



<Reports on the Ninth Annual Meeting of the
Tsukuba English Linguistic Society> Toward a
Theory of Word Order Change : Parameter
Percolation Principle

journal or publication title	Tsukuba English Studies
volume	8
page range	267-269
year	1989-08-31
URL	http://hdl.handle.net/2241/7387

(LOE) period. Specifically, in EOE unstressed personal pronouns never occupy the first position of root sentences when a verb occupies the second position. In LOE, on the other hand, unstressed nominative personal pronouns occupy the first position of root sentences when a verb occupies the second position, as in (2).

- | | | |
|-----|---|-----------------------------|
| (2) | He hǣfde god geþanc
He had good mind
þa hwile þe he mid handum
while he with hands
bord and bradswurd ...
board and broadsword ... | healdan mihte
hold could |
|-----|---|-----------------------------|

(Mld, 13b-15a)

We claimed that this contrast between EOE and LOE is due to the difference in the position of I. Specifically, we argued that EOE is an SOVI language on the grounds that in SOVI languages where the Verb Second Phenomena (V2) are operative, unstressed personal pronouns, not focalized, are not able to occupy the initial position of root sentences, a position for focalized elements. LOE is, by contrast, an SIOV language, for, in SIVO languages where V2 is operative (e.g. Modern German), unstressed nominative personal pronouns occupy the first position of root sentences, which is not a position for focalized elements.

At the next stage, we attempted to establish the underlying word order in Late Middle English (LME) on the basis of an investigation into the data in the poetic works of Geoffrey Chaucer and The Owl and the Nightingale. We argued that LME is an SIOV language mainly based on the examples in (3). V2 is operative in both root and embedded sentences and unstressed nominative personal pronouns occupy the initial position of root sentences.

- (3) a. Ye shul me never on lyve yse.
You shall me never on life see.

(BD. 205)

- b. Ye knowe what this enseple may resemble.
You know what this enseple may resemble.

(D.WB.90)

We further observed, following the traditional analyses, that the underlying word order in Modern English (ModE) is SIVO. Thus, it can be said that the underlying word order is changed in the history of English as follows: SOVI (EOE) → SIOV (LOE→LME) → SIVO (ModE). This change amply shows that the value of the Head-Complement Parameter is changed in the course of the diachronic word order change. In particular, in EOE, both IP and VP are head-final; from LOE through LME, IP is head-initial, while VP is still head-final; in ModE, both IP and VP are head-initial. This change also shows that the change of the parameter value begins at CP and percolates down to IP and VP. Thus, we claimed that it is quite reasonable to propose a general principle on the word order change, called the Parameter Percolation Principle, which is roughly formulated as in (5). We strongly believe that this principle sheds fresh light on the nature of word order change, or more generally, on the nature of diachronic syntactic phenomena.

(5) Parameter Percolation Principle

The value of a parameter percolates down from CP to VP in the course of word order change.