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AN EMPIRIC STUDY ON THE FUNCTION OF *þA* AND *þONNE* IN THE ORGANIZATION OF DISCOURSE

1. Introduction

The Old English temporal adverbs *þa* and *þonne* have been associated traditionally with diverse meanings (e.g. temporal, causative) and functions (main clause introducer, subordinate clause introducer); within the framework of generative studies, they have been associated with the pragmatic function of separating given from new material in the subordinate clause. This paper aims to explore the function of these adverbs also in the main clause and to determine their role in the pragmatic organization of the clause.

The pilot study is based on the scrutiny of MS A of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, on King Alfred's *De Consolatione Philosophiae* and on a wider search on the YCOE electronic corpus.

The paper is structured as follows: in section 2 the temporal adverbs *þa* and *þonne* are introduced, both from a traditional as well as from a generative perspective; in section 3 the theoretical framework is given, while in section 4 the different patterns found in the corpus will be outlined and an analysis is proposed, section 5 contains the conclusions and open questions.

2. The temporal adverbs *þa* and *þonne*

Traditionally, the temporal adverbs *þa* and *þonne* have been associated with different meanings and functions, according to their position in the clause; the Bosworth-Toller dictionary suggests to translate

them as *then*, when the surface order of the sentence is *þa/þonne-Verb-Subject*, while they should be translated as *when*, when the surface order of the clause is *þa/þonne – Subject-Verb*¹.

Finally, these adverbs can have a correlative and causative meaning.

The following quote from Mitchell (1985) is paradigmatic:

“There are problems of more moment where **personal preference is the only criterion available** today and may have been the determining factor **even in OE**. These include **the ambiguous adverb/conjunctions** such as *þa*, *þonne* and *þær* [...]” (Mitchell 1985:695, my emphasis).

Mitchell (1985 – 2001), however, gives some information for the interpretation of these adverbs with respect to their position in the clause. Summarizing, if the order of the sentence is *þa/þonne-Verb-Subject*, then we have to analyse the sentence as a main clause; while if the order of the sentence is *þa/þonne – Subject-Verb*, then we have to analyse the sentence as a subordinate clause. Mitchell also notes that there are sentences with the following order: *þa/þonne – Subject – þa/þonne – Verb* and notes that the second occurrence of the adverb does not have to be translated, but he does not specify its function².

Mitchell moreover observes that these adverbs can mark the start of a new narrative section, when they do not have a pure temporal meaning; this fact is relevant for the present analysis, since in this paper it is

¹ Cf. the following quote from the Bosworth-Toller online dictionary of Old English: “Then, when. When the word stands at the beginning of a clause and may be translated by *then*, the verb generally precedes its subject; if it is to be translated by *when* the subject generally precedes the verb.” (Bosworth, Joseph. “An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary Online.” þá. Ed. Thomas Northcote Toller and Others. Comp. Sean Christ and Ondřej Tichý. Faculty of Arts, Charles University in Prague, 30 Mar. 2014.)

² But Vezzosi (1998) observes that word order alone cannot be the only decisive factor for the categorization into main and subordinate clauses, since she observes that S(...)V clauses are not always subordinate and that VS clauses are not always independent.

claimed that these adverbs were also involved in the discourse organization of the Old English clause.

This last hypothesis was first put forth by Van Kemenade and Los (2006): they label the adverbs *þa* and *þonne* as *discourse particles*, noting that they perform different functions with respect to their position in the clause.

When these adverbs are found in the left periphery of the clause³, their function is to introduce a main clause, as can be observed in the following example:

- (1) **þa** wæs þæt folc þæs micclan welan ungemetlice brucende
(Orosius 1.23.3)
'Then the people were partaking excessively of the great prosperity'

(Van Kemenade and Los 2006: 225)

They claim moreover that the clause-initial discourse particles indicate *discourse continuity*, signalling that the sentence introduced by them is embedded in the same narrative sequence of the previous one.

Sentence-initial discourse particles can also be found in subordinate clauses being part of a correlative structure, an example is given in (2):

- (2) **þa** he þa ure Drihten his þæm halgum sægde [...], **þa** cwæþ
he to him [...]
(coblick⁴, HomS_46_[BIHom_11]:119.49.1511)

³ The definition of left periphery discussed here follows the model proposed in Rizzi (1997); the left periphery of the clause is the domain which contains information such as the illocutionary force of the sentence and its finiteness. Moreover, this domain encodes pragmatic information such as Focus and Topic. Wh-elements are supposed to move to the left periphery of the clause in direct questions.

⁴ All the references beginning with *co-* are part of the York-Toronto-Helsinki Parsed Corpus of Old English Prose (Ann Taylor, Anthony Warner, Susan Pintzuk, Frank Beths 2003); information about the files and the editions used for the syntactically parsed texts can be consulted at <http://www-users.york.ac.uk/~lang22/YCOE/YcoeHome.htm>.

‘When our Lord said [that] to his holy people [...], then he said unto them...’

(adapted from Van Kemenade and Los 2006: 228)

The first sentence, analysed as a subordinate clause, anchors the narration with respect to a specific point in time, while the second sentence, a main clause, conveys new information and is at the same time embedded in the narrative context introduced by the previous sentences.

In clause-internal position, the discourse particles separate given from new material:

(3) Se cwæð to þam, þe me tigon: gelædaþ hine eft ham,
forþon Seuerus se mæssepreost cwyþeð & mæneþ his sawle
& mid tearum biddeð, **þæt him Drihten þa forgife.**

(cogregdC,GD_1_[C]:12.89.31.1036)

‘he says to those who raised me: lead him home now, because the mass-priest Severus bewails and laments his soul, and begs the Lord in tears to forgive him.’

(Van Kemenade and Los 2006:240)

Van Kemenade and Los (2006) argue that the material preceding the discourse particle in the subordinate clause constitutes given information: the pronoun *him* anaphorically refers to the mass-priest *Seuerus*, while the reference of *Drihten* can be argued to be part of the Common Ground knowledge shared by the discourse referents⁵. The new information consists in the verb *forgifan*, which is found at the right of the discourse particle.

The analysis of Van Kemenade and Los (2006) regards mainly clause-internal discourse particles in subordinate clauses, they do not deny, however, that clause-internal discourse particles can also be found in main clauses.

⁵ For a discussion about the concept of Common Ground, cf. Krifka (2007).

They also note that at the right side of the discourse particles, in the domain of new information, also pronouns can be found. Pronouns inherently refer to given information, they cannot in fact be interpreted correctly in the absence of an antecedent which is previously introduced in the discourse; moreover, Lambrecht (1994) argues that the morpho-phonological form and the discourse status of the referents correlate.

The presence of pronouns in the domain of new information is signalled in Van Kemenade and Los' (2006) work, the issue is however not addressed.

Another important feature highlighted in Van Kemenade and Los' (2006) work is that in some cases, as was argued for also by Mitchell (1985), the temporal meaning of *þa* and *þonne* is not transparent, as can be observed in the following example:

(4) Her Ine feng to Wesseaxna rice, 7 heold .xxxvii. wintra. 7 he getimbrade þæt menster æt Glæstingabyrig. [...] **Þonne was se Ine Cenreding**, Cenred Ceolwalding, Ceolwald was Cynegilses broþur, [...]. (Chron. A, AN 688⁶)

“In this year, Ine took the Kingdom of the Westsaxons and he held it 37 years. And he built the monastery at Glastonbury. [...] The aforementioned Ine belonged to the kin of Cenred, Cenred [belonged] to the kin of Ceolwald, Ceolwald was the brother of Cynegils.”

As opposed to the second sentence in example (2), in this case the discourse particle does not signal discourse continuity, i.e. the information of *Ine*'s belonging to the kin of *Cenred* does not follow the ac-

⁶ If not indicated otherwise, the references to the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle were obtained by searching the text manually; the indication *AN* refers to the year entry as reported in Bately's (1986) scholarly edition. Moreover, except for the examples reported from Van Kemenade and Los' (2006) work, the examples were translated by the author. As far as the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle is concerned, the translation of names of place and person is taken from Swanton's (2003) and Thorpe's (1964) translation.

tions described in the previous sentences, as if they were placed in a temporal line; this sentence predicates a certain feature about *Ine* and possibly draws the addressee's attention to this fact.

Finally, in the work of van Kemenade and Los, as well as in Van Kemenade's subsequent work, the structure of the left periphery includes a CP layer and a "non-committal" FP layer. In this article, we would like to propose an analysis in the sense of Rizzi's (1997) extended left periphery.

Summarizing, in this section the traditional and the generative approaches to the treatment of the adverbs *þa* and *þonne* were discussed; it emerges that these adverbs can have also a correlative and causative meaning, they can be found both in main and subordinate clauses and can mark the start of a new narrative section. According to the analysis put forth by Van Kemenade and Los, discourse particles can introduce a main clause, or serve as temporal anchoring if they introduce a subordinate clause, while if they are found in clause-internal position they divide given from new material.

3. The theoretical background

The discourse analysis presented in this paper is based on Lambrecht's (1994) definition of *Information Structure*, *Universe of Discourse* and *Focus*. As regards a particular construction found in the corpus, the notion of *Contrastive Topic* outlined by Krifka (2007) is used.

Lambrecht (1994) identifies two concepts that make up the Universe of Discourse, namely the Text-External and the Text-Internal world. The elements belonging to the Text-External world are the speech participants and the speech setting, i.e. the place and time in which a speech event takes place. The Text-Internal world is made up of the linguistic expressions and their meaning; Information Structure comprises both text-worlds, since it involves speech participants matching form-meaning pairs with the linguistic representation created at the moment of the utterance.

Moreover, Lambrecht assumes that the elements belonging to the two text-worlds are evoked during the information exchange; the linguistic expressions that designate the elements of the Text-External world are called Deictic Expressions, since they directly point to the elements designated. There are other non-deictic elements that designate text-external features, such as inflectional elements referring to one of the Speech Participants - e.g. the feminine inflectional ending in expressions like French *Je suis contente* - or linguistic categories relating to the social interaction between the speech participants - e.g. deictic elements denoting politeness – (cf. Lambrecht: 37-38).

As far as the identification of elements pertaining to the Text-Internal world is concerned, a central notion is the one of Activation. Elements belonging to the Text-Internal world are in fact designated indirectly, via mental representations set up for the addressee by the speaker; the forms of the expressions that denote such entities depend on the state of activation these referents have during the speech event. For example, if the mental representation of a linguistic expression is activated (i.e. its representation has been recently evoked) during the speech event, this is referred to via anaphoric expressions such as pronouns and demonstratives.

Lambrecht states that the central concepts of information structure - such as focus, for instance - belong to the text-internal world: they have to do with the discourse representations of entities in the minds of the speech participants⁷.

A notion which is applied in the present paper is that of Focus; Focus is defined as “the semantic component of a pragmatically structured proposition whereby the assertion differs from the presupposition” (Lambrecht 1994: 213) . The concept of (pragmatic) presupposition, then, identifies the knowledge that the speech participants share at the time of the utterance, while the concept of (pragmatic) assertion identi-

⁷ For a comprehensive introduction to the concepts of *Information Structure* and *Discourse*, cf. Lambrecht (1994: Chapter 2).

fies the new proposition that is added to this stock of knowledge. The assertion must not be viewed as what remains of the utterance without the proposition, but rather as the relation between what is presupposed and what is not. From these definitions it follows that new information and focus are relational concepts, in the sense that it is the relation between the elements evoked in the discourse that results in new information for the speech participants; Lambrecht in fact rejects the idea that a sentence can be segmented into old and new components, since also activated elements can be part of the focus domain of the utterance, if they build new relations with other elements belonging to the Universe of Discourse, as can be observed in example (5):

- (5) a. Where did you go last night, to the movies or to the restaurant?
 b. We went to the RESTAURANT.
 Lambrecht (1994: 211)

The previous example can be analysed as follows:

Presupposition: *Interlocutor went to x*, where $x = \text{cinema} \vee x = \text{restaurant}$;
 Assertion: *Interlocutor went to the restaurant*.
 Focus: $x = \text{restaurant}$, where *restaurant* is an element which has been mentioned previously in the discourse.

Depending on the domain in which the Focus extends, Lambrecht distinguishes three types of structures, which are represented cross-linguistically, even if they are marked in different ways (such as specialized syntactic structures, different prosodic contours or focus particles).

In a Predicate-Focus Structure, the Focus domain is extended on the VP⁸:

⁸ Examples (6-8) are taken from Lambrecht (1994: 223). The discourse analysis presented in the box under example (5) is based on Lambrecht's analysis presented in chapter 5.

- (6) a. What happened to your car?
b. My car BROKE DOWN.

In an Argument-Focus Structure, the Focus Domain extends on an argument, such as a DP or a PP:

- (7) a. I heard that your motorbike broke down.
b. No, MY CAR broke down.

In a Sentence-Focus structure, the Focus domain extends to the whole sentence:

- (8) a. What happened?
b. MY CAR BROKE DOWN.

One last notion applied in this study is that of Contrastive Topic, let us observe the following example (adapted from Krifka 2007):

- (9) a. What do your siblings do?
b. [My sister]_{Contrastive Top} [studies medicine]_{Focus Domain}, and
[my brother]_{Contrastive Top} [is working on a ship]_{Focus Domain}.

The notion of contrastive topics presupposes the presence of one Aboutness topic (the referent about which the comment develops), which is set as an alternative with another or more aboutness topics. In Present Day English, word order does not signal this pragmatic function, which has, however, a specific prosodic intonation: the accent falls on the contrastive topics and on the last word in the two focus domains.

Finally, it is assumed that Old English was a discourse configurational language, namely, that the syntax of this language was shaped in order to meet the discourse needs of the speech participants. Recently, this view has been supported by the researches of Van Kemenade and Westergaard (2012), Van Kemenade and Hinterhölzl (2012), Van Kemenade and Los (2006) Petrova and Speyer (2011) and Taylor and Pintzuk (2012). Van Kemenade and Westergaard (2012) claim that subjects can occupy different syntactic positions according to their state of activation, while Petrova and Speyer (2011) correlate new information

focus with the post-verbal position of DPs on the one hand, and on the other hand they individuate a projection for contrasted focus in the left periphery of the Old English clause. A similar view – although more cautious – is held also by Pintzuk and Taylor (2012), who also individuate prosodic heaviness as another factor responsible for the word order variation in Old English.

Moreover, Van Kemenade (2009) argues that the adverbs *þa* and *þonne* are part of a wider system which consists of deictic elements and includes also the demonstratives *se*, *sio* and *þæt*; this system helps structuring the discourse and tracking the discourse referents in the course of the information flow. She argues that the demise of this system may have been one of the factors leading to the grammaticalization of the SVO word order, in which discourse relations are identified syntactically.

Finally, also Vezzosi (1998) pointed out that grammaticalization processes originate from pragmatic needs, which become syntactically fixed, to be eroded then morphologically and lexically; this assumption reflects what has been claimed in the more recent literature quoted above on the grammaticalization of the SVO word order in the history of the English language.

4. Patterns found in the corpus

In the following, the patterns found in the corpus are given; the corpus comprises Ms A of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, which was searched manually from Bately's (1986) scholarly edition and Jebson's electronic XML edition; in addition to the Chronicle, also King Alfred's translation of *De Consolatione Philosophiae* was searched, both by querying the YCOE *coboeth.psd* file and with a scrutiny of Sedgfield's (1899) edition. Finally, the wider YCOE corpus was searched, in order to check whether the patterns found by searching the texts manually are represented in the corpus.

In main clauses, different patterns can be found, which, at a first glance, may

not seem to be syntactically and/or pragmatically motivated; it has to be noted, moreover, that patterns B, C and E are only represented in the Chronicle⁹.

Pattern A: þa/þonne – V – Subject;	ða andwyrde þæt Mod [coboeth,Bo:5.12.29.177]
Pattern B: þa/þonne – AdvPP ¹⁰ - Verb – Subject;	þa on hærfæste gefor se here on Miercna lond (Chron. A, AN 877)
Pattern C: þa/þonne – AdvPP - Subject – Verb;	Ða þy ilcan gere onforan winter þa Deniscan þe on Meresige sæton tugon hira scipu up on Temese (Chron. A, AN 894)
Pattern D: DP subject/pronoun subject - þa/þonne – Verb – object;	a. Se fæder þa gelærde þæt mæden mid halgum gewirtum, and godcundum rædingum, and mid eallum woruldlicum wisdom; [Euphr]:26.27 b. Hit þa andwyrde [coboeth,Bo:5.13.11.192]
Pattern E: þa/þonne – AdvPP – þa/þonne – V – Subject;	þa æfter þam þa for se here eall up (Chron. A, AN 914)
Pattern F: (Subj) – obj pronoun – þa/þonne – (Subj) – V;	a. and he hine þa tihte to ðære acennednysse mid his diglum wordum, þe he onwreah us syððan [coaelhom,ÆHom_13:142.1949] b. Him þa andswarode his ealdorbisceop [cobede,Bede_2:10.134.11.1292]
Pattern G: (Subj) – V - þa/þonne – Object;	& seo papa seonde þa his writ þus cwæðend. [Plummer]:656.118.472]

⁹ Cf. however, the following example from the Blickling Homilies: [BIHom_17]:203.121.2602] & þa sona ealle eadmodlice to þæm cyninga Cyninge, to Criste sylfum, onhnigan.

¹⁰ With this label, I refer to the PPs which have a temporal or locative meaning.

As well as these patterns, also correlative structures as in example (2) were found. From this search it emerges that these adverbs can be found in sentence-internal position also in main clauses, and not only in subordinate ones; moreover, pattern E testifies the co-occurrence of the two particles also in main clauses¹¹, providing some evidence for the hypothesis that clause-initial and clause-internal discourse particles may occupy two different syntactic positions and cover two different syntactic functions. In the following, this hypothesis is pursued; for the analysis, the discourse status of the single constituents, as well as the discourse value of the whole sentence, as defined in Section 3, were analysed. The information structural investigation was restricted to ms A of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle and to King Alfred's translation of Boethius' text; we obtained a total of 244 main clauses presenting a discourse particle. Only with the scrutiny of the surrounding context is it possible to determine the discourse status of sentences and referents, which is not possible with an electronic search of the corpus, since only the sentence containing the item queried is provided in the results.

As was highlighted above, Van Kemenade and Los (2006) note that pronouns, inherently signaling given discourse referents, can be found after the discourse particle in subordinate clauses. This is problematic for their analysis, since according to them the discourse particles partition the clause into a domain containing given referents and a domain containing new referents; for the present analysis, the taxonomy proposed by Lambrecht (1994), as well as his definition of new information are applied.

Also in main clauses, both given and new material can follow the particles *þa* and *þonne*:

- (10) *ða andwyrde [þæt Mod]_{Given} (=Boethius) answered.*
 Then the Mind
 [coboeth,Bo:5.12.29.177]

¹¹ Mitchel (1985) had already noted, in fact, that in correlative structures, the subordinate clause introduced by *þa* or *þonne* presented in some cases a second *þa*. Moreover, robust evidence of an internal position of these adverbs in subclauses is given in Van Kemenade and Los (2006).

- (11) Ða comon [þa menn of þrim mægþum Germanie]_{New}.
Then came the men of three families of Germany.
(Chron. A, AN 449)
- (12) Ða gegaderade [Ælfred cyning]_{Given} [his fierd]_{Given}.
Then gathered Alfred king his army. (Chron. A, AN 893)

In sentences like the following, however, while the material following the particle can be either new or given, the material preceding it is always given:

- (13) [He]_{Given} þa gemunde [þara ednessa & þara ealdrihta þe hi under þam caserum hæfdon]_{Given}.
He then remembered the favours and the ancient rights which they had under the Caesars. [coboeth, Bo:1.7.15.63]
- (14) [ta Brettas]_{Given} þa forleton [Centlond]_{New} 7 mid micle ege flugon to [Lundenbyrg]_{New}.
The Britons then left the land of Kent and with great dread they fled to London. (Chron. A, AN 457)

If we assume that the discourse markers serve to demarcate Sentence-Focus vs Predicate-Focus, as defined by Lambrecht (1994), the presence of given material after the particles is not problematic; in sentence (12), even if both *King Alfred* and *his army* constitute given material, it is their interaction that results in new information. In sentence (13), it is Boethius' act of remembering the ancient rights that constitutes new information, even though these entities are introduced in the previous discourse.

A piece of evidence in favour of this view is the following sentence, which can be analysed as involving two contrastive topics, in the sense of Krifka (2007), and two predicate-focus domains; the discourse markers separate the two domains:

- (15) Earnulf þa wunode on þem londe be eastan Rin, 7 Roþulf þa feng to þam middelrice

E. then lived on the land at the east of the Rhine, while R. succeeded to the middle kingdom. (Chron. A, AN 887)

This is the context in which sentence (15) is embedded:

7 þy ilcan geara forþferde Karl Francna cyning, 7 Earnulf his broþur sunu hine .vi. wicum ær he forþferde bered<d>e æt þæm rice, 7 þa wearþ þæt rice todeled on .v. 7 .v. kyningas to gehalgode.

And that same year Charles King of the Franks died, and Arnulf his brother's son six weeks before he died dispossessed [him] of the kingdom and then the kingdom was divided between five, and five kings to be consecrated.

What constitutes given information in (15) is the fact that the kingdom has been divided into five parts and each part is assigned to a king; the new information consists the association between one of the kingdoms and which king it was assigned to. In this case, the discourse particles separates the aboutness topics from the rest of the clause, in which the kingdom assigned to them is introduced; this example is a piece of evidence in favour of the view held in this paper that the adverbs *þa* and *þonne* are used in the structuring of the discourse, separating the topic from the predicate-focus of the clause – as in example (15) – or introducing a sentence-focus structure, where all the elements following it interact resulting in new information.

Another examples of predicate-focus structure can be found in the following; in this example, the topic of the sentence is separated from the rest of the clause from the discourse particle:

(16) Hy ða sendan heom mare fultum
They sent them more help. (Chr. A, AN 449)

It can be argued that in structures like (17), the discourse particle highlights an argument-focus structure:

(17) worhton ða tu geweorc on twa healfe þære eas.
[They] built two forts on the two sides of the river. (Chr. A, AN 895)

As was stated above, the temporal meaning of *ponne* in example (4) – repeated here as (18) – is not clear; according to the analysis put forth in this paper, the sentence is re-analysed as a sentence-focus structure, in which the new information is found after the discourse particle:

- (18) *Ponne* was se Ine Cenreeding.
 The afore-mentioned Ine was the son of Cenred. (Chr.A,
 AN 688)

So far we have come to the conclusion that also in main clauses the discourse particles serve to organize the discourse into a domain that contains the topic, and the domain that contains the focus of the clause; when the whole sentence conveys new information, all the elements follow the discourse particles. The discourse status of the single referents is not a sufficient condition to capture the function of the discourse particles; by adopting a relational definition of focus, the presence of pronouns or given material after the discourse particle is not problematic, if these belong to the focus of the clause.

5. Two syntactic positions for the discourse markers

In the traditional literature, it has been observed that the adverbs *þa* and *þonne* can introduce a new narrative section, whereas for their internal position it has been proposed that they divide the sentence into a domain of given and new information; with the present paper we have associated a taxonomy of focus structures with some of the patterns found in the corpus. There is some evidence that lets us postulate that *þa* and *þonne* can appear in two different positions in the main clause; recall patterns B, C and E, sketched here as:

- Disc. marker > given adverbial prepositional phrase > {Subject}> Verb > {Subject}
- Disc. marker > given adverbial prepositional phrase > Disc. Marker > Verb > Subject

where the first pattern represents both patterns B and C, since they differ only with respect to the position of the subject. Pattern E shows that a sentence-initial and a sentence-internal particle can co-occur:

- (19) Þa æfter þam þa for se here eall up
Then after that the army went all up. (Chron. A, AN 914)

In sentences like (19), the first discourse marker precedes an adverbial prepositional phrase, which collocates the narration to a point in time or place, whereas the second discourse marker follows the adverbial prepositional phrase. The position of the first discourse marker before a Frame Setter may point at a high position in the left periphery of the clause. Further evidence from this claim is provided in van Kemenade (2009), where it is shown that the adverbials under examination occur lower than a *wh*- element in root questions. At the same time, however, they trigger almost categorical V2 inversion in main clauses, which points at a higher position in the C domain. This apparent paradoxon is resolved if we assume that these particles can occupy two distinct positions in the left periphery of the clause.

On the basis of the empiric data collected so far, the following architecture of OE clauses is proposed:

þa/þonne-her > (AdverbialPrepositionalPhrase) > {Subject} > þa/þonne > Verb > {Subject}¹²

Given the fact that these adverbs trigger semi-categorical V2, van Kemenade has analysed them as occupying the high [Spec, CP] position. We have seen that the same adverbs can occupy a lower position

¹² Where “>” indicates precedence and the {} brackets indicate that the subject can be either pre- or post-verbal. The structure is based on Rizzi’s (1997) proposal of the extended left-periphery, according to which pragmatic functions such as Focus and Topic are mapped between ForcePhrase, which encodes the illocutionary force of the sentence, and FinPhrase, which encodes information about the finite or non finite character of the sentence.

in the left periphery of the clause. Given the discourse functions analysed in this papers, we propose that the higher discourse adverbial is hosted in [Spec, ForceP], whereas the lower one is hosted in [Spec, TopP].

Hinterhölzl and Petrova's (2010-2011) study shows that also in OHG different syntactic structures served the pragmatic organization of discourse; from their analysis of the sentences deviating from the Latin source in the OHG translation of Tatian's *Harmonia Evangeliorum* it emerges that V1 sentences open new narrative sections, while V2 sentences continue the narration. They relate these pragmatic functions with the concept of Coordinating and Subordinating discourse relations: coordinating discourse relations set forth the narration on a higher level, opening new narrative sections to be further elaborated, while subordinating discourse relations provide further information about higher elements of discourse.

Interestingly, Hinterhölzl and Petrova note that V1 sentences are in competition with V2 sentences introduced by *tho*, which introduce coordinating discourse relations as well.

For the present discussion it is important to recall that Van Kemenade and Los (2006) noted that main clauses with the order *þa/þonne* – Verb – Subject represent *discourse continuity*; this notion was not specified further in their work, but in light of the findings for OHG, it can be re-stated in terms of subordinating discourse relations.

Since sentences with the order *þa/þonne* – {Subject} – Verb – {Subject} behave similarly to sentences introduced by *her*, which in the Chronicle indicates a new year entry (cf. below), they can be analysed in terms of coordinating discourse relations, i.e. sentences that open a new narrative section.

The picture is complicated by the position of the subjects which appear both pre- and post-verbally both in sentences introduced by *her* and in sentences introduced by *þa/þonne*; in the following, the position of subjects is treated.

As far as the position of the subject is concerned, let us observe the following example:

- (20) Ða þy ilcan gere onforan winter þa Deniscan þe on Mersige sæton tugin hira scipu up on Temese.

Then in the same year, before winter, the Danish that were staying in Mersea, pulled their ships along the river Thames. (Chr. A, AN 894)

As was already noted by Vezzosi (1998) the order SV is not sufficient to label the clause as a subordinate one; in fact, this sentence is semantically independent, and is neither preceded nor followed by a second clause. If we look at the textual properties of this clause we can notice that it introduces a new narrative section: in this year entry the discourse revolves around a part of the Danish army which settled in Mersea. The perspective then changes to another part of the army, which had besieged Exeter, and when the perspective changes again to the army that had settled in Mersea, which is introduced with the sentence reported above.

As was already noted by Mitchell (1985), the temporal adverbs can also introduce new narrative sections; in this sense, they behave similarly to the particle *her*, which in the Chronicle introduces a new year entry. Also in sentences introduced by *her* the subject – independently of its discourse status – can either precede or follow the verb, as can be observed in the following sentences:

(21) Her [Ceawlin 7 Cuþa]_{New} fuhton wiþ Brettas, in þam stede þe mon nemneþ Feþanleag.

In this year Ceawlin and Cuþa fought against the Britons, in the place that is called Battle Wood. (Chron. A, AN 584)

(22) Her on þysum gere foran to Eastron [Eadweard cyning]_{Given} het gefaran þa burg æt Tofecestre 7 hie getimbran; 7 þa eft æfter þam on þam ilcan gearre to gangdagum [he]_{Given} het atimbran þa burg æt Wigingamere.

Here in this here before Easter King Edward let proceed the stronghold at Towcester and build it. Then after that in the same year at Rogationtide he let build the stronghold at Wigmore. (Chron. A, AN 917)

(23) Her feng [Tiberius]_{New} to rice.

In this year, Tiberius took the kingdom. (Chron. A, AN 16)

- (24) Her for [se here]_{Given} of Eastenglum ofer Humbre muþan
 In this year the army went away from East-Anglia over
 the mouth of the [river] Humber. (Chron. A, AN 867)

The adverb *her*, moreover, can precede adverbial prepositional phrases and is never preceded by any constituents when it introduces a new year entry.

The pre- or post-verbal positioning of the subject may be due to an independent parameter; as was demonstrated by Van Kemenade and Westergaard (2012), lexical subjects can occupy a higher or lower position in the clause, depending on their discourse status. In view of the present analysis, this could be restated in terms of Focus structures; if the subject belongs to the focus domain, it is found after the verb, while if the subject is an aboutness topic, it is found before the verb, in the left periphery of the sentence. Hinterhölzl and Petrova (2010-2011) have demonstrated that in OHG clauses with the order SV are topic-comment structures, whereas V1 clauses generally introduce new information.

The evidence for OE points at a similar phenomenon also in this language; however, more data are needed in order to determine whether subject placement depends on its being the aboutness topic of the sentence, or on its belonging to the focus domain of the clause. This aspect is left for future research.

In order to test the assumptions about the two positions that *þa/þonne* can occupy, two narrative passages from the Anglo-Saxon Chronicles are examined, in order to determine the broader narrative sections within which the actions take place.

The first passage is the year entry 917, Chron A.:

Her on þysum gere foran to Eastron Eadweard cyning het gefaran þa burg æt Tofeceastre 7 hie getimbran; 7 **þa eft æfter þam on þam ilcan geare to gangdagum he het atimbran þa burg æt Wigingamere.** Þy ilcan sumera betwix hlafmæssan 7 middum sumera se here bræc þone friþ of Hamtune 7 of Ligeraceastre 7 þonan norþan 7 foron to Tofeceastre 7 fuhton on þa burg ealne dæg, 7 þohton þæt hie hie sceolden abrecan, ac hie þeah awerede þæt folc þe þærbinnan wæs oþ him mara fullum to com, 7 hie forleton þa þa burg, 7 foron aweg. 7 **þa eft swiðe raþe æfter þam hie foron eft ut mid stælherge nihtes**

7 comon on ungearwe men 7 genomon unlytel ægþer ge on mannum, ge on ierfe betweox Byrnewuda 7 Æglesbyrig. Þy ilcan siþe for se here of Huntandune 7 of Eastenglum 7 worhton þæt geweorc æt Tæmeseforda 7 hit budon 7 bytledon 7 forleton þæt oþer æt Huntandune 7 þohton þæt hie sceoldon þanon of mid gewinne 7 mid unfriðe eft þæs landes mare geræcan 7 foran þæt hie gedydon æt Bedanforda; 7 þa foran þa men ut ongean þe þærbinnan wæron 7 him wiþ gefuhton 7 hie gefliemdon 7 hira godne dæl ofslogon. **Þa eft æfter þam þa giet gegadorode micel here hine of Eastenglum** 7 of Mercnalande 7 foran to þære byrig æt Wigingamere 7 ymsbæton hie utan 7 fuhton lange on dæg on 7 namon þone ceap onbutan; 7 þa men aweredon þeah þa burg þe þærbinnan wæron 7 þa forleton hie þa burg 7 foron aweg. **Þa æfter þam þæs ilcan sumeres gegadorode micel folc hit on Eadwardes cynges anwalde of þam niehstum burgum** þe hit [*]ða gefaran mehte, 7 foron to Tæmeseforda. [...]¹³

¹³ Here in this year before Easter King Edward ordered them to go and build the stronghold at Towcester; and then after that, at Rogationtide in the same year, he ordered them to build the stronghold at Wigmore. The same summer, between Lammas and midsummer, the raiding-army from Northampton and from Leicester and north of there, broke the peace and went to Towcester and fought against the stronghold all day, and thought that they would be able to break it down. However, the people who were inside there defended it until more help came to them; and then they left the stronghold and went away. And then again very soon after that, they went out again by night with predatory bands, and came on men unprepared, and seized not a little, both in men and in property, between Bern Wood and Aylesbury. At the same time the raiding-army went from Huntingdon, and thought that from there they would reach more of the land again with war and with hostility; and went so that they got at Bedford, and the men who were inside there went out to meet them, and fought against them and put them to flight, and killed a good part of them. Then yet again after that, a great raiding-army gathered from East-Anglia and from the land of Mercia, and went to the stronghold at Wigmore and besieged it, and fought it long into the day, and seized the cattle round about; nevertheless, the men, who were inside there, defended the stronghold, and then they [the Danes] left the stronghold and went away. Then after that, the same summer, a great tribe gathered together in King Edward's domain, from the nearest strongholds who could travel to it [...], Swanton (2003: 101-102).

The sentences highlighted in bold entail a change of setting, of subject or of time; in the first sentence, the setting changes from the time before Easter to Rogation days, and from a stronghold to another. The opening sentence of the passage and the second sentence – the one introduced by *þa* – represent two independent sequences, which can be argued to be on the same discourse level.

The second sentence highlighted in bold opens the scene for a new raid, while the third and the fourth deal respectively with the gathering of a new army and of a multitude.

The last three events open the scene for the subsequent actions, which are contained within these units; in this passage, the sentences introduced by *þa* followed by one or more adverbial phrases and the verb represent coordinating discourse relations.

Moreover, in the same passage, the following sentences can be found:

Þa æfter þam þæs forhraþe gegadorode micel folc hit on hær-
fest, ægþer ge of Cent, ge of Suprigum, ge of Eastseaxum, ge
æghwonan of þam nihstum burgum, 7 foron to Colneceastre,
7 ymbsæton þa burg [...].

Then very quickly after that a great tribe gathered together in
harvest-time, both from Kent and from Surrey and from Essex,
and from the nearest strongholds everywhere, and went to
Colchester and besieged the stronghold. (Swanton 2003: 102)

Þa giet æfter þam þæs ilcan geres foran to Martines mæssan for
Eadweard cyning mid Westsexna fierde to Colneceastre [...].
Then still after that, before Martinmas the same year, King Ed-
ward went with a West Saxon army to Colchester [...]. (Swan-
ton 2003: 103)

Also these sentences open a new narrative scene, entailing a change in subject or a change in setting.

The second passage presented here is the year entry 755 (757):

[...] 7 se Cynewulf oft miclum gefeohtum feaht uuþ Bret-
walum, 7 ymb .xxxī. wintra þæs þe he rice hæfde, he wolde

adræfan anne eþeling se was Cyneheard haten, 7 se Cyneheard wæs þæs Sigebryhtes broþur; 7 þa geascode he þone cyning lytle werode on wifcyþþe on Merantune 7 hine þær berad 7 þone bur utan beode ær hine þa men onfunden þe mid þam kyninge wærun; 7 þa ongeat se cyning þæt 7 he on þa duru eode 7 þa unheanlice hine werede oþ he on þone eþeling locude 7 þa ut rædde on hine 7 hine miclum gewundode, 7 hie alle on þone Cyning wærun feohtende oþ þæt hie hine ofslægenne hæfdon **þa on þæs wifes gebærum onfundon þæs cyninges þegnas þa unstillnesse** 7 þa þider urnon swa hwelc swa þonne gearo wearþ 7 radost 7 hiera se eþeling gehwelcum feoh 7 feorh gebead 7 hiera nænig hit geþicgean nolde. Ac hie simle feohtende wæran oþ hie alle lægon butan anum Bryttiscum gisle 7 se swiþe gewundad wæs. [...] ¹⁴

Also in this passage, the sentence highlighted in bold opens a new narrative section; the perspective in fact moves from the king's chamber to the king's thegns, who hear the woman's cries and rash to battle.

Finally, another piece of evidence in favour of the view presented here is given by the following sentence, which opens a new year entry:

(25) Ond þa sona æfter þæm on ðys gere for se here of

¹⁴ [...] And that Cynewulf often fought great battles against the Britons; and 31 years after he took the kingdom, he wanted to drive out a certain aetheling who was called Cyneheard; and that Cyneheard was that Sigeberth's brother. And then he [Cyneheard] heard that the king, with a small troop, was in the company of a woman at Merton; and he rode after him there, and surrounded the chamber before the men who were with the king became aware of him. And then the king perceived this, and he went to the door and then defenden himself in no disgraceful way until he caught sight of the aetheling, and then rushed out on him and greatly wounded him; and they were all fighting against the king until they had killed him. And the from the woman's cries the king's thegns became aware of the disturbance, and whoever then was ready and quickest ran there; and the aetheling offered each of them money and life, and not any of them wanted to accept it; but they were fighting continuously untile they all lay [dead] except for one British hostage, and he was very wounded. [...] (Swanton 2003: 46-48).

Wirheale on Norðwealas.

And then soon after that in this year the army went away
from Wirral into North-Wales. (Chron. A, AN 894)

Since the discourse markers found at the extreme left periphery of the clause involve the opening of a new narrative section, entailing a shift in time, place or subject, it is reasonable to treat them separately from the discourse markers that demarcate the focus domain of the clause.

When judged only from the surface order, the discourse markers in sentences with the order Disc. marker > given adverbial prepositional phrase > {Subject}> Verb > {Subject} or Discourse marker> Verb > Subject the discourse marker seem to occupy the same position. However, the two types of sentences encode different pragmatic functions, namely coordinating and subordinating discourse relations respectively. Moreover, the following examples provide syntactic evidence also for a second syntactic position for the discourse markers, lower than Wh-phrases:

(26) Ac he **þa** gehat swiðe yfele gelæste, 7 swiðe wraðe geendode mid manegum mane.

But he then commanded such evil to be done, and very wickedly ended with many men. (Boethius, p. 6, lines 8-9).

(27) Hu meahst þu **þonne** mænan þæt wyrse & þæt ladre nu ðu ðæt leofre hæfst gehealden?

How can you mean that you have conserved the worse and the evil as your dearest possession? [coboeth, Bo:10.22.2.356]

As far as the concept of subordinating discourse relations is concerned, let us observe example (14), reported here as (28) within its broader context:

(28) Her Hengest 7 Æsc fuhton wiþ Brettas in þære stowe þe is gecueden Crecganford 7 þær ofslogon .iiiiim. wera, 7 **þa Brettas þa forleton Centlond 7 mid micle ege flugon to Lundenbyrg.**

In this year Hengest and Æsc fought against the Britons in the place that is called Crayford and there they killed four thousands of men and the Britons then left the land of Kent and with great dread they fled to London.

The sentence highlighted represents a further action within the same narrative sequence; the subject can be argued to be an aboutness topic and is therefore removed from the focus domain.

Finally, let us observe the following example:

- (29) Her wæs Wala gefeoht 7 Defna æt Gafulforda 7 þy ilcan geare gefeaht Ecbryht cyning 7 Beornwulf cyning on Eilendune 7 Egbryht sige nam 7 þær wæs micel wēl geslægen. **Þa sende he Eþlwulf his sunu of þære fierde 7 Ealhstan his biscep 7 Wulfheard his aldormon to Cent micle werede [...].**

In this year [there] was a battle [between] the Britons and and the [people] of Devonshire at the Tax Ford and the same year King Egbert and King Beornwulf fought at Eilendun and Egbert had the victory and there was a great slaughter. Then he sent his son Ethelwulf and Ealhstan his bishop and Wulfheard his ealdorman from the army into Kent with a great force. [...] (Chron. A, AN 823)

In this example, the sentence highlighted is embedded within the narrative section introduced with the year entry and provides further information about it.

In this section, the discourse properties of the patterns found in the corpus have been discussed, and a structure for the left periphery of the OE clause has been proposed. It can be shown that the syntax of OE was also influenced by discourse needs, a fact that is evident in passages such as the episode of Cynewulf and Cyneheard or in the passage about King Edward; in this passage, the sentences introduced by *þa* and followed by an adverbial phrase change the setting and open a new scene, to which the following sentences provide further developments. These

pieces of evidence provide information about how the texts were structured and how texts can be interpreted.

Recall, however, that the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle is the main source for variation in patterns, presenting patterns B, C and E, which were not found querying the electronic corpus of Old English, moreover, only in the Chronicle *her* is used as a marker for a new narrative section.

Moreover, *þa* and *þonne* are not totally de-void of their temporal meaning, even though their content can be argued to be bleached in some contexts.

Finally, it has to be noted that the presence of these discourse markers is not always obligatory, since material can be moved to the left periphery also in the absence of a discourse marker, as in the following example:

- (30) On twam þingum hæfde God þæs mannes sawle
 gegodod. (ÆCHom I, 1.20.1)
 With two things God had endowed man's soul.
 (Van Kemenade – Westergaard 2012:92)

The proposal as to which syntactic projections the discourse markers occupy needs to be tested further.

6. Conclusions and open questions

Building on the traditional literature and on the proposal put forth by Van Kemenade and Los (2006), the interaction between discourse and the temporal adverbs *þa* and *þonne* in main clauses was analysed. The analysis is based on the empiric evidence obtained by analysing the patterns found in the Old English corpus; it has been proposed that also in main clauses these adverbs can occupy two positions, one at the extreme left periphery of the clause, and one found before the inflected verb. When found in the first position, these adverbs introduce a new narrative section; this assumption is based on the observation that they

occupy the same position as the adverb *her*, which in the Chronicle introduces a new year entry and precede Adverbial prepositional phrases, the subject and the inflected verb. The study of their function in the text seems to support this view, moreover, one of the examples discussed opens a new year entry; the conclusion has been drawn that the sentences introduced by these adverbs in the extreme left periphery constitute coordinating discourse relations.

Building on the analysis of Van Kemenade and Los for subordinate clauses, it has been proposed that the discourse adverbs found in the lower position demarcate focus structures; the definition for focus proposed by Lambrecht (1994) accounts also for the presence of given material in the focus domain, since according to this definition the focus is established via the relations built among the discourse referents within the information flow. Moreover, Van Kemenade and Los' (2006) observation that main clauses with the order *þa/þonne-Verb-Subject* constitute *discourse continuity* has been restated in terms of subordinating discourse relations.

Furthermore, it has been postulated that the subject can be found before or after the inflected verb, due to its being the topic of the sentence or of its belonging to the focus domain of the clause. More research is needed to determine whether there are other factors responsible for the positioning of the subject.

This research confirms the view held in Petrova and Solf (2011) that the left periphery of the Old English clause consists of a cascade of functional projections, devoted to the positioning of pragmatic features; the present paper proposes that the particles *þa* and *þonne*, as well as *her* in the Chronicle, occupy the highest one, probably Force, as well as the specifier of Topic Phrase.

As was argued for in Section 3, Old English is a discourse configurational language, which had at its disposal a system of demonstratives and particles, which served as a textual tracking devices. These elements, being light and having a deictic origin, constitute candidates to be hosted in these functional projections at the left periphery of the clause.

The conclusions drawn from this pilot study need to be analysed

further by employing more refined syntactic tests, as well as by extending the discourse analysis to a wider set of data.

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