

Roots of V-to-C Movement in Romance: Investigating the Late Latin Grammar

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Abstract: We investigate the syntactic structure of interrogative clauses in late Latin, particularly object and adjunct wh-sentences. Our results show that, in object questions, the wh-operator reaches FocP in the left periphery, with the finite verb been raised to the Foc head. This Spec-head relation accounts for why subjects and dislocated XPs (like topics or focus elements) can not be intervening constituents between the object wh-phrase and the verb. For adjunct interrogative sentences, we show that the wh-phrase occupies SpecIntP. Here, the verb does not move to the CP-field, thus explaining the possibility of intervening subjects and interpolated XPs between the adjunct wh-element and the verb. These results show that the verb second (V2) property of V-to-C movement, as seen in several old Romance languages, can be derived from late Latin, and not exclusively from a supposed influence of Germanic languages, as is assumed in the literature.

Key words: Romance; V2; Late Latin; interrogative clauses; V-to-C movement.

1. Introduction

A long standing claim in the generative literature is that medieval Romance languages are characterized as verb second (V2) grammars, particularly for showing V-movement to the CP-field in different structural contexts (cf., among many others, Adams 1987 and Roberts 1993 for old French; Benincà 2006 and Ledgeway 2008 for medieval Italian dialects; Fontana 1993 and Pinto 2011 for old Spanish). A much less discussed topic derived from this hypothesis concerns the origin itself of the V2 phenomenon in the Romance branch and, more specifically, the development of the V-to-C syntax. One idea is that this property evolves from a Germanic influence, as argued by Mathieu (2009:345) in relation to V2 word order in old French: “The influence of Germanic on what was to become French may have been through contact, first through the invasion of Gaul by

the Franks, and second, by the Normans in the North-West.”

While the contact with languages of the Germanic branch can be appointed as a key factor in the development of the V2 syntax in old French, such an analysis faces some challenges if extended to other medieval Romance varieties which also manifested V2 traces. For instance, it is not a consensual view whether old and classical Portuguese were V2 grammars (in favor of the V2 hypothesis, cf. Ribeiro 1995, Galves 1997, Paixão de Sousa 2004, Antonelli 2011; contrary to the V2 hypothesis, cf. Kaiser 1999, Eide 2006, Rinke 2009). In fact, in declarative matrix clauses, besides V2 word order, we can also find V1 and V3 patterns which are not attested in strict V2 languages, as exemplified in (1) and (2) for old Portuguese.¹

(1) *Diremos nós ora, padre, que ...*
say-FUT.1PL we now father that
‘We will say now, father, that ...’ (Ribeiro 1995:121)

(2) *E enton hũũ homem siia en sa pousada ...*
and then a man sat.down in his inn
‘Then a man sat down in his inn ...’ (Ribeiro 1995:124)

However, in wh-interrogative main clauses, it seems clear that V-to-C movement applies, as the examples in (3) of classical Portuguese show.²

(3) a. *Que dizeis vós, Humildade?*
what say-2PL you-2PL, Humility
‘what do you say, Humility?’
b. *Como posso eu caber aí?*
how can I fit-INF there

‘how can I fit there?’ (Lopes-Rossi 1996:40)

The word order in (3) is similar to what is found in standard V2 languages, like German.

(4) *Welches Buch hat Peter gelesen?*

which book has Peter read

‘Which book has Peter read?’ (Vikner 1995:39)

The examples in (3) and (4) present the finite verb in strict adjacency to a dislocated wh-phrase, giving rise to subject-verb inversion (VS). For standard V2 languages, this word order is taken as an important evidence that the verb has moved to the left periphery, establishing a Spec-head relation with the wh-phrase located in SpecCP. Under such a configuration, the subject remains in a lower structural position and the VS sequence is derived. This is the standard analysis for the V2 phenomenon in German, for instance (cf. Roberts 1993 and Vikner 1995). Since Portuguese shows an identical pattern, it seems reasonable to suppose that this language featured V2 traces, at least in matrix interrogative clauses (residual V2, if we assume that V-to-C movement is a property not generalized to declarative sentences). But, even though the examples in (3) manifest a striking similarity with the word order pattern in German, it is not clear, in terms of diachronic evolution, how the Portuguese syntax was influenced by languages of the Germanic branch. The traditional view is that most of the Germanic impact on the development of Portuguese was restricted to the lexicon, without substantial influence on syntax (see, for instance, Head & Semënova-Head 2013). So, the question of how Portuguese, as well as other old Romance varieties not directly affected by the Germanic branch, developed V2 properties remains unanswered. Here, not denying the possible impact of Germanic languages, we propose that the V-to-C property, particularly in interrogative structures, has an earlier root in the grammar of late Latin.

2. Interrogative clauses in Late Latin: the data

Our investigation of wh-structures in late Latin is based on examples drawn from the Vulgate, Jerome's Latin translation of the Bible finished in the 4th century.³ In particular, we look at the Old Testament books of 1st and 2nd Samuel and 1st and 2nd Kings as well as the Gospels and the book of Acts in the New Testament. For the present work, we use the 5th edition of the *Biblia Sacra Iuxta Vulgatam Versionem*, the most disseminated published edition of the Bible in Latin.

One first important point observed in our corpus is that late Latin behaves as a wh-*in-situ* language.⁴ All the examples we collected show the wh-operator in the left periphery of the clause, as exemplified in (5).⁵

- (5) a. **quare** *scidisti* *vestimenta tua*
why tear-PST.2SG clothes your
'Why have you torn your robes?' (2nd Kings 5:8)
- b. **quid** *faciet* *agricolis* *illis*
what do-FUT.3SG tenants-DAT those-DAT
'What will he do to those tenants?' (Matthew 21:40)
- c. **quem** *vultis* *dimittam* *vobis*
who-ACC want-2PL release-1SG you-DAT.2PL
'Which one do you want me to release to you?' (Matthew 27:17)

Another interesting fact arises when we compare the position of subjects in object wh-sentences and adjunct wh-structures. In the first group, we observe a strong tendency to show subject-verb inversion. For instance, particularly in sentences which present the interrogative element *quid* "what" functioning as an object argument phrase, the VS word order is widely attested. In (6), we present some examples of postverbal subjects in *quid*-clauses.

- (6) a. *quid habet populus quod plorat*
 what has people that weeps
 ‘What is wrong with the people? Why are they weeping?’ (1st Samuel 11:5)
- b. *quid dixerunt viri isti*
 what say-PST.3PL men those
 ‘What did those man say?’ (2nd Kings 20:14)
- c. *quid faciemus et nos*
 what do-FUT.1PL also we
 ‘What should we do?’ (Luke 3:14)
- d. *quid vult seminiverbius hic dicere*
 what want-3SG babbler this say-INF
 ‘What is this babbler trying to say?’ (Acts 17:18)

If preverbal, subjects appear before the wh-element, as illustrated in (7). In our corpus, we do not find any example of a subject breaking the adjacency between the wh-phrase and the verb.

- (7) *tu quid dicis de eo*
 you-2SG what say of him
 ‘What have you to say about him?’ (John 9:17)

Adjunct wh-sentences, however, in particular those with the interrogative phrase *quare* “why”, manifest a different pattern. Postverbal subjects are also attested, just like in *quid*-sentences, as illustrated in (8).

- (8) a. *quare percussit nos Dominus hodie*
 why defeat-PST.3SG us Lord today

‘Why did the Lord bring defeat upon us today?’ (1st Samuel 4:3)

b. *quare succenderunt servi tui segetem meam*

why fire-PST.3PL servants your field my

‘Why have your servants set my field on fire?’ (2nd Samuel 14:31)

c. *quare maledicit canis hic moriturus domino meo*

why curse-3SG dog this dead lord-DAT my-DAT

‘Why should this dead dog curse my lord?’ (2nd Samuel 16:9)

d. *quare fremuerunt gentes*

why rage-PST.3PL nations

‘Why do the nations rage?’ (Acts 4:25)

However, SV structures are quite common, especially the linear order in which the subject appears between the wh-element and the verb. Examples of intervening subjects are presented in (9).

(9) a. *quare servus tuus fit oneri*

why servant your be.done-3SG burden-GEN

‘Why should your servant be an added burden?’ (2nd Samuel 19:35)

b. *quare dominus meus flet*

why lord my weep-3SG

‘Why is my lord weeping?’ (2nd Kings 8:12)

c. *quare discipuli tui transgrediuntur traditionem seniorum*

why disciples your break-3PL tradition elders-GEN

‘Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders?’ (Matthew 15:2)

There is another striking difference between *quid* and *quare*-sentences. In the former, even

though subjects cannot break the wh-adjacency with the finite verb, we attest that some coordinated conjunctions can appear as intervening constituents. In (10), we present examples with these elements, usually called discourse markers (cf. Kroon 1998).

- (10) a. *quid enim feci*
what for do-PST.1SG
‘But what have I done?’ (1st Samuel 29:8)
- b. *quid ergo vult ut faciam ei*
what so want-3SG that do-1SG her-DAT
‘What can be done for her?’ (2nd Kings 4:14)
- c. *quid igitur faciam de Iesu*
what so do-FUT.1SG of Jesus
‘What shall I do, then, with Jesus?’ (Matthew 27:22)

In fact, not only discourse markers appear as intervening material in *quid*-clauses. We also find 6 examples of clitic-like elements, particularly non-nominative personal pronouns, as in (11), and one example of fronted XP, as in (12), clearly a quite marginal case. As a matter of comparison, discourse markers appear as breaking constituents in 16 examples.

- (11) a. *quid tibi dixit Heliseus*
what you-DAT say-PST.3SG Elisha
‘What did Elisha say to you?’ (2nd Kings 8:14)
- b. *quid vobis praecepit Moses*
what you-DAT.2PL command-PST.3SG Moses
‘What did Moses command you?’ (Mark 10:3)
- c. *quid tibi vis faciam*

what you-DAT want-2SG do-1SG

‘What do you want me to do for you?’ (Luke 18:41)

(12) **quid** *in via tractabatis*

what in road argue-PST.2PL

‘What were you arguing about on the road?’ (Mark 9:33)

In *quare*-sentences, we also find discourse markers breaking the linear adjacency between the wh-operator and the verb, as shown in (13).

(13) a. **quare** *ergo peccas in sanguine innocio*

why so sin-2SG in blood innocent

‘Why then would you do wrong to an innocent man?’ (1st Samuel 19:5)

b. **quare** *ergo contempsisti verbum Domini*

why so despise-PST.2SG word Lord-GEN

‘Why did you despise the word of the Lord?’ (2nd Samuel 12:9)

c. **quare** *ergo regnavit Adonias*

why so reign-PST.3SG Adoniah

‘why then has Adoniah become king?’ (1st Kings 1:13)

However, contrary to what we saw in object wh-clauses, structures with *quare* seem to impose no restriction on the presence of fronted XPs between the wh-phrase and the verb, since these structures are widely attested. In (14) we present examples of this word order.

(14) a. **quare** *iuxta murum accessistis*

why near wall approach-PST.2PL

‘Why did you get so close to the wall?’ (2nd Samuel 11:21)

b. *quare hoc fecisti*

why that do-PST.2SG

‘why do you behave as you do?’ (1st Kings 1:6)

c. *quare in parabolis loqueris eis*

why in parables speak-2SG them-DAT

‘Why do you speak to the people in parables?’ (Matthew 13:10)

In the next section, we propose an analysis of these facts trying to show how they can be interpreted as an evidence that a process of V-to-C movement already takes place in late Latin.

3. *The analysis*

In our analysis, we assume a split-CP view (cf. Rizzi 1997, 2001, 2004), as the one schematized in (15).

(15) [ForceP [TopP [IntP [FocP [TopP [FinP]]]]]]

We propose that *quid* and *quare* are positioned in the CP-domain, in accordance with the fact that late Latin is a wh-movement language. However, we argue that these question operators must target different positions. As for *quid*-clauses, our idea is that both the wh-phrase and the verb are moved to the left periphery, the former reaching SpecFocP and the latter being raised to Foc⁰ (as a result of the Wh-Criterion, for instance), in a paradigm similar to what has been proposed for object wh-clauses in Italian (see Rizzi 1997). Under this configuration, the subject either remains in a lower layer (SpecIP, for instance), thus accounting for the Wh-V-S word order, or is generated in a Topic position above FocP, thus deriving the S-Wh-V sequence. Besides that, the Spec-head relation between *quid* and the finite verb also explains the marginality of fronted intervening XPs, since

there would be no peripheral space for interpolated dislocated phrases.⁶ In relation to intervening non-nominative personal pronouns, we assume that they are clitic elements adjoined to the verbal constituent.⁷ In this case, their presence to the left of the verb does not contradict the hypothesis of V-to-C movement.

As for adjunct wh-clauses, we propose that *quare* functions as *perché* “why” in Italian. Rizzi (2001) shows that *perché* does not target SpecFocP because its occurrence is compatible with the presence of a focalized constituent to its right, as the contrast in (16) exemplifies. That is one of the reasons why the author proposes an additional layer above FocP specialized in hosting wh-operators like *perché*, namely IntP.

- (16) a. ***Perché QUESTO avremmo dovuto dirgli, no qualcos'altro?***
‘Why THIS should have said to him, not something else?’
b. **QUESTO perché avremmo dovuto dirgli, no qualcos'altro?*

Rizzi shows that *come mai* “how come” behaves like *perché*, as confirmed by the pair of sentences in (17).

- (17) a. ***Come mai IL MIO LIBRO gli ha dato, non il tuo?***
‘How come MY BOOK you gave to him, not yours?’
b. **IL MIO LIBRO come mai gli ha dato, not yours?*

For Rizzi, the position in the CP-domain of question operators like *perché* is SpecIntP. In addition to that, he also proposes that V-to-C movement does not apply in this type of wh-structure. Such a claim would explain why the SV word order is possible in *perché*-clauses, as illustrated in (18). Since the verb is not in the left periphery, a subject in SpecIP would occupy a position structurally higher than that where the verb is landed.

(18) ***Perché Gianni è venuto?***

‘Why has Gianni left?’

A second advantage of this analysis is that it accounts for why fronted XPs are allowed to appear between *perché* and the finite verb, as already seen in (17a). An additional example is also presented in (19). Here again, since the verb is not in a Spec-head relation with the wh-operator, specialized positions for a focus element or topic constituents can be activated below IntP.

(19) ***Perché, il mio libro, Gianni lo ha portato via?***

‘Why, my book, Gianni took it away?’

It seems clear that the late Latin facts around *quare*-clauses are amenable to a similar analysis. So, we propose that *quare* is in SpecIntP, without manifesting a Spec-head relation with the verb, since in this context there would be no V-to-C movement. As in Italian, this proposal derives the word order Wh-S-V, with the subject in SpecIP and the finite verb in I⁰. The presence of fronted XPs breaking the adjacency between *quare* and the verb is also accounted for, since the lack of V-to-C movement would allow the activation of FocP or TopP below IntP. Concerning postverbal subjects, as shown in (8), it could be assumed that they are *in-situ*, remaining inside the VP-layer.⁸

A particular challenge arises when we consider discourse markers, which can break the adjacency between the wh-operator and the verb in both classes of interrogatives. In adjunct wh-clauses, the presence of an intervening discourse marker is not a problem, since we could assume that it is located in the CP-domain, occupying either a spec position or a head position below IntP. Under the view that there is no V-to-C movement in this particular type of interrogative, there would be enough space below IntP for left peripheral elements. However, in object wh-sentences, such a proposal would not fit with the hypothesis that *quid* and the verb are in a Spec-head relation,

thus weakening the hypothesis of V-movement to the CP-field in these clauses.

One alternative option would be to say that these discourse markers are clitics. The examples in (20) are an evidence that the particles under study do not occupy a fixed position in the left periphery. In (20a), *ergo* follows the object wh-phrase, while in (20b) *ergo* precedes it. This behavior is clearly identified with second position clitics, since in both cases the discourse marker is ahead of just one element.

- (20) a. *quid ergo faciemus*
what so do-FUT.1PL
'What should we do then?' (Luke 3:10)
- b. *tu ergo quid dicis*
you-2SG so what say-2SG
'Now what do you say?' (John 8:5)

A similar pattern is also noticed in matrix declarative clauses, as exemplified in (21).

- (21) a. *Dicit ergo ei mulier illa samaritana ...*
say-PST.3SG so him-DAT woman that samaritan
'The samaritan woman said to him ...' (John 4:9)
- b. *ego autem dico vobis quia ...*
I but say you-DAT that
'But I tell you that ...' (Matthew 5:22)

It should not be forgotten, however, that discourse markers seem lexical items with their own independent accent, despite their syntactic behavior as second position clitics (see Spevak 2010). In other languages, similar words not only appear in strict second position. Portuguese is a

good example. The coordinated conjunctions *entretanto* “however” and *portanto* “therefore” can be licensed in second position order, as exemplified in (22) and (23), respectively.

(22) *Ele, entretanto, deve estudar sintaxe.*

he however should study syntax

‘however, he should study syntax.’

(23) *Ele, portanto, deve estudar sintaxe.*

he therefore should study syntax

‘therefore he should study syntax.’

However, contrary to their counterparts in Latin, these discourse markers in Portuguese can also appear in other positions with some different levels of acceptability, as exemplified in (24) for *entretanto* and in (25) for *portanto*. Anyway, it seems clear that the coordinated conjunctions are not clitics, considering their flexibility within the clause. In view of these facts, it could be said that discourse markers in Latin are not clitics as well, with the difference that they would present a more restricted distribution in the sentence.

(24) a. *Entretanto, ele deve estudar sintaxe.*

b. *Ele deve, entretanto, estudar sintaxe.*

c. *Ele deve estudar, entretanto, sintaxe.*

d. *?Ele deve estudar sintaxe, entretanto.*

(25) a. *Portanto, ele deve estudar sintaxe.*

b. *Ele deve, portanto, estudar sintaxe.*

c. *?Ele deve estudar, portanto, sintaxe.*

- d. *?Ele deve estudar sintaxe, portanto.*

Here, we would like to briefly present the analysis made by Peterson (1999) for parentheticals. He argues that examples like those presented in (26) are cases in which the parenthetical clause is not syntactically linked to a higher structure, behaving as an aside to central message.

- (26) a. John Smith — at least I think that's his name — is asking to see you.
b. John Smith — is that his real name? — is asking to see you.
c. John Smith — he's persistent, isn't he? — is asking to see you.
d. John Smith — boy! is he persistent — is asking to see you.

For Peterson, the examples in (27), with interpolated structures, and the non-juxtaposed constructions in (28) are non-equivalent sentences. In his view, this should be taken as an evidence that parenthetical clauses can not be treated as dependent elements syntactically linked to a host.

- (27) a. It will stop raining, I expect, before Sunday.
b. John Smith, would you believe, is asking to see you.
- (28) a. I expect (that) it will stop raining before Sunday.
b. Would you believe (that) John Smith is asking to see you.

He argues that (27b), for instance, is more resemble to (29), which conveys the proper illocutionary meaning, than to (28b), which is not declarative, as it would be expected in the case of equivalence, but interrogative.

(29) Would you believe, John Smith is asking to see you.

Following Peterson's analysis for parentheticals, we propose that discourse markers also function as independent elements, establishing a non-syntagmatic relationship with the clause. In other words, they would be linked to the sentence only by linear adjacency, but not by hierarchical construction. Although there is a pragmatic connection between the discourse marker and the remaining clause, this would occur independently of a superordinate syntactic relationship. The point to be emphasized is that, under this proposal, the presence of discourse markers between the wh-operator and the finite verb does not block the application of V-to-C movement in *quid* clauses.

4. Final remarks

Our results show that the process of V-to-C movement is already present in a specific type of wh-interrogative clauses in late Latin. This is particularly welcome considering those medieval Romance varieties which, despite showing V2 traces, did not undergo a substantial impact from Germanic languages. Our findings show that V2 properties in Romance can be traced back to late Latin, a more natural predecessor than the hypothesis of Germanic influence.

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- 1 In standard V2 languages, V1 word order is seen in yes/no questions, imperative sentences and conditional clauses (cf. Haider 1986 and Roberts 1993), but not in declarative matrix structures (cf. Zwart 2005). As for V3 sentences, V2 languages usually allow this word order if the first XP is resumed by a pronoun (cf. Zwart 2005). This is not the case in the example (2) of old Portuguese.
- 2 Similar data are also attested in old French (cf. Roberts 1993 and Kaiser 1996).
- 3 We understand late Latin as a grammatical period extending from the 3rd century up to the 6th century. For a detailed discussion on the difficulties in defining this period, cf. Adams (2011).
- 4 This does not mean that the grammar of late Latin did not license wh-*in-situ* structures. Probably, as is the case in modern Romance varieties like Brazilian Portuguese, the non-movement of the interrogative phrase is disfavored in written texts.
- 5 All the English translations are from the *New International Version* (NIV).
- 6 The only example of the word order Wh-XP-V could be understood as a performance product, and not a structure derived from the linguistic competence of the speaker.
- 7 For a view that classical Latin already had non-nominative personal clitic pronouns, cf. Adams (1994).
- 8 It is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss why subjects occur pre and postverbally. One possibility would be to say that discursive factors are at stake, in the same line of what Belletti (2001, 2004) has proposed for the alternation SV/VS in Italian declarative clauses.

This book examines the grammatical changes that took place in the transition from Latin to the Romance languages. The emerging language underwent changes in three fundamental areas involving the noun phrase, verb phrase, and the sentence. The impact of the changes can be seen in the reduction of the Latin case system; the appearance of auxiliary verb structures to mark such categories as tense, mood, and voice; and a shift towards greater rigidification of word order. The book considers how far these changes are interrelated and compares their various manifestations and pace of change across the Romance languages, a group of related languages all derived from Vulgar Latin within historical times and forming a subgroup of the Italic branch of the Indo-European language family. The major languages of the family include French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, and Romanian. The fact that the Romance languages share features not found in contemporary Latin textbooks suggests, however, that the version of Latin they continue is not identical with that of Classical Latin as known from literature.