

Stepwise loss of verb movement
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In this paper we discuss how the loss of verb movement takes place in a stepwise fashion, focusing in particular on data from the history of English and Scandinavian. More specifically, we argue that there are (at least) two intermediate stages between a grammar with subject-verb inversion patterns (V2) and a grammar with no verb movement:

- (1) Stage (i) *V2/subject-verb inversion*
 Stage (ii) *Long non-V2 verb movement (V-to-Fin)*
 Stage (iii) *Short non-V2 verb movement (V-to-I)*
 Stage (iv) *No verb movement*

Recent studies on synchronic syntax have shown that the verb movement generally labeled V-to-I (i.e. not yielding subject-verb inversion) comes in various types. For example, Bentzen (2007) and Wiklund et al. (2007) have demonstrated that whereas verbs in Icelandic embedded non-V2 clauses obligatorily precede negation/adverbs and follow the subject, as in (2), verbs in Northern Norwegian (NN) and Northern Ostrobothnian (NOB) embedded non-V2 clauses may precede and intervene between adverbs, but have to follow negation and the subject, as in (3). Following Bentzen (2007) and Wiklund et al. (2007), we assume that stage (ii) corresponds to the Icelandic pattern, whereas stage (iii) corresponds to the NN/NOB pattern.

- (2) a. ... fyrst Jón {**keypti**} ekki {***keypti**} bókina. (Icelandic)
as John bought not bought book.the
 b. ... fyrst Jón {**keypti**} sennilega {***keypti**} oft {***keypti**} nýjar bækur.
as John bought probably bought often bought new books
- (3) a. ... ettersom Jon {***kjøpte**} ikke {**kjøpte**} boka. (NN)
as John bought not bought book.the
 b. ... ettersom Jon {**kjøpte**} sannsynligvis {**kjøpte**} ofte {**kjøpte**} nye bøker.
as John bought probably bought often bought new books

Diachronic data suggest that the loss of verb movement proceeds through the stages in (1). The loss of V2 in English is a case in point. Historically, English verb movement has gone through stages (i), (ii), and (iv). Old English displayed V2 with subject-verb inversion with both main verbs and auxiliaries in *wh*-questions and clauses with non-subject topicalization, as in (4) (cf. e.g. Eythórssón 1996). This corresponds to stage (i). In late Middle to early Modern English (the 15th-16th century) there was a (brief) stage with quite systematic movement of both main verbs and auxiliaries across negation, but without obligatory V2, i.e. no inversion, as in (5) (cf. Biberauer & Roberts to appear). This corresponds to our stage (ii), Long non-V2 verb movement. In present-day English, this Long non-V2 verb movement pattern still applies to auxiliaries, but there is no movement of main verbs anymore.

- (4) a. hvæt **sægest þu** yrðling? (Old English)
what say you-sg. ploughman
 ‘What so you say, ploughman?’
 b. þa **ge-mette he** sceaðan.
then met he robbers
 ‘then he met robbers’
- (5) a. ... but Cristen men he **forbade not** þe entre. (Middle English)
... but Christians he forbid not the entry
 ‘but he did not forbid Christians from entering’
 b. And gif he **be noht** so, then ... (Late Middle English)
and if he be not so, then ...
 ‘and if he’s not, then ...’

A second case in point comes from the history of the Mainland Scandinavian languages. These languages display V2 in main clauses today, but in embedded contexts we find evidence for the stepwise development from V2/subject-verb inversion to Long non-V2 verb movement to No verb

movement. There are instances of stage (i), V2/subject-verb inversion, in Old Norse and Middle Mainland Scandinavian embedded clauses, as shown in (6) (Holmberg & Platzack 1995). Furthermore, stage (ii), Long non-V2 verb movement (verb movement across negation) is attested in Old, Middle, and Early Modern Mainland Scandinavian embedded clauses, as in (7) (Sundquist 2003). Verb movement is now generally lost in embedded contexts in Mainland Scandinavian (stage (iv)), but we find evidence for the intermediate stage (iii), Short non-V2 verb movement, in Northern Norwegian and Northern Ostrobothnian (verb movement across adverbs but not negation), as shown above in (3).

(6) þa vildi iah slikum rætti vnæ, sum nu **føræ iah** þær fram (Old Swedish)
then wanted I such redress get that now bring I you forth
 ‘Then I would be satisfied with such redress as I now offer to you.’

(7) om vy **for icke** de suar (Early Modern Danish)
if we get not the answers
 ‘if we do not get the answers.’

A show-case example of these four stages comes from an Insular Scandinavian language, namely Faroese. This language descends from Old Norse, and has hence once had V2/subject-verb inversion in embedded clauses (stage (i)). Furthermore, in Faroese we have seen all the three steps in the development from stage (ii) to stage (iv) during this and the last century, lending support to our stepwise model. Old Faroese consistently displayed Long non-V2 verb movement (stage (ii)), as illustrated in (8), but around the 19th-20th century this becomes optional (Thráinsson et al. 2004). Long non-V2 verb movement has been attested in Faroese at least up until the mid 20th century, but recent studies have shown that this pattern is not accepted by Faroese speakers anymore (Thráinsson 2003, Heycock & Sorace to appear). However, a recent survey has attested Short non-V2 verb movement (stage (iii)) in modern-day Faroese, as in (9). This survey also shows that certain speakers do not allow verb movement at all, suggesting that their grammar has already reached stage (iv).

(8) Enn ef hann **uill æigu** læigu taca (Old Faroese)
but if he wants not rent take
 ‘but if he does not want to charge rent’

(9) Jógvan skilir ikki hví Kjartan **vaskar so ofta** hansara bil (Modern Faroese)
Jógvan understands not why Kjartan cleans so often his car
 ‘Jógvan does not understand why Kjartan cleans his car so often.’

Support for the stepwise change from V2 to Long non-V2 verb movement and to Short non-V2 verb movement is also found in the Romance languages. Early Romance varieties were V2 (stage (i)). Comparing this to modern varieties of Romance, we find that French displays a stage (ii) grammar, requiring verb movement across negation, whereas Italian and Spanish display a stage (iii) pattern, with verb movement across adverbs but not negation.

Thus, diachronic data from English, Mainland and Insular Scandinavian, as well as data from Romance, provide supporting evidence for a stepwise loss of verb movement proceeding through stages from *V2/subject-verb inversion* to *Long non-V2 verb movement* and *Short non-V2 verb movement* and finally to *No verb movement*.

References:

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