

Old Romance word order: a comparative minimalist analysis

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The aim of the talk is the analysis of some aspects of word order in the medieval stages of the Romance languages, focussing on the issue of how the relevant differences with respect to their modern stages can be expressed by parameters in the sense of the Minimalist Program.

The general framework is a new funded research project, which analyses the basic syntactic properties of all Romance languages within a minimalist framework, including the formalization of the underlying mechanisms. Our approach is based on Chomsky's (2000 ff.) proposal of a uniform syntactic component with the lexicon as the locus of parameters, responsible for syntactic variation. As a consequence, the project aims at capturing the varying syntactic behaviour of Romance languages in means of parameterized and consistently formalized functional categories. We mainly assume the following basic syntactic features and mechanisms: the core functional categories C, T, v, and D, the operation Merge, a probing mechanism or operation Agree, and the existence of [EPP]-features. The status of head movement still being controversial, we provisionally stipulate a feature similar to the "strong" affixal head-feature used by Radford (2004), a "Head Attraction Feature" (HAF), following Pomino (2008).

The Old Spanish and Old Italian examples in (1) to (3) show the main phenomena that will be addressed in the talk. It will be shown that almost all other Romance languages allowed essentially the same word order during the Middle Ages. Unlike most other studies on the subject, I will present examples from a great number of medieval linguistic varieties of the Romance language group.

- (1) a. E esto fiz yo porque tomases ejemplo.
And this did I because you.take-SUBJ. example
'And I did this for you to have an example.' (*Conde Lucanor, enx. 2*).
- b. Questo tenne lo re a grande maraviglia.
this held the king to great miracle
'The king considered this great miracle.' (*Novellino 7*)
- (2) a. porque ella non avia las cartas rescebidas
because she not had the letters-FEM.SG. received-FEM.SG.
'because she had not received the letters'
(*L. De Buen Amor, I 191a*, cf. Batllorri, Sánchez & Suñer 1995:204)
- b. avrebbono a Alessandro e forse alla donna fatta villania
they.have-COND. to A. and maybe to-the woman done affront
'they would have affronted A. and perhaps the lady, too' (*Boccaccio, Dec. 2,3*)
- (3) a. las ventas e compras de tu engañosa feria no prósperamente sucedieron
the sales and purchases of your fraudulent fair not successfully happened
'the sales and purchases of your fraudulent fair were not performed with success' (*Celestina 21*)
- b. e loro ordinatamente disse come era avvenuto
and to-them orderly he.told how it-had happened
'and he told them in detail how it had happened' (*Boccaccio, Dec. 2,5*)

The examples in (1) show the well known phenomenon of XP-V-S order. It will be argued that, in a framework that tries to avoid splitting approaches, these cases can best be explained by theories such as that of Fontana (1993), Roberts (1993), among others, according to which the fronted constituent is located in [spec,TP], whereas the subject remains in its base position. In a minimalist framework, this means that the [EPP]-feature of T could be checked by any subject or non-subject constituent, unlike the situation in the modern stages of the languages at issue. However, at least two problems will be discussed with respect to this idea: 1.- To assume different types of [EPP]-features (say subject-

oriented versus non-subject oriented ones) would at most yield descriptive, but not explanatory adequacy. 2.- Why should the [EPP]-feature attract an object or another constituent located in a tree-position lower than the subject? It will be shown that these problems can be resolved by the assumption that, in Old Romance, (little) *v* could have an optional [EPP]-feature, which, if chosen, attracts a constituent to an outer specifier of *v*P. In this case, both the subject and the moved non-subject constituent would be equidistant to T according to standard assumptions, and either of them could move to its specifier. Interestingly, the data in (2) show that the lower “scrambling”- position really existed, see the analysis of (2a) presented in (4):

(4) [TP *ella*_i non avia [*v*P las cartas_j *t*_i [*v*' resçebidas_k [VP *t*_k *t*_j]]]]

This analysis may further be corroborated by another property of the Old Romance languages, namely participle fronting. Batllori (1992) provides evidence that Old Romance participle fronting should be interpreted as XP movement; in our approach the fronted XP (probably a VP under remnant movement) containing the participle will check the [EPP]-feature of T. According to a corollary established by Müller (1998), languages which show this type of movement also have a lower scrambling position available. This is, in fact, borne out by the data and our analysis.

Finally, I will show that the property in (3), i.e., the preverbal location of certain adverbs (in contrast to their modern postverbal position) is independent of the explanation for the examples in (1) and (2). I will stipulate that the HAF on T was optional in the medieval stages of Romance, so that the finite verb could remain in *v*.

Summarizing, what I will show is that the cases in (1)-(3) can be explained by two (lexical) parameters: Optional HAF on T and optional [EPP]-feature on (little) *v*. A combination of both parameters is able to explain almost all Old Romance word order patterns, including the (apparent) verb-final order. The corresponding lexical entries for the functional categories at issue will be formalized and compared to those of several modern Romance varieties.

In addition, my theory will be compared to other approaches that also try to explain data such as (1)-(3) by using (cartographic) split-TP frameworks (e.g., Batllori, Sánchez & Suñer 1995) or split-CP-theories (e.g., Poole 2006, Poletto 2008). With respect to the latter, an alternative explanation for information structure will be presented (based on López in press).

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