

Partial V2: Residue or innovation?

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Residual Verb Second in Romance (ReVerSe) 1: ‘Through the Looking Glass’

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1 Introduction

Rizzi’s (1990, 1996) choice of terminology – *residual verb second* – is rather unfortunate:

- It conflates two senses which must be distinguished: one formal, one historical.

(1) *Senses of “residual verb second” in the literature*

- Formal:** a V2 system is “residual” if its syntax is highly constrained compared to a fully-V2 system.
 - e.g. V2 only arises in non-declaratives, only involves T-to-C (rather than V-to-C), etc.
- Historical:** a V2 system is “residual” if it is vestigial, i.e. a historical relic from an earlier, fully-V2 system
 - Entails that the set of V2 environments is a proper subset of those from earlier diachronic stages.

These two senses can be doubly-dissociated (Sailor 2020):

- Where (1a) holds, but not (1b): e.g. British and Irish English (Sailor 2017, 2020)
 - ▶ i.e., a restricted V2 system which only arises in non-declarative clauses, only inverts auxiliaries/modals, etc...
 - ▶ ...but aspects of which are recent historical developments (i.e. non-vestigial)
- Where (1b) holds, but not (1a): any stable fully-V2 system (e.g. Dutch)
 - ▶ i.e., a V2 system which has clearly persisted from a much earlier historical stage...
 - ▶ ...but which isn’t constrained to non-declaratives, etc.; it is extremely robust.

The goals of this talk are strictly methodological / programmatic (i.e., no new Romance data, no new analyses...)

- Review arguments for the distinction in (1), from British and Irish English
- Build up a notion of *innovative V2*, supported by a very different-looking V2 system in Afrikaans
- Since even the most restrictive V2 systems can apparently still become productive...
 - ▶ ...we should ask not just what it takes to lose vs. preserve V2...
 - ▶ ...but also what it takes to extend V2—for it to become productive.
 - (And hopefully you can name some additional examples from Romance!)

2 Background

When examining how V2 systems change, the literature has focused on loss (and sometimes preservation). A non-exhaustive sample:

- General loss/weakening of V2: Poletto (2019)¹
 - ▶ Loss (of strict-V2) in Germanic: Walkden (2017), a.o.
 - Loss in English: Roberts (1993:§3.4), Haeberli (2002), van Kemenade (1987, 2012), among many, many others
 - Loss in Norwegian dialects: Westergaard (2005), Westergaard et al. (2017), a.o.
 - ▶ Loss in Medieval Romance: Wolfe (2018), a.o.
 - Loss in French: Larrivé (2021), a.o.
 - Loss in Italian: Poletto (2019), a.o.
 - ▶ Loss (and stability) in languages of Northern Italy: Poletto (2019) (and references therein)
 - ▶ Loss in Welsh: Willis (1998), a.o.

By contrast, literature on extension/broadening of an existing V2 system pales by comparison.²

- Below: two case studies in innovative V2 (from Germanic...sorry)
 - ▶ Open question for the audience: can such cases be found in Romance?

3 Two case studies in innovative V2

3.1 Innovative V2 in British and Irish English (Sailor 2017, 2020)

English is said to have lost V2 around the 15th century (Fischer et al. 2000: ch. 4).

- Present-day: only T-to-C (rather than V-to-C), and only in a small set of non-declarative clause types (interrogatives, exclamatives, conditionals, negative inversion...)
 - ▶ Clearly “residual” in the formal sense (1a): a highly restricted system.
 - ▶ But is it “residual” in the historical sense (1b)?
 - Are all V2 environments in English vestiges of earlier stages of the grammar?

Sailor (2017, 2020): no, at least not for all varieties.

- British and Irish English have recently extended V2 to an entirely novel environment.
- *Fuck*-inversion (FI) clauses exhibit the following properties:
 - ▶ Surface-V1
 - ▶ Emphatic-negative interpretation
 - ▶ No overt negative morphology

¹ See also talks from the *Secrets of Success* workshop in Oslo, 2019, apparently set to appear in a special issue of the *Journal of Historical Syntax*.

² This should be distinguished from the question of what it takes to innovate V2 from scratch (a relevant question, given its typological rarity; see Holmberg 2015:§5 for one suggestion).

- ▶ Taboo expression in post-subject position (inc. *fuck, hell, bugger(y), bollocks...*)

- (2) A: John is a nice guy.
 B: Is he fuck—he stabbed my cousin!
 = *No he isn't (a nice guy)!*
- (3) They're all wearing kilts, but will I fuck be wearing one of them.
 = *I definitely won't be wearing one of those.*

As argued at length in Sailor (2017, 2020), FI clauses:

- Are only superficially V1; like e.g. polar questions, they are underlyingly V2
 - The first position is occupied by a null negative operator
 - Unlike the null polar-Q operator, this null negative operator can be easily diagnosed by its especially high scope
 - ▶ e.g. it scopes over the subject position (unlike standard sentential negation), licensing NPIs there, etc.
- (4) We might have gotten a bit lairy at the football match, but...
- a. #...any of us didn't throw flares onto the field.
 - b. ...did any of us fuck throw flares onto the field.
- (5) a. Everybody didn't wear green.
 = *Everybody is such that they didn't wear green*
 # *It is not the case that everybody wore green*
- b. Did everybody fuck wear green.
 # *Everybody is such that they didn't wear green*
 = *It is not the case that everybody wore green*

- Thus, FI clauses fit the classic “residual” V2 profile in the formal sense (1a).

Crucially, though, FI is also only found in varieties spoken in Britain and Ireland

- Unattested in all other varieties (North American, Australian, South African, Singaporean...)
- Strongly suggests that FI arose in the post-colonial era...
 - ▶ ...i.e., several centuries after V2 was “lost” in the grammar (see Sailor 2017, 2020 for details).
- So FI clauses do not fit the definition of “residual” in the historical sense (1b):
 - ▶ There are now novel V2 environments that were unattested in previous stages of the grammar (see also polar exclamatives: Biberauer 2010, Sailor 2020)

Now that we can clearly dissociate these two senses of “residual” V2...

- ...we desperately need a new term for the formal sense.
- In its place, I propose the term *Partial V2* (on par with e.g. *partial pro-drop*),³ in which only a narrow subset of environments license the phenomenon.
 - ▶ “Residual” V2 in the formal sense (1a) = *Partial V2* (PV2).
 - ▶ (Admittedly, *ParVerSe* doesn't quite have the same ring to it...)

³See also Westergaard's (2007) term *mixed V2*.

3.2 Innovative V2 in Afrikaans (Biberauer 2017)

As another instance of a language extending/broadening its V2 system, consider Afrikaans.

- In a sense, it falls on the opposite end of the V2 spectrum from English:
- Biberauer (2017, *inter alia*): Afrikaans has the most robust V2 system in all of Germanic
 - ▶ It allows V2 in various environments that even its closest relatives do not:

(6) *Afrikaans V2 in wh-complement clauses* (adapted from Biberauer 2016:6)

- a. Ek sal uitvind hoe **kom** ons by die gebou in.
I shall out.find how come us by the building in
'I will find out how we (can) get into the building.'
- b. Ek wonder wat **eet** hulle saans.
I wonder what eat they evenings
'I wonder what they eat in the evenings.'

Biberauer (2017): this is a straightforward case of innovative V2:

- In brief, Afrikaans complement clauses grew in size, licensing V2 where it would normally be blocked (e.g. in Dutch).

The impetus was a peripheral discourse particle *nie*, which arose in the early 19th century:

- An emphatic tag resumptive employed in communication with non-native Dutch speakers:

(7) Het kan niet waar zijn, nee!
it can not true be no
'It can't be true, no!'

- *Nie* underwent Jespersen's cycle, becoming an obligatory concord marker upon standardization in 1925.
 - ▶ It then appeared in many environments, e.g.:

(8) a. Hulle koop nie koerante nie.
they buy not newspaers POL
'They don't buy newspapers.'
b. Moenie jou paspoort vergeet nie!
must.not your passport forget POL
'Don't forget your passport!'

- It also began to take high scope, appearing in concord structures (with e.g. *nouliks*)
 - ▶ This shows that this *nie* is integrated into the clause, but in a high right-edge position:

(9) Hy kon nouliks staan (nie).
he could barely stand POL
'He could barely stand.'

Biberauer: systematic exposure to peripheral, acategorical *nie* led to complete reanalysis of Afrikaans CPs:

- Learners assigned these complement clauses a new type (PolP)
 - ▶ This extra layer of functional structure licenses V2 where it would otherwise be blocked (see Biberauer 2016:§3.2 for detailed discussion).

- ▶ So Afrikaans took an already fully-V2 system from its V2 parent (Dutch) and extended it even further.
- So Innovative V2 is attested even in languages with robust (non-partial) V2 systems.

4 Takeaway and remaining questions

A complete theory of V2 diachrony should provide for all three possible outcomes: **loss, preservation, extension.**

- While the first two are well-represented in the literature, the third seems significantly less so.

The two case-studies above are instances of such extension, i.e. innovative V2

- Importantly, this is found both in highly restricted systems (partial V2) and robust systems (fully-V2) alike.

Diachronic pathways for innovative V2?

- Both Biberauer (2017) and Sailor (2020) argue that clause-level functional structure as the locus of innovation
 - ▶ Perhaps unsurprising; directly accords with various theories of V2 loss in both Germanic and Romance
- A larger sample is clearly required before firm conclusions can be drawn.
 - ▶ Is innovative V2 rare? No *a priori* reason
 - ▶ Presumably happened many times in the history of Germanic
 - ▶ Just in English and Scots, Sailor (2020) identifies three examples (FI, polar exclamatives, and *gonnae* exhortatives)

Lessons for the linguist interested in “residual” V2:

- The historical sense of “residual”:
 - ▶ Necessarily relative, especially given innovative V2:
 - English: full V2 → “residual” V2 → “residual”-plus-innovations V2... (at least in some varieties)
 - ▶ Is basically vacuous (and presumably unattested among linguists) when the formal sense is not also at play:
 - Even full V2 systems are “residual” if they are stable (e.g. Dutch), but nobody would use the term this way
 - So the historical sense has no status independent of the formal sense, and has to go.
- The formal sense of “residual”:
 - ▶ Is just badly named: it refers to syntactic restrictions (clause type, head movement...), not diachrony
 - ▶ Ought to be replaced by an appropriately syntactic term (e.g. *partial*, akin to analyses of *pro*-drop)
 - ▶ Is to be thought of simply as one extreme the V2 spectrum (with Afrikaans at the other pole?)...
 - ...measured by the cardinality of the set of morphosyntactic environments in which it can occur
- When working on a particular V2 case, check its individual history (not just the general history of V2 in the language)
 - ▶ Perhaps it is a recent extension of an existing pattern = evidence for innovative V2

- ▶ Further examples may give way to a fuller theory of innovative V2

While I've presented nothing from Romance bearing on these questions,

- I hope to have raised considerations relevant for any study of “residual” V2 (in either sense).
- I also hope to learn about possible examples of innovative Romance V2 in the question period!

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