



## **Reassessing the effect of dialect variation and language contact on V2 in Middle English**

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The question of why English V2 deteriorated has been discussed from different perspectives in historical linguistics. These range from how the loss of clitics drove the decline of V2 (e.g., van Kemenade 1987; Platzack 1995); the diminishing status of information structure led to an infrequent V2 (e.g., Bech 2001; van Kemenade & Westergaard 2012; Eitler & Westergaard 2014); and contact with Scandinavian led to disparities in V2 usage across Middle English dialects (e.g., Kroch, Taylor & Ringe 2000, henceforth KTR). Some of these studies have also proposed that verb-movement did not occur beyond the Inflectional domain (IP-V2) in English, whereas the V2 of Old Norse and other Germanic languages had verb-movement to the left- periphery of the sentence (CP-V2). This description of V2 grammar is important for understanding how Old Norse influenced V2.

In this paper I reassess the influence of language contact on the trajectory of English V2. While KTR presented the possibility that late-medieval contact between the North and South led to its eventual decay, the current study will illustrate how the frequency of V2 was affected more subtly, comparing instances of V2 with varying subjects, verbs, and sentence- initial constituents diatopically. The project maps texts from the Penn Parsed Corpus of Middle English (release 2), with respect to provenance, authorship, genre, and patterns of high and low V2. While Scandinavian influence on ME V2 is well-known to be possible, I take a nuanced approach by showing how it emerged in restricted contexts of V2, particularly in sentences with more functional elements. I also confirm that an English IP-V2 grammar likely did not exist, making the effect of a CP-V2 Scandinavian grammar redundant. Thus, further investigation into the specific properties of V2 affected by language contact is necessary. Overall, I add further insight into why V2 declined in ME, and why only remnants of it exist today.



## References

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