Cracks in the bottleneck:

Verb-third and the polyoccupation of the initial slot in verb-second languages
Insights from Germanic and beyond

Sorbonne Université, Paris
February 16th - 17th, 2023

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Deadline for submissions: **October 15th, 2022**
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With the exception of English and its varieties, all Present-Day Germanic languages display some kind of verb-second (V2) rule, according to which the finite verbal form has to be put in the second position of the clause, at least in declarative utterances and *wh*-questions. But the exact contours of the V2 rule vary strongly from one language to the other. For instance, in some languages, the selection of the pre-finite constituent is totally blind to whether it is the subject argument or not (e.g. High German), whereas others make a significant difference (e.g. Icelandic). But above all, the "bottleneck" (originally a theory-internal label, going back to Haegeman 1996) demanding that one and only one constituent be placed before the finite verb is not equally respected in all Germanic varieties. Previous cross-Germanic insights into these V3 phenomena can be found, among others, in Freywald et al. (2015), Walkden (2017), Alexiadou & Lohndal (2018), or in some of the studies collected in Meklemborg & Wolfe (2021).

The present conference is concerned with all kinds of violations of this "bottleneck" in any variety of Germanic, present and past (including former V2 stages of English). We warmly encourage cross-Germanic comparison, studies from a historical perspective, sociolinguistic analyses, and investigations centred on language contact including code-switching. V3 has been extensively mentioned in syntactic descriptions of urban vernaculars, and comparison with other varieties may prove fruitful.

The conference is open to contributions from all theoretical frameworks. We also welcome contrastive proposals comparing Germanic and non-Germanic V2 languages, such as Medieval Romance languages or subsisting V2 varieties in Romance; Estonian; or any other language, regardless of their family and location.

Here is a first, non-exhaustive list of issues to be addressed during the conference.

1. Syntax, information-structure, history and sociolinguistics of verb-third-patterns in Germanic

At least two verb-third constructions are attested both in North and West Germanic languages.

A. Adverbial – Subject – finite verb

(1) ***Nå de*** *får betale.* (Norw.)
"Now they have to pay."
(2) ***Då alla*** *började hata henne.* (Sw.)
"Then everybody started to hate her."
(3) ***Dann wir*** *sind gegangen.* (High German) [(1) to (3) quoted from Freywald et al. 2015:82]

"Then we left."

(4) *En **dan hij** gaat weg.* (Dutch) [Appel 1984, quoted from Freywald et al 2015:86]
"And then he's going away."

Data from Freywald et al. (2015) suggest that this pattern is much more restricted in Dutch urban vernaculars than in the corresponding N, S, G varieties. Wiese & Müller (2018) also show that this pattern, while it is widely attested in urban vernaculars, may not be an innovation. The same pattern is well-attested in the West Flemish variety of Dutch (see recent discussion in Haegeman & Greco 2018), independently of the sociolinguistic context of urban vernaculars. The same seems to hold in colloquial Danish (Jørgensen 2016). Even though research on the acquisition of V2 suggests that language contact may facilitate the use of the Adv – S – V pattern (Johansen 2008), just like code-switching (Kahan-Newman 2015), the role of language contact in the rise of V3 is a matter of debate (compare Walkden 2017, Wiese & Müller 2018). Research drawing on sociolinguistically diverse data and addressing this sociolinguistic diversity is all the more welcome. But other factors also need to be addressed, such as a possible privileged access of subject pronouns to this pattern (as opposed to heavier NP/DP subjects).

B. Topic – High adverb – finite verb

An adverb fulfilling a text-structuring function can be inserted between the initial constituent (a topic) and the finite verb. However, beyond surface order, the attestations of thus pattern display diverging properties throughout the Germanic family. In High German, this pattern is attested in contexts of topic change; in Swedish, it also selects non-contrastive framesetting topics:

(5) *Der Juniaufstand ist Ausdruck spontaner Empörung; ihm fehlt Führung und Organisation.* ***Der Gegenschlag indessen*** *ist ebenso kühl kalkuliert wie brutal.*
(High German; quoted from Breindl 2008: 35)
"The June Uprising is an expression of spontaneous indignation; it is deprived of leadership and organisation. The retaliation, on the other hand, is both well-calculated and brutal." (contrastive topic)

(6) ***Hon kanske*** *kommer i kväll.* (Egerland 1998:1)
"Maybe she's coming tonight." (non-contrastive topic)

In Norwegian and Swedish, this phenomenon is particularly well-attested for the adverbial *så* (Sollid & Eide 2007, Nordström 2010), which may imply that some resumptive forms may have historically acquired a specific access to V3 constructions:

(7) *Jag anlände till Rom och **sedan så** tog jag in på hotell.*
(Swedish; quoted from Egerland 2021:364)
"I landed in Rome, then I checked into a hotel."

This raises the major question whether resumptive adverbials and personal pronouns stacked immediately before the finite verb should be treated separately, even when they are not clitics (see Jørgensen 2016).

2. Verb-third beyond verb-third?

A. "Seemingly verb-third" constructions

Several syntactic patterns reminiscent of V3 have drawn the attention of grammarians and have often been treated as less obvious violations of V2. Müller (2013) calls them "apparent polyoccupation".

Notably, the possibility to stack circumstancial adverbials in the pre-verbal slot is well-attested throughout V2 languages.

(8) ***Vor wenigen Wochen im Deutschen Theater*** *sagte ich: „Unser Ziel muß sein, daß die Polizei friedliche Demonstranten schützt und damit den Namen Volkspolizei rechtfertigt."*
(High German; quoted from Müller 2003:38)
"A few weeks ago, at the German Theater, I said: 'Our goal must be that the police protect peaceful protesters, and thus deserve the name of People's Police'."

(9) ***I går på jobbet*** *var det olidligt hur varmt det var.*
(Swedish TenTen 2014, item 1652707550)
"Yesterday at work, it was unbearably hot."

Which precise rules govern this kind of stacking? Should this pattern be analysed as a violation of V2? If not, may the syntactic analysis of this pattern help us explain more critical V3 phenomena? The same questions may be raised for other cases of "apparent polyoccupation" (Müller 2003 and subsequent) involving the fronting of several constituents from the VP:

(10) ***Eindeutig für die Existenz von Doppeltopikalisierungen*** *spricht das Beispiel (79a).*
(High German; quoted from Müller 2003:41)
"Example 79a speaks unequivocally for the existence of double topicalizations."

Further phenomena may also be investigated, such as the behaviour of focus-sensitive adverbials and particles taking another constituent in their scope and coexisting with that constituent in the pre-finite slot:

(11) ***Zelfs Jan*** *was gisteren aanwezig.* (Foolen et al. 2009: 51)
"Even Jan was there yesterday."

While many scholars have been keen on insisting that the two constituents should be counted as one phrase, others, such as Büring & Hartmann (2001), have claimed the focus particle is an adverb of its own, not merged with its partner and thus triggering V3.

B. Embedded V2, stylistic fronting and object shift in subordinate clauses

Some Germanic languages display OV order in subordinate clauses (Dutch, High German), others, such as Yiddish, also front the finite verb in conjunctional clauses. The issue of embedded V2 is a much-debated one in Nordic languages, which display various possibilities of verb placement in subordinate clauses (see Julien 2007, Petersson 2009, Wiklund et al 2007, Vikner 2020, among many others). As it seems, embedded V2 is at least an option for some Scandinavian languages, where it is plausibly a variety of main-clause phenomena.

(12) *Madsvåg mener at* ***i framtiden*** *kan ikke alle drive med alt.*
(Norwegian, quoted from Julien 2007)
"Madsvåg thinks that in the future, not everyone will be able to cope with everything."

Can V3 patterns observed in main clauses be detected in such embedded contexts, too?

The stance adopted regarding regarding verb placement in subordinate clauses determines the analysis of "stylistic fronting", the placement of constituents other than the subject before the finite verb in non-verb-final embedded constructions, be it at the subject's expense, or additionally to it.

(13) a. **At **tomater** spiser Johan ofte overrasker de fleste.*
(intended: 'That John often eats tomatoes surprises most people.")
b. *Hun siger at **tomater** spiser Johan ofte.*
"She says that John often eats tomatoes."
c. *Hun siger at **Johan ofte** spiser tomater.* (Danish, quoted from Vikner 2020:377)
"She says that John often eats tomatoes."

If we discard the V2 hypothesis for Scandinavian embedded clauses, we still have to account for the possibility of "stylistic fronting" What can we learn from the comparison of the pre-verbal slot in embedded clauses and in main clauses?

Finally, some Germanic languages and dialects follow a V2 rule in several sentence types, most prominently in *wh*-questions. Here, too, modern research has highlighted the presence of V3 phenomena (Westergaard & Vangsnes 2005). Contributions addressing the licensing of V3 in non-declarative contexts or comparing a variety of sentence moods are highly welcome, as well.

Proposals for contributions (3000 signs max., excluding references) should be sent to:

conference.V2V3 [AT] protonmail.com

before **October 15th, 2022**

The working language of the conference will be English.

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