

# The Subject Position of the Negative *There* Construction

否定存在文の主語の文中の構造について

Naoko Kishida

I investigate the distribution of a kind of negative expletive *there* construction with the general form *there* — modal/*have* — *no*+NP — main verb. This construction often occurs in the Paston Letters written in the late 15th century. I consider whether [Spec, TP] is a possible landing site for the *no* NP subject of this construction. I also consider if Object Shift actually occurs in the language of PL.

**Keywords:** expletive, there, subject, [Spec, TP], object shift, parameter, negative noun phrase, *no*, Middle English, Paston Letters

## 1. Introduction.

In this article I investigate some properties of a particular kind of negative expletive *there* construction of the general form (1), which consists of *there* — modal/*have* — a noun phrase subject modified by an inherently negative quantifier<sup>1</sup> *no*, followed by a main verb of the non-finite form. The negative quantifier *no* negates the whole sentence in this construction.

(1) *there* — modal/*have* — *no*+NP — main verb

I will hereafter call this construction NETC (= negative expletive *there* construction), and the negative noun phrase in question INNP (= inherently negative noun phrase).

NETC is frequently found in the language of the Paston Letters

(hereafter, PL)<sup>2</sup>, and used in various types of constructions. It appears in the environment where it cannot occur in presentday English (hereafter, PE). I will classify the examples of NETC in PL into Type A and Type B: the former type is still found in PE with a different word order, the latter type does not occur in PE any more. The examples of type A are shown below in (2)~(5). In each pair (a) and (b), (a) is the original sentence and (b) is its modern translation. Notice that the negative noun phrase subject occurs after *be* or the lexical main verb in the non-finite form in PE.

(2) a. there wyl no wrushup be there-in at long way. (212051-2)<sup>3</sup>

b. there will be no worship therein at long way.

(3) a. There<sup>4</sup> xal no man ben so hardy to don nother seyn agens  
my lord of Sowthfolk (128046-7)

b. There shall be no man so hardy (= bold) to do neither say  
against my lord of Suffolk.

(4) a. ther schall no processe goo owt ageyn them. (248076-7)

b. there shall go out no process against them.

(5) a. that there shuld non assise be graunted to your entent.  
(455015)

b. that there should be no assize granted (according) to your  
intent.

Type B is shown below in (6) and (7). In each pair (a) (b) and (c), (a) is the original sentence, (b) is its literal translation, which is ungrammatical in PE, and (c) is the PE sentence with the same meaning. The examples of type B are the transitive verb construction.

(6) a. ther wol no man by yt a gret. (221020-1)

b. \*there will no man buy it a great.

c. no man will buy it agreat (= by the whole piece, lump).

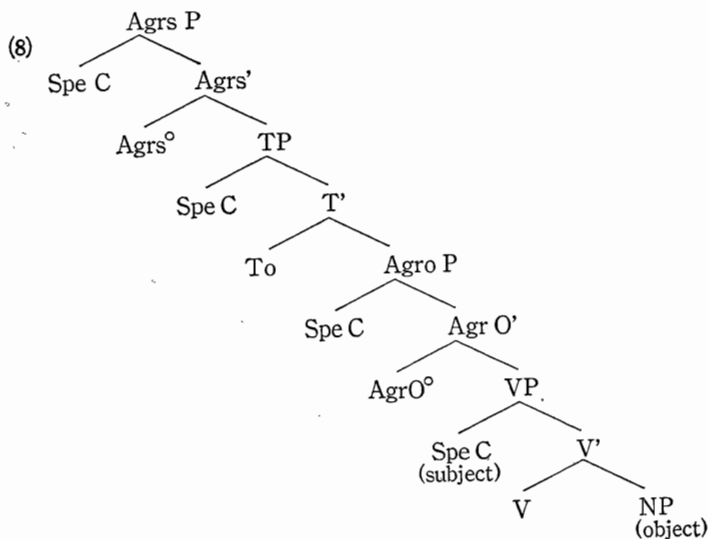
- (7) a. there would no man take no scharge fore vus (211016)  
 b. \*there would no man take no charge for us  
 c. no man would take any charge for us

The problems I discuss in section 2 are:

- (A) Where is the subject position of INNPs in NETCs?  
 (B) Why have these NPs changed their word order in type A?  
 (C) Why has type B disappeared?

## 2. INNP in the Subject Position of NETC.

In this section I consider first the problem (A). To be more specific, whether the INNP subjects are VP-internal or external at S-Structure. If we assume the basic structure for NETC as in (8), it is obvious that INNPs overtly move in NETCs in the grammar of PL, but not in PE. The problem is to what position they move. Do they still stay within a VP, probably in [Spec, VP] after they have overtly



moved, or have they moved out of it, and landed on [Spec, TP] as Bobaljik and Jonas (1996) claim? What we need is the evidence to determine whether INNPs overtly move out of VP or not. Thus see the following examples, where the INNP subject crosses over *have* in (9) or *dare* in (10).

(9) a. yf ther hade no folkys a be left here in thys plase. (192074)

b. if there had a (= had) be (= been) no folks (= people)  
left here in this place.

(10) a. ther shall no man dar appere in the place. (204016)

b. \*there shall no man dare appear in the place.

c. ?there shall dare (to) appear no man in the place.

cf. (11) a. be good dyscresyon ther mythe myche there-of a ben sparyd.  
(212021-2)

b. \*by good discretion there might much thereof a (= have)  
been spared.

c. by good discretion there might have been much thereof spared.

If we assume *have* and *dare* head its own projection, the examples above clearly indicate that the INNP subject has moved out of VP.

According to Bobaljik and Jonas (1996) (hereafter, B. & J.), Icelandic has transitive expletive constructions (TECs) such as in (12) (B. & J.: 196).

(12) það borðuðu sennilega margir jólasveinar bjúgun.

there ate probably many Christmas trolls the sausages.

'Many Christmas trolls probably ate the sausages.'

They summarize the distribution of TECs in the Germanic languages as in (13) (B. & J.: 209).

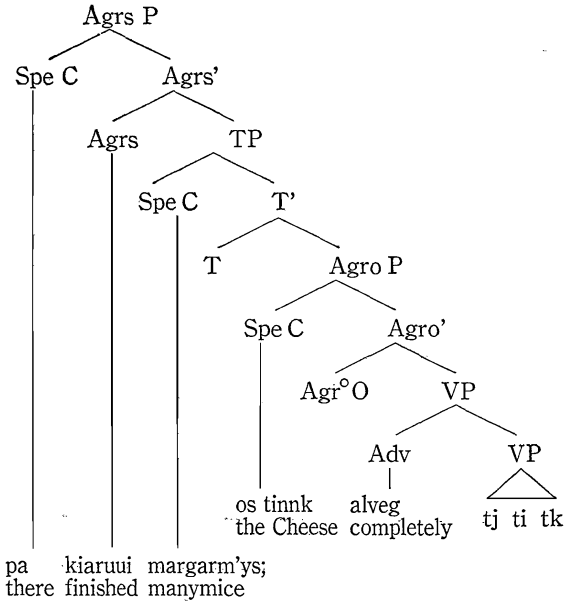
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(13)

TECs	No TECs
Icelandic	(presentday) English
Faroese I	Faroese II
German	Norwegian
Dutch	Danish
Yiddish	Swedish
Frisian	Afrikaans

They claim that the languages which allow TECs licence [Spec, TP] as an A-position to which the subject can move at S-Structure (Ibid. 220). They assume the basic clause structure (8) and an example of the derivation of TEC (14).

(14)



Let us compare NETCs in PL with the TECs they discuss, and see if the existence of [Spec, TP] can be justified in NETCs. In PL there are examples shown below which resemble TECs in Icelandic.

- (15) a. And ther knoweth no man hōw soon God woll clepe hym.  
 (030011-2)
- b. \*And there knows no man how soon God will clepe him.
- c. And no man knows how soon God will clepe (= call) him.

As was shown in section 1, only INNPs occur in the subject position in NETCs; that is, their distribution is more restricted in PL than in Icelandic, but this is not a serious problem because INNPs are a particular kind of indefinite NPs modified by a negative quantifier. Both types of NETC found in PL; type A (intransitive) and type B (transitive) constructions of NETC are at least compatible with the [Spec, TP] analysis. In addition, if we accept the existence of [Spec, TP], we get a natural answer to the problems (B) and (C); that is, the [Spec, TP] parameter has changed in English. The 15th century English licenced [Spec, TP] but PE does not licence it. The INNP subject in PE has lost the position [Spec, TP] to move into overtly.

### 3. INNP in Object Position

According to B. & J., the Germanic languages fall into two groups; those which allow Object Shift (OS) and which do not (B. & J.: 207) as in (16).

(16)	NP OS		No NP OS	
	Icelandic		(presentday)	English
German		Faroese		

Dutch	Norwegian
Yiddish	Danish
Frisian	Swedish
Afrikaans	

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They claim that overt OS entails the S-Structure licencing of [Spec, TP]; that is, if a given language allows overt OS, then it also licences [Spec, TP]. Then the problem arises whether the language of PL allows OS or not. Let us examine the properties of OS more closely.

NP OS is A-movement of object arguments (lexical definite NPs) across some element denoting the left edge of the VP, but within IP (B. & J.: 205). Thus in (17) the object *the hat* moves to [Spec, Agr<sub>o</sub>P], crossing over *not* which denotes the left edge of the VP.

- (17) Jólasveinninn borðaði [Agr<sub>o</sub>P hattinn<sub>i</sub> [VP ekki t<sub>i</sub>]].  
 the Christmas troll ate the hat not

'The Christmass troll didn't eat the hat.'

In (18) the adverb *alveg* 'completely' delimits the left edge of the VP (B. & J.: 218).

- (18) Ígær kláraði [TP mús<sub>k</sub> [Agr<sub>o</sub>P ostinn<sub>i</sub> [VP alveg [VP t<sub>k</sub> t<sub>i</sub>]]]].  
 yesterday finished a mouse the cheese completely  
 'yesterday a mouse completely finished the cheese'

OS presupposes the previous verb movement to Agr<sub>o</sub>, later to T, and finally to Arg<sub>s</sub> in order to enable the subject to move over the object in [Spec, Agr<sub>o</sub>P] and finally to [Spec, Agr<sub>s</sub>P]. This fact means that OS is impossible when T is occupied by an auxiliary since it blocks the movement of the verb into T. Thus see (19).

- (19) a. Jón<sub>i</sub> las<sub>j</sub> bækurnar<sub>k</sub> [VP (ekki) [VP t<sub>i</sub> [V' t<sub>j</sub>t<sub>k</sub>]]]].

John read the books not

'John did not read the books.'

b. \*Jon hefur bækurnar lesith (ekki).

'John has the books read not.'

Let us examine some examples of PL, where the object apparently shifts leftward from its original VP-internal position. Thus see below.

(20) And to encomfort yow, dy[s]peyre yow not fore lak of vytayle ner of gonne-powdre, (243039)

'And to encourage you, despair you not for lack of victual nor of gunpowder'

(21) we can non geets (618027)

'we can get none.'

(22) yif ye any thyng doo in this mater (908011)

'if you do anything in this matter'

(23) or ellis if ony thyng he haf to do; (PL629018)

'or else if he has anything to do'

Notice that the shifted objects in the above examples are pronouns; that is, they are not full lexical NPs. B. & J.: (206-7) point out that "pronouns shift" should be analyzed as a process of head movement or cliticization, not as an instance of OS.

The following examples pose more serious problems. They are the INNPs in object position which occur between modals and main verbs.

(24) I may non other remedy hauyn but streyth to presoun; (436015)

'I may have none other remedy but straight to prison;'

(25) but he cowde no pepoll gete (654034)

'but he could get no people'

These are full lexical, but indefinite NPs. If we assume the basic order SVO in PL, these object NPs shift leftward even if the auxiliary is



present in these examples. These facts distinguish them from Scandinavian OS. I guess that some sort of scrambling (e.g. A'-movement within IP) may be operative in these examples, but I do not have any ready answer at present. In addition the question arises how this shift of INNPs is related to NETC. If this object shift is derived by scrambling, NETC may be derived in the same way. What we need is a further research on the precise nature of scrambling in PL, especially in view of the following rightward movement of the object.

(26) and he vesaged so the mater ther that (460003)

'and he visaged (= regarded) the matter there so that'

#### Footnotes

- 1 See Payne (1985 : 204-5) for its definition.
- 2 The Paston Letters are the collection of the letters written by and to the Paston family in the 15th century.
- 3 The first three numbers denote the letter number, and the rest the line number of the Davis' edition.
- 4 Spellings are modernized.

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