

On Germanic and Old Romance V2. The view from Mòcheno.

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1. Intro.

Mòcheno, a German speech-island variety spoken by around 600 people in the Fersina valley (Northern Italy), is traditionally analysed as a V2 language (cf. Togni 1990, Rowley 2003). Rowley (2003:281) assumes that Mòcheno instantiates a German-like V2 rule forcing the finite verb to appear in the second sentence position in all main clauses. All deviations from this rule (i.e. V3/V4 orders) are considered to be contact induced; in particular they are treated as the outputs of the abstract rules of the non-V2 Romance contact grammars. This type of explanation is supported by sociolinguistic considerations, in particular by the fact that Mòcheno has been spoken by bilingual speakers for at least 200 years (cf. Cognola 2013:3). By comparing Mòcheno with German(ic) and Romance varieties, I show that the contact explanation for sentences deviating from strict V2 turns out to be untenable when a wider data set is considered. As an alternative analysis I propose that V3-V4 word orders originate within a single and autonomous Mòcheno grammar which is characterised by the presence of an Old Romance V2 rule (cf. Poletto 2002, Benincà 2006, Holmberg to appear among others). The properties that Mòcheno shares with Old Romance and those that are specific to it will be discussed in the talk, showing how they can contribute to our theoretical and empirical understanding of the V2 phenomenon as a whole.

2. The data.

2.1 On subject-finite verb inversion in main declarative clauses

Mòcheno is analysed as a V2 language on the basis of data such as those given in (1), which show that subject-finite verb inversion (so-called Germanic inversion, cf. Salvesen 2013) is possible in sentences with a fronted non-subject XP (unlike in the Romance contact varieties).

- (1) Gester hòt **der Mario** kaft s puach V2
yesterday has the Mario bought the book
“Yesterday Mario bought the book”

However, subject-verb inversion is not obligatory, as shown in (2).

- (2) Gester **der Mario** hòt a puach kaft V3
yesterday the Mario has a book bought
“Yesterday Mario bought the book”

The contact hypothesis predicts that sentences (1) and (2) only differ for the setting of the parameter involving the movement of the finite verb. In particular, the finite verb is assumed to have moved to C° in (1) and to remain in T° in (2) with all other things being equal (i.e. the DP subject appears in Spec,TP in both sentences). Therefore, no semantic / pragmatic differences involving the DP subject are predicted to exist between the sentences, since subjects appear in an A-position (Spec,TP) in both. In the talk I show that this prediction is not borne out: sentences (1) and (2) differ from the point of view of information structure: (2) involves a topicalised subject, whereas (1) involves a focussed subject. This distribution of DP subjects, which is shown to be very consistent in Mòcheno and to be very similar to that of DP subjects in Old English (Hinterhölzl/van Kemenade (2012), van Kemenade/Westergaard (2012) a.o.) and modern Norwegian (Holmberg 1993, Westergaard 2011 a.o.), is incompatible with an analysis of Mòcheno as a language with optional movement of the finite verb to C°, since this analysis does not account for the fine-grained discourse differences between (1) and (2). The discourse facts are captured by the alternative hypothesis that the finite verb moves to a C head in all main declarative clauses, and the DP subject can either precede (in a position of the left periphery, typically a TopicP, but FocusP is not excluded) or follow it (in a FocusP of the vP periphery).

2.2 On subject-finite verb inversion in interrogative clauses

A second argument *against* the validity of the competing-grammars explanation for Mòcheno comes from the syntax of interrogative clauses. The prediction of the contact hypothesis is that optionality should be available in any syntactic environment, according to the patterns observed in the competing grammars (cf. Svenonius 2000:280). In wh-interrogative clauses, therefore, subject-

finite verb inversion is predicted to be optional, because it is obligatory in German (and in Germanic languages including English, residual V2, cf. Rizzi 1991) but ruled out in contact Romance. As shown in (3) this prediction is not borne out. In Mòcheno, subject-finite verb inversion is ungrammatical in wh-interrogative clauses, and the only possibility is the dislocation construction.

- (3) a. *Bos hòt der Mario kaft?
 what has the Mario bought
 b. Bos hòt=erj kaft der Marioj?
 What has-subj.cl bought the Mario
 “What did Mario buy?”

The data in (3) are shown not to be counterevidence to the idea defended in the talk that Mòcheno is a V2 language (i.e. a language in which the finite verb moves in C° in all main clauses), but to follow from the specific properties of TP and of DP subjects in the language. In particular, DP subjects can only appear in an A' position in the high or low periphery, but never in Spec,TP which can only host *pro*.

2.3 Autonomous developments

The last piece of evidence against the contact account for Mòcheno comes from the presence of autonomous developments absent from both the competing grammars. Particularly relevant for the V2 phenomenon is the syntax of subject pronouns. Mòcheno has three morphologically different classes of subject pronouns (clitic-weak-strong, cf. Cardinaletti & Starke 1999), which exhibit specific syntactic and discourse properties. One example of this is given in (4). In (4a) it can be seen that the pronominal form in inversion contexts is the clitic *se*. This contrasts with German, where all pronouns are possible in inversion, and with contact Romance, where i) clitics cannot appear in inversion in main declarative clauses (Trentino), and ii) the weak pronoun is null (Italian, pro-drop language).

- (4) a. Gester hòt=se /*de /*si a puach kaft Mòcheno
 yesterday has=subj.cl subj weak subj strong a book bought
 b. Gestern hat die / sie ein Buch gekauft German
 yesterday has she / she a book bought
 c. Algeri l'ha -*la / *ela tolt en libro Trentino
 yesterday subj-cl-ha-subj.cl / subj.strong taken a book
 d. Ieri ha comprato un libro Italian
 yesterday has bought a book
 “Yesterday she bought a book”

3. Defining the V2 of Mòcheno

The discussed data indicate that the observed variation is not the result of the presence of two competing (V2 and non-V2) grammars, and must be accounted for through the hypothesis that the different orders are generated by rules internal to a single Mòcheno grammar. This grammar exhibits a V2 rule of Old Romance type, in which the movement of the finite verb to a C head for EPP reasons and the fronting of one XP to the Spec position of the FP hosting the verb (Holmberg to appear: 39) coexist with a split-CP (cf. Rizzi 1997, Benincà 2001). This is evidenced by the fact that Mòcheno shares the two core properties of Old Romance languages, i.e. not all fronted XP “count” for V2, and V3/V4 word orders are possible, as long as topics precede foci. Mòcheno has developed a class of C-oriented weak and clitic pronouns, which I show are hosted in SubjP - the position whose head is associated with the EPP feature responsible for V2 in this languages. By analysing the properties of SubjP, and its interaction with TP in modern Germanic V2 languages and Old Romance, I propose an explanation for the different developments of V2 in the two language families (maintenance vs loss).

Partial references

Benincà P. (2006) A detailed map of the left periphery of Medieval Romance. In *Crosslinguistic Research in Syntax and Semantics. Negation, Tense and Clausal Architecture*, Zanuttini et al (eds), 53–86. Georgetown; Rowley (2003). *Liacht as de sproch. Grammatica della lingua mòchena*. Palù del Fersina; Svenonius (2000) Quantifier movement in Icelandic. In *The Derivation of VO and OV*, Svenonius (ed.), 255–291. Benjamins.