

## Verb Position in Old Catalan

Afra Pujol i Campeny  
PhD Candidate in Old Catalan  
Queens' College  
University of Cambridge

**THE V2 DEBATE.** Several authors defend that in OR the verb raised to the CP layer for [+fin] (Benincà & Poletto [2004]; Benincà [2006] for Old Italian, Adams [1987], Roberts [1993], Vance [1997]; for Old French, Fontana [1993] for Old Spanish. Others (Martins [2011] for Old Portuguese, Sitaridou [2011; 2012; 2016] and Batllori [2015] for Old Spanish) argue that the OR languages behaved similarly to their modern counterparts, in that the verb did not raise to the left periphery for the fulfilment of a V2 requirement.

**THE DATA.** Evidence for this talk is drawn from Old Catalan from a database containing 2,000 parsed clauses extracted from *El Llibre dels Feyts* (LFRJ), a 13<sup>th</sup> century chronicle.

**DID OLD CATALAN HAVE A V2 GRAMMAR?** In the literature supporting a V2 analysis of the OR languages, the following syntactic tests have been used to prove the movement of the verb to the CP layer. Let us contrast LFRJ data against them:

**i. THE POSITION OF CLITICS:** Benincà (2006), Vance, Donaldson & Devan Steiner (2010) and Donaldson (2016), relate the oscillation in clitic placement to the saturation of SpecFocP (the verb having raised to FocP): if SpecFocP is filled, proclisis is expected. If not, enclisis follows. This is not the case in OC, as shown in (1-2), where there proclisis is found after topical elements (in brackets).

(1) E, ab aytant, [él] se n' anà.  
and then he REFL-3SG-CL CL=left-3SG  
And, in the meantime, he left.

(2) On, [nós] vos deïm, sobre ls ·iii· conseyls que vós nos  
where we you say-1PL about the 3 advice that you to;us  
havets demanats  
have-2PL asked

Here, we tell you, about the three pieces of advice that you have asked us for.

**ii. THE POSITION OF THE VERB IN RELATION TO ADVERBS:** Cinque (1999) adverbial hierarchy has been used to identify the position of the verb within the clause. (3-4) show how the OC verb occurs below high TP adverbs.

(3) E puyes anam-nos-en reebre l'altra partida  
and then went-1PL.REFLX.1PL=CL receive-INF the other part  
de la host de Barcelona.  
of the army of Barcelona  
And afterwards we went to receive the other part of Barcelona's army.

(4) E ja vench la ora del vespre.  
and already came-3SG the hour of;the evening  
And it was already evening.

**iii. GERMANIC SUBJECT-VERB INVERSION:** In V2 languages, when the preverbal element is not the subject, the subject occurs immediately postverbally. In Romance languages, to distinguish Germanic inversion from 'free inversion', one needs to look for cases where the subject occurs between the auxiliary and the past participle in compound verb tenses (Poletto 2014:5). In LFRJ there is not a single case of the subject occurring between the auxiliary 'to have' and the non-finite form of compound tenses in clauses with postverbal overt subjects where another element occurs preverbally.

**iv. PRO-DROP ASYMMETRY BETWEEN MAIN AND EMBEDDED CLAUSES:** Old Catalan, a pro-drop language, does not display an asymmetry in the distribution of pro-drop subjects between main and embedded clauses, as shown in Table 1:

	V1	V2	V3	Total
<b>Main</b>	367	148	22	537/1000
<b>Embedded</b>	397	120	5	522/1000

Table 1 – Distribution of pro-drop subjects in LFRJ

**v. VERB INITIAL CLAUSES:** In the recent literature defending the V2 nature of the OR languages, verb initial clauses (significantly frequent in some varieties, **47.6%** in LFRJ database) have been explained by calling upon null elements that would satisfy the V2 constraint. In LFRJ, 92.2% of V1 clauses are preceded by the coordinating conjunction *e*. Poletto (2005) analyses *eV* clauses in Old Italian as conforming to the V2 system by means of a topic continuity marker, while other authors call upon subject continuity as the licenser for this type of clauses. Subject continuity can be discarded as an explanation for *eV* in OC with examples like (5):

- (5) E nostra mare, sempre que nós fom nats, **envià**·ns a  
 and our mother as soon as we were-1PL born.PPT sent-3SG=us to  
 Sancta Maria e **portaren**-nos en los braces; e **deyen**  
 Saint Maria and took-3PL=us in the arms and were saying-3PL  
 matines en la església de Nostra Dona  
 morning mass in the church of Our Lady  
 And our mother, as soon as we were born, sent us to Saint Mary's, and they carried us  
 in their arms, and they were singing the morning mass in the church of Our Lady.

The coordinated clauses in (5) display 3 different subjects: *nostra mare*, 'our mother' for *envià* 'she sent', and two pro-drop subjects that can be inferred from the context, but which had not been previously been introduced in the discourse. It is clear that in (5) we find "e" in contexts of switch-reference, not topic continuity only. Moreover, similar structures (5) are found in SVO languages such as Modern Catalan (MC), with the same distribution of the coordinating conjunction), where there is no need for a null element to satisfy a V2 requirement. Finally, absolute verb initial clauses can be accounted for in two ways: (i) predicate type (Pujol i Campeny 2016), and (ii) broad focus (in opening lines and direct speech). The same exact distribution is found in MC.

**CONCLUSION.** By contrasting OC data from LFRJ with the syntactic features associated with the description of OR V2 systems, we have shown that (i) clitic placement is not sensitive to the saturation of SpecFocP, (ii) that the verb was located in the TP layer, (iii) that there was no Germanic subject-verb inversion, (iv) that there is no asymmetry in the distribution of pro-drop subjects in main and embedded clauses, and (v) that verb initial clauses are truly verb initial. Therefore, it can be concluded that OC was not a V2 language. This calls for a reassessment of analyses that defend the common development of a V2 grammar throughout the OR languages.

**SELECTED REFERENCES:** BENINCÀ, P. 2006. A Detailed Map of the Left Periphery of Medieval Romance. *Crosslinguistic Research in Syntax and Semantics Negation Tense and Clausal Architecture* 2. 53–86. BENINCÀ, P. & Cecilia POLETTI. 2004. Topic, focus, and V2. In Luigi Rizzi (ed.), *The Structure of CP and IP*, 52–75. Oxford: Oxford University Press. POLETTI, C.. 2005. Si and e as CP expletives in Old Italian. In Montserrat Batllori, Maria Luisa Hernanz, Carme Picallo & Francesc Roca (eds.), *Grammaticalization and Parametric Variation*, 206–235. Oxford: Oxford University Press. POLETTI, C. 2014. *Word Order in Old Italian*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. SITARIDOU, I. 2011. Word order and information structure in Old Spanish. *Catalan Journal of Linguistics*(10). 159–184.