Rhetorical Relations and Verb Placement in the Early Germanic Languages

A Cross-Linguistic Study

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Starting point: Correlation between the pragmatic status of discourse referents and verb placement in OHG

• presentational / thetic sentences

(1) lat.  
\textit{Vidua autem quaedam erat/ In ciuitate illa}

OHG  
\textit{uuas thar ouh sum uuitua/ In thero burgi} (T 201, 2)

was there a widow too in that city

• categorical sentences with discourse-given referents

(2) lat.  
\textit{ego sum pastor bonus. bonus pastor/ animam suam dat pro ouibus suis}

OHG  
\textit{ih bin guot hirti. guot hirti/ tuot sina sela furi siniu scaph.} (T 225, 16-17)

I am a good shepherd. [The] good shepherd gives his soul for his sheep
Conclusion: Vfin opens new-information focus domain

(3) thetic V/1 FOC[Vfin ... DRnew ...]

categorical V/2 TOP[DRgiv] FOC[Vfin ...]
New Task: V1 in sentences with context-given material

(4) lat. *Phariseus autem coepit intra se/ reputans dicere*
OHG *bigonda ther phariseus innan imo/ ahtonti quedan (T 126,5f.)*

started the Pharisee within himself thinking [to] speak

The Pharisee started to speak thinking by himself
Distribution of V1 with discourse-given referents

i) preferred positions in text structure

(5) a. lat. \textit{Factum est autem In diebus illis'}

\textit{OHG} \textit{uuard tho gitân In then tagon (T 35, 7)}

[It] happened in those days

b. lat. \textit{Acceperunt autem corpus ihesu}

\textit{OHG} \textit{Intfiengun (sie) tho thes heilantes lichamon (T 321, 29)}

took they then the body of Jesus
Distribution of V1 with discourse-given referents

ii) preferred groups of verbs

• verbs of motion

(6) lat. & ecce angelus domini
  OHG quam thara gotes engil (T 35, 32)
  came there God’s angel

• verbs of saying

(7) lat. & respondens angelus
  OHG antlingota tho ther engil (T 28, 26)
  responded then the angel

• perception verbs/ new state of affairs

(8) lat. & sensit corpore/ quod sanata ess& a plaga
  OHG furstuont siu thó in ira lihhamen/ thaz siu heil uuas
  fon theru suhti (T 95, 14-15)
  felt she then in her body that she recovered was from this plague
Proposal: verb placement indicates rhetorical relations

- V2 indicates subordination
- V1 indicates coordination
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- V2 indicates subordination
- V1 indicates coordination
Comparison: Old English

Domains of V1:

• episode onsets with all sorts of predicates

  (10) a. OE *wæron æþelingas eft to leodum fuse to farenne* (Beow. 1804f.)
  Were the noble man eager to go to their people

  b. OE *Gesæt ḏa on næsse niðheard cyning* (Beow. 2417)
  The brave king sat down on the cliff

• verbs of motion:

  (11) a. OE *Com ḏa to lande lidmannas helm* (Beow. 1623)
  Came then to the shore the protector of the sailors

  b. OE *Eode Wealhþeow forð, cwen Hroðgares* (Beow. 612f.)
  Came then W., H.'s wife
Comparison: Old English

Less common domains of V1:

• verbs of saying

(12) a. OE  
  *Het ða eorla hleo in gefetian, / heaðorof cyning Hreðles lafe*
  (Beow. 2190f.)
  Ordered then the protector of the noblemen, the mighty king, to bring
  the heritage of H.

  b. OE  
  *Beowulf maðelode, bearn Ecgðioes* (Beow. 1999)

• perception verbs:

(13)  OE  
  *Gesseah ða […] se ðe worna fela / gumcystum god guða gedigde*  
  (Beow. 2542f.)
  saw then from […] who a great number of battles well fought
Comparison: Old English

Categorical sentences:

- **V/2** \( \text{TOP[DRgiv]} \) \( \text{FOC[Vfin \ldots]} \)

(14) a. OE *We synt gumcynnes Geata leode* (Beow. 260)
We are by kin of the clan of Geats

b. OE *Wulfgar mapelode --- þæt wæs Wendla leod* (Beow. 345)
Wulfgar spake -- this was the Wendles' chieftain

- other patterns

(15) OE *(Het ða in beran eafor heafodsegyn, / heaðosteapne helm, hare byrnan, / guðsweord geatolic, gyd æfter wræc)*

\[ \text{Me} \quad \text{dis hildesceorp} \quad \text{Hroðgar sealde'} \] (Beow. 2155)

These ornaments of war were given to me by H.
**Old Saxon**: pragmatic status of discourse referents and verb placement

- **presentational / thetic sentences**

  \(16\) \textit{Than uuas [...] thar en gigamalod man} (Hel. 72)
  
  ‘There was an aged man’

- **categorical sentences with discourse-given referents**

  \(17\) \textit{Maria uuas siu hêten} (Hel. 252)
  
  ’She was called Maria’

  \(18\) \textit{Ic is engil bium} (Hel. 119)
  
  ’I am his angel’
Old Saxon: domains of V1

• verbs of beginning

(19) *uurdo ald gumo / sprâka bilôsit* (Hel. 172 – 173)

'There was the old man bereft of speech'

• verbs of motion

(20) *Giuuêt imu thô an themu âbandre alouualdand Krist / an theme seli sittien* (Hel. 4554 – 4555)

'That evening the all-wielding Christ went to take seat in the hall'

• verbs of saying

(21) *endi sprak that barn godes / uuiô that uurêôe uuerod* (Hel. 4903 – 4904)

'And the child of god spoke tho the angry crowd'
Old Saxon: domains of V1

- episode (‘fit‘) onsets

(22) **Habda** *im the engil godes al giuûsisid […]* (Hel 427)

‘The angel of god had shown all unto them’

- ’periods‘

(23) *(Thô uurô thar an thene gastseli / megincraft mikil manno gisamnod [...].)* **Quâmun** managa / ludeon an thene gastseli; **uurô** *im thar gladmôd hugi […] Drôg* man uuîn an flet [...]. **Uuas** thes an lustun landes hirdi [...]. **Hêt** he thô gangen forô gêla thiornun […] (Hel. 2733 – 2745)

‘(There was a mighty crowd of men gathered together in the guest hall, [...].) Many people came into that guest hall; there they became glad-hearted [...]. Wine was brought to the room [...]. The herdsman of the land bethought him with joy [...]. He hight to go forth the gay maiden [...].‘
**Old Norse:** pragmatic status of discourse referents and verb placement

- presentational / thetic sentences

  (24) *Garðarr hét maðr* (Landnámabók 3)
  ‘Garðarr was the name of a man’

- categorical sentences with discourse-given referents

  (25) *Garðarr sigløi umhverfis landit* (Landnámabók 3)
  ‘Garðarr sailed around the land’
Old Norse: V1 in sentences with context-given material

• verbs of beginning

(26) **enda varþ secr hann Hǿsnapórer […]** (Islendingabók V, 4)

'And H. was outlawed'

• verbs of motion

(27) **oc fór hann utan þat sumar** (Islendingabók X, 10)

'And he went out that summer'

• verbs of saying

(28) **oc mælte því mangi í gegn** (Islendingabók X, 9)

'And there were many speaking against that'
Old Norse

• 'periods'

(29) Þá var fjörðinn fullr af veiðiskap, ok gáðu þeir eigi fyrir veiðum at fá heyanna ok dó alt kvikfé þeira um vetrinn. (Landnámabók 5)

'There was the fjord full of fish, and because of the fishing they didn’t care to get hay, and all their cattle died in the winter'
Conclusion

- Old Germanic Syntax is ruled by information and discourse structure.
- Differences between the dialects in the distribution of the various verb placement patterns might have been a starting point for the development of different word order patterns in the modern Germanic languages.
End of Presentation

Questions