ON THE RISE OF THE ORDINAL NUMBER SECOND IN MIDDLE ENGLISH

The article discusses the late Middle English replacement of the ordinal number other by the Romance loanword second. The major cause of the change was the ambiguity and polyfunctionality of the older native word. The study is based on the language material from the Dictionary of Old English Corpus, the Middle English Compendium and the Anglo-Norman Dictionary.

1. Introduction

In Molencki (2016) we discussed the origin of the ordinal number first in Medieval English, which in late Middle English totally replaced several earlier Old English words used in this function. The process was more or less contemporary with the rise of the ordinal number second in English and its quick ousting of other and after when they meant ‘second of more than two’ (cf. Mustanoja 1960: 306). The illustrating language material comes from the Dictionary of Old English Corpus (DOEC) and the Middle English Compendium (MEC) and the abbreviated reference notation follows the standard practices used in the dictionaries based on these corpora: the Dictionary of Old English (DOE) and the Middle English Dictionary (MED).

Another interesting parallel between the first two numbers is the fact that the cardinal and ordinal forms display suppletion in most Indo-European languages (cf. Hurford 1975, 1987; Veselinova 1997; Stolz 2001). This means that ordinal numbers are derived from roots which are different from those found in their cardinal counterparts. Table One shows the situation for the numeral two/second in ten Indo-European languages, out of which half use suppletive forms derived from unrelated roots (marked in bold):
## TABLE ONE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>two/second</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sanskrit</td>
<td>dvi/dvitya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>δόο/δεύτερος</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin</td>
<td>duo/secundus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hittite</td>
<td>da/danna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avestan</td>
<td>duua/bittiya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armenian</td>
<td>yerko/yerkord</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lithuanian</td>
<td>du/antras</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albanian</td>
<td>dy/dytë</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old Irish</td>
<td>dá/alyos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old Church Slavonic</td>
<td>ðъва/ъмьръ</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## 2. Medieval *oþer* and *æftera*

Following the pertinent qualitative and quantitative phonetic changes (including the Ingvaeonic spirant law, whereby the nasal was lost and the vowel underwent the compensatory lengthening; cf. Reszkiewicz 1973: 51, 74; Hogg 1992: 82), the Old English word *oþer* was a regular and direct continuation of Proto-Germanic *anþaraz* derived in turn from Proto-Indo-European *an-tero-s/al-tero-s*. The Indo-European word was made up from the morpheme *al-* denoting ‘beyond’ and the comparative suffix -tero-, thus meaning ‘something more strange and/or remote’, and was reconstructed on the basis of such attested ancient forms as, for example, Sanskrit ántara-s ‘other, foreign’, an-yá-s ‘other, different’, Latin al-ius, al-ter ‘other’, Lithuanian antras ‘second’. The cognate early Germanic forms are included in Table Two:

## TABLE TWO

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>two/second</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gothic</td>
<td>twai/anþar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old High German</td>
<td>zwene/andar (Middle and Modern High German ander)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old Saxon</td>
<td>twene/ ôðar, ôðar, andar;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old English</td>
<td>twa, twegen’/oþer, æftera</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old Frisian</td>
<td>twa/óther (oder; ander)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old Norse</td>
<td>tveir/annarr</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* For a detailed discussion of the Old English cardinal numer twegen/twa see van Mengden (2010:75-80).
The Old English word *oþer* was multifunctional, as it could be used as an adjective, pronoun and numeral (cf. Bosworth and Toller 1898, s.v. *oþer*). Below are typical instances of the Old English ordinal numeral *oþer*:

(1) *ÆGr* 26.11 seo *oðer* declinatio hæfð syx geendunga. ‘The second declension has six endings.’
(2) *Mt* 22.26 (Ru) *similiter et secundus et tertius usque ad septimum* gelice 7 se *oþer* 7 se þridde ðop to þæm siofund. ‘And likewise the second and the third up to the seventh.’

As a numeral *oþer* competed with another Old English word *æftera*, which was originally an adjective used in locative sense as ‘later, closer to the back’, hence the sense ‘second’, both ‘latter, second of the two’ and ‘second of more than two’ (cf. DOE, s.v. *æfterra*), as in e.g.:

(3) *HomS* 44 60: on þam þriddan dæge æt þære *æfteran* tide dæges on heofonum æteowæð fyrentacen. ‘On the third day at two o’clock PM a token of fire appeared in the sky.’
(4) *Mart* 5 Au 8, A.18: ond Cristene men … hine bebyrgdon on þære *æfteran* mile fram þære ceastre þe is nemned Augusta. ‘And the Christians buried him on the second mile from the town which is called Augusta.’

The words could be used interchangeably as can be seen in the free variation between *æftera* and *oþer* in some glossaries and glosses, e.g. in the *Lindisfarne Gospels* *Mt* 22.26 for the Latin *secundus* we find in the Old Northumbrian gloss *de æftera l ðe oþer*; cf. also Esquibel and Wojtyś (2016). A similar variation can be found in the Alfredian prose:

(5) *Or* 1 14.35.26 her endaþ sio *forme* boc, 7 onginõ sio *æfterre*. vs.
(6) *Bede* 18.92.26 Her endað seo *æрестe* boc 7 onginneð seo *oþer*.
‘Here ends the first book and begins the second.’

However, *oþer* was much more common. In Ælfric’s *Grammar* (13.17, 118.1, 282.15) the ordinal number *secundus* is rendered by (*se*) *oþer*, but the prepositional *secundum* ‘according to’ is consistently translated as *æfter* (270.2). In Middle English *æfter* appeared only in very early texts, most of which were copies of Old English texts:

(7) *c1150*(OE) *Hrl.HApul.(Hrl 6258B)* 109.82/11: Wið fefore, þe ði æftran dæge to cumeð. ‘With the fever which comes on the second day.’
(8) *c1175*(?OE) *HRood* (Bod 343) 2/12: Ða on þære *æfteræ nihte*, ne durstlæhte he hine þær to rætene. ‘Then on the second night he did not dare to rest’
(9) *1296* *Sub.R.Sus.in Sus.RS 10* 50: *Will le Aftere* [William the Second].
The typical Middle English numeral denoting ‘second’ between the 12th and the mid-14th centuries was *other*:

(10) **c1200 Orn.** 13430: Affterr **patt forrne da33** patt wass I Paradisess blisse...3u w iss nu ba[e] god & ned...To flitten o **pis operr da33** Fra deofless. ‘After the first day that I was in the bliss of paradise...and for you it is both good and fitting...to escape from the devils on the second day.’

(11) **c1275(?a1200) Lay. Brut** 3050: He to scipe wende.. þene oðerne dæi he com to Denemarke. ‘He boarded the ship and on the second day came to Denmark.’

(12) **a1450 PNoster R.Hermit** 23/14: Þat is **pat oper poyn** of þe pater noster, and is on englische ðus myche to seye: halewed be þi name. ‘This is the second verse of Pater Noster, which is as much to say in English: hallowed be Thy name.’

*(The) other* is still used in Present-day English in the sense ‘the second out of two’, but there was no such restriction yet in Old and Middle English, where *other* was a polysemantic term meaning ‘other, different, variant’ and ‘second’. Such ambiguity must have led to misunderstandings, which was remedied by a new French loanword.

### 3. New word *second*

According to the *OED* and the *MED*, the word *second* is first attested in 1297, i.e. in the period when thousands of Romance words were being borrowed into English. Its Middle French/Anglo-Norman etymon was *seco(u)nde*, obviously continuing the Latin gerundival form *secundus* ‘following’ of the *verbum deponens sequi* ‘to follow’ (cognate with Old English *seon* ‘see’ from the Germanic *sekhwan* also continued in Gothic *saihwan*, Old High German *sehan*), ultimately from the Proto-Indo-European root *sekw-*. Below are some examples of the Anglo-Norman usage of the word in the 13th and 14th centuries:

(13) Le **secunde** comaundement si est tel: vous ne tuerez nul homme. *Mirour de seinte Eglyse* 31 a1250 ‘The second commandment is such: you will not kill anyone.’

(14) a nostre palais de Westm’, le **seconde** jour de Juyl, l’an de nostre regne quarantisme primer *Foedera* year 1367 ‘at our Palace of Westminster on 2 July, the 40st year of our reign.’

(15) William le Mareshall son auncestre les porta al coronement le Roi Edward **le second**. *Foedera* year 1377 ‘William the Marshal, his ancestor, brought them to the coronation of King Edward II.’
The word is found in parallel bilingual French and English texts, as in (16) and (17). The best evidence of its novelty status is the manuscript variation: while in older versions we still find other, in later texts, especially in the 15th century mostly second is used as in examples (18, 19) from the Chronicles of Gloucester and (20, 21) from the different manuscripts of the Cursor mundi, where while all the three 14th century manuscripts still have other, the 15th century southern Trinity MS systematically has second. This means that in the 15th century the scribe must have perceived other in this context as weird. A similar variation can be observed in the early and late versions of Wycliffe’s Bible, as is shown in (22):

(16a) Le an secounde apres le encorounement vs.
(16b) þe ȝere seconde after his corounment c1350 Peter Langtoft’s Chronicle 267 ‘The second year after his coronation…’
(17a) ceste rule enseigne le englysh dez voz paroiles de fffrauncyeys et en tiel manere la primer Rule enseigne pur scrivere, la seconde pur lire, la tierce pur entendre. vs.
(17b) þat rule tecþþ þe englyse of our wordez of frensh & in swych manere þe fyrste Rule tecþþ to wryte, þe seconde to rede, þe þryde to understand. c1400 Femina Trinity College Cambridge B.14.40 ‘This rule teaches English from our French words and in such manner the first rule teaches us to write, the second to read and the third one to understand’
(18) c1325 Glo.Chron. (ClgA.11) 8576 In þe secunde [þe oper αβ] þer…of is kinedom · Őoru out al engelond · so gret erþgrine com. ‘In the second year of his reign there was a big earthquake all over England.’
(19) So þat in þe teþe ȝer · of þe kinges croune. [þe teþe] þeope α; þe oper β; þe secunde] 5231 ‘so that in the second year of the king’s crown.’
(20a) Cotton: Her begins at noe þe lede þe toþer werlde right for to del
(20b) Fairfax: Here be-gynneþ in noe þe lede þe toþer world for til dele
(20c) Göttingen: Here bigynneþ of Noe lede þe secounde world for to sede.
(20d) Trinity: Here bigynneþ of Noe lede þe secounde world for to sede. 
   Cursor mundi 1626 ‘Here Noe’s people begin to populate/seed the second world.’
(21a) Cotton: þe first it gas, þe toper it hise,
(21b) Fairfax: þe first gas þe toper hit hyes
(21c) Göttingen: þe first gas, þe topir it hise
(21d) Trinity: þe furste gooþ þe secounde doþ hiȝe
   Cursor mundi 21278 ‘The first one goes (slowly), the second one hurries.’
(22a) (a1382) WBible(1) (Bod 959) Josh.10.32: þe hoost disposyd by enuy-ron aȝeyn fouȝte hit..& he took hit þat oper day and the oost disposid
bi enuyroun, aȝenfaȝt it... and he took it that other day, and smoot in mouth of swerd, and eche lîjf that was in it

(22b) **a1425(c1395) WBible(2)** (Roy 1.C.8) [WB(2) vr. in the secounde dai; L altero] and whanne the oost was disposid bi cumpas, he fâȝt aȝens it. and he*. took it*. in the tothir*. [secounde I.] dai, and smoot*. bi the scharpnesse of swerd, and*. [he slowȝ I.] ech man*. [lijf I.], that was therynne.

*King James Bible*: And the Lord delivered Lachish into the hand of Israel, which took it on the second day, and smote it with the edge of the sword, and all the souls that were therein.

Thus by the end of Middle English other became obsolete in the sense of ‘second of more than two’ and some late uses were most likely deliberately archaic, as in (23, 24) with reference to the ordering of kings who had the same names (the second Henry vs. Henry the other).

(23) **c1400 Trevisa Higden’s Polychronicon** [folio 447a] Kynge Henry the Firste. His brother nexte, callede the firste Henry... now comes pe se-cunde Henry Peter Langtoft *Chronicle* 167 (*Henricus secundus factus est rex*) ‘King Henry I, his next brother, called the first Henry. now comes the second Henry.’

(24) **a1500 Conq.Irel.(Rwl B.490)** 89/8: The kynge henry the othyr was a man same rede, roune hede, and rounde grey eyyn. ‘King Henry II was a man with red round head and round grey eyes.’

4. Conclusion

In the 15th century second finally replaced the native ordinal numbers other (and after), most likely owing to polysemanticity of the earlier words, which now specialized mostly as grammatical words. An additional factor was the heavy functional load of the pronoun other and the adverb/preposition after, which also developed a new function of the subordinating temporal conjunction more or less at the same time (*after paȝm þe/pæt > after that > after*; cf. Mo-lencki 2005).

Parallel processes affected other West Germanic languages at the time, where forms derived from the cardinal number were replacing the original an-der: German zweite, Dutch tweede, Frisian twadde. We can read in the Grimm brothers’ *Deutsche Wörterbuch* (s.v. ander): „im 14. jh. zuerst an stelle von ander bezeuget...vom 14-17 jh. nur dünn belegt, da ander noch weiterlebt...und mundartlich heute noch gebräuchlich ist“. Nevertheless the Scandinavian languages have preserved the Common Germanic form of the ordinal number sec-ond: Swedish andra, Danish anden, Norwegian annen, Icelandic and Faroese annar (thus in Scandinavia the second floor is still ‘the other’ floor). English,
however, introduced new forms of the first ordinal pronouns, which were both loanwords: Norse first and French second.

References

MEC = Middle English Compendium and MED= Middle English Dictionary.
OED= Oxford English Dictionary Online available online at http://www.oed.com