Pronoun object preposing in Afrikaans between 1750 and 1920

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In a series of articles, Shannon (1997, 2000, 2003, ms.) has discussed an interesting shift in the word order of (some of) the West-Germanic languages, including German, Dutch and Afrikaans, which concerns the relative word order of subject nominals (further: NSubj) and object pronouns (further: ProObj) in the middle field (i.e., between the two verb brackets). In earlier stages of Dutch and German, it was quite common for pronoun objects to appear before noun subjects, as illustrated in (1) for Early New High German, where the pronoun object *mir* precedes the noun subject *der Halß*, and in (2) for Middle Dutch, where the noun subject *sijn vader* follows the pronoun object *hem*. Following Shannon, we call this word order type "pronoun object preposing".

(1) Ich gang und trag, das **mir** *der Halß* kracht…
　　'I'm walking and carrying [so much] that my neck is cracking …' (Shannon ms.: 6)

(2) Doe sette **hem** *sijn vader* op sijn peert achter hem.
　　'Then his father set him on his horse, in back of him.' (Shannon ms.: 4)

On the basis of data collected from literary prose works from different centuries, Shannon has shown that the relative frequency of ProObj-preposing decreased over time in German, Dutch and Afrikaans, though not to the same extent and/or at the same speed. In German the decrease of ProObj preposing was rather slow and the pattern is still well preserved in present-day language, while for Afrikaans, Shannon's late 20th century data suggest that the pattern has already been completely abandoned. Dutch holds the middle ground: the pattern has decreased to a much stronger extent than what is seen in German, but it has definitely not become completely obsolete yet.

Shannon explains the drift away from ProObj preposing as a consequence of a long-term shift in the West-Germanic languages from a pragmatically determined word order to a grammatically determined word order, as described by Burridge (1993). In a pragmatically determined word order, the linearization of the constituents is influenced by contextual factors: short, unstressed, contextually presupposed elements are generally placed before long, stressed and contextually new elements. In the case of a NSubj and ProObj in the middle field, that principle would indeed lead us to expect ProObj preposing, as ProObjs are just a single short word long (Shannon 2003: 160) and refer to referents that are contextually given. However, all of the West-Germanic languages discussed here, have at least partially gone through the process of deflexion. This is especially the case for Dutch and Afrikaans, which lost their nominal inflectional system almost completely, as well as a significant part of their pronominal case marking system. As a result of this deflexion process and the related increase in ambiguity, Dutch and Afrikaans (and to a lesser extent German) became languages with a grammatically determined word order, in which the subject occupies the prominent position right before or after the finite verb.

The hypothesized relation between the loss of morphological inflection and the decrease of ProObj preposing does not only explain why present-day Dutch, German and Afrikaans allow

less ProObj preposing compared to their earlier stages; it also explains why the relative frequency of the phenomenon differs between these languages. The frequency of ProObj preposing correlates with the three languages' degrees of overt morphological inflection and the extent of the diachronic decrease in ProObj preposing correlates with the extent of morphological deflexion these languages went through, as shown by Shannon.

However, while corpus data for different historical periods have been discussed for both Dutch and German, the data presented in Shannon (ms.) for Afrikaans are limited to the second half of the 20th century (1973 - 1990). Since Shannon does not report historical data for Afrikaans, it is not clear whether ProObj preposing was *ever* possible in that language and thus whether the abscence of ProObj preposing in present-day Afrikaans can be seen as evidence for the above-mentioned hypothesis about the shift away from ProObj preposing.

This paper presents the results from a corpus-based investigation of ProObj preposing in Cape Dutch and Cape Afrikaans between ca. 1750 and 1920. We collected all instances of ProObj preposing and NSubj preposing in the *Kaapse Taalargief* (L.C. van Oordt 1947-48, 1949) and the *Corpus of Cape Dutch Correspondence* (Deumert 2004). Analysis of this data shows that ProObj preposing occurred in about 10% of all cases in the investigated period (both in the Cape Dutch period before +/- 1850 and in the Cape Afrikaans period after +/- 1850), which is very similar to the situation in present-day Dutch. Additionally, our data show that the occurrence of ProObj preposing was determined by the same factors as in German and Dutch, thus corroborating Shannon's hypothesis about the decrease of ProObj preposing in the West-Germanic languages.

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