

On the replacement of subordinating *then* with *when* in Middle English

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Introduction

The replacement of *then* with *when*

- (1) a. ac [**þa** he wæs þæt ger bisceop]
but then he was that year bishop

he witgode þæt se hælend sceolde sweltan for ðære þeode
he predicted that the Savior should die for that people

“But when he was bishop that year, he prophesied that the Savior
should die for the people’

(cowsgosp,Jn-[WSCp]:11.51.6768) (c. 990)

- b. but [**whanne** he was bischop of that 3eer,]
but when he was bishop of that year

he prophesiede, that Jhesu was to die for the folc
he prophesied that Jesus was to die for the folk

‘But when he was bishop that year, he prophesied that Jesus would
die for the people’

(CMNTEST,11,40J.1143) (c. 1383)

(e.g., Mitchell 1985: §2775, Declerck 1997: 58-63)

Measurement

Texts used in this study

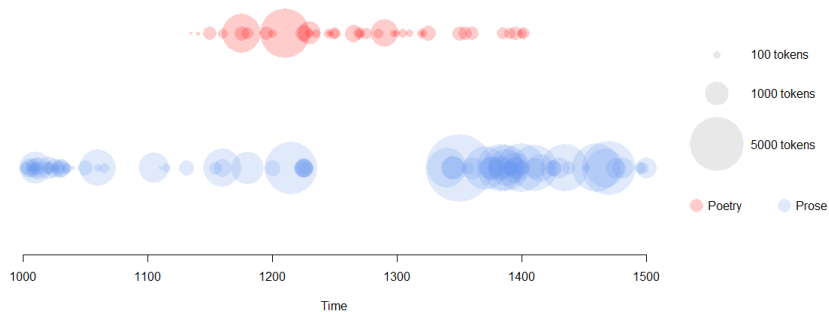


Figure 1: Temporal distribution and size of poetry and prose texts



then in Middle English

(2) a. **Present tense - þan**

and [_{CP} þan hie fulle beð.] hie secheð to þe fule floddri.
and then they full are they seek to the foul mire

'And when they are full, they desire the foul mire [of drunkenness]'
(CMTRINIT,37.511)

b. **Past tense - þo**

[_{CP} tho I escaped from hym] I loste myn one ere
then I escaped from him I lost my one ear

'When I escaped from him, I lost one of my ears'
(CMREYNAR,52.309)

Tense	<i>þo</i>	<i>þan</i>
present	23	247
past	231	45

Table 1: Tense in temporal subordinate clauses by subordinator form (Middle English texts only) ($\chi^2=307.0$, $df = 1$, $p<0.001$)

(Kivimaa 1966, Yamakawa 1969, Wårvik 1995)

- (3) ... þæt he wyle abidan, [_{CP} **hwænne** he hire eað gewrecan
... that they will abide when they theirs easily avenge
muge]
might

'...so that they will wait [instead] when they might easily avenge their
[sense of injury]'

(coalcuin,Alc_[Warn_35]:215.154)

The rise of subordinating *when*

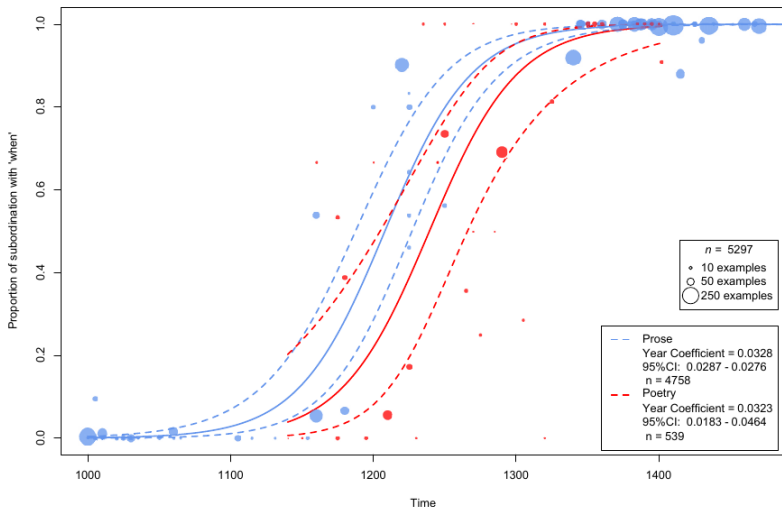


Figure 2: The development of temporal subordination with *when*

Illustration I

(4) *The Rhymed Pater Noster (Lambeth Homily no. [6]), c. 1160*

- a. we nabben wil to sunegen.
we not-have will to sin

[_{CP} **penne** ure unwines us munegen]
then our enemies us tempt

'We have no will to sin when our enemies tempt us'
(PatNost,72.63.144)

- b. to gode solf we us wreið;
to God self we us accuse

[_{CP} **hwenne** we þos word seggeð]
when we these words say

'We denounce ourselves to God himself when we say these words'
(PatNost,93.65.182)

Illustration II

(5) *Havelok the Dane*, c. 1290

- a. [_{CP} **þan** he was ded,] þere micte men se
then he was dead, there might men see

þe meste sorwe that micte be
the most sorrow that might be

'When he was dead, one could see, the greatest sorrow that could
ever be'

(*Havelok*, 8.233.107)

- b. [_{CP} **Hwan** he wore come,] sket was þe erl yare,
when he was come, quickly was the earl ready,

Ageynes denshe men to fare,
against Danish men to go

'When he had arrived, the earl was ready right away to advance
against the Danish'

(*Havelok*, 73.2575.1188)

Analysis

Analysis as free relatives

- (6) ... he of deaðe aras,
... he of death arose

þa [_{IP} he cydde [_{CP} þæt [_{IP} he ær mihte ful eaðe deað
then he announced that he earlier might full easily death
forbugan gyf he swa wolde]]]
escape if he so wanted

' ... [that] he arose from death when he earlier announced that he would very easily escape from death if he so desired'
(cowulf,WHom_6:182.363)

- (i) probably not high construal: # at the time that he made the announcement
(ii) probably low construal: at the exact time of his announced escape from death

(Haegeman 2010)

Analysis as free relatives

- (7) sum vnsele haueð **hwenne** [_{IP} ha seide [_{CP} [_{IP} ha schriue hire.]]]
some unsouly had when she said she shrived her,
ischriuen hire alto wunder.
shriven her al-to wonder

'[Only] a wretched woman has, when she said she shrove herself,
[actually] shriven herself wondrously'
(CMANCRIW-1,II.56.537)

- (i) probably not high construal: # at the time that she made the
assertion
(ii) probably low construal: at the exact time of her supposed
self-confession

Why did the change happen?

A) French influence

(8) a. *Anglo-Norman French*

E [CP **quant** il est de quatre annees] il doit partyr hors de
and when he is of four years he must part out of
la soundre par age.
the sounder by age.

'And when he [=boar] is four years old, he ought to depart out of
the sounder because of his age.'

William Twiti's *Le Art de Venerie*, edition: Dryden (1843: 2),
c. 1320

b. *Middle English*

and [CP **when** they be of .iiij. yere age] they shall departe fro
and when they be of four year age they shall depart from
the sounder for age
the sounder for age

'And when they [=boars] are four years old, they will depart from
the sounder because of their age.'

John Gifford's translation, *Le Venery de Twety*, edition: Wright and
Halliwell (1845: 151), c. 1410

A) French influence

- (9) Forþi blisce I þat paramour
therefore bless I that loved-one

[_{CP} **Quen** I haue nede me dos socure,]
when I have need me does assistance

‘Therefore I bless that loved one [who] when I have need, helps me’
The (Northern) Cursor Mundi, edition Morris (1874-1893: 12, lines
69-70), c. 1300

B) Analogical extension from other *wh*-elements

(10) a. **Relative clause formed with indeclinable particle *þe***

æfter me cymð [DP wer [CP **þe** me beforan geworden wæs]]
after me comes man that me before become was

'A man comes after me who was made before me'

(cowsgosp,Jn-[WSCp]:1.30.5791)

b. **Middle English innovation: subject relativized by *which***

Aftir me is comun [DP a man, [CP **which** was maad bifor me]]
after me is come a man which was made before me

'A man has come after me who was made before me'

(CMNTEST,1,20J.63)

B) Analogical extension from other *wh*-elements

(11) a. **Locative relative introduced by there**

in [_{DP} the same place [_{CP} **there** the grete batayle was,]] ys grete
in the same place there the great battle was is great
tresoure hydde in the erthe
treasure hidden in the earth

'In the same place where the great battle was, a great treasure was hidden in the earth'
(CMMALORY,30.947)

b. **Middle English innovation: place relativized by where**

I com but late oute of [_{CP} the Waste Foreyste [_{CP} **where** I
I came but late out of the waste forest where I
founde the Rede Knyght]]
found the red knight

'I came only late out of the desolate forest where I had found the red knight'
(CMMALORY,667.4880)

B) Analogical extension from other *wh*-elements

(12) a. **Argument free relative introduced by that**

Ich have y-doo [_{DP} [_{CP} **pat** y schulde]]

I have done that I should

'I have done what I should' (CMPOLYCH,VIII,111.3726)

b. **Middle English innovation: argument free relative formed with what**

here after y schal doo [_{DP} [_{CP} **what** me nedeþ]]

here after I shal doo what me needs

'Hereafter, I shall do what I need' (CMPOLYCH,VIII,111.3727)

B) Analogical extension from other *wh*-elements

(13) a. **Old English the while that construction**

and he wunode þa swa on his broðor hirede [_{DP} þa hwile
and he lived then so in his brother's court the while
[_{CP} ðe he leofode]]
that he lived

'And he lived thus in his brother's court while he was alive'
(Chronicle2:ChronC_[Rositzke]:1041.3.1801)

b. **Middle English innovation: introduction of subordinator while**

& ðat lastede þa xix wintre [_{CP} wile Stephne was king]
and that lasted the 19 years while Stephen was king

'This lasted the nineteen years while Stephen was king'
(CMPETERB2,56.452)

C) Loss of conditioning word order

(14) **Verb-second after operator adverb then**

[_{CP} **pa** [_{C'} *aras* [_{IP} he]]]
then arose he

'Then he arose' (cowsgosp,Mk-[WSCp]:2.14.2301)

C) Loss of conditioning word order

(15) Verb-final after subordinator then

ac sume dæge on ærnemergen [CP þa [IP he of slæpe awoc,]]
but some day on early-morning then he of sleep awoke
he abræc into ðam bure
he broke into the bower

'But some day, in the morning, when he awoke from sleep, he broke into her bedchamber'
(coapollo, ApT:1.10.9)

(16) Verb-medial after subordinator then

... gelice þam þe Iudeas didon [CP þa [IP hi mængdon
... like to-that that Jews did then they mixed
eced and geallan togædere]]
vinegar and gall together

'... similar to what the Jews did when they mixed vinegar and bile together'
(cocanedgD, WCan_1.1.1_[Fowler]:39.48)

C) Loss of conditioning word order

- (17) Ða het se papa hine to biscope gehalgian & hine on
then ordered the pope him to bishop consecrate and him to
Breotone sende.
Britain sent

Ða com he ærest upp in Westseaxum & heo þær hæðne
then came he first up to West-Saxons and them there heathens
gemette,
met

þa ðuhte him nyttre & betre þæt he ðær Godes word
then seemed him more-useful and better that he there God's word
bodade & lærde.
preached and taught

'Then the pope had him ordained bishop and sent him to Britain.

(i) # Then / at that point he first came to the West-Saxons

(ii) When he first came to the West-Saxons

and met them there as heathens, then it seemed better to him that he
should preach God's word'

(cobede, Bede_3:5.166.27.1609-1613) (Andrew 1940: §§11-12)

C) Loss of conditioning word order

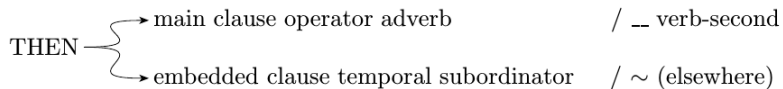


Figure 3: Word order conditioning on the interpretation of *then*

C) Loss of conditioning word order

- (18) **Tho** the screwe was overcome; Sori he was and wo.
then/when the villain was overcome, sorry he was and woe
- (i) 'Then the villain was overcome. He was sorry and miserable.'
(adverb)
- (ii) 'When the villain was overcome, he was sorry and miserable.'
(subordinator)
- (Fridesw,43.55)

Hypothesis testing

H1: Time courses compatible with causation?

- (19) **Hypothesis 1:** *Time Course of Decline in Verb-Second after then and Rise in when*

If one measures the decline in verb-second order after *then* and the rise in subordinating *when*, one should find that the former change commences earlier than, but does not become implemented excessively before, the onset of the latter change.

(20) Chaucer's *Parson's Tale*, c. 1390

And [_{CP} moore shame [_{C'} *do* [_{IP} **they** to Crist, than dide they that
and more shame do they to Christ than did they that
hym crucifiede,]]]
him crucified

'And they do more shame to Christ than do those who crucified him'
(CMCTPARS,309.C1.891)

Generalized V-to-C in Middle English

(21) *The Book of Vices and Virtues*, c. 1400

and [_{CP} many wordes [_{C'} *fynde* [_{IP} **we** þat scheweþ vs wel what is
and many words find we that show us well what is
of him]]]
of him

'And we find many words that show us well what it is about him'
(CMVICES4,102.112)

(22) *The Book of Margery Kempe* c. 1435

“Nay,” he seyde, “[_{CP} þat [_C wyl [_{IP} I not grawnt 3ow]]]”
no he said that will I not grant you

“No,” he said, “That, I will not grant you.” (CMKEMPE,24.504)

Tracing V-to-C through the history of English

(23) Middle English

a. Object - Verb ... Pronominal subject (408 examples)

And þus [_{CP} **þe comun vndyrstondyng** [_{C'} *schulden* [_{IP} we
and thus the common understanding should we
algatis holde]]]
all-ways hold

'And thus we should hild the common understanding in every
respect' (CMWYCSE, 348.2183)

b. Object ... Pronominal subject ... Verb (1280 examples)

[_{CP} **Syche dowtis** [_{CP} we *schulden* sende to þe scole of
such doubts we should sent to the school of
Oxenforde]]
Oxford

'We should send such doubts to the school at Oxford'
(CMWYCSE, 370.2585)

Rise and Fall of Generalized V2

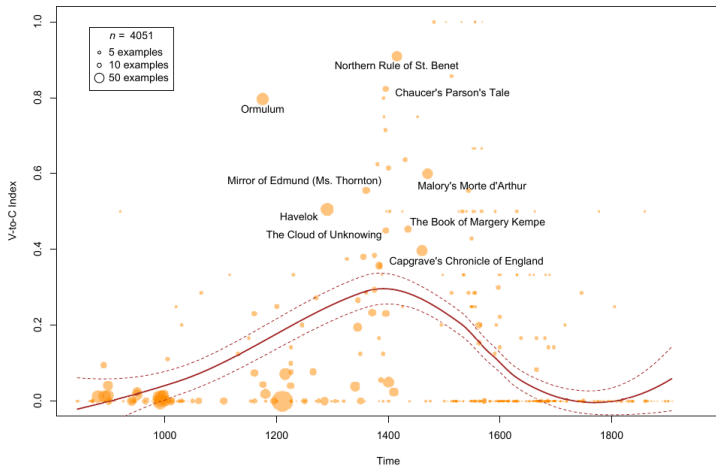


Figure 4: Development of the V-to-C index in the history of English

(Kroch and Taylor 1997, Nevalainen (1997), summarized in Fischer et al. (2000: 132–4))

Variation between V2 and 'subject -verb' after *then*

- (24) a. [_{CP} **Da** [_{C'} *cusen* [_{IP} *hi an cleric*]]]
then chose they a clerk
'Then, they chose a clerk' (CMPETERB1,43.55)
- b. and [_{CP} **þan** [_{CP} [_{IP} *þei chose Jon þe XXII*]]]
and then they chose John the 22
'And then, they chose [Pope] John XXII'
(CMCAPCHR,141.3280)
- (25) a. [_{CP} **þen** [_{C'} *come* [_{IP} *our lady to hur*]]]
then came our lady to her
'Then, our lady came to her' (CMMIRK,110.3014)
- [_{CP} **Then**, [_{CP} *on þe morow*, [_{CP} [_{IP} *mongkes come to hym*]]]]
then on the morrow monks came to him
'Then, the next morning, some monks came to him'
(CMMIRK,100.2723)

Loss of V2 after *then*

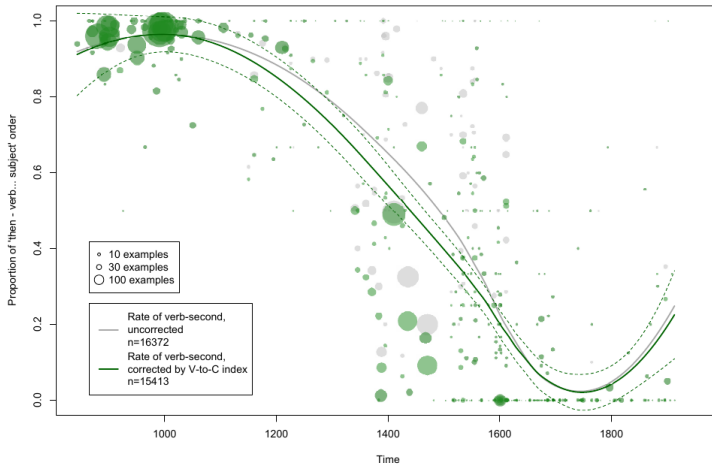


Figure 5: Development of V2 after *then* in the history of English

Evaluation: Time courses of the two changes

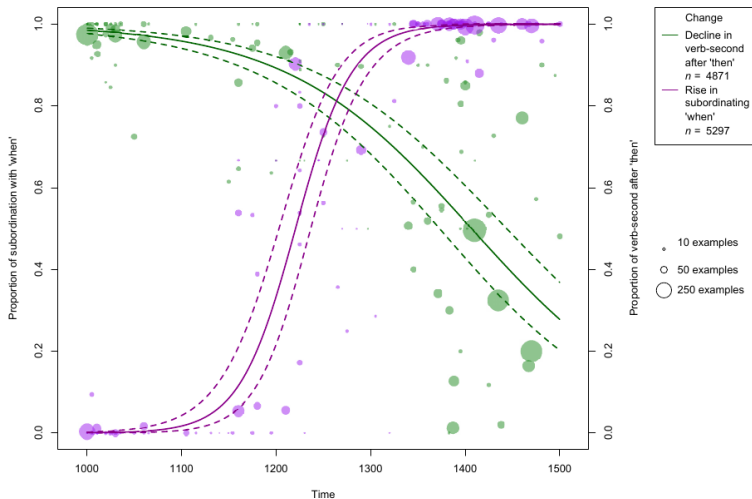


Figure 6: Time courses of decline in V2 and rise of *when*

H2: Effect of alternative subordinating strategy

- (26) **Hypothesis 2:** *Effect of Alternative Subordinating Strategies*
If the temporal subordination data is subdivided into those cases that involve an alternative indication of embedding and those cases that do not, one should discover an overall lower probability of *when* in the former than the latter context.

Correlative constructions

(27) a. [_{CP} [_{ADVP} **þa** he lai an slep in scip,]
then he lay in sleep in ship

[_{CP} [_{ADVP} **þa**] [_{C'} þestrede [_{IP} þe dæi ouer al landes]]]
then darkened the day over all lands

'When he lay asleep in the ship, then the day became dark in all the lands'

(CMPETERB2,54.380)

b. [_{CP} [_{ADVP} **wane** þi lust is ago,]
when your lust is gone

[_{CP} [_{ADVP} **þonne** [_{C'} is [_{IP} þi song ago also]]]
then is your song gone also

'When your desire has passed, your song has passed also'

(OwlNight,46.508.296)

(Kemenade and Los 2006, Links and Kemande 2013; for a short historical summary, see Fischer et al. 2000: 88-9)

- (28) a. [_{ADVP} [_{ADVP} þa] [_{CP_REL} þa me hine to beheafdunge lædde. ...]]
- then then one him to beheading led
- ‘When he was led to his beheading ...’
 (cojames,LS_11_[James]:110.102)
- b. [_{ADVP} [_{ADVP} þanne] [_{CP_REL} huanne we ziggeþ ‘vader oure’ ...]]
- then when we say father our
- ‘When we say the Lord’s Prayer ...’ (CMAYENBI,101.1985)

Overt complementizer

- (29) a. and [_{CP} **þa** [_{C'} **þe** [_{IP} he wæs twelf wintra]]] he gewilnode
and then that he was twelve winters he wanted
to westene
to wasteland
'And when he was twelve years old he wanted [to go] to a desert'
(coelive,ÆLS_[Martin]:23.5986)
- b. And [_{CP} **whan** [_{C'} **that** [_{IP} they knewe that they were naked,]]]
and when that they knew that they were naked
they sowed of fige leves a maner of breches
they sewed of fig leaves a manner of breeks
'And when they realized that they were naked, they made some
kind of pants from fig leaves'
(CMCTPARS,297.C1.369)

Independent signals of subordination

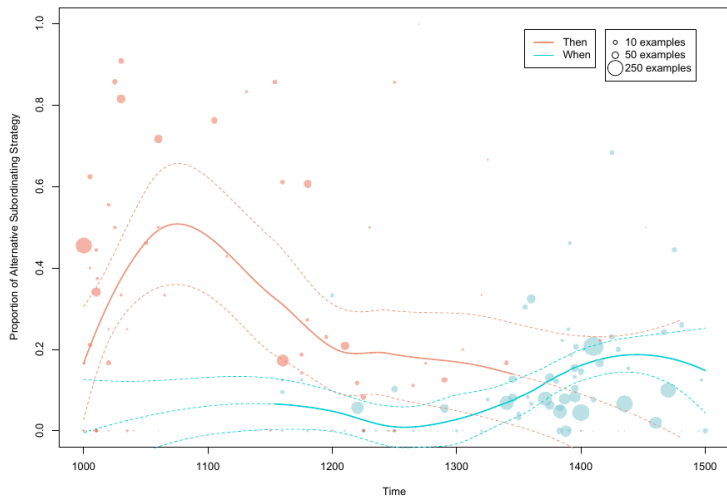


Figure 7: Frequency of alternative subordinating strategies over time

Evaluation: Rise of *when* in two environments

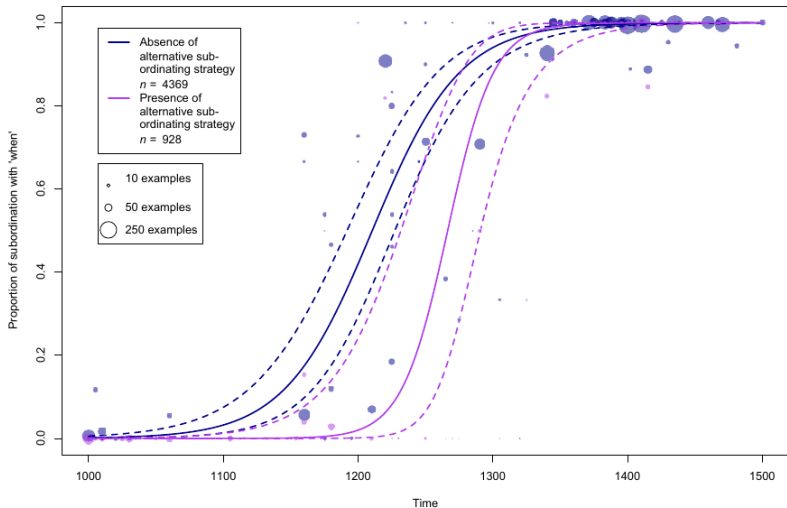


Figure 8: Rise of *when* by time and alternative subordinating strategy

Conclusion

Thank you for your attention!

“Concepts without percepts are empty, percepts without concepts are blind”

(I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B75)

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