THE PRESENT PARTICIPLE MARK-ING IN EAST MIDLAND MIDDLE ENGLISH: A CORPUS STUDY

Abstract

The present paper contains a description of the distribution of the typical forms of the present participle marker in the East Midland dialect, one which also incorporates the relatively autonomous dialectal areas of East Anglia and London. The major contrasting characteristic of the conservative and the advanced types was materialised in the opposition between the old nd-forms and the new ng-forms. The evidence for the present study comes from the prose and poetic texts of the 13th–15th centuries compiled in the electronic versions of the Innsbruck computer archive of machine-readable English texts (ICAMET), Penn-Helsinki parsed corpus of Middle English (PPCME2), Chadwyck-Healey’s English poetry full-text database, The Auchinleck manuscript, and the Michigan Corpus of Middle English prose and verse. The selected texts are those from localized manuscripts, established on the basis of the Catalogue of sources for a linguistic atlas of Early Medieval English (LAEME) and A linguistic atlas of Late Mediaeval English (LALME). The present contribution is another instalment in a series of papers devoted to the rise and spread of the present participle form -ing(e) in Middle English.

1. Introductory remarks

Although the provenance of the present participle marker -ing remains unclear it seems certain that its rise was connected with the regional transformation of the Old English present participle marker -ende to -inde in Middle English. Following the merger with -ung of the Old English gerund, the form -inde may have substituted the sequence -ng- for -nd- and finally become -ing(e), soon recognized as a standard form in the East Midland.
The present paper, part of a much larger study, contains a description of the distribution of the typical forms of the present participle marker in the East Midland dialect, one which also incorporates the relatively autonomous dialectal areas of East Anglia and London. The major contrasting characteristic of the conservative and the advanced types was reflected in the opposition between the old *nd*-forms and the new *ng*-forms.

The evidence for the present study comes from the prose and poetic texts of the 13th–15th centuries compiled in the electronic versions of the *Innsbruck computer archive of machine-readable English texts* (ICAMET), *Penn-Helsinki parsed corpus of Middle English* (PPCME2), Chadwyck-Healey’s *English poetry full-text database*, *The Auchinleck manuscript*, and the Michigan *Corpus of Middle English prose and verse*. The selected texts are those from localized manuscripts, established on the basis of the *Catalogue of sources for a linguistic atlas of Early Medieval English* (LAEME) and *A linguistic atlas of Late Mediaeval English* (LALME).

This contribution is another installment in a series of papers devoted to the rise and spread of the present participle form *-ing(e)* in Middle English, the earlier studies being Budna (2007, 2009, 2010, 2012).

2. Present participle forms in verse and prose

The corpora under scrutiny contribute texts from the three main areas of the East Midlands: northern, central and southern. The only text localized in the northern East Midlands is the *Ormulum* (MS Junius 1 SC 5113, Bodleian Library, Oxford), an early poem dated to c1200. The text was composed by a monk named Orm and comprises a set of metrical homilies written in regular 15-syllable unrhymed iambic lines with a caesura after the eighth syllable. This relatively early Middle English text, localized in Southwest Lincolnshire, still retains the inherited Old English dialectal marker *-end(e)*. The spelling used by the author is unique: consonants are doubled to indicate the preceding short vowel so that the present participle marker obtains an additional *-n*, i.e. *-ennde*.

(1) O þatt allterr haffgenn þe33 (Ormulum, l.1066)  
**Glowennde** gledess arrkedd (Ormulum, l.1067)  
Þurrh Drihtin blettcedd, & to ben (Ormulum, l.2289)  
**Allwældennd** Godess moderr. (Ormulum, l.2290)
More numerous texts, dated to c1200–1425, are localized to the central East Midlands, cf.:

(2) c1200  *The Peterborough chronicle* (MS Laud. Misc. 636 E, Bodleian Lib., Oxford)
   c1300  *Proverbs of Alfred* (MS Maidstone)
   c1314  *Guy of Warwick* (MS Auchinleck, Advocates, 19.2.1)
   c1400  *English sermons* Wycliffite (MS Additional 40672, Brit. Lib., London)
   c1425  *The cloud of unknowing* (MS Harley 674, Brit. Lib., London)

The studies on the manuscript of *The Peterborough chronicle* attribute its first lines (up to 1131) to a single scribe, who also copied the earlier material from the other manuscripts of the *Anglo-Saxon chronicle*. The Final Continuation (1132–1154), added by the second copyist differed in its “case-marking systems, showing a progressive deterioration with some interference in the First Continuation from the West-Saxon Standard” (*Penn-Helsinki corpus of Middle English texts*, 2nd ed.). Worth mentioning is that even though various scribes dealt with the manuscript, the text seems to be rather homogeneous in terms of the language and its dialect. *The Peterborough chronicle*, which comes from Northamptonshire, still exhibits the Old English present participle marker *-ende*:

(3) (a) Ða Willelm Englalandes cyng, þe þa *wæs sittende* on Normandige forðig he ahte ægðer ge Englaland ge Normandige (...) (*The Peterborough chronicle*, 8/5)
   (b) & þær him comon to his witan and ealle þa *landsittende* men þe ahtes væron ofer eall Engleland (...) (*The Peterborough chronicle*, 9/5)
   (c) & þurh yfelra manna rædas þe him æfre geweme væran & þurh his agene gitsunga, he æfre þas leode mid here & mid ungyldæ *tyrwigende væs*, forþan þe on his dagan æle riht afeoll & æle unrhht for Gode & for worulde up aras. (*The Peterborough chronicle*, 27/13)

Another text, *Proverbs of Alfred*, dated to 1300, is preserved in six manuscripts. Although the manuscript chosen here, part of the MS Maidstone originating in the Northampton area (Laing 1993: 121), reveals the authorship of several hands, its language is homogeneous. Despite the fact that the text represents Early Middle English, it unexpectedly shows a slight prevalence of the innovative form *-ing(e)* over the conservative *-ende* (3 instances vs. 5 in *-inge)*.

The other texts from the 14th–15th century central East Midland dialect show more variation in the present participle marker. Thus, *Guy of Warwick* (couplets and stanzas), the text from Auchinleck MS, apparently shows
a rivalry between the dialectal variants -inde (74 tokens), -ende (2 tokens) and a ‘gerund-like’ form in -inge (61 tokens), but it also contains the suffix -and(e) (3 tokens) which is regarded as a northern dialectal form. Present participle forms like -inde/-inde, -ande or -inge are commonly found alternating in the same text, even in rhymes:

(4) (a) He seye wiþ þat a grom cominde
To himward fast erneinge. (Guy of Warwick, l.5419–5420)
(b) When þe douk Loer herd þis tiding,
þat Gij & Tirri were coming. (Guy of Warwick, l.6203–6204)
(c) Wiþ þat com Gij prikeinde
& a small tvige in his hond bereinde. (Guy of Warwick, l.2342–2343)
(d) Wiþ þat come Tirri prikeinge
In his fest his brond bereinge. (Guy of Warwick, l.2088–2089)
(e) No of þat sorwe neuer þe mo
þat him was comand to (...) (Guy of Warwick, l.1125–1126)
(f) Wiþ þat come prikeand Tirri
Of Gurmoise þerl sone Aubri (...) (Guy of Warwick, l.2035–2036)

As regards the present participle markers the scribe of Guy of Warwick is rather inconsistent. Apart from attaching various present participle markers to the same verb he uses either of two forms within the same rhyme, so that the forms in -nd rhyme with forms in -ng frequently. It looks as if the plosives in these clusters were lost.

(5) (a) He seye wiþ þat a grom cominde
To himward fast erneinge. (Guy of Warwick, l.5419–5420)
(b) Bi þat side was Otous fleinde
In his hond his swerd kerueing. (Guy of Warwick, l.4857–4858)
(c) Of þre kniþtes so wele doinde
O3ain þen Loreyns þîþing. (Guy of Warwick, l.4765–4766)

The last two central East Midland texts, English sermons and The cloud of unknowing, contain numerous present participle forms in -ing, but differences in the formation of the present participle ending remain. The analysis of the Wycliffite English sermons, dated to c1400 and probably originating in the Northampton/Leicestershire area, brings interesting results. Although the text offers a considerable number of -yng/-ing tokens (133), it also contains a few instances of forms different from -ing, e.g. 5 instances of -enge and 2 instances of -ynde.

(6) (a) (...) a poore man lyeng at hys gate þat was clepyd Lazarus
(CMWYCSER, 223.12)
Whan Crist saw þese leprouse men crierege (CMWYCSER, 275.888)
And he say anoone and sewede Crist heryenge God (CMWYCSER, 392.2993)

(b) þe þrydde was þe stynkynde careyne þat he qwekude in þe graue (CMWYCSER, I, 284.1031)
þis is Lazar þat lyþ stynkynde fowre days in his sepulcre (CMWYCSER, I, 284.1039)
þe þridde trauyle herof where to arayle þese growynde vynes. (CMWYCSER, 380.2757)

It is hard to determine why the scribe incorporated a small number of dialectal forms in -enge/-ynde, considering his frequent use of the most advanced form -ing. But pairs of present participle forms spelt -enge/-inge or -ynde/-ing are occasionally found:

(7) For hit is noo charyte to leue þe ordre þat Crist gaf and to take þese stynkyng orders. (CMWYCSER, 328.1825)
He was cryinge neþeles he ches to speke more mekely. (CMWYCSER, 342.2063)

It could also be emphasised that in the case of growynde and its variants in -yng/-ing the scribe uses the ending -ing to represent the participle (8a) and the gerund (8b):

(8) (a) (...) and þornes growing strangledon hit. (CMWYCSER, 384.2836)
(b) (...) but God gyueþ þe growyng, al gif men planten and watren. (CMWYCSER, 380.2766)
For growing of cool wortis and oþtre weedis maken malecoly and oþre synnes (CMWYCSER, 381.2780)
(...) and growing of þis hooly seed. (CMWYCSER, 384.2824)

The last group of texts to be discussed, localized in the southern part of the East Midlands, contains the following items:

(9) c1100 Poema morale (MS Trinity College B 14, Cambridge)
c1200 Vices and virtues (MS Stowe 34 (olim 240), Brit. Lib., London)
c1300 King Alisaundr (MS Auchinleck (Advocates) 19.2.1)
c1330 Arthour and Merlin (MS Auchinleck (Advocates) 19.2.1)
c1350 Prose psalter (MS Additional 17376, Brit. Lib., London)
c1395 The Old Testament Wycliffite (MS Royal 1.C.8, Brit. Lib., London)
c1400 Mandeville’s travels (MS Cotton Titus C16, Brit. Lib., London)
The earliest south East Midland text, *Poema morale*, shows no attestations of the present participle. *Vices and virtues*, a text from a slightly later period and produced by three scribes, contains corrections incorporated by at least three other hands. According to the PPCME2 sources,

“a scribe of the northern border of the South-Eastern area has turned a composition in the dialect of the Middle or Western South into his own, with occasional retention of Southern forms. After a considerable interval his version was copied with little alteration by the three scribes of the Stowe manuscript”

which suggests that the language of the manuscript is older than the date of the copy. As regards the present participle markers, *Vices and virtues* exhibits the alternation of -enge and -inde. Additionally, the parsed text of the Penn-Helsinki corpus classifies the only present participle form as that in -inge (Code of oDes sueriingge). Assuming that the data is reliable, one may draw the conclusion that the form -inge in the East Midlands appeared for the first time in *Vices and virtues*, which seems not to be the case. The item sueriingge in the prose text apparently functions as a verbal noun and its meaning is ‘of oath’s swearing’ or ‘swearing of an oath’.

The scribes of the Auchinleck manuscript, containing the East Midland poems *King Alisaundr* (1300) and *Arthour and Merlin* (1330), written in Essex/Middlesex, use various markers to signal the present participle. *King Alisaundr* contains the ending -ing, but also -in, and shows the deletion of -inge.

(10) Swete odour ʒiueþ, ywis,
    Gelofre, quibibbe & þe mace
    Gingeeuer, comin ʒeueþ odour of gras. (*King Alisaundr*, l.6787)

In *Arthour and Merlin* the scribe’s favourite present participle suffix is -ande, the commonest northern form. Out of the 49 present participle tokens in the poem, 34 are -ande, 12 attach the Midland suffix -inde/iende, and only 3 verbs feature the contemporary -ing marker.

(11) He was founde þurth wicthing þin,
    Traitour’ þai seyd ‘verrament
    For al þine enchauntement (...) (*Arthour and Merlin*, l.3154–3156)

(12) þe kniȝt fel ded in a forwe;
    In his falling brast þe spere -
    Bretel bar it no ferþere. (*Arthour and Merlin*, l.3460–3462)
Foules sing in forest wide,
Swaines gin on iustinge ride,
Maidens tiffany hem in pride. (Arthur and Merlin, l.7620–7622)

Apart from incorporating of so many -and forms, the scribe does not hesitate to use the alteration of -and/-inde markers in the same words. The context is not clear, but apparently the author used both forms freely, introducing the -and/-inde variation in words of high frequency (comand/cominde, doand/doinde, fleand/fleainde and rideand/rideinde).

Although The earliest complete English prose psalter is regarded as a typical East Midland prose text from the Essex area, a considerable majority of the present participle forms seem to be characteristic of the North. Out of 324 present participle tokens in the text, 295 attach -and, 23 represent the Southern type (-ynge/-ing), and only 4 verbs retain the inherited Old English marker -end. Two verbs, wirchen and sechen, contain the specific sequence -aund with -u insertion typical of French spelling.

(a) Defende me fram te wirchaund wickedness. (CMEARLPS, 69.3015)
(b) (...) þou shal drescen te rigftful God sechaund hertes and reiners. (CMEARLPS, 6.238)

The last two items from the list, the Wycliffite The Old Testament and Mandeville’s travels, an anonymous translation of a French work written in the southern part of the East Midlands (PPCME2), were composed at the beginning of the 15th century. The Wycliffite text contains the suffix -ynge exclusively, while Mandeville’s travels displays a number of forms different from -ing (i.e. -enge/-and). The vast majority of the present participles exhibit forms with the marker -ynge/-inge (102 verbs), whereas 16 items end in -enge, with only one verb attaching the suffix -and, of Northern origin.

(... and become holle within of whilk þer er many git standand in diuere sealicez of the world. (CMMANDEV, 45.1111)

The evidence from the East Midland manuscripts shows a gradual decrease in the use of the continuations of the Old English present participle marker -ende. The data selected from the East Midland texts suggest that the present participle suffix -ing(e) prevailed over the widely used markers -end(e), -ind(e) and even -and(e) just before 1400.

3. Concluding remarks

The incidence of the present participle forms in the East Midland texts is shown below:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text name</th>
<th>Manuscript</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Genre</th>
<th>Pres. Part. forms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>East Midland North</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Ormulum</em></td>
<td>MS Junius 1 (SC 5113), Bodleian Lib., Oxford</td>
<td>c1200</td>
<td>Homilies, poetry</td>
<td>-ennd(e) 11 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Peterborough chronicle</em></td>
<td>MS Laud. Misc. 636 E, Bodleian Lib. Oxford</td>
<td>c1200</td>
<td>History</td>
<td>-ende 22 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Proverbs of Alfred</em></td>
<td>MS Maidstone</td>
<td>c1300</td>
<td>Poetry</td>
<td>-end(e) 3 (37,5%) -ind(e) 5 (62,5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Guy of Warwick</em></td>
<td>MS Auchinleck (Advocates) 19.2.1</td>
<td>c1314</td>
<td>Poetry</td>
<td>-ind(e) 74 (44%) -end(e) 2 (1,2%) -ing(e) 61 (36,3%) -and(e) 31 (18,5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>English sermons Wycliffite</em></td>
<td>MS Additional 40672, Brit.Lib., London</td>
<td>c1400</td>
<td>Prose</td>
<td>-ynge 130 (92,8%) -eng(e) 5 (3,5%) -ing 3 (2,1%) -ynde 2 (1,6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The cloud of unknowing</em></td>
<td>MS Harley 674, Brit.Lib., London</td>
<td>c1425</td>
<td>Prose</td>
<td>-ynge 68 (75,5%) -ing 22 (24,5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>East Midland Central</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Vices and virtues</em></td>
<td>2Stowe 34 (olim 240), Brit. Lib., London</td>
<td>c1200</td>
<td>Prose</td>
<td>-ende 40 (51,2%) -inde 37 (47,4%) -ingge 1 (1,4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>King Alisaundr</em></td>
<td>MS Auchinleck (Advocates) 19.2.1</td>
<td>c1300</td>
<td>Poetry</td>
<td>-in 1 (50%) -ing 1 (50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Arthour and Merlin</em></td>
<td>MS Auchinleck (Advocates) 19.2.1</td>
<td>c1330</td>
<td>Poetry</td>
<td>-and 34 (69%) -inde/ende 12 (24%) -ing 3 (7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The earliest complete English prose psalter</em></td>
<td>MS Additional 17376, Brit. Lib., London</td>
<td>c1350</td>
<td>Prose</td>
<td>-and 295 (91,04%) -ynge 15 (4,6%) -ing 8 (2,4%) -end 4 (1,2%) -aund 2 (0,76%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Old Testament Wycliffite</em></td>
<td>Royal 1.C.8, Brit. Lib., London</td>
<td>c1395</td>
<td>Prose</td>
<td>-ynge 60 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Mandeville’s travels</em></td>
<td>Cotton Titus C16, Brit. Lib., London</td>
<td>a1425</td>
<td>Prose</td>
<td>-ynge 97 (81,5%) -eng(e) 16 (13,4%) -ing(e) 5 (4,2%) -and 1 (0,9%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The evidence above indicates that the East Midland texts of the 13th–14th centuries preserve divergent present participle forms, but according to the data extracted from the texts under scrutiny, the substitution of the Old English marker -inge for -ende was completed before the end of the 14th century. The data from the East Midland texts suggest that the present participle suffix -inge prevailed over the widely employed markers -end(e), -ind(e), -and(e) just before 1390.

Figure 1 shows the distribution of the present participle variants -ende/-inge in the East Midland between 1200 and 1390:

![Fig. 1. The distribution of the present participle markers -ende/-inge in the East Midlands (1200–1390)](image)

The wide range of prose and poetic texts from between 1200 and 1300 composed in the Central and Southern parts of East Midlands display a gradual disappearance of the present participle suffixes -ende and -inde in favour of -inge at the end of the 13th century. A rapid increase of the prevalence of -inge over the other dialectal variants, i.e. -ende/-inde/-enge and Northern -ande, took place between 1300 and 1400. An intriguing phenomenon is the appearance of the -and marker, typical of the North, in several East Midland poems.

To conclude, none of the texts written after 1400 show variation, save one. Mandeville’s travels shows slight variation with some verbs ending in -ynge/-inge/-enge and a single item which attaches -and, possibly of Northern origin.
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