From Latin to Romance peripheries: discourse-driven change and typology

Matteo Fiorini (University of Utah)

Romance languages; Word order; Discourse configurational; Peripheries

The paper investigates the change of word order from SOV in Latin to SVO in Romance as the result of discourse-related factors. Evidence for such a claim comes from the rich typological set of "peripheries" of the clause (Rizzi, 1997), which I show stems from Latin's discourse-configurational nature.

Albeit a canonical SOV word order for Latin is widely accepted in the literature (Oniga, 2004; Polo, 2004, Ledgway 2011), it is likewise standardly assumed that variation in word order was the norm. Ledgway (2011) proposes that this is the result of the shift from a non-configurational system to a configurational one. I reject this claim, and from a synchronic point of view, I consider Latin a "Discourse Configurational" (É. Kiss, 1995) language (see also Danckaert, 2012).

From a diachronic perspective, I argue that such discourse configurational properties progressively weakened in relation to the decline of the morphological case system (Ledgway, 2011). The consequent gradual consolidation of individual categories (Hermann 2000) includes vP/VP, resulting in a shift from OV to VO. Left-dislocation becomes the norm (1) since the Republican Era (509-29BC, see Halla-aho, 2018) and favors the emergence of the V2 ordering for Late Latin (Devine & Stephens 2006) and Early Romance (Haiman & Benincà, 1992). Unlike other V2 languages, the preverbal position is occupied exclusively by elements interpreted as the *theme* of the sentence (2):

(1) **_Latin clitic left dislocation:_**
 Epidamniensis ill' quem dudum dixeram […] **ei** liberorum nisi diuitiae nil erat.
 'That man from Epidamnus I was talking about a moment ago […] he had no children except for his wealth.' [Plaut. Men. 57-59, in Halla-aho 2018, 21:1]

(2) **_"Thematic" V2 is Old Romance_**
 a. Lo cavaliere prese i marchi <u>Old Tuscan</u>
 the knight took the marks
 'The knight took the marks.'
 b. Autre chause ne pot li roi trouver <u>Old French</u>
 other thing not could the king find
 'The king couldn't find any other thing.'
 c. A questo resposse Iasone <u>Old Neapolitan</u>
 to this replied Jason
 'Jason replied to this.'
 d. D'algunas cousas me calarei <u>Old Portuguese</u>
 of some things myself I.shall.remain.quiet
 'I should not care about certain things.' (Ledgway 2011: 17)

A topic position developed on the left of the verb in the CP area, hosting the dislocated elements. Their frequent dislocation eventually triggers a re-analysis of leftward subjects as occupying a non-derived position in the sentential core (Ledgway 2011, possibly for the emergence of an [EPP] feature on TP).

I argue that this configuration triggers the development of a focus position in the periphery of vP (Jayaseelan 2001; Belletti, 2004) to host the rhematic portion of the proposition. A configuration in which both positions are visible in a modern Romance language is the Italian clitic left dislocation in (3). The thematic position is occupied by the dislocated object *Maria*, while the rhematic one, by the post-verbal subject *Gianni*:

(3) **Maria l'** ha chiamata Gianni
 Maria CL.3SG have.3SG call.PRT.F Gianni
 'As for Mary, Gianni called her.'

The 'topic-comment' V2 ordering, in particular, is attested in medieval Gallo-Romance and Rhaeto-Romance varieties (Haiman & Benincà 1992). I suggest that this factor contributes to the development of the significantly richer low periphery of some modern Gallo-Romance varieties (Ledgway, 2020). As a case study, the paper discusses Camuno, a dialect of Eastern Lombard. In Camuno, operators, wh-phrases, and discourse particles are hosted at the phase edge of vP (Neagu & Fiorini, *to appear*; Fiorini 2021) (4):

(4) Al beker l' a dat mia po amò **ke** a la ʧèta?
the.M butcher CL.3SG have.3SG give.PRT NEG *po*DIS *amò*DIS what to the.F girl
'What is the x such as the butcher did not give x to the girl last night?'

This can be explained by a constraint on the prosodic structure of the utterance that requires the main sentence stress to align with the right edge of the phonological phrase containing the verb. Pragmatically prominent elements must receive sentential stress, and consequently, it can be proposed that this motivates the historical development of an articulated low periphery (see Hinterhölzl, 2009 for the Germanic group).

The evidence presented here helps sketch a typology of the two peripheries, i.e., the discourse-oriented portions of the clause, which I have shown to stem from the ordering of spoken Latin (5):

(5) LATIN : Topic > V > Focus > …
    1st type – e.g. FRENCH: (Topic) Focus (Topic) > V > …
    2nd type – e.g. ITALIAN: (Topic) Focus (Topic) > V > Focus
    3rd type – e.g. CAMUNO: (Topic) > V > Focus

If this analysis is on the right track, it could explain the following: (i) the presence of wh-doubling in some Lombard varieties; (ii) the optionality of wh-fronting in many Northern Italian dialects (Bonan 2017); and (iii) the lack of transparent generalized patterns of head initial configurations in Romance languages after the shift from OV to VO ordering.

Cited works:
Belletti, A. (2004). Aspects of the Low IP area, The Structure of IP and CP. In Rizzi, L. (ed.), *The Cartography of Syntactic Structures, 2.* pp. 16-51, Oxford: Oxford University Press

Bonan, C. (2017). Arguing against a one-fits-all derivation for Northern Italian insituness. Garzonio, J. (ed.), *Quaderni di lavoro ASIt* 20, pp. 49-76.

Danckaert, L. (2012). *Latin Embedded Clauses: the Left Periphery. (Linguistik aktuell 184)*. Amsterdam; Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Devine, A. M. & Stephens, L.D. (2006). *Latin word order: Structured meaning and information*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Fiorini, M. (2021). In-situ wh-interrogative in Camuno: interpretation at the interfaces. In A. Holtz, I. Kovač, R. Puggaard-Rode & J. Wall (eds.), *ConSOLE XXIX: Proceedings of the 29th Conference of the Student Organization of Linguistics in Europe.* Leiden: Leiden University Centre for Linguistics.

Halla-aho, H. (2018). *Left-Dislocation in Latin: Topics and Syntax in Republican Texts*. Amsterdam studies in classical philology, 28. Leiden: Brill.

Haiman, J. & Benincà, P. (1992). *The Raetho-Romance Languages*. London-New York: Routledge.

Hermann, J. P. (2000). Vulgar Latin. Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania University Press.

Hinterholzl, R. (2009). The Role of Information Structure in Word Order Variation and Word order Change. In Hinterholzl R & S. Petrova (eds.), *Information Structure and Language*, 203. pp. 45-66. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Jayaseelan, K. A. (2001). IP-internal topic and focus phrases. *Studia Linguistica*, 55, pp. 39-75.

Kiss, K. É. (ed.). (1995). *Discourse configurational languages*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ledgeway, A. (2011). Syntactic and morphosyntactic typology and change. In Maiden, M., J. Smith & A. Ledgeway (eds.), *The Cambridge History of the Romance Languages*. pp. 382-471. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ledgeway, A. (2020). Variation in the Gallo-Romance left periphery: V2, complementizers, and the Gascon enunciative systemV2, complementizers, and the Gascon enunciative system. In Wolfe, S. & M.Maiden (eds.). *Variation and Change in Gallo-Romance Grammar*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Neagu, A. & Fiorini, M. (*to appear*). Interrogatives in Camuno: A representationalapproach. *Proceeding of the workshop "Expanding Romance Linguistics"*. Language Science Press: Berlin.

Oniga, R. (2004). *Il latino. Breve introduzione linguistica.* Milan: Franco Angeli.

Polo, C. (2004). *Word Order in Latin, Italian and Slovenian between morphology and syntax.* Padua: Unipress.

Rizzi, L. (1997). The fine structure of the left periphery. In Haegeman, L. (ed.), *Elements of Grammar, Kluwer international handbooks of linguistics.* pp. 281-337. New York: Springer.