The comparative evolution of word order in French and English

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University of Pennsylvania
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www.ling.upenn.edu/~kroch/handouts/digs11.pdf
French Data Sources


Six Old French texts:
• Brendan
• Le chanson de Roland
• Yvain
• Nicolette et Aucassin
• La queste de la sainte Graal
• Le somme le roi

Five Middle French texts:
• Chroniques de Froissart
• La Prise d’Alexandrie
• Cent N. N. Anonymes
• XV Joies de Mariage
• Commynes

Two Early Modern French texts:
• Étaples Bible translation
• letters of Marguerite de Valois

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English Data Sources


Decline of direct object topicalization in English

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Decline of direct object topicalization in French

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Frequency of direct object topicalization in modern spoken Dutch (Bouma 2008)

Table 4.2: Summary of Vorfeld occupation of arguments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Argument</th>
<th>Vorfeld</th>
<th>Prop est (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
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<tr>
<td>subject</td>
<td>43 523</td>
<td>18 597</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>direct object</td>
<td>3 418</td>
<td>20 432</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>indirect object</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>815</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Evolution of PP preposing in English

% Preposed

Date

OE (Early)  OE (Late)  1151-1250  1251-1350  1351-1420  1421-1500  1501-1569  1570-1639  1639-1710
Evolution of adverb fronting in English

% Preposed

- Temporal adverbs
- Locative adverbs

Date

OE (Early)  OE (Late)  1151-1250  1251-1350  1351-1420  1421-1500  1501-1569  1570-1639  1639-1710

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Evolution of adverb fronting in French

% Preposed

Date

1101-1200  1201-1300  1301-1400  1401-1500  1501-

temporal adverbs

locative adverbs

- - all subjects
- - overt subjects

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The history of topicalization in English (Speyer 2008)

• Why does topicalization decline in Middle English but not disappear? If the change a parametric one, it should go to completion. Otherwise, topicalization, a clear case of stylistic variation might be expected to be stable in frequency over time.

• This question has answer in the specific interaction between parametric settings and stylistic variation in the history of English.
Decline of direct object topicalization by subject type

% V2

pronoun subjects

full DP subjects

Date

OE (Early) OE (Late) 1151-1250 1251-1350 1351-1420 1421-1500 1501-1569 1570-1639 1639-1710

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Correlation between frequencies of object topicalization and of V2 in Middle English texts (Wallenberg 2007)
Distribution of subject types in a corpus of topicalized and non-topicalized sentences in natural speech

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>personal pronoun</th>
<th>demonstrative pronoun</th>
<th>full noun phrase</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>140</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>46.4</strong></td>
<td><strong>6.6</strong></td>
<td><strong>47.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Subject type in sentences with \textit{in situ} objects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>personal pronoun</th>
<th>demonstrative pronoun</th>
<th>full noun phrase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>181</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>90.5%</strong></td>
<td><strong>1%</strong></td>
<td><strong>8.5 %</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Subject type in sentences with topicalized objects
Clash avoidance

• The type of topicalization that declines:

  (1) The newspaper Jóhn read; the novel Máry did.

  (Compare: The newspaper read Jóhn.)

• The type of topicalization that doesn’t:

  (2) The newspaper I read; the novel I didn’t.
Translating German topicalized arguments into English in three modern German novels [by Böll, Dürrenmatt and Grass]

Topicalized to topicalized:

G: Mahlkes Haupt bedeckte dieser Hut besonders peinlich.
E: On Mahlke’s head this hat made a particularly painful impression.

Topicalized to non-topicalized:

G: Zu den sechs kamen noch drei weitere.
E: Three others joined these six in the afternoon.
Accent placement and topicalization frequencies in translating German topicalized arguments into English

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2nd accent on the German subject</th>
<th>accent elsewhere</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>topicalization in the English translation</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no topicalization in the English</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Rate of V2 loss in English with topicalized objects and PPs

% V2

Date

1151-1250 1251-1350 1351-1420 1421-1500 1501-1569 1570-1639 1639-1710

topicalized objects

topicalized PPs

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Rate of V2 loss in English corrected for clash avoidance

% V2

topicalized PPs

Date

1151-1250 1251-1350 1351-1420 1421-1500 1501-1569 1570-1639 1639-1710

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The V2 constraint in Old English:
the pronoun exception

(1) þæt hus hæfðon Romane to ðæm anum tacne geworht.
(2) Ælc yfel he mæg don.
(3) þin agen geleafa þe hæfþ gehæledne.
(4) & seofon ærendræcan he him hæfðe to asend.
Was Old English a V2 language?
Phrase structure of an English V2 clause

CP
  ▲
   ▲
   C'
     └── C^0
         └── TP
              ▲
              TP^0
              └── T^0
              └── vP
                  ▲
                  v^0
                  └── v'
                      ▲
                      v^0
                      └── vP
                          ▲
                          v^0
                          └── vP
                              ▲
                              v^0
                              └── DP
                                  └── hæfdon
                                      ▲
                                      DP
                                          ▲
                                          DP
                                              ▲
                                              DP
                                                  ▲
                                                  DP
                                                      ▲
                                                      DP
                                                          ▲
                                                          DP
                                                               v^0
                                                               └── geworht
                                                               └── pæt hus
Phrase structure of an English V2 clause

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Phrase structure of an English V2 clause

CP
  /               
 DP               C'
     /         
   DP         C^0
     |          |
    hi        TP
      /     
     T'   v0
       /     
      VP    v'
        /     
       V0    geworht
            /  
           DP  pæt hus

pæt hus

ærfdon

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Object topicalization with V2 in Old and Middle French

(1) l'estreu li tint sun uncle Guinemer
   the stirrup him held his uncle Guinemer
   Roland 27.329

(2) messe e matines ad li reis escultet
   mass and matins has the king heard
   Roland 11.139

(3) si grand paour avoit que a pou qu'il ne mouroit
   so great fear he-had that at little that he ne died
   CNNA 51.488
Object topicalization with V2 and pronoun subjects in Old and Middle French

(1) Espaigne vus durat il en fiet
Spain you will-give he in fief
Roland, 36.446

(2) chars avoient ils assés
meat had they enough
Froissart, 135.569

(3) une chose ont-ilz asez honnestes
one thing have-they enough honest
Commynes, 120.1634
Object topicalization with V3 and pronoun subjects in Middle French

(1) aultre remyde je n’y voy
other remedy I not there see
XV Joies, 111v.1209

(2) deux chose je diray de luy
two things I will-say of him
Commynes, 38.478

(3) nul enfant il n’ot onques eu de sa femme
no child he not-had ever had of his wife
Froissart, 462.6477
Adverb preposing with V2 in Old and Middle French

(1) Er matin sedeit li emperere suz l’umber
yesterday morning sat the emperor under the shade
Roland 29.363

(2) or est ele bien venue
now is she welcome
Yvain 43.1440

(3) ben l’entendit il arcevesques Turpin
well it understands the archebishop Turpin
Roland 96.1237
Adverb preposing with V3 in Old and Middle French

(1) unkes nuls hom ne vit tel ajustee.
never no man not saw such joust
Roland 238.3299

(2) premierement il devient taverniers
first he becomes innkeeper
Somme 47.306

(3) doucement li oisel chantoient
sweetly the birds sang
Yvain 15.451
Frequency of V2 in main clauses with topicalized XPs in Old French (no Somme)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>pronominal subject</th>
<th>full DP subject</th>
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<tr>
<td>XVS</td>
<td>40 [.98]</td>
<td>146 [.97]</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
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Topicalized objects

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<tr>
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<tbody>
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<td>40 [.67]</td>
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<tr>
<td>XSV</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>81</td>
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Topicalized PPs

Sunday, July 19, 2009
Frequency of V2 in main clauses with topicalized XPs in Middle French

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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>21</td>
<td>64 [.93]</td>
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<tr>
<td>XSV</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>5</td>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>XVS</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>422 [.61]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XSV</td>
<td>438</td>
<td>274</td>
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Topicalized PPs
Frequency of V2 in main clauses with topicalized XPs in Middle French

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Topicalized PPs
Why does French completely lose object topicalization?
Rise of clitic left-dislocation and loss of topicalization (Priestley 1955)

Reprise frequency per 100 sentences

Date

1200 1350 1450 1550 1650 1750 1875
“Adjunction to CP” in French

(1) ... de priere aide li font les dames
of prayer help him do the ladies
Yvain, 137.4788

(2) ... puis si chevalchet od sa grant ost li ber
then so rides with his great army the baron
Roland, 179.2438

(3) ... aussi telle oppinion tiennent les Angloys
also such opinion hold the English
Commynes, 26.279
Adjunction to CP in Modern French / English

(1) Jean sûr elle/Marie l’aimera bien (mais Pierre pas)
John sure she him-will-like well

(2) sûr Jean elle/Marie l’aimera bien (mais Pierre pas)

(3) sure John you will like (him) (but you won’t like Bill)

(4) John sure you will like *(him)
Left dislocation in Old French

(1) Que pro comandas[i]i, ço[i]i ad pro enpris
What you commanded, that has he undertaken
(Brendan, 30.4)

(2) Qu’en avendrat[i]i bien le[i]i purveit pro
What-of-it would-come well it foresaw he
(Brendan, 35.106)
Clitic left dislocation in Middle French

(1) le tant peu que ce fut\textsubscript{i}, si l’\textsubscript{i} avez vous forfait
the little bit that it was still it have you forfeited
(CNNA,420.6403)

(2) qui là vaillans ne sera\textsubscript{i}, jamais honneur ne l’\textsubscript{i} amera
who there valiant not will-be never honor not him will-love
(Prise, .2855)
Phrase structure of a French V2 clause

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Phrase structure of a French V2 clause
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Phrase structure of a French V2 clause

```
CP
  DP
  qu'en avendrat
  AdvP
    bien
CP
  C'
  T'
  v'
  T
  v
  V
  t
  V
  T
  T
  T
  T
  pro
  le
  V
  purveit
  V
  AdvP
  AdvP
  DP
  DP
  DP
  DP
  le
  pro
  qu'en avendrat
```

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Clitic left dislocation in Modern French

(1) *Le Figaro* *(le)* lit tous les jours.
   *The Figaro* John it reads every day

(2) Ma femme elle travaille à la Bibliothèque Nationale.
   My wife she works at the library national
Focus preposing in Modern French

(1) Jamais, je n’accepterais de telles conditions.
never I not-will-accept of such conditions

(2) Dix euros ça m’a couté ti.
ten euros that me-has cost

(3) Tant de malheurs ils ont vécu ti!
So many troubles they have experienced
The temporal evolution of subject and object left dislocation frequencies per thousand sentences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>frequency of subject left dislocation</th>
<th>frequency of object left dislocation</th>
<th>number of matrix clauses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Old French</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>12022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle French</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>24634</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Modern</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>3514</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The temporal evolution of subject and object left dislocation frequencies per thousand sentences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Frequency of subject left dislocation</th>
<th>Frequency of object left dislocation</th>
<th>Number of matrix clauses</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Old French</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Modern</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>3514</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Cleft sentences in Modern French

(1) C’est *Le Figaro* que Jean *lit* tous les jours.
It’s *The Figaro* that John reads every day

(2) C’est *ma femme* qui *travaille* à la BN.
It’s *my wife* that *works* at the BN

(3) Il y a *un an* qu’elle *travaille* à la BN.
It’s *one year* that-she *works* at the BN
The temporal evolution of cleft sentence frequencies per thousand sentences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>frequency of temporal clefts</th>
<th>frequency of subject and object clefts</th>
<th>number of matrix clauses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Old French</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>12022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle French</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>24634</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Modern</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>3514</td>
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</table>
Finis