

Heritage languages and urban vernaculars: A case-study of verb placement

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Introduction: It is well known that varieties of Germanic do not display a strict V2 system whereby the finite verb is in the second position in main clauses. Dialects in e.g., Norway display a rich pattern of variation (Westergaard & Vangsnes 2005, Westergaard 2009), and modern urban vernaculars (often called ethnolects) often do not have V2 (see Wiese et al. to appear, Walkden in press for recent overviews). In this paper, we compare Germanic heritage languages with Germanic urban vernaculars, demonstrating that similar processes and structures are in place in both varieties. This, we claim, provides important information about the nature of bilingual grammars in general, and of verb placement specifically. We will explore two scenarios for the nature of heritage grammars: creation of hybrid grammars or retreat to a ‘default system’.

Background: Walkden (in press) provides a detailed overview of verb placement in learner varieties of various Germanic languages. He focuses among others on Kiezdeutsch and the Mainland Scandinavian urban vernaculars/multiethnolects. (1) and (2) provide examples of V3 structures in Kiezdeutsch and Norwegian, respectively.

- (1) morgen ich **geh** arbeitsamt (Kiezdeutsch)
tomorrow I go job.center
‘Tomorrow I will go to the job center.’ (Wiese 2009: 787)
- (2) med limewire det tar én to dager (Norwegian multiethnolect)
with Limewire it takes one two days
‘Using Limewire it takes one or two days’ (Freywald et al. 2015: 84)

Walkden argues that the similarity across geographically isolated areas should be analyzed in terms of what he labels sequential simplification and complexification. Walkden importantly makes the connection between the synchronic analysis and the history of English (see van Kemenade & Los (2006), and Haeberli (2002), among others), pointing out that V3 may be similar for Old English and modern urban vernaculars.

Goal: Building on Walkden (in press), we argue that the same reasoning can be extended to other varieties of Germanic languages, most notably heritage languages. This comparison suggests that the factors favoring V3 in Germanic are uniform, involving clauses which have an initial adjunct constituent. To this end, we will present data from American Norwegian showing surprising similarities.

Case Study: American Norwegian is a heritage language of Norwegian spoken in the US. Data have been collected by Haugen (1953), Hjelde (1992), and more recently through the spoken corpus CANS (Johannessen et al. 2015). Eide and Hjelde (2015) investigate V2 in American Norwegian based on the CANS corpus. The corpus consists of 50 speakers so far (age 70-100, 3rd – 5th generation), and Eide and Hjelde have examined five informants. (3) provides an example of V2 whereas (4) is an example of V3 (Eide and Hjelde 2015: 86)

- (3) Ja, å da **likte** dem itte kattlikken.
Yes and then liked they not Catholic.def
‘Yes, and then they didn’t like the Catholics.’
- (4) nå je **flotte** nerri her, kjinner alle her, veit du.
now I move down here, know everyone here, know you
‘Now I’m moving down here, I know everyone here, you know.’

Norwegian, including all dialects, has V2 in both instances. Focusing on one specific speaker, Eide and Hjelde note that there are a lot of V2 violations in topicalization structures (5-6), but no V2 violations in subject-initial clauses (Eide and Hjelde 2015: 94).

- (5) Fyste gong vi hadde bisøk ifrå Nårge vi var på en tjørke oppi Taylor
first time we had visit in.from Norway we were at a church up.in Taylor

‘The first time we had visitors from Norway we were in a church up in Taylor’ (Eide and Hjelde 2015: 91)

- (6) Og så da neste år, fir-og-førti, je var egg eating champion før to år.
and so then next year, four-and-forty, I was egg eating champion for two years
‘And then next year, in forty-four, I was an egg eating champion for two years’ (Eide and Hjelde 2015: 92)

It should be noted that in written and spoken Norwegian, about one third of main clause declaratives are topicalization structures (Eide and Hjelde 2015: 88). Thus, this is perceived to be a ‘Norwegian’ trait for speakers of American Norwegian. In the talk, we will present additional data from speakers in the corpus illustrating the initial findings by Eide and Hjelde.

Generalizations: We see that in both urban vernaculars and heritage languages, the V2 requirement is relaxed. In American Norwegian, we find a lot of V3 in structures with topicalization. In Kiezdeutsch, only adjuncts can appear as the initial constituent, unlike standard V2 grammars (Walkden in press). Thus a common trait appears to be that V3 structures appear more easily with adjuncts as the initial constituent. These adjuncts are typically either temporal adverbs or adverbial clauses.

Analysis: If we assume that there is no T-to-C movement in either urban vernaculars (Opsahl & Nistov 2014, te Velde to appear) and variable T-to-C movement in American Norwegian for non-subject initial sentences, we get a unified analysis of these varieties: Adjuncts can be first-merged in the CP, unlike arguments (cf. Walkden in press), and since the verb does not move to C, a V3 structure appears as a result. As in Old English (Haeberli 2002) and Kiezdeutsch, in V3 structures pronominal subjects are preferred, suggesting that these may serve as heads and are placed in C (cf. Westergaard & Vangsnes 2005). Still, as in Old English, V2 in American Norwegian is not systematic even with non-pronominal subjects. Thus the relevant difference seems to be subject- vs. non-subject-initial clauses. We argue for the (somewhat simplified) representation in (7) for V3 with non-subject-initial clauses.

(7) [_{CP} adjunct [_C C [_{TP} subject [_T verb [_{VP} ...]]]]]

We also argue against Walkden’s CP recursion analysis as this predicts more instances of V2 than what we actually find in the data. We will discuss implications concerning the nature of V2, arguing that there is no V2 parameter and that V2 is an umbrella term for a range of ‘smaller rules’ (Westergaard et al. 2016), and the discrepancy between subject-initial and non-subject initial clauses and their syntactic representations (Alexiadou et al. 2016).

Implications: We adopt the view that heritage grammars are native grammars (Rothman & Treffers-Daller 2014) in the sense that they are fully-fledged grammatical systems internalized by their speakers. Despite their age, the speakers in CANS, show systematic influences by the contact language (i.e., English), yet they are also creating a novel grammatical system for verb placement which does not exist in either Norwegian or English. This can be argued to be an instance of a ‘hybrid grammar’ (Aboh 2015). However, given the abundant similarity across populations, multi-ethnolects and heritage grammars, we will explore the question whether or not the system discussed here qualifies as an instance of what Scontras, Fuchs and Polinsky (2015) identify as a ‘default system’. This, they argue, often obtains in the case of heritage grammars (cf. Benmamoun, Montrul and Polinsky 2013). From this perspective, V3 structures emerge due to the employment of a restricted set of operations and avoidance of marked word order such as V2.

Selected references: Eide, Kristin Melum and Arnstein Hjelde. 2015. Verb Second and Finiteness Morphology in Norwegian Heritage Language of the American Midwest. In *Moribound Germanic Heritage Languages in North America*, B. R. Page and M. Putnam (eds.), 64-101. Leiden: Brill.

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