



STARFISH

SOCIOLINGUISTIC TYPOLOGY
AND RESPONSIVE FEATURES
IN SYNTACTIC HISTORY

The Loss of Plural Concord in Quantifiers and Adjectives in Middle English

ICHL 25, Oxford

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Universität
Konstanz



Introduction

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Old English

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Sg	N	-∅	-∅	-u
	A	-ne	-∅	-e
	G	-es	-es	-re
	D	-um	-um	-re
Pl	N	-e	-u	-a
	A	-e	-u	-a
	G	-ra	-ra	-ra
	D	-um	-um	-um

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	D	-um	-um	-um

Early Middle English

		M	N	F
Sg	N	-∅	-∅	-∅
	A	-e	-∅	-e
	G	-es	-es	-re
	D	-e(n)	-e(n)	-er
Pl	N		-e	
	A		-e	
	G		-er	
	D		-e(n)	

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Old English					Early Middle English					Late Middle English				
		M	N	F			M	N	F			M	N	F
Sg	N	-∅	-∅	-u	N	-∅	-∅	-∅		N				
	A	-ne	-∅	-e	A	-e	-∅	-e		A				
	G	-es	-es	-re	G	-es	-es	-re		G		-∅		
	D	-um	-um	-re	D	-e(n)	-e(n)	-er		D				
	N	-e	-u	-a	N		-e			N				
Pl	A	-e	-u	-a	A		-e			A				
	G	-ra	-ra	-ra	G		-er			G		-e		
	D	-um	-um	-um	D		-e(n)			D				

(*OE inflections table from Hogg and Fulk (1992), ME inflection table from Pyles & Algeo (1993)*)

Introduction

GENERALISATIONS IN THE LITERATURE

- This loss was the result of phonological erosion and analogy (Pyles and Algeo, 1993).
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GOALS OF THIS STUDY

1. Study whether syntactic category (adjective vs quantifier) had any effect on the loss of number marking.
2. Test empirically the effect of Scandinavia contact on the loss of plural concord, and provide a more fine grained description of the effect of language contact.

Scandinavian Contact and Data Available

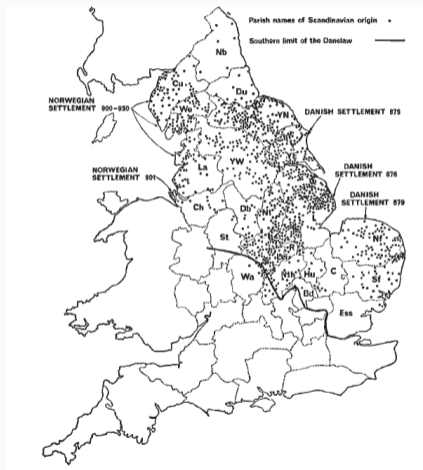


Image from Smith (1956).

Phases of English and Norse Contact (Pons-Sanz 2013; Walkden, in prep):

- ‘Hit-and-run’ phase: 8th c. -10th c.
- ‘Settlement’ phase: mid 10th c. - 1000
- ‘Conquest’ phase: 1016-1042
- ‘Shift’ phase: 1042-1100

Last phase was characterised by large numbers of L2 → relevant for Trudgill’s (2011) Sociolinguistic typology.

Data from that period and area scarce, instead:

- After 1100: prose texts from PPCEME2
- Before 1042: annotation phase (with Sarah Einhaus)

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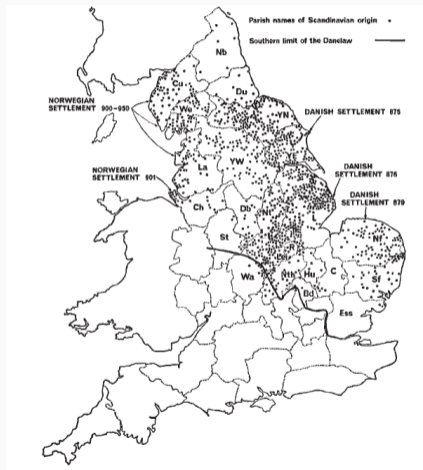


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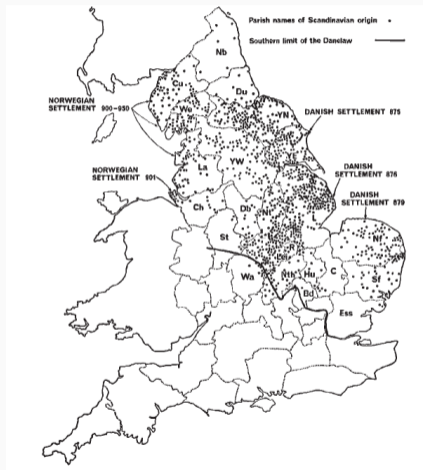


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Some Preliminaries: Nominal Structure

- ▶ In morphological terms adjectives and quantifiers are very similar. However, they differ in distributional terms, and thus belong to different syntactic categories (Fischer and van der Leek 1981).

(1) Floating Quantifiers in OE:

Ʒa common **Ʒa sacerdas** to Ʒam cynincge **ealle**
then came the priests to the king all

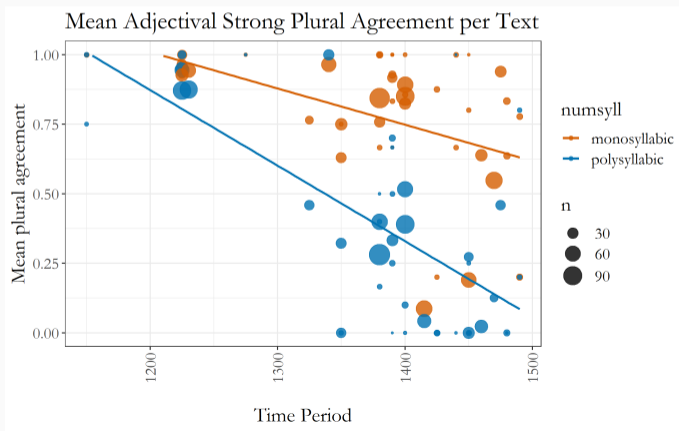
‘Then all the priests came to the king.’ (coelive *ÆLS*:374.3935, in Siyan (2020))

- ▶ Nominal Structure:

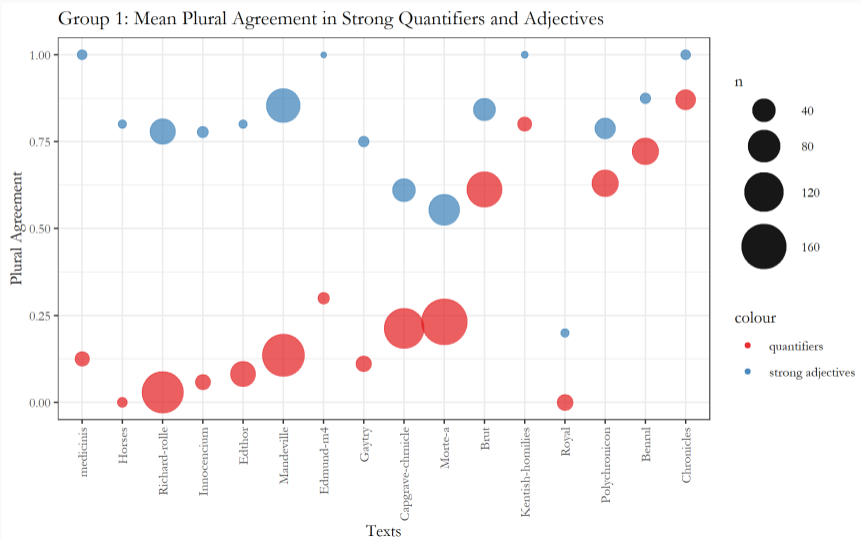


Some Preliminaries: Number of Syllables

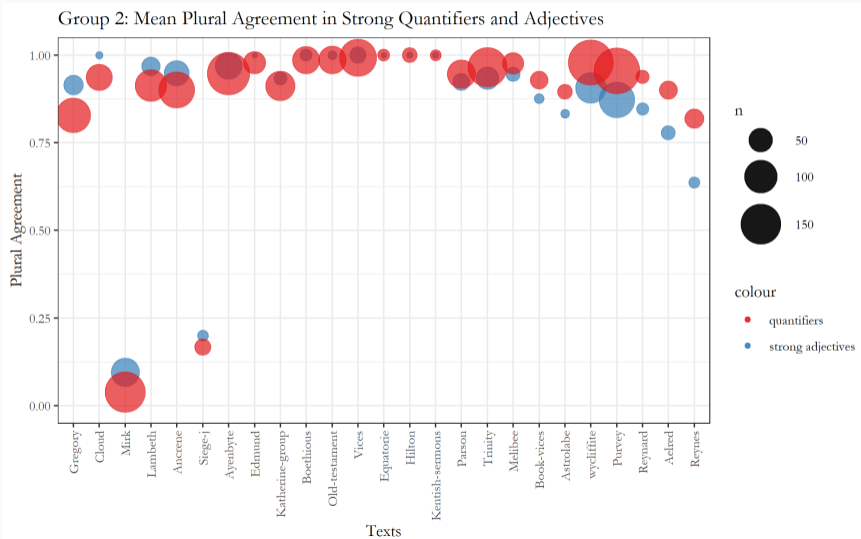
- ▶ Number of syllables: by 1250, the plural -e ending was present only in strong adjectives and quantifiers which were monosyllabic and ended in a consonant in OE, polysyllabic ones were uninflected (Baugh and Cable, 2002: 146) → We only compared monosyllabic Adj and Q.



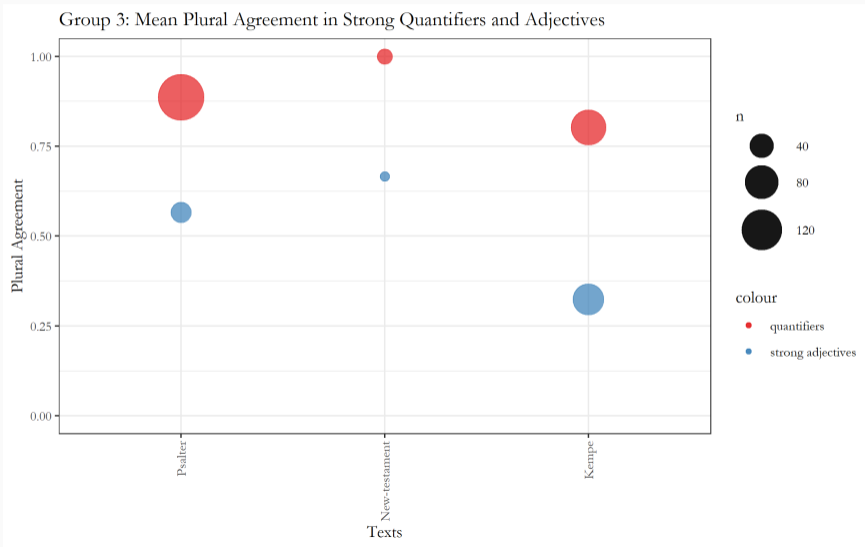
Results: Difference between Quantifiers and Adjectives



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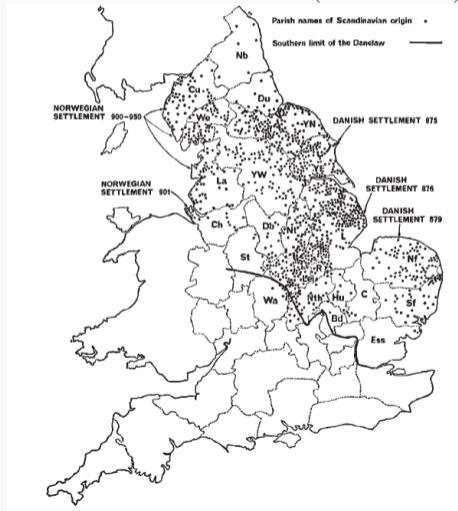
Examining the Difference between Q and Adj

- ▶ What are the factors influencing whether adjectives and quantifiers behave differently?
- ▶ Where and when did this split into groups emerge?

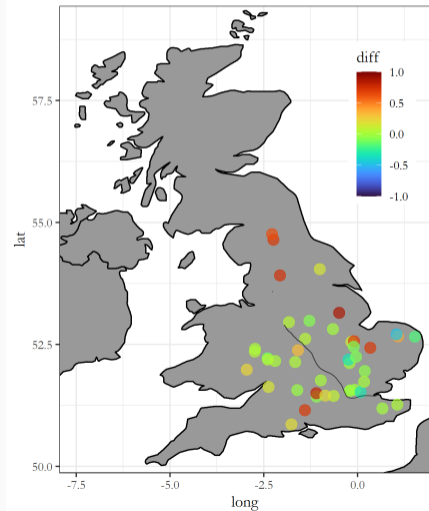
Results: Effect of Language Contact

(Geographical Information taken from eLALME and LAEME)

Scandinavian Settlements (Smith 1956)

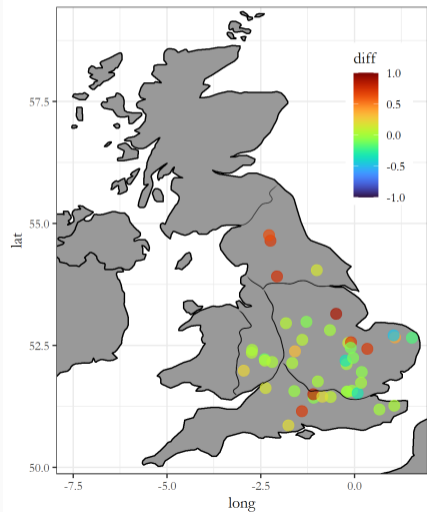


Difference Plural Agreement (Q vs Adj)



Results: Dialectal Effect

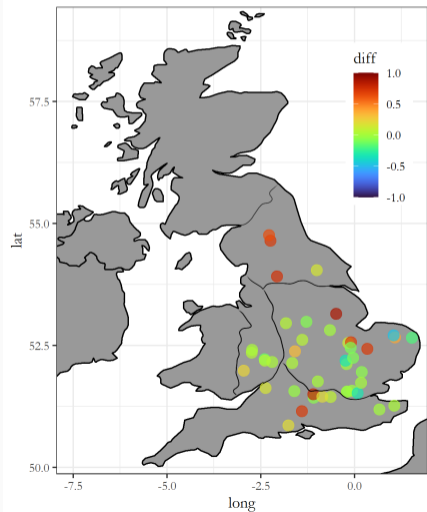
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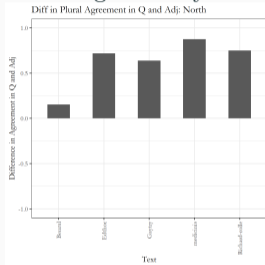
North significantly different, $W = 17$, $p\text{-value} < 0.05$

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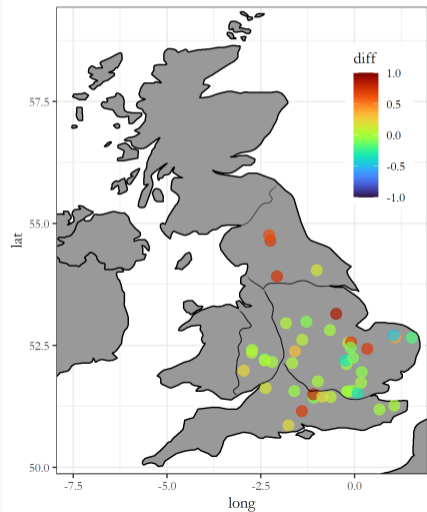


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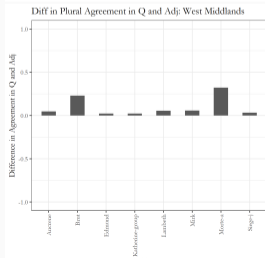
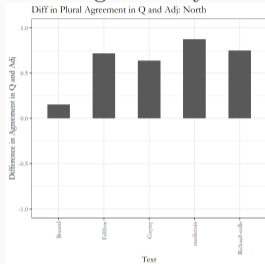


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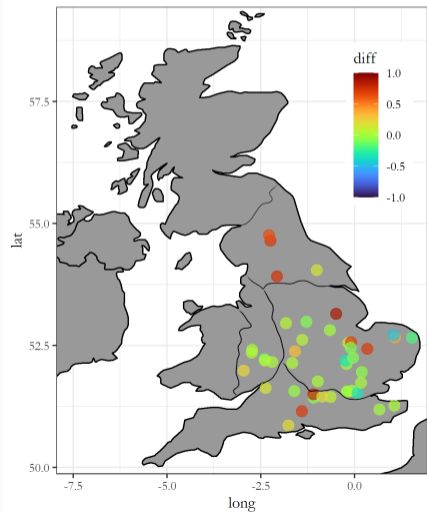


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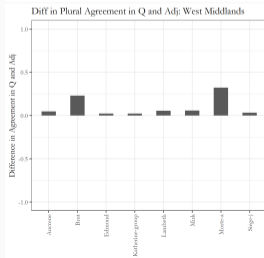
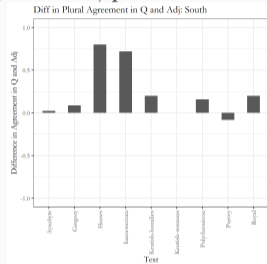
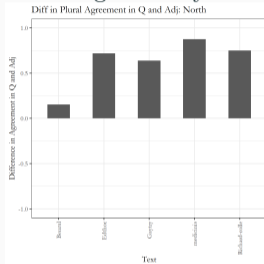


Results: Dialectal Effect

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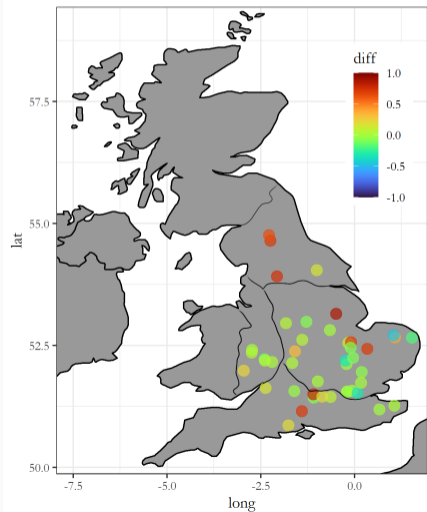


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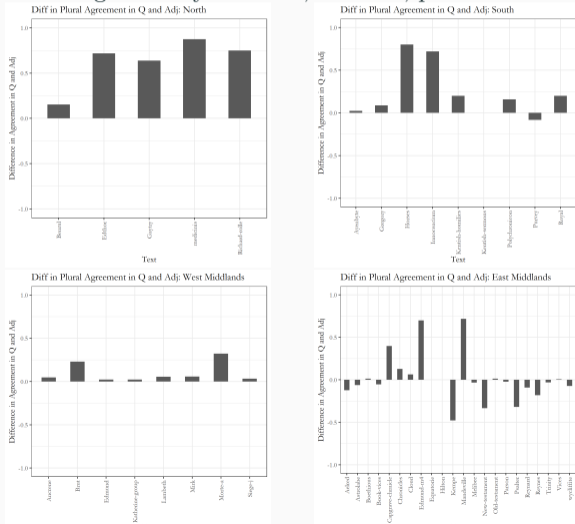


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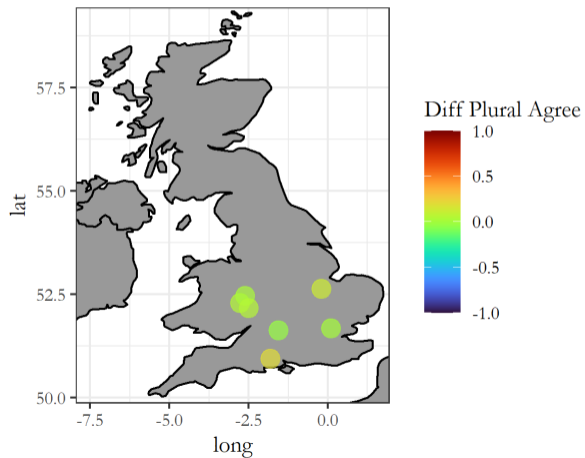


Examining the Difference between Q and Adj

- ▶ What are the factors influencing whether adjectives and quantifiers behave differently?
 - *Dialect is a main factor, with Northern texts showing a higher difference between categories.*
 - ‘Northern Middle English (NME) is quite clearly the most Norse-influenced of the ME dialects.’ (Thomason and Kaufman, 1992: 282)
 - Contact is a possible trigger.
- ▶ Where and when did this split into groups emerge?

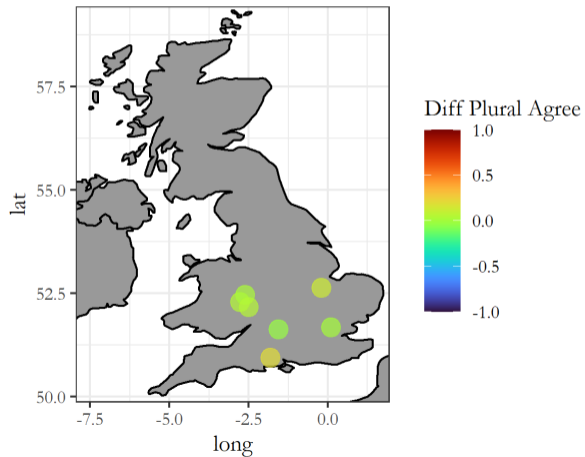
Results: the origin of the split

Difference Plural Agree: Q and Adj (1150-1250)

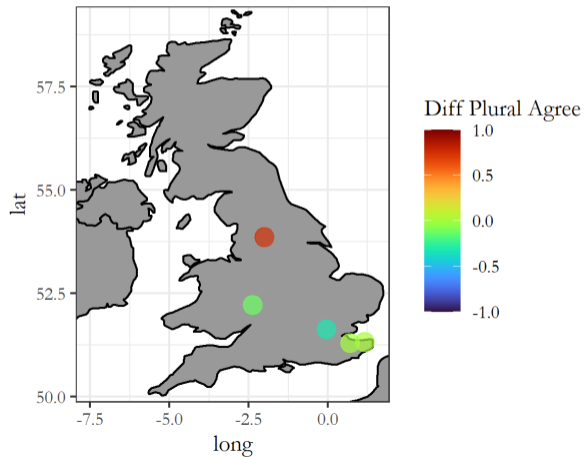


Results: the origin of the split

Difference Plural Agree: Q and Adj (1150-1250)

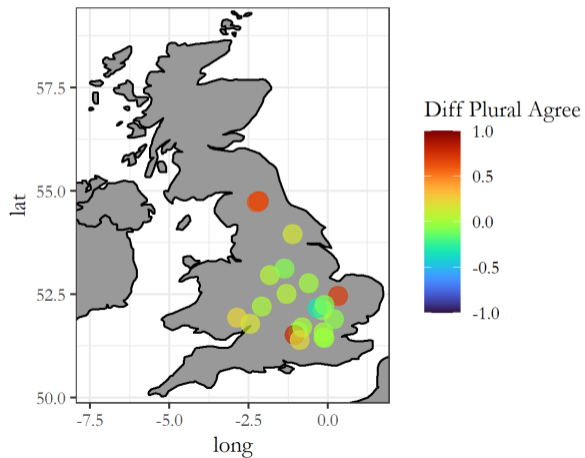


Difference Plural Agree: Q and Adj (1250-1350)



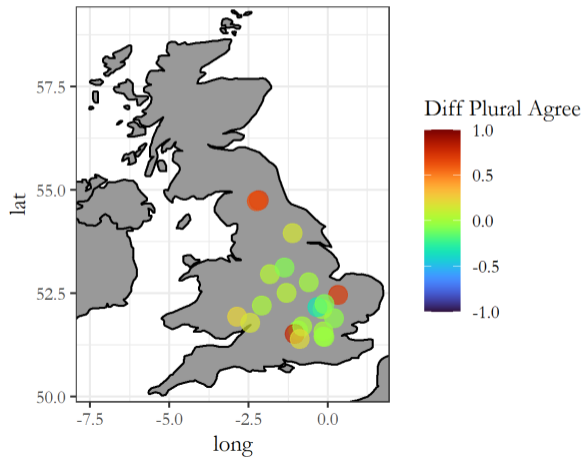
Results: the origin of the split

Difference Plural Agree: Q and Adj (1350-1420)

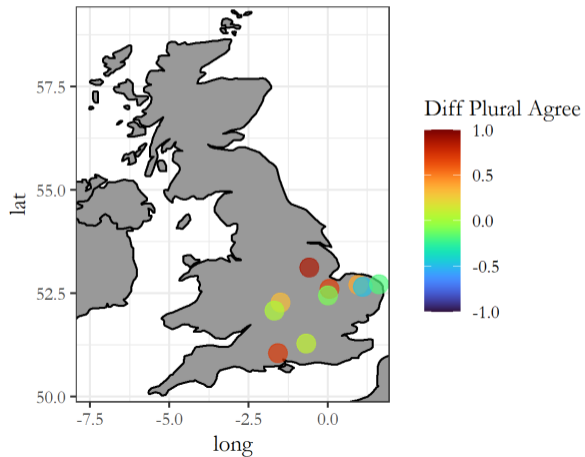


Results: the origin of the split

Difference Plural Agree: Q and Adj (1350-1420)



Difference Plural Agree: Q and Adj (1420-1500)



Examining the Difference between Q and Adj

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 - ‘Northern Middle English (NME) is quite clearly the most Norse-influenced of the ME dialects.’ (Thomason and Kaufman, 1992: 282)
 - Contact is a possible trigger.
- ▶ Where and when did this split into groups emerge?
 - *The first text in which Q show less agreement than adjectives is a Northern text from the M2 period.*
 - *The first text in which adjective show less agreement than quantifiers, is a south EM text.*
 - *Before these, agreement was equal for both categories in all dialects for which we have evidence.*

Explaining the Pattern

- ▶ Why did the Northern dialects behave differently?
 1. Exogenous explanations:
 - Transfer from Old Norse
 - L2 Difficulty
 2. Endogenous explanations:
 - The dialectal difference was present already in Old English

Discussion: Transfer

- **Transfer:** In Old Norse Qs, Adjs and Ds followed a similar inflectional pattern (Faarlund 2014)

Strong Adjectives (Faarlund 2014: 37)

		M	F	N
Sg	N	-r	∅	-t
	A	-an	-a	-t/∅
	D	um	-ri	-u
	G	-s	-rar	-s
Pl	N	-ir	-ar	∅
	A	-a	-ar	∅
	D	-um	-um	-um
	G	-ra	-ra	-ra

- In ME, determiners followed a different paradigm and lost inflection earlier than Q and Adjs.
- If transfer, we would have predicted an homogenization (either all three categories show agreement or they don't).

Discussion: L2 Difficulty

- ▶ **Interpretability Hypothesis** (Tsimpili & Dimitrakopoulou 2007): uninterpretable features are hard to acquire by L2 learners.
- ▶ Agreement and uninterpretable features:
 - Chomsky (2001): Agree is one of the core syntactic operations and it is triggered by the need of uninterpretable features to get deleted before LF.
 - Bobaljik (2008): agreement is a postsyntactic operation.
 - Is plural concord postsyntactic or syntactic?
- ▶ Proposal: Difference between Qs and Adjs in terms of agreement.
 - Qs are heads → syntactic agreement.
 - Adjs are adjuncts (which are introduced late in the derivation/merge countercyclically (Lebeaux 1991) → postsynatic agreement.

Discussion: L2 Difficulty

➤ Adjunction and intervention: (Ochi 1999)

(2) Ana **does** not leave → negation as a head intervenes

(3) Ana always **leaves** → adjuncts do not intervene

➤ Analysis:

(4) Ana Infl [_{VP} Ana leave] → Spell-Out and PF merger of Infl and leave

(5) Ana always **leaves** → late merge and Spell-Out

➤ If the adjunct is inserted later in the derivation, after (4) has been sent to the interfaces, how can Agreement in adjuncts (if syntactic) happen?

➤ Agreement in adjuncts in postsyntactic

➤ Is there evidence from the L2 acquisition corroborating this claim?

Discussion: dialectal differences present in Old English

- ▶ **RESULTS:** the Northern texts which were written after the shift phase (1041-1100), show differences between Q and Adj.
- ▶ **QUESTION:** How did quantifiers behave before the shift phase? If they followed the same distributional and agreement patterns, then a contact explanation can be ruled out.
- ▶ **FUTURE WORK:** Look at the behaviour (distributional and morphological) of quantifiers in earlier texts from different dialectal regions → Lindisfarne Gospels annotation with Sarah Einhaus.

Conclusion

1. Study whether syntactic category (adjective vs quantifier) had any effect on the loss of number marking.
 - There is a diff between Q and adjectives in some texts.
 - This difference is not determined by period, but there is an effect of dialect (Northern texts show a higher tendency to show a difference).
2. Test empirically the effect of Scandinavian contact on the loss of plural concord, and provide a more fine grained description of the effect of language contact.
 - We explored three explanations to account for the pattern (2 exogenous and 1 endogenous):
 - i. Transfer \rightarrow ✗
 - ii. L2 difficulty \rightarrow ?
 - iii. Dialectal difference present before contact \rightarrow ?

Further research is needed to tease these last two apart.

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STARFISH Members:

George Walkden, Henri Kauhanen, Gemma McCarley, Molly Rolf and Sarah Einhaus

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University of Konstanz

Thank you!

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Appendix: Annotation

- Strong Adjective + Plural Noun
- Quantifier + Plural Noun

EXCLUDED FROM THE ANALYSIS:

- Nouns beginning with a vowel.
- Adjectives that were inflected with the French plural -s morphology.
- Adjectives whose stem ends in an -e. For example *treowe* is inflected *treowe* for both nominative singular and plural.

Appendix: Manuscripts Information

► Annotation

1. Dialectal Region

- The LAEME and eLALME provide the specific locations of the manuscripts

Oxford, Bodleian Library, Rawlinson B 171. *ca.* 1400. Ed. F.W.D. Brie, *The Brut* i, EETS OS 131 (1906, repr. 1981), p. 14 seq.; whence analysed. LP 7370. Grid 336 236. Herefordshire.

LP number: 7370

Manuscript: Oxford, Bodleian Library, Rawlinson B 171.

Date: *ca.* 1400.

Area: England

County: HRF (Herefordshire)

Grid reference: 336 236

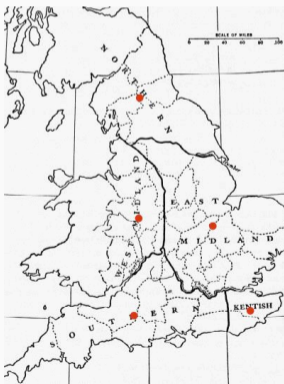
Bibliographic information: Ed. F.W.D. Brie, *The Brut* i, EETS OS 131 (1906, repr. 1981), p. 14 seq.; whence analysed.

2. Year of composition: the PPCME2 gives information about the period of the texts.

- M1: 1150-1250
- M2: 1250-1350
- M3: 1350-1420
- M4: 1420-1500

Appendix: manuscripts information

- There were some few texts with no grid reference in eLALME and LAEME → Used a central point in the dialectal area.



- There was one text in the PPCME2 which do not specify the manuscript used, and there are several in manuscripts in the LAEME → calculated the midpoint.

