Particle Verbs and Word Order Alternation in Early New High German

Alexandra Belkind
School of Linguistics, HSE Moscow

Particle verbs are generally considered to behave as a subclass complex predicates, i.e. they can be separated from the base verb and fronted, in German they can appear separately from the base verb in final position under certain circumstances and in some German dialects they appear at the left periphery of the verbal complex (see e.g. Müller 2002). However, not all particle verbs have these properties, and the difference in their syntactic behavior has received much attention from the formal grammarians. Two following aspects of particle verbs build the main field of research: the inner structure of the verb-particle complex and its syntactic realization in the concrete Germanic languages.

Early New High German shows huge variation of possible surface word orders in sentences with particle verbs. Middle German dialects from the period between 1450-1500 were chosen for the analysis, which allows further comparison with other dialects of ENHG as well as a diachronic comparison. The aim of this study is to consider if this variation is due to different underlying basic word orders or can be reduced to other parameters, such as e.g. focus, different settings of V2 parameter or syntagm type.

There can be distinguished two main approaches as to how to analyze the inner structure verb-particle complex, which are the small clause approach (e.g. Vikner 2013) and the complex head approach (e.g. Neeleman 2002, see Wurmbrand 2000 for further references). However, Wurmbrand (2000) tries to reconcile these two analyses, arguing that particle verbs can have both structures, depending on their semantic characteristics. She argues that particle verbs with a transparent semantic configuration have the small clause structure, when particle e.g. assign theta-roles to the complements of VP, while idiomatic and semi-idiomatic particle verbs have a complex head structure. In her study she differs between transparent and idiomatic particle-verb combination. The parameter of transparency in this case is equal to compositionality, while idiomatic complexes are those, where both elements have lost their initial semantics. This distinction is not strict, so Wurmbrand discriminates a subclass of semi-idiomatic combinations. These are combinations, where one of the elements – mainly a verb – keeps it semantics, but the second element has lost it and cannot be treated as compositions.

The most obvious difference in the syntactic behavior of particle verbs among the Germanic languages are multiple positions of a particle in SVO languages, as English or Swedish, and particle's adjacent position to the verb or its trace in SOV languages, as Dutch and Modern German. These differences does not affect the inner structure of the verb-particle complex, which remains the same, and can be reduced to different settings of the OV/VO parameter, as was shown by Neeleman (2002). In his paper, however, he does not look at word order as S V Part O in the main clause, which to the best of my knowledge does not appear in standard varieties of Modern Dutch and German, but appears at earlier stages of German. Wurmbrand argues that such word order is a result of scrambling and allowed only for transparent verb-particle complexes, which have small clause structure, but is forbidden for idiomatic particle verbs (Wurmbrand 2000).

Early New High German (ENHG) has a wide variation of surface word order both in main and subordinate clauses. As described by Sapp there are five possible word orders with an auxiliary in a subordinate clause. However, it is also assumed that the underlying word order for subordinate clauses is SOV (e.g. Sapp 2005, Fuß 2018). Main clause structure is also heterogeneous (Schmidt 2013, Frühneuhochdeutsch Grammatik 1993), but the underlying word order doesn't differ and is also SOV. As for word order alternations in

subordinate clauses, Sapp argues that the main factor, which leads to Aux V, is focus – both contrastive and new information. Besides this he identifies five other parameters: separable prefixes, i.e. verb particles, clause and syntagm type, three-verb clusters, argument postposition, and coordination. (Sapp 2005). In his statistic-based study of extraposition in ENHG Sapp concludes that following factors are most favoring extraposition: type of extraposed element (clause, PP, NP, adjunct or argument), heaviness of extraposed constituent, focus – both new information and contrastive – and genre of a text. Dialect also seems to play a role, but this parameter needs further research (Sapp 2014).

All three dialects, studied here, i.e. Thuringian, Hessian ad Ripuarian, have Part V order in subordinate clauses and in passive or perfect in main clauses, which supports the assumption about the underlying SOV order (see Sapp 2005, Fuß 2018). The order of Part and V in infinitive phrases and participles follows the pattern, characteristic for Modern German, i.e. Part+zu/ge-+V.

The extraposition of an object after an auxiliary/modals is attested both in subordinate and in main clauses. The order S V O Part or S Aux/Mod O Part V is attested in all three dialects, but even on the basis of the three texts there is a clear dialect variation attested. The clearest contrast is between Thuringian and Ripuarian, because both texts are chronicles and the genre parameter, which is important for extraposition, is unified. Extraposition of a direct object out of particle-verb phrase in Thuringian is rather rare and regulated by new information focus:

(1) Dornach   sante her uss eyne tubin ...
    After that sent he   out a   dove ...
    Then he sent out a dove ...

(2) ... unde dornoch aber ober sobin tage do   sante her die tubin uss ...
       and after that but over seven days then sent he the dove out
       And then after seven days he sent out the dove...

In Ripuarian on the contrary such extraposition is attested more often and extraposed can be even direct objects, which are not characterized as new information or contrastive focus:

(3) Disse Enos began anzoroiffen de name̅ des here.

In Hessian S V O Part is the most frequent word order for a main clause. But the order S V Part O is also quite common in Hessian. Genre of the text is not a chronicle, but a medicine treatise. However, this is not very likely to have a strong effect on the rate of extrapositions, because both genres are nearer to written and not to spoken language. Postposed direct objects in Hessian have definite article, but to my mind can be considered as a weak contrastive focus.

(4) Disser same drybet vß   die bőse flecma.
    This   seed drive   out the bad phlegm
    This seed drives out the bad phlegm (from the body).

Note that the postposed direct object was found in my data only with transparent particle-verb combinations, with some exceptions in Ripuarian. However this fact needs further investigation with bigger amount of text because of a disbalance between transparent and idiomatic (counted together with semi-idiomatic) particle-verb combinations.

For Thurigian double object constructions can have S V O Part O order.

(5) Die Chaldei,   zu den gezeiten betten   sie   das fuer an   vor got.
    The Chaldeans   to this times   worship-PAST they the fire Part for god
    At this time the Chaldeans worshiped the fire as a god.

In Ripuarian the order S Part V was attested, but only with idiomatic particle verb and in a very ambiguous context.

(6) Vnd dairumb   angemirckt   dye groisse ernsticheyt.
    And that's why Part-ge-note-IMP the big   seriousness

Ad that's why you should not the seriousness.

Ripuarian has, besides S V Part O, postposed S in focus position: Adv Aux Part V S.

(7) Want vp dye zijt   is vpgedain   dye portz des paradijss.
     Until up the time is Part-ge-do the gate   the paradise
     Until that time the gates of the paradise are closed.

At the current sate of research it seems that three factors are important for word order alternation in sentences with particle verbs − a type of a postposed object, focus and dialect. To the smaller grade it seems that transparency or idiomaticity of particle-verb complex also plays a role at least in Hessian. The latter factor is relevant for main clauses and more complex, while the first two more universal.

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