

Early Germanic preposition stranding revisited

A crucial question for syntactic theory is whether all long-distance dependencies can be reduced to a single mechanism of movement (internal Merge). Early Northwest Germanic preposition stranding facts played a key role in this debate in the late 1970s and 1980s: is the stranding movement-derived (Chomsky & Lasnik 1977; van Riemsdijk 1978: 286–297; Vat 1978; van Kemenade 1984, 1987) or not (Grimshaw 1975; Bresnan 1976; Maling 1976; Allen 1977, 1980a, 1980b; Maling 1978; Kiparsky 1995)? The movement analysis predicts that locality should be respected, whereas the non-movement analysis does not. The debate was never satisfactorily resolved, in part because the crucial empirical predictions were extremely difficult to test: relevant contexts for locality violations are vanishingly rare.

In this paper I revisit the question in the light of new resources, the YCOE (Taylor et al. 2003) for Old English (OE) and IcePaHC (Wallenberg et al. 2011) for Old Icelandic (OI), as well as advances in the theory of locality and stranding. I argue that there is evidence for a movement-based analysis, under the assumptions made by Abels (2003, 2012).

The key facts are that stranding is unattested in OE when a relative pronoun is present, and obligatory when only the invariant complementizer *þe* is present (see Traugott 1992: 230–231; Fischer 1992: 388–389; Taylor 2014: 444–445).

- 1) & þone dracon acwealde þe we on belyfdon
 and the dragon killed COMP we in believed
 ‘and killed the dragon that we believed in’
 (cocathom1,+ACHom_I,_37:504.202.7459)

In OI, which has the invariant relative particle *er*, there is never a relative pronoun (Wagener 2013), and stranding is obligatory (Faarlund 2004: 259–260). The generalization seems to be that in languages that do not generally allow stranding under A- or A'-movement, stranding may occur in relative clauses introduced by an invariant complementizer (Romaine 1984: 451, Harbert 2007: 451). Having an invariant complementizer is not a sufficient condition, however, as shown by Yiddish *vos* (Allen 1980b: 313–314; Harbert 2007: 452), Gothic *ei* and *þei* (Harbert 2007: 439), and Alemannic *wo* (Brandner & Bräuning 2013: 161), which do not permit relativization on a PP or prepositional complement at all. In modern terms, the competing analyses can be treated roughly as follows, where \emptyset stands for a null (and/or deleted) resumptive:

- Movement: [CP Op_i [C' *þe/er* [TP ... [PP [P' P Op_i]]]]]
- Non-movement: [CP [C' *þe/er* [TP ... [PP [P' P \emptyset]]]]]

Allen (1980a: 264) states that no locality violations are found in OE. Kiparsky (1995: 150–151) claims that locality violations occur in OE with *þe* but not with relative pronouns; however, the sole example he gives does not in fact contain a locality violation. Given the general rarity of long-distance extraction in corpora in any case, it would be hard to be sure either way (Chomsky & Lasnik 1977: 498–499).

I adopt van Riemsdijk's (1978) *escape hatch* theory of stranding as reformulated by Abels (2003, 2012). In this approach, the phasehood of PP is parameterized. In the case where PP is a phase, antilocality prevents movement of the complement to SpecPP. In the early Germanic languages, PP is a phase (as stranding seems to be impossible in other instances of A- or A'-movement). One way of treating early Germanic stranding in relative clauses could be as an extension of R-stranding (Ponelis 1993, Harbert 2007: 453), as illustrated in (2), which is common to all West Germanic languages.

- 2) þonne gæþ þær swiðe mycel hwil to
 then goes there very great while to
 ‘then it will take a great deal of time’ (OE; cocathom2,+ACHom_II,_1:9.214.190)

In Abels's approach, R-stranding involves R-words base-generated in SpecPP of a special class of zero-place prepositions. Examples like (1) could be taken to involve a null R-word. I

argue against this approach, for three main reasons. First, stranding in relative clauses is found in OI, which does not have R-stranding. Second, an R-stranding account predicts that different prepositions should be free to behave entirely differently with regard to whether or not they allow stranding, when in fact the possibility of stranding seems to be general. Third, the R-stranding account predicts the possibility of differences in form between stranded and unstranded pronouns: while these do exist in OE (Wende 1915), these differences are most plausibly viewed as purely phonological alternations (Alcorn 2011).

The crucial question then is how to test – in the absence of robust data on locality – whether the early Germanic examples involve movement or (null) resumption. Abels (2003: 181–186) argues that resumptive pronouns are necessarily cross-linguistically incompatible with comparatives of inequality. As a result, he argues *pace* Hoekstra (1995) that Frisian exhibits true preposition stranding, based on examples like (3), the equivalent of which is ungrammatical in Dutch and German.

- 3) Jan hat mear jild fertsjinne **as dat** syn frou **op** rekkene hie.
 Jan has more money earned than that his wife on counted had
 'Jan made more money than his wife had expected.' (Frisian)

This is also possible in OE and OI, though examples are not numerous.

- 4) seo is bradre **þonne** ænig man **ofer** seon mæge
 she is broader than any man over see may
 'it is broader than any man can see across'

(OE; Traugott 1992: 225; coorosiu,Or_1:1.16.9.286)

- 5) to beteran tidun **þonne** we nu **on** sint
 to better times than we now in are
 'in better times than we are in now'

(OE; Goh 2004: 484; coorosiu,Or_2:5.48.36.938)

- 6) ef vér gjörum oss aðra götu **en** hann gekk **fyrir**
 if we make us other roads than he went for
 'if we take other roads than he went along'

(ON; 1150.HOMILIUBOK.REL-SER.,1633)

- 7) Þér meguð verja til eigi meira **en** yður sé eigi skaði í
 you may invest to not more than to-you be not harm in
 'You may pay no more than there is no harm in for you'

(ON; 1275.MORKIN.NAR-HIS.,1290)

These constitute evidence against a null resumptive analysis of early Germanic stranding, and hence in favour of a movement analysis. I assume that languages may have a null operator as a matter of lexical variation, and that this operator may instantiate a chunk of structure smaller than the complement of P. This allows the operator to be extracted via the phase edge of PP in languages where P is a phase head. The possibility of operator extraction then paves the way for a reanalysis of P as non-phasal in the Middle English period, especially given the loss of (inflecting demonstrative) relative pronouns and case distinctions.

Selected references: Abels, Klaus. 2003. *Successive cyclicity, anti-locality and adposition stranding*. Ph.D. dissertation, University of Connecticut. Alcorn, Rhona. 2011. *Pronouns, prepositions and probabilities: a multivariate study of Old English word order*. Ph.D. dissertation, University of Edinburgh. Allen, Cynthia L. 1980a. *Topics in diachronic English syntax*. New York: Garland. Brandner, Ellen, & Iris Bräuning. 2013. Relative *wo* in Alemannic: only a complementizer? *Linguistische Berichte* 234, 131–169. Chomsky, Noam, & Howard Lasnik. 1977. Filters and control. *Linguistic Inquiry* 8, 425–504. Romaine, Suzanne. 1984. Towards a typology of relative-clause formation strategies in Germanic. In Jacek Fisiak (ed.), *Historical syntax*, 438–470. Berlin: Mouton.