

# From Manner to Temporal Uses: Historical Changes of the English Subordinator *As*

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The English subordinator *as* is known to be polysemous in Present-Day English (PDE) (e.g. manner, time, and cause). The general semantic continuity between the temporal and causal uses is already pointed out by Traugott and König (1991) through the diachronic semantic study of *since*, but that of the manner and temporal uses is uncertain. This paper, therefore, clarifies their semantic continuity and reveals what factor engendered these different uses.

In the historical perspective, not all of those uses have been available since the Old English (OE) period. The manner use was already available in the OE period whereas the temporal use was not found until Middle English (ME) (cf. The *Oxford English Dictionary*)

This paper, based on my corpus research, shows that there has existed an intermediate case since the OE period, as in (1).

- (1) Hi ða þa bydelas and feala oðre, eallswa hi to sceatte hopedon, ferdon  
they then those heralds and many other as they to prize hoped went  
'Hoping for the prize, those heralds and many others then went [and sought the Christians].'  
(cosevensl,LS\_34\_: OE)

In this case, the *as*-clause expresses the subject participant's inner state or supplementary action accompanying the primary one. This situation has semantic continuity with the manner use in that both focus on the way the overall event unfolds. Also shared, but backgrounded between them is the notion of simultaneity: the accompanying feeling/action or manner is inextricably integrated to the primary action expressed in the matrix clause. The difference is that as opposed to the manner use, the notion of comparison disappears in the case in question: the *as*-clause no longer functions as the standard for comparison, neither does the matrix clause the object for comparison.

The above situation also shares with the temporal use the notion of simultaneity: the two events expressed by the *as*-clause and its matrix clause concur. The difference lies in the degree to which the two concurring events are integrated. For example, the events in (1) are facets of a single higher-order event while those of the typical temporal use are separate, different events. In other words, as the degree decreases to which the two events are integrated into an inseparable, higher-order event and they start to be regarded as separable, the aspect of simultaneity, which is backgrounded in (1), gradually becomes foregrounded.

In summary, a situation such as (1) offers a bridging context between the manner and temporal uses and its existence facilitates the development of the temporal use. This paper provides a new finding about a possible semantic extension observed in polysemous subordinators (e.g. *since* and *while*) as well as the semantic development of the subordinator *as*.

## References

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