A micro-perspective on Verb-second in Romance and Germanic

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The Verb-second (V2) phenomenon is one of the central issues of modern linguistic theory. This volume examines V2 from a micro-perspective, comparing various languages and periods. At the heart of the work presented here lies the clear assumption that Verb-second is by no means a unitary phenomenon, but rather a heterogenous and rich system that affects languages in various ways.

1 A linear model

Descriptively, the notion of V2 refers to the word order in which the finite verb occurs in second position of the linear string, regardless of what element precedes it. Consequently, the subject may be preverbal or postverbal, depending on the nature of the initial element. In (1) we see that in Norwegian – a V2 language – the finite verb (in boldface) may only be preceded by one element, and if the initial element is not the subject (underlined), the subject occurs postverbally. In (2), we see that English does not have similar restrictions with respect to the number of preverbal constituents, and

that the subject is always preverbal.[1]

(1)　**Norwegian –V2**

    a.　*[De] gikk　hjem　etter møtet.*
        they　walked home after meeting.DET
        'They went home after the meeting.'

    b.　*[Etter møtet]　gikk de　hjem.*
        after　meeting.DET went they home
        'After the meeting they went home.'

(2)　**English – non-V2**

    a.　[They] **went** home after the meeting

    b.　[After the meeting] [they] **went** home.

Holmberg (2015) has defined V2 in the following way (3) (Holmberg's 77):

(3)　a.　A functional head in the left periphery attracts the finite verb.

    b.　This functional head wants a constituent moved to its specifier position.

This definition captures the differences in (2) and (3), but as we will see, it is not sufficient to describe V2.

2　Typology

From a typological point of view the V2 word order is rare. It is first and foremost a characteristic of the modern Germanic languages, with the exception of Modern English. In addition, V2 is reported in Rhaeto-Romance

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[1]There are instances of postverbal subjects in English, but I leave this to the side as the phenomenon is restricted to specific contexts.

(Poletto, 2002), Breton (Roberts, 2004), Estonian, Sorbian, Kashmiri, Himachali, and Karitana (for a discussion, see Holmberg, 2015). The Old Romance languages have also been described as V2-languages (Benincà, 2006; Wolfe, 2015b, 2019).

2.1 *Old Romance*

While it is uncontroversial to claim that Modern Germanic languages have a V2 configuration, it is much less so with respect to the Old Romance languages. A first wave of generative scholars looking at the Romance languages argued that these languages had a V2 structure (Vanelli et al., 1985; Adams, 1989; Roberts, 1993; Vance, 1997), formalising observations made by earlier generations of grammarians (Thurneysen, 1892; Foulet, 1930; Skårup, 1975). The basis for this claim was that fronted XPs regularly lead to the postposition of the subject (4)–(5)– or pro drop (in Old French and Old Italian) (6).

(4)   *[Lors] **regarde** [Lanceloz] le   chevalier que il avoit ocis*
        then   looks   Lancelot the night   that he had   killed
        'Then Lancelot looked at the knight he had killed'

Old French, MortArtu X-30

(5)   *[Lora] **se=lievà**   [lo nostro Signor] et andè   apresso lui con*
        then   REFL=rose the our lord   and walked after   him with
        li   suoi discipuli
        the his   disciples
        'Then our Lord stood up and walked after him with his disciples.'

(Old Venetian, Matt cap. 9)

(6)   *[Apresso]* ***ti=voglio***   _   *mostrare le false allegagioni . . .*
         after   you.CL=will *pro* show   the false allegations
         'Afterwards, I will show you the false allegations . . . '

                                   (Old Florentine, Bono Giamboni cap 12)

However, the opposite analysis also has been presented, notably in Germany (Kaiser, 2002; Rinke and Meisel, 2009), but also elsewhere (Eide, 2006; Sitaridou, 2012). While the proponents of a V2 structure take systematic inverted structures as evidence for V2 (7), the opponents interpret this order as the result of information structural movement of a topic or a focus to clause-initial position and not by a V2 configuration *per se*. In addition, they have pointed to the elevated number of V2 violations in the Old Romance languages compared to Modern German. In Old Romance as in Old Germanic, fronted adverbial clauses regularly give rise to V3 constructions (see Kiparsky, 1995) (7).

(7)   *[Quant il fu   termes de colchier], [el]* ***fait***   *les liz   aparoillier*
         when   it was time   to sleep   she made the beds prepare
         'When it was time to go to bed, she prepared the beds.'

                                   Old French, eneas1, p.37, v.1205

(8)   *[Dhuo ir himilo   garanuui frumida] [dhar]* ***wwas*** *[ih]*
         when   he heaven's equipment created   there   was   I
         'when he fashioned the heavens, I was there'

                                Old High German, from Axel (2007: 228)

While the debate was particularly vivid in the first decade of the century, the dominating view today seems to be in favour of a V2 analysis for these

languages, with the caveat that the V2 in the Old Romance languages is different from the one found in e.g. German or Dutch (Salvi, 2004; Benincà, 2006; Ledgeway, 2012; Labelle, 2007; Poletto, 2014; Wolfe, 2015b, 2019). The origin of this structure has also been debated. While it has been suggested that V2 in the Romance languages is the result of language contact with Germanic languages (Mathieu, 2007a,b), this view has been challenged and it has been suggested that V2 evolves independently in these languages (Wolfe, 2015a,b, 2019; Ledgeway, 2017; Klævik-Pettersen, 2018).

3 A formal approach

Formalising the V2 phenomenon was a challenge for early generative linguists. Den Besten's analysis of German (den Besten, 1983) was highly influential in that it captured the German data, where embedded V2 never occurs in the presence of an overt complementiser. In (9) the complementiser *dass* 'that' is expressed, and the finite verb occurs in clause-final position. In (10), there is no complementiser, and the embedded clause has a V2 structure.

(9)   *Er erzählte, dass [Heinz] gestern   verspätet **war**.*
     he told   that Heinz yesterday late   was
     'He told [me] that Heinz was late yesterday.'   German

(10)   *Er erzählte, gestern   **sei** [Heinz] verspätet.*
     he told   yesterday was Heinz   late
     'He told [me] that Heinz was late yesterday.'   German

Den Besten suggested that the finite verb in a V2 language moves to COMP (11), a position which is occupied by the complementiser in embedded clauses (12). This analysis not only captures the fact that V2 and

the complementiser mutually exclude each other in German, but also the fact that German permits embedded V2 when the complementiser is not expressed, as we saw in (10).

(11)   **matrix clause:** [$_{COMP}$ V$\_fin$ ...]

(12)   **embedded clause:** [$_{COMP}$ complementiser ...]

However, den Besten's analysis turned out to be less felicitous for the North Germanic languages, where embedded V2 *exclusively* takes place in the presence of the complementiser (13). The solution was to postulate so-called CP-recursion, meaning that the CP hosting the complementiser would select a CP as its complement (14).[2]

(13)   *Han fortalte at   [i går]   **hadde** [han] forsovet seg.*
        he   told   that in yesterday had   he   slept.in. REFL
        'He told [me] that he had slept in yesterday.'   Norwegian

(14)   [$_{CP}$ [$_{C^o}$ at [$_{CP}$ i går [$_{C^o}$ hadde ...]]]]

An open question of course would be why certain predicates permit CP recursion – not to mention what exactly the nature of this recursive structure is.

3.1   *Main–embedded asymmetries*

As we saw in the last paragraph, there is an asymmetry between main and embedded clauses in German in that main clauses have a V2 structure, while embedded clauses with an overt complementiser are V final. The same

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[2]CP is the descendant of COMP as the highest projection in the tree.

asymmetry is observed in Dutch. In Mainland Scandinavian, there is also asymmetry as matrix clauses are V2, while embedded clauses are normally S–V–O. Only under certain matrix predicates – often referred to as bridge verbs – is it possible to find V2 structures (Julien, 2009, 2015; Wiklund et al., 2009). Unlike Dutch, German and Scandinavian, Icelandic has been reported to permit V2 under all kinds of verbs (Rögnvaldsson and Thrainsson, 1990). For instance, it is possible to have embedded V2 even under under type C predicates (in the system of Hooper and Thompson, 1973), which normally exclude the embedding of root contexts. Observe the difference between (15-a) and (15-b), where embedded V2 is excluded under *beklage* 'regret' in Norwegian, but permitted under *harma* 'regret' in Icelandic. These verbs are a class C verb.

(15)　　a.　*Jón　harmar að　[þessa bók]* **skuli**　*[ég] hafa lesið*
　　　　　　John regrets that this　　book should I　　have read
　　　　　　'John regrets that I read this book.'

　　　　　　　　　Icelandic, from Rögnvaldsson and Thrainsson (1990: 23)

　　　　b.　*Jon　beklager at　[denne boka]* **skulle**　*[jeg] lese.*
　　　　　　John regrets　that this　　book　should I　　read
　　　　　　'John regrets that I should have read this book.'　　Norwegian

These observations gave rise to the division between *asymmetric* and *symmetric* V2 languages. Dutch, German and Mainland Scandinavian were considered to be asymmetric, while Icelandic and Yiddish were symmetric. However, the data seem to be less clear than originally assumed. Comparing *that*-clauses from all Scandinavian languages, Wiklund *et al.* found that no Scandinavian language had generalised embedded V2 (Wiklund et al., 2009). The main difference between Icelandic and Faeroese on the one hand

and Mainland Scandinavian on the other, is that the former permit the order V > negation (16-a) under non-assertive and factive predicates (classes C and D). Topicalisation – the order XP–V–S – is ruled out (16-b). (Examples from Wiklund et al., 2009: 1919.)

(16)   a.   *Hann efast um að [hún] **hafi** ekki hitt þennan mann.*
            he   doubts about that she has not met this   man
            'He doubts that she hasn't met this man.'   Icelandic

    b.   **Hann efast um að [þennan mann] **hafi** [hún] ekki hitt.*
          he   doubts about that this   man has she   not met
          'He doubts that she hasn't met this man.'   Icelandic

This way, it seems that the distinction between symmetric and asymmetric languages is be less pertinent. As a consequence the main–embedded asymmetries seem to be descriptive of V2 languages seen as a whole. These kinds of asymmetries have also been reported for the Old Romance V2 languages (see among numerous others Vanelli et al., 1985; Roberts, 1993; Vance, 1997; Benincà, 2006; Wolfe, 2015b, 2019). Like the Scandinavian V2 languages, Old Romance permitted embedded V2 under certain predicates and in the presence of a complementiser (Salvesen and Walkden, 2017) (17).

(17)   *Et cil   dient que [tot asseür] **soit** [il] que il   feront tot lor*
        and these said that all certain is   it   that they make all their
        pooir de confondre lor enemis mortex
        power to beat   their enemies deadly
        ' And they said that it was certain that they would do everything in their power to beat their enemies.'   Old French, MortArtu XIII-16

However, the default word order in embedded clauses is S–V–O (18).

(18)   *Quant Morchofles oï   chou, si kemanda que [on] **wardast** molt*
          when Morchofles heard this   SI demand that one guarde very
          bien les murs et   les tours
          well the walls and the towers
          'When Morchofles heard this he ordered that they guarded the walls

          and the towers.'   Old French, clari p. 62

3.2   *CP-V2 and IP-V2*

Closely linked to the question of main–embedded asymmetries is the question about the derivation of V2. Does V2 take place within the CP or the IP – or maybe both? Three models may be recognised: the CP-model, which predicts that all preverbal elements move to SpecCP (Schwartz and Vikner, 1996); the IP-V2 model where the verb only moves to I° (or T°) (Rögnvaldsson and Thrainsson, 1990) and an XP (both subject and non-subject) moves to SpecTP/SpecIP; and the split model, where a non-subject preverbal XP moves to SpecCP, while a preverbal subject moves to SpecIP/SpecTP (Zwart, 1991). An asymmetric model would be captured in the CP-V2 model, as the complementiser would block V-movement to C, as proposed by den Besten (1983). A symmetric V2 language would be captured in an IP-V2 model, as the complementiser and the finite verb would not be in conflict. Finally, a split model would be apt for a asymmetric V2 language, as it would rule out topicalisation in embedded clauses.

4   Cartography

The advent of the cartographic approach (Rizzi, 1997) provided a refined model for the analysis of languages such as the Scandinavian ones, and also for Old Romance. Rizzi's original idea was that the left periphery of the

clause could be subdivided into different projections, all expressing certain information structural values. The exploded CP was limited to the left by ForceP, responsible for clause typing, and Fin(iteness)P to the right, directly linked to the finite/non-finite status of the subordinate clause. Between these two positions there were recursive topic projections (indicated by *) and one focus projection (19).

(19)   ForceP ... TopP* ... FocP ... TopP* ... FinP ...

The model in (19) gave an immediate solution to the problem with embedded V2 under bridge verbs in Mainland Scandinavian. If the complementiser targets Force° under bridge verbs in a language, Fin° would still be accessible to the verb, generating embedded V2 in the presence of a complementiser (20). The difference between Mainland Scandinavian and German could then be accounted for by reference to the locus of the complementiser. A natural assumption is that the complementiser (*dass*) in German sits in Fin° (21) (see also Poletto, this volume). With a complementiser in Fin°, verb movement to the CP layer is blocked. In Mainland Scandinavian, the matrix predicate would either select a complementiser under Force° or Fin°. In the former case, embedded V2 is a possibility (20); in the latter case, only SVO is a possible word order (21).

(20) $[_{\text{ForceP}} \ [_{\text{Force}°} \ \text{at} \ [_{\text{FinP}} \ \text{XP} \ [_{\text{Fin}°} \ \text{V}_{fin} \ ... \ ]]]]$

(21) $[_{\text{ForceP}} \ [_{\text{Force}°} \ [_{\text{FinP}} \ [_{\text{Fin}°} \ \text{dass} \ ... \ ]]]]$

Rizzi's paper gave rise to a number of works discussing the precise composition of the left periphery, both in Romance and Germanic (Rizzi, 2001,

2002; Benincà and Poletto, 2004; Frascarelli and Hinterhölzl, 2007; Cinque and Rizzi, 2008). The tendency was to provide more specific functions for the different positions, often splitting topics and foci up into several, more specific projections, generating what might be referred to as the topic field and the focus field. Benincà and Poletto (2004) suggested the structure in (22), where a FrameP hosting hanging topics and scene setters precedes ForceP. Frascarelli and Hinterhölzl (2007), not discussing hanging topics, suggested a hierarchy of topics as in (23).

(22)   FrameP ... ForceP ... Topic field ... Focus field ... FinP

(23)   ForceP ... Shift Topic ... Contrastive Topic ... Focus ... Familiar
        Topic ... FinP

While it seems clear that the Romance languages have an articulate left periphery, it is less obvious in the case of the Germanic languages. In these languages, there is normally only one constituent to the left of the finite verb.

4.1   *The bottleneck*

A complex left periphery leads to the question of why only one element may precede the finite verb in a V2 language. In principle, there is a large number of accessible positions, yet only one element may in principle precede the finite verb. A solution has been provided by Haegeman (1996) and Roberts (2004), namely that elements accessing the left periphery of a V2 structure must move through the specifier of the phrase containing the finite verb, what has come to be known as the *bottleneck effect*. Once an element has

moved to or through the bottleneck, no other element may reach the left periphery by movement. Movement across this position and into the left periphery is equally ruled out. This way the V2 structure is assured.

A consequence of this is that if material occurs to the left of the V2 structure, it has to be base-generated in the left periphery.

4.2 *Force-V2 and Fin-V2*

The combination of the split CP and the bottleneck led to new insights into the composition of the left periphery of V2 languages. Discussing Rhaeto-Romance, Poletto (2002) suggested that not only might the complementiser realise different heads, the finite verb might move to different left peripheral heads in different languages. This idea has been explored through the highly influential work of Walkden (2015) and Wolfe (2015b, 2019), the former investigating Old Germanic languages, the latter Old Romance ones. Wolfe's work has shown how there are microparametric differences between the Old Romance languages, which he ascribes to different landing sites for the finite verbs. According to Wolfe, V2 languages may be divided into two groups: Those with a high locus for V2 (Force-V2) and those with a low locus for V2 (Fin-V2). A language that is Force-V2 has a limited number of accessible positions to the left of the finite verb, which means that V2 violations are few, and the language is characterised as a *strict* V2 language. Wolfe considers Later Old Venetian, Later Old Spanish, and Modern Rhaetoromance to be Force-V2 languages, while Early Old French, Early Old Spanish, Old Sicilian, Old Occitan, Old Sardinian, and Late Latin were Fin-V2 languages. Walkden (2015), who uses the same approach, claims that Old High German and Old English had a split system, with both Fin°

and Force° as landing sites for the finite verb, while Old Saxon only had Force°. The modern Germanic V2 languages are all considered to be strict Force-V2 (for Norwegian, see Østbø, 2007; Eide, 2011; Eide and Sollid, 2011; Julien, 2015).

5 V2 violations

A new approach to the study of the V2 phenomenon in later years has been to examine V2 violations. This is the focus of the work of Haegeman and Greco, who look at unintegrated fronted adverbial clauses in West Flemish (Haegeman and Greco, 2018a,b; Greco and Haegeman, in press) (24).

(24)　*[Oan' k em zien], [k] **zan** 't zeggen.*
　　　 When I him see,　 I　 will it tell
　　　 'When I see him, I'll tell him.'

West-Flemish, from Greco and Haegeman (in press)

　　The recent interest in resumptive structures also deals with apparent V2 violations. These structures are constructions where a resumptive element occurs in second position, pushing the finite verb to third position of the linear string. Resumptive structures are common in all Modern Germanic V2 languages, and research indicates that they were also common in Old Romance (Salvesen, in press). (Both examples from Salvesen, in press).

(25)　*[Wanneer je   terugkomt naar Griekenland], dan **moet** [je] ons*
　　　 when   you back.come to   Greece   DAN must you us
　　　 bezoeken.
　　　 visit
　　　 'When you come back to Greece, you must visit us.'　　　Dutch

(26)   *[s' il est morz] si m'=en=**mostrez***   *le cors si*
       if he is dead SI me.CL=of.it.CL=show.IMP the body SI
       le=feré   *enterrer*
       it.CL=make bury
       'If he is dead, then show me the body and I will bury him.'

Old French, graal_cm, col. 202c, l. 19

A question to be asked is if it is possible to talk about a V2 word order when a language displays such deviations on a systematic basis. It is quite clear that V2 violations are incompatible with a strict linear definition of V2. However, the presence of V°-to-C° movement, systematic subject inversion and main–embedded asymmetries are indications of a structural V2 word order. Strictly speaking, V°-to-C° movement is in itself taken as the definition of V2 by a number of scholars (Benincà, 2006; Wolfe, 2015b, 2019; Ledgeway, 2017).

6   This volume

The interest of this particular volume is to challenge the idea that V2 is a unitary phenomenon that is taken best represented by German. All the contributions go beyond this assumption while examining the details of one or more languages at a time.

The contribution of **Sam Wolfe** is the application of his Force-Fin-V2 model to modern Germanic languages, not only Romance ones. By doing so, he maps out the differences between historical and modern V2 languages and shows how these may successfully be explained by reference to a narrow set of principles. Wolfe explores these observations further and compares data from Old Romance to data from Old and Modern Germanic. He

suggests that all V2 languages have a V probe and an Edge Feature (EF) in Fin°, and that some also have this in Force°. The evolution that he has observed in the Romance languages also extends to the history of the Germanic languages.

Cecilia Poletto examines a vast sample of V2 languages asking the question why the V2 property may be lost. She shows that it is impossible to identify one single factor that is decisive in this respect. While some languages lose V2 after the loss of nominal subject inversion, others may continue to display V2 effects even after this property is lost. Another factor that comes into play is the complementiser system.

Federica Cognola's paper in this volume is based on three lesser studied V2 languages, two Germanic and one Romance: Mòcheno, Cimbrian, and Ladin, all located in Northern Italy. The variations observed in these languages shed light on the complexity of the V2 phenomenon. All three languages are so-called relaxed V2 languages, and Cognola examines the different V>2 structures in these languages. She argues that the NP subjects in these languages occur in the vP periphery and that their interpretation is that of a focus. Further, Cognola explores the V3/V4 word orders of the three languages in question. *Wh* operators always occur in a low position in the left periphery, while foci have to rise to SpecForceP. In the cases where the left periphery contains a topic, this topic has been moved into its surface position in Mòcheno and Ladin, while it has been base-generated there in Cimbrian.

In this volume, **Elly van Gelderen** examines the CP in the history of English, and she demonstrates that Old English did not have access to a split CP. It is not until Middle English that a split CP starts to emerge. As

for matrix verbs, the divisions between assertive and non-assertive verbs (see Hooper and Thompson (1973)) is not relevant for Old English, and the selection of the indicative and the subjunctive does not hinge on the matrix verb. As such, van Gelderen argues that the embedded clause in Old English had a more independent status.

Espen Klævik-Pettersen discusses the influence of Germanic on so-called Germanic inversion in the Romance languages and concludes that this kind of inversion is the result of internal changes in the Late Latin language. In other words, Klævik-Pettersen sees V^o-to-C^o movement as the result of processes that are pan-Romance, stemming from the common language. However, the constraint to fill a slot in the left periphery is, under his analysis, something that may be due to language contact.

7 Acknowledgements

entire volume.

Sources

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