Subject positions and information-structural diversification in the history of English
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Background: English subject positions (SPs) have received considerable synchronic and diachronic attention in the literature: van Kemenade (vK) (1999/2000) and Haeberli (1999/2002), building on vK (1987) and Pintzuk (1991/1999), propose a clause structure where pronominal subjects occupy a higher position than DP-subjects – cf. (1). vK & Milicev (2005/2011) *et. seq*. and vK & Westergaard (2009, to appear) refine this insight to incorporate information-structural (IS) factors – cf. (2). This IS-sensitive system is thought to have been lost during the Middle English (ME) period, giving rise to the present-day (PDE) system featuring a single, canonical SP (Spec-TP). This paper revisits the topic of early English SPs and their subsequent history, with specific attention falling on IS considerations. In the light of recent advances in the understanding of subject properties, of differences between OV and VO languages, of the loss of OV order, and of the formal representation of IS properties, we focus on the following previously un(der)discussed synchronic and diachronic issues:

(a) the relation between the early English subject system and the language's OV origins;
(b) the process via which the early English subject system was lost; and
(c) the nature of the PDE system that has resulted from the changes.

We argue that the properties of the IS-sensitive early English system and its subsequent loss can be understood within Biberauer & Roberts's (2005 *et seq.*; B&R) approach to OE and ME word-order variation and change. Our analysis crucially involves an ambiguity in the analysis of expletives during the ME and Early Modern English periods which was central in the subsequent development of the English subject system. We further argue that standardization decisions taken during the EME period resulted in a new IS-sensitive system, with distinct SPs of the kind proposed in Kiss (1996), rather than the unitary position usually assumed for PDE.

Proposed analysis: For B&R, OV order is necessarily derived by object movement, either independently (3a) or via VP-piedpiping (3b), with further object scrambling of informationally old (*old*) objects, as in modern German. In this system, Spec-TP could host a subject (4a, initially a minority pattern in OE) or the pied-piped full vP, giving rise to OVAux orders (4b). From (within) Spec-TP, *old* subjects could undergo scrambling to Spec-FP (cf. (2)). That the *new*-SP should have been lower than FP and associated with Spec-TP, follows naturally in B&R's system as vP-internal subjects are expected to be *new* (cf. Diesing 1992). B&R's approach thus explains why OE and early ME IS-sensitivity patterns the way it does.

The presence of V2 and Verb(-Projection) Raising, however, obscured the differential placement of *old* vs. *new* subjects (also affecting acquirers' ability to determine the placement of *old* vs. *new* objects in surface VO-structures, leading to the patterns observed in Taylor & Pintzuk 2010). Diagnostic adverbs (including *þa, þonne*, *nu, not*) and the IS-sensitive *se*-demonstrative series therefore played a crucial role in signalling the IS-sensitivity of the OE and early ME subject system. With the loss of these elements over the ME period, and the increasing restriction of object-raising to pronominal and negated objects (cf. Taylor & van der Wurff 2005, Pintzuk and Taylor 2006), the PLD-impetus for acquirers to postulate an optional stranding (4a) vs. piedpiping system (4b) became so weak that the pied-piping option was lost. A further development was the rise of clause-internal expletives (5) (cf. Williams 2000, B&R). Importantly, however, expletives did not become obligatory and neither did internal-argument/IA raising (6 and 8). We propose that certain corners of the grammar initially retained the earlier IS-sensitive subject system, with *new* IAs (unaccusative and passive subjects) continuing to remain unraised, while *old* IAs raised into the higher clausal domain. Expletives play an ambiguous role here: transitive Expletive Constructions (7) were possible, but unraised unaccusatives did not require the presence of an overt expletive (6a). We argue that Grohmann & Ingham's (2009) Post-Finite Misagreement structures (8) signal that the PLD available to late ME acquirers was ambiguous between equally plausible subject-systems (neither of which, crucially, corresponds to the generally assumed Chomskyan single canonical SP):

a. a system in which there is **a single canonical subject position, whose contents determines verbal agreement**. In the context of this system, a (phonetically) empty Spec-TP or one filled by expletive *there* systematically triggers default 3rd person singular agreement, thereby giving rise to PFM; and

b. a system in which there are **two subject positions**, one reserved for specific subjects and expletive *it* (Spec-FP in (2)), and the other (Spec-TP) reserved for non-specific elements and expletive *there*. In all cases, **the verb agrees with the subject, regardless of its position**, thus accounting for the cases in which we see regular agreement.

External intervention (standardization), rather than natural "drift", ultimately decided in favour of Kiss (1996)-compatible (b). (a), however, survives in non-standard varieties and can be seen as a relic that develops from the earlier IS-sensitive subject-system as naturally as prescriptively sanctioned (b). Importantly, then, there is significant and previously unrecognized continuity between the earlier and PDE subject-systems, with IS-sensitivity playing a role throughout. In studying the development of the English subject-system, we are also able to distinguish between PLD which constitutes input to natural reanalyses (cf. B&R's (2008) "cascading" changes) and that which presents alternatives which are, in acquisitional terms, equally plausible. More detailed synchronic and diachronic study of such equal-plausibility scenarios strikes us as an as yet unexplored "way in"

to developing better understanding of the interaction between "second" and "third-factor" considerations in language acquisition and thus also of language typology and diachrony.

Data

(1) $[_{CP}$ XP C $[_{AgrP}$ SU$_1$ *Agr* SU$_2$ ...]]], where SU$_1$ = pronominal and SU$_2$ = full DP

(2) $[_{CP}$ XP C $[_{FP}$ SU$_1$ F SU$_2$ ...]]], where SU$_1$ = an old-information subject, SU$_2$ = a new-information subject, and F is a head within the lower CP (discourse) domain.

(3)   a.   object-fronting ('stranding'): $[_{vP}$ **DP-OB$_{Goal}$** V+v$_{Probe}$ $[_{VP}$ .. (DP) ..]]

   *Dunn hafað $[_{DP}$ **þas boc**] gesald+v $[_{VP}$ his wife (V) (DP)]*

   Dunn has this title-deed given his wife

   'Dunn has given this title-deed to his wife'   [ch1514(Rob9)1); Koopman 1994: 59]

  b.   VP-fronting (piedpiping): $[_{vP}$ $[_{VP}$ … **DP-OB$_{Goal}$** …] V+v$_{Probe}$ (VP)]

   *... þæt ic $[_{VP}$ **þas boc** to Engliscre spræce (V)] awende+v (VP)*

   that I this book to English tongue translate

   '... that I translate this book into English'   [*AHTh*, I, pref, 6; van Kemenade 1987: 16]

(4)   a.   subject-fronting ('stranding'): $[_{TP}$ **DP-SU$_{Goal}$** T$_{Probe}$ $[_{vP}$ (DP) …]]

   *... þæt $[_{DP}$ **he**] mehte $[_{vP}$ (DP) his feorh generian]*

   that he could   his life save

   '... so that he could save his life'   [*AHG*, IX, 104; van Kemenade 1987: 34]

  b.   vP-fronting (piedpiping): $[_{TP}$ $[_{vP}$ **DP-SU$_{Goal}$** VP V+v] T$_{Probe}$ (vP)]

   *... þæt $[_{vP}$ **þæt folc** Gregorium to papan gecoran] hæfde (vP)*

   that the people Gregory to pope elected had

   '… that the people had elected Gregory as pope' [*Orosius* 48: 18; van Kemenade 1987: 59]

(5)   *Many dyvers reules there ben*

  'There are many different rules'   [late 14th century Pepys ms, *Ancrene Riwle* 1,8]

(6)   a.   me forthynkith of youre displeasure

   'I resent your displeasure'   [CMMALORY,49.162]

  b.   … and syþen han be sowen *manye false loorus*

   '… and since have been sown many false teachings' [CMWYCSER,253.523]

(7)   þere coupe *no man* it aquenche wiþ no craft

 'There was no-one who could quench it in any way' [*Trevisa Higden* (Rolls) I. 223; Tanaka 2000: 480]

(8)   a.   This yere after alhalontyde there <u>was</u> *proclamations* made in London by the kingis commandement

   'This year after All Saints' Day, proclamations were made in London by the King's command'

      [Gough 163 (1469); Grohmann & Ingham 2009: 313]

  b.   And on xx day of Janyver <u>was</u> *certayne poyntys of armys* done in Smethefylde

   'And on the 20th of January, various feats of arms were accomplished in Smithfield'

      [Greg. 184 (1441); Grohmann & Ingham 2009: 321]

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