tha~ these be, howbeit they are more piercing then all soure and binding w		x
subtil	243 e is he that is borne a Roge: he is a more subtil and more geuen by nature to al		x
vnkynde	305 outragious sinne, and hast been much more vnkynde after this his moste wonderfu		x
wretched	320 that is, that they that do wronges be more wretched the~ they that suffer wrong		x
wretched	321 yll to do euyll thynges, It is a more wretched thyng to haue myght to do it		x
wycked	323 e let go without iust ponyshment, be more wycked then when they be ponyshed by		x
wycked	324 ye it. PHIL: Then such wycked folk be more wycked when they be wrongfullye perd		x
wycked	325 om god. Certes what confusion may be more wycked, the~ that other whiles aduers		x
abiecte	(1) t selfe, should it seeme for that moore abiecte or lesse estemed of any par		x
perfite	(16) change that chanced. An. 1553. Whan mo perfite scholers were dispersed from		x
E2			
wretcheder	punishment of the Actor. "Then wretcheder is the maker, than the Receauour.	x	
aduanced	14 tates & kingdoms: So it would bee yet more aduanced, if there were more Intellig		x
alike	19 protest I neuer saw two Maids more alike I'le nere seeke farther, if you		x
constant	61 obility of the Realme remayned with a more constant countenance, ey		x
correct	64 ndly, Newe Editions of Authors, with more correct impressions, more faithfull		x
eastward	86 to those whose # Meridian is more Eastward then to them whose Meridian		x
faithfull	93 hors, with more correct impressions, more faithfull translations, more profita		x
foolish	97 called the foole. Another seruingman, more foolish then both, took Jack's part,		x
fruitful	102 anes buy no Kine from a place that is more fruitful then your owne, but rather h		x
gainfull	105 if we gaine anything by them, but the more gainfull a sinne is, the more daunger		x
gainfull	106 s, the more daungerous it is, and the more gainfull Vsurie is, the more daungero		x
grievous	115 ll. And that which hath yet been much more grievous to me. I have sometimes been		x
lawfull	155 he was not a borrower, which is |PE3V more lawfull than to be an Vsurer, like a		x
obscure	173 of the Vniuersities were deriued fro~ more obscure times, it is the more requis		x
paineful	191 f they be more pregnant and witty, or more painefull and diligent, they shall pu		x
pleasant	202 ke of it, and I found the taste to be more pleasant then any other water, sweet		x
pregnant	204 nke to go before them; but if they be more pregnant and witty, or more painefull		x
p~fecte	207 the Offences aforesaide # and the more p~fecte accomplisshing of the p~miss		x
secret	217 nts in matters of learning, which are more secret and remote from vulgar opinion		x
seuere	221) followers in learning, that is, the more seuere, and laborious sort of Enquire		x
severe	222 yninge the saide Offenses, and more severe punishinge the same, be it fur		x
stable	232 in it self more true, nor by reaason more stable, nor for god wourthyer." "In t		x
subtill	233 TION OMITTED^] Now the serpent was more subtill then any beast of the field,		x
thankefull	265 thou lying villaine Vnlesse thou wert more thankefull. (^T.S.^) I haue no dwelli		x
troubled	315 hifted off my Canibals, and was neuer more troubled with them. The next day I		x
westward	337 tward then to them whose Meridian is more Westward. And contrariwise the Eclip		x
westward	338 # sooner to those whose Meridian is more Westward. [{ WHAT OTHER USES HATH THI		x
wicked	342 quitie make men miserable, he must be more wicked that longer lastes: whom most		x
wretched	350 be to wysh that is nought, it is much more wretched to doo it. Whithout which th		x

E3			
remoter	976 by it and stuck fast to it; but the remoter parts continued in their former p	x	
remoter	978 and convenient passage to be had from remoter parts, both by land and by water.	x	
abler	1166 abling in strangers; and every of the abler sort of inhabitants in the Town, sho	x	
nobler	1223 ase. (^Ph.^) But there can be nothing nobler than that which Reason commands us	x	
gentler	1556 give him an abhorrence of it by gentler ways, but obstinancy being an open	x	
remoter	(1) it and stuck fast to it; but the remoter parts continued in their former posture.	x	
nobler	(1) love (which the Angels, better and nobler Creatures # than we are, desire	x	
nobler	(2) say on purpose to recommend to men a nobler exercise for their wits, and if it	x	
nobler	(3) God hath given them, to better and nobler purposes in the # service, and	x	
nobler	(4) God hath given them to better and nobler purposes in the service and to the	x	
nobler	(5) e. (^Ph.^) But there can be nothing nobler than that which Reason Commands us	x	
afraid	4 ince I came, not wanting it, & being more afrayd of what might heat |P341 mee, i		x
cheerful	41 it, that they seem to rejoyce with a more chearful Verdure, and unconcerned reje		x
cheerfull	42 leased to speak kindly to me, and is more cheerfull y=n= he was when he was last		x
cruel	55 much less are those over whom Vice, more cruel than any bodily Distemper, hath		x
doubtful	69 cted by them in things that are more doubtful and difficult, I do not see		x
faithful	92 help them to a much better and more faithful Guide? If any Church, any pro		x
fearfull	94 e are more apprehensive of danger or more fearfull of death than this sort of me		x
froward	107 ake, # and being disturb'd, will be more froward. [^VERSE OMITTED^] (^Tom.^)		x
gracious	111 o the Noblemen & others, expecting a more gracious & cherefull reception, when t		x
harmelesse	115 re is no escaping of it: yet it is a more harmelesse thing then is imagined		x
honest	119 of the hypocritical sort, and of the more honest but no less pernicious enthusia		x
intent	133 that after coming in Tired, they are more intent to spread their Carpets for R		x
irksome	135 olence, were very Offensive, and the more irksome, because we were constrained t		x
open	186 on that Journy, and an higher way to more open Doors. (\--- Patet Atri janua Dit		x
pregnant	200 s as these, I have knowne some boyes more pregnant witted then the rest, to have		x
preserved	201 hereby their name and memory will be more preserved; especially, if they have no		x
proper	209 by Night, that is, in the lesser and more proper Circles of her affairs, in the		x
real	215 no more then that no man can have a more real heart toward any then hath to The		x
remote	217 n Faith preach't to them by a Nation more remote, and (as a report went, account		x
renown'd	218 soul, which was still panting after more renown`d actions. Before I parted		x
shatter'd	235 he Colchester buildings but it seems more shatter'd and indeed the town looks a		x
smoothed	239 ly relaxed, the fathers brow be more smoothed to them, and the distance by		x
solid	245 Gombroon^) , now beating the Hoof on more solid Rocks: In this Passage we could		x
troubled	342 t the Marshes were passable; we were more troubled with Waves of Sand than Water		x

Table 6.23.. List of all disyllabic consonant-final comparatives compared by inflection or periphrasis within all three sub-periods of Early Modern English.

Of the 22 tokens listed above from the period 1500 to 1570, there were 17 types, three of which were compared by inflection with 14 adjectives compared by the periphrastic form of comparison. During E2 there were 26 types from the mentioned 29 tokens. Just one example was of the inflectional form and the remaining 25 adjective types were compared with the help of the extra word *more*. The last period shows the greatest difference between types and tokens as there were in the case of the inflectional comparison two adjectives, namely *noble* and *remote* which were better represented than the others. So of the eleven tokens only four types could be taken into consideration. In the case of periphrastic comparison 23 types of the 24 tokens will be looked at. Thus, E3 presents 27 types for the following investigation.

6.6.2.2.4.   Comparison of the vowel-final and consonant-final adjectives

The following analysis looks at all examples and compares the method of comparison for the vowel-final and consonant-final adjectives in order to find possible reasons why authors chose one of the two forms. All in all 84 disyllabic adjectives will be taken into consideration; 14 vowel-final adjectives and 70 consonant-final adjectives.

Word-endings of disyllabic comparatives

Diagram 6.24.: Comparison of all vowel-final and consonant-final adjectives and the division into inflectional and periphrastic comparison within all three sub-periods of Early Modern English.

What can be seen at once while looking at diagram 6.24. is that the majority of all disyllabic comparatives were of the consonant-final type. Additionally, it can be said that those consonant-final word-endings apparently favoured the periphrastic method of comparison as nearly 60% were of this type in E1, which even rose to about 86% during E2 and finally slightly dropped to about 74% during E3. The number of inflectionally compared adjectives of the consonant-final type was consequently quite low: 12.5% during the first sub-period, only 3.45% during the second sub-period and 12.90% during the last sub-period. Consequently, also the number of the vowel-final adjectives was quite low as we get 8.33% inflectionally compared and 20.83% periphrastically compared adjectives during E1. During E2 6.90% were compared by –er and 3.45% were of the periphrastic type. The last sub-period shows that 3.23% of vowel-final adjectives were inflectionally compared and 9.68% periphrastically.

6.6.2.3. *Disyllabic superlatives*

6.6.2.3.1.   Introduction

The following part of my investigation of adjectival word-endings and their possible influence on the choice of one of the two forms of comparison takes a close look at all examples of superlatives, vowel-final as well as consonant-final. Following the pattern established in the previous analysis, vowel-final examples will be examined first, to be followed by analysis of the consonant-final adjectives. A comparison of these two parameters will follow in order to show possible tendencies.

6.6.2.3.2.   Vowel-final adjectives

The following table 6.24 presents all vowel-final adjectives and their division into inflectional and periphrastic comparison. All in all I found 44 tokens which ended in a vowel. Of them 24 occurred during the first sub-period, 12 during the second sub-period and 8 were found during the last sub-period of Early Modern English.

Division of all vowel-final adjectives into the inflectional and periphrastic method of comparison			
Example	**Cite**	**i**	**p**
E1			
merriest	13 properties diuersly exceled. One the meriest, an other the wiliest, the thirde	x	
holiest	158 an other the wiliest, the thirde the holiest harlot in his realme, as	x	
mightiest	308 childern, the same childern were the mightiest of the world and men of renowne.	x	
lustiest	370 or certaine misorders: And one of the lustiest saide: Syr, we be yong ientlemen,	x	
goodliest	379 eyns in Walbroke, and ther he mad the goodliest sermon that ever was hard of the	x	
wiliest	429 xceled. One the meriest, an other the wiliest, the thirde the holiest harlot in	x	
readiest	526 vse # of speaking, were the best and readiest waie, to learne the latin tong.	x	
readiest	527 dangerous experience, is the next and readiest waie, that must leede your Childr	x	
merriest	531 e praise of those properties. But the meriest was this Shoris wife, in who	x	
iolyest	542 d easie tumbling. (^R. Royster.^) The iolyest wenche that ere I hearde, little m	x	
godly	52 d us (^Englishmen^) which hadde a most godly and vertuous Prince to raigne		x
goodly	53 e of twentie hundred thousande, Your most goodly personage is worthie of no l		x
harte	59 hast. Right worshipful Sir, in my most harte wyse I recommend me unto you, d		x
myghtie	101 ey fell apon their faces and sayed: O most myghtie God of the spirites of all fl		x
worthy	150 or |P69 contrarye wyse, that they be most worthy reuerence aboue all thinges.		x
worthy	151 ynge, that is moste myghtye, that is most worthy honor (as it is afore grau~ted		x
hartie	15 MORE.\}] Maystres Alyce, in my moste hartie wyse I recommend me to yo[{u{]		x
hartye	16 nto bondys for me. I # gave them moste hartye thankes for their jentil offe		x
hartye	17 !P126 Jhesus Dere hart, after my moste hartye commendatyons, thys shalbe #		x
myghtye	22 that hath nede of nothynge, that is moste myghtye, that is most worthy honor		x
priuye	30 kes secretelye with a fewe of their moste priuye frendes, sette # them dow		x
harty	6 d diligens he geveth your Grace his moost harty, and not more harty than highl		x
hertie	7]}] My very good Lord, after my moost hertie commendations it shall please		x
E2			
happiest	110 lack of payne, for their faultes, the happiest. But now looke what the euerlasti	x	
deadliest	171 hee forbiddeth Vsurie, as one of her deadliest enemies: for a man can not loue	x	

		i	p
goodliest	247 well, but the Gentlemens mansions and goodliest houses are obscurely founded in	x	
happiest	329 wood Iunior, and Moll.^) (^T.I.^) The hapiest meeting that our soules could wish	x	
worthiest	337 that needes not, is most of powre, & worthyest most honour, yet wanting estimat	x	
hartiest	471 for your greate gift, Remembringe his hartiest sseruice to your Ladiship s	x	
happiest	472 es, not so much as the Scauenger, the happiest state that euer Man was borne to.	x	
goodliest	474 y, wherein I obserued the fairest and goodliest streete that euer mine eyes behe	x	
weariest	496 long, I found that dayes iourney the weariest that euer I footed, and at night	x	
cleanliest	613 Marry, this is the next: what is the cleanliest trade in the world? Marry, say	x	
happie	81 d thirtieth yere of your Majesties most happie Raigne, aswell at the humble S		x
holy	87 e= letter to the Pope it was writte~, most holy father, &c. if y=e= prouide~		x
E3			
prettiest	89 xes, and all Churchtime are the prettiest Company in the World, stap my Vi	x	
easiest	219 nd. Satyr and invective are the easiest kind of wit. Almost any degree of	x	
happiest	319 you are, (and # deserve to be,) the happiest Pair that live in it. (^Lov.^) I'	x	
prettiest	345 as you walk, Madam, you have the prettiest Prospect in the World; you have	x	
likeliest	438 y should be taught by him, for it was likeliest to be the yoke of Christ, both w	x	
likeliest	440 r what way and meanes was the likeliest to obteine it. 27. 4. Then I	x	
happy	88 ppiness. (^Ph.^) O my Pupil, thou art most happy in this Opinion, provided thou		x
worthy	231 of Fortune; who is most powerful, and most worthy of Renown, if he, I say, want		x

Table 6.24.: List of all disyllabic vowel-final superlatives compared by inflection or periphrasis within all three sub-periods of Early Modern English.

As can be seen in table 6.24 nine types, of the mentioned 24 tokens, were of the inflectional type and six types of the periphrastic one during the first sub-period. During E2 nine types of the 12 tokens are listed. Of them seven types of vowel-final adjectives are compared inflectionally and the remaining two are periphrastically compared. During E3 table 6.24 lists six types, of which four are of the inflectional and two of the periphrastic form.

6.6.2.3.3.   Consonant-final adjectives

For this analysis the Helsinki Corpus offered 144 tokens altogether of consonant-final adjectives. 60 examples were found in the first sub-period, 37 during E2 and 47 occurred in the third sub-period.

Division of all consonant-final adjectives into the inflectional and periphrastic method of comparison			
Example	Cite	i	p
E1			
humbliest	111 lton, this Setterday before day, Your humbliest doughter, Kateryn Scrope. <B CEO	x	
forwardest	574 uer was there of learning, one of the forwardest yong plantes, in all that worth	x	
assured	3 shuld be examined; and I am sure, and most assured, he hathe bin willed to say w		x
blessed	6 eeuouslie sinne was punyshed in that most blessed bodye of our Sauyour Christ		x
blyssyd	7 ell, and the conception of Crist, The most blyssyd virgine goyyng in to the Mown		x
blyssyd	8 r leve of the holy places, And of the most blyssyd Citee of Jherusalen. And thus		x
bounden	10 WARRE, A.D. 1539.\] }] |PI,124 Our most bounden dueties right humbly remembre		x
bounden	11 rouse and noble regne. Your Maiesties most bounden feithfull and humble subjects		x
bounden	12 WARRE, A.D. 1539.\] }] |PI,124 Our most bounden dueties right humbly remembre		x

bounden	13 endevoyre our selfs according to our most bounden dueties as shalbe, we hoope,		x
devowte	28 wher our blyssyd lady vsyd to sey hyr most Devowte Prayers and Dayly Devowte De		x
fruteful	48 nd by readinge againe and againe your most fruteful and delectable letter, the f		x
gentyl	49 e what that they couete or desyre, in most gentyl maner to teache them to aske i		x
gracious	54 he foresaide thirde yere of the King~ most gracious reigne, or any other Acte or		x
gracious	55 e us as we trust your Highnes of your most gracious disposition woll. Assuredly		x
grieuous	57 the foresaid Confession, as matters most grieuous against the Prisoner. Then (		x
humble	68 ter y=e= 5=th=. day of Febr. by your most humble Chapleyn, T. Card=lis=. Ebor.		x
humble	69 . Ryght worshipfull father, in the most humble manner that I # can I recomm		x
humble	70 the xij=th=. day of Februarie By your most humble subjecte and servaunt Cuthbert		x
humble	71 e Grace to be advertised that We your most humble subjects and obedient servaunt		x
humble	72 ensor of the Faith. S=r=. After my most humble & lowly recommendations, it ma		x
louing	89 ur dayly prayer and blessing. Your most louing obedient daughter and bedeswom		x
louing	90 with his precious blood. Your owne most louing obedient doughter and bedeswom		x
louinge	91 f minde and of body, and gyue me your most louinge obedient dowghter and handm		x
louinge	92 receyued |P539 in the reading of your most louinge and godly letter,		x
mortal	100 trusted to be wel ridde of his most mortal enemies. 27. The Scottis, h		x
noble	103 r most excellent Maieste. Please your most noble Grace to be advertised that We		x
noble	104 our graciouse pleasur. Beseching your most noble and benigne Grace that, seen up		x
noble	105 TO BE ENDOWED.\] }] To the King's Most noble Grace, Defensor of the Faith.		x
noble	106 of him. And thus Jesus preserve your most noble & royall estate. At my Howse be		x
noble	107 mber the xxix=th= yer of his Ma=ties= most noble Regne Yo=r= louyng ffreend Tho		x
noble	108 r most excellent Maieste. Please your most noble Grace to be advertised that We		x
noble	109 withdrawe his devotion from his owne most noble, vertuous, and lawfull wif, Que		x
nobull	110 o{] the quen's pales to soper, by the most nobull men ther was a-bowt the cowrt,		x
precious	120 when our sauiour so dearely with his most precious bloud, & with all these gree		x
secret	126 hores wife, which was one also of his most secret counsel of this heynous		x
shamfull	127 me calling themselves Gipcyans, for a most shamfull and detestable murder commy		x
simple	128 figures that remayne vndeclared, the most simple of them ar such ones as be mad		x
speciall	131 myghty god wold geff vnto them of hys most Speciall grace. And thys Sermon Do		x
vnkinde	146 vp the wight of his whole body? O most vnkinde sinner, all this he suffred f		x
wicked	152 e wycked folke then must he nedes be most wycked that longest is wycked. Whych		x
gracious	11 r or his # byll assigned wyth his moste gracious hande may graunte and gyve		x
gracious	12 in the thirde yere # of the King~ moste gracious reigne, amongest other thin		x
greeued	13 uing the falling sicknesse, that be moste greeued in the beginning of the newe		x
ioyfull	20 t this truely appere to be a thynge moste ioyfull. BOE: I saye I cannot c		x
louing	21 ted so great vnkindnes against this moste louing charitie, that was shewed vnt		x
noble	23 llion, where some tyme was set the moste noble citie of Troy, beinge demaunde		x
precious	28 ill there were throwen in to it the moste precious thinge in the citie; which		x
precious	29 4 life of man was aboue all thinges moste precious; to thentent the residue of		x
vnkynde	37 w that he wylbe much ashamed of his moste vnkynde and vngentle dealing against		x
wofull	40 is xii. Moneths such a Mind, that I moste wofull Wight, was unlike to stande h		x
abiecte	2 .\ ) Appoynte them Judges that are moost abiecte, and vyle in the congregatio		x
bounden	4 f Septembre. Your humble Orator and moost bounden beedman Thomas More. !PI, 20		x
bounden	5 at mydnyght. Your humble orator and moost bounden beedman Thomas More. To my L		x
prudent	14 erof his Grace well perceiveth your moost prudent answere devised and made as		x
prudent	15 the more conveniently send hym your moost prudent advise, he hath commaunded m		x
prudent	16 te of the Kings Grace, as also your moost prudent ordre taken therin, by which		x
stable	19 grete foundament of the chirche and moost stable stone. O man of lytle faythe		x
inclined	7 pupil, that is to say, wherto he is mooste inclined or disposed, and in what t		x
noble	9 nge the tyme that he harped. The mooste noble and valiant princis of Grece		x
E2			
perfetest	159 he was the first & aboue all: for the perfetest doo show them sellves first afor	x	
humblest	161 ice to # your Ladiship so with my humblest dutie, to yovr sellfe, and my ff	x	
ablest	320 endowme~t be such, as may co~tent the ablest man, to appropriate his whole labou	x	
learneddest	417 hich lie so hid and secrete, that the learneddest Physitians can not espie them,	x	
able	1 of Scyences, that Readers be of the most able and sufficient men; as those wh		x
assuered	12 end them to me. [\Address:\] To his most assuered loving wife m=is= Knyvett at		x
assuered	13 brace of virgins. [\Address:\] To his most assuered loving wife m=is= Knyvett at		x
bounden	18 hty god for y=r= happines I rest Your most bounden and obedient son Nicholas Fer		x
bounden	19 dge, 28=o= Januarij 1594 Your Honor's most bounden ever to be commaunded Tho		x
certaine	21 for in deede I pitty your case, it is most certaine you are bewitched. (^Sam.^)		x
constant	28 to especiall grace, so was shee most constant to those whom shee received;		x
enuyed	55 ely from Vsurie, because Vsurers were most enuyed. And to shewe that he was not		x

Word	Citation		
faithful	64 a happy and speedy meeting with Your most faithful affectionat wife, Brilliana		x
faithfull	65 e you happy meeting with Your most faithfull affectionat wife, Brilliana		x
faithfull	66 joyefull and happy meeting with your Most faithfull affectinat wife, Bril. Harl		x
faithfull	67 nd a speady # and happy meeting. Your most faithfull affectinat wife, Brilliana		x
faithfull	68 ou a happy meeting # with Your most faithfull affectinat wife, Brilliana		x
faythfull	73 ng for thine and mine I rest Thy most faythfull loving husband Tho: Knyvett		x
fearefull	74 reat Papist was slaine ther. It was a most fearefull Judgment of god.		x
frequent	75 incipall of this Towne, hauing the most frequent & best aduertisementes from		x
gracious	77 scholars, made sithens her Majestie's most gracious raigne, be duely observed an		x
gratious	79 X> |PIII,154 [} [\LETTER CCXCII.\] }] Most gratious patron. I am commaunded b		x
honoured	93 aston att paston Hall. May itt Speede Most honored and Deare mother, The Lorde B		x
humble	96 that I will live and dye Your Graces Most humble servant Edw. Conwey. Theobalds		x
louinge	108 oner than he:/ in all which of thy most louinge letters I haue thy faythefull		x
louinge	109 sweet harte to thy owne selfe:/ thy most louinge Mother Katherine Pason My Nee		x
loving	110 e out of fashion. [\Address:\] To his most loving and deer wife m=is= Knyvett at		x
noble	121 the Earle of (^Argile^)) did giue vs most noble welcome three dayes. From th		x
perfect	152 y spots of life, even in the best and most perfect amongst vs, (for who can say,		x
pleasing	161 renced: Is it not playne, that so is most pleasing to? I can not imagine, how		x
pliant	162 is first age is that wherein they are most pliant, and may bee bended and fashio		x
potent	163 and Claret, Tent, (or Allegant) with most potent (^Aquavitae^) . All these,		x
proper	165 into one Cup. (^Dauy^) Into one Cup, most proper, A fitting complement for a Go		x
famous	5 igne of our late Sou~aigne Ladie of moste famous and happie # memorie Queene		x
gracious	6 more at # large maye appere: Nowe moste gracious Soveraigne, Forasmuche as b		x
humble	7 E ABUSES IN CLOTHES.}] In theire moste humble and dutyfull wise shewen and		x
E3			
remotest	38 ubstance, she extends her self in the remotest and most fruitless Beings. So tha	x	
slenderest	78 plied, will not move the flame of the slenderest Candle. Which some will think n	x	
noblest	115 et to damnation: but of all these the noblest End is the multiplying children, (	x	
tenderest	125 d saw me by him: He brake out in the tenderest Expressions concerning my kindn	x	
pleasantest	181 ut; but the first being related to be pleasantest I chose that way; sailing by (	x	
noblest	333 a Body so changed and deprived of its noblest parts: Yet this (\Caput mortuum\)	x	
properest	339 him to my House presently, that's the properest place ((^Aside.^)) to bubble h	x	
properest	367 valued himself on the doing it at the properest season, and in the best manner:	x	
humblest	371 Thus much at present in haste. My humblest service to my Aunt, and sister We	x	
joyfullest	413 nowledged. So that it was one of the joyfullest things that befel him in his	x	
severest	454 strength as to offer her self to the severest Trial and Examination.	x	
lovingest	478 ee: (^lone.^) Indeed Sir, I'de be the lovingest Wife that ever was made of flesh	x	
barren	18 h amongst the Stones; some choose the most barren Sands for the Place of their B		x
charming	26 represented her to his fancy, as the most charming he had ever possess'd in all		x
charming	27 , proceeded to tell him, they had the most charming black that ever was beheld o		x
common	30 es bear Fruit in each kind, or in the most common sort of Fruit-trees. 1. (^V		x
doubtful	45 the authority of Judges, even in the most doubtful and disputable matters. T		x
dreadfull	46 rfull preservation of you in the late most dreadfull storm, w=ch= no man liveing		x
exact	60 les to Mr. Thomas's house, where is a most exact garden, with all sorts of green		x
faithfull	69 g esteemed My Lord Your Excellencie's most faithfull and most humble servant Dan		x
faithfull	70 resentation, who am Your Excellency's most faithfull humble servant Danby. |QE3_		x
famous	71 He was able not onely to repeate the most famous things which are left us in an		x
fitting	75 e, and left to the Grammar-School, as most fitting to be taught there onely, bec		x
foolish	77 e Wise hat no Body: For who but the most foolish would hat good Men? and it		x
forward	81 t able to judge, to be frequently the most forward and confident, the most		x
fruitless	83 extends her self in the remotest and most fruitless Beings. So that if, as befo		x
graceful	85 ll unconcern. She is adorn'd with the most graceful modesty that ever beautify'd		x
harmless	90 e so, I put a suddain stop to a most harmless Entertainment, which till th		x
humble	94 ite in this behalfe. I am, S=r=, your most humble servant, Sunderland P. [} [\LE		x
humble	95 Your Excellencie's most faithfull and most humble servant Danby. |P45 [} [\XXXVI		x
humble	96 Sept. 1699.\] My Lord, I return my most humble thankes for y=e= honour of y=r		x
humble	97 Fop.^) ((^to Lov.^)) Sir, I am your most humble Servant. (^Lov.^) I wish you J		x
humble	98 are further from me. I am, S=r=, your most humble servant, Sunderland P. [} [\LE		x
humble	99 both Houses. I am my Lord Yr Excy=s= most humble servant Fran Aungier |QE3_X		x
humble	100 , S=r=. You M=ties= most dutyfull, most humble, and most obedient subject and		x
inward	111 r Marrow is, is always laid up in the most inward Cabinet, and covered by a stro		x
learned	113 he power he refuses them. Also a late most learned Writer reciting the Electrick		x
painful	161 ove, and suffer'd under a torment the most painful in the world, the old king wa		x
perfect	179 ppiness resides only in the great and most perfect God. This (returned I) I appr		x

perfect	180 enounce their Authority, I do yield a most perfect submission and obedience to		**x**
perfect	181 great God is full of the greatest and most perfect Goodness. But we have already		**x**
pregnant	187 ferment attending these Schooles, the most pregnant witted children are commonly		**x**
pretious	188 (^Bo^) This truly is a very fair and most pretious, call it Deduction or Coroll		**x**
proper	191 n to lay such Subsidiary books as are most proper for its use. The lowest story		**x**
reall	192 rd and my Cozin Dalison now to bee my most reall friends [\SIX LINES OMITTED\]		**x**
tender	209 Marrow? And also that the softest and most tender Matter, as the Pith or Marrow		**x**
tender	210 pliant to reason when at first it was most tender, most easy to be bowed.		**x**
wretched	232 unhappy if it were |P182 longer, and most wretched of all if it were perpetual.		**x**

Table 6.25.: List of all disyllabic consonant-final superlatives compared by inflection or periphrasis within all three sub-periods of Early Modern English.

In table 6.25 it can be seen that some adjectives like *humble, noble, faithful* or *loving*, are again better represented than others throughout the entire Early Modern English period. Consequently, the number of types and tokens differs a lot which can be seen as follows: of the 60 tokens mentioned above of E1 29 types can be taken into consideration. Of them two were of the inflectional and 27 of the periphrastic type. During the second sub-period 24 types (of the 37 tokens) are relevant and divided into four types belonging to the inflectional method and 20 to the periphrastic one. The last sub-period lists 34 types of the mentioned 47 tokens whereof 10 are inflectionally compared and 24 periphrastically.

6.6.2.3.4.   Comparison of the vowel-final and consonant-final adjectives

For the following comparison of all vowel-final and consonant-final adjectives and consequently their method of comparison 177 adjective types will be taken into consideration. Diagram 6.26 shows the division according to word-ending and the respective method of comparison.

Word-endings of disyllabic superlatives
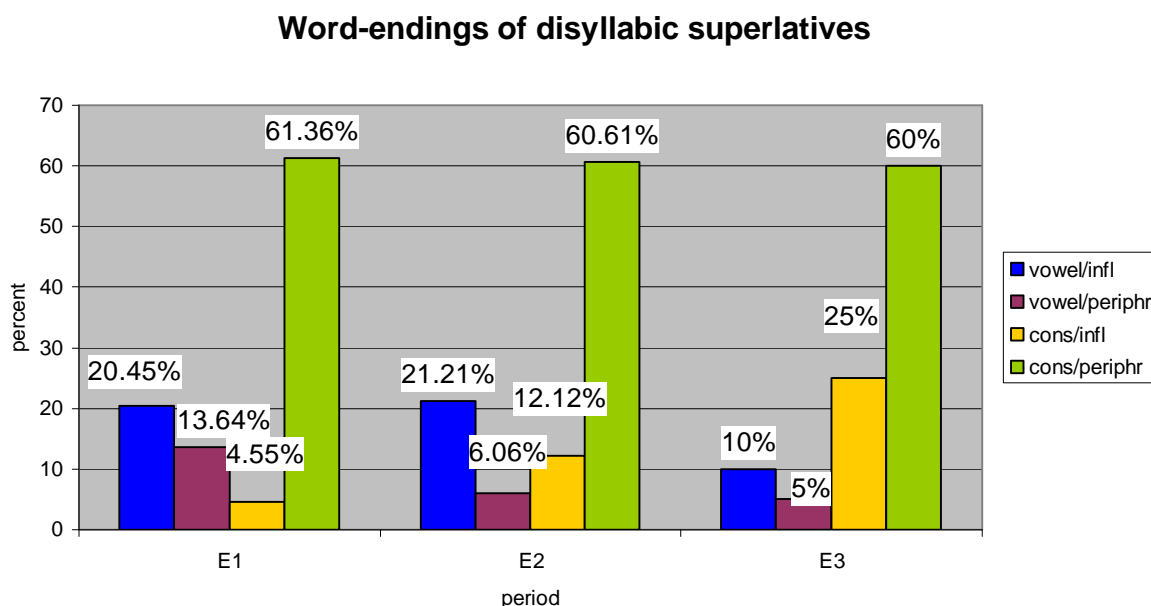
Diagram 6.25.: Comparison of all vowel-final and consonant-final adjectives and the division into inflectional and periphrastic comparison within all three sub-periods of Early Modern English.

Also in the case of the superlative it is the periphrastic method of comparison for consonant-final adjectives which is prevalent. In all three sub-periods of Early Modern English this form of comparison makes up about 60%. Additionally, it is important to mention that the number of inflectionally compared adjectives for consonant-final forms rose from 4.55% in the first sub-period, to 12.12% during the second sub-period and finally to 25% during the last sub-period. In the case of vowel-final adjectives it is interesting to see that in the first two sub-periods this category made up about 20%. The periphrastic form was only used 13.64% during the first and about six% during the second sub-period for adjectives ending in vowel. During the last sub-period the number of inflectionally compared adjectives ending in a vowel dropped to 10% and only five% of those examples were periphrastically compared.

6.6.2.4. Discussion

After looking at all examples of disyllabic adjectives in detail which occurred in the Early Modern English part of the Helsinki Corpus it is first of all important to mention that the majority of disyllabic adjectives were of the consonant-final type which apparently entails the periphrastic form of comparison, for both the comparative and the superlative. In the case of the comparative I came across consonant-final adjectives ending in *–ous*, like *grievous*, or *gracious*. Additionally, there were

adjectives ending in –*ed*, like *wicked* or *wretched*, or those adjectives ending in –*full*, for example, *faithful* or *gainful*. In the case of the superlative examples of consonant-final adjectives compared with *most* are, for example, *blessed*, *gracious*, *humble joyful* or *thankful*.

Additionally, the investigations brought to light that in the case of the superlative the approach of the inflectional method of comparison for consonant-final adjectives from 4.55% to 25% already mirrors the development towards the present situation where many consonant-final disyllabic adjectives can be compared by either method[48]. Most of these examples of the first two sub-periods were consonant-final adjectives ending in –*le*, like *humble* or *able*. During the last sub-period of Early Modern English the consonant-final adjectives which were compared by inflection had a variety of consonantal endings, like adjectives ending in /ə^r/, like *slender*, *tender*, or *proper* or those ending in */le/,* as for example, *noble* or *humble.* Even one adjective ending in –*ful*, namely *joyful*, was found which was compared by inflection.

In the case of the comparative of vowel-final adjectives it is problematic to look for some evidence for a possible tendency as only 14 types were found – not a particularly robust number upon which to base any conclusion.

As far as the superlative is concerned at least 30 vowel-final adjective types were found which allows some speculations as to whether the adjective endings have influenced the authors by choosing one of the two forms of comparing adjectives. What can be spotted is that authors apparently favoured the inflectional method of comparing adjectives for these vowel-final adjectives which would again show the development towards Present Day English. In both methods of comparison examples like *merry*, *ready*, *happy* or *worthy* could be found. However, the inflectional form of comparison outnumbered the periphrastic form throughout the Early Modern English period.

Finally, I want to look at, the already mentioned, common word endings of disyllabic adjectives, namely –*le/-er, -ed, -ous/-ful* and *y/ly,* in more detail in order to find out if authors preferred either the inflectional or the periphrastic way of comparing adjectives according to the nature of word ending. This will only be done for the superlative as the number of the inflectional comparatives is too small.

The first group of word endings deals with disyllabic adjectives ending in –*le/-er*. All in all the texts of the Helsinki Corpus contained 19 adjective types of this

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[48] Compare chapter *4.3.2.2. Disyllabic adjectives.*

category. Eight of them were compared inflectionally, and eleven with the help of *most*. Thus, about 42% are of the inflectional type and nearly 58% are periphrastic. Compared with Present Day rules[49] adjectives with these word endings are more likely to take inflection (according to Quirk et al. 2000: 462), however there are also several adjectives mentioned (Cobuild 1995: 441) belonging to this group which can also be compared by the periphrastic way of adjectival comparison. Consequently, the endings *–le/-er* do not seem to be restricted to one of the two forms of comparing adjectives which was apparently also the case in the Early Modern English period.

The next group deals with adjectives ending in *–ed* of which I found eleven examples altogether. One example (or 9%) of the inflectional type and ten (about 91%) of the periphrastic one. In this case phonological reasons are probably responsible for the preference of the periphrastic comparison as it is more difficult to pronounce the added inflection *–est* after the word ending *–ed,* instead of putting a *most* in front of the adjective[50].

The third group examines the word endings *–ous/ful* in more detail. In the Early Modern English part of the Helsinki Corpus these forms occurred 19 times altogether. The majority, namely 18 examples (or 94.74%) were compared by the periphrastic way and only one example ending in *–ful*, namely *joyfull*, formed the comparison with the help of inflection (5.26%). This use already mirrors the Present Day situation as all adjectives ending in *–ous* or *–ful* favour the comparison with periphrasis according to Cobuild (1995: 441)[51]. A possible explanation for this use of comparing adjectives ending in *–ous* was given by Kytö & Romaine as follows

> [f]or adjectives ending in *–ous*, and other adjectives ending in sibilants, one might be tempted to suppose that the prime determinant of the preference for the periphrastic type […] is phonological; namely, speakers will avoid the repetition of two sibilants, e.g. **foolishest, *famousest.* (Kytö & Romaine 1997: 342)

The last analysis of word endings deals with the adjectives ending in *–y/-ly*. All in all 28 examples were found in the Helsinki Corpus of which 67.86% were compared inflectionally (19) and 32.14% were of the periphrastic type. However, it has to be mentioned that the greatest number of periphrastically compared adjectives ending in

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[49] See chapter 4.3.2. *The choice between inflectional and periphrastic comparison*; especially 4.3.2.2. *Disyllabic adjectives.*
[50] Also compare chapter 4.3.2. *The choice between inflectional and periphrastic comparison.*
[51] See chapter 4.3.2. The choice between inflectional and periphrastic comparison; especially 4.3.2.2. *Disyllabic adjectives.*

–y/-ly occurred in the first sub-period (5 types), which diminished to two types in the second sub-period and finally to one during the last sub-period. Thus, the use of comparison of these adjectives apparently developed towards the present system within the Early Modern English period.

In summary, according to the data of the Helsinki Corpus, authors of the Early Modern English period gave preference to the periphrastic method of comparing disyllabic adjectives, especially those ending in a consonant.

In the case of the inflectional comparison it can be said that the vowel-final/consonant-final analysis did not show any clear trend, however, what could be spotted was that the majority of those consonant-final adjectives compared by inflection were those ending in "syllabic */l/* (e.g. *simple)/,* or schwa (with or without /r/) (e.g. clever)" (Quirk et al. 1985: 462, quoted in Kytö & Romaine 1997: 342) which are "disyllabic adjectives most readily able to take inflected forms" according to Quirk et al. (Quirk et al. 1985: 462, quoted in Kytö & Romaine 1997: 342)[52]. Hence, the nature of word endings of disyllabic adjectives was a decisive criterion for the choice of either the inflectional or the periphrastic comparison, however, the decision for one or the other form has always been subject to more variation in comparison to mono- or polysyllabic adjectives. Not without reason, it is the group of disyllabic adjectives nowadays which contains quite a large number of adjectives that can be compared by both methods.

6.6.3. Word stress

6.6.3.1.   *Introduction*

The following analysis deals with the influence of word stress on the choice of either the inflectional or periphrastic method of comparing disyllabic adjectives during the Early Modern English period.

What will be discussed is whether it made a difference for the authors of the Early Modern English period in choosing one or the other form of comparison, if the disyllabic adjective had its most prominent stress on the first or on the second syllable.

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[52] Also compare chapter *4.3.2. The choice between inflectional and periphrastic comparison*, especially *4.3.2.2. Disyllabic adjectives.*

For this reason all found disyllabic adjectives of the Early Modern English part of the Helsinki Corpus will be divided into those where the main stress is located on the first syllable and those where it is on the second syllable. Every disyllabic adjective will be looked at in isolation, as the context is not important for this analysis[53]. As already mentioned before[54] a type/token analysis was necessary and therefore the following analyses only deal with all relevant types, disregarding the number of disyllabic tokens.

6.6.3.2. Division of disyllabic adjectives compared by –er according to the position of the main stress.

Division of inflectionally formed comparatives of disyllabic adjectives according to word stress		
Example	1st syllable	2nd syllable
E1		
singler	x	
narrower	x	
subtiller	x	
abler	x	
readier	x	
E2		
shallower	x	
wretcheder	x	
happier	x	
E3		
easy	x	
remote		x
able	x	
noble	x	
gentle	x	

*Table 6.26.: List of all disyllabic adjective types compared with –*er *and the division into adjectives having the main stress on the first and those having the main stress on the second syllable.*

In the case of disyllabic adjectives compared with *–er* it can be seen in table 6.26. that in the first two sub-periods all eight examples (five in E1 and three in E2) have their main stress on the first syllable. In the last sub-period there is one example of the listed five types which has its main stress located on the second syllable. In terms of the percentage it can be said that about 92% of these adjectives of the Early Modern English period had the main stress on the first syllable.

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[53] For a detailed context-analysis look at chapter *6.6.4. Contextual influence on the choice of the inflectional or periphrastic comparison.*
[54] See *6.6.1. Introduction.*

6.6.3.3. *Division of disyllabic adjectives compared by* more *according to the position of the main stress.*

Division of periphrastically formed comparatives of disyllabic adjectives according to word stress		
Example	1st syllable	2nd syllable
E1		
ample	x	
blessed	x	
displeased		x
facile	x	
goodly	x	
grievous	x	
happy	x	
hearty	x	
inward	x	
noble	x	
piercing	x	
ready	x	
subtil	x	
unkind		x
worthy	x	
wretched	x	
wicked	x	
abject	x	
perfect	x	
E2		
advanced		x
alike		x
constant	x	
correct		x
eastward	x	
faithful	x	
foolish	x	
fruitful	x	
gainful	x	
grievous	x	
lawful	x	
merry	x	
obscure		x
painful	x	
pleasant	x	
pregnant	x	
perfect	x	
secret	x	
severe		x
stable	x	
subtle	x	
thankful	x	
troubled	x	
westward	x	
wicked	x	
wretched	x	

E3		
afraid		x
cheerful	x	
cruel	x	
doubtful	x	
easy	x	
faithful	x	
fearful	x	
forward	x	
gracious	x	
happy	x	
harmless	x	
honest	x	
intent		x
irksome	x	
open	x	
pregnant	x	
preserved		x
proper	x	
real	x	
remote	x	
renowned		x
shattered	x	
smoothed	x	
solid	x	
speedy	x	
troubled	x	

Table 6.27.: List of all disyllabic adjective types compared with more *and the division into adjectives having the main stress on the first and those having the main stress on the second syllable.*

In table 6.27. all in all 71 adjective types are listed. 19 disyllabic adjectives occurred in the first sub-period of which 17 had the main stress on the first and two on the second syllable. During the second sub-period 26 types were found whereof five adjectives had their most prominent stress on the second syllable and 21 on the first. In the last sub-period again 26 adjective types were found, but in this case only four examples had the main stress located on the second syllable and consequently 22 on the first.

Expressed in percentage, 10.53% of all found disyllabic adjectives compared with the help of *more* are stressed on the second syllable in the first sub-period, which rises to 19.23% during the second sub-period and slightly drops to 16% during the last sub-period.

6.6.3.4. Division of disyllabic adjectives compared by –est *according to the position of the main stress.*

Division of inflectionally formed superlatives of disyllabic adjectives according to word stress		
Example	**1st syllable**	**2nd syllable**
E1		
merry	x	
humble	x	
holy	x	
mighty	x	
lusty	x	
goodly	x	
wily	x	
ready	x	
jolly	x	
forward	x	
E2		
happy	x	
perfect	x	
humble	x	
deadly	x	
goodly	x	
able	x	
worthy	x	
learned	x	
hearty	x	
weary	x	
cleanly	x	
E3		
remote		x
slender	x	
pretty	x	
noble	x	
tender	x	
pleasant	x	
easy	x	
happy	x	
proper	x	
humble	x	
joyful	x	
likely	x	
severe		x
loving	x	

Table 6.28.: List of all disyllabic adjective types compared with -est *and the division into adjectives having the main stress on the first and those having the main stress on the second syllable.*

The third analysis of the influence of word stress deals with disyllabic adjectives compared with *–est*. In this case 35 types were found during the entire Early Modern English period. During E1 ten types occurred and all of them have their main stress

on the first syllable. Eleven adjective types were found in the second sub-period and again the main stress is located on the first syllable. During E3 14 disyllabic adjective types were found and in this case two adjectives (14.29%) have their main stress on the second syllable; the remaining 12 (85.71) are again stressed on the first syllable.

6.6.3.5. Division of disyllabic adjectives compared by most according to the position of the main stress.

Division of periphrastically formed superlatives of disyllabic adjectives according to word stress		
Example	1st syllable	2nd syllable
E1		
assured		x
blessed	x	
bounden	x	
devote		x
fruitful	x	
gentyl		x
godly	x	
goodly	x	
gracious	x	
grievous	x	
hearty	x	
humble	x	
loving	x	
mortal	x	
mighty	x	
noble	x	
precious	x	
secret	x	
shameful	x	
simple	x	
special	x	
unkind		x
worthy	x	
wicked	x	
joyful	x	
privy	x	
woeful	x	
abject	x	
prudent	x	
stable	x	
inclined		x
E2		
able	x	
assured		x
bounden	x	
certain	x	
constant	x	
envied	x	
faithful	x	

fearful	x	
frequent	x	
gracious	x	
happy	x	
holy	x	
honoured	x	
humble	x	
loving	x	
noble	x	
perfect	x	
pleasing	x	
pliant	x	
potent	x	
proper	x	
famous	x	
E3		
barren	x	
charming	x	
common	x	
doubtful	x	
dreadful	x	
exact		x
faithful	x	
famous	x	
fitting	x	
foolish	x	
forward	x	
fruitless	x	
graceful	x	
happy	x	
harmless	x	
humble	x	
inward	x	
learned	x	
painful	x	
perfect	x	
pregnant	x	
precious	x	
proper	x	
real	x	
tender	x	
worthy	x	
wretched	x	

Table 6.29.: List of all disyllabic adjective types compared with most *and the division into adjectives having the main stress on the first and those having the main stress on the second syllable.*

The last analysis is concerned with the superlative of disyllabic adjectives formed with the help of *most*. The total number of all found examples of the Early Modern English period is 80. Of them 31 occurred in the first sub-period with 26 having their main stress on the first syllable and five showing the most prominent stress on the second syllable. Of the 22 listed examples of the second sub-period only one disyllabic adjective has its main stress on the second syllable. All others are again stressed on the first syllable. During the last sub-period of Early Modern English 27

compared adjectives occurred, whereof again only one example has the main stress on the second syllable.

In terms of the percentage the division is as follows: during E1 83.87% have the main stress on the first and 16.13% on the second syllable. During E2 it is 95.65% and 4.35% and finally during the last sub-period there are 96.43% stressed on the first syllable and 3.57% on the second syllable.

6.6.3.6. Discussion

In order to show the division of compared disyllabic adjectives according to the present parameter more clearly, a comparison of both methods, the inflectional and the periphrastic one, had to be done for those adjectives having the main stress on the first and those having the main stress on the second syllable, within all three sub-periods of Early Modern English. This will first of all be done for the comparative and then for the superlative.

6.6.3.6.1. Comparative

For the following analysis 24 compared disyllabic adjectives were taken into consideration in the first sub-period of the Early Modern English period. 29 examples were looked at during E2 and finally 31 examples were investigated during the last sub-period. Their division according to word stress can be seen in the following diagram 6.30.
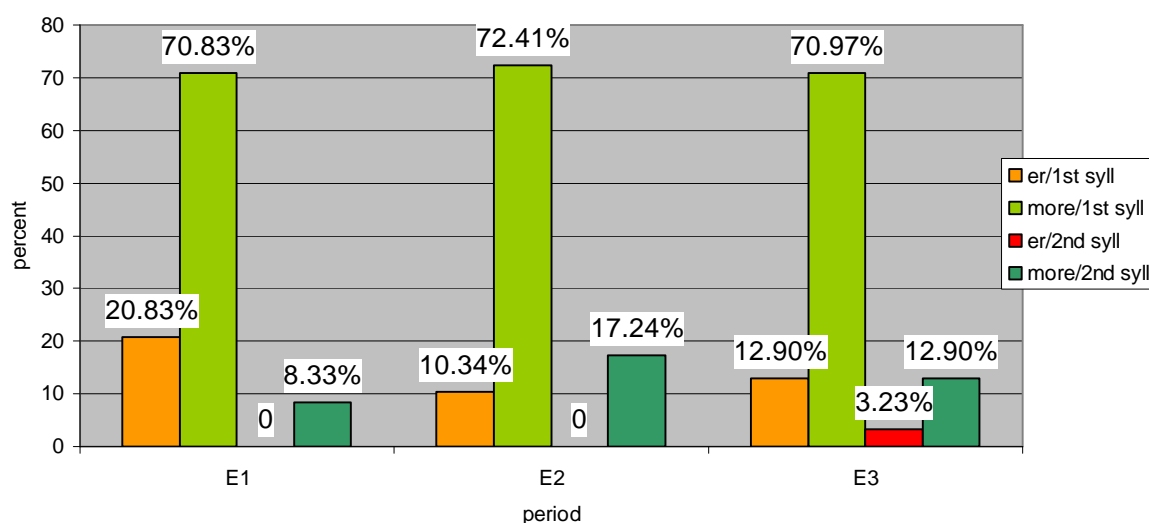
Division of all comparatives according to word stress

*Diagram 6.30.: Division of all disyllabic adjectives compared either by –*er *or* more *according to word stress.*

Diagram 6.30. clearly shows the division of all disyllabic comparatives into the inflectional and periphrastic method according to the main stress.

What can again be recognised at once is that the majority of all disyllabic comparatives were compared periphrastically. Additionally, it can be seen that during the first sub-period 20.83% of all found disyllabic comparatives, having their main stress on the first syllable, were compared by inflection. The majority, namely 70.83%, of all disyllabic adjectives, most prominently stressed on the first syllable, were those compared with the help of *more*. No example was found of inflectionally compared adjectives having the main stress on the second syllable, however, 8.33% of those adjectives were compared periphrastically.

During the second sub-period, the diagram shows in terms of the percentage, that 10.34% were inflectionally compared disyllabic adjectives mainly stressed on the first syllable; 72.41% were again periphrastically compared adjectives of this category; Again no example of an adjective stressed on the second syllable formed with *–er* was found, as all forms of disyllabic adjectives having the stress on the second syllable, namely 17.24%, were formed periphrastically.

During the last sub-period inflectionally compared adjectives with the main stress on the first syllable made up 12.9% of all disyllabic adjectives. 70.97% of these adjectives were compared periphrastically. Of those disyllabic adjectives having the

main stress on the second syllable 3.23% of all disyllabic adjectives made up the inflectionally compared ones and 12.9% the periphrastically ones.

Consequently, in the case of the comparative it can be said that the majority of disyllabic adjectives were compared periphrastically. Therefore, also according to word stress it is the periphrastic method of comparison that was used more often as well as for adjectives having the main stress on the first and second syllable. Some adjectives mainly stressed on the first syllable were compared by inflection, however, no single example of an inflectionally compared adjective having the main stress on the second syllable could be found within the first two sub-periods. It was only during the last sub-period where one example (3.23% of all examples) was found which was inflectionally compared.

However, as already mentioned in the analysis of the preceding chapters, the number of inflectionally compared disyllabic comparatives was very small (all in all 13 types) which might have possibly lead to a distorted representation of the true situation of this time.

6.6.3.6.2.   Superlative

In the case of the superlative I looked at 41 compared disyllabic adjectives during E1, 33 adjectives were found during the second sub-period and again 41 superlatives occurred during the last sub-period. The following diagram 6.31. illustrates the division of disyllabic adjectives according to word stress more clearly:
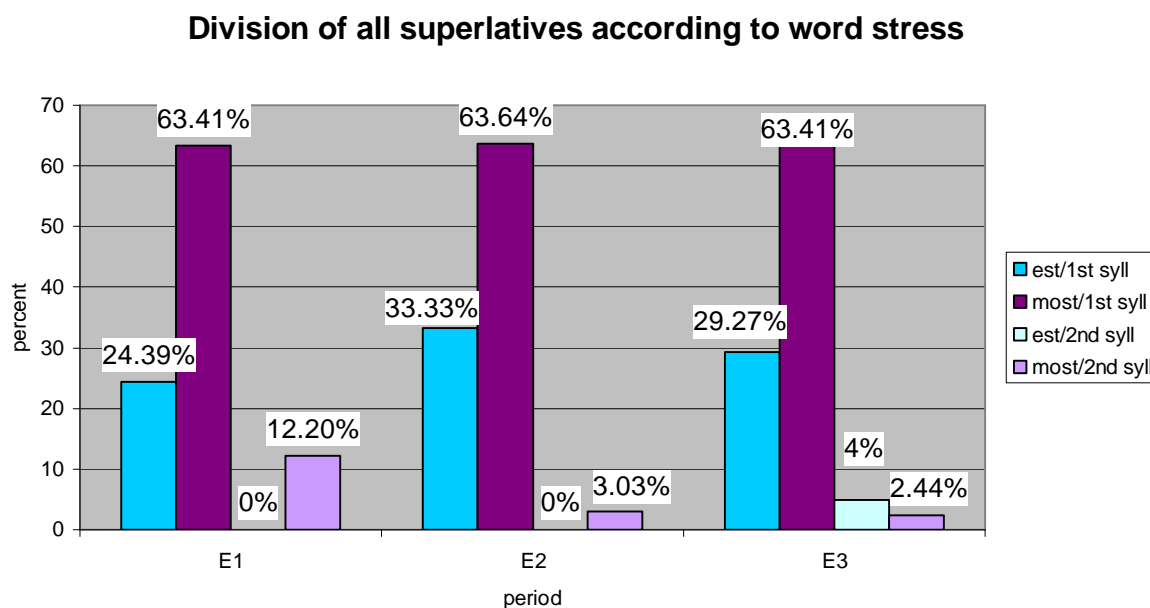
Division of all superlatives according to word stress

Diagram 6.31: Division of all disyllabic adjectives compared either by -est *or* most *according to word stress.*

As can be seen in diagram 6.31. the division of all found examples of the first sub-period is as follows: 24.39% were adjectives mainly stressed on the first syllable and compared with the help of *–est*. 63.41%, the majority, consist of the same category of adjectives, however, this time compared by periphrasis. No example of an adjective, having the main stress on the second syllable and being compared inflectionally, was found. The periphrastic method of comparing disyllabic adjectives with the main stress on the second syllable made up 12.20%.

During the second sub-period there were 33.33% which made up the category of inflectionally compared adjectives having their most prominent stress on the first syllable. Of the same category, but compared with the help of *most*, 63.64% are shown in the diagram. 3.03% of all found disyllabic adjectives of this sub-period had their main stress on the second syllable and all of them were compared periphrastically.

The last sub-period presents a slightly different picture: in the case of those adjectives mainly stressed on the first syllable, 29.27% were compared by inflection and 63.41% by periphrasis. However, it is the category of those adjectives having the stress on the second syllable that deviate from the preceding tendency, as 4% were of the inflectional type and only 2.44% of the periphrastic one. Thus, the inflectional comparison of these disyllabic adjectives outnumbered the periphrastic one for the first and only time.

Finally it can be said that it was again the periphrastic method which was most prominent for comparing adjectives with the main stress on the first syllable, as this category made up about 63% in each sub-period. The smallest number of occurrences was again found in the category of disyllabic adjectives having the main stress on the second syllable and being compared by inflection.

6.6.4. Contextual influence on the choice of the inflectional or periphrastic comparison

6.6.4.1. Introduction

The last analysis of disyllabic adjectives looks at the context of compared adjectives, in order to look for certain stress patterns which might have influenced the authors in choosing either the inflectional or the periphrastic way of comparison.

As the English language prefers a steady change of stressed and unstressed syllables on the rhythmical level, it can be predicted that the synthetic method of comparing adjectives prefers a stressed syllable following the compared adjective, because of the extra unstressed syllable of the inflectional endings *–er* or *–est* and the analytical method favours an unstressed syllable which follows the stressed adjective. And it is exactly this prediction which will serve as the basis for the following study.

6.6.4.2. Presentation of the stress pattern of 50 disyllabic adjectives compared with *–*est *or* most *and its right context*

Also for this study I concentrated on the superlative, because of the very small number of inflectionally formed comparatives. Additionally, all examples where the compared adjective appeared at the end of a sentence are not included as the investigation relies on the compared adjective and its correct context, which would not be possible in those examples.

Out of the remaining occurrences of disyllabic adjectives of both the inflectional and the periphrastic way of comparison I chose 50 random examples to illustrate the stress pattern; 25 examples are disyllabic adjectives compared with the

inflection –*est* and the remaining 25 are those adjectives compared with the help of *most*.

Although, the tables 6.32 and 6.33 present the examples according to the particular sub-period, the sub-division of the Early Modern English period given in the Helsinki Corpus will not be taken into consideration as it is irrelevant at this point.

In the tables (6.32 and 6.33) the example is first of all presented then the cite where the disyllabic adjective occurred and finally the stress pattern of the compared adjective and the following word. All stressed syllables will be marked as | and all unstressed syllables as -. Table 6.32 deals with the inflectional comparison and 6.33 consequently with the periphrastic one.

Inflectional comparison		
Example	**Cite**	**Stress pattern**
E1		
humbliest	111 lton, this Setterday before day, Your humbliest doughter, Kateryn Scrope. <B CEO	**| - - | -**
holiest	158 an other the wiliest, the thirde the holiest harlot in his realme, as	**| - - | -**
mightiest	308 childern, the same childern were the mightiest of the world and men of renowne.	**| - - -**
lustiest	370 or certaine misorders: And one of the lustiest saide: Syr, we be yong ientlemen,	**| - - |**
goodliest	379 eyns in Walbroke, and ther he mad the goodliest sermon that ever was hard of the	**| - - | -**
readiest	526 vse # of speaking, were the best and readiest waie, to learne the latin tong.	**| - - |**
merriest	531 e praise of those properties. But the meriest was this Shoris wife, in who	**| - - -**
forwardest	574 uer was there of learning, one of the forwardest yong plantes, in all that worth	**| - - |**
E2		
humblest	..161 ice to # your Ladiship so with my humblest dutie, to your sellfe, and my ff	**| - | -**
goodliest	247 well, but the Gentlemens mansions and goodliest houses are obscurely founded in	**| - - | -**
happiest	329 wood Iunior, and Moll.^) (^T.I.^) The hapiest meeting that our soules could wish	**| - - | -**
worthiest	337 that needes not, is most of powre, & worthyest most honour, yet wanting estimat	**| - - -**
hartiest	471 for your greate gift, Remembringe his hartiest sseruice to your Ladiship s	**| - - | -**
happiest	472 es, not so much as the Scauenger, the happiest state that euer Man was borne to.	**| - - |**
goodliest	474 y, wherein I obserued the fairest and goodliest streete that euer mine eyes behe	**| - - |**
weariest	496 long, I found that dayes iourney the weariest that euer I footed, and at night	**| - - -**

E3		
remotest	38 ubstance, she extends her self in the remotest and most fruitless Beings. So tha	- | - -
slenderest	78 plied, will not move the flame of the slenderest Candle. Which some will think n	| - - | -
prettiest	89 xes, and all Churchtime are the prettiest Company in the World, stap my Vi	| - - | - -
tenderest	125 d saw me by him: He brake out in the tenderest Expressions concerning my kindn	| - - - | -
easiest	219 nd. Satyr and invective are the easiest kind of wit. Almost any degree of	| - - |
happiest	319 you are, (and # deserve to be,) the happiest Pair that live in it. (^Lov.^) I'	| - - |
noblest	333 a Body so changed and deprived of its noblest parts: Yet this (\Caput mortuum\)	| - |
properest	339 him to my House presently, that's the properest place ((^Aside.^)) to bubble h	| - - |
lovingest	478 ee: (^lone.^) Indeed Sir, I'de be the lovingest Wife that ever was made of flesh	| - - |

Table 6.32.: List of the 25 inflectionally compared adjectives and the stress pattern of the compared word and its right context.

In table 6.32 it can be seen that 19 of the 25 examples were stressed according to the predicted theory. The compared adjective was followed by a stressed syllable in order to maintain the favoured stress pattern. However, six compared adjectives, or nearly 25%, were followed by an unstressed syllable, a fact that rejects the given assumption.

The following table (6.33) shows all 25 periphrastically compared adjectives and the stress pattern in question.

Periphrastic comparison		
Example	**Cite**	**Stress pattern**
E1		
blessed	6 eeuouslie sinne was punyshed in that most blessed bodye of our Sauyour Christ	| - | -
fruteful	48 nd by readinge againe and againe your most fruteful and delectable letter, the f	| - -
gracious	54 he foresaide thirde yere of the King~ most gracious reigne, or any other Acte or	| - |
louinge	92 receyued |P539 in the reading of your most louinge and godly letter,	| - -
myghtie	101 ey fell apon their faces and sayed: O most myghtie God of the spirites of all fl	| - |
noble	103 r most excellent Maieste. Please your most noble Grace to be advertised that We	| - |
simple	128 figures that remayne vndeclared, the most simple of them ar such ones as be mad	| - -
vnkinde	146 vp the wight of his whole body? O most vnkinde sinner, all this he suffred f	- | | -

E2		
able	1 of Scyences, that Readers be of the most able and sufficient men; as those wh	| - -
bounden	18 hty god for y=r= happines I rest Your most bounden and obedient son Nicholas Fer	| - -
certaine	21 for in deede I pitty your case, it is most certaine you are bewitched. (^Sam.^)	| - -
fearefull	74 reat Papist was slaine ther. It was a most fearefull Judgment of god.	| - | -
holy	87 e= letter to the Pope it was writte~, most holy father, &c. if y=e= prouide~	| - | -
famous	5 igne of our late Sou~aigne Ladie of moste famous and happie # memorie Queene	| - -
gracious	6 more at # large maye appere: Nowe moste gracious Soveraigne, Forasmuche as b	| - | -
humble	7 E ABUSES IN CLOTHES.}] In theire moste humble and dutyfull wise shewen and	| - -
E3		
barren	18 h amongst the Stones; some choose the most barren Sands for the Place of their B	| - |
common	30 es bear Fruit in each kind, or in the most common sort of Fruit-trees. 1. (^V	| - |
famous	71 He was able not onely to repeate the most famous things which are left us in an	| - |
foolish	77 e Wise hat no Body: For who but the most foolish would hat good Men? and it	| - -
graceful	85 ll unconcern. She is adorn'd with the most graceful modesty that ever beautify'd	| - | - -
happy	88 ppiness. (^Ph.^) O my Pupil, thou art most happy in this Opinion, provided thou	| - -
humble	94 ite in this behalfe. I am, S=r=, your most humble servant, Sunderland P. [} [\LE	| - | -
proper	191 n to lay such Subsidiary books as are most proper for its use. The lowest story	| - -
tender	209 Marrow? And also that the softest and most tender Matter, as the Pith or Marrow	| - | -

Table 6.33.: List of the 25 periphrastically compared adjectives and the stress pattern of the compared word and its right context.

Table 6.33 shows that in the case of the periphrastic comparison many different stress patterns were used. After the compared adjectives, there were stressed as well as unstressed syllables spotted, seemingly without any regular pattern.

6.6.4.3. Discussion

After looking at the stress patterns of inflectionally and periphrastically compared adjectives in context, it can be said that the prediction presented at the beginning of this chapter could not be confirmed. In the case of the inflectional comparison a certain preference of a following stressed syllable could be spotted, however, the results were not at all definite. In the case of the periphrastic comparison the stress

patterns were even more irregular and the predicted preference for an unstressed syllable could not be clearly noticed. Consequently, according to this pilot study it can be assumed that the stress pattern of the compared adjectives and the following word did not have any influence on the authors of the Early Modern English period in choosing either the inflectional or periphrastic method of comparison, as no regular trend could be recognised.

7.   Conclusion

Over the course of the study, my main concern was to present the development of the comparative and superlative formation patterns used during the Early Modern English period and to find several factors which were responsible for the assimilation of this grammatical category to Present-day usage.

The analysis concerning the division of all occurrences of adjectival comparison found between 1500 and 1700 into variant A and variant B according to Present-day grammar rules, makes the steady adaptation to a regularized grammar system obvious.

The greatest number of irregularities can be found in the first sub-period of Early Modern English where word-length or word endings seem to be disregarded. Additionally, it is in this sub-period where the bulk of double comparison was found, especially double superlatives.

The second sub-period could be renamed as the period of experimenting, as this challenge was the author's main interest, which resulted in many examples of what might nowadays be regarded as uncommon forms of comparatives and superlatives. However, the number of double forms diminished considerably which somehow shows the assimilation to Present-day English to a certain extent.

The third sub-period of that particular time is the most striking as the results of my study clearly show that the rules concerning the comparative and superlative formation patterns have already been established. Double comparatives and superlatives disappeared completely and only a tiny number of variant B forms could be spotted.

The results concerning the double comparison demonstrate that although this form existed from 1500 to approximately 1640, it has always been marginal. No instances of double forms were found in the last sub-period of the Early Modern English period as they were condemned as being non-standard by authors of that period. This development clearly mirrors the standardisation process, but also reflects the fact that the Helsinki Corpus only contains written material, as it is likely to assume that double forms occurred in the spoken language throughout the entire period, as it is today. Due to the tiny number it was difficult to categorise the use of this peculiar form. However, it seems probable that the combination of both methods

of comparing adjectives was regarded as a stylistic option and was used as a result of emphatic need, often in connection with God or letter salutations.

It is much more difficult to draw conclusions around the third area of investigation, concerning disyllabic adjectives, as no definite results could be brought to light. To really understand whether word endings, word stress or the context in which the words are used are influencing factors in choosing one of the possible methods of comparing adjectives, further investigations that are beyond the scope of this study are required.

The time span investigated in this study covers the period from about 1500 to 1700. Consequently, it would be more than interesting to examine the development of the comparative and superlative formation patterns from 1700 to the present day, or to go even further back in history and look at the occurrences of adjectival comparison found in Middle English.

Additionally, it is important to keep in mind that although there are nowadays strict grammatical rules available, telling the speaker or writer how to use this grammatical category, there is still a lot of variation to be found. Especially in the spoken, or colloquial language, double forms, for example, are not that uncommon, or in the group of disyllabic adjectives the ongoing change can clearly be observed, as a few years ago adjectives like *quiet*, or *polite* were normally compared with the inflectional comparison, but now they are usually compared with *more* and *most*. However, according to Kytö and Romaine the trend is not towards the analytical method as follows

> [t]he majority of both comparative and superlative adjectives in present-day English are in fact of the inflectional type, contrary to what one might expect from the general trend in English towards a more analytical syntax. (Kytö & Romaine 1997: 331).

Moreover, because of this ongoing change it is important to mention that all my analyses are, of course, based on the status quo of adjectival comparison and 'my rules' used in this study will perhaps be regarded as uncommon or even old-fashioned in a few years. The intensive interplay between language and time has always led to changes concerning grammatical regularisation and the English language, like every language, is continually changing as every period leaves its mark, not only on the vocabulary, but also on grammar.

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Zusammenfassung

Das Thema dieser Diplomarbeit ist die Entwicklung der adjektivischen Steigerungsstufen, des Komparativs und des Superlativs, im Frühneuenglischen. Die Untersuchung wurde mit Hilfe der Textsammlung des Helsinki Corpus of English Texts durchgeführt.

Der theoretische Teil der Arbeit, befasst sich mit einer detaillierten Beschreibung des Helsinki Corpus und einem geschichtlichen Überblick der Frühneuenglischen Periode. Weiters werden verschiedene linguistische Studien zu diesem Thema präsentiert.

Im empirischen Teil der Arbeit wird beschrieben, wie die Daten aus dem Helsinki Corpus gefiltert wurden und welche Parameter relevant für die folgenden Untersuchungen waren. Danach wurden alle gefunden Beispiele einer adjektivischen Steigerung und deren Aufteilung in die analytische und die synthetische Form präsentiert, um mögliche Tendenzen in Hinblick auf die Anzahl der Silben zu zeigen. Anschließend werden alle Formen einer adjektivischen Steigerung des Frühneuenglischen mit jenen Formen die heutzutage als Standard betrachtet werden verglichen. Diese beiden Studien zeigten eine stete Entwicklung der Steigerungsstufen in Richtung eines Englischen Standards innerhalb der Zeitspanne von 1500 bis 1710.

Da es während der Frühneuenglischen Periode auch eine dritte Form der adjektivischen Steigerung gab, die so genannte *double form*, sind es diese Beispiele die Gegenstand der nächsten Untersuchung werden. Die Anzahl der Beispiele, die im Helsinki Corpus gefunden wurde, ist sehr gering und ab 1640 nicht mehr existent.

Die letzte empirische Untersuchung setzt sich mit der Steigerung von zweisilbigen Adjektiven auseinander, da diese Gruppe stets mehr Variationen aufweist. Allerdings brachten die Untersuchungen des Wortendes, der Betonung eines Wortes und des Kontextes keine eindeutigen Ergebnisse hervor, die die Autoren dieser Periode bei der Entscheidung einer möglichen Form der Steigerung beeinflusst haben könnten.

<u>Lebenslauf</u>

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