

LINGUISTIC CHANGE: THE GRAMMATICAL ENVIRONMENT OF PARTICIPIAL NON-FINITE CLAUSES IN OLD ENGLISH AND IN PRESENT-DAY ENGLISH

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1. Introduction

The following paper reports on the final results¹ of the author's study of the use of participial nonfinite clauses and dependent clauses in Old English (OE) and in present-day English (PE), in relation to the nature of their respective grammatical environment. It ensues from the research into the early stages of syntactic change, which started as team work at the universities of Ljubljana and Maribor in 1986, under the guidance and coordination of Janez Orešnik.² The theoretical premises of the research have been presented on several occasions, and will be merely outlined here³

1.1. The key postulate of the research is that any linguistic change may be viewed as a diachronic dimension of linguistic variation. The same message may be encoded in different ways, and the variants differ, as a rule, in terms of the transparency/economy of their form. The preference for one or another variant appears to be random. In fact, it is a conscious or subconscious response to one of the two principal tendencies at work in the process of communication: a) the tendency ensuing from linguistic activity as a physiological process, compelling the author of the message to be as economical as possible; b) the tendency ensuing from the principal function of the language, communication: the choice of the variant depends on the speaker's constant assessment of the addressee's ability to correctly decode the intended message.

1 The results of the pilot study were preliminary presented at the international symposium on natural linguistics and language change, held in Maribor in May 1996.

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3 Janez Orešnik, Andrej Snedec, Karmen Teržan, and Frančiška Trobevšek Drobnač, "Introduction to the subsequent three papers in the present volume". *Linguistica XX* Ljubljana 1990, pp. 5-12;

Janez Orešnik and Frančiška Trobevšek Drobnač, "Expanded Tenses in the Old English Orosius". In Claudia Blank (ed.), *Language and Civilization I*. Frankfurt, Berne, New York, Paris: Peter Lang 1992, pp. 146-153.

Janez Orešnik, "Syntaktischer Wandel und Natürlichkeit in der Forschung slowenischer Linguisten". In Boretzky et al. (ed.), *Natürlichkeitstheorie und Sprachwandel - Teorija naravnosti in jezikovno spreminjanje. Beiträge zum internationalen Symposium über "Natürlichkeitstheorie und Sprachwandel" an der Universität Maribor vom 13.5.-15.5.1993*. Bochum: Brockmeyer 1995, pp. 253-262..

1.2. Syntactic change may be viewed as a diachronic dimension of syntactic variation, of the expansion of one syntactic variant and the decline of another. Syntactic variation is understood as the reality of pairs of linguistic entities which convey roughly equivalent messages, or perform the same (grammatical) function, but which differ on the level of expression. The members of such pairs are referred to as *the weakened* and *the strengthened* syntactic variants. The terms "weakened" and "strengthened" are modelled after the terms "weakening" and "strengthening" applied in *Natural Phonology*.¹ They display the following traits:

A *weakened syntactic variant* is formally (ie on the level of expression) less elaborate than the corresponding *strengthened syntactic variant*. From the speaker's point of view, it is more economical to produce, and from the hearer's point of view it is less transparent to decode. A *strengthened syntactic variant* is formally more elaborate than the corresponding weakened syntactic variant. From the speaker's point of view it is less economical to produce, and from the hearer's point of view it is more transparent to decode².

1.3. The preference for the strengthened or the weakened syntactic variant depends on many factors, the most obvious being pragmatic circumstances of communication, the language medium, genre, register. This preference may change in time, in the sense that one variant expands and becomes more frequent in contexts and co-situations formerly favouring the other variant. In this paper, the expansion of a weakened syntactic variant is referred to as *weakening* and the expansion of a strengthened syntactic variant as *strengthening*.³

1.4. The working hypothesis of the research was that initially, at an early stage of syntactic change, when two compared variants still perform the same function, and their respective distribution has not been regularized, the assertion of the weakened or of the strengthened syntactic variant depends not only on pragmatic circumstances and/or stylistic considerations, but also on the grammatical content of their linguistic environment. The strengthened syntactic variant is expected to spread from relatively complex to simple grammatical environment, and the weakened syntactic variant is expected to spread from relatively simple to more complex grammatical environment.

2. Previous research

2.1. Since the beginning of the research (1986), the working hypothesis has been empirically tested on selected pairs of syntactic constructions. The author of this paper tested the validity of the working hypothesis on the example of Old English

¹ Cf. Patricia J. Donegan, *On the Natural Phonology of Vowels*. New York and London: Garland 1985.

² When referring to a group of old people, two constructions can be used, old men and women, and old men and old women. The former is less elaborate, more economical, but also ambiguous, since it can be interpreted as referring to old men and to young (=not old) women. By contrast, the latter construction is less economical, but more transparent and less prone to misinterpretation, therefore "easier" to decode. According to the definition above, they represent a weakened and a strengthened syntactic variant respectively.

³ Cf. Peter Braun, *Tendenzen in der deutschen Gegenwartssprache. Sprachvarietäten*. Second edition. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer 1987.

expanded and non expanded tenses as the first pair (1990), and Old English *ge*-verbs and non prefixed verbs as the second pair of variants (1994). Of these two pairs, expanded tenses and *ge*-verbs were identified as the strengthened variants, whereas non expanded tenses and non prefixed verbs were identified as the weakened variants.

2.2. The analysis of each pair of syntactic variants involved the formation of two sets of samples. The basic samples consisted of clauses containing the strengthened variants, and the control samples consisted of clauses containing corresponding weakened variants. The clauses were analysed in terms of their type and propositional modality; the verbal phrases in the clauses were analysed as to tense, mood, number, and transitivity. The choice of grammatical parameters was partly influenced by the properties of the samples⁴, and partly by the potential consensus as to the simple/complex nature of their individual values.

Natural Morphology was followed in assessing the grammatical environment as complex or simple. It was presumed complex when grammatical categories assumed their marked values, as suggested by Mayerthaler⁵:

- the affirmative propositional modality is less complex (less marked) than the non affirmative propositional modality;
- the present tense is less complex (less marked) than the non present tenses;
- the indicative mood is less complex (less marked) than the non indicative moods;
- the singular is less complex (less marked) than the non singular;
- intransitivity is less complex (less marked) than transitivity.

The non-affirmative propositional modality, the non-present tenses, the non-indicative moods, the non-singular, and intransitive verbs were consequently expected to be more frequent in basic than in control samples.

2.3. The results of the analysis of samples were compared and assessed in the light of the working hypothesis⁶. In both cases, the success rate of predictions was about 75%. That provided a solid enough basis for further elaboration and testing of the working hypothesis, but also indicated the need to re-examine some of its elements. The distribution of "favourable" and "unfavourable" results commended special caution while a) defining constructions as strengthened or weakened syntactic variants, b) pairing off different values of grammatical parameters as representing "simple" or "complex" grammatical environment.

2.4. While it seems easy to exert caution in identifying syntactic constructions as syntactic variants, and in defining them as either strengthened or weakened

⁴ The samples containing instances of expanded/non expanded tenses were taken from Sweet's edition of King Alfred's Orosius (1883); the samples containing instances of *ge*-verbs/non-prefixed verbs were taken from Sweet's edition of King Alfred's Orosius and from Skeat's edition of the Old English translation of the Gospels according to St. Mark and St. John (1871, 1878). The occurrence of non-third verbal persons in Orosius was, for example, too low to be statistically significant.

⁵ Willi Mayerthaler, *Morphologische Natürlichkeit*. Wiesbaden: Athenaion 1980.

⁶ Frančiška Trobevšek, "Expanded Tenses in the Old English Orosius: A syntactic change." *Linguistica XXX*. Ljubljana 1990, pp. 13-46.

members of respective pairs, the issue of what constitutes simple or complex grammatical environment is more challenging. A typical question raised would be: does the present simple tense in *the train leaves in an hour* constitute more complex grammatical environment than in the sentence *the sun rises in the east*? In other words: can the complexity of (grammatical? notional?) environment, which affects the expansion of linguistic variants, be deduced from its formal markedness alone, or do semantic aspects have to be considered? To answer that, the list of potentially relevant parameters had to be expanded beyond the *marked/unmarked* parameter values as suggested by *Natural Morphology*. The author chose to examine those additional parameters which appear to be relevant in the process of *pidginization* and/or *creolization* of languages (see 3.4). Both processes, *pidginization* and *creolization*, are commonly recognized as manifesting the interdependence between the form and the content of communication (Todd 1974, De Camp 1977, Hudson 1980, Bickerton 1981). The former involves a drastic reduction of mandatory grammatical information, and renders its encodement (the form) as transparent as possible; the latter involves mandatory expression of more grammatical information (= more grammatical categories), but also economizing (=morphologization) on its encodement, i.e. on the outer form (Hymes 1971).

3. The method applied

The new empirical study involved the following steps:

- a pair of syntactic constructions was selected which convey roughly the same message and perform the same function in the sentence, thus acting as syntactic variants;
- the two syntactic constructions were identified as the weakened and the strengthened variant respectively;
- the early stage of syntactic change was determined, and samples were formed representing the grammatical environment of both variants at the early and at a later stage of their assertion;
- grammatical parameters to be examined were selected;
- predictions were made as to the value of grammatical parameters in basic and control samples;
- the grammatical environment of syntactic variants was analysed;
- the results were assessed as to their compliance with the predictions and the original hypothesis of the correlation between the outer form of syntactic variants and the content of their grammatical environment.

3.1. Participial nonfinite clauses (PNF) and corresponding dependent finite clauses (DC) have all the attributes of syntactic variants: they differ on the level of expression, but convey the same message (perform the same function). Nonfinite clauses with a present participle as the predicator were chosen as the first member of the pair, and adjectival or adverbial dependent clauses which could be paraphrased as nonfinite clauses were chosen as the second member of the pair of syntactic variants. Such constructions feature both in present-day English (PE) and in Old English (OE):

PE *Being a farmer, he has to get up early* (= As he is a farmer....)

PE *Coming home late one evening, I heard something which made my blood freeze in horror.* (=When I was coming home late one evening.....)

OE *And ut-gangende hi bodedon þæt hi dædbote dydon.* (=Pa hie ut geeodon....)

OE *Lareow, ic brohte minne sunu dumbne gast hæbbende* (=se/þe dumbne gast hæp...)⁷

3.2. On the level of expression, a nonfinite clause is less elaborate and more economical in form, but less transparent and more difficult for the hearer to decode than the corresponding finite clause. In accordance with the definitions stated under (1), participial nonfinite clauses can be identified as the weakened, and dependent finite clauses as the strengthened syntactic variant.

3.3. The Germanic present participle was originally incapable of verbal rection and governed a genitive object like nouns. The verbal rection emerged in the Old English period, possibly supported by Latin influence, but the early glossators were still reluctant to render Latin *present participle + object* by a corresponding Old English construction (Kisbye 1971: 24-27). The Old English period can consequently be viewed as the early stage of the syntactic change involving the assertion of participial nonfinite clauses in the English language, and the present-day English period as the later stage of the same change.

Three sets of basic and control samples were formed. The first basic sample (B₁) consisted of all 114 instances of clauses containing PNF in Skeat's edition of the Old English Gospel According to St Mark (1874). The first control sample (C₁) consisted of 252 main clauses from the same text to which adverbial or adjectival clauses were subordinated.⁸ The second basic sample (B₂) consisted of 250 instances of PNF in *Murder in the Calais Coach* by Agatha Christie (1934). The corresponding control sample (C₂) consisted of 300 instances of main clauses from the same text to which adverbial or adjectival clauses were subordinated. The third basic sample consisted of all 248 PNF in the present-day English translation of the Gospel According to Mark, from the Good News Bible (1979). The third control sample (C₃) listed the environment (main clauses) of 250 instances of DC in the same text.

3.4. The samples were analysed as to the following parameters:

- *the number of arguments in the clause containing a PNF or a DC.*
- *the person, the number, and the animate/inanimate status of the subject of the clause containing a PNF or a DC.*
- *the tense (preterite, present, present with future reference), the type of verb (stative, non-stative), and the mood (indicative, non-indicative) of the verbal phrase in the clause containing a PNF or a DC.*
- *the affirmative or non-affirmative. propositional modality of the clause containing a PNF or a DC.*

⁷ Examples from Leech and Svartvik 1994; Kisbye 1971.

⁸ Simple finite sentences were not included in control samples, since they do not represent immediate (grammatical) environment of dependent clauses.

- the syntactic function (subject, direct object, indirect object, adjunct) of the referent of the subject of the PNF or DC in the environment.⁹
- *the number and the animate/inanimate status of the subject of the PNF or DC.*
- the number of "marked" values of grammatical parameters in the environment of syntactic variants¹⁰.
- In previous research, verbs were analysed as transitive or intransitive only.
- The parameter *animate/inanimate status* of the subject was included in the analysis, since it is a relevant factor in the grammar of some languages.¹¹ The preterite tense had been initially presumed as more complex grammatical environment than the present tense. As the results of the analyses of different samples were inconsistent and often contradictory, the verbal tense was re-examined in the light of the stative/non-stative nature of respective verbs¹².

3.5. On the basis of the working hypothesis under (1), the following predictions were made:

- a) the values of grammatical parameters in the sample containing instances of Old English PNF will be different from the values of grammatical parameters in the sample containing Old English DC;
- b) the values of grammatical parameters in the sample containing instances of present-day English PNF will differ from the values of grammatical parameters in the sample containing instances of present-day English DC;
- c) the values of grammatical parameters in the samples containing Old English PNF or DC will differ from the values of grammatical parameters in the samples containing present-day English PNF or DC;
- d) the differences predicted above will be systematic and consistent with the theory of the correlation between the external form of linguistic variants and the grammatical content of their environment.

⁹ Examples: "he made a clumsy little bow, flushing a little" - the referent of the subject of the PNF - *he* - is the subject in the environment; "he turned his attention to the motionless figure lying in the bunk" - the referent of the subject of the PNF is *the motionless figure* - the indirect object in the environment; "he was carrying it out with all the zeal and ardour befitting a young officer" - the referent *the zeal and ardour* is part of an adjunct in the environment.

¹⁰ The last three sets of parameters differ from those listed before them. Two of them were chosen to explore the relation between the internal grammatical complexity of the variants themselves and their form, the last one to examine the possibility of a cumulative nature of grammatical complexity.

¹¹ When the number distinction, which has no formal encodement in pidgin languages, becomes mandatory in Creoles, its morphologization favours *humans > animates > count nouns > mass nouns* and *subject > direct object > indirect object > locative > genitive* (Bybee 1985).

¹² In the morphologization process of tense encodement in creole languages, the primary tense system based on the opposition [+/- anterior] is dependent on the distinction between stative and non-stative verbs. Bickerton reports that the default tense of the zero form of non-stative verbs in Creoles is simple past, whereas the default tense of the zero form of stative verbs is non-past (Bickerton 1975: 461).

4. The analysis of samples¹³

Probability rates are not listed if the frequency of the parameter value is below 1%. Statistically insignificant results (differences) are marked with (*).

A. *The number of arguments in the environment*

| parameter value | P ₁ | P ₂ | P ₃ | P ₄ | P ₅ | P ₆ |
|-----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| 1 argument | 50.0 | 26.6 | 48.0 | 42.0 | 48.0 | 51.9 |
| 2 arguments | 47.4 | 63.9 | 47.3* | 48.4* | 45.3 | 38.9 |
| 3 arguments | 2.6 | 9.5 | 5.0 | 10.2 | 6.7 | 5.5 |

B. *The person and the number of the subject in the environment*

| parameter value | P ₁ | P ₂ | P ₃ | P ₄ | P ₅ | P ₆ |
|----------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| 1 st singular | 3.5 | 5.2 | 1.7 | 6.0 | 2.7 | - |
| 2 nd singular | 1.8 | 7.1 | 4.0 | 4.0 | - | - |
| 3 rd singular | 64.9 | 53.2 | 68.1 | 74.0 | 54.7* | 55.6* |
| 1 st plural | 0.9 | 0.8 | 2.2 | 4.1 | - | - |
| 2 nd plural | 4.4 | 7.1 | - | - | 5.3 | - |
| 3 rd plural | 24.5 | 26.6 | 9.3 | 12.4 | 37.3 | 44.4 |
| singular all | 70.2 | 65.5 | 89.3 | 84.1 | 57.6 | 55.6 |
| plural all | 29.8 | 34.5 | 10.7 | 15.9 | 42.6 | 44.4 |
| 3 rd person all | 89.5 | 79.8 | 87.0* | 84.1* | 92.0 | 100.0 |
| non-3 rd person | 10.5 | 20.2 | 13.0* | 15.9* | 8.0 | - |

C. *The status of the subject in the environment*

| parameter value | P ₁ | P ₂ | P ₃ | P ₄ | P ₅ | P ₆ |
|-----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| animate | 95.6* | 93.7* | 93.1 | 84.4 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| inanimate | 4.4* | 6.6* | 6.9 | 15.6 | - | - |

¹³ P_x - probability rate of a given parameter value in the sample, computed as the ratio between the number of favourable events (instances of the analysed parameter assuming a particular value in the sample) and the number of all possible events (all instances included in the sample).

P₁ - probability rate (x 100) of the parameter value in the basic sample B₁;

P₂ - probability rate (x 100) of the parameter value in the control sample C₁;

P₃ - probability rate (x 100) of the parameter value in the basic sample B₂;

P₄ - probability rate (x 100) of the parameter value in the control sample C₂;

P₅ - probability rate (x 100) of the parameter value in the basic sample B₃;

P₆ - probability rate (x 100) of the parameter value in the control sample C₃.

The statistical significance of the differences was computed with the formulas (Pavlič 1985):

D. *Tense of stative and non-stative verbs in the environment*

| parameter value | stative verbs | | | | | | non-stative verbs | | | | | |
|-----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|-------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| | P ₁ | P ₂ | P ₃ | P ₄ | P ₅ | P ₆ | P ₁ | P ₂ | P ₃ | P ₄ | P ₅ | P ₆ |
| present | 11.4* | 13.9* | 10.0* | 4.1 | 1.3 | 11.1 | 2.6 | 15.5 | 3.0 | 2.1 | 5.3 | 11.1 |
| present/future | 4.4 | 7.9 | - | 2.0 | 2.6 | - | 0.9 | 6.7 | - | - | 0.9 | - |
| past | 25.4* | 24.2* | 24.1 | 26. | 42.7 | 33.3 | 55.3 | 31.7 | 26.0 | 40.3 | 38.7 | 33.3 |
| pres. perf. | | | 7.2 | - | | | | | 2.0 | - | | |
| past perf. | | | 6.1 | 4.3 | | | | | 3.1 | 6.1 | | |
| future | | | 1.0 | 6.0 | | | | | - | 4.0 | | |

| parameter value | P ₁ | P ₂ | P ₃ | P ₄ | P ₅ | P ₆ |
|-----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| present all | 14.0 | 29.4 | 13.0 | 6.2 | 6.6 | 22.2 |
| pres./fut. all | 5.3 | 14.7 | 2.0 | | 3.5 | - |
| past all | 80.7 | 56.0 | 50.1 | 66.5 | 81.4 | 66.6 |
| stative all | 41.2 | 46.0 | 49.0* | 48.1* | 46.6* | 46.4* |
| non-stative all | 58.8 | 54.0 | 51.0* | 51.9* | 53.4* | 53.6* |

E. *The mood of the verb in the environment*

| parameter value | P ₁ | P ₂ | P ₃ | P ₄ |
|-----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| indicative | 93.0 | 78.8 | 92.0* | 88.1* |
| non-indicative | 7.0 | 21.2 | 8.0 | 11.9 |

F. *The propositional modality in the environment*

| parameter value | P ₁ | P ₂ | P ₃ | P ₄ |
|-----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| affirmative | 97.4 | 86.1 | 91.0 | 84.2 |
| non-affirmative | 2.6 | 13.9 | 9.0 | 15.8 |

F. *The syntactic function of the referent of the subject of the PNF or DC in the environment (only for B₁, C₁, B₂ and C₂)*

| parameter value | P ₁ | P ₂ | P ₃ | P ₄ |
|-----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| subject | 64.0 | 32.0 | 76.2 | 31.5 |
| direct object | 28.1 | 15.3 | 17.4 | 6.3 |
| indirect object | - | 11.0 | 3.1 | 8.0 |
| adjunct | 7.9 | 41.7 | 3.3 | 54.2 |

G. *The status of the subject of the PNF or DC*

| parameter value | P ₁ | P ₂ | P ₃ | P ₄ |
|-----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| animate | 95.7* | 91.3* | 88.0 | 71.9 |
| inanimate | 4.3 | 8.7 | 12.0 | 28.1 |
| singular | 61.4* | 59.0* | 92.3 | 84.3 |
| plural* | 38.6* | 41.0* | 7.7 | 15.7 |

H. *The number of the marked values of individual parameters in the environment*¹⁴

| parameter value | P ₁ | P ₂ | P ₃ | P ₄ | P ₅ | P ₆ |
|-----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| 0 | 40.4 | 18.7 | 31.2 | 10.4 | 22.7 | 9.3 |
| 1 | 39.5 | 33.7 | 37.5 | 44.1 | 40.0 | 50.0 |
| 2 | 13.2 | 22.2 | 24.3 | 35.0 | 30.7 | 27.8 |
| 3 | 6.0 | 19.0 | 7.0 | 6.1 | 5.3 | 9.3 |
| 4 | 0.9 | 6.0 | - | 4.4 | 1.3 | 3.6 |
| 5 | - | 0.4 | - | - | - | - |
| mean | 0.87 | 1.61 | 1.09 | 1.59 | 1.23 | 1.5 |

5. The assessment of results

5.1. The values of the grammatical parameters in the environment of Old English PNF differ from the values of the grammatical parameters in the environment of Old English DC. The following values are more frequent in the environment of PN (B₁ vs C₁): one argument, 3rd person singular of the subject, singular of the subject, 3rd person singular + plural, animate subject, past stative verbs, past non-stative verbs, past tense in all verbs, non-stative verbs in all tenses, indicative mood, affirmative propositional modality, the referent of the subject of the PNF as the subject in the environment, the referent of the subject of the PNF as the direct object in the environment, animate subject of the PNF, singular subject of the PNF.

The following values of grammatical parameters are higher in the environment of Old English DC:

2 arguments, 3 arguments, 3rd person plural of the subject, plural of the subject, non-third persons singular + plural, inanimate subject, present stative verbs, present non-stative verbs, present in all verbs, present with future reference in all verbs, stative verbs in all tenses, non-indicative mood, non-affirmative propositional modality, the referent of the subject of the DC as the indirect object in the environment, the referent of the subject of the DC as the adjunct in the environment, inanimate subject of the DC, plural subject of the DC.

5.2. The values of the grammatical parameters in the environment of present-day English PNF differ from the values of grammatical parameters in the environment of present-day English DC. The following values are more frequent in the environment of PNF (B₂, B₃ vs C₂, C₃): one argument, two arguments, singular subject, 3rd person singular + plural, animate subject, past stative verbs, past non-stative verbs, past in all verbs, indicative mood, affirmative propositional modality, the referent of the subject of the PNF as the subject in the environment, the referent of the subject of the PNF as the direct object in the environment, animate subject of the PNF, singular subject of the PNF.

¹⁴ The following parameter values were considered "marked": 3 arguments, non-third person, plural, inanimate subject, past tense of stative verbs, present tense of non-stative verbs, non-indicative mood, non-affirmative propositional modality, in the environment; indirect object or adjunct as the syntactic function of the PNF or DC subject's referent, plural, and inanimate status of the PNF or DC subject.

The following values of grammatical parameters are more frequent in the environment of present-day English DC: three arguments, 3rd person singular of the subject, plural of the subject, non-third person singular + plural, inanimate subject, present stative verbs, past stative verbs, past non-stative verbs, present all verbs, stative verbs, non-indicative mood, non-affirmative propositional modality, the referent of the subject of the DC as the indirect object in the environment, the referent of the subject of the DC as the adjunct in the environment, inanimate subject of the DC, plural subject of the DC.

5.3. The differences between the values of the grammatical parameters in the environment of PNF and DC are more significant in Old English than in present-day English. The frequency of the following values of grammatical parameters are found higher in the environment of PNF in present-day English than in Old English (B₁ vs B₃): three arguments, 3rd person plural, plural subject, present non-stative verbs, past stative verbs, stative verbs, and those occurring less frequently are: one argument, 3rd person singular of the subject, singular subject, present stative verbs, past non-stative verbs, non-stative verbs.

The mean number of marked values of grammatical parameters is highest in the sample containing Old English DC, and lowest in the sample containing Old English PNF. The number of marked values in the environment of PNF is in present-day English higher than in Old English. The number of marked values in the environment of DC in present-day English is lower than in Old English.

5. Conclusion

The hypothesis that a) participial non-finite clauses are the weakened syntactic variants of corresponding dependent finite clauses, b) the assertion of participial non-finite clauses in Old English was the early stage of a syntactic change called weakening, and c) that the assertion of participial non-finite clauses in Old English depended on their grammatical environment is valid. The hypothesis that this assertion was initially strongest in simple grammatical environment, and later expanded to more complex grammatical environment, is valid if the following values of grammatical parameters constitute complex grammatical environment: a) more than two arguments in the clause, b) non-third persons of the subject, c) plural subjects, d) inanimate subjects, e) past tense of stative verbs and present tense of non-stative verbs, f) stativeness of verbs, g) non-indicative moods, h) non-affirmative propositional modality, i) syntactic functions indirect object and adjunct. The validity of the last hypothesis is also confirmed if the following values of grammatical parameters constitute simple grammatical environment: a) one argument in the clause, b) third person of the subject, c) singular subject, d) animate subject, e) past tense of non-stative verbs and present tense of stative verbs, f) non-stativeness of verbs, g) indicative mood, h) affirmative propositional modality, and i) syntactic functions subject and direct object.

Some of the above values of grammatical parameters have already been commonly recognized as complex or simple (marked or unmarked, see 2.). It may take more research to confirm the complexity or simplicity of others. Their frequency in the environment of strengthened or weakened syntactic variants,

however, could be a valuable addition to the many factors that would eventually determine their status.

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