

THE SYNTAX OF OBJECT SHIFT IN EARLY MODERN ENGLISH (EME): A PRINCIPLE AND PARAMETERS APPROACH

Setumile Morapedi¹³

University of Botswana

ABSTRACT

The paper analysed object shift constructions in Early Modern English or the English of the Shakespearean time. This follows conflicting views on the order of the Verb and Object during this time. One group of researchers argued that both Object Verb (OV) and Verb Object (VO) were available as underlying orders in Old English as well as Middle English, while another group held the view that English had undergone some change in underlying word order from OV to VO. I argue, from the perspective of Principles and Parameters theory, developed by Chomsky (1993) that the surface OV order can be derived from the underlying VO through leftward movement rule (s) applying to the object. I have appealed to Principles and Parameters Theory because the theory assumes that the shifting of the object is determined by its strength, and thus moves leftwards. Principles and Parameters theory maintains that grammatical differences between languages can be characterized in terms of a restricted set of parameters.

Keywords: object shift, EME, inflectional (strong and weak) features, scrambling, Principles and Parameters theory.

The aim of this paper is to analyse object shift constructions in Early Modern English (EME), making comparison with Present-day English where relevant. There are some properties of EME period that differentiate it clearly from Present-day English, which are worth mentioning in this paper since they have a bearing on the movement of elements that are triggered by tense features. The strength of verb elements is attributable to the richness of its inflectional morphology, which EME enjoys, whereas Present-day English is so impoverished that it only remains with only one type of verbal inflection such as *-s/es*. Shifting occurs when two or more constituents occurring on the same side of their head exchange positions in order to

¹³ Setumile Morapedi is a professor in the Department of English, University of Botswana. E-mail: moraped@s@mopipi.ub.bw

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Setumile Morapedi Department of English, University of Botswana. moraped@s@mopipi.ub.bw

obtain non-canonical word order. Object shift refers to the leftward movement of the object to a required position in the sentence.

The investigation on these types of constructions follows from the conflicting views on the order of the Verb and Object during this time. One group of researchers has put forward the claim that both Object Verb (OV) and Verb Object (VO) were available as underlying orders in Old English as well as Middle English, (Kroch & Taylor 1994; Pintzuk 1991, 1996, 2002), while another group holds the view that English had undergone some change in underlying word order from OV to VO (Roberts 1995, 1997; Wurff, 1997). Wurff (1997) and Roberts (1995, 1997) drawing on the Universal Grammar S(ubject) V(erb) O(bject) hypothesis proposed by Kayne (1994), maintain that sentence constituent order in English has always been VO even in Old English, and that OV was derived by a scrambling process which declined as the English period progressed.

In this paper, I argue that Early Modern English only had VO order underlyingly, and that the order OV was a surface structure derived by means of leftward movement of the object across the verb or through the process of shifting or scrambling. I appeal to the Principles and Parameters Theory of syntax by Chomsky, in which the relation agreement plays a central role not only in determining inflectional morphology like person, number properties of nominal, but also in movement. So, the approach becomes relevant in the analysis of object shift and verb movement in terms of the theory of locality in Chomsky's object movement and verb movement in EME (Chomsky 1993, 1995). A head movement is local if the head moves into the next highest position within the same structure. The theory assumes that in the surface OV, the object has moved overtly to the functional projection of AGRoP (object agreement phrase) for feature checking, which is compatible with the leftward object movement in Early Modern English.

The study on EME of the early 17th century is very important as it does not only shed some light on the structure of the object shift construction but also forms a base for the leftward movement of the object in Modern English. Also, the paper is intended for people who are interested in the history of the English Language or those that are interested in reading the works written in Early Modern English plays, poems and historical documents.

The paper is organized as follows: Background on the behavior of data in the Early Modern English which explains that the language was very rich in inflections which according the theoretical approach used in this paper has a bearing on the movement of the object to the left; a brief outline of the Principles and Parameters Theory; methods of data collection; and data analysis.

Background on Early Modern English

Early Modern English is a period of history of the English language that lies between 1580 and 1620. It is found in Shakespearean plays and poems, as well as the Parsons' family correspondence of the time. Therefore, Shakespearean language is generally referred to as Early Modern English (EME). EME was very rich in the system of subject-verb agreement inflections. Verbs and auxiliaries had different second person singular forms that ended in /-st/t/, as in *canst/couldst*, */dost/didst/*, *art*, *wilt/wouldst* and *shalt/shouldst*. Alongside the third person singular present forms ending in /-s/, EME also had forms ending in /-th/. There was an alternation between */does/doth/*, */drops/ dropeth/*. However, a lot of EME inflections have fallen out of use. Some of them are found in Shakespearean works, the bible (King James' version), as well as The Parsons' correspondence of that period. See example in (1) below showing the inflected verb from both EME, Holy Bible - King James Version (1999)

(1) He maketh me to lie down in green pastures. Psalm 23:2 (King James Version).

In contrast, Present-day English is mainly associated with the period from 1700 to the present (Aitchson 1996, p. 178). Present-day English is very much impoverished in terms of inflections, especially as compared with EME. The verb phrase is not heavily inflected as most of the inflections have fallen out of use. In fact, Present-day English is only left with a few inflections, such as the third person singular /-s/ with its variant /-es/ for present tense, the past tense form /-ed/; the present participle /-ing/ for progressive aspect and gerund, and the /-en/ past participle for the perfective aspect and passive (Radford 1997, p. 30). Grammatical aspects such as tense, aspect, and voice and the negative forms are usually expressed periphrastically, using constructions with primary auxiliary verbs like the *Be* form and its variants (*was*, *is*, *are*, *were*, *am*); and *Have* form and its variants (*has*, *had*). These auxiliaries inflect for tense and agreement. See example (2) below showing inflected verb in the simple present tense from Present-day English.

(2) He makes me to lie down in green pastures.

Method of Collection and Organization of Data

The paper presents some of the known facts about EME, in particular grammar of the object shift. Data were collected from twenty plays by Shakespeare in William Shakespeare plays and poems (Wells & Taylor 1998; Wells, Taylor, Jowett & Montgomery, 1998), as well as the Holy Bible - King James. Present-day data were collected from A comprehensive Grammar of the English Language (Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech, & Svartvik, 1985) English Grammar: A generative perspective (Haegeman & Guéron, 1999), and Deriving OV order in Finish (Holmberg, 2000b).

There were all sorts of patterns that were observed in the EME data. Some main verbs had objects either on the left of the verb, (OV) or right of the verb, VO, as in (3a) and (3b) below. Data collected were arranged into categories such as underlying structure, as in VO, surface structure, as in OV resulting from movement with scrambling inclusive. This was done in order to compare data from Early Modern English and Present-day English to account for the differences. The paper contains a number of examples from EME, which most of the time are not accessible to the average present-day reader.

(3a) Me thinks. –OV

(3b) Take thou. -VO

Principles and Parameters theory

Principles and Parameters is a framework within generative grammar which posits that the syntax of natural languages be described in accordance with general principles and specific parameters. Generative grammar has its traces from the book titled *Syntactic Structures* written by Noam Chomsky and published in 1957. Generative grammar is a linguistic theory that considers grammar to be a system of rules that generate combinations of words which form a grammatical sentence in a given language. Chomsky and other generativists have argued that many of the properties of generative grammar arise from Universal Grammar, which is a theoretical system of categories, operations and principles shared by all human languages (Wikipedia, n.d.). It is considered to be innate to the human brain rather than being learned from the environment. The idea of Universal Grammar can be traced back to the observation of Roger Bacon, a 13th century philosopher that all languages are built upon a common grammar (Wikipedia, n.d.). The idea got to be well known in the 1950s and 1960s through Noam Chomsky and other linguists. Chomsky (1993), (1995), postulates that universal properties of natural language grammar should show the operation of a set of universal grammatical principles.

The theory further posits that the grammatical variations found between languages can be characterized in terms of a restricted set of parameters, Radford (1997, p. 269). The parameters define the areas of cross-linguistic variations. Roberts (1997) argues that Universal Grammar lays down basic principles, but that each language has the liberty to pick and choose the parameters along which those principles are realized. The principles that phrases are built by surrounding the head words are rigid in the sense that they define what does not vary cross-linguistically, whereas the strength of functional heads may vary. If a language has a strong inflectional position, it will have V(erb) movement to inflectional (Tense) position. If a language has weak inflectional position then it will not have verb movement to

inflectional position. Early Modern English is very rich in inflections and, therefore, has strong functional heads (AGRs) (subject- agreement), while Present-day is very much impoverished in terms of inflections and thus has weak functional heads (AGRs). Therefore, the strength of functional heads (AGRs) determines the relative order of the verb and the object. The central idea is that the lexical items are moved from their lexicon to phrase markers already having their morphological features which match those of their destination, (Haegeman & Guéron, 1999, p. 582).

In Principles and Parameters Theory, The Early Modern English Inflectional Tense *head* (position) is assumed to be strong and as such triggers the movement of main verbs position to Inflectional or Tense position of the Inflectional Phrase. The strength of complement position also triggers movement from Inflectional position to complement position. In this paper, it is assumed that the shifting of the object in Early Modern English is determined by its strength, and thus moves leftwards to a strong position. Object shift is permitted only if the verb has raised to Tense position (Chomsky 1999). A brief description of salient properties of Early Modern English, which differentiate it from Present-day English, is provided since the features have a bearing on the movement of elements leftwards. Therefore, Principles and Parameters Theory is suitable for the data presented in this paper since it accounts for the parametric variations existing between EME and Present-day English, (Haegeman & Guéron, 1999).

Object shift

The parametric variations between Early Modern English and Present-day English is that the EME has object shifting from its canonical position to a position higher than the verb, whereas Present-day English has its object stay in its normal position as a verb complement. Object shift has not only been found to be occurring in Early Modern English, but also found to occur in Icelandic, Norwegian, Swedish and Danish. Many of the current studies on object shift have assumed underlying OV order and that the OV order result from movement operations of object shift. Holmberg, (1985, p.184, 1985, p.175, 1999, pp. 1-39) when working on Icelandic, which is similar to EME with regard to word order, came up with the generalization that object shift is dependent on verb movement (See the rule in 4). According to Holmberg, the object shifts in order to satisfy certain requirements. It is driven by *phi* features such as person, number [3rd P sg] that it has. In generative grammar, *phi* features (usually denoted with the Greek letter ϕ 'phi') are the semantic features of person, number and gender as encoded in words such as nouns and pronouns.

(4) Move an object leftward within the X' projection of its governing verb, when this verb (its trace) is phonetically empty (Holmberg, 1999, p. 184)

This means that an object NP should be moved into Spec, Agro, when there has been verb movement to Tense position. See example (5a).

(5a) Who are they that complain unto the King, The I, forsooth, am stern and love them

not? (Glou, The Tragedy of King Richard III. I. iii)

(5b) When have I inured thee? (Glou, The Tragedy of King Richard III. I, iii)

In EME, object shift is a licit application of object movement derived by V(erb)-to Inflection to Complement and object shift of a weak pronoun. In (5b), the verb has not moved because the auxiliary verb blocks movement of the main verb and, therefore, the pronoun 'thee' stays in its original place. The shifting of the object may be determined by its strength, whether it is strong and thus moves leftwards or weak and stays in situ. Object Shift is permitted only if V has raised to Tense position. Object shift is prevented across any phonologically visible category within VP.

In EME, the pattern V-OBJ-not is restricted to pronominal objects. However, this is only possible where the verb is also positioned in front of *not*. Full NPs do not undergo such a movement in sentences.

Object Pronoun

Object pronouns in Early Modern English have peculiar properties in the sense that they can occur in front of the negative particle *not* in sentences such as (6)

(6a) I know her not. (Speed, Two Gentlemen of Verona, II. i)

(6b) I know him not (Pedant, Taming of the Shrew, IV. ii)

(6c) I fear thee not. (Leonato, Much Ado about Nothing, V. i)

(6d) I understand you not (Princess, Love's Labour's Lost, V ii)

(6e) I love thee not, therefore pursue me not (Demetrius, Midsummer Night's Dream, v(i))

However, this is only possible where the verb is also positioned in front of *not*. What this suggests is that a weak (i.e. unstressed) pronoun which serves as the (direct) object of a finite verb can cliticise to the verb and then move into T(ense)

(9) Demetrius loves her and he loves not you. (Lysander, *Midsummer Night's Dream*, III. ii)

Although the verb *loves* moves in front of the negative *not* in (9), the pronoun *you* does not, but rather remains in-situ and so is positioned after *not*. This is because *you* is contrasted with *her*. So, both italicized pronouns are strong and remain in situ.

Further evidence that a weak object pronoun cliticises to a finite verb and undergoes movement along with the verb comes from negative imperative, as in (10).

(10a) Pity me not! (Phebe, *As You like It*, III. v)

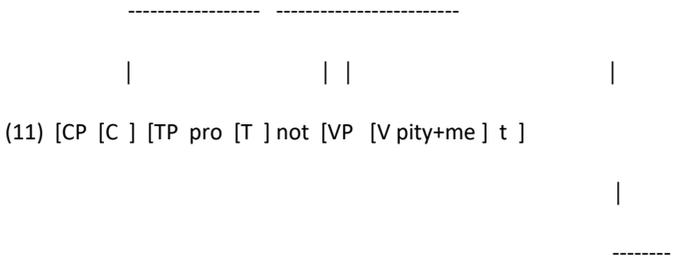
(10b) Fear me not, man! (Antipholus, *Comedy of Errors*, IV, iv)

(10c) Wrong me not! (Bianca, *Taming of the Shrew*, II, i)

(10d) Give me not the boots! (Proteus, *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, I. i)

(10e) Do him not that wrong! (Julia, *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, II. viii)

The imperatives raise to C (complement) position. The object pronouns in (10) move to C along with the immediately preceding bold-printed finite verb. A sentence like (10a) is derived in the manner shown in (11).



In (11), the weak pronoun *me* adjoins to the verb *pity* (as shown by the lower arrow). The resulting verbal complex *pity+me* moves as a single unit through Tense position into the strong imperative C (as shown by the upper arrows), resulting in the structure (12)

(12) [CP [C pity + me] [TP pro [T t] not [VP [V t] t]]]

The bold printed trace in (12) is the trace of *pity+me*. The italicized trace is the trace of *me*. As a result of being pied-pied (i.e. dragged) along with the verb *pity*, the weak object pronoun *me* comes to be positioned in front of the null *pro* subject in spec-TP, and in front of the negative *not*. The complex unit *pity+me* has moved to the Tense position to the complement position.

Similarly, complement carries a complete set of features; comprising the features, Person and Number. In this case, it searches and locates the verb *wrong* with its cliticised pronoun *me* because the verb has matching features, Person and Number properties by virtue of it carrying agreement morphology, which is the property of EME verbs. Consequently, the uninterpretable Person and Number features of complement get deleted. In turn complement values the unvalued features of the verb *wrong*.

The occurrence of both object verb (OV) and verb object (VO) order in EME can be attributed to the operation of V(erb) movement, and can, therefore, explain the absence of overt-movement in Present-day English. I have, therefore, established the fact that personal pronouns occur in positions barred to full NPs in EME. Only object pronouns (but not full NPs) can undergo this kind of movement, where they move from complement position in V(erb) P(hrase) to the functional projection such as AGRo, T or AGR S. This fits in very well with Chomsky's idea that clitics are both XPs and heads.

Scrambling

Another aspect of word order that is found in EME is that the object of the verb could sometimes be positioned in front of the verb instead of appearing after it. Languages that show a wide variety of different word orders are said to have scrambled them from their normal word order. The term scrambling is credited to Ross (1967) who posited that there is a scrambling transformation which alters the word order among constituents within the clauses. It applies in stylistic part of the grammars of the languages affected. Many instances of scrambling involves just shifting words out of their syntactic constituents, resulting in non-canonical word order. Scrambling does not occur in Present-day English. It is frequent in languages with free word order such as German, Dutch, Russian, Persian and Turkish languages. See the examples from Early Modern English in (13) below.

(13a) She may more suitors have. (Tranio, *The Taming of the Shrew*, I. ii)

(13b) Shall we their fond pageant see? (Puck, *Midsummer Night's Dream*, II. ii)

(13c) Thou should'st a husband take by my consent (Leontes, Winter's Take, V. iii)

This situation where the object appears and the object of the verb is positioned in front of the verb is considered by a number of linguist (Takano, 1998; Wurff, 1997) to be resulting from and (optional) movement operation called scrambling under which the object is adjoined to the VP containing it, as in (14) below.

(14) [TP She [T may] [VP more suitors [VP [V have] t]]]



In example (14) the object noun phrase *more suitors* originates immediately after the verb *have* in VP-complement position, and has undergone a scrambling operation by which it is adjoined to the left of the VP that was containing it.

See sentences in (13) where the scrambled object appears immediately to the left of the verb, whereas in sentence (15) below, the objects appear immediately to the left of the subject.

(15) Thy physic I will try (King, All's Well That Ends Well, II. i.)

It appears like rather than being adjoined to VP, the scrambled objects in (15) are adjoined to Tense Phrase. The resultant phenomenon is that (15) has the derivation (16) below.

(16) [TP Thy physic [TP I [T will] [VP [V try] t]]]



The scrambled object noun phrase *thy physic* originates as a complement of the very *try*, and is then moved to become an adjunct to the overall TP. See sentences in (17) below.

(17) a. The King your mote did see. (Boyet, Love's Labours's Lost, IV. i)

17) b. But I beam do find in each of three (Berowne, Love's Labour's Lost, IV. iii)

In example (17a) *your mote* is the object of the verb *see* although it is positioned between the subject *the king* and the auxiliary *did*. What has happened here is that, the object *your mote* has undergone movement into spec-CP for focusing

CONCLUSION

In this paper, I have demonstrated that object shift occurs in Early Modern English but not in Present-day English. I have shown that EME has object shift because it was very rich in morphology; the situation which Principles & Parameters theory views as having the power to trigger movement of pronouns along with verbs upward to functional positions. For instance, it was rich in its subject-verb agreement inflections. The object moves to check features. In contrast, Present-day English is very much impoverished in terms of morphology and, therefore, does not have the object noun phrase move in the manner in which the object in EME shifts. From P&P theory, Present-day English is “weak” because the finite auxiliaries and verbs carry impoverished subject-agreement inflections that are capable of triggering the object movement. The object shift in EME was not case-driven, instead, it was semantically driven movement that was caused by features as the object raised to a higher position outside the focal domain of the VP. The paper has also provided evidence showing that EME had both object shift and scrambling in the same period.

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