

Micro-cues and language change: There's a quantitative correlation between V2 and particle *si* in (non-literary) Medieval French

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An emerging view of syntactic variation and change is that individual evolutions involve multiple structural co-determinants. Thus, Poletto (2019) and Wolfe (2021) propose that more than one structural correlate contributes to the loss of V2 in Medieval Romance. Providing empirical substantiation to the notion of correlates of change for V2 loss in Romance is the purpose of this talk. It offers a quantitative analysis of the rates of use of V2 in relation with one such correlate in one Medieval Romance language using calibrated data from the same region and textual genre.

The study focuses on Medieval French that displays a declining V2 configuration. The rates of use of V2 across time is reasonably well-documented (Marchello-Nizia 2018, Labelle and Hirschbühler 2018, Ingham 2018, Wolfe 2018, to cite only a few recent studies), although often using language data from different regions and textual genres (but see Larrivée 2019). Furthermore, some proposals have been made as to the correlates of V2 change. One candidate that is recurrently identified is particle *si* (> Lat. *sic* 'thus') (Marchello-Nizia 1985, Fleischman 1991, 1992, Reenen and Schøsler 2000, Ledgeway 2008, Wolfe 2018). The hypothesis that we formulate is that 'si' is a correlate of V2 and its loss. If correct, it should then demonstrate an evolution comparable to that of V2. Comparability should reflect itself in both contexts and rates of use, although this paper focuses on quantitative evidence.

The formulated hypothesis is tested of a comparable rate of use between V2 and particle 'si'. Using a language where V2 is declining allows potential quantitative correlations to be verified. What's more, the rates of use of V2 in Medieval French is sensitive to formality (Larrivée 2021). The greater frequency of V2 in more formal texts provides another way to check the expected correlation. Thus, if V2 is correlated to 'si', the prediction is that rates of use of one should co-vary with the other. This should hold both through temporal change and through register variation. The prediction is tested by two separate protocols. On the one hand, the rates of use of V2 (represented by unambiguous XP V S configurations) and 'si' are determined in a formality-differentiated set of prose texts from the same non-literary genre at the end of the 13th century. On the other, these rates are established in prose texts from the same non-literary genre at three temporal points (beginning of 14th, 15th and 16th centuries). The results from both investigation are in line with the predictions. Non-literary material from different subtypes of legal texts illustrating different registers provide a quantitative ratio of 4 to 5 between the number of particles and the number of (unambiguous) V2. Likewise, a similar ratio is found in preliminary indications emerging from custom law records.

The data provide definite quantitative indications regarding a correlation between V2 and 'si' in Medieval French through time and register. Such a correlation supports the view that word order is structured and learned on the basis of micro-cues (Lightfoot 1999, Westergaard 2014). Some elements of a grammar provide indications that structure the target configuration and help new generations of learners to acquire them. As the micro-cues evolve for different reasons, cues change, and can lead to different analyses of the configuration. Such a model thus accounts for the possibility of variation and change for clausal word-order. New questions are raised by it as to which other micro-cues relate to V2, and whether micro-cues are relevant only for word-order configurations or for all syntactic phenomena.

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