

In search of the force of dependent V2:

A note on Swedish*

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Abstract

This paper is a brief extension of recent work on embedded verb second and is a contribution to research on the relation between V2 and illocutionary force. It presents a problem for the hypothesis that there is an illocutionary motivation for the verb second word order in Mainland Scandinavian declaratives. The relevant force, to the extent that we can identify it, appears to be available also in the absence of V2 word order.

1 Introduction

The background of this paper is a wish to understand the alleged semantic difference between the two members of minimal pairs like (1) in view of hypothesis (2).

- (1) a. Olle sa att han inte hade läst boken. (non-V2)
 Olle say.Past that he not had read.Sup book.Def
- b. Olle sa att han hade inte läst boken (V2)
 Olle say.Past that he had not read.Sup book.Def
 ‘Olle said that he had not read the book.’

- (2) *Illocution hypothesis of V2 (declaratives):*

V2 declaratives have illocutionary force, V-in-situ declaratives don’t.

Example (1a) shows the more common non-V2 word order in Mainland Scandinavian embedded clauses, (1b) embedded verb second. The question is whether it is possible to identify an illocutionary force in (1b) that is

* I wish to thank Kristine Bentzen, Björn Lundquist, Christer Platzack, and the participants at Grammatikseminariet, Göteborgs Universitet (April 24, 2009) for discussion.

absent in (1a), in which case the V2 word order (V-in-C) would be a potential force marker. A related question is whether this force is never present in V-in-situ declaratives, in which case the force perceived would actually be dependent on V2 word order, in support of (2).

Recent research on embedded verb second in Scandinavian declarative clauses divide in two camps regarding (2) with the more optimistic Julien (2007) on the one side and the more sceptical Wiklund et al. (2009) on the other. The debate bears some resemblance to that represented in *Theoretical Linguistics* 32-3 (2006) between Truckenbrodt (2006) and e.g. Reis (2006) on the semantic motivation of verb movement to C in German. Other works on the relation between illocutionary force and V2 include Andersson (1975), den Besten (1977/1983), Wechsler (1991), Heycock (2006) and Julien (2007).

V2 is one of many phenomena that call for scrutiny if we are to choose between models where illocutionary force is not directly encoded in syntax (even though it can be traced to syntactic properties), as in Zanuttini and Portner (2003), and models where syntax takes over a great deal of the burden of pragmatics, as in Speas and Tenny (2003). In the latter, sentence mood and point of view related phenomena are taken to be deducible from a layered speech act phrase and a layered sentience phrase, respectively. The issues raised here do not put into question the presence of a Force head as such, the primary role of which is to distinguish clause types (Rizzi 1997). This head may be layered and perhaps does also encode illocutionary force. However while sympathetic to the cartographic theory in general, I think there is room for some scepticism until it has been shown that illocutionary force does not follow from other properties.¹ This note is a contribution to research on the relation between V2 and illocutionary force. I will end up not having much to say about whether or not there is

¹ For cartographic approaches, see Rizzi (1997) on the C-domain, Cinque (1999) on the I-domain, Ramchand (2008) on the V-domain of the clause, and works under the heading of *Nanosyntax* that take the “atoms” of syntax to be smaller than words or morphemes (to which the work by Ramchand 2008 also belongs).

a force in (1b). However, to the extent that we can identify such a force, it also appears to be available in V-in-situ declaratives. This weakens the relation between V2 and illocutionary force even though there is little doubt about there being a relation (at least in Mainland Scandinavian), if by nothing else, by virtue of both being root phenomena.

2 Embedded V2 is limited to asserted clauses

The illocutionary act normally associated with declaratives is that of *asserting*, roughly the act of uttering a sentence with the intention to make the addressee accept the content of it and take it as part of the common ground. Given that the verb second word order in Swedish and other languages is excluded under the factive predicate *ångra* (\approx ‘regret’), see (3a), where the content of the clause is presupposed (already part of the common ground), we seem to have support in favor of there being a relation between the verb second word order and assertion or the corresponding assertoric force. We can at least conclude that a presupposed proposition cannot be expressed by using the verb second word order.

- (3) a. *Olle ångrade att han hade inte läst boken.
Olle regret.Past that he had not read.Sup book.Def
- b. Olle ångrade att han inte hade läst boken
Håkan regret.Past that he not had read.Sup book.Def
 ‘Olle regretted that he had not read the book.’

Looking at semi-factives like *upptäcka* ‘discover’, we see two things. First, factivity is irrelevant to V2 but whether the content of the embedded clause is presupposed by both the speaker and the hearer or only by the speaker appears to be relevant for the possibility of verb second (see Wiklund et al. 2009 for details).

- (4) Olle upptäckte inte att Lena hade redan gått.
Olle discover.Past not that Lena had already go.Sup
 ‘Olle did not discover that Lena had already left.’

In (4), the content of the embedded proposition has to be presupposed by the speaker but need not be so by the hearer, in which case the illocution of the clause potentially qualifies as an assertion; the sentence may be uttered with the intention of informing the addressee about the fact that Lena had already left. To the extent that we want to accept calling something that is presupposed *asserted* in this context, which is a matter of terminology, we can at least conclude that the less presupposed the content of the clause is, the more compatible it is with verb second. (4) contrasts with (3b) in precisely this way. In (3b), the content of the embedded clause has to be part of the common ground (presupposed by both speaker and hearer).

A third discovery is the compatibility between verb second and matrix negation in Scandinavian under semi-factive verbs, as in (4).² This is in fact also possible with *say* as long as negation is not an illocutionary negation (in the sense of Searle and Vanderveken 1985). The negation of a non-assertive verb like *doubt* shows the same (marginal) compatibility, (5a), here despite the fact that this verb is otherwise not compatible with the verb second word order, cf. (5b).

- (5) a. ?Jag tvivlar inte på att den boken köper du.
I doubt.Pres not on that DET book.Def buy.Pres you
 b. *Jag tvivlar på att den boken köper du.
I doubt.Pres on that DET book.Def buy.Pres you

All of these facts show us that there is a relation between verb second word order in declaratives and assertion in the sense that V2 word order is ruled out in cases where the speaker is not undertaking some commitment to the proposition expressed, as in (5b), and in cases where there is no

² Another verb with the same properties, which is factive when embedding a finite clause (but does not belong to the semi-factives) is *glömma* ‘forget’.

wish to update the common ground (to inform the hearer of something), as in cases where the embedded proposition is already part of the common ground, (3a).

3 V-in-situ declaratives

One immediate problem, however, is that the non-V2 word order is the default word order of Swedish embedded clauses and it is not clear in what sense the non-V2 word order under *say*, (1a), and *discover* on the relevant use, (6), are not also assertions (again, to the extent that we wish to label informative presuppositions assertions); at least (6) yields the interpretation of a commitment to the embedded proposition on the part of the speaker and on the parenthetical use we can also infer a wish that the embedded proposition is added to the common ground (also becomes known to the addressee).

- (6) Olle upptäckte att Lena inte hade gått.
Olle discover.Past that Lena not had go.Sup
 ‘Olle did not discover that Lena had not left.’

(4) and (6) both seem to have parenthetical uses, just like (1a) and (1b). Note that there seems to be no way to distinguish the two word orders in terms of notions like *main assertion* (Hooper and Thompson 1973). In Wiklund et al. (2009), a detailed investigation of Icelandic, Norwegian, and Swedish is performed, using the diagnostics presented in Simons (2007) in search for differences between the two word orders regarding the status of the clause in terms of *main assertion* (*Main Point of Utterance* – MPU in the terminology of Simons 2007). Whenever the content of an embedded clause alone can constitute the answer to a question, the embedded clause has the possibility of being the MPU. It is shown that neither is the V2 word order necessary for a clause to represent the main assertion, nor is this word order unambiguously the main assertion of the sentence. As an

illustration, the example sentences in (8) and (9) are all possible answers to the question in (7). In (8), the embedded clause expresses the main assertion (he did not come to the party because he did not have time), in (9) the whole sentence represents the main assertion (he did not come to the party because someone said something that offended him). Under both uses, the non-V2 word order (a-sentences) and the V2 word order (b-sentences) are both possible.

- (7) Varför kom han inte på festen?
why come.Past he not to party
 ‘Why didn’t he come to the party.’
- (8) a. Han påstod att han inte hade tid.
he claim.Past that he not had time
 b. Han påstod att han hade inte tid.
he claim.Past that he had not time
 ‘He claimed that he did not have time.’
- (9) a. Någon sa att dom inte ville ha en idiot där.
someone say.Past that they not want.Past have an idiot there
 b. Någon sa att dom ville inte ha en idiot där.
someone say.Past that they want.Past not an idiot there
 ‘Someone said that they didn’t want an idiot there.’

MPU-readings, just like the V2 word order, are not possible when the content is already part of the common ground, nor under non-assertive predicates (e.g. *doubt*). Under assertive predicates and semi-factives, however, MPU-readings are possible, just like the V2 word order, see Wiklund et al. (2009) for details. Importantly though, the non-V2 word order is also possible.

4 Identifying force

Suppose that the relevant clauses with non-V2 word order nevertheless lack the *force* of an assertion. The question is how to identify that force. Assertive particles, speech act adverbials, and swear words would seem to constitute candidate indicators. However, these elements appear perfectly fine also with the non-V2 word order, see (10).³ According to Julien (2008), the V2 word order is preferred with discourse-oriented swear words. Many speakers (including myself), however, do not agree with this intuition.

- (10)
- a. Hon upptäckte att han **ju** inte hade rest.
she discover.Past that he you-know not had go.Sup
 - b. Hon sa att han **fasen** inte hade gjort ett skit.
she say.Past that he SwearWrd not had do.Sup a shit
 - c. Hon sa att han **ärligt talat** inte hade betalat.
she say.Past that he honestly speaking not had pay.Sup
 - d. Vi upptäckte att de **nämligen/minsann** inte hade kommit.
we discover.Past that they you-see/indeed not had come.Sup

Although this fact does not preclude a difference between V2 and non-V2 word order with respect to illocutionary force in the absence of the above elements, verb movement does not appear to be obligatory in the presence of the purported illocutionary force features. Note also that the above elements are impossible in precisely those environments where MPU readings are unavailable and where V2 word order is impossible in Swedish:

- (11)
- a. Hon ångrade att hon (*ju) inte hade rest.
she regret.Past that he you-know not had go.Sup

³The same seems to be true for Norwegian (Kristine Bentzen, p.c.).

- b. Hon tvivlade på att han (*fasen) inte hade gjort ett
she doubt.Past on that he SwearWrd not had do.Sup a
 skit.
shit

If illocutionary force is possible in the absence of V2 word order, this weakens the connection between V2 and illocution considerably. The important observation seems to be that the three phenomena V2, Main-Point-of-Utterance readings, and illocutionary force (qua identifiable by the above mentioned elements) may occur independently from one another. Unless we have evidence to the contrary, illocutionary force may be derived from whatever is responsible for the root status of a clause, which in dependent clauses may be e.g. the presence of a certain layer of the C-domain in combination with other configurational properties. E.g. V2-clauses appear to contrast with clauses displaying non-V2 word order in not being topicalizable, (12a) vs. (12b). This is also true of the embedded clauses in (10) that lack V2 word order but involve discourse elements, cf. (12c).⁴

- (12) a. Att hon inte hade gått hem upptäckte han först
that she not had go.Sup home discover.Past he not-until
 igår.
yesterday
- b. *Att hon hade inte gått hem upptäckte han först
that she had not go.Sup home discover.Past he not-until
 igår.
yesterday

⁴ Another property that seems to show the same distributional split is the obligatoriness of (or preference to insert) the complementizer in V2-clauses and clauses involving the above mentioned discourse elements (I am indebted to Christer Platzack for reminding me of this fact):

- (i) a. Hon sa (att) hon inte hade läst den.
she say.Past that she had read.Sup it
- b. Hon sa ??(att) hon hade inte läst den.
she say.Past that she had not read.Sup it
- c. Hon sa ??(att) hon nämligen inte hade läst den.
she say.Past that she you.see not had read.Sup it

- c. *Att hon nämligen hade gått hem upptäckte han först
that she you-see had go.Sup home discover.Past he not-until
 igår.
yesterday

As a final note, V-in-situ is in fact possible also in root clauses; in exclamatives of the kind shown in (13a). In these, a force is arguably present (exclamative) but V2 word order is impossible, cf. (13b).

- (13) a. Att han inte var där!
that he not was there
 b. *Att han var inte där!
that he was not there

Although this fact says nothing about the relation between V2 and the specific illocutionary force of assertion (see Truckenbrodt 2006 on the difference between exclamatives and epistemic speech acts), it is another case where V-in-situ appears to come with illocutionary force. Examples of what appears to be the reverse situation – V2 without illocutionary force – can be found in Icelandic A (see Jónsson 1996 and also Gärtner 2003), where V2 word order is possible also under non-assertive and factive predicates.⁵ Thus, verb second does not always yield force and force does not appear to require verb second, not even the forces associated with epistemic speech acts.

5 Conclusion

I have discussed problems for the hypothesis that there is an illocutionary motivation for the verb second word order. The relevant force, to the extent that we can identify it, appears to be available also in the absence of V2 word order in Swedish.

⁵See Wiklund et al. 2007 and Wiklund et al. 2009 for arguments in favor of taking all Icelandic verb movement to be to C.

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