



Ana Elvira Ojanguren López. *Predications in competition and the rise of serial verb constructions in English: The verbal and nominal complementation of Old English aspectual and manipulative verbs*. Lausanne: Peter Lang, 2024. 534 pp. DOI: 10.3726/b21357

Silvia Saporta Tarazona

Universidad de La Rioja. Departamento de Lenguas Modernas  

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Old English (OE) has traditionally been regarded as an extraordinarily complex language, for its intricate syntactic and morphological relations remain a conundrum for many historical linguists. This explains the substantial number of manuals which primarily focus on the basics of grammar (Mitchell and Robinson 1992; Hog 2012; Fulk 2014). Nevertheless, for those enthusiasts who would like to deepen their insight of Old English structures, Ojanguren López book constitutes a stimulating work which explicitly delves into one of the most elaborate aspects of syntax and semantics: the competition on the complementation of OE aspectual and manipulative verbs, namely, the ones that correspond to contemporary English aspectual *end*, *try* and *fail*, along with manipulative *forbid*, *hinder* and *refrain*. This research also addresses the question of “the rise of serial verb constructions in English” (Ojanguren López 2024, 17) and provides some clarification on the semantics of the verbs linked to complementation patterns, which represents a valuable addition to prior contributions (Callaway 1913; Mitchell 1985; Molencki 1991; Denison 1993; Martín Arista 2022).

The aforementioned monograph is divided in nine chapters, which facilitates the comprehension of the matter of study, as it is presented sequentially and includes a well-defined methodology which is supported by the theoretical underpinnings of the research. Thus, chapter one overviews the major focus of the undertaking as well as its analytical structure, and contextualises the complementation patterns of verbs of aspect and manipulation in Old English within its most recent framework. Once the fundamentals have been established, chapter two underlines the relevance of the work that has been carried out considering several dimensions (synchrony, diachrony, typology), which contribute to a comprehensive approach of the objects of research. Furthermore, the lexicographical and textual sources specified in said chapter include dictionaries, lexical databases, grammars, translations, and lemmatisers. In order to describe the competition existing on the complementation of Old English verbs, the Role and Reference Grammar (RRG) and its Interclausal Relations Hierarchy (Van Valin and LaPolla 1997; Van Valin 2005) are proposed, for its “model of the interaction between morphology and syntax, including constituents and operators” is paramount for a language such as Old English (Ojanguren López 2024, 26). Additionally, several works on the clausal complementation of verbs are revisited to discuss different types of competition (Callaway 1913; Denison 1993; Molencki 1991; Los 2005) while introducing nominal complementation and verb serialisation as the innovative elements of the study.

As a means to expand the foundations sustaining the analysis on OE verbal complementation, Ojanguren López reviews in chapter three the most relevant parts of the theory of RRG, as the former is central for the consideration of semantic and pragmatic categories in syntax, and for the concern of cross-linguistic validity. The book also devotes special attention to lexical representation, semantic roles and macroroles, which play a crucial role in the association of semantics and syntax, as well as the notion of *Aktionsart* (Brugmann 1922), for it constitutes “the semantic representation of the sentence” (Ojanguren López 2024, 37). Additionally, grammatical relations embodied in the function of Privileged Syntactic Argument (PSA) and clause structures represented by the Layered Structure of the Clause (LSC), which distinguishes multiple forms of complex referential clauses, complete RRG theory and indubitably help the reader understand the basis for the subsequent study, reinforced by the concepts of juncture and nexus acting as the main aspects of the theory of complex sentences. Chapter four, in turn, intends to become a further contribution towards “a more semantically oriented syntax of Old English” (Ojanguren López 2024, 57), hence it revolves around preceding research in the structural-functional analysis of Old English (Martín Arista 2000a, 2000b, 2020) with the aim of applying these earlier advances to the linking of semantics and syntax proposed by RRG. To successfully accomplish this, terminological remarks such as Verb Classes and Alternations (Levin 1993), linking and its

primary components, and the Lexematic-Functional approach have been noted, whereas particular emphasis has been placed on OE case system (Campbell 1987; Hogg and Fulk 2011; Ringe and Taylor 2014); prepositional government; first, second and third arguments; the passive construction (Traugott 1992; Martín Arista 2000b); complex sentences; and tree diagrams, the latter being of considerable interest, since they have revealed some disparities compared to the ones proposed by Van Valin and LaPolla (1997), which are mostly reflected in subordination, the assignment of juncture level and hybrid complementation.

A methodological approach is also greatly required, as it accounts for the underlying principle of any empirical work. In this case, it is portrayed in chapter five and comprises the sources and data of the present study, since the combination of these are vital for an effective implementation of the selected approach. This section also encompasses the object of the monograph, that is, “the competition on the complementation of Old English aspectual and manipulative verbs that arises between finite and non-finite clauses” and alternatively, “between clauses and referential phrases” (Ojanguren 2024, 88), which is specified in the research questions proposed by the book. Mention must also be made of the criteria for verb selection, which was based on the possibility of complementation with other verbs and the clausal and nominal complementation requirement, which hence led to the compilation of aspectual and manipulative verbs. The methodology is precisely organised in three stages: the selection of sources and the collection of data, the analysis of the verbs at stake, and finally, the evaluation of the role that nominal complementation plays, so as to reach conclusions concerning nominalisations and the development of gerund and serial verb constructions (SVC) in English.

The source selection is also deemed one of the most innovative features of this monograph owing to the interaction of a myriad of resources, which has culminated in the creation of a subcorpus containing an impressive number of 1,372,803 words. The textual and lexicographical sources include dictionaries such as *Thesaurus of Old English* (Roberts & Kay, 2000), *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary* (Bosworth and Toller 1973), *Dictionary of Old English Corpus (DOE)* (Healey et al. 2004); databases, specifically, *The York-Toronto-Helsinki Parsed Corpus of Old English Prose (YCOE)* (Taylor et al., 2003), *NerthusV3. Online Lexical Database of Old English* (Martín Arista et al. 2016), *ParCorOEV2. An open access annotated parallel corpus Old English-English* (Martín Arista et al., 2021); lemmatisers (*Norna*); or Old English grammars (Campbell 1987; Hogg 1992; Hogg and Fulk 2011; Ringe and Taylor 2014). Furthermore, this compilation has resulted in 428 textual tokens corresponding to 38 verbal types and has entailed some revision in order to obtain meaning components consistent with the verbal classes under analysis, relate the verbal inflectional forms to their lemas and examine the coincidences of grammar behaviour.

The fundamental analysis of the book is reflected in chapters six and seven, for both are devoted to the study of OE aspectual and manipulative verbs. In this regard, Ojanguren López explores the range of complements employed by these verbs, together with the resulting syntactic constructions, classified in terms of simplex and complex linking, and associated with several juncture-nexus classes. Three categories of linked predication have been regarded: the finite dependent clause, the non-finite dependent clause and the referential phrase headed by a nominalisation based on a verb. The cluster of aspectual verbs has involved the verbal classes of *End* verbs, *Fail* verbs and *Try* verbs, and particularly, the verbs *āblinnan*, *ætstandan*, *blinnan*, *geblinnan*, *oðstillan*, *oflinnan*, *forsittan*, *ofergīman*, *oferhealdan*, *oferhebban*, *(ge)trucian*, *wandian*, *(ge)cneordlæcan*, *fandian*, *fundian*, *hīgian*, and *(ge)tilian*. The evidence based on Ojanguren’s analysis suggests that the verbs *āblinnan*, *blinnan*, *(ge)cneordlæcan*, *(ge)fandian*, *fundian*, *(ge)tilian*, *wandian* and *hīgian* are linked to complex syntactic configurations, whilst *forsittan*, *geblinnan*, *oferhealdan*, *ofergīman*, *oferhebban*, *oflinnan*, *oðstillan* and *(ge)trucian* have been reported in simple syntactic configurations. Nonetheless, all the verbs noted can be related to a finite clause with a verb in the subjunctive form, as well as to a non-finite clause with verb in the inflected infinitive, albeit the latter does not apply to the verbs *(ge)cneordlæcan* and *hīgian*. Only *blinnan* accepts a non-finite clause with a verb in the uninflected infinitive, whereas *āblinnan*, *ætstandan*, *blinnan*, *forsittan*, *hīgian* and *(ge)tilian* have been related to nominalisations acting as complements.

With regards to manipulative verbs, distinct categories have been proposed, as *Hinder* and *Prevent* verbs fall into the set of classes of inverse control, *Forbid* verbs are found within the series of classes of manipulative verbs, and *Abstain* verbs and *Refrain* verbs are part of the grouping of classes of self manipulative verbs. The Old English verbs under analysis include *forstandan*, *for(e)stemman*, *gehremman*, *hremman*, *āgælan*, *belēan*, *forfōn*, *for(e)sacan*, *gælan*, *bewerian*, *forhabban*, *forbēodan*, *forwiernan*, *tōcweðan*, *fæstan*, *forġān*, *gefæstan*, *ofersittan*, *(ge)mīdlian*, *āhabban*, and *forberan*. Within the insight derived from the analysis, it should be highlighted that, with the exception of *forstandan*, *gehremman* and *hremman*, inverse control verbs occur in complex juncture-nexus types, although *forsacan*, *forstemman*, *forfōn*, *gælan*, *gehremman* and *hremman* are usually combined with nominalisations. The entire set of manipulative verbs are employed in both simple and complex configurations, notwithstanding the fact that *tōcweðan* does not allow nominal complementation. In addition, the self manipulative verbs *fæstan*, *forberan*, *forġān*, *gefæstan*, *(ge)mīdlian* and *ofersittan* are not present in complex juncture-nexus types. Concerning nominalisations, *forġān*, *forhabban*, *gefæstan*, *(ge)mīdlian* and *ofersittan* are not accompanied by deverbal referential phrases.

Chapter eight is dedicated to exploring the distinct types of competition that arise from Old English (OE) verbal complementation. To achieve this purpose, structural competition is analysed, including finite and non-finite clauses and the referential phrase, by providing instances of aspectual and manipulative verbs in different contexts such as complex configuration, passivisation or nominalisation. This evidence has demonstrated that aspectual verbs participate in juncture-nexus relations of cosubordination and might be complemented by linked nominal predications involving nominalisations. Apropos of manipulative verbs, inverse control verbs appear in subordination and coordination nexus relations and are often found in clause junctures,

whereas manipulative verbs are combined with nexus relations of subordination. Additionally, *Abstain* verbs participate in simple configurations, although *Refrain* verbs are most likely linked to complex ones. Some of the findings made in this section are prone to shedding light on the development of the English gerund, which may have started earlier than expected. Structural competition also examines lexical competition of strong and weak verb bases of nominalisations to infer that the entire set of verbs under analysis can be combined with deverbal nominalisations, except for *fæstan*, *for(e)sacan*, *forfōn*, *geblinnan* and *oflinnan*. Moreover, “the same syntactic range is available to nominalisations related to weak verbs as to nominalisations related to strong verbs” (Ojanguren López 2024, 273) despite OE morphology evolving into invariable base and strong verbs shifting to the weak conjugation. The former data must also be considered in the evolution of the gerund, as it demands nominalising suffixes along with other properties that might be derived from the corp responding verbs. Should functional competition be analysed, two possible scenarios arise: the competition between units deriving from distinct structural levels for the status of macro role and the competition arising from referential phrase units for the status of direct core argument. In said cases, the linking algorithm of RRG serves as the main cornerstone for explaining the semantic behaviour of the objects under analysis, albeit concepts such as The Dative-Nominative Promotion Hierarchy have proved highly advantageous to clarify syntactic configurations, namely, instances of marking and macrorole as well as the competition on direct argumenthood.

The typological perspective of verbal complementation is offered in chapter nine, as it revises the cross-linguistics characteristics of OE serial verb constructions considering Roberts’ insights in contemporary English (2010, 2012) as well as other scholars’ contributions on SVC (Baker and Harvey 2010; Aikhenvald 2006; Haspelmath 2016). Moreover, Present-Day English catenative verb constructions are also noted, as these align with the criteria required to be deemed as serial verb constructions (Roberts 2012). The Role and Reference Grammar theory is also specified in the OE operators and clause linkage employed in serial constructions, for OE clause coordinations and subordinations usually correspond to contemporary English core junctures. However, the application of Present-Day English analysis to Old English limits nuclear junctures to “linked plain infinitives that do not take a second argument” (Ojanguren López 2024, 304) and thus reconsidering the status of *tō* in the inflective infinitive would be particularly promising, as well as contemplating the inflective infinitive as a “on-finite form of the inflection of the verb that takes a prefixal and a suffixal inflectional morpheme” (Ojanguren López 2024, 307). These previous findings are reflected in the analysis of constituent and operator projections of aspectual *End*, *Fail*, *Try* and *Hinder* verbs and manipulative *Prevent*, *Forbid*, *Abstain* and *Refrain* verbs so as to assess their suitability to serve as CVCs. They specifically focus on the notions of juncture level, nexus relation and operators, with emphasis on the operator of negation. The results obtained are discussed in the following section, claiming that, concerning the constituent projection, OE aspectual verbs may share the first argument of the matrix predication with the linked one, whereas in inverse control verbs and manipulative verbs proper “the first argument of the matrix predication is not shared by the linked predication” (Ojanguren López 2024, 334). In spite of these affirmations, self control verbs display a different behaviour, since they appear in nexus relations of cosubordination. As for the operator projection, aspectual verbs partake of the operator of negation, but this is not feasible in the case of manipulative *Prevent* and *Forbid* verbs, as said operator cannot be introduced into the two predications of a syntactic configuration, with the exception of *Abstain* verbs and *Refrain* verbs.

All these data conclude that OE aspectual verbs meet the requirements selected to be classified as CVCs. Contrarily, manipulative verbs do not fulfil the conditions to be identified as CVCs, which leads to constrain the scope of CVCs to cosubordination. The analysis of OE aspectual and manipulative verbs based on the RRG has provided the means for a hypothetical Serialisation Cline inspired in earlier examinations (Givón 1991, 2009; Rose 2009; Dixon and Aikhenvald 2006) that predicts the evolution from independent sentences into serial constructions. Moreover, the Serialisation Cline contributes to the consideration of other OE syntactic phenomena as CVCs and has been able to demonstrate that linked infinitives and participles in predicative constructions constitute CVCs, whereas pre-modal verbs and the causative verb *dōn* do not possess serial status, notwithstanding the fact that they satisfy some of the CVC requirements. The final chapter compiles the fundamental conclusions of the monograph, which state that both aspectual and manipulative verbs can be linked to dependent clauses or noun phrases, although it should be remarked that verbs of aspect originate nexus relations of cosubordination, whilst verbs of manipulation have a wider syntactic range that incorporates nexus relations of coordinations and subordination. Furthermore, nominalisations have proved to be of utmost importance for complementation in aspectual and manipulative verbs, as the majority of categories under analysis can be related to a deverbal nominalisation. One of the major contributions of the study resides in a unifying theoretical proposal which is not only capable of integrating the Interclausal Relations Hierarchy of RRG, but it also merges the competition of linked verbal predications and lined nominal predications on complementation. The research data also demonstrate the existence of OE serial verb constructions and the categorisation of nuclear junctures and core junctures of aspectual verbs as CVCs, and suggest further lines of research, especially those involving the analysis of the infinite and preverbal markers.

Despite the rigour of the methodology adopted, certain aspects of the corpus compilation deserve some comment. The asymmetrical treatment of the verbs beginning with the letters A–I, whose data are drawn directly from the Dictionary of Old English (Healey 2018), as opposed to those beginning with the letters L–Y, which are retrieved from a subcorpus of the YCOE, may introduce a methodological imbalance that is not fully addressed in chapter five. Whereas the DOE provides exhaustive lexicographical coverage including all attested citations, the YCOE represents approximately one half of the *Dictionary of Old English Corpus* and

yields a more fragmentary picture of inflectional and syntactic variation for the L-Y segment. The consequence is that frequency-based generalisations and class-membership decisions are not necessarily comparable across the two halves of the verbal inventory under analysis. Moreover, the exclusion of textual tokens for which no Present-Day English translation is available in the database *Idunn*, although justified on practical grounds, restricts the scope of the corpus. In this respect, the work could have benefited from a more explicit discussion of the balance between accessibility and representativeness, particularly considering that poetic occurrences of verbs such as *ofersittan* are consequently underrepresented (Ojanguren López 2024, 242). Finally, the considerable length of chapters six and seven, which present the descriptive analysis verb by verb, occasionally results in repetition that could have been avoided through cross-referencing or summary tables. A summary at the end of each verbal class, comparable to the concluding section of chapter eight, would have guided readers through the empirical material. These observations notwithstanding, the depth and originality of Ojanguren López contribution remain unaffected.

In sum, Ojanguren López book can be seen as an outstanding achievement for both historical linguistics and syntactic theory, as well as key development in Old English syntax and semantics, for it goes one step further to illustrate the existing competition on the complementation of aspectual and manipulative verbs by applying the contemporary English syntactic theory of RRG and a pioneering methodology that includes varied textual and lexicographical sources, which have given rise to a Serialisation Cline that reveals the OE origins of serial verb constructions and the relevance of nominalisations as one of the factors for the evolution of the gerund. Last but not least, this monograph unveils new perspectives of research addressed to those scholars interested in the fields of study which comprise historical languages, corpus linguistics (Martín Arista 2024) and grammatical theories.

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