

Revisiting the Loss of V-to-I Movement in the History of English

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V-to-I movement: Cross-linguistic variation

- One of the major topics in syntax in the 1990s:
Variation among languages with respect to V-to-I movement (cf. e.g. Pollock 1989 etc.)
 - Diagnostic: The distribution of verbs with respect to certain adverbs and negation.
 - V-Adv/Neg: V-to-I.
 - Adv/Neg-V: No V-to-I.
 - French: +; English: –.
- (1) a. Elle (*souvent) mange (souvent) des pommes.
b. She (often) eats (*often) apples.



V-to-I movement: Diachronic variation

- Old and Middle English used to be like French and unlike Present-Day English:

- (2) a... he **sawe never** so grete a knight ...
(CMMALORY,180.2433; Middle English, a 1470)
- b. *... he **saw never** so great a knight ... (PDE)
... he **never saw** so great a knight ...

- Conclusion: English lost V-to-I movement.
 - The loss is generally situated towards the end of the 16th century in the literature (cf. e.g. Kroch 1989, Roberts 1993).
 - It has played an important role in theories trying to relate the presence or absence of V-to-I to morphological properties (agreement; cf. e.g. Vikner 1995, Roberts 1993).



V-to-I movement: Diachronic variation in English


- But: Most of the discussion of the loss of V-to-I in the literature is based on evidence from negation and the related rise of *do*-support. The changes in adverb placement have not been studied in any detail.
- Problem: The rise of *do* must involve factors that are independent of the loss of V-to-I since a language can lose V-to-I without necessarily developing *do*-support (cf. e.g. Falk 1993 for Swedish).



V-to-I movement:

Diachronic variation in English


- Aim of our project: To examine the developments in the placement of lexical verbs with respect to adverbs in Middle and Early Modern English and to relate our findings to the theoretical debate on V-to-I movement (e.g. "The Rich Agreement Hypothesis"; the exact landing site of V; the relation to analyses based on *do*-support).
- Source of data: Three parsed corpora covering the Middle and the Early Modern English periods.



The loss of V-to-I in English

Adverb placement in clauses with a finite main verb and an overt subject (pronoun or full DP) – All clause types


<i>Period</i>	<i>Su-V-Adv</i>	<i>Su-Adv-V</i>
1150-1249	651	351 (35.0%)
1250-1349	224	32 (12.5%)
1350-1419	1784	176 (9.0%)
1420-1499	1220	147 (10.8%)
1500-1569	1552	600 (27.9%)
1570-1639	1528	597 (28.1%)
1640-1700	1251	713 (36.3%)



The loss of V-to-I in English

Placement of 'never' in clauses with a finite main verb and an overt subject (pronoun or full DP) – All clause types

<i>Period</i>	<i>Su-V-never</i>	<i>Su-never-V</i>
1150-1249	19	12 (38.7%)
1250-1349	2	0 (0%)
1350-1419	54	11 (16.9%)
1420-1499	55	16 (22.5%)
1500-1569	14	97 (87.4%)
1570-1639	7	168 (96.0%)
1640-1700	2	103 (98.1%)



The loss of V-to-I in English

Adverb placement in all clauses with an overt subject, a finite main verb and a DP object (no longer than 3 words)

<i>Period</i>	<i>SAVO</i>	<i>SVAO</i>	<i>SVOA</i>
1150-1249	20 (19.2%)	47 (45.2%)	37 (35.6%)
1250-1349	5 (10.9%)	30 (65.2%)	11 (23.9%)
1350-1419	38 (12.0%)	151 (47.8%)	127 (40.2%)
1420-1499	20 (11.2%)	64 (35.8%)	95 (53.1%)
1500-1569	88 (32.0%)	47 (17.1%)	140 (50.9%)
1570-1639	91 (34.6%)	22 (8.4%)	150 (57.0%)
1640-1700	104 (40.2%)	25 (9.7%)	130 (50.2%)