V2 effects in the world’s languages

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Keywords: syntax, left periphery, V2 effects, adjacency effects, information structure

Germanic languages, with the major exception of Modern English, are characterized by the regular occurrence of the finite verb in second position in main clauses, particularly declaratives, a property widely known as ‘verb second’ (V2). In the classical formal approach this configuration is assumed to result from the attraction of the finite verb to the highest clausal head (C) along with the appearance of an element in its outer edge (Thiersch 1978, den Besten 1983).

Old Romance languages, even though they display V>2 orders quite robustly, have also been characterized as obeying a similar syntactic constraint: the occurrence of the finite verb in at least second position (cf. Jouitteau 2009). While some researchers assume that Old Romance languages have a non-V2 system with V2 configurations following from stylistic, pragmatic or information-structural factors (e.g. Kaiser 1999, 2002, Sitaridou 2011, Elsig 2012, Varga 2017 for Old Romance and Haeblerli 2005 for Old English), others propose to conceive of Germanic V2 as part of a wider set of V2 effects obtaining in various other languages (e.g. Old English (Pintzuk 1993), Old Romance (e.g. Benincà 2013, Salvi 2012, Wolfe 2015)). In recent generative work, the latter approach has been framed in the rich model of the sentential left periphery in the wake of Rizzi (1997).

Modern English and Modern Romance languages likewise display V2 effects in specific contexts, in particular main wh-interrogatives (cf. (1), (2) and (3)):

(1) Which battery type would you recommend?  
(2) Quel livre a-t-elle acheté?  
   which book has-she bought  
   ‘Which book did she buy?’
(3) ¿Qué libro ha comprado María?  
   which book has bought Mary  
   ‘Which book did Mary buy?’

These languages have been labelled ‘residual’ V2 (Rizzi 1996), the implications being that the V2 effects are the residue of an earlier general V2 grammar, and that, in these constructions, the finite verb moves to C to enter into a Spec-Head relation with the fronted wh-phrase. However, these languages also deviate to various degrees from V2 order in the contexts at issue, a state of affairs that challenges the classical V2 approach in terms of verb-movement to the left periphery (e.g. Suñer 1994, Barbosa 2001, Goodall 2004). A case in point is the order of the subject and the finite verb in Spoken French and Brazilian Portuguese, in which the former regularly precedes the latter (e.g. Ambar 2008, Kato 2012):

(4) Quel livre Marie a acheté?  
   which book Mary has bought  
(5) Que livro a Maria comprou?  
   Brazilian Portuguese
Among the many other languages that exhibit similar V2 effects is Basque, an SOV language that is typologically different from, yet, for centuries, in close contact with Romance. In Basque, the wh-phrase as well as the focal-phrase occur immediately left-adjacent to the verbal cluster (e.g. Ortiz de Urbina 1989, 1995, 1999, Irurtzun 2007):

(6) Nork eman dio Mireni liburu?  
who.ERG give AUX Miren.DAT book.the.ABS  
‘Who gave the book to Miren?’

The adjacency effects of Basque have been associated with a general ban on verb-first (or tense-first) sentences (*V1) (Ortiz de Urbina 1989, 1994, Uriagereka 1999, Elordieta & Haddican 2017):

(7) a. *Dator Miren.  
come.3SG Miren  
‘Miren comes.’  

b. Miren dator.  
Miren come.3SG  
‘Miren comes.’

These adjacency effects have occasionally led to the classification of Basque, along with numerous other SOV languages, as a wh-in-situ language (e.g. Richards 2010, Dryer 2012). Alternative accounts argue for the analysis put forth regarding ‘residual V2-languages’, involving the leftward movement of the wh-/focal phrase and the verb (Ortiz de Urbina 1989, 1995, 1999), and are hereby able to concomitantly tackle the fact that, in the context of long-distance movement, the wh-/focal phrase appears left-adjacent to the matrix verb (Irurtzun 2007, 2008):

(8) Norki uste duzu [esan duela Jonek ti erosi duela liburu]?  
who.ERG think AUX say AUX:that John.ERG buy AUX:that book.ABS  
Lit. ‘Who do you think that Jon said that bought the book?’

The notion of V2 thus possibly constitutes a lens through which to explore the question of wh-in-situ in SOV languages.

The aim of this workshop is to bring together scholars working within a variety of theoretical frameworks and adopting either a diachronic or modern synchronic perspective to shed light on V2 effects in languages that are not commonly considered to have a strict V2 grammar. In particular, the typology of V2 effects is to be explored cross-linguistically to determine whether there is a common syntactic basis as well as, more generally, to gain deeper insights into the structure of the left periphery of the clause. Questions that the workshop seeks to address from theoretical and experimental angles include the following:

- What languages, beyond the Germanic ones, are relevant to the V2 typology?
- How do ‘at least V2’ languages as well as ‘*V1 languages’ fit into this typology?
- What is to be made of ‘residual V2 languages’, in which V2 effects are confined to particular syntactic contexts?
- Do V2 effects constitute a uniform phenomenon cross-linguistically or, at least, in particular language groups/families (e.g. Modern Romance)?
- How can the tendency, noted in the typological literature, for wh-phrases and foci to surface in a position adjacent to the verb in SOV languages be theoretically conceived of?
- Does language contact play a role in V2 effects being an areal phenomenon in e.g. Europe?
- What do changes in word order in the history of particular languages teach us on the nature of V2 as well as its typology?

References
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