

**On the development of deverbal conjunctions.
A case-study on the grammaticalisation of
provided (that) in early Modern English¹**

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ABSTRACT

The immense amount of medieval borrowing from French and Latin into English is not restricted to immutable lexical income, since, once introduced, the loan-words may become subject to internal processes of language change. Some recent studies by M. Rissanen (1999b, 2000a, 2000b) have looked in particular at loan-words which have undergone processes of grammaticalisation, i.e. the development of grammatical material out of lexical items. In this paper, our attention is focused on the development of deverbal conjunctions from French loans, as illustrated in the specific case of PDE *provided that*. The loan *provide* is introduced into English during the Middle English period, but evidence of the progressive grammaticalisation of the original form does not start to be witnessed until the very last years of Middle English. The aim of this paper is to trace the gradual process of grammaticalisation of the form from the time of its introduction to the end of the early Modern English period (early eighteenth century).

1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to focus on the evolution of loan-words introduced into English during the Middle English period, and more specifically to analyse the development of borrowed verbal lexemes which eventually became conjunctions.

¹ The research reported on in this paper has been funded by the Spanish Ministry of Education and Culture (grant number BFF2001-2914) and by the Xunta de Galicia (grant number PGIDT01PXI20404PR). Both grants are hereby gratefully acknowledged. Our gratitude goes also to María José López Couso and Elena Seoane Posse for their valuable comments. Any shortcomings remain our entire responsibility.

During the Middle English period there was a heavy influx of foreign elements which were added to the English lexicon. Of special interest for us are the verbs which were borrowed in this period. Although some of these borrowed verbal items were lost in the course of time, others did not only survive, even up to Present-day English, but also underwent a number of changes which gave way to their later emergence as deverbal conjunctions or prepositions (cf. Kortmann 1997:299-301). Such is the case of Middle English *consider*, *suppose*, *accord* or *provide*.

Since a detailed analysis of all deverbal conjunctions is not possible here, we shall concentrate on the verb *provide*, tracing its development from the moment it was introduced into English to the end of the early Modern English period.

Besides describing its evolution, we shall also consider the progressive grammaticalisation of the form *provided (that)*. As Rissanen (2000b:249) claims, the majority of studies which deal with grammaticalisation focus exclusively on native vocabulary, without analysing loan-words as items which can also be affected by this process. It is possible, however, that the conclusions drawn from this study help to shed some light on the process of grammaticalisation of deverbal conjunctions in English.

2. DIACHRONIC OVERVIEW OF THE VERB *PROVIDE* FROM LATIN TO ENGLISH

The English verb *provide* has its roots in the Latin verb *provideo* which, according to the *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, was used to convey the following meanings: 'to see before' (used when denoting space); 'to foresee, to consider in advance'; 'to prepare, arrange'; 'to take care, take precautions, protect'; 'to supply.'

By the beginning of the twelfth century the verb *pourvoir* started being used in French as a reproduction (to a certain extent) of the Latin verb *provideo*. However, the meaning 'to see before' conveyed by Latin *provideo* was not acquired by French *pourvoir*. At first, and according to the data provided by dictionaries such as *Trésor de la Langue Française* or the *Dictionnaire Historique de la Langue Française*, the French verb is attested with the meaning 'foresee'. By the end of the twelfth century the French verb *pourvoir* developed the sense 'supply someone with something.' Therefore, the range of meanings conveyed by *pourvoir* was more restricted than that of Latin *provideo*.

Around the fifteenth century the verb *provide* was introduced into English. The meanings of this verb listed in the *Oxford English Dictionary*

(henceforth *OED*) can be summarised as follows: ‘to foresee’; ‘to make provision’; ‘to prepare, arrange’; ‘to supply’; ‘to stipulate.’

Taking the evidence provided by the *OED* as starting point, we proceeded to analyse all the examples of the verb *provide* recorded in the *Helsinki Corpus* (*HC*). Although our study is mainly based on the information retrieved from this corpus, when necessary, data extracted from other sources, namely the *OED* and the *Lampeter Corpus*, have been included.

3. THE VERB *PROVIDE* IN THE *HELSINKI CORPUS*

133 instances of the verb *provide* have been found in the *HC*. Non-finite forms of this verb are the most frequent, especially participles, which are more numerous than infinitival forms. On the contrary, finite forms are scarce, being recorded only in 11 examples.

Focusing on the semantics of the verb *provide*, we have classified the meanings this verb can convey into four groups, (i) to (iv). The main features of each group are explained and exemplified below:

(i) ‘to make provision,’ as examples (1) and (2) show:

- (1) To ioyne in Conferrence wth the Kinges Mynisters and theirs, to the intent that as they are all in a Bande of Confederacy, so they may ioyntly resolve ether to giue eare to Treatyse or to *provide* for warres contynuance. (*HC*, 1640, Robert Cecil, *Letter to Edmondess*)
- (2) Nowe when Simon was gon from his said master, and was at his fre libertie to serve ellswere, he might have had mani masters, but he wold dwell with none, but *provided* and wente to the free scolle every day for eight wicke’s space, and followed his bocke hard. (*HC*, 1600, Simon Forman, *The Autobiography and Personal Diary of Dr Simon Forman, the Celebrated Astrologer*)

When *provide* conveys the meaning ‘make provision’ the type of complementation it requires is either just one complement, always a prepositional phrase (PP), as in (1), or no complement at all, as seen in (2).

(ii) ‘to prepare, arrange,’ as illustrated in examples (3) to (5):

- (3) But Custom makes all things familiar and easy, that we generally Repose till Two the next Day; when our Cook has *provided* not only our Dinner (which is as Sumptuous as if at Home, and brought in with the same order) but furthermore, our necessary Provant for the ensuing

Day's Journey. (HC, 1672-1681, John Fryer, *A New Account of East India and Persia, being Nine Years' Travels*)

- (4) Nevertheless because ye are strangers, and have endur'd so long a journey, to impart us the knowledge of things, which I perswade me you believe to be the truest and the best, ye may be sure we shall not recompence you with any molestation, but shall *provide* rather how we may friendliest entertain ye. (HC, 1670, John Milton, *The History of Britain, that part especially now call'd England*)
- (5) After priuat praier I went to breakfast, and then I talked with a phesiton which, I hope, the Lord hath *provided* for me in steed of Doctor Brewer, and some other gentlemen. (HC, 1599-1605, Margaret Hoby, *Diary of Lady Margaret Hoby*)

When occurring with this meaning, *provide* may be followed either by one or by two complements. Examples (3) and (4) show the use of *provide* with one complement, a noun phrase (NP) in (3) and a clause in (4). Number (5) is an instance of the use of *provide* with two complements.²

(iii) 'supply:'

- (6) Why how now Huswife, do you snap at me? Do you grudge me my Victuals? Pray Madam Joan, what is it to you how much I eat and drink, do I not *provide* it? (HC, 1685, *Samuel Pepys' Penny Merriments*)

When used with the meaning 'supply', *provide* is always followed by at least one complement, usually an NP, as in (6) above, although it is more commonly used in the corpus with two complements, an NP and a PP, as (7) below shows:

- (7) You knowe not what belongeth to youre case, and therefore we must teach you: it appertaineth not to us to *prouide* Bookes for you, neyther sit wee here to taught of you. (HC, 1500-1570, *The Trial of Sir Nicholas Throckmorton*)

(iv) 'stipulate by law:'

- (8) And it is hereby *provided* and enacted by the Authority aforesaid That it shall and may be lawfull for any Person or Persons to ship or putt on

² The double complementation of *provide* in example (5) is not straightforward, due to the insertion of the predicate in a relative clause, whose relativiser (*which*) fulfils the function of direct object.

- board any Corn Meale Flour Bread Malt Starch or Biscuit to be carried Coastwise. (*HC*, 1640-1710, *Statutes*)
- (9) The Mayers wyfe of the citie *provided* in her wyll, that she would be buried without any pompe or noyse. (1560, J. Daus, *Slei dane's Comm.* 114b. *OED* s.v. *provide* v. 2c)

When *provide* has the sense 'stipulate', it only takes one complement, a *that*-clause, as (8) and (9) show.

Therefore, almost all the senses of the verb *provide* listed in the *OED* have been found to occur in the corpus. The only exception is the meaning 'foresee'. Although the *OED* lists instances of *provide* with this meaning as early as c.1420, examples of the verb under study with this sense have not been recorded in the *HC*.

As for the chronological evolution of the meanings of *provide* present in the corpus, the earliest instances go back to ME3 (1350-1420) where *provide* has the meaning 'prepare, arrange.' The next chronological subperiod of ME, that is ME4 (1420-1500), is of great relevance because at this stage new meanings of this verb emerge, namely 'make provision,' 'supply' and 'stipulate'. Although 'supply' is the most frequent sense in the corpus, all the meanings which arose in ME survive and are still recorded in the corpus in the last subperiod of early Modern English.

After describing and exemplifying the main semantic and syntactic features of the verb *provide*, we shall now proceed to consider its evolution up to the moment the form *provided* (*that*) became a subordinator, and its behaviour as such.

4. FROM VERB TO SUBORDINATOR IN ENGLISH

4.1. Subjectless participial constructions

Already in the last ME subperiod (1420-1500), participial forms of the verb *provide* are attested in specific constructions, like (10) below, which constitute the roots of a new conditional subordinator.

- (10) And more over that it be inacted and stablissed by thauctorite aforsaid from hensforth that no butte or buttes of Malmeseys in vessell or in vessels that shalbe brought in to this your seid realme shall be sold above iiij l~i. sterling.

Provided allwey *that* this acte extend not to any Englissh man borne touching the newe custume above reherced of xvij s. And that this p~sent acte endure no leng~ than they of Venice shall sette aside the imposition of the payment of the iiij Ducates aforseid. (*HC*, 1420-1500, *Statutes*)

As can be seen, there is a significant similarity between the participle occurring in structures of this kind and the PDE conditional subordinator *provided (that)*. Nevertheless, the past participle in constructions like (10) retains much of the verbal character of the original lexeme, as is shown by the consideration of the following criteria:

a) Discontinuity. The occurrence of adverbial modifiers in between the participle and the particle/complementiser *that* is an indication of verbal-like behaviour, because internal modification is not possible in a function word. Quirk *et al* (1985:1003) use this criterion to distinguish between participles used in *free syntactic constructions* (as (11)) and those used in *complex subordinators* (as (12)), since only *free syntactic constructions* can be expanded by adverbials, like ordinary verbal participles:

- (11) Supposing, for the sake of argument, that
- (12) *Provided, for the sake of argument, that

Out of 64 instances of the subjectless participial construction under consideration in the *HC*, 52 (i.e. more than 80%) contain a discontinuous structure. The occurrence of different structural variants (e.g. *always*, *also*, *nevertheless*, etc.) as internal modifiers demonstrates that the elements occurring between the participle and the particle *that* are not part of a fossilised expression:

- (13) *Provided alsoe That* noe Person shall bee discharged out of Prison or have any Benefitt or Advantage by force or virtue of this Act who shall bee really and (\bona fide\) indebted in more than the Su~m of One hundred Pound~ Principal Money for Debt or Damages or shall stand charged with any Debt to His Majestie. (*HC*, 1640-1710, *Statutes*)

b) Coordination with a verb phrase. Besides adverbial modification, *provided (that)* is occasionally made discontinuous by the introduction of a coordinated verb phrase, as in (14) below:

- (14) *Provided and bee it enacted by the Authority aforesaid That* if such Person who was Goaler or Keeper of such Goal or Prison on the said Five and twentieth Day of December One thousand six hundred ninety

and five shall not happen to bee the Goaler or Keeper of such Goal or Prison att the time of the making such Su~mon that then the said justice or Justic~ of the Peace before whom the Sheriff Goaler or Keeper of such Prison shall appeare by virtue of such Warrant shall administer and give to such Person as shall bee Sheriff Goaler or Keeper of such Prison att the time of making of such Summons an Oath to the Effect following viz^t. (*HC, 1640-1710, Statutes*)

In this example the coordination of *provided* with the finite passive verb phrase *be it enacted* suggests that *provided* is a constituent of a similar passive construction where the dummy subject *it* and the passive auxiliary *be* have been omitted, by virtue of their status as shared material in coordination. The passive structure becomes evident in example (8), repeated here as (15) for convenience, where the participle *provided* explicitly forms part of a passive periphrasis:

- (15) *And it is hereby provided and enacted by the Authority aforesaid That it shall and may be lawfull for any Person or Persons to ship or putt on board any Corn Meale Flour Bread Malt Starch or Biscuit to be carried Coastwise (...). (HC, 1640-1710, Statutes)*

In view of the similarity between the finite construction in (15) and the non-finite constructions which we are presenting here as subjectless participial constructions (cf. (14)), we are inclined to analyse these participial constructions as part of similar passive verb phrases.

The hypothesis of a passive interpretation for the examples under consideration gains support from the examination of the immediate linguistic context.

- (16) *And be it furthermore ordeyned and enacted by thadvyse and auctoritie aforesaid that the Kyng our Soverayn Lord or eny other persones take not any advantage or p~fuyt of any penalties of forfaitures by an Act made in the p~liament (...) And provyded also that this Acte extend not to Wollen Clothes called Tostok~ (...) Provyded also this Acte or eny penaltie or articule therin conteyned extend not ne in any wise be hurtfull or prejudiciall to any cloth makers for makynge of any Cloth within the Countie of Cornewall (...). Provyded also that this acte extend not nor be prejudicyall of or to the maker merchant or byer of eny wollen clothes called Bastard~ made with cremyll Lystes. (HC, 1500-1570, Statutes)*

In this example, *provided* functions as the verbal head of a number of clauses which occur in paratactic arrangement (either syndetic or asyndetic) with a previous imperative passive verb-phrase (i.e. *be it (...) ordeyned and enacted*).

In all these cases, *provided* introduces syntactically independent units, separated from the contiguous clauses by strong punctuation marks (sometimes even paragraph boundaries, as in example (10) above).

c) Matrix control. It is frequently assumed that in the initial stages of the development of a participle into a functional unit (either a preposition or a conjunction), the matrix clause controls the interpretation of a subject for the participle. Consider in this connection examples (17) and (18) below:

- (17) Given the chance, I'd do it again.
- (18) Given that this work was produced under particularly difficult circumstances, the result is better than could be expected. (both taken from Quirk *et al*, 1985:660)

The participle in (17) can only be interpreted as a verbal form, because there is an element in the matrix, in this case the subject, which controls the assignment of a subject to the participle. This example should be paraphrased as "If I were given the chance, I'd do it again." On the contrary, there is no such control in (18) and this permits a conjunctive interpretation of the participle.

Given that all our examples involve passive structures with a dummy subject *it* and a clausal complement, we shall refer to semantic rather than syntactic aspects of control (cf. Kortmann 1995). In this respect, we can identify matrix control in the assignment of semantic arguments of the participle. Semantic control can be seen in an example like (16), where the agent argument of the matrix predicate *be ordained and enacted* (i.e. *by thadvyse and auctoritie aforesaid*) can also be interpreted as the agent of the participle *provided*. Only in more advanced stages of grammaticalisation does the participle lose the typically verbal capacity to select its own arguments.

4.2. Reanalysis of the participle as subordinator

The phrasal construction in which the participial form retains its original verbal nature is fairly common throughout the eModE period, always in connection with legal documents (as was the case in examples (10) and (13) to (16). According to the data retrieved from the *HC*, the loss of verbal properties by the participle is not evident until the seventeenth century, as shown in the consideration of the following criteria:

a) In the first place, there is a loosening of textual restrictions and semantic weakening. With the detachment from legal contexts, there is a weakening of

the meaning associated with the participle from a strictly legal stipulation to a more general stipulation or provision devoid of legal nuances.

- (19) such breede will holde vp and continue the stocke, *provided that you reare not vp any calues which are calued in the prime daies*, for they generally are subject to the disease of the sturdie, which is dangerous and mortall. (*HC*, 1615, Markham, *Countray Contentments*)

b) Secondly, the clause introduced by the participle is no longer an independent clause in these new contexts; it is incorporated into a complex sentence separated from the adjacent matrix clause by commas.

c) Thirdly, none of the participles occurring outside legal contexts in the *HC* is affected by adverbial modification or appears in a discontinuous phrase. We must note, however, that there are instances from the seventeenth century (outside the *HC*) where a relatively grammaticalised form of *provided (that)* occurs under the scope of an adverbial modifier, as shown in (20) taken from the *Lampeter Corpus*. In the few examples of this kind, the adverbial element tends to occupy premodifier position, without provoking, therefore, a discontinuous structure.

- (20) However, if there be any such place, that is so remote from a Town, that they cannot send to it, without too much trouble, there a Shop-keeper may be allowed to set up, alwaies *provided that he hath a certificate of his freedom of some Shop keeping Trade; and that the place where he shall set up in, be eight measured Miles from any Market Town, which is hardly six by computation*. (*Lampeter Corpus*, 1681, *The Trade of England Revived*)

d) Finally, the last criterion refers to the optionality of *that*, which is reached by the second half of the seventeenth century (none of the *HC* examples from this period shows *that*-reinforcement), as can be seen in examples like (21) below.³

³ In this respect, we could possibly suggest a difference between the use of *that* in the phrasal constructions of the participle and its later use in the complex subordinator. In the phrase, *that* is clearly a complementiser introducing a clausal complement required by the verbal predicate. As a complementiser, *that* is likely to be omitted ever since the late ME period, specially when dependent on predicates of saying or mental activity (cf. Fischer 1992:313, Rissanen 1999a:284, Denison 1998:258). In conjunctive uses, *that* could be interpreted either as a remnant of the original verbal complementation pattern of the participle or as a subordination marker, such as those following numerous subordinators throughout the ME and eModE periods, but still relatively common with complex and newly-acquired subordinators in PDE (cf. Beal 1988).

- (21) This new accident made him more impatient of liberty, and he was every day treating with (^Trefry^) for his and (^Clemene's^) liberty and offer'd either gold, or a vast quantity of slaves, which should be paid before they let him go, **provided** he could have any security that he should go when his ransom was paid. (*HC*, 1688, Aphra Behn, *Oroonoko*)

Optional dropping of *that* after participial forms in conjunctive uses has been interpreted as a signal of grammaticalisation by Beal (1988:58-60). *That* is taken to be a subordination marker; therefore, when it becomes optional, it is because the subordinating nature of the original participle is sufficiently established.⁴

The amount of examples of the new grammaticalised conjunction in the *HC* is too low to warrant significant conclusions. It must be pointed out, however, that the subjectless participial construction continues to be the predominant option by the end of the seventeenth century, always limited to legal documents, while the new conjunction gradually gains ground from the moment of its introduction (early seventeenth century) to the end of the eModE period.

5. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The historical development of the medieval loan *provide* from a verbal lexeme to a subordinating conjunction *provided (that)* throughout the Renaissance period has been presented in this paper as a gradual process, where the progressive loss of verbal properties by the participle results in its final acquisition of grammatical status in the early seventeenth century.

The data from the *HC* reveal that the roots for this process of grammaticalisation are found in the subjectless participial constructions occurring in legal contexts since the end of the fifteenth century. Our data suggest that the participle does not abandon its original verbal behaviour until the construction extends to a wider variety of text types in the early seventeenth century.

As a grammaticalised subordinator, *provided (that)* does not express the same broad sense of condition as the general conditional subordinator in English, *if*, but rather it has specialised for the expression of a very specific type of condition, namely “sufficient and necessary condition.” This

⁴ The actual occurrence of *that* in complex subordinators where it has become an optional constituent has been associated with the need for explicitness in cognitively complex environments (cf. Rohdenburg 1996:165-66).

specialisation in meaning can possibly account for the successful and rapid establishment of *provided (that)* as a conditional subordinator in English.

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'Nothing but papers, my lord'

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