



Laura García Fernández

Lemmatising Old English on a relational database

Preterite-present,
contracted, anomalous
and strong VII verbs

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English and Beyond

herausgegeben von Hans Sauer, Gaby Waxenberger
und Monika Kirner-Ludwig

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Introduction

This work deals with the linguistics of Old English in the new paradigm defined by the incorporation of linguistic corpora and electronic resources. With exhaustive compilations of data that are organised systematically, much more powerful computing hardware, and software (including non-specific one) that offers a wide range of functionalities, it is possible to make significant advances in the linguistic analysis of Old English.

This work may take a further step in the research in the linguistic analysis of Old English with corpus-based lexical databases conducted, among others, by García Fernández (fc.), García García (2012, 2013), González Torres (2010a, 2010b, 2011), Martín Arista (2012a, 2012b, 2013a, 2013b, 2014, 2017a, fc.), Martín Arista and Cortés Rodríguez (2014), Martín Arista and Veá Escarza (2016), Mateo Mendaza (2013, 2014, 2015a, 2015b, 2016), Metola Rodríguez (2016, 2017, 2018), Novo Urraca (2015, 2016a, 2016b), Tío Sáenz (2015, 2018), Torre Alonso (2011a, 2011b) and Veá Escarza (2012, 2013, 2014, 2016, 2016b).

More specifically, this work is framed within the *Nerthus* Project, which works on the lexical database called *The Grid*, presented by Martín Arista (2013b) in a lecture delivered at the University of Sheffield, where the language itself the object of analysis. *The Grid* consists of five relational layouts, namely *Nerthus*, a concordance by fragment, a concordance by word, an index and a reverse index to the *Dictionary of Old English Corpus*. This lexical database is being built with the purpose that the language itself is the object of analysis. One of the main avenues of research that the database has started is the lemmatisation of the verbal lexicon of Old English as attested in the *Dictionary of Old English Corpus*. The present study contributes to this line of research.

With these bearings, this work combines aspects of Morphology, Lexicography and Corpus Analysis, and takes two main directions: exploring the relationship between Inflectional Morphology and Lexicography; and gaining insight into the connection between Inflectional Morphology and Corpus Linguistics.

As is explained in the synthetic part of this work, the relationship between Corpus Linguistics and Lexicography is well established: new dictionaries, as a general rule, are designed and compiled on the basis of a corpus of the target language; while lemmatisation is generally accepted as one of the necessary tasks of dictionary making: indeed, textual occurrences need to be related to a headword whose entry presents the information relevant to all the textual occurrences of each lemma.

On the other hand, the relationship between lemmatisation and Corpus Linguistics is less clear, at least in the field of Old English studies. As a matter of fact, no lemmatised corpus of Old English is available. Generally

speaking, a lemmatised corpus has clear advantages over an unlemmatised one. It facilitates studies in morphology, syntax and semantics (as well as in the relationships between them) and allows for textual analysis of frequency, productivity, collocations, etc. In the specific area of Old English, a lemmatised corpus is even more necessary. This is so because Old English presents numerous and various morphological variations and, above all, because it does not have a written standard. Instances of morphological variation are attributable to change over time; and as a result of spelling inconsistencies that may have to do with authorship or textual transmission. Thus, for example, the contracted negative forms *næfð*, *næfst*, *næbbe*, *næfdon*, *næfde*, *nabban* and *nabbað* should be attributed to the verbal lemma *habban* ‘to have’; whereas to the copulative verb lemma *bēon* ‘to be’ the following forms, at least, should be assigned: *be*, *beo*, *beon*, *beonne*, *beoð*, *beop*, *bið*, *bist*, *bip*, *byð*, *byst*, *byþ*, *eart*, *eom*, *heom*, *is*, *sindon*, *sint*, *sund*, *sy*, *synd*, *syndan*, *synden*, *syndon*, *synt*, *ys*, *wær*, *wære*, *wæran*, *wæron*, *wæs*, *was*, *were*, and *wes*. Notice that this list comprises rather unpredictable forms such as *heom*, *sund*, *syndan*, *wæran* and *wes*. When it comes to analysing Old English, it makes a great difference if the forms just cited are gathered under the corresponding lemma. Not only because all the information on the lemma is available for all its inflectional forms but, above all, because the researcher does not know where or how to look for morphologically or orthographically deviant or unpredictable forms. Put differently, the lemmatisation of the lexicon gathers morphological paradigms and applies a criterion of regularisation whereby deviant or unpredictable forms are found where they should be, thus becoming available for the researcher.

With these preliminaries, the aim of this work is to contribute to the lemmatisation of the Old English verbal lexicon. Of all the classes, the scope of this research is restricted to the most morphologically complex verbal classes of Old English: irregular verbs and reduplicative verbs. This is to say, the scope includes the preterite-present, anomalous, contracted and strong VII verbs of Old English. Therefore, the main task is to relate the attestations of the above mentioned classes to a lemma inflected for the infinitive. This aim is twofold. Firstly, it is necessary to select and manage the sources of data and verification of results. Secondly, the steps of the lemmatisation tasks need defining and sequencing. Whereas strong verbs may have relatively predictable *ablaut* patterns that allow for a degree of automatised, and weak verbs may have relatively predictable inflectional paradigms, the four verbal classes in the scope of this research call for a specific lemmatisation procedure.

As remarked above, lemmatisation is still a pending task in Old English since there is not a complete list with all the attested forms by dictionary word. *The Dictionary of Old English* (henceforth DOE), which provides

all the attestations by headword entry, has only published the letters A-I, so that similar information is not available for the rest of the alphabet (L-Y). Similarly, the standard dictionaries of Old English, including Bosworth and Toller's *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, Hall-Meritt's *A Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, and Sweet's *The Student's Dictionary of Anglo-Saxon*, do not give all the attested inflectional forms of verbs, neither do they offer the citations on a systematic basis. This leaves us with the task of not only relating attested forms to the verbal infinitive but also finding textual evidence for the infinitives or inflectional forms turned out by this analysis. This research also raises the issue of the automatised process of lemmatisation of Old English verbs, on which no previous literature has been found, except Metola Rodríguez (2015, 2017, 2018) and Tío Sáenz (2015, 2018).

This research contributes to the field with the inventory of lemmas and inflectional forms for the L-Y letters of the verbal classes mentioned above as attested in *The Dictionary of Old English Corpus*, which was not available until now from the lexicographical sources. This kind of analysis requires two types of resources, textual and lexicographical. The corpus used is the 2004 version of *The Dictionary of Old English Corpus*, which is the base of the lexical database. The *Dictionary of Old English Corpus* contains approximately three thousand texts and three million words, which represents in practice all the surviving written records of the Anglo-Saxon language. The lexicographical sources checked are, in the first place, the database *The Grid*, and secondly, the Old English dictionaries, including the DOE, Bosworth and Toller's *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, Hall-Meritt's *A Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, and Sweet's *The Student's Dictionary of Anglo-Saxon*.

Two different approaches to lemmatisation have been taken in this research. Firstly, the class VII strong verbs are lemmatised by means of a search algorithm that is based on the main forms of the verbs (Metola Rodríguez 2015, 2017, 2018). The search algorithm is created on the basis of the roots, the set of inflections and the preverbal items of the strong verbs. Four different query strings combine aiming at the attested basic and complex strong verbs, while four filters are designed in order to discard undesired results. Therefore, this methodology targets both the derived lemmas and the basic verbs, unlike the other three verbal classes, which concentrate exclusively on the derived verbs. Secondly, the derived preterite-present, anomalous and contracted verbs are searched by means of their simplexes. By *derived* this research understands the Old English verbal forms and lemmas that are created on the basis of the attachment of a verb-forming prefix to a simplex form. Take as an example *tōsāwan*, which constitutes a derived strong VII verb by the addition of the prefix *tō-* to the simplex verb *sāwan*.

The method is based on one of the defining characteristics of the lexicon of Old English noted by Kastovsky (1992), which is the remarkable degree of morphological relatedness found in large word families of derivatives that share a base of derivation. Given that derived verbs display the same stem and inflectional endings as their simplex counterparts, it is possible to search for derivatives on the grounds of simplex verbs. For example, *onādōn* is a derivative of *ādōn*, which, in turn, results from the prefixation of *ā-* to *dōn* ‘to do’. Consequently, the morphological relationship holding between *dyde* and *dōn* is the same as the one that links *onadyde* to *onādōn*. The lemma *onādōn* is assigned to the inflectional form *onadyde*.

With the two approaches just described, the methodology comprises automatic searches and the manual revision of the hits. The automatic searches are launched on the lemmatiser *Norna* and the hits are compared with the available lexicographical sources. For example, given a basic verb like *gān*, the forms in theory attributable to the infinitive *gebegān* include *gebiced*, *gebegeð*, *gebegeð*, *gebege*, *gebiggan*, *gebegað*, *gebega* and *gebegane*, although the only attestation in the texts that corresponds to the infinitive *gebegān* is *gebegane*. The first half of the alphabet, that is, letters A-I, are compared with the DOE, whereas, letters L-Y are checked with the standard dictionaries of Old English. After that, this research turns to secondary sources, as presented by the database *Freya*, and the York corpora of Old English (prose and poetry). Finally, ambiguous cases are examined in their context, for which this research provides their citation and translation.

With respect to the organisation, the present work is divided into six chapters. Chapter 1 is devoted to the identification of Old English as an Indo-European language and to contextualise it within the family of the Germanic languages. Section 1.2 remarks the similarities and differences among Old English and the other Germanic languages. This chapter also includes a section (1.3) that gives an account on the main dialects that coexisted in the Anglo-Saxon times and comments on their common features as well as their main differences. After the general introduction to the Old English language, chapter 1 focuses on the morphology, which at the core of this work, gives special emphasis to the verbal system and the main procedures of word formation. Section 1.4 offers an overview of the verbal system in the Anglo-Saxon language, the formation of the inflectional paradigms, and the classification into the different verbal classes, which include strong verbs, weak verbs, preterite-present verbs and anomalous verbs. On the other hand, section 1.5 discusses the most relevant mechanisms that were used in Old English for the creation of new words. The final sections in chapter 1 (1.6, 1.7, 1.8 and 1.9) thoroughly describe the four classes of Old English verbs selected for this research, the strong VII, contracted, preterite-present and anomalous verbs,

respectively. Apart from their specific features, the focus is on the several theories that attempt to explain the origin and development of the mentioned verbal classes from the Indo-European and the Germanic languages.

Turning to chapter 2, it is devoted to the research methodology. Since this research is directly related to the disciplines of Lexicography and Corpus Linguistics, this chapter provides an overview on these linguistic areas, addresses their main goals and remarks the importance of Corpus Linguistics for the task of lemmatisation. In this respect, section 2.2 analyses Corpus Linguistics along the history of Lexicography and comments on the future perspectives concerning how these two linguistic areas will correlate. Section 2.2 also includes a description of the steps and methods of dictionary making, where lemmatisation plays a decisive role. This chapter devotes a whole section (2.3) to the problem of headword spelling, which is one of the main problems that lexicographers of Old English encounter when building a dictionary. After having offered an overview on lexicographical work, chapter 2 concentrates on the lemmatisation task. In section 2.4, the lemmatisation methods that are being currently developed by the *Nerthus* Project are presented, pointing at their main steps and differences among them. Section 2.5 gives an account of the sources required by this study, and finally, the methodological process that has been followed to get an exhaustive list of lemmas and inflectional forms is thoroughly described in section 2.6.

The remaining chapters of this work (3, 4, 5 and 6) share the same structure. Each of them deals with one of the verbal classes in this research, the preterite-present, contracted, anomalous and class VII strong verbs, respectively. These chapters apply the lemmatisation methodology to the four verbal classes following the procedure explained in chapter 2. These chapters are divided into several sections that deal with the lemmatisation tasks individually. First of all, sections 3.2, 4.2, 5.2 and 6.2 provide the context of what is available from the secondary sources by listing the lemmas and inflectional forms as indexed in the database *Freya*. The first task of the lemmatisation procedure has to do with the automatic searches, which is presented in sections 3.3, 4.3, 5.3 and 6.3. The subsequent sections concentrate on the next task and illustrate the steps by which the hits from the automatic searches are manually revised with the available lexicographical sources. The first half of the alphabet is compared with the DOE, as presented in 3.4, 4.4, 5.4 and 6.4. Then, the hits from the automatic searches corresponding to the L-Y letters are compared with the standard dictionaries of Old English. This step is illustrated in sections 3.5, 4.5, 5.5 and 6.5. Secondary sources, such as Old English glossaries (*Freya*) and annotated corpora (*York Corpus of Old English*), are checked for the verification of forms that are not given by

the dictionaries. After applying those filters, a few doubtful cases appear, which are discussed in 3.6, 4.6, 5.6. and 6.6. After all, this research provides the list of lemmas and inflectional forms for the L-Y letters that correspond to the preterite-present, anomalous, contracted and strong VII verbs in section 3.7, 4.7, 5.7 and 6.7, respectively. In the appendix, a list of lemmas and inflectional forms for the letters A-I is included that is based on the reference list from *Nerthus*. This list matches the inventory of L-Y lemmas and inflectional forms given in this work and, more importantly, reflects a consistent headword spelling.

The conclusions of this work constitute a contribution in two areas. On the descriptive side, an inventory of inflectional forms and lemmas of the verbs under analysis is offered. On the applied side, this work presents different procedures of automatic and manual lemmatisation that can be applied to the fields of Lexicography and Corpus Linguistics.

Chapter 1. Old English: from context to distinctiveness

1.1. Introduction

The focus of this work is the morphology of the Old English language in general and the verbal system in particular. This chapter is devoted to locating Old English within the Indo-European family and the Germanic languages, and to highlight the most relevant developments throughout history. This chapter is divided into eight subsections, each of them focusing on specific features of the Anglo-Saxon language.

To begin with, section 1.2 contextualises Old English within the Germanic languages, pointing to the similarities and differences among the languages in the group. Section 1.3 gives a brief introduction to the main Old English dialects and the common features they share. The remaining sections concentrate on the Old English morphology, which is the interest of this work. The characteristics of the verbal system are described in section 1.4, whereas section 1.5 offers an overview of the main procedures of word formation in Old English.

The last four sections (1.6, 1.7, 1.8 and 1.9) deal with the four classes of Old English verbs selected for this research. These sections thoroughly describe the specific features of the strong VII, contracted, preterite-present and anomalous verbs, respectively. The focus is on the several theories that attempt to explain the origin and development of the mentioned verbal classes from the Indo-European and the Germanic languages. Finally, the chapter concludes with some final remarks.

1.2. Old English within the family of the Germanic languages

The scope of this work is the morphology of the Old English language and in particular, the verbal system. This section is devoted to locating Old English in place and time and to briefly explain its origin and main developments.

Old English derives from one of the Germanic branches of the Indo-European languages that is usually subdivided into three groups, North, East and West Germanic.¹ Germanic languages were those spoken in the south of Scandinavia and the northern part of Germany in the years before Christ. The migrations of those peoples contributed to the spread of their language. In particular, East Germanic is represented by Gothic, which survives in fragments of a version of the Bible from the fourth century. It is the best-known East Germanic language thanks to the surviving translations from the Old and New Testaments which were carried out by the Bishop Wulfila. Gothic is considered the closest language to Proto-

¹ For the distinctive features of the three branches see Fulk (2018).

Germanic. Within the North Germanic group, East and West Norse are distinguished. East Norse contains Danish and Swedish whereas West Norse is formed by Norwegian and Icelandic, among others. West Germanic is the group where Old English belongs and shares similarities in its history with other languages in the group. The languages of this group tend to have old, middle and modern periods. The old period, which is the one of interest in this research, lasts until mid eleventh century.

The attestations corresponding to the West Germanic languages date back to the tenth century approximately. Along history, this group of languages underwent further splitting creating diverse languages and dialects. In fact, Fulk (2018: 25) claims that scholars have not reached consensus on the origin and the relations of the West Germanic languages. The best recorded languages of this family showing an old period are Old High German, Old Saxon and Old English. Old German, for instance, is one of the main languages in this group, which, at the same time, develops into two dialects, High and Low German. The oldest texts of these two dialects date from the eighth and ninth centuries. Another language of this group is Old Frisian, which is available from the twelfth century and therefore, is contemporaneous with Middle English. However, many authors group Old Frisian together with Old English. Bammesberger (2005: 30) points out that English is usually compared to Frisian believing that they represent a unique linguistic group within the West Germanic languages. Similarly, Fulk (2018: 26) recognises Anglo-Frisian as a subgroup of the West-Germanic languages to which also Old Saxon can be linked. Turning to Old English, the earlier text available is from the seventh century although runic inscriptions are earlier. However, Old Saxon has only survived in two biblical poems from the ninth century and a few glosses.

If Germanic is going to be defined on the basis of linguistics, then the subgroups within the Germanic languages are established by means of shared innovations. Some of the most salient features of Germanic are original, although they are not limited to this language, as Bammesberger remarks (2005: 30). The first of these features has to do with the sound system and the treatment of consonants. For instance, where Germanic has **f-* in initial position,² like in **fader-* (OE *fæder*), related languages such as Latin and Greek have *p-*, as in Latin *pater*. The same kind of phenomenon takes place in the contrast between Germanic **p-* and other Indo-European languages **t-*, or where Germanic displays **x-* and others

² Proto Indo-European and Germanic letters and forms are marked with an asterisk indicating their reconstructed nature in Chapter 1. The asterisk in Chapter 2 represents one of the search operators available on the lemmatiser. In Chapters 3 to 6 the use of the asterisk indicates that the unit was initially considered a potential lemma, which has not been found attested in the corpus.

have **k-*. According to Bammesberger (2005: 30), this is a feature that distinguishes Germanic from the rest of the related languages, since the treatment of consonants places it apart from the rest of the Indo-European languages. In addition, the sound system of Germanic is characterised by the initial accent. Whereas in Indo-European the accent could occur on any syllable of a word, it was normally on the first syllable in Germanic. Consequently, vowels of non-initial syllables were unstressed and weakened. Sometimes, this resulted in the loss of the vowels of non-initial syllables.

Focusing on the West Germanic languages, Campbell (1959: 2) explores its most prominent features and highlights three main differences among Old Saxon and Old English in comparison with Old High German. To begin with, the Germanic consonant system in Old English and Old Saxon remains the same but suffers modification in Old High German by a process known as sound-shift. Moreover, the consonantal groups *-mf-*, *-ns-* and *-np-* are reduced in Old English and Old Saxon as a consequence of the loss of the nasal consonant, whilst it cannot be found in Old High German. Finally, Old English and Old Saxon agree in the use of one single form for the three persons of the plural in the verbal system. Conversely, certain differences are noticed at the same time between Old English and Old Saxon, which have to do mainly with the pronunciation of vowel sounds.

As stated above, the Germanic languages, including Old English, developed from the Proto Indo-European language, which is thought to share many of its characteristics with Greek and Sanskrit. In particular, the verbal system in Greek and Sanskrit is morphologically complex, consisting of three voices (active, middle and passive) and five moods (indicative, subjunctive, imperative and injunctive). Additionally, the verbal system of Greek and Sanskrit could express seven different tenses (present, imperfect, future, aorist, perfect, pluperfect, conditional and future perfect) inflected for three numbers (singular, plural and dual) and three persons (first, second and third).

However, Germanic languages dramatically reduced these morphological complexities from the parent language. Regarding the Old English verbal system, it is usually described from the comparison with other Germanic languages rather than with the reconstructed Proto-Germanic systems, which are still speculative. The great variety of inflection present in Proto Indo-European verbs was reduced to a simpler conjugational verb system in Germanic. Ringe and Taylor (2014: 158) point out at the syncretism of all plural forms of the finite verb under the form of the third person plural as the most striking innovation of northern West Germanic dialects. Generally, finite verbs were inflected according to two tenses (present and preterite) and three moods (indicative,

subjunctive and imperative). While Gothic preserves a few dual verb inflections, the rest of the Germanic languages only make a distinction between singular and plural.³ Similarly, Gothic retains a fully inflected category of passive verbs inherited from Proto Indo-European that was completely lost in other Germanic languages. Old English, for instance, preserves only two attestations of the passive forms which are *hätte* ‘is called’ and *hätton* in the plural.

In contrast to Indo-European, noticeable innovations took place in Germanic regarding the verbal system. Whereas the Indo-European system differentiated between the diverse functions of present, aorist and perfect, Germanic focuses on tense. Germanic languages, as highlighted by Pyles and Algeo (1982: 85) will only be able to express the great variety of tenses by means of periphrasis. The Germanic verbal system expresses two tenses, present and preterite, and verbs are divided into two main groups. According to their classification, Germanic verbs are strong or weak depending on the formation process by which their preterite is created. On the one hand, strong verbs in Old English form their preterite by means of a change in the vocalism of the root, called *ablaut*. Strong preterites in Germanic are thought to derive from the Indo-European perfect. This process is preserved in certain examples of Present-day English such as in *sing-sang*, *ride-rode* or *get-got*. Weak preterites, on the other hand, are considered a Germanic innovation. Weak verbs form their preterite by means of the addition of a dental suffix to the present stem, just as it occurs in Modern English with regular verbs (*knock-knocked*, *love-loved* or *greet-greeted*).

Verbal tenses in Proto Indo-European were marked by *ablaut* grades, suffixation, prefixation and inflections, and often inherited verbs in Germanic retained some of these characteristics. Nevertheless, new verbs adopted a different method of tense formation. In this way, the preterite stems were distinguished from present stems by adding a dental suffix that was generally **-ǵ-*, but also sometimes **-t-* and **-þ-*. These two different processes helped to recognise two kinds of verbs in the Germanic languages: the ablauting type and the group of verbs with dental preterite. Ablauting verbs are also referred to as strong verbs and they form their past tense by means of vowel variation, as for example *bær* ‘bore’ (OE *beran* ‘bear’). On the other hand, weak verbs form their past tense by adopting a dental element, as in *hīerde* ‘heard’ (OE *hīeran* ‘hear’). In Germanic, strong and weak verbs are classified, at the same time, into various subtypes attending to diverse phonological developments. Strong verbs in Old English became a closed class since new verbs were not created by using *ablaut*, in fact, Hogg and Fulk (2011: 213) claim that

³ Gothic is considered the most conservative of the Germanic languages.

already in Old English a few strong verbs started to be reinterpreted as weak verbs.

Within the Germanic verbal system there are four realisations of the non-finite forms, which include two forms for the infinitive and two other forms for the participle. These four realisations of the non-finite forms include the infinitive, inflected infinitive, present participle and past participle. The infinitive (OE *faran* ‘to go’) goes mainly with auxiliary verbs, whereas the inflected infinitive (OE *to faranne*) normally accompanies nouns, adjectives and forms of the verb ‘to be’ to express necessity, futurity or purpose, as remarked by Hogg and Fulk (2011: 211). The present participle (*farende* ‘going’) and past participle in Old English (*faren* ‘gone’) are inflected as adjectives. Campbell (1959: 295) points out that Old English constructs many different periphrastic forms by means of the non-finite formations. For instance, future meaning with a sense of desire is conveyed from the combination of *willan* plus an infinitive, or from *sculan* followed by an infinitive to express a sense of obligation. Other periphrastic verbal tenses can be created, such as the past imperfect (*wæron feohtende* ‘they were fighting’) and the periphrastic perfect (*ðu hæfst gehæled* ‘thou hast healed’).

Regarding the verbal stems, Proto Indo-European verbs could be either thematic or athematic. Thematic verbs added a theme vowel, usually *-e- or *-o-, between the stem ending and the inflection, whereas athematic verbs added the endings directly to the stem. The endings were always the same except for the first person singular of the present tense that, where athematic verbs had *-mi, the thematic verbs had *-ō. Although the athematic formations of Proto Indo-European remain in a small group of verbs, the majority of the verbs in Old English are thematic. The athematic verbs in Old English are referred to as anomalous verbs, usually grouped within the irregular verbs. Athematic verbs are created by a process in which the theme vowel is combined with the inflection. This process started in Proto Indo-European and concluded in Germanic, and for instance, present indicative endings such as *-e-s(i) or *-o-nt(i) in Proto Indo-European created single units like *-is and *-anþ, respectively, in Old English (Hogg and Fulk 2011: 212).

Generally, Proto Indo-European verbal stems were frequently derived and added affixes to distinguish them from other categories. Although these processes were not productive in Germanic, Old English preserves certain of those present-stem suffixes as illustrated by Hogg and Fulk (2011: 211). For instance, *wyscan* ‘wish’ from Proto Germanic **wun-sk-j-an* reflects Proto Indo-European **-sk-*. The present-tense *n*-infix became very productive and created *n*-suffixes that have been preserved in certain Old English verbs such as *standan* ‘stand’ and *wæcnan* ‘awake’.

1.3. The dialects spoken by the Anglo-Saxons

Old English is a language that displays a remarkable degree of spelling variation, which is partly due to the many dialects that coexisted during the Old English period. This section will present the main dialects of Old English together with the most famous texts where the dialects survived.

The earliest texts in English are runic inscriptions, attested at the beginning of the fifth century. These inscriptions, which are recorded in a form of the Runic Alphabet, evince specifically North-Germanic linguistics characteristics. According to Fulk (2018: 22), the inscriptions “reflect a stage of linguistic development in which North and West Germanic forms cannot yet be distinguished”. The earliest manuscripts date from 700, although some texts must have been composed earlier.

Within the Old English language, four different dialects can be differentiated from the surviving documents. Those are Northumbrian, Mercian, West-Saxon and Kentish. Fulk (2018: 27) believes that the most remarkable sources of information on Northumbrian, Mercian and Kentish are glosses. Northumbrian and Mercian formed a non-southern unit, known as the Anglian dialects. Mercian represents the midland variety that shared some features with the rest of the dialects but remained distinct from the West-Saxon language. Toon (2005: 417) claims that “West Saxon was the most clearly distinct variety, as might be expected because of geographical factors which isolated it even from the Norse invaders”. Kentish is the southeast dialect that greatly differed from the other dialects but shared some features with Mercian.

The Northumbrian dialect, on the one hand, is known by means of certain inscriptions of runes and short pieces that survived in manuscripts. The earliest manuscripts of *Cædmon's Hymn* from the first half of the eighth century are written in Northumbrian, as well as the Bede's *Death-song* and the *Leiden Riddle* from the ninth century. The Northumbrian dialect is attested in the eight-century runic inscriptions of the Ruthwell Cross and the Franks Casket. According to Campbell (1959: 5), these inscriptions do not add much to the knowledge of the dialect but help to relate three other later text to the dialect of Northumbrian. These later texts that he refers to are the tenth century glosses on the *Lindifarne Gospels*, the *Rushworth Gospels* and the *Durham Ritual*. Campbell points out that another important source for Northumbrian is found in Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica* and in the *Liber Vitae Dunelmensis*. In these texts, names occasionally reflect Northumbrian dialectal features. Bede, for instance, uses southern names such as *Eorcon-*, which sometimes appear spelt in the Northumbrian form *Ercon-* (Campbell 1959: 5). Likewise, the *Liber Vitae* has names with the first elements *Beadu-* and *Heaðu-*, which appear occasionally with *-a-* or *-eo-* resembling the Northumbrian forms.

On the other hand, Mercian is mainly attested in a large collection of charters of Mercian kings. Nevertheless, many of the charters that survived in Old English are not considered of linguistic value, according to Campbell (1959: 6), since after the year 900 they are written in the standard West-Saxon independently of the area of origin. Still within the period before 900, some of them do not consistently reflect a dialectal linguistic variant or are just written in Latin. In his *Oldest English Texts*, Sweet collected more than fifty charters. Of those, only ten would represent the Mercian dialect, Campbell (1959) believes. He claims other texts could be added to the Mercian dialect, such as the interlinear glosses on the *Vespasian Psalter* from the mid-ninth century and the *Rushworth Gospels* from the later tenth century. After the year 900, the standardised use of West-Saxon reduced the use of Mercian.

Turning to the Kentish dialect, the earliest attestations come from the charters collected by Sweet. First, Kentish names appear in certain Latin charters from the eighth century. Later, the dialect is attested in other few vernacular charters from the ninth century. After 900, Kentish is preserved in late tenth century texts: the *Kentish Psalm*, the *Kentish Hymn* and the glosses to *Proverbs*.

West-Saxon, which is studied as Early West-Saxon and Late West-Saxon, is considered the standard written Old English language. It is mainly exemplified in the literary works of King Alfred from around the tenth century. However, before that time, West-Saxon is only attested in a few charters and small fragments from the ninth century, when it had to compete against the Mercian spelling. Good examples of the most representative texts of the West-Saxon dialect are the *Old English Chronicle* and the Gregory's *Cura Pastoralis*. Nevertheless, many West-Saxon manuscripts displayed orthographic and inflected elements proper to other dialects. Campbell (1959: 9) cites the Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica* and the *Blicking Homilies* as examples of those. Old English verse is predominantly West-Saxon but very rich in any kind of dialectal forms, and therefore, it is almost impossible to relate the origin of a poem to one particular dialect (Campbell 1959: 10).

There is still a lack of consensus regarding the dialect that should be considered the reference of West-Saxon. Early West-Saxon was the dialect spoken during the reign of Alfred the Great, from the end of 9th century to the beginning of the 10th. Conversely, the Late West-Saxon reflects the language written by Ælfric, the head of the monastery in Winchester at the end of the 10th century. Widely known Old English grammars, such as Campbell (1987) and Brunner (1965), take the Early West-Saxon as the reference. However, other scholars do not completely agree on the acceptance of the Early West-Saxon as the perfect representation of the West-Saxon dialect. One example is Gretsche (2003:

37), who points at “Late West-Saxon phonology and inflectional morphology as the dialectal base for this standard”⁴.

Toon (2005: 427) points out at the partial knowledge that we get from the dialects throughout the Old English years, since only a few surviving texts are taken to represent a whole period, sometimes of almost three centuries. In addition, it is worth mentioning that it is not until the mid-tenth century that several dialects can be found recorded at the same time in diverse texts.

1.4. A general view on the verbal system of Old English

The focus of the analysis of this research is on the verbal system of Old English in general and on derived verbs in particular. This section will present the general characteristics of the verbal system of Old English, some of them coinciding with the Germanic features. The broad classification between strong and weak verbs is described, but the minor classes, central to the analysis, will be discussed thoroughly in subsequent sections.

The verbal morphology of Old English comprises strong verbs, weak verbs, preterite-present verbs and irregular verbs. The verbal system is quite complex, considering that Old English verbs inflect for tense, mood, voice and agreement between person and number. As Hogg and Fulk (2011: 5-7) remark, the tense system of Old English has suffered a continuous process of development and change. As remarked above, the present tense in Proto Indo-European was originally used to indicate all possible time situations. In the Germanic period, an alternation was introduced into the morphology of the verb by means of which the verbal system could make further distinctions in such a way that different forms indicated the present and the past. It is remarked by several scholars, such as Pyles and Algeo (1982: 11) or Robinson (1993: 168), that in Old English the present tense was also used to express the future time, whereas the preterite was not only used to express the past but also to refer to the perfect aspect. To illustrate, Mitchell and Robinson (1985: 115) show with *willan* ‘to want’ the duality of the present tense. This verb can be either used to express intention in the present (*ic wille sellan* ‘I intend to give’) or in the future (*Hi willað eow to gafole garas syllan* ‘They wish to (will) give you spears as tribute’). The preterite is used to express the past simple and past continuous tenses that Mitchell and Robinson (1985: 109) illustrate by means of *slæpan* ‘to sleep’ and *cuman* ‘to come’ in the

4 In his project, Gretsich aims to identify the standard Old English spelling by contrasting manuscripts written by different scribes, at diverse time and locations, in order to examine the linguistic forms of the standard spelling, the degree of acceptance of these forms and their regional and temporal distribution.

sentence *soðlice þa ða men slepon, þa com his feonda sum* ‘truly, while men were sleeping, one of this enemies came’. The preterite is also used to refer to perfect tenses, such as *gewilnode* (wiltian ‘to desire’) in *ic mid ealre heortan þe gewilnode* ‘I have wished for Thee will all my heart’.

The paradigm of the verb is the one with the largest number of inflected forms: there are fourteen distinct forms for each verb. As remarked above, Old English verbs are inflected according to four categories to form their paradigms: person, number, tense and mood. In the same way, they present finite and non-finite forms. Finite forms are those which have personal endings while non-finite forms do not take any personal ending, as it is the case with infinitives and participles.

It is noticeable that weak and strong verbs are similar in the way that they follow regular patterns in the formation of their conjugations, as highlighted by Smith (2009: 109). They differ in that weak verbs are conjugated by merely adding inflections to a fixed stem, whereas strong verbs do the same but additionally, they change the vowel in their stem. This variation in the root of strong verbs is known as *ablaut variation* or *gradation*. The central forms in the paradigm of any weak or strong verb are the infinitive and the first and third person singular of the preterite indicative. These forms are considered to be central because their stems are used as the base to which the inflections are attached in order to build the rest of the conjugation. Therefore, as Pyles and Algeo (1982: 123) remark, the stem of the infinitive is used to build all the present system of both weak and strong verbs. Similarly, the stem of the first and third persons of the singular are taken as references to build the whole preterite system in the case of weak verbs. Considering strong verbs, the stem of the preterite plural is used to form the second person singular indicative form and the whole preterite subjunctive system. The past participle is also considered a central form in the declension of verbs although its stem is not a referent in the formation of their paradigms. As a consequence, weak verbs are commonly identified as regular while strong verbs are identified as irregular.

Hogg and Fulk (2011: 213-214) affirm that strong verbs are a closed class since no more verbs have been added into the list with the passing of time. In fact, some strong verbs show a tendency to be assimilated to weak verbs. Generally, their present system shows a high resemblance while the main distinctions can be appreciated in their preterite forms. Apart from these, they share some basic characteristics (Mitchell and Robinson 1985: 36) and both, weak and strong verbs display: two tenses (present and preterite); three modes (indicative, subjunctive and imperative); two kinds of infinitives (inflected, with *to*, and uninflected); two kinds of participles (present and past); three persons in the present singular and preterite indicative, and the use of only active voice.

Old English displays three classes of weak verbs and seven of strong verbs classified according to the pattern that they follow in their paradigm. Unlike strong verbs, weak verbs added dental consonants rather than using *ablaut* or reduplication.⁵ The preterite and past participles of weak verbs are formed by adding a dental suffix to the stem without the necessity to modify it.

The inflectional systems of strong and weak verbs in Old English were almost identical except for the preterite indicative singular and the past participle. The endings attached to the strong verbs' stems are shown in Figure 1. Hogg (2005: 147) points out at the similarities between pre-Old English inflection such as in **scrīfu* 'I decree', **scrīfis*, **scrīfīð*, and their Latin counterparts like *scribo* 'I write', *scribis*, *scribit*.

Present			
	Indicative	Subjunctive	Imperative
1 singular	-u, -o	-e	
2 singular	-es	-e	-ø
3 singular	-eð	-e	
Plural	-að	-en	-að
Past			
1 singular	-ø	-e	
2 singular	-e	-e	
3 singular	-ø	-e	
Plural	-on	-en	
Infinitive	-an		
Present participle	-end		
Past participle	-en		

Figure 1. Inflections attached to strong verbs in Old English (Hogg 2005: 148).

Old English, as well as other Germanic dialects, is characterised by the loss of separate inflections for the persons of the plural. Verbal paradigms show the same ending for the first, second and third person singular subjunctive, which happened as the result of sound change. The second and third person singular of the present indicative system underwent a process of sound change, known as *i*-mutation that produced changes in the stem vocalism. The paradigm of a typical West-Germanic strong verb may be represented as shown in Figure 2.

Present		
	Indicative	Subjunctive Imperative
1 singular	<i>bīde</i>	<i>bīde</i>

⁵ See section 1.6 on strong VII verbs and reduplication.

2 singular	<i>bītst</i>	<i>bīde</i>	<i>bīd</i>
3 singular	<i>bītt</i>	<i>bīde</i>	
Plural	<i>bīdað</i>	<i>bīden</i>	<i>bīdað</i>
Past			
1 singular	<i>bād</i>	<i>bide</i>	
2 singular	<i>bide</i>	<i>bide</i>	
3 singular	<i>bād</i>	<i>bide</i>	
Plural	<i>bidon</i>	<i>biden</i>	
Infinitive	<i>bīdan</i>		
Inflected Infinitive	<i>to bīdanne</i>		
Present participle	<i>bīdende</i>		
Past participle	<i>biden</i>		

Figure 2. The strong verb *bīdan* ‘await’ paradigm (Hogg and Fulk 2011: 214).

Generally, when a first or second person pronoun appears immediately following the plural inflected forms of a verb, the ending normally reduces to *-e*. Thus, the present indicative plural form *bīdað* turns into *bīde wē* ‘we await’, or the preterite subjunctive form *biden* changes to *bide gē* ‘you await’ when followed by a personal pronoun. This replacement takes place as a result of the redundancy of the inflection when preceding a pronoun.

The present indicative system of strong verbs is characterised by the *i*-umlaut of the root vowel, as noticed in *hilpst* ‘help’ (from the infinitive *helpan*) and *brycð* ‘enjoys’ (from the infinitive *brūcan*).⁶ Additionally, as appreciated in the previous examples, these forms suffer syncopation in the inflectional ending after a heavy syllable. In fact, this contraction is thought to be the cause of the change of the ending of the second person present indicative form *-(e)s* to *-(e)st*, as seen in *onfōēst* ‘accept’ or *gesīst* ‘see’. However, these forms can appear unsyncopated for stylistic reasons, usually in poetry. Indeed, certain poetic texts, usually of southern origin, may alternate between syncopated and unsyncopated forms, such as *ðringð* ‘presses’ or *felð* ‘falls’, and *swinceð* ‘labours’ or *forlætedð* ‘abandons’. Syncopation originated consonant clusters like *-hst* (*lyhst* ‘lie’), *-st* (*cwist* ‘say’), *-tt* (*hætt* ‘commands’), etc. Hogg and Fulk (2011: 219) claim that syncopation in second and third person singular “originated in phrases in which a pronoun followed and received greater stress than the preceding inflection, e.g. **brūcis þū* ‘you enjoy’, **bindiþ hē* ‘he binds’”. They point out at the lexicalisation of such phrases in the

⁶ This concept refers to the fronting of short and long back vowels (*a*, *o* and *u*) which are followed by a syllable containing *-j-* or *-i-* and result into *-æ-*, *-e-* and *-y-*, as in PIE **sōcjan* ‘to seek’ that turns into OE *sēcan*.

second person, thus creating forms such as *gesiistu* ‘you see’ or *cuoeðestu* ‘you say’. Nevertheless, no similar lexicalisation is evidenced in the third person. Syncopation and *i*-umlaut of the second and third person of the present indicative tense are absent in most poetry and Anglian texts, so that forms such as *haldes* ‘hold’ and *oncnāweð* ‘recognise’ are found. Hogg and Fulk (2011: 220) suggest that the reason for not using syncopated and *i*-umlauted forms could be the elevated style of the homilies, although it is unclear it could also attend to dialectal questions.

The final sound of the third person singular appears written *-th* in early texts, although occasionally, the spelling may change to *-t* or *-d*, as in *fallet* ‘falls’ or *cymid* ‘comes’. However, the variant in *-d* of later texts is considered by Hogg and Fulk a scribal error for *-ð*. It is common to find much variation in the spelling of vowels throughout all the verb inflections of the strong verbs’ paradigms. The third person singular ending is written with *-i-* in the earliest texts, as for instance *hlimmith* ‘resounds’, but becomes sporadic in later texts. In the same vein, the second person present indicative may vary among the endings *-es*, *-as* and *-æs*, whereas the third person may appear in *-eð*, *-að* or *-æð*. Furthermore, the second person ending sometimes replaces the third person inflection in Northumbrian, having for instance *cuoeðas*, *cuoeðes* or *cuoeðæs* besides *cuoeðað* ‘says’. Conversely, the endings in *-ð* were occasionally used for the second person, as in *gelēfeð* or *gilēfeð* ‘believe’. The present indicative plural inflection *-að* eventually occurs in *-ad* or *-at*, such as in *bicumad* ‘occur’ or *cweoðad* ‘say’. Additionally, the *-s* that has spread from the second to the third person ending, also reached the plural, appearing in forms like *cymæs* ‘come’ or *cueðas* ‘say’.

Concerning the preterite indicative system, the no-ending in the first and third person singular derives from the loss of the Proto Indo-European inflections **-a* and **-e*. The second person ending in *-e* reflects West-Germanic **-i*. The *-e* is eventually omitted when the pronoun *ðū* appears immediately after, as in *cōm ðū* ‘did you came’. The preterite plural ending in *-on* derives from earlier *-un*, which occasionally varies between *-an* and *-en* (Hogg and Fulk 2011: 223). The indicative plural ending in *-on*, alternating with *-an*, spreads into the subjunctive system. As a result, besides *-en*, *-on* and *-an*, the present and preterite plural subjunctive may also appear in *-e*, such as in *fuhte* ‘fought’.

Turning to the non-finite forms, the uninflected infinitive inflection *-an* is reduced to *-a* in Northumbrian, and besides, it may appear in *-e*, *-æ* or *-o*. According to Hogg and Fulk (2011: 224), the inflection *-enne* of the inflected infinitive is usually less frequent than the unumlauted *-anne*. Present participles are declined as most adjectives in Old English. In the earliest texts, present participles appear in *-endi* or *-ændi*, whereas in later dialects they are commonly inflected in *-ende*, with variants such as *-ande*,

-onde or -ænde, as very well attested by Hogg and Fulk (2011: 224). Similarly, past participles are declined as disyllabic adjectives and they display a great tendency to carry the prefix *ge-* added to the stem.

Beside the formation of the dental preterites, two other features distinguish weak from strong verbs. Weak verbs in Old English display a unique set of inflections for the preterite indicative singular, including *-e* for the first person, *-est* for the second and *-e* for the third person. Hogg (2005: 157) claims that the class of weak verbs show a distinct origin from strong verbs since a derivational affix is added to the stem. The suffix could have different shapes such as **j*, **ōj*, **aij* and **nōj*, thus giving raise to four different classes in the parent language. However, only the first two fully persist in Old English, whereas the fourth class has completely disappeared. The third class has some remnants in Old English, which form part of the class of irregular verbs. In this way, the Old English weak verb *trymman* ‘strengthen’ is formed from the root **trum* and the suffix **-j-* plus the inflection (Hogg 2005: 157). The paradigm of the weak verb *trymman* ‘strengthen’ is given in Figure 3.

Present			
	Indicative	Subjunctive	Imperative
1 singular	<i>trymme</i>	<i>trymme</i>	
2 singular	<i>trymest</i>	<i>trymme</i>	<i>tryme</i>
3 singular	<i>trymeð</i>	<i>trymme</i>	
Plural	<i>trymmað</i>	<i>trymmen</i>	<i>trymmað</i>
Past			
1 singular	<i>trymede</i>	<i>trymede</i>	
2 singular	<i>trymedest</i>	<i>trymede</i>	
3 singular	<i>trymede</i>	<i>trymede</i>	
Plural	<i>trymedon</i>	<i>trymeden</i>	
Infinitive	<i>trymman</i>		
Present participle	<i>trymmende</i>		
Past participle	<i>trymed</i>		

Figure 3. The paradigm of the weak class verb *trymman* ‘strengthen’ (Hogg 2005: 159).

Weak verbs in Old English are classified into three subclasses according to the suffix that they added to the stem in Proto-Germanic. The weak class 1 is the largest of all Old English verb classes and although very productive in Germanic, it became a closed class in Old English. The origins of weak 1 verbs go back to Proto Indo-European, and the method of formation of these verbs persisted in Germanic by adding the suffix **-j-* plus the inflection to stems from many different parts of speech to form mainly causative verbs. Take as an example Old English *drencan* ‘make to drink’, formed from the noun *drinc* ‘drink’, or *cwellan* ‘kill’ from the

verb *cwelan* ‘die’ (Hogg and Fulk 2011: 259). Even though this method only formed present tenses in Proto Indo-European, the present stem containing **-j-* contributed also to the formation of the preterite in Germanic. In order to differentiate between present and preterite, a dental suffix is added to the preterite, usually taking the form of **-ð-*.

The second class of weak verbs is the one to which new verbs were regularly added in the Old English period. Originally, these verbs derived from feminine nouns, but the class became highly productive and new verbs were also formed from different lexical categories. The most representative verb of this class is *lufian* ‘to love’, derived from the Old English noun *lufu* ‘love’. Like weak verbs of class 1, weak verbs of class 2 were in origin formed by the addition of a **-j-* element to the Proto Indo-European present stems. The preterite and past participle in Germanic were added the same dental suffix as in class 1, directly to the stem.

The third class of weak verbs in Old English is formed by only four verbs, including *habban* ‘have’, *libban* ‘live’, *secg(e)an* ‘day’ and *hycg(e)an* ‘think’. In origin, they were parallel to verbs of the weak class 2 but their Proto-Germanic stem was in **-æ-* rather than in **-o-*. Figure 4 shows examples of the paradigms of weak 1, 2 and 3 verbs.

Present system				Preterite system		
Indicative				Indicative		
ic	<i>cēpe</i>	<i>lufige</i>	<i>hæbbe</i>	<i>cēpte</i>	<i>lufode</i>	<i>hæfde</i>
þū	<i>cēpest</i>	<i>lufast</i>	<i>hæfst</i>	<i>cēptest</i>	<i>lufodest</i>	<i>hæfdest</i>
hē, hēo, hit	<i>cēpeð</i>	<i>lufaþ</i>	<i>hæfþ</i>	<i>cēpte</i>	<i>lufode</i>	<i>hæfde</i>
wē, gē, hī	<i>cēpað</i>	<i>lufiaþ</i>	<i>habbaþ</i>	<i>cēpton</i>	<i>lufodon</i>	<i>hæfdon</i>
Subjunctive				Subjunctive		
Singular	<i>cēpe</i>	<i>lufige</i>	<i>hæbbe</i>	<i>cēpte</i>	<i>lufode</i>	<i>hæfde</i>
Plural	<i>cēpen</i>	<i>lufigen</i>	<i>habbaþ</i>	<i>cēpten</i>	<i>lufoden</i>	<i>hæfden</i>
Imperative						
Singular	<i>cēþ</i>	<i>lufa</i>	<i>hafa</i>			
Plural	<i>cēpað</i>	<i>lufiaþ</i>	<i>habbaþ</i>			
Infinitive						
Simple	<i>cēpan</i>	<i>lufian</i>	<i>habban</i>			
Inflected	<i>tō cēpene</i>	<i>tō lufienne</i>	<i>tō hæbbenne</i>			
Present participle				Past participle		
<i>cēpende</i> <i>lufiende</i> <i>hæbbende</i>				<i>gecēped</i>	<i>gelufod</i>	<i>gehæfd</i>

Figure 4. Paradigms of the class 1 weak verb *cēpan* ‘to keep’, the class 2 weak verb *lufian* ‘to love’ and the class 3 weak verb *habban* ‘to have’.

(Pyles and Algeo 1982: 122; Mitchell and Robinson 1985: 49-50).

1.5. The creation of new lexical material in Old English

This section deals with the main word-formation processes of Old English, compounding and affixation, and puts the focus on the formation of verbs, mainly from other verbs. The processes of verbal derivation are worth mentioning since they represent the basis of the methodology of this research.

Old English, as well as any other language, required patterns according to which new lexemes could be formed from the already existing lexical material. The most basic property of such new formations is that they are transparent and motivated, and in many cases, their meaning can be deduced from the structure and meaning of their constituent parts (Kastovsky 1992: 355). When the new formation of words becomes more popular and recurrent, the process of lexicalisation may alter the transparency or motivation principle of early formation. As Kastovsky (1992: 356) explains, this is the result of the fact that once the lexeme has been formed, it adopts semantic properties that are not predictable from the meaning of the constituents.

One of the main devices of word-formation in Old English is compounding. Compounds were one of the most important stylistic devices in Old English poetry although their use was not restricted to the poetic use only. Compounds are lexical items consisting of two or more lexemes which normally belong to the nominal, adjectival or verbal categories. Regarding the verbal compounds, some authors believe that in Germanic languages verbal composition is basically restricted to combinations with adverbs, prepositions or determinants. However, Kastovsky (2005: 374-375) points out that there are a number of combinations that contradict this assumption, such as *nidniman* 'take by force' or *rihtwisian* 'justify'. According to him, this type of compounds can be relocated in two groups. The first one consists of derivatives from nominal compounds, so that they would be treated as genuine compounds. The other group is not well defined but seems to represent sporadic attempts at verbal composition, with examples like *ellencampian* 'campaign vigorously' or *morgenwacian* 'rise early'. Kastovsky (1992: 375) explains that the combination with adverbs and prepositions represents two groups of verbal compounds, the 'inseparable' (*oferfeohthane* 'conquer') and the 'separable' (*hie ut ne sprecaþ* 'they do not speak out') compounds. Concerning the separable compounds, the particle may be separated from the verb by a negative particle or any other element. In those cases, the particle is usually unstressed, as in the example *under stāndan* 'understand'. Nevertheless, inseparable compounds always display the particle adhered to the verbal element. Indeed, the particle usually receives the main stress and, in the majority of

the cases, does not preserve the original locative meaning (*understandan* ‘stand under’). In fact, Kastovsky (2005: 375) highlights that in a number of cases the particle may express opposite meanings, or even more, that there are particles with not recognisable meaning. This is the reason why many particles lost their productivity and others, such as *out-*, *over-* or *under-*, have remained productive in Modern English.

Prefixation is another generalised process of word-formation in Old English. Prefixes are bound morphemes occurring in initial position in word-formations that function as determinants. The prefix does not change the word-class of the word to which it is attached to. Within the large number of verbal prefixes existing in Old English, it is impossible to establish consistent meanings (Kastovsky 1992: 377). In fact, it can be seen that in subsequent copies of one and the same text, prefixes are often omitted, added or exchanged for other prefixes without any apparent semantic effect. Prefixation had a widespread use in Old English and the most regularly attested verbal prefixes in texts of the period include *ā-*, *be-*, *for-*, *ge-*, *mis-*, *of-*, *on-* and *tō-*. They do not attach to verbs in a very transparent way in Old English. For instance, the prefix *ā-* raises some complications since it is hard to find consistency in its meaning or even length. In some cases, the appearance of this prefix in a word is not compulsory, while in other instances it means ‘out’. One of the most frequent prefixes is *ge-*, which has two basic functions, a nominal and a verbal one. In the case of the verbal prefix *ge-*, it denotes ‘perfectivity’ or ‘result’ (*gesittan* ‘inhabit’), but also in a rather opaque and inconsistent way. Another extremely frequent prefix is *un-*, which comprises negativity (*unbrad* ‘narrow’, *unberende* ‘unfruitful’).

Turning to verbal suffixation, Kastovsky (1992: 391) observes that verbal derivation in Old English is primarily affixless and consequently, the few verbal suffixes that existed did not exhibit relevant levels of productivity. Verbal suffixes regularly attested are: *-ett(an)*, *-læc(an)*, *-n(ian)* and *-s(ian)*. With respect to *-ett(an)*, it is added primarily to verbal bases although it may, at the same time, be added to nominal or adjectival bases, and shows an intensifying meaning like in *agnettan* ‘appropriate, usurp’. The suffix *-læc(an)* forms deadjectival verbs with the meaning ‘be, become, make’ and denominal verbs with the meaning ‘produce, grow, become’, such as in *rihtlæcan* ‘put right’ and *æfenlæcan* ‘become evening’. The suffix *-n(ian)* results from the misanalysis of zero-derived verbs and the frequent suffix *-s(ian)* derives deadjectival and denominal verbs, as for instance, *metsian* ‘feed, furnish with provisions’.

To finish this section, a few ideas about the typological status of word-formation are going to be discussed. As Kastovsky (1992: 397) points out, Old English is in a stage of transition from stem-based to word-based inflection and derivation, but with a residue of root-based pattern. The

originally root-based inflection and derivation is directly linked to the phenomenon of *ablaut*. The emergence of weak verbs introduced stem-inflection and stem-based derivation. With the growing predominance of the weak verbs as the only productive verb-creating pattern, stem-inflection became then the system-defining property of verb inflection. As a result, this caused the reinterpretation of strong verbs, and thus, *ablaut* alternations became functional. As a matter of fact, the derivatives from *ablaut* patterns were little by little isolated and gradually lost and replaced by derivatives based on infinitive stems. Finally, derivation was established as the dominant principle of word-formation, which is still an important characteristic of Present-Day English in its section of vocabulary.

1.6. A special case of Strong Verbs: the class VII

The following pages will be devoted to the classification of strong verbs in Old English and will concentrate on the peculiarities of the seventh class, one of interest in this research. Several different theories on the origin of the strong VII verbs will be discussed.

Traditionally, strong verbs have been classified according to their apophonic alternations or *ablaut* patterns, which are the systematic alternations of vowels in roots and affixes inherited from the Indo-European language. Strong verbs in Old English can be classified in seven classes (with their corresponding subclasses) as presented in Figure 5.

	Vocalic changes	Infinitive	Preterite singular	Preterite plural	Past participle
Class I	ī + one cons. (ī, ā, i, i)	<i>drīfan</i> 'to drive'	<i>drāf</i>	<i>drifon</i>	<i>drifen</i>
Class II	ēo + one cons. (ēo, ēa, u, o)	<i>clēofan</i> 'to cleave'	<i>clēaf</i>	<i>clufon</i>	<i>clofen</i>
Class II	ū + one cons. (ū, ēa, u, o)	<i>brūcan</i> 'to enjoy'	<i>brēac</i>	<i>brucon</i>	<i>brocen</i>
Class III	e + two cons. (e, æ, u, o)	<i>bregdan</i> 'to move'	<i>brægd</i>	<i>brugdon</i>	<i>brocen</i>
Class III	eo + r/h + cons. (eo, ea, u, o)	<i>beorgan</i> 'to protect'	<i>bearg</i>	<i>burgon</i>	<i>borgen</i>
Class III	l + cons. (e, ea, u, o)	<i>helpan</i> 'to help'	<i>healp</i>	<i>hulpon</i>	<i>holpen</i>
Class III	palatal + ie + two cons. (ie, ea, u, o)	<i>gielðan</i> 'to pay'	<i>geald</i>	<i>guldon</i>	<i>golden</i>
Class III	i + nasal + cons. (i, a, u, o)	<i>drincan</i> 'to drink'	<i>dranc</i>	<i>druncon</i>	<i>druncen</i>
Class IV	e + liquid (r/l)	<i>beran</i>	<i>bær</i>	<i>bæron</i>	<i>boren</i>

	(e, æ, ǣ, o) e + one cons. (plosive p/y/c/d/g or fricative f/ þ/s)	'to bear'			
Class V		<i>metan</i> 'to measure'	<i>mæt</i>	<i>mǣton</i>	<i>meten</i>
Class VI	(e, æ, ǣ, e) a + one cons. (a, ō, ō̄, a)	<i>faran</i> 'to fare, go'	<i>fōr</i>	<i>fōron</i>	<i>faren</i>
Class VII	(ea, ēo, ēō, ea)	<i>healdan</i> 'to hold'	<i>hēold</i>	<i>hēoldon</i>	<i>healden</i>
Class VII	(ēa, ēo, ēō, ēa)	<i>ēacan</i> 'to increase'	<i>ēoc</i>	<i>ēocon</i>	<i>ēacen</i>
Class VII	(ā, ēo, ēō, ā)	<i>cnāwan</i> 'to know'	<i>cnēow</i>	<i>cnēowon</i>	<i>cnāwen</i>
Class VII	(a, ēo, ēō, a)	<i>bannan</i> 'to command'	<i>bēonn</i>	<i>bēonnon</i>	<i>bannen</i>
Class VII	(ō, ēo, ēō, ō)	<i>swōgan</i> 'to sound'	<i>swēog</i>	<i>swēogon</i>	<i>swōgen</i>
Class VII	(ǣ, ē̄, ē̄, ǣ)	<i>drædan</i> 'to fear'	<i>drēd</i>	<i>drēdon</i>	<i>dræden</i>

Figure 5. Main parts of the paradigms of the seven classes of strong verbs and their subtypes (Pyles and Algeo 1982: 126-127; Hogg and Fulk 2011: 234-258).

However, some authors do not completely agree with the traditional classification of strong verbs in Old English. As an example, Von Mengden (2011: 128) criticises that only some of the modifications that the language experienced with the passing of time are reflected in the system, while others have been ignored. His approach points out that the traditional classes of strong verbs of Old English are motivated, and believes that the vowel alternations presented above developed from just three different vowel series. According to Von Mengden, classes I to III would share a mutual origin, and so do classes IV and V. A different vowel alternation would be the origin of class VI. He also claims that the distinction between classes I to III and classes IV and V relies in the coda of the root syllable rather than in the *ablaut* alternation itself. For this reason, he assumes that the classification has been modified according to diversifications in the paradigm. Although he agrees with the fact that the system should reflect these diversifications, he argues that modifications are not always systematic and that "the compromise in its present form is based on random criteria" (Von Mengden 2011: 129).

Von Mengden (2011) explores three perspectives from which a grammatical model system should be motivated: diachrony, typology and synchrony. In his view, a diachronic approach in the description of the Old

English strong verbs should consider the class VII at the same level as weak verbs, preterite-present verbs and the six classes of ablauting verbs. Moreover, the six ablauting classes should be reduced to only three, as explained above. From a typological point of view, the system should be described taking as a starting point the cross-linguistically attested categories. Von Mengden (2001: 134) highlights that the Old English system has completely omitted grammatical markers that play a relevant role in the development of the paradigm. Finally, the author purposes a synchronic approach that, according to him, would have an enormous didactic value. From the perspective of the synchronic approach, the paradigms of the systems would have to be presented in such a way that complexity remains as moderate as possible.

Conversely, Mailhammer (2007) has a slightly different view concerning the strong verb system in Old English. He observes a primary system, a secondary system and a parallel system. Primary and secondary systems comprise the ablauting verbs, while the parallel system enfold the reduplicating verbs, which are the verbs that could not be integrated in any of the other two groups. The primary system includes classes I to V and display *e*-grade for the present, *a*-grade for the preterite singular, and zero grade for the remaining forms. This group of verbs corresponds to Van Coetsem's *e*-verbs, which retain the same *ablaut* alternations originally taken from the Indo-European language. Classes IV and V differ from classes I to III in that their *ablaut* pattern displays lengthened grade in the preterite singular stem rather than a zero grade. Additionally, the past participle of class V offers *e*-full grade instead of a zero grade shown in classes I to IV. The secondary system corresponds with class VI, which displays only two different *ablaut* grades. This group coincides with Van Coetsem's *a*-verbs that he claims show *ablaut* alternations of Germanic origin with a peculiar combination of Indo-European elements.

Van Coetsem (1990) is another example of an author that strongly disagrees with the traditional division of the Germanic strong verb system into six basic classes and one class of reduplicating verbs. He argues that the theoretical basis of this approach is defective, and it lacks periodisation and consistency. In his view, *ablaut* is much more complicated than just morphological alternations. In his study (Van Coetsem 1990), the traditional classes of Germanic verbs are considered as alternation structures which represent the alternants that occur in a given phonological environment. In addition, alternants of the present and of the preterite usually differ from one another.

The common feature to all of the diverse approaches just mentioned is *ablaut*, which is an irrefutable characteristic to strong verbs of Old English. Two various kinds of *ablaut* are differentiated according to Mailhammer (2007: 16), qualitative and quantitative *ablaut*. The former

would be caused by accent while the latter causes that the ablauting vowel appears unaltered, that it becomes lengthened, or that it disappears. *Ablaut* would happen, in origin, as a result of phonological processes, which was then internalised in morphology and used as a tool for stem formation. According to Mailhammer (2007), *ablaut* and reduplication are morphological devices which are in charge of the stem formation in the Germanic strong verbs. Likewise, Mailhammer (2007: 32) finds three different types of reduplication: total, partial and inexact. Total reduplication involves the whole root, while partial reduplication has to do only with part of the root. In addition, inexact reduplication uses non-root material in the reduplicative syllable.

Even though reduplication was the preferred mechanism for the formation of preterites in Indo-European, Mailhammer (2007: 34) highlights that the Germanic strong verbs do not form their present tense by means of reduplication, indeed, reduplication is only used in the formation of the preterite of the reduplicating verbs. By contrast, most of the strong verbs form their preterite only with *ablaut*. Therefore, reduplication is weakened in comparison to Indo-European, in which the perfect was formed using reduplication. On the contrary, *ablaut* is strengthened becoming the foundation of the stem formation of the Germanic strong verbs.

As pointed out by Fulk (2018: 260), assuming that the most direct source of the Germanic preterite is the Proto Indo-European perfect, it should be expected that reduplication was an original feature of all Germanic strong preterites. However, reduplication is only retained in the VII class of strong verbs. In Fulk's view, reduplication had to be preserved in class VII as a tense marker since there was not *ablaut* difference between the present and the preterite stems.

Many authors speculate with the reason for the lack of reduplication in the formation of the preterite in Germanic, and according to Mailhammer (2007: 34), three main hypotheses stand out. The first approach tries to explain the loss of reduplication through the assumption that it was an obligatory element in the parent language. Secondly, it is thought that the missing of reduplication is a result of the influence of the aorist. Finally, the third hypothesis states that reduplication was considered redundant since the preterite was already marked by *ablaut*.

Jasanoff (2008: 243) points out that the process by which strong preterites gave up reduplication must have been gradual and linked to sociolinguistic variation. Along time, dereduplicated forms became more frequent and replaced longer forms. Thus, verbs whose vocalism in the present contrasted with that of the preterite lost reduplication, so that happened in the six classes of strong verbs. Yet, the longer forms of the preterite predominated in verbs with the same vocalism for the present and

the preterite and dereduplicated forms were disfavoured because of their similarity to the present. Nevertheless, the retention of reduplication is inconsistent in the reduplicating-ablauting verbs.

Reduplicating verbs have been widely studied since as Durrell (1975: 48) remarks “the corresponding verbs in North-West Germanic form their preterites largely by means of a set of vocalic alternations which have no parallels in any other Indo-European language”. They can be subdivided into two distinct groups, those that display *ablaut* as well as reduplication and those that only show reduplication. The vast majority show only reduplication and Mailhammer (2007: 104) explains the reason why. These verbs present as their root vowel either a diphthong or the vowel *o*, so that the formation of *ablaut* grade would have been hardly possible due to phonotactic constraints⁷ in the former, and because there is not *ablaut* grade available in the latter case. In this way, they retained the archaic feature of reduplication to indicate the opposition between present and preterite.

Originally, strong VII verbs formed the preterite with an initial reduplicative syllable that could also show *ablaut* alternation in the root vowel. Reduplication consists on “the prefixation of the root syllable with a copy of the initial consonant or, in some cases, consonant cluster” (Hogg and Fulk 2011: 251). Hogg and Fulk (2011: 252) explain that reduplicating verbs in North-West Germanic without an initial consonant formed the preterite with the addition of *-e-* before the root vowel, and consequently, Old English preterite vocalism resulted in *-eo-* or *-ē-* depending on the root vowel in North-West Germanic. When the North-West Germanic root vowel contained a back vowel or diphthong (**sp-e-ann*), the Old English preterite is formed in *-eo-* (*speonn* ‘joined’) but when it showed a front vowel or diphthong (**h-e-aīt*), the Old English preterite form is in *-ē-* (*hēt* ‘commanded’).

The original survivals of the reduplicating preterites are referred to as *r*-preterites and belong to the Anglian dialect. The Anglian reduplicating preterites include *hēht* (*hatan* ‘command’), *leolc* (*lācan* ‘leap’), *speoft* (*spātan* ‘spit’), *beoft* (*bēatan* ‘beat’), *leort* (*lætan* ‘let’), *reord* (*rædan* ‘advise’) and *ondreord* (*ondrædan* ‘dread’). Their preterite forms differ from the regular preterite forms of Old English class VII verbs. As Adamczyk (2002: 29) suggests, they have been traditionally divided into two groups. One includes the Anglian *r*-less type (*hēht*, *leolc*, *speoft* and *beoft*), whereas the other group is formed by the *r*-type forms (*reord*, *ondreord* and *leort*).

Similarly, Jasanoff (2008: 245) indicates that reduplicating preterites in Old English are poetic or belong to the Anglian dialect. The best example

⁷ This combination would have led to certain impossible sound sequences.

is *hēht*, preterite form of the verb *hātan*, which still survives in Modern English ‘hight’. These forms share the predominance of the diphthong -*eo*- and the monosyllabicity, although it is only inherited from the parent languages in the cases with *reord* and *leort*. The author claims strong VII verbs should not be considered a class itself since it shows far more diversification than those of classes I to VI. Jasanoff (2008: 247) distinguishes five subclasses within the strong VII verbs according to the process by which they form their preterites with respect to the Indo-European infinitives. The five subclasses proposed by Jasanoff are shown in Figure 6 with examples from the different dialects.

Subclass	Infinitive	Old Norse	Old High German	Old Saxon	Old English
VII a	* <i>haitan</i> ‘call’	<i>hét</i>	<i>hiaz</i>	<i>hēt</i>	<i>hēt</i>
	* <i>skaipan</i> ‘divide’	-	<i>sciad</i>	<i>skēð</i>	<i>scēd</i>
VII b	* <i>hlaupan</i> ‘run’	<i>hljóp</i>	(<i>h</i>) <i>liof</i>	<i>hliop</i>	<i>hlēop</i>
	* <i>hauwan</i> ‘chop’	<i>hjó</i>	<i>hio</i>	<i>heu</i>	<i>hēow</i>
VII c	* <i>haldan</i> ‘hold’	<i>helt</i>	<i>hialt</i>	<i>held</i>	<i>hēold</i>
	* <i>fanhan</i> ‘take’	<i>fekk</i>	<i>fiang</i>	<i>feng</i>	<i>fēng</i>
VII d	* <i>rēdan</i> ‘take’	<i>rēð</i>	<i>riat</i>	<i>rēd</i>	<i>rēd</i>
	* <i>slēpan</i> ‘sleep’	-	<i>sliaf</i>	<i>slēp</i>	<i>slēp</i>
VII e	* <i>wōpjan</i> ‘cry’	-	<i>wiof</i>	<i>wiop</i>	<i>wēop</i>
	* <i>blōtan</i> ‘sacrifice’	<i>blét</i>	-	-	<i>blēot</i>

Figure 6. Classification of the strong VII Old English verbs (Jasanoff 2008: 247).

Following this classification, verbs with *-*ai*- (VII a) in Indo-European present their Old English preterites in -*ē*-, while roots in *-*au*- (VII b) form their preterites in -*eu*-. Verbs with *-*a*- followed by a liquid or nasal (VII c) show variation in the formation of the preterite forms. Sometimes they have -*eo*- or -*e*-. Verbs with *-*e*- in the present (VII d) form their preterites in -*ē*- and finally, verbs with *-*o*- (VII e) show -*eo*-. It is still ambiguous where those forms come from.

In order to trace back the origin of the reduplicating verbs, Jasanoff’s (2008) assumption is that class VII was created by Northwest Germanic speakers to improve the learnability of the reduplicated forms that they inherited from their Germanic ancestors. The first step taken in this direction is what he calls the “new cluster rule”, by which a consonant cluster is simplified into only one consonant in the reduplicated syllable, for instance *ondreord* (*ondrædan*), by which the -*rd*- is simplified into -*d*-. However, Van Coetsem (1990: 75) suggests that the change in the reduplication rules is a consequence of the movement of the accent from the root of the word to the reduplicated syllable. Later, the compression

that Jasanoff (2008: 265) defines as “the morphological process by which disyllabic weak stems [...] were reduced to monosyllabic” would have taken place, which causes the loss of contrast between the singular and the plural stems.

Apart from Jasanoff, many other authors wonder about the origin of the strong VII class of Old English verbs. Some of them are Adamczyk (2002), Durrell (1975) and Vennemann (1997), whose appreciations on the subject will be presented below. They try to offer appropriate solutions to the unsolved questions with respect to the strong VII class of Old English verbs.

Adamczyk (2002) puts forth two main theories that try to explain the development of reduplicating preterite forms. One finds the Anglian syncope as the direct responsible for the appearance of these preterites. Syncope occurred due to the shift of the stress to the initial syllable, so that the second syllable (root vowel) was reduced and therefore, the preterite resulted in a monosyllabic stem. In this way, the monosyllabic forms conformed with the preterites of the strong verb classes I to VI. On the contrary, the other hypothesis finds Old English developments as the cause of the creation of these preterites. This theory argues that, at the beginning, monosyllabic preterite stems proper to the plural coexisted with non-monosyllabic forms characteristically of the singular. But soon, following the pattern of other monosyllabic preterites, the short form is generalised for the plural. Because of these adaptations in the paradigms of the strong VII verbs, new consonant clusters were expected, which were unpronounceable and that resulted in the simplification of the clusters, as in *speoft*. The expected form would have been **spespt*, but unable to be pronounced the cluster *-spt* was reduced to *-ft*.

Regarding the vocalism of the original preterite forms in Old English, Adamczyk (2002: 30) explains that the diphthong *-eo-*, present in all the attested forms except *hēht*, is understood as “an outcome of breaking before *r* + the following consonant in the *r*-type verbs”. And, with respect to the *r*-less forms, D’Alquen (1997: 87) claims that they suffer *u*-umlaut before a liquid or labial + back, rounded vowel.

The presented system of strong VII preterites was going to be replaced by a newly emerged system that would work as a way of regularising strong verbs of class VII (Adamczyk 2002: 30). This new type is characterised by the non-reduplicating verbs of class VII that form two groups depending of the vocalism of the preterite: *-ē-* preterites (*hēt*) and *-eo-* preterites (*spēon*). The vocalism of these verbs follows the new pattern of *ablaut* and is shaped by means of the *e*-infix. In this way, *-e-* is added before the root vowel of the present serving as a kind of infix before the original root vowel (Adamczyk 2002: 31).

Through this process (Adamczyk 2002: 31) emerged the strong VII preterites in $-e^2-$ and in $-eo-$. First, unaccented diphthongs $-ai-$ and $-au-$ in the original roots are converted into the monophthongs $-ē-$ and $-ō-$ that by the merging with the e -infix form following sequences: $*e-ē$ and $*e-ō$. Thereafter, the weakening of the unaccented syllable and the subsequent contraction give rise to the $-e^2-$ and $-eo-$ preterites. The process is illustrated in Figure 7.

Type	Infinitive	Preterite	
		Infixation	Merger into one syllable
$*e-āē (< *e-ē) > /ē^2/$	<i>*háitan</i>	$*h-é-ait >$	$*héēt > hē^2t$
$*e-ā (< *e-ē) > /ē^2/$	<i>*lāetan (< *lētan)</i>	$*lé-ēt >$	$lē^2t$
$*e-ō > /eo/$	<i>*hrōpan</i>	$*hr-é-ō-p >$	<i>hreop</i>

Figure 7. The development of $-e^2-$ and $-eo-$ preterites (Adamczyk 2002: 31).

Similarly, the preterites of the verbs with the structure $-ea-$ + nasal or liquid (*hēold* from *healdan*) are traced back by Adamczyk (2002: 31) to the earlier $*e-a$ vocalism. The diphthong $-ēo-$ is obtained as a result of breaking before $-r-$ or $-l-$. Figure 8 shows the sequence of events for these developments.

Infixation	Merger	Breaking	Analogical replacement
$*h-é-ald >$	$*heald >$	$*heold >$	<i>hēold</i>
$*sp-é-an(n) >$	$*spean(n) >$	$*speon(n) >$	<i>spēon</i>

Figure 8. From $*e-a$ vocalism to $-ēo-$ preterite (Adamczyk 2002: 31).

Following this theory, the new system of non-reduplicative preterites then would disseminate first to the archaic forms and then to the other verbs of class VII. This approach explains how the archaic Anglian forms such as *hēht*, *leort* and *reord* coexisted in Old English with *hēt*, *lēt* and *rēd*. This view is probably the most widely accepted as an explanation of the origin of the preterites of class VII in Old English.

Similarly, Durrell (1975: 50) claims that the formation of the preterite of the strong VII verbs in North-West Germanic has no clear counterpart in Indo-European and that it consists of the alternation of the present vowels with $-ē^2-$ and $-eu-$ vocalisms in the preterite. In fact, he claims that two or three new *ablaut* classes would be taking place within the class VII of strong verbs. He observes that verbs with roots in $-ai-$ and $-ē-$ plus a consonant have preterites in $-ē^2-$, that verbs whose roots are in $-au-$ and $-$