

WHEN ENGLISH MEETS FRENCH A CASE STUDY IN COMPARATIVE DIACHRONIC SYNTAX*

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Abstract A well-known syntactic difference between English and French concerns the distribution of adverbs with respect to finite main verbs. Whereas adverbs productively occur between a subject and the main verb in English (SAdvV order), this word order is generally ruled out in French. In the theoretical literature, the contrast between English and French has been analyzed as a difference with respect to verb movement. The aim of this paper is to examine how this contrast developed diachronically by comparing the distribution of adverbs and finite main verbs in the early histories of the two languages. This is of interest not only from a comparative point of view, but also because of the fact that the two languages were in contact in England during the Middle English period. Following up on earlier work on the development of adverb placement in the history of English, the paper will explore to what extent the contact situation with French may have contributed to changes affecting the syntax of adverbs in Middle English. The evidence to be considered comes from two sources: a close comparison of a French text and its Middle English translation, which has unexpected properties, and an overview of the status of adverb placement in a range of early French texts. The overall picture that emerges is that there is no strong evidence for a role of French in the development of adverb placement in English. However, the comparative diachronic analysis of the two languages reveals an interesting parallelism in their development that is presumably not caused by contact and that ends once English takes a separate path with the decline of verb movement.

1. INTRODUCTION

As is well-known, present-day French and present-day English (PDE) differ with respect to the distribution of adverbs and finite main verbs (cf. e.g. Emonds 1976, Pollock 1989 among many others). Whereas French allows certain adverbs to occur postverbally, the corresponding word order is not possible in English. Instead, the adverb has to precede the finite main verb in English, an order that is ruled out in French. This is shown in (1) (adverbs in italics, finite main verb in bold print).

- (1) a. Jacques **achète** *toujours* des Macs.
b. * Jacques **buys** *always* Macs.
c. * Jacques *toujours* **achète** des Macs.
d. Jacques *always* **buys** Macs.

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This contrast between French and English has been analyzed in the literature as a parametric difference with respect to verb movement (cf. again Pollock 1989 and much subsequent work). Assuming that the adverbs in (1) occur at the VP-edge, the French word order in (1a) can be analyzed as involving V-movement out of the VP into the inflectional domain to T. Under the further assumption that the subject occupies Spec,TP and that adjunction of adverbs to T' is ruled out, the adjacency between the subject and the verb in (1c) is accounted for as well. In English, however, the V-movement parameter is set negatively. A finite verb can therefore not move out of the VP to the left of an adverb as in (1b). Instead, it remains in V and, hence, in a position that is adjacent to its complement (cf. 1d). With the subject in Spec,TP and the verb in V, adverbs can intervene between the two, as also shown in (1d).

In this paper, I will examine how the contrast between French and English in (1) developed diachronically by comparing the distribution of adverbs and finite main verbs in the early histories of the two languages. This is of interest not only from a comparative point of view, but in particular also because of the fact that the two languages were in contact for several centuries after the Norman Conquest in 1066. Although the most obvious effects of the English-French contact situation are lexical, with large numbers of French loanwords coming into English during this period, certain consequences on the syntax cannot be ruled out (cf. Haeberli 2010). A comparative diachronic analysis will therefore allow us to address the question whether the presence of French in England had any effect on the distribution of adverbs and main verbs in English.

The paper is structured as follows. In section 2, the diachronic development of the placement of adverbs with respect to finite main verbs in the history of English will be outlined on the basis of earlier work by Haeberli and Ihsane (in press). Against this background, I will then consider possible effects of contact between French and English in the following two sections. Section 3 considers contact in the context of a translation. Based on a close comparison of a late Middle English translation and its French source, I will examine whether the somewhat unexpected syntactic properties of the English text can be related to French influence. In section 4, I will present quantitative data concerning the placement of adverbs with respect to main verbs in a wider range of early French texts from the 12th to the 15th centuries, and I will explore whether the situation in French could be related in any way to the developments in English as presented in section 2. Section 5 concludes the paper.

2. ADVERBS AND FINITE MAIN VERBS IN THE HISTORY OF ENGLISH

As shown by the contrast in (1b) and (1d), verbs in PDE do not undergo movement out of the VP. In earlier English, however, the situation is different. Just like French, Old English (OE) and Middle English (ME) have word orders of the type (1a) that suggest that in these stages of the language, English had V-movement to the inflectional domain (Roberts 1985, 1993, Kroch 1989, Pollock 1989 among many others). This is illustrated in (2) with an example from the 15th century.¹

- (2) Perfor I **aske** now mercy (CMKEMPE,141.3272; c1450)
Therefore I ask now mercy

¹ All English data in this paper are from the following parsed historical prose corpora: the *The York-Toronto-Helsinki Parsed Corpus of Old English Prose* (YCOE; Taylor, Warner, Pintzuk, and Beths 2003), the *Penn-Helsinki Parsed Corpus of Middle English 2* (PPCME2; Kroch and Taylor 2000), the *Penn-Helsinki Parsed Corpus of Early Modern English* (Kroch, Santorini, and Diertani 2004) and *The Parsed Corpus of Early English Correspondence* (Taylor, Nurmi, Warner, Pintzuk, and Nevalainen 2006). We follow the referencing conventions used in these corpora. The reference is followed by the date of the text.

‘Therefore, I now ask mercy’

As also observed by the authors mentioned above, V-movement is then lost in the Early Modern English period.

In order to trace the history of V-movement in English, Haeberli & Ihsane (in press) provide a detailed overview of adverb placement from OE to Late Modern English. Here, we will only focus on their findings with respect to the overall variation between Subject-Adverb-Verb order (SAdvV) and Subject-Verb-Adverb order (SVAdv) with any type of adverb. This type of variation does not exactly measure the presence or absence of V-movement since a language like PDE has orders in which the adverb occurs postverbally (cf. e.g. *Jacques bought it recently*) even though it does not have V-movement. Nevertheless, the SAdvV/SVAdv variation can provide some information on the diachronic development of V-movement in that we can assume that a rise in the frequency of SAdvV order indicates the beginning of the loss of V-movement and a relative stabilization of this frequency signals its end.²

Table 1 summarizes the results presented in Haeberli & Ihsane (in press) for the period that is relevant for our purposes here and that witnesses the most important changes with respect to the surface word orders SAdvV and SVAdv. From the early 16th century onwards the frequency of SAdvV order remains relatively stable, the main exception being a further significant increase around 1700. However, this seems to be an increase that cannot be linked in any way to the verbal syntax (cf. Haeberli & Ihsane in press).

TABLE 1 *The distribution of adverbs and finite main verbs from Old to Early Modern English in YCOE, PPCME2, PPCEME, and PCEEC*

Periods	SAdvV	SVAdv	Total
OE	9387 (70.0%)	4023 (30.0%)	13410
1150-1250	299 (38.2%)	583 (61.8%)	782
1250-1350	25 (13.6%)	160 (86.4%)	185
1350-1420	164 (9.9%)	1486 (90.1%)	1650
1420-1475	161 (8.5%)	1744 (91.5%)	1905
1475-1500	123 (16.5%)	622 (83.5%)	745
1500-1525	211 (37.3%)	355 (62.7%)	566

Table 1 covers OE, the entire ME period (1100-1500) as well as the very beginning of Early Modern English. As the data in this table show, the status of SAdvV order is highly unstable in this period. In Old English (OE), SAdvV order is the clear majority option as compared to SVAdv. Its rate then declines gradually to an all-time low of 9.9% and 8.5% in the periods 1350-1420 and 1420-1475. But finally, this development is inverted again, with the frequency of SAdvV order being multiplied quickly by four within half a century. As pointed out above, this rise is then followed by a certain stability in the following two centuries.

The developments shown in Table 1 raise several questions. First, given that it is generally assumed that early English had V-movement out of the VP, why does OE have such a high rate of SAdvV order? Second, why does the frequency of SAdvV order decline after the OE period? And third, how can the rise in the second part of the 15th century be accounted for?

² The validity of this assumption is confirmed by data based on clear diagnostics for V-movement such as V-object (non-)adjacency and the behaviour of individual adverbs (cf. Haeberli & Ihsane (in press): sections 3.2 and 3.3)

In a nutshell, the proposals made by Haeberli & Ihsane (in press) in order to deal with these issues are the following. Concerning the situation in OE, one important aspect is the head-final syntax of OE. Just like SAdvV order, SOV and SVAux orders are very common in OE as well. That the high frequency of SAdvV is related to head-final structure is confirmed by the fact that in subordinate clauses, where head-final structure is more frequent than in main clauses, the rate of SAdvV is considerably higher as well. However, even in unambiguously head-initial clauses the rate of SAdvV order is non-negligible (28.7%). A majority of these cases (over 70%) involve the adverbs *þa* and *þonne* ('then'), which can be argued to have the function of discourse particles (van Kemenade and Los 2006). Head-initial SAdvV orders can be analyzed as involving V-movement to T, placement of the adverb in a high position hosting primarily discourse particles and subject placement in the CP domain.

The decline of SAdvV order after OE is the result of two developments, according to the analysis proposed by Haeberli & Ihsane. On the one hand, SAdvV order derived on the basis of head-final structures is lost since English becomes a purely head-initial language in the early ME period. On the other hand, the status of the high subject position is weakened due to other changes (loss of the V2-like syntax of OE, loss of the discourse marking properties of *þa/þonne*). As a consequence, English moves towards a system corresponding to modern French where the subject is in Spec,TP and the verb in the head position of a head-initial TP and where adverbs generally do not occur between the subject and the verb.

Finally, the increase in SAdvV order starting in the 15th century can be related to the decline of V-movement. With the subject in Spec,TP and the verb starting to occur in a position below T, word orders in which the adverb intervenes between the two become more frequent. In the literature, V-movement has frequently been related to richness of verbal agreement morphology (Rich Agreement Hypothesis). However, this hypothesis is not likely to provide an explanation for the decline of V-movement in late ME as there do not seem to be any changes in the agreement morphology at this point that would turn English from a rich to an impoverished agreement language. Instead, Haeberli & Ihsane propose that the loss of V-movement starting in the mid-15th century is the result of a combination of other factors, namely the decline of the subject-verb inversion grammar found in early English, changes in the verbal morphosyntax (loss of subjunctive morphology, rise of periphrastic forms), an acquisitional bias towards simpler structures, and effects of dialect contact with northern varieties of English.

The above account of the decline and subsequent rise of SAdvV order in ME relies on language-internal causes (changes such as the decline of head-final structure or subject-verb inversion), acquisitional factors, and, in one case, an external cause (contact with northern ME). In the remainder of this paper, I will consider the role of external factors in some more detail, exploring an alternative option not considered by Haeberli & Ihsane. The hypothesis that contact with northern ME may have played a role in the rise of SAdvV order is based on the observation that when SAdvV order is least frequent in the history of English, i.e. between 1350 and 1475, we find considerably higher frequencies in northern texts. While the figures for most texts are well below 10%, those for the three northern texts from this period are between 25.0% and 47.6%. This suggests that northern influence, which has been observed in various other contexts, may have played a role in the decline of V-movement past adverbs.

There is just one text that does not fit into this general picture and that is the ME version of the *Brut*. It is a non-northern text from around 1400, but with a rate of SAdvV order of 26.6% it patterns with the northern texts.³ The question that arises then is what the reason for

³ Note that if we exclude the *Brut* and the northern text from the totals for the period 1350-1420, the average frequency of SAdvV order would just be slightly above 5%. The frequency in the *Brut* is thus five times higher

the high frequency of SAdvV order in the *Brut* is and whether the *Brut* allows us to identify another factor that may have contributed to the decline of V-movement in English.

One distinctive property of the *Brut* that could be relevant in this connection is the fact that it is a translation of a French source text. More generally, we may wonder then whether French had an impact on the developments shown in Table 1. During a large part of the period represented in that table, English was in contact with French as a consequence of the Norman Conquest in 1066. Although the role of French in England is weakened over the course of the ME period, some effects of its presence cannot be ruled out even in later ME. For example, Rothwell (1998) observes that “[t]he scribal class of medieval England, responsible in large measure for the enrichment of later Middle English, was in varying degrees a trilingual one”. Transfer of syntactic features in the writing of such multilingual authors would not be unexpected. The continued importance of French in late ME is also stressed by Kristol (2000:38/9):

“Même si certains témoignages, en particulier un passage de la *Manière de langage* de 1396, affirment que le français est toujours la langue de conversation soignée dans certains milieux de la bonne société anglaise, ... la situation linguistique en Angleterre médiévale doit sans aucun doute être décrite comme une diglossie codique: l’oralité appartient essentiellement à l’anglais, alors que le français occupe une partie importante des usages écrits.”⁴

Although the clearest evidence for French influence on ME comes from the lexicon, various references to possible contact effects in the syntax can be found in the literature (e.g. Allen 2006:214/5, Fischer 1992: 214, 226, 273, 299ff., Haeberli 2010, Ingham 2005). Ingham (2005) even goes as far as suggesting that “with late C14 English we may not be looking at the product of an organic development of English from EME onwards, but rather at the reflex of Anglo-Norman linguistic practices on which bilingual writers were calquing their English syntax”.

As for the influence French could have had on the syntax of adverb placement in ME, two scenarios would be conceivable: Either early French predominantly had SAdv order and it contributed to the decline of SAdvV order in ME up to the 15th century. Alternatively, French had frequent occurrences of SAdvV order and played a role in the rise of this word order in late ME. At first sight, the second scenario may seem less likely because present-day French generally does not allow the word order SAdvV in non-parenthetical contexts (cf. 1c above).⁵ However, SAdvV is not necessarily ruled out in V-movement languages (cf. e.g.

than in other non-northern texts from the same period. If the *Brut* were excluded from the figures for 1350-1420, the low point for SAdvV order would already be reached in that period, and the first significant increase of SAdvV would occur in the period 1420-1475.

⁴ Even if some sources, in particular a passage from *Manière de langage* from 1396, affirm that French is still the language of refined conversation in certain circles of the English high society, ... the linguistic situation in medieval England should without doubt be described as a code diglossia: orality essentially belongs to English whereas French occupies an important part of written usage.

⁵ There are some exceptions to this generalization. For example, the occurrence of an adverb like *normalement* (‘normally’) in preverbal position can be fairly natural (Christopher Laenzlinger, p.c.):

- (i) Cet outil normalement permet de réparer la machine.
This tool normally allows to repair the machine.
‘This tool normally allows one to repair the machine.’

Furthermore, Posner (1997:353) observes that “in literary style the adverb can still appear in diverse positions, determined by considerations of harmony and rhythm”, and she gives the following attested example in support of this statement:

- (ii) Mais sa raison sans cesse lutte et souvent l’emporte contre son coeur. (Gide, *Symphonie pastorale*)
But his reason without cease struggles and often it takes-away against his heart.
‘But his reason ceaselessly struggles against and often triumphs over his emotions.’

Belletti 1990). This is illustrated in the following two examples from Italian and Spanish (from Schifano to appear).

- (3) a. Antonio *probabilment* **confonde** la poesia. (*Italian*)
 ‘Antonio probably confuses the poem.’
 b. Sergio *siempre* **confunde** estos poemas. (*Spanish*)
 ‘Sergio always confuses these poems.’

Thus, although French may not have undergone any obvious changes with respect to V-movement in its history, we cannot entirely exclude that it changed from a V-movement system of the Italian or Spanish type that allows word orders as in (3) to one that generally bans material intervening between the subject and the verb. To my knowledge, no study has examined the placement of adverbs and main verbs in early French in any detail, so the hypothesis that contact with French favoured the rise of SAdvV in late ME cannot immediately be discarded.

In order to investigate the potential influence of French on the development of adverb placement in ME, I will proceed as follows. The following section focuses on the late ME text mentioned above, the *Brut*, which is a translation from French and has an unusually high rate of SAdvV order. Based on a close comparison of this text with its French source, I will examine whether the rate of SAdvV can be related to a translation effect. In a second section, I will then consider the distributional properties of adverbs with respect to main verbs in a range of early French texts in order to obtain a more general picture of the situation with respect to adverb placement in this period of the history of French and the impact it could have had on English.

3. SADV ORDER IN THE ME *BRUT*

As shown in Table 1, the period 1350-1475 has the lowest overall frequencies of SAdvV order in the history of English. The rate of 26.6% found in the ME *Brut*, a text from around 1400, is therefore unexpectedly high. Given the role of dialect variation in ME, an initial hypothesis could be that the *Brut* represents another dialect area, besides the north, in which SAdvV order and, hence, the decline of V-movement is more advanced than elsewhere. However, such a hypothesis is problematic. It is assumed that the version of the *Brut* that is included in the *Penn-Helsinki Parsed Corpus of Middle English 2* (PPCME2) and that has thus been used for the counts reported in Table 1 is from South-West Herefordshire (Matheson 1998:79), i.e. from the dialect area of the West Midlands. If we consider the other West Midlands texts from the period 1350 to 1475, we can observe that they do not have any distinctive properties with respect to SAdvV order. They have frequencies of 4.3%, 7.8%, and 10.5% and thus fall well within the range of what is found with other non-northern texts. Dialect origin is therefore an unlikely cause of the particular behaviour of the *Brut* with respect to SAdvV order.

As pointed out above, a more likely explanation of the special status of the *Brut* is the fact that the part of the ME *Brut* that is included in the PPCME2 is a close translation of a French text. This distinguishes the ME *Brut* from most other PPCME2 texts from the relevant period. Two scenarios with respect to effects of contact with French would be conceivable

It is likely that the word order in (ii) is related to the particularities of the coordination context in which it occurs. Posner’s conclusion is that “[m]ost French speakers would judge that the prefixing of the adverb to the verb represents a stylistically motivated transformation, from a basic unmarked order where the adverb immediately follows the finite verb” (1997:353). In general, it seems to be uncontroversial that this “stylistically motivated transformation” is very marginal.

then. One would be that the influence can only be detected in the particular context of a translation, i.e. when features of the contact language are particularly salient for the writer of the English text. Alternatively, and more interestingly, influence in a translation could be the sign of a more general impact of French on the development of English syntax.

The prose *Brut* is a chronicle that gives an overview of the history of England from its beginnings to the middle ages. It is found in more than 240 manuscripts in the three main literary languages of medieval England, i.e. English, French/Anglo-Norman, and Latin (Matheson 1998:1). To examine whether the translation context may have had an influence on adverb placement in the ME *Brut*, I will compare the PPCME2 sample, which is taken from the first part of Brie's (1906) edition, with the corresponding parts of the Anglo-Norman (AN) version of the *Brut* edited by Pagan (2011). It must be pointed out, however, that this pair of texts is not likely to correspond exactly to the source used and its first translation, since the surviving ME versions of the *Brut* are later copies of the original translation and because the AN version used for the translation must have been a longer one than the version contained in Pagan (2011). However, for large parts Brie's ME edition reads like a very close translation of Pagan's AN edition, and it therefore seems plausible to assume that the two texts are representative for the two texts originally involved in the translation process (cf. Haerberli (in preparation) for more detailed discussion of these issues).

The dataset from the ME *Brut* that I will focus on consists of all the main clauses containing an overt subject, a finite main verb and an adverb to the right of the subject.⁶ 239 clauses of this type can be found, with the order SAdvV occurring 61 times and the order SVAdv 178 times.⁷ If we now compare the 61 cases of SAdvV to the AN text, we obtain the following picture. The most frequent scenario (31 examples) is the occurrence of SAdvV in ME with a corresponding AN sentence that does not contain an adverb. This is illustrated in (4) where the ME main clause is given on the first line, the corresponding AN clause on the second line, and the common gloss on the third line.⁸

- (4) a. Brut *þo toke* his wyf, & all his men ... (CMBRUT3,8.177)
 Et Bruyt **prist** sa femme, et toutz sez hommes (ANPB 104)
 (And) Brut (then) took his wife and all his men
- b. Tydyng *some come* to Kyng Goffar ... (CMBRUT3,9.215)
 Novele **vint** a Goffar ... (ANPB 145)
 News (soon) came to (King) Goffar ...
- c. Cordeil *þe Quene anone nome* golde and siluer ... (CMBRUT3,19.572)
 Cordeille la royne **prist** or et argent (ANPB 492)
 Cordeille the queen (at-once) took gold and silver ...'

In 15 examples, the ME order SAdvV corresponds to an SVAdv order in AN.

- (5) a. and Brenne *shamefully fleye* þens (CMBRUT3,25.728)
 et Brenne **s'enfui** *hounte[u]sement* (ANPB 652)
 and Brenne (shamefully) fled (shamefully) (from-there)
- b. Engist *priuely sent* bi lettre ... (CMBRUT3,51.1520)

⁶ As for the corpus from which these clauses are extracted, it corresponds to pp. 5 to 128 in Brie (1906) for ME and to pp. 33 to 135 (lines 10 to 3841) for AN in Pagan (2011).

⁷ The frequency of SAdvV is thus 25.5%. This figure is slightly below the 26.6% reported earlier. There are two reasons for this contrast. First, the overall figure given earlier includes subordinate clauses. And secondly, it also includes a passage contained in the PPCME2 for which there is no corresponding AN text in Pagan (2011).

⁸ For ME, I follow the referencing conventions used in the PPCME2. As for the AN *Prose Brut*, I will use the abbreviation ANPB followed by the line number in Pagan's (2011) edition.

- Engist **maunda** *privément* par letre ... (ANPB 1516)
 Engist (secretly) sent-word (secretly) by letter
- c. and þe kyng *anone* **turnede** azeyne to Tyntagell, (CMBRUT3,67.2020)
 Et le roy **retourna** *tauntost* a Tintagel (ANPB 2041)
 And the king (soon) returned (soon) (again) to Tintagel

7 sentences have an identical SAdvV word order both in ME and in AN.

- (6) a. and þe Britouns *anone* **assemblede** ham,
 (CMBRUT3,59.1747)
 et lez Brutouns *tauntost* s' **assemblerent** (ANPB 1777)
 and the British soon (themselves) assembled (themselves)
- b. And þus traitour Edrik *anone* **went** to þe Quene
 (CMBRUT3,120.3649)
 Cestui traitour Edrith *tauntost* s'**en ala** a la royne (ANPB 3580)
 (And) this traitor Edric soon went to the queen
- c. The Kyng *anone* **lete** calle a Danois (CMBRUT3,121.3674)
 Le roy *meintenant* **appella** un Daneis (ANPB 3608)
 The king at-once called a Dane
- d. But þe Erl Godwyne ... *falsely* **pouzt** to slee þo ij breþerne
 (CMBRUT3,126.3817)
 Meas le counte Godwin *traiterousement* **pensa** occire ambedeux lez freres
 (ANPB 3776)
 But the Earl Godwin treacherously thought to-kill the two brothers

Finally, the remaining 8 examples of SAdvV in ME fall in various minor categories: (a) AdvVS in AN (1 example); (b) SAuxAdvV in AN (1 example); (c) relatively free translation from identifiable AN sentences (3 examples); (d) no corresponding sentence in AN (3 examples).

Two main conclusions can be drawn from these findings. First, the unexpectedly high frequency of SAdvV order in the ME *Brut* cannot be related to direct influence from the AN source text. Only in 7 out of the 61 cases of SAdvV (11.5%) can the same word order be found in AN. For a contact explanation to be plausible, the phenomenon would have to be more pervasive in the source text. More generally, this example illustrates that unusual properties of a translation should not systematically be reduced to slavish transfer from the source text.

A second conclusion makes some form of a contact effect more plausible again, however. As pointed out above, in the large majority of the 61 cases of SAdvV order in ME, the AN text does not have a corresponding adverb. But among those 22 cases where we do have an adverb and a finite verb after the subject in AN, there are 7 (31.8%) with the order SAdvV. This is too small a sample to draw any firm conclusions, but the data in (6) nevertheless suggest that the occurrence of an adverb between the subject and the finite main verb is not as constrained as it is in present-day French.⁹ Adverbs like *tantôt* ('soon'), *maintenant* ('now')

⁹ Note that the 7 cases of SAdvV I have identified in Pagan's (2011) edition have the same word order in Marvin's (2006) edition of an earlier (probably late 13th century) AN manuscript. The sentences corresponding to (6a-d) are given in (i).

- (i) a. E les Brutons *tantost* **se assemblerent** ... (Marvin 2006, line 1359)
 b. Cesti traitre Edrich *tantost* **sen ala** a la reine (line 2749)
 c. Le roi *meintenaunt* **appella** vn Daneis qe auoit anoun Walgar (line 2773)
 d. Mes le Counte Godwyn *traiterousement* encounter son serment **pensa** occire ambedeux (line 2902)

Furthermore, Vance argues that (9) is representative in that the subject must be pronominal, a point also made Franzén (1939).

Although the above observations suggest that SAdvV is a word order that is salient enough in OF for it to be noted repeatedly in the literature, there do not seem to be any quantitative studies that allow us to evaluate its status in a precise way. Furthermore, due to absence of detailed quantitative work, it is also unclear how the word order SAdvV developed over time.

In order to start filling this empirical gap, I will examine the status of SAdvV order as compared to SAdv order in all the OF and early Middle French (MF) files from before 1500 of the parsed part of the MCVF corpus (Martineau et al. 2010). The search criteria as well as the division of the data into periods correspond to those for English in section 2.¹¹ For the periodization, I have used the dates provided by the MCVF corpus for the composition of the text.¹² Table 2 summarizes the quantitative findings for all the clauses containing a subject, a finite main verb and an adverb in early French.

TABLE 2 *The distribution of adverbs and finite main verbs in Old and early Middle French in the parsed section of the MCVF corpus*

Periods	SAdvV	SAdv	Total
1100-1150	42 (44.2%)	53 (55.8%)	95
1150-1250	145 (19.8%)	586 (80.2%)	731
1250-1350	33 (9.0%)	331 (91.0%)	364
1350-1420	95 (7.5%)	1178 (92.5%)	1273
1420-1475	69 (8.3%)	764 (91.7%)	833
1475-1500	2 (1.8%)	110 (98.2%)	112

At first sight, the data in Table 2 show a trend that is similar to that observed in the English data in Table 1. Initially, SAdvV order is very common, but then its frequency decreases over time. Two aspects distinguish French from English, however. First, the decline occurs somewhat earlier in French than in English (19.8% SAdvV order in the period 1150-1250 for French as opposed to 38.2% for English). Secondly, whereas the rate of SAdvV order rises again in the 15th century in English, there is a further decline in French.

However, a note of caution concerning some of the French evidence must be added. In particular, it is not entirely clear how representative the two texts contained in the first period are for the French language more generally at the time. The main reason for this is that they are both written in verse, and it is possible that this property has the effect of inflating the rate of SAdvV order. In the period 1150-1250, it is indeed the case that the two verse texts (*Lais* and *Le Chevalier au Lion*) have an SAdvV rate that is twice as high as that found in the other texts (30.3% (n = 238) as opposed to 14.8% (n = 493) for the remaining texts). Similarly, the

¹¹ The only difference is that the French data include clauses with finite copula *be* as they are treated like main verbs in the MCVF corpus whereas they are treated on a par with auxiliary *be* in the English corpora and are therefore excluded from the counts in Table 1.

¹² The texts are divided into different periods in the following way: 1100-1150: *La Chanson de Roland*, *Le Voyage de Saint Brendan (Benedeit)*; 1150-1250: *Leis Willelme*, *Lais (Marie de France)*, *Sermon anonyme sur sainte Agnès*, *Le Chevalier au Lion (Chrétien de Troyes)*, *Aucassin et Nicolette*, *La Charte de Chièvres (Rasse de Gavre)*, *Pseudo-Turpin*, *La Conquête de Constantinople (Robert de Clari)*, *Queste del Saint Graal*; 1250-1350: *Le livre Roisin*, *Mémoires ou Vie de Saint Louis (Jean de Joinville)*; 1350-1420: *Prise d'Alexandrie (Guillaume de Machaut)*, *Les XV Joyes du mariage*, *Chroniques (Jean Froissart)*; 1420-1475: *Formulaire de la chancellerie royale (Morchesne)*, *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles*; 1475-1500: *Mémoires (Philippe de Comynnes)*.

For 5 out of these 19 text files, the manuscript date would clearly fall in a different (later) period than the date of composition that is given in the MCVF. However, this uncertainty about the exact dating of some texts will not fundamentally affect the overall conclusions that we will reach.

rhymed chronicle *Prise d'Alexandrie* has a substantially higher frequency of SAdvV than the other texts from the period 1350-1420 (23.0% vs. 4.3% for the prose texts). Given these observations, the rate given for the period 1100-1150 (like those of other periods containing verse texts) is likely to be overestimated.

A second aspect of the data in Table 2 that has to be examined more closely is the adverbs involved in SAdvV orders. As mentioned above, Franzén (1939) and Vance (1997) identify the adverb *si* as occurring particularly frequently between the subject and the finite verb in OF. This observation is confirmed by the data obtained from the MCVF corpus. More than a third of the SAdvV clauses involve the adverb *si* (135 out of 386 (35.0%)).¹³ The contribution of *si* to the number of SAdvV clauses is particularly high in the periods 1150-1250 (41.4% of the SAdvV clauses for all texts, or 74.0% for prose texts only) and 1250-1350 (81.8%). Thus, if we would like to obtain a clearer picture of the behaviour of adverbs in general with respect to SAdvV order, it would be preferable to leave clauses with *si* aside in our counts so as to avoid distorting effects of the apparently distinct status of this adverb.

Once we leave aside all verse texts and all clauses containing *si* (both with SAdvV and SVAdv order), we obtain the following results.

TABLE 3 *The distribution of adverb and finite main verb from 1100 to 1500 in the parsed section of the MCVF corpus – verse texts and clauses with si excluded*

Periods	SAdvV	SVAdv	Total
1100-1150	-	-	-
1150-1250	19 (4.4%)	409 (95.6%)	657
1250-1350	6 (1.8%)	325 (98.2%)	331
1350-1420	22 (2.1%)	1009 (97.9%)	1243
1420-1475	53 (6.5%)	764 (91.7%)	817
1475-1500	1 (0.9%)	110 (99.1%)	111

Table 3 shows that, in prose texts, SAdvV order is a highly marginal word order from the very beginning of the attested history of French. In the earliest OF texts, the frequency of SAdvV order only reaches 4.4% and it remains low in the following centuries. OF may thus merely manifest the final residues of a more productive SAdvV word order option found earlier (cf. Buridant 1987), and the verse texts could be interpreted as making an increased use of this archaic word order. In terms of such a diachronic scenario, the data in Table 3 at best show the very end of the decline of SAdvV order as the decrease from the period 1150-1250 to the period 1250-1350 is borderline significant.¹⁴ The rate of SAdv then remains very low. A statistically significant difference in the occurrence of SAdvV order can only be detected again in the period 1420-1475. But this difference has to be treated with caution as it is due to the properties of a single text, which is predominant in the data for this period (*Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles*; 801 out of the 817 clauses with an adverb). The result in Table 3 may therefore not be representative for other texts from this period.¹⁵ The most plausible assumption would be instead that in general SAdvV is a highly marginal word order option

¹³ Vance (1997:60) observes that preverbal *si* mainly occurs with the verbs *estre* 'to be' and *faire* 'to do'. In the MCVF data, different forms of these two verbs are indeed predominant. However, well over a third of the SAdvV cases with *si* involve a wide range of other verbs. This suggests that this option is not simply, as Franzén (1939) suggests, a formulaic expression, but it has a certain productivity.

¹⁴ Pearson's chi-square test suggests statistical significance ($p = 0.04$). However, significance is not quite reached with a Yates' chi-square test ($p = 0.07$) or Fisher's exact test ($p = 0.06$).

¹⁵ The second text included in the period 1420-1475 (Morchesne's *Formulaire de la chancellerie royale*) does not contain any examples with SAdvV order. But given that there are only 16 clauses with an adverb altogether, this finding is not conclusive, either.

from the 13th century onwards, with frequencies reaching very low levels of around 2% or below.

Below are some illustrations of the SAdvV orders that can be found in prose texts from between the 13th and the 15th centuries in the MCVF corpus. As was the case for the examples in (6) above, the same word orders would be ruled out in present-day French.¹⁶

- (10) a. Le mary *aucunesfois* **accuse** la femme (XV-JOIES,80.2129)
 ‘The husband sometimes accuses the wife’
- b. ... elle *tantos* **dist** au roi: ... (FROISSART,118.1744)
 ... she soon said to-the king
 ‘... she soon said to the king: ...’
- c. Et nostre bon chevalier *souvent* luy **disoit**: ... (ANONYME_CNN,455.9810)
 And our good knight often him said
 ‘And our good knight often said to him: ...’
- d. ... s'il *bien* s'en **prenoit** garde (12XX-QUESTE,20.678)
 ... if he well himself of-it took care
 ‘... if he took care well’
- e. Si la vieille *hier* luy **fist** ung grand prologue ... (ANONYME_CNN,80.1676)
 If the old yesterday him made a big speech ...
 ‘If the old woman made a big speech yesterday ...’
- f. ... un des plus hardis hommes que je *onques* **veisse**
 (JOINVILLE_MEMOIRES,311.3664)
 ... one of-the most bold men that I ever saw
 ‘... one of the boldest men that I had ever seen.’

The examples in (10) are fairly representative in that, in contrast to what Vance (1997) observes for SXV order in general, SAdvV order involving adverbs other than *si* is relatively evenly distributed over main and subordinate clauses.¹⁷ Furthermore, both pronouns and full DPs can be the subject with main and subordinate SAdvV order.

Having obtained a clearer picture of the general situation with respect to SAdvV order in early French, let us now return to the question explored in section 3 whether contact with French could have contributed to the rise of SAdvV order in late ME. In section 3, we showed that the unexpectedly high frequency of SAdvV in the ME *Brut* cannot be related to simple imitation of corresponding word orders in the French source text. But the small sample of clauses involving adverbs in the French version of the *Brut* suggested that the overall frequency of SAdvV order may nevertheless be rather high and the hypothesis of French influence on the rise of SAdvV could therefore not be entirely discarded. In view of the data presented in Table 3, however, the correctness of this hypothesis has become very unlikely. The frequency of SAdvV order in prose texts is very low from the beginning of the attested history of French contrary to what one would expect if French were to play a role in the rise of this word order in English.

There is one scenario that our discussion so far cannot entirely exclude. Given that English was in contact with the Anglo-Norman variety of French (as represented in the version of the *Brut* discussed in section 3), a possibility would be that SAdvV was frequent in this variety but not in the continental ones. The fact that the two texts with very high rates of

¹⁶ Just like in present-day French, object pronouns and partitive *en* are cliticized to the left of the verb Old and Middle French. Examples (10c/d/e) therefore involve cliticization rather than an underlying OV word order.

¹⁷ In the periods 1150-1250 and 1420-1475, the frequency of SAdvV is higher in subordinate clauses than in main clauses but the difference is not statistically significant. In the remaining three periods, it is in main clauses that the rate of SAdvV is higher, with statistical significance reached only once.

SAdvV in the period 1100-1150 in Table 2 are of British origin could be argued to support this hypothesis. Two observations go against this scenario, however. First, two of the five verse texts in the parsed MCVF corpus are not of British origin and they nevertheless have frequencies of SAdvV order that are well above those for prose texts. This suggests that, as assumed earlier, it is indeed genre that is related to a high rate of SAdvV rather than the origin of a text. And secondly, with respect to certain other syntactic features of AN, Ingham (2006a, b) has found “strong evidence of non-divergence from the continental mainstream” (2006a:103) at least in the 14th century. The minimal assumption is that this non-divergence also holds for adverb placement and that AN is therefore not fundamentally different from the texts examined in Table 3. To confirm this conclusion, a range of AN prose texts would have to be examined. This is not possible on the basis of the parsed MCVF corpus as it contains only one AN prose text sample (*Leis Willelme*, composition date 1150), and that one happens to be too small for meaningful quantitative analysis.¹⁸ I will therefore have to leave a more detailed study of adverb placement in AN for future research.

Although a slight uncertainty remains pending further work on AN prose, the overall picture we have obtained in this section and in section 4 is that it is rather unlikely that contact with French played a role in the rise of SAdvV order in late ME. As a matter of fact, the low frequencies of SAdvV order in early French observed in Table 3 suggest that French could rather have had an influence on the first change affecting adverb placement in Middle English, i.e. the decline of SAdvV between OE and the beginning of the 15th century. A comparison of Tables 1 and 3 shows that throughout this decline the frequencies of SAdvV order in French are well below those in English. Thus, the contact situation that coincides with this development cannot be excluded as a factor favouring it. However, since there are other elements that can be identified as causes of this decline (cf. Haeberli & Ihsane in press), it is difficult to evaluate conclusively whether contact with French is indeed of importance here.

Before concluding, let us briefly explore some consequences of our findings with respect to French discussed in this section. As shown in Table 3, SAdvV order has never been a productive option in French prose throughout its attested history. Nevertheless, we can regularly find word orders in early French (cf. examples 6 and 10) that are no longer grammatical in present-day French. The question that arises then is why such word orders were possible in earlier French and how they were lost over time. Here, the comparative analysis of French and English may provide some insights as some developments in the two languages are very similar. As discussed in section 2, SAdvV order is very common in OE due to head-final structure. Nevertheless, SAdvV can also be regularly found in head-initial contexts. But there, the large majority of cases involve the elements *pa* and *ponne* (‘then’). These can be argued to be located in a position that primarily hosts discourse particles and occurs between the target of V-movement (T) and the subject in the CP-domain. According to Haeberli & Ihsane’s (in press) analysis, once head-final structure is lost after the OE period, certain SAdvV cases with adverbs other than *pa/ponne* are reanalyzed by language learners as involving movement of adverbs from their merge position to what was originally a discourse particle position above TP. However, since there does not seem to be any motivation for this movement apart from deriving a residual word order of an earlier SOV syntax, this option is not stable and SAdvV order declines.

An almost identical scenario can now be proposed for French. Following Buridant (1987), we may assume that SAdvV in OF is a residue of an earlier, more SOV-like syntax, in the same way that this word order is a ME remnant of OE head-final structure. Once head-

¹⁸ *Leis Willelme* contains 8 clauses that are relevant for our purposes, 3 with the order SAdvV, and 5 with SVAdv.

final structure is completely lost, SAdvV has to be derived in a different way. For ME, we proposed that this alternative derivation is the result of the extension of the use of a discourse particle position to other types of adverbs. This analysis can be argued to hold for French as well. Just like *þalþonne* in OE, OF *si* has been considered as a discourse particle in the literature (cf. Ingham 2012:140ff. for an overview). Furthermore, as the contrast between Table 2 and Table 3 shows, the adverb *si* has a special status with respect to SAdvV order in early French as it accounts for over a third of the clauses with this word order in the period examined. We can therefore adopt the analysis of OE and propose that *si* occupies a position above TP which hosts discourse particles in early French.¹⁹ As in English, this discourse particle position starts becoming the landing site of other adverbial elements once SAdvV can no longer be derived through head-final structure. This leads to word orders, as in (6) and (10), that are not possible in present-day French. As for the loss of these orders after the period examined here, at least two factors can be argued to have played a role. First, the discourse particle *si* is lost after the 15th century, which weakens the status of the adverbial position above TP. Second, as pointed out earlier, the movement of other adverbs to this position seems to be poorly motivated, which may have made this option diachronically unstable. The only difference between English and French would then be that in French the decline of preverbal adverb placement went to completion whereas the loss of V-movement interfered with this development in English.²⁰

The above considerations may allow us to tie up another loose end. In section 3, I discarded translation effects as the source of the unexpectedly high frequency of SAdvV order in the ME *Brut*. The question therefore remains how this property of the *Brut* can be explained. A closer look at the type of adverbs that occur in preverbal position in the *Brut* shows that *þo* ('then') accounts for nearly one fourth of the cases (14/62). Although this adverb loses its status as a discourse particle in the ME period, it may nevertheless continue favouring the SAdvV option. Another temporal adverb is found even more frequently in preverbal position in the *Brut*, the adverb *anone* ('soon, at once'; 22/62). The high frequency of SAdvV order in the *Brut* could thus be a combination of (a) certain adverbs having a higher likelihood of occurring in preverbal position, and (b) a genre (history) making particularly frequent use of such adverbs as it reports sequences of events and links them with temporal adverbs. If this conclusion is correct, the high frequency of SAdvV order in the *Brut* may be due to a rather superficial type of variation and may therefore not provide us with any substantial insights into how V-movement was lost in late ME.

5. CONCLUSION

In this paper, I have examined the diachronic development of adverb placement with respect to finite main verbs (SAdvV vs. SAdv) in English and French. Following up on earlier work on verb movement in the history of English, the focus of this paper has been the SAdvV word order in early French and the impact the situation in French could have had on English in the context of language contact in medieval England. The contact situation is of potential relevance for the account of two developments that took place in the ME period with respect

¹⁹ The parallelism between *þalþonne* and *si* goes even further since both elements also very frequently occur in initial position in Verb Second clauses (cf. e.g. Posner 1997:358 for French).

²⁰ The above scenario suggests that there are important similarities between the two languages as long as SAdvV word order is in decline. However, this parallelism does not necessarily provide any support for a contact scenario. The ingredients postulated in the account above (availability of a structurally high discourse particle position, extension of the use of that position to other adverbs to accommodate residual SAdvV after the loss of head-final structure, diachronic instability of high adverb placement) can be argued to be derivable from purely internal and acquisitional factors.

to adverb placement, that is, an initial decline of SAdvV order up to the 15th century and a subsequent increase of this word order starting in the middle of the 15th century.

Two elements have been taken into account to evaluate the potential role of language contact with French in the ME developments with respect to adverb placement: (a) the role of the French source in a translation context, and (b) the general status of SAdvV order in a range of early French texts. As for (a), a close comparative analysis of the ME prose *Brut*, which has an unexpectedly high SAdvV rate for a text written around 1400, and a French version of the *Brut*, which, due to its similarity in content, must be close to the source of the ME translation, has shown that the SAdvV orders found in the ME *Brut* can only very rarely be related to a corresponding word order in the French counterpart. Thus, the unexpected properties of the ME *Brut* cannot be related to transfer in a translation context and, hence, they do not provide any evidence in favour of a contribution of French to the rise of SAdvV. With respect to (b), a similar conclusion has been reached. Leaving verse texts and clauses involving the discourse particle *si* aside, SAdvV is a quantitatively very marginal phenomenon from the very beginning of the attested history of French. The data from a range of Old and Middle French texts suggest that, if French has a role in the development of adverb placement in the history of English, it would rather be in the first phase as the low frequency of SAdvV in French could have contributed to the decline of this word order in ME up to the 15th century. However, since there are independent factors that must have played a role in this decline, it is difficult to establish such a French contribution conclusively.

Finally, our comparative diachronic analysis of English and French has also shown that, despite the low SAdvV frequencies, early French is not as restrictive with respect to SAdvV orders as present-day French since the former allows word orders that are no longer grammatical in the latter. This state of affairs can be accounted for by assuming that early French had a high discourse particle position typically occupied by *si* and that the use of this position was extended to other types of adverbs so as to accommodate residues of SAdvV order from an earlier head-final syntax. Once *si* was lost, this option became unavailable and a more rigid subject-verb adjacency emerged. An interesting parallelism can be observed here with early English, where discourse particles (*þa/þonne*) can also be argued to occupy a high structural position, the use of which is extended to other adverbs following the loss of head-final syntax. Thus, the two languages initially seem to have undergone a development of SAdvV order that proceeded in a very similar (but presumably independent) way. It is only once English started losing V-movement in the second half of the 15th century that the diachronic paths start diverging.

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