The realization of arguments in Old Portuguese and Contemporary Portuguese: Clitics and postverbal subjects

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0. Goals and approach

This paper deals with some phenomena from Old Portuguese (henceforth OP) (from the 13th to the 16th century), namely inverted subjects in the (XP) V S configuration and proclitic constructions with interpolated constituents.

We will provide some evidence favouring the claim that there are no major structural differences between OP and Contemporary European Portuguese (CEP) as far as verb movement is concerned and that the differences found between the two stages of the language are due to discourse and semantic factors.

In this paper, we adopt the generative grammar (GG) framework for both analysis and description of the data.

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1 Both descriptive and statistical work is based on data provided by the CIPM (Computerised Corpus of Medieval Portuguese - http://cipm.fcsh.unl.pt/).
1. **The problem and previous proposals**

CEP seems to differ from OP as to the productivity of certain syntactic configurations. Namely in contexts with subject-verb inversion and sentences with clitics, in particular in those with interpolated constituents. We will be claiming that the differences found between OP and CEP are due to the interaction of semantic and discourse functional factors with syntactic properties that derive word order in both stages of the language.

2. **V2 syntax: an overview**

2.1. *Asymmetric V2: German and Dutch*

In the languages that display asymmetric V2, such as German or Dutch (den Besten 1983, Schwartz & Vikner 1996, a.o.), the finite verb occurs in second position in main clauses and may be preceded by a constituent, including the subject. In such cases, it is argued that the finite
verb moves to the C(omplementizer) position (this is the most commonly adopted approach within a generative framework), like in (1):

(1) 

   a. Maria trinkt Wasser.  
     Mary   drink-3SG water 
     "Mary drinks water."
   b. Ich las dieses Buch.    
     I read-1SG-PAST this book 
     "I read this book."

In subordinate clauses the verb does not move to C if C is filled, that is to say, there is no V2. See the contrast in (2):

(2) 

   a. Ich glaube dass Maria Wasser trinkt. 
   b. Ich glaube ∅ Maria trinkt Wasser.

However, in subordinate clauses introduced by "bridge verbs" (like sagen "say", glauben "believe"), with or without an overt complementizer, the so-called recursive structures, this rule does not apply.

2.2 Symmetric V2: Yiddish and Icelandic

In languages like Yiddish or Icelandic, which are symmetric V2 languages, there is V2 both in main clauses and in subordinate clauses (Diesing 1990, Holmberg 1986, a.o.). See the following examples from Yiddish (Diesing 1990: 42):

(3) 

   a. Max shikt avek dos bukh.  
     Max sends away the book
b. Avrom gloybt az Max shikt avek dos bukh.
Avrom believes that Max sends away the book

2.3 Old French

French is a good example of a language that used to be V2 but has lost that property. It is well known from the literature that Old French (OF) was a null subject V2 language (Adams 1988, Roberts 1993, a.o.). In the generative framework, it is claimed that in OF the agreement markers are in C and Nominative Case is assigned under government or agreement.

See the examples in (4), of main clauses with the verb in second position (12th century French) (Roberts 1993: 95):

(4) a. *Muetes de chien font avec els mener.*
   Troops of dogs make (they) with them bring.
   COMPL V
b. *Li cuents Guillelmes fu molt gentix et ber.*
   The count Guillelmes was very kind and good:
   SUBJ V
c. *En mi sa voie a Bertran encontré.*
   On his way has (he) Bertran encountered.
   PP V

As we mentioned earlier, French has lost the possibility of displaying the V2 order. This coincided with the loss of the null subject property, as well as of the VS order in interrogatives with lexical subjects.

2.4 Old Portuguese
As for the evolution of OP, there are two different analyses available in the literature. Some authors defend for OP an evolution similar to that of French (Torres Morais 1993 and Ribeiro 1995). That is, OP was a V2 language, although not a rigid one. As for Nominative case, two options are available for its assignment, either under government, the agreement markers being in C (VS orders), or under agreement, the agreement markers being in Infl (SV orders).

Kayser 1999, on the other hand, argues that OP evolved differently from OF. That is, OP is a null subject (S) V O language (cf. also Martins 2000), like CEP. In this case, given that OP is not a V2 language, Nominative case is assigned under Spec/Head agreement only. As for the agreement markers, they are in Infl (like in CEP), the position the verb moves into.

3. **The data from the CIPM**

In order to support one of these analyses, we searched for sentences with verbs that occur in both transitive and unaccusative constructions, because that is where we would expect variation in word order. The data is extracted from the *CIPM* - a corpus of literary and non-literary texts form the 13th to the 16th centuries. We first analysed main clauses with lexical
subjects (3.1.) and afterwards dependent clauses (3.2.). Only this way was it possible to test for the possibility of OP displaying either symmetric or asymmetric V2.

3.1 Main clauses

The main clauses with lexical subjects found in the corpus were divided into groups displaying the sequences: V S, or V1, and XP V S, or V2, from the 13th to the 16th centuries. It was clear for us that the verb is preferably the first element of the clause: 60 sentences are V1 and 43 are V2 (out of 103).

Bearing this in mind, we then analysed the grammatical status of the elements preceding the verb in the XP V S configuration. We concluded that most of the left-dislocated constituents in the XP V S configuration are adjuncts (25 out of 43) or adverbs (15 out of 43). The remaining 3 constituents are: Wh Direct Object, Indirect Object and Negation. See examples in (5):

(5) a. *e de so aquelle leito jaziã muitos carvões acesos* (13th c.)
   "and on on that bed layed many coals burning"

b. *E aqui se acabou o reyno dos Estrogodos* (14th c.)
   "And here CL-REFL finished the kingdom of-the Estrogodos"

c. *Prymevramente se segue o prolego* (1437/1438)
   "Firstly CL-REFL follows the prologue"

d. *e no dito campo se parte a metade* (1540)
   "and on-the so-called field CL-REFL breaks the half"
By itself, this kind of derivation is not enough for motivating a V2 configuration with the verb in the C node.

In addition, we ought to remember that in the traditional analysis for Germanic V2, connective adverbs do not interfere in the V2 configuration (den Besten 1983). The same happens with sentence negation in CEP, that is, sentence negation is a clitic (Matos 1999). Hence neither one of this elements will be counting for V2 (recall that we have 15 adverbs preceding the verb, from which 7 are connective adverbs, and 1 negation), and this is a fact that reinforces the V1 tendency for OP, at least as far as main clauses are concerned.

3.1.1 V2 in unaccusative constructions

Once we had the statistics for the V2 configuration in OP and the syntactic function of the constituents that precede the verb in this type of sequence, we looked for the contexts in which V2 occurs. We started out with the hypothesis that V2 sequences occur mainly in unaccusative contexts, for they are also possible in CEP.

In fact, the data shows that most contexts are unaccusative (30 out of 34), only 4 are XP V S orders in transitive contexts. This observation seems to support our hypothesis, that is, V2 orders occur mainly in unaccusative contexts, which contradicts the assumption that OP is a V2 language.
3.1.2 V1 orders

In our corpus, 69 sentences display the V1 order, and these results obtain whether the V1 sentence is introduced by a conjunction (E/Ca) or not. This observation corroborates Mattos e Silva 1989. The author argues that there are no differences between V1 sequences with the verb in the first position and V1 sequences introduced by a conjunction (E/Ca), for the reason that those conjunctions are outside the scope of the sentence.

3.1.3 Conclusion: main clauses

In section 3.1., we presented data showing that in OP there is no V2 in main clauses with finite verb and that almost all V2 contexts occur in unaccusative constructions. In the following section, we will be showing that the same holds for dependent clauses in OP.

3.2 Dependent clauses

We focused our analysis on dependent clauses with a complementizer (que/se) and a lexical subject, for only this way will we be able to compare OP to Yiddish and Icelandic, the languages that, as we have seen before, are symmetric V2.

We concluded, once again, that in dependent clauses with a lexical complementizer the sequence COMP V S, or V1, is preferred, 62
occurrences (out of 71), and that holds for the four centuries. As for the syntactic function of the constituents that intervene between the complementizer and the verb, they are mainly clausal adjuncts and negation. Let us look at some examples of dependent clauses displaying either V1, as in (6), or V2, as in (7):

(6)  
a. Hũa cousa que fica depois que se parte a ssanha (1437)  
One thing that remains after that CL-REFL breaks the anger  
b. espera ella com os tamgeres que se queime ho marido (16th c.)  
Waits her with the tamgeres that REFL-CL burns the husband  

(7)  
a. o dano seya daquel que o conparou e a prol outrosy, se enalgũa cousa mellorar a cousa uenduda (1280?)  
The damage be to-the-one that it-CL compared and the prole also, if in-some way improves the thing sold  
b. por que o entender partem osriterados em quatro ramos (1437/1438)  
because the understanding break the literates in four branches

3.2.1 Conclusion: dependent clauses

We may conclude, then, that OP is not even a symmetrical V2 language like Yiddish or Icelandic. If so, we would expect a majority of V2 contexts in dependent clauses with overt complementizers, and that does not happen. On the contrary, there is a clear tendency for the V1 order.

4. Our proposal
Our proposal is based on the initial assumption that there are no main structural differences between OP and CEP as far as verb movement is concerned. This proposal being supported, first, by the facts outlined in section 2, that is, OP, like CEP, is a null subject SVO language; inflection markers are generated under Infl and the verb moves to Infl, which derives the SV order. In addition, XP V S orders occur in unaccusative constructions in which the subject is realized in its base position (inside VP) and the initial XPs are left-dislocated.

The real meaning of all this being that OP is not V2 (in the Germanic sense) because, on the one hand, most independent clauses are V1 and, on the other hand, the examples with V2 and subject inversion occur predominantly in unaccusative contexts. This is a relevant conclusion given the fact that the subjects of unaccusative verbs do not behave like the subjects of accusative verbs, that is, they do not move to the Inflection node to check for agreement features. As far as information structure is concerned, unaccusative verbs are predicates that typically allow for postverbal subjects.

5. **Clitics**
Considering that the behaviour of clitics may help to characterize the structure of the clause (namely the landing site for the verb), we have checked the distribution of these forms, which helped reinforce the conclusions outlined in the previous section. Until the 14th century the pattern in root affirmative sentences is enclitic, alternating with proclisis, which became the dominant pattern in the 15th and 16th centuries (Martins 1994, Fiéis 2003).

(8) a. e a rogo do dito Pedro Heanez este testemoũo emde cõ mha mão propia o escreu (1282)
   and by plea of the so called Pedro Heanez this testimony then with my own hand
b. E meteram se dentro E amaynaram. (1500)
   And (they) got themselves inside and calmed down

It is assumed that this increase in proclisis is not caused by a change in the landing site of the verb. As far as interpolation is concerned, see examples (9)-(10), it is proposed that the changes found in the availability of this construction are also due to the formal properties of the clitic (head) regarding the type of host to which they can adjoin to (Fiéis 2001, 2003), and are unrelated to the landing site of the clitic and to verb movement.

(9) a. asi como a atá áqui derõ (1295)
   Just how until now (they) gave
b. dous capoos e o terço do vinho que the Deus der (1454)
   two capons and a third of the wine that to him
(10) a. e porque se nos a nos ho Priol agrauou (1299)
    and because if us the prior aggravated
b. falou estando o capitam com ele perante nos todos sem o nunca njmguem entender (1500)
(he) spoke being the captain with him before us all without
him-CL never nobody understand

This situation, however, already resembles what is to be found in CEP: we can have interpolation, although restricted to negation, certain adverbs and personal pronouns (11), and we can also have interpolation of more than one element in certain dialects (12).²

(11) Ê ainda te nã disse. (Lobo e Carrilho 1999)
I yet you-CL not said

(12) O livro que lhe ainda não entreguei (Barbosa 1996: 7)
The book that to him-CL yet not handle

3.3.1 The analysis for cliticization

In CEP proclitics are analysed as X° categories that adjoin to verbal heads. However, in OP clitics ought to carry an ambiguous feature, either X° or XP, and must be underspecified as to the host they adjoin to (Fiéis 2003). Dialectal Portuguese and also 16th century Portuguese are in an intermediate situation (Idem). The analysis we propose for this situation is that there has been a change in the formal specification of clitics somewhere in the history of Portuguese. That is, interpolation is fully productive in OP until the 16th century, but this possibility starts decreasing already in the 13th century. Finally, we claim that there is no relation whatsoever between the decrease in proclisis and in interpolation.

² Magro (in prep.) argues that, in Dialectal Portuguese, interpolation is not that restricted after all. The author shows that in some dialects a wide variety of elements can occur between the proclitic and the verb, not only heads (like negation, some adverbs, ...).
6. **General conclusion**

The analysis of contexts with postverbal subjects where there is preposing of other constituents leads us to reject the V2 hypothesis for OP, as it is clear that inversion occurs predominantly in unaccusative constructions (Fiéis 2002, 2003), and unaccusative predicates are predicates that typically allow for postverbal subjects. That is why we claim that the occurrence of postverbal subjects in OP, like in CEP, is due to the semantics of the verb and not to syntactic constraints.

Secondly, a closer look at the constructions with clitics, even those with constituents interpolated between the proclitic and the verb, suggests that there has been a change in the formal characterization of the clitic and not a change in the landing site of the verb.

Thus, OP is a null subject SVO language and verb movement to Infl is always observed. Even the comparison between CEP and OP phenomena shows that there are no significant structural differences between the two historical periods.
References


