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## Norwegian child language and the history of English: The interaction of syntax and information structure in the development of word order

### 1. Introduction

In this paper, data from a study investigating the acquisition of verb second (V2) word order in a dialect of Norwegian which allows two different word orders in *wh*-questions (V2 and V3) are used to argue for a cue-based approach to language acquisition and change (Lightfoot 1999). More specifically, it is shown that certain word order patterns that are dependent on information structure are acquired extremely early, and that they appear in Norwegian child language even in constructions where there is no evidence for them in the input. Similar patterns are attested in Old and Middle English, where V2 and non-V2 structures co-exist in topicalizations. The paper argues that a change in the statistical frequencies in the input to children, brought about by patterns of information structure, could be (at least partly) responsible for the development from V2 to non-V2 word order in the history of English.

### 2. The word order of Norwegian

As is well known, Norwegian is a V2 language which requires verb movement to the second position in all main clauses, as illustrated by the topicalization construction in (1).

- (1) Danmark synes jeg er et deilig land.  
*Denmark think I is a lovely country*  
 ‘I think Denmark is a lovely country.’ (Standard Norw.)

While the dialect of Norwegian spoken in Tromsø is similar to the standard language with respect to topicalizations, two different word orders are allowed in *wh*-questions with monosyllabic *wh*-words, V2 or V3. This is illustrated by the sentences in (2) and (3):

- (2) Ka gjør studentan? / Ka studentan gjør?  
*what do student.DEF.PL/what student.DEF.PL do*  
 ‘What are the students doing?’
- (3) Kor er du? / Kor du er?  
*where are you where you are*  
 ‘Where are you?’ (Tromsø dialect)

In Westergaard (2003a), a sample of spontaneous speech of the Tromsø dialect has been investigated, and it is argued that the choice of word order in these *wh*-questions is dependent on the information value of the subject. V2 word order is always chosen when the subject conveys new information, while V3 order is generally used if the subject is informationally given. This is reflected in clear preference patterns for subjects and verb types used in the two constructions: While V2 word order often occurs with full DP subjects and the verb *være* ‘be’, V3 mainly occurs with pronominal subjects and other verbs than *være*. This pattern, which is found to be highly statistically significant, is illustrated in examples (4) and (5) from the corpus. The two structures thus clearly adhere to the two well-known pragmatic principles of end focus and end weight, i.e. the tendency to put longer and informationally heavier elements towards the end of the sentence (see e.g. Firbas 1992).

- (4) ka er det lyset der? (INV, File Ole.18)  
*what be.PRES that light.DEF there*  
 ‘What is that light there?’

- (5) ka du trur? (INV, File Ole.14)  
*what you think.PRES*  
 ‘What do you think?’

### 3. The acquisition of Norwegian

Westergaard (2003a) also provides results from a study of three children acquiring the Tromsø dialect. The corpus used consists of spontaneous production recorded at regular intervals between the age of 1;9 and 3.1 It is shown that both V2 and V3 word orders are attested from about the age of two, with more or less the same frequencies and preference patterns for subject and verb types as in the adult data, illustrated in examples (6) and (7). Under the assumption that these preference patterns reflect the distinction between given and new information, this indicates that young children are extremely sensitive to information structure and to statistical frequencies in the input.

- (6) kor er postmannen? (Ann, 2;1.7)<sup>2</sup>  
*where be.PRES mailman.DEF*
- (7) mamma ka du fikk? (Ann, 2;3.9)  
*mom what you get.PAST*  
 ‘Mom, what did you get?’

A study investigating topicalizations in the same corpus (Westergaard 2003b), where the target language requires V2 word order, shows that all three children produce constructions with verb movement from the start of multi-word utterances. The typical

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1 The corpus of child data has mainly been collected by Merete Anderssen.  
 2 A full translation of the examples will not be provided when it is clear from the gloss what the sentence means.

early topicalizations are of the same kind in all three children's files, viz with the initial element *der* 'there', the verb *være* 'be' and a full DP subject, as shown in (8)-(10). As illustrated by the examples in (11)-(13), other types also appear early.<sup>3</sup>

- (8) *der er gudmor.* (Ina, 1;8.20)  
*there be.PRES godmother*
- (9) *der er bestefar.* (Ann, 1;8.20)  
*there be.PRES granddad*
- (10) *der er vovvaen.* (Ole, 1;9.10)  
*there be.PRES doggie.DEF*
- (11) *der hoppa æ.* (Ina.02, 1;10.4)  
*there jump.PAST I*
- (12) *der har Ann føtter.* (Ann, 1;10.02)  
*there have.PRES Ann feet*
- (13) *no hørte æ en bil.* (Ole, 1;10.0)  
*now hear.PAST I a car*

Nevertheless, all three children also produce certain non-target forms in these topicalizations, where verb movement seems to have failed and the resulting structure appears with V3 word order. This word order is mainly attested in the early files, but occasional examples are scattered throughout the corpus. Examples of these V3 word order mistakes are given in (14-16).

- (14) *der Ina tegne hatt.* (Ina, 2;0.5)  
*there Ina draw.PRES hat*

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3 In Norwegian, any non-subject constituent that appears in initial position triggers verb movement, also short adverbs such as *så* 'so', *da* 'then', *der* 'there' etc. All of these constructions will be considered to be topicalizations, even though these initial constituents are presumably not real topics.

- (15) *der Ann har et. (Ann, 2;1.28)*  
*there Ann have.PRES one*
- (16) *den bondegården æ har laga på kjøkkenet. (Ole, 2;11.23)*  
*that farm.DEF I have.PRES make.PP on kitchen.DEF*  
 ‘That farm I made in the kitchen.’

When these non-target forms are investigated more closely, they turn out to exhibit a special pattern with respect to subject and verb types. While in the early topicalizations with target word order, illustrated in (8)-(10), the verb is very often *være* ‘be’ (in fact it occurs on average in 64.4% of all topicalizations up to age 2;4), this verb is virtually non-existent in the sentences with V3. And while full DP subjects are extremely frequent in V2 topicalizations (67.1%), the majority of subjects in the V3 constructions are pronouns. When full DP subjects do occur in these clauses with V3, they are almost always the child’s own name, or occasionally the name of a family member or an item in the immediate situation, which means that they are informationally given.

It thus looks like children’s early topicalizations exhibit exactly the same subject and verb patterns as *wh*-questions, where both word orders are grammatical; V2 order is frequent with the verb *være* ‘be’ and full DP subjects, while pronominal subjects and other verbs occur with V3 order. In topicalization constructions, all combinations of subject and verb types are of course found with V2 word order, especially in the later files of the children, as that is the only order allowed by the syntax of the adult grammar. Nevertheless, it seems that children make a distinction between given and new subjects also in topicalization constructions at an early stage.

Given the lack of input for this distinction in the adult language, it could be argued that the patterns found in the children’s word order mistakes are due to a natural word order preference provided by Universal Grammar (UG). This word order would be sensitive to information structure, which would have to be encoded in the syntax and thus function as a syntactic spell-out of the principles of end focus and end weight. Another possibility is of

course that the error pattern seen in these children's early production of topicalizations is not due to UG preferences, but the result of overgeneralization from the input that these Norwegian children are exposed to in *wh*-questions. Westergaard (2003b), investigating Swedish child data made available by Lynn Santelmann (see also Santelmann 1995), finds similar patterns in the non-target forms produced, although all input to Swedish children should be consistently V2. Schönenberger (2000) has also attested different subject positions for pronouns and full DPs in embedded clauses with non-target word order produced by children acquiring Swiss German. These findings lend some support to the hypothesis that these patterns are governed by universal word order principles. In any case, they provide further evidence that young children are very sensitive to information structure, and that such patterns tend to show up in child language, even in situations where there is robust evidence in the input for a syntactic rule of verb movement, as is the case in e.g. Norwegian or Swedish. In the next section we turn to a situation where the syntactic cue for verb movement is not as clear, viz. Old and Middle English.

#### 4. Word order patterns in Old and Middle English

There is considerable debate among scholars whether Old English (OE) was a true V2 language, or whether it only had V2 tendencies - as noted by e.g. Bech (2000/2001), the former approach is often taken by generativists and the latter by non-generativists. She has studied ten text samples from this period and calculated percentages for various word order patterns occurring in the data. In this paper I only focus on non-subject-initial declarative main clauses, i.e. the word orders XVS and XSV, as these are the environments where the cue for a V2 grammar will be manifested in the input to

children acquiring the language.<sup>4</sup> In her text samples Bech finds 680 sentences with XVS order and 288 with XSV for the OE period as a whole, which means that 70.2% of the relevant contexts have V2 word order (XVS) and 29.8% occur with V3 (XSV), as illustrated in Table 1.5

Word order	OE			ME		
	Early	Late	Total	Early	Late	Total
V2 (XVS)	69.7%	70.9%	70.2%	51%	31%	39.9%
V3 (XSV)	30.3%	29.1%	29.8%	49%	69%	60.1%

**Table 1: The percentage of V2 vs. V3 word order in non-subject-initial declarative main clauses across the OE and ME periods in the corpus studied in Bech (2000/2001).<sup>6</sup>**

According to e.g. Kroch and Taylor (1997), the word order in OE non-subject-initial declarative main clauses depends on the type of subject. In general, V2 is preferred if the subject is a full DP, as illustrated by example (17). If the subject is a pronoun, on the other hand, it normally appears before the verb, yielding what Kroch and Taylor call a “superficial verb-third order” (p. 302), as illustrated in (18). They follow Pintzuk (1991) in arguing that pronominal subjects are clitics that move to the boundary between CP and IP and thus do not constitute “evidence of variability or irregularity in the adherence of OE to the V2 constraint” (p. 302).

4 Some of the other word order categories in Bech’s data, e.g. the 5.8% verb-initial clauses, as well as the 3.1% instances of the XXVS category, would presumably both serve as triggers for verb movement in the input to children. A minor word order category that would give the opposite signal is XXSV, which is extremely infrequent in the texts, occurring in only 1.1% of the total number of sentences. This means that including these minor word order patterns would yield a result with even more cues for V2 word order in the input to children acquiring OE.

5 Table 1 also includes corresponding figures for Middle English, which will be discussed below.

6 The figures in Table 1 are calculated for the XVS and XSV word orders only, from raw figures taken from Table 4.2 in Bech (2000/2001, p. 73), which includes many other word order patterns.

(17) & of heom twam is eall manncynn cumen.  
*and of them two is all mankind come*

(18) Ælc yfel he mæg don.  
*each evil he can do*

(from Kroch and Taylor 1997, p. 302, originally from Pintzuk 1991)

However, as pointed out by Bech (2000/2001), the word order situation in OE is not simply a question of full DP vs. pronoun subject. Dividing her texts into Early OE and Late OE, she finds that in the former period, the subjects in V2 clauses are more or less equally divided between full DPs and pronouns, 48.3% and 44.9% respectively, as illustrated in Table 2 (see next page). This has changed considerably in the Late OE period, where the percentages are 66.5% to 22.8% respectively.<sup>7</sup> This shows that pronominal subjects were not impossible in V2 constructions, as illustrated in example (19). For sentences with V3 word order, Bech finds that the two periods are relatively similar, with a majority of pronominal subjects in both Early and Late OE, 78.2% and 75.6% respectively.<sup>8</sup> This means that full DP subjects occur in non-V2 contexts in 20-25% of all cases throughout the OE period, as illustrated in example (20), and this proportion can by no means be said to be negligible. These figures also correspond to findings reported in Haerberli (2002).

(19) Þa siglde he þonan suðryhte be lande.  
*then sailed he from-there southwards along coast*

(from Bech 2000/2001, p.3)

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7 The actual numbers from Bech's corpus are 155 sentences with full DP subjects in XVS constructions and 144 with pronominal subjects in Early OE, while the corresponding figures for Late OE are 175 vs. 60.

8 These percentages correspond to the actual figures 79 pronominal subjects in XSV constructions (vs. 22 full DPs) in Early OE and 65 (vs. 21) for the Late OE period.

- (20) For þrim þingum Hælend eode on westen.  
*for three reasons Savior went into wilderness*  
 (from Bech 2000/2001, p.4)

Word order	OE				ME			
	Early		Late		Early		Late	
	DP	Pro	DP	Pro	DP	Pro	DP	Pro
V2 (XVS)	48.3%	44.9%	66.5%	22.8%	66.7%	26.0%	78.9%	19.5%
V3 (XSV)	21.8%	78.2%	24.4%	75.6%	16.6%	82.8%	46.3%	53.7%

**Table 2: The percentage of full DP vs. pronominal subjects in non-subject-initial declarative main clauses across the corpus investigated by Bech (2000/2001).<sup>9</sup>**

The frequency of V2 constructions decreases from OE into Middle English (ME) and then again during the ME period, see Table 1 above. Haukenes (1998) has studied a large number of texts from the ME period, which she divides into an early and a late stage, ME I and ME II. The transition between the two stages is taken to be the middle of the 14th century. She argues that there is little change in the frequency of V2 word order in the earlier stage of the ME period, while there is a “marked decrease in the overall frequency of XVS order from ME I to ME II, the total percentage dropping from 58.2% to 33.8%” (p. 89). She also notes that there is considerable variation between the different authors in her corpus with respect to word order.

Bech’s (2000/2001) study also investigates ten ME text samples, and she finds that the word order situation for V2 vs. V3 is reversed compared to OE. Again considering non-subject-initial declarative main clauses only, as was done for the OE data above, we find that 39.9% of the relevant sentences in her data occur with V2 word order and as much as 60.1% with V3, which is considerably different from the figures for the OE period, see Table 1. In order to illustrate the development during this time, Bech also divides

<sup>9</sup> These figures are extracted directly from Bech’s Tables 4.13 and 4.14 (pp. 96-97), which include many other word order types. The figures do not always add up to 100%, as Bech has disregarded some subjects.

this period into an early and a late stage. Calculating percentages for the two stages of ME in the same way as above, we find that for early ME the distribution of V2 and V3 is almost identical, 51% vs. 49%, while for the late ME stage the figure for V2 is 31% and for V3 69%, which is more or less exactly the opposite of the OE percentages.<sup>10</sup>

With respect to the subject types used in the two constructions, Bech's (2000/2001) figures are the following: Both in early and late ME the preferred subject in V2 constructions is a full DP, see Table 2.11 For the V3 construction, on the other hand, there is a different development: While the percentage of pronominal subjects reaches its peak in early ME with 82.8%, the relation between full DP and pronominal subjects evens out in late ME, with a distribution of 46.3% vs. 53.7%.<sup>12</sup> Haukenes's (1998) data confirm this development: She has divided the subject types in her corpus into given and new information (defined as Discourse-old vs. Discourse-new, see p. 10) and argues that there is a clear preference for V2 word order when the subject conveys new information: The percentage of new subjects occurring with V2 in ME I is 95.8% (226 out of 236), dropping slightly to 82.8% in ME II (584 out of 705). When the subject conveys given information, on the other hand, the word order preferred in the ME I period is equally divided between V2 and V3 (47.2% to 52.8%, actual numbers 747 vs. 836), while in ME II V3 has taken over and is chosen as often as 76.1% of the time (actual figures 4500 out of a total of 5913).

Bech and Haukenes both argue that word order in earlier stages of English was to a certain extent governed by information structure and the pragmatic principles of end focus and end weight. They also speculate that this has had an impact on the development of English from a V2 to an XSV language. If we take the dis-

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10 Actual numbers for Early ME are 246 sentences with XVS and 236 with XSV word order, while for Late ME the corresponding figures are 187 to 416.

11 The actual numbers for the V2 construction are 136 full DP subjects (vs. 53 pronouns) for Early ME and 97 (vs. 24) for Late ME.

12 For the V3 constructions the actual numbers for Early ME are 24 full DPs vs. 120 pronominal subjects and 69 vs. 80 for Late ME.

tribution of full DP vs. pronominal subjects in OE and ME (summarized in Table 2) to be a reflection of information structure, we can argue that the figures presented in this section point in this direction:<sup>13</sup> First and foremost, it seems clear that the syntax of OE and ME allows two word orders in topicalizations, which is similar to what we find in *wh*-questions in present-day Tromsø dialect, where both V2 and V3 word orders are grammatical. In such situations it is not uncommon that the choice between the two structures becomes subject to pragmatic factors, see e.g. Bresnan and Nikitina's (2003) work on the double object construction in English. In OE the distinction between the two word orders with respect to subject type is not a clear-cut one, as full DP and pronominal subjects may appear with either order. This again mirrors the situation in the Tromsø *wh*-questions, indicating that what is important here is not pure syntax, but rather information structure. When a subject is given information (i.e. often a pronoun) it will tend to appear early in the sentence, in preverbal position, while a subject which conveys new information (often a full DP) will tend to occur in postverbal position. But true syntax is also involved here, seen clearly in the difference between the stages: In OE there must be a syntactic V2 constraint, ensuring not only that a majority of (relevant) clauses appear with this word order, but also that it applies to any kind of subject, given and new, reflected in the almost equal distribution of full DPs and pronominal subjects in V2 constructions at this stage. Deviations from this word order will only occur when the information pattern of the sentence is right for it, i.e. when the subject conveys given information, which accounts for the dominance of pronouns in V3 constructions in OE. Towards the end of the ME period, we see the opposite situation: Non-V2 has become the syntactic norm and therefore occurs with any type of subject, while V2 word order still survives in cases where the subject conveys new information. Bech

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13 This is of course simplified, as full DPs subjects may obviously sometimes be given information and certain pronominal subjects new (in Westergaard 2003a this was especially found to be the case for demonstrative pronouns). Nevertheless, there should be a strong correlation between information structure and full DP vs. pronominal subjects.

(2000/2001, pp. 161-4), distinguishing between subject types with high vs. low Information Value (mainly based on contextual criteria), offers a similar discussion of this development.

In the next section I will try to incorporate the data from Norwegian child language into an analysis of language change where acquisition plays a significant role. More specifically, I argue that a word order pattern based on information structure is an order that children acquire extremely early, possibly because it is preferred by UG. Bech (2000/2001) argues that in the history of English we see evidence that pragmatics can override syntax (see e.g. p. 197). In this study of language acquisition, we can turn Bech's argument around and argue that what children need to learn is that syntax sometimes overrides pragmatics.

## 5. A cue-based approach to acquisition and change

Lightfoot (1999) has developed a cue-based approach to language acquisition and change, which assumes that children do not attempt to match input directly, but that they scan the input for designated cues (in the I-language) for various syntactic processes. These cues must be relatively robustly attested in the primary linguistic data for a syntactic rule to be acquired. Language development occurs when there is a statistical shift in the input, making the frequency of a cue fall below a critical level so that the corresponding syntactic rule is no longer acquired by children. The cue for V2 syntax, Lightfoot argues, will be manifested in topicalizations, as subject-initial declarative main clauses are ambiguous with respect to a V2 or a non-V2 grammar. Based on studies of present-day V2 languages, Lightfoot suggests a frequency of this cue of roughly 30% to be necessary for a V2 grammar to be acquired (p. 154). According to this theory, then, Lightfoot argues that the loss of V2 word order in English is due to a decrease in the frequency of the cue, mainly caused by dialect contact (between a northern and a southern dialect), see also Kroch and Taylor (1997).

The analysis adopted here is similar to Lightfoot's cue-based approach, but rather than seeking an explanation in terms of dialect contact, I argue that there are language-internal reasons for this change that are connected to information structure. Assuming that prehistoric OE once was a true V2 language,<sup>14</sup> similar to other present-day Germanic languages, the development could be sketched as follows: We have already seen in the acquisition data from the Tromsø dialect that young children distinguish between given and new subjects and display word order patterns in topicalizations that conform to the pragmatic principles of end focus and end weight, even though there is no input that suggests such a distinction in the target language. In Westergaard and Vangsnes (forthcoming) a Split-CP model of word order is provided, where V2 word order is argued to be the result of verb movement to different heads in the CP domain depending on clause type.<sup>15</sup> To account for the patterns of information structure attested in adult V2 and V3 *wh*-questions in the Tromsø dialect, they propose the existence of a Foc(us)P(hrase), which attracts the verb only in cases when the subject is new information. This FocP can thus be said to be a syntactic spell-out of (part of) the principle of end focus, as the result of this is that subjects conveying new information occur in postverbal position, while given subjects appear preverbally. In Westergaard (2003b) it is argued that children's early topicalizations (involving new subjects only) do not represent verb movement to the same functional head as the adult grammar (the head of the Top(ic)P(hrase)), but that initially the verb only targets the Focus head. This means that V3 word order mistakes should only occur in the absence of the trigger for V-to-Foc°, i.e. only in sentences with given subjects, which is exactly what we see in the child data (cf. section 3). Movement to

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14 As argued by Swan (1994), OE was presumably never a true V2 language in the same way as e.g. present-day Norwegian. The status of pre-historic OE is therefore simply a speculation. Nevertheless, as argued above, there seems to be a syntactic V2 requirement in Early OE, which differs from the rule that causes V2 word order at later stages.

15 This model is inspired by Rizzi (1997), but differs from this framework in significant ways.

the FocP seems to be preferred in early child language, while movement to the TopP must be triggered by cues in the input. In other words, what Norwegian children need to learn is that the syntax sometimes overrides information structure.

The fact that such a stage is attested in the child data in a modern V2 language makes it plausible that this could also have happened in OE. Children acquiring OE must have been equally inclined to build clause structures which adhere to principles of information structure, and could thus be assumed to have developed an adult grammar where there is verb movement to the FocP only, as illustrated in (21). This grammar will display V2 word order and thus be superficially similar to the original, consistently V2 grammar (with verb movement to a higher functional head), the only difference being occasional V3 structures with given subjects. This seems to be the situation in OE, which exactly mirrors the findings in Norwegian child language.

(21) **Prehistoric OE: Syntactic V2** □  
**OE/Early ME: V2 (new S)/V3 (given S)**

Caused by: Reanalysis of verb movement as movement to the FocusPhrase (cf. Norw. child language).

This grammar, which is only a brief stage in the acquisition of word order in Norwegian, turns out to be a relatively stable system in the history of English. It presumably starts in Early OE (or possibly even before) and persists throughout Late OE as well as the Early ME period. If patterns like these are preferred by UG, as suggested above, then it is not surprising that they should survive also in adult languages. Nevertheless, from the figures in Table 2, it seems like information structure is driving syntactic development in the history of English: In Late OE the subject distribution of V2 sentences has changed dramatically from Early OE, from an equal number of full DP and pronoun subjects to a clear preference for DP subjects. This, I would like to argue, is the reflection of the reanalysis of V2 as verb movement to the FocP rather than the higher functional head of the previous grammar; i.e. from a purely syntactic rule which applies across the board (to all types of

subjects) to a rule which is dependent on the information value of the subject. Note that this does not immediately change the overall frequency of the V2 pattern in the language (see Table 1). However, since subjects tend to be given information, the frequency of V3 should increase as a result of this and the occurrences of V2 should drop correspondingly.<sup>16</sup> As more and more speakers adopt the new grammar, there will be a statistical shift in the input to children. This has apparently taken place the Early ME period. Perhaps paradoxically, as a result of this, children are in fact receiving fewer cues that information patterns play a role in these structures, as the frequency of V2 structures drops dramatically. Since children seem to prefer simplicity and consistent parameter settings in the grammar, they will eventually disregard constructions that are only marginally attested in the input. This has resulted in another reorganization of the grammar in the minds of children, and consequently a (more or less) complete loss of V2 word order in topicalization constructions in the Late ME period, as illustrated in (22).

(22) **OE/Early ME: V2 (new S)/V3 (given S)□**

**Late ME: Syntactic V3**

Caused by: Cue for V2 dropping below critical level for language acquisition.

A similar analysis of the development from OV to VO word order in Icelandic has been proposed by Hróarsdóttir (2003). She shows that there is a stage in the history of Icelandic when the language allows both word orders, and argues that this results in a gradual development of a system where the postverbal position is reserved for focused elements. The occurrences of this VO word order becomes increasingly frequent because of external factors, she argues, and this leads to fewer expressions of the cue relevant for the original OV order, even-

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16 In Haukenes's (1998) analysis of given vs. new subjects during the ME period, she has classified 941 subjects as new information and as many as 7496 as given information in her data for the period as a whole (figures taken from Table 4.26a, p. 146), which corresponds to a percentage of 11.2% for new and 88.8% for given subjects.

tually wiping it out from the grammars acquired by children. In the spirit of the account presented in this paper for the loss of V2 in English, I would like to add that it would be possible to argue that there are (additionally) internal factors causing the shift in frequency in this case: As objects tend to be new information, a system that distinguishes between VO and OV word order based on information structure would naturally lead to a gradual increase in VO constructions.

## 6. Conclusion

In this paper it has been argued that child language data from Norwegian could be used to account for certain word order changes in the history of English. Two general facts of language acquisition are important here: First, children seem to be extremely sensitive to patterns of information structure and easily acquire grammars where syntactic patterns adhere to the pragmatic principles of end focus and end weight. This has been used to explain the first stage of the development in English - from what was possibly a true V2 language (prehistoric OE) to a system where word order choice depended on pragmatic factors. Second, as children also seem to prefer maximally simple grammars, a cue-based approach has been used to argue for the second stage of the development in English - from a language allowing several word orders based on information structure to a (more or less) consistent non-V2 grammar.

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