

English Historical Syntax

Verbal Constructions

David Denison

Longman Linguistics Library



LONGMAN LINGUISTICS LIBRARY

ENGLISH HISTORICAL SYNTAX

LONGMAN LINGUISTICS LIBRARY

General editors

R. H. Robins, University of London
Martin Harris, University of Manchester
Geoffrey Horrocks, University of Cambridge

A Short History of Linguistics

Third Edition
R. H. ROBINS

Structural Aspects of Language Change

JAMES M. ANDERSON

Text and Context

Explorations in the Semantics and Pragmatics of Discourse
TEUN A. VAN DIJK

Introduction to Text Linguistics
ROBERT-ALAIN DE BEAUGRANDE
AND WOLFGANG ULRICH
DRESSLER

Spoken Discourse

A Model for Analysis
WILLIS EDMONDSON

Psycholinguistics

Language, Mind, and World
DANNY D. STEINBERG

Dialectology

W. N. FRANCIS

Principles of Pragmatics

GEOFFREY N. LEECH

Generative Grammar

GEOFFREY HORROCKS

Norms of Language

Theoretical and Practical Aspects
RENATE BARTSCH

The English Verb

Second Edition
F. R. PALMER

A History of American English

J. L. DILLARD

Historical Linguistics

EDITED BY CHARLES JONES

Pidgin and Creole Languages

SUZANNE ROMAINE

General Linguistics

An Introductory Survey
Fourth Edition
R. H. ROBINS

A History of English Phonology

CHARLES JONES

Generative and Non-linear Phonology

JACQUES DURAND

Modality and the English Modals

Second Edition
F. R. PALMER

Semiotics and Linguistics

YISHAI TOBIN

Multilingualism in the British Isles I: the Older Mother Tongues and Europe

EDITED BY SAFDER ALLADINA
AND VIV EDWARDS

Multilingualism in the British Isles II: Africa, Asia and the Middle East

EDITED BY SAFDER ALLADINA
AND VIV EDWARDS

Dialects of English

Studies in Grammatical Variation
EDITED BY PETER TRUDGILL AND
J. K. CHAMBERS

Introduction to Bilingualism

CHARLOTTE HOFFMANN

Verb and Noun Number in English:

A functional explanation
WALLIS REID

English in Africa

JOSEF S. SCHMIED

Linguistic Theory

The Discourse of Fundamental Works
ROBERT DE BEAUGRANDE

English Historical Syntax

Verbal Constructions
DAVID DENISON

English Historical Syntax: Verbal Constructions

David Denison

 **Routledge**
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

First published 1993 by Longman Group UK Limited

Published 2014 by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017, USA

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

© David Denison 1993

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

Notices

Knowledge and best practice in this field are constantly changing. As new research and experience broaden our understanding, changes in research methods, professional practices, or medical treatment may become necessary.

Practitioners and researchers must always rely on their own experience and knowledge in evaluating and using any information, methods, compounds, or experiments described herein. In using such information or methods they should be mindful of their own safety and the safety of others, including parties for whom they have a professional responsibility.

To the fullest extent of the law, neither the Publisher nor the authors, contributors, or editors, assume any liability for any injury and/or damage to persons or property as a matter of products liability, negligence or otherwise, or from any use or operation of any methods, products, instructions, or ideas contained in the material herein.

ISBN 13: 978-0-582-29139-3 (pbk)

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is
available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Denison, David, 1950–

English historical syntax : verbal constructions / David Denison.

p. c.m. — (Longman linguistics library)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-582-29139-9 Ppr. 0-582-21620-6 Csd.

1. English language—Syntax. 2. English language—Grammar,
Historical. I. Title. II. Series.

PE1361.D46 1993

425—dc20

92-20598
CIP

Set by 8M in 10/11 pt Times

Contents

<i>Preface</i>	ix
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xii
<i>Abbreviations</i>	xiii

PART I: GROUNDWORK

Overview	1
1 Introduction	3
1.1 Data collection	3
1.2 Importance of context	4
1.3 Background knowledge	4
1.4 Sources of information	5
2 Background	8
2.1 Prehistory	8
2.2 Periods of English	8
2.3 A sketch of Old English	9
2.4 A sketch of Middle English	10
2.5 A sketch of Modern English	12
2.6 Further reading	14
3 Nominal morphology	16
3.1 Old English	16
3.2 Middle English	20
3.3 Modern English	22
3.4 Question for further research	23

PART II: WORD ORDER

Overview	25
4 Word order	27
4.1 Introductory remarks	27
4.2 The data	30
4.3 Descriptions and explanations	30
4.4 Synchronic accounts in non-generative linguistics	31

4.5	Synchronic accounts within generative linguistics	35
4.6	Diachronic, non-generative explanations	39
4.7	Diachronic accounts within generative linguistics	50
4.8	Ramifications	55
4.9	Questions for discussion or further research	55

PART III: SUBJECT AND VERB PHRASE

	Overview	59
5	Impersonals	61
5.1	The problem	61
5.2	The data	63
5.3	Explanations	73
5.4	Explanations involving reanalysis	74
5.5	An explanation without reanalysis	80
5.6	Explanations involving semantics-based syntax	83
5.7	Other syntactic approaches	87
5.8	Mainly descriptive accounts	91
5.9	Dummy <i>it</i>	97
5.10	Questions for discussion or further research	99
6	Dative Movement and the indirect passive	103
6.1	The problem	103
6.2	The data	104
6.3	Explanations in non-generative linguistics	112
6.4	Questions for discussion or further research	119
7	The prepositional passive	124
7.1	The problem	124
7.2	The data	125
7.3	Explanations in non-generative linguistics	134
7.4	Explanations in generative linguistics	144
7.5	The complex prepositional passive	153
7.6	Indirect and prepositional passives	155
7.7	Questions for discussion or further research	159

PART IV: COMPLEX COMPLEMENTATION

	Overview	163
8	VOSI and V+I (Control verbs)	165
8.1	The problem	165
8.2	VOSI	166
8.3	V+I	170
8.4	The data	172
8.5	Explanations	192
8.6	Philological and semantics-based accounts	193
8.7	Accounts in generative syntax	197
8.8	Text-based, structural accounts	201
8.9	Infinitive \pm <i>to</i>	213

8.10	Questions for discussion or further research	215
9	Subject raising	218
9.1	The problem	218
9.2	Raising	220
9.3	The data	220
9.4	Explanations	242
9.5	Questions for discussion or further research	250

PART V: AUXILIARIES

	Overview	253
10	Origins of periphrastic DO	255
10.1	The problem	255
10.2	The data	256
10.3	Explanations in non-generative linguistics	274
10.4	Explanations in generative linguistics	285
10.5	Questions for discussion or further research	287
11	Modals and related auxiliaries	292
11.1	The problem	292
11.2	Modals in Present-day English	292
11.3	The data	295
11.4	Explanations	325
11.5	Questions for discussion or further research	337
12	Perfect	340
12.1	The problem	340
12.2	The HAVE perfect	340
12.3	Other HAVE + past participle constructions	341
12.4	The BE perfect	344
12.5	Data on the HAVE perfect	346
12.6	Data on the BE perfect	358
12.7	Explanations	364
12.8	Questions for discussion or further research	368
13	Progressive	371
13.1	The problem	371
13.2	Progressives versus related constructions	372
13.3	The data	380
13.4	Explanations of the origins of the OE progressive	397
13.5	Explanations for the ME and ModE progressive	400
13.6	Explanations for the 'passival' progressive	408
13.7	Questions for discussion or further research	410
14	Passive	413
14.1	The problem	413
14.2	The data	416
14.3	Explanations	437
14.4	Questions for discussion or further research	443
15	Multiple auxiliaries, regulation of DO	446
15.1	The problems	446
15.2	The data	446

15.3	Explanations of history of auxiliary category	452
15.4	Explanations of regulation of DO	457
15.5	Questions for discussion or further research	468
15.6	Envoi	469

PART VI: BIBLIOGRAPHY AND INDEXES

<i>Glossary of technical terms</i>	475
<i>Secondary sources (references) (indexed)</i>	482
<i>Primary sources (texts) (indexed)</i>	502
<i>Index of verbs in examples</i>	519
<i>General index</i>	526

This book is dedicated to the memory of my parents.

Preface

Historical syntax

Historical syntax has attracted increasing attention over the last fifteen years or so. When the modern science of language started to blossom in the nineteenth century the study of historical change – nowadays often called **diachronic** linguistics – was well to the fore, but with phonology, morphology and lexis central to linguistic theory and syntax treated only descriptively if at all. In transformational generative grammar of the 1950s and 1960s, on the other hand, syntax had a central role but now little attention was paid to language change: most theoreticians concentrated on the study of timeless states of a language, **synchronic** linguistics. The renewed interest in historical change is beginning to bring these two traditions together. The explicitness of current linguistic theory should provide better explanations of historical change, while historical facts can play their part in testing and shaping linguistic theory – at least such have been the intentions behind much recent work. In synchronic generative linguistics the predominant source of data for English-speaking linguists has been Modern English, and English is a natural field of study in historical syntax too because of its conveniently long recorded history. Hence this book and the research it presents. It provides materials for the study of some of the central topics in English historical syntax, both data and analysis.

Methodology

For each of the topics discussed there is a critical review of work that has been published on the topic in both the philological and linguistic traditions, with the results of my own research incorporated. I do not attempt to acknowledge and review everything ever written on a given topic. My approach is eclectic, often with a straightforward use of traditional terminology, in order to make the book accessible to people working within any of the formal or informal frameworks current today. Indeed I shall often

compare different approaches to the same material. No linguistic discussion is ever wholly value- or theory-free, of course, but my choice of an eclectic approach is deliberate. Linguistic theory is a fickle thing, and close identification with one version of one theory makes for a monograph with a great deal of technical, theory-bound argument whose usefulness may be very short-lived. In any case, no one existing theory gives a satisfactory account of every aspect of syntactic change.

What about the division of historical syntax into topics? Synchronic syntax is a seamless whole, and discussion of, say, auxiliary verbs will eventually have to be integrated with, say, considerations of sentence word order in the language of a particular epoch: it is artificial to keep them separate.¹ From complete synchronic grammars of different epochs we might then move on to diachronic changes linking them. But we have to begin somewhere. Short of presenting a complete cut-and-dried analysis in a single theoretical framework, that ideal methodology would have to be compromised in all sorts of ways, certainly in a book of this size, and I have chosen what I think is a more useful way in. My procedure in this book is to isolate topics which seem to form relatively coherent and self-contained fragments of syntax, to discuss them individually on a historical basis, and to nest the topics in such a way as to permit – indeed encourage – their integration into larger domains of English syntax. (For obvious practical reasons the selection of topics is limited. The majority concern Old and Middle English data since it is during Middle English that syntax changes most.)

But this diachronic approach raises another problem: is it legitimate to trace a particular syntactic pattern over a period of time? After all, as Lightfoot puts it, ‘there is no clear basis for saying that a certain sentence of Old English “corresponds” to some sentence of Middle English’ (1979: 8). Nevertheless, that is what we shall do, and what even the greatest methodological purists do too. The data *must* be sliced up in various ways in order to be dealt with at all, and it is standard practice to gather examples of a given construction from different texts and periods in order to discuss such matters as the date of first appearance and reason for adoption by the language. The practice is all right just as long as we bear in mind that at different periods a construction may have a different relation to the rest of the grammar.

Using this book

To the extent that the book matches my original intentions for it, it should serve three purposes. It is a source of data for researchers on the history of English syntax. It is intended also as a contribution to research. And for students it is a textbook on what has been found out so far.

How it is used as a teaching text will naturally depend on both teacher and students. Each chapter is designed to give an overview of some problem and a presentation of different solutions which encourages comparison and criticism. Where appropriate it concludes with some open-ended questions for discussion. The commentaries are intended to help less experienced

students to work through some demanding recent research publications, and to enable more advanced classes to 'cover the ground' more efficiently.

There is more material in this book than can be covered thoroughly in a typical undergraduate course, and students and teachers may well wish to pick and mix a selection of chapters. (Researchers will, of course, home straight in on their own interests.) The division into parts and chapters is intended to make a selective approach practical. Not that the different topics do not have links with one another: of course they do. To some extent this follows merely from the truism that language – and most of all syntax – is a system *où tout se tient*, where everything hangs together. In part, though, it is because topics have been deliberately chosen and arranged to bring out links.

Sections marked with an asterisk deal with more advanced and/or more technical aspects of a topic and can be omitted by undergraduate readers. Technical terms which appear in ***bold italics*** at their first appearance in a chapter are explained in the Glossary. Students will probably need to have had some prior introduction to Old and/or Middle English, though all examples in the text are fully glossed.

Here is one approach, tested on early versions of the material, which has been used successfully with seminar groups of three to ten students. A topic is selected for a future meeting, and everyone reads the appropriate chapter. Certain members of the group are also assigned individual tasks, perhaps the close reading of one or two important articles, or (in more advanced groups) actual research on some aspect of the topic. These members introduce the discussion with a presentation of their findings. The chapter will have served its purpose if everyone in the group is equipped to contribute usefully to discussion and stimulated to explore the topic further. 'Doing' English historical syntax should be an exploration.

Organisation

The book is laid out as follows. Part I, Groundwork, covers background knowledge and nominal morphology, which are of pervasive importance to the topics of the remainder of the book. So too is Part II, Word Order, where the syntax proper begins. Part III, Subject and Verb Phrase, deals with constructions where the relationship between a verb and its (mostly) nominal ***arguments*** has altered. Part IV, Complex Complementation, covers constructions in which one argument of a verb itself contains another verb – in other words, structures involving the embedding of one clause within another. Part V, Auxiliaries, comes next because most uses of auxiliaries derive historically from clause embedding constructions. These topics by no means exhaust the subject of English historical syntax – of course not! – but they form a coherent set which includes much of the most interesting material studied to date. And the writing of this book had to stop somewhere.

Part VI gathers together the reference material, including a glossary of technical terms, indexed lists of primary and secondary sources, an index of verbs in citations, and a general index.

Acknowledgements

The writing of this book has taken much longer than intended or expected. I have been given generous help by friends, colleagues and students (non-discrete groups, these), some of it noted at the appropriate places. I must thank above all Wim van der Wurff for detailed comments on an earlier draft of Chapters 1–7 and 9 (part), and Elizabeth Traugott for her reading of the near-final version of the whole book, as well as Fran Colman (1–3), Willem Koopman (4), Cindy Allen (5 and part of 6), and Linda Roberts (7). I have also benefited from points raised by Ans van Kemenade (1–7), Bob Stockwell (4), Pat Poussa (10), Laurel Brinton (12), Mats Rydén (12), Jean Aitchison, and several generations of students from Amsterdam, Manchester and the University of British Columbia (Vancouver), and from the literary expertise of my departmental colleagues. Nigel Vincent at Manchester and Guy Carden and Michael Rochemont at UBC filled me in on so-called empty categories. Martin Harris has given support and good advice throughout. Over the years in the departmental office at Manchester, Shelagh Aston and Maxine Powell have saved me from many an anxiety attack, while Mary Syner has in addition given me generous and invaluable assistance with checking of examples. In the last stages Chris Jordan of Epson Canada came up with the timely loan of a printer, and UBC English Department let me get on with checking and printing out.

None of them are to be held responsible for the book as it now is, but without their help it would have been much the poorer.

And my family have seen far less of me than is right. Biz, Alice and Rosie: Thank you for just about putting up with (and without) me.

David Denison

Note

1. On the other hand, it is also artificial to exclude the time dimension from an account of, say, Present-day English. It ignores age-related differences among speakers (see the work of Labov and followers), as well as 'frozen' features of syntax, semantics, spelling and so on which reflect the productive grammars of various past ages. Few generative linguists seem to question the legitimacy of idealising time away, however.

Abbreviations

/ /	encloses phonemic transcription
[]	encloses phonetic transcription
< >	encloses graphemic transcription
‘ ’	encloses gloss (translation, meaning)
–	links items which occur together in the order indicated
+	links items which collocate together but not necessarily in that order
~	links contrasted items
*	(i) (before linguistic forms) ungrammatical or unattested (ii) (after section numbers) more technical and/or advanced material
!	(before linguistic forms) inappropriate meaning or paraphrase
1,2,3	(before SG or PL) first, second, third person
A	adjective
ACC	accusative
aci	accusative cum infinitive
AdvP	adverbial phrase
AmE	American English
AP	adjective phrase
BrE	British English
CLAN	clause and nominal construction
DAT	dative
d.o.b.	date of birth
Du.	Dutch
e	(i) (before language abbreviations) early (ii) (in GB analyses) empty node
EST	Extended Standard Theory
FEM	feminine
Fr	French
GB	Government-Binding
GEN	genitive
I,INFL	(in GB analyses) inflectional constituent
IMP	imperative
INDECL	indeclinable (no variation for case/gender/number)

INF	infinitive
INST	instrumental
l	late
Lat.	Latin
LFG	Lexical-Functional Grammar
MASC	masculine
ME	Middle English
ModE	Modern English
N	noun
NEUT	neuter
NOM	nominative
NP	noun phrase
np	lexically empty NP node
O	object
OBJ	objective
OBL	oblique
OE	Old English
ON	Old Norse
P	preposition
PA	past tense, (before PTCP) past
PDE	Present-day English
PIE	Proto-Indo-European
PL	plural
PP	prepositional phrase
Pred	predicative complement
PRES	present tense, (before PTCP) present
prt	particle
PTCP	participle
REL	relative
S	(i) (in word order) subject (ii) (in GB analyses) sentence/clause (iii) (in 'S-structure') surface
SG	singular
SUBJ	(i) (in NPs) subjective (ii) (in verbs) subjunctive
s.v.	Lat. <i>sub voce</i> , <i>sub verbo</i> 'under the/that word'
t	trace
TG	transformational-generative
V	verb
v	finite verb
V-1	verb-first order
V-2	verb-second order
V-3	'verb-third' = SVX order
V-F	verb-final order
V+I	catenative <u>v</u> erb + <u>i</u> nfinitive
VOSI	catenative <u>v</u> erb + <u>o</u> bject/ <u>s</u> ubject NP + <u>i</u> nfinitive
VP	verb phrase
X	(in word order) element other than S or V

Part I

GROUNDWORK

Overview

Part I is one part which should not be skipped by the inexperienced reader, as it contains material which has a direct bearing on every single topic discussed in Parts II–V. Chapter 1 is an introduction to the study of the historical syntax of English, with a discussion of methodological issues and a survey of the reference works which are of central importance. Chapter 2, Background, is a brief survey of English linguistic history other than syntactic, intended to give a historical and more general linguistic context to the syntax at the core of the book. Chapter 3, Nominal Morphology, introduces some theoretical issues in the case syntax of the noun phrase and discusses the history of nominal inflection, though the details of paradigms in Old and Middle English are left for the handbooks. It is most important to have some grasp of the changes sketched in §§3.1.1–2, 3.2.1–2, and 3.3. These matters, apparently far removed from verbal syntax, are actually directly relevant.



Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Data collection

How should the data for historical syntax be collected? Scholars working on Present-day English syntax have relied on introspection or, increasingly, on data which can be retrieved by computer from a stored corpus. Both methods are convenient. Historical data are less easy to collect. Scholars have tended either to work through a chosen corpus of texts, or simply to borrow their examples from such great repositories of information as the *Oxford English Dictionary (OED)* (1933, 1989) or Jespersen's *Modern English Grammar* (1909–49) or Visser's *Historical Syntax* (1963–73), especially the last-named. Now Visser's work is a remarkable and quite indispensable compilation, but – probably inevitably in a one-man work of such encyclopaedic coverage – there are many examples of misquotation and misclassification. One of the aims of this book is to provide a selection of data, taken from good editions, which has been checked carefully and can be relied on as the basis for linguistic argument.¹ For this purpose I have found Visser the best secondary source of material and freely acknowledge my debt. The concordance of Venezky and Healey (1980) is also proving invaluable for research on Old English syntax.² In future the materials collected for the Helsinki Corpus of English Texts should provide a useful controlled sample, especially for comparing usage in different periods, genres, registers, and so on. Examples of my own finding do not come from a single systematic reading programme within a defined corpus. Many were noted in texts and linguistic discussions in the course of research on particular topics, others were come across merely by chance. In addition to the better-known texts of Old English and Middle English I have tried to look at non-literary texts, to counter the prevailing emphasis on literary styles of discourse, and at editions only recently published.

For certain approaches to historical syntax it is necessary to make much fuller collections of data than can be attempted in a book of this scope. Especially for Old English it is now possible to aspire to complete collections of instances of a given construction, while for variationist research it is necessary to have statistically valid samples of data. When the data come from different sources it may be desirable to minimise differences

of genre, or alternatively such differences may be exploited as a reflection of sociolinguistic differences in a speech community. For these purposes a more systematic measure of text type is useful, on which see Biber and Finegan (1986).

1.2 Importance of context

Historical syntax done in isolation is prone to error. Often it is misleading to confine attention to a single sentence-fragment or even sentence because the syntax is partly determined by the wider discourse context – a point often neglected in formal linguistics. Then the stylistic differences among different kinds of text need to be taken into account. Is the work a translation from French or Latin, and if so, how close does it stick to the original? If it is verse, to what extent is the syntax modified by the verse form? If it is a work preserved in manuscript, how much scribal corruption or modification is there? If it is a work from, say, the nineteenth century, to what extent is the syntax modified by the strictures of prescriptive grammarians, and what is the relation between the written form and speech? We must also know whether a medieval work has been edited with the manuscript punctuation retained or at most slightly adapted, or whether modern ideas of sentence structure have been imposed. These and other such points can be summed up by saying that our data must always be interpreted in context: the context of the discourse, of the form and genre, of the register, of editorial procedures, and so on. That warning places an implicit constraint on all the discussions of historical syntax which follow.

The dating of citations raises another question. If we assume that most features of an author's syntax are fixed before adulthood, or even just that behaviour with respect to linguistic *variables* is always liable to be affected by age-grading within a population, then the birthdate of the author may be more significant than the date of publication. The use of data grouped by authors' birthdates is beginning to appear in historical studies, for example Allen (1984), Rydén and Brorström (1987), in effect taking account of one aspect of the sociolinguistic context. The point is rarely of practical relevance before the Modern English period.

1.3 Background knowledge

Readers of this book unacquainted with the general history of English ought really to use it in conjunction with one of the standard histories (see §2.6 below). In order to make the book just about self-contained, however, the following chapter contains an outline of the history of English which will give some context for the syntactic facts. Readers who know better had better skip it.

1.4 Sources of information

Rydén (1979, 1984) gives a convenient survey of what needs doing in English historical syntax, different approaches to doing it, and major sources of information.

1.4.1 Data and analysis

Apart from editions of the texts themselves, the most important source is Visser (1963–73), already mentioned in §1.1 above, a work focusing on the verb and so having little to say on the syntax of the noun phrase (NP), for example. Nevertheless almost everything else is covered, and with copious exemplification, somewhere or other in this four-volume work, and it is worth spending some time on the contents pages to get a feel for its organisation. For Old English the work of Mitchell (1985) is an essential source book. Like Visser it is essentially descriptive, based on a traditional parts-of-speech terminology, and comprehensive in its survey of secondary material. Unlike Visser it covers nearly everything (only word order is treated less than fully) and is exceptionally accurate in detail. For Middle English there is Mustanoja (1960), a less detailed, traditional work notable for its judiciousness and clarity. Although ostensibly only 'Part I', *Parts of Speech*, it contains much useful information on syntax generally. These reference works will soon be supplemented by the more manageable and modern survey chapters in *The Cambridge History of the English Language (CHEL)*: Traugott (1992) on Old English and Fischer (1992a) on Middle English, and later Rissanen (in prep.) on early Modern English and Denison (in prep.) on late Modern English. Overall surveys aimed at students include Traugott (1972), a clear account of the main lines of development within a coherent generative framework, and Schibbye (1972–7), a descriptive treatment of all facets of the history of English, whose syntax sections are generously exemplified but not as overwhelming as Visser's.

Individual grammars and readers give more concise information. For Old English the best on syntax written in English are Mitchell and Robinson (1992) and Quirk and Wrenn (1957). For Middle English Mossé (1952) and Burrow and Turville-Petre (1992) give a simple overview, while Bennett and Smithers (1968) goes into considerable detail on certain specific points. A survey of early Modern English syntax is included in Görlach (1991), and Barber (1976) is very informative.

The great historical dictionaries of English provide a lot of information on aspects of syntax which can be related to particular lexemes. *The Oxford English Dictionary (OED)* covers the whole historical period but concentrates on Middle English and later. The search program available with the computer-readable version on CD-ROM should open up new possibilities for research.³ The *Michigan Middle English Dictionary (MED)* has far more detail on Middle English and at the time of writing had covered the letters *A* to *S*. For Old English there will be a very full picture in the *Toronto Dictionary of Old English (DOE)*, but it has only just begun publication with the letters *D* and *C* and will take some years to work back to *A* and then forwards through the rest of the alphabet. Meanwhile there is

'Bosworth-Toller' (Toller 1898, 1921), where you must turn first to the *Supplement* for the letters A–G because of the unreliability of early parts of the *Dictionary*, but first to the *Dictionary* for H–Y, and in both cases cross-check afterwards with the other volume. Despite its cumbersomeness and citation from obsolete editions the work remains useful and surprisingly comprehensive. Clark Hall (1960) is handier and also provides a useful index to the Old English material in *OED*, but unlike the other, large dictionaries mentioned so far it has no illustrative quotations.

1.4.2 Bibliography

Visser (1963–73) provides a comprehensive bibliography for each topic that he covers, but given the date of publication these include hardly anything from the generative school apart from some early studies of Present-day English syntax. Reasonably up-to-date bibliographies can be compiled from the classified annual lists in the *Bibliographie Linguistischer Literatur*, the *Bibliographie Linguistique/Linguistic Bibliography*, the *Annual Bibliography of English Language and Literature*, and – with the shortest time-lag – *Old English Newsletter*; from the critical surveys in *Year's Work in English Studies*; or by selective use of the *Arts and Humanities Citation Index* and *Modern Language Association Bibliography*. Of particular interest to students of English historical syntax are the bibliographies of Kennedy (1927), covering all kinds of work on English language up to 1922, and Fisiak (1987), for selective coverage of historical studies to 1983. Two complementary bibliographies provide more specialised coverage: Scheurweghs and Vorlat (1963–79) list Modern English syntax and morphology work up to 1960, while Tajima (1988) covers Old and Middle English language studies up to 1985. To the latter we must now add Mitchell (1990, and planned supplements), whose comprehensive listings of works on Old English syntax are very helpful, as too his clearing away of now-outdated scholarship. The cavalier dismissal of much 'modern linguistic' work may not accord with the interests of readers of this book, however.

1.4.3 Theory and methodology

Syntactic theory is a big industry, and new general introductions are brought out quite frequently. I have found Radford (1988) useful for some of the details of **Government-Binding (GB) theory**, while Sells (1985) provides an accessible introduction to the main features of three major theories: GB, **Lexical-Functional Grammar (LFG)** and **Generalized Phrase Structure Grammar**. Of these, GB and LFG at least have been used in historical research.

Finally there are many theoretically oriented works on historical syntax which could be recommended here. I will confine myself to three books which cover specific aspects of English historical syntax as well as offering a theoretical perspective: Lightfoot (1979), Allen (1980a), and Warner (1982). Each presents a coherent, individual approach within some version of generative grammar, and each has interesting comments on theory and methodology. Another book worth mentioning is Samuels (1972a), whose

espousal of multi-factorial, functional explanations is relevant to syntax, even though most of the actual case studies belong to morphology, phonology and lexis.

Notes

1. There are nearly 1200 examples; see the list of primary sources at the end of the book for information on the texts. Word-for-word translations of Old and Middle English examples present the following difficulty:

Should the modern rendering be the present phonetic counterpart or the old meaning? – should e.g. Old English ‘sellan’ be rendered ‘sell’ or ‘give’? I am afraid I have not been consistent.

I share the difficulty with, and borrow the confession from, Schibsbye (1972–7: I, Preface).

2. The high-frequency words concorded in Venezky and Butler (1985) will doubtless play a part in future syntactic research. The complete corpus of Old English is available in machine-readable form, and modern computer software allows sophisticated investigations to be carried out – even more readily when the words have been grammatically tagged with form-class labels, as has been done for some corpora of Modern English.
3. More so with the CD-ROM version of the *second* edition of *OED*, especially with improvements in the accompanying software.

Chapter 2

Background

2.1 Prehistory

English belongs to the Germanic branch of the Indo-European family of languages. The reconstructed language known as Proto-Germanic, spoken somewhere in what is now Scandinavia or North Germany in the last few centuries BC, is the principal ancestor of English, as also of Dutch, German, and the Scandinavian languages (except Finnish). Of Germanic languages which no longer survive the most important is Gothic, represented mainly by a bible translation of the fourth century AD which easily predates the other Germanic remains.¹ The exact relationship between the early Germanic dialects is a matter of dispute, but it can safely be said that the oldest recorded English shows greatest affinity with Frisian (itself close to Dutch), and also some evidence of a close relationship with the Scandinavian subgroup.

2.2 Periods of English

The continental Germanic tribes who settled in Britain, mainly Angles and Saxons, started their large-scale immigration in the fifth century AD. It used to be common to give the name 'Anglo-Saxon' to their language, but the term is now usually reserved for cultural or racial description and 'Old English' is the standard linguistic label for the period from which written records survive. The historical period of English is conventionally divided into three stages, **Old English** (OE), **Middle English** (ME), and **Modern** (or **New**) **English** (ModE). Sometimes Early Middle English (eME) and Early Modern/New English (eModE) are distinguished.

Old English	{	700
Middle English (eME up to 1350)		1100
Modern English (eModE up to 1700)		1500
	}	present

The labels are purely for descriptive convenience and the approximate transition dates (slightly different dates are given by different authorities!) do not imply sharp discontinuities in the history of the language. Note therefore that Modern English includes but is to be distinguished from Present-day English (PDE).

2.3 A sketch of Old English

The first historical, as opposed to reconstructed, stage of the language is Old English, because for the first time writing came into widespread use and was done on a durable material, parchment made from sheep- or calfskin.² Christian missionaries from Ireland and subsequently direct from Rome worked out a writing system for (Old) English after the sixth century AD. This system used the Latin alphabet, augmented by the symbols ‘ash’ <æ> (perhaps influenced by sporadic <ae> in Latin), ‘eth’ <ð> (a crossed *d* of uncertain origin), and ‘thorn’ <þ> (borrowed from the runic alphabet).³ The letter <æ> represented a low-mid front vowel, maybe [æ] or [ɛ], while <ð> and <þ> both represented the dental fricatives [θ, ð] (which were not phonemically distinct). Phonemic vowel length was not systematically represented, but otherwise spellings were more or less phonemic. Modern editions often mark long vowels by a macron as an aid to students, e.g. *stān* ‘stone’, and sometimes palatalised /k, g/ (i.e. [tʃ, ʒ]) are indicated by a dot, e.g. *ċeap* ‘price’ (cf. ModE *cheap*), *ġeolu* ‘yellow’. Such editorial marks and indeed scribal accents are ignored in this book.

Spelling in Old English is unusually consistent for a medieval vernacular, because of the strong scribal tradition which developed. There is, however, some chronological variation, for example an early use of <th>, replacement by <þ> and <ð> for most of the period, and eventual reappearance of <th> right at the end. There is also a certain amount of dialectal variation, less noticeable in the main literary texts.

Most prose texts survive in the West Saxon dialect, that used in the south-west of England, while the poetry is mostly in a mixed dialect with Anglian (midlands and northern) characteristics – a conventional statement usually associated with phonological, morphological and lexical features. A distinction is often drawn between ‘early’ and ‘late’ West Saxon (i.e. c900 and c1000 AD), but the differences are mainly to do with vowel spellings. West Saxon is the dialect used in teaching grammars for the illustration of forms. There is some promising work on stylistic traits which can be associated with particular scriptoria in Anglo-Saxon England, but so far work on OE syntax has largely ignored dialectal variation.

As for date, apart from sporadic OE names cited in Latin texts there is little surviving in original manuscripts from before the eighth century, and major prose works only appear in the Alfredian period (c900) and subsequently. Much OE material survives only in copies made long after the original composition, in some cases well into the eME period.

Old English had a vocabulary inherited almost entirely from Germanic or formed by compounding or derivation from Germanic elements. There were

Latin loan words, mainly to do with philosophy, religion and medicine, and some compounds *calqued* on Latin forms. Word stress regularly fell on the first syllable, except for inseparable verbal prefixes. One such prefix, *ge-*, is so common and sometimes makes so little discernible contribution to the meaning of a verb that many dictionaries and glossaries ignore it in alphabetisation. The inflectional systems showed a great deal of reduction compared with Indo-European and Germanic but were still more varied and important than those of Modern English. Nominal morphology plays a major part in the history of English syntax and will be dealt with separately in the next chapter, so only the inflectional morphology of verbs will be sketched here.

The verbal system showed a clear two-term tense contrast. Let us call the two tenses ‘present’ and ‘past’, though the correlation between tense and time was little closer than it is now. For each tense there was an indicative mood (with potentially four distinct endings for 1 SG, 2 SG, 3 SG, and 1/2/3 PL) and a subjunctive (with a simple SG ~ PL distinction). For the majority of verbs the stem(s) of the past tenses were formed in one of two ways:

- (A) by vowel change as compared with the present stem: these are vowel-ablaut, ‘strong’ verbs
- (B) by the addition of an alveolar suffix, *-(e)-d-* (which might be realised as *-t-* after a voiceless consonant) or *-o-d-*: these are consonantal, ‘weak’ verbs

Thus the strong verb SINGAN ‘sing’ has indicative 3 SG PRES *singeð*, 3 SG PA *sang*, 3 PL PA *sungen*, while the weak verb HÆLAN ‘heal’ has *hæld*, *hælde*, *hældon*. Modern English preserves both of these types, though with fewer distinct stem vowels and fewer endings. OE verbs are conventionally cited by their infinitive form.⁴

2.4 A sketch of Middle English

The ME period is one of great linguistic diversity, partly because of two invasions which had taken place during the OE period but whose linguistic effects took longer to become evident.

Invasion and immigration at various times between the ninth and eleventh centuries resulted in extensive Scandinavian settlements in the north and east of the country. The surviving lexis borrowed from Old Danish and Norwegian amounts to some four hundred words in standard Modern English, perhaps two thousand in dialect. Imported features tended to appear first in the old Danelaw (the area under Scandinavian control in the Anglo-Saxon period) and spread southwards during the course of the ME period. An example is the personal pronouns *they*, *their*, and *them* (to give them their ModE spellings), which first appeared in the east midlands in the twelfth century and worked their way south one after the other over the next two centuries or so. Borrowing of pronouns also shows the intimate nature of contact, since closed-class items like pronouns are in general less readily borrowed than open-class items like nouns. Existing morphosyntactic

tendencies in English were certainly reinforced by contact with Scandinavian, but it is doubtful whether any syntactic changes in English were wholly due to Scandinavian influence. It has been suggested that the mixing of two similar languages could have resulted in a kind of creole, and certainly some eME developments – acceleration in the loss of inflections and fixing of word order – are characteristic of creoles. Poussa (1982) makes an interesting case for Anglo-Scandinavian creolisation. Compare the surveys in Görlach (1986) and Thomason and Kaufman (1988: 263–342) (sceptical) and Wallmannsberger (1988) (measured) for summaries, with references, of evidence for alleged creole phases in Middle English, whether Anglo-Scandinavian or Anglo-French.

The Norman Conquest of 1066 also had a profound effect on the language, bringing French-speakers into all positions of authority in England. The Anglo-Saxon aristocracy was more or less wiped out, the cultural, educational and literary traditions were broken except in the south-west midlands, and an enormous transference of lexis took place. At first the influence was from mother-tongue Norman French within the Anglo-Norman kingdom; later it came rather from the acquired and culturally higher-valued Central French of the Paris region. By the end of the ME period, when English had once again become the first language of all classes, perhaps the bulk of OE lexis had become obsolete (measured by type, not token, of course: many of the common OE words are still in daily use), and some ten thousand French words had been ‘borrowed’ into English, maybe 75 per cent surviving into Modern English (Baugh and Cable 1978: 178). One effect was to make English a language of free stress, with different words accented on different syllables. Another was to make a permanent alteration in the balance between word formation and foreign borrowing in subsequent extensions of vocabulary, in that English has remained particularly open to lexical borrowing ever since.

French supplied a class-based influence with little of the geographical restriction shown by Scandinavian. Changes which had already been taking place in spoken English became increasingly visible in written English once the educational and scribal traditions were disrupted. Furthermore the practices of French-trained scribes changed the appearance of written English greatly in both handwriting and spelling. The OE letters <æ> and <ð> died out during early Middle English, while <þ> became indistinguishable from <y> in many styles and was lost in the fifteenth century (except in the contractions *y^e* ‘the’ and *y^t* ‘that’). Meanwhile, the continental <g> was introduced as a separate letter from the insular <3> (which was now called ‘yogh’), with typical values [g] and [χ, j], respectively; by the end of the ME period <3> had been supplanted by <gh> or <y>. The letters <q> and <z> were newly adopted; <k> was systematically used and distinguished from <c>; <v> was distinguished from <f>; and all sorts of new spellings were introduced, including digraphs like <ch> and <ou>.

The only significant foreign influence apart from Scandinavian and Norman French was Latin, which continued to provide lexis principally and perhaps some syntactic influence too (see §§8.5–8 and 10.2.2 below). However, for the first time since the Anglo-Saxon settlement there were some large-scale population movements within the country, particularly

migration to London from East Anglia in the fourteenth century and then from the central midlands at the end of that century. Linguistic evidence for changes in London speech correlates well with historical evidence of migration patterns (Samuels 1972a: 169). The English of documents originating in the Chancery (court of record) became an important incipient standard in the early fifteenth century (Fisher 1977, etc.).

Middle English is more heterogeneous than either Old English before it or Modern English after it, since by and large scribes spelled as they spoke – and there was as much dialectal variation in speech then as at other times. As a result it has been possible to map ME dialects with a precision not attained for any other period of English (including the present day). Regional differences in orthography, lexis, and inflectional morphology have been found in the corpus used for *The Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English*, but Benskin and Laing have voiced doubts as to whether the corpus will yield a regional syntax (McIntosh et al. 1986: I,32), even though there is undoubtedly syntactic diversity in Middle English.

The vowels of nearly all unstressed syllabic inflections were reduced to [ə], spelled <e>. The amount of inflectional differentiation was less than in Old English, especially and earlier in the north. (One *post-hoc* justification of the terms Old English, Middle English and Modern English is to call them the periods of full, reduced and zero inflections, respectively.) In verb morphology the main changes were the transfer of many strong verbs to the still productive weak class, reduction in the number of vowel alternations in surviving strong verbs, and reduction in the number of distinctive person-number endings. The 1 SG (singular) -e and 2 SG PRES (present tense) -(e)s(t) endings remained distinct in most dialects. In the midlands 3 PRES SG -eþ was distinguished from PL (plural) -en, whereas -es in the north and -eþ in the south served for both. Past tenses increasingly failed to differentiate singular and plural as the period wore on. Van Kemenade (1987: 204) suggests that the last-named change plus loss of 1 SG PRES and PL PRES endings, which she places in the fourteenth century, was of significance for verbal syntax. By the end of the period inflectional [ə] had disappeared in word-final position and was in process of loss when followed by a consonant.

2.5 A sketch of Modern English

From the fifteenth century the commercial, political and cultural dominance of London began to have an effect on English. In both speech and writing, London dialect provided a standard for the whole of England – though Scotland continued to take Edinburgh as a standard and newer Englishes in America and elsewhere have partly gone their own way too. From the late fifteenth century there is little sign of dialectal diversity in published English. And from that time, of course, publishing increasingly means *printing*, a medium which, at least after the idiosyncrasies of the early printers, massively contributed to homogenisation of spelling and perhaps of other linguistic features too.

Spelling developed more slowly in the eModE period and began to fall

behind changes in pronunciation. By the sixteenth century the essentials of modern spelling were present, although with much inconsistency and a great use of superfluous doublings and final <e>. By the eighteenth century, as <i> and <j>, <u> and <v> came to be distinguished as vowel and consonant letters rather than mere positional variants, public spelling had stabilised in almost its present form. (Right up to the nineteenth century, however, private letters even of educated people frequently showed surprising divergence from printers' spellings.)

During the eModE period the language borrowed enormous lexical resources from the classical languages of Latin and Greek. It has been estimated that lexical borrowing from Latin in all periods has brought a good quarter of all Latin vocabulary into English (quoted by Strang 1970: 129). Influence from writings in the classical languages was also responsible for highly elaborate periodic sentence structure in certain styles. As the British Empire expanded, so the range of lexical influence widened to ever more exotic source languages.

As far as texts are concerned, the first relatively informal letters come from the fifteenth century,⁵ and the quantity and range of surviving material shoots up from that time on, including more and more that approximates to colloquial registers of speech. Wyld (1936: xi–xiv) lists some sources of colloquial English which date from the fifteenth century – which is really Middle English – to the eighteenth, and Stein (1990) some more. Nearly twenty million words of seventeenth-century writing in a variety of registers (and indeed languages) is currently being compiled in machine-readable form at Sheffield University as the Hartlib Papers Project; see Leslie (1990). For Modern English the Helsinki Corpus of English Texts: Diachronic and Dialectal includes much written material which is speech-based (e.g. records of trials) and/or colloquial in nature (e.g. private letters). Kytö gives useful details of some available early American English data and on the early Modern British English part of the Helsinki Corpus (1991: §3).

Morphological changes in the ModE period tended to have minimal effect on the syntax of lexical verbs and NPs (though cf. §11.4.5.2 below on auxiliaries). In the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries 3 SG PRES *-(e)th* was replaced by the originally northern ending *-(e)s*,⁶ and 3 PL *be(en)* was replaced by *are*. The past tense forms and past participles of strong verbs and irregular weak verbs underwent a great shake-out as the language finished shedding all differences of stem vowel in strong verbs between singular and plural⁷ and often past participle too: compare OE INF (infinitive) *feohtan* 'fight', 3 SG PA *feahst*, 3 PL PA *fuhton*, PA PTCP *gefohten* with ModE INF *fight*, PA *fought*, PA PTCP *fought*. In strong past participles a form with or without final *-en* was seemingly arbitrarily picked on (compare BrE (British English) *got* with *forgotten*). Right up to the nineteenth century there was widespread fluctuation within standard English in irregular past morphology (e.g. past tense *drunk* ~ *drank*), as of course still remains in non-standard usage. Loss of the 2 SG form *thou* and its associated verbal inflection *-(e)st* (*-t* with some auxiliaries) meant that most verbs retained only one inflectional distinction in the present tense, 3 SG vs. the rest, and none in the past tense, and that modal verbs had no person-number inflections at all.

From the sixteenth century various aspects of the language became matters of lively intellectual interest. From the seventeenth century grammars of English began to appear in English, and a prescriptive tradition of teaching English grammar grew up, largely based on the grammar of Latin. It is from this time that explicit mention appears of 'rules' of syntactic etiquette. Some of them are reasonable but many now seem entirely arbitrary, such as the condemnation of clauses which end with a preposition or which employ multiple negation or which have as subject of the passive what would be indirect object in the active.

Finally here we must point to two factors which make the external history of late Modern English quite different from all earlier periods of English. One is that up to the seventeenth century the entire English-speaking population amounted at most to a few million people, all within the British Isles, and having limited contact between regions. Since then and particularly in the last hundred years a vast growth has taken place both in population and in means and capacity for travel and communication. Mass communication, especially sound movies and telecommunications, accelerates certain linguistic changes, though it can act as a brake on the differentiation of dialects. The second factor, due originally to the importance of the British Empire and later to the economic might of the United States, is the dominance of English as a world language, with recent estimates of over 300 million mother-tongue speakers, a further 300 million second-language speakers, and altogether about 1500 millions living in countries where English has official status or is one of the native languages (Quirk et al. 1985: 3,5). The most important consequences are for the many languages subject to English influence or threat, but the sheer number and variety of speakers may have consequences for the future development of English too. It is too early to say whether the rate or the nature of syntactic change in recent times differs from earlier periods, but it would be an interesting topic for research.

2.6 Further reading

I would recommend Strang (1970) as the best of the one-volume histories of English, particularly on the internal history, syntax included: Professor Strang always made a strong attempt to *explain* developments. More detail on the external history can be found in Baugh and Cable (1978). A good short survey is Barber (1972, forthcoming). *CHEL* (1992–) should become the standard source as publication proceeds. A readable introductory work on language change in general is Aitchison (1991). The nature and extent of Latin influence on OE prose has been discussed mostly in relation to specific constructions. For an overall discussion and references see Fischer (1992b). Foreign influence on lexis is treated in Serjeantson (1935). For spelling history see Scragg (1974). There is useful material on standardisation in late Middle English in Samuels (1972a). The progress of standardisation in early Modern English is well surveyed by Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg (1989), who also describe the Helsinki Corpus.

Notes

1. Apart from some inscriptions written in the runic 'futhorc', an alphabet peculiar to Germanic, though related ultimately to other alphabetic writing systems.
2. What we have of Old English amounts to some three million words in two thousand texts (Healey and Venezky 1980: ix). Healey (1985: 245) gives the figure of *three* thousand texts, though here 'text' refers to items in the *DOE* computer corpus and can range from a fragmentary scribble through a single book of *Or* or *Bede* to the whole of the *Canterbury Psalter* (p.c. 28 April 1988).
3. The upper case forms corresponding to *æðþ* are *ÆÐÞ*. Other symbols, notably 'wynn', used for the sound [w], and the insular *g* <3> used for [ɣ, j, g], need not concern us here, as they are regularly replaced in modern editions and in this book by the corresponding modern letters <w> and <g>.
4. Notice that I follow the convention of using small capitals for a *lexeme*. The point of citing verbs as lexemes is to indicate that different inflectional forms are subsumed. Whether the infinitive form cited is Old English (e.g. *SINGAN*), Middle English (*SINGEN*), or Modern English (*SING*) depends on context; utter consistency is beyond me. A few non-verbs which exhibit striking variations of form are also cited in small capitals.
5. Poussa (1982: 82) cites Taylor (1956: 132) on the replacement of parchment by paper in the 1420s, and the consequential spread of letter-writing beyond the very rich and powerful.
6. Recent work by Dieter Stein (1985, 1990) has suggested that the choice between *-(e)th* and *-(e)s* was exploited as a discourse marker during the changeover period.
7. The only surviving trace is in *was* vs. *were*.

Chapter 3

Nominal morphology

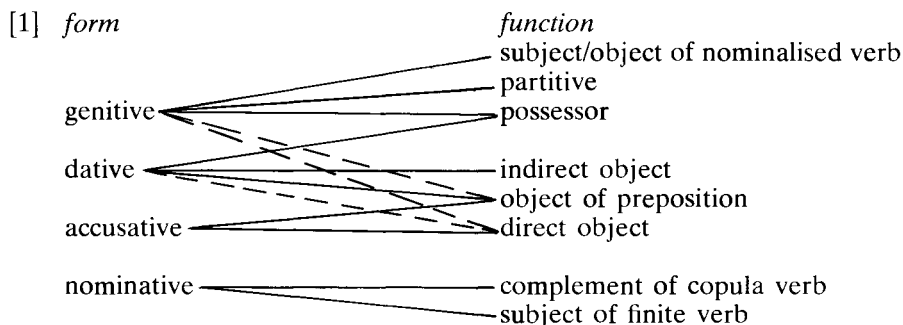
3.1 Old English

3.1.1 Surface inflections

Noun phrases carried inflections which potentially at least marked the phrase for number, gender and case. These inflections appeared on the head (pro)noun and on determiners and adjectives associated with it. There was a two-term **number** contrast of singular and plural in the NP, except in first and second person pronouns, which could show a three-term contrast: singular, dual, plural. Number is a fairly straightforward semantic category.

Nouns belonged to one of three **gender** classes: masculine, feminine, neuter. Grammatical gender was largely a morphological matter, fixed for nearly all nouns, though the semantics of natural gender played some part too: most nouns for human males were masculine, for instance. The gender of many nouns was arbitrary and semantically unmotivated, however.

The final inflectional category, a purely syntactic one, was **case**, which helped to show the syntactic function of an NP and its relation to other constituents of the clause. Case form and syntactic function should not be confused, however. Nouns showed a four-term case contrast, for which the Latinate terms nominative, accusative, genitive, dative are conventionally used. A crude summary of the main uses of each case is given in [1], where dotted lines represent less common form-function pairings:



Some pronouns and adjectives had in addition a fifth case, instrumental, in

the masculine and neuter singular, used for inanimates in functions like means, manner, accompaniment or time. Elsewhere the instrumental had coalesced with the dative.¹

Determiners and adjectives showed agreement for number, gender and case. Few elements of the NP showed the maximum potential inflectional variation implied by the description just given. Nominal inflection was fusional, not agglutinative: usually a single morph realised case, number and (where appropriate) gender. Nowhere in Old English was it possible to distinguish inflectionally between nominative and accusative singular neuter, for instance, or between nominative and accusative plural in any gender (except in first and second person pronouns). Despite this degree of neutralisation the traditional categories (2 numbers × 3 genders × 4 cases) can each be justified on the basis of explicit formal distinctions found somewhere in OE morphology. For details of the forms see for instance Campbell (1959), Keyser and O'Neil (1985).

3.1.2 Prepositions

Prepositional marking of syntactic function is the closest equivalent to surface case marking of an NP, and in languages like Old English using both methods there may be considerable overlap. There were nearly 80 prepositions in Old English,² many of them still surviving, e.g. *þurh* 'through', though not always in identical meanings, e.g. OE *of* '(away) from' and *wið* 'against'. For certain functions there was alternation between an oblique case and a prepositional phrase, thus e.g. *þy ilcan geare*(INST) ~ *on þam ilcan geare* '(in) the same year', *lytle werode*(INST) ~ *mid lytlum werode* 'with a small troop'.

3.1.3 Case in linguistic theory

Theories of case in modern linguistics form a vast and complex subject. All I shall attempt here is to identify some general approaches to case which have been applied in recent years to Old English.

3.1.3.1 Case Grammar

Case Grammar is best known from the work of Charles Fillmore and John Anderson.³ In Case Grammar every NP in a given clause has (usually) one semantic role, its **deep case**: Agent, Experiencer, Instrument, and so on. Deep case – not the same as the surface cases discussed in §3.1.1 – may be expressed on the surface in various ways, thus accounting for alternative realisations of 'the same' clause. One sort of variation used to motivate claims of underlying identity is:

- [2] (a) John opened the door with a key.
 (b) John used a key to open the door.
 (c) A key opened the door.
 (d) The door opened.
 (e) The door was opened by John.

The various NPs may appear in different syntactic functions and with or without various prepositions, but with the same underlying semantic role. A

typical extension of Case Grammar is to regard deep cases as essentially **localistic** in origin, so that all semantic roles depend on, or are figurative extensions of, spatial notions like Source, Location and so on.

3.1.3.2 Government-Binding theory

Government-Binding theory, the current version of Chomskian transformational generative grammar, consists of a number of autonomous modules. One such is Theta Theory. Semantic case roles are called **thematic relations** or **θ-roles**, and appear to be broadly similar to Fillmorean deep cases.

3.1.3.3*

Another module of the GB framework is Case Theory, within which definitions of abstract case continue to evolve with bewildering rapidity; much of the discussion is wholly theory-internal. Case in GB theory is essentially a syntactic property of NPs; its bearing on semantics is quite indirect; nor is it the same as surface (morphological) case, though they are related. There were at first two main kinds of abstract case in GB theory: 'inherent' case, associated with θ-role and so lexically determined at **D-structure**, and 'structural' case, determined at and by **S-structure** and independent of particular lexical items. The case of object NPs is in recent work either 'oblique', which is inherent, or 'objective', which is structural. 'Nominative' case, which seems to correspond exactly with surface nominative, is assigned structurally through government by INFL (the constituent which dominates tense). Fischer and van der Leek (1987: 95–7) provide references to early work on case in GB theory and trenchant criticism of its vagueness.

3.1.3.4 Deep and surface case

Recent work inside and outside the tradition of generative linguistics has been attempting to find systematic correlations between surface case forms in Old English and some notion of underlying semantic role or deep case or case relation.

Frans Plank has studied verbs which allow a choice of case in object NPs, arguing that in many instances the choice is motivated rather than arbitrary (1981, 1983). He claims that dative marking of object NPs tends to signal a relatively low degree of opposedness between the referents of object and subject NPs, accusative marking relatively high opposedness (correlated with patient function for the object), while genitive marking tends to encode circumstantial roles rather than full participants. His hypothesis is nicely illustrated by the following pair:

[3] *Phoen* 591

Him folgiað fuglas scyne
him(DAT) follow birds brilliant
'brilliant birds follow him'

[4] *Beo* 2933

ond ða folgode feorhgeniðlan
and then pursued deadly-foes(ACC?)
'and then he pursued deadly foes'

Whether FOLGIAN means ‘follow’ or ‘pursue’ is allegedly signalled by the case of its object NP. Similarly, GEEFENLÆCAN + ACC is said to mean ‘imitate’, but + DAT ‘resemble’:

[5] *BenR* ii 11.16

... and þa unandgytfullan ... hine geefenlæcen.
 ... and the unintelligent(NOM) ... him(ACC) imitate(SUBJ)
 ‘... and the unintelligent ... may imitate him’

[6] *ÆCHom* II, 13.129.71

Gif he geeuenlæcð gode
 if he resembles God(DAT)

Appealing though the hypothesis is, there seems to be some special pleading going on.⁴

3.1.3.5* Anderson

Anderson has in recent work reduced the number of deep cases in his Case Grammar framework to four **case relations**:

ergative (erg): source of action
absolutive (abs): thing affected, moved, located
locative (loc): location or goal
ablative (abl): spatial source

(I quote here from Colman 1988: 40, summarising e.g. Anderson 1985: 4.) Every clause contains an abs argument. All constituents of a clause apart from verbs carry one or more of these case labels. Anderson suggests (1985) that the four main surface cases in Old English should be analysed as ‘morphologisations’ of certain case relations and/or grammatical relations. Thus erg is typically associated with nominative, erg/loc and loc with dative, abs with accusative, abl with genitive. These typical associations may be overridden by subject-formation (which in the absence of erg extends erg-hood to the next available argument on a hierarchy of case relations), genitive-formation (which substitutes abl for another case relation), or particular lexical specifications attached to prepositions. See also Anderson’s (1988) use of this framework for OE impersonal verbs, discussed in §5.6.2.2 below.

3.1.3.6 Fischer and van der Leek

These ideas have been taken up by Olga Fischer and Frederike van der Leek (1987), who build on Plank’s observations and on localistic case theory to suggest that in Old English there is a major difference between nominative and accusative cases on the one hand and genitive and dative on the other. A non-argument NP will be more peripheral than an *argument*, either having no direct relation with the verb at all or else fulfilling a peripheral semantic role. Thus in the ModE sentence:

[7] Jim painted Joe’s bike in the garage.

NPs headed by *Jim*, *bike* are arguments of PAINT, by *Joe*, *garage* not. (A further refinement is to distinguish between [VP-]external arguments like *Jim*

and **internal** arguments like *bike*.) Fischer and van der Leek suggest that in Old English, nominative and accusative mark NPs which are arguments of a verb – their θ -roles are assigned by the verb – whereas genitive and dative mark independent θ -roles, not arguments of a verb. More will be said about their approach in §5.6.3 below, in the chapter on impersonal verbs.

3.2 Middle English

3.2.1 Surface inflections

By the early ME period many OE inflectional distinctions were obsolescent. Dual number in pronouns did not survive beyond the early thirteenth century, grammatical gender survived only in the sporadic use of historically correct determiners – and then only in the south – until the fourteenth century; see here Jones (1988), Markus (1988a). There were major changes in determiners. From a two-term *deictic* system (OE SE ‘the, that’ ~ PES ‘this’) with enormous person/number/case differentiation, the forms and functions were eventually rearranged into a three-term deictic system (ModE *the* ~ *THAT* ~ *THIS*) with limited number differentiation. Adjectival inflections were reduced to a contrast between \emptyset and *-e* at most, and then mainly on certain monosyllabic stems. Where inflectional *-e* in adjectives had any grammatical significance at all, it could mark plurality or (especially in early Middle English) a *weak* adjective.

As for nouns, case *syncretism* meant that all nominative ~ dative ~ accusative distinctions were lost. Often they would have fallen together by ordinary phonetic change, but where they would have differed the actual ME form comes from the old nominative or accusative. The genitive survived as a formally marked category but no longer served as a case governed by verbs or prepositions. Thus there were two noun cases, which we can call ‘common’ (the *unmarked* form) and ‘genitive’.

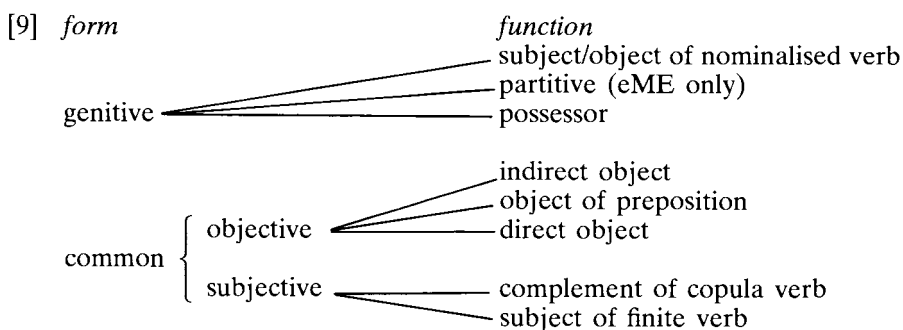
In animate personal pronouns it was the old dative form which survived rather than the accusative,⁵ and this remained distinct from the old nominative. These surviving cases can be called ‘objective’ and ‘subjective’ (or ‘nominative’), respectively. An appropriate table for a typical noun, *arm* ‘arm’, and for the 3 MASC (masculine) personal pronoun would therefore in many dialects show these contrasts in the singular:

[8] genitive	<i>armes</i>		<i>his</i>
		{	objective <i>him</i>
common	<i>arm</i>		subjective <i>he</i>

This particular paradigm has not changed except in phonological detail since Middle English. (For details of the full range of nominal inflection in Middle English see for instance Mossé 1952.)

Recognition of three NP cases is justified for Middle English (and Modern English) by their formal distinctness in personal pronouns, even though determiners, adjectives, and nouns no longer showed an objective ~ subjective distinction. In addition to the changes in the formal case system since Old English there was also a slight redistribution of functions. The

formal distinctions are presented in [9] so as to be applicable either to nouns or to personal pronouns:



Compare diagram [9] with [1]. The inflectional genitive marking the object of a nominalised verb – **objective genitive** (*John's killing/betrayal* = 'the killing/betrayal of John') – became rarer when there was possibility of confusion with the **subjective genitive** (*John's killing/betrayal* = 'the killing/betrayal by John'), but it has remained in the language.

3.2.2 Prepositions

Prepositional use in Middle English shows enormous expansion over Old English. Mustanoja devotes a long chapter to the subject (1960: 345–427), detailing how a number of new prepositions entered the language from native and foreign sources and how prepositions increased in frequency of occurrence and in range of use. Comparing Middle English with Old English in this respect he writes:

The syntactical relationships formerly expressed by means of the case-endings now come to be expressed mainly by means of word-order and prepositions. *Of*, for example, becomes a favourite equivalent of the genitive . . . ; *to* and *for* are widely used for the original dative . . . , and *mid*, *with*, *through*, *by*, and *of* for the instrumental. (1960: 348)

Prepositional marking was in part a functional replacement for case marking. New prepositional usages play an important part in the topics discussed in Chapters 6 and 7.

3.2.3 Theories of case

In GB theory the changes in surface case forms sketched above in §3.2.1 can be correlated with changes in syntax; see Chapters 5 and 7 below.

In the framework of Relational Grammar, relations such as Subject and Direct Object and not structural configurations are treated as primary. Paul Bennett (1980) has interpreted the loss of dative case in English in Relational Grammar terms. He identifies the emergence of 'unmarked case' (our common case) with an extension of the scope of the relation Direct

Object, whether underlying or derived. His analysis will be discussed in §7.6.3, in a chapter concerned with the appearance of new passives in Middle English.

3.3 Modern English

There are few surface changes to report in Modern English. The pronunciation of the inflection spelled *-es* in most dialects of Middle English became [ɪz] in the dominant dialect, and such inflections as survived became non-syllabic where vowel loss would not lead to unacceptable consonant clusters, thus for example *-es* [ɪz] > *-s* [s, z]. Adjectives lost all trace of inflectional variation apart perhaps from comparative and superlative formations like *longer*, *longest*; and even here syntactic comparison with *more* and *most* has spread at the expense of synthetic forms, thus PDE *most ungrateful* rather than eModE *ungratefull'st*.

In the pronoun system the main changes affect second-person forms. The plural form was increasingly used with singular reference, at first with various social implications but increasingly as unmarked replacements of the historically singular forms *thou* and *thee*. By the seventeenth century it was *thou* and *thee* which had become the socially or stylistically marked forms for singular reference; they later became obsolete in most registers of standard English, though not in all dialects. Meanwhile from the end of the sixteenth century there was confusion between (historically) subjective *ye* and objective *you*; eventually *ye* was lost except as an archaism. The second person system has therefore ended up with one form in the standard language, *you*, where first and third persons have up to four.

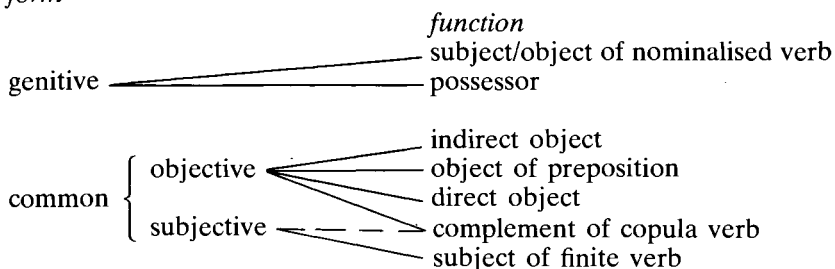
The main functional change in case usage has been a continued shift towards objective as unmarked form, most noticeable in such patterns as *It's me* and *taller than me* (cf. Harris 1981, Kjellmer 1986), where subjective *I* would have been normal at earlier times. Here is an early example with the copula verb PROVE (compare with [74] in Chapter 12 below):

[10] 1697 Vanbrugh, *Provok'd Wife* IV.iv.7

But if it prove her, all that's woman in me shall be employ'd to destroy her.

The ME table of [9] must therefore be modified slightly as follows for late Modern English:

[11] *form*



There are grounds for a more substantial modification too, namely to treat the genitive as an *enclitic* word rather than a noun inflection (though what to do with genitive pronouns would be a moot point). This is because 's⁶ can now be added not just to nouns but to NPs and even coordinated NPs in the so-called **group genitive**:

[12] the player on the inside's control

In [12] it would be inappropriate syntactically or semantically to treat 's as an inflection on *inside*. However, the history of the group genitive is essentially a matter of the internal structure of NPs, and if we allow the actual locus of case to remain vague, [11] can stand as a summary of case usage in NPs in Modern English.

3.4 Question for further research

Use the *Concordance* of Venezky and Healey (1980) to gather examples of FOLGIAN 'pursue, follow' and/or (GE)EFENLÆCAN 'imitate, resemble' with a view to testing the semantics of case choice for the object NP (see §3.1.3.4 above). Be prepared for dialectal or diachronic variation within Old English.

Notes

1. For fuller descriptions of OE case usage see Quirk and Wrenn (1957: 59–68) or Mitchell and Robinson (1992: §§188–92). Mitchell (1985: §§1240–1427) is the standard reference.
2. Mitchell lists 78 undoubted OE prepositions (1985: §1178).
3. See Fillmore (1968) for a seminal sketch of the theory, Anderson (1971, 1977, and later papers) for fuller working out.
4. Examples [3]–[6], from Plank (1981: 20; 1983: 247), have been quoted approvingly by Fischer and van der Leek (1987: 92–3) and Traugott (1992: 204). However, a cursory inspection of Venezky and Healey (1980) suggests that in Ælfrician manuscripts at least, GEEFENLÆCAN normally took a dative object even in contexts which suggest the meaning 'imitate' (namely the imperative, or after UTON 'let us', or with the object *his dædum* 'his deeds', etc.); thus also Sweet (1897) s.v. *efenlæcan*. As for *feorhgeniðlan* in [4], it is not unambiguously accusative and is actually listed as dative in Klaeber's glossary of *Beo*.
5. Southern dialects of Middle English maintained a distinction between dative and accusative only in MASC and NEUT (better, inanimate) 3 SG pronouns, with MASC *hine* and inanimate *hit* as direct object forms, MASC (or occasionally inanimate) *him* as indirect object form (Strang 1970: 198). The pronoun of inanimate reference in prepositional object function was most commonly *proclitic per(e)* in all dialects.
6. Or conceivably just the apostrophe in writing ([Ø] in speech) if the NP happens to end in -s:
(a) ?the leader of the insurgents' voice



Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

Part II

WORD ORDER

Overview

Part II consists of the single Chapter 4, Word Order. This aspect of syntactic organisation is placed here because it is self-evidently of major overall importance in verbal syntax, to be discussed in Parts III to V. Despite the fact that I have relatively little to contribute from my own research, Chapter 4 is a long chapter, and one in which the difficulty of reconciling different theoretical approaches is particularly apparent. Readers who do not wish to work through all the detailed commentaries might like at least to read §4.1.



Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

Chapter 4

Word Order

4.1 Introductory remarks

4.1.1 Relation to (other aspects of) syntax

We can talk about the word order either of a particular utterance or of a language as a whole, in which case we mean the general, typical, *unmarked* order(s) found in the language at a particular time.¹ Word order and syntactic structure are closely interrelated. It could be said that the word order of a language (in the general sense) merely follows from – is the sum of – the orders of all relevant syntactic constructions. Then word order would be a derivative notion. A word order change would simply mean that a number of syntactic constructions had begun to manifest themselves differently. However, since it is usually possible to state rules or tendencies of word order in such a general way that they apply to a wide range of syntactic patterns, it is more common to regard the overall word order rules as having priority over individual constructions. That is the viewpoint we shall adopt in this chapter. We shall make use of the idealisation that word order has an existence independent of the individual syntactic constructions which manifest any given ordering. Later chapters on particular constructions will allow us to look back on word order change from the alternative viewpoint.

4.1.2 SVO, SOV, VSO, etc.

A pioneering cross-linguistic study by Greenberg (1966) listed the basic word order of 30 languages in terms of the relative order of just three elements: subject (S), verb (V) and object (O).² This simple classification into potentially six different orders came to be of central importance in the new field of **language typology**. It was shown to correlate significantly with other ordering relationships, and later work – a recent example is Dryer (1991) – tried to establish an *implicational hierarchy*³ for word order facts. In those terms Modern English is clearly an SVO language, since no

unmarked declarative clause deviates from that order. Whether Old English should be labelled SVO or SOV is far less clear, since clauses of both types were common. The answer might well vary with the date or genre of the text(s) analysed. In any case the use of blanket labels like SVO or SOV, however necessary for cross-linguistic comparison, is hardly practicable for Old English. In an OE text sample containing 251 clauses I found a mere handful that were actually suitable for counting as SVO, SOV, OSV or whatever (Denison 1986: §5.1): all the rest had at least one of those elements split or missing altogether, were marked in some way, or were clearly affected by weight ordering (see §4.6.1 below). For a method which is essentially statistical this is a big problem.

Labels like SVO, SOV, VSO can carry a rather different significance. For generative linguists they stand not for the most frequently attested ordering – with or without allowance for deviations due to some kind of marking – but rather for an abstract underlying order from which all attested surface orders can be derived with the greatest economy. This is legitimate within a particular linguistic model, but careless usage might blur the distinction between the unmarked/most frequently attested sense on the one hand and the abstract/underlying sense on the other. Certainly the term *canonical order* is sometimes used with worrying shiftiness.⁴

4.1.3 Verb position

Labelling the position of the (finite) verb has proved useful in dealing with the history of English word order. Four possibilities are usually allowed for in this nomenclature. A language – or perhaps a subset of clause types in a language – may be **verb first** or **V-1** or **V1**. Arguably ModE polar (i.e. yes/no) interrogatives can often be V-1, though of course only if the *finite* verb is counted as 'V':

- [1] (a) Have you seen Jimmy?
 (b) Will Fred be coming?
 (c) Is that so?

It may be **verb second** or **V-2**, in which case one sentence constituent precedes the verb. *Wh*-interrogatives and a very few other constructions in Modern English are V-2:

- [2] (a) Who gave you that camera?
 (b) Which delegate did you take a picture of?
 (c) Never in all my life have I been so embarrassed.

In Modern Dutch and German all declarative main clauses are V-2. A language or subset of clauses may be **verb third** or **V-3**, a somewhat unhappy choice of label for a situation in which the verb follows the subject regardless of whether or not there is any pre-subject element. ModE declaratives are then V-3, both in main and subordinate clauses:⁵

- [3] (a) Jimmy spoilt his chances.
 (b) *Last year spoilt Jimmy his chances.

- (c) Last year Jimmy spoilt his chances.
- (d) (You must know) that Jimmy spoilt his chances.
- (e) (the chances) which Jimmy spoilt by his foolish behaviour

Notice that although the order of [3](a) could be due to a V-2 constraint, the non-occurrence of [3](b) and the existence of [3](c–e) show this to be fortuitous: only the V-3-ness of [3](a) is significant, however inappropriate the name. Last on our list is **verb final** or **V-F**. This order is not found systematically in Modern English, but subordinate clauses in Dutch and German are V-F. A variant of V-F is **verb-late** (Vennemann 1984), which is essentially V-F but with some provision for ‘afterthought’ elements.

4.1.4 Other terminologies

Many other ways of labelling particular word orders will be found in the literature. For Old English Smith (1893: 215) adopted from a grammar of German the terms **normal**, **inverted** and **transposed** orders, standing for SV, VS, and S . . V, respectively. The presuppositions of these terms are no longer in favour: to call SV ‘normal’ and the other orders deviations from normality is to beg the question. Alternative labels within similar systems include **direct** and **neutral** orders (= SV = SVX⁶), **demonstrative** order (= XVS), and **subordinate** and **conjunctive** orders (= S . . V = SXV), the latter terms embodying assumptions about the clause-types which use that order. Bruce Mitchell uses SV, S . . V, and VS (1964; 1985: §3900), which seem acceptably neutral until one realises that apparently arbitrary variants (licensed by ModE parallels) are permitted within each category. Thus, for example, a pattern is still SV if ‘elements such as adverbs or phrases’ intervene between subject and verb, though not if nominals or non-finite verbs intervene (1985: §3901). The choice of S and V as pivotal elements is simply taken for granted. Furthermore V-1 and V-2 are not distinguished. Mitchell’s terminology implicitly codes a classification and an analysis.

Other scholars have drawn on the notion of **topic** (often T) and **comment**, as in the suggestion that one stage of Old English was TVX. The topic of a sentence is the element which is given, usually in the preceding discourse, while the comment is what is new. Typically the topic will be an NP, and often it will coincide with the subject. A largely equivalent terminology is **theme** (for topic) vs. **rheme** (for comment). Sometimes ‘theme’ is used for the discourse notion of givenness so that **topicalisation** can be reserved for the syntactic property of ‘an optional fronting of a constituent from some other, syntactically neutral position’ (Kohonen 1978: 69). In that case ‘theme’ and ‘topic’ will not be equivalent terms even if in a particular sentence they often coincide.

4.1.5 The problem

Ignoring a large body of exceptions and some evidence of non-homogeneity within Old English, we might claim that Old English was a mixed V-2/V-F language like Dutch or German, with V-2 predominant in main clause

declaratives and V-F predominant in subordinate clauses. Modern English, on the other hand, is consistently V-3 or SVO. How and why did word order change? This I take to be the main problem to be investigated.

Subsidiary questions include the following. How should we deal with the Old English exceptions? Are they systematically explicable, and if not, how then should we describe and explain the word order of Old English? What was the role of 'dummy *hit*'? – see §5.9 on this question. What exactly were the word order rules during the transitional period? What is the history of non-finite verbs (infinitives and participles)? Do interrogatives and imperatives, whose largely V-2 or V-1 ordering appears to have changed little over the centuries, constitute independent domains? (The last question is hardly discussed here and is left as an exercise.)

4.2 The data

Word order studies require large numbers of examples in order for statistically significant generalisations to be drawn. To illustrate this point, consider the claim, already stated above, that Modern English is SVO. What then of the following?

- [4] Such problems I avoid.
- [5] (a) Down it came.
- (b) Down came the rain.

Example [4] is OSV or XSV, [5](a) is XSV, while [5](b) is XVS. Yet the generalisations can be allowed to stand because [4]–[5] are clearly exceptional: [4] is a marked order with topicalisation of the object NP, while the topicalisation of a directional adverb in [5] is both marked and very limited in application.⁷ Analysis of a large ModE corpus would probably reveal the infrequency of patterns [4]–[5] and the special contexts to which they are confined.

For Old English, where both data and intuitive knowledge are more limited, it is harder to discriminate between rules and exceptions, though numerous scholars have had a go undeterred. In Middle English the problem is worse, since the language is messier (more heterogeneous, see §2.4) than Old English and probably for this reason has been less fully studied. And for any period, just what constitutes relevant data, let alone how to assess it, depends very heavily on the theoretical assumptions of the analyst. All of this makes a neutral account of the evidence particularly difficult, and I shall not attempt one. A few examples will appear incidentally in the course of a survey of scholarly investigations. Each study really has to be taken as a whole; I draw comparisons where I can.

4.3 Descriptions and explanations

I have made a rough-and-ready four-way division of the scholarly material: synchronic versus diachronic, and non-generative versus generative. Not all contributions sit happily inside this categorisation, of course, but overall it

should help to keep the almost overwhelming variety of material under control. I have also been rather selective in my choice of studies to discuss.

In synchrony most attention has been paid to Old English (apart, of course, from Present-day English, which I neglect entirely). The traditional viewpoint on Old English word order is represented here by Smith and to some extent Mitchell. Bacquet concentrates on the idea of marked and unmarked order, while Reszkiewicz explores weight ordering. Smith goes on to consider the breakdown of the OE system, and Mitchell also compares a very late OE/early ME text with older and later states of the language. Generative accounts of Old English word order are represented by Koopman and by Pintzuk and Kroch.

Diachronic accounts are more in the linguistic than the philological tradition. They include Fourquet, Strang, Vennemann, Stockwell, and Canale, all of whom look for functional explanations of developments which run from the pre-historic period through and beyond Old English. Bean attempts to test some of the theories on offer against an OE corpus, while Kohonen has the most thorough statistical study – his corpus includes Old and early Middle English texts – and discusses the widest range of factors. Gerritsen goes for a bird's-eye view of word order change in the entire Germanic language family, while Danchev and Weerman have independently pointed to Anglo-Scandinavian contact. An important diachronic account which is strictly generative in its approach is that of van Kemenade. Different, semi-formalised approaches are represented by Canale, Colman, and Stockwell and Minkova.

4.4 Synchronic accounts in non-generative linguistics

4.4.1 Smith

C. Alphonso Smith made one of the first serious studies of Old English word order (1893), using the Alfredian *Orosius* and Ælfric's *Homilies* as source material. His avowed aim was 'to find the syntactic norm' (1893: 212), that is, the order dictated by syntactic factors and not by rhetorical considerations or euphonic ones (the latter applying in any case only to poetry).

Smith deals with his main order types one by one: SV, VS, SXV. The positions of other sentence elements in the SV type are described systematically, though the explanations are somewhat impressionistic, and the same relative orders of minor elements are to be presumed for the VS and S . . V types – apart from the order of auxiliary and main verb, which is discussed once in relation to SV order and again for dependent clauses generally. A detailed table of contents ('index') is given at the end of the article.

As has already been noted, Smith takes SV order to be normal. Datives, he says, usually preceded direct objects if both were full NPs – this is not confirmed by Koopman (1990d) – and direct objects normally preceded other verbal modifiers. If pronominal, however, both datives and direct objects normally preceded V. The position of a non-finite verb was not yet determined by a syntactic norm: it could follow the finite immediately, go to

the end of the clause, or appear somewhere between those two positions, but with a tendency to final position if there were few other elements in the VP.

(X)VS order is taken to be a marked order and is discussed under two heads: the initial element, if present, which 'caused' inversion (giving XVS, a kind of V-2 pattern), and the clause-types which could be signalled by inversion (i.e. VSX or V-1 order), namely conditional, concessive, interrogative, and 'command'.

SXV order is characteristic of subordinate clauses in his texts, though occasional examples in main clauses are considered briefly (1893: 231-2). Smith also discusses the reasons for individual instances of VS or SVX in dependent clauses, where rhetorical principles have overridden syntactic ones, for example the non-final position of *gemunde* in [6]:

[6] *Or* 33.6

for þon ðe se cyning ne gemunde þara monigra teonena þe
because the king not remembered the many wrongs which
hiora ægðer oþrum on ærdagum gedyde
them(GEN) each the-other(DAT) in former-days did

'because the king did not remember the many wrongs which each of them had formerly done to the other'

Smith explains the order of [6] as allowing an antecedent (*þara monigra teonena*) to be adjacent to its relative clause (*þe . . . gedyde*).

Smith gives detailed figures for compound tenses in dependent clauses, which I summarise now with the abbreviations v = finite verb and V = non-finite verb. The most common order by far in *Orosius* is SVv (no object) at 43 per cent, while the orders SvOV 11 per cent, SvV (no object) 15 per cent, and SOVv 17 per cent account for most of the rest. In the *Ælfric Homilies* the figures are different. The commonest orders are SvV 26 per cent, SVv 20 per cent, S(X)vVX 18 per cent, followed by SvOV 11 per cent, SvVO 9 per cent, and SOVv 8 per cent.

By showing statistically that SXV was already less than invariable in dependent clauses in *Orosius* and had declined still further by the time of *Ælfric*, well before the Norman Conquest, Smith can reason that 'while the influence of French powerfully aided the movement against transposition, it did not create the movement, but only fostered it' (1893: 230). He suggests a threefold explanation for the replacement of SXV by SVX in dependent clauses (1893: 238): the greater simplicity of SVX; analogy with main clauses; analogy with indirect affirmative clauses (which show higher proportions of SVX than other dependent clauses). The type he calls indirect affirmatives are *þæt*-clauses which follow a verb of saying, as in:

[7] *ÆCHom* I 3.46.2

We gehyrdon hine secgan þæt Crist towyrpð þas stowe
we heard him say that Christ destroys this place

'We heard him say that Christ will destroy this place.'

Perhaps they are not all truly dependent clauses; see Mitchell (1985:

§§1939–43) on the rather fluid boundary between true indirect speech and direct quotation.

4.4.2 Bacquet

The work of Paul Bacquet (1962) has been roundly criticised by Mitchell (1985: §3916 *et passim*), especially for its failure to acknowledge the subordinate-like behaviour of coordinate *ond/ac/ne*-clauses, and I shall not pursue the details of Bacquet's analysis here. Its importance lies in its thoroughness – it remains a major source of information on OE word order – and in the principle which Bacquet adopts, namely that for a given clause-type there is one order which is unmarked, and every other order must be in some way marked.

4.4.3 Mitchell

4.4.3.1

Bruce Mitchell's summary of the principles of OE word order runs as follows (1964: 119):⁸

In the sentence or clause, Old English prose retained the three ancient Germanic word-orders – S.V. [. . .], S. . . . V., and V.S. But word-order in Old English is not as regular as that in Modern German, where S. . . . V. occurs only in subordinate clauses [. . .] and S.V. is the order of principal clauses except when some element other than the subject begins the sentence, when we have V.S. What are rules in Modern German are certainly tendencies in Old English prose. But (possibly under the influence of verse, where these rules do not apply, and as part of the process which led to the modern fixed word-order) S.V. and sometimes V.S. occur in subordinate clauses, while V.S. with initial verb can occur in principal clauses which are statements, not questions. [. . .]

Of course if Strang and others are right about early Old English, it is wrong (for that period at least) to use a classification which treats the position of the subject as fundamental.

Mitchell has been humorously but admiringly called the only living native speaker of Old English. Often his intuition about how to classify order types has anticipated later work, even if his classifications are not explicitly motivated. He points out, for example, that [8](c) is rare and that (therefore?) [8](d) is an equivalent of both [8](a) and (b) (1964: 124):

- [8] (a) ic lufige God
I love God
- (b) ic God lufige
- (c) ic lufige hine
I love him
- (d) ic hine lufige

Van Kemenade's work on personal pronouns as *clitics* makes sense of the

behaviour of *hine* here: see §4.7.1.1 below. Another case in point is Mitchell's classification of examples like [9] as S. . . V (1964: 120):

[9] *ÆCHom* I 3.44.29

þæt he tallice word spræce be Moyse
that he blasphemous words might-speak concerning Moses
and be Gode
and concerning God

'that he might speak blasphemous words concerning Moses and God'

He has chosen (but without real explanation) to ignore conjoined PPs that come right at the end of what would otherwise be an SXV clause. Other workers, notably Vennemann and Stockwell, have likewise regarded such examples as variants of SXV in origin, but they have gone on to explain both why they might have occurred and how their occurrence might have contributed to the eventual demise of the SXV pattern.

One recurrent theme in Mitchell's work is the nature of OE clauses beginning with *ond* 'and', *ac* 'but' or *ne* 'nor'. His suggestion is that they be separately classified (1964: 118), since although coordinate in nature they have a strong tendency to show the SXV order characteristic of subordinates; see also Denison (1986: §2.2).

I shall not attempt to summarise the word order material in Mitchell's great reference work (1985: Chapter IX). The approach is the same as in the earlier article, but here Mitchell is at pains to show that so many order possibilities can be attested in Old English that this reader at least is left without a clear idea of what OE word order was like. For information on the use of subjunctive verb forms in subordinate clauses – a possible test of subordinate status which I shall not discuss here – see the many entries in the contents pages of Mitchell's Volume 2 under 'Mood'. Subjunctives are frequent, for example, in the subordinate members of correlative *ær* 'before' . . . *ær* 'first' constructions (1985: §2540). Non-use is rarely decisive against subordinate status, however.

4.4.3.2

Mitchell's important paper on the word order of the *Continuations* of the *Peterborough Chronicle* (1964) is a highly traditional (if revisionist) study. Where the *First Continuation*, dated 1122–31, might be regarded as very late Old English, the *Second Continuation* of c1154–5 is often taken to be the first Middle English text. Mitchell's purpose is to locate each *Continuation* on a notional scale which runs from the norms of Old English to those of Present-day English, and specifically to show that the *Second Continuation* is less modern than had been claimed.

Various linguistic features are discussed in brief, but it is word order patterns that dominate the article. A previous worker is condemned for 'not appear[ing] to care whether the word-order in question is possible or not today' (1964: 118). This criterion plays a major part in Mitchell's own discussion, as can be seen from the conclusion that 'the word-order of the two *Continuations* therefore contains much which is common to Old and

Modern English, much which cannot occur in Modern English, and nothing which cannot be paralleled in Old English' (1964: 138). Yet it is not necessarily helpful, since in principle at least the same pattern might be possible at different times for quite different reasons, as for example:

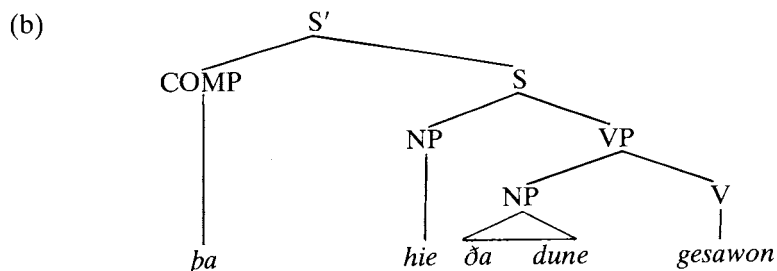
- [10] c1155 *Peterb. Chron.* 1137.42
 Wrecce men sturuen of hungær.
 poor men died of hunger

This word order could be produced either by V-2 syntax or by V-3, so that the modern-looking order of [10] might be coincidental and deceiving. Mitchell does observe that any *Peterborough Chronicle* word order which is found in Old English too is of no value as a test of modernity. He does not discuss the possibility that some word orders common to Old, Middle and Modern English might be due to fundamentally different word order principles in the different language systems. Only to some extent is this because of the limited purpose of his article: Mitchell's whole approach to word order makes discussion of underlying principles difficult.

4.5 Synchronic accounts within generative linguistics

Most transformational generative accounts of Old English syntax assume that the verb of every clause is generated in final position, despite the fact that V-F is not the most common of attested orders. In TG grammar, of course, a sentence may have a number of different syntactic structures, its underlying structure (initial structure, *deep structure*, *D-structure*) being transformed successively to its *surface structure* (*S-structure*) by means of explicit rules.⁹ Details of tense marking and of notation apart, then, the underlying structure of *all* clauses in Old English is taken to be something like that of the subordinate clause illustrated in [11] (ignoring INFL):

- [11] (a) *Gen* 22.4
 þa hie ða dune gesawon
 when they(NOM) the hill(ACC) saw
 'when they saw the hill'



The subject of the clause – *hie* in [11] – is a *sister*¹⁰ of the VP (verb phrase). The VP may have a variety of internal structures – in [11] a simple object NP, *ðā dune*, as sister of V – but V is always its final constituent, at least if sentence embedding is left out of account. Now the value of the V-F analysis, first proposed for Modern Dutch and German, is that the typical surface order of OE subordinate clauses is accounted for without further cost, so that the surface structure of [11](a) is much like its underlying structure.

Main clauses ('root clauses') require only a transformation from V-F to V-2 order, and since COMP is typically empty of lexical material in main clauses but occupied by a subordinator (conjunction) in subordinate clauses, application of the movement rule can be made conditional on the COMP node being empty. A common formulation is to treat the movement which creates V-2 order as a two-stage process. First, V moves to COMP if COMP is empty, making V the first constituent. Then one of the other constituents is topicalised, that is, moved over V to a TOPIC position at the left periphery of the whole structure, creating V-2 order. Support for, refinements of, and problems with this analysis appear in numerous publications, of which a selection of the ones concentrating on Old English are discussed in the following pages. For a more general survey see Platzack (1985).

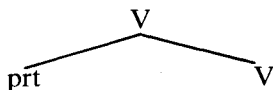
4.5.1 Koopman

Willem Koopman has written a series of papers on Old English word order (1985, 1990b, 1990c, 1990d, 1992), each working carefully through the implications for a generative analysis of one small domain of syntax (and not to be confused with influential cross-linguistic research on verbal syntax by his sister, Hilda Koopman).

4.5.1.1

Koopman (1985) uses verb-particle combinations as a test case, where a **particle** (henceforth 'prt') is a (usually) spatial adverb like *forð* 'forth, forwards', *up* 'up', *ut* 'out'. Prior assumptions are that general base-generated word order is SXV and that verb and particle are generated under a single node (1985: §1), though the latter is perhaps a little dubious, since most OE verb-particle combinations have nothing like the idiomatic unity of many ModE phrasal verbs (Denison 1985b). In clauses where the verb-particle combination is at the end and can therefore be presumed to preserve its base-generated position, particle nearly always precedes verb, so Koopman assumes that S-X-prt-V is the underlying order.¹¹ Particle and verb, incidentally, are inserted as the following subtree:

[12]



Given Koopman's working assumptions about underlying structure, the possible surface positions of prt are a useful pointer to the rules of OE syntax.

There are two main parts to his argument. In the first he looks at what happens to prt in clauses where V has moved to second position, as in:

[13] *ChronE* 135.10 (1003)

ac he teah forð þa his ealdan wrenceas
but he drew forth then his old tricks

'but then he produced his old tricks'

He argues that the order of [13] is best accounted for by a Particle Movement rule to the left¹² rather than by Object Extraposition of *his ealdan wrenceas* to the right, thus:

[14] he [teah]_{Vi} [forð]_{jprt} . . . his ealdan wrenceas [t]_{jprt} [t]_{iV}

(In diagram [14] t stands for *trace*.) Koopman also claims that Particle Movement confines prt within the VP (1985: §§1.1–1.2).

4.5.1.2*

The variety of surface positions of prt within VP leads him to wonder if the internal order of VP could be left unspecified by the rules apart from the finality of V, but he decides against this and sticks with fixed underlying order and a rule of Particle Movement (1985: §2.1). (In a later paper on double object constructions, Koopman (1990d) goes the other way and argues for a VP with no internal structure.)

4.5.1.3

When prt appears to have escaped from VP altogether, as in:

[15] *Bede* 3 1.154.10

þæt heo onweg adyde þa gemynd para treowleasra
that it[sc. the time?] away did the record(ACC) the faithless
cyninga
kings(GEN PL)

'that it/they would strike out the record of those faithless kings'

Koopman's explanation is that the V-2 rule(s) have moved particle and verb as a unit, i.e. the higher V of [12] (1985: §1.2).

The second major strand of argument is rather more a problem of theory than of Old English, and it concerns the *landing site* for the movement of V (§2.2). The problem arises in subordinate clauses with SVX order (which suggest that V-2 applies only optionally in subordinates), some of which have an explicit subordinating conjunction: if COMP is already occupied by a subordinator, COMP cannot be the landing site for movement of V. An example Koopman cites in this context is [16]:

[16] *ChronA* 46.5 (745)

sippan he onfeng bisċ dome
 after he received bishop's authority

'after he received the bishopric'

Koopman's eventual conclusion is that the landing site in both main and subordinate clauses is INFL, the constituent which carries tense, with the possibility of further movement of V + INFL to COMP and/or of topicalisation of some other constituent.¹³ The paper concludes with a brief analysis of changes in Middle English (§§3–3.2).

Koopman (1990c) deals with constructions involving a finite modal, an infinitive of BEON, WESAN, WEORDAN, or HABBAN, and a participle. Of the six possible relative orders for the three verbal elements, two are rare and one has not been found at all. Koopman's explanation of this, which will be looked at in more detail in §15.3.1 below, relies heavily on the technical notion of Verb raising, to be discussed in §4.7.1.2 below.

4.5.2 Pintzuk and Kroch

Having accepted that Old English had V-F underlying structure and a V-2 constraint, Susan Pintzuk and Anthony S. Kroch (1985, 1989) set out to explain apparent departures from the orders predicted by it. Using a poetic text, *Beowulf*, both because of its presumed archaism and because its metre may provide clues to Old English intonation, they discuss why some main verb complements can come *after* a verb which would otherwise be clause-final, as in such examples as [17] (their [3]):

[17] *Beo* 636

Ic gefremman sceal | eorlic ellen
 I(NOM) perform shall heroic deed

'I shall perform a heroic deed'

in effect giving a generative analysis of verb-late syntax. They consider in turn four possible explanations:

- (A) variable word order in the base – but that cannot explain the complete absence of certain orders
- (B) 'verb-attraction', a sort of topicalisation of the (non-finite) verb to the left periphery of the VP – but that too leaves certain examples unexplained
- (C) **Extraposition**
- (D) **Heavy-NP Shift**

The last two are different mechanisms for moving certain constituents to the right periphery of VP. Since Extraposition in modern languages neither moves NPs nor necessitates a strong intonation break between the moved element and the preceding ones, they decide that Extraposition cannot explain *Beowulf* examples which have an NP in the final position and/or a metrical boundary between verb and complement. The rest of the paper is a justification of the Heavy-NP Shift analysis. In Present-day English, only

when the NP to the immediate right of the verb is 'heavy' can it be shifted to the right, and then there is usually an intonation phrase boundary before the shifted NP.

Pintzuk and Kroch present evidence that half-line boundaries in *Beowulf* probably coincide with intonation phrase boundaries in speech, and they then make a statistical analysis of the presence or absence of half-line boundaries between clause-final NPs or PPs and their preceding clauses. Correlations between the metrical facts and various clause patterns lend support to three analyses: a Heavy-NP Shift analysis for final NPs in verb-late clauses; an Extraposition analysis for at least some final PPs; and, for clauses whose only verb is finite and not in final position, either a verb-seconding rule if there is a single constituent before the verb, or Heavy-NP Shift if there are more than one.¹⁴

4.6 Diachronic, non-generative explanations

4.6.1 Fourquet, Reszkiewicz and Strang¹⁵

Jean Fourquet's pioneering work (1938) on word order in early Germanic languages is of great importance, not least for his methodological assumptions. Fourquet looks for opposition(s) between an unmarked order and order(s) marked in some way. He allows for the convergence of unrelated developments, where speakers (unconsciously) identified new patterns accidentally formed and hence began to use new ordering principles, as well as for different ordering principles overlapping and being in conflict at a given time.

Texts from various Germanic languages are studied, including runic and Gothic material which represents the most primitive state of all. Within the historical period of English Fourquet studies the OE poem *Beowulf* and two sections of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, representing for him, respectively, an old, transitional and newer system of word order. In Fourquet's own summary (1938: 285–97) the primitive state is characterised by the importance of the VP ('*prédicat*'): OV order, the unmarked case, called attention to the whole VP, whereas VO order was used to draw attention to the individual constituents. Pronouns, however, behaved differently from other NPs and had their position determined by the other elements. Rather than discuss Fourquet's analysis of the succeeding three systems, let us move on to Barbara Strang, who relied on Fourquet's work in developing her analysis of word order developments in early Old English (1970: §192). Her dense but insightful argument resists further shortening. Here nevertheless is a brutal summary.

Prehistoric and early recorded Old English were V-F, with objects and complements – i.e. the rest of the VP – preceding the verb, and subject, if expressed, preceding *them*. Marking could be achieved by extraposing a focused element beyond the verb. A newer principle which grew up beside the older one was to put rhythmically light elements at the start of the clause; these included BEON and other auxiliary-like verbs. Contrastive marking for sentences ordered by weight was by means of V-1 order, a

pattern appropriate for, and later specialised for, interrogatives. By the late ninth century a new pattern had developed for sentences which lacked light elements to put at the beginning. Where a heavy element opened the clause, the nominal elements of the VP closed it, leaving the verb contingently in medial position, i.e. V-2.¹⁶ Increasingly V-2 became the norm for independent clauses, while verb-late began to be taken as characteristic of subordinate clauses.

For later Old English Strang leans on the work of Alfred Reszkiewicz (1966). His study of word order in the prose of Ælfric (c1000) concluded that the 'weight' of elements was a determining factor in their ordering. His ten-place template for unmarked declarative order – there is a succinct account of it in Strang (1970: §174) – is essentially a restricted version of SVX and is meant to apply to both main and subordinate clauses. The nucleus of the clause is the SV cluster, where V refers to the finite verb. A short function word, more or less what could be generated under COMP in a generative account, may precede the SV cluster. After the SV cluster are seven positional slots, available for items of increasing 'weight' as one moves further to the right. The first of them, for instance, is for items like personal pronouns, the last two for dependent and independent clauses. Like Fourquet and Bacquet, Reszkiewicz assumes that any deviation from the unmarked order he has intuited must have been marked in some way.

I see little prospect of confirming or disconfirming such a detailed specification, as the size of corpus which would be needed to produce reliable statistics and filter out all the distortions of marking, individual style, and interaction of factors would be enormous. If it could be done, it would certainly have to be computer-assisted, in order for statistical tests of correlation to be carried out on what would be a horribly multivariate distribution. Kohonen (1976/82, 1978) goes some way towards the goal, also confining himself (for Old English) to Ælfric.

A similar but less detailed view is very widely held. The two poles of Reszkiewicz's weight classification are represented by pronouns at the light end and clauses at the heavy. It is generally agreed that pronouns tend to come earlier in a clause than functionally equivalent full NPs during the OE period, whilst it is universally conceded that dependent (non-relative) clauses are final in the higher clause. Whether the manifest tendency of pronouns and clauses in Old English towards early and late placement, respectively, is a matter of weight or of givenness is harder to assess. Just as pronouns tend to be *anaphoric* and therefore given information, so clauses tend to be high in information content and therefore new information. Are their positional tendencies due to their weight or to the general linguistic fact that, other things being equal, theme (given) tends to precede rheme (new)? In probably the majority of cases, the positional predictions made by Reszkiewicz's weight classification will coincide with an ordering along a theme-rheme spectrum. However, they do not always coincide, and Kohonen has some interesting statistics on cases where a principle of end-weight seems to override considerations of givenness in the placement of adverbials (1976/82: 192).

I do not know whether weight *can* be separated from givenness: it may be that 'weight' can be factored into a component of 'rhematicity' and some