OLD ENGLISH VOCALIC CONTRASTS AND THE SCOPE OF ANALYSIS IN HISTORICAL LINGUISTICS

ANA ELVIRA OJANGUREN LÓPEZ

UNIVERSIDAD DE LA RIOJA[1]

Abstract. This article carries out a study in the Old English version of De Temporibus *Anni* in order to identify phonological contrasts of the vocalic type both from the interdialectal and the intradialectal perspective. The descriptive conclusions indicate that narrowing the scope of the analysis does not necessarily reduce the relevance of the conclusions and, what is more important, that conducting a study in one text avoids problems of coherence of the interpretation and overgeneralization of the results.

Key words: *Variation, diachrony, dialectology, Old English.*

Resumen. Este artículo analiza la versión en inglés antiguo de *De temporibus Anni* a fin de identificar los contrastes fonológicos de los tipos vocálicos desde una perspectiva inter e intradialectal. Las conclusiones desriptivas indican que la restricción del enfoque del análisis no implica la reducción de la relevancia de las conclusiones y, lo que es más importante, que realizar el estuido en un solo texto evita problemas de coherencia de la interpretación y una sobregeneralización de los resultados.

Palabras clave: *Variación, diacronía, dialectología, inglés antiguo*

1. Literature review and aims of research

Recent research in the lexical semantics of Old English considers all the written records of the language a unified phenomenon, carries out an analysis of most or all available linguistic data as a whole and draws general conclusions relevant for all the period. Thus, Kastovsky (1986, 1989, 1990, 1992, 2006) deals with the typological change in the morphology of Old English as a result of which variable bases replace invariable bases. According to Kastovsky (1992) this evolution takes place in two steps: from root-formation to stem-formation and, later on, from stem-formation to word-formation. Stem-formation and word-formation take place both in the domain of derivational morphology and inflectional morphology. Haselow (2011) raises the issue of productivity in noun formation and identifies analytic tendencies that result from the change from invariable to invariable base morphology. Martín Arista (2008, 2009, 2011c, 2012b) develops a functional theory of morphology centred on the contact between syntax and morphology

that draws on some aspects of functional grammars like layering and projection. This author discusses some aspects of the inflectional and derivational morphology of Old English in terms of the Layered Structure of the Word (Martín Arista 2010a, 2010b, 2011a, 2012a) and proposes a model of variation based on lexical layers defined on the grounds of different morphological processes and different degrees of morphological productivity (Martín Arista 2011b, 2013).

Although these works come to relevant conclusions and significantly contribute to the explanation of the morphology and vocabulary of Old English, the position adopted in this research is that a more contextualized analysis, involving an only work, can also lead to generalizations of interest. Furthermore, this type of analysis has the remarkable advantage over the large-scale approach reviewed above of guaranteeing the coherence of the results, which may be questionable on specific aspects when they correspond to the data from around six hundred years of linguistic evolution.

With these premises, this article conducts a study in the Old English version of *De Temporibus Anni* (Blake 2009). More specifically, the objective of this analysis is to identify phonological contrasts of the vocalic type both from the interdialectal and the intradialectal perspective. The vocalic contrasts just mentioned are identified in the verbs beginning with the letters A-G, the ones that have been published by *The Dictionary of Old English* (hereafter *DOE*) so far. The description of the verbal morphology of Old English grammars is based on Campbell (1987) and Hogg and Fulk (2011).

The outline of the article is as follows. Section 2 describes the dialectal contrasts that involve vocalic sounds in verbs. Section 3 offers the different aspects of the textual analysis that has been carried out, including the description of the data, the results of the analysis, the problems found and the solutions that have been adopted. Finally, section 4 draws the main conclusions.

2. Vocalic contrasts and dialectal variation in Old English verbs

Before presenting the interdialectal and intradialectal contrasts subject to analysis, it is necessary to make a methodological remark. As Old English lacks normalised spellings, the written representations of the words must correspond to their approximate phonetic transcription. Thus, we can assume that written contrasts also entail a different pronunciation of the word in question. This said, some of these contrasts that follow can

be attributed to the existence of different regional varieties; while others can be considered a consequence of the evolution of the language throughout time. In this section, both types of contrasts are dealt with by following de la Cruz (1986: 166-171). In general, interdialectal contrasts are described with reference to West-Saxon while intradialectal contrasts refer to West-Saxon exclusively.

2.1. Interdialectal contrasts

The most important vocalic contrasts between different Old English dialects are discussed below. Since West-Saxon was the dialect in which Ælfric wrote, there is a special emphasis on the contrasts which affect the West-Saxon variety of English, as they allow us to distinguish West-Saxon from the other Old English dialects.

Firstly, the contrast <æ>/<e> distinguishes the West-Saxon dialect from the other Old English varieties. West-Saxon prefers the forms in <æ>, while <e> varieties are used in other dialects. This is the case with the preterite of the verb *beran* 'to bring', which is *bær* in West-Saxon but *ber* in Kentish and Southern Mercian; the infinitive *lǣtan* 'to leave' and *sǣtan*, the preterite form of *sittan* 'to sit', which are, respectively, *lētan* and *sēton* in Northumbrian, Kentish and Mercian. However, together with the West-Saxon variety, Northumbrian and Mercian also presents some <æ> forms, as in *dǣlan* 'to divide; to distribute', *hǣlan* 'to heal' or *lǣdan* 'to lead'; while Kentish uss the <e> forms of these words: *dēlan*, *hēlan* and *lēdan*.

Another contrast holds between <ie> and <e, æ>. West-Saxon is the only variety of Old English which uses the <ie> forms for verbs such as *hliehhan* 'to laugh', *cierran* 'to turn', *hīeran*, *gelīefan* 'to believe' and *giefan* 'to give'; while the <e> or <æ> forms of these words are preferred in Northumbrian, Kentish and Mercian: *hlehhan/hlæhhan*, *cerran*, *hēran*, *gelēfan* and *gefan*.

West-Saxon also makes use of the diphthong <ea> where the other three varieties of Old English use <e> or <æ>. This is the case with *sceal* 'shall' in West-Saxon, but *scel* or *scæl* in Northumbrian, Kentish and Mercian.

The contrast <eo>/<e> distinguish West-Saxon and Kentish from Northumbrian and Mercian. The West-Saxon and Kentish varieties prefer the <eo> forms; hence verbs such as *beorgan* 'to protect' and *flēogan* 'to fly', which are respectively *bergan* and *flēgan* in Northumbrian and Mercian.

<y> forms are used in all Old English dialects. However, in Kentish, the original <y> of these forms changes into <e>. In this way, verbs like *fyllan* 'to fill' and *ontynan* 'to open' become *fellan* and *ontenan* in Late Kentish, although the <y> forms continue to be used in the other dialects and Early Kentish texts.

The contrast <e>/<eo> distinguish West-Saxon, which uses the <e> forms, from the rest of dialects, which prefer the <eo> forms. An example of this is the verb *beran* 'to bring', which is *beoran* in Northumbrian, Kentish and Mercian. Nevertheless, it should be noted that, together with West-Saxon, Northumbrian and Mercian also present some <e> forms where Kentish still prefer the <eo> forms. Thus, the verb *sprecan* 'to speak' is written in this way in all Old English dialects except Kentish, which favours *spreocan*.

Another contrast which characterized the West-Saxon dialect of English is the <i>/<io> contrast. <i> forms are preferred only in West-Saxon, whereas Northumbrian, Kentish and Mercian use <io> spellings. Therefore, the West-Saxon forms *sidu* 'habit' and *wita* 'adviser' are *siodu* and *wiota* in the rest of the dialects.

The contrast <ea>/<a> also allows us to distinguish the West-Saxon variety, which presents <ea> forms, from the other three, which use <a> spellings. Nevertheless, it should be noted that, in Kentish, the <a> becomes <ea>, as in West-Saxon. Thus, *healdan* in West-Saxon and Late Kentish corresponds to *haldan* in Northumbrian, Mercian and Early Kentish texts.

Another contrast holds between <ie> and <io, eo>. West-Saxon is characterized by using <ie> spellings where the rest of dialects prefer the forms in <io> or <eo>. Hence, *hierde* 'shepherd' and *gestrīenan* 'to procreate' are found in West-Saxon texts, but *hiorde* or *heorde* and *gestrīona* or *gestrīonan* are used in Northumbrian, Kentish and Mercian.

Finally, another contrast occurs between <e> and <eo>. West-Saxon presents <e> forms where the rest of the dialects use <oe> spellings. However, in Kentish the original <oe> spellings gives <e> forms. Thus, we find *dēman* 'to judge' and *sēcan* 'to seek' in West-Saxon and late Kentish, but *dōēman* and *sōēcan* in Northumbrian, Mercian and early Kentish. Similarly, *ēþ* 'he does' is used in West-Saxon and Late Kentish where Mercian and Early Kentish use *dōēþ*. Nevertheless, this verbal form is *doēs* in Northumbrian.

2.2. Intradialectal contrasts

West-Saxon also presented some contrast as a consequence of the changes the language underwent with the passing of time, which are discussed below. These contrasts allow us to distinguish, from instance, Early West-Saxon manuscripts from others written later in Eate West-Saxon or Classic West-Saxon.

This is the case with the contrast <ie>/<y, i>. Early West-Saxon texts present <ie> forms, as in *hīeran* 'to hear'; *hīerde*, the preterite form of *hīeran*; *begietst*, the third person singular indicative of the verb *begietan* 'to obtain'; *giefan* 'to give'; and *wierþ*, the third person singular indicative of the verb *weorþan* 'to become'. Nevertheless, this diphthong changes to <y> or <i>. Therefore, in Late West-Saxon texts, we find *hȳran* or *hīran*, *hȳrde* or *hīrde*, *begystst* or *begitst*, *gyfan* or *gifan* and *wyrþ* or *wirþ* instead of the spellings presented before.

The contrast <y>/<i> can been identified between some nouns. In Early West-Saxon we find spellings like *cyning* 'king', *cynn* 'race' and *dryhten* 'lord'. However, this <y> evolved into <i>. The corresponding forms in Late West-Saxon are, respectively, *cining*, *cinn* and *drihten*.

In addition, Early West-Saxon presents <ea> forms for verbs such as *reahte*, the preterite of *reccan* 'to narrate'; *seah*, the preterite of *sēon* 'to see'; *geaf*, the preterite of *giefan* 'to give'; and *sceal* 'shall'. This diphthong yields way to <e>. Thus, in Late West-Saxon we find *rehte*, *seh*, *gef* and *scel*.

Another contrast can be identified between <io> and <eo>. Early West-Saxon displays <io> forms such as *cliopode*, the preterite of the verb *clipian* 'to call'; and *liofast*, the second person singular present indicative of the verb *libban* 'to live'. In contrast, in Late West-Saxon, these forms are *cleopode* and *leofast* respectively.

Among vocalic contrasts we must also include some represented by consonants, like the one holding between <v[j]> and <v>. Thus, in Early West-Saxon we find forms like *frignan* 'to ask'; *ligeþ*, the third person singular present indicative of the verb *licgan* 'to lie'; and *sægde*, the preterite of *secgan* 'to say', which become *frīnan*, *līþ* and *sæde* in Late West-Saxon (de la Cruz 1986: 170).

Finally, other diachronic verbal contrasts are a consequence of the gradual regularization that Old English verbs undergo throughout the process of simplification of inflections. In this way, some originally canonical forms of strong verbs like *sprecen*, the present subjunctive plural of the verb *sprecan* 'to speak'; and *sungon*, the preterite indicative plural of the verb *singan* 'to sing', adopted a weakened form, namely *sprecan* and *singan*.

3. Analysis of *De Temporibus Anni*

This section carries out an interdialectal and intradialectal analysis of *De Temporibus Anni* aimed at vocalic contrasts as displayed by verbs. The weak and strong classes, as well as contracted verbs, preterite-present verbs, are taken into account, whereas anomalous verbs are disregarded because they are often suppletive. The following analytical steps can be distinguished. Firstly, the textual forms are related to the lemmas provided by the glossary of Blake´s (2009) edition. In the second place, the infinitives are looked up in the *DOE* in order to obtain all attested spellings of each verb. Next, those contrasts due to the ablaut of the verb are put aside. The variations in prefixes and inflectional endings are also disregarded. To continue with, the forms obtained from the previous step of analysis are compared to other attested spellings of the same verbs as given by the *DOE*. Those alternative spellings that in the analysis by verb have proved to be due to dialectal or diachronic variation are classified by contrast and are the ones that are considered for the analysis of the results. Finally, it should be noted that de la Cruz (1986) does not find any contrasts for <o> and <u>. As a result, the verbs whose stems present either <o> or <u> are not considered even if some attested alternative spellings can be identified that contain other vowels.

Of the contrasts analyzed, the interdialectal contrasts <e>/<eo> and <eo>/<e> proposed by de la Cruz (1986) are largely circular. This means that, in the presence of attested forms of a given verb with both <e> and <eo>, it is hard to decide which contrast is the relevant one, <e>/<eo> or <eo>/<e>. Toon (1992) provides further information about the evolution of these forms in Old English and, in particular, in West-Saxon. First, Toon (1992: 431) argues that both the traditional West Germanic /e:/ and /e/ become the diphthong spelled <eo> in Old English when they occurr before [x] − which can be written <c>, <g> or <h> − or when they occur before [l + C] or [r + C]. However, this diphthong is monophthongized in Early West-Saxon by a process known as *smoothing*. Consequently, all West Germanic verbs which present a stem in /e:/ or /e/ correspond to verbs with <e> forms in West-Saxon, but other forms for these verbs may have developed in different dialects. It is necessary to find the Germanic forms of the verbs which present attested spellings with both <e> and <eo> to decide whether the contrast <e>/<eo> or the contrast <eo>/<e> occurred. This part of the research has been based on

the primitive strong verbs and adjectives discussed, respectively, by Seebold (1970) and Heidermanns (1993). Besides, as Toon (1992: 431) notices, the verbs which present stems with [e] in Germanic are expected to develop <e> forms in West-Saxon. Therefore, verbs with stems with [e] in Germanic would present the contrast <e>/<eo>. Conversely, the rest of the verbs with attested forms in <e> and <eo>, which present stems with the diphthong [eu] in Germanic, should have developed <eo> forms in West-Saxon and present the contrast <eo>/<e>.[2]

The results obtained from the analysis by verb are presented by contrast. Interdialectal contrasts are dealt with first. It should be noted that the first spelling provided in the classification is the one that has been identified as characteristic for the West-Saxon dialect. Therefore, in the analysis, the verbs have been divided into two groups depending on the form they present in the text. The verbs presenting a particular contrast whose form in the text corresponds to the expected for the West-Saxon dialect are classified as presenting a predictable contrast. Conversely, those verbs which present the opposite form in *De Temporibus Anni* for that given contrast are labeled as presenting an "unpredictable" contrast.

Next, a similar classification is provided for the intradialectal contrasts. In this case, the form expected for Early West-Saxon is the first given in the contrast. The verbs labelled as "predictable" for a given contrast would be the ones presenting an expected form in *De Temporibus Anni* according to de la Cruz (1986); and verbs in the group of "unpredictable" contrast would present the opposite forms. For each entry, the forms as they appear in *De Temporibus Anni* are provided first, followed by the infinitive form of that verb extracted from the glossary of the work. On the right, the forms which present the contrast in question are given. The contrasts in Figure 1 are interdialectal:

1. <æ>/<e>
Predictable
bedæled [**bedælan**] ~ *bedeled*
betæhte [**betæcan**] ~ *betec*
gefæstnod [**gefæstnian**] ~ *gefestnie*

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[2] There is one verb only in *De Temporibus Anni* which presents attested spellings in <e> and <eo> but whose stem in Germanic is neither in [e] nor in [eu]. Such is the case with the verb *ateon*, a contracted verb also affected by breaking which presents a Germanic stem in [ei]. Therefore, this verb has been excluded from the analysis of interdialectal contrasts, although it has been taken into account in the study of intradialectal contrasts.

forbærn, forbærne [**forbærnan**] ~ *forbernan*

Unpredictable

acenð, acennedum [**acennan**] ~ *acænnan*

asendan [**asendan**] ~ *asændan*

aðenede [**aðennan**] ~ *aþænede*

awend, awent [**awendan**] ~ *awændan*

derað [**derian**] ~ *dærigen*

geendað, geendod, geendode [**geendian**] ~ *geændian*

fremað [**fremian**] ~ *fræmeð*

2. <ie>/<e, æ>

Predictable

afligð [**afliegan**] ~ *aflegedo*

Unpredictable

aberst [**aberstan**] ~ *abiersð*

berð [**beran**] ~ *viere*

3. <ea>/<e, æ>

Predictable

afeallað [**afeallan**] ~ *afellan*

aheawene [**aheawan**] ~ *ahewenne, ahæwenum*

feallað, fealð, fylð [**feallan**] ~ *fellan*

Unpredictable

berð [**beran**] ~ *beara*

betæhte [**betæcan**] ~ *beteahte*

gefæstnod [**gefæstnian**] ~ *gefeastnadon*

forbærn, forbærne [**forbærnan**] ~ *forbearnde*

4. <eo>/<e>

(When West-Saxon <eo> corresponds to Germanic [eu])

Predictable

aðeostrian, aðeostrað [**aðeostrian**] ~ *aðestred*

beboden [**bebeodan**] ~ *bebed*

bescyt [**besceotan**] ~ *bescet*

fleon, fleoð [**fleon**] ~ *flegan*

5. <y>/<e>

Predictable

adylegode [**adylegian**] ~ *adelegað*

afylled, *afyllede* [**afyllan**] ~ *afelle*

alysed [**alysan**] ~ *alesan*

astyrað, *astyred* [**astyrian**] ~ *astereð*

gebyrige [**gebyrian**] ~ *gebereð*

cyrð, *gecyrð* [**(ge)cyrran**] ~ *gecerran*

gefyllað [**gefyllan**] ~ *gefellan*

Unpredictable

aberan, *aberð* [**aberan**] ~ *abyrð*

aberst [**aberstan**] ~ *abyrst*

abrece [**abrecan**] ~ *abrycan*

acenð, *acennedum* [**acennan**] ~ *acynð*

berð [**beran**] ~ *byran*

derað [**derian**] ~ *dyrige*

6. <e>/<eo>

(When West-Saxon <e> corresponds to Germanic [e])

Predictable

aberan, *aberð* [**aberan**] ~ *abeoren*

atent [**atendan**] ~ *ateodon*

berð [**beran**] ~ *beoran*

derað [**derian**] ~ *deoriende*

Unpredictable

awyrpð [**aweorpan**] ~ *awerpan*

7. <i>/<io>

Predictable

arisan, *arison*, *arist* [**arisan**] ~ *arioson*

geedniwod [**edniwian**] ~ *edniowað*

8. <ea>/<a>

Predictable

afeallað [**afeallan**] ~ *afalle*

behealdan [**behealdan**] ~ *behaldan*

feallað, *fealð*, *fylð* [**feallan**] ~ *fallen*

Unpredictable

beheton [**behatan**] ~ *beheatenre*

gegaderað, *gegaderode*, *gadrian* [**(ge)gad(e)rian**] ~ *gegeadriga*

9. <ie>/<io, eo>

Predictable

aðeostrian, *aðeostrað* [**aðeostrian**] ~ *aðiestrige*

Unpredictable

æteowað, *æteowiað* [**æteowian**] ~ *ætiewan*

beboden [**bebeodan**] ~ *bebiet*

fleon, *fleoð* [**fleon**] ~ *fliehð*

10. <e>/<oe>

Predictable

awend, *awent* [**awendan**] ~ *awoendað*

<center>*Figure 1: Interdialectal contrasts.*</center>

The intradialectal contrasts found in the analysis follow in Figure 2:

1. <ie>/<y, i>

Predictable

afylled, *afyllede* [**afyllan**] ~ *afielde*

alysed [**alysan**] ~ *aliesan*

awrat, *awritenne*, *awriton* [**awritan**] ~ *awrieten*

gebicniað [**bicnian**] ~ *biecne*

gebigedum [**gebigan**] ~ *gebiegeð*

cyrð, *gecyrð* [**(ge)cyrran**] ~ *gecierran*

gefyllað [**gefyllan**] ~ *gefielde*

Unpredictable

afligð [**afliegan**] ~ *aflygan*, *afligan*

2. <y>/<i>

Predictable

abæd, *abæde* [**abiddan**] ~ *abyddan*

afindan [**afindan**] ~ *afynden*

agifð [**agifan**] ~ *agyfan*

arisan, *arison*, *arist* [**arisan**] ~ *arysan*

astah, *astihð* [**astigan**] ~ *astygen*

awrat, *awritenne*, *awriton* [**awritan**] ~ *awrytan*

belicð [**belicgan**] ~ *bilyð*

belimpað, *belimpð* [**belimpan**] ~ *belympð*

gebicniað [**bicnian**] ~ *bycneþ*

bæd [**biddan**] ~ *byddan*

gebæd [**gebiddan**] ~ *gebyddan*

gebigedum [**gebigan**] ~ *gebygan*

gediht [**dihtan**] ~ *dyht*

geedniwod [**edniwian**] ~ *ednywod*

forgifan, *forgeaf* [**forgifan**] ~ *forgyfan*

glit [**glidan**] ~ *glyt*

Unpredictable

adylegode [**adylegian**] ~ *adilegian*

afylled, *afyllede* [**afyllan**] ~ *afillað*

alysed [**alysan**] ~ *alisan*

astyrað, *astyred* [**astyrian**] ~ *astirian*

gebyrige [**gebyrian**] ~ *gebireþ*

cyrð, *gecyrð* [**(ge)cyrran**] ~ *gecirran*

fyligð [**fyligan**] ~ *fulfiligan*

gefyllað [**gefyllan**] ~ *gefillan*

3. <ea>/<e>

Predictable

berð [**beran**] ~ *beara*

Unpredictable

afeallað [**afeallan**] ~ *afellan*

aheawene [**aheawan**] ~ *ahewenne*

eardað [**eardian**] ~ *erddian*

feallað, *fealð*, *fylð* [**feallan**] ~ *fellan*

4. <io>/<eo>

Predictable

atihð [**ateon**] ~ *ation*

aðeostrian, *aðeostrað* [**aðeostrian**] ~ *aþiostraþ*

awyrpð [**aweorpan**] ~ *æwiorpen*

æteowað, *æteowiað* [**æteowian**] ~ *atiowan*

beboden [**bebeodan**] ~ *bebiode*

fleon, *fleoð* [**fleon**] ~ *flion*

Figure 2: Intradialectal contrasts.

In Table 1 below, the number of occurrences per contrast is provided as a summary of the analysis. The table is organized according to the number of total occurrences for each contrast, in such a way that the contrasts which present the highest number of occurrences in the results are given at the top of the table.

Interdialectal contrasts	Total number of occurences	Intradialectal contrasts	Total number of occurrences
<y>/<e>	13	<y>/<i>	24
<æ>/<e>	11	<ie>/<y, i>	8
<ea>/<e, æ>	7	<io>/<eo>	6
<e>/<eo>	5	<ea>/<e>	5
<ea>/<a>	5		
<eo>/<e>	4		
<ie>/<io, eo>	4		
<ie>/<e, æ>	3		
<i>/<io>	2		
<e>/<oe>	1		
Total	55	**Total**	43

Table 1: Number of occurrences by contrast.

As can be seen in Table 1, a total of 55 interdialectal versus 43 intradialectal contrasts have been identified in *De Temporibus Anni*, that is, there are more interdialectal contrasts than intradialectal ones. It can be observed that the frequency of occurrence of the different interdialectal and intradialectal contrasts varies. As shown in Table 1, <y>/<e>, <æ>/<e> and <ea>/<e, æ> are the interdialectal contrasts which present the highest number of occurrences – 13, 11 and 7 respectively. On the other hand, the interdialectal contrasts <e>/<oe>, <i>/<io> and <ie>/<e, æ> are the least frequent according to the data – with 1, 2 and 3 occurences respectively. Therefore, if we compare

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the first range of figures with the results obtained for the contrasts at the bottom of the table, it turns out that there is a high degree of variation regarding the frequency of occurrence between the different interdialectal contrasts.

Similarly, intradialectal contrasts also present a high degree of variation regarding the number of occurrences. The most frequent intradialectal contrast according to the data is <y>/<i> with 24 occurrences; whereas the least frequent is <ea>/<e> with 5 occurrences.

In order to give an interpretation of the data obtained from the analysis, Table 2 shows the number of predictable and unpredictable occurrences for each contrast.

Type of contrasts	Number of occurrences		Type of contrasts	Number of occurrences	
Interdialectal	Predictable	Unpredictable	Intradialectal	Predictable	Unpredictable
<æ>/<e>	4	7	<ie>/<y, i>	7	1
<ie>/<e, æ>	1	2	<y>/<i>	16	8
<ea>/<e, æ>	3	4	<ea>/<e>	1	4
<eo>/<e>	4	0	<io>/<eo>	6	0
<y>/<e>	7	6			
<e>/<eo>	4	1			
<i>/<io>	2	0			
<ea>/<a>	3	2			
<ie>/<io, eo>	1	3			
<e>/<oe>	1	0			
Total	30	25	Total	30	13

Table 2: Number of predictable and unpredictable occurrences by contrast.

In Table 2, the column of predictable occurrences for the interdialectal contrast represents the number of verbs that, in spite of having different attested spellings, display the expected form for the West-Saxon dialect in the text. Conversely, the column of unpredictable occurrences gives the number of verbs which present a form representative of any other dialect (Kentish, Mercian or Northumbrian) in the text of reference. Moreover, according to the data obtained, 28 verbs out of the 50 which present at least

one contrast have occurrences for two or more different contrasts. Therefore, the remaining 22 verbs present only one single contrast. This means that most of the verbs which present any contrast do so in more than one occasion.

4. Conclusion

This essay has analysed the Old English text *De Temporibus Anni* and identified the phonological contrasts of the vocalic type in verbs beginning with the letters A-G both from the interdialectal and the intradialectal perspective.

The first conclusion is that the contrasts listed by de la Cruz (1986: 166-171) are relevant and widespread in Old English, as analyzing one single text has been enough to find evidence for all of them. As a matter of fact, all contrasts analyzed present occurrences and most of the verbs show one or more contrasts.

Secondly, the number of occurrences corresponding with spellings identified as West-Saxon is higher than the number of spellings corresponding to the other three dialects – 30 versus 25 occurences respectively. This seems to indicate that the work *De Temporibus Anni* was written in the West-Saxon dialect. Nevertheless, we have found many unexpected forms for a West-Saxon text written at the time of Ælfric. As Blake (2009: 20) points out, this may be due to the fact that several scribes may have worked on the elaboration of this manuscript, and they may have come from different regions where other dialects were spoken; and to the fact that *De Temporibus Anni* was rewritten several times and probably by different scribes.

Thirdly, de la Cruz (1986: 166-171) identifies ten interdialectal contrasts, but only four of the intradialectal type. Indeed, a total of 55 interdialectal and 43 intradialectal contrasts have been identified in the text. This seems to suggest that regional variation was a factor which affected Old English in a higher degree than diachronic evolution. Concerning intradialectal contrasts, the text studied presents internal variation in this respect. The data analyzed show a higher number of predictable occurrences – 30 versus 13. This means that Late West-Saxon spellings outnumber Early West-Saxon spellings. It can be the case, then, that *De Temporibus Anni* was written in the Late West-Saxon dialect. Nevertheless, the text also presents some archaic forms for the time of Ælfric, in which it was supposedly written. This conclusion goes in the line of Blake (2009: 23) and Pyles and Algeo (1982: 109), who remark that Early West-Saxon forms may have been preferred by some scribes attached to tradition.

Regarding individual verbs, some tendencies can be identified. First, some verbs are more likely to suffer interdialectal or intradialectal changes than others. And, second, the verbs that present any contrasts are likely to be subject to more kinds of variation. Finally, some vowels have proved to be more likely to experience variation. An example of this is the vowel <e>, for which seven interdialectal contrasts and one intradialectal have been identified (de la Cruz 1968: 166-169). On the other hand, some other spellings seem more reluctant to change, as is the case of the vowel <a>, for which only one interdialectal contrast has been identified by de la Cruz (1986: 168). This might be related to the higher number of phonological changes involving *e* than involving *a*, as has been presented in the section corresponding to phonological evolution.

These descriptive conclusions clearly indicate that to narrow the scope of the analysis does not necessarily reduce the relevance of the conclusions and, what is more important, to conduct a study in one text avoids problems of coherence of the interpretation and overgeneralization of the results.

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