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Developing pro-drop *The case of Cimbrian*

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Abstract:

The syntax of Cimbrian, a Germanic heritage language spoken in the North-East of Italy, is at a very peculiar developmental stage: on the one hand it has lost the V2 linear restriction, but still maintains both pronominal subject inversion (V_{fin}-pron) and a residual word order asymmetry (main versus embedded word order pattern); on the other, it is characterized by both ‘free’ subject inversion (VP DP) and the systematic violation of the ‘that-trace’ filter, but does not allow any kind of null subject. This very specific mixture of both V2- and pro-drop properties gives us an opportunity to revisit the traditional assumption that Germanic V2 (i.e.: word order restriction due to mandatory V_{fin} to C movement in the root context) is incompatible with full pro-drop. On the basis of the Cimbrian data, we propose that the development of pro-drop crucially depends on the loss of V-to-Fin movement and, consequently, on the lowering of structural subject agreement within TP so that the whole complex process of feature sharing (KEEP, SHARE, DONATE) between C and I is restructured, changing from a C-dominant system to an I-dominant system.

1 Methodological premises

Cimbrian — spoken in Lusérn, a small enclave in the mountains in the southern part of Trentino (Italy) — is a German(ic) heritage variety whose syntax seems to be ‘stuck’ between the original German(ic) and a Romance contact-induced typology.¹ Cimbrian is thus a special key to study the theoretical correlation between V and pro-drop and allows us to reevaluate the traditional assumption, originally proposed by Jaeggli and Safir (1989) and Hulk and van Kemenade (1995), that ‘Germanic’ V (i.e. word order

¹ Beyond the lively community of Lusérn, the Cimbrian varieties include the almost extinct dialects of the so-called *Seven Communities* in Vicenza (Altopiano di Asiago) and of the *Thirteen Communities* in Verona (Lessinia); it must be remembered that these differ from other German-language islands in the North-East of Italy (i.e. Mòcheno in Fersina Valley, Trento), Sappadino, Saurano, Timavese (Sappada, Sauris, and Timau in the Province of Udine), and the Carinthian variety spoken in the Canale Valley), all of which have their own settlement histories and partially diverse diachronic developmental aspects

restriction due to mandatory V_{fin} to C movement in the root context) is incompatible with full pro-drop ‘à la Italian’, where *pro* does not manifest any restrictions to either specific persons or specific syntactic contexts.

As we will show in § 2, Cimbrian does not display the canonical V linear restriction, although it maintains some aspects of this typical Germanic phenomenon, such as pronominal subject inversion and a residual root-embedded asymmetry. However, it allows free subject inversion (henceforth SI) with the whole verbal complex and shows no *that*-trace effect (as does a canonical Null Subject (NS) language, although it maintains a fully articulated class of expletives, consistent with the negative value of the Null Subject Parameter (henceforth NSP).

On the basis of this premise, in order to capture the relevance of Cimbrian data for the theory of pro-drop we need to raise the two following methodological issues:

- I. The fine-grained disentangling of the pro-drop parameter recently discussed in Biberauer et al. (2010) is not appropriate in the case of Cimbrian. The tripartition among

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full NS languages, semi-NS languages (subtypes included) and non-NS languages does not predict the co-existence of a negative NSP value (the English and French type) with the already mentioned phenomena (free SI and *that*-trace violation) which were traditionally interpreted as pro-drop correlates. Hence, Cimbrian raises an initial methodological question with respect to the implicational nature of the NSP typology, as it represents some sort of exception.²

² Together with both Bavarian and other German heritage varieties—such as Mòcheno. The former requires lexical expletives with meteorological verbs (no quasi argumental *pro*), but admits referential NSs of the PL, SG, and PL, as Bayer (1984) established. As a matter of fact, Bavarian is explicitly excluded from the refinement proposed by Biberauer (2010: 153–4), which does not address Huang’s (2000) subtypes c (omission of non-argumental expletives, quasi-argument, and, under certain restricted circumstances, referential subject). As for the position of Mòcheno with respect to pro-drop (see Cognola 2013: ch. 5), a detailed comparison with Cimbrian accounting for both the similarities and the subtle differences goes beyond the aims of this chapter and awaits further research.

- II. The fine-grained scale proposed for pro-drop is not designed to take into account any potential interaction with other (fine-grained) parameters. This limitation is particularly evident for the subtypes of semi-NS languages. Focusing on the Germanic-Romance variation, the interaction between pro-drop and V was established in the literature in the late s (Adams 1987a, 1987b; Vance 1989, 1995, 1997). From this perspective, the crucial methodological question is which type of V is relevant for which type of NS. In fact, Old French and Old High German occupy a special intermediate position which favours NS in a ‘V phase’. Nevertheless, it cannot just be assumed that they are manifestations of the same subtype. First of all, Old High German already implied mandatory V-to-C movement, like Modern German,³ while this is not the case for all the Old Romance varieties (see Poletto 2016). Second, the decrease of referential NSs is connected to the loss of main versus embedded asymmetry, that is, to the loss of V, in the history of French but not in that of German, where the loss of pro-drop phenomena is clearly unrelated to V, which — in fact — undergoes a process of regularization (see Axel 2007; Axel and Weiß 2011; and Weiß and Volodina, Chapter 11, *this volume*).

The two methodological questions raised above lead us to analyze pro-drop in Cimbrian after a comparison between Standard German and Standard Italian as maximally distant typological foci in the interaction between V and pro-drop (from [+V, -pro-drop] to [-V, +pro-drop]). Starting with the core properties of a particular phenomenon, we can distinguish the potential convergence caused by contact from the internal variation specific to the two typological areas defined by each focus. From this perspective the original position of Cimbrian as a German(ic)-language island in a Romance context can be correctly and entirely appreciated, and is revealed to play a significant role in the understanding of pro-drop development.⁴⁴

³ For a first generative analysis of V in Old High German and the different qualities of the attested exceptions, see Tomaselli (1995).

⁴ Given this methodological premise, we have decided not to tackle a full comparative analysis of microvariation phenomena, although two reviewers suggested we should: the comparison between Cimbrian and Southern German dialects on the one hand, and Trentino dialect on the other, can only be properly understood after the definition of the core properties of Cimbrian syntax

After setting the Cimbrian scenario with respect to both V and pro-drop (see § 2), we then focus on two apparently contradictory aspects of Cimbrian subject syntax,

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that is, free SI ‘à la Italian’ and the mandatory realization of an expletive clitic (-*da*) whenever the nominal subject is not ‘raised’ into the CP domain (see § 3), drawing a conclusion (see § 4) which speculates on the following hypothesis: (i) Cimbrian is still a C-dominant language (with Fin both attracting the finite V and assigning nominative case); (ii) it has nevertheless developed a Romance-like agreement configuration for nominative case assignment within the lowest CP layer (= FinP).⁵ From this perspective, the development of pro-drop depends on the potential loss of V-to-Fin movement and, consequently, on the lowering of structural subject agreement within TP. In other words, Cimbrian syntax is revealed as a very special case which tests the change from a C-dominant system to an I-dominant system through a reassessment of the complex process of feature sharing (KEEP, SHARE, DONATE) between C and I, which was first proposed by Ouali (2008) and adopted by Biberauer and Roberts (2010).

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2 Setting the Cimbrian scenario

As the literature has already demonstrated, Cimbrian is a German(ic) VO variety (Grewendorf and Poletto 2005) that does not display the core property of the V phenomenon — the well-known Germanic linear restriction — and thus expands the CP-domain (Split-CP) (see Bidese and Tomaselli 2007; Bidese 2008; Grewendorf and Poletto 2011; Bidese et al. 2012a). As a matter of fact, the DP subject usually shows up before the finite verb, even together with other constituents (see (1a)), while subject inversion, as in German, that is on the right of the finite verb, is possible only with pronominal subjects (see (1b) versus (1c)):

⁵ See Rizzi (1997b) for a first proposal on a Split-C configuration. For the sake of our analysis the assumption of a Split-C configuration without further refinements is enough to capture the distinction between Cimbrian and the canonical V languages like German (cf. § 3).

- (1) a [Gestarn] [dar pua] **hatt** gisek in has
 yesterday the.NOM boy has seen the.ACC hare
 ‘Yesterday, the boy saw the hare.’ (Cimbrian; Panieri et al. 2006: 310)
- b. Gestarn **hatt=ar** gisek in has
 yesterday has=he.CL seen the.ACC hare
 ‘Yesterday, he saw the hare.’
- c. *Gestarn **hatt** dar pua gisek in has
 yesterday has the.NOM boy seen the.ACC hare

Furthermore, Cimbrian has maintained a second well-known aspect of V2, namely the asymmetry between root and embedded clauses, in some types of subordinate clauses: declarative clauses introduced by *az* ‘that’ (see Grewendorf and Poletto 2011; Padovan 2011), indirect interrogative clauses introduced by *be* ‘if, whether’, adverbial clauses introduced by *bal* ‘when’, *vor* ‘before’, and restrictive relative clauses introduced by *bo* ‘that’ (see Bidese et al. 2012b). In all these contexts, the finite verb follows the negative marker *nèt* ‘not’ and pronominal clitics occur to the right of the complementizers (see (3a) vs. (3b) and (3c)), contrary to the order pattern that characterizes the root context (see (1a) and (2)):

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- (2) Haüt **geast**=(t)o *nèt* ka Tria (... V=CL NEG)
 today go.2SG=you.CL not to Trento
 ‘Today, you will not go to Trento.’
- (3) a. I bill *az*=to **geast** ka Tria (... *az*=CL NEG V ...)
 I want that=you.CL go.2SG to Trento
 ‘I want you not to go to Trento.’
- b. *... *az* *nèt* **geast**=(t)o ka Tria (... *az* NEG V=CL ...)
 ... that not go.2SG=you.CL to Trento
- c. *... *az*=to **geast** *nèt* ka Tria (... *az*=CL V NEG ...)
 ... that=you.CL go.2SG not to Trento

This word order asymmetry is not attested in clauses introduced by the borrowed complementizer *ke* ‘that’ (both declarative and non-restrictive relative), or in interrogative clauses introduced by WH-phrases and some

WH-elements like *bem* ‘whom’ and *umbròmm* ‘why’,⁶ where the root word order pattern has been generalized (see Grewendorf and Poletto 2009; Bidese et al. 2012b, 2014):

- (4) a. I boaz **ke** haüt **geast**=(t)o nèt ka Tria
 I know that today go.2SG=you.CL not to Trento
 ‘I know that today you will not go to Trento’
 b. I vors=mar **belz geschenkh** di mǎmma **khoaft**=en
 I ask=me.CL.DAT which present the mum buy.CL.2SG=him.CL
 ‘I wonder which present the mother buys for him’

In order to capture both the phenomenon of pronominal subject-inversion (see (1b)) and the residual root-embedded word order asymmetry in a Split-CP configuration (see (3b)), we propose the following (simplified) structural analysis:

(5) Cimbrian root clause

...	[TOPP	[FOCUSP	...	[FINP	[FIN ⁰	...	[TP	[NEGP	[vP	[Aux	[VP
Gestarn				dar pua ⁷	hatt					hatt	gisek in has			
*Gestarn					hatt		dar pua			hatt	gisek in has			
Gestarn					hatt=ar					hatt	gisek in has			
Haüt					geast=(t)o	nèt				geast		ka Tria		

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(6) Cimbrian embedded clause

[SubP ⁸	...	[TOPP	[FOCUSP	...	[FINP	[FIN	[TP	[NEGP	[vP	[VP	...
						az=to	nèt			geast ka Tria	
ke	haüt					geast=(t)o	nèt			geast ka Tria	
						belz geschenkh	di mǎmma	khoaft=en		khoaft	

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⁶ The special case of *umbròmm* in the double role of both indirect interrogative element and causal adverbial has been addressed by Bidese and Tomaselli (2016).

⁷ Assuming that the Cimbrian root clause is characterized by mandatory V-to-Fin movement, it follows that the pre-verbal DP Subject (*‘dar pua’*) naturally occurs in Spec,FinP. For a different approach, see Grewendorf (2013), where Cimbrian is considered a ‘high V2’ language.

⁸ We assumed that *‘ke’* occurs in SubordP following an original proposal by Padovan (2011) and Grewendorf and Poletto (2011). For the purposes of the present contribution, the basic idea that *‘ke’* realizes the highest position within the C-layer, whereas *‘az’* realizes the lowest one is what matters.

The analysis proposed in (5) and (6) is based on three main assumptions:

- (i) the Cimbrian root clause is characterized by mandatory V-to-Fin movement in complementary distribution with the subordinating conjunction ‘az’. This explains the German-like asymmetry between main and embedded clauses;
- (ii) cliticization occurs to the right of FinP, independently of its lexical realization (either to the right of the finite verb or to the right of ‘az’) obtaining pronominal ‘subject inversion’;
- (iii) the subordinate clauses that display the root declarative word order are characterized by a higher introducer (either ‘ke’ in SubP or the wh-phrase in FocP) and imply mandatory V_{fin} to Fin movement.

The fact that subject inversion ‘à la German’ does not occur with a DP-Subject will be explained in terms of Nominative Case Assignment after discussing the syntax of expletive subjects, that is, the value of the Null Subject Parameter in Cimbrian (see § 3).

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2.1 *The basics of pro-drop in Cimbrian*

Concerning the value of NSP, we observe first of all that Cimbrian does not allow referential *pro*, and behaves just like a non-*pro-drop* language such as English with respect to the ‘core’ phenomenon (see 7):⁹

⁹ See the following citation from the most recent normative grammar of this variety: ‘Im Zimbrischen wird das Subjekt immer ausdrücklich genannt’ (Panieri et al. 2006: 285) (‘In Cimbrian [of Lusérn] the subject always has to be explicitly expressed’, our translation: EB and AT). Note that the phonological realization of the referential subject pronoun has been attested since the first written documentation of a Cimbrian variety (see Bosco 1996: 198–201 and 1999: 36–38). The examples given in (i) and (ii) below are taken from the Cimbrian translation of Roberto Bellarmin’s Italian catechism in 1602 (see Meid 1985) and show that the subject pronoun has always been lexicalized in Cimbrian, independently of its syntactic position and unlike the Italian NS model (see also Ferrero 1981, Bosco 1996, 1999, and Bidese 2008: 77, fn. 25: of the 549 clauses in the Cimbrian translation of Bellarmin’s catechism of 1602, display no phonetic realization of the referential subject. For 26 of them there is, however, clear evidence for a topic-drop analysis, i.e. answers to direct questions):

(i) Ik glaube in den Hailighen Gaist

[Cat. 1602: line 240]

- (7) a. Haüt **er** iz gânt ka schual
 today he is gone to school
 ‘Today, he went to school.’
 a’. *Haüt [**pro**] iz gânt ka schual
 b. Haüt izz=**ar** gânt ka schual
 today is=he.CL gone to school
 ‘Today, he went to school.’
 b’. *Haüt iz [**pro**] gânt ka schual
 c. (I sperar) azz=**ar** sai gânt ka schual haüt
 (I hope) that=he.CL is.SBJV gone to school today
 ‘I hope he went to school today.’

Nevertheless, Cimbrian displays a unique pattern as far as the three traditional correlates of the pro-drop parameter are concerned (see Taraldsen 1978; Chomsky 1981; Rizzi 1982): on the one hand, it presents an articulated typology of **lexical expletives** (much like English and German), on the other hand, it allows both free **subject inversion** and the violation of the so-called ‘**that-trace**’ effect (as does a full pro-drop language like Italian).

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2.1.1 Lexical expletives

With regard to the first pro-drop correlate, Cimbrian displays an interesting typology of lexical expletives. Just like English (and German), and in

Credo nello Spirito Santo
 ‘I believe in the Holy Ghost’

- (ii) a. [Barome der gheschaide kennet de leste zait,] unt kan deme indrizzatar alle dink
 [Perchè il savio conosce l’ultimo fine,] e a quello indirizza ogni cosa [Cat. 1602: lines
 701-702]
 ‘Since the wise man knows the last end, and he direct all things towards this’
 b. Hailega, barum si hat in hop [Cat. 1602: line 318]
 Santa perchè ha il capo
 ‘(it is) holy, since it has a head’

It is important to underline once more that Cimbrian resembles neither Bavarian nor Old High German. In fact, it does not show any person restriction (unlike Bavarian, which only admits an NS for the 1PL, the 2SG and 2PL), nor any asymmetry between main and subordinate clauses (unlike Old High German where pro-drop was facultative, consistent and asymmetric, see Axel 2007: 310; Axel and Weiß 2011; Weiß and Volodina, Chapter 11 *this volume*).

contrast to Italian, Cimbrian requires the overt impersonal subject pronoun 'z both with meteorological verbs (see 8a–d) and as a correlate of an extraposed subject clause (see (9)):

- (8) a. 'Z snaibet haüt 'z = 3SG = Ger. *es* = En. *it*
 it snows today
 'It is snowing today.'
- b. Haüt snaibet=z
 today snows=it.CL
 'It is snowing today.'
- c. Snaibet=z haüt?
 snows=it.CL today
 'Is it snowing today?'
- d. I vors=mar bi=z snaibet haüt
 I ask=me.CL.DAT whether=it.CL snows today
 'I wonder whether it is going to snow today'
- (9) a. 'Z iz hoatar [*ke dar Gianni khint nèt*]
 it is clear that the Gianni comes not
 'It is clear that Gianni will not come.'
- b. In a boch bart=z soin hoatar [*ke dar dokhtor khint nèt*]
 in a week will=it.CL be clear that the doctor comes not
 'In a week, it will be clear that the doctor will not come.'

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In contrast to both English and German, Cimbrian is characterized by a special subject expletive, *-da*, which occurs in enclisis to *Fin*⁰ whenever the subject is not

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raised to the C-domain, typically in structures which involve free subject inversion (see 2.1.2) (see Kolmer 2005a; Bidese et al. 2012b).

2.1.2 Free subject inversion

As already mentioned, Cimbrian allows free SI ‘à la Italian’:¹⁰ the DP subject inverts with the whole VP without any specific restrictions connected with either the ‘definiteness effect’ or a specific verbal class. Usually, it occurs in presentative constructions (see (10)) or with focalized DP subjects (see (11)). Crucially, the structure ‘VP DP subject’ is possible only with the co-occurrence of the expletive *-da/-ta* to the right of the finite verb:

- (10) Haüt iz=*(**ta**) khent dar nono (presentative construction)
 today is=DA arrived the.NOM grandpa
 ‘Today, the grandpa arrived.’

- (11) a. Gestarn in balt hat=*(**ta**) gesek in has DI DIARN
 yesterday in-the forest has=DA seen the.ACC hare the.NOM girl
 ‘Yesterday, it was the girl that saw the hare in the forest.’
 (new information focus)

- b. Gestarn in balt hat=*(**ta**) gesek DI DIARN in has (nèt dar pua)
 yesterday in-the forest has=DA seen the.NOM girl the.ACC hare (not
 the boy) x
 ‘Yesterday, it was the girl that saw the hare in the forest (and not
 the boy).’

It is important to note that the invariant form of expletive *-da* should be clearly differentiated from structures which resemble clitic-right dislocation where the resumptive clitic agrees in person, gender, and number with the post-verbal subject:

- (12) a. Haüt izz=**ar**_i khent (**dar** **nono**_i)
 today is=he.CL arrived (the.NOM grandpa)
 ‘Today, the grandpa arrived.’
 b. Gestarn in balt hatt=**ze**_i gesek in has (**di** **diarn**_i)
 yesterday in forest has=she.CL seen the.ACC hare (the.NOM girl)
 ‘Yesterday, the girl saw the hare in the forest.’

¹⁰ We are aware that the notion ‘free subject inversion’ covers different constructions which imply different structural analyses (see, for example, Belletti 2001, 2004). Here, what matters is that the inverted subject does not leave the VP phase, or, more precisely, does not reach Spec,TP.

Note, moreover, that expletive *-da* can never occur alone, and must co-occur with a non-raised subject (see (13)). Nor can *-da* act as an impersonal (quasi-argumental) subject with meteorological verbs (see (14)), or as the correlate of an extraposed subject clause (see (15)):¹¹

- (13) *Haüt izz=**ta** khent
today is=DA arrived

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- (14) a. *Pan bintar snaibet=(**t**)**a**
in winter snows=DA
b. *Haüt hatt=(**t**)**a** gesnibet
today has=DA snowed

- (15) *In a boch bart=(**t**)**a** soin hoatar [ke dar dokhtor khint nèt]
in a week will=DA be clear that the.NOM doctor comes not

2.1.3 ‘That-trace’ effect

With regard to the third pro-drop correlate, that is the violation of the ‘that-trace effect’, Cimbrian allows subject extraction from the embedded clause, much like Italian, thus providing a strong confirmation of Rizzi’s (1982, 1986a) intuitive hypothesis that free SI constitutes the proper ‘escape hatch’ for subject extraction.¹² The obligatory occurrence of the expletive *-da* with subject extraction provides overt morphological evidence of this (see 16):¹³

¹¹ This underlines an important difference with the phenomenon of Complementizer agreement in German dialects like Bavarian. In fact, Complementizer agreement morphology is restricted to the 2SG and 2PL person and thus by definition never occurs with a nominal subject. Furthermore, Complementizer agreement morphology is compatible with the lexicalization of the subject pronoun, whereas the Cimbrian expletive *-da* never co-occurs with pronouns unless they are focalized.

¹² The correlation between free subject inversion in a VO language like Italian and subject extraction from the subordinate clauses is not weakened by the possibility in some regional (southern) German varieties and dialects (Bavarian) of violating the ‘that-trace’ filter as well. Quite on the contrary, it suggests a more general correlation between subject extraction from the vP phase circumventing Spec,TP (no intermediate trace in Spec,TP) and the possible violation of the ‘that-trace’ filter (see Bayer and Salzmann 2013 and the literature cited there).

¹³ Once again it is important to note that subject extraction is fully excluded with subject clitics:

- (16) a. Ber_i gloabst=(t)o, **az=ta** khemm atz Lusérn t_i?¹⁴
 who believe.2SG=you.CL that=DA comes.SBJV to Lusérn
 ‘Who do you believe will come to Lusérn?’
- b. Ber_i gloabst=(t)o, ke ’z **khint=(t)a** atz Lusérn t_i?
 who believe.2SG=you.CL that it comes.IND=DA to Lusérn
 ‘Who do you believe will come to Lusérn?’

The alternative choice between the autochthonous complementizer *az* and the loan complementizer *ke* (see Grewendorf and Poletto 2009; Padovan 2011; Bidese et al. 2013) reveals two important aspects of Cimbrian subject syntax: (i) neither *az* nor *ke* interferes with subject extraction, which implies free SI in both cases, as confirmed by the obligatory occurrence of *-da/-ta*; (ii) since *ke* requires the word order pattern of the root declarative sentence (with obligatory V to Fin⁰ movement), two different types of expletive are required: a CP expletive ’z on the left of the finite verb *khint* in Spec,FinP and the enclitic expletive *-da*, which correlates with free SI.

Before addressing the importance of the Cimbrian data for the pro-drop theory, let us briefly reconsider the position of Cimbrian in a comparison of its typology of lexical expletives with those of German and English.

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2.2 Three types of lexical expletives (’z / -z / -da)

As observed in the preceding paragraph, there are three ‘specialized’ lexical expletives in Cimbrian:

- (i) ’z which precedes the finite verb in Fin (preserving the root declarative word order pattern); ’z is connected with mandatory V movement to the lower CP projection and implies neither a definiteness effect on

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- (i) *Ber gloabst-(t)o azz=*ar* khemm atz Lusérn t?
 who believe=you.CL that=he.CL comes.SBJV to Lusérn

This observation provides a further argument in favour of the special status of *-da* and reintroduces the already noted difference with respect to the phenomenon of clitic-right dislocation in which the post-verbal subject may be omitted (cf. (10)–(11) with (12)).

¹⁴ The verb *gloam* ‘to believe’ selects both *az* plus subjunctive and *ke* plus indicative (see Bidese et al. 2013).

the post-verbal DP subject nor restrictions to a specific verbal class, much like the German CP-expletive known as *Vorfeld es* or *Platzhalter es* or syntactic *es* (see Curme 1952):¹⁵

- (17) a. 'Z arbatan=da di maurar atti schual
it work.3PL=DA the masons at-the school
'The masons are working at the school.'
- b. Haüt arbatan=da di maurar atti schual
today work.3PL=DA the masons at-the school
'Today, the masons are working at the school.'
- c. Arbatan=da di maurar atti schual?
work.3PL=DA the masons at-the school
'Are the masons working at the school?'
- (ii) 'z/-z as impersonal subject with meteorological verbs, which occurs both on the left and on the right of the finite verb in Fin⁰ (see both (18) and the examples in (8) above):
- (18) a. 'Z hatt gesnibet in gântz takh haüt
it has snowed the whole day today
'Today, it snowed the whole day.'
- b. Haüt hatt=z gesnibet in gântz takh
today has=it.CL snowed the whole day
'Today, it snowed the whole day.'
- (iii) **-da/-ta** which always occurs in enclisis either to the finite verb (as already noted in § 2.1.2) (see (19)) or to the subordinating conjunction (*az+da*, *bo+da*, *benn+da*, ...) (see (20) and (21)), that is whenever the nominal subject is not raised into the CP domain on the left of the finite verb in Fin⁰:

¹⁵ Compare the following examples, which are correct in German, with their ungrammatical English counterparts:

- (i) a. Stell dir vor, es hat gerade meine Tochter dem Kanzler einen Brief geschrieben
b. *Imagine, there writes my daughter a letter to the president
- (ii) a. Es kommt der Großvater / der Nikolaus / die ganze Familie
b. *There arrives the grandfather / Santa / the whole family

(19) Haüt iz=**ta** khent dar nono atz Lusérn
 today is=DA arrived the.NOM grandpa in Lusérn
 ‘Today, the grandpa arrived in Lusérn.’

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(20) I bill az=**ta** dar maurar richt di schual¹⁶
 I want that=DA the.NOM mason repairs.SBJV the school
 ‘I want the mason to repair the school building.’

(21) a. ’Z proat, bo=**da** hatt gekhoaft dar nono, ...¹⁷

¹⁶ In the subordinate clause introduced by ‘az’, the preverbal subject is not incompatible with a contrastive reading, whereas this is the only possible reading in a root declarative context:

- (i) a. Haüt richtet=(**t**)**a** DAR MAURAR die schual (nèt dar bidello)
 today repairs=DA the.NOM mason the school (not the.NOM janitor)
 ‘Today, the mason is repairing the school building (and not the janitor).’
 b. Haüt richtet=(**t**)**a** die schual DAR MAURAR (nèt dar bidello)
 today repairs=DA the school the.NOM mason (not the.NOM janitor)
 ‘Today, the mason is repairing the school building (and not the janitor).’
 c. Haüt dar maurar richtet die schual
 today the.NOM mason repairs the school
 ‘Today, the mason is repairing the school building.’

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In fact, the unmarked subject position in the root clause is the preverbal one (see i c).

¹⁷ See Bidese et al. (2012: 4). With respect to relative clauses, the Cimbrian expletive *-da* may resemble, but should not be confused with, the particle ‘da’ which occurs in the so called ‘double filled COMP’ construction, like free relatives in the German variety spoken in Leipzig (see Weiß 2013: 782):

- (i) a. Wär **de** dsuhärn will, där mech mainswächtn dsuhärn
 Wer da zuhören will, der mag meinetwegen zuhören
 who DA listen-to want, this may as-for-me listen-to
 ‘As for me, who wants to listen, may do so.’
 b. Mir is gans schnube, wär **de** das wider gemacht had
 Mir ist ganz schnuppe, wer da das wieder gemacht hat
 me.DAT is completely indifferent, who DA this again done has
 ‘I do not care who did this again.’

As our examples show, the Cimbrian *-da* is not limited to the context of free relatives; in fact, it acts as a ‘subject expletive’, which occurs in enclisis to either the finite verb (see (19b)) or the lexical complementizer (see (20)).

the bread that=DA has bought the.NOM grandpa ...

‘The bread that the grandpa bought ...’

- b. 'Z proat, bo=**da** DAR NONO hatt gekhoaft (nèt di nona) ...
the bread that=DA the.NOM grandpa has bought (not the grandma)
‘The bread that the grandpa (not the grandma) bought ...’

Summing up, the typology of lexical expletives in Cimbrian reminds us of both the German and English tripartite systems (see the table proposed below in § 2.3). In fact, like both German and English, Cimbrian makes use of the 3SG.N **'z/-z** (= Ger. *es* = En. *it*) as an impersonal/expletive subject with meteorological verbs and with extraposed subject clauses. Like German, Cimbrian exhibits a CP expletive (**'z** = *Vorfeld es*), but, unlike German, it does not rely on an NS expletive *pro*.¹⁸ Like English, Cimbrian

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displays two types of lexical subject expletive, the 3SG.N (**-z** = *it*) and **-da**, which resembles English *there*, but without the well-known restrictions (no definiteness effect on the ‘unraised’/‘delayed’ subject, which is not limited to a specific verbal class, i.e.: unaccusative verbs).

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Interestingly, while the two kinds of subject/TP expletive are mutually exclusive, the CP expletive and the subject expletive **-da** can co-occur (see (22)):¹⁹

- (22) **'Z iz=ta** khent dar nono
it is=DA arrived the.NOM grandpa

¹⁸ Contexts licensing expletive *pro* in German (i.e. impersonal subject constructions and delayed subject constructions) have been well-known in the literature since the 1970s (see Tomaselli 1986 and Haider 1988). The impersonal passive construction represents a proper context of comparison between German and Cimbrian:

- (i) a. Gestern wurde **pro** getanzt
b. Gestarn iz=**ta** khent getânzt
yesterday is=DA come danced
‘Yesterday, it was danced’

¹⁹ This phenomenon has already been noted, for other reasons, by Grewendorf and Poletto (2011: 324) (see also Kolmer 2005a):

- (i) 'Z hãm=**da** gelaütet di klokkn alle sunta
it have.3PL=DA rung the bells every Sunday
‘The bells rang every Sunday.’

‘The grandpa just arrived.’

As expected, only *-da* is maintained in both root interrogative contexts (see (23)) and in subordinate clauses introduced by a complementizer such as ‘*az*’ (see (24)):

- (23) a. *Iz=ta khent dar nono?*
is=DA arrived the.NOM grandpa
‘Did the grandpa arrive?’
b. **Iz khent dar nono?*
is arrived the.NOM grandpa

- (24) ..., *az=ta dar nono iz khent*
..., that=DA the.NOM grandpa is arrived
‘..., that the grandpa has arrived’

The option to drop the expletive *-da* is only available when a dative pronominal clitic is used (see (25)), somewhat like the pattern of German impersonal constructions with a dative (/accusative) pronoun (see (26) and (27)):²⁰

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- (25) *Gem=en di milch di baké?*
give.3PL=them.CL.DAT the milk the farmers
‘Do the farmers give them the milk?’

- (26) *Schwindelt (es) mir/mich?*
‘Am I feeling dizzy?’

- (27) *Graut (es) dir vor mir?*
‘Are you terrified of me?’

Before turning to the special status of free SI with respect to the NSP, we will first propose a classification of lexical expletives and draw a provisional conclusion about the typological position of Cimbrian.

²⁰ The extent to which the optionality of *es* in these examples, as well as in other contexts (extraposed subject clause: *Gestern war (es) schon klar, dass es schneien würde*, ‘Yesterday it was already clear that it would snow’) can be explained in terms of information structure requires further research.

2.3 Provisional conclusion

The analysis of the syntax of lexical expletives in Cimbrian provides us with a strong argument in favour of the tripartite system, which could easily be extended to take into account both German as the potential Standard reference and Italian and English as the prototypical NS languages:

	CIMBRIAN	GERMAN	ITALIAN	ENGLISH
TP expletives	'z/-z -da	es pro	pro pro	it there
CP expletive	'z (+ -da)	es (+pro)	/	/

The syntax of lexical expletives in Cimbrian strongly confirms the analysis of this Germanic variety as a non-NS language (like German and English) with mandatory V movement to Fin⁰ (i.e. the lower projection of CP) in the root declarative clause.

As noted in the introduction (§ 1), Cimbrian occupies an original typological position: 'stuck' between German and Italian with respect to both V and NSP, it has lost the core of the V2 phenomenon (no linear restriction) but has maintained both pronominal subject inversion and the occurrence of a CP expletive 'z which behaves much like *Vorfeld es*. In addition, the negative value of the NSP is compatible with two of the three classical correlates of pro-drop, free SI and the extraction of the subject from an embedded clause introduced by *az* or *ke* (no 'that-trace effect').

The picture which has emerged so far corroborates the assumption that the phenomena which correlate with the value of a given parameter (\pm V2; \pm NSP) play a crucial role in the process of both losing and acquiring the 'core' aspect of the parametric choice.²¹ More specifically, we assume that, in the first place, pronominal subject inversion with the finite verb as a correlate of V2 'survives' (disappears later than) the loss of the 'core' manifestation of the phenomenon (the loss of the linear V restriction). Second, the diachronic development of Cimbrian shows that free SI (as in Italian), which in itself implies a previous typological change from OV to VO, precedes the core

²¹ For a first proposal from this perspective, see Tomaselli (2004).

phenomenon of pro-drop (i.e. the potential development of a referential NS).²² Finally, the core phenomenon of the NSP (referential *pro*) is thought not to develop while mandatory V movement to Fin is maintained.

Pronominal subject inversion has already been assumed to support the argument for mandatory V-to-C movement in a Split CP configuration in recent studies of Cimbrian syntax (see Grewendorf and Poletto 2005; Bidese et al. 2012a; Bidese et al. 2013, 2014). Our analysis of 'z (+*da*) as a CP expletive provides a further argument in favour of the hypothesis that the finite verb moves to the (lowest) CP layer in Cimbrian declarative root clauses (at least as far as the variety spoken in Lusérn is concerned). With regard to the analysis of free subject inversion as a potential step in the development of pro-drop, our focus shifts to the theoretical level, and reexamines the nature of this potential correlation.

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3. Revisiting free subject inversion

As underlined at the end of § 2.1, the traditional analysis of pro-drop has already established a strong correlation between two different aspects of an apparently unique phenomenon:

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- (i) the subject may (or even must) be null, that is, there is no lexical/phonetic realization;
- (ii) the subject is free to occupy different positions within the structure of the sentence (free subject inversion; free extraction from the embedded clause, that is, there is no 'that-trace' effect).

As a matter of fact, both aspects of the pro-drop phenomenon, namely its core manifestation and its correlates, imply that Spec,TP may be 'null', that is, unrealized.

²² As a matter of fact, the hypothesis that free SI precedes full pro-drop is implied in a refined typology of semi-pro-drop languages (see Biberauer 2010) where the occurrence of the quasi argumental *pro* (with meteorological verbs) implies the occurrence of expletive *pro* with low/extraposed subjects.

It is not surprising that in the recent discussion on NSP these two distinct (not overlapping) aspects have received particular attention from a theoretical point of view (see Biberauer 2010). Holmberg (2010a), among others, assigns the first aspect – the licensing of referential *pro* – to the ‘morphological’ feature characterization of T^0 (+ definiteness), following and implementing Rizzi’s (1982) original approach. The second aspect – the possibility for the subject to be ‘out of place’ – is assigned to the different modalities in which the ‘syntactic’ EPP feature of Tense can be probed. While in a canonical NS language such as Italian the same morphological feature of T^0 is taken to be relevant for both the licensing of a referential/definite *pro* and the satisfaction of the EPP feature in T, in non-NS languages the interplay of these two distinct aspects of subject syntax gives rise to a complex typology. Adopting Holmberg’s perspective, we take at least three parametric considerations into account:

- (1) the ϕ -dependency of EPP in both T and C, i.e. a ϕ -dependent EPP (which ought to be probed by the subject) *versus* a ϕ -independent EPP (which could also be probed by other XPs, such as local adverbials);
- (2) ϕ characterization of C (with respect to nominative case assignment);
- (3) ϕ characterization of T (with respect to agreement morphology, i.e. number, person, and definiteness);

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The differences between two non-NS languages such as English and German could then be derived as follows:

(A) English

- (i) T is characterized by a ϕ -dependent EPP feature that requires that the subject always be moved to Spec,TP;
- (ii) ϕ characterization of C is not relevant to Nominative Case assignment (i.e. no mandatory V-to-C movement; no EPP in C = C ‘DONATES’ the EPP feature to T, according to the terminology of Biberauer and Roberts 2010, based on Ouali 2008).
- (iii) ϕ characterization of T is poor with respect to both tense [+V] and agreement morphology [+D] (i.e. no V-to-T movement; no licensing of NSs, either referential or expletive; two kinds of expletive subjects: *it*,

which lexicalizes Spec,TP by internal Merge, versus *there*, which is directly merged in Spec,TP).

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B) German

- (i) both T and C are characterized by the EPP feature. EPP in C is ϕ -independent (Spec,TP is realized by just one XP, regardless of its feature characterization; the CP expletive does not agree with the finite Verb in C). EPP in T is ϕ -dependent, i.e. reserved to the subject, as in English.
- (ii) ϕ characterization of C is rich enough to: (a) force finite V-to-C movement; (b) assign nominative case to Spec,TP; (c) license expletive *pro* in Spec,TP, i.e. probe the EPP feature of T from above.
- (iii) ϕ characterization of T is poor with respect to both tense and agreement morphology (i.e. no finite V-to-T movement; no licensing of referential NSs; *es* as *Scheinsubjekt*²³ lexicalizes Spec,TP by internal Merge).

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If we are on the right track, we have already explained why free SI is excluded in both English and German: due to the ϕ characterization of T. In both languages the (non-phase) TENSE is characterized by: (i) a ϕ -dependent EPP; (ii) a ϕ -characterization which is poor with respect to both tense [+V] and agreement morphology [+D]. As a consequence, the subject raising to Spec,TP (internal Merge) is the first choice for probing the EPP feature in T. The external Merge of an expletive subject implies specific restrictions in both English and German. The deictic feature of the English lexical expletive *there* refuses a definite subject (see Kayne 2008), the German expletive *pro* is limited to very specific contexts (impersonal passive constructions; non-agentive subject conditions).²⁴

²³ In the German grammatical tradition, the term *Scheinsubjekt* labels the ‘formal’ subject *es* (it) which occurs in impersonal constructions, in particular with meteorological verbs, but also with verbs expressing a noise or a sensory perception (*brennen* ‘to burn’, *klopfen* ‘to knock’, *stinken* ‘to smell’). The *Scheinsubjekt* cannot be dropped and should be kept distinct from the pure CP-expletive called *Vorfeld es*.

²⁴ The special case of heavy NP-shift (*‘Dann ist endlich noch angekommen, ein gewisser Herr Meier als Vertreter einer namhaften Firma aus München’*, ‘And finally a certain Mr Meier, the repre-

(C) Cimbrian

- (i) both T and the lower CP layer, i.e. Fin^0 , are characterized by the EPP feature. The EPP feature in Fin^0 is ϕ -independent, as in German. In fact, it is probed by: (a) the nominal subject raised to Spec,FinP ; (b) the direct Merge of the CP expletive 'z';²⁵ (c) any XP raised/merged in the higher CP-layers. The definition of the EPP feature in T (ϕ -dependent versus ϕ -independent) is not relevant since it is always controlled from above, either by the nominal subject in Spec,FinP or by a clitic subject in complementary distribution with expletive *-da/-ta* (see (iii) below).

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- (ii) ϕ -characterization of Fin^0 is rich enough to: (a) force finite V-to-Fin movement; (b) assign nominative case to Spec,FinP ; (c) act as a landing site for cliticization processes (enclisis/incorporation to Fin^0);
- (iii) much like German, ϕ characterization of T is poor with respect to both tense and agreement morphology (i.e. no finite V-to-T movement, no licensing of referential NSs). Unlike in German, Spec,TP is never assigned nominative case. In fact, the 'structural subject position' corresponds to Spec,FinP . 'z/-z as *Scheinsubjekt* either lexicalizes Spec,FinP or occurs enclitic to Fin^0 via internal Merge.

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The complex interplay of parametric variations considered above gives rise to a fine-grained typology which allows us to explain the 'special' position of Cimbrian as follows: First, Spec,TP does not correspond to the position

sentative of a renowned company from Munich, arrived') cannot be considered representative of the phenomenon of subject inversion (the non-raised subject), but rather as an instance of *Nachfeldbesetzung* (extraposition or right word movement or argument shift); this opens up a question which is, however, irrelevant to our explanation.

²⁵ The expletive in Spec,FinP does not require agreement with the finite verb in Cimbrian either:

- (i) 'z soin=da khent vil laüt
it are=DA arrived many people
'There arrived many people.'
- (ii) 'z arbatan=da vil maurar
it work.3PL=DA many masons
'Many masons are at work.'

where nominative case is assigned, that is, TP is ‘poor’ from both a morphological/inflectional point of view (no V to T movement, no referential *pro*) and a syntactic point of view (the subject does not move to Spec,TP to check nominative case, EPP is always probed from above). Unlike English, Cimbrian is a COMP-dominant language, much like German, that is, C is rich enough to force finite V movement and to probe nominative Case. Crucially, nominative case assignment applies differently: in Cimbrian it applies within FinP in a Split-CP configuration (see Rizzi 1997b and footnote 4 in this chapter), that is, Fin ‘KEEPS’ the relevant ϕ (agreement) features; using the old terminology, Fin assigns case to the left in a canonical SPEC-HEAD agreement configuration; in German, nominative case assignment does not apply within CP but involves Spec,TP (i.e. C ‘SHARES’ its relevant nominal agreement features with T;²⁶ using the old terminology, C assigns nominative case to the right under government). The EPP feature in C is ϕ -independent in both Cimbrian and German, that is, it can be probed by either the subject or by a different XP (or even by a CP expletive as a ‘last resort’). In Cimbrian, subject raising in the CP domain plays a double role with respect to both EPP and the ϕ features relevant for nominative case assignment. If the subject occurs in a lower position, the syntactic features (EPP) of Fin must be probed independently by an XP in a higher CP layer; nominative case is then absorbed via cliticization. In both German and the other canonical V languages, subject raising in Spec,CP is never triggered by nominative case assignment, but is nevertheless sufficient to probe a ϕ -independent EPP in complementary distribution to any other suitable XP.

3.1 *Free subject inversion in Cimbrian*

On the basis of previous assumptions, free SI is always allowed in Cimbrian syntax due to the ‘deficiency’ of the TP layer. This is exactly the opposite situation to that of Italian, where T⁰ is endowed with morphological agreement features rich enough to both

²⁶ We generalize here Biberauer and Roberts’s (2010) assumption limiting this option to Continental West Germanic, which manifests overt complementizer agreement morphology (see 2010: 283). In languages which are not characterized by mandatory V to C movement, like Italian and English, we have to assume that either C ‘DONATES’ the relevant agreement features for nominative case assignment to the lower TP projection or, more reasonably, that T acquires its feature characterization from verbal morphology, i.e. from the lower VP phase (see once again Biberauer and Roberts 2010: 283–4 and fn. 14 on p. 283).

incorporate the NS pronoun and satisfy the syntactic EPP feature (see also Holmberg 2010a: 99). Interestingly, Spec,TP — for diametrically opposed reasons — is not active (not projected) in either Cimbrian or Italian, determining a partial overlap of the linear word order pattern in the two languages (cf. (28a) and (29a) with (28b) and (29b)):

- (28) a. Haüt iz=ta **khent dar nono atz Lusérn** (Cimbrian)
 today is=da arrived the.NOM grandpa in Lusérn
 b. Oggi è **arrivato il nonno a Luserna** (Italian)
 today is arrived the grandpa to Lusérn
 ‘Today, the grandpa arrived in Lusérn.’
- (29) a. Haüt iz=ta **khent atz Lusérn dar nono** (Cimbrian)
 today is=da arrived to Lusérn the.NOM grandpa
 b. Oggi è **arrivato a Luserna il nonno** (Italian)
 today is arrived to Lusérn the.NOM grandpa

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The overlapping of the linear word order has been considered the premise for the process of reanalysis in diachronic perspective since Lightfoot (1979). Subject inversion patterns should therefore supply the necessary premise for Cimbrian to develop pro-drop favouring the structural reanalysis of the superficial word order pattern — from (30a) to (30b) — as illustrated below:

- (30) a. [_{CP} X [**Vf** [_{TP} T [V S]]]] VF to C/Fin
 b. [X [_{TP} *pro* [**Vf** [V S]]]] VF to T

However, the data discussed in our work all clearly show that no reanalysis has yet taken place. Why not? Our assumption is that the answer lies in the ‘deficiency’ of T. The process of reanalysis needs to be accompanied by a radical change in both the syntactic and the morphological feature characterization of T:

- (i) EPP in T should acquire a ϕ -dependent characterization (Fin ‘DONATES’ the relevant ϕ (agreement) features to T, i.e. nominative is assigned to Spec,TP);
- (ii) the ϕ -characterization of T should become rich enough to allow *pro* incorporation.

Is there any evidence that such a development will occur?

3.2 *Developing pro-drop: Two potential developmental paths for Cimbrian*

We can speculate that Cimbrian will follow one of two different developmental paths. The first maintains (and even reinforces) mandatory V to Fin movement combined with (the development of) a rich paradigm of enclitic pronouns (personal pronouns and expletive *-da*) ‘freezing’ Cimbrian syntax in an intermediate position ‘stuck’ between German and Italian. The second implies that V to Fin is reanalysed as V to T (cf. (30b)) with the following morpho-syntactic readjustments: enclitic subject pronouns would be reanalysed as verbal agreement morphology,²⁷ object clitics

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would occur to the left of the finite verb (proclisis replaces enclisis), and the expletive *-da* would be dropped.

The first of these paths currently seems to be the more probable: no proclisis has yet been developed, and the expletive *-da* shows no signs of erosion.

4. Conclusion: The relevance of Cimbrian for the theory of parameter-resetting

As already noted at the end of § 2, Cimbrian manifests both of the two classical correlates of an NSP like Italian — free subject inversion (VP DP) and no ‘that-trace’ effect — and certain aspects of a canonical V non-NS

²⁷ As pointed out by a reviewer, this is exactly what happened in another German-based heritage language in Italy, Walser German (see Zürcher 1999; Dal Negro 2000, 2004; Kolmer 2005b; Weiß 2005a: 161).

language like German — pronominal subject inversion with respect to the finite verbal form (V_{Fin} + subject clitic). It also displays two different classes of lexical expletives: (a) a CP expletive 'z whose occurrence is limited to the preverbal position (Spec,FinP) and never appears in enclisis, much like the German *Vorfeld es*; and (b) two subject expletives in complementary distribution—the impersonal subject 'z/-z and -da.

What the peculiar typological position of Cimbrian tells us about syntactic evolution confirms the crucial role of the so-called 'correlating phenomena' in the process of both losing and acquiring the 'core' aspect of a given parametric choice, as discussed in § 2.3. In particular:

- (i) Pronominal subject inversion with the finite verb as a correlate of V 'survives' (disappears later than) the loss of the core manifestation of the phenomenon (the loss of linear V restriction);
- (ii) Free subject inversion precedes the core phenomenon of pro-drop (i.e. the potential development of a referential NS), and crucially implies the mandatory co-occurrence with the expletive -da.

At this stage of the language's evolution, the coexistence of correlating phenomena from two mutually exclusive parameter values (+V2, +NSP) determines a 'syntactic impasse' which can only be resolved by resetting one of the values.

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Although the extension of mandatory V to Fin movement in the subordinate context seems to reinforce the Germanic character of Cimbrian as a COMP-dominant language, it also favours the preverbal subject position (subject raising to the left of the finite verb), in other words, the generalization of a word order pattern which excludes co-occurrence with either the enclitic subject pronoun or the expletive -da, as illustrated in ((31a–b) versus (31c–d)):

- (31) a. COMP Nominal Subject ke dar pua hatt gesek in has
VF ... that the boy has seen the hare
- b. COMP Nominal Subject ke dar nono iz khent
VF ... that the grandpa is arrived
- c. *COMP Nominal Subject ke dar pua hatt=ar gesek in has
VF+CL SBJ ... that the boy has=he seen the hare
- d. *COMP Nominal Subject

VF+**da** ...

*ke dar nono iz=ta khent
that the grandpa is=DA arrived

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In fact, it is probable that only the morphological reanalysis of the pronominal subject can unlock the process of structural reanalysis (from (32a) to (32b)):

- (32) a. (X) [CP **DPSubject** [Vf [TP T [V...]]]] VF to C/Fin
b. (X) [TP **DPSubject** [Vf [V...]]] VF to T

The generalization of mandatory V to Fin to embedded contexts reduces the importance of pronominal subject inversion as a correlate of V, thus potentially favouring a reanalysis of subject enclisis as verbal agreement morphology (the second developmental path, see § 3.2), in line with Kolmer's (2012) observations. The development of a proclitic paradigm — and the weakening of enclisis — may be crucial to such a reinterpretation.

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