# Remarks on the XV/VX Alternation in Early Middle English*

Anthony Kroch
kroch@change.ling.upenn.edu

Ann Taylor
ataylor@babel.ling.upenn.edu

Department of Linguistics
University of Pennsylvania
619 Williams Hall
Philadelphia, PA 19104-6305

March 1994

*DRAFT: PLEASE DO NOT CITE. COMMENTS WELCOME.*

## 1 Introduction.

This paper presents a largely quantitative description of the alternation between XV and VX word order in Early Middle English, based on the parsed corpus of Middle English that we have been constructing for the past three years. With that corpus, which is now approximately 300,000 words in size, we can easily define grammatical contexts and retrieve specified example types for further study and counting. Using the simplest of the data analysis techniques allowed by our corpus, we have discovered that the patterning of the XV/VX alternation in the earliest Middle English prose documents differs substantially from text to text and that the texts divide into two main groups: 1) the Katherine group and Ancrene Riwle texts of the West Midlands and 2) the "Book of Vices and Virtues" and other texts of the Southeast Midlands and Kent. We will argue, on the one hand, that both groups exhibit grammar competition between a base generated verb-final and verb-medial VP, but, on the other, that grammars of the texts in these two groups also differ in a more complex way.

*The research reported here was supported by a research grant from the NSF (BNS 89-19701), with supplementary support from the University of Pennsylvania Research Foundation and the Institute for Research in Cognitive Science. We would like to thank Caroline Heycock, Jack Hoeksema, Sabine Iatridou, Ans van Kemenade, Susan Pintzuk, Donald Ringe, Bernhard Rohrbacher, and Beatrice Santorini for their helpful comments on various aspects of our work.

The grammatical theory assumed in this paper will be the standard one developed in the context of Government Binding work in the 1980s; that is, we will assume the phrase structure of *Barriers* and the existence of underlying variation in head directionality. These assumptions will allow us to describe the syntactic patterns found in our texts and relate them to the patterns that have been described for other Germanic languages, especially Old English as described by van Kemenade (1987) and Pintzuk (1991). We do not intend our descriptions as a rejection of the "split INFL" proposal of Pollock and others or of Kayne's anti-symmetry proposal, according to which all heads are underlyingly initial in the first projection of $X^0$. Because this paper concentrates on the order of the verb and its complements/adjuncts, our discussion will not be in any direct way germane to the first set of proposals. In fact, we will limit ourselves largely to the analysis of subordinate clauses with auxiliary verbs that have moved to $I^0$ so as to control as much as possible for the effects of verb movement. On the other hand, the results we have obtained, and prior results obtained by others in the study of Old English, do pose a challenge to the anti-symmetry claim. We will leave it to others to evaluate the relevance of our analysis for that idea and, if appropriate and possible, to translate our work into that framework where there is interest. We note in passing, however, that there is considerable evidence, both syntactic and intonational, of rightward movement in West Germanic beyond the underlying right edge of VP (Pintzuk and Kroch 1989, Bies 1993, Santorini 1989, 1993 and others). If such rightward movement is admitted, however, the empirical content of the anti-symmetry analysis may be threatened since surface postverbal position will no longer be evidence of underlying order.

## 2 The logic of grammar competition.

As this paper proposes that part of the explanation for the XV/VX alternation in Early Middle English is grammar competition and as the status of such competition in the theory of language is controversial, we give here a brief introduction to the notion. Whenever we find syntactic alternations in a language, like the XV/VX alternation we will describe for Early Middle English, we are faced with an analytic difficulty, at least in a theory of grammar where economy considerations are basic. There are two surface outputs of what seem to be the same underlying configuration; and if economy drives derivations, why is one output not more economical than the other and, therefore, obligatory? Sometimes the answer seems to lie in the different semantico-pragmatic import of the two outputs, as in the case of scrambling in West Germanic (see, notably, recent work by Diesing (1994)). Here various solutions are available, including augmentation of the syntactic representation to include abstract features or other elements which distinguish the cases. Then economy calculations will no longer compare the derivations. The economy question is, however, more difficult to answer when languages undergoing grammatical change exhibit alternations which correspond to obligatory choices in related languages or dialects. Here meaning and information structure differences do not seem relevant; and analyses of the languages with categorical output depend on licensing constraints that do not readily admit of variability. Let us take a concrete example from AGR-based case theory. One could analyze Dutch and English both as VO languages which differ, however, in the level at which accusative case checking applies. In Dutch, which would have a strong accusative case feature in the sense of Chomsky (1992), objects would have to move overtly while in English the case feature would be weak and license only LF movement. It might seem then that Middle English, with its XV/VX alternation, was a case where checking could occur at either level; but economy considerations rule out this solution. Since for other reasons, LF movement must be more economical than overt movement, no language in which case checking can be postponed until LF will show overt movement. Thus, we are forced, if we adopt this analysis, to say that Middle English sentences sometimes contain a weak accusative case feature on their objects and sometimes a strong one. This difference, however, is just the parametric difference we have postulated to differentiate Dutch and English; and, therefore, we have wound up proposing that Middle English contains contradictory parameter settings, in other words, grammar competition. This example, moreover, does not depend in any way on the specific grammatical assumptions we have used. In an analysis in which the difference between English and Dutch is due to differences in verb movement driven by different feature requirements or in a theory where directionality is parametrized directly, the same point holds. There are, of course, alternative analyses potentially available for the Middle English case that do not invoke grammar competition. For instance, one might propose that Middle English is underlyingly VX and derives XV order exclusively by leftward scrambling. Then we would expect to escape the economy problem in whatever way other cases of scrambling do. We will see below that in the case under investigation, such an approach is also of interest, but that is an empirical discovery.

In various studies, we and others have given reasons to believe that grammar competition is widespread in historical change (Kroch 1989, Santorini 1989, Pintzuk 1991, Taylor 1991, Fontana 1993). The reasoning has always been the same: Historically attested languages often exhibit variation within texts among alternative forms or word orders that modern languages do not. This variation can be shown by statistical analysis (Kroch 1989) to be not between surface forms but between abstract parametric options of grammar. Examples that have been studied in some detail include: variable V-to-I raising of tensed verbs in Late Middle English, variable INFL-final versus INFL-medial phrase structure in early Yiddish, the same variation in Old English, variable XV/VX grammars in Ancient Greek, variable verb-second in Middle English, and the same variation in Middle Spanish. All of the languages in these examples, in their initial stages, are not variable; but at some point in their history, they acquire an innovative grammatical option. They then go through a period of variability during which the innovation is used more and more frequently. Eventually, the original grammatical option drops from use entirely and only the innovation remains. In all of these cases, moreover, the best analyses of modern languages which are categorical (in one direction or the other) where our historical cases show variability treat the categorical behavior as derived from deep licensing requirements. These requirements admit of parametric variation but not of grammar internal optionality. The consistency of these findings drives us to ask two related questions: First, why do we find variation only where it is associated with change and replacement? And, second, does this variation justify the weakening of grammatical theory to allow optionality in the realization of fundamental licensing requirements? The grammar competition hypothesis answers that no weakening of grammatical theory is justified because the variation is grammar external; namely, it is between mutually incompatible parameter settings. It claims further that the variation is found associated with change because, being purely syntactic parametric alternatives without semantico-pragmatic content, the alternative options are necessarily in unstable competition in usage.

Sometimes it is objected to the idea of grammar competition that admitting such a notion into the theory of language will introduce learnability problems; but this objection is based on a misunderstanding.[1] Since the postulation of competing grammars would arise when languages give evidence of the simultaneous use of incompatible parameter settings, the learner would always have positive and unequivocal evidence of grammar competition. In the absence of such evidence, the learner will simply set parameters unambiguously in accord with the evidence. The difficulty introduced by the possibility of grammar competition is not for the learner but for the linguist, for whom a difficult methodological question arises; namely, how to know when grammar competition should be invoked and when failure to find a unified analysis means only that more research is needed. Our first comment here must be that the existence of this methodological problem does not bear on the issue of whether grammar competition is real. Nothing requires that language be constructed so as to make its investigation easy. Indeed, the same methodological problem induced by grammar competition is induced by notions like "core" versus "periphery" or "I-language" versus "E-language." These notions also imply that the facts of language as we collect them from observation (including judgments of grammaticality) may not be directly susceptible to a unified analysis. Understanding this basic point, of course, does not eliminate the problems the linguist will have in practice in distinguishing grammar competition, peripheral constructions, and E-language effects from the core object of study. That continues to be accomplished by the gradual formulation of more powerful theories that categorize and explain an ever wider range of phenomena. When we reach the point where the linguist has as good a theoretical grasp on Universal Grammar as the language learner has an unconscious one, grammar competition will be as easily recognizable to the former as it already is to the latter.

## 3 The position of constituents in Early Middle English.

Turning now to the analytical problem we have set, let us consider the basic patterning in the placement of complements and adjuncts in Early Middle English. We will ignore topicalizations as

[1]Another issue with regard to grammar competition, which we will not discuss here, is its sociolinguistic locus. Since the cases of grammar competition we have studied are all historical cases based on written texts, it is perfectly possible that it reflects stylistic options limited to the written language, with its known pecularities and tendencies to linguistic unnaturalness. Thus, we might see in historical contexts competition between the grammar of the spoken language of a given time and an archaic but still influential literary standard. If this is so, then grammar competition will have no purely linguistic significance, but will still be important in the interpretation of historical texts. Only work on possible cases of competition in living languages can determine whether it exists in unreflecting vernacular speech, a question to which we do not yet know the answer.

irrelevant to our purposes and will limit ourselves to subordinate clauses with tensed auxiliaries to eliminate as far as possible uncertainties in the landing sites of verbs. We take it to be uncontroversial that in subordinate clauses, aside from cases of CP recursion, the landing site of the verb is $I^0$ (or its equivalent in a syntax with an exploded INFL). The placement of complements and adjuncts in such sentences can be schematized as below:

(1) [ ... X(P)1 ... Aux ... X(P)2 ... V ... X(P)3 ... ]

The schema presupposes that Early Middle English by the year 1200 was entirely INFL-medial in word order, although there are a few remnant INFL-final sentences in the texts. As the schema indicates, there are three positions where a complement or adjunct, whether phrasal or a head (i.e., a pronoun or a particle), may appear: 1) before the tensed auxiliary verb (henceforth 'PREAUX'); 2) medially between the the tensed and the untensed verbs ('POSTAUX'); and 3) after the untensed main verb ('POSTVERB'). The POSTAUX and POSTVERB positions are freely available and are not subject to any obvious pragmatic or intonational restrictions. On the other hand, when X(P) is not a clitic pronoun, the PREAUX position is limited to sentences with pronoun subjects for reasons that are not entirely clear.[2] The sentences in (2)-(4) below give examples of the three positions. The relevant XP in each is indicated in boldface:

(2) a. ðat he **deað** scolde þoliȝen (Book of Vices and Virtues: 113.443a)
that he death should suffer

b. min lauerd godd **me** wolde swingen mid ani swinge (VV: 13.107)
my Lord God me would scourge with any scourge

c. þat tu **fram ðine lichame** scoldest skelien (VV: 17.143)
that thou from thy body shouldst separate

[2]Kroch and Taylor 1993 treat movement to the PREAUX position as an instance of scrambling; and, as we shall see, the analysis we shall propose here also leads to this conclusion. However, the pronoun restriction, which also holds in Old English, is not obviously compatible with the scrambling analysis. Pintzuk (1991) interprets the restriction as evidence that the PREAUX landing site is Spec,IP rather than an adjoined position. Her point is that the clitic subject pronoun need not be in Spec,IP; nor does it have to move through it under an analysis like that proposed by Santorini (1992). This leaves Spec,IP available as a landing site for a topicalized element. If the sentence-initial subject is a full NP, it fills Spec,IP and blocks the preposing of other constituents. Clitics, of course, move differently and prepose freely because they do not land in Spec,IP. If we are correct in our treatment, there must be another explanation for the pronoun restriction, but we do not yet know what it might be.

(3) a. ðat we moten mid ȝeure helpe and mid his hale grace **ðis scorte lif** her laden...
that we may with your help and with his holy grace this short life here lead
(VV: 21.172)

b. þt ich nule **þe** forsaken (Katherine group, St. Julia: 106.186)
that I not-will thee forsake

c. hwat ic habbe **mid his eihte** ȝedon (VV: 17.136)
what I have with his goods done

(4) a. ðat ic mihte hauen **ðat eche lif** (VV: 67.222b)
that I might have that same life

b. þet ȝe mahen ane pine **me** here (St. Julia: 102.119)
that ye may alone torture me here

c. þet ha beo ear ouercumen **wið desputunge** (Katherine group, St. Katherine:
that she be already overcome with disputing
B.205)

When we ask what grammatical analyses might account for the distribution we find, two major possibilities suggest themselves; and it is not easy to evaluate them. One standard analysis would say that Early Middle English, though INFL-medial, is underlyingly still an XV language. The PREAUX position arises when an X(P) moves to the left, while the POSTVERB position results from XP extraposition. This is essentially the analysis proposed by Kemenade (1987) or by Pintzuk and Kroch (1989) for Old English. Indeed, since Pintzuk (1991) shows that Old English also exhibits competition between INFL-final and INFL-medial word order, this analysis implies that Early Middle English directly continues the syntax of Old English and differs from the earlier language only in having lost the INFL-final phrase structure option. Another possible analysis would hold that the POSTVERB position is the underlying one, and that the preverbal positions arise out of leftward movement. Under this analysis, Early Middle English differs from Old English in two parameter settings: It is fully INFL-medial as opposed to INFL-final and VX rather than XV. In these respects, it is just like modern English, from which it differs only in allowing leftward scrambling, presumably inherited from Old English, which the language then loses in the course of its further development. Choosing between these two analyses, or variants of them, is not easy, as they make similar empirical predictions and as it is not clear how theoretical considerations might choose between them.[3] In what follows we will explore the facts of Early Middle English and search for evidence that might help us to settle the question. In the course of our investigation, we will discover that different dialects of Middle English differ substantially in their word order distributions and that there may be room for both leftward and rightward movement in a complete treatment of the complex patterns of variation that we have discovered.

## 4 Two diagnostic environments.

One domain of fact which we clearly must investigate in some detail is the distribution of pronouns, which are known to exhibit important regularities in the other Germanic languages that distinguish them from full NPs and that constrain their behavior in ways which might shed light on our problem. Most significantly for our purpose, pronouns in West Germanic (including the historical languages Old English, Early Yiddish, and Early New High German (Pintzuk 1991, Santorini 1989)) do not move rightward. In particular, they do not postpose beyond an otherwise final verb in the way that NPs can. In her study of Old English, Pintzuk reports no cases of such postposing of pronouns in a sample of 222 cases where it might have occurred. Thus, while the appearance of a full NP constituent in the POSTVERB position is consistent both with a VX analysis lacking movement and a XV analysis with postposition, the appearance of a pronoun in that position is unambiguous evidence of underlying VX order. In this regard, the facts of Early Middle English are not uniform. There are texts in which pronoun objects regularly appear in the POSTVERB position and texts in which they do not. Limiting ourselves to texts from the earliest period of Middle English (ca. 1200-1250) we find the pattern in Table 1:

[3] The second analysis might seem to be favored as consistent with the anti-symmetry hypothesis; but this appearance is deceptive. The conditions under which a phrase appears postverbally differ importantly in VX and XV languages so that character of the leftward movement will be very different according to whether it represents an optional scrambling or an obligatory preverbal placement. Thus, the question remains as to whether the preverbal placement is a continuation of the Old English XV requirement or of the optional scrambling process.

| | Pronoun position | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Text | PREAUX | POSTAUX | POSTVERB | % POSTVERB |
| Katherine group (KG) | 17 | 13 | 28 | 48% |
| Ancrene Riwle (AR) | 5 | 1 | 6 | 50% |
| **Total W Midlands** (WM) | 22 | 14 | 34 | 49% |
| Vices and Virtues (VV) | 26 | 7 | 1 | 03% |
| Trinity Homilies (TH) | 3 | 2 | 0 | 00% |
| Kentish Sermons (KS) | 16 | 1 | 2 | 10% |
| **Total Southeast** (SE) | 45 | 10 | 3 | 05% |

Table 1: Frequency of pronouns in POSTVERB position in Early Middle English.

The texts of the Katherine group and the Ancrene Riwle are West Midlands in provenance and show Scandinavian influence on their phonology and vocabulary, a fact which has led some experts to fix their provenance as Northwest Midlands. We see in our table that these texts, though very early, show considerable evidence of underlying VO word order based on pronoun position. On the other hand, the almost total absence of pronouns in the POSTVERB position in the contemporary texts from the Southeast suggests that the southeast midlands and Kentish dialects they represent were not VO at the same date.

This conclusion is supported by an examination of the position of particles in the texts. As the examples below indicate, particles in Early Middle English appear both pre- and post-verbally. Because of the paucity of data, we consider particles in almost all environments, despite the potential problems of interaction with verb movement. We have eliminated only those examples where a particle appears after a tensed verb which has moved to $I^0$ or higher, because that order, being due entirely to verb movement, tells us nothing about underlying verb-complement order.

(5) a. þat non godes word **upp** ne mai springen (VV: 69.234)
that no God's word up not may spring

b. Nu scal ðe alder of ðis woreld **ut** bien ȝedriuen (VV: 111.398)
now shall the elder of this world out be driven

c. ich **awei** weorp ower witlese lei (St. Katherine: B.308)
I way threw your witless law

(6) a. Ha wes sone ibroht **forð** (St. Katherine: B.827)
she was soon brought forth

b. Hwaso mei gan **in** (Ancrene Riwle: 2.60.5)
whoever may go in

We see in our examples that particles can appear before auxiliary verbs, which in a uniformly INFL-medial language indicates that they move leftward, unlike particles in modern German or Dutch, or apparently in Old English (Pintzuk 1993). [4] Also, like pronouns and unlike full XPs, they can appear in PREAUX position when the subject is a full NP, indicating that their movement is a kind of head movement rather than a kind of XP scrambling.[5] The following table shows the quantitative distribution of our particle data. We have collapsed the data into just the two geographic groupings and two positions because the number of cases is so small.

| | Particle position | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Text | PREVERB | POSTVERB | % POSTVERB |
| Total W Midlands (WM) | 15 | 11 | 42% |
| Total Southeast (SE) | 8 | 2 | 20% |

Table 2: Frequency of particles in POSTVERB position in Early Middle English.

Once again we see a pattern in which the WM texts seem to favor the POSTVERB position more than the SE texts do. As in the case of pronouns, rightward movement of particles does not occur

[4] This may be the same process observable in the modern language, with the difference that the NP in the modern language moves leftward only across the particle, while in Middle English it could move further and left-adjoin to the verb.

[5] Our interpretation of the particle data depends entirely on the assumption that all Middle English dialects are fully INFL-medial. If we admit a substantial survival of INFL-final order, many of the clauses with preverbal particles will turn out to be INFL-final, some with verb-raising of the West Germanic sort. More work is clearly needed here to determine the likelihood of this possibility. It is worth noting, however, that substantial survivals of INFL-final syntax in Middle English would link the language even more closely to Old English than we will do and would make the grammatical changes across the two periods even more continuous.

in the verb-final West Germanic languages, including Old English. Pintzuk (1993) reports just one case out of 94 potential instances of a particle appearing after an INFL-final verb. Therefore, the data in this table, like the pronoun data, favor the idea that the SE texts are basically XV and continue directly the Old English word order. Even the few postverbal exceptions correspond to possibilities in Old English. Pintzuk (1991) reports that while particles and pronouns never appear postverbally in INFL-final clauses with auxiliary verbs, they do sometimes appear in that position in INFL-medial clauses with auxiliaries. Particles appear in this position 7% of the time in her sample (9 out of 132 cases) and pronouns 3% of the time (9 out of 275 cases). She interprets these few cases as the first appearance of VX word order in English. If she is correct, Old English already admitted competition between XV and VX grammars; and our data suggest that, in the conservative SE, VX order had made only very modest progress by the Early Middle English period. The western midlands texts, perhaps through contact with the Scandinavian influenced dialects of the North (which have left no prose records), underwent more change in the direction of VX. The unresolved question for the latter texts is whether they show the same competition as the SE texts, only at a higher rate of use of VX order, or whether the alternations of order they exhibit reflect another grammatical analysis. We return to this issue below.

## 5 The placement of NPs.

The patterns in our texts become more complex when we consider more data. If we compare the placement of pronouns with that of full NPs, we find that the WM texts no longer differ as strikingly from the SE texts.

| | NP position | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Text | PREAUX | POSTAUX | POSTVERB | % POSTVERB |
| Katherine group (KG) | 5 | 20 | 43 | 63% |
| Ancrene Riwle (AR) | 1 | 3 | 16 | 80% |
| **Total W Midlands** (WM) | 6 | 23 | 59 | 67% |
| Vices and Virtues (VV) | 22 | 17 | 24 | 38% |
| Trinity Homilies (TH) | 1 | 12 | 12 | 48% |
| Kentish Sermons (KS) | 2 | 2 | 16 | 80% |
| **Total Southeast** (SE) | 25 | 31 | 52 | 48% |

Table 3: Frequency of full NPs in POSTVERB position in Early Middle English.

As the above table shows, the average frequency of POSTVERB is indeed higher in the WM texts than in SE, but not much higher. Indeed, the frequency of POSTVERB in the latter texts is higher than we might have expected for an XV language. Of course, it is not clear what frequency one should expect in an XV language that allows rightward postposition. In Early New High German (Bies 1992) and in Early Yiddish (Santorini 1993), the frequency of postposition of NP's in structurally verb-final clauses is only about 10%. However, in Beowulf, an Old English text with generally archaic syntax, Pintzuk and Kroch (1989) found that the frequency of POSTVERB was 25% (91 out of 361 cases) for NP complements in sentences with auxiliary verbs. This number is lower than the average for our SE texts but not so very much lower than our figure for VV, the southeastern text for which we have the most data. Moreover, the high frequency of POSTVERB in the SE texts becomes less anomalous when we examine the positional distribution of NPs of different lengths across our two dialects. The following table shows the distribution of the first 50 non-pronominal NPs in clauses with auxiliary verbs in KG and VV:

| Katherine group | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | NP position | | | |
| Length | PREAUX | POSTAUX | POSTVERB | % POSTVERB |
| one word NPs | 1 | 2 | 8 | 72% |
| two word NPs | 0 | 5 | 15 | 75% |
| three word NPs | 0 | 3 | 1 | 25% |
| heavy NPs (4+ wds.) | 0 | 2 | 13 | 87% |
| Vices and Virtues | | | | |
| | NP position | | | |
| Length | PREAUX | POSTAUX | POSTVERB | % POSTVERB |
| one word NPs | 2 | 5 | 0 | 00% |
| two word NPs | 5 | 6 | 4 | 27% |
| three word NPs | 2 | 3 | 5 | 50% |
| heavy NPs (4+ wds.) | 3 | 1 | 14 | 82% |

Table 4: Positional distribution by length of NP in KG and VV.

This table shows that heavy NP objects behave alike in the two dialects, appearing almost always in the POSTVERB position. Indeed, these NPs almost always appear to the right of other postverbal complements and adjuncts, where present, showing that their surface position is in all dialects the result of rightward movement of some sort. On the other hand, shorter NPs behave differently according to dialect. In VV, we find a completely regular correlation between increased length and frequency of postverbal position, a correlation which is entirely absent in KG. In unpublished studies of modern English heavy NP shift usage, we have also found such a correlation, suggesting that it is a diagnostic of rightward movement. The absence of the correlation in KG indicates once again that postverbal NPs in that dialect do not arise primarily by rightward movement but rather by base generation in the postverbal position. In fact, the complete absence of any correlation with length is surprising since, if preverbal NPs in WM were sometimes base-generated there, we would expect some of the postverbal NPs to have orginated in preverbal position and to have been postposed. If such postposition occurred at anything like the rate found in Old English or in SE, we should see at least a weak correlation of POSTVERB frequency with length for the WM texts. The fact that we see no correlation outside of the heaviest NPs is a small piece of evidence that the language of WM may differ from that of SE more than just by having a different frequency of underlying VX versus XV. We note in passing that when the heavy NPs are removed from the VV sample, the rate of POSTVERB drops to 28% (9 out of 32 cases) and is quite comparable to the rate in Beowulf, a text in which the number of long and complex NPs that so overwhelmingly postpose is much lower than in the didactic religious texts of Early Middle English.

## 6 The placement of PPs.

If we look now at PPs, we find more reason to doubt that our two dialect areas differ only in the frequency of two base-generated word orders. The following table gives the distribution of PPs across positions by text:

| | PP position | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Text | PREAUX | POSTAUX | POSTVERB | % POSTVERB |
| Katherine group (KG) | 6 | 27 | 36 | 52% |
| Ancrene Riwle (AR) | 1 | 10 | 16 | 59% |
| **Total W Midlands** (WM) | 7 | 37 | 52 | 54% |
| Vices and Virtues (VV) | 10 | 13 | 35 | 60% |
| Trinity Homilies (TH) | 1 | 2 | 8 | 73% |
| Kentish Sermons (KS) | 4 | 1 | 31 | 86% |
| **Total Southeast** (SE) | 15 | 16 | 74 | 70% |

Table 5: Frequency of PPs in POSTVERB position in Early Middle English.

Here we see that the SE texts actually exhibit a somewhat higher frequency of PPs in the POSTVERB position than the WM texts do. This reversal is surprising and not reconcilable, as far as we can see, with there being a simple and merely quantitative relationship between the two dialects.

The fact that PPs appear more frequently in the POSTVERB position than NPs do in the SE texts is by itself expected. In Early New High German, for example, the rate of PP postposition is much higher than the rate of NP postposition. In a sample of approximately 900 main clauses with auxiliary verbs in second position in a corpus of Early High German collected by Ann Bies at the University of Pennsylvania, she has found a rate of NP postposition of 12% (40 out of 324 cases) compared to a rate of PP postposition of 32% (85 out of 267 cases) (Bies, p.c.). Rather the questions we face are, first, why the frequency of PPs in the POSTVERB position should be higher in SE than in WM and, second, why the frequency of POSTVERB should be higher for PPs than for NPs in WM, the reverse of the relationship in SE. These quantitative relations are not consistent with what we have found in other cases where texts share the same grammatical options but differ in their relative rates of use of those options. In such cases, we, and students of variation generally, have invariably found that the relative rates of use of competing grammatical options are the same across contexts (Labov and Sankoff 198X, Kroch 1989). Here we find just the opposite – a reversal in the relationship between WM and SE as we go from one context, NP postposing, to another, PP postposing. To us this means that the two dialects are unlikely to be manifesting the same grammatical competition.

## 7 Speculations by way of a conclusion.

For the various reasons we have given in course of our presentation, the SE dialect seems to be adequately described by the postulation of a competition between XV and VX word order, but we have found that the WM dialect is not likely to be correctly so described. How then are we to analyze WM? We do not at present have a worked out and satisfactory answer to this question and can offer only some initial speculations which we hope to pursue in future work. Our line of reasoning would be as follows: On the basis of the behavior of pronouns, we have claimed that POSTVERB NPs are much more likely to be base generated in that position in the WM texts than in SE, where NPs appear postverbally largely due to postposing of the Old English sort. Suppose that the same is true of PPs. Then it seems reasonable to propose that in WM it is the preverbal positions, relevantly the POSTAUX position, that should be taken as derived and the postverbal ones as base generated.[6] In other words, NPs and PPs in WM would generally start out postverbally and variably prepose, perhaps to a VP-adjoined position.[7] Whatever the landing site, it is apparently not Spec,AGRoP, if that is the landing site of object shift. Negative sentences show that the latter process is fully operative in VO Middle English, but only when the object is a pronoun. Under a preposing analysis, a plausible reason becomes available to explain why PPs should appear preverbally more often than NPs in WM. It is just that PPs move more freely than NPs in WM just as in SE or in Early New High German.[8] Since the movement is in the opposite direction, the frequency relations are reversed. If this analysis can be supported, it also has the potential to explain an important fact that we have so far left unmentioned; namely, that the PREAUX position is less frequently used in WM than in SE, both with NPs and with PPs. Under any scenario where the grammatical options are the same in the two dialects, we would expect the frequency of PREAUX to pattern with one of the other positions and so would expect one constituent type to favor WM and the other SE. If, however, we adopt the suggestion under discussion and further suppose that the PREAUX position is accessible to a base-generated preverbal constituent but not to one that has landed in an adjoined position after moving leftward across the verb, then the observed frequency pattern will follow. We assume, whatever the locality conditions on movement, that the PREAUX position is too far from the postverbal position to be accessible in one step, but the details of our analysis remain to be worked out. Of course, the fact that the PREAUX position is sometimes filled in WM would mean that some XV base order remains in the texts. This order would be a low frequency option and corresponds to the low frequency of VX order we must postulate for the SE texts to account for the few cases of postverbal pronouns and particles we have found there. Thus, the two dialects we have isolated,

[6] In Yiddish, where the frequency of POSTVERB is much higher than in any of our Early Middle English texts, being greater than 90% in the modern language (Santorini 1993), just such analysis may be appropriate. If it is, it complicates the picture we have presented because Yiddish, up to the present day, does not allow unstressed pronouns in the POSTVERB position. Thus, the Yiddish case may show that obligatory preverbal pronoun placement is consistent with underlying VX word order. However, Yiddish treats similarly pronouns and PPs with pronominal objects, suggesting that the obligatory leftward movement of pronouns from the postverbal position is governed by prosody, not by morphosyntax. In Early Middle English, by contrast, even dialects that do not allow postverbal pronouns freely permit postverbal PPs with pronominal objects.

[7] This suggestion is potentially in conflict with AGR-based case theory, though there are several ways to reconcile the two, if that should prove desirable.

[8] It is not clear why this should be so but it does appear to be the case in a certain number of languages, including modern English. Perhaps it is an indirect effect of NPs' need for case, though it is not clear how the effect would work.

though contemporaneous, would be at different ends of the transition from XV to VX; and leftward movement would arise as a reanalysis of XV word order in the presence of unambiguous evidence, here the postverbal appearance of pronouns and particles, for base generated VX word order.

## 8 References.

TO BE ADDED