On the Status of *ne* in Old English Prose and Poetry*

Phillip Wallage

University of Manchester

Abstract

This paper examines the evidence for two types of *ne* in Old English (OE) and Early Middle English (EME), in relation to the changes in negation known as Jespersen's Cycle (Jespersen 1917). Van Kemenade (2000) claims that there are two types of *ne* at successive stages of Jespersen's Cycle. She posits two forms of *ne* at stage one of Jespersen's Cycle: a head and a [spec,CP] operator. The operator is reanalysed as a head at stage two of Jespersen's Cycle. Van Kemenade argues that loss of operator *ne* accounts for change in patterns of negative inversion which correlate with the introduction of secondary negators (*na, not*) under Jespersen's Cycle. I show that changes in negative inversion are independent of the introduction of these secondary negators. This undermines van Kemenade's motivation for operator *ne* in Old English. Finally, I argue that assuming *ne* is an operator located in [spec,CP] is also problematic for the derivation of V-to-C movement in the Old English poem *Beowulf*.

1 Introduction: the issues

This paper will address the syntactic status of the negator *ne* in Old English prose, and in the Old English poem *Beowulf*. Particular attention will be given to the question of whether the syntactic status of *ne* is the same in the two genres, and whether it remains the same throughout the entire Old English (800-1150CE) and Early Middle English.*

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(1150-1250CE) periods. The Old English prose data come from the York-Helsinki Parsed Corpus of Old English prose (Taylor et al. 2002). The Early Middle English data come from the the PPCME2 (Kroch and Taylor 2000). The Old English poetry data come from the York-Helsinki Parsed Corpus of Old English Poetry (Pintzuk and Plag 2001).

There are two lexical items ne in Old English: a negative conjunction (1), and a sentential negator (2).

(1) Ne Suere hethen men wese ne diden pan hi diden.
   Nor never heathen men worse NEG did than they did.
   'Nor did heathen men do worse than they did.'
   (CMPETERB,66.463)

(2) Ic gesese ne maeg.
   I see NEG can.
   'I cannot see.'
   (coasive,+-ALS_[Swithun];204.4357)

I will discuss the syntactic status of the sentential negator ne in Old English and Early Middle English prose and in the Old English poem Beowulf. This paper will address the syntactic status of ne in the light of proposals by van Kemenade (2000) which make reference to two forms of ne in Old English negative main clauses: a head or prefix on the finite verb, and a phrase in a specifier position.

It seems that V-movement to C, with the negative element in [spec,CP], entails that ne is reduced/procliticised to the finite verb. I hypothesize that...this cliticization is phonological, which means that, although ne is a prefix/proclitic, it does represent a constituent in [Spec,CP] ... At the stage of the language represented by Beowulf, the negative element seems to be undergoing a reanalysis from an independent constituent, an adverb, as far as we can tell, to becoming a functional head incorporated with the finite verb.

( van Kemenade 2000: 63)

I aim to determine whether the analysis of Old English needs to make reference to both these forms or whether one is sufficient to account for the distribution of ne in Old and Middle English. I will discuss two changes affecting ne in Early Middle English main clauses: change in the position of ne, and change in the frequency with which a secondary negator (na, not) appears alongside ne. The introduction of a secondary negator results from Jespersen's Cycle. Is the loss of clause-initial placement of ne+finite verb (NegV1) a related to Jespersen's Cycle? Van Kemenade's (2000) analysis of negative initial clauses and Jespersen's Cycle supposes a particular relationship between the two changes which I will subject to empirical scrutiny. She argues that initial ne is a [spec,CP] operator, whereas her analysis of the agreement which holds between sentential negators ne...na/not at stage two of Jespersen's Cycle requires ne to be a head (Neg) and na/not a [spec,NEG] operator. It follows that negative initial clauses cannot be derived in the same way at stages one and two of Jespersen's Cycle.

Van Kemenade appeals to the Neg-criterion (3) to derive both NegV1 and bipartite ne...na/not negation. She analyses NegV1 as spec-head agreement between XP ne and a finite verb (van Kemenade 2000: 62). At stage two of Jespersen's Cycle, spec-head agreement between [spec,NEG] na/not and Neg ne satisfies the Neg-criterion at NegP.

(3) The Neg-criterion:
   a. Each Neg X must be in a spec-head relationship with a Neg operator.
   b. Each Neg operator must be in a spec-head relationship with a Neg X.
   c. NEG-operator: a NEG phrase in a scope position.
   d. Scope position: a left-Peripheral A'-position (i.e. XP-adjoined or Spec).
   (Hasegeman 1995: 106)

As a scope based condition on the interpretation of sentential negation, the Neg-criterion cannot apply twice in the clause, at CP and NegP. Once na/not become negative operators in [spec,NEG] the Neg-criterion is satisfied at NegP by spec-head agreement between na/not and the negative head ne. Hence the Neg-criterion cannot be invoked again to motivate NegV1 at the CP level. Van Kemenade's analysis of NegV1 relies on ne being a [spec,CP] operator which triggers verb movement to satisfy the Neg-criterion. NegV1 can only be derived under this analysis when ne is in [spec,CP]. In these cases, the Neg-criterion cannot also hold at NegP. The changes which arise out of van Kemenade's analysis amount to a change in the position at which the Neg-criterion is satisfied, from CP to NegP. This change is contingent on reanalysis of ne from [spec,CP] operator to negative head (Neg) proclitic on the finite verb. Loss of operator status for ne entails the development of na/not as new negative operators in positions lower than CP. Na/not take over the operator function previously held by clause initial [spec,CP] ne. As negative operators na/not trigger the Neg-criterion, but in a lower position than the operator ne does. There are two issues arising from van Kemenade's analysis. The first is whether there is sufficient evidence to justify the analysis of clause initial nea as a [spec,CP] operator at stage one of Jespersen's Cycle. The second is whether the Neg-criterion approach is sufficient to deal with NegV1 and its loss in early English. This paper will be mainly concerned with the first of these issues, but it will become clear that my analysis impacts on the second issue as well. At first sight, van Kemenade's analysis might be taken to entail complementary distribution between NegV1 and bipartite ne...na/not negation, or at least two different derivations of negative inversion at successive stages of Jespersen's

1 Although it is not clear in what sense the verb is negative. It is not morphologically marked as negative.
Cycle.

I will show that the distribution of NegV1 predicted by van Kemenade's analysis is not borne out. NegV1 is not restricted to clauses in which ne is potentially a [spec,CP] element. I will show how the interaction of NegV1 and Jespersen's Cycle undermines the motivation for distinguishing XP ne and X ne in the classical Old English prose of the 10th-11th centuries. These data are problematic for a Neg-criterion based approach to NegV1 and Jespersen's Cycle. I will then propose an alternative account based on feature-checking which can accommodate the apparent independence of NegV1 and Jespersen's Cycle.

The distribution of ne in the prose will be compared with the distribution of ne in the early OE poem Beowulf. A first issue is whether ne is a syntactic head (X) or a syntactic phrase (XP). A further issue relating to poetry is how negative initial clauses are derived and how this derivation relates to negative initial clauses in the prose. I will make some remarks here, but a full discussion of the poetry will have to await a future paper.

The structure of the paper will be as follows. First, I will discuss widely accepted positional evidence for head ne in Old English. I will examine van Kemenade's account and its predictions concerning the interaction of NegV1 and Jespersen's Cycle in detail. Then, I will show that the frequency of NegV1 is the same in clauses with unambiguously head ne as in the ambiguous clauses. I will then show that the correlation between loss of NegV1 and Jespersen's Cycle is too weak to be of much use in accounting for the loss of NegV1. I will contrast evidence of phrase ne in the Old English prose with evidence from the Old English poem Beowulf. Finally, I will propose alternative analyses of the Old English data on the grounds that the Neg-criterion approach to the distribution of negatives in Old English which van Kemenade (2000) proposes does not account for the interrelationship of NegV1 and Jespersen's Cycle.

2 The distribution of ne

2.1 The positions available to ne

The predominant position for ne in main clauses throughout the Old English period is clause initial position (4a)-(4b). Negated finite verbs precede subject pronouns, indicating that V-to-C movement has taken place (Pintzuk 1999; van Kemenade 1997, 2000).

(4) a. Ne brohte we nām þing þysum middaneardæ.  
   NEG brought we no thing to this world.  
   'We did not bring anything to this world.'  
   (coca-thelmal,+ACHom_1_18.332.188.3595)

b. Ne forgif ic eow swa swa ðæs middaneard forgif.  
   NEG forgive I you as the world forgives.

The clause structure I assume for Old English main clauses is given in the tree in (7), and follows Haeberli (2001, 2002). Under this analysis, Old English has separate Tense and Agreement heads within INFL. In positive declarative main clauses without an initial operator, the finite verb moves to Agr. So, in clauses with non-subject topics, finite verbs typically precede full NP subjects (5) and follow pronoun subjects (6). The split-INFL analysis captures the different position of subject pronouns (in [spec,AgrP]) and full NP subjects (in [spec,TP]) relative to the finite verb in Agr.

(5) Pinae meder gehoelop þin halga geoleah.  
   Your mother helped your holy faith.  
   'Your holy faith helped your mother.'  
   (Aelfric's Lives of Saints, I,212.28, Haeberli (2002: 245, ex.1b)

(6) þet þu meaht swile sweatele ongitan.  
   That you can very easily understand.  
   'You can very easily understand that.'  
   (Boethius, 88.14, Haeberli (2002: 245, ex.2a)

(7) $\begin{array}{c}
   \text{CP} \\
   \text{C} \\
   \text{pronoun subject} \\
   \text{finite V1} \\
   \text{NP subject} \\
   \text{T} \\
   \text{VP}
\end{array}$

Many clauses with negated finite verbs do not show this asymmetry between NP subjects and pronoun subjects, indicating the finite verb has moved to a functional head higher than the position of the pronoun subject ([spec,AgrP]). Hence these clauses (4a) have V-to-C movement (8). The finite verb is higher than subject pronouns and subject NPs. Van Kemenade (2000) makes the point that clause initial ne is ambiguous between a prefix on the finite verb in C as I have it in (8) or a phrasal [spec,CP] element.

'I do not forgive you as the world forgives.'  
(coca-thelmal,+AHom_10:15.1413)
verb, which is seen irrespective of the position of the finite verb after verb-movement:

In the Old English found in the prose texts of the ninth and tenth centuries, sentential negation is dominantly expressed by the negative marker ne, which immediately precedes and is often procliticised to the finite verb, whatever the position of the latter……. This is sufficient motivation for regarding ne as the (incorporating) head of NegP, allowing us to see the positional co-variance of ne with the finite verb as an instance of head incorporation.

(van Kemenade 2000: 57)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clause</th>
<th>ne adjacent to VI</th>
<th>ne elsewhere</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
<th>% adjacent to VI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Main</td>
<td>7492</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7504</td>
<td>99.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subordinate</td>
<td>7988</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7995</td>
<td>99.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: The distribution of ne relative to the finite verb in the OE prose corpus.

Ne is adjacent to the finite verb whether the finite verb is in Agr (11), in T (12), or in C (13), and irrespective of the headness of INFL (Pintzuk 1999). Examples of 1-medial and 1-final main clauses are shown in (11a) and (11b). (12a) is an example of an 1-medial subordinate clause, (12b) an example of an 1-final subordinate clause.

(11) a. Ne me ēg hit nu swa hraðe aśingan.
    I NEG can it now so quickly sing.
    (coheoth,Bo:39.127.29.2536)

b. Ne geseon ne ēg.
    I see NEG can.
    'I cannot see.'
    (coasive,+ALS__[Swithun]:204.4357)

(12) a. Gif þu nēle me ofeselan, asend me to þam casere…
    If you NEG-intend me to-kill, send me to the emperor…
    'If you do not intend to kill me, send me to the emperor…'
    (coasive,+ALS__[Julian_and_Basilissa]:207.1066)

b. Pæt he deap þrowigan ne scie.
    That he death endure NEG shall.
    'That he shall not endure death.'
    (coverhorn,HomS_24__[Scragn.Verc_1]:115.121)

(l) Ucan ne forsetan gæt. Þæs hæc...
    Let NEG neglect any longer the book...
    'Let us neglect the book no longer…'
    (consilb,Soll_1:50.14.645)
Thus, ne occurs in three positions: adjacent to a finite verb which is in Agr, adjacent to a finite verb which is in T and adjacent to a finite verb which is in C. Is ne the same lexical item, with the same syntactic status in all these positions?

The position of ne is contingent on head (V-) movement at least when V moves to Agr or T. Therefore ne must be a head or a prefix on the finite verb rather than the head or specifier of a functional projection NegP whose position in the clause is invariant.

This analysis adequately describes examples of ne adjacent to finite verbs in Agr or T. It could be extended to deal with clause initial ne+finite verb, but further analysis is required to provide a rationale for movement of the finite verb to C in these instances. Indeed, such rationale is required by van Kemenade’s analysis to deal with negative inversion at stage two of Jespersen’s Cycle. This paper aims to determine whether movement of ne+Vfinite should be extended to stage one of Jespersen’s Cycle to account for negative inversion at that stage in the same way as at later stages.

3 Previous accounts of negative inversion (van Kemenade 1997, 2000)

Van Kemenade (1997, 2000) observes two patterns of negative inversion in early English. She notes that OE negative inversions typically result in clause initial ne. There are few instances in the OE prose where non-subject topics co-occur with negative inversion. However, she observes that clauses in which topicalisation and negative inversion co-occur become more frequent in Late Old English and Early Middle English (14).

(14) þet ne seide he noth.
That NEG said he not.
‘He did not say that.’
(Kentish Sermons 214.26, van Kemenade (2000: 65,ex.22a))

It is not clear exactly how the second type of inversion involving a topic is derived. These clauses are not amenable to analysis under the Neg-criterion in the same way van Kemenade proposes for clauses with initial ne, in which she claims that ne is a [spec,CP] operator triggering verb movement to C (15).

(15) [cp ne [c Vfinite [ Agrp subject pronoun ...]]]
In (14), ne follows a DP which occupies the [spec,CP] position. It follows that ne is a head because there is no specifier position between [spec,CP] and the finite verb for ne to occupy (16).

(16) [cp NP [c ne+Vfinite [ Agrp subject pronoun ...]]]
In (15), V-to-C movement cannot be motivated under the Neg-criterion in the same way that van Kemenade motivates inversion following clause initial ne. Whilst the [spec,CP] element in these clauses can be negative, it does not have to be. In order to derive inversion in these clauses van Kemenade is forced to propose a different mechanism. She claims that the availability of this new type of inversion is linked to diachronic change.

Van Kemenade (2000) seeks to link the increased appearance of topics in clauses with inversion to a structural difference between negative clauses in Old and Early Middle English. For van Kemenade (2000), the syntactic status of ne is different at the two periods. In Old English ne is a phrase in [spec,CP], hence no position is available to host topics. In Early Middle English, ne is a clitic on the finite verb in C, hence the [spec,CP] position is available for topics. This difference requires different inversion strategies to apply to the two types of ne (15)-(16). In (15), ne is necessarily clause initial. In (16) it does not have to be. Therefore one might reasonably expect the frequency of NegV1 to differ according to the derivation of negative inversion. Van Kemenade analyses inversion following [spec,CP] under the Neg-criterion, but it is not clear from van Kemenade’s account how inversion of C ne+Vfinite (16) is to be derived, except that the Neg-criterion cannot be invoked.

Van Kemenade (2000, 67) relates this change in the status of ne to changes under Jespersen’s Cycle (Jespersen 1917). The three stages overlap considerably in the history of English and are subject to a great deal of variation. However, in broad terms, Stage one is typical of Old English (850-1150), stage two is typical of Early Middle English (1150-1350) and stage three is typical of Late Middle English (1350-1550).

Jespersen’s Cycle

- Stage 1: Negation is expressed by one negative marker (Old English ne).

(17) Ne forgifte ic eow swa swe des middaneard forgif0.
NEG forgive I you as the world forgives.
‘I do not forgive you as the world forgives.’
(coaelhom, +Ahom_10:15.1413)
The Old English *ne...na/na* pattern (22) is interpreted by van Kemenade (1999, 2000) as the Old English equivalent of Middle English *ne...not*. For van Kemenade (1999, 2000), *ne...na* and *ne...not* represent the same dependency under the Neg-criterion at stage two of Jespersen’s Cycle. The development of more than one secondary negator is also attested in French (Roberts and Roussou 2003: 156), so it is not unique to English.

(22) a. Ne hec he us na leornanc heofonas to wyrccena. NEG ordered he us not learn heavens to make.
   ‘He did not order us to learn to make the heavens.’

b. Ne sæde na ure Drihten þat he mid cynehelme oððe mid purpuran NEG said not our Lord that he with diadem or in purple gescryd, cuman wolde to us.
   ‘Our Lord did not say that he wanted to come to us with a diadem or clothed in purple.’
   (Ælfric *Lines of Saints* XXXI.762, van Kemenade (2000: 64,ex14b))

Van Kemenade’s interpretation of Old English *na* is not universally accepted (for example see van Bergen (2003)). However, I will adopt van Kemenade’s view of *na* for the purposes of this paper in order to examine the empirical consequences of her assumptions.

By linking the increase in clauses like (14) with the transition to stage two of Jesperen’s Cycle, van Kemenade (2000) is arguing for a reanalysis of *ne away* from a phrase in [spec,CP] to a negative head Neg which projects NegP, with *na/not* as a negative operator in specifier position. Therefore NegP is introduced into clauses as a position at which the Neg-criterion (Haegeman 1995) can be satisfied. The position of NegP is indicated by the position of the operator *na* or *not* in [spec,NegP]. The head *ne* is criticalised onto the finite verb during the syntactic derivation as the verb moves through Neg. In clauses without the secondary negators *ne, not* there is no evidence for the head Neg or the functional projection NegP. So the introduction of secondary negators marks the innovation of the functional projection NegP.

Van Kemenade’s analysis uses the change from XP *ne* to head *ne* to drive the introduction of a new negative operator at stage two of Jesperen’s Cycle. Jesperen’s Cycle, as manifest in Old or Middle English, does not necessarily imply a change from phrase *ne* to head *ne*. Previous approaches to Jesperen’s Cycle did not invoke an XP>X change for *ne*. For Frisch (1997), *ne* is a negative head at both stages. Under Frisch’s (1997) account, the difference between stages one and two of Jesperen’s Cycle is the form of the operator which is in spec-head agreement with *ne*. At stage one it is null. At stage two it is overt not. His account does not link change in the form of the operator to change in its
position. This account differs from van Kemenade’s as it does not implicate weakening of ne from XP->X in the grammaticalisation of not and does not require XP ne.

In order to reconcile van Kemenade’s analysis of initial ne with non-initial ne whose position is covariant with the finite verb (see §2), there must be two forms of ne at stage one of Jespersen’s Cycle, one a phrase (clause initially in [spec,CP]), the other a head which is part of the finite verbal morphology, whether a syntactic clitic or a morphological affix present in the lexical entry for the finite verb. She acknowledges the need for a negative head to account for the distribution of non-initial ne, arguing that ne in low positions develops via prior reanalysis of ne from operator to head of NegP. Discussion of the adjacency of ne and the finite verb (§2.2) demonstrates that there is no evidence for this reanalysis in my Old English prose data. Such evidence might take the form of independence of the position of ne and the position of the finite verb. For all but 19/1449 instances, the position of ne is contingent on verb movement. There are two types of ne available at stage one of Jespersen’s Cycle, one a head and the other a phrase. Many examples of ne at stage one of Jespersen’s Cycle are best analysed as clitic on the finite verb or functional head (11a)-(13a). These comprise all non-initial ne which are adjacent to the finite verb. In these instances there is no evidence that head ne arises out of Jespersen’s Cycle in the way van Kemenade proposes. Only clause initial ne (13b), and those examples of ne not adjacent to the finite verb (2) are structurally ambiguous between XP and X, and then only at stage one of Jespersen’s Cycle. All instances of ne in the ne...ne or ne...not constructions must be heads if bipartite negation is analysed as spec-head agreement within NegP.

The reanalysis of ne in clause initial position discussed by van Kemenade has the effect of eliminating a phrasal option for ne in which it is an operator. It is not the only means by which the head ne [Neg] comes into existence. Change under Jespersen’s Cycle removes the structural option to analyse clause initial ne as a phrase occupying [spec,CP]. Van Kemenade’s analysis fails to take adequate account of the progress of Jespersen’s Cycle in clauses where ne does not invert with a subject pronoun. In these clauses ne is not an operator at stage one of Jespersen’s Cycle, in the sense required by Haegeman’s Neg Criterion. Distributional evidence indicates that ne in these clauses is a head, hence the introduction of ne/not as a negative operator cannot be a consequence of loss of operator status for ne as van Kemenade proposes for negative inversion clauses.  

Some predictions follow from van Kemenade’s analysis of clause initial ne. If van Kemenade (2000) is right, there should be visible change in the distribution of ne between stages one and two of Jespersen’s Cycle. Different structural analyses for ne are available at the two stages which necessitate different derivations of negative inversion at the two stages. She asserts that the increase of clauses like (14) is one such change. I will argue that the correlation between this structural change, and Jespersen’s Cycle does not hold (§5). I will first show that the overall distribution of ne+finite verb in initial and non-initial positions does not differ between stage one and stage two of Jespersen’s Cycle (§4). Differences are expected as van Kemenade’s account requires different structural options and syntactic processes to derive clause initial ne at the first and second stages of Jespersen’s Cycle. Recall that NegV1 is derived by spec-head agreement between the negative operator ne and a finite verb at stage one of Jespersen’s Cycle, but by movement of a negated finite verb ne+Vfinite to C at stage two. At stage two of Jespersen’s Cycle, negative inversion does not necessarily result in NegV1 as it does at stage one.

There are two potential derivations for clause initial ne at stage one: ne as the head Neg, clitic on V-to-C movement and as ne as [spec,CP] triggering verb movement under the Neg-criterion. At stage two there is only one derivation. ne is the head Neg. The operator ne in [spec,CP] is eliminated. Change under Jespersen’s Cycle presupposes loss of a phrasal option for ne. This implies a syntactic change in clause initial position for which there should be some evidence. A higher frequency of clause initial ne might be expected at stage two than at stage one of Jespersen’s Cycle.

4 Independence of the position of ne and change under Jespersen’s Cycle

This section will examine the frequency of clause initial ne at successive stages of Jespersen’s Cycle. I will show that the frequency of clause initial ne is the same at stages one and two of Jespersen’s Cycle. This similarity is not expected if change under Jespersen’s Cycle entails a change in the structural means to derive clause initial ne. Change to the position of ne is independent of Jespersen’s Cycle. The two changes intersect, but have no apparent influence on each other. For the purpose of the argument here, I will consider both Old English ne...na and Middle English ne...not as examples of stage two bipartite negation. Even if the Old English ne...na pattern is not counted as bipartite sentential negation (see van Bergen (2003)), my conclusions still stand in respect of Early Middle English ne...not.
I will examine the incidence of pattern (23) which has clause initial ne in CP. This is the context where the status of ne is indeterminate between [spec,CP] and a prefix on the finite verb in C. Confining the investigation to ne+Vf preceding a subject pronoun ensures that all clause initial ne are in CP rather than in lower positions. The subject pronoun marks the boundary between CP and lower positions (Pintzuk 1999; Kroch and Taylor 1997; van Kemnade 1997, 2000; Haeberli 2002). I exclude second conjuncts from the investigation as these typically do not show movement of the finite verb to C in clauses with ne.

The order (23) is compared with non-initial ne+Vf in which ne is the unambiguously proclitic head Neg (24)- (25).

(23) ne+Vf - su pro ...
(24) Topic - ne+Vf - su pro ...
(25) Su pro - ne+Vf ...

The distinction is between clause initial ne where there is a potential specifier position to host phrasal ne, and other instances of ne adjacent to a finite verb where there are no suitable specifier positions to host phrasal ne. In these positions ne is unambiguously a head. Structurally ambiguous phrase/ head ne is distinguished from structurally unambiguous head ne. For further discussion of this distinction between initial and non-initial ne, see §2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Ne+Vf Initial</th>
<th>ne+Vf elsewhere</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>850-950</td>
<td>308 (65%)</td>
<td>145 (35%)</td>
<td>453</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>950-1050</td>
<td>1020 (60%)</td>
<td>445 (31%)</td>
<td>1465</td>
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<tr>
<td>1050-1150</td>
<td>253 (55%)</td>
<td>136 (35%)</td>
<td>389</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1150-1250</td>
<td>120 (49%)</td>
<td>123 (51%)</td>
<td>243</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: The distribution of ne is in initial and non-initial positions in OE non-conjoined main clauses with subject pronouns.

The distribution of ne across initial and non-initial contexts remains stable throughout OE (850-1150), but differs in early ME (1150-1250). The frequency of (23) differs significantly between the period 1050-1150 and the period 1150-1250 under a χ² test: χ²=11.2, p≤.001, 1 degree of freedom. Differences between the other periods are not significant. The negative initial pattern (23) does not begin to be lost in Old English, as van Kemnade (2000: 67) asserts.

The figures in Table 2 include all non-conjoined main clauses with negated finite verbs and subject pronouns. However, in order to isolate negative inversion from other types of inversion productive in Old and Middle English, we need to exclude clauses in which other derivations for NegV1 are potentially available. Inversion is productive in imperative (26) and subjunctive clauses (27). Verb-initial patterns are common in both negative and non-negative imperatives and subjunctives, indicating that the derivation of inversion in subjunctives and imperatives is independent of polarity.

(26) Drihten, ne loca þu na to minum synan.
    ‘Lord, NEG look you not to my sins.’

(27) SoNices gif Abraham ne ongate Lazurum, ne sprece he nemigra þinga
    Truly if Abraham NEG understand Lazarus, NEG spoke he in no way
    swa to þan weligan me...
    so to the prosperous people...
    ‘Truly, if Abraham did not understand Lazarus, he ought not have spoken so to
    the prosperous people...’

Therefore, verbs which are potentially imperative or subjunctive are excluded from the discussion of negative inversion in this section. The verbs excluded include those morphologically marked as imperative (26) or subjunctive (27), and also verbs whose morphology is ambiguous between an indicative and subjunctive interpretation (28).

(28) Ne forgiwe ic eow swa swa des midnaethear forgiwst.
    NEG forgive I you as the world forgives.
    ‘I do not forgive you as the world forgives.’

In order to make sure that inversion in the clauses examined is negative inversion the database is restricted to verbs which have unambiguous morphological marking for indicative mood (29). The frequency of inversion in this subset of clauses is given in Table 3.

(29) Næfæt þu nane mihte ogean me.
    NEG-have you no strength against me.
    ‘You have no strength against me.’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Ne+Vf Initial</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>% Ne+Vf initial</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>850-950</td>
<td>146 (58%)</td>
<td>107 (42%)</td>
<td>253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>950-1050</td>
<td>351 (54%)</td>
<td>300 (46%)</td>
<td>651</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1050-1150</td>
<td>67 (51%)</td>
<td>64 (49%)</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1150-1250</td>
<td>17 (35%)</td>
<td>31 (65%)</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: The distribution of ne in in initial and non-initial positions in OE non-conjoined main clauses with subject pronouns, and morphologically marked indicative verbs only.
Next, I distinguish the positions of ne at stage one (32)-(33) and stage two (34)-(35) of Jespersen’s Cycle. At stage 2, the secondary negator for Old English (850-1150) is na/no (van Kemenade 1999, 2000). For Early Middle English (1150-1250) it is not (Haebel and Ingham 2003). Instances of na/not which are potentially used as adverbial modifiers (30b) or quantifiers (30c), or with constituent scope (30d) are not counted as secondary negators.

(30) a. Nis hit him no swa lange alefed swa þe þi þiþ.
NEG is it him not so long granted as you think.
‘it is not granted to him for so long as you think.’
(coboeth,Bo:38.117.6.2330)

b. We ne durran gelengcan na leng þysne tahah.
WE NEG dare lengthen no longer this text.
‘We dare not make this text any longer.’
(coaelhom, +AHom._6:367.1053)

c. Ne sind Codes frynd na feawa.
NEG are God’s friends not few.
‘God’s friends are not few.’
(cocathom₂, +ACHom₂₁:40:301.58.6853)

d. Nis þis na gessel be manna sawlim, ac be manna lichaman...
NEG is this not sated by men’s souls but by men’s bodies...
‘This is not sated by men’s souls but by men’s bodies...’
(coaselive, +ALS[Ash_Wed]:27.2717)

Contexts in which ne co-occurs with negative phrases such as negative NPs (31a) or adverbs (31b) are also excluded from Table 4. Frisch (1997) argues for a distinction between ne in multiple negation and ne as a sentential negator at stages one and two of Jespersen’s Cycle. Without further work on the syntax of multiple negation, it is unclear exactly how ne in multiple negation fits into Jespersen’s Cycle or what the syntactic status is of ne in multiple negation. These examples are not crucial to my argument so I will leave them aside.

(31) a. Ne brohte we nan þing þysum middanearde.
NEG brought we no thing to this world.
‘We did not bring anything to this world.’
(cocathom₁, +ACHom₁₁:18.323.188.3959)

b. Ne haft þu nœrsæ sceafadsnesse on þe ær ðu nuʒ know en
NEG have you never true humility in you before you can suffer
alle harmes... all injuries...
‘You never have true humility before you can suffer all injuries...’
(CMVICES1,59.641)

This leaves the following types of examples under examination in Table 4. (32) and (33) are the orders compared at stage one of Jespersen’s Cycle. (34) and (35) are the orders compared at stage two of Jespersen’s Cycle. The two stages of Jespersen’s Cycle overlap during Old and Middle English as part of an ongoing change. They are separated here for the purposes of analysis.

(32) Ne spryð he of him sylfon.
NEG speaks he of him self.
‘He does not speak of himself.’
(cowsgesp,Jn₁[WSCP]:16.13.7081)

(33) Is gesoon ne mag.
I see NEG can.
‘I cannot see.’
(coasleve, +ALS[Swithun]:204.4357)

(34) Ne leoda na se mann be hlafe annum.
NEG lives NA the man by bread alone.
‘Man does not live by bread alone.’
(CathHolm, +ACHom₁₁:11:267:50.2038)

(35) Du ne milt heom na of þissere stowe ledan.
You NEG can him NA from this place lead.
‘You cannot lead him from this place.’
(corood,LS₅[InvCrosNap]:542.573)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>ne Initial</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%ne...na/ne...not Initial</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Initial</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%ne...na/ne...not Initial</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>850-950</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>950-1050</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>440</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>288</td>
<td>530</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1050-1150</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1150-1250</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: The position of ne when ne is unsupported and when it co-occurs with OE na or ME not. Morphologically indicative verbs only.

In Table 4, the position of ne when it is unsupported is contrasted with the position of ne accompanied by OE na or ME not. Throughout Old English periods (to 1150) we see that the frequency of NegV1 is actually higher in clauses with ne than in clauses without na, contrary to the predictions of van Kemenade’s analysis. Table 4 indicates that the use of secondary negators na/not is independent of the position of ne in the clause in a way that does not fit with van Kemenade’s account, which asserts that NegV1 and the secondary negators na/not are structurally incompatible.

Early Middle English (1150-1250) does not show any link between the loss of NegV1 and the introduction of not. not and NegV1 co-occur. I draw two conclusions from
this distribution. First, NegV1 and bipartite ne...na/not negation must be structurally compatible and able to co-occur. Therefore, deriving NegV1 and ne...na/ne...not as different instantiations of the Neg-criterion does not capture the independence of these two phenomena. The predicted difference in NegV1 between clauses with ne...na/ne...not and those with unsupported ne is not found. Second, this fact does not support an analysis in which ne in clauses without na or not and ne in clauses with na or not are different syntactic entities in the way van Kemenade proposes. The lack of the predicted distinction in the frequencies of NegV1 in clauses with and without na argues against two different forms of ne in either OE or EME, but instead supports the view that there is one derivation of negative initial clauses in OE and EME irrespective of the occurrence of na or not. Of course Table 4 raises the question of why na should be more frequent in NegV1 clauses than elsewhere, which I will leave for future work.

These data provide no reason to analyse ne differently at stages one and two of Jespersen’s Cycle. They support the view that there is one derivation of negative initial clauses at both stages, in which V-to-C movement occurs with ne as a clitic or prefix on the finite verb. The quantitative data provide no empirical basis to distinguish phrase and head ne at successive stages of Jespersen’s Cycle. Van Kemenade (2000) asserts that the development of bipartite ne...na is a reflex of the change from phrase ne to head ne:

...the fact that at a later stage a topic is readily tolerated in this construction is accounted for by assuming that the constituent status of ne in [spec,CP] is weakening, and that therefore it ceases to be interpreted syntactically as a topic. A crucial intermediate step in this weakening process is the introduction of a reinforcing negator in [spec,NegP] which supposedly marks the weakening of the original negator. (van Kemenade 2000: 67).

Prefixal ne+Vfront is required in certain contexts throughout Old English. Furthermore, the quantitative data presented in this section argue against linking a change in the distribution or syntactic status of ne to change under Jespersen’s Cycle. Van Kemenade’s claim that there is a change in the status of ne must be independent of Jespersen’s Cycle. If there is a change from XP>X ne, there is no overt evidence for it my Old English prose data. It is possible that change in the status of ne may precede change under Jespersen’s Cycle. However, the overall distribution of ne in my quantitative data provides no evidence for any change in the distribution of ne until Early Middle English, once change under Jespersen’s Cycle is already underway.

If there is any change in the status of ne, there is no evidence for it the prose data I have investigated. The change proposed by van Kemenade may antedate the earliest Old English prose data I have looked at, or there may have been no such change. In any case, I have demonstrated independence of change in the position of ne and change under Jespersen’s Cycle. This mitigates against an analysis of ne as a phrase. Under the syntactic analysis of Jespersen’s Cycle which van Kemenade adopts, the availability of phrase ne cannot independent of Jespersen’s Cycle, but is tied to it in a very particular way. Quantitative data provide no empirical support to this idea.

The simplest account of the data I have collected involves only the head ne. This allows for a single derivation of V-to-C movement in negative clauses at stages one and two of Jespersen’s Cycle. The independence of change in the position of ne and change under Jespersen’s Cycle supports this account.

5 Jespersen’s Cycle and the availability of topics in negative clauses

One argument which van Kemenade (2000) presents for ne being a phrase in [spec,CP] in Old English is the restricted occurrence of (36). This restriction follows from her account of ne as [spec,CP]. The [spec,CP] position is not available to host a topic in these clauses. (36a) is one of the few Old English examples with an NP topic. (36b), (36c) represent the more frequently attested Early Middle English examples with NP topics. She argues that this increase follows from the change in the status of ne XP>X under Jespersen’s Cycle which has the consequence of freeing up [spec,CP] for topics. Therefore, the increase in topics in clauses with negative inversion should correlate with the increased use of na/not as sentential negators.

(36) Topic - ne+VY - su pro...

a. Drihten, þine rihtwisynsse ne behidde ic an minne heortan.
   Lord, your righteousness NEG hide I in my heart.
   Lord, I do not hide your righteousness in my heart.’
   (cochrdrul,ChrodrR1:79.45.967)

b. Dis ne deode ic næme.
   This NEG did I never.
   ‘I never did this.’
   (CMVICES1,13.144)

c. Dis ne habbe ic naðt ofearnad.
   This NEG have I not deserved.
   ‘I have not deserved this.’
   (CMVICES1,17.192)

Under the assumption that all stage 2 ne are heads while stage one ne are ambiguous between [spec,CP] operators and heads, van Kemenade’s account implies that the incidence of (36) should increase in parallel with the change under Jespersen’s Cycle which frees up [spec,CP] as a host for topics. Table 5 shows that both changes advance in Early
Kemenade’s account involves a change in the [spec,CP] element from an overt operator ne to an overt topic (non-subject or subject). This follows from the reanalysis of ne from XP operator > X, and the fact that the new negative operator (na/not) occupies a position lower than [spec,CP].

If operator ne and topics are the only two options in competition for [spec,CP] in EME as van Kemenade’s account implies, the replacement of operator-initial NegV1 clauses should be with topic-initial clauses in all cases. Van Kemenade proposes that loss of operatorhood for ne drives Jespersen’s Cycle. Change from [spec,CP] operator to [spec,CP] topic is a consequence of Jespersen’s Cycle. Hence the transition from operator-initial to topic-initial clauses should exactly correlate with change under Jespersen’s Cycle to eliminate NegV1. However, there are many NegV1 clauses with secondary negators (see Table 4) in which the initial ne must be a head rather than a [spec,CP] element. Van Kemenade’s proposals cannot account for the lack of topics in these clauses. NegV1 clauses at stage two of Jespersen’s Cycle fall outside van Kemenade’s account.

Therefore, van Kemenade’s motivation for analysing ne as a clause initial [spec,CP] element, namely that this analysis allows topicalisation to be blocked, cannot hold of all NegV1 clauses. It only holds of ne at stage one of Jespersen’s Cycle. In NegV1 clauses with the bipartite negations ne...na or ne...not (37), the lack of topics cannot be due to the presence of ne in [spec,CP].

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Table 5: The changes under Jespersen’s Cycle and the availability of topics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Jespersen’s Cycle stage 2 Total</th>
<th>% stage 2</th>
<th>XP ne vs su</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
<th>% XP nev</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>850-950</td>
<td>134 778</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>61 450</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>950-1050</td>
<td>284 2381</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>172 1465</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1050-1150</td>
<td>119 675</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>60 389</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1150-1250</td>
<td>357 541</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>59 243</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6: The distribution of NP topics in clauses with inversion and a non-subject NP argument.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Negative inversion clauses</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>% topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>850-950</td>
<td>1 98</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>950-1050</td>
<td>5 411</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1050-1150</td>
<td>2 70</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1150-1250</td>
<td>7 22</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

EME shows a marked increase in topics in negative inversion clauses which seems at first sight to correlate with the increased use of not in this period. However, the problem for van Kemenade’s account is that the introduction of NP topics (as shown in Table 5) does not occur in parallel with the introduction of na/not used as a sentential negator. As I demonstrated in the previous section, there are NegV1 clauses at stage two of Jespersen’s Cycle. Following van Kemenade’s proposals, these are clauses with an initial negated verb in C and no overt [spec,CP] element. Van Kemenade’s analysis predicts that these clauses should have subject or non-subject topics. In Old and Middle English clauses without initial operators, [spec,CP] is always filled by a topic, either a non-subject or a subject topic. Hence NegV1 clauses at stage two of Jespersen’s Cycle, when ne is not an operator but a head, fall outside van Kemenade’s analysis, and as such are a problem to it.

This undermines the structural account of (36) which van Kemenade proposes. Her proposals are unable to account for all negative clauses without further modifications. Van Kemenade’s account involves a change in the [spec,CP] element from an overt operator ne to an overt topic (non-subject or subject). This follows from the reanalysis of ne from XP operator > X, and the fact that the new negative operator (na/not) occupies a position lower than [spec,CP].

If operator ne and topics are the only two options in competition for [spec,CP] in EME as van Kemenade’s account implies, the replacement of operator-initial NegV1 clauses should be with topic-initial clauses in all cases. Van Kemenade proposes that loss of operatorhood for ne drives Jespersen’s Cycle. Change from [spec,CP] operator to [spec,CP] topic is a consequence of Jespersen’s Cycle. Hence the transition from operator-initial to topic-initial clauses should exactly correlate with change under Jespersen’s Cycle to eliminate NegV1. However, there are many NegV1 clauses with secondary negators (see Table 4) in which the initial ne must be a head rather than a [spec,CP] element. Van Kemenade’s proposals cannot account for the lack of topics in these clauses. NegV1 clauses at stage two of Jespersen’s Cycle fall outside van Kemenade’s account.

Therefore, van Kemenade’s motivation for analysing ne as a clause initial [spec,CP] element, namely that this analysis allows topicalisation to be blocked, cannot hold of all NegV1 clauses. It only holds of ne at stage one of Jespersen’s Cycle. In NegV1 clauses with the bipartite negations ne...na or ne...not (37), the lack of topics cannot be due to the presence of ne in [spec,CP].

---

*In view of this change, one might expect the reanalysis of ne from operator to head to lead to the loss of negative inversion. It can no longer be motivated under the Neg-criterion by an operator in [spec,CP]. The fact that inversion continues to occur following a frontal argument in [spec,CP] is puzzling. It is not clear whether this pattern arises as a consequence of the loss of NegV1 or whether it is a distinct pragmatic and syntactic strategy which just happens to be more frequent in Early Middle English. In some of the examples, inversion can be motivated independently of negation. For example (i) and (ii) show inversion following an initial non-subject argument, but the verbs involved are morphologically marked as subjectives.

(i) Dat ne forset da naure.
That NEG forget you never.
’That, you ought never forget.’
(CMVICBES1,101,1890)

(ii) Neo wunenge ne hese he mid be.
No dwelling NEG has he with you.
’No dwelling ought he to have with you.’
(CMVICBES1,101,1215)

Furthermore, not all instances of the ‘Topic - ne+VSubj’ pattern have bipartite negation (see (36a), for example). The two patterns are not in complementary distribution at the two stages of Jespersen’s Cycle.
(37) Ne mai ich noht alle bing telien.
NEG can I not all things tell.
'I cannot tell all things.'
(CMTRINIT, 177.2407)

Such clauses are not rare, accounting for 32/73 (44%) of clauses with ne...not in the period 1150-1250 (see Table 4). The results of the previous section show no loss of NegV1 contingent on Jespersen’s Cycle. A syntactic account which links the incidence of topics in clauses with ne and change under Jespersen’s Cycle makes a correlation where there is no evidence for one. There are plenty of exceptions to the correlation van Kemenade proposes: NegV1 clauses with bipartite negation which van Kemenade’s account cannot handle. Also, van Kemenade’s analysis does not take account of the fact that NegV1 needs to be derived with equal frequency at both stages of Jespersen’s Cycle.

Invoking a change from phrasal [spec,CP] ne to head ne fails to account fully for the changing occurrence of topics in inversion. The findings of section 4 show the independence of NegV1 and Jespersen’s Cycle, demonstrating a lack of quantitative evidence for two competing forms of ne. Invoking two competing forms of ne does not account for the loss of NegV1 or for the distribution of ‘Topic - ne+Vfinite - subject pronoun’ orders. Therefore, I argue that clauses with initial ne+Vfinite are derived in the same way at both stages one and two of Jespersen’s Cycle, with ne a prefix on the finite verb which moves to C. The independence of NegV1 and bipartite negation show that both cannot be derived using the Neg-criterion. Invoking the Neg-criterion to account for both these phenomena does not allow them to co-occur, and is therefore empirically inadequate. There are two solutions to this problem in a Government-Binding framework: first to deny that Old English ne and Early Middle English not are sentential negators subject to the Neg-criterion. This is the approach taken by Ingham (this volume), but I argue that this ignores distributional parallels between these elements and later instances of not which are widely accepted to be sentential negators. Second, the independence of NegV1 and bipartite negation could be modelled using two instances of the Affect-criteria (Haegeman 1995: 93) which make reference to different features in the derivation of NegV1 and bipartite negation.

6 Patterns of negation in the OE poem Beowulf

Van Kemenade (2000) provides an account for the lack of topics in clauses with negative inversion which makes reference to phrasal [spec,CP] ne. She proposes to treat clause

initial ne+finite verb as an ‘operator - head’ construction fulfilling the requirements of spec-head agreement at CP under a version of the Affect-criterion (38):

(38) The Affect Criterion:
   a. An AFFECTIVE operator must be in a Spec-head configuration with an
      [AFFECTIVE] X
   b. An AFFECTIVE X must be in a Spec-head configuration with an AFFECTIVE operator
      (Haegeman 1995: 93)

It seems reasonable to analyse the initial negative element in root clauses in Early Old English as a [Spec,CP] element, and to say that the finite verb, when moved, is in C. The motivation for the rise of this V-movement strategy could then plausibly come from a condition of Universal Grammar stating that an (operator) element in [Spec,CP] must be licensed by a lexically filled C. This kind of condition is well known in the theoretical literature; one appropriate way of formulating it for English past and present is Rizzi’s Wh-criterion (Rizzi 1990), and his adaptation of Haegeman’s analogous Neg-criterion (Haegeman 1995). The only element that can satisfy this condition without violating the usual conditions on head movement is V… (van Kemenade 2000: 63)

I argue that there is no quantitative evidence for the existence of phrasal ne in OE prose. There is no evidence for the loss of phrasal ne in the prose data or any competition between phrase or head ne in the prose as van Kemenade’s (2000) account predicts.

Evidence from the Old English poem Beowulf is less conclusive. The distribution of negatives is different in this text. Van Kemenade (2000) discusses a pattern of sentential negation with clause initial no (39) which is not attested in the OE prose data. In Beowulf, at least some clause initial ne might have the same syntactic status as clause initial no: a [spec,CP] element. This is van Kemenade’s (2000: 63) claim.

(39) a. No he him hæ sceecz ondred.
    NEG he himself the struggle feared.
    ‘He did not fear the struggle.’
    (cobewul73.2345.1917)
   b. No be owihl fram me floclyþum for flecan meahet.
    NEG he at all from me waves-DAT far swim could.
    ‘He could not get far from me at all one the waves.’
    (cobewul18.541.490)
Instances of ne which are not clause initial show positional covariance with the finite verb, and therefore are heads (40), but clause initial ne (41) could be either a head, cliticised to the finite verb in C or a phrase in [spec,CP].

(40) *He þæt ne wiston.
    They that NEG knew.
    'They did not know that.'
    (cobowulf,26.738.684)

(41) *Ne maeg ic her leng wesan.
    NEG can I here long be.
    'I cannot be here long.'
    (cobowulf,86.2799.2823)

The occurrence of initial phrasal negatives in [spec,CP] such as no in Beowulf might support a parallel analysis of ne as a [spec,CP] element. This contrasts with the conclusions I made in §4 concerning the status of ne in the Old English prose corpus data. If there is phrase ne in Beowulf, it must be lost between the time of Beowulf and the Old English prose, since there are good arguments against phrase ne in the prose. Unfortunately there are insufficient data from the early English period represented by Beowulf to show this change in progress.

There is one reason to distinguish ne from phrasal negatives like no, nafre 'not, never' in the poetry. Initial ne always appears with a finite verb immediately following in C. No (39a)-(39b), nafre (42) are never immediately followed by finite verbs in C.

(42) *Nafre ic ængegum mæn æl sylafde.
    Never I any man before injured.
    'I never injured any man before.'
    (cobowulf,22.652.549)

Van Kemenade (2000, 62) links the pattern with clause initial no in Beowulf with the NegV1 pattern in the OE prose. There is a diachronic change which has two aspects to it: phonological reduction of no to ne, and the rise of V-to-C movement following initial negatives. These changes need to be linked in order to account for the fact that V-to-C movement only follows initial ne Old English the only initial negative to appear with a finite verb in C is the sentential negator ne.9 Examples of initial negatives other than ne do not occur with a finite verb in C in the prose (43) or in Beowulf. Assume for a moment that ne can be a phrase in [spec,CP] in Beowulf. The Affect Criterion only holds

9Unlike Present-Day English (i)-(ii):
(i) Never will I believe it.
(ii) Nothing have I seen that could rival the pyramids. (Haegeman 2001: 28, ex 9b)

of [spec,CP] ne, not of other negatives in [spec,CP], such as no, nafre which are found initially in Beowulf.

(43) a. Nafre ofer þis ic owihht ma spreco.
    Never of this I any more said.
    'I never said any more of this.'

b. Nænge þinga ic þæs blode aðeran mæg.
    No thing I this cheerfully bear can.
    'I cannot bear anything of this cheerfully.'
    (cobede,Bede_4:12.290.18.2930)

Beowulf frequently employs negative initial clauses with no, nafre, naðas 'not, never, not at all' (n=64), in addition to clauses with initial ne (n=77). Only initial ne appears with a finite verb in C (n=77/77 initial ne). Any account must make a distinction between ne, which induces verb movement, and negatives like nafre ('never') which do not. The Affect or Neg-criterion do not easily accommodate this distinction. The Neg-criterion applies wherever an negative operator is found. In order to derive the difference between ne and other [spec,CP] negatives in respect of verb movement, ne must be the only initial negative to count as an operator for the Neg-criterion, so that no, nafre are excluded from the criterion.

This distinction is difficult to maintain under Haegeman's (1995: 107) definition of a negative operator. Under this definition, Ne, no, nafre are all equally sentential negative operators in [spec,CP] and should all be subject to the Neg-criterion in the same way.

- NEG-operator: a negative phrase in a scope position;
- Scope position: left peripheral A' position [Spec,XP] or [YP,XP]

The distinction between initial ne with V-to-C movement, and no, nafre without V-to-C movement could be derived by applying movement at different levels of the grammar. The Affect-criterion could apply overtly for ne and at LF for no, nafre, but applying the criterion at different levels for different lexical items seems difficult to motivate. Equally problematic are NegV1 clauses at stage two of Jespersen's Cycle. In these, ne is analysed as a head. Therefore, a different derivation of NegV1 is required in these instances, perhaps using a null operator to trigger the Neg-criterion. In §4 I argued that there is no empirical basis for two distinct NegV1 derivations at successive stages of Jespersen's Cycle.

Van Kemenade's account requires variation and change in the way the Affect-criterion is satisfied in Early and later Old English to account for what she proposes are changing patterns of verb movement. However, where patterns analogous to those seen in Beowulf
with initial _næfre_, appear in later prose (43a), they provide no evidence for change in V-to-C movement patterns. Initial _næfre_ occurs in later prose without V-to-C movement just as it did in _Beowulf_. V-to-C movement does not develop in this context. Regrettably, there are no instances of clause initial _no_ in the prose for comparison with those in poetry. The evidence available to me is consistent with an analysis with no change in verb movement patterns, either between poetry and prose, or between successive stages of Jespersen’s Cycle: fronting of _ne_ always entails verb movement to C, fronting of other negatives ( _no, næfre_ does not). The difference between poetry and prose is therefore likely to be the absence of clauses with clause initial _no, næfre_ as the primary sentential negator in the prose rather than any rise in V-to-C movement following clause initial negatives.

Evidence to support van Kemenade’s proposed increase in V-to-C movement is difficult to find. The frequency of V-to-C movement is not significantly different in poetry and prose (Table 7). Any arguments based on these data must be tentative given the small number of data from _Beowulf_. The data are are consistent with a constant frequency of V-to-C movement in clauses with _ne_ throughout Old English. The difference between the poetry and the prose is then simply a difference in the frequency of the negators _ne_ and _no_ in _Beowulf_ and the prose, independent of the position which these occupy in the clause. This is the simpler analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ne+VI - pro su</th>
<th>pro su - ne+VI</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>% ne+VI - su</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beowulf</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prose</td>
<td>1578</td>
<td>728</td>
<td>2304</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7: The frequency of V-to-C movement in clauses with _ne_. _Beowulf_ and the Old English prose compared.

In summary, there is no reason to argue that the syntactic status of _ne_ in the poetry differs from _ne_ in the prose, scant evidence for a rise in V-to-C movement in Early Old English,19 and good syntactic reasons for separating _no_ and _ne_ in Early Old English. Given that there is no good empirical evidence for a change in the status of _ne_ during Old English, the analysis of _ne_ as a head can be adopted from the Early Old English of _Beowulf_ onwards as the simplest or null hypothesis. V-to-C movement only co-occurs with _ne_+finite verb because _no, næfre_ are never prefixed to the finite verb either in the lexicon or during the derivation. Eythorsson’s (2002) observations concerning Old English in relation to other Germanic languages support my hypothesis.

Eythorsson (2002) argues against van Kemenade’s link between _ne_ and _no_. He claims that _ne_ and _no_ are etymologically distinct, even in the pre-Old English period. _No_ is not reduced to _ne_ by a process of change. This is consistent with the distribution of _ne_ found in earlier Germanic languages such as Gothic (Eythorsson 2002).

19Particularly when the different constraints operating on verb fronting in _Beowulf_ and prose identified byGetty (2002) are taken into account.

The negation _ni_ ( _ne_ ) is a prefix like element on the verb, representing an Indo-European inheritance in Old Germanic ... The anonymous reviewer, citing van Kemenade (2000), mentions that there is evidence for a stage in the earliest Old English at which a negative element could occur in a clause-initial position without “attracting” the verb. This view, however, seems to be based on a confusion regarding the relevant form in question. In particular, the claim in van Kemenade (2000: 61-63) that the prefixal negation _ne_ represents a “reduced” variant of the free form (adverb) _no_ ( _na_ ) ‘not at all, not, never’ in Old English fails to take the long-established etymology of these elements into consideration, according to which _ne_ is the inherited negation but _no_ ( _na_ ) derives from a combination of this negation with an adverb, corresponding to Gothic _ne_ ars ‘never (i.e. not ever)’ (e.g. Klaiber 1950: 381). Thus, in Old English from the earliest times, the negation _ne_, by virtue of being a prefix, regularly precedes the finite verb, irrespective of its position in the clause. The word _no_ ( _na_ ), on the other hand, is an adverb and can occur separated from the verb.

(Eythorsson 2002: note 12)

Eythorsson’s account favours an analysis of _ne_ as a clitic or prefix throughout the Old English period. _Ne_ should be kept distinct from _no_ and other initial adverbs.

7 Conclusions

To conclude, I will summarise my main findings and arguments:

- The behaviour of _ne_ is consistent throughout the OE prose, both at stage one and stage two of Jespersen’s Cycle. Change under Jespersen’s Cycle does not imply a change in the syntactic status of _ne_. Quantitative data supports this view. There is no evidence for change which would indicate the loss of phrasal _ne_ in any of the OE prose data.

- The increase in “Topic - _ne_+VI - su pro” order is not concurrent with changes under Jespersen’s Cycle.

- The _Beowulf_ data are less conclusive. There may be phrasal _ne_ in _Beowulf_, but there is no evidence for it in the prose data. This puts the loss of phrase _ne_ somewhere between the date of _Beowulf_ (early 8th century), and the earliest OE prose (late 9th century), not later as van Kemenade (2000) claims. That is, if phrasal _ne_ is present in the grammar of Old English at all. I argue that there is no compelling reason to suppose that there is phrase _ne_ at any period of Old English.
An account is required which can accommodate the independence of NegV1 and the introduction of sentential negators *ne/not*. The Neg-criterion can account for NegV1 or bipartite negation, but not their co-occurrence. The account must also derive the differences in verb movement following *ne* and other initial negatives (*no, nafre*). This difference is problematic to van Kemenade's implementation of the Neg-criterion. My claim that *ne* is a head throughout its history, rather than an operator does not fit with van Kemenade's implementation of the Neg-criterion.

The independence of NegV1 and Jespersen's Cycle has been crucial to my argument, but brings its own problems for the syntactic analysis. The dependencies which NegV1 and bipartite negation represent must be independent. If we accept that Old English *ne...ne* and Early Middle English *ne...not* are bipartite secondary negators in spec-head agreement with *ne*, as I claim here, then Jespersen's Cycle and the loss of NegV1 are two distinct parametric changes which cannot both be accommodated under the Neg-criterion. Further research will establish Minimalist syntactic analyses of both phenomena which take proper account of their independence. Quantitative examination of Old and Middle English data establish the relationship between two areas of change in negative clauses, to inform the syntactic analyses of these phenomena.

References


