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## **Subjects and OV/VO patterns in Old and Middle English**

In this paper, I will present a number of novel facts from Old and Middle English which give an interesting new perspective on the nature of word order variation in older English. They show that word order variation is not only determined by variation within the "IP/VP-domain" as advocated most prominently in the work of Kroch, Pintzuk and Taylor and as analysed in terms of phrase structure variation. Rather, a good deal of the variation is controlled by a tight relation between the subject domain and the object domain.

In a minimalist analysis of these facts, these facts are keyed to the material that can be contained in Spec, TP, adapting the recent work of Biberauer. If the subject DP alone is in Spec, TP (as shown by word order tests relative to negators and time adverbs), there are tight restrictions on the further word order of the clause; no material is allowed on the left of the DP-subject, the incidence of OV word order is comparatively low, and the range of OV patterns allowed is more circumscribed. If Spec, TP hosts more material, other material, e.g. object pronouns, are allowed on the left of Spec, TP, the incidence of OV is higher and the full range of OV patterns is robustly attested. The key variation is, then in the amount of material that is hosted by Spec,TP, with concomitant further restrictions. The 'subject alone in Spec,TP' construction with its attendant restrictions on variation, gains momentum through the Old English period, with a sharp upward shift in the transition to Middle English. The facts and the analysis I present have interesting implications for the nature of syntactic variation. They show that the so-called "OV/VO shift" is structured in a different way than has been thought so far, and has close links with the changing status of various types of subjects. Also, it is shown that the assumption of multiple grammars is not needed to account for this complex change in the history of English in an insightful way.