

Rethinking the origins of Old Romance V-to-C movement

1. Aim of the paper There is a long-standing consensus that at least some Old Romance languages had V-to-C movement in root clauses, with concomitant ‘V2-effects’, like obligatory subject-verb inversion in clauses where a non-subject XP occurs to the left of a left-peripheral verb. The main aim of this paper is to show that V-to-C movement was already available in (Late) Latin, but only in one particular environment hitherto overlooked in the literature. Importantly, there are good reasons to assume that V-to-C is a relatively young, Latin-internal innovation. I will develop an account of how this phenomenon came into being, paying special attention to the role of language learners in bringing about syntactic change.

2. Some structurally ambiguous Latin V1/V2 orders It has recently been claimed that V-to-C movement was in fact widely available in Latin main clauses, yielding V1 and V2 orders in a range of environments (Devine & Stephens 2006 (D&S); Ledgeway 2012; Wolfe 2016). For instance, D&S (2006: 168) analyse the V1-clause in (1a) as involving V-to-C, SpecCP being occupied by an empty discourse operator. Similarly, Ledgeway (2012: 151) suggests that in an OSV-clause like (1b), the direct object sits in SpecCP, and the finite verb in C°. It has also been argued that the interrogative particle *-ne* is first merged in a left-peripheral Pol head (D&S 2006: 167), and that in cases like (1c) V_{fin} incorporates into Pol°.

A major objection against this line of reasoning is that for all cases of the type exemplified in (1), there is invariably at least one parse available in which the verb sits in T. For instance, three possible alternative parses for the linear string in (1b) are given in (2), with V-to-T movement and an A'-moved object in (2a), and a verb in T and a scrambled object in (2b). As shown in (2c), even a parse with a head-final TP and an extraposed subject is available. Similarly, it is well known that the question particle *-ne* can be merged low in the structure, sometimes with constituent scope (not illustrated), or, as in (3), attached to a finite verb (arguably heading a head-final TP) preceded by three clausemate constituents:

(2) a. [CP idem [C' [TP [T' facilitate [VP Caesar [V']]]]]]
 b. [CP [ScrP idem [TP [T' facilitate [VP Caesar [V']]]]]]
 c. [TP [TP [T' [VP idem] facilitate]]] Caesar]

(3) [Pension-es plurim-as], [ad quart-am usque], [ob decurionatu-m] depend-it=ne?
 payments-ACC most-ACC to fourth-ACC until for decurionship-ACC pay-PRS.3SG=Q
 ‘Did he make up to four payments to obtain the rank of *decurio*?’ (Fronto Epist. 2.7.6)

In sum, the Latin V1/V2 orders previously analysed in terms of V-to-C are in fact structurally ambiguous. From an acquisition point of view, this conclusion has important consequences: assuming that children only set syntactic parameters on the basis of unambiguous evidence (Fodor 1998; Yang 2002; Fodor & Sakas 2011), there is at this point no reason to assume that data such as (1) could have led learners to postulate the existence of V-to-C.

3. Two TP-internal verb positions In contrast, there is unambiguous evidence for (at least) two TP-internal verb positions, witness the fact that V_{fin} can both follow (4a) and precede (4b) aspectual (and modal, cf. Danckaert 2017a) adverbs such as *semper* 'always':

(4) a. quia semper **animaduert-i** studios-e te oper-am da-re
 because always notice-PRF.1SG eager-ADV you.ACC.2SG effort-ACC give-PRS.INF
 ‘because I’ve always noticed that you eagerly do your best’ (Cic. Fam. 13.11.1)

b. quia **incip-it** semper a fin-e
 because begin-PRS.3SG always from end-ABL
 ‘because it always starts at the end’ (Sen. Ep. 73.3)

The main thing to note is that the high verb position (4b) is not left-peripheral: as shown in Danckaert (2012), subordinators like *quia* ‘because’ occur low in the articulated CP (plausibly in Fin), and invariably follow fronted foci (if present). In section 5, I will suggest that the existence of this high verb position is a first prerequisite for a V-to-C grammar to come about.

4. The genesis of A-movement for subjects A second prerequisite is a TP-internal position for subjects, which I will call SubjP. As argued in Danckaert (2017a,b), there is every reason to assume that A-movement for subjects is an innovative grammatical option, which only fully establishes itself in Late Latin. In all likelihood, this development came about when learners reanalysed left-peripheral (A'-moved) subjects as being A-moved. Building on Yang (2002), Danckaert (2017b) provides corpus evidence to corroborate the claim that in the history of Latin, TP-internal subjects are indeed on the rise. Assuming a pair of two ‘competing’ grammars, one without (‘Subject in VP’) and one with A-movement (‘Subject in TP’), Yang’s (2002) variationist acquisition model allows us to estimate the ‘fitness’ of both grammars, whereby the fitness of a grammar G_i is defined as the proportion of clauses in the PLD that can only be parsed by G_i . As shown in the table below, in the period from 200 BC to 200 AD (say Early and Classical Latin) it is the grammar without A-movement which is cued most robustly, whereas the roles are reversed in the four centuries thereafter (Late Latin):

	200 BC - 200 AD	200 - 600 AD
Subject in VP	Fitness: 185/1254 = .1475	Fitness: 38/760 = .05
Subject in TP	Fitness: 138/1254 = .1100	Fitness: 98/760 = .1289
Significant?	YES (Pearson’s χ^2 , $p = .0014$)	YES (Pearson’s χ^2 , $p < .000001$)

5. Innovating V-to-C movement When learners first reanalysed A'-subjects as A-subjects, it had to be determined whether the new SubjP sits below or above the high verb position. The PLD are not informative in this respect, as the previous generation of speakers did not have SubjP. As a result, the learner can only rely on UG. Given that there is no principled objection against either ‘(C-)Subj-V-Adv’ or ‘(C-)V-Subj-Adv’ orders, we predict both to be possible in Late Latin. As shown in (5), this is indeed correct. The crucial case is (5b), where V occurs to the left of an unambiguously TP-internal subject: given that it is not possible for TP-internal V-movement to cross an A-moved subject (Cinque 1999: 111), we can be confident that this example involves V-to-C. In sum, we here have a case where language acquirers bring about syntactic change by going beyond the input, all the while staying within the confines of UG.

(5) a. quia **David** contra se **habe-ba-t** semper delict-um su-um
 because David.NOM against REFL have-IMPRF-3SG always misdeed-ACC his-ACC
 ‘because David always had his own mistake against him’ (Ambr. apol. Dav. 1.10.55)

b. **Sta-ba-t** igitur **fide-s** semper in creator-e et christ-o eius.
 stand-IMPRF-3SG thus faith-NOM always in creator-ABL and Christ-ABL this.GEN
 ‘Faith in the Creator and his Christ always stood firm.’ (Tert. adv. Marc. 1.21)

References Cinque 1999. *Adverbs and functional heads*. OUP | Danckaert 2012. *Latin embedded clauses*. Benjamins | id. 2017a. The development of Latin clause structure. OUP | id. 2017b. Subject placement in the history of Latin. *CatJL* 16 | Devine & Stephens 2006. *Latin word order*. OUP | Fodor 1998. Unambiguous triggers. *LI* 29 | Fodor & Sakas 2011. Disambiguating syntactic triggers. *LAcq* 19 | Ledgeway 2012. *From Latin to Romance*. OUP | Wolfe 2016. A comparative perspective on the evolution of Romance clausal structure. *Diachronica* 33 | Yang 2002. *Knowledge and learning in natural language*. OUP |