Linear versus non-linear V2 languages

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The Split-CP configuration proposed by Rizzi (1997) opened the way to refine the analysis of the different typology of languages characterized by mandatory finite verb movement to C.

In fact, subject inversion 'a la German' may coexist with both the respect and the violation of the linear V2 restriction (just one constituent before the finite verb) with evident consequences for the structural analysis, given the possibility for the raised finite verb to occupy the head of either a lower ('low V2') or a higher projection ('high V2') within the C domain (cf., among others, Wolfe 2016).

Not surprisingly, two specular hypothesis could be taken into consideration:

1) A. In linear (= canonical) V2 languages like German the finite Verb moves either to a 'non expanded/non scattered' CP projection with just one Spec position for XP fronting (cf. Giorgi & Pianesi 1996; Hsu, *to appear*) or, alternatively, to the highest C projection (i.e. Force) giving rise to a 'high-V2' language typology;

   B. In non-linear V2 languages (like both Germanic contact varieties in Northern Italy and Old Romance) the split CP configuration allows for both finite V movement to the lowest projection (i.e. 'low V2') and multiple XP fronting to the different/specialized specifier-position within the C domain (cf., among others, Bidese, Cognola & Padovan 2012).

2) A. In linear V2 languages the finite V moves to the lower CP projection (i.e. Fin) giving rise to a 'low V2' typology (cf. Grewendorf 2013). As a consequence the traditional notion of *Vorfeld* is reanalyzed in terms of [Spec, FinP] and the notion of *Vor-Vorfeld* in terms of movement to a higher Topic projection;

   B. In non-linear V2 languages the finite V moves to the highest C projection (i.e. 'high V2'); the notion of *Vorfeld* is analyzed in terms of [Spec, ForceP] and multiple adjunction should be allowed.

The choice between these two radical alternatives relies on two different lines of argumentation.

As we will show, two theoretical arguments play a role in favor of the first hypothesis (cf. 1):

i. the possible configurations allowing for Subject-Verb agreement in non linear V2 Languages, i.e. the pivotal role played by FinP in diachronic evolution or in contact situations.
ii. the role of C (i.e. Fin) as potential probe for Nominative Case assignment (C either "KEEPs" or "SHAREs" the relevant φ-features along the lines of Ouali 2008).

The only important argument in favor of the hypothesis in (2) concerned the possible co-occurrence of the so-called *Vorfeld-es* with a sentence-initial left-dislocated Topic:

(1) Den Studenten, es hat den keiner gesehen (cf. Grewendorf 2013:666)
the.$_{ACC}$ student^{i}, it has him^{i} nobody seen
'Nobody saw the student'

Assuming a Split-CP configuration for standard German, Grewendorf claims that: a) the finite verb moves to the lower CP projection (Fin^0); b) the positional expletive *es* lexicalized [Spec, Fin]; the left dislocated accusative DP (*Den Studenten*) moves to a higher C-layer (i.e. TopicP).

Rather on the contrary, in a non-linear V2 language like Cimbrian the co-occurrence of the positional expletive (*'z*) with a fronted XP is fully a-grammatical. As the examples in (2) show, the Cimbrian translation of its German counterpart (cf. 1 with 2a) is fully ungrammatical, while (2b) is perfect:

(2) a. *In naüge studjånt 'z hatt=en niamat gesekk
b. In naüge studjånt niamat hatt=en gesekk
the.$_{ACC}$ new student nobody has=him.$_{CL}$ seen
'Nobody has seen the new student'

Grewendorf (2013) takes the ungrammaticality of an example like (2a) as a strong argument in favor of the hypothesis that in a non-linear V2 language like Cimbrian the finite verb moves to the higher C-layer (ForceP) leaving no possibility for the co-occurrence of the positional expletive *'z* with the topicalized accusative DP (*in naüge studjènt*) in [Spec, Force]. Note however that Grewendorf's explanation for (2a) implies a fairly counterintuitive mechanisms like either adjunction to ForceP or movement to a projection outside the canonical split-CP configuration in order to give an account of (2b), i.e. non-linear V2.

In our proposal we will reverse Grewendorf's analysis for Cimbrian, adapting it for Standard German. From our perspective the co-occurrence of the positional expletive *es* and the left dislocated DP (see 1) suggests that a high adjoined DP in a linear V2 language does not satisfy the EPP feature in the CP domain. In this perspective the occurrence of the positional expletive should be interpreted as a 'last resort' device for the lexicalization of the relevant [Spec, CP].

On the contrary, in a non-linear V2 language like Cimbrian the dislocated (object) DP occurs in a specialized Spec position within the split C-domain overruling the occurrence of pre-verbal positional expletive as 'last resort' with respect to EPP in [Spec, Fin], which remain nevertheless 'active' for NOM assignment as (2b) shows.

Selected references

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