

# Syntactic and prosodic factors in the rise and fall of V2 in English

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The paper discusses the rise and loss of V2 in Middle English (ME). The paper proposes that the loss of the construction in early Modern English is closely intertwined with the grammaticalization and subsequent reanalysis to functional head status of modals and other auxiliaries and the prosodic reanalysis of pronouns from affixal clitics to free clitics which is caused by a change in metrical structure of the prosodic word in the ME period.

**The background:** A subset of adverbs, which we call THEN-adverbs, pattern with question elements and initial negative elements in triggering categorical V to C movement as in (1) while other initial adverbs fail to trigger verb movement to the highest head, as in (2).

- (1) coblick, HomS\_46\_[BIHom\_11]:119.49.1511  
*þa cwæþ he to him...;*  
*then said he to them...*
- (2) a. (*ÆCHom I*, 1.20.1)  
*On twam þingum hæfde God þæs mannes sawle gegodod*  
*in two things had God the man's soul endowed*  
*'With two things God had endowed man's soul'*
- b. (*HomU19*, 26)  
*Forðon we sceolan mid ealle mod & mægene to Gode gecyr*  
*therefore we must with all mind and power to God turn*  
*'Therefore we must turn to God with all our mind and power'*

## The proposal:

A) In the transition from OE to ME *þa* was lost, and the V to C construction was continued with *then* as the most regular adverb, and with *thus* and *now*. This development is visible as a substantial dip in the frequency of V to C with THEN-adverbs and probably necessitates a reinterpretation of its trigger. Since most of the other adverbs newly recruited in the construction are short discourse linking adverbs, the trigger for verb movement arguably was purely prosodic; B) The grammaticalization of auxiliaries and their correspondingly increased use made possible a prosodic reanalysis of subject pronouns from affixal clitics to free clitics - necessitated by an independent change in the metrical structure of the prosodic word in ME that is evidenced by schwa-deletion in word-final position; C) The construction disappears at the point at which auxiliaries are fully realized as functional elements, since they fail to be able to host subject pronoun and the discourse referential initial adverb.