The Pragmatics of Direct Object Fronting in Historical English

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Abstract

Speyer (2008) finds an overall decline in the rate of topicalization in historical English, which we refer to pre-theoretically as direct object fronting. He attributes it to two separate phenomena: 1) the early loss of unaccented pronominal and demonstrative fronting, and 2) a gradient decline in the use of accented, contrastive fronting due to prosodic well-formedness conditions imposed by the loss of the V2 constraint. In this paper we present a prima facie problem with Speyer's account. While personal pronouns exhibit the expected behavior, the rate at which demonstrative pronouns front is more stable. We propose that, contrary to expectation, unaccented demonstratives in Old English behaved syntactically as if they were contrastive. The reason for this lies in a special information-structural function for demonstrative pronouns across Germanic, for which our corpus study provides independent evidence. Specifically, demonstratives in Germanic tend to refer anaphorically to elements whose meanings, like the meanings of contrastive elements, are not in every possible answer to the Question Under Discussion (see Roberts 1996, Buring 2003 and Schwarz to appear).

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Jon Stevens and Caitlin Light*

1 An introduction and a puzzle

Across the Germanic language family, we find a type of movement traditionally termed *topicalization*. This phenomenon may be realized in Germanic languages which possess the so-called Verb-Second (V2) constraint, as well as those without it.

(1)　a. **Das**　weiss ich.
　　　　that.ACC know I.NOM

　　　b. **Það**　veit　ég.
　　　　that.ACC know I.NOM

　　　c. **That**, I know.

Direct object topicalization in V2 languages is exemplified by (1a) for German and (1b) for Icelandic. Here, topicalization of the object leads to inversion of the subject and the finite verb, according to the V2 constraint. Modern English is not V2, and thus topicalizing the direct object does not lead to subject-verb inversion (1c).

The information structural properties of topicalization in Germanic have long been under debate. As the traditional term *topicalization* suggests, this phenomenon has often been associated primarily with information structural topics. However, there have been many challenges to this assumption in recent literature. In order to avoid making undesirable theoretical assumptions off the bat, we will refer to this phenomenon henceforward by the more neutral term *fronting*.

As documented in Speyer (2010), the overall rate of object fronting declines over time, so that object fronting in Modern English occurs much less frequently than it did in Old English. This leads one to wonder whether object fronting is in the process of disappearing from the English language. Speyer (2010), however, suggests a different way of understanding the trend. Speyer argues that the general decline in object fronting is not an independent syntactic change in the grammar of English. Old English had a grammar that generated verb-second word orders like those found in German, although the distribution of V2 patterns was limited to clauses with certain subject types (cf. Pintzuk 1991, Fischer et al. 2000). Over time, these V2-like word orders disappeared as the grammar of English changed. Speyer claims that this is the key to understanding object fronting in English: the loss of V2 word orders limited the environments in which fronting is prosodically well-formed, leading to an apparent decline in fronting.

Fronted DPs bear a prosodic accent in English. Next to an accented subject, this results in accent clash. Thus, (2a) is a perfectly acceptable example of object fronting in English, with the accented object and finite verb 'saved' from accent clash by the intervening, unaccented subject pronoun. However, (2b) is dramatically less acceptable, because the accented subject and object lead to accent clash.

(2)　a.　Bèans I líke.
　　　b.　?? Bèans Í like.

The latter type of example is alleviated in Old English by the availability of V2 word orders, which would allow the unaccented finite verb to intervene between two accented elements. This means that fronting was prosodically acceptable in more environments while V2 word orders were possible in the English grammar, and when these word orders were lost, object fronting declined as a consequence.

Speyer's theory allows us to treat several apparent changes in the English language as linked to the same syntactic change. The theory also proves to show a clearer picture of fronting across the history of English. Speyer shows that because pronoun subjects are resistant to accent, object fronting is more likely to be well-formed in clauses with a pronoun subject, in absence of the V2 word order option. Furthermore, when only cases with pronominal subjects are considered, the rate of fronting is rather stable over time.

Speyer's theory relies on the assumption that object fronting is necessarily accented in English. This is important to motivate the claim that accent clash can have such a strong influence on the overall rate of fronting. In fact, Speyer himself claims that unaccented objects were capable of fronting in Old English, as with the fronted object pronouns in (3). Speyer considers fronting of object pronouns as the key case for unaccented fronting, because as before, he assumes that pronouns resist accent. In fact, pronoun fronting occurred at a reasonable rate in Old English, but disappeared rapidly in the Middle English period.

(3)   a. Þone asende se Sunu
           this   sent   the son
           'The son sent this one.'
           (coaelhom,+AHom_9:113.1350)

       b. &   hit Englisce men swy3e   amyrdon
           and it   English   men fiercely prevented
           'and the Englishmen prevented it fiercely.'
           (cochronE,ChronE_[Plummer]:1073.2.2681)

Speyer relates this to the proposal of dual fronting mechanisms presented for German in Frey (2006a,b). Frey suggests that fronting be associated with two types of movement: (1) *True A-Bar Movement* (TAB), which results in a contrastive interpretation on the fronted XP, and (2) *Formal Movement* (FM), which has no interpretive effect. While TAB may target any constituent in the clause, FM may target only the highest available element below C.

Contrastive constituents are frequently associated with a specific accent pattern (cf. Büring 1997). Speyer therefore associates the availability of a contrastive *interpretation* with the availability of a contrastive *accent*, which means that the general patterns of English fronting which he intends to account for may be reduced to TAB.

Speyer proposes that FM was available in Old English, and subsequently lost. This accounts for the availability of unaccented fronting in previous stages of the language, as well as the abrupt drop in pronoun fronting in the Middle English period. All examples of fronting after the loss of FM are presumed to be examples of TAB, and thus fit with the claim that Modern English allows fronting only of (contrastively) accented objects. The analysis of FM in Old English cannot be identical to Frey's analysis for German, because unlike German, Old English was not robustly V2. However, we take it to be the case that some similar movement operation was available in OE, and for convenience we will call it FM. We return to this issue in Section 4.

We test the hypothesis that English lost non-contrastive fronting following the Old English period. This leads us to a puzzle. We find that in contexts in which fronting remains prosodically well-formed (following the analysis in Speyer 2010), although personal pronoun fronting declines (as Speyer originally observed), *demonstrative* pronoun fronting remains relatively stable across the history of English, into the Modern British English period. Figure 1 demonstrates this fact. Demonstrative pronouns present a serious challenge to Speyer's analysis. They appear to be capable of fronting without a contrastive interpretation in every stage of English; examples (4)–(5), taken from the Penn Parsed Corpus of Modern British English (PPCMBE), show fronted demonstrative pronouns in contexts which afford them no plausible contrastive interpretation. These demonstrate that the fronting of such elements persisted far later than the Old English period, and remains felicitous in Modern English.

(4)   Amongst several other Prisoners of great Quality, he took three of the Sons of Sandauce, the King's Sister; **these** he sent to Themistocles . . .
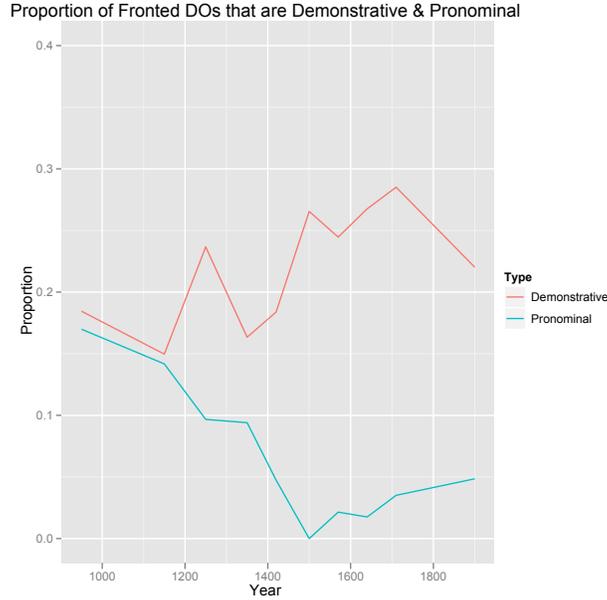   (HIND-1707,323.296–297)

Proportion of Fronted DOs that are Demonstrative & Pronominal

Figure 1: Proportion of fronted direct objects which are demonstrative and pronominal.

(5)   and, on receiving my answer, brought in a pint bottle with a large label on its side - Fine
       Crab-apple Cider. **This** he opened ...
       (READE-1863,224.589–590)

In fact, demonstrative pronoun fronting is surprisingly common: in the Penn Parsed Corpus of Early
Modern English (PPCEME), for example, demonstrative pronouns front more often than not. This
is drastically unlike the rate of personal pronoun fronting: 130 out of 208 (62.50%) demonstrative
pronouns are fronted, while only 39 of 3575 (1.09%) personal pronouns are fronted.

    We further observe that the end of the Old English period does not signal the end of non-
contrastive fronting as a general trend. If all non-contrastive fronting was a result of FM, then
Speyer's hypothesis predicts a sudden spike in the proportion of fronted objects which have a con-
trastive interpretation, around the time that FM is supposed to disappear. However, we find that the
proportion of fronted objects with a possible contrastive interpretation remains stable through every
period of English.

oe12	oe34	me1	me2	me3	me4	eme1	eme2	eme3	mbe
36	38	44	35	37	30	31	33	39	43

Table 1: Contrastive tokens for each period, out of 100.

    Table 1 shows an estimate of the rate of contrastivity in fronted direct objects for each period
across the history of English, based on a sample of 100 tokens from each period.[1] From early Old
English into Middle British English, the rate of contrastive fronting remains consistent (and never
approaches 100%).

    If Speyer's theory is based on the claim that English had only (contrastively) accented fronting
following the Old English period, then the data presented here are a problem. Under the assumption
that demonstrative pronouns behave like personal pronouns, they appear to represent a class of
elements which continue to front without a prosodic accent throughout the history of English and

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[1]Time periods in this table are based on Helsinki classifications.

into the present day. But is this grounds to reject Speyer's theory entirely?

As we will show, the issues raised by the data presented above may be reconciled with Speyer's analysis of fronting in English. The apparent problem is due to the assumption that non-contrastive demonstratives behave like unaccented pronouns, which would make it unexpected that non-contrastive demonstratives are able to front in a language where only TAB is available. We will instead argue that demonstrative pronouns represent a class of elements which front via TAB without an obvious contrastive interpretation.

2 On the referents of demonstrative pronouns

Thus far, we have considered it to be a null hypothesis that the D-class should be treated as non-contrastive and thus analyzed as fronting via FM. We challenge the assumption that demonstrative pronouns, in the absence of a clear contrastive interpretation, pragmatically have more in common with non-contrastive, unaccented personal pronouns than with contrastively accented pronouns.

In fact, this is not the case. The pragmatic analysis of these elements relies heavily on a notion of semantic alternatives, which builds the groundwork for an analysis of the D-class as pragmatically contrastive elements. This will be based on a body of work which explores the referential and pragmatic properties of personal and demonstrative pronouns in German.

Bosch et al. (2003, 2007), Bosch and Umbach (2007) describe a distinction between personal and demonstrative pronouns in German. The initial observation is that in discourse fragments like (6), the choice of a personal or demonstrative pronoun in the second sentence will affect the meaning of the sentence: the personal pronoun will prefer the subject of the preceding sentence, *Paul*, as its antecedent, while the demonstrative will prefer the available non-subject antecedent, *Peter*.

(6) Paul$_i$ wollte mit Peter$_k$ laufen gehen. Aber **er**$_i$ / **der**$_k$ war
     Paul.NOM wanted with Peter.DAT run   go   but he.NOM / he.DEM.NOM was
     erkältet.
     caught-cold
     'Paul wanted to go running with Peter. But he had a cold.'

Bosch et al. (2003) proposes a *Complementary Hypothesis*, stating that the referents selected by demonstrative pronouns complement those selected by personal pronouns: while personal pronouns prefer discourse topics as referents, demonstratives prefer non-topical referents.

Bosch and Umbach (2007) continues to support the claim that, while grammatical status of the antecedent is a factor in the choice between personal and demonstrative pronouns, information structure also plays a central role in the choice. The authors argue that topicality is the relevant notion. When the context specifies a certain entity as the topic for that discourse segment, it is infelicitous to refer to that entity with a demonstrative pronoun. Bosch and Umbach argue that the demonstrative *avoids* topical referents.

Hinterwimmer (forthcoming) follows Bosch and Umbach (2007), and argues that demonstratives may not refer to a topical entity (using the notion of *aboutness topic* as defined by Reinhart (1981)). In (7), note that the preferred antecedent for the demonstrative is the object *den Patienten* ('the patient'), even though world knowledge suggests that the subject *der Chefarzt* ('the head doctor') is a more likely antecedent in this context.

(7) **Der**   **Chefarzt**$_i$ untersucht den   Patienten$_k$. **Er**$_{i,k}$ / **Der**$_k$ ist nämlich
     the.NOM head-doctor examined the.ACC patient   he.NOM / he.DEM.NOM is namely
     Herzspezialist
     heart-specialist.NOM
     'The head doctor examined the patient. He is namely a heart specialist.'

Hinterwimmer notes further that fronting the object of the preceding clause is one way to ensure that the demonstrative will prefer the subject as its antecedent. This is another indication that the grammatical role of the antecedent is not the determining factor in demonstrative pronoun reference. He suggests that fronting the object makes it the preferred aboutness topic of the following sentence. This makes it unavailable (or at least strongly dispreferred) as the antecedent for the demonstrative.

(8) **Den   Patienten**$_i$ untersucht der   Chefarzt$_k$. Der$_k$ ist nämlich
     the.ACC patient   examined the.NOM head-doctor he.DEM.NOM is namely
     Herzspezialist
     heart-specialist.NOM
     'The head doctor examined the patient. He is namely a heart specialist.'

A response to this proposal is introduced in Schwarz (forthcoming). Schwarz notes that, while some topic-like notion is necessary to explain the array of facts Hinterwimmer introduces, topicality itself may be insufficient. If the aboutness topic is contextually identified as a contrastive topic, then the topic becomes a perfectly acceptable referent for a demonstrative pronoun.

(9) A: 'Most people brought Harry presents. For example, Anne gave him a picture.'

     B: Und was ist mit Maria? Was hat SIE Harry gegeben?
         'And what about Maria? What did SHE give Harry?'

     A: i.   **# Dem**   hat sie   ein Hemd   gegeben
              him.DEM.DAT has she.NOM a.ACC shirt.ACC given
              'She gave **him** a shirt.'

         ii. **Die**   hat ihm   ein Hemd   gegeben
              she.DEM.NOM has him.DAT a.ACC shirt.ACC given
              '**She** gave him a shirt.'

         iii. **Sie**   hat ihm   ein Hemd   gegeben
              she.NOM has him.DAT a.ACC shirt.ACC given
              '**She** gave him a shirt.'

Although the demonstrative cannot be used to Harry, the demonstrative *is* possible to refer to Maria, although Maria is contextually identified as an aboutness topic. Contrastive accent on *sie* ('she') in the preceding context is necessary. Schwarz takes this as evidence that something more nuanced than topicality is involved with reference resolution of demonstratives. He suggests an adjustment of Hinterwimmer's proposal in situation semantics, using the notion of a *topic situation*. Topic situations are derivable from the *Question Under Discussion* (QUD) of a given context. Where Hinterwimmer assumes that the demonstrative pronoun essentially 'may not be identical to the current aboutness topic,' Schwarz suggests that the referent of the determiner *cannot be a part of all the viable counterparts of the topic situation.*

In example (8) above, the low subject position occupied by *der Chefarzt* ('the head doctor') is taken as evidence that the subject is in focus. The Question Under Discussion in this case is essentially taken as *Who examined the patient?*. As a result, the referent of the subject is not part of every possible answer to the QUD, but rather represents only one answer. In contrast, the referent of *den Patienten* ('the patient') is part of every such situation, being part of the QUD itself, and thus is not a viable referent for the demonstrative pronoun.

Note that alternative situations play a central role in determining reference resolution under this account. As Schwarz notes, this is not unrelated to the analysis of contrastive topics formulated in Büring (2003). This link is crucial, because it will show that demonstrative pronouns may have more in common with contrastive elements than originally expected.

Büring (2003) models discourse as a *discourse tree* (or *d-tree*), whose nodes are composed of broad questions under discussion (QUD), subquestions which contribute to the answer of the broader QUD, and answers to subquestions. Every node in a d-tree is called a *move* (Carlson 1983), and represents a sentence in the discourse, whether an assertion or question. Crucially, Büring assumes that each move is a *syntactic phrase marker* representing a declarative or interrogative sentence.

Within a d-tree, a question and the subquestion(s) belonging to it is called a *strategy*. Contrastive topics, in this system, can be analyzed as a tool to indicate a strategy being used. Büring wishes to represent how a contrastive topic may signal the difference between the strategy in Figure 2 and the strategy in Figure 3. Note that both of these strategies are generated from the same broad QUD. Many theories of focus and contrastive topic are not able to formally describe the difference between these examples, and the discourse strategies they represent.
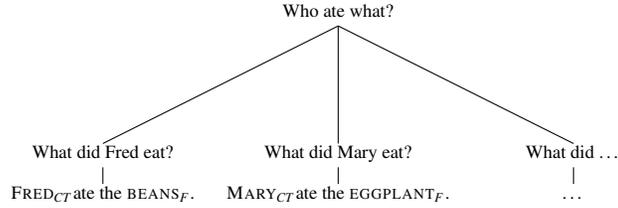
Who ate what?

What did Fred eat?   What did Mary eat?   What did …
| | |
FRED$_{CT}$ ate the BEANS$_F$.   MARY$_{CT}$ ate the EGGPLANT$_F$.   …

Figure 2: The first contrastive strategy in the d-tree (Büring 2003).

Who ate what?

Who ate the beans?   Who ate the eggplant?   Who ate …
| | |
FRED$_F$ ate the BEANS$_{CT}$.   MARY$_F$ ate the EGGPLANT$_{CT}$.   …
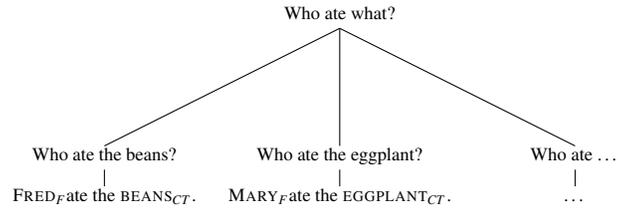
Figure 3: The second contrastive strategy in the d-tree (Büring 2003).

If we import Schwarz's proposal into Büring's discourse model, we may say that the referent of a demonstrative *may not appear in all possible answers of a strategy*. The possible answers are restricted by certain well-formedness constraints on the structure of the discourse which Büring (2003) outlines briefly, including *Relevance:* " Stick to a question until it is sufficiently resolved!"

The principle of relevance may be defined relative to the QUD. As Roberts (1996) describes: "In order for discourse to be coherent (obey Relevance), it must be clear what alternatives … a given assertion selects among. The relevant alternatives are those proffered by the question, or topic, under discussion." Thus, a well-formed strategy will allow only those answers which are relevant to the immediate QUD. This constrains the set of possible answers within a strategy. Within these possible answers, the demonstrative pronoun's referent may be represented in only some subset.

This system easily accounts for the difference between contrastive and non-contrastive topical material with respect to the referential properties of demonstrative pronouns. Contrastive topics, being tools for segmenting the QUD into a particular strategy, cannot possibly occur in every sub-question or answer of the strategy. Other topical material, in comparison, will appear in every possible answer of the strategy. This allows us to describe the properties of demonstrative pronoun reference within the notational device which Büring (2003) proposes for discussing the discourse structure. It also helps to illuminate a link between the referents of demonstrative pronouns and certain information structural categories which are known to feature in fronting: contrastive topics.

In this sense, the demonstrative pronoun and the contrastive topic may both be used as conventionalized signals that the discourse structure is more complex than the hearer could be expected to assume, based on the context. Because both contrastive topics and demonstrative pronouns accomplish this by drawing attention to the current QUD or sub-QUD and introducing the idea of alternatives, which contribute partial answers to a broader QUD, both are similarly contrastive.

3 Solving the puzzle of English fronting

Let us return to the puzzle introduced at the beginning of this paper. Our observations are entirely expected under the understanding that demonstratives have contrastive properties and front via TAB. Thus, using the knowledge assembled in the previous sections, we may solve the puzzle of English fronting.

As Speyer argues, TAB has remained a constant across the history of English, and only fronting of contrastively marked (and, consequently, prosodically accented) constituents is possible. Because demonstrative pronouns retain the ability to front via TAB, fronting of demonstrative pronouns is attested into the Modern English period, and our data reflect this. These facts are only surprising under the assumption that demonstrative pronouns front with the same pragmatic and prosodic effect

as personal pronouns, which we argue is incorrect. In fact, demonstrative pronouns have a pragmatic effect more in line with contrastive topics.

The prediction, based on this argument, is that demonstrative pronouns in English should demonstrate pragmatic properties in line with those we have already described for German. Furthermore, the pragmatics of demonstrative pronouns should remain constant across the history of English, independent of any morphosyntactic changes over the course of the language.

In order to test these predictions, we consider data from both the earliest and the latest available English corpora. For the latest period of English, we combined data from the Early Modern and Modern British English corpora. This was necessary, mainly because the data available from these corpora were scarce. Demonstrative pronouns are somewhat less common by this period for independent reasons: since the Old English period, using the demonstrative pronoun to refer to human entities became ungrammatical, and restrictions of this sort led to a decrease in demonstrative pronoun use. Even less common were those demonstrative pronouns which suited our purposes: to more easily analyze the pragmatic properties of the demonstrative pronouns and their referents, we restricted our study to demonstrative pronouns with DP antecedents (eliminating a common context in which the referent is a proposition, i.e. *This I know*).

Given this restriction, the combined Early Modern and Modern British English corpora provide 54 examples of direct object demonstrative pronouns which unambiguously refer to DPs: 36 fronted and 18 non-fronted. We compared this set to a selected sample of 37 fronted direct object demonstrative pronouns from the Old English corpus, in order to consider the properties of fronted demonstrative pronouns across the history of English. After collecting relevant examples, we coded each demonstrative pronoun based on the properties of their antecedents, according to these criteria: (1) availability of a contrastive interpretation on the antecedent; (2) grammatical status of the antecedent (oblique or non-oblique); (3) discourse status of the antecedent (new or old); (4) DP type of the antecedent (full, pronominal, or demonstrative DP); and (5) information status of the antecedent (focused or other).

We consider these criteria to be sufficient to present a reasonable overview of the pragmatic properties of demonstrative pronouns in English. As we show in the following section, an investigation based on this coding system provides interesting and relevant information on the pragmatic properties of the demonstrative pronoun, and on its relative stability over time.

Our first goal is to motivate the claim that demonstrative pronouns in English fit with the analysis we have supported for German. We consider several pragmatic and grammatical criteria to investigate this claim. For this purpose, we consider the set of fronted demonstrative pronouns collected from the Old, Early Modern and Modern British English corpora, resulting in a total set of 73 tokens. The results of this study are broken down in Table 2, in which we give results for the earlier and later periods separately, as well as the totaled results.

	Old English	EME/MBE	Total
Contrastive	9 (24.32%)	10 (27.78%)	19 (26.03%)
Narrowly focused	12 (32.43%)	12 (33.33%)	24 (32.88%)
Discourse-new	30 (81.08%)	27 (75.00%)	57 (78.08%)
Oblique	24 (64.86%)	23 (63.89%)	47 (64.38%)
Full DP	34 (91.89%)	32 (88.89%)	66 (90.41%)
Total	37	36	73

Table 2: Properties of the antecedent of fronted demonstrative pronouns in English.

As we can see, several properties seem to be related to the selection of the demonstrative pronoun. Both narrowly focused referents and referents with a possible contrastive interpretation are attested. This is not surprising from the perspective of the analysis adopted in this paper, according to which focused referents have the same effect on the discourse as contrastivity, with respect to the referential abilities of the demonstrative pronoun.

As observed for German by Bosch et al. (2003), the demonstrative pronoun frequently refers to

non-subjects in the preceding clause. This holds true in English as well: as shown above, over 64% of the demonstrative pronouns in this sample selected an oblique referent. This is higher than the frequency reported for German by Bosch et al. (2003): 46.7%. To further contribute to the preference of the demonstrative pronoun to select less salient referents, we find that almost all demonstrative pronouns have an antecedent which is a full DP: less than 10% of the total sample had a pronominal or demonstrative antecedent.

We also find that a majority of demonstrative pronouns have referents which are discourse-new in the context immediately preceding use of the demonstrative pronoun. A total of 78.08% of the demonstrative pronouns in the sample fit this profile (examples 4 and 5 above are in this category). This fits well with our analysis. An entity only newly introduced into the discourse is, necessarily, unable to occur in every possible answer in the strategy.

Next, we consider the demonstrative pronoun data with the intention of demonstrating the diachronic stability of the demonstrative pronoun. In fact, the data show a remarkable similarity between the earliest and latest time periods available. A glance at Table 2 shows that, for each property examined, there is little apparent difference between the data in the earlier and the later period considered. Statistical tests confirm this expectation: when the two periods are compared, in each case, we find no statistical significance in the difference between the two.[2] There is little or no difference in the properties of fronted demonstrative pronouns between the two periods. We find that the second prediction is entirely verified by the data: there has been no change in the pragmatics of the demonstrative pronoun between Old English and the modern language.

Despite the morphosyntactic changes which have occurred over the history of English, we argue that the function of the demonstrative pronoun can only be analyzed as a stable phenomenon. Like its pragmatic function, the rate of fronting of the demonstrative pronoun is strikingly stable over the course of time. Given all the evidence, we can only assume that these two facts are linked.

4 Formal Movement and Old English

Although superficially verb-second word orders can be found in Old English, it is generally assumed that the verb does not move as high as C in the main clause of Old English. Thus, V2 word orders in Old English do not correspond syntactically to the phenomenon of V2 elsewhere in Germanic, in which the verb occupies C and Spec,CP must be phonologically realized.

In Light (2012), it is argued that FM as described by Frey is nothing but a mechanism by which the V2 constraint may be satisfied as a sort of last-resort mechanism. The appearance of clauses which are superficially V2 is not sufficient to motivate the existence of Formal Movement in Old English, under this analysis.

However, the analysis in Speyer (2010) does propose that Formal Movement existed in Old English. We differ from him in claiming that the phenomenon in question is not, strictly speaking, Formal Movement, but the likelihood is that what does occur in Old English is not as different from FM as one might expect.

Recall that under Frey's analysis, there are two types of elements which move leftward in the clause. The first type, represented by TAB, is marked or accented elements, which move to the left edge for some pragmatic effect. The second type, which has been discussed in this chapter, is weak, prosodically light elements, like unaccented personal pronouns. Unlike the contrastive elements fronted by TAB, these weak elements do not move directly to the Prefield. They are first moved by operations like scrambling, which put them at the left edge of the Middlefield. It is a consequence of this that these elements become common targets of FM.

Though not fully compatible with Frey's analysis, Old English did have scrambling of the type found elsewhere in Germanic (cf. Wallenberg 2009). This permits an account of the observed facts which does not assume FM in a non-V2 language, but acknowledges the intuitive relationship be-

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[2]For contrastivity of the referent: Chi-squared = 0.0048, df = 1, $p = 0.9446$. For narrow focus on the referent: Chi-squared = 0.028, df = 1, $p = 0.8672$. For grammatical status of the antecedent: Chi-squared = 0.0248, df = 1, $p = 0.875$. For DP type of the antecedent: Fisher's Exact Test, $p = 0.7106$. For discourse status of the referent: Chi-squared = 0.119, df = 1, $p = 0.7301$.

tween FM in Germanic and the leftward movement of unaccented pronouns in OE. Namely, we propose that Speyer's data includes not only fronted pronouns according to the syntactic definition of fronting assumed in this paper, but also pronouns which have scrambled to the left edge of the clause. Because V-to-C movement does not generally occur in OE main clauses, this would mean that these pronouns are scrambling to the same structural position that personal pronouns may scramble to in the German Middlefield, below C, prior to Formal Movement.

Independent changes in the syntax of English led to the loss of this possibility. Wallenberg (2009) proposes a crosslinguistic account of scrambling which generalizes Holmberg's Generalization (Holmberg 1986). Essentially, according to this account, leftward scrambling is always bounded by an intervening head. As Wallenberg shows, this constraint is operational in English, with the consequence that the loss of Tense- and then Verb-final clauses led to the loss of scrambling in English.

We therefore speculate that the majority of the clauses showing personal pronoun "fronting" in Old English are, in fact, Tense-final clauses in which an object pronoun has scrambled to the left edge of the clause. As these contexts rapidly disappeared after the Old English period, the decline of personal pronoun fronting follows.

An example reported by Speyer, (10), is then analyzed as a Tense-final clause. The object is free to scramble as high as the left edge of the clause, and thus superficially appears to be fronted.

(10) &   hit Englisce men swy3e   amyrdon
      and it   English men fiercely prevented
      'and the Englishmen prevented it fiercely.'
      (cochronE,ChronE_[Plummer]:1073.2.2681)

A principled testing of this hypothesis is no simple matter. Because of the greater variation in the word order of the Old English clause, the majority of Old English clauses are ambiguous: one cannot tell if they are underlyingly Tense-final or Tense-medial. A limited set of diagnostics may be used to identify unambiguous examples of Tense-final orders (cf. Santorini 1989), and the examples identified by such tests are vanishingly scarce.

However, we believe that this is the key to understanding the phenomenon of personal pronoun fronting in OE. It is related superficially to Formal Movement because it represents the syntactic structure of a language like German prior to FM, as far as the position of the object pronoun is concerned. As Tense-final structures disappeared from the grammar of English, during the transition into the Middle English period, the loss of this type of scrambling is both predicted and attested. Under this approach, the data aligns with other known facts about the structure of English and the changes it experienced around this time.

5 Conclusion

This paper has presented an apparent puzzle in the behavior of fronting in the history of English. Speyer (2010) argues that, since the Old English period, only contrastive (and hence accented) constituents have been able to front in English. This was apparently challenged by the fact that demonstrative pronouns without an obvious contrastive interpretation have been able to front from Old English into the modern period. This apparent challenge to Speyer's account is erased once we see that demonstrative pronouns are inherently contrastive in their effect on the discourse, much like contrastive topics. This was shown by a comparison with existing data on demonstrative pronoun reference in German, the analysis of which (as we have shown) may be successfully applied to the behavior of demonstrative pronouns in English.

The result of this data is, on one hand, that we are back where we started: we have raised an issue with Speyer's analysis, and then erased it again. However, on the other hand, we have used an apparent challenge to deepen our understanding of the behavior of fronting in the history of English, and our understanding of the ways in which fronting remains constant from Old English to the present day. We have also contributed to our understanding of how the morphosyntax of English may be situated within more general issues of Germanic. Ultimately, this contributes to the possibility of a unified theory of the syntax and pragmatics of fronting in Germanic.

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