

V2-complements in the history of German

Svetlana Petrova (Wuppertal University)

In modern German, asyndetic (complementizerless) clauses with the verb in second position (aV2) are a well-known, though restricted alternative to canonical complement clauses introduced by the complementizer *dass* 'that' (see Reis 1997, Meinunger 2007, Freywald 2013). While the conditions triggering this alternation are a well-established subject of investigation in present-day German, the diachronic dimensions of this phenomenon lack comparable attention in formal syntactic research. A notable exception is Axel-Tober (2012: Chapt. 3.4) who investigates the properties of complement clauses with medial verb placement in Old and Middle High German, rejecting their status of potential equivalents of aV2-clauses on the basis of the following argumentation. Frist, Axel-Tober (2012) observes that in the corpus she uses, no safe evidence supporting a V-in-C-analysis is available; by contrast, the attested orders can be properly derived via extraposition within asyndetic verb-final clauses, a pattern which is widely attested in data of the period (1). Second, in some sporadic cases in which there is diagnostic evidence for verb movement to the left, the governing category is of a type that blocks rather than allows V2 in its complements in modern German, as e.g. the nouns *lougen* 'denial' and *zuïuel* 'doubt' or the verbs *zuïvelôn* 'to doubt', *wellen* 'to want' or *geheizzan* 'to command' (3). In general, Axel-Tober (2012) concludes that aV2-complements are missing in the earliest attestation and only enter the grammar of German later, during the Early New High German period.

Note, however, that the selection of V2-complements is subject of parametric variation across Germanic. This is not only true for V2 in *that*-complement clauses, whose licensing conditions vary across varieties of Icelandic (Gärtner 2003) as well as between Mainland Scandinavian, Frisian and German (de Haan 2001, Freywald 2008), but also for aV2-complements, which e.g. in Afrikaans can be licensed by exactly those verbs which block aV2 in modern German (Biberauer 2016). This invites the hypothesis that in case the evidence for verb movement is safe in the respective complement clauses in historical German, the differences in the type of the licensing categories may result from changes regarding the licensing conditions of aV2 over time. This hypothesis is borne out by the data. Searching the recently launched *Referenzkorpus Altdeutsch*, it was possible to determine the following two datasets involving diagnostic evidence for V-in-C in asyndetic complement clauses in OHG.

The first dataset involves the presence of pronominal arguments or adverbials like *giwisso* 'certainly' or *rehto* 'indeed' in postverbal position. As pronouns and adverbials of the mentioned kind do not undergo extraposition to the right themselves, orders in which the finite verb surfaces above such elements is diagnostic for verb movement to the left. As the examples suggest, this order is attested in the complements of verbs of saying, which are good aV2-licensors in modern German as well (4) but also in complements of directive verbs (5) which reject aV2 with a main verb in C in modern German (Truckenbrodt 2006).

The second dataset involves empty referential subjects (*pro*). This diagnostics is established by Axel (2007), who observes that *pro* in OHG is licensed via c-command by an element agreeing with the referential subject of *pro* in person and number. The c-command relation necessary for licensing *pro* can be provided either by way of complementizer inflection, as in modern dialects of German (Weiß 2005), or by movement of V to C (Axel and Weiß 2011). Applied to patterns as in (6) and (7), this diagnostics suggests that the verb must have moved to C to provide the agreement relation necessary for licensing *pro*. Note that this is also possible if the matrix predicate is one of the well-known 'blockers of aV2' in modern German, as e.g. *to say* in its use as a directive verb (6).

This evidence suggests that aV2-complements are possible in German from the very beginning of the attestation, but that the present-day distribution of this syntactic pattern is established after the MHG period, as a result of diachronic change in the licensing conditions of these clauses, thus providing another instance of parametric variation in the domain of embedded V2 across Germanic.

Data

- (1) *quad, thánana in quami wízzi | joh mánagfalto núzzi*
said thereof them came-SubjII wisdom and much use
'[the Serpent] said they would gain much wisdom and use thereby' (O II 6, 15)
- (2) *íst tánne zuûuel. síu nesîn uuíllig tes richtennes*
is then doubt they Neg-are-SubjI willing the-Gen judging-Gen
'there is doubt that they are unwilling to judge'
(Notker Boethius III 174, 22; Axel-Tober 2012: 156 = (71b))
- (3) *Man gebot dem herzogen Adelgêre, er chome*
Indef ordered the-Dat duke-Dat A.-Dat he come-SubjI
scire ze Lateran
quickly to Lateran
'They ordered that Duke Aderger came quickly to Lateran'
(Kaiserchronic 6820; cited in Paul ²⁵2007: 401; Axel-Tober 2012: 170 = (100))
- (4) *Ih zéllu iu, quad er ubarlút, alle wárut ir mir drút*
I tell you said er openly all were you me-Dat dear
'I tell you, he openly said, you were all dear to me' (O IV 12, 5)
- (5) *bat man gábi imo then mán*
asked Indef gave-SubjII him the-Acc man
'[Joseph of Arimathea] aksed that they gave him the man [the dead body of Jesus]'
(O IV 35,6)
- (6) *siu quat, sus libiti pro, commen nehebiti pro*
she said so lives-SubjII husband-Acc Neg-had-SubjII
'she said, she lived alone, she had no husband'
(Kl.ahd.Dkm., Chr.Samar., 24)
- (7) *Ér quad thes ni tháhti pro*
he said this-Gen Negt thought-SubjII
'he [the angel] said, he [Joseph] should not consider this'
(O I 8, 21)

References

- Axel, K. 2007. *Studies in Old High German Syntax: left sentence periphery, verb placement and verb-second*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Axel, K. & Weiß, H. 2011. Pro-drop in the history of German. From Old High German to the modern dialects. In *Null Pronouns*, eds. Peter Gallmann & Melani Wratil, 21–52. Berlin, New York: de Gruyter.
- Axel-Tober, K. 2012. *(Nicht-)Kanonische Nebensätze im Deutschen: Diachrone und Synchrone Aspekte*. Berlin: de Gruyter.
- Biberauer, T. 2016. Afrikaans V2 and its implications for our understanding of V2 parametrisation. Paper at Rethinking Verb Second, March 22, 2016, Cambridge, UK.
- De Haan, G. 2001. More is going upstairs than downstairs. Embedded root phenomena in West Frisian. *Journal of Comparative Germanic Linguistics* 4: 3–38.
- Freywald, U. 2013. Uneingeleiteter V1- und V2-Satz. In *Satztypen des Deutschen*, eds. Jörg Meibauer, Markus Steinbach & Hans Altmann, 317–337. Berlin, New York: de Gruyter.
- Freywald, U. 2008. Zur Syntax und Funktion von *dass*-Sätzen mit Verbzweitstellung. *Deutsche Sprache* 36: 246–285.
- Gärtner, H.-M. 2003. How Icelandic Can You Be, If You Speak Icelandic B? In *Grammar in Focus*. Vol. II, 115–122, eds. Lars Olof Delsing, Cecilia Falk, Gunlög Josefsson & Halldor Sigurðsson. Lund: UP.
- Meinunger, A. 2007. In the mood of desire and hope. *Cahiers Chronos* 17: 155–176.
- Paul, H. 2007²⁵. *Mittelhochdeutsche Grammatik*. Tübingen: Niemeyer.
- Reis, M. 1997. Zum syntaktischen Status unselbständiger Verbzweit-Sätze. In *Sprache im Fokus. Festschrift für Heinz Vater zum 65. Geburtstag*, eds. Christa Dürscheid, Karl Ramers & Monika Schwarz, 121–144. Tübingen: Niemeyer.

- Truckenbrodt, H. 2006. On the semantic motivation of syntactic verb movement to C in German. *Theoretical Linguistics* 32 (3): 257–306.
- Weiß, H. 2005. Inflected complementizers in Continental West Germanic dialects. *Zeitschrift für Dialektologie und Linguistik* 72: 148–166.