The force of V2 revisited

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Abstract The main claim of this paper is that embedded V2 clauses in Mainland Scandinavian have the same syntactic structure as main clauses. This means that embedded V2 clauses contain a Force head, and as a consequence, embedded declarative V2 clauses will normally be asserted. Embedded V2 clauses are also similar to main clauses in that they contain linkers which encode the local speaker and addressee. Hence, indexical shift is possible in embedded V2 clauses, but not in non-V2 clauses, which do not contain linkers. In shifted contexts, the assertion that the embedded clause represents will be attributed to the local, implicit speaker, while in other cases, the actual speaker will be responsible for the assertion. The Force head is also the source of the V2 order, since it attracts the finite verb in addition to attracting a phrase from its complement to its Spec. In this way, the connection between V2 order and illocutionary force gets a straightforward explanation.

Keywords Verb second · Embedded clauses · Mainland Scandinavian · Illocutionary force

1 Introduction

The literature on embedded V2 in Scandinavian has been growing steadily for some time. As far as Mainland Scandinavian is concerned, the distribution of V2 in embedded clauses is by now well documented (see, e.g., Julien 2007, 2010; Bentzen et al. 2007; Heycock et al. 2010; Wiklund et al. 2009). It has also been shown that Icelandic and Faroese display partly different patterns (see, e.g., Heycock et al. 2010), and these varieties will therefore be kept out of the discussion here. The question of what triggers V2 in some Mainland Scandinavian embedded clauses has however not been settled yet, and there is still disagreement as to which conditions allow embedded clauses to have V2 order.

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One view which has been at the forefront of the debate is the so-called assertion hypothesis, according to which embedded declarative clauses with V2 order are asserted. The assertion hypothesis has been advocated, e.g., by Stroh-Wollin (2002), Julien (2007, 2009, 2010) and Heycock et al. (2010). Other works on the relation between illocutionary force and V2 are Andersson (1975), den Besten (1983), Wechsler (1991), Gärtner (2002), Meinunger (2006), and Heycock (2006). Contrastingly with this view, Bentzen et al. (2007), Wiklund et al. (2009), and Wiklund (2009a, b, 2010) hold that the possibility of V2 order in embedded clauses coincides with the possibility of the embedded clause representing the main point of the utterance.

In this paper, I will defend a version of the assertion hypothesis. I will however start from the observation that the word order of an embedded clause has consequences for the possibility of indexical shift, as shown in the Norwegian examples in (1). In (1a), there is an embedded clause with non-V2 order. In this case, the subject of the embedded clause, the second person singular pronoun \( du \), must refer to the addressee in the current speech situation. In (1b), on the other hand, where the embedded clause has V2 order, two different interpretations of the embedded subject \( du \) are possible: It can either refer to the addressee, as in (1a), or it can refer to the speaker, who was the addressee in the situation that the speaker describes.

(1) a. Ho sa til meg at du ikkje har gjort dette aleine.
    \textit{She said to me that you not have done this alone}
    \`She said to me that you haven’t done this on your own.’
    \[you = \text{present addressee}\]

b. Ho sa til meg at du har ikkje gjort dette aleine.
    \textit{She said to me that you have not done this alone}
    \`She said to me that you haven’t done this on your own.’
    \[you = \text{present speaker or present addressee}\]

The contrast in (1), which shows that V2 interacts with other syntactic relations in non-trivial ways, arguably holds the key to a proper understanding of embedded V2 in Mainland Scandinavian.

My analysis of the pattern seen in (1) builds on the proposals of Sigurðsson (2004a, b, 2010, 2011) concerning the encoding of deixis in the left periphery of the clause, and also on the discussion in Eide (2011) of the C-domain in Mainland Scandinavian V2 clauses. Below, Sigurðsson’s proposal is presented in Section 2, while the overall syntax of the C-domain is the topic of Section 3. As we will see, these two sections lead to the conclusion that (declarative) embedded V2 clauses in Mainland Scandinavian are similar to non-embedded V2 clauses, with an articulated C-domain containing a Force head and also so-called C/edge linkers, as proposed by Sigurðsson, that is, elements encoding the features of topic, speaker and addressee. Embedded non-V2 clauses, on the other hand, are smaller, consisting only of a FinP with a subjunction added on top.

In Section 4, the contrast illustrated in (1) above is connected to the syntactic differences between embedded V2 clauses and embedded non-V2 clauses that were identified in Sections 2 and 3. I show here how the possibility of indexical shift depends on the presence or absence of an articulated C-domain in the embedded clause.