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A corpus study of and as a subordinating conjunction from Middle English to Early Modern English

## 1. Introduction

Conjunctions are usually divided into two subgroups: coordinating and subordinating conjunctions. Although this categorisation is obviously valid, there are overlaps and – as Kortmann (1997) asserts – we can even talk about polyfunctionality among conjunctions. Thus (adverbial) subordinators can function as coordinators (e.g. *weil* 'because' in colloquial German), and coordinating conjunctions can introduce subordinate clauses as well. During the history of the English language *and* functioned not only as a coordinator but also as a conditional subordinator.

The aim of the present paper is to study the use of *and* as a subordinator in conditional clauses. The linguistic data will be drawn from two corpora, the *Penn-Helsinki Parsed Corpus* of *Middle English (PPCME2)* and the *Penn-Helsinki Parsed Corpus* of Early Modern English (*PPCEME*). The texts considered are presented in detail in the Appendix.

# 2. Background

In this section, I discuss *and* as a subordinating conjunction in the light of a number of previous studies. Section 2.1. focuses on the origin and lifespan of *and* 'if', section 2.2. on possible contact influences giving rise to the use as a subordinator.

## 2.1. Origin and lifespan

According to the *Dictionary of Old English (DOE)* (s.v. and conj.), the beginnings of the conditional and can be placed in the Old English (OE) period, cf. gelīce and... meaning 'like as if'. A number of scholars see Middle English (ME) as the period when the use of and in the meaning 'if' emerges. Mitchell (1985:§3668) seems to agree with the *Oxford English Dictionary (OED)* which places the first occurrence of conditional and into the Early Middle English (EME) period: the *OED* cites two examples from Layamon's Brut as the first relevant instances (*OED s.v.* and, conj. formerly prep. IV.C.). The *Middle English Dictionary (MED)* cites an example from the EME Lambeth Homilies as the earliest instance of conditional and. (*MED s.v.* and (conj. (& adv.)) 5). Fischer (1992:348), who sees the subordinator use as a development from the coordinator and, regards and 'if' as a later ME addition to the list of subordinators.

If most scholars see *and* 'if' as a ME innovation, how close to the present time does its lifespan extend? Several scholars discuss the use of *and* in the meaning 'if' in Early Modern English (EModE). Kortmann (1997:293) gives a list of adverbial subordinators which include an(d) if in ME *an* if and an(d) in EModE. Visser (1966:§880) observes the use of conditional *an* both in ME and in EModE, with possible variants *and* and *an* if; for EModE he also gives the aphetic form *nif*. Rissanen (1999:281) points out the decline of *and* (or *an*) as a conditional subordinator in EModE as compared to ME.

The conditional and can be found even in Present-Day English (PDE), not only in Irish or Scottish English but also in colloquial PDE. (Kortmann 1997; Rissanen 1999:281-2). For American English, Curme (1931:318-323) mentions the use of and or its variant an in the meaning 'if' in certain dialects today: "An is still to be heard in our southern mountains and here and there in New England".

It is worth pointing out that the relative frequency of and 'if' over the long diachrony has not received a systematic discussion in the literature so far. There is, then, all the more reason to apply quantification to the data examined in this essay.

#### 2.2. Is the rise of the subordinator use of and due to contact influence?

It is possible that the subordinator use of and arose in English as the result of a languageinternal development. As Rissanen (1999:281) puts it, "[t]his conditional/concessive use of an(d) may have arisen from a simplified correlative use in which an(d) loosely expresses various relations between two clauses."

It has, however, also been suggested that language contact might have triggered the subordinator use of and. The OED puts forward Old Norse enda as a possible source for the conditional use of and. Klemola and Filppula (1992) propose two factors where and 'if' can derive from. According to one hypothesis, it might have Latin origin, but the difficulty with this theory is that "Latin models typically lack overt subordinators" (315). According to another hypothesis the conditional and could stem from Celtic languages, where subordinate clauses introduced by a subordinator meaning 'and' are rather similar to subordinate and clauses in ME and EModE. Here is an Old Irish example from Klemola and Filppula 1992:

"do ·bertis cech n-olc from os-messe oc taircitul cech maith dóib-som 'they used to inflict every evil on me, though I was (lit. and I) prophesying every good to them" (315-16).

Celtic languages continue using the subordinating 'and' constructions. Here is a comparable example from Irish English, cited from Klemola and Filppula 1992. In such a 'Celtic' variety of English, contact influence from Irish is very plausible. It is to be noted, however, that the semantics of the non-finite and clause is not conditional, or concessive as in the previous example, but it rather expresses temporal simultaneity (Klemola and Filppula 1992):

"Well, I seen the time you'd buy a farm for...five or six hundred... Seen farms selling and I a young lad" (316).

It is also worth noting that Kortmann 1997, when discussing the polyfunctionality of conjunctions, points out that "a coordinating conjunction introducing an undoubtedly subordinate clause is a well-known phenomenon in Celtic languages and...was clearly not uncommon in earlier stages of other Western European languages" (61).

The main aim of this essay is not to try to find a solution to the question whether the conditional and in English is a native development or due to contact influence. However, the fact that in my ME corpus, the conditional and is relatively more frequent in West Midland texts than in texts representing any other dialect would fit the Celtic contact hypothesis quite well (see further sections 3.2. and 6.1. below).

# 3. Research: methods and process

My specific target in this paper is to examine the use of the conditional subordinator and in Middle English and in Early Modern English. I will thus take prose texts from both periods and analyse them. The chronological coverage is roughly from 1150 to 1710. I wish to find out the exact rate of occurrences of and 'if' conditional clauses (and possible spelling variants) in these two periods. In addition to the diachronic analysis, I will also look at diatopic variation. This is naturally only possible with texts for which dialect is given as a separable parameter.

As already pointed out in section 1, two corpora will be utilised in my study. Both the PPCME2 and the PPCEME are based on the relevant parts of the Helsinki Corpus. As the two corpora contain different numbers of prose texts, and as those texts differ in length, also relative numbers will be taken into consideration. In both parts all the texts containing and conditionals will be considered, and analyses according to diatopic and diachronic variation will be carried out. The lack of sufficient number of examples in certain dialects and/or periods might be due to the relative limited number of manuscripts available in the parsed version of the Penn-Helsinki Corpus (as compared to the Helsinki Corpus, for instance).

## 3.1. Types of conditionals

We can divide conditionals into "positive" and "negative" types. These types can be realised by both if and and. Table 1 is based on my corpus material. For a brief discussion of the ME subordinators, see also Mustanoja 1960:469.

Positive	Negative
1a. if/and	1b. if/and not
2a. and if <sup>1</sup>	2b. but if/and (=unless)
3a. what if/and	3b. unless
4a. no conjunction	4b. no conjunction
inversion	inversion

Table 1.

This study only concentrates on the positive and types, excluding those instances where no subordinator introduces the conditional clause (4a). During the analysis certain problems arose, however. The first complication concerns subcategory 2b where the but if/and sequence occurs: there are many instances where – seemingly – this combination occurs, but where but itself functions as a coordinating conjunction separating two clauses, one of which is a conditional clause introduced by and. In such cases, the item is categorised as an example of subcategory 1a and is obviously counted. Another problem is found in clauses from 1a: it often happens that and instead of introducing a conditional clause introduces a reported question. These clauses are not included in the analysis.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> The *OED* uses the expression "strengthening effect" when *and* and *if* stand together (*OED s.v.* and, conj. formerly prep. IV.C.1.b.). Kortmann (1997), on the other hand, says: an(d) 'if' + if' if' = an(d) if; this produces a polymorhemic subordinator where both elements express the same function/meaning. "There is an element of redundancy involved here." (312)

## 3.2. Penn-Helsinki Parsed Corpus of *Middle English*

The Middle English section of the Diachronic Part of the Helsinki Corpus of English Texts formed the basis of the text samples in the PPCME2. It includes almost 1.2 million words of running text in 55 text samples. Table 2 lists the distribution of word count according to both diatopic and diachronic distribution. In accordance with the Helsinki Corpus there are four subperiods (ME1, ME2, ME3 and ME4), and five dialectal areas in Middle English (Kentish, Northern, Southern, East-Midlands, and West-Midlands).

	ME1	ME2	ME3	ME4	Total
	(1150-1250)	(1250-1350)	(1350-1420)	(1420-1500)	
Kentish	4316	51.914	-	-	56.230
Northern	-	-	18.470	11.070	29.540
Southern	-	-	104.179	43.834	148.013
East-Midlands	130.804	45.035	207.831	178.972	562.642
West-Midlands	116.802	-	81.092	162.152	360.046
Total	251.922	96.949	411.572	396.028	1.156.471

Table 2.

The 55 parsed prose texts were put under scrutiny in order to explore the regularity (if possible) of and-clauses, and the contrast in the rate of occurrence between the two types of conditional clauses. From this examination it emerged that the ME part of the Penn-Helsinki Corpus contains 100 instances of and used in the sense of 'if'. Those instances appear in 23 texts (in addition to the regular if-clauses). There is one text (CMINNOCE), where, interestingly enough, the only conditional clause is introduced exclusively by and, "And he breke them he is sharpely corrected" 'If he breaks them, he will be sharply corrected'. Considering the other types of conditionals there is another text (CMREYNAR) where the combination of the two subordinating conjunctions, and if, occur, "But and yf he wolde haue comen hyther he myght haue ben here" 'but if he would have come ..., he might have been here'. The combination what and is not represented among the ME instances.

The first conditional and can be found in ME1 in The Lambeth Homilies (West Midland dialect). Like ME1, ME2 has only one example of and 'if' (Kentish dialect). A sudden increase can be seen in ME3 with 22 instances in eight texts. In ME4, however, there is an abrupt rise in the number of and-occurrences: 76 and-conditionals divided between 13 texts. Thus the number of and-conditional clauses reaches its peak during the ME4 period; a considerable number of and-instances can be observed in the West Midland dialect: 79% out of all and-clauses occurred there in ME4. Table 3 shows the distribution of and-conditionals according to both diachronic and diatopic distribution.

Period/Dialect	ME1	ME2	ME3	ME4
Kentish	Ø	CMKENTSE: 1	Ø	Ø
East Midland	Ø	Ø	CMCLOUD: 11	CMAERL4: 1
			CMWYCSER: 1	CMCAPCHR: 1
			CMMANDEV: 1	CMINNOCE: 1
				CMJULNOR: 1
				CMKEMPE: 4
				CMREYNAR: 3
				CMVICES4: 1
West Midland	CMLAMBX1:1	Ø	CMBRUT3: 1	CMMALORY:50
			CMEDVERN: 3	CMMIRK: 7
				CMSIEGE: 3
Southern	Ø	Ø	CMAERL3: 2	CMGREGOR: 1
			CMHORSES: 2	CMROYAL: 2
			CMPOLYCH: 1	
Northern				CMROLLEP: 1
Total	1	1	22	76

Table 3.

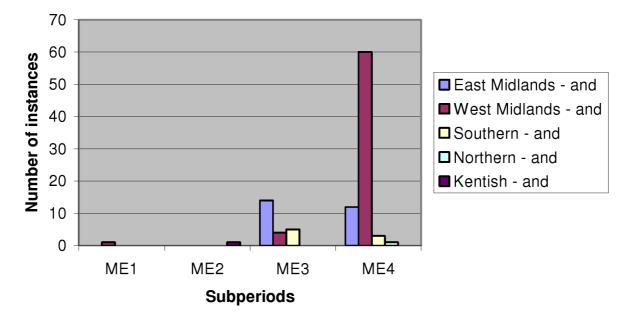


Diagram 1.

When diatopic criteria are taken into consideration, it turns out that there is one dialect area, viz. the West Midlands, where in ME4 the and-clauses are in substantial majority considering all types of conditionals. Because of this rather unexpected result it would be beneficial to examine texts originating from the same dialectal area in EModE as well. It is regrettable, however, that in the *PPCEME* the diatopic distribution of the manuscripts is not available.

As to genre distribution, the following observations can be made: the majority of andconditionals occur in Romance (53%), then in Religious Treatise (14%); the distribution between the text types is, however, rather wide – as seen in Table 4. Table 4 presents absolute numbers; relative numbers will be considered in a later study. Diagram 2 represents the cumulative percentages from ME1 to ME4.

	ME1	ME2	ME3	ME4
Homilies	1% (1)	1% (1)		
Religious Treatises			14% (14)	8% (8)
Sermon			1% (1)	10% (10)
Travelogue			1% (1)	
History			2% (2)	2% (2)
Handbook – Medicine			2% (2)	
Fiction				3% (3)
Romance				53% (53)
Rule			2% (2)	

Table 4.

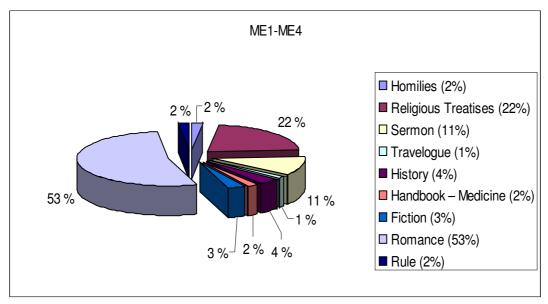


Diagram 2.

# 3.3. Penn-Helsinki Parsed Corpus of Early Modern English

The Penn-Helsinki Parsed Corpus of Early Modern English consists of almost 1.8 million words. The corpus itself is divided into three subcorpora:

- -the Helsinki part consists of roughly 573,000 words;
- -the Penn1 part consists of roughly 615,000 words;
- -the Penn2 part consists of roughly 606,000 words.

The two Penn parts are supplements to the Helsinki part; they mostly contain text samples written by the same authors as in the Helsinki part. Penn2, however, contains more new material than Penn1. In accordance with the Helsinki Corpus itself all the three directories are divided into subperiods, viz. E1, E2, and E3. Table 5 presents the distribution of word counts in both subcorporal and diachronic respects.

	Helsinki	Penn1	Penn2	Total
E1 (1500-1569)	196,754	194,018	185,423	576,195
E2 (1570-1639)	196,742	223,064	232,993	652,799
E3 (1640-1710)	179,477	197,908	187,631	565,016
Total	572,973	614,990	606,047	1,794,010

*Table 5.* 

Due to the twofold supplementation in the *PPCEME*, the number of the texts analysed, 192 in all, is almost four times as high as in the Middle English part. Interestingly enough, PPCEME also contains 100 instances of and used in the sense of 'if' (this already suggests a decline in the number of occurrences). The distribution of those examples is, however, slightly different from that in *PPCME2*: and-conditionals can be detected in all subperiods in EME, as shown by Table 6. Those instances, however, appear in 13 texts (E1:3; E2:9; E3:1).

	E1	E2	E3		
And	85	14	1		
- 11 6					

Table 6.

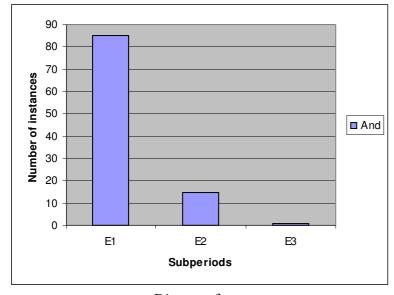


Diagram 3.

As far as the distribution in Table 1 is concerned, all types of combination with and were found in the corpus; thus the strengthening effect of if beside and (= and if) was represented in *PPCEME* as well, e.g. "for so they get more **and if** they went together" (HARMAN). The what if... combination also occurred in the form of what and ..., as in "what and it hadde beene any other man, and not your good dames husbande" (HARMAN), or "what and she come not" (UDALL).

The spelling variants are not as manifold as in the Middle English part; and, however, also had two spelling variants in the form of ampersand (&) and the phonologically reduced

form an. As mentioned above, the diatopic analysis is unfortunately not possible in this period since only those texts were put into the corpus which represents the standard British dialect. Still, another form of classification is feasible, namely the analysis according to genre. A considerable number of text types is accessible in the *PPCEME*, from biblical texts to private letters. Table 7 shows the actual genre-distribution of and-conditionals in each subperiod. Diagram 4 represents the cumulative percentages from E1 to E3.

	<b>E</b> 1	E2	E3
Fiction	12% (12)		
Biography	16% (16)	4% (4)	
Drama - Comedy	38% (38)	3% (3)	$1\% (1)^2$
Handbook	3% (3)	1% (1)	
Letter – non-private	2 % (2)	1% (1)	
Letter – private	3% (3)	3% (3)	
Proceedings, trials	8% (8)		
Sermon	1% (1)		
Philosophy	2 % (2)	1% (1)	
Travelogue		1% (1)	

Table 7.

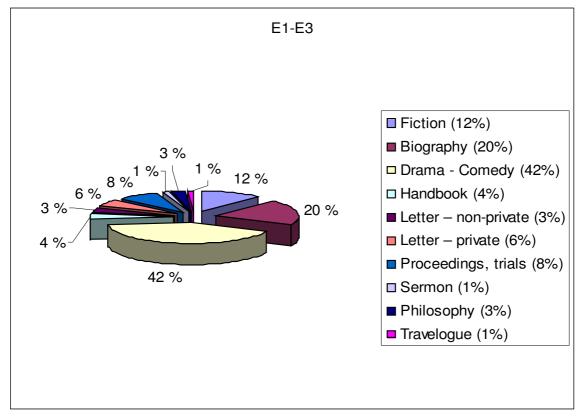


Diagram 4.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> According to the syntactic tagging of the PPCEME, there should be no subordinating *and* instances in E3. There is, however, one clear example of conditional an in this subperiod: "... and so your Honour wou'd have said, an you had seen how the poor thing stuck't." I am grateful to Dr Matti Kilpiö for pointing out this example to me.

And meaning 'if' occurs in ten text types; the majority can be found in Dramas, in E1. The number of and-instances in Biography and in Fiction is also noteworthy. In E2, however, there is a drastic fall in the use of and-clauses that ends in the almost total demise of andsubordinators in E3.

### 4. Diachronic variation from ME1 to E3

In the two corpora analysed both the rise and the decline of the subordinator and can be clearly seen. The first and-instance is found in The Lambeth Homilies in ME1. This is in agreement with the evidence of the MED (see section 2.1. above). From my analysis of PPCEME it appears that at the end of the EModE period the conditional and (or its spelling variants, an or &) was still in use – very infrequently, however. What happened between ME1 and E3? This question will be answered with the help of relative numbers. (The importance of having a look at the relative numbers lies in the deficiency of the number of available texts in the two corpora as well as on the fact that these texts are varying in length.) Table 8 shows the relative frequencies per 10,000 words. In case of and-conditionals the relative frequency does not reach 1/10,000 from ME1 to ME3; in ME4, however, it exceeds that number, and the relative frequency is almost 2/10,000. Only a modest fall comes in E1, in E2, however, a drastic decline can be observed; this leads to an almost complete disappearance of andconditionals in E3. Diagram 5 shows the relative frequencies of and 'if' in all the subperiods studied.

	ME1	ME2	ME3	ME4	E1	E2	<b>E</b> 3
And	0,039	0,103	0,534	1,919	1,475	0,214	0,018

Table 8.

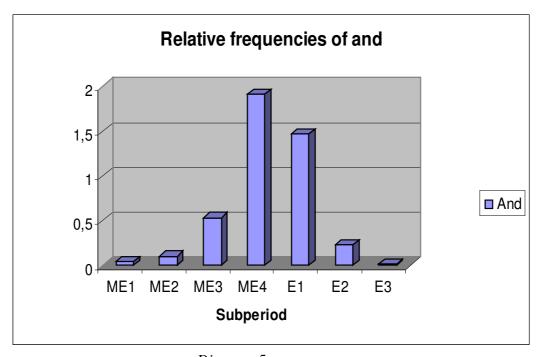


Diagram 5.

## **5.** Questions and tentative answers

## 5.1. Why the rise?

It is interesting why *and* 'if' was the dominant subordinating conjunction in one subperiod and in one genre, and not in others? And why did it emerge in the first place?

The rise (and spread) of the conjunction can be due to contact with the Celtic languages, as mentioned above, in section 2. If the usage already existed in any of the Celtic languages and came into contact with any English dialect, then it could have influenced that dialect. As far as the spread of the conditional *and* is concerned, the increase in the number of instances might not show the situation *de facto*. Laing (2000) mentions the possible role of some scribes: during the copying procedure it might have happened that the scribe arbitrarily converted the texts, or even translated them into his/her own dialect. Thus it can happen that the distribution of the *and*-conditionals was more uniform in each dialect than the present results show.

My own results concerning ME show that *and* 'if' is frequent in the West Midland dialect area. This tallies well with the Celtic contact hypothesis, given the geographical adjacency of this dialect area with areas where a Celtic language was spoken, like Wales. Accounting for the occurrence of the conditional *and* in seven East Midland texts in terms of direct Celtic influence is problematic: perhaps we could hypothesise that the contact influence leading to the use of *and* as a subordinator arose in the West Midland dialect area (cf. the early Lambeth Homily instance and the Layamon's Brut instances cited by MED), and spread to other dialect areas, particularly the East Midland area. There is, however, room for more work here.

## 5.2. Why the decline?

In connection with the decline of conditional *and*, the hypothesis of Culpeper and Kytö (2000) should be mentioned. They are of the opinion that the occurrence of *and*-conditionals was first minimalised and then disappeared in the EModE period. The reason for this might be that the use of the conjunction *and* became restricted: thus "other conjunctions might have been used instead of *and* for particular functions" (309). So after the period of Middle English the usage of both subordinating and coordinating conjunctions became more and more specified: *and* occurred less in the role of a subordinator until it became almost completely extinct.

On the other hand, the process of standardisation has most probably contributed to the 'tidying up' of the system of connectors in EModE, and the prescriptive tendencies of the 18<sup>th</sup> century must have worked in the same direction.

### 6. Conclusion

This paper aimed at examining the use of *and* as a conditional subordinator from the beginning of Middle English to the end of EModE. It also set out to prove that *and* 'if' played an important role in conditional clauses and thus it should not be overlooked when analysing such subordinate clauses. In the process of analysis it turned out that the use of *and* instead of *if* introducing conditional clauses was constantly increasing, especially towards the end of the ME period, while a continuous decrease characterised the EModE period.

With the examination of the two corpora studied, a quantitative diachronic survey could be presented, which also paid attention to diatopic and text typological factors. In order to get more precise and more reliable results, however, it would be advisable to look at other corpora from both periods as well, and study subordinate *and*-clauses from a variety of angles not touched upon in this essay.

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#### Access to electronic corpora and dictionaries:

The Dictionary of Old English. Fascicle F and Fascicles A-English (with revisions). CD-ROM Version 1.0

The Middle English Dictionary: http://www.ets.umdl.umich.edu/m/med/

PPCME2: http://www.ling.upenn.edu/hist-corpora/PPCME2-RELEASE-2/index.htm

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