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On Verb-Initial Constructions in Old English with Special Reference to Metrics

Shigeyuki KOBAYASHI

Abstract

Old English has verb-initial constructions which are rhythmically constrained by metrical grammar. The verb-initial constructions observed in my preliminary survey can be classified into null-subjects construction and construction without overt expletives corresponding to expletive construction with overt expletives. The semantic properties of these constructions are consistent with the phonological property of the sentence-initial finite verb; i.e. it does not rhythmically receive stress. The previous syntactic studies of OE have assumed V-to-C movement and V-to-T movement in relation to the position of the finite verb in main clauses. The observation that the the finite verb in verb-initial constructions occupies T is supported by the above-mentioned phonological property.

Key words; Old English, Verb-Initial Word Order, Metrical Grammar, V-to-T Movement

0 Introduction

The grammar of metre in Old English has been treated separately from the grammar of prose in OE. The metrical grammar of poetry has not been closely examined in many previous studies of OE. OE syntax has advanced since Generative Grammar was first applied to this field. However, theoretical syntactic studies of OE have been conducted mainly on prose texts.

The word order of OE needs to be studied from a phonological point of view, as word order has been treated phonologically in the recent framework of Generative Grammar (i.e. the Minimalist Program). Syntax should tackle more universal problems. This paper aims to introduce a point of contact between prosody and OE syntax as a way to further analysis of OE.

1 Metrical Grammar in Old English

1.1 Alliteration

Alliteration in Old English poetry is a repetition of the same sound at the beginnings of two or three stressed words in a line. In the following examples, '/' represents stress and 'A' represents alliteration:

(1)   /   /   /   /
    Fēasceaft fundan. Hē þæs frōfre gebād

    destitute found   he for   that consolation experienced

    A   A   A   Y

    ［(he was) found destitute. For that, he lived to see consolation］

    (*Beo 7*, Terasawa 2011: 3)

(2)   /   /   /   /
    on flōdes ǣht feor gewītan

    in of-ocean possession far go

       A   X   A   Y

    ［(many treasures should) go far into the possession of the ocean］

    (*Beo 42*, Terasawa 2011: 4)

The alliterative pattern of (1) is ［AA: AX］, and that of (2) is ［AX: AY］. They are the most general patterns of alliteration.

1.2 Lift and Dip

Syllables are metrically classified into two kinds. One is called *lift*, which is a rhythmically stressed part marked '/'. The other is called *dip*, a rhythmically unstressed part marked with '×'. A foot consists of a lift and one or more dips.

Examples are shown as follows:

(3)   / × | /×
    nihtes hwīlum

    of-night every

    FOOT FOOT

'every night'

(*Beo* 3044a, Terasawa2011: 32)

(4)   ×   ×   / | × /
　　syðþan flōd   ofslōh

　　after   flood destroyed

　　FOOT　　　FOOT

　　'after the flood destroyed (the race of giants)'

(*Beo* 1689b, Terasawa2011: 32)

1.3 Word Classes in Metrics

There are three classes of words in Old English poetry. They are stress-words, particles, and proclitics. Stress-words are always stressed, which consist of nouns, adjectives, non-finite verbs, adverbs and some heavy pronouns, are always stressed. Proclitics, which include prepositions, demonstratives, possessives, copulative conjunctions, and prefixes, are not normally rhythmically stressed. Finally, particles, which are composed of finite verbs, demonstrative adverbs, personal pronouns, demonstrative pronouns, and some conjunctions, are not usually rhythmically stressed.

1.4 Kuhn's Laws

Kuhn's laws for Old English metre are well-known. They are stated by Terasawa (2011: 95) as follows:

(5) Kuhn's First Law: Particles must be placed together in the first dip of a clause (i.e., either before or immediately after the first lift).

(6) Kuhn's Second Law: At the beginning of a clause, the dip must contain particles; in other words, proclitics alone cannot occupy the clause-initial dip.

According to Kuhn's second law, finite verbs can be in the first position of a sentence as a particle which is not rhythmically stressed.

I will syntactically examine verb-initial constructions in OE in later parts of this paper. It is promising to analyse the verb-initial order from a metrical point of view as there should be a point of contact between syntax and prosody in the verb-initial construction, as suggested by Kuhn's laws describing metrical grammar.

2 Verb Movement in Old English

2.1 Verb Second Construction in Old English

The verb second construction in Old English has been analysed in two different ways. One analysis maintains that OE had only verb second order and no V-to-T; this is argued for by Biberauer and Roberts (2010). They maintain that ME had V-to-T by Late ME, while English, prior to this, did not have V-to-T. However, a re-analysis that a change from V2 to V-to-T was triggered in Late ME, as follows:

(7)　$[_{CP}$ DP $[_{C}$ V$]$ $[_{TP}$ $t_{DP}[_{T}$ $t_{V}]$ $[_{VP}$ $t_{DP}[_{V}$ $t_{V}]$ VP$]]]$
　　　$\rightarrow$ $[_{TP}$ DP $[_{T}$ V$]$ $[_{VP}$ $t_{DP}[_{V}$ $t_{V}]$ VP$]]$
　　　　　(Biberauer and Roberts 2010: 280 (26))

However, Haeberli (2002) argues that OE had not only V2, but also a word order not found in modern Germanic languages, as it follows:[1]

(8)　[On his dagum] sende Gregorius us fulluht
　　　In　his days　　sent　Gregory　us baptism
　　　'In his time, Gregory sent us Christianity.'
　　　　　(ChronA₂18.565.1, Haeberli 2002: 88 (1c))

(9)　[hiora untrymnesse] [he] *sceal*　ðrowian on his heortan
　　　their　weakness　　　he shall　atone　　in his heart
　　　'He shall atone in his heart for their weakness.'
　　　　　(CP 60.17, Haeberli 2002: 90 (2))

V3 orders arise when pronominal subjects precede the finite verb, as in (9).

V3 orders are also realised even when the finite verb takes non-pronominal subjects, as follows:

(10)　a. & [fela　ðinga] [swa gerad man] *sceal* don
　　　　and many things　so　wise　man　must do
　　　　'And such a wise man must do many things.'
　　　　　　(Law4 448.5.4, Haeberli 2002: 90 (3a))

b. [Sumum monnum] [God] seleð ægðer ge good ge yfel gemenged, …

 some persons God gives both good and bad mixed

 'God gives some people both good and bad things.'

  (Bo 133.21, Haeberli 2002: 90 (3b))

c. & [from Offan kyninge] [Hygebryht] *wæs* gecoren

 and from Offa king Hygebryht was chosen

 'and Hygebryht was chosen by king Offa.'

  (ChronA 52.785.1, Haeberli 2002: 90 (3c))

Haeberli (2002: 90) argues that '[a]lthough V2 orders are much more frequent in such contexts than V3 orders, the frequency of exceptions to the V2 pattern … is by no means negligible.' Those examples show that V2 order is not adequate to explain the word orders of OE.

2.2 V-to-T Movement in Old English

Haeberli (2002) also points out that V2 orders, in spite of the appearance of pronominal subjects when the fronted element is an operator in OE, are as follows:

(11) [hwi] sceole [we] oþres mannes niman

  why should we another man's take

  'Why should we take those of another man?'

   (ÆLS 24.188, Haeberli 2002: 93 (4))

Haeberli (2002: 93-4) argues that two targets of verb movement in OE are possible: one is C, when a wh-operator is fronted as in (11), the other is T (Agr) when a non-wh-operator is fronted, and also says that pronoun subjects have to occur in Spec-TP while full DP subjects can remain in the lower subject position (below the head of TP). This analysis is schematised as follows:

(12) $[_{CP}$ XP C $[_{TP}$ SU$_1$ T SU$_2$ …]]

  (Haeberli 2002: 94 (5), the original notation *Agr* was changed to *T*.)

In (12), pronouns always occupy SU$_1$. They become postverbal when V moves to C, as in (11), and are preverbal when V moves to T, while full DPs can remain in SU$_2$.

According to Haeberli, V2 word order is realised by V-to-T movement in OE when full DP

subjects appear with a no wh-operator. It is notable that OE had both types of verb movement, V-to-C and V-to-T. When a finite verb is in the initial place of the sentence, the finite verb is assumed to come to T metrically, according to Kuhn's second law（6）, as it is not semantically a phonetically stressed focus, assuming that CP contains the focus position.

3 V-to-T Movement and Verb-Initial Construction

3.1 VSO Word Order

VSO is the word order in which the placement of the finite verb becomes sentence-initial and is followed by the subject. Thus, VSO word order can also be analysed as V-to-T movement.

The usual word order in finite clauses in Welsh is VSO, as follows:
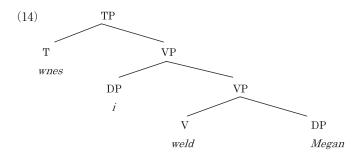
（13）　a. Fe/mi **welais** i Megan.

　　　　　PRT　　saw　　I Megan

　　　　　'I saw Megan.'
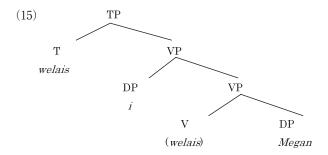
　　　b. Fe/mi **wnes** i weld Megan.

　　　　　PRT　　did　I see　Megan

　　　　　　　（Roberts 2007: 46（51））

Roberts（2007: 46-7）assumes that the verb moves over the subject in a VSO sentence like （13a）. This analysis is supported by the fact that Welsh has an alternative way of expressing the simple tense of a verb by using a construction involving the auxiliary *gwneud*（'do'）and a non-finite form of the verb, as in（13b）. If we assume that auxiliaries are in T, as in Modern English, and omit the particle *fe/mi* in order to simplify the analysis, the underlying structure for（13b）is（14）:[2]

（14）　TP

```
             TP
            /  \
           T    VP
         wnes   / \
              DP   VP
               i  /  \
                 V    DP
               weld  Megan
```

（Roberts 2007: 46（52））

The sentence corresponding to (14), without an auxiliary, involves V-to-T movement. The underlying structure for (13a) is assumed to be (15):

(15)

```
                TP
            ╱        ╲
        T              VP
      welais        ╱      ╲
                  DP          VP
                   i        ╱      ╲
                          V          DP
                       (welais)     Megan
```

(Roberts 2007: 47 (53))

The difference in surface word order between ModE and Welsh is determined by whether the subject moves to the TP-Spec position or not after V-to-T movement.

It is notable that VSO word order can also be analysed by V-to-T movement as SVO word order. The EPP property correlates with the movement of the subject to the TP-Spec position. The subject is not driven to move to the spec-TP position by the EPP in VSO word order as it is in Modern English.

3.2 Verb-Initial Word Order in Early Old English

We will examine the following verb-initial sentences in the early period of Old English.

(16) þolode ðrȳð-swȳð   þeġn-sorge   drēah,
      suffered very strong (one) thane-sorrow   experienced
      'Their mighty prince … humiliated by the loss of his guard' (Trans. by Heaney 2000)
            (*Beo* 131a-b)

Example (16) shows that a heavy subject occupies a lower position of T and the predicate *þolode* moves to the initial position of the sentence, as *ðrȳð-swȳð* takes the nominative case; hence, it is the subject of the predicates.

(17) **Hæfdan** him   gecynde   cyningas twegen,
      had   to them lineage   kings   two   (*Boethius* M 1.6 ab)[3]
      'Akin to the clansmen kings were there twain'   (Sedgefield 1900: 178.3)

Example (17) shows that some elements intervene between the finite verb *Hæfdan* and its subject *cyningas twegen*, as *gecynde* takes the accusative plural form and *him* is a dative plural form functioning as an adverbial. The word order of (17) indicates a VOS pattern. The verb phrase is assumed to have moved to the sentence-initial position, which is T according to Haeberli's analysis. It is furthermore assumed that the subject *cyningas twegen* remains in a lower position of *v*P and the object *gecynde* is in the upper position of *v*P.

Adverbials intervene between the finite verb and its subject in (18) below, as follows:

(18)　**setton** suðweardes　　　sigeþeoda　　　　twa.

　　　set　　southwards　　　victorious nations two　　(*Boethius* M 1.4 ab)

　　　'Two tribes triumphant tramped to the south'　　(Sedgefield 1900: 178.1)

It is assumed that the finite verb *setton* moves to the sentence-initial position while the subject *sigeþeoda twa* remains in *v*P. The finite verb *setton* is assumed to move to the T position illustrated by Haeberli's schema (12), as it moves over the adverbial *suðweardes*. The position of the adverbial *suðweardes* fulfills the metrical requirement as we saw in section 1.4.

Examples (16), (17), and (18) have full-DPs as their subjects. Pronouns appear in Verb-Initial construction as well as full-DPs, as follows:

(19)　wæs se grimma gǣst　Grendel hāten

　　　was　he fierce　　demon Grendel called

　　　'Grendel was the name of this demon'

　　　　　(*Beo* 102 a-b, translated by Heaney 2000)

Example (19) shows that pronominal subjects come to the post-verb position, the initial position of the sentence, as seen in Haeberli's analysis in 2.2. According to his analysis, pronominal subjects come to the position of SU_1 in scheme (12), which also fulfills the metrical requirement of Kuhn's laws.

3.3 Verb-Initial Order with Null-Subjects

Some cases of verb-initial examples have null subjects as follows:

(20) **Stod** þrage   on ðam;

stood   for a time on them   (*Boethius* M 1.28 a)

'The leader stood on them for a time'(Sedgefield 1900: 178.25; 'Thus things stood')

Example (20) appears in the metre of *Boethius*, the other examples of verb-initial order appear with overt subjects as indicated in §3. 2.

Verb-initial order with null-subjects is more often observed in the prose of *Boethius* as follows:

(21) **Sende** þa   digellice   ærendgewritu to þam kasere to Constentinopolim,

sent   then   secretary letter   to the emperor to Constentinople

     (*Boethius* MR10 a. 20)[4]

'sending word privily to the Caesar at Constantinople ...'

     (Sedgefield1900: 2.5)

(22) **Bædon** hine þæt ...

asked   him that   (MR 10a.23)

'he prayed him ...'   (Sedgefield 1900: 2.9)

The subject position in this pattern of word order is obscure because the subjects of the finite verb do not appear in the above examples. However, example (22) shows that it is not a VSO pattern, as the finite verb *bædon* is immediately followed by the object pronoun *hine*. This pattern of sentence is supposedly derived from pro-dropping, by which pro is not phonetically realised.

A few occurrences of these constructions indicate that verb-initial construction with null-subjects is unusual, and compose a marked type of sentence. The conditions on null-subjects should in future be analysed from a morphological viewpoint.[5]

4 Verb-Initial Order in Ælfric's *Lives of Saints*

Ælfric's *Lives of Saints* is a representative text of the late period of Old English. A small-scale investigation shows that verb-initial order with strictly limited distribution is observed in the texts.

We begin examining verb-initial order in Ælfric's *Lives of Saints* with verb-initial order such as we saw with null-subjects in §3.3 as follows:

(23) sende ða   to scotlande þær   se geleafa wæs ða   and bæd   ða

　　　 sent   then to Scotland where the belief   was then and prayed then

　　　 heafodmenn þæt hi   his benum getiþodon.

　　　 head man   that they his request granted

　　　　　(*LS* 26.48)

　　　 'Then he sent to Scotland where the faith was then, and prayed the chief men that they

　　　 would grant his requests,'

　　　　　(*SK2* 129.48)[6]

　　　Example (23) is supposedly derived by pro-dropping, as the finite verb is followed by a particle

and an adverbial phrase. Pronominal subjects are not necessarily assumed to occupy a position

under the projection of CP, as they are not semantically focused if invoking the split-CP hypothesis

proposed by Rizzi (1997). It can be deduced that the finite verb should move to T because

pronominal pronouns would be focused in the Spec-CP position.[7]

　　　Next, we will examine null-expletive construction in Ælfric's *Lives of Saints*, which corresponds

to expletive construction with *þær* 'there' in ModE, as follows:

(24) Þær wæs sum   man gehende, gehealden þurh god behyd þam   hæþenum.

　　　 there was a certain man near to   preserved by   God hidden to the heathen

　　　　　(*LS* 32.127)

　　　 'There was a certain man at hand, kept by God hidden from the heathen,'

　　　　　(*SK2* 323.127)

　　　The following examples corresponds to an expletive construction such as the one shown in

(24), while expletives are not phonetically realised as follows:

(25) Synd eac fela   oðre on angel-cynne   halgan

　　　 are   also many other in Angles-people saints

　　　　　(*LS* 32.64)

　　　 'There are also many other saints among the English.'

　　　　　(*SK2* 333.264)

(26) Wæs eac wundorlic þæt seo ðruh wæs geworht þurh   godes

　　　 was   also wonderful that the coffin was   prepared through God's

foresceawunge hire   swa   gemæte.

foresight   to her just as fitted

   (*LS* 20.102)

'Wonderful was it also that by God's providence the coffin was wrought so exactly

fitting (suitable) her.'

   (*SK1* 439.102)[7]

Example (25) corresponds to an expletive (i.e. 'there') construction in ModE, except for when

the expletive 'there' is followed by the finite verb. Example (26) corresponds to a cleft sentence in

Modern English, except for the expletive *it*. Many such examples without expletives are observed

in Ælfric's *Lives of Saints*.

   Expletives are also found in impersonal constructions, as follows:

(27)   Hit gelamp þa   swa   þæt se   geleaffulla cyning gerehte   his witan

       it   befell   then just as that this believing   king   explained his counsellors

       on heora agenum gereorde þæs bisceopes bodunge mid bliþum   mode.

       in their   own   language the bishop's   preaching with cheerful mind

          (*LS* 26.64)

       'It befell then that this believing king explained to his counsellors in their own

       language the bishop's preaching with glad mind,'

          (*SK2* 129.64)

Example (27) has an impersonal verb with the overt expletive *hit*, indicating that expletives

were expanding those domains and null-subjects were regressing from those domains in the late

period of Old English.

   The position of the expletives followed by finite verbs is not found in CP because they need not

be either semantically focused or topicalised. The position of the finite verbs is assumed to be in T,

supported by (27) where the finite verb is followed by the adverbials *þa* and *swa*.

5 V-to-C Movement and the Split-C System

Rizzi (1997) proposes the Split-C system, which consists of multiple hierarchical layers in CP as

follows:

(28)　… Force … (Topic) … (Focus) … Fin IP
　　　　　　(Rizzi 1997: 288 (8))

In the above scheme, Roberts (2004) analyses the constraints on selecting Fin for Germanic languages and English as proposed by Rizzi, as follows:

(29)　a. + selected, + declarative　(* in Germanic)
　　　b. − selected, + declarative　(* in Germanic, not in (Mod) English (full V 2))
　　　c. + selected, − declarative　(* in Germanic, * in (Mod) English (residual V 2))
　　　d. − selected, − declarative　(not found, as declarative is a default)
　　　　　(Roberts 2002: 305 (25), * stands for active, not ungrammatical.)

According to Roberts, finite verbs must move to Fin in CP when the sentences are [− declarative] as follows:

(30)　[hwi] sceole [we] oþres　mannes niman
　　　　why should we　another man's　take
　　　'Why should we take those of another man?'
　　　　(= (11), ÆLS 24.188, Haeberli 2002: 93 (4))
(31)　Hwær eart þu　nu　gefera?
　　　where are　thou now　comrade
　　　　(*LS* 32.150)
　　　'Where art thou now, comrade?'
　　　　(*SK2* 325.150)

We saw that *seole* in (30) is analysed as moving to C, which is identified as Fin by Rizzi's elaborate analysis.　The finite verb *eart* in (31) is also assumed to move to Fin, since the finite verb is followed by the pronoun *thou*, while the wh-question shows residue-V2 even in ModE.

6 Conclusion

The occurrence of verb-initial order with full DPs is observed in *Beowulf*, which is thought to have been written earlier than the copy of the present manuscript and the metrical part of *Boethius* in the early period of OE, as demonstrated by Haeberli (2002). In contrast to the full DPs type of verb-initial construction, the null-subjects type of verb-initial construction is mainly observed in the prose of *Boethius*. However, null-expletive types are more often observed in the metrical part.

A small-scale survey of the verb-initial orders in Ælfric's *Lives of Saints* in the late period of OE shows that they can be classified into two types. One is construction with null-subjects, occurrences of which are not often found. The other is construction with null-expletives, the occurrences of which are often found, whereas occurrences of overt expletive construction accompanying *thare* 'there' are also observed. However, the expletive *hit* 'it' is attested in impersonal constructions.

Notes

1. Haeberli uses the Brooklyn-Geneva-Amsterdam-Helsinki Parsed Corpus of Old English. The data cited by Haeberli are indicated as ibid.
2. Roberts (2004: 302) argues that 'Welsh differs from German in having particles that can be inserted into Fin, preempting movement of the finite verb.'
3. M stands for metre.
4. MR stands for Mitchell & Robinson.
5. Biberauer and Roberts (2010) argues about the relation between verb movement and morphology in relation to φ-feature in the Minimalist Program.
6. SK2 stands for Skeat (ed. And trans.) (1881-1900, repr. 1966) *Ælfric's Lives of Saints*. Vol. 2.
7. Fischer et al. (2000: 155) adopts FP for the position in which the finite verb moves to in OE. However, Roberts (2004) describes the position as FinP in a Split-C system. The projection FP is used to indicate that it is a lower position than CP and higher than TP.
8. SK 1 stands for Skeat (ed. and trans.) (1881-1900, repr. 1966) *Ælfric's Lives of Saints*. Vol. 1.

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古英語の動詞先頭構文について
——韻律論の観点から——

小　林　茂　之

抄　　録

　古英語の語序には，動詞先頭構文（Verb-Initial Constructions）がある。古英語の詩の半行の先頭に来る定形動詞に韻律的な制約があることが韻律文法によって知られている。古英語の韻文および散文の予備的な調査で見られた動詞先頭構文は，無主語構文と虚辞（expletive）を伴わない虚辞構文とに分類される。このような構文の意味的な特徴は，韻律文法において先頭の定形動詞が韻律的な強勢を受けないことと一致する。統語論的な先行研究では，古英語の主文における定形動詞の位置は C または T であると仮定されてきたが，古英語の動詞先頭構文の定形動詞は V-to-T 移動によって T に位置するという仮説が韻律的特徴から裏づけられる。

キーワード； 古英語，動詞先頭語序，韻律文法，V-to-T 移動