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The Syntax of Early English

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This book is a guide to the development of English syntax between the Old and Modern periods. Beginning with an overview of the main features of early English syntax, it gives a unified account of the grammatical changes occurring in the language during this period. Written by four leading experts in English historical syntax, the book demonstrates the ways in which syntactic change takes place and how these changes can be explained in terms of grammatical theory and language acquisition. The authors draw upon a wealth of empirical data and through a series of well-selected case studies they cover a wide range of topics including changes in word order, infinitival constructions and grammaticalization processes. This invaluable introduction to the significant changes in early English syntax will appeal to students and researchers in historical linguistics, theoretical linguistics and the history of English.

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CAMBRIDGE SYNTAX GUIDES

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Written by leading figures in the field, these guides will each include an overview of the grammatical structures of the language concerned. For the descriptivist, the books will provide an accessible introduction to the methods and results of the theoretical literature; for the theoretician, they will show how constructions that have achieved theoretical notoriety fit into the structure of the language as a whole; for everyone, they will promote cross-theoretical and cross-linguistic comparison with respect to a well-defined body of data.

The Syntax of Early English

OLGA FISCHER
ANS VAN KEMENADE
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Contents

Preface *vii*

List of editions used *x*

1	Language change and grammar change	<i>1</i>
1.1	Introduction	<i>1</i>
1.2	Historical change, language acquisition and the Principles and Parameters model	<i>2</i>
1.3	Grammar change and language change	<i>19</i>
1.4	Methodology and the role of data	<i>26</i>
1.5	Overview of the book	<i>35</i>
2	An outline of Old English syntax	<i>37</i>
2.1	Introduction	<i>37</i>
2.2	Morphology and case assignment	<i>37</i>
2.3	Word order	<i>46</i>
2.4	Some clause types	<i>53</i>
2.5	Subordinate clauses	<i>55</i>
2.6	Preposition stranding	<i>64</i>
3	An outline of Middle English syntax	<i>68</i>
3.1	Introductory remarks	<i>68</i>
3.2	Morphology and case assignment	<i>69</i>
3.3	Word order	<i>79</i>
3.4	Clause types	<i>83</i>
3.5	Subordinate clauses	<i>88</i>
4	The Verb-Second constraint and its loss	<i>104</i>
4.1	Introduction	<i>104</i>
4.2	The facts	<i>105</i>
4.3	The position of the finite verb: Verb-Second?	<i>110</i>
4.4	Developments after the Old English period	<i>129</i>

5	The loss of object–verb word order	138
5.1	Introduction	138
5.2	Old English: the basic facts	139
5.3	Old English word order: OV or VO?	145
5.4	Middle English: the basic facts	160
5.5	Analysing the Middle English word order patterns	164
5.6	The diachrony of OV and VO order	172
6	Verb–particles in Old and Middle English	180
6.1	Introduction	180
6.2	Particles: some general considerations	181
6.3	Particles in Old English	185
6.4	Position of the particle marks the position of the verb before movement	190
6.5	The universal base hypothesis	197
6.6	Some remaining problems: particles separated from the verb (part . . . V)	199
6.7	Particles in Middle English	201
6.8	Conclusion	210
7	Changes in infinitival constructions	211
7.1	Introduction	211
7.2	New infinitival constructions: constructions containing a lexical subject	214
7.3	Borrowing and internal factors: the Latin AcI in the history of Dutch	241
	Appendices	248
8	The history of the ‘easy-to-please’ construction	256
8.1	Introduction	256
8.2	Theoretical issues in the analysis of ‘easy-to-please’	257
8.3	Data and analysis for Old English	261
8.4	Data and analysis for Middle English	271
8.5	Explaining the changes in Middle English	277
9	Grammaticalization and grammar change	284
9.1	Introduction	284
9.2	Grammaticalization theory	286
9.3	Two case studies	293
	Appendix	320

Preface

In the course of the 1980s and 1990s, historical syntax in general, and English historical syntax in particular, developed into a thriving field of research. Much of the credit for this renaissance must go to the advent of sophisticated models of language variation and of linguistic theory. It is perhaps in the domain of syntax that modern theoretical work has most clearly sharpened the traditional questions of historical linguistics, leading to a surge of novel and interesting insights. Happily, this interest in theoretical questions has gone hand in hand with a continued interest in philological matters and, perhaps even more importantly, the creation of ever larger and more sophisticated computerized databases. For these reasons, it seems a particularly felicitous moment for a textbook to appear in which questions concerning the historical syntax of English are consistently addressed from the perspective of a model of syntactic theory.

The model of syntactic theory adopted in this book is the one known as the Principles and Parameters framework. This has important consequences for the way in which we view historical change. In the Principles and Parameters framework, the focus of investigation is the grammar internalized by the native speaker rather than the language output. Consequently, we will attempt throughout the book to make a distinction between language change and grammar change. In the first chapter, we outline the view of grammar change that we try to establish in the book, and set out our arguments and methodology for making the distinction between language change and grammar change. Chapters 2 and 3 are devoted to descriptive overviews of the most important features of the syntax of Old English and Middle English respectively. The remaining chapters are case studies emerging from our own ongoing research into Old and Middle English syntax. In each of these chapters, we present and discuss the relevant facts, giving a structured and critical appraisal of the results accomplished in work done on each case in the literature, substantially including our own research results cast from the perspective of grammar change. Thus, it is attempted in each chapter to strike a balance between theoretical argument and historical detail.

The choice of topics was dictated by a simple consideration: we have tried to make a combination of those among our research topics that are currently of interest, and that would make a coherent book. The case study chapters contain, first of all, three chapters on closely related word order phenomena. Chapter 4 is on the position of the finite verb. In Old and Middle English, the position of the finite verb was determined by a rather complex version of the Verb-Second constraint that is a characteristic of most Germanic languages. This chapter gives a detailed discussion and analysis of this phenomenon and its loss. Chapter 5 is on another classic of word order: the loss of OV word orders. This is essentially about the position of the non-finite verb. It has often been observed that Old English had many OV orders, which were lost in Middle English: the chapter reviews the evidence and pursues an analysis in current theoretical terms. Chapter 6 is on verb-particle constructions, or the rise of phrasal verbs. For Old English particle + verb combinations, a good case can be made that the position of the particle corresponds rather precisely to that of the non-finite verb (in an OV order), whereas that of the verbal part follows the processes governing finite verb placement. Thus the chapter makes crucial use of the results of both chapters 4 and 5. With the general changes in word order as treated in chapters 4 and 5, the verb-particle combinations came to be reanalysed as fixed lexical constructs. Chapters 7 and 8 are on developments in infinitival constructions. Chapter 7 is on the rise of infinitival constructions with a lexical subject, such as *I believed him to be innocent*. It is argued that an important factor in this development is the loss of OV word order as discussed in chapter 5. Chapter 8 is on the rise of the so-called *easy to please* construction, whose development is also closely interrelated with word order developments. Finally, chapter 9 is on two cases of grammaticalization in the history of English from the perspective of grammar change: the rise of periphrastic *have to*, as in *I have to do my work*; and the historical development of sentence negation. Contrary to much work on grammaticalization, it is argued in these case studies that our specific and theoretical notion of grammar change yields an interesting perspective for these cases.

This book aims at an audience consisting of advanced undergraduates and beginning graduate students. It is suitable as a textbook for a specialized undergraduate course, and lecturers and students alike should find it of help in delineating topics for research essays, and paving the way toward thesis research. Although we have attempted to clarify theoretical issues as they come up in the discussion, some background in the Principles and Parameters framework will make it easier to put the case studies in perspective. For individual use, the book should be of interest to both language historians and

theoreticians, and may be seen as a guided tour through the most relevant literature on the empirical topics under discussion.

We are grateful to Kluwer Academic Publishers and the editors of *Neophilologus* for permission to reprint the appendix on *have to* in chapter 9, and to Mouton de Gruyter for permission to use the appendix on infinitival constructions in chapter 7.

We owe a debt to several people, editors and kindred spirits in our quest for increased knowledge of and insight in the historical development of English. Judith Ayling, formerly of Cambridge University Press, initiated the project with us, and her efforts were later taken over by Kate Brett and Andrew Winnard. David Denison and Anthony Warner wrote encouraging referee reports in the early stages, which advanced the whole project a step. David Lightfoot has given us various rounds of comments which have helped considerably in sharpening the issues and tightening the discussion. Richard Hogg gave positive feedback on the whole manuscript. Finally, Liesbeth Visser provided student feedback on chapters 4 and 5.

Editions used

The editions cited in this book are listed alphabetically under their abbreviated title. Citations of Old English texts are taken from the Dictionary of Old English Corpus (apart from *ÆCHom* I where Thorpe's text is cited) with the line references and short titles employed by the Dictionary of Old English (Healey and Venezky 1980). Unless otherwise indicated texts are cited by volume/book, chapter, page and line reference where applicable.

The following abbreviations are used:

- ASPR* G. P. Krapp and E. V. K. Dobbie (eds.) 1931–53. *The Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records: a Collective Edition*, 6 vols. New York and London: Columbia University Press
- EETS* Early English Text Society, Original Series
- EETS ES* Early English Text Society, Extra Series
- EETS SS* Early English Text Society, Supplementary Series

- Alex* *Alexander's Letter to Aristotle* in S. Rypins (ed.) 1924. *Three Old English Prose Texts* (EETS 161), pp. 1–50. 2.3
- Ancr.* J. R. R. Tolkien (ed.) 1962. *The English Text of the Ancrene Riwe, Ancrene Wisse, CCC MS 402* (EETS 249). By folio and line. 3.15, 3.63
- Ancr. (Nero)* M. Day (ed.) 1952. *The English Text of the Ancrene Riwe: BM MS. Cotton Nero A.xiv* (EETS 225). 3.34, 6.46a, 6.42a
- And* *Andreas*, in *ASPR* 2. 7.23iii
- ApT* P. Goolden (ed.) 1958. *The Old English 'Apollonius of Tyre'*, London: Oxford University Press. 5.38
- Arth.&M.* O. D. Macrae-Gibson (ed.) 1973. *Of Arthour and of Merlin I: Text* (EETS 268). 3.23
- Audelay Poems* E. K. Whiting (ed.) 1931. *John Audelay: the Poems* (EETS 184). 8.79
- Ayenb.* R. Morris and P. Gradon (eds.) 1965–79. *Dan Michel's Ayenbite of Inwit*, corr. and repr. (EETS 23, 278). 3.31, 5.57, 5.59

- ÆAdmon* 1 Admonitio ad filium spiritualem, in H. W. Norman (ed.) 1848. *The Anglo-Saxon Version of the Hexameron of St. Basil . . . and the Anglo-Saxon Remains of St. Basil's Admonitio ad filium spiritualem*, London. 7.8a
- ÆCHom* I B. Thorpe (ed.) 1844–46. *The Sermones Catholici or Homilies of Ælfric I*, London: Ælfric Society. 1.21a,c, 1.22b, 2.2, 2.5b, 2.6a, 2.17a,c, 2.26b, 2.28, 2.29a, 2.32, 2.33a, 2.34a,b, 2.36a, 2.38a, 2.39d,f, 2.40a, 2.47, 2.50a,b, 2.54a,c, 2.61b, 2.68, 2.71c, 2.77, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6a, 4.12, 4.15, 4.19, 4.22, 4.24, 4.33, 4.34, 4.35, 4.36, 4.39, 4.40, 4.50, 4.55a, 4.59, 4.67, 4.71b, 4.73a,b, 5.5, 5.7, 5.16, 5.18, 5.19, 5.20, 5.23, 5.24, 5.26, 5.28, 5.31, 5.40, 5.46, 5.48, 6.2a, 6.5b, 6.14, 6.17b, 6.20b, 6.28b, 6.29b, 6.32, 6.35, 7.1, 7.15a, 7.21iia, 8.46, 8.53, 9.23a, 9.24
- ÆCHom* I, 17(App) P. Clemoes (ed.) 1997. *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: the First Series* (EETS SS 17), pp. 535–42. 7.21ia,b
- ÆCHom* II M. Godden (ed.) 1979. *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: the Second Series* (EETS SS 5). 2.9b, 2.19b, 2.24, 2.30, 2.38b, 2.39a, 2.48, 2.51, 2.52, 2.54b, 2.61a,c, 2.62b, 2.76a, 2.78a, 2.79b, 3.8, 4.43a, 4.68, 5.15, 5.17, 5.21, 5.27, 5.33, 6.18b, 6.28a, 6.31, 6.39d, 6.43a, 6.45, 7.8c, 8.28, 8.43, 8.81, 9.5b
- ÆColl* G. M. Garmonsway (ed.) 1947. *Ælfric's Colloquy*, 2nd edn., London: Methuen. 2.5a, 4.9, 7.18b
- ÆGram* J. Zupitza (ed.) 1880. *Ælfrics Grammatik und Glossar*, Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung. 7.15b, 7.17
- ÆHom* J. C. Pope (ed.) 1967–68. *Homilies of Ælfric: a Supplementary Collection* (EETS 259, 260). 1.22c, 2.7a,b, 2.12a, 2.25, 2.33b, 2.49, 2.64, 4.44, 4.46, 4.69, 4.70, 5.8, 6.13, 7.21iiia, 9.21, 9.23b
- ÆLet* 2(Wulfstan 1) First Old English Letter for Wulfstan, in B. Fehr (ed.) 1914. *Die Hirtenbriefe Ælfrics*. Bibliothek der angelsächsischen Prosa 9, Hamburg: Henri Grand. 2.39b, 6.29a
- ÆLS* W. W. Skeat (ed.) 1881–1900. *Ælfric's Lives of the Saints* (EETS 76, 82, 94, 114) (repr. as 2 vols. 1966). By life and line. 1.21b, 2.12c, 2.15b, 2.20b, 2.31, 2.53, 2.67, 2.71b, 3.6b, 4.42, 4.43b, 4.47, 4.55d, 4.71a, 5.12, 5.22, 6.3b, 6.10a, 6.11, 6.20a, 6.36a,b, 6.44, 7.21iiib, 7.22a, 9.26a,b, 9.27a
- ÆTemp* H. Henel (ed.) 1942. *Ælfric's De temporibus anni* (EETS 213). 7.7a
- Barlam* J. C. Hirsh (ed.) 1986. *Barlam and Iosaphat* (EETS 290). 5.64
- Bede* T. Miller (ed.) 1890–98. *The Old English Version of Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (EETS 95, 96, 110, 111). 2.18b, 2.37a, 2.57, 2.58, 2.59, 2.62a, 2.65, 4.61, 6.6a, 6.39b,c, 7.18a, 7.21iib, 7.23iva, 8.41, 9.14, 9.16A1

- Ben.Rule*(1) E. A. Kock (ed.) 1902. *Three Middle-English Versions of the Rule of St. Benet* (EETS 120). 4.79a,b,c
- Beo* *Beowulf*, in *ASPR* 4. 1.27, 2.10a, 2.22a, 2.55, 5.35, 5.36, 9.10a, 9.28, 9.29a,b, 9.note14
- Bo* W. J. Sedgefield (ed.) 1899. *King Alfred's Old English Version of Boethius' De consolazione philosophiae*, Oxford: Clarendon (repr. Darmstadt 1968). 1.22d, 2.12b, 2.45, 2.69, 2.70a, 2.76b, 3.6a, 3.20, 3.86, 4.18, 4.48, 5.13, 5.25, 5.39, 7.7b, 8.40, 8.47
- ByrM* P. S. Baker and M. Lapidge (eds.) 1995. *Byrhtferth's Enchiridion* (EETS SS 15). 6.38b
- Capgrave Chronicles* P. J. Lucas (ed.) 1983. *John Capgrave's Abbreviacion of Chronicles* (EETS 285). 5.60, 5.62
- Caxton Paris&Vienne* M. Leach (ed.) 1957. *Paris and Vienne translated from the French and printed by William Caxton* (EETS 234). 3.41
- Caxton Knight of Tower* M. Y. Offord (ed.) 1971. *The Book of the Knight of the Tower translated by William Caxton* (EETS SS 2). 5.77
- Cely Letters* A. Hanham (ed.) 1975. *The Cely Letters 1472–1488* (EETS 273) By letter and line. 3.3, 5.63
- Chaucer* L. D. Benson (ed.) 1988. *The Riverside Chaucer*, 3rd edn. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 3.2, 3.4, 3.27, 3.32, 3.33, 3.35, 3.36, 3.44, 3.45, 3.46, 3.47, 3.48, 3.50, 3.51, 3.52, 3.53, 3.54, 3.55, 3.56, 3.57, 3.58, 3.59, 3.62, 3.65, 3.66, 3.67, 3.73, 3.75, 3.79, 3.80, 3.89, 3.90, 3.91, 3.93, 3.94, 3.96, 5.3, 5.55, 5.56, 5.58, 5.69, 5.83, 5.84, 7.12, 7.19a, 7.28, 7.note16, 8.67, 9.8, 9.11, 9.34a,b
- Cloud* P. Hodgson (ed.) 1944. *The Cloud of Unknowing and the Book of Privy Counselling* (EETS 218). 8.59, 8.73, 8.74
- ChristB* *Christ*, in *ASPR* 3. 6.note2
- ChronA* The Parker Chronicle. MS A, in C. Plummer (ed.) 1892–99. *Two of the Saxon Chronicles Parallel*, Oxford: Clarendon. 2.9a, 2.19a,c, 2.21b,c, 2.27, 2.41, 4.10, 4.16, 4.53, 5.1
- ChronB* MS BL Cotton Tiberius A.vi, in B. Thorpe (ed.) 1861. *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, London: Rolls Series. 6.34
- ChronE* The Peterborough Chronicle. MS. E, in C. Plummer (ed.) 1892–99. *Two of the Saxon Chronicles Parallel*, Oxford: Clarendon. 1.6, 3.60, 4.75a, 4.76a, 5.2, 6.42b, 6.47, 6.note12
- Conrad* *Lord Jim* Joseph Conrad 1949. *Lord Jim*, Harmondsworth: Penguin. 6.49
- CP* H. Sweet (ed.) 1871. *King Alfred's West Saxon Version of Gregory's Pastoral Care* (EETS 45, 50). 1.23b, 2.4, 2.6b, 2.8b, 2.11a,b, 2.13, 2.16, 2.17b, 2.35b, 2.40b, 2.43, 2.44, 2.46, 2.62c, 2.70a,b, 2.78b, 2.79a, 3.26,

- 4.7, 4.14, 4.25, 4.26b, 4.49, 4.54, 4.55b, 4.64, 4.71c, 5.4, 5.9, 5.11, 5.30, 5.32, 5.50, 6.3a, 6.4b, 6.12, 6.15, 6.18a, 6.19, 6.20a, 6.38c, 6.39a, 7.23ii, 8.37, 8.52, 9.9a, 9.25, 9.27b
- Cursor Mundi* R. Morris (ed.) 1874–78. *Cursor Mundi* (EETS 57, 59, 62, 66, 68). 1.26b, 3.74, 3.82, 8.57, 9.12
- Destr. Troy* G. A. Panton and D. Donaldson 1869–74. *The Gest Hystoriale of the Destruction of Troy* (EETS 39, 56). 3.13b, 3.92
- Dives&Pauper* P. H. Barnum (ed.) 1976–80. *Dives and Pauper* (EETS 275, 280). 3.17, 3.19
- Dryden M. E. Novak and G. R. Guffey (eds.) 1970. vol. 10: (*Plays*) of *The Works of John Dryden*, Berkeley: University of California Press. 5.81
- EARLPS* K. D. Bülbiring (ed.) 1891. *The Earliest Complete English Prose Psalter* (EETS 97). 4.78
- El Elene*, in *ASPR* 2. 2.22b, 3.68
- Gawain* J. R. R. Tolkien and E. V. Gordon (eds.) 1967. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, 2nd edn., rev. by N. Davis, Oxford: Clarendon. 3.97a
- GD (C)* MS C, in H. Hecht (ed.) 1900–07. *Bischof Wærferths von Worcester Übersetzung der Dialoge Gregors des Grossen*, Bibliothek der angelsächsischen Prosa 5, Hamburg: Henri Grand. 4.38, 5.49, 6.20a, 8.26, 8.34
- GD (H)* MS H, in Hecht 1900–7. 6.4a, 8.35
- Gen&Ex* R. Morris (ed.) 1865. *The Story of Genesis and Exodus* (EETS 7). 3.37, 3.71
- Gower Confessio Amantis* G. C. Macaulay (ed.) 1900–01. *Confessio Amantis* in *The English Works of John Gower* (EETS ES 81, 82). 1.17a, 3.14, 7.29c
- GuthA,B Guthlac*, in *ASPR* 3. 7.8b, 8.38
- Havelok* G. V. Smithers (ed.) 1987. *Havelok*, Oxford: Clarendon. 3.7a,b, 3.61, 3.97b
- Hoccleve Jonathas* F. J. Furnivall and I. Gollancz (eds.) 1892–98. *Hoccleve's Works: The Minor Poems* (EETS ES 61, 73). 1.17b
- HomS* 17(BIHom5) Blickling Homily 5, in R. Morris (ed.) 1874–80. *The Blickling Homilies* (EETS 58, 63, 73) (repr. in 1 vol. 1967), pp. 55–65. 2.23
- HomU* 19(BIHom8) Blickling Homily 8, in R. Morris 1874–80, pp. 97–105. 2.35a, 4.13, 4.51
- HomU* 20(BIHom10) Blickling Homily 10, in R. Morris 1874–80, pp. 107–15. 2.15a
- HomU* 42(Nap52) Homily 52, in A. S. Napier (ed.) 1883. *Wulfstan, Sammlung englischer Denkmäler* 4, Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, pp. 275–6. 7.22b

- HomU* 46(Nap57) Homily 57, in Napier 1883, pp. 291–9. 5.14
- Imit.Christ* B. Biggs (ed.) 1997. *The First Translation of the Imitatio Christi* (EETS 309). 7.9a
- Jacob&J* A. S. Napier (ed.) 1916. *Jacob & Iosep: a Middle English Poem of the 13th Century*, Oxford: Clarendon. 3.9
- Jn(WSCp)* John (Cambridge Corpus Christ College MS 140), in W. W. Skeat (ed.) 1871–87. *The Four Gospels in Anglo-Saxon, Northumbrian, and Old Mercian Versions*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 9.16A2
- Jud* *Judith*, in *ASPR* 4. 7.18d
- Jul* *Juliana*, in *ASPR* 3. 7.18f
- Ken.Serm.* *Kentish Sermons*, in J. A. W. Bennett and G. V. Smithers (eds.) 1968. *Early Middle English Verse and Prose*, 2nd edn, Oxford: Clarendon, pp. 213–22. 4.75c, 9.33a
- King Horn* J. Hall (ed.) 1901. *King Horn: a Middle English Romance*, Oxford: Clarendon. 3.28, 3.29
- Lanc. of the Laik* W. W. Skeat (ed.) 1865. *The Romans of Lancelot of the Laik* (EETS 6). 3.64
- Layamon Brut* G. L. Brook and R. F. Leslie (eds.) 1963–78. *Layamon's Brut* (EETS 250, 277). 3.49, 7.25a, 7.26a,b, 7.29a, 9.13
- Lch* I(Herb) Herbarius, in T. O. Cockayne (ed.) 1864–66. *Leechdoms, Wortcunning and Starcraft of Early England*, 3 vols. (repr. 1961), London: Holland. 8.44
- Lch* II Bald's Leechbook, in Cockayne 1864–66. 7.23i
- LibSc* S. S. Getty (ed.) 1969. *An Edition with Commentary of the Latin/Anglo-Saxon "Liber scintillarum"*, dissertation, University of Pennsylvania. 8.31
- Lk(WSCp)* Luke (Cambridge Corpus Christ College MS 140), in W. W. Skeat (ed.) 1871–87. *The Four Gospels in Anglo-Saxon, Northumbrian, and Old Mercian Versions*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 9.5a
- LS7* (Euphr) Saint Euphrosyne, in W. W. Skeat (ed.) 1881–1900. *Ælfric's Lives of the Saints* (EETS 76, 82, 94, 112) (repr. as 2 vols. 1966), vol. II, pp. 334–54. 4.6b, 4.52
- LS8* (Eust) Saint Eustace and his Companions, in W. W. Skeat (ed.) 1881–1900. *Ælfric's Lives of the Saints* (EETS 76, 82, 94, 112) (repr. as 2 vols. 1966), vol. II, pp. 190–218. 8.42
- LS14* (MargaretAss) B. Assmann (ed.) 1889. *Angelsächsische Homilien und Heiligenleben*, Bibliothek der angelsächsischen Prosa 3, Kassel: Georg Wigand, pp. 170–80. 7.note6, 9.10b

- LS17.1 (MartinMor) Saint Martin, in R. Morris (ed.) 1874–80. *The Blickling Homilies* (EETS 58, 63, 73), pp. 211–27. 6.16
- LS20 (AssumptMor) Assumption of Mary the Virgin, in R. Morris (ed.) 1874–80, pp. 137–59. 6.17a
- LS23 (MaryofEgypt) Mary of Egypt, in W. W. Skeat (ed.) 1881–1900. *Ælfric's Lives of the Saints* (EETS 76, 82, 94, 112) (repr. as 2 vols. 1966), vol. II, pp. 2–52. 8.45
- LS29 (Nicholas) Saint Nicholas. Dictionary of Old English Transcript. 7.18c
- LS32 (Peter&Paul) Peter and Paul, in R. Morris 1874–80. *The Blickling Homilies* (EETS 58, 63, 73), pp. 171–93. 6.30, 6.43b
- Lydgate *Troy Book* H. Bergen (ed.) 1906–10. *Lydgate's Troy Book* (EETS ES 97, 103, 106). 3.30
- Malory *Works* E. Vinaver (ed.) 1947. *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory*, 3 vols., Oxford: Clarendon. 3.24, 3.25, 3.39, 3.40, 3.72, 3.83, 3.85, 7.25b, 7.27, 7.30, 7.31a, 7.33b
- Mandev. P. Hamelius (ed.) 1919–23. *Mandeville's Travels* (EETS 153, 154). 3.70, 3.78, 3.95
- MAngl Mappula Angliae, C. Horstmann (ed.) 1887. 'Mappula Angliae', *ES* 10, 6–34. 8.56
- Manning HS F. J. Furnivall (ed.) 1901–03. *Robert of Brunne's 'Handlyng Synne'* (EETS 119, 123). 3.87, 8.84
- Mart 5(Kotzor) G. Kotzor (ed.) 1981. *Das altenglische Martyrologium*, Abhandlungen der Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-Historische Klasse, Neue Folge, Heft 88/1–2, München: Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften. 7.23ivb, 8.27, 9.9b
- Met *The Meters of Boethius*, in *ASPR* 5. 4.26a, 4.37, 4.63
- Mk(WSCp) Mark (Cambridge Corpus Christ College MS 140), in W. W. Skeat (ed.) 1871–87. *The Four Gospels in Anglo-Saxon, Northumbrian, and Old Mercian Versions*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 4.41
- MKempe S. B. Meech (ed.) 1940. *The Book of Margery Kempe* (EETS 212). 3.38, 6.42e,f
- More *Dialogue of Comfort* L. L. Mantz and F. Manlay (eds.) 1976. *A Dialogue of Comfort* (vol. 12 of *The Complete Works of St. Thomas More*), New Haven: Yale University Press. 5.66, 5.67
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- Or J. Bately (ed.) 1980. *The Old English Orosius* (EETS SS 6). 1.22a, 1.23a,

2.20a, 2.22a, 2.26a, 2.29b, 2.36b, 2.37b, 2.56, 2.60, 2.61d, 2.66, 2.76a, 4.8, 4.17, 4.20, 4.23, 4.55c, 4.60, 4.62, 4.65, 4.66, 5.6, 5.10, 6.2b, 6.5a, 6.6b, 6.10b, 6.33, 9.7

- Orm* R. Holt (ed.) 1878. *The Ormulum: with the Notes and Glossary of Dr. R. M. White*, 2 vols., Oxford: Clarendon. 3.22
- Paston Letters* N. Davis (ed.) 1971–76. *Paston Letters and Papers of the Fifteenth Century*, Oxford: Clarendon. By letter and line. 3.18, 3.84, 5.65, 5.76, 7.19b, 7.29b, 7.31b,c, 7.33a, 9.16B1
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- Phoen* *The Phoenix*, in *ASPR* 3. 2.10b
- Piers Plowman B* G. Kane and E. T. Donaldson (eds.) 1988. *Piers Plowman: the B Version, Will's Visions of Piers Plowman and Do-Well*, rev. edn., London: Athlone / Berkeley: University of California Press. 3.97c
- Poema Morale* J. Hall (ed.) 1920. *Selections from Early Middle English 1130–1250 I*, Oxford: Clarendon, pp. 30–53. 9.35a
- PPs* The Paris Psalter, in *ASPR* 5. 8.29
- PPs(prose)* J. W. Bright and R. L. Ramsay (eds.) 1907. *The West Saxon Psalms*, The Belles Lettres Series, Boston: Heath. By psalm and verse. 4.45
- Rel.Lyrics* C. Brown (ed.) 1914. *Religious Lyrics of the XIVth Century*, Oxford: Clarendon. By lyric and line. 7.9b
- Rid* *Riddles*, in *ASPR* 3. 7.18e, 7.21ia,b
- Rolle* G. G. Perry (ed.) 1866. *Richard Rolle de Hampole: English Prose Treatises* (EETS 20). 4.80a,b
- RRose* in L. D. Benson (ed.) 1988. *The Riverside Chaucer*, 3rd edn, Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2.77, 8.78
- Sat* *Christ and Satan*, in *ASPR* 1. 6.38
- Sermon* *Testimony of Thorpe*, in A. Hudson (ed.) 1993. *Two Wycliffite Texts: Sermon of Taylor, Testimony of Thorpe* (EETS 301). 5.61
- Shakespeare* S. Wells and G. Taylor (eds.) 1986. *William Shakespeare: the Complete Works*, Oxford: Clarendon.
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- SSecr* R. Steele and T. Henderson 1898. *Three Prose Versions of the Secreta Secretorum* (EETS ES 74). 3.5

- Stanzaic Life of Chr.* F. A. Foster (ed.) 1926. *A Stanzaic Life of Christ* (EETS 166). 7.9c
- St. Juliana* (Bod) MS. Bodley 34, in S. R. T. O. d'Ardenne (ed.) 1961. *þe Liflade ant te Passiun of Seinte Iulene* (EETS 248). 6.42c, 9.33b
- St. Juliana* (Roy) MS. BL Royal 17 A xxvii, in S. R. T. O. d'Ardenne (ed.) 1961. *þe Liflade ant te Passiun of Seinte Iulene* (EETS 248). 1.26a
- St. Kath.* S. R. T. O d'Ardenne and E. J. Dobson (eds.) 1981. *Seinte Katerine* (EETS SS 7). 3.76, 6.42d, 6.48b
- St. Marg.* F. M. Mack (ed.) 1934. *Sainte Marherete* (EETS 193). 6.46b,c, 6.48a
- Sward* Sawles Warde, in J. A. W. Bennett and G. V. Smithers (eds.) 1968. *Early Middle English Verse and Prose*, 2nd edn., Oxford: Clarendon, pp. 241–61. 3.16, 4.76b, 9.35b
- Syr Tryamowre* A. J. Erdman Schmidt (ed.) 1937. *Sir Tryamowre: a Metrical Romance*, Utrecht: Kemink. 8.77
- Tale of Beryn* F. J. Furnivall and W. G. Stone (eds.) 1909. *The Tale of Beryn* (EETS ES 105). 8.64
- ThCap2* (Sauer) MS. Bodley 865, in H. Sauer (ed.) 1978. *Theodulfi Capitula in England: Die altenglischen Übersetzungen, zusammen mit dem lateinischen Text*, München: Wilhelm Fink. 7.11, 8.30
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- Trevisa Polychr.* C. Babington and J. R. Lumby (eds.) 1865–86. *Polychronicon Ranulphi Higdin, Monachi Cestrensis: together with the English Translation of John Trevisa and of an Unknown Writer of the fourteenth century*, 9 vols., London: Rolls Series. 9.16A3
- VespHom.* MS Cotton Vespasian A.xxii, in R. Morris (ed.) 1868. *Old English Homilies of the 12th and 13th Centuries* (EETS 34). 6.40
- Vices&V* F. Holthausen (ed.) 1888–1921. *Vices and Virtues* (EETS 89, 159). 3.13a, 4.75b, 4.76c, 4.77, 6.41a,b, 9.35c
- WBible* *The Earlier Version*, in J. Forshall and F. Madden (eds.) 1850. *The Holy Bible . . . made from the Latin Vulgate by John Wycliffe and his Followers*, 4 vols., Oxford: Oxford University Press. 3.10, 7.20b
- WCan* R. G. Fowler (ed.) 1972. *Wulfstan's Canons of Edgar* (EETS 266). 2.63
- WHom* D. Bethurum (ed.) 1957. *The Homilies of Wulfstan*, Oxford: Clarendon. By homily and line. 2.8a, 2.21a, 2.39c,e, 5.29

- Wooring Lord* R. Morris (ed.) 1868. *Old English Homilies* (EETS 34) pp. 269–87. 3.69, 8.55
- WPal.* G. H. V. Bunt (ed.) 1985. *William of Palerne: an Alliterative Romance*, Groningen: Bouma. 3.21
- Wycl Clergy HP* in F. D. Matthew (ed.) 1880. *English Works of Wyclif* (EETS 74), pp. 359–404. 8.60
- Wycl Feigned Cont. Life* K. Sisam (ed.) 1921. *Fourteenth Century Verse & Prose*, Oxford: Clarendon, pp. 119–28. 4.81b
- Wycl Leaven Pharisees* in F. D. Matthew (ed.) 1880. *English Works of Wyclif* (EETS 74), pp. 1–27. 8.58
- Wycl.Serm.* (Arnold) T. Arnold (ed.) 1869–71. *Selected English Works of John Wyclif*, 3 vols., Oxford: Clarendon. 7.20a
- Wycl.Serm.* A. Hudson (vols. I, III) and P. Gradon (vol. II) (eds.) 1983–90. *English Wycliffite Sermons*, Oxford: Clarendon. 4.81a

Language change and grammar change

1.1 Introduction

Ða com of more under misthleopum
 Grendel gongan, Godes yrre bær;
 mynte se manscaða manna cynnes
 sumne besyrwan in sele þam hean. (*Beo* 710–13)

These are four lines from one of the earliest Old English texts, the famous heroic poem *Beowulf*, which was composed over one thousand years ago. This piece of language, indeed Old English in general, is almost completely unreadable without specialized training; the most an unskilled reader will recognize is a few words still around in the language, like *of* and *under*. A word-by-word translation is: then came from moor under misty cliffs / Grendel go, God's anger bore / meant the foul-foe of-the-men / one trap in hall the high. An idiomatic translation into Modern English is: 'Then from the moor under the misty cliffs came Grendel, bearing God's anger. The foul foe meant to trap one of the men in the high hall.' Leaving aside phonological and lexical differences, which are not our concern in this book, it is not difficult to spot differences in sentence construction between these four lines and the present-day language. For instance, the word order *Then came from the moor . . .* is at best a stylistically marked option in present-day English, and the word order with the finite verb in initial position in line 3 is ungrammatical: *meant the foul foe . . .* Other differences are the combination of the verbs 'come' and 'intend' with a bare infinitive, as in *com . . . Grendel gongan*, and *mynte . . . besyrwan*. A further difference is the word order of the nominal group *sele þam hean* 'hall the high'. Beside these, the language of *Beowulf* has a system of cases and of verb endings, and there are various other syntactic differences apparent from these four lines of text. Many of these differences will be discussed or touched upon in the chapters to come, though not all of them, for it is not the aim of this book to give an inventory of the syntactic changes that have taken place in the history of English. This is a task that is best left to handbooks, such as the various volumes of *The Cambridge History of the English Language*, which

contain excellent and extensive digests of the work that has been done. The approach in this book will be different, in that we pursue in detail the nature and causes of a number of cases of syntactic change in the history of English. The approach that we shall take in doing so is inspired by theoretical work in the vein of Chomsky's Principles and Parameters approach to syntactic theory. Looking at historical developments from this generative perspective has important consequences for our view of syntactic change, since it means that we will focus on change in grammar as conceived of in the Principles and Parameters approach, rather than on language change.¹

In this introductory chapter, we explicate our approach and its consequences in the realms of syntactic theory and philology. We first sketch the basic ideas underlying the generative approach to syntactic change, and show how its emphasis on the grammar of the native speaker as the object of study both sharpens and complicates the study of historical change. We will also discuss some important recent contributions to the study of English historical syntax from perspectives other than our grammar-focussed one, to achieve a more comprehensive view of the syntactic changes in the history of English that we discuss in subsequent chapters. Section 1.2 will be on grammar change from the Principles and Parameters perspective; section 1.3 on grammar change and language change; and section 1.4 will concentrate on methodological issues and presents a discussion of problems that historical data pose for the linguist in general, and the generative linguist in particular.

1.2 Historical change, language acquisition and the Principles and Parameters model

1.2.1 *Language acquisition and grammar change*

The general framework for the study of syntax adopted here is Principles and Parameters theory. This is not one single set of ideas or theoretical notions, but rather an approach to the study of language. Its nature is perhaps best captured in the following quote from Chomsky:

The study of generative grammar has been guided by several fundamental problems, each with a traditional flavor. The basic concern is to determine and characterize the linguistic capacities of particular individuals. We are concerned, then, with states of the language faculty, which we understand to be some array of cognitive traits and capacities, a particular component of

¹ For introductions to generative syntax, we refer the reader to Radford (1997) and Haegeman (1994).

the human mind/brain. The language faculty has an initial state, genetically determined; in the normal course of development it passes through a series of states in early childhood, reaching a relatively stable steady state that undergoes little subsequent change, apart from the lexicon. To a good first approximation, the initial state appears to be uniform for the species. Adapting traditional terms to a special usage, we call the theory of the state attained its *grammar* and the theory of the initial state *Universal Grammar* (UG). (Chomsky 1995: 14)

It follows from this characterization that in this perspective on the study of language, the object of study is the grammar of the native speaker, to be understood as one language learner's choices for her native language with respect to the abstract parameters that are part of Universal Grammar (UG).² One of the core aims of generative grammar, then, is to solve what has come to be called 'the logical problem of language acquisition', i.e. the question how it is that the language learner is capable of constructing a mature grammar of her native language in a surprisingly short time, and on the basis of impoverished evidence. The evidence available to the language learner consists of the speech output of her language environment, which contains many performance errors, and little to no evidence about ungrammaticality. It seems that the role of correction by parents in the language acquisition process is very limited indeed, as illustrated in e.g. McNeill (1966). The starting point for the answer to the logical problem of language acquisition is that the human language capacity, the 'initial state' or 'UG' as Chomsky and Lasnik call it, is a highly structured system of abstract principles and parameters, the values of which are filled in by the language learner on the basis of exposure to the language environment. This system is called Universal Grammar and is assumed to be part of the genetic endowment of the human species.

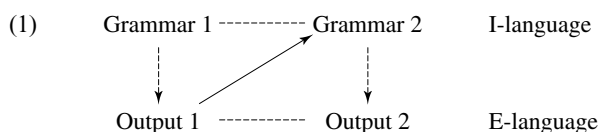
If we consider historical change from this perspective, it follows that the focus of investigation is on grammar change rather than on language change. This distinction is crucial and has important ramifications for how we approach historical change. The distinction between grammar change and language change correlates with the distinction usually made in generative approaches between a speaker's *competence* (knowledge and understanding) and *performance* (what the speaker does with that knowledge and understanding). The competence of the speaker, grammatical or otherwise, is reflected by what she knows about her native language. An important method for obtaining information about this grammatical knowledge is by eliciting a native speaker's wellformedness judgements. There may be a considerable

² Following frequent practice in the literature on language acquisition, we refer to the language-learning child as *she/her*.

discrepancy between competence and performance. Whereas competence is supposed to constitute the steady state referred to by Chomsky, performance very often reflects that steady state imperfectly, and is influenced by factors such as slips of the tongue, tiredness, boredom, external distractions and, as the case may be when working with historical data, factors that are beyond our reach, such as the possibility of a piece of written performance like a manuscript being a late copy of a copy of a translation from Latin, written in winter when the scribe's fingers were cramped by frost, with a quill that was badly in need of sharpening, while the candle was running low. What we aim at when we study historical change from this perspective is to isolate from the set of historical data, which comprises historical written performance material, those data that reflect changes in the competence of speakers, changes in grammars.

An implication of this view of grammar change is the notion that the process of acquisition of the grammar of the native language is the main locus of change. Data from language change are of particular interest to this approach because, as Paul Kiparsky first put it, they provide a window on the form of linguistic competence (Kiparsky 1982). Instances of change can show something about the grammars of languages, because we can get a clearer view of a partially hidden abstract system when it changes from one state to another. This in turn may throw light on the precise way the theory of grammar should be formulated.

The idea that we should look primarily to language acquisition for explanations of syntactic change has evolved with increasing emphasis since it was first formulated explicitly in this context in David Lightfoot's *Principles of Diachronic Syntax* (1979). In that work, Lightfoot reacts strongly against ideas about language change in terms of drift and teleology, and the notion of diachronic grammar, which were popular in the 1970s. Such notions presuppose that language change follows, even across many generations, a predestined direction. This, according to Lightfoot, cannot be right. Each speaker constructs her own grammar afresh. The language learner does not know anything about the history of her language, and hence cannot follow any predestined process. Lightfoot argues that the language learner is endowed genetically with the ability to construct a grammar of her native language on the basis only of the speech in her language environment. Example (1) (dating back to Andersen (1973)) illustrates this:



If we see output 1 as the speech of the parent grammar (their E-language, or external language), what this diagram shows is that the language learner constructs her grammar (grammar 2) on the basis of output 1. Crucially, this happens without reference to the grammar of the parent language, since the learner has no access to that. The relationship is between output 1 and grammar 2; there is in principle no relation between grammar 1 and grammar 2. On such a view, there is no (direct) relation between the grammars of speakers, often called their I(internal)-languages, whether they belong to the same or to different generations. There is therefore no ontological basis for such notions as drift, teleology or diachronic grammar, since they presuppose that the language learner recognizes a change in progress as part of a master plan spanning many generations, to which she conforms. There is indeed no theory of change, since change is by definition synchronic, and takes place as each new language learner constructs her grammar.

There are, nevertheless, many long-term changes which often seem to follow a particular direction. This is the kind of change that inspires notions like drift and the emphasis on diachrony found in the work of grammaticalization theorists. For example, Hawkins (1990: 102–3) talks about ‘diachronic universals’ (‘regular diachronic drifts’), and states that ‘The causes of these drifts are various and constitute part of the theory of language change’. Because grammar change takes place in the acquisition process, it is a fallacy to analyse such phenomena as essentially diachronic. We discuss this more closely in section 1.3, and devote chapter 9 to a discussion of some case studies of long-term change.

Lightfoot (1979) gives an explicit methodology for work on syntactic change, which has the important quality of being falsifiable by virtue of its being explicit. Lightfoot argues that each language learner constructs her own grammar in an optimal fashion within the bounds set by the principles of UG. In his (1979) contribution, he assigns a major role to the *Transparency Principle*, a principle of grammar that requires derivations to be minimally complex, so that underlying structures are as close as possible to their surface structures. It is intended to minimize opacity in the derivation. In the course of historical development, a construction or category may acquire a number of marked characteristics through independent developments such as phonological changes, the loss of morphology and changes in word order. An example of this would be the precursors of the present-day English modals. The history of the English modals will be considered in greater detail in the next section, since it provides a good illustration of Lightfoot’s view of syntactic change as well as that of others that will come up in the course of this and following chapters.

1.2.1.1 The history of English modals

Let us start with the standard assumption that in the present-day language, modals are auxiliaries, verbal function words. They occur as finite forms only, and in conjunction with an infinitive form without *to*, as in *I will do my homework*; *she might be going to the party*; *you can go to the party*. Syntactically, they function essentially as sentence modifiers: *I* in *I will do my homework* is the thematic subject of the predicate *do my homework*, not the subject of *will*. *Will* expresses future time reference, which is evidence that it is not a lexical verb. In the present-day language, modals lack inflections for person (first, second, third) or number (sg, pl), and although they have forms which reflect a present/past tense distinction historically, like *will/would*; *can/could*; *may/might*, these do not now necessarily mark a present/past distinction: for instance, the choice of *can/could* and *may/might* may reflect degrees of politeness, as in *can/could you pass me the salt?* or degrees of confidence of a positive reply as in *may/might I borrow your gold fountain pen?*

In the Old English period, modals had many more characteristics typical of lexical verbs. Evidence for this is that they could have objects and tensed clause complements, and, though they were part of the special class of so-called preterite-present verbs, they had a wider range of verbal inflections, including endings for the subjunctive mood. Lightfoot (1979) discusses the chain of events through which the Old English 'premodals', as he calls them, changed to the present-day modals as a paradigm case of a catastrophic change, a grammar change from one generation to the next. This account has been the subject of much criticism, not all of it justified: for instance, Plank (1984) argues that the history of the modals is a case of all graduality, but Warner (1990; 1993) shows that there is an abrupt shift in the behaviour of the modals in the early sixteenth century, although this is not a case of grammar change in the sense of a parameter of grammar being reset. Rather, to the extent that there is an abrupt change, it is a change in the lexical properties of modal verbs, the modal verbs being reanalysed from main verbs of sorts to auxiliaries, i.e. grammatical markers of mood.

The account in Lightfoot (1979) recognizes the following changes affecting the modals:³

- (2) a. Modals lost the ability to take a direct object. According to Lightfoot, this seems to have been complete in Middle English (fifteenth century) with the exception of *can*, which was a good deal more resistant (seventeenth century).

³ Lightfoot adds a fifth change to this list, based on a highly theory-internal word order argument. We have omitted this for the sake of clarity.

- b. Most premodals belonged to the inflectional class generally known as 'preterite presents'. The notable thing about this class is that the third person sg did not have the usual *-eþ* ending. Gradually, all the non-premodals of this class were lost. As a result, the premodals became a morphologically unique class.
- c. Because of phonological similarities in the endings, the opposition between present and past as one of tense, and indicative and subjunctive as one of mood became increasingly opaque, so that the present and past forms and levelled subjunctive forms acquired separate modal meanings.
- d. There were changes connected with the rise of the *to*-infinitive. In Old English, the premodals were never followed by *to*. The *to*-infinitive was firmly established in the course of the fourteenth century, except with premodals. Lightfoot concludes from this that at this stage the premodals were already beginning to be recognized as a separate class.

Following these changes, the premodals came to function as a separate class inflectionally, syntactically and semantically. Evidence for this is that the premodals (now modals) ceased to display a number of typically (main) verbal characteristics:⁴

- (3)
 - a. They ceased to occur as infinitives.
 - b. They could no longer occur with *-ing*-affixes.
 - c. They could no longer occur in clusters.
 - d. They could no longer occur with *have* and with *-en*-affixes.

According to Lightfoot, the modals have now acquired too many exception features to be learnable as lexical verbs. The Transparency Principle then predicts a reanalysis; the form of this reanalysis is constrained by other principles of grammar, and in this case the premodals changed into a different word category: that of auxiliaries, grammatical function words. In this view of the history of modals, the premodals were verbs and in one fell swoop underwent a radical categorial reanalysis, changing into modal auxiliaries.

While much of the ideology of Lightfoot's approach (1979) still stands, the Transparency Principle has proved to be an undesirable and superfluous addition to the theory of grammar. It is undesirable because it has no possible formal characterization like other principles of grammar, as it is not clear what opacity in a derivation really is. Also, it is implicit in the way Lightfoot illustrates the Transparency Principle that reanalyses are only forced as the result of accumulating exception features. This is not necessarily correct, as we will see below. Roberts (1985) argues that the Transparency Principle is superfluous

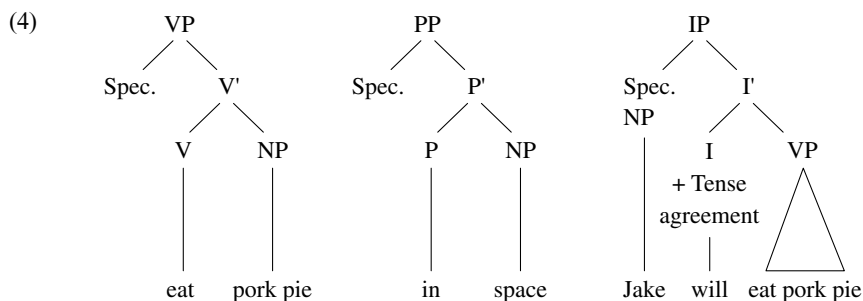
⁴ The changes listed in (3) should be seen in perspective: the four changes reduce to one, i.e. the loss of nonfinite forms. But it is not the case that the modals before the reanalysis occurred in nonfinite forms on a large scale, and some of them (e.g. *may*, *must*) never had any nonfinite forms, as discussed in Warner (1983).

in that its results are incorporated in the parameter-setting approach to language acquisition formulated in Chomsky (1981). This will be explained further below.

1.2.2 *The Principles and Parameters model*

Work in the Principles and Parameters model has dominated the generative scene since the development of Chomsky's 1981 theory of Government and Binding (GB). In GB theory, UG is organized in terms of a number of subsystems or modules, which interact with each other. One important subsystem is the theory of Government, which started life as a structural recasting of the notion of government in traditional grammar. Thus the head of a constituent, say a verb or a preposition, governs its complement in a constituent structure. A second subsystem is the theory of Binding, which defines the grammatical conditions on the reference of nominal constituents: anaphors like reflexive pronouns obligatorily refer back to (are bound by) a subject antecedent in a local domain such as a tensed clause, so in *John likes himself*, *himself* is bound by *John*, but in **John expects that Mary likes himself*, it isn't. Pronouns may refer back in the discourse, but not to a noun phrase in a local domain. Full noun phrases have their own reference.

Subsystems of grammar consist of quite general principles and of parameters. Parameters define the dimensions along which languages may differ from each other. As an example, we will consider in some more detail the theory of Case, which is closely related to the theory of government. Consider the following bits of constituent structure (VP is a verb phrase, PP a preposition phrase, IP an inflection phrase in which inflection for tense and agreement is 'coded'):



The basic principle of constituent structure is that each constituent has a head (V in VP; P in PP, I in IP etc.) with lexical properties determined in the lexicon. Heads are governors. Some heads are also case markers. In present-day

English, verbs and prepositions assign object case to their complements; a tensed I-head assigns nominative case to the subject, which is in the specifier of IP. Thus, for present-day English, Case is an abstract notion, since morphological case is visible only when the NP in question is a personal pronoun (*hel/him, shel/her*). Case theory consists of the following general components:

- (5) a. *the Case Filter*, which stipulates that each NP must have one and only one case
- b. an inventory of heads which are possible case markers
- c. a definition of ways in which case can be assigned

(5a) is a good example of a principle of case theory, and is universal. In (5b) and (5c), parameters come into play. Suppose that UG makes available a possibility of case marking heads, but not all languages use all options. A difference between Old English and the present-day language is that where the present-day language has the case markers as in (4), Old English has adjectives added to this inventory; adjectives may take complements that have dative or genitive case, an option that was lost in the course of the Middle English period. Contrast the Old English (6a) with Modern English (6b) and the impossibility of (6c).

- (6) a. *peah hit þam cynge ungewill wære*
 though it the king (D) displeasing was
 ‘though it was displeasing to the king’ (*ChronE*(Plummer) 1097.22)
- b. *though it was displeasing to the king*
- c. **though it was displeasing the king*

A complicating factor here is that adjectives combine only with dative or genitive case, typically lexically selected cases. This brings us to (5c): there are at least two ways in which Case can be assigned. It is assumed that in present-day English, Case is assigned exclusively under structural conditions such as those in (4) above. But lexically selected cases appear to be different: they are probably specified in the lexical properties of the head, and therefore lexically associated with that head, rather than purely structurally determined. Also, the option of having lexical case probably presupposes that the language in question is able to signal those cases by means of morphological case endings. Languages differ, then, in the extent to which they have lexical cases. If we consider the loss of case marking by adjectives in Middle English, there are at least two ways of formulating the grammar change that must be associated with this loss. The first could be that adjectives like *ungewill* in (6) dropped out of the English-specific inventory of heads that were case markers, which would be a change involving the inventory of case-marking heads; the second could be that English lost the typically lexical cases dative and (objective) genitive,

probably because the Old English system of morphological case marking was lost. Since dative and genitive were the cases combining with adjectives, adjectives ceased to be case selectors. The change would then be a change in the ways in which case could be assigned. The latter view is the more interesting one. It is certainly the one with the most general validity. Dative and genitive cases did not only cease to combine with adjectives; the dative and (object) genitive cases were lost generally, with the loss of morphological cases, as we will see in chapter 3.

In a parameter-setting model of acquisition and change, the task of the learner is to decide, on the basis of the evidence in her language environment, how to fill in the values for the various parametric options allowed by UG. Choosing the values for the parameters for any particular language is the main task of language acquisition. With respect to the changes in Case marking by adjectives discussed above, we could say that in the Old English period, the language learner was able to incorporate lexical Cases in her grammar because the system of morphological case distinctions (in combination with some other properties) enabled her to learn a distinction between structural and lexical Cases. This is what, according to Roberts (1985), makes the Transparency Principle superfluous, since the nature of the acquisition process is such that the optimal grammar will be chosen. Roberts (1985, 1993) also suggests an explicit parametric account of the history of the English modals. While subscribing to Lightfoot's story of the history of modals as essentially a change in word-class resulting from the loss of specific main verb characteristics, Roberts shows that in addition, this categorial reanalysis interacts with and is furthered by other instances of grammar change, such as changes in verb placement, and changes in the system of subject-verb agreement. This makes it clear that the historical fate of the English modals was not necessarily shaped as a random accumulation of exception features, leading to a change in category forced by the Transparency Principle. The changes affecting the modal verbs interacted with other, independent changes.

1.2.3 *More on language acquisition and grammar change*

The general spirit of the Principles and Parameters approach to language acquisition and grammar change should be clear by now: language-learning children, on the basis of a richly structured innate UG, construct a grammar of their native language on the basis of the language they hear being spoken around them. There is no consensus in the literature on how children proceed to do this, and this lack of consensus makes itself felt in acquisition-oriented work on grammar change. In the following subsections, we give a

flavour of the kinds of debates that currently dominate the scene, which really revolve around two interacting issues: the nature of the language evidence which is the potential input to the acquisition process; and the question of what it is that children actually do with this potential input: do they construct a grammar which matches this input as closely as possible? Do they create fragments of grammar that are later put together and may then turn out to be (partially) conflicting? Or do they keep an overall grammar in mind during the process? With respect to any case of grammar change, this leads to the question of what the change in the language environment is (to the extent that it is observable in our historical data set), how this is caused (if that question can be answered), how it triggers a grammar change, and how in turn the grammar change is reflected in the data set produced by the next generation. We will now review some of the literature with these issues in mind.

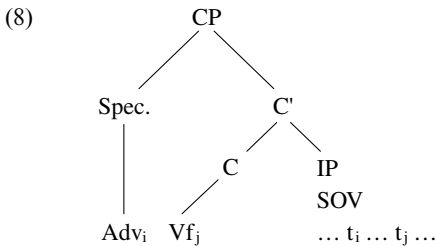
1.2.3.1 Degree 0 learnability and robustness

In the course of the 1980s, there was increasing emphasis on the question of how the language learner comes to set parameters in a different way. With this development, it has become important to appreciate the nature of the triggering evidence for the language learner. Lightfoot (1991) emphasizes very prominently that we should try to find acquisition triggers for the resetting of parameters, i.e. we should try to formulate clearly what the changes in the language environment are that induce the language learner to set a parameter differently. Such evidence must be robust, Lightfoot argues; in Lightfoot 1997, he quantifies this robustness as: exceeding a threshold level of thirty per cent of the potential of environments. An additional constraint that he formulates on the robustness of evidence is that it should come from simple, unembedded clauses. This is called *degree 0 learnability*. The rationale behind it is that the language environment of the learner consists largely of main clauses. They should therefore contain the evidence for the resetting of a parameter. Hence, if a language change formulated as a parametric change has to appeal primarily to embedded clauses for evidence, this does not qualify as an appropriate explanation for that change, according to Lightfoot. For example, modern Dutch is a 'Verb-Second' language, which means that the finite verb occupies the second constituent position in any main clause, and the first constituent position can be of any category or function: subject, object, adjunct, NP, PP, AdvP etc. Some examples are given here:

- (7) a. Jan *heeft* gisteren het boek aan Marie *gegeven*.
 Jan has yesterday the book to Marie given (subject NP-first)
 b. Gisteren *heeft* Jan het boek aan Marie *gegeven*.
 yesterday has John the book to Marie given (adverb-first)

- c. Het boek *heeft* Jan gisteren aan Marie *gegeven*.
 the book has John yesterday to Marie given (object NP-first)
- d. Aan Marie *heeft* Jan gisteren het boek *gegeven*.
 to Mary has John yesterday the book given
 'John gave the book to Mary yesterday.' (indirect object PP first)

It has become standard to assume that Dutch is an SOV language in the sense that objects precede the non-finite verb in surface word order. In main clauses, some constituent is moved to the specifier of CP, and the finite verb is moved to C, as in the following abbreviated structure:



First-language learners acquiring Dutch have to work out that in main clauses the first constituent position is a category-neutral one, a topic position rather than, say, a subject position, and that this position is followed by the finite verb, regardless of the structure of the rest of the clause. Since the input from the language environment contains many clauses which are subject-first, the crucial clue for the language learner should come from those clauses which are non-subject-initial, i.e. sentences like (7b-d). According to Lightfoot (1999: 153), statistical counts for Dutch, German, Norwegian and Swedish show that simple main clauses are subject-initial in about seventy per cent of the cases. The conclusion is, then, that the thirty per cent of non-subject-initial clauses suffice to trigger the Verb-Second grammar of Dutch, and that a threshold of robustness need not be more than thirty per cent. There is nothing magical about this number, but it should give an idea of what Lightfoot means by robustness.

1.2.3.2 Input matching

Robin Clark and Ian Roberts (1993) offer an explicit perspective on the relation between acquisition and change in 'A computational model for language learnability and language change'. According to Lightfoot (1999), their approach to language learning is essentially what is called an 'input-matching' one: the learner, endowed with UG, constructs grammars and evaluates those grammars with respect to the input she hears in the language environment. In principle, all possible grammars are available to the learner.

Clark and Roberts propose, following Clark (1990; 1992) that *genetic algorithms* provide a computational model of learning for a principles and parameters theory. In their words:

Genetic algorithms model the basic process of natural selection in the biological world: how certain patterns of genetic material are more adapted to their environment (i.e., fitter) than others, and hence tend to reproduce at the expense of others. Our account of language learning is analogous: the input text is the analogue of the environment, and so 'fitness' means consistency with this; parameter settings correspond to the genetic material of the biological world (and so a whole grammar would be a genome). Successful combinations of parameter settings 'reproduce' (i.e. contribute to the formation of new hypotheses about the target grammar) at the expense of others. In this way, the learning mechanism gradually eliminates 'unfit' hypotheses (those that are not consistent with the input text) and arrives at a single fittest grammar. Since nothing in the approach requires this grammar to be consistent with the one that underlies the input text, learners may arrive at final-state systems that differ from those of their parents; this, in essence, is our solution to the logical problem of language change. (1993: 303)

Clark and Roberts propose that parametric change typically occurs when, because of various factors (phonological changes, morphological changes, etc.), the input data do not unambiguously force the setting of certain parameters to a definite value; several alternative grammars can adequately account for the input stream and so the choice of grammar cannot be uniquely determined on the basis of the language environment. This can happen when the evidence presented to the learner is formally compatible with a number of different and conflicting parameter settings. Clark and Roberts suggest that in such a situation the learner 'will turn in on itself, abandoning external pressure, and rely on its own internal structure to select from the alternatives at hand' (1993: 302).

This model of language learning assumes, then, that learners match all the potential values for each parameter against the language environment. Only those that fit the input data are then combined into larger grammar fragments, which are again matched, until one grammar is arrived at. This presupposes two important and contentious notions: the first is that this approach is highly UG-driven, in the sense that the learner actively explores all the options potentially offered by UG. This is in stark contrast to the approach in Lightfoot (1991), which gives pride of place to how the language environment triggers the acquisition of new parameter values. Clark and Roberts, on the other hand, postulate that the learner herself fuels diachronic change when confronted with a situation where the input is inconclusive. Thus, there is not necessarily a direct trigger in the language environment, merely a situation of indeterminacy that

the learner resolves with an appeal to UG. This is a situation not allowed for by Lightfoot, and it remains to be seen if that is correct for all language change.

A second contentious feature of this approach is that it assumes that the learner tries to match the input from the language environment in full. We will now briefly look at a case study by Alison Henry (1997), in which both these contentious issues play an important role. Henry studies syntactic change in progress in Belfast English imperative constructions and observes that, from one generation to the next, children ignore some of the positive evidence that they receive and adopt a grammar which systematically deviates from the parent grammar. Belfast English is undergoing a remarkable syntactic change in imperative constructions; the oldest of three generations has two types of imperative constructions, one with and one without inversion:

- (9) a. You sit down
 b. Sit you down
 c. Sit everybody down

Henry shows on the basis of a number of distributional criteria that the proper analysis of inverted imperatives in what she calls the 'Unrestricted Inversion' dialect has the finite verb in the C-position, much as in the Dutch Verb-Second constructions discussed above.

- (10) [_{CP} [_C Sit_i [_{AgrSP} you . . . t_i . . . down]]]

This is the only construction left in Belfast English in which lexical finite verbs move to C; other contexts have *do*-support here. In the dialect of the oldest generation, when the verb is passive or unaccusative (i.e. where the subject is the underlying object), the subject may appear in AgrSP, as in (10), corresponding to (11a–b), but it may also remain in object position, as in (11c–d):

- (11) a. Be you picked for the team
 b. Be you going out of the door when they arrive
 c. Be picked you for the team
 d. Be going you out of the door when they arrive

(11c–d) are analysed as follows:

- (12) [_{CP} [_C be . . . [_{VP} picked you for the team]]]

The middle generation also has inverted imperatives, but they are now restricted to constructions with passives and unaccusative verbs:

- (13) a. Go you away
 b. Arrive you on time
 c. Be picked you for the team
 d. *Eat you those vegetables
 e. *Run you around the room

Distributional evidence shows that the structure of inverted imperatives in what Henry calls the ‘Restricted Inversion’ dialect is quite different from those in the Unrestricted Inversion dialect. Where the structure of (9b) is as in (10), that of (13a) is as in (14):

(14) [. . . [_{VP} go you away]]

In other words, the only inverted imperatives now left are the ones we have in (13a–c), analysed as in (14): movement of lexical finite verbs as in (9b) analysed as (10) is no longer possible.

The transition from (9)–(12) to (13)–(14) is an interesting one, for a variety of reasons. With respect to the issues at hand, its most significant aspect is that the learners of the younger generation must have been exposed to a significant number of inverted imperatives during the acquisition process (perhaps imperatives are the most frequent type of sentence addressed to small children). They indeed arrived at a grammar which accommodates the superficially similar verb-first construction (13a–b), but the relevant sentences have a different structure, that in (14). Henry argues that this happened because some other aspects of the grammar militated against constructing a grammar in which lexical finite verbs move to C. This implies that learners made a UG-driven choice, ignoring part of the input data (the Unrestricted Inversion data), and accommodating another part of the input data (inverted unaccusatives) in a way compatible with the rest of the grammar.

Henry argues on the basis of this that the task of the language learner does not seem to be to set the parameters corresponding to all the data in the input. Rather, children select the grammar, from those made available by UG, that can accommodate the majority of data in the input, and may ignore other data, unless they are quite robust. Thus children can adopt grammars different from those of their parents, and be major contributors to language change. It is interesting to see that Henry’s approach, like that of Clark and Roberts, is a strongly UG-driven one, where learners are assumed to run their UG-options by the language input in a continuous process of hypothesis creation and verification. Where the approaches differ is that, contra Clark and Roberts, Henry explicitly argues that learners leave part of the input unmatched.

1.2.3.3 Cue-based learning

The latest contribution by Lightfoot to the ongoing debate about language learning and change is Lightfoot (1999), in which he adopts ideas from some of the most recent work on language acquisition (the reader is referred to Lightfoot’s book for references). He argues against the input-matching

approach: on the one hand, because it assigns too large a role to UG; on the other, because learners do not always match the input, a point that was discussed above in connection with Henry's work. Lightfoot pursues some recent work that argues in favour of what is called 'cue-based learning'. Where the cue-based child perhaps differs most sharply from the input-matching child is that the cue-based child does not explore all the parametric options that are made available by UG. Rather, the cue-based learner remains true to Lightfoot's earlier triggering experience, where the trigger now feeds into cues. We may think of cues as pieces of structure, little grammar fragments, deduced by the learner from robust pieces of degree 0 evidence in the language environment. As an illustration, we follow up the discussion on robustness above. The reader will recall that the trigger for acquiring the Verb-Second grammar of languages like Dutch presumably consists of the subset of main clauses introduced by a non-subject. What children have to learn is that the structure of those sentences is something like in (15), where XP can be a range of different phrases:

- (15) [_{CP} XP [_C Vf [_{IP} SOV]]]

Lightfoot (1999: 152–3) argues that the cue for the learner is that a robust number of main clauses begin with an arbitrary phrasal category. The account for why this is accompanied by movement of the finite verb to C must come from a UG condition saying that material in Spec,CP must be licensed by a lexically filled C. This is because the learner cannot know that movement of the finite verb is obligatory, since she does not have access to ungrammatical data: she does not hear sentences with [XP . . . Vf] that are marked with a star. This part of the account must therefore come from a UG condition. Hence, the trigger is, according to Lightfoot, the thirty per cent of main clauses beginning with XP, to which the learner assigns a piece of structure, the cue:

- (16) _{SpecCP} [XP]

This is an abstract representation of a partially analysed syntactic structure. A cue is, therefore, an element of I-language, which in turn feeds into parameter settings. Thus, the child gradually builds up a grammar, following a learning path. One point that is less than clear in this approach is that Lightfoot assumes that there will be a robust trigger in the language environment, hence a cue, for all and any of the parameter settings. One may reasonably wonder whether this is always true, and what the learner does if this is not the case. The latter situation is the very one that Clark and Roberts are concerned with: situations where the input is inconclusive; this is, according to Clark and Roberts, precisely when learners invoke some default value dictated by UG, or 'turn in on themselves', as they call it.

In the first few sections of this chapter, we outlined the generative approach to syntactic change in terms of the resetting of parameters. Of primary interest in this view are clusters of changes, like those in the history of the modals, which are analysed by Lightfoot as the result of a single underlying change (a categorial reanalysis from verb to auxiliary). In the scenario of changes sketched by Lightfoot, this kind of change is typically abrupt. The emphasis is on discontinuity, which follows from the fact that its focus is on the moment of grammar change rather than on the gradual change in the language environment. Generative work on syntactic change is often criticized for its emphasis on abruptness, which does not in general sit well with the surface graduality of language change. Let us evaluate as an example the changes involving case marking by adjectives discussed above. Adjectives in Old English could take nominal complements with dative or genitive case, and this option was lost in the course of the Middle English period. English generally lost the dative and (object) genitive cases, typically lexically selected cases. This would be a change in the ways in which case could be assigned. Verbs, adjectives and prepositions could no longer assign lexical cases. Supposing we look upon the availability of inherent case as a parameter, we might assume that this parameter was reset in the second half of the thirteenth century.⁵ But after that date, examples of adjective + object will still be found, side by side with adjective followed by a PP. The examples in (17) illustrate this:

- If reanalyses are as radical as suggested, this situation is unexpected. This is also a problem from a theoretical point of view. One of the core ideas in the parameter-setting model is that when a parameter is set by the language learner, it is set once and for all. It then becomes a problem to deal with forms that suggest the opposite setting of the parameter. Forms that suggest the older parameter value, in this case the possibility of assigning lexical case, should presumably be handled by the learner in terms of some kind of adaptive rule. But it is questionable whether a restrictive theory of grammar should

⁵ Arguments for this can be found in van Kemenade (1987), chapter 6.