

A NEW PERSPECTIVE ON THE NATURE OF V2
AND THE EVOLUTION OF ROMANCE CLAUSAL STRUCTURE

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The intuition that the medieval Romance languages share the verb-second (V2) property with the Germanic languages is well established (Adams 1987, Roberts 1993; Vance 1997; Benincà 2004, 2006) though this view has recently been challenged (Kaiser 2002; Rinke & Elsig 2010; Sitaridou 2012). In order to bring a new perspective on the debate, this paper presents quantitative and qualitative data from a corpus study of six medieval Romance texts, drawing on data from Old Sardinian, Old Sicilian, Old Venetian, Old French, Old Occitan and Old Spanish. We suggest that different forms of V2 systems are instantiated in the early Romance texts and provide an account of how these systems could have evolved from Classical Latin onwards.

Pace Kaiser (2002), Rinke & Elsig (2010) and Sitaridou (2012), all the varieties under examination provide compelling evidence that finite verb movement targets a C-head. Evidence comes from a preverbal *vorfeld* not specialised for subjects, verb-subject inversion when a non-subject occurs in the left periphery and object topicalisation/focalisation without clitic resumption. Linear V2 order is also the dominant order across all languages except Old Sardinian:

- (1) Son cors ne poï je veoir..
his body NEG can.1SG I see.INF
'I cannot see his body' (Old French)
- (2) Questo avrò=e'
This have.1SG.FUT=I
'I will have this' (Old Venetian)

These characteristics closely mirror those of the Germanic V2 languages (Holmberg & Platzack 1995; Vikner 1995) and provide evidence that a point of continuity across medieval Romance is the presence of a Phi-Probe on a C-head. We therefore conclude that finite verb movement higher than the inflectional layer of the clause may represent the core of the "Abstract Medieval Romance" syntax' posited by Benincà (2004).

Beyond this core point of continuity however, the languages under consideration vary in terms of two key underlying properties: (i) the head in the C-layer that bears both a Phi-Probe and +EDGE feature and thus constitutes the locus of the V2 property and (ii) whether a head in the C-layer bears an +EDGE feature at all.

Old Sicilian and Old Occitan share certain properties in common: they allow V1 in structures which appear to involve a null Shift Topic in the terms of Frascarelli & Hinterhölzl (2007), they show widespread attestation of orders where a preverbal Topic and Focus co-occur (4) and consequently show robust attestation of V4 orders (7.84% of OOcc. and 9.64% of OSic. matrix clauses).

- (3) killi pirsuni pir la grandi pagura ki àppiru si partèru
those people for the great fear that have.3PL.PST SI leave.3PL.PST
'Those people, because of the great fear that they felt, left' (Old Sicilian)

It is suggested that here the locus of V2 is C_{Fin} , whereby both Topic and Focus projections in the CP are 'multiply accessible' in the terms of Benincà (2004, 2006) and null elements moving to the Topic layer can satisfy V2 through movement via $SpecC_{Fin}P$.

These characteristics differ markedly to the (later) Old Spanish, Old French and Old

Venetian varieties instantiated in our texts. Here preverbal Topics and Foci do not co-occur at all, V4 accounts for less than 1% of matrix clauses and V3 can only co-occur with a semi-deictic adverbial expression, whose pragmatico-semantic characteristics suggest it is occupying a position very high in the C-layer within the Frame field (Giorgi 2010; Sigurdsson 2004, 2011). The nature of V1 in these varieties is also distinct, either failing to occur at all as in later Old French or being restricted to discourse-initial position with *verba dicendi*. We analyse this as a form of Narrative V1 which distances the speaker from the content of a recounted proposition and entails a different form of illocutionary force in the terms of Reis (2000). Formally this involves a null discourse operator (Zwart 1997:220), which we suggest occupies SpecC_{Force}P. Under the proposed analysis, in these languages the locus of V2 is C_{Force} (cf. Roberts 2012 for Germanic). The absence of V4 and Topic + Focus orders result from the high position of finite verb movement which allows only one constituent to occupy SpecC_{Force}P and optionally one further constituent to occupy C_{Frame}P. We suggest furthermore that the absence of V1 structures involving null topics results from the failure of null elements base-generated or moved to lower positions in the C-layer to move higher in the structure to satisfy V2. Tentatively, we suggest that this may result from their status as featurally-inert Defective Goals in the terms of Roberts (2010).

Old Sardinian appears to show the characteristics associated with the other C_{Fin}-V2 languages but differs in one crucial property: the presence of an +EDGE feature on a C-head (Wolfe 2014). It thus features ‘half the V2 constraint’ in the terms of Roberts (2005). This manifests itself in an unmarked V1 word order (Lombardi 2007), which is distinct from the other Romance languages.

The new synchronic data enable a refined account of the evolution of Romance clausal structure. Classical Latin, as is well known, featured pragmatically conditioned verb-fronting, standardly associated with topic continuity, focus and different polarity values (Devine & Stephens 2006, Bauer 2009). Following Ledgeway (2012) we suggest that this was verb movement to the C-layer of the clause motivated by unvalued Information Structure-related features on the finite verb. The data from late Latin suggest a reanalysis to have taken place, whereby this pragmatically conditioned verb-fronting was reanalysed as unmarked verb movement to C_{Fin}, accompanied by optional topicalisation and focalisation (Salvi 2004; Clackson & Horrocks 2007; Ledgeway 2012). We suggest that this syntactic system is maintained in Old Sardinian, where the texts used in our study are earlier than for the other languages (11th-12th centuries). A further reanalysis appears to have taken place in the C_{Fin}-V2 languages, whereby the optional topicalisation or focalisation was reanalysed as the result of an +EDGE feature on C_{Fin}. Observations from earlier French and Spanish texts than those used in the corpus suggest that earlier stages of these languages were C_{Fin}-V2 languages which underwent further changes to the C_{Force}-V2 systems instantiated in our texts.

Selected References

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