

On the competing grammar approach to the derivation of sentences in OE
 Concha Castillo, University of Málaga (Spain), ccastillo@uma.es

This paper is about the issue of the OV/VO alternation in OE, and further all possible orders featuring an auxiliary and a lexical verb, or a V1 and a V2, plus an object (O). Some questions posited more or less overtly in the literature are the following: What is the real meaning of head-initial TP vs. head-final TP, and head-initial VP vs. head-final VP? Why does the head-final configuration disappear at the end of OE (in contrast with e.g. Modern German or Dutch)? Why is the order VOAux not possible (so-called FOFC constraint)?

1. Introduction

As is widely known, the accounts of word order in OE hinge mainly around the controversy on whether OE is both head-initial and head-final (Pintzuk 1999, 2002, 2005; Taylor & Pintzuk 2012) or exclusively head-initial (van Kemenade 1987; Biberauer & Roberts 2005, 2008; Biberauer, Holmberg & Roberts 2007, 2008). Below are examples illustrating the OV/VO alternation.

- | | | |
|--------|---|----|
| (1) a. | he <u>Gode þancode</u>
he God thanked
'he thanked God'
(<i>Beowulf</i> , 625, YCOE Corpus, Taylor et al., 2003) | OV |
| b. | he <u>awecð deade</u> to life
he awakened the-dead to life
(<i>James the Greater</i> , 30.31, idem.) | VO |

As for structures containing both an auxiliary and a non-finite lexical verb (or V1 and V2 for those accounts that do not endorse the existence of true auxiliary verbs in this period), in addition to the OV/VO alternation, there are four relevant orders, which are shown in (2) below. As in Taylor & Pintzuk (2012), OAuxV is outside the present discussion, and VOAux is not possible, as explained below.

- | | | |
|--------|--|-------|
| (2) a. | gif heo <u>þæt bysmor forberan wolde</u>
if she that disgrace tolerate would
'if she would tolerate that disgrace'
(coelive,+ALS_ [Eugenia]: 185.305) | OVAux |
| b. | þæt he <u>friðian wolde þa leasan wudewan</u>
that he make-peace-with would the false widow
'that he would make peace with the false widow'
(coelive,+ALS_ [Eugenia]: 209.315) | VAuxO |
| c. | þurh þa heo <u>sceal hyre scippend understandan</u>
through which it must its creator understand
'through which it must understand its creator'
(coelive,+ALS_ [Christmas]: 157.125) | AuxOV |
| d. | swa þæt heo <u>bið forloren þam ecan life</u>
so that it is lost the eternal life
'so that it is lost to the eternal life'
(coelive,+ALS_ [Christmas]: 144.117)
(Taylor & Pintzuk 2012: 29-30) | AuxVO |

If we consider syntactic theory proper, two kinds of accounts or hypotheses must be mentioned. On the one hand, the so-called *Final-over-Final Constraint*, which aims to explain the ungrammatical status of the order *VOAux, though it seems to be purely descriptive. Effectively, Holmberg (2000: 124) states that “if α is a head-initial phrase and β is a phrase immediately dominating α , then β

must be head-initial; if α is a head-final phrase, and β is a phrase immediately dominating α , then β can be head-initial or head-final”.

On the other hand, head-initial accounts are based on the seminal theory of Kayne (2014) that is known as LCA or Linear Correspondence Axiom, and that states originally that specifier-head-complement is the universal base order.

Now, head-initial/head-final accounts of OE word order must face the problem of accounting for *VOAux in an explanatory way, and also they are expected to explain the demise or disappearance of head-final structures in the language. As for exclusively head-initial accounts of OE word order, these must additionally aim to respond to the generalised criticism that such accounts rely on massive vp-pied-piping. It is important in this respect to highlight the fact that LCA has been made more derivational in Kayne (2010/2013) by postulating that precedence is part of narrow syntax, though the full account relies on the stipulation that probe-goal search is from left-to-right.

I would like to endorse Kayne’s view that precedence is part of narrow syntax, though the view proposed here relies on the valuation or processing of features, which is determined by complexity of computation.

2. Proposed analysis

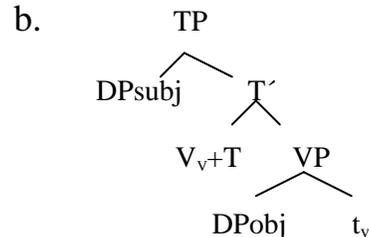
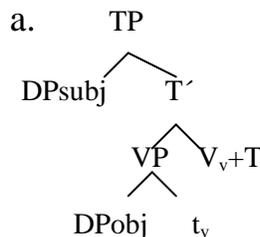
The present account agrees that OE is both head-initial and head-final, though these are surface orderings, that is, the end result of computation or processing of features. As observed above, I endorse Kayne’s (2010/2013) view that precedence is part of narrow syntax, though valuation of features is determined by complexity of computation.

Order of derivation for structures with one V:

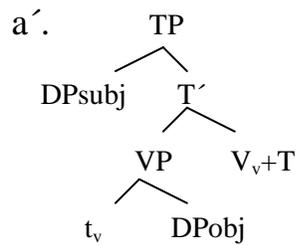
- V (a lexical root) is merged externally from the Lexicon/Numeration, with a DP object, TP is merged on top of VP and the DP agent of V goes up into Spec of TP.
- T probes for V in order to value both its V-feature and its tense-features, and it attracts V: so-called V-to-T movement, which is crucially an instance of complex computing
- Either O is linearised to the left of finite V (that is, V+T), and the result is OV (see (3a) and (3a’) below); or otherwise finite V (that is, V+T) is linearised to the left of O, with the resulting structures as in (3b) and (3b’).

Of these two options, OV sequences should arguably be harder to process since finite V (which itself demands more processing) is left to second position. Incidentally, it could be assumed that postposition of O as in (3b’) should entail additionally more processing, which means that (3b’) should be the most difficult structure to process.

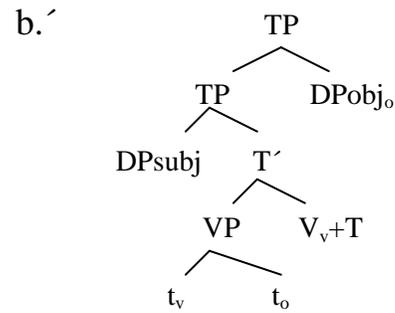
(3)



OV : head-final TP and head-final VP VO: head-initial TP and head-final VP



OV: head-final TP and head-initial VP

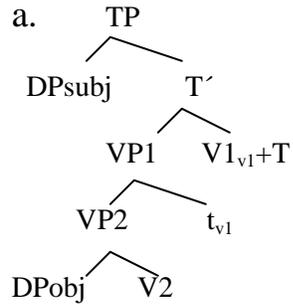


VO: head-final TP and head-initial VP,
with postposition of O

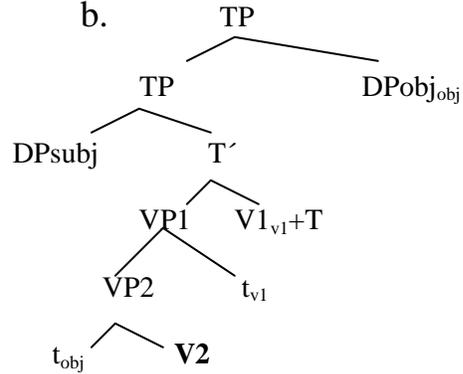
Order of derivation for structures with Aux and V (or V1 and V2):

- V2 (a lexical root) is merged externally from the Lexicon/Numeration, with a DP object,.
- AuxP/V1 is merged on top of VP2, and TP is merged on top of AuxP/VP1.
- The DP agent of V2 goes up into Spec of TP.
- T probes for Aux/V1 in order to value both its V-feature and its tense-features, and it attracts Aux/V1 in what is called V-to-T movement, again an instance of complex computing.
- Aux/V1 probes V2 in order to value [perfective], [progressive], ...which is actually a step missing in the derivation described above, which of course adds to the complexity of computation.
- Either Aux/V1 (that is, V1+T) is linearised to the left of both O and V2, in which case there is a further option: in (4c) the order between the object and the lexical verb is OV, whereas in (4d) the order is VO; or otherwise Aux/V1 (that is, V1+T) is linearised after O and V2, in which case there is again a two-fold option, either O is linearised to the left of V2 (see (4a)), or else the same situation applies plus the postposition of O (see (4b)).
- Of all these options, (4d) should arguably be the one entailing least processing: AuxVO. Then comes (4c), that is, the order AuxOV. Finally, both (4a) with the order OVAux, and (4b), with the order VAuxO, should be the most difficult to process or derive, since the element that entails most computing appears in final position, and further the second element needing most computing (the lexical verb) appears immediately to its left. Incidentally, in both (4b) and (4d') there is postposition of O, which should arguably make the derivation more complex.

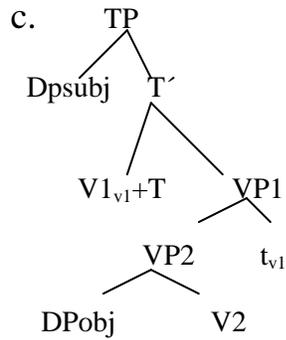
(4)



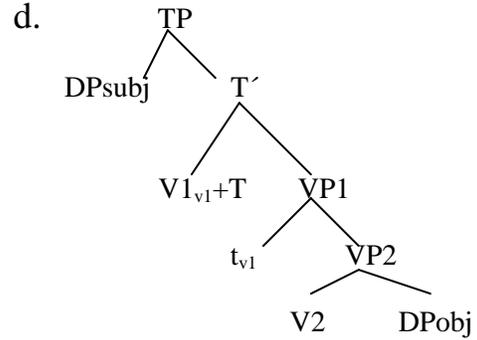
OVAUX: head-final TP and head-final VP



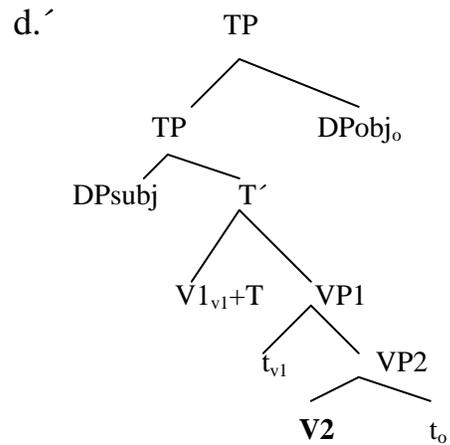
VAUXO: head-final TP and head-final VP with postposition of O



AUXOV: head-initial TP and head-final VP



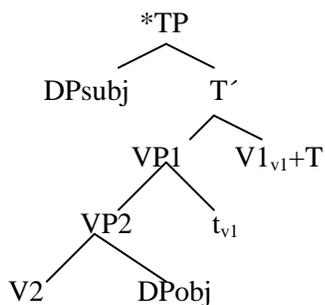
AUXVO: head-initial TP and head-initial VP



AUXVO: head-initial TP and head-initial VP, with postposition of O

- Answer to question relating to *VOAux above: this order should entail linearising in last position the most complex element to compute, namely Aux (that is, the finite verb), and additionally it should entail linearising afar from this element the other element that needs most computing, namely the lexical verb. See (4e).

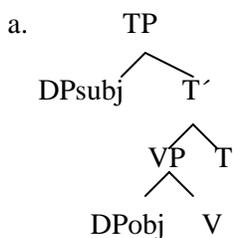
(4) e.



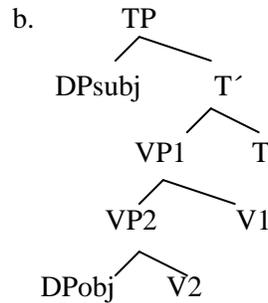
*VOAux: head-final TP and head-initial VP

- Answer to the question above about the demise or disappearance of head-final structures: TP-final configurations involving V-to-T, which are the ones analysed here, are more difficult to process than TP-initial configurations not involving V-to-T. Since it is assumed in this paper that OE is a V-to-T language (which becomes V-in situ in the Early Modern period), then the conclusion is that speakers of OE would have chosen eventually the option of having the finite verb linearised to the left. In other words, TP-final configurations should have been dispreferred because of the complexity inherent in V-to-T.
- Contrast between OE on the one hand, and Modern German or Dutch on the other: Modern German or Dutch are SOV languages but, in a crucial way, they are V-in situ languages (as argued in the very recent literature). This means that the finite verb is linearised in last position, but it does not involve the high load of computation as it does in OE, since T would just license its tense-features without attracting V. See (5) below.

(5)



OV with no V-to-T (compare with (3a) above)



OVAux with no V-to-T (compare with (4a) above)

Summary of the discussion

In this paper I have endorsed the competing grammar approach to word order in OE that is postulated by a part of the literature, and I have argued that the demise or disappearance of head-final configurations is due to their being more difficult to process than head-initial configurations since the most difficult or complex elements to process are placed in final position. In a similar way, by assuming that OE is V-to-T, the topmost level of complexity of VOAux should explain why this type of structure is not attested.

References

- Biberauer, T. & I. Roberts (2005). Changing EPP parameters in the history of English: Accounting for variation and change. *English Language and Linguistics* 9: 5-46.
- Biberauer, T. & I. Roberts (2008). Cascading parameter changes: Internally driven change in Middle and Early Modern English. In T. Eythórrsson (ed.) *Grammatical Change and Linguistic Theory: The Rosendal Papers*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 79-113.
- Biberauer, T., A. Holmberg & I. Roberts (2007). Disharmonic word-order systems and the Final-over-Final Constraint (FOFC). In A. Bisetto & F. Barbieri (eds.) *Proceedings of XXXIII Incontro di Grammatica Generativa*, 86-105.
- Biberauer, T., A. Holmberg & I. Roberts (2008). Linearising disharmonic word orders: The Final-over-Final Constraint. In K-A. Kim (ed.) *Perspectives on Linguistics in the 21st Century*, 301- 318.
- Holmberg, A. (2000). Deriving OV order in Finnish. In P. Svenonius (ed.) *The Derivation of VO and OV*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 123-152.
- Kayne, R. (1994). *The Antisymmetry of Syntax*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT P.
- Kayne, R. (2010/2013). Why are there no directionality parameters? In T. Biberauer & M. Sheehan (eds.) *Theoretical Approaches to Disharmonic Word Order*. Oxford: Oxford U.P., 219-329.
- Pintzuk, S. (1999). *Phrase Structures in Competition: Variation and Change in Old English Word Order*. New York: Garland.
- Pintzuk, S. (2002). Verb-object order in OE: Variation as grammatical competition. In D. Lightfoot (ed.) *Syntactic Effects of Morphological Change*. Oxford: Oxford U.P.
- Pintzuk, S. (2005). Arguments against a universal base: Evidence from Old English. *English Language and Linguistics* 9: 115-138.
- Taylor, A., A. Warner, S. Pintzuk & F. Beths (2003). *The York-Toronto-Helsinki Parsed Corpus of Old English Prose* (www-users.york.ac.uk/~lang22/YCOE/YcoeHome.htm). Oxford Text Archive.
- Taylor, A. & S. Pintzuk (2012). Verb order, object position and information status in Old English. *York Papers in Linguistics* 2:29-52.
- Van Kemenade, A. (1987). *Syntactic Case and Morphological Case in the History of English*. Dordrecht: Foris.