

Word order and demonstrative pronouns: OV order and information structure

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In this paper, I will explore the relation between OV word order and information structure sensitivity in Middle English. OV word orders in Middle English should be distinguished into at least four subtypes, according to type of object: nominal, pronominal, quantified, negated, (as in much well-known literature), and according to whether the object is in pre-finite or pre-nonfinite verb position. Here, I will concentrate on the discourse sensitivity of pronominal and nominal objects. Van Kemenade and Milicev (to appear); van Kemenade and Los (2006); van Kemenade, Milicev and Baayen (2007) show that a higher subject position in Old English hosts not only personal pronouns, but also a subset of definite NP's. Appearance in this position is keyed to a significant extent by specific reference to an antecedent in the discourse, so allowed for definite NP's because demonstrative pronouns allow specific reference. In this paper, I explore a similar hypothesis for the positioning of NP objects, keying the loss of OV word order for definite NP objects to the recategorization of demonstrative pronouns as definite determiners.

References

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