

A CLUSTER OF CHANGES: NORWEGIAN WORD ORDER

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ABSTRACT

Among the syntactic changes that can be observed in the transition from Old Norwegian to Modern Norwegian are the following word order changes: loss of OV order, object shift from a VP containing a verb (non-finite verb or any verb in a subordinate clause), preverbal preposition, and topicalization of a bare head. The fact that these changes all seem to occur at the same time is not accidental. Old Norwegian was arguably a VO language, like Modern Norwegian, but unlike Modern Norwegian, OV order was also possible. It can be shown that it is possible to derive sentences with object shift with a verb in VP, sentences with preverbal prepositions, and with topicalized heads only from an OV structure. Therefore, when the OV order was no longer available, the other three structures could no longer be derived.

[1] INTRODUCTION

Like biological evolution, grammatical change has no purpose or predetermined direction. Genetic mutation is random, and so is grammatical innovation. Learners and speakers innovate continuously, but which innovations they make, which ones spread in the community, and which ones catch on and become changes in the grammar, depend on various unpredictable circumstances. There is no theory of change predicting future changes. Grammatical change is, however, not totally random. There is an upper bound set by Universal Grammar – understood as the theory of possible grammars; no change may yield a result which is not a possible grammar (Lightfoot 1979, pg. 141). The specification of a possible grammar includes the specification of structural and hierarchical relations within the sentence. Those relations are the preconditions of historical changes taking place in the grammar; a change from the stage L_a to a later stage L_b of the language L , besides being limited by the human language faculty (Universal Grammar), also depends on the structural properties of L_a . Thus a grammatical change may be triggered by or prevented by the grammar of the language at the point in time where the change takes place.

In this paper I will show how one particular change in the history of Norwegian had important repercussions in other parts of the grammar. A word order

change which took place at the transition from Old Norwegian to Early Modern Norwegian, presumably during the early 16th century (but like all other grammatical changes, this change did not take place at the same time in all parts of Norway), led with necessity to three other changes.

Old Norwegian is recorded in manuscripts from the 12th through the 15th century, representing the language spoken as far back as the 9th century. There are no well documented syntactic contrasts between the two major dialects of Old Norse, Old Icelandic and Old Norwegian (Faarlund 2004a, pg. 2). In the 16th century the Norwegian dialects underwent dramatic changes at many levels of the grammar, as well as in the vocabulary, which removed the language significantly from Old Norwegian, and from later stages of the other West Nordic dialects, Icelandic and Faroese. At the same time, Norway was subjected to the Danish Crown and ruled from the Danish capital Copenhagen, with the consequence that the Norwegian language was replaced by Danish as the official and literary language of the country. The Norwegian dialects survived as a spoken vernacular, and a new standard language was established based on those dialects after the independence from Denmark in the 19th century.

Modern Norwegian and Old Norwegian share several syntactic patterns and operations, while at the same time there are clear syntactic contrasts between the two stages, as we will see. Most notable perhaps among the shared patterns, are movement of the finite verb via T to C in main clauses, and A' movement to SpecCP, which in combination create the familiar 'Verb Second' pattern at both stages of the language, see the Old Norwegian examples in (1a,b) and Modern Norwegian ones in (1c,d). Another shared pattern is a general head-complement order (VO), as in (1a) and (1d), where a non-finite verb precedes its complement.

- (1)
 - a. Hon scal alrigh fa the kona
 she shall never get that cow-DEF
 'She will never have that cow.' (DN XI.151)
 - b. nú gerir maðr langskip í heraði
 now makes man long-ship in district
 'Now a man makes a long ship in the district.' (ML 47.10)
 - c. Ho kom ikkje heim
 she came not home
 'She did not come home.'
 - d. No har dei kjøpt ein ny båt
 now have they bought a new boat
 'Now they have bought a new boat.'

On the other hand, Old Norwegian has the character of a ‘free word order’ language, allowing several word order patterns which no longer exist in Modern Norwegian, a ‘fixed word order’ language (Laake 2018). Those word order patterns include, first, the possibility of an object-verb order, as an alternative to the verb-object order in (1a), as in (2a); second, object shift across a non-finite verb in VP, (3a); third, shifting of a preposition from the position in front of its complement, to a position in front of the verb, (4a); and finally, the possibility of moving a head without its complement(s) to the topic position in front of the finite verb, (5a). The corresponding Modern Norwegian sentences in (2-5b) are all ungrammatical. It will be the claim of this paper that these changes did not just coincidentally occur during the same period in the history of Norwegian. The first change mentioned above, the loss of OV order, can be explained independently. The other three constructions that were lost, were dependent on the possibility of OV, so when OV disappeared, the constructions in (3-5) could no longer be generated.

(2) OV order

- a. Hælldr mindi hann þessa gripina kiosa en allt fee
 rather would he these treasures.DEF choose than all property
 annat
 other
 ‘He would rather choose those treasures than all the other prop-
 erty.’ (Olavss.5:218639)
- b. *Han ville heller desse skattane velja
 he would rather these treasures.DEF choose
 ‘He would rather choose these treasures.’

(3) Object Shift

- a. þurfu þær þat ekki sægia¹
 needed they that not say
 ‘They did not need to say that.’ (DN IV.100)
- b. *Dei ville det ikkje seia
 they would that not say
 ‘They did not want to say that.’

[1] This sentence starts with the finite verb, since the topic position is empty, another option no longer available in Modern Norwegian (except in questions).

- (4) Preverbal preposition
- a. eigi má ek hug mínum á koma **fleiri þá hluti**
not may I mind.DAT mine on come more those things.ACC
'I cannot think of more of those things.' (Kgs 38.15)
 - b. *Eg kan ikkje **pá** komma **fleire slike ting**
I can not on come more such things
'I cannot think of more such things.'
- (5) Topicalized head
- a. en **binda** ma maðr **þiof**
but bind may man thief
'But a man may bind a thief.' (ML 64.14)
 - b. ***Binde** kan ein mann **ein tjuv**
bind may a man a thief
'A man may bind a thief.'

In Section 2 the OV order of Old Norwegian, as illustrated in (2a), will be further examined, and its eventual demise in Modern Norwegian will be accounted for. In Section 3 I will show that the other three changes, illustrated in (3) – (5), necessarily follow from the loss of the OV order.

[2] HEAD FINAL VP

Modern Norwegian is a consistent head initial language: the complement follows the head within VP (6a). No other order is possible in the contemporary language. However, in main clauses a finite verb moves to C via T. In subordinate clauses the verb stays within VP, whether finite or non-finite, (6b).

- (6) a. Der vil du **sjå ein mann med dress**
there will you see a man with suit
'There you will see a man in a suit.'
- b. dersom eg aldri **møter henne** igjen
if I never meet her again
'if I never meet her again.'

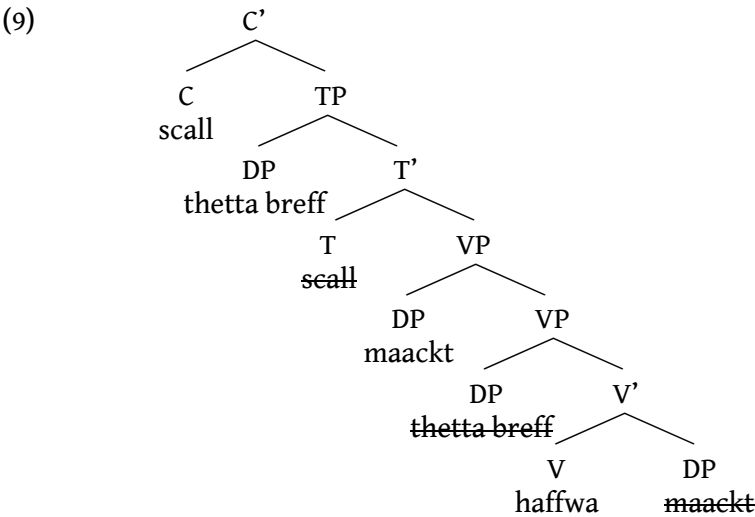
The oldest documents in any Scandinavian language (Ancient Nordic, 3rd to 6th century) show an OV pattern, as do other older Indo-European languages (Faarlund 2002, 2004b). The change from OV to VO took place during the Old Norwegian period, and it was more or less completed by the time of early Modern Norwegian (16th century). Thus in Old Norwegian we find both patterns, OV as in

(7), and VO as in (8). Note that the ‘O’ stands for not only object, but a complement of any category.

- (7)
- a. scall thetta breff **maackt haffwa** om allder ok eeffwe
shall this letter power have in age and eternity
‘This letter shall remain valid for ever.’ (DN II.897)
 - b. hann man þer **priðiungs unna** af feno
he will you-DAT third grant of money.DEF
‘He will grant you a third of the money.’ (Olavss. 5:218640)
 - c. meer wilium þyðher **kungøra** ath ...
we will you(pl)-DAT notify that ...
‘We want to notify you that ...’ (DN V.590)
 - d. Haralldr grænске lætr asto **hæim fara** til faður sins
Harald Grenski let Asta home go to father her
‘Harald Grenski let Asta go home to her father.’ (Olavss. 4:218622)
 - e. en ælligar man þer **til giævo snuazt**
but otherwise will you.DAT to luck turn-REFL
‘But otherwise it will turn into good luck for you.’ (Olavss. 3:218613)
- (8)
- a. þar mantu **sia mann æinn** með slicum bunaðe sem ec hævi
there will-you see man one with such dress as I have
‘There you will see a man dressed the way I am.’
(Olavss.3:218605)
 - b. en þess vil ec **biðia yðr** at þer bloteð mic ægi
but that will I ask you(pl) that you worship me not
‘But I will ask you not to worship me.’ (Olavss. 2:218586)
 - c. nu ef þu villt **fara or lande**
now if you want go out-of country
‘Now if you want to leave the country.’ (Olavss. 1:219265)

Which order was basic and which one was derived at any given point in the history (and dialect geography) of Old Norwegian, is a question of some controversy (Kossuth 1978, Sigurðsson 1988, Rögnvaldsson 1996, Hróarsdóttir 2000, Faarlund 2004a). Sundquist (2006) presents statistics showing the relative frequency of verb final order in Old Norwegian during the period 1250 – 1525, showing that in the earliest period (end of 13th century), there is 42% OV, and in the early 16th century this order is down to 6%. So throughout the documented history of Old Norwegian, VO order has been the most frequent one. Therefore, at some point in the history of Scandinavian the basic structure of the VP must have changed

from head final (OV) to head initial (VO). Even though structures like those in (7) are easy to find in Old Norwegian texts, there is good reason to posit head initial order as the basic one from early on in Old Norwegian; besides the fact that this is by far the most frequent order (by itself not a proof, though), it is also the least marked one (by any reasonable concept of markedness) (Christoffersen 1993, pg. 305f.). More importantly, even though the verb follows its complement, it may not be absolutely clause final, as can be seen in most of the examples here; parts of the VP may remain behind the verb. For example, in (7b) the direct object is actually *briðiungs affeno*, and in (7d) the directional adverbial is *hæim til faður sins* (on this kind of separation of a head from its complement, see Section 3.2). This would be unexpected if the basic structure was verb final, and it gives us reason to posit an optional rule moving (parts of) the complement of the verb and left-adjoining it to VP. I will refer to this movement as ‘scrambling’. The relevant part of (7a) has the (simplified) structure in (9).²



Besides the general rules moving the finite verb from T to C, and the subject from SpecVP to SpecTP, the complement of V, *maackt*, left-adjoines to VP. Eventually, this was seen as a marked order, becoming less and less frequent, until the rule of scrambling was lost, and OV was lost from the grammar of Modern Norwegian.

[3] STRUCTURES FED BY SCRAMBLING

The three other changes which make up the cluster of changes from Old to Modern Norwegian, all involve the loss of a specific word order pattern. They are

[2] Actually, the auxiliary *scall* is not first merged in T; it heads its own V-projection, which takes the VP [*thetta breff maackt haffwa*] as its complement, and from where it is raised to T.

object shift across non-finite verbs, preverbal prepositions, and movement of naked heads to SpecCP, as illustrated above in (3), (4), and (5), respectively. What those constructions have in common is that they can be derived only on the basis of an OV structure. After the rule of scrambling was lost, they could no longer be derived by the grammar of Norwegian.

[3.1] *Object Shift*

The Scandinavian languages, including Modern Norwegian, have an operation known as – among other things – ‘object shift’, whereby a pronominal object (direct or indirect) moves across a sentence adverbial to the position immediately preceding that adverbial, following the finite verb or the subject (if it is not topicalized) in main clauses. This pattern exists both in Old Norwegian, as in (13), and in the Modern Scandinavian languages, including Modern Norwegian, (10).³ There are two important conditions for this movement to take place: the pronoun has to be unstressed, and its position has to be immediately following the sentence adverbial before the movement can take place. The second condition means essentially that a sentence adverbial and an unstressed pronoun change places.

- (10) a. Eg såg **henne** **ikkje**
 I saw her not
 ‘I didn’t see her.’
 b. Derfor seier dei **det** **ikkje**
 therefore say they it not
 ‘Therefore they don’t tell.’
 c. Eg gav **dei** **ikkje** pengar
 I gave them not money
 ‘I didn’t give them money.’

The second condition, known as ‘Holmberg’s Generalization’ was first discussed in generative terms by Holmberg (1986, ch. 6).⁴ In a later work, he offers the following formulation: ‘Object Shift cannot apply across a phonologically visible category asymmetrically c-commanding the object position except adjuncts’. (Holmberg 1999, pg. 15). In the spirit of Kayne (1994), ‘asymmetrically c-commanding’ means simply ‘preceding’, and the adjuncts in question are sentence adverbials.

A sentence adverbial is a non-argument phrase which typically modifies the

[3] Object shift may not be obligatory in certain Scandinavian varieties. But it seems to be close to obligatory in the Central and Southern parts of East Norway, and in standard Bokmål, see Faarlund (1977, 2019, pg. 199f) and Munch (2013).

[4] This word order pattern and its conditions have, however, been familiar to traditional Scandinavian grammarians since long before the days of generative grammar.

clause, or parts of it, depending on its scope properties. In Norwegian, the sentence adverbial follows the finite verb on the surface in main clauses and precedes it in subordinate clauses. It may precede or follow the subject. The negation behaves syntactically like a sentence adverbial, so for our purpose there is no reason to operate with a separate NEG node (Faarlund 2004a, pg. 225). A sentence adverbial may consist of a simple word, or it may be modified or conjoined. Object shift takes place regardless of the length or complexity of the adverbial. The crucial element of Holmberg's Generalization is the requirement that the object at a certain stage of the derivation be adjacent to the adverbial in order for it to operate. That can only happen after the subject has moved from its base position in SpecVP to SpecTP. Next, the verb has to leave VP for object shift to take place. This happens to finite verbs in main clauses, where they move to C via T. Non-finite verbs remain in VP, thus blocking object shift, as in (11a,b). In subordinate clauses even the finite verb remains within VP, blocking object shift, as in (11c). Consider the contrast between (10) and (11).

- (11) a. *Eg har henne ikkje sett
 I have her not seen
 'I have not seen her.'
- b. *Dei treng det ikkje seia.
 they need it not say
 'They need not say it.'
- c. *dersom du henne ikkje gav pengar
 if you her not gave money
 'if you did not give her money'

Not only non-finite verbs, but also indirect objects and prepositions block object shift.

- (12) a. *Han fortalde det ikkje foreldra sine
 he told it not parents his
 'He did not tell it to his parents.'
- b. *Han snakka det ikkje om.
 he talked it not about
 'He did not talk about it.'

The descriptive facts about object shift in Norwegian (and the other Mainland Scandinavian languages) are thus quite clear and can be summed up as follows: whenever no overt material intervenes between a sentence adverbial and a light object pronoun, the pronoun moves to the left of the adverbial. The theoretical implications of this are, however, rather problematic. It is different from regular

syntactic operations. First of all, object shift violates strict cyclicity, or the Extension Condition (Chomsky 1993), which basically says that the merge operation can only target the root. This is also known as the ‘no-tampering condition’ on computation, requiring that ‘Merge is invariably “to the edge” ’ (Chomsky 2008, pg. 138). Concretely, this means that once the subject has been internally merged in SpecTP, nothing can be changed in the structure below T. Furthermore, object shift has no effect on binding relations (Holmberg 1999, pg. 18). Holmberg concludes that ‘Object Shift is a stylistic rule, applying in a component of the grammar which I shall call Stylistic Syntax’ (p. 21), which includes phonological features such as [FOCUS]. He does not make it clear what the relationship is between Stylistic Syntax and the phonological component. In any case, it seems that object shift is not in the syntax. It does not obey general syntactic principles, it depends on overt phonetic adjacency without regard for copies of syntactic merge operations, and it is sensitive to prosodic features.

Turning now to Old Norwegian, it seems that it has the same pattern of object shift as Modern Norwegian.

- (13) a. þær rænti **hann ækki**
 they robbed him not
 ‘They did not rob him.’ (DN II.156)
- b. samde þeim **eigi** til lykta
 suited them.DAT not in end
 ‘It did not suit them in the end.’ (DN II.99)
- c. ek lener þik ey hws
 I lend you not house
 ‘I won’t lend you a house.’ (DN I.564)

However, it turns out that a pronoun can also shift out of a VP which contains the governing verb.

- (14) a. þurfu þær þat **ekki** sægja
 need they that not say
 ‘They do not need to say it.’ (DN IV.100)
- b. getom weer **thet æy** giort
 get we that not done
 ‘We will not get that done.’ (DN V.8099)
- c. Sigrid hafde þet **goz ekki** fenghet⁵
 Sigrid had that property not obtained
 ‘Sigrid had not obtained that property.’ (DN I.201)

[5] As shown by (14c), a definite DP may also undergo object shift, although this is quite rare.

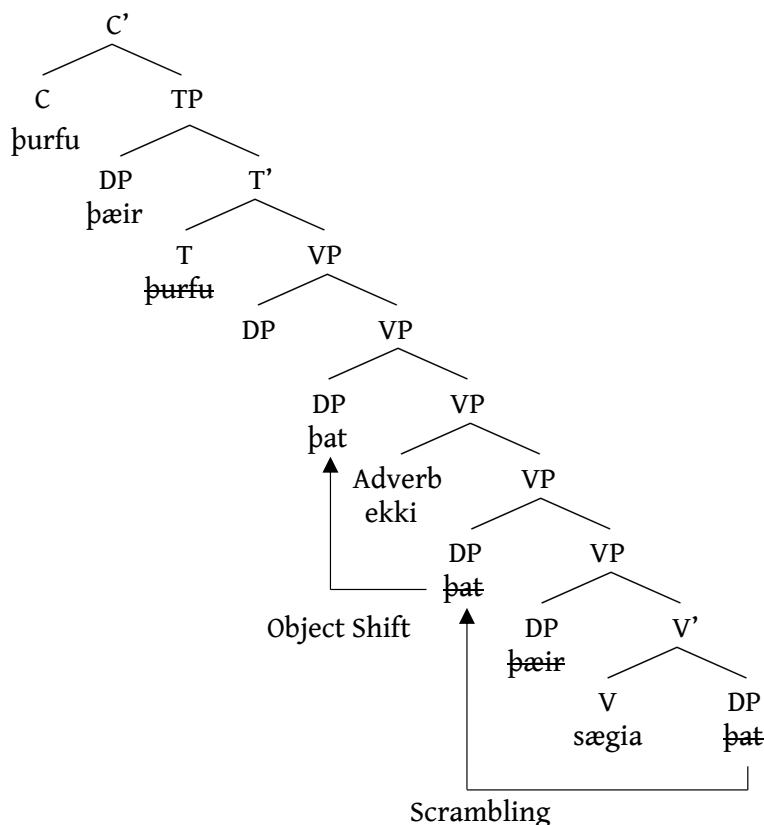
This looks like a violation of Holmberg's Generalization, which, being a 'generalization', should work for older Scandinavian as well as for the modern languages. The question is then whether the sentences in (13) are instances of a different phenomenon, or whether they can be subsumed under the rule of object shift. Remember that a basic condition on object shift is immediate adjacency of the object to the sentence adverbial. Now, let us assume that the sentences in (14) are not derived from a VO structure, but from the older OV structure, still present in Old Norwegian, see (7). In other words, (14a) is not derived from a structure like (15a), but from (15b), both of which are, as far as we know, grammatical at the relevant stage of Old Norwegian.

- (15) a. þurfu þeir ekki **sægia** **þat**
 need they not say that
 'They need not say that'.
 b. þurfu þeir ekki **þat** **sægia**
 need they not that say

I will assume that (15b) is derived synchronically from the structure underlying (15a) by a rule of scrambling, moving the complement out of VP and left-adjoining it to VP, thus bringing it in immediate contact with the sentence adverbial. The two movement operations and their interaction are illustrated in (16) (next page).⁶ Modern Norwegian, lacking OV as a possible order at any stage in the derivation, has no way of shifting the object when the verb is still present within VP, see (11). But in principle, the rule of object shift, or Holmberg's Generalization, is the same in Old and Modern Norwegian.

[6] The derivation of the auxiliary *þurfu* is as that of *scal* in (9), see footnote 1.

(16)

[3.2] *Preverbal prepositions*

Both Old and Modern Norwegian have head initial prepositional phrases, as typologically expected in VO languages.

- (17) a. Hakon konongr hafðe gort brullaup sitt **til drotningarennar fru**
 Hakon king had made wedding his to queen-DEF-GEN lady
Magrethar
 Margaret
 'King Hakon had prepared his wedding to the queen lady Margaret.'
 (DN I.8)
- b. aller broeðr skyli ser skæmta **af þæssare varre minning**
 all brothers should REFL-DAT amuse of this our memory-DAT
 'All the brothers should amuse themselves with our memories.'
 (DN I.8)
- c. er fallit hefir á hjarta mitt
 which fallen has on heart-ACC my
 'which has fallen on my heart' (Barl 6.34)

In addition to this regular pattern, the complement may sometimes be extraposed and separated from the preposition. For example, there are cases where the preposition precedes the verb, while the complement of the preposition follows the verb. This pattern is completely out in Modern Norwegian.

- (18) a. ok þat hefir mik **til** rekit **svá langrar ferðar**
 and that has me to driven so long journey-GEN
 ‘And that has driven me to such a long journey.’ (Laxd 58.26)
- b. eigi má ek hug **mínum á** koma **fleiri þá hluti**
 not may I mind-DAT my on come more those things.ACC
 ‘I cannot think of more of those things.’ (Kgs 38.15)
- c. her er mikit **af** sagt **burtreið þessara manna**
 here is much of said joust-DAT these men-GEN
 ‘Much is told here about these men’s joust.’ (FS 35, 54)
- d. er eigi vildi **af** láta **heiðninni**
 who not wanted off let paganism-DEF-DAT
 ‘who did not want to give up paganism’ (Hkr II.123.13)

Note that the complement in each example is assigned case by the preverbal preposition: genitive by *til* in (18a), accusative by *á* in (18b), and dative by *af* in (18c,d). A similar example is (7d), repeated here as (19). Here *heim til faður sins* ‘home to her father’ is one phrase, with *heim* as the head of the phrase in a preverbal position; the complement is another prepositional phrase, *til faður sins*, following the verb.

- (19) Haralldr grænске lætr asto **hæim** fara **til faður sins**.
 Harald Grenski let Asta home go to father her
 ‘Harald Grenski let Asta go home to her father.’ (Olavss. 4:218622)

Also other material than the verb may intervene between the preposition and its complement. Thus if the verb is finite and moves to T or C, the preposition and the complement may still be separate.

- (20) a. hogg þú **af** tvær alnar **hverju stótré**
 cut.IMP you off two ells-ACC each big.tree.DAT
 ‘Cut two ells off each big tree.’ (Laxd 220.4)
- b. Snorri brá **við** skjótt **orðsending Guðrunar**
 Snorri startled at suddenly message-DAT Gudrun.GEN
 ‘Snorri got suddenly startled by the message from Gudrun.’ (Laxd 211.1)

- c. þickir monnum þegar mikils **um** vert **vascleik** **þeirra**
 seems men.DAT at.once much of worth bravery-ACC their
 ‘The men at once thought much of their bravery.’ (FS 81, 6)

As in (18), the extraposed complement is assigned case by the severed preposition: dative by *af* in (20a) and by *við* in (20b), and accusative by *um* in (20c).

The existence of preverbal prepositions in Old Norwegian, and their disappearance in Modern Norwegian, can again be connected to scrambling.⁷ By scrambling, a PP as well as a DP may move out of VP and consequently precede the verb. One example is (7e), repeated here as (21a), along with further examples.

- (21) a. En ælligar man þer **til giævo snuazt**
 but otherwise will you.DAT to luck turn.REFL
 ‘But otherwise it will turn into good luck for you.’
 (Olavss.3:218613)
- b. en hann man æigi vilia **af þer taka**
 but he may not want of you take
 ‘But he may not want to take it from you.’ (Olavss. 5:218643)
- c. þa skal hann **a þing foera**
 then shall him to court lead
 ‘Then he shall be taken to court.’ (ML 168.21b)

Structures such as these form the derivational basis of the patterns in (18) – (20). The next step is extraposition of the complement of the preposition. Note that in all the examples in (18) – (20), the complement comes at the very end of the sentence. Generally, extraposition of a focused or complex DP is quite common in Old Norwegian, as can be most clearly seen in the case of extraposed subjects.⁸

- (22) a. skal ok standa **allar saatmale** **ok ol skipti**
 shall also stand all settlement.NOM and all divisions.NOM
 ‘The whole settlement and all the divisions are confirmed.’ (DN III.421)

[7] Most of the examples in (18) – (20) are from Nygaard (1906, pg. 355, 358). Examples (18a,d) and (20a,b) are Old Icelandic rather than Old Norwegian. They are included here to supplement the Old Norwegian examples. This construction type is quite infrequent in both dialects, and finding more Norwegian examples would require an extremely time consuming manual search.

[8] Theoretically, extraposition is a rather complex syntactic operation, with several formal treatments in the literature. For a recent overview, cf. Corver (2014). In this paper I use the term descriptively to refer to any movement of a DP to the right edge of the sentence, without committing myself to any specific formal analysis.

- b. ok sua hafa fareth **fleire þiner frender**
and so have fared more your friends.NOM
'And so have several of your friends suffered.' (DN V.423)
- c. kom tha fore oss **skellig beuising**
came then before us clear proof.NOM
'Then clear proof was presented to us.' (DN I.841)

The derivation of sentences such as those in (18) requires no other apparatus than what we already have in other parts of the grammar. The necessary starting point is a head final VP, as exemplified in (7) and (21). From its preverbal position, the complement of the preposition is extraposed. This is just another instance of the extraposition rule at work in (22). The derivation of the relevant part of (18d) can then be summarized as in (23).

- (23)
- a. *eigi vildi* _{VP}[láta af heiðninni]
 - b. *Scrambling:*
eigi vildi _{PP}[af heiðninni]_i _{VP}[láta _i]
 - c. *Extraposition:*
eigi vildi _{PP}[af _i] _{VP}[láta] heiðninni_i

Due to the lack of scrambling in Modern Norwegian, structures like those in (18), (20), and (21) are now excluded. On the other hand, in some cases, a preverbal preposition has been reanalyzed as a verbal prefix and/or a verbal particle, while the original complement of the preposition has been reanalyzed as the complement of the verb. This can be illustrated by comparing (20a) to the Norwegian near-equivalent (24a), where *greina* is the object of *hogg*, and *av* is a particle. Such particles may also precede the object, which then still is the complement of the verb, as in (24b). When the verb has the form of a participle, the particle may be prefixed to the verb, (24c).

- (24)
- a. Han hogg greina av
he cut branch.DEF off
'He cut the branch off.'
 - b. Han hogg av greina
he cut off branch.DEF
'He cut off the branch.'
 - c. Greina er avhoggen
branch.DEF is off-cut
'The branch has been cut off.'

For a more detailed study of this reanalysis, see Faarlund (1990, pg. 185f and

1995).

[3.3] *Head in SpecCP*

In Old Norwegian, in contrast to Modern Norwegian, a transitive non-finite verb may move to SpecCP alone, leaving the complement behind.⁹

- (25) a. en **binda** ma maðr **þiof**
 but bind may man thief
 ‘But a man may bind a thief.’ (ML 64.14)
- b. **styrkia** skal ek **hann oc hans riki**
 strengthen shall I him and his power
 ‘I will make him and his power stronger.’ (ML 30.8)
- c. **sia** skolu skilrikir menn **mark þeirra luta**
 see shall honest men mark their lot.GEN
 ‘Honest men shall see the mark of their own lot.’ (ML 94.14)

In (25a-c) non-finite transitive verbs are topicalized, leaving the object behind. This looks like head movement to SpecCP, an A' position. However, head movement to an A' position violates an assumed general principle of generative grammar. In connection with a different kind of verb topicalization,¹⁰ Holmberg (1999, pg. 13) concludes about this possibility that ‘The most controversial aspect of [the] analysis is, probably, the notion that the verb, a head, is moved to a specifier position, namely SpecCP. But this is something that the theory very likely has to allow for anyway’. I think the ‘theory’, or whoever is responsible for it, ought to be extremely reluctant to allow for head movement to a specifier position, since it violates a very fundamental principle of grammar, which is the distinction between head movement, and phrasal movement to specifier positions, whether A or A' positions. According to this principle, heads can only move to head positions, such as a verb moving from V to T. Therefore, each apparent

[9] On the other hand, topicalization of a full VP including the complement does not seem to be possible in Old Norwegian. The equivalent of this Modern Norwegian sentence does not seem to exist in Old Norwegian.

(i) Binda ein tjuv kan ein gjera
 bind a thief may one do (cf. (25a))

[10] The structure in question is verb topicalization in sentences such as the Swedish

(ii) Kysst har jag henne inte
 kissed have I her not
 ‘I have not kissed her.’

Contrary to Holmberg’s claim, the Modern Norwegian equivalent is ungrammatical, but it would be OK in Old Norwegian, as we have seen.

counterexample should be thoroughly scrutinized to see if there are other possible analyses available.

I will now demonstrate that movement to SpecCP in (25) is really phrasal movement. This again presupposes an OV structure, which accounts for the absence of equivalent structures in Modern Norwegian. In Section 2, I described the OV order as the result of scrambling, which means left-adjoining the complement of V to VP, thus leaving the verb as the only element left in the original VP. This verb is then free to topicalize as a phrase by remnant movement.¹¹ The derivation of (25a) can be summarized as in (26).

- (26) a. $_{CP}[má_{TP}[maðr_{VP}[binda\ \text{þiof}]]]$
 b. *Scrambling:*
 $_{CP}[má_{TP}[maðr_{DP}[\text{þiof}_i]_{VP}[binda\ _i]]]$
 c. *Topicalization of remnant VP:*
 $_{CP}[_{VP}[binda_i] má_{TP}[maðr_{DP}[\text{þiof}]_{VP}[_i]]]]]$

Even prepositions may be topicalized and thus separated from their complements.

- (27) a. **af** hefir þú mik ráðit **brekvísi** **við þik**
 off have you me advised importunity.DAT with you
 ‘You have advised me not to be importunate with you.’ (Laxd 98.14)
 b. **a** þicki mer vera skuginockur manningum
 on seems me.DAT be shadow some man.DAT
 ‘There seems to me to be a shadow over the man’ (FS 52.48)

This looks like another instance of head movement to a specifier position. But in this case, too, it is possible to treat it as remnant movement, parallel to the cases with verbal heads in (25). We have already seen in Section 3.2 that the complement of a preposition may be extraposed and thereby separated from its head. So let us assume that the prepositional phrase is left-adjoined to VP by scrambling, followed by extraposition of the complement. The PP now consists of a preposition alone, which then may be topicalized by remnant movement. The derivation of (27a) can be summarized as in (28).

- (28) a. $_{CP}[_{TP}[hefir\ \text{þú}_{VP}[\text{ráðit}\ \text{mik}_{PP}[\text{af}_{DP}[\text{brekvísi}\ \text{við}\ \text{þik}]]]]]$
 b. *Scrambling:*
 $_{CP}[_{TP}[hefir\ \text{þú}\ \text{mik}_{PP}[\text{af}\ \text{brekvísi}\ \text{við}\ \text{þik}]_i]_{VP}[\text{ráðit}\ _i]]]$
 c. *Complement of P extraposed:*
 $_{CP}[_{TP}[hefir\ \text{þú}\ \text{mik}_{PP}[\text{af}\ _i]_{VP}[\text{ráðit}]_{DP}[\text{brekvísi}\ \text{við}\ \text{þik}]_i]]]$

[11] For similar analyses see Ott (2016) for Old Icelandic, and Salvesen (2011) for Old French.

d. *Topicalization of remnant PP:*

CP_{PP}[af_i] TP[hefir þú mik PP_[_i] VP[ráðit]] DP[brekvísi við þik]]

The analysis presented in this section, involving scrambling and remnant movement, makes the assumption of head movement to a specifier position unnecessary, at least in this type of cases.

[4] CONCLUSION

Syntactic change is slow, and few changes take place from one generation to the next; changes in phonology and in the lexicon are much more frequent. The reason may be that syntax is the most basic and abstract part of the grammar, in the sense that there is no direct interface connection between syntax and the extralinguistic components, such as sound or meaning, which are connected to phonology and semantics, respectively. The basic syntactic structures are part of Universal Grammar, and any changes are either very superficial, or related to features in the morphology or the lexicon. As many as four changes in the course of perhaps less than 500 years may therefore seem unlikely. In this paper I have shown how four syntactic changes have one and the same underlying cause. The difference between the two historical stages of Norwegian is therefore not as radical as it may seem on the surface.

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