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On the syntactic differences between OE dialects: evidence from the Gospels[1]

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Old English has traditionally been considered a period of linguistic homogeneity, since most available recorded texts are generally written in the West Saxon dialect. There are, however, isolated texts which have been ascribed to other varieties, in particular Northumbrian and Mercian. In fact, recent research on syntactic dialectology in early English (Kroch & Taylor 1997; Ogura 1999; Hogg 2004, 2006a; Ingham 2006) shows that linguistic variation has been present in the English language from the earliest times. This study reassesses the existence of variation in the syntax of texts belonging to different dialectal varieties in Old English, in particular in relative constructions. Based on an analysis of relative clauses in three versions of the Gospels from late Old English, representing West Saxon, Northumbrian and Mercian dialects, we will observe differences in the texts, regarding both the paradigm of relativizers and the position adopted by the relative clause within the main clause. I relate these differences to the existence of linguistic differences in northern and southern dialects.

1 Introduction

Recent research into syntactic dialectology in Old English (Kroch & Taylor 1997; Ogura 1999; Hogg 2004, 2006a; Ingham 2006) shows that linguistic variation has existed in English from the earliest times of the language. However, even a cursory glance at the literature on historical dialectology reveals that it is the Middle English period which has most often been addressed by linguists. The fact that research has focused almost exclusively on this period should perhaps come as no surprise. Strang hailed Middle English as 'par excellence, the dialectal phase of English' (1970: 224), and for Milroy it was the period that 'exhibited the greatest diversity in written language of any period before or since' (1992: 156). Indeed, for Milroy 'the label "Middle English" does not refer to a coherent entity, but to a complex series of divergent, rapidly changing and intertwining varieties retrospectively seen as transitional between "Old English" and "Modern English"' (1992: 157).

Reference books dealing with the history of the English language (Milroy 1992: 156; Fennel 2001: 108–9; Hogg 2006b: chapter 7) tend to agree that this diversity was

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less noticeable in both Old and Early Modern English. In Old English, this was due to the scarcity of available material and to the dominance of West Saxon, spoken in the southern part of England (with the exception of the Southeast, which had its own Kentish dialect), with West Saxon becoming the dialectal variety used in most prose texts extant today.[2] Despite the fact that the Old English language is – or has been considered – very limited and extremely homogeneous, especially in terms of dialect,[3] some evidence of other dialects exists, in a small number of documents listed by Toon (1992: 427). As for Early Modern English, most written evidence adopts the 'standard' variety of the London area, leaving us once again with a relatively homogeneous set of historical data. Thus Middle English stands out in historical dialectology as the period of the English language for which the most comparable texts remain at our disposal.

In spite of the scant research on Old English dialectology, it is generally acknowledged that there must have been dialectal variation from the very beginning, bearing in mind that from the fifth century onwards the island was populated by five different nations. And, indeed, the few available studies here confirm this. Toon (1992: 429–33), for example, has highlighted significant differences between the northern dialectal area (comprising Northumbrian and Mercian dialects) and the southern area (including West Saxon and Kentish). In this North–South divide, northern dialects are generally considered the linguistically more innovative ones, with more resistance to the incorporation of new forms observed in the South. It is generally assumed that innovation in these northern dialects stems from the eighth- and ninth-century Scandinavian invasions, while the southern dialects continue their own linguistic traditions, a point made by Milroy, who is tempted to 'suggest that a history of relatively strong contacts with Danes and (to a lesser extent) Normans may be implicated here, and that traditional forms survived where these contacts were less strong' (Milroy 1992: 181).

Those few studies available have observed dialectal differences at the levels of orthography, phonology and lexis. Grammar, and especially syntax, has remained almost wholly overlooked until recently, with little research carried out into syntactic dialectal variation. The reasons for this are firstly, that there are few texts in prose to base research on, and secondly, that the available data consist principally of Latin-based originals, which have generally not been considered entirely satisfactory for the study of syntax. In spite of these data-related problems, the aim of the present study is to assess whether the limited dialectological evidence for Old English allows us to argue in favour of different geographic variants from a syntactic perspective. In particular, I will pay attention to processes of relativization, as regards both the

[2] Although it is not relevant for this article, it is obvious that there should have been intradialectal variation within West Saxon (see Hogg 2006a for further information).

[3] According to Hogg (2006a: 395), Old English texts are not only homogeneous dialectally speaking, but also from a social point of view. Due to the social constraints of the time, texts most commonly come from men belonging to the upper social classes, who were educated, and who were very likely to be of a certain age (see also Fischer 2007: 13).

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paradigm of relativizers and the position adopted by the relative clause within the main clause.

Following Milroy's suggestion, we might assume that in a situation of language contact there would be grammatical changes,[4] and that syntax, though neglected in the linguistic literature, would nevertheless have an important role to play in dialectal variation. Southern dialects, in particular West Saxon, were affected by external influences only later in their development, and thus show greater allegiance to their own traditions in the Old English period than their northern counterparts. In terms of the distribution of relativizers in West Saxon, Mitchell (1985: §2165) and Fischer et al. (2000: 59), among many others, note the clear preference for the invariable relativizer *þe* (equivalent to PDE *that*) over the pronominal relativizers, both simple (*se/seo/þat*) and compound (*seþe/seoþe/þatþe*) (equivalent to PDE *who/which*), or the almost nonexistent relativizer zero (equivalent to PDE zero). As regards the position adopted by the relative clause, West Saxon shows a clear tendency against embedding (Carkeet 1976; O'Neil 1976). Therefore, assuming that northern dialects are different from southern ones, I would expect a different distribution of relativizers and differences in the position adopted by the relative clause with respect to West Saxon in those texts belonging to dialects which may have been influenced by language contact, that is, Northumbrian and Mercian.

The article is organized as follows. A description of the corpus (section 2) is followed by a brief revision of what little research has been done on syntactic dialectology in Old English, in particular on word order and negation (section 3). The following section illustrates the variation of relativizers, and the position that the relative clause has with respect to the main clause in the texts under analysis. Finally, concluding remarks are offered (section 5).

2 Description of the corpus

As noted above, the evidence illustrating the different dialects of Old English is very patchy, especially in the case of non-West Saxon dialects (see Hogg 2006b: 355). However, a small number of such documents are included in the *Helsinki Corpus of English Texts: Diachronic and Dialectal*, and these have been used to obtain the data for the present study. In order to minimize internal variation and to avoid possible bias in the sample, the corpus has been kept as homogeneous as possible in terms of register, date and size. Thus, from the *Helsinki Corpus* we have selected excerpts of a comparable number of words from three prose biblical texts, all dating from the same period (950–1050). These are the *Lindisfarne Gospels*, classified as a Northumbrian text; the *Rushworth Gospels*, the part classified as a Mercian text; and, finally, the *West*

[4] Changes motivated by language contact are also observed in pidgins (Holmes 2001: 81, 83). See, for instance, the development of relativizers in Tok Pisin, from the deictic marker *ia* to a function word (Romaine 1984).

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Saxon Gospels, classified as West Saxon.[5] In the three cases only the fragments included in the *Helsinki Corpus* have been analysed. All of them are Latin-based originals, the former two glosses and the latter a translation.

Although Latin-based texts are generally not used in the study of syntactic variation, since they may rely too heavily on the original and hence reflect no variation of the language under study, in the case of Old English, excluding these texts would drastically reduce the available material.

Examples (3) and (4) below demonstrate that there are indeed differences in the selection of relativizers irrespective of the original.[6]

The *Lindisfarne Gospels* were written in about the year 700, but not until the late tenth century did the English version appear, in Northumbrian dialect, adapted by Aldred of Chester-le-Street, a town close to Durham (for more information see Hogg 2006a). This text is of greatest relevance here, since it is the most valuable evidence of the Northumbrian dialect of Old English.

The *Rushworth Gospels* are divided into two parts: the first comprises the Gospel of St Matthew (the section included in the *Helsinki Corpus*, and therefore the part analysed for the present research), part of the Gospel of St Mark and part of the Gospel of St John. The English version was made in Lichfield by a scribe named Farman, by the late tenth century, using spelling which has been classified as Mercian.[7]

Finally, the *West Saxon Gospels* were ascribed to different priests, amongst them Ælfric of Eynsham. The English version of this text dates from the late tenth century and follows the orthographic conventions of West Saxon.

Hence my corpus contains texts representing three of the four traditionally recognized major Old English dialectal areas (Toon 1992: 414–28; Hogg 2006a), which distribute as follows:

(i) Northumbrian, spoken to the north of the river Humber;
(ii) Mercian, spoken in the area between the rivers Thames and Humber;
(iii) Kentish, spoken in the south-eastern area (Kent and part of Hampshire);
(iv) West Saxon, spoken in the rest of the southern area.

In total, the corpus contains ca. 29,000 words and has rendered 548 examples of relative clauses, as set out in table 1.

[5] The dialect ascription provided by the *Helsinki Corpus* has been rigorously followed. For further information on the location of these texts, see Hogg (2006a) and Fernández Cuesta, Rodríguez Ledesma & Senra Silva (in press).

[6] Differences in the degree of Latin influence in the English texts are generally observed. It has been demonstrated by Taylor (2008) that Latin has a statistical effect on a particular OE structure. Nunally (1992) and Kÿto and Rissanen (1993) showed no effects of translation from Latin. Timofeeva (2008) demonstrates that there is no one-to-one correlation; it really depends on the translator and on the text.

[7] The second part was written in the Northumbrian dialect by a scribe named Owun (Hogg 2006a).

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Table 1. *Description of the corpus*[8]

Dialect	Text	No of words	No of tokens
Northumbrian	*Lindisfarne Gospels*	8,750	143
Mercian	*Rushworth Gospels*	10,290	171
West Saxon	*West Saxon Gospels*	9,920	234
Total		28,960	548

3 Dialectal variation in Old English syntax

Most studies of Old English language pay exclusive attention to West Saxon. Indeed, other dialects have seldom been studied. Nevertheless, some distinctive features characterizing the different dialects have been recognized. These features are mainly concerned with orthography, phonology and lexis, with most available regional indicators pertaining to one of these three. Far fewer regional indicators have thus far been identified in the fields of morphology and, especially, of syntax. To the best of my knowledge, the only corpus studies conducted to date on historical dialectology at the level of syntax concern word-order patterns and negative concord in Old English. The findings of these studies will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

With respect to word-order patterns, there is no agreement as to the unmarked word order in Old English, as noted by Denison (1993: 28) when he states that 'whether Old English should be labelled SVO or SOV is far less clear'.[9] Kroch & Taylor (1997) observe variation in Old English word orders and conclude that the most conservative dialects – southern dialects – show a variant of the IP-V2[10] type (like modern Yiddish and Icelandic), since movement of the finite verb to the second position of the clause is observed both in main and subordinate clauses. In the North, however, the verb-second constraint is of the CP-V2[11] type (also known as 'the northern V2 grammar'), as in modern mainland Scandinavian, German and Dutch, in the sense that movement of the finite verb to the second position of the clause is only allowed in main clauses. Kroch and Taylor hypothesize that such a difference in the implementation of the verb-second constraint arises as a consequence of contact-induced simplification in the verbal agreement paradigm of the northern dialect.

As to the negative concord constraint, there is agreement that Old English was a negative concord language (see, for instance, Fischer et al. 2000: 54). Ingham (2006), however, demonstrates that Old English texts provide clear evidence of a dialectal split in how negative concord was syntactically conveyed. He shows that West Saxon texts exhibit a marked preference for symmetrical use of the negative particle of Old English

[8] No texts from the Kentish dialect are available in this subperiod of the *Helsinki Corpus*.

[9] For more information on Old English word orders see van Kemenade (1987) and Pintzuk (1995).

[10] IP-V2 = inflectional phrase, verb-second language. In Government and Binding theory IP refers to a maximal projection and represents the position to which the verb moves in IP-V2 languages.

[11] CP-V2 = complementizer phrase, verb-second language. In Government and Binding CP refers to the largest unit of grammatical analysis and represents the position to which the verb moves in CP-V2 languages.

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ne in clauses containing a negative indefinite (i.e. symmetry in negative concord) (example (1), from Ingham 2006: 241), as opposed to non-West Saxon texts, which indicate a clear preference for the asymmetric type of negative concord (Ingham 2006: 245) (example (2), from Ingham 2006: 241).

(1) þæt heo **nanne** æfter hyre **ne** forlete
that she none after her NEG leave
'That she should leave none behind after her.' (*Martyrology* 210, 27)

(2) þæt he **næfre** godes geleafan forlete
that he never god's belief give up
'That he should never give up believing in God.' (*Martyrology* 34, 5)

Regarding relativization, the available literature is not very illuminating in terms of dialects, and most information is based on descriptions of West Saxon. Therefore, my intention in the corpus analysis here is twofold. Firstly, I aim to analyse the differences among the selected texts concerning the choice of relativizers and the position that the relative clause occupies with respect to the main clause. Additionally, I aim to observe whether the existing differences between the Latin and Old English versions of the Gospels in the codification of relativization (see examples (3) and (4)) can be attributed to the fact that they belong to different dialects.

(3) Ac seo tid cymð & nu is þonne soþe gebedmen gebiddaþ Fæder
But the time comes & now is when true adorers adore Father
on gaste & on soðfæstnesse witodlice Fæder secþ swylce [RC **þe** hyne
in spirit & in truth certainly Father seeks such rel him
gebiddon.]
adore
'But the hour comes and now is, when the true adorers shall adore the Father in spirit and in truth. For sure the Father also seeks those who adore him.'
(Latin version: Sed venit hora et nunc est quando veri adoratores adorabunt Patrem in spiritu et veritate nam et Pater tales quaerit **qui** adorent eum.)
[Q O3 XX NEWT WSNEW 4:23][12]

(4) of þe soþlice gæþ latteuw [RC seþe ræccet folc min israhæl].
from you truly go captain rel rule people my Israel
'From you shall truly go the captain, who shall rule my people Israel.'
(Latin version: ex te enim exiet dux **qui** reget populum meum Israhel)
[Q O3 XX NEWT RUSHW 2: 6]

In examples (3) and (4) the same Latin relativizer (the pronominal *qui*) is conveyed by a different relativization strategy in the Old English version. In (3), from the *West Saxon Gospels*, the alternative chosen is the invariable relativizer *þe* (like PDE *that*). By contrast, example (4), from the *Rushworth Gospels*, chooses the pronominal compound *seþe* (equivalent to PDE *who*). The differences between these two examples suggest that Latin-based texts are syntactically more diverse than is usually supposed and that they therefore appear to be a valid resource for the study of syntactic variation in

[12] With the exception of examples (1), (2) and the example included in footnote 21, all the examples are quoted from the *Helsinki Corpus*.

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early English. Actually, relative clauses in Latin are always introduced by a pronominal relativizer (*qui/quae/quod*) and they immediately follow the NP antecedent they modify. As will be demonstrated in sections 4.2 and 5.2, the texts under analysis in this study contain relative clauses introduced by up to four different relativizers and they may adopt up to three different positions within the main clause.

4 Relativizers in Old English

4.1 Description

Three main relativization strategies have been available throughout the history of the English language,[13] which allows us to establish a formal distinction between the following types of relative clauses in Present-day English:

– *Wh*-relatives (illustrating the pronominal relativization strategy), introduced by a form of the paradigm of the pronominal relativizers, as in:

(5) The person [RC with whom I usually go to exotic countries] is a box of surprises.

– *That* relatives (illustrating the invariable relativization strategy), introduced by an invariable complementizer:

(6) The class [RC that I have enjoyed most] was about relative clauses in early English.

– Zero or unintroduced relatives (illustrating the gap relativization strategy):

(7) The song [RC Ø I was thinking about] suddenly started to play on my favourite station.

The same three relativization strategies were present in Old English (Traugott 1992: 224–8; Fischer et al. 2000: 58–61):

a. Pronominal relativization strategy: represented by a simple (*se*) or a compound (*seþe*) relativizer, agreeing in number and gender with the antecedent they refer to and in case with the syntactic function they realize in the relative clause. This relativization strategy is illustrated in examples (8) and (9):

(8) ofslog ealle þa cnehtas [RC þa þe werun in bethlem]
killed all the boys rel were in Bethlehem
'(Herod) killed all the boys who were in Bethlehem.'
[Q O3 XX NEWT RUSHW 2: 16]

(9) & gebaed hine se wer [RC of ðæm ða diowblas ferdon] þætte . . .
& entreated him the man of rel the devils went that
'And the man from whom the devils were departed entreated him that . . . '
[Q O3 XX NEWT LIND 8: 38]

The relative pronoun appears at the front of the relative clause irrespective of its syntactic function (subject in (8) and complement of a pied-piped preposition in (9)). It agrees in gender and number with its antecedent, and its case depends on the syntactic function it realizes in the relative clause. Example (8) is an example of a relative clause introduced by a compound pronominal relativizer (*þa þe*) in the nominative form and (9) of a simple pronominal relativizer (*ðæm*), declined as dative.

[13] See Keenan (1985: 146–55) and Givón (1993: 124–7) for a complete classification of relativization strategies.

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b. Invariable relativization strategy: represented by *þe* and *þat* relative clauses, as the following examples illustrate respectively:

(10) æghwilc þara [RC þe forleteþ his wif butan forlegennisse þinge vel
any of those rel abandons his wife except fornication circumstance or
intinga] he deþ þæt hiu dernunge licgæ
cause he does that she secretly lies
'Anyone who abandons his wife, except on account of her fornication, makes her commit adultery.' [Q O3 XX NEWT RUSHW 5: 32]

(11) wæs noma his se hælend [RC þætte geceiged wæs from engel aer ðon inna
was name his the healer rel called was from angel before in
geecnad]
conceived
'His name was The Healer, thus called by the angel before he was conceived.'
[Q O3 XX NEWT LIND 2: 21][14]

In both (10) and (11) the relativizer *þe* and *þætte* are invariable.[15] There is neither case nor gender agreement with the antecedent they refer to, namely, the pronominal element *æghwilc þara* 'any of those' in (10) and the singular masculine noun *se hælend* 'the healer' in (11).

Invariable *þe* is the unmarked invariable relativizer of Old English. From late Old English onwards, *þat* begins to be used as an invariable relativizer and supplants *þe* during the Middle English period.

c. Gap relativization strategy: represented by zero relative clauses, as in (12):

(12) & on somnunge wæs monn [RC Ø hæfde ðone dioul unclæne]
& in congregation was man rel had the devil unclean
'There was a man in the congregation who had an unclean devil.'
[Q O3 XX NEWT LIND 4.33]

Relativizer *zero* existed in Old English, but relative clauses similar to (12) were very uncommon, as we shall see in the corpus analysis in section 4.2. In most cases the relativized item functions as subject.

4.2 Distribution

Table 2 contains the overall distribution of relativizers in my Old English sample according to text. The pronominal relativizers *se* and *seþe* have been grouped together, whereas the invariable relativizers *þe* and *þat* have been kept separate. The reason is that pronominal relativizers – both simple and compound – were functionally alike

[14] Examples (11) and (15) from the *Lindisfarne Gospels* strengthen the Northumbrian provenance of the text due to the presence of the so-called 'Scandinavian stylistic fronted' constructions (Holmberg 1997; Trips 2003), syntactic constructions found in Scandinavian languages.

[15] The general view considers that these relativizers are subordinating particles functionally very similar to the prototypical complementizer which introduces complement clauses. According to Seppänen (1997, 2004) and Seppänen & Kjellmer (1995), these relativizers are clearly pronominal in nature. Whether pronominal or not, the invariable relativizers show behaviour different from the *se/seo/þæt* ones and will therefore be analysed as two different items in the present article.

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Table 2. *Distribution of relativizers*

	West Saxon	*Rushworth*	*Lindisfarne*	TOTAL
þe	202 (86.3%)	118 (69%)	58 (40.6%)	378
Se and *seþe*	30 (12.8%)	48 (28.1%)	79 (55.2%)	157
Invariable *þat*[16]	2 (0.9%)	4 (2.3%)	4 (2.8%)	10
Zero	–	1 (0.6%)	2 (1.4%)	3
Total	234	171	143	548

and distributed with similar frequencies throughout the Old English period; however, invariable *þe* was far more frequent in Old English than *þat*, which has been considered a late innovation and was finally consolidated as an invariable relativizer in Middle English.

Invariable *þe* is clearly favoured in the language of the *West Saxon Gospels* (86.3%). It also became the relativizer of choice in the *Rushworth Gospels* (69%), although it is considerably less frequent than in the previous ones. A very different situation prevailed in the *Lindisfarne Gospels* where the invariable *þe*, although present, was much less frequently used (40.6%). This situation deserves special attention because, as noted in section 1, invariable *þe* has been described as by far the most favoured relativizer in (West Saxon) Old English.

Regarding the pronominal relativizers (*se* and *seþe*), table 2 shows that although they are the second most frequent relativizers in the *West Saxon* (12.8%) and *Rushworth Gospels* (28.1%), they are much less frequently used than the invariable relativizer, especially in the former. Surprisingly, then, they become the clear favourite relativization strategy in the *Lindisfarne Gospels* (55.2%).

Finally, invariable relativizer *þat* is infrequent in all of the analysed dialects, with slightly greater occurrence in the *Lindisfarne* (2.8%) and *Rushworth Gospels* (2.3%). Does this mean that *þat* was becoming preferred as an invariable relativizer over *þe* and that this preference started from the northern dialects and spread towards the South? The number of examples is too low to draw any definite conclusions, but it is perhaps worth mentioning that in a recent study carried out on dialectal variation of relativizers in early Middle English (Suárez-Gómez 2008), it is observed that invariable *þat* began to supplant *þe* from the Midlands southwards. No texts from the North were included in that particular study because they were not available in the data from the *Helsinki Corpus*, though it is very likely that the substitution started from the North, bearing in mind that most linguistic innovations in the early history of the English language were first documented in the northern area.

As for the relativizer zero, the only information that can be retrieved from table 2 is that it is very infrequent, and scarcely used at all in any of the three analysed dialects.

[16] Nonambiguous cases of *þat* used pronominally (e.g. complements of a pied-piped preposition) have been conflated with pronominal relativizers, and cases of *þat* which are ambiguous between a pronominal and an invariable reading (e.g. relativizer functioning as subject/DO with a neuter antecedent) have been left out. The examples included in this cell are unambiguously invariable (example (11)).

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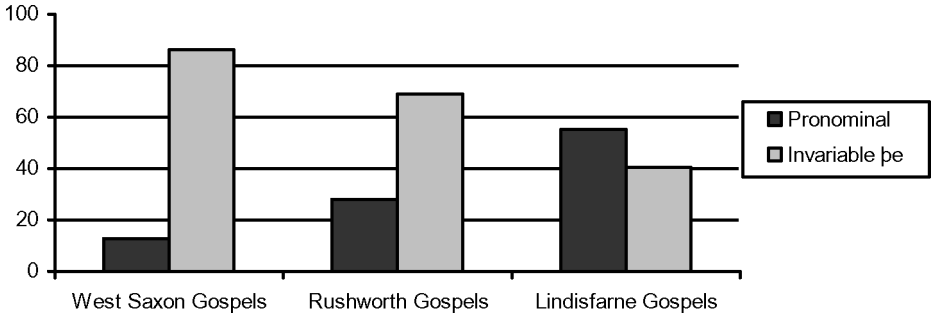


Figure 1. Distribution of relativizers (%)

Figure 1 above depicts more clearly the tendencies seen in table 2. Only the two most frequent relativization strategies have been included. Relativizer zero and invariable *þat* have been excluded because they are underrepresented.

In sum, what figure 1 nicely illustrates is the lower frequency of invariable *þe* in the *Rushworth Gospels* and, especially, in the *Lindisfarne Gospels*; the higher frequency of pronominal relativizers in the *Rushworth Gospels* and, most significantly, in the *Lindisfarne Gospels*; and finally, how the *Lindisfarne Gospels* differ from the *Rushworth Gospels* and, even more so, from the *West Saxon Gospels*.

5 Position of the relative clause

5.1 Description

Another important aspect of variation in Old English relative clauses is the position that the relative clause occupies with respect to the main clause. By position we refer to the linear order shown by the NP antecedent and the relative clause.

In Present-day English, relative clauses are postnominal and tend to immediately follow the antecedent they modify, irrespective of the function this realizes in the main clause. Therefore, if the antecedent functions as subject, the relative clause will most likely be embedded, as in (13), whereas if the antecedent functions as direct object, the relative clause will not be embedded, as in (14).

(13) The house [RC that I rent] has amazing views.
(14) I rent a house [RC that has amazing views].[17]

In earlier English, and especially in Old and early Middle English (O'Neil 1976), constructions such as (13) were available, but rarer than in Present-day English.

[17] 'Embedding' here departs from the generative view and is more in line with the functional view found in Foley & Van Valin (1984: chapters 5 and 6), Matthiesen & Thompson (1988) and Hopper & Traugott (2003: chapter 7). Otherwise, from a formal point of view, both examples would be similar, bearing in mind that in both cases the relative clause stands in the same syntactic relation to the noun *house*.

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There seems to be broad agreement that Old English syntax was characteristically paratactic, and that subordinate structures arose after the reinterpretation and subsequent reanalysis of originally paratactic structures, especially relative clauses. In fact, a number of strategies were available in Old English to avoid embedded relative clauses within the main clause (O'Neil 1976; Carkeet 1976; Hopper & Traugott 2003: chapter 7; Suárez-Gómez 2006a, 2006b). The most relevant strategies are the extraposition of the relative clause towards the end of the main clause, or, following Carkeet (1976: 45), the moving of the relative clause to the front by a rule of copying the antecedent. Through this strategy, the antecedent (normally the subject) and the relative clause are topicalized and referred to again by means of a copy pronoun (cases of left-dislocation), so that the subject is not separated from the main verb, as illustrated by example (17) below.

A threefold classification regarding the position of the relative clause in Old English has been proposed in different studies, distinguishing between embedded or intraposed, left-dislocated and extraposed relative clauses (O'Neil 1976; Hopper & Traugott 2003: chapter 7; Suárez-Gómez 2006a: 39–42). This classification has been adopted in the present study, although it has been simplified into two categories, as summarized below:

- Embedded or intraposed relative clauses, in which the relative clause and the antecedent follow each other, and the relative clause is embedded within the main clause, as in (15):

(15) Ða [RC ðe gecosted weron from gastum unclænum] weron gelecnad
those rel troubled were by spirits unclean were cured
'Those who were troubled by unclean spirits were cured.'
[Q O3 XX NEWT LIND 6.18]

Examples such as (15) resemble subject relative clauses of Present-day English (see example (13)), where the tendency is to embed the subordinate clause. The antecedent *ða* 'those' and the invariable relativizer *ðe* are adjacent, and the relative clause *ðe gecosted weron from gastum unclænum* 'who were troubled by unclean spirits' is intraposed within the main clause.

- Non-intraposed relative clauses. This category comprises relative clauses of two types:

(i) extraposed relative clauses: the relative clause is separated from the antecedent it refers to and placed at the end of the main clause,[18] as the following example illustrates:

(16) ælcne ðara þyrst eft [RC þe of ðyson wætere dringð]
any of-those thirsts again rel of this water drinks
'Anyone who drinks of this water will thirst again.'
[Q O3 XX NEWT WSNEW 4: 13]

[18] By 'extraposition' I do not assume a rightward movement of an intraposed element. Actually, taking into account that Old English was syntactically paratactic, it makes more sense to assume that intraposed structures are derived from extraposed ones.

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In this example the relativizer *þe* and the antecedent it refers to, *ælcne ðara* 'any of those', are separated by extraposing the relative clause *þe of ðyson wætere dringð* 'who drinks of this water' towards the end of the main clause;

(ii) left-dislocated relative clauses: the relative clause is displaced to the front of the main clause, together with the antecedent it refers to. The antecedent is then repeated in the main clause, as below in (17):

(17) And þa [RC þe þær asende wæron] þa wæron of sundorhalgon
And those rel there sent were those were of Pharisees
'And those who were sent these were of the Pharisees.'
[Q O3 XX NEWT WSNEW 1: 24][19]

In example (17), the relative clause *þe þær asende wæron* 'who were sent there' is moved to the front of the main clause together with the antecedent *þa* 'those'. This antecedent is then referred to by the third-person pronoun *þa* ('copy-pronoun') which functions as the subject of the main clause.

Extraposed and left-dislocated relative clauses have been subsumed here under the same label because both of them are syntactic alternatives which prevent the intraposition of the subordinate clause. Although syntactically different, from a functional point of view they serve the same purpose.

5.2 Distribution

In order to analyse the position that the relative clause occupies with respect to the main clause, many examples had to be excluded from the analysis, leaving only those which could potentially show variation in position. In fact, in most of the remaining examples, the relativized item is the subject, as with *ða* in example (15) above, or a topicalized complement, as with *þam* in example (18) below.

(18) þam [RC þe hyne gebiddað] gebyrað þæt hig gebiddon on gaste and on
to-those rel him adore happens that they adored in spirit and in
soðfæstnesse
truth
'It happens to those who adore him: they must adore him in spirit and in truth.'
[Q O3 XX NEWT WSNEW 4: 24]

Examples such as (11) and (12) also had to be excluded. Although the antecedent of example (12) functions as subject, it resorts to Subject–Verb inversion so as not to separate the antecedent from the relativized item (*mon* and *Ø*), thus avoiding embedding. In Subject–Verb inversion, however, there are some exceptional cases in which position is still relevant, as in examples (19) and (20), the first being a clear

[19] In examples (17) and (19) it can be argued that *þa þe* is a generalizing pronominal relativizer ('whoever'), instead or a demonstrative pronoun followed by a relative clause introduced by invariant *þe*, the analysis adopted here. An important piece of evidence supporting the latter analysis is provided by examples in which the relativizer functions as complement of a preposition, as the preposition appears stranded, providing unequivocal evidence for the invariant relativizer (see Allen 1980: 108).

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Table 3. *Distribution of relative clause position*

	West Saxon	*Rushworth*	*Lindisfarne*	Total
Non-intraposition	75 (67.6%)	41 (49.4%)	13 (32.5%)	129
Intraposition	36 (32.4%)	42 (50.6%)	27 (67.5%)	105
Total	111	83	40	234

case of intraposition and the second one of extraposition:

(19) Weron þonne þa [RC þe etum] siofun þusend weoras
Were then those rel ate seven thousand men
'Then those who ate were seven thousand men.'
[Q O3 XX NEWT RUSHW 15: 38]

(20) Hu mage ge gelyfan, [RC þe eow betweonan wuldor underfoð]
how may you believe rel you between glory receive
'How can you, who receive glory from one another, believe?'
[Q O3 XX NEWT WSNEW 5: 44]

In instances similar to (11), also excluded from the data, the antecedent functioning as subject complement appears in final position in the main clause, leaving no alternative position for the relative clause. Similarly, most examples in which the antecedent functions as complement (direct object, indirect object, prepositional object, etc.) had to be excluded – with the exception of examples such as (21) below – because the complement tends to be located in the final position of the clause, leaving no chance of variability. The exclusion of such examples explains the reduced number of tokens in table 3 in comparison with tables 1 and 2.

(21) se drihte ealdor þæs wines onbyrigde [RC þe of þam wætere geworden wæs]
the chief lord the wine tasted rel of the water turned was
'The chief lord tasted the wine which was made from the water.'
[Q O3 XX NEWT WSNEW 2: 9]

Example (21) is relevant to the study of the position of the relative clause because the verb *onbyrigde* 'tasted', used as a transitive verb, appears in final position; its complement (the DO *þæs wines* 'the wine') precedes it, and this complement is modified by a relative clause which is extraposed (separated from its antecedent).

The overall results of our analysis concerning the position occupied by the relative clause in terms of dialects in Old English are laid out in table 3 above. The results here distinguish the three different texts very clearly. The *West Saxon Gospels* show that intraposition – theoretically the favoured syntax in a paratactic language such as Old English – is retained as the second most preferred alternative (32.4%). At the opposite extreme, the *Lindisfarne Gospels* seem to have adopted intraposition as the favoured pattern for relative clauses (67.5%). In between these, the *Rushworth Gospels* show no preference for any of the structural variations.

Figure 2 illustrates these findings more clearly. It shows the two syntactic positions of relative clauses in the three sources under analysis.

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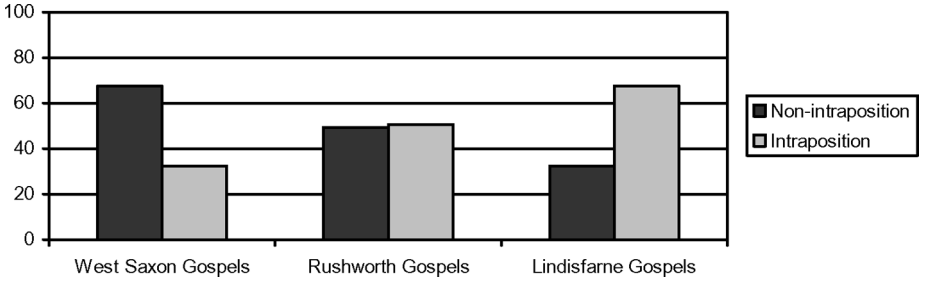


Figure 2. Relative clause position (%)

Relative clauses in the *West Saxon Gospels* show a clear preference for non-intraposition and in the *Lindisfarne Gospels* for intraposition. A different situation is represented by the *Rushworth Gospels*, where non-intraposed constructions are almost as frequent as intraposed ones. Intraposition, then, becomes more and more frequently used as we move northwards. The question of whether these results reflect merely a scribal stylistic preference or a definite dialectal difference in Old English, though, is left to be determined. However, at least one study on dialectal variation in Middle English (Suárez-Gómez 2008) reveals that intraposition is, indeed, more frequent in the Midlands than in the southern (both West and Kent) dialects. This seems to give weight to the tentative claim that the results set out in table 3 are due to dialectal variation, rather than to scribal whim; although this preliminary conclusion needs to be confirmed with further research and analysis of additional texts.

To summarize, the *West Saxon Gospels* display a clear preference for non-intraposed constructions (which comprises both extraposed and left-dislocated) over intraposed ones. By contrast, the *Lindisfarne Gospels* show a strong preference for intraposition over non-intraposition. The *Rushworth Gospels* show no preference for any position. What is relevant in this text is the higher rate of intraposition and lower rate of non-intraposition in comparison with the *West Saxon Gospels*. The higher rate of intraposition in the *Lindisfarne* and *Rushworth Gospels* is of great significance.

It has been frequently proposed in the literature that variation in position – in relative clauses in particular – is related to varying degrees of syntactic complexity (Dekeyser 1989: 387; Rohdenburg 1996: 191; Hawkins 2003). It has also been demonstrated that the position of the relative clause is also influenced (but not determined) by other factors, the most relevant of which being the degree of explicitness of the relativizer, the type of relative clause, whether restrictive or nonrestrictive (Suárez-Gómez 2006a: 125–9), as well as the length of the relative clause (see Wasow 1997 for weight influence on the position of constituents). In fact, non-intraposed relative clauses are favoured if they are nonrestrictive, long and introduced by a pronominal relativizer, whereas

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intraposed relative clauses are favoured if they are restrictive, short and introduced by an invariable relativizer. This correlation is mostly based on analyses of West Saxon texts, but judging from the results of tables 2 and 3 it does not work in the same way in the texts under analysis in the present study. If this were the case, we would expect a higher incidence of non-intraposition (than intraposition) in the *Lindisfarne Gospels*. Whether this is to be attributed to a scribal preference or the influence of Latin needs to be confirmed through the analysis of additional texts classified as Northumbrian.[20] Nevertheless, what is extremely relevant for the present article is that variation in the position adopted by the relative clause in Old English (non-intraposed vs intraposed constructions) is more closely related to the spread of intraposition observed in the evolution of the English language before the rigidification of word order (Suárez-Gómez 2006a: 88–90), a process which seems to have started from the North and moved progressively southwards.[21]

6 Conclusion

In the present study I have analysed the distribution of relativizers and the position that the relative clause occupies with respect to the main clause in order to ascertain whether the North–South divide attested in Old English for some levels of analysis, such as spelling, phonology and lexis, also holds true for syntax.

The studies of Kroch & Taylor (1997) and Ingham (2006) were taken as point of departure, given that they affirm that there is indeed dialectal variation in Old English syntax. My study here illustrates these claims with the study of the distribution of relativizers and the position adopted by the relative clause within the main clause, although further research and an increase of the database is necessary to validate the results obtained in this work. Analyses of three versions of the Gospels from the late Old English period show that, regarding the paradigm of relativizers, the traditional invariable *þe* is by far the most frequent relativizer in the *West Saxon Gospels* and *Rushworth Gospels*, representative of the West Saxon

[20] If the position is attributed to the influence of Latin, similar behaviour should be expected in both the *Lindisfarne* and the *Rushworth Gospels*.

[21] Following the Adjacency Hypothesis proposed by Hawkins, 'zero marking. . .results in more minimal domains and in greater adjacency across languages, and this can be accounted for by saying that there are more dependencies between A and B when certain syntactic properties are not syntactically marked' (Hawkins 2003: 185), we would expect zero relative clauses to favour [+ adjacency]. Although zero relative clauses are not frequently used in Old English, there are some examples introduced by zero which are non-intraposed (see below) and which seem to reinforce the hypothesis presented here that the paratactic status of the language favours the variation in terms of position, and especially the high incidence of non-intraposition in the *West Saxon* and *Rushworth Gospels*.

Sum wer wæs betogen þæt he wære on stale [RC Ø wæs swaðeah unscyldig]
Certain man was accused that he was in theft rel was however innocent
'A certain man, who was however innocent, was accused of stealing.' [Ælfric *Lives of* Saints 21: 265–6]

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and Mercian dialects respectively, but not in the *Lindisfarne Gospels*, representative of the Northumbrian variety. The innovative invariable *þat*, infrequent in all three texts, appears to gain prominence, and indeed preference, over the traditional and archaic *þe* in the Northumbrian dialect, although the limited number of examples prevents us from reaching any definite conclusion. As regards the paradigm of the pronominal relativizers, they are only frequent in the *Lindisfarne Gospels*, which differ from the *West Saxon Gospels*, where pronominal relativizers are less frequently used.

Regarding the position occupied by the relative clause, it has been observed that intraposition, the less-preferred structural technique of Old English, becomes the preferred form in the northern dialects, especially in the *Lindisfarne Gospels*, even in the Old English period. By contrast, the *West Saxon Gospels* avoid the use of embedded structures, favouring nonembedding (both extraposition and also left-dislocation) instead.

The analysis of the distribution of relativizers and the position adopted by the relative clause with respect to the main clause provides evidence of variation in late Old English, in accord with evidence from analyses of other linguistic areas, such as orthography and phonology, lexis and the recent studies of syntax. Therefore, although the findings here may also reflect the mere capriciousness of individual scribes, they seem to constitute evidence of significant geographical variation, indicating in particular that northern dialects – and especially Northumbrian – are linguistically different from West Saxon.

The *Rushworth Gospels*, an illustration of Mercian, seem to behave as an in-between text with respect to the other two texts under analysis here. The *Rushworth Gospels* resemble the *West Saxon Gospels* in the distribution of relativizers (prevalence of invariable relativizers) but approximate to the *Lindisfarne Gospels* in the higher frequency of pronominal relativizers. Regarding the position occupied by the relative clause, the *Rushworth Gospels* resemble the *Lindisfarne Gospels* in the increase of intraposition, but tend towards the language of the *West Saxon Gospels* in the still high frequency of non-intraposition.

Finally, we might also conclude from the present study that Latin-based texts – commonly excluded from the analysis of syntax – have provided useful data on variation in the expression of relativization across different texts of Old English. Considering the scarcity of material in this area, these texts might reasonably be regarded as valuable source material for the further study of Old English.

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