

RAFAL MOLENCKI
University of Silesia

ON THE RISE OF THE ORDINAL NUMBER *FIRST* IN MEDIEVAL ENGLISH

The word *first* was very rare in Old English, which mostly used *forma*, *firmest* and *aerest* in both spatial and temporal senses. All the three OE words became obsolescent in the 14th century while *first*, most likely supported by the fact that Old Norse had a similarly shaped cognate word, increased its occurrence and range of senses in early Middle English. By 1400 *first* had become the usual word denoting the front position and temporal antecedence both as an adjective and an adverb. Simultaneously it outcompeted the equivalent words in the function of the ordinal number.

1. Introduction

1.1. Introductory remarks

In this article we discuss the origin and expansion of the ordinal number *first* in Medieval English, with its secondary function of an adverbial of time. The history of this important English word is presented in the context of its competition with other synonymous words which all gradually gave way to *first* in late Middle English. The illustrating language material mostly comes from the *Dictionary of Old English* and the *Middle English Dictionary* and the reference notation of examples follows the standard abbreviations used by the compilers of these dictionaries.

1.2. (Proto-)Indo-European

In most Indo-European languages the first two numerals display suppletion in their cardinal and ordinal forms. The original Proto-Indo-European form of the cardinal *one* is reconstructed as the root **oy-* + two competing suffixes **-wo* and **-no*, as is evidenced, for example, by Old Persian *aiwa* and Classical Greek *οἷνος*, respectively (cf. Emmerick 1991: 292), while the ordinal *first* is based on

the root form **p₁h₃-* (meaning ‘forward, front’, thus originally ‘foremost’) accompanied by such suffixes as **-mo-*, **-wo-*, the forms reflected, for example, in Latin *pri-mus*, Lithuanian *pirmas* and Avestan *paouruuua*, Slavonic *prъvyi* (hence Polish *pier-w-szy*), respectively. As for the ordinal number *second*, the daughter languages use several different expressions, usually unrelated to the cardinal *two*, so that Proto-Indo-European forms are rather difficult to reconstruct (see Molencki, forthcoming). Let us take a look at the suppletive forms of *one* and *first* attested in some ancient Indo-European languages (cf. Bednarczuk 1986, Gvozdanović 1991). In most cases the form of the ordinal is derived from the noun denoting the front:

TABLE ONE

Language	Cardinal	Ordinal
Sanskrit	<i>éka</i>	<i>prathama</i>
Greek	<i>οἶνος</i>	<i>πρῶτος</i>
Latin	<i>unus</i>	<i>primus</i>
Lithuanian	<i>vienas</i>	<i>pirmas</i>
Hittite	<i>as</i>	<i>hantezzi</i>
Avestan	<i>aēuuua</i>	<i>paouruuua</i>
Armenian	<i>meg</i>	<i>arrajin</i>
Irish	<i>oen</i>	<i>chead</i>
Slavonic	<i>edinъ</i>	<i>prъvyi</i>
Albanian	<i>një</i>	<i>parë</i>

1.3. Early Germanic languages

Proto-Germanic inherited this kind of suppletive dualism from its mother language, and the respective forms of the cardinal and ordinal numeral are **ain-az* and **frumô*, **furistaz*, which have been reconstructed on the basis of such attested early Germanic forms as shown in Table Two. The consonantism of the suffix of the cardinal (**-no>-na*) is shared with Greek, Italic, Celtic, Baltic and Slavonic, whereas that of the ordinal (**-mo*) with Sanskrit (Indo-Aryan), Italic and Baltic.

TABLE TWO

Language	Cardinal	Ordinal
Gothic	<i>ains</i>	<i>fruma</i>
Old High German	<i>ein</i>	<i>ēristo, furisto</i>
Old Saxon	<i>en</i>	<i>ēriste, formo, furisto</i>
Old English	<i>an</i>	<i>forma, fyrmest, ærest</i>
Old Frisian	<i>en</i>	<i>forma, formest, ēr(e)st, fer(e)st</i>
Old Norse	<i>einn</i>	<i>fyrstr</i>

2. The medieval English data

2.1. Old English inventory

Old English had a number of variants for both ‘first’ and ‘second’ (*oper, æftera*), none of which was morphologically related to the cardinal numbers *an* and *twegen/twa* respectively (cf. Campbell 1959: §692, Mitchell 1985: §222, *OED* s.v. *first* and *second*). Etymologically speaking, all of the forms equivalent to modern *first* were superlatives in origin:

- *forma* – *for* ‘forward, front’ < PIE**prh₃*- + the superlative suffix *-*mo-*
- *fyrst* – the umlauted root + superlative suffix *-st* (cf. OHG *furisto*)
- *fyrmest* – the umlauted root + the double superlative (*-m-* and *-st*)
- *ærest* – the adjective *ær* ‘early’ + the superlative suffix *-st*

Table Three shows the numbers of attestations of the individual items listed in the *Dictionary of Old English* on the basis of the complete Old English corpus of poetry and prose:

TABLE THREE

Form	Number of occurrences
<i>forma, fyrmest</i>	c650
<i>ærra, ærest</i>	c600
<i>frum</i>	7
<i>furðra, forðmest</i>	c45 (only in Lindisfarne and Rushworth glosses)
<i>fyrst</i>	20 (9 adjectives and 11 adverbs), most in 12 th c. MS E of the <i>Anglo-Saxon Chronicle</i>

Marginally, the cardinal *one* could also be used in the function of ordinal *first*, especially when listing people, who took some position one after another, e.g.:

- (1) **Or** 1.36.12: **An** wæs Babylonicum, þær Ninus ricsade; **þæt oðer** wæs Creca, þær Alexander ricsade; **pridda** wæs Affricanum, þær Ptolome ricsedon; **se feorða** is Romane, þe giet ricsiende sindon. ‘*The first one was Babylonian, where Ninus ruled; the second Greek, where Alexander ruled; the third was African, where the Ptolemies ruled; the fourth is the Romans, who still rule there.*’
- (2) **Stonor Letters** 1466: Furdermore, as for the accion of sewryte of pese, the wycche Thomas Horne hathe ayenst me, y have aperyd therto and have y-putte yn iij seuryteys, John Kyrton ys **on**, John Frende of Seynte Jely’s parysche ys **the secunde**, and a cosyn of myn ys **the thirde**. ‘*Furthermore, as for the action of pledge of peace, which Thomas Horne has against me, I have appeared there and put in three guarantors: John Kyrton is first, John Friend of St. Jely’s parish is the second and a cousin of mine is the third.*’

2.1.1. *forma/fyrmest*

In Old English the most common item corresponding to modern *first* was the word *forma* and its (historically double) superlative *fyrmest*. Both are listed in the same entry of the *Dictionary of Old English*, which records as many as 650 occurrences of both in the whole Old English corpus, e.g.

- (3) **Beo** 2285: frea sceawode fira fyrngeweorc **forman** siðe. ‘*The Lord saw for the first time the ancient work of men.*’
- (4) **ÆLS (Book of Kings) 1**: Saul hatte se **forma** cyning þe ofer Godes folc rixode. ‘*Saul was the name of the first king who ruled over God’s people*’
- (5) **ÆGram** 102.6: se **forma** had ego ic macað his menigfealde getel *nos* we. ‘*the first person ego I. Make this the plural number nos we*’
- (6) **Or** 1 14.35.26: her endað sio **forme** boc, 7 onginð sio æfterre. ‘*here ends the first book and begins the second.*’
- (7) **HomM 13 (Verc 21) 127**: God gesceop þone **fyrmystan** mann Adam of eorðan lame þurh his agene mihta. ‘*God created the first man Adam out of clay with his own might.*’
- (8) **LS 10.1 (Guth) 6.19**: sona swa he þæt **fyrmeste** fers sang þæs sealmes, þa gewiton hi swa swa smic fram his ansyne. ‘*As soon as he had sung the first verse of the psalm, they departed like smoke from his presence.*’
- (9) **ÆCHom I, 6** 229.168: se monandæg nis na **fyrmest** daga on þære wucan: ac is se oþer. ‘*Monday is not the first day in the week, but it is the second.*’

This is continued in early Middle English, but while the last occurrences of *fyrmest/formest* are recorded in the early 14th century, usually in the figurative sense only, *forme* continued to be used more or less a century longer:

- (10) **a1121 Peterb. Chron. (LdMisc 636)** annal 1106: On þære **forman** længten wucan on þone Frigedæg *i xiiii kalendæ Marcii* ætywde an ungewunelic steorra. ‘*In the first week of Lent, on the Friday, which was the fourteenth before the calends of March, in the evening appeared an unusual star.*’
- (11) **?c1200 Orm. (Jun 1)** 13732: **Forrme** menn, Adam 7 Eve hiss macche. ‘*The first people, Adam and Eve, his wife.*’
- (12) **c1330(?a1300) Arth. & M. (Auch)** 4477: Bi hir **form** husbunde Sche hadde a child of gret munde. ‘*With her first husband she had a child of great power.*’
- (13) **c1330(?c1300) Spec. Guy (Auch)** 223: Adam was þe **forme** man, þat euere singyn bigan. ‘*Adam was the first man who ever began sinning*’
- (14) **c1425(c1400) Ld. Troy (LdMisc 595)** 67: What was the **forme** enchesoun.. the kynges of Grecis..the Troyens so longe pursued. ‘*which was the first cause the kings of Greeks and Troyans had pursued for so long.*’
- (15) **c1175(?OE) Bod. Hom. (Bod 343)** 22/10: He awende hwilon water to wine, six fate fulle mid þam **fyrmostan** wine. ‘*He turned once water to wine, six vats full of the first (=best) wine.*’
- (16) **c1275(?a1200) Lay. Brut (Clg A.9)** 21195: An alre **freomeste** [MS Otho: formest] þat fiht ich wulle biginnen. ‘*I will begin the first fight of all.*’
- (17) **a1325(c1250) Gen. & Ex. (Corp-C 444)** 1682: Long wune is her driuen, **firrest** on elde **first** ben giuen. *They had an old custom: the first(=oldest) in age should first be given.*’

2.1.2. *ærest*

Another common Old English word for *first* was *ærest(a)*, usually declined like a weak adjective. It was particularly common in King Alfred’s translation of Bede’s *Ecclesiastical History*, both as an adjective and as an adverb. Below are examples from Old English poetry and prose:

- (18) **Cædmon** (early Anglian version) He **æríst** scop aelda barnum heben til hrofe, haleg scepén. ‘*He, the holy creator, first created heaven as a roof for the children of the earth*’
- (19) **Or 2** 1.36.25: se **æresta** cyning wæs Ninus haten. ‘*The first king was called Ninus.*’
- (20) **Bede 1** 18.92.26: her endað seo **æreste** boc & onginneð seo oðer. ‘*here ends the first book and begins the second*’. (cf. Example 6 above)
- (21) **ChronA** 787.5: þæt wæron þa **ærestan** scipu Deniscra monna þe Angelcynnes lond gesohton. ‘*Those were the first ships of the Danish men that attacked England.*’

Like *forma* above, Middle English adjective and adverb *er(e)st* became rare after 1400

- (22) **c1230(?a1200) *Ancr.(Corp-C 402)** 2b: Ich write ow, mine love sustren, of uttre þinges i þe **earste** dale of ower boc. ‘*I write you, my dear sisters, about bodily things in the first part of our book.*’
- (23) **?a1300 Fox & W.(Dgb 86)** 16: Þo **eroust** bigon þe vox to erne. ‘*Then the fox began to run first.*’
- (24) **c1325 Of a mon (Hrl 2253)** 12: Huere foreward wes to fon, So the **furmest** heuede ydon, Ase þe **erst** vndertoc. ‘*Their contract was to receive the same as the first had done, and as the first received.*’
- (25) **c1450(?a1400) Parl.3 Ages** 464: Of the thre Cristen..þat were conquero-urs..**Areste** was sir Arthure. ‘*Sir Arthur was the first of the three Christians that were conquerors.*’

2.1.3. *forðmest*

The northern and midland Gospel glosses, Lindisfarne and Rushworth, also featured the word *forðmest*, which is not found in this usage in the West Saxon dialect, e.g.:

- (26) **LkG1 (Ru)** 13.30: *et ecce sunt nouissimi qui erant primi et sunt primi qui erant nouissimi* 7 heono bioðon lætemesto ðađe werun **foerðmest** 7 bioðon **foerfest** ðađe werun lætemest. ‘*And indeed there are those who are last who will be first, and first who will be last.*’

2.1.4. *frum*

There was one more word, albeit very rare, with just seven attestations in the whole Old English corpus, which meant *first*. It was the adjective *frum*, obviously cognate with the noun *fruma* ‘beginning, origin’, which in the northern and midland Gospel glosses was given as a variant of both *forma/forðmest* and *ærist*:

- (27) **Bo** 30.69.30: ac ælc mon þe allunga underþeoded bið unþeawum forlæt his sceppend & his **fruman** sceaft & his æðelo. ‘*But each man who is entirely subdued by vices loses his creator and his first creation and his origin.*’
- (28) **MtArgG1 (Li)** 1: *Matheus ... euangelium in Iudaeam primus scripsit, ... duorum in generationi Christi principia praesumens, unius cuius prima circumcissione carnis, alterius cuius secundum cor electio fuit* Matheus ... godspell in Iudea **ærest** **l f’ðmest** awrat ... twoegera in cynreswu **l** cneuresu Cristes **ða forwuearda** **l** **ða fruma** foregefeng ðæs anæs ðæs **l** his **forma** **l** **fruma** mið ymbcyrf lichome oðres ðæs æfter hearta gecorencscip wæs. ‘*Matthew first wrote Gospel in Judea assuming two natures of the birth [literally: the condition or the origin] of Christ: the first of which was the circumcision of the body and the other by the choice heart.*’

- (29) **DurRitGl 1 97.8:** *deus cuius spiritu creatura omnis adulta congauDET exaudi preces nostras super hunc famulum tuum iuuenalis ætatis decore lætantem et primis auspiciis adtondendum exaudi domine* God ðæs gast giscæft ælc wynsvm gifeaia giher beodo vs of ðiosne esne ðin gigoð ældo wlite wynsvmiende & æristvm I frvmmvm frehtvm to scearanne giher driht. ‘*God, whose spirit brings joy to all the creation, hear our prayers for us your young servants and hear Lord those who are to be shaved for the first time*’

3. The rise of *first*

3.1. *fyrst* in Old English

The word *first* was used in Old English, but not in the literal spatial or temporal sense. It was rather infrequent, with just 9 occurrences of the adjective and 11 of the adverb in the entire Old English corpus. Curiously enough, the oldest examples refer to *first* in the figurative sense of ‘foremost in rank/importance, leading, chief’. This sense is easily recognizable in cognate West Germanic words for *prince*: German *Fürst*, Dutch *vorst*. Consider the following Old English examples, where in (31) the quoted version has the word *fyrmestan*, but the dictionary mentions its variant *fyrstan* in another manuscript of Ælfric’s *Lives of Saints*:

- (30) **Or 1 1.15.11:** he wæs mid þæm **fyrstum** mannum on þæm lande. ‘*He was among the foremost men in that land*’
- (31) **ÆLS (Edmund) 29:** on þam flotan wæron þa **fyrmestan** heafodmen Hinguar and Hubba (L *furmestan*, B *fyrstan*). ‘*The foremost leaders of the fleet were Inguar & Ubbe*’

All the very few instances of Old English *first* in the temporal sense are very late, as they occur in Manuscript E of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, otherwise known as the *Peterborough Chronicle*, classified by some as a very early Middle English text and by others as a very late Old English text of the early 12th century. We believe that this sudden appearance of the temporal *first* must have been influenced by Old Norse. After all, Scandinavians had been present in great numbers in England for more than three centuries at the time and, as is well known, the contact situation brought about a heavy influx of Norse words into late Old English. The Norse origin of *first* in English is not recorded in any of the dictionaries, but we think it cannot be excluded given the fact that the regular Scandinavian word for *first* was *fyrst(r)*, as in (32); cf. Gordon (1957: 347). This must have paved the way for the first instances of English *first*, as shown in the quotations from the *Peterborough Chronicle* in (33) and (34)

- (32) **Völuspá 21 c1270:** Þat man hon folkvíg **fyrst** í heimi. ‘*She remembers that folk-war, the first in the world*’

- (32) **Peterborough Chronicle annal 656**: Ðet wæs **first** seo kyning Wulfere þe þet feostnode **first** mid his worde 7 siððon mid his fingre gewrat on Cristes mel. ‘*That was, first the king, Wulfere, who confirmed it first with his word, and afterwards wrote with his finger on the cross of Christ*’
- (33) **Peterborough Chronicle annal 963**: And se biscop com þa **fyrst** to Elig. ‘*And the bishop came then first to Ely.*’

3.2. *Fyrst* in Middle English

The *Middle English Dictionary* lists the following spellings of *first* in Middle English texts, which display orthographic, phonetic and dialectal variants: ***first, fyrst, furst, forst, ferst, virst, vurst, vorst, verst, frist, frust, frost, frest***. Welna (2012: 419) summarizes the situation stating that “the dialectal distinction between the ordinal forms of ‘first’ continued in Middle English: *first* (East Midlands/Northern), *furst* (West Midlands/Southwestern), *uerst* (Kentish)”. For a detailed dialectal and textual distribution of the variant forms see the relevant maps in the linguistic atlases of Middle English *LAEME* (1150-1325) and *LA-LME* (1350-1450), both of which are available online today. Reading Middle English texts, one can easily notice that the word *first* occurs more and more commonly over successive centuries, becoming the dominant form by 1400:

- (34) **?c1200 *Orm.* (Jun 1) 7800**: O Moysesess laȝhe stod, Swa summ itt Drihtin sette, þatt all þatt hemm wass borenn **firrst** Off ahhte þatt wass clene, **firreste** callf, þe **firreste** lamb, þe **firreste** kide, 7 swillke, All þatt wass clene deor, all þatt þatt mann maȝ etenn offe. ‘*It was written in Moses’ law, as Lord had set it, that of all that was born to them of anything that was clean, the first calf, the first lamb, the first kid and the like, of all that was clean animals man can eat.*’
- (35) **c1325 *Ase y me rod* (Hrl 2253) 25**: þe **furst** ioie of þat wynman. ‘*The first joy of that woman.*’
- (36) **(a1387) *Trev. Higd.* (StJ-C H.1) 7.453**: Kyng Henries **firste** wyf was dede. ‘*King Henry’s first wife was dead.*’
- (37) **c1395 *Chaucer Prioress* B.1847**: Oure **firste** foo þe serpent Sathanas That hap in Iewes his waspes neste. ‘*Our first foe, the serpent Satan, who has his wasp’s nest in Jews.*’
- (37) **?c1450 *Knt. Tour-L.* (Hrl 1764) 44/24**: He wolde euer after be one of the **furst** atte the chirche. ‘*And ever after he wanted to be one of the first at church.*’

3.3. Manuscript variation

The best evidence for the fact that an important language change was underway is the comparison of different manuscripts of the same Middle English. For example, very often in place of *formest* and *erest* of the earlier MS Caligula

of Layamon's chronicle *Brut* (copied c1275 from an early 13th century original) we find *forste* in MS Otho, believed to have been copied c1300. Compare the following three examples:

c1275(?a1200) Lay. *Brut* (Clg A.9):

- (38a) Colgrim...feolde þa Bruttes to grunde. i þan **uormeste** ræse; fulle fif hundred 10662 '*Colgrim felled the Britons in the first attack, as many as five hundred.*'
- (39a) Riden after þan kinge bald here-ðringes, a þen **feoremeste** flocke, feouwert hundred. 23801 '*Bald warriors rode after the king, four hundred in the first group*'
- (40a) Þet wes þa **ææraste** mon; þe guldene crune dude him on. 2121 '*It was the first man who put a gold crown on him.*'

versus **c1300 Lay. *Brut* (Otho C.13):**

- (38b) Colgrim...fulde þe Bruttus in þe **forste** rease; folle fif hundred. 9872
- (39b) Riden after þan kinge; bolde heredrings in þan **forste** flocke fourti hundred. 11001
- (40b) was þe **forste** man þe goldene croune dude him on. 2024

A similar manuscript variation can be observed in the different versions of *Ancrene Wisse*. While the 13th century manuscripts have *earste* and/or *forme*, the late 14th century Vernon Manuscript consistently has *furste*, which must have appeared to the scribe a more natural variant than the obsolescent words:

- (41a) þe **earste** dale spekeð al of ower seruise. *Corpus Christi* (1225-40)
- (41b) þe **eareste** dale spekeð al of ower seruise. *Cleopatra* (1225-30)
- (41c) þe **forme** dole spekeð al of ower seruise. *Nero* (1225-50)
- (41d) þe **furste** dole spekeþ of oure seruise. *Vernon* 372rb44 (1375-1400)
'*the first part tells you everything about our service.*'
- (42a) þe **forme** beoð ueele inoh. *Corpus Christi* (1225-40)
- (42b) þe **forme** beoð ueele inoch. *Cleopatra* (1225-30)
- (42c) þe **uorme** beoð vuele inouh. *Nero* (1225-50)
- (42d) þe **ffurste** beoð euel inouh. *Vernon* 375va59 (1375-1400)
'*the first one is evil enough.*'
- (43a) as we seiden þruppe **on earst** þ Salomon seide. *Corpus Christi* (1225-40)
- (43b) as we seiden þruppe **an earest** þ Salomon seide. *Cleopatra* (1225-30)
- (43c) ase we seiden þer uppe **a vormest** þer salomon seide. *Nero* (1225-50)
- (43d) As we seyden þervppe **furst** þat Salomon seide. *Vernon* 377rb09 (1375-1400)
'*As we said above, Salomon said that first.*'

Interestingly, no such variation can be observed in the four manuscripts of Morris's edition of *Cursor mundi*. All the four 14th century versions consistently have *frist/furst* throughout the text.

4. Conclusion

First, etymologically a superlative formation on the stem 'fore-' with the unlauded root vowel, was a rare word in Old English, as compared with hundreds of instances of the other synonyms in the OE corpus. In earlier Old English, the few instances of *frist* are used figuratively in the sense of 'most prominent, most important'. All the OE occurrences of temporal *fyrst* are attested in the later period, especially in Manuscript E of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. Although the word appears to have a regular native form, we believe that the sudden increase of its use in early Middle English was owing to the heavy influence of Old Norse, which had a virtually identical cognate word: the adjective *fyrstr* and the adverb *fyrst* (Gordon 1957: 347). The Scandinavian factor in the quick spread of the ordinal number *frist* in Middle English is not taken account of in any of the major English historical dictionaries (*OED*, *DOE*, *MED*).

Some additional phonetic and lexical arguments for the expansion of *fyrst* at the expense of *forme/firmest* and *erest* in Middle English that might be taken into consideration are as follows.

- due to the simplification of a difficult consonantal cluster after the loss of unstressed schwa in the inflectional ending, *-est firm(e)st* may have become homophonous with *fyrst*:

firmest > **firmst* (unattested spelling) > *frist*

- *firmest/formost* may have become obsolete owing to the appearance of the new homophonous/homonymic Romance borrowings:

(1) the superlative *firmest* of the adjective *ferm/firm* < Latin *firmus*, as in:

(44) *Piers Plowman B* 19120: þat she fyrst & formost scholde ferme þat believe. 'that first of all she should believe in that firmly.'

(2) the noun *form* < Old French *fourme* < Latin *forma*, first attested c1300, may have contributed to the elimination of the adjective/numeral *forme*

In the course of Middle English *forme* > *firme/firmest* and *er(e)st* fell out of use. The demise of the latter parallels the replacement of the adverb-preposition-conjunction *ere* with *before* (cf. Molencki 2007; see also Rissanen 2007). By 1400 *frist* had become the standard ordinal number corresponding to the cardinal *one*. Interestingly, more or less at the same time the Romance loanword *second* replaced the numeral *oper* when it meant 'second of more than two' (Mustanoja 1960: 306).

References

- Bednarczuk, L. 1986. *Języki indoeuropejskie*. Vol. I. Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe.
- Buck, C.D. 1949. *Comparative grammar of Greek and Latin*. Second edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Campbell, A. 1959. *Old English grammar*. Oxford: Clarendon.
- Emmerick, R. 1991. Iranian. In J. Gvozdanović (ed.), 289-346.
- Gordon, E.V. 1957. *An introduction to Old Norse*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gvozdanović, J. (ed.), 1991. *Indo-European numerals*. Berlin and New York: Mouton de Gruyter.
- DOE = *Dictionary of Old English* – <http://www.doe.utoronto.ca>
- LAEME = Margaret Laing. 2013. *A Linguistic atlas of Early Middle English, 1150-1325*, Version 3.2 [<http://www.lel.ed.ac.uk/ihd/laeme2/laeme2.html>]. Edinburgh: The University of Edinburgh.
- LALME = Michael Benskin, Margaret Laing, Vasilis Karaiskos and Keith Williamson. 2013. *An electronic version of a linguistic atlas of Late Mediaeval English* [<http://www.lel.ed.ac.uk/ihd/elalme/elalme.html>]. Edinburgh: The University of Edinburgh.
- MED = Kurath, Hans and Sherman M. Kuhn (eds.). 1956-2002. *Middle English dictionary*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, available online at <http://ets.umdl.umich.edu/m/mec>
- Molencki, R. 2007. On the rise of the temporal preposition/conjunction *before*. In M. Krygier and L. Sikorska (eds.), *To make his Englishh sweete upon his tonge. Medieval English mirror 3*, 37-54. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.
- Molencki, R. (forthcoming). The origin of the ordinal number *second* in Middle English.
- OED = *Oxford English Dictionary Online* – <http://www.oed.com>
- Mitchell, B. 1985. *Old English syntax*. 2 vols. Oxford: Clarendon.
- Mustanoja, T. 1960. Middle English syntax. *Mémoires de la Société Néophilologique de Helsinki* 23. Helsinki: Société Néophilologique.
- Rissanen, M. 2007. The development of adverbial subordinators in early English. In M. Rissanen, L. Kahlas-Tarkka, M. Hintikka and R. McConchie (eds.), *Change in meaning and the meaning of change: studies in semantics and grammar from Old to Present-day English*, 173-210. Helsinki: Société Néophilologique.
- Welna, J. 2012. Middle English morphology. In A. Bergs and L. Brinton (eds.), *English historical linguistics. An international handbook*, 415-434. Berlin and New York: Mouton de Gruyter.