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# Temporal Structures in Occitan and French Oral Narrative: the Role of Frames and Connectives

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## Introduction

This article explores the role of temporal frames and connectives in the structuring of Occitan and French oral narratives. It forms part of the ExpressioNarration project, which was financed by a Horizon 2020 Marie Skłodowska Curie Fellowship.<sup>1</sup> The wider project aims to use contemporary linguistic theory, through a corpus-based analysis, to examine the relationship between language and orality, with a specific focus on key temporal features, including ‘tenses’, ‘temporal connectives’ and ‘temporal frame introducers’. This article discusses the last two of these, i.e.:

- temporal connectives between clauses; the article will focus on those that appear between two clauses that advance the narrative (e.g. *et, alors, puis* in French; *e, alavetz, puish* in Occitan). These often operate very differently in written and oral discourse (see Section 2.1 below);
- and temporal frame introducers, i.e. particular adverbials at the head of groups of clauses (e.g. *un jour, le lendemain matin* in French and *un jorn, lo lendoman matin* in Occitan) which operate differently in non-narrative and narrative discourse but have largely been explored in relation to written rather than oral narratives (see Section 2.2 below).

Until relatively recently, a binary ‘oral-written’ divide has tended to dominate our thinking on the question of medium, and while models have emerged that challenge this dichotomy, our knowledge of how different types of orality operate is still patchy, and the description of the features of oral ‘genres’ very underdeveloped, indeed non-existent in the case of most minoritised languages such

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<sup>1</sup> EU project 655034.

as Occitan.<sup>2</sup> Yet narratives in a minoritised language offer a particularly rich object of study when it comes to the relationship between language and orality. Not only do we know from previous research that both ‘oral discourse’ and ‘narrative discourse’ are of major interest in terms of certain temporal features, but also, the relationship between oral and written discourse is complex in the case of a minoritised language such as Occitan because of its rich oral cultural history and traditions (see 1.2 below) in comparison to the highly standardised national language of French, with its well-established written norms.

In our analysis, we will draw on Labov and Waletzky’s theoretical model of the structure of oral narrative and the properties of narrative clauses (Labov & Waletzky, 1967),<sup>3</sup> as well as theories that have largely been used to explore written forms of discourse, notably Discourse Framing Theory (Charolles, 1997) and, to a lesser extent, Segmented Discourse Representation Theory (SDRT: Asher & Lascarides, 2003). Models such as these, which facilitate an analysis of discourse-level phenomena, have not previously been used to explore the linguistic properties of Occitan. Our hypothesis is that they will offer a revealing comparison in relation to the use of frames and connectors across different levels of orality.

In order to explore temporality in different ‘degrees’ of orality, we adopt a corpus-based approach, with a new and unique corpus built for the project, entitled ‘OcOr’ (Carruthers & Vergez-Couret, 2018).<sup>4</sup> The corpus contains three sub-corpora which reflect different degrees of orality, offering the possibility of comparison along different parameters (e.g. oral vs. written sources of stories; oral vs. written transmission of narratives; traditional vs. contemporary storytelling; the type of performance practice, e.g. informal community-level performance vs. more formal performance on stage). Indeed, these distinctions reflect some of the categories in Koch and Oesterreicher’s work, both in terms of ‘canal’ (written vs. oral transmission) and in terms of the various continuums in their ‘comportement communicatif’ parameter, e.g. ‘communication privée’ vs. ‘communication publique’, ‘interlocuteur intime’ vs. ‘interlocuteur inconnu’, ‘communication spontanée’ vs ‘communication préparée’ (2001: 586).<sup>5</sup> The three sub-corpora are constituted as follows:

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<sup>2</sup> See for example Biber (1988), Koch & Oesterreicher (2001), Crystal (2006), Biber & Conrad (2009), Carruthers (2018).

<sup>3</sup> See also Fleischman (1990).

<sup>4</sup> The corpus (Vergez-Couret & Carruthers, 2018) is available on <https://zenodo.org/record/1451753#>.

<sup>5</sup> See Table 1 in Section 1.2 below for a summary of the descriptors for each sub-corpus.

- OOT (Occitan, oral, traditional): stories drawn from fieldwork among native speakers in the Occitan domain, recorded by the COMDT<sup>6</sup> and transcribed by and for the project. Language here is fundamentally oral, with almost no written influence.
  - OWT (Occitan, written, traditional): published literary stories, digitised by and for the project.<sup>7</sup> These are stories collected from oral sources and produced in a publishable written version. The original oral sources were never recorded.
  - OOC (Occitan, oral, contemporary): stories recounted by contemporary artists, taken from existing recordings and two Toulouse storytelling events recorded during the project.<sup>8</sup> Story performance is oral and relatively spontaneous (prepared and practised but not memorised) but sources are often, though not exclusively, written. There can be considerable individual variation in storytelling practice in this sub-corpus, an issue to which we shall return in the course of the article.
- The project also draws on a French corpus as a point of comparison:
- FOC (French, oral, contemporary): stories are extracted from the French Oral Narrative Corpus<sup>9</sup> designed by Carruthers (2013). These stories are performances from contemporary artists, recorded at the CLIO.<sup>10</sup> Story performance is oral and relatively spontaneous but sources are written.

Section 1 elaborates on the corpus characteristics and in particular on the complexity of the relationship between oral and written in the case of storytelling, establishing the foundations for the analysis of linguistic features in the three Occitan sub-corpora in comparison with French. Drawing on the theoretical models mentioned above, Section 2 considers previous research on the description and function of connectives and frames, and articulates the research questions. Sections 3 and 4 constitute the core analysis: Section 3 concentrates on the patterns attested in the four sub-corpora and the possible complementarity of connectives and frames, while Section 4 explores the strategic structuring of oral narrative. In interpreting the results, we will reflect, in response to the research questions, on the relationship between different degrees of orality and the use of temporal connectives and frames.

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<sup>6</sup> Conservatoire Occitan des Musiques et Danses Traditionnelles (<http://www.comdt.org/>).

<sup>7</sup> See Vergez-Couret (2017) on the methodology for the constitution of OWT.

<sup>8</sup> Live recordings were made at storytelling events in 2016, in collaboration with the Institut d'Etudes Occitanes (IEO).

<sup>9</sup> <http://frenchoralnarrative.qub.ac.uk/>

<sup>10</sup> Conservatoire de Littérature Orale, Vendôme, France.

## 1 Corpus Characteristics

### 1.1 Oral narratives

The stories in the four sub-corpora are all ‘narratives’ in the Labovian sense of being “one method of recapitulating past experience by matching a verbal sequence of clauses to the sequence of events that actually occurred” (Labov & Waletzky, 1967:20). Of course, in the case of folktales and fairy tales, the events do not normally actually occur; rather, they are presented as though they occur. The clauses in question are known as ‘narrative clauses’ and they usually contain reference to ‘events’ (as opposed to descriptions for example) that succeed each other in time.<sup>11</sup> A minimal narrative thus contains at least two narrative clauses and the sequence of event clauses forming a narrative is known as the ‘narrative line’. We focus in this article on narrative clauses (i.e. referencing events) rather than other types of clause such as descriptive clauses.

All narratives in the corpus map broadly onto the structure proposed for oral narrative by Labov & Waletzky (1967), a model we shall draw on throughout this paper:<sup>12</sup>

- (i) Abstract (overview of the story - optional)
- (ii) Orientation (situation, person, place and time)
- (iii) Complicating Action (main storyline which varies in length and can be sub-divided into episodes)
- (iv) Peak (high point of the story)

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<sup>11</sup> See also the discussion of ‘Narrative discourse mode’ in Smith (2003). It is of course possible for the order of event clauses not to involve temporal succession but in such cases there are normally clear linguistic cues or elements of world knowledge that override the default interpretation of sequence. Prototypical narrative clauses are independent clauses, or juxtaposed or coordinated clauses, such as narrative clauses 17 and 18 in the following example (superscript numbers are taken from the digitised corpus):

[L'òme tornèt a son ostal ambe lo gròs peis]<sup>17</sup> [e donèt lo cap a sa canha, la coa a sa cabala e lo ventre a sa femna]<sup>18</sup> ([the man returned home with the large fish]<sup>17</sup> [and he gave the head to his dog, the tail to his horse and the stomach to his wife]<sup>18</sup>).

<sup>12</sup> This model was designed originally for conversational narratives but it can be applied also to storytelling of the type found here (Carruthers 2005, 2011).

- (v) Evaluation (implicit or explicit aim of the story)
- (vi) Resolution (sense of completion)
- (vii) Coda (back to the present context - optional).

Narrative clauses are particularly dominant in the Complicating Action (which contains the main storyline), the Peak and the Resolution, whereas the Orientation often contains large quantities of descriptive clauses.

None of the narratives in our corpus is conversational: all represent stories drawn either from the European repertoire of traditional stories or from other cultures around the world. All the stories have a defined structure in terms of the events that occur but the nature of each individual performance varies (see 1.2 below) such that each is a unique performance, renewed every time it is recounted (Belmont, 1999: 10). This explains why we find various versions of one story (or story-type), truncated or mixed versions, and combinations of both European and worldwide stories with both regional and local references. In constituting the corpus, we have made use of the widely-known Aarne & Thompson (1961) classification of stories, noting both their categorisation in a particular group (e.g. animal tales, tales of magic, anecdotes etc.), sub-group (e.g. supernatural adversaries, magic object, supernatural power or knowledge etc.) and story-type where the evidence is available (e.g. T 333. Little Red Riding Hood). We have attempted to gather a balanced breakdown within each sub-corpus of the broader story categories and information on story-type is provided in the metadata where relevant, following Delarue & Tenèze (1997) for the geographical territory of France.<sup>13</sup>

In order to explore the relationship between orality and temporality, the four sub-corpora vary in respect of a number of important parameters, as the following section will show.

## 1.2 Occitan and the sub-corpora

Occitan is a Romance language spoken in southern France, twelve valleys in Italy and the Val d'Aran in Spain. It has several dialects and there is no agreed standardised variety. The most widely accepted classification proposed by Bec (1995) includes Auvergnat, Gascon, Lengadocian, Lemosin, Provençau and Vivaroaupenc. Our corpus includes stories in two of the dialects: Lengadocian, spoken in a zone delimited by the Rhône, the Garonne and the Mediterranean Sea;

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<sup>13</sup> It was not always possible to achieve an ideal balance and our analysis below will raise issues in relation to this.

and Gascon, spoken in a zone delimited by the Pyrenees, the Garonne, and the Atlantic Ocean.

The status of Occitan has changed considerably in the last hundred years.<sup>14</sup> For speakers born before the First World War, Occitan was probably the most widely spoken language in the zones delimited above. However, Occitan transmission declined sharply between the two World Wars, due to strong government support for the policy of ‘one nation, one language’, the rural exodus and the ensuing linguistic melting-pot in urban areas. Occitan currently survives primarily (though not exclusively) in rural contexts, particularly where both parents in a family are Occitan speakers. Since the 1970s, there has been a considerable revival movement, supported by a network of various not-for-profit associations, such as the Calandreta<sup>15</sup> (immersive bilingual schools), the IEO<sup>16</sup> (Institut d’Estudis Occitans) and the CFPO<sup>17</sup> (Centre de Formacion Professional Occitan). Occitan can now be found in newspapers, radio and television, on street signage and in the French national education system (in bilingual classes in primary school, optional courses in secondary school and as main or optional classes in several universities). It is also supported by a network of writers, singers and storytellers. However, Occitan does not have any official status in France, where Article 2 of the constitution declares French to be the sole national language, although support is provided through bodies such as the Ofici Public de la Lenga Occitana.<sup>18</sup>

As outlined in the Introduction above, the three Occitan sub-corpora have been designed to reflect different degrees of orality in terms of sources (oral or written), transmission (oral or written/published) and performance practice (as part of an oral tradition vs. stylised oral performances).<sup>19</sup> The stories in the **OOT sub-corpus** are essentially traditional (they are acquired and disseminated orally), with the storytellers born between 1860 and the First World War.<sup>20</sup> Relatively good metadata on speakers are available with the recordings in the COMDT. The stories in the

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<sup>14</sup> See Martel (2015), Walter (2012).

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.calandreta.org/>

<sup>16</sup> <https://ieo-oc.org/>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.cfpoccitan.org/accueil/>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.ofici-occitan.eu/fr/accueil/>

<sup>19</sup> Existing digitised corpora of Occitan include BaTelÒc for written texts (<http://redac.univ-tlse2.fr/bateloc/>) (Bras and Vergez-Couret, 2016).

<sup>20</sup> This period is a generalisation extrapolated from metadata provided for six storytellers born between 1876 and 1906, and the years when data were collected. The six storytellers were aged between 62 and 102 when data were collected between 1960 and 2000.

**OWT sub-corpus** are also traditional (and acquired orally) but, contrary to OOT, they have been produced in a published written version and no recordings of the original stories are available. Metadata on the collection process and the storytellers are very patchy but we have sufficient information on individuals (names, gender, occupation, date and place of birth, and publication dates) to be able to generalise by saying that the storytellers were born in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. The texts were published between the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the writers were educated people born also during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. We know little about the relationship between the original oral versions and the published written versions and this is an issue to which we will return in our analysis below.

The stories in the **OOC sub-corpus** are not primarily traditional. They are mainly staged contemporary performances that often involve music, accessories, an elaborate set etc. This type of practice is usually far removed from the traditional oral context, where stories are told in an intimate informal setting with no or few accessories. However, in some cases, the OOC story performances are much less strongly ‘staged’ and given their strong links to Occitan-speaking communities, the sources for some contemporary storytellers can be oral as well as written. Crucially, for all storytellers in OOC, local and regional stories feature strongly in their repertoire, whether the sources are written or oral. The impact of these more complex characteristics in terms of sources and performance, and the scope for individual variation in practice amongst OOC storytellers, are issues to which we shall return, as they have important implications for our analysis.

The OOC storytellers were born between 1944 and 1981, i.e. mostly in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>21</sup> The storytellers in the three Occitan sub-corpora thus belong to different generations. The speakers in OWT and OOT are native Occitan speakers (we know little about their knowledge of French); the storytellers in OOC are mostly not native speakers of Occitan, were educated in French schools and learned Occitan in various ways.<sup>22</sup> As a point of comparison, we will also exploit a selection of stories from the French Oral Narrative Corpus (**FOC**), a contemporary corpus of storytelling in French. None of the storytellers has acquired their stories as part of an oral tradition; all use written sources to build a repertoire which they work up into an oral performance, where the storyline and certain formulae are memorised, where preparation and training is involved but where the performance

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<sup>21</sup> The age range was 32 to 72.

<sup>22</sup> The stories in the three Occitan sub-corpora (OOT, OCC and OWT) were digitised and harmonised with ‘classical’ Occitan spelling. See Carruthers & Vergez-Couret (2018) for a detailed discussion.

itself is relatively spontaneous. Thus all the storytellers in FOC and many in OOC are said to be ‘new’ storytellers in the sense that they do not form part of an oral tradition but rather draw on multiple sources which can blend local, national and international stories. The literature on storytelling in France draws a sharp distinction between ‘traditional’ and ‘new’ storytelling, the former associated with rural communities and regional languages, the latter with ‘educated’ speakers working in more urban contexts: “le conteur des villes doit constituer son répertoire lui-même, à partir des sources qui lui sont offertes, sans avoir de modèle précis présent à l’esprit [...] le conteur traditionnel puise dans un fonds commun dont il est l’héritier direct” (Gay-Para, 1999:116).<sup>23</sup> We shall return to this traditional/new divide later in the article.

In short, according to Zumthor’s classifications (1983), the stories in OOT are examples of ‘oralité mixte’ in the sense that they are part of an oral tradition in a society which has developed a writing system but where the influence of the latter (for sociological and educational reasons) is only partial. In the case of OWT, we are also dealing with ‘oralité mixte’, whereby the influence of the writing system is considerable in the case of the authors of these written texts but non-existent for the storytellers themselves. In the case of ‘new’ storytelling in OOC and FOC, we are dealing with ‘oralité seconde’, where society (and the individual) is strongly influenced by the dominant literate culture which is of course much more established and prestigious in French than it is in Occitan.

Table 1 summarises the descriptors of the four sub-corpora:

OOT (Occitan Oral Traditional)	OWT (Occitan Written Traditional)	OOC (Occitan Oral Contemporary)	FOC (French Oral Contemporary)
+ spontaneous – planning + traditional	– spontaneous + planning + traditional	+ spontaneous + planning +/- traditional	+ spontaneous + planning – traditional
oral transmission	written transmission	oral transmission	oral transmission
intimate private setting	NA	public performance	public performance
oral sources	oral sources	mainly written & some oral sources	written sources

<sup>23</sup> See Carruthers (2005:3-9) for a detailed discussion.

‘oralité mixte’ speakers born mid-19th to early 20th c.	‘oralité mixte’ speakers born early 19th c.	‘oralité seconde’ speakers born mid 20th c. onwards	‘oralité seconde’ speakers born mid-20 <sup>th</sup> c. onwards
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Table 1. Descriptors for the four sub-corpora

## 2 Connectives and Frames: Theoretical and Methodological Perspectives on two Complementary Modes of Discourse Organisation

Temporal connectives and frames are cohesive devices which play important roles in two complementary modes of discourse organisation: one of ‘connection’ between clauses or groups of clauses and one of ‘indexation’, where particular adverbials (frame introducers) provide instructions for the interpretation of a succeeding section of discourse, whether the latter is long or short. As we shall see in this section, connectives tend to establish a relation with a previous site in the discourse and in that sense, they look backwards in a text, whereas frame introducers have scope over a succeeding section of text and in that sense, they look forwards (see Le Draoulec & Péry-Woodley, 2005). In theory at least, they operate alongside each other in a given discourse with complementary roles, i.e. connectors are dynamic and involve changing relations as the text progresses whereas frames are more static, relating to a block of text (Charolles, 1997; Le Draoulec & Péry-Woodley, 2001, 2005).

### 2.1 Temporal connectives

In the context of oral narrative, our primary interest is in the connectives that are employed on the narrative line as the narrative moves forward, i.e. between the clauses Labov labels as narrative clauses (Section 1.1 above). These are points where we find what SDRT would call the ‘Narration relation’ and we will use this terminology at certain points in our analysis. In SDRT, two propositions  $\alpha$  and  $\beta$  linked by Narration are temporally ordered in the order in which the event (‘e’ in the formula below) clauses occur (cf. Labov’s definition of a ‘narrative’ and ‘narrative clauses’ in Section 1.1 above):

$$\text{Narration } (\alpha, \beta) \rightarrow e_{\alpha} < e_{\beta}$$

Since in oral narratives events are normally introduced in the order in which they occur, Narration is the most common discourse relation in our corpus.<sup>24</sup> The Narration relation is thus a key site for the possible occurrence of temporal connectives: e.g.<sup>25</sup>

- 1)      a ) *Justin knocked at the door. Then he entered.*  
           b) *Justin frappa à la porte. Puis il entra.*<sup>26</sup>

There are two important caveats to this point. The first is that it is of course possible for there to be no connective in cases of Narration, i.e. there would simply be parataxis in cases where the two clauses are juxtaposed. Example (1) above would be such a case if *puis* was not used: the Narration relation would be inferred from the relation between the semantic content of ‘frapper à la porte’ and ‘entrer’, since we know that the event of ‘entering’ normally follows that of ‘knocking the door’. Second, there are many connectives such as *alors* (*alavetz* in Occitan) and *et* (*e* in Occitan) where the connective itself does not *trigger* the Narration relation but is *highly compatible with* Narration and thus often occurs in this context. Such connectives can be polyvalent, with different meanings (‘then’, ‘and’, or a causal ‘so’ in the case of *alors*) that are nonetheless compatible with Narration. For example, Le Draoulec & Bras (2007) argue that *alors* in initial position triggers a dependency relation between two event clauses, the temporal effects of which are always compatible with succession.<sup>27</sup> Alongside connectives such as *puis* that trigger the Narration relation, connectives such as *alors* and *et* are known to be frequent in oral narratives and we would thus expect to find them at sites of Narration in our corpus.<sup>28</sup> As Fleischman (1990:185) puts it: “one of the most

<sup>24</sup> Of course, in some cases, other linguistic or contextual evidence indicates a different DR such as Elaboration, Continuation or Flashback: see Asher & Lascarides (2003) and Bras & Asher (1994).

<sup>25</sup> We only present here a brief summary of the definition (triggering rules) of the Narration relation in SDRT that is strictly relevant for the analysis presented in this paper. See Asher & Lascarides (2003) for a full account of the definition of Narration.

<sup>26</sup> In this case, the rule inferring Narration in SDRT is based on the presence of the French connective *puis* (Bras, Le Draoulec & Vieu 2001, 2003). The rule states:  $(\alpha, \beta, \lambda) \wedge [\text{puis}](\beta) \rightarrow \text{Narration}(\alpha, \beta, \lambda)$ .

<sup>27</sup> See also Bras, Le Draoulec & Asher (2009) and Carruthers (2011). For discussion of how the function of *alors* relates to other causal connectors, see Rossari (2000:112-133) and Bras, Le Draoulec & Asher (2006).

<sup>28</sup> Other temporal adverbials have been studied in the SDRT framework such as *un peu plus tard* (*a bit later*). In SDRT, some of these anaphoric temporal adverbials

widely recognised features of ‘oral’ narrative, artistic or conversational, is its paratactic organisation. Formal apparatus for textual cohesion, in particular for coordination and subordination, is often at a minimum, with clauses merely juxtaposed asyndetically or linked by the minimal connectives ‘and’ or ‘then’”.

In addition to contexts where we can clearly identify the Narration relation, it is of course also possible to find connectives such as *puis* and *alors* at the start of narrative clauses where there is not an obvious and immediately previous clause to which they are connected. Such examples occur, for instance, where the site to which the Narration relation is attached is more distant in the text than the previous clause. This can occur, for example, at the beginning of sections (usually introduced by a frame), where the hierarchy of frames in the text is such that the new frame can be said to have a relation of Narration with the previous one which may have occurred further back in the discourse. In other cases, connectives signalling progression on the narrative line can occur where, strictly speaking, Narration does not come into play, e.g., at the beginning of a Complicating Action where the relation with the Orientation would be that of Background. Examples such as these are a small minority but are included in our analysis, as we are interested in capturing **all usages of connectives in a context of progression on the narrative line**. For this reason also, only connectives on the narrative line are annotated: dialogues and elements such as exchanges with the audience are excluded from annotation and analysis.

## 2.2 Temporal frame introducers

As frame introducers, initial temporal adverbials are exploited both to specify a temporal criterion for the interpretation of one or more clauses and to organise discourse by dividing information into ‘blocks’. The following example from Le Draoulec & Péry-Woodley (2001: 162) illustrates a temporal frame in a non-narrative geographical text:

- 2) ***En juin 1992**, 747 500 candidats se sont présentés à l’examen, dont 35000 candidats individuels ; près des trois quarts ont été reçus ; mais pour les candidats individuels le taux de réussite a été à peine de 50 %. Pour la*

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were first considered as triggering the relation of Narration (Asher & Bras, 1993; Bras & Asher, 1994) but further SDRT analysis revealed that only *puis* plays a role at the structural level that is relevant for discourse relations. For example, *un peu plus tard* does not trigger Narration even if it expresses temporal succession (Bras, Le Draoulec & Vieu, 2001) but it is obviously compatible with the Narration relation.

*série collège (85 % de l'ensemble des candidats), 76 % des candidats des établissements scolaires ont obtenu le brevet, ceux des collèges privés sous contrat réussissant mieux que ceux des collèges publics (85 % de taux moyen de succès dans les premiers, 74 % dans les seconds).*

***En 1989**, tant les collégiens du privé que ceux du public ont de meilleurs résultats dans les départements des académies de l'Ouest où les élèves du privé sont nombreux, d'Orléans -Tours, Reims et Grenoble, ainsi que dans les Midis aquitain et méditerranéen.*

The frame introducers *En juin 1992* et *En 1989* split information into two temporal 'blocks' by gathering clauses under the temporal criterion specified by each frame introducer. Some adverbials are referential, i.e. they refer to a period of time. The reference can be 'absolute' (e.g. *le 4 avril 2020*) or relative (either 'deictic' by reference to the enunciation time, such as *hier*; or 'anaphoric' with respect to a reference point given in the discourse, such as *le lendemain matin*).<sup>29</sup> Many indefinite adverbials are unspecified, such as *un jour*.

Le Draoulec & Péry-Woodley (2001, 2005) make two key arguments in relation to frames in narrative discourse. First, they point out that "frames are definitely not dominant" (2001:273) and that it is the Narration relation, with temporal progression through the narrative clauses, that dominates the temporal structure of narrative. Second, they argue convincingly that whereas the role of frame introducers is both temporal and structural in non-narrative texts, their role in narrative discourse is primarily structural. In such contexts, their temporal content may be much less important, as we can see in example (3) below: *En 1933* probably does not temporally index all the clauses introduced before the appearance of the new frame introducer, *En 1938*, even though there is no linguistic element (e.g. change of tense, change of paragraph, new framing adverbial, cf. Le Draoulec & Péry-Woodley, 2005: 46) that would indicate that the reader should not interpret those events under the temporal index of *En 1933*:

- 3) ***En 1933**, il [Klaus Mann] fonda à Amsterdam la revue antinazie 'Die Sammlung'. Il sillonna l'Europe pour mobiliser les intellectuels contre le fascisme, donna des conférences, écrivit des articles virulents contre le régime hitlérien, notamment dans le 'Pariser Tageblatt', journal des Allemands antinazis en France, et collabora au cabaret satirique dirigé par sa sœur Erika, 'Die Pfeffermühle' (Le Moulin à Poivre). **En 1938**, il se rendit en Espagne pour faire des reportages sur la guerre civile; il prit parti pour les Républicains dans ses articles très polémiques.*

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<sup>29</sup> See Smith (1980) and Borillo (1983).

In this case, the progression of time with the Narration relation that is inferred between the different clauses when we take into account the semantic function of the verbs in question (*fonder la revue antinazie*, *sillonner l'Europe*, *donner des conférences*, *écrire des articles*, *collaborer au cabaret*) would appear to be incompatible with the fixed temporal criterion specified by the frame introducer, *En 1933*. For the purposes of this article, we will refer to such frames as 'primarily structural' in function: i.e., while there is temporal reference in many instances (such as the date in 'en 1933'), in terms of indexing a subsequent section of discourse, it is highly unlikely that events occurred within the temporal scope of the frame introducer. Moreover, previous research has shown that in French, the indefinite *un jour* (one day) is frequently used to start a new section of a narrative, with in many cases an unspecified temporal reference, thus creating a weak frame with a largely organisational function.<sup>30</sup> In this sense, such 'primarily structural' frames contrast with 'temporal and structural' frames which are exploited both to index a subsequent section of discourse in temporal terms (i.e. the frame introducer has scope over that section of discourse) and for their organisational function in terms of helping to structure the discourse.<sup>31</sup> Most research on frames has been carried out on written texts but Carruthers (2011) has shown that in contemporary French oral narratives, temporal frames can have important structural functions that are linked to storytelling performance. In her data, temporal frames are used to mark certain specific sections as defined by Labov & Waletzky (see 1.1 above), with *un jour* frequently exploited to launch the Complicating Action and other frames used to mark the transition between different sections of the story or to subdivide them into episodes, in some cases highlighting parallel episodes.

For the analysis of our corpus, we annotated frame introducers with information on whether they are 'temporal and structural' or 'primarily structural' in terms of their function in the discourse.<sup>32</sup> In terms of criteria for annotation, if it is highly unlikely for events to have occurred within the temporal scope of the frame, the frame is annotated as 'primarily structural'; otherwise, the frame is annotated as

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<sup>30</sup> See Charolles *et al.* (2005) and Charolles (2006).

<sup>31</sup> See Le Draoulec & Péry-Woodley (2005) for a discussion of this distinction along the lines of systemic functional linguistics (Halliday & Hasan, 1976).

<sup>32</sup> Additional information is provided in the annotation on the presence or not of a coordinating conjunction or another adverbial; and on whether the type of reference is absolute, deictic, anaphoric or indeterminate. Note that frames signalling habitual events such as *chaque jour* or *chaque matin* are excluded from this study as they are generally not concerned with events on the narrative line but rather with context setting in the Orientation.

‘temporal and structural’, even if the evidence supporting a temporal interpretation is not absolutely clear. Relevant clues to determining the scope for ‘temporal and structural’ frames have already been described by Le Draoulec & Péry-Woodley (2001) and include the presence of a new temporal frame introducer and/or a change of tense. In some cases, we are reliant on world knowledge to indicate that certain clauses can no longer be interpreted under the criterion defined by the frame introducer. For example, in the coordinated clause *et comme ça les jours passent* (and in that way, the days go by) in (4) cannot be interpreted under the temporal criterion defined by *et le lendemain matin* (and the next morning), as several days cannot come under the scope of a morning:

- 4) *et le lendemain matin il est tout heureux et comme ça les jours passent*  
(FOC)

In cases such as (3) and (4), there is thus sufficient evidence that these are ‘primarily structural’ frames’.

However, in many cases, it is more difficult to judge. For example, in (5), it is difficult to decide whether or not certain clauses can be interpreted within the temporal criterion of the frame introduced by *L’endoman*: the clauses *E n’anar, e n’anar, e n’anar: tant e tant qu’arribèt* (and he kept walking and walking and walking: for such a long time that he arrived) suggest that the events took a long time but nothing indicates with total clarity whether or not they took more than a day:

- 5) *L’endoman donc, au punt deu jorn, que torna s’aprelhar, s’arrecapta son guit, e se bot lo camin devath los pès. E n’anar, e n’anar, e n’anar : tant e tant, qu’arribèt.* (OWT)<sup>33</sup>  
*The next day then, at dawn, he gets ready again, takes his duck with him, and gets on his way. And he keeps walking and walking and walking: for such a long time that he arrived.*

Even though it is possible that these events take more than one day, the frame introducer *L’endoman* in (5) is labelled as ‘temporal and structural’ since neither linguistic elements nor world knowledge suggest that it is highly unlikely that events under the scope of the frame introducer cannot be interpreted as within the scope of its temporal criterion.

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<sup>33</sup> Note that in (5), some scholars might consider that *au punt deu jorn* forms a second frame which has a narrower scope than *L’endoman*. However, we would argue that *au punt deu jorn* is a sentence-level adverbial which only references the events in the first sentence rather than a section of upcoming discourse.

### 2.3 The research questions

As is clear from Sections 1 and 2, the vast bulk of research thus far on connectives and frames concerns exclusively written discourse, both narrative and non-narrative. In relation specifically to oral narrative, we know from previous research that certain connectives are found particularly frequently (see 2.1 above) and that framing can be used for structural purposes (2.2). However, we know little about whether or how the use of frames and connectives might be related to each other in practice, or about the impact of different ‘degrees of orality’ on the use of both phenomena. Drawing on Discourse Framing Theory and Labov & Waletzky’s model of oral narrative structure, the analysis in Sections 3 and 4 will aim to answer the following research questions:

- How do connectives and frames operate in terms of temporal patterning in the corpus and how do the patterns compare across the sub-corpora?
- Is there any quantitative evidence to support the argument that the use of connectives and frames is in fact complementary?
- Is there any link between patterns of usage and degrees of orality? To what extent are questions around sources, transmission and storytelling practice relevant in the patterns observed both for connectives and frames?
- What other factors impact on patterns observed and are there specific factors that have a particular type of influence?
- What do the patterns observed tell us about the structuring of oral narrative?

## 3 Connectives, Frames, Complementarity and Temporal Patterning: Analysis of the Corpus

### 3.1 Broad patterns

Connectives and frames have been presented in Section 2 above as two complementary modes of discourse organisation and both are found in all the sub-corpora, in varying proportions. In the first instance, we wish to assess to what extent their distribution in the introduction of narrative clauses in the corpora (as defined in 1.1 above) is actually complementary in quantitative terms. In total, there are 3143 narrative clauses across the four sub-corpora. In practice, as highlighted by Le Draoulec & Péry-Woodley (2001:273), connectors are much more widely

used than frames: the volume of connectives introducing narrative clauses is high in all four sub-corpora and in the analysis that follows, it is therefore usually possible to underscore our observations with quantitative data. Frames, however, are much less numerous and thus conclusions derived from comparison across the sub-corpora are more qualitative and tentative. Moreover, for practical reasons connected to the large volume of connectives, we reduced the volume of stories for that part of the analysis, equalizing the size of each sub-corpus at 12,000 words (2082 narrative clauses in total), keeping the same proportions of particular authors and of story types as for the full corpus (which varies between 16600 and 20000 words for each sub-corpus). Since the data for both connectives and frames is viewed as a proportion of the total number of narrative clauses in our analysis, we can compare the percentages for the two.<sup>34</sup>

Analysis of our sub-corpora shows clearly that the use of discourse connectives is inversely related to the use of frame introducers: the greater the percentage of connectives, the lower the percentage of frame introducers – and vice versa (Figures 1 a and b):

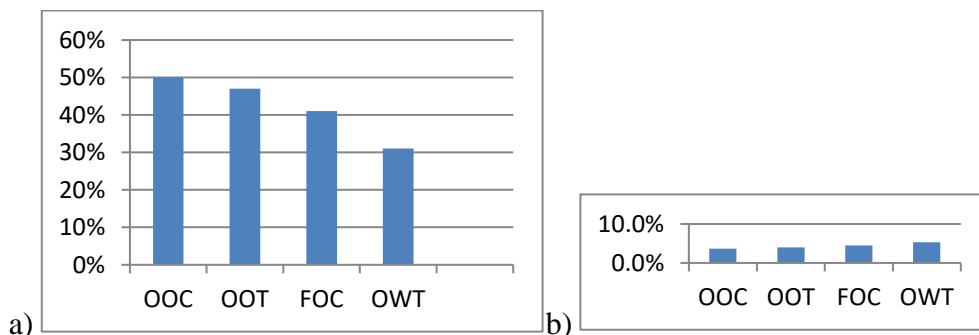


Figure 1. Use of discourse connectives (on the left) and frame introducers (on the right)

At first glance, the spectrum of patterns observed does appear to be connected to the question of degrees of orality, at least to some extent. At one end of the spectrum, the least oral of the sub-corpora in terms of sources, transmission and practice (i.e. OWT: see 1.2 and Table 1 above), has the lowest number of narrative clauses introduced by connectives (31%) and the highest number (5.3%) by frame

<sup>34</sup> The number of narrative clauses in the full corpus (used for the frame analysis) varies between 590 and 900 in each sub-corpus (with an average of 785). In the reduced corpus used for the connectives analysis, it varies between 400 and 575 (with an average of 520).

introducers.<sup>35</sup> The second ‘least oral’ corpus in terms of sources, transmission and practice (i.e. FOC) is next in the patterning, with the two more strongly oral corpora (OOT and OOC) showing higher degrees of connectives and lower levels of frames. However, taking sources, transmission and storytelling practice into account, if there is a connection between degrees of orality and the numbers of frames and connectives, we might have expected the order of OOC and OOT in the patterning to be reversed, given that OOT is the most oral of the sub-corpora in terms of sources, transmission and practice. Instead, the data shows that OOC is at the opposite end of the spectrum from OWT, with 50% of narrative clauses introduced by connectives and 3.7% introduced by frame introducers.

A closer examination of OOC in fact reveals a high level of individual variation in the patterns observed which is underscored by information on practice gleaned from interviews with all the storytellers in OOC. All storytellers in OOC see themselves as strongly connected to regional and local stories from the oral tradition (no doubt because of the link between the oral tradition and regional minoritised languages).<sup>36</sup> However, for a majority, practice is close to that of new storytellers in French (i.e. their sources are written and performance is staged and relatively stylised); only a few work primarily with oral sources and their performances tend to be much less staged. In practice, in line with the nature of OOC as discussed in 1.2 above, there is a considerable difference between the patterns observed for these storytellers, such that, if we remove them from the cohort of OOC, leaving only those whose practice is closer to the new storytellers in FOC, the percentage of connectives falls to 40% which is extremely close to the figure for FOC at 41%. More research on a larger corpus would allow us to see whether we are dealing with two distinct practices here or whether these represent two ends of a continuum, with the possibility of ‘mixed’ practice in between. In any case, there is clear evidence across the three sub-corpora involving oral transmission (OOT, OOC, FOC) of a connection between degrees of orality and the patterns attested: storytellers drawing on oral sources and who are closest to the type of practice found in the oral tradition

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<sup>35</sup> Note that elements can be counted in more than one category where they co-occur, e.g. a connective alongside a frame. Note also that the other elements found in this context include parataxis (where narrative clauses are juxtaposed) and subordinate clauses (a majority of these are introduced by ‘quand’ and reference an event which is anterior to the event in the succeeding clause).

<sup>36</sup> Each of the storytellers was asked about their sources and their storytelling practice in a questionnaire (along with questions about age, education, language skills in Occitan, occupation, places of residence).

use fewer frame introducers and more connectives, while those drawing on written sources and closest to new storytelling practice favour the reverse pattern.

The corpus of published stories (OWT) is also interesting in this regard. Although this corpus of published texts draws on stories collected in the oral tradition, it is the corpus where patterns least resemble those we are identifying strongly with the oral tradition in OOT and OOC. Indeed, a striking fact about discourse frames in OWT is the systematic use of at least one frame in 90% of the texts. These figures suggest strongly that the medium of transmission plays an important role: it is the fact that transmission is through written, published texts that distinguishes this corpus most from OOT. Moreover, although all sources for FOC and some sources for OOC are written, their transmission is oral. It is the fact that OWT is a written published text that distinguishes it from all the other sub-corpora and determines the low use of connectives and the higher use of frames. In short, our data suggests that not only are frames and connectives used quantitatively in a complementary fashion but also, the patterns attested are indeed related to the question of different degrees of orality. Sources, transmission and storytelling practice are all highly relevant.

### 3.2 Connectives and frames: further detail and nuances in the argument

#### *Discourse connectives: variation in the range attested*

Use of discourse connectives is higher in all three oral corpora (OOC, OOT, FOC) than in OWT and indeed, as noted in 2.1 above, the extensive use of discourse connectives in spoken discourse is a well-attested phenomenon. Patterns in our corpus (Table 2) are similar to those found elsewhere for French (Fleischman, 1990; Carruthers, 2005), with the Occitan equivalents of ‘et’, ‘alors’, ‘après’, ‘puis’ and ‘et puis’ particularly frequent (see 2.1 above):

Connectives	OOT	OOC	OWT	FOC
e/et	143	122	132	161
alara/alavetz/alòrs/e alavetz/alors	58	24	18	30
après/e après		6	4	
apuèi/puèi/puis	8		1	2
e_puis/e_puish/et puis	3			9

Table 2. Connectives in the Occitan sub-corpora<sup>37</sup>

Particularly striking is the relative frequency of variations of ‘alors’ in OOT, a feature to which we shall return in 4.3 below. Moreover, the contrast in this regard between the two sub-corpora that allow a relatively direct comparison in terms of source, i.e. OOT and OWT, relates not just to the quantity of connectives but also to the range and combinations attested. The most oral of the sub-corpora in terms of sources, transmission and practice (OOT) is characterised by a broader range of discourse connectives (11 types: see Section 4.3 below) and many different combinations, while OWT (the least oral of the sub-corpora) has a smaller range of discourse connectives (8 types) and very few combinations. OOC and FOC reveal patterns that are in between these two extremes.

Frame introducers: variation in the range attested

As already noted, our data contain far fewer examples of frame introducers overall than of connectives and thus our observations are cautious: we cannot go as far as claiming a straightforward relationship between frame introducers and written texts. Overall, frame introducers are not very diversified: around 30 types for 99 occurrences in the Occitan data and 17 types for 39 occurrences in the French data. Moreover, certain frames are particularly frequent. In Occitan, 65% are occurrences of four main types (*lo lendoman* (the next day), *un jorn* (one day), *un còp* (once) and *lo lendoman matin* (the next morning))<sup>38</sup> while in French, 64% concern *le lendemain* (the next day), *le lendemain matin* (the next morning), *ce jour-là* (that day), *un jour* (one day) and *le soir* (in the evening). The figures are not large enough and the patterns not clear enough for us to be able to draw conclusions about diversification in written versus oral data: the only clear patterns concern syntactic complexity, where frames in OWT demonstrate higher levels of complexity: e.g. they often involve embedded nominal or prepositional phrases, relatives and/or adjectives, such as in *e, un beth ser d’escurada* (and, one beautiful dark night (literally, ‘night of obscurity’)).

A striking phenomenon in OWT is the frequency of one particular frame introducer, especially at the beginning of stories, i.e. *un còp* (and its dialectal variants) which literally means ‘once’ (*une fois*) and is employed in similar contexts to ‘once upon a time’ (*il était une fois*, *un còp èra*). In OWT, 7 texts out of 19 are introduced by *un còp*. By contrast, only 2 of 26 texts in OOT and 1 of 13 texts in

<sup>37</sup> These figures are raw numbers because the sub-corpora were equalised in terms of size at 12000 words each.

<sup>38</sup> Dialectal variations of *matin* and *lendoman* have been taken into account for these frequencies.

OOC are introduced by *un còp*, while the figure is zero for FOC. This widespread use of *un còp* at the beginning of stories in OWT contributes to the high number of frames in this sub-corpus. The related structures of *il y avait une fois/il était une fois* in French and *un còp èra /I avèva un còp* in Occitan are not, strictly speaking, frame introducers and are not therefore counted in these figures.<sup>39</sup> However, it is interesting to note that while these structures are also relatively frequent in OWT (opening nine stories), the same cannot be said of the other three sub-corpora where numbers are extremely small.<sup>40</sup> In other words, there are some indications that *un còp* and its non-framing associated structures are more widely attested at the beginning of stories in our one written corpus; they are very rare in the oral sub-corpora. It would be interesting to see to what extent they are attested in more recent written corpora of stories.

#### Framing and story type

To date no studies have looked at the question of story-type. Our corpus reveals that the number of frame introducers per text is strongly correlated with story-type:

Type of story	Number of stories	Number of frames	Average number of frames	Average story length
Fantastic tale	15	60	≈ 4	1443
Legend	12	14	≈ 1,2	505
Anecdote	15	19	≈ 1,3	928
Animal tale	10	9	≈ 0,9	919

Table 3. Correlation between Type of story and Quantity of Frames in the whole corpus (4 sub-corpora)

Frames are quite clearly more heavily exploited in fantastic tales, with around four times the number per story than in other types of story. Although fantastic tales tend

<sup>39</sup> We consider that *il était une fois* and *il y avait une fois* are not, strictly speaking, frame introducers, as they are not temporal adverbial expressions but rather impersonal verbal expressions that are used to place other elements (usually the following noun) in focus position. This position is debatable and we recognise that some scholars might take a different view.

<sup>40</sup> They are slightly more raised in OOC but this is heavily influenced by one storyteller.

to be longer (as is clear from the average number of words in Table 3), the proportionally higher use of frames is not entirely due to the length of story, since fantastic tales are not even close to four times the length of other types of story. It is also the case that a well-known feature of fantastic tales is the use of parallel episodes (see 4.2 below), where usually three (sometimes more) similar episodes are recounted, with the last having a different outcome to the others. As we shall see, frames are often used to demarcate parallel episodes. Indeed, it is possible that the very fact that fantastic stories tend to be longer than others increases the chances of frames being deployed as a mechanism to structure the story (see 4.2 below). This association with fantastic tales might help explain why frames are less frequent in OOC (see Figure 1), given that this corpus contains only two fantastic tales.

### 3.3 Interim conclusions on patterns

To conclude, there is clear quantitative evidence of complementarity in the usage of frames and connectors across the full corpus: the greater the use of connectives, the lower the use of frames and vice versa. Crucially, we have shown that the patterning of frames and connectives is demonstrably related to the question of degrees of orality: sources (written or oral), transmission (written or oral) and storytelling practice (traditional versus new) are all relevant, as is story-type. Moreover, the relatively high use of connectives in FOC (the least oral of the three oral sub-corpora in terms of sources and practice) suggests that oral *transmission* is the key determiner of high use of connectives: the figures for connectives are higher for all three oral sub-corpora, with differences between them related to other factors.<sup>41</sup> However, it is much more difficult, not least due to small numbers, to make a direct correlation between frames and written texts. In other words, the lower number of connectives in OWT is much more striking than the greater and more complex use of frames. Finally, although the expectation might have been that patterning for OOT and OOC in Figure 1 would have been the other way round on the orality spectrum, this may be related not only, as noted above (3.1), to the fact that the influence of oral sources and traditional practice remains high for some OOC storytellers (unlike all FOC storytellers), but also to the low numbers of fantastic tales in the OOC sub-corpus.

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<sup>41</sup> See Carruthers (2005) for similar findings in relation to oral French.

## 4 Strategic Structuring of the Narrative: Frame Introducers and ALORS<sup>42</sup>

### 4.1 The structural functions of discourse framing in oral narratives

As noted above (Section 2.2), most research on framing has been based on written texts, with the exception of Carruthers (2011) on framing in French oral narratives. Carruthers (2011) argues that the functions of frame introducers are not only ‘primarily structural’ in many instances (see Section 2.2) but also, in cognitive terms, frames help in the memorisation and performance of oral stories, occurring in the same key positions in cases where the same storyteller recounts the same story in two different performances (whereas the precise text differs in the different performances). In this section, we explore the function of framing in the different sub-corpora with a view to examining whether there is a possible relationship with different degrees of orality.

Overall in the full corpus, ‘primarily structural’ frames are almost twice as frequent (90) as ‘temporal and structural’ frames (49), a pattern which is similar to that found by Carruthers (2011) for French oral narratives. The proportion of ‘temporal and structural’ frames is low (less than 50%) in all four sub-corpora.

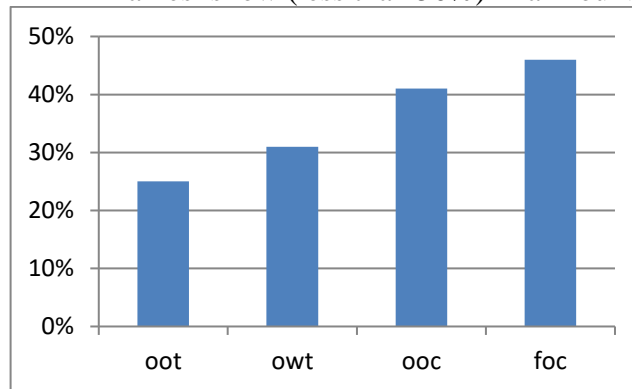


Figure 2. Percentage of ‘temporal and structural’ frames (from the lowest to the highest)

However, as Figure 2 shows, there is some variation across the four sub-corpora, from 25% in OOT to 46% in FOC. These two corpora at either end of the spectrum involve stories that are transmitted orally but which are distinguished in terms of the level of preparation versus spontaneity, the sources used and the type of performance involved. In FOC, stories are pre-planned and prepared for a

<sup>42</sup> Henceforth ALORS in capitals denotes the generic connector. The French *alors* and Occitan dialectal variants (*alòrs*, *alavetz*, *alara*) are given in lower case at certain points in the text.

stylised performance (often with music and dance) on the basis of written sources (see Section 1.2): the storyline and certain formulae are memorized but the performance is unique on each occasion, with a different story ‘text’. In the case of OOT, stories are based on oral sources which are part of an oral tradition; they are more spontaneous and are distinctly less stylised in performance. The argument could thus perhaps be made that the stronger the combination of written sources, pre-plannedness and stylised performance, the greater the use of ‘temporal and structural’ frames and vice versa. In other words, that the less planned, more ‘oral’ stories in OOT use more ‘primarily structural’ frames. That said, while it is possible to make these arguments for OOT and FOC as the two extremes of Figure 2, it is more difficult to explain the positioning of OWT and OOC, given that OWT, which is typically planned and prepared for written publication, contains a lower percentage of ‘temporal and structural’ frames than OOC.

One possibility is that we may be looking at a diachronic difference here in addition to a difference of sources and transmission. It would be worth undertaking research on a substantial corpus of written published texts stretching from the period of OWT through to contemporary texts in order to test whether more ‘temporal and structural’ frames become established in earlier published texts of supposedly oral stories (i.e. in OWT as opposed to stories that are oral in source, tradition and transmission, i.e. OOT) and are subsequently employed to a greater extent in oral narratives that draw on written sources, i.e. OOC and FOC, with those drawing most heavily on written sources (FOC) demonstrating the greatest use of these frames. Quantitative evidence from a wider diachronic and synchronic corpus of published stories would be needed in order to confirm this hypothesis.

#### 4.2 Specificities and functions of ‘temporal and structural’ and ‘primarily structural’ frames

Using the criteria outlined in 2.2 above to categories frames as ‘temporal and structural’ or ‘primarily structural’, the most striking statistic across the corpora is that overall, 65% of frames are ‘primarily structural’ in function.<sup>43</sup> This section looks at the function of both types of frame, beginning with an analysis of the four most frequent frames introducers *-lo lendoman/le lendemain, un jor/un jour, un còp/une fois (il était une fois)* and *lo lendoman matin/le lendemain matin* - which together cover more than 60% of all the frames attested. Indeed, the semantic content of frames in the three sub-corpora within OcOr and in FOC are very similar,

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<sup>43</sup> For the criteria for classification of frame introducers as ‘temporal and structural’ or as ‘primarily structural’, see the discussion in 2.2 above.

with many referring to the day (*jorn*, *lendoman*, *dimenge/jour*, *lendemain*, *dimanche...*), part of the day (*ser*, *matin/soir*, *matin...*), or a point in the day (*miegjorn*, *miejanuèit/midi*, *minuit...*).

Amongst the more frequent frame introducers, *un còp/une fois* was annotated as ‘primarily structural’ in 100% of cases. In fact, this frame has a clear structural function of introducing the Orientation in Labovian terms (see Section 1.1 above) and its blurred semantic content – ‘once’ – actually prevents any specific temporal reference function (see Section 3.2). *Lo lendoman/le lendemain* is annotated as ‘primarily structural’ in 50% of cases, which is below average and *un jorn/un jour* is annotated as ‘primarily structural’ in 68% of cases, which is close to the average; *lo lendoman matin/le lendemain matin* is annotated as ‘primarily structural’ in 80% of cases, which is particularly high. In other words, with the exception of *un còp*, the most common frames are ‘temporal and structural’ in 50% or less of instances and ‘primarily structural’ in 50% or more. It is important to note that this does not mean that there is no relevant temporal semantic content in a ‘primarily structural’ frame introducer such as *lo lendoman/le lendemain*; rather, it means that the forward scope of the frame in context is highly unlikely to correspond to the period of temporal reference in question in terms of the events that take place in the narrative.

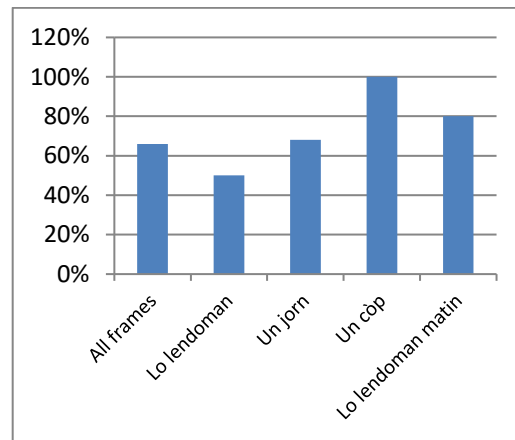


Figure 3. Proportion of ‘primarily structural’ frame introducers

Note that there appears to be a difference between temporal expressions that are labelled ‘continuous’ and those labelled ‘discontinuous’ (Bras & Molinès, 1993). Continuous head nouns such as *jorn/jour* (day), *lo lendoman/le lendemain* (next day), *annada/année* (year), *ora/heure* (hour) refer to a homogeneous time division (one day is followed by another day) while those labelled ‘discontinuous’ involve head nouns such as *matin/matin* (morning), *ser/soir* (evening) which refer to

heterogeneous time divisions (a morning is not followed by another morning but by an afternoon).<sup>44</sup> Frame introducers with a discontinuous temporal head noun are more frequently annotated as ‘primarily structural’. It is difficult to be certain about why this is the case but a possible explanation is that it is connected to the frequency of *lo lendoman matin/le lendemain matin* (and its equivalents) in parallel episodes (see 4.2): the fact that *matin/matin* is discontinuous may increase the chances of events occurring in the period between two instances of *lo lendoman matin/le lendemain matin* (e.g. in the afternoon) and therefore of the frame introducer being ‘primarily structural’.

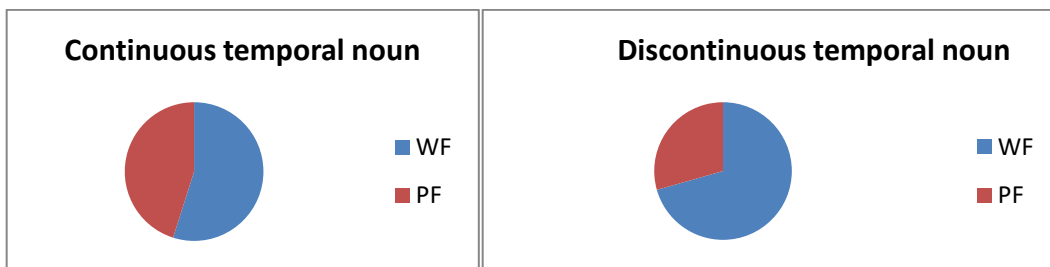


Figure 4. Proportion of ‘primarily structural’ frames for frame introducers involving ‘continuous’ and ‘discontinuous’ temporal noun

As Carruthers (2011) has demonstrated for contemporary French oral narratives, frame introducers are used in very strategic positions, to mark specific sections of the narrative. For instance, using the Labov & Waletzky model (Section 1.1), we can see that in (6), *un jor* and *lo lendoman* are used in a similar way to French *un jour* and *le lendemain*.<sup>45</sup>

- 6) ***Un jor*** [the king asked a farmer for one of his daughters in marriage – the farmer asked his eldest daughter – she refused]  
***Lo lendoman*** [the king asked the farmer for one of his daughters in marriage – the farmer asked his middle daughter – she refused]  
***Lo lendoman*** [the king asked the farmer for one of his daughters in marriage – the farmer asked his youngest daughter – she accepted](OWT)

<sup>44</sup> Strictly speaking, the noun *lendoman/lendemain* does not fall into either of these two categories. However we categorised it as ‘continuous’, as it inherits this property from the type of referent it applies to, i.e. ‘day’.

<sup>45</sup> In (6) and (7), the frame introducers appear in bold followed, in square brackets, by a summary of the events in the preterit (as in the original text) under the scope of each frame introducer.

*Un jorn* launches the Complicating Action and the first of three parallel episodes. The next two episodes are introduced by *lo lendoman*, each containing the king's marriage proposal to the farmer's daughters. Although the frame introducers are considered to be temporal (since it is perfectly possible that events took place on three consecutive days), nonetheless, their structural function is also very clear, hence their categorization as 'temporal and structural': they mark three parallel episodes and their outcomes, i.e. two refusals and one acceptance.

A little later in the story, we find a second run of four parallel episodes (n.b. Donkey Skin is the king's first wife):

7) **No frame introducer** [*Donkey Skin convinced the king's new wife to let her sleep with the king. She went to bed with the king and failed to talk to him because the king's new wife had given him sleeping pills*]

**Lo lendoman matin** [*The king's new wife returned to the bedroom to send Donkey Skin out to work. Donkey Skin convinced the king's new wife to let her sleep with the king. She went to bed with the king and failed to talk to him because the king's new wife had given him sleeping pills*]

**Lo lendoman matin** [*The king's new wife returned to the bedroom to send Donkey Skin out to work. Donkey Skin convinced the king's new wife to let her sleep with the king. She went to bed with the king and succeeded in talking to him because the sleeping pills were not strong enough*]

**Lo lendoman matin** [*The king's new wife returned to the bedroom to send Donkey Skin out to work. The king announced he would go back to his first wife (Donkey Skin)*] (OWT)

In each episode, Donkey Skin, who wants to talk with the king, convinces the king's wife to let her sleep with him but the plan fails, as the king's wife has given him sleeping pills (with the exception of the last episode). The first episode is not introduced by a frame introducer but the three following episodes are introduced by *lo lendoman matin*. Each time, Donkey Skin reissues her request in what the temporal adverbial would indicate to be the morning. It is quite possible that one or more of the events takes place in the morning and therefore that *matin* retains a certain temporal function for at least part of the frame. However, although *lo lendoman matin* moves the narrative forward in temporal terms, it is highly unlikely that the new king's wife goes to bed with him in the morning and that this and the events later in the frame take place in the morning. Unlike (6), *lo lendoman matin* in (7) is thus considered to be a 'primarily structural' frame introducer, which, rather than marking a temporal reference that has scope over the full frame, operates primarily as a structural device to demarcate the beginning of each of the episodes as the narrative moves forward.

Like the examples explored in Carruthers (2011), frames can also be used to demarcate sections within episodes, as in (8), where the first part of the episode involves ‘staying at home to prepare a dinner’ and the second ‘being attacked by a monster’ (ending with failure or success in resisting/defeating the monster):

- 8) *e alòrs lo lendoman* [The first of the three main character stays home to prepare dinner] *a miegjorn* [The man rings the bell to call the two other characters but a monster goes out and kicks the man](OOT).

These examples, whether involving the launch of major sections such as the Complicating Action, the demarcation of episodes or structuring within episodes, are similar to the patterns in the French stories analysed in Carruthers (2011), where it is argued that questions around memorisation and performance are central to how frames are used. Whether they are ‘temporal and structural’ (like examples 6 and 8) or ‘primarily structural’ (like example 7), they help the storyteller to structure the story and the listeners to follow it. Indeed, given the complexities involved, it could be argued that rather than a clear-cut divide, we are dealing here with a continuum from the fully ‘temporal and structural’ at one end to the ‘primarily structural’ at the other, with a range of possibilities in between. What is clear is that the structural function of frame introducers is fundamental in oral narratives.

#### 4.3 Frames and the connective ‘ALORS’: are both structuring devices in OOT?

In Section 2 above, we discussed the complementary nature of the functional relationship between frames and connectives; the patterns revealed in Figure 1 suggest that this analysis of complementarity is supported by the statistics. In this section, we ask whether there is any overlap in structural function between frames and connectives: for example, where the number of frame introducers is low and the number of connectives high, is there any sense in which connectives might have structural functions in common with frame introducers? In order to respond to this question, this section focuses on the OOT corpus, where we find fewer frames and more connectives.

A closer look at discourse connectives attested in OOT reveals that one connective and its variants (ALORS: *Alors* (fr)/*Alòrs*, *Alavetz*, *Alara* (Oc)<sup>46</sup>) stands out in terms of frequency (see also Table 2):

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<sup>46</sup> We are supposing that *alors* and the Occitan forms given here are broadly equivalent in semantic terms. However, to our knowledge, there is no published research that confirms this.

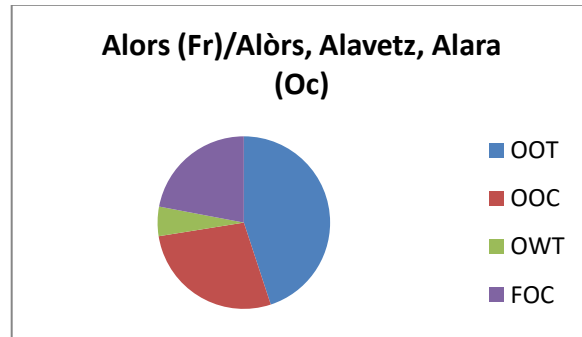


Figure 5. Breakdown of ALORS connectives in the 4 sub-corpora

As mentioned above (in Section 2.1), ALORS connectives have a range of functions in oral narratives (such as causal ‘so’) but they are invariably highly compatible with the Narration DR. In this section, we will not focus on their semantic functions as connectives but on their potential strategic use in positions where we often find frame introducers.

It has been noted above (Section 2.2) that frame introducers such as *un jorn* frequently launch the Complicating Action of the story. In OOT, we find that ALORS also appears regularly in this position. The following table shows use of ALORS and/or frame introducers (both for the full corpus) in the first narrative clause of the Complicating Action:

Corpus	ALORS	ALORS+Frame Intr.	Frame Intr.
OOT	10	3	7
OOC	0	0	5
OWT	0	0	8
FOC	0	0	8

Table 4. Devices used to introduced the first narrative clause on the narrative line (for the full corpus)

The appearance of ALORS at the launch of the Complicating Action only occurs in OOT, where it is employed in similar quantities to frame introducers (with three cases where both are combined). In none of the other sub-corpora does ALORS appear alone or in combination with a frame introducer at the launch of the Complicating Action. We are not arguing here that ALORS has a similar temporal function to frames, in the sense of having scope over an upcoming chunk of text, or that its core function of making a temporal or causal connection with what precedes it does not operate in certain instances. Rather, we are arguing that ALORS is also used in OOT to mark the structural juncture at the beginning of the Complicating

Action and in that sense, it has a similar structural function to frame introducers elsewhere, as shown in (9):

- (9) *i avèva un jorn un òme avèva ua hilha e la volèva bien maridar e trobava pas* **alavetz** *se digóc* (OOT)  
*once a man with a daughter wanted to marry her and could not find anyone so he thought...*<sup>47</sup>

As outlined above (in Section 4.2), in addition to launching the Complicating Action, frame introducers such as *lo lendoman* are exploited to introduce new episodes in the story. In the following story from OOT, entitled “Istoèra del curè d’Escaudes e del curè de Malhàs”, no frame introducers at all are employed on the narrative line. Rather, connectives (predominantly *alavetz*) are attested at the beginning of the Complicating Action and at the start of successive episodes of the story (the content of episodes is summarised in square brackets):

- (10) *Enfin [two priests, the abbot Artaud and the priest of Malhàs went to talk to another priest, Dellis]*  
*Alavetz [the abbot Artaud complained that he was bald]*  
*Alavetz [the priest of Malhàs complained that he did not have a servant]*  
*Alavetz [they wrote to the archbishop]*  
*Alavetz [the answers arrived by letters with some kind of strange misunderstanding –the letters were mixed up]*  
*Alavetz [they went to talk to Dellis]*  
*Ø [the priest of Malhàs recounted his letter]*  
*Alavetz [the abbot Artaud recounted his letter]*  
*Alavetz [Dellis explained the misunderstanding to them]* (OOT)

Elsewhere in OOT, ALORS can also be used not only at the opening of episodes but also to mark structural breaks within episodes, as illustrated by *La craba* (the goat) in Table 5:

Events within each episode →	<i>The father needs someone to look after the goat</i>	<i>The protagonist agrees to look after the goat</i>	<i>The protagonist goes to look after the goat</i>	<i>The protagonist brings the goat to a nice place to eat</i>	<i>The goat says that it is not hungry anymore</i>	<i>They leave</i>	<i>They arrive</i>	<i>The goat complains about not having eaten enough</i>
Episodes ↓								

<sup>47</sup> Note that *alavetz* in this example also has a ‘causal’ function. See 2.1 above.

1 <sup>st</sup> episode	Alòrs	Ø	Alara <sup>48</sup>	Alòrs	Ø	Bon alòrs	Alòrs	Alòrs
2 <sup>nd</sup> episode	Lo lenduman matin	Alòrs	Alòrs	Ø	E puis	-	-	Ø
3 <sup>rd</sup> episode	Alòrs	-	Alòrs bon	Alòrs	Enfin alòrs	Alòrs bon	Alòrs	Ø
4 <sup>st</sup> episode	Ø	-	Alòrs	Alòrs bon alòrs	Bon alòrs	-	Alòrs	Ø

Table 5. Diagram for *La craba*

The first horizontal line of the table gives the internal structure of each episode which in fact has broadly the same content. The four parallel episodes are set out vertically. The table contains the elements which are found at the beginning of each episode and sub-episode (Ø = no element; - = sub-episode omitted). Each episode, with the exception of the last one, is introduced either by a frame or an ALORS connective (given in the first column). Additionally, seventeen other connectives (mainly ALORS but also *enfin* (finally and, *puis* (then)) are used in the story in order to structure the episodes internally. In OOT therefore, ALORS is used **both** as a connector between the events within episodes and as a structural element at the beginning of a new episode. Indeed, in OOT, it can be difficult to separate out the use of ALORS as a connective between two narrative clauses and its use at the beginning of a new sub-episode within an episode. This structuring function of connectors such as ALORS when positioned at the beginning of a new episode has been discussed elsewhere in relation to conversational ‘reports’ as opposed to ‘stories’ (i.e. narrations that are episodic in structure rather than following a Labovian story structure: Carruthers 2018) but there is no such study of Occitan. More research would be needed to explore any possible similarities between the patterns in OOT and those in reports.

#### 4.4 Interim conclusions on strategic structuring with frame introducers and ALORS

To conclude this section, we would argue that if temporal frame introducers are less frequently attested in OOT, it may be, at least in part, because temporal connectives (mainly ALORS) can be exploited with similar strategic structural functions, i.e. appearing at the beginning of the Complicating Action and at the beginning of

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<sup>48</sup> Note that one form, *alara*, is different from the others in this story and there are in fact other stories where this is the case. Further research would be needed in order to determine whether the variants of ALORS might have different functions.

episodes; and marking internal breaks within episodes. What is particularly interesting here is the clear contrast with the Occitan published texts (OWT), despite the fact that the stories in OWT are drawn from the same ‘oral tradition’ context as those in OOT. The authors of the texts in OWT, i.e. Arnaudin, Blader and Lalanne, talk in their prefaces about the process of collecting stories in the field, mentioning particular storytellers from whom they have gleaned their narratives. Yet oral stories transcribed directly from the oral tradition (i.e. OOT) suggest that temporal patterns are different in the oral and the published versions: the oral versions have strikingly high levels of connectives and the published versions strikingly low quantities. It is possible that the practice of using connectives for structural functions that are more widely associated with frames was not taken up by the authors of the published versions, where frames are more widely used and crucially, where other forms of structuring such as paragraphs and punctuation can be deployed. This may be particularly the case for ALORS which, in any case, has a wide range of functions in the oral medium and might therefore be felt to be particularly weak, both semantically and structurally, and/or highly informal in terms of register by the authors of the written texts. In our two more contemporary corpora, in both French and Occitan, the presence of frames may be linked to the extent to which they draw on written rather than oral sources – which is greater in French than in Occitan for the reasons we have outlined in Section 1.2 above - hence the higher levels of framing in FOC than in OOC. This hypothesis is also compatible with the possible diachronic development outlined above (Section 4.1) in terms of a possible later increase in the use of ‘temporal and structural’ versus ‘primarily structural’ frame introducers.

## 5 Conclusions and Future Directions

Certain clear patterns emerge from our data. Following the theoretical analysis by Le Draoulec & Péry-Woodley (2005) which posits complementary roles for frames and connectives in narrative discourse, our data show that there is indeed quantitative evidence to support this claim, with inverse proportions of frames and connectives in the four sub-corpora. Connectives are dominant and higher quantities of connectives are associated with fewer frames and vice versa.

In terms of questions of orality and degrees of orality, our results suggest that not only are connectives particularly strongly associated with oral as opposed to written narratives (Fleischman, 1990; Carruthers, 2005) but also, that factors relating to sources, transmission and practice are relevant and interact with each

other in complex ways. As noted in the Introduction, some of these factors relate to parameters that are close in nature to several dimensions of Koch & Oesterreicher's 'canal' and 'comportement communicatif' (2001) but in the case of the sub-corpora, they relate to specific characteristics of the storytelling context and the storytellers, i.e. sources (oral vs. written), transmission (written vs. oral), practice (traditional vs. new storytellers), performance contexts (intimate/relatively informal vs. public/stylised), relationship to Occitan (when and how it was acquired). All three sub-corpora where the stories are recounted orally (i.e. where the 'canal' of transmission is oral) have large quantities of connectives, with fewer in the published corpus (OWT). Moreover, where both sources and transmission are oral, the proportion of connectives is particularly high. This holds not just for the corpus of traditional stories drawn directly from an oral tradition and recounted orally (OOT) but also for a section of the contemporary Occitan corpus (OOC), i.e. for the stories recounted by contemporary storytellers, several of whom draw heavily on oral sources and see themselves as part of an oral tradition. The range of connectives is also much higher for OOT than for other corpora. Patterns for contemporary Occitan storytellers who draw more heavily on written sources are more closely aligned with the contemporary French storytellers in FOC, using higher proportions of connectives than the published corpus but less than both the traditional storytellers in OOT and those in OOC who draw more on oral sources. The OOC corpus is thus particularly complex in terms of the background and practice of the storytellers. While the literature on oral storytelling tends to draw a clear line between 'traditional' and 'new' storytelling (1.2 above), our corpus of contemporary Occitan stories suggests that the picture is much more nuanced in the case of a regional minoritised language.

The patterns for frames are less clear-cut, not least because the quantities are lower in each sub-corpus and although the proportion of frames is higher in the written corpus (OWT), and their syntactic complexity is greater, we must nonetheless be cautious in making a straightforward link between written narratives and higher use of frames. What is clear is that frames in all sub-corpora are not highly diversified: many of the same frames, i.e. expressions referring to parts of the day, recur in all the sub-corpora and their structural functions in terms of introducing the Complicating Action, demarcating episodes, structuring episodes and marking parallel episodes are evident. Moreover, the proportion of 'primarily structural' rather than 'temporal and structural' frames is high overall, underscoring quantitatively Le Draoulec & Péry-Woodley's argument in relation to the frequency of 'primarily structural' frames in narrative discourse. It is more difficult to make clear claims with regard to degrees of orality. There are indications that there may also be some evidence of diachronic evolution, with 'temporal and structural'

frames used more frequently in OWT than OOT (thus associated with published stories in this period) and subsequently more widely attested in written texts on which many storytellers in OOC and all storytellers in FOC draw. However, more evidence from a larger diachronic corpus of published texts would be required to explore this further. Moreover, it may be valuable, in the light of complex nature of many attested examples in the corpora, to re-frame this distinction as a continuum rather than two categories.

Nonetheless, two particularly interesting findings emerge in relation to frames. The first is that there is a strong correlation with fantastic tales, or '*contes merveilleux*'. This may be connected to the high use of parallel episodes in these stories and to their length which may mean that more structuring devices are required, particularly for oral storytellers. The second finding is that in the most 'oral' of the sub-corpora, i.e. OOT, where sources, tradition and transmission are oral, we find that certain connectives, notably the dialectal variants of ALORS, can assume structural roles that are not totally dissimilar to frames, structuring the narrative in very similar ways in terms of launching the Complicating Action and structuring episodes (internally, externally, and in parallel).

Our findings point to a number of avenues for future research. In this paper, we have largely considered connectives and frames as two different phenomena in terms of their role in discourse but have noted in 4.3 that the connective ALORS can take on structuring functions in OOT that are not dissimilar to some of the functions of frames elsewhere. In the case of Occitan, both dialectal and individual variation in the forms used for ALORS may be significant in terms of their function in the discourse: more research would be needed in order to judge this. It would also be useful to explore the relationship between framing and connectives in conversational narratives, asking for example whether connectives such as ALORS also play a key structuring role as they do in OOT? Similarly, given the anaphoric dimension to certain common frame introducers in the *conte*, notably *le lendemain/le lendemain matin* and their Occitan equivalents (whose semantic content, like connectives, involves a relation to a previous element in the discourse), it would be fascinating to explore to what extent these frame introducers may also have certain functions in common with connectives.<sup>49</sup> More broadly, a deeper and broader analysis of the role of 'parts of the day' in the genre of the '*conte*' would also be valuable, exploring the extent to which these may now have primarily structural functions and have become something of a convention in storytelling, oral or written. Finally, the link between frames and tense usage/tense switching –

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<sup>49</sup> See Rossari (2018) for a discussion of a certain frames that can also function as 'reformulation connectors'.

the other key component of temporal patterning - remains to be analysed, notably in terms of how tense switching and framing might interact in structuring oral narrative.

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### **Temporal Structures in Occitan Oral Narrative: the Role of Frames and Connectives**

This article explores the temporal structuring of Occitan oral narratives. Using contemporary linguistic theory and through a corpus-based analysis, it aims to explore the relationship between language and orality, with a specific focus on two key temporal features of oral narrative, i.e. frames and connectives. The authors create a digitised corpus involving three sub-corpora demonstrating different degrees of orality in Occitan and these are also compared with a French oral corpus. The analysis shows that there is quantitative evidence to support the idea that frames and connectors have complementary roles in narrative, with inverse proportions of frames and connectives in the four sub-corpora. In terms of degrees of orality, our results suggest that not only is use of particular connectives strongly associated with oral as opposed to written narratives but also that factors relating to sources, transmission and storytelling practice are highly relevant and interact with each other in complex ways. Frames are generally ‘primarily structural’ in function rather than ‘temporal and structural’ and certain frame introducers recur in all the sub-corpora but there are complex differences between the different sub-corpora and a clear link with type of story. Questions of sources, transmission and narrative practice are central to our argumentation throughout and are particularly striking in the case of the contemporary Occitan sub-corpus.

**Keywords:** oral narrative, frames, connectives, Occitan

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