

# What is “residual verb second”? And what does Romance have to do with it?

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## Abstract

This paper aims to clarify a point of persistent confusion in the literature: namely, the status of *residual verb second*. We approach this from both a terminological and typological perspective. Terminologically, traditional usage of *residual V2* in the literature has conflated two different senses (one formal, and one historical); we argue that it is essential to keep these two senses separate. We propose a distinction between *partial V2* and *residual V2* within the general typology of verb second. Following a formal definition of V2 from the recent literature, we define partial-V2 systems as involving genuine instances of V2 that are limited to nondeclarative environments in a given language (e.g. English). By contrast, we (re)define residual V2 as describing purely vestigial structures that do not qualify as formally V2 in the synchronic grammar of a given language, despite their historical origins in an earlier stage in which the language had true V2. In this respect, almost all modern Romance languages provide clear examples of residual V2: the syntax of these languages is only

historically related to V2, with all formal traces of V2 having been long lost, even in nondeclaratives. With these clarifications in place, we propose an updated typology of V2 systems, conceiving of it as a spectrum of degrees from partial V2 through strict V2 (as measured by the set of formally-V2 environments that a given language allows).

**Keywords:** Residual verb second, partial verb second, verb movement, word order, Romance, English.

## 1. Introduction

In this paper we address the question of what *residual verb second* (V2) is. Since Rizzi (1990, 1996), this term is used to refer to structures characterized by apparent V2 syntax within languages (English and French) that are otherwise considered no longer “fully” V2. Despite its apparent simplicity, the synchronic application of this term is highly ambiguous and requires clarification, especially if one takes a diachronic perspective into account, alongside different types of V2.

Our study begins in Section 2 with a general discussion of (residual) V2, including a formal definition of V2 from Holmberg (2015), which we adopt for full-V2 systems. According to this definition, the V2 syntax is characterized by two properties: systematic verb movement to a left-peripheral head, and the merger of a constituent to the specifier of the same head. Depending on the targeted head, we distinguish between strict-V2 systems involving movement to a higher peripheral head (Force) and relaxed-V2 systems with movement to a lower peripheral head such as Focus or Fin (see Wolfe 2018; Poletto 2014, 2019). Moving to residual V2, in Section 3, we distinguish two different senses (formal and historical) in which the term residual V2 has been used – or indeed (con)fused together – in the literature, and show why these senses must be kept separate. As such, we distinguish between *partial V2*, a formal notion referring to V2 systems restricted to a highly limited set of environments (as in English), and *residual V2*, a historical notion describing the structural vestiges of an earlier V2 system that has since been lost in diachrony (e.g. subject inversion in Italian wh-questions; cf. §4.). On the one hand, these vestigial structures do not qualify as formally V2 (partial or otherwise) in their own right; on the other hand, these structures would also not exist in the language if it had not been fully V2 in some earlier historical stage. Concretely, then, *partial V2* structures satisfy the formal definition of V2, whereas *residual V2* structures do not—the latter might only satisfy half of Holmberg’s bipartite definition (e.g. movement to C domain), or might simply give rise to one of the concomitant surface effects of V2 (e.g. subject inversion). The distinction between partial and residual V2 is further motivated in Section 5, where we discuss the changes affecting V2 systems. Both partial V2 and residual V2 are then situated within a broader typology of V2 (cf. §6). The paper closes with some final remarks in Section 7.

## 2. Background on Verb Second (V2)

### 2.1. Overview of V2

In a V2 language, the finite verb is obligatorily the second constituent of the clause, irrespective of the nature of the first constituent. The examples in (1) illustrate this

property for Swedish, where the finite verb (the auxiliary verb, in this case) occurs in the second position of the clause, while the first constituent can be a variety of elements (subjects, objects, adverbials, etc.):

- (1) a. Jag **har** ärligt talat aldrig sett huggormar i den här skogen.  
I have honestly speaking never seen adders in this here forest  
'To be honest I've never seen adders in this forest.'  
b. Huggormar **har** jag ärligt talat aldrig sett i den här skogen.  
adders have I honestly speaking never seen in this here forest  
c. I den här skogen **har** jag ärligt talat aldrig sett huggormar.  
in this here forest have I honestly speaking never seen adders  
d. Ärligt talat **har** jag aldrig sett huggormar i den här skogen.  
honestly speaking have I never seen adders in this here forest  
(Swedish, Holmberg 2015: 343)

An idealized V2 clause can be described in syntactic terms as the confluence of two different properties: (a) the finite verb comes to occupy a high clausal position (either in main clauses only, as in *asymmetric* V2 languages, or in all finite clauses, as in *symmetric* V2 languages),<sup>1</sup> and (b) exactly one constituent precedes the position of the finite verb.<sup>2</sup>

V2 is characteristic of all Germanic languages (with Modern English typically listed as an exception; see below), but is in fact crosslinguistically rare. Outside the Indo-European family, only a handful of other languages have been described as (arguable/potentially) V2, such as Khoekhoegowab (den Besten 2002), Estonian (Holmberg 2015; Vihman & Walkden 2021), Karitiana (Holmberg 2015), and Dinka (van Urk & Richards 2015). The rarity of V2 effects has therefore led to the hypothesis that V2 syntax is in fact epiphenomenal—that is, a by-product or a conspiracy (Weerman 1989) resulting from the aggregation of several smaller properties or rules which are in principle independent of one another (see Holmberg 2015: §6; Lohndal, Westergaard & Vangsnes 2020; and Vihman & Walkden 2021 for recent discussion).

Specifically, generative accounts of V2 since den Besten (1983) have pursued the insight that V2 is not an irreducible feature of a language, but rather is derived through two distinct movement operations, each yielding the properties described above: i.e., head movement of the finite verb to a high clausal position, alongside phrasal movement of some XP across that position. If V2 reduces to two distinct, principally independent features along these lines, then its typological rarity would find a natural explanation (Holmberg 2015: §6). However, this sort of compositional approach then raises the question of whether V2 is even a coherent notion. To address this question, Holmberg (2015) characterizes the two-step derivation of V2 in somewhat more formal terms as follows (see also Roberts 2004: §3.2):

(2) *The two components of the V2 property* (Holmberg 2015: 375)

- a. A functional head in the left periphery attracts the finite verb.
- b. This functional head wants a constituent moved to its specifier position.

<sup>1</sup> The availability of embedded V2 additionally depends on clause type, that is, whether it is a VP complement, a relative or an adverbial clause, as well as on the verb selecting the embedded clause (see Vikner 1995; Bhatt 1999; and Heycock 2017).

<sup>2</sup> The first constituent can be silent in certain contexts – for example when it is the operator in a polar interrogative (as in Germanic, but also in Dinka, Kashmiri, etc.) – leading to superficial V1 order (see also the discussion of the dialectal English data in §5.1).

Against this backdrop, Holmberg argues that the term *V2 language* is in fact a “meaningful, well-defined notion[: it] is a language which has the two properties” in (2a,b). Note that the property in (2a) is deliberately stated in such a way that it might hold of only some types of clauses in a language (i.e., those with the relevant type of functional head) but not others; this correctly allows for the kind of variation we see in V2 systems by both clause type and embedding status. Note that even English qualifies as a *V2 language* under this approach, albeit one with a particularly narrow set of clauses exhibiting both properties in (2); we return to this below (cf. §5).

In the remaining discussion, we adopt Holmberg’s bipartite definition of V2. Note that this definition would seem to imply a linear restriction by which only one constituent precedes the finite verb. Following the relevant literature, we call this *strict* V2. As Holmberg (2015) notes, though, even strict V2 systems (e.g. in German) allow principled exceptions, not only in synchrony but also in diachrony (see Fuß 2008; Petrova 2015). Still, despite these possible deviations from a V2 surface order, strict V2 is still quite different from its counterpart, *relaxed* V2, as discussed below for Old Romance.

## 2.2. V2 in the history of Romance

If the study of the Germanic languages have focused on the “holistic” approach to V2, seen as the result of tightly interconnected operations explicable by reference to a single parameter, investigation of other languages seems instead to favor a more “atomistic” perspective. Research on the diachronic syntax of Romance languages has led to considerable – albeit not absolute – consensus that medieval Romance was characterized by V2, existing as a transitional phase between the predominant SOV order of Classical Latin and the SVO order of modern Romance. Among the present-day Romance languages, V2 is only found in some Rhaeto-Romance varieties (see Haiman & Benincà 1992; Benincà 1994; Poletto 2002; Anderson 2005); but, according to Benincà (1983, 2006) and many others after her, V2 syntax was present in many, or even all, medieval Romance languages.<sup>3</sup>

The V2 status of medieval Romance is particularly well attested and widely supported by corpus-based statistical studies (see Ledgeway 2012; Poletto 2014; and Wolfe 2018 for some overviews), but has also been disputed and denied, especially for old Ibero-Romance languages (see Martins 1994, 2002, 2019; Kaiser 1999, 2002; Ribeiro 1995; Sornicola 2000; Rinke 2009; Rinke & Meisel 2009; Sitaridou 2012). The properties that have been taken as evidence for V2 in medieval Romance include: (a) fronting of a constituent other than the subject to a preverbal position, as in (3)–(5); (b) subject inversion, whenever a constituent other than the subject is fronted and the subject is overtly realized in a postverbal position (cf. (3)–(4)); and (c) enclisis of pronominal forms to the finite verb, as shown in (5), which is generally used as a diagnostic for V2 following verb movement over the weak pronoun:

- (3) [Autre chose] **ne pot** li roi trouver.  
 other thing not could the king find  
 ‘The king couldn’t find anything else.’  
 (*Old French*, Artu 101; Benincà 2006: 61)

<sup>3</sup> See also Vanelli et al. (1985), Adams (1987), Fontana (1993), Roberts (1993), Vance (1997), Salvi (2004, 2012), Ledgeway (2007, 2008, 2011, 2012, 2017), and Wolfe (2015a, 2015b, 2015c, 2018), among others.

- (4) [Con tanta paceença] **sofría** ela esta enfermidade.  
 with so-much patience suffered she this disease  
 ‘She suffered this disease so patiently’  
 (*Old Portuguese*, Diálogos de São Gregório; Ribeiro 1995: 114)
- (5) e [a los otros] **acomendo-los** adios  
 and to the others commended.3SG-them to god  
 ‘And he commended the others to God.’  
 (*Old Spanish*, *Estoria de España*, II.2v: Fontana 1993: 153)

These properties have been viewed as direct grammatical reflexes of the fact that the two components of the V2 syntax in (2) were also operating in Old Romance. By contrast, the high frequency of orders other than V2 (e.g. V1, V3, V4) has been taken as a strong argument against the V2 nature of medieval Romance. See the examples in (6), where more than one constituent precedes the finite verb:

- (6) *Old Italo-Romance* (Benincà 2006: 69–70)
- a. [L’altre ami] [si]est la moiller.  
 the-other friend so is the wife  
 ‘The other friend is the wife.’ (*Old Piemontese*; *Serm. Sub.*, 238)
  - b. [A lè] [per tug li tempi] me rend e me consegno.  
 to her for all the times me surrender and me deliver  
 ‘I surrender and submit myself to her forever.’  
 (*Old Milanese*; Bonvesin, 163)
  - c. E [Pero Capel] [en la fiata] branchà uno uiger de pes  
 and PeroCapel immediately seized a hamper of fish  
 ‘And Pero Capel immediately seized a hamper of fish.’  
 (*Old Venetan*; *Lio Mazor*, 35)
  - d. [Allora] [questi] andò e ricombatté  
 then this went and fought-again  
 ‘Then he went there and began to fight again.’  
 (*Old Florentine*; *Novellino*, 37)
  - e. [Lafigura piacente] [lo coro] mi dilanca  
 the figure pleasant the heart to-me wrenches  
 ‘The pleasant figure tears my heart.’  
 (*Old Sicilian*; Scremin, 34: Jacopo da Lentini)

Recent analyses have attempted to attribute this difference in linear order between strict-V2 (as found in the Germanic languages) and relaxed-V2 (as in medieval Romance) to independent properties of the left periphery of the clause, such as the possibility of having recursive topics (see, e.g., Benincà 2006; Poletto 2002, 2014, 2019; Wolfe 2015, 2018). Within a split CP model à la Rizzi (1997), these different V2 types have been associated with two different landing sites for the finite verb within the left periphery of the clause: the head of ForceP in strict V2 languages, and a lower head in relaxed V2 systems—either the head of FocP (Poletto 2002, 2014, 2019) or of FinP (Wolfe 2015, 2018). In principle, these V>2 orders are incompatible with strict V2 syntax, but it has been claimed that this can be explained by the absence – or a more relaxed version – of the “bottleneck effect” found in strict-V2 languages, which

restricts the number of left-peripheral positions available for the fronting of a constituent past the verb to just one (Haegeman 1996; Roberts 2004; Cardinaletti 2010; Poletto 2014; Wolfe 2018).

Irrespective of the controversies surrounding the status of V2 in medieval Romance and its precise definition, V2 syntax and enclisis have survived in some modern Romance varieties. As already mentioned, V2 has been preserved in some Rhaeto-Romance dialects (Poletto 2002, 2019), presumably under the influence of German contact, while enclisis with finite verbs survives in western peninsular Ibero-Romance (e.g. Portuguese and Galician). The fact that enclisis survives independently of V2 syntax has been regarded as evidence against the correlation between this property and a fully-fledged V2 syntax.

The history of the Romance languages therefore appears to provide evidence for an “atomistic” or piecemeal approach to V2: a confluence of independent properties typically associated with V2 has been taken as evidence for early V2 syntax; but, these properties underwent diachronic change (especially loss vs. preservation) independently of one another, leading to present-day variation across some varieties. These V2 effects are often considered to be V2 residues, but their actual relationship to the synchronic or diachronic V2 character of the language is still unclear. Are these effects the direct residual heritage of a more general V2 system? Or are they simply surface properties that are consistent with, but not exclusively generated by, underlying V2 syntax? Before addressing these questions, let us turn to the origins of the term residual V2.

### 2.3. Rizzi (1990, 1996) on “Residual V2”

The term “residual V2” was coined by Rizzi (1990, 1996) to refer to apparent V2 structures in languages that otherwise lack “full” V2 (i.e., languages without V2 in main declarative clauses). In particular, Rizzi used this term to refer to phenomena involving subject inversion in English and in French, as well as in Italian. Consider, for example, the interrogative sentences in (7)–(9), from Rizzi (1990: 376) and Rizzi (1996: 63), where the finite verbal form raises across the subject into second position following the initial *wh*-phrase, resulting in subject inversion of the sort familiar from full V2 languages:

- (7) a. What **has** Mary said? (English)  
       b. \*What Mary **has** said?
- (8) a. Que **manges**-tu? (French)  
       what eat.2SG-you  
       ‘What do you eat?’  
       b. \*Que tu **manges**?  
       what you eat.2SG
- (9) a. Che cosa **ha** detto Maria? (Italian)  
       what has said Maria  
       ‘What did Maria say?’  
       b. \*Che cosa Maria **ha** detto?  
       what Maria has said

Subject inversion phenomena of this sort are restricted in these languages, only arising in particular non-declarative clause types or similarly marked contexts (see §4

below)—i.e., in a tiny proper subset of the environments in which V2 is normally found in full V2 languages (e.g. Swedish, German, etc.). Such phenomena in English, French, etc. therefore give the impression of a V2 pattern without the apparent productivity that other, fuller V2 systems have. Indeed, the clear implication of the term “residual” is that these V2 phenomena are historical vestiges of an older, more general V2 system (though whether this implication holds is a separate question; see §3 below). Rizzi, however, does not develop a diachronic account of these phenomena or their historical context; rather, he exclusively discusses the contemporary phenomena that manifest a marked word order with the finite verb moving into pre-subject position similar to fully-V2 languages, e.g. in *wh*-questions (cf. (7)–(9)), but also in negative and hypothetical clauses (see §3 below on the *historical* vs. *formal* senses of the term “residual V2”).<sup>4</sup>

Given that subject inversion in modern French is primarily confined to the written and literary language, as in example (10), the configurations featuring this property have been related to the V2 character of medieval French.<sup>5</sup> In this sense, subject-inversion structures in French “may be regarded as learnt vestiges of an older language stage” (Kaiser & Zimmermann 2011: 377), consistent with the historical implication of Rizzi’s term. Other topicalization (or topic-related) constructions in modern Romance have been considered potential vestiges of historical V2 as well, such as so-called Resumptive or Anaphoric Preposing – illustrated in (11) for Italian – which is stylistically limited to a formal or high register:

- (10)    Sous le pont    Mirabeau   coule    la   Seine.  
           under the bridge Mirabeau   flow.3SG the   Seine  
           ‘Under the Mirabeau bridge flows the Seine.’  
           (*French*, Apollinaire, Lahousse 2011: 66)

- (11)    La stessa proposta fece    poi   il   partito di maggioranza.  
           the same proposal made.3SG then the party   of majority  
           ‘The majority party then made the same proposal.’  
           (*Italian*, Cardinaletti 2009: 8)

Like *wh*-questions, however, the status of these configurations as vestigial V2 has not yet been investigated coherently and systematically. Again, the question arises: are these surface profiles the result of underlying V2 syntax in the present-day languages, persisting from some earlier historical variety? Or, is it merely the superficial shape of V2 that has been preserved, with some other (non-V2) syntax responsible for producing it in the present-day languages?

If the V2 status of medieval Romance is still open to debate, there is general consensus that modern Romance languages are no longer V2. According to Poletto (2006, 2014, 2019), in medieval Romance (especially in old Florentine and old French) V2 correlates with a set of interesting properties which are lost as soon as V2 disappears: subject inversion and the position of clitic pronouns (typically with an asymmetric distribution between main and embedded clauses), as well as special word orders that are generally no longer possible in modern Romance, such as the placement

<sup>4</sup>        The term “residual V2” was later extended to a variety of other inversion structures featuring non-subjects in first position, including locative inversion, quotative inversion, focus fronting, and topicalization (but see Holmberg 2015: fn. 2 on the non-V2 status of locative and quotative inversion).

<sup>5</sup>        On subject inversion in French, see Lahousse (2006, 2007, 2011, this volume).

of the indefinite pronouns and quantifiers in front of the past participle. It is precisely these properties that correlate with V2 that have been taken as evidence for an older V2 syntax, and as such are key phenomena to understanding the syntactic changes that led to its loss. Indeed, the literature on historical change of V2 systems has mainly focused on loss (and sometimes preservation) of such properties—that is, on the breaking-down of V2 syntax (but see §6 for some discussion of *extension*). That is why it is essential to tease apart the surface properties we often rely on as V2 diagnostics from the underlying syntax that generates them.

As mentioned above, Rizzi's (1990) distinction between “residual V2” and “full V2” concerns the set of environments where V2 is available (see §6 for more discussion of this distinction), but also “certain qualitative differences” as well (Rizzi 1990: 376). In order to understand its actual connections with full V2, the first steps of investigation must include the environments in which residual V2 occurs and its qualitative differences with full V2 in a comparative perspective. To facilitate this comparative task, though, we must first make a terminological clarification regarding *residual V2*, which conflates two senses which must be distinguished: one formal, and one historical (but both relevant to the discussion at hand).

### 3. What is “residual V2”? Resolving a terminological problem

Before we dig further into the synchronic and diachronic status of these restrictive V2 systems, a point of clarification is in order. Rizzi's (1990, 1996) choice of terminology for the phenomenon under discussion – i.e., *residual verb second* – is fraught: its use in the literature conflates two senses which crucially must be kept separate. We refer to these as the *formal* sense and the *historical* sense, defined as follows:

#### (12) Senses of “residual verb second” in the literature

- a. **Formal:** a V2 system is “residual” if its syntax is highly constrained compared to a fully-V2 system (e.g. V2 only arises in non-declaratives, only involves T-to-C rather than V-to-C, etc.).
- b. **Historical:** a V2(-like) pattern is “residual” if it is vestigial; i.e., it is the historical relic of a V2 system from an earlier diachronic stage of the language.

Following Rizzi's original description, both senses are evoked whenever a language such as English is characterized as having “residual V2”: after all, the English V2 system is famously constrained in its syntax and clausal distribution, following progressive (but not complete) loss of the phenomenon over several centuries (Fischer et al. 2000: chapter 4). However, it is worth asking whether there is any implicational relation between these two senses of the term that would warrant their being collapsed in this way, and, indeed, whether both senses actually hold of the languages typically described as being “residual V2”. As we will see below (and as argued in Sailor 2017, 2020), the answer to both questions is no.

The historical sense of *residual* in (12b) simply follows from the everyday meaning of the word (unlike the formal sense), so collapsing the two senses in (12) is only valid to the extent that all vestigial V2 systems are formally constrained as in (12a). Unfortunately, this is not the case: while the literature on residual V2 generally does not distinguish between these two senses of the term, they can in fact be doubly dissociated (Sailor 2020). Specifically, just as the formal sense in (12a) makes no statement about the diachronic origins of a particular V2 system, the historical sense



in (12b) is similarly neutral with respect to the generality or robustness of the V2 pattern it describes.

First, it is trivial to show that (12b) can hold of some V2 system when (12a) does not. Indeed, this is the case for all of present-day Germanic: there is strong evidence that even Proto-Germanic had a V2 system (Kiparsky 1995, among many others),<sup>6</sup> and this has persisted into the Modern Germanic languages (save English). As a simple demonstration, consider the diachronic stability of V2 in main clauses (involving an adverbial in first position) throughout the history of Scandinavian, exemplified here with Swedish:

- (13) a. Gjarna mundi hann hafi viljat drepa hann í fyrstu...  
 gladly would he have wanted kill him at first  
 ‘He would have gladly wanted to kill him at first...’  
 (Old Norse, Nygaard 1906; Vikner 1995: 160)
- b. thær skal han göræ sik orthiuffwæ  
 there shall he make himself innocent  
 ‘There shall he prove his innocence.’  
 (Old Swedish ca. 1300, Upplandslagen 48; Delsing 2000: 268)
- c. tha satte hwar therä sin skioll nider a iordena  
 then put each they.GEN his.ACC shield.ACC down on earth.the.ACC  
 ‘Then each one of them put his shield on the ground.’  
 (Middle Swedish ca. 1480, *Didrikssagan* 259; Norde 2008)
- d. Sedhan kom thet en sadan hafftigh Storm  
 Then came it a such violent storm  
 ‘Then a violent storm came.’  
 (Early Modern Swedish ca. 1667, *Diarum Gyllenianum*; Falk 1993: 166)
- e. På kusten bliser det alltid fiirskrackligt  
 On coast.the blows it always terribly  
 ‘It always blows terribly on the coast.’  
 (Modern Swedish; Falk 1993: 148)

Thus, by (12b), Modern Swedish (and each of its predecessors) has a “residual” V2 system inasmuch as earlier stages of the language were also V2; however, the Modern Swedish V2 system plainly does not qualify as “residual” by (12a), since it arises in main declarative clauses (etc.). Thus, we are already facing terminological problem in this domain.

In fact, the problem gets worse, because it is also possible to show the inverse of the above: namely, that (12a) holds of a V2 system when (12b) does not. Sailor (2020) argues that even a highly constrained V2 system such as the one in English can nevertheless become productive, with acquirers extending the limited V2 pattern to novel clausal environments (see §5). Such cases of *innovative V2* are *prima facie* not vestiges of an earlier grammar, and so (12b) does not hold; on the other hand, even in these innovative V2 environments, the system is constrained in all the familiar ways (only arising in non-declaratives, only with T-to-C, etc.), and so (12a) clearly applies.

<sup>6</sup> In fact, Kiparsky (1995) argues that (a post-Gothic stage of) Proto-Germanic had a “residual” V2 system in the formal sense in (12a), but very much *not* in the historical sense in (12b): its predecessor had no V-to-C movement – indeed, no C position at all – according to Kiparsky.

Given this double dissociation of the senses of *residual V2* in (12), any work treating such V2 systems would do well to keep the two separate. More to the point: given the everyday historical meaning of the term, its use for the formal sense in (12a) is simply confusing—(12a) refers to syntactic restrictions, not diachrony, and therefore ought to be expressed by a suitably syntactic term. Following Sailor (2020), we suggest use of the term *partial V2* for the formal sense in (12a), to reflect the restricted syntax and distribution of the phenomenon (and to evoke parallels with the terminology used to describe similar restrictions in other phenomena, e.g. *partial null subject languages*).<sup>7</sup> Relieved of the formal sense in (12a), the term *residual V2* then would then simply be left to convey its everyday meaning, i.e. “vestigial”, as in (12b).

We are of course aware that such pleas for terminological revision are rarely successful; still, with the preceding discussion we at least hope to have highlighted some of the basic issues and challenges facing the linguist interested in “residual V2”, in any sense of that term.

Next, we turn to some of the specific properties that characterize both typical and residual V2, with particular emphasis on Romance.

#### 4. V2-like properties without V2 syntax? On the historical residues of V2

In this section, we aim to specify the main properties that are taken to hold of residual V2 as we have defined it. No single property below is sufficient for a language to qualify as residual V2 as we understand it; however, not all residual-V2 languages will exhibit all of these properties, either. In lieu of a concrete definition, then, what we provide here is a set of typical characteristics of residual-V2 effects, from which individual languages make a selection. Once we have a better understanding of the notion of residual V2 and of its nature, such phenomena can be analyzed with different research goals.

Throughout the discussion, we place particular emphasis on the Romance languages as providing examples of these characteristics. Synchronically, the investigation into all possible V2 residues in modern Romance can help us to identify the definitional properties of residual V2, both at the level of syntax and semantics. Diachronically, it is important to distinguish between historically preserved properties on the one hand and innovations on the other, as we saw in the previous section. Finally, the results of these synchronic and diachronic approaches to the problem can be used for comparative purposes, not only within different varieties of the same Romance language, but also in contrast with other language families (e.g. Germanic), so as to highlight possible factors that lead to the preservation or loss of V2 (Poletto 2019, and see §6 below on *extension* of V2).

According to the syntactic composition of V2, we can distinguish three areas of investigation across phenomena of residual V2: verb movement, subject inversion, and the nature of the preverbal constituent. The occurrence of these phenomena is in turn dependent on the clause type.

##### 4.1. Verb movement and subject inversion

Patterns of complementary distribution between V2 and overt complementizers in full-V2 languages provides strong evidence that V2 involves movement of the finite verb or auxiliary into a position within the complementizer domain. This movement is

<sup>7</sup> See also Westergaard’s (2007) term *mixed V2*.

traditionally analyzed as V-to-C (see, e.g., den Besten 1983; Holmberg 1986; Vikner 1995) or, following cartographic work beginning with Rizzi (1997), some left-peripheral functional head (e.g. Fin, Foc, or Force). When accompanied by movement of a non-subject constituent into the specifier of the verb’s landing site, the result is a V2 configuration with a postverbal subject. For example, verb movement to C is an important property of (partial) V2 in wh-questions (Rizzi 1990). Indeed, Rizzi (1996) proposes that in wh-questions T-to-C movement takes place in order to satisfy the Wh-Criterion, whereby the wh-feature is generated on T and the verb must move from T to C in order to create a Spec-head relation with the wh-phrase. In non-subject wh-questions, the result is subject inversion.

However, despite representing the most well-known case of “residual V2” from the previous literature, the status of verb movement in Modern Romance wh-questions is controversial. For example, it has been argued that no T-to-C movement takes place in wh-questions in Spanish, Italian, or French, despite the availability of subject inversion in such contexts (see Cardinaletti 2007: §7 and Wolfe 2021a: 131 for references). If this is correct, then to the extent that earlier stages of these languages were in fact V2 (see Wolfe 2018), then subject inversion in Modern Romance wh-questions is a strong candidate for a vestigial property that follows from an earlier V2 syntax, but which is no longer the product of true V2 syntax in the synchronic grammar—i.e., it is a strong candidate for a residual V2 effect, as we have defined the term.

In fact, this is precisely the line of argument taken in Wolfe (2021a: §4.5) for French. Wolfe shows that although true V-to-C was attested in Old and Middle French, this started to decline in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. This led directly to the vestiges we find in Modern French, namely pronominal inversion (14a) and complex inversion (14b) (Wolfe 2021a: 135):

- (14) a. Quand est-il parti?  
           when be.3SG-he leave.PTCP  
           ‘When did he leave?’  
       b. Quand Jean est-il parti?  
           when Jean be.3SG-he leave.PTCP  
           ‘When did John leave?’

Following recent work by Cardinaletti (2021; see also Cardinaletti 1997, 2004, 2007) showing that light pronominal subjects in Modern French occupy a lower position than lexical subjects do ([Spec, TP] and [Spec, SubjP], respectively), Wolfe (2021a: §4.5.2.2) argues that the Modern French verb no longer undergoes movement into the left periphery (i.e., Fin or higher), but rather moves no higher than Subj in wh-questions. This accounts for the data above (and the absence of subject inversion with lexical subjects in the language), but it also represents a clear example of a residual V2 effect (in our sense):<sup>8</sup> it is the direct descendant of an earlier, fully V2 grammar, but happens to share only a superficial linear order with such structures; the underlying

<sup>8</sup> Note that Wolfe (2021a: 135) specifically argues against a ‘residual’ (or ‘relic’) V2 analysis of the environments in (14), but under a different understanding of that term (i.e., what we have called partial V2). His core point is that these structures are not true V2 structures in Modern French, despite superficial appearances; our core point is that these superficial appearances are the result of an earlier V2 grammar, and thus qualify these environments as cases of residual V2 in our sense of the term.

syntax of (14) lacks V-movement into the left periphery, and thus cannot qualify as a (partial) V2 structure, following the definition in (2).

If this basic approach to subject inversion in Modern Romance is on the right track, and such examples are derived without a crucial component of canonical V2 syntax (namely V-movement into the left periphery), then we must rethink what it means to refer to such languages as “residual V2” in the same breath with English, which *does* have canonical V2 syntax (albeit in a constrained way) in subject inversion contexts. Specifically, we need to distinguish the fully V2 syntax of wh-questions in English, which can be taken to be part of a general partial-V2 system satisfying the definition of V2 in (2), from the derivation of wh-questions in languages like Spanish and Italian, which may exhibit only half (or none) of the properties in (2) (e.g. wh-movement to the left periphery without concomitant T-to-C). Thus, to the extent that Spanish and Italian wh-questions simply preserve the surface ‘shape’ of V2 from an earlier, fully-V2 stage of the language, but crucially *not* the underlying syntax that derives this shape, then these phenomena should be properly characterized as residual V2 (which can then be meaningfully contrasted with partial V2).

Beyond wh-questions, this same state of affairs may extend to other phenomena involving subject inversion as well, including locative and quotative inversion. Indeed, the main characteristic of these constructions, both in English and in Romance, is subject inversion, which often yields a superficial V2 order and has hence been taken as a V2 residue. Some scholars have argued that in these structures V2 is only apparent, and that subject inversion is not the result of verb movement to a left-peripheral position, but rather the result of the subject occupying an especially low position (Bresnan 1994; den Dikken 2006; Collins & Branigan 1997; Sluckin 2021; Sluckin et al. 2021; Lahousse, this volume; cf. also fn. 11 on certain other types of inversion in English). For locative inversion, for example, it has been emphasized that it results from the interplay of a number of factors related to argument structure and lexical semantics (e.g. unaccusativity); it therefore cannot be viewed as the simple outcome of a structural (V2) requirement. Locative inversion, moreover, is cross-linguistically common in languages that were never V2 (see Sluckin et al. 2021 and references therein); thus, while a V2 system might be responsible for generating locative inversion in some languages, this is evidently not a necessary condition.

Identifying residual V2 in wh-questions and other inversion constructions therefore requires ruling out a synchronic V2 analysis according to (2), but also ruling in a V2 analysis for an earlier diachronic stage of the language (although with the due distinctions discussed in Section 2.2. for Old Romance; cf. also (19) below). Following this line of inquiry, the synchronic evidence can feed the diachronic investigation of a possible medieval stage of V2 in Romance in a wider set of environments. Interestingly, the contrast between the true (albeit partial) V2 wh-questions of English and the merely residual-V2 wh-questions of Italian and Spanish aligns with the historical distinction between strict V2, as in an earlier stage in the history of English, and relaxed V2, as in the diachronic development of the Romance languages (see Wolfe 2021b: fn. 20 on the diachronic instability of relaxed V2 as compared to strict V2). This supports the hypothesis that whereas English moved from a full to a partial V2 system over time, the Romance languages (modulo Rhaeto-Romance) moved from what may have been a full V2 system to an entirely non-V2 system, and we nowadays only find circumscribed (apparent) residues.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> However, as strongly implied for at least French in Wolfe (2021a: §4.5), the ubiquity of V-to-T movement found throughout Modern Romance might itself be taken as a kind of

On the other hand, there is strong evidence suggesting that the peculiar syntax of imperatives results from verb movement to a C-projection in some languages. Indeed, in Germanic and Romance languages the verb typically occurs sentence-initially and precedes its complements and adjuncts, yielding enclisis in most Romance varieties. The superficial V1 order of imperatives is often attributed to an underlying V2 syntax, involving a null imperative operator base-generated in the specifier of the left-peripheral functional projection hosting the imperative verb, similar to V1 polar interrogatives with a null interrogative operator (cf. fn. 2 and §6.1 below). The emergence of imperative syntax has therefore been seen as a synchronically V2 phenomenon that survived the loss of the general V2 system in Romance (see Wratil 2010 and references therein). If this analysis of imperatives is on track, then we would be dealing with a case of genuine partial V2 in modern Romance. If, on the other hand, imperative V1 order is derived without V-movement into the left periphery (as has been argued for English in Potsdam 1996: §2.4), then it is a strong candidate for a residual-V2 pattern, to the extent that it derives from some prior V2 stage of the language.

Further possible candidates for residual V2 or partial V2 associated with verb movement include the position of clitics in western peninsular Ibero-Romance (e.g. Portuguese, Galician, Asturian) which, once again, seems to preserve only one ingredient of V2 syntax, namely, verb movement past the pronoun (*Contou-mo todo* [told.3SG=me.CL-it.CL everything] ‘S/he told me everything’, *Galician*), but not the movement of a constituent to its specifier position. Interestingly, enclisis on finite verbs in these varieties largely depends, among other factors, on the presence of certain constituents in the preverbal position, which in fact trigger proclisis.

#### 4.2. The preverbal constituent and information structure

V2 generally interacts with the information structure of the sentence, in that the constituents in first position (other than neutral preverbal subjects and frame-setting expressions) are typically marked as topic or focus—obligatorily, according to some analyses (see Bhatt 1999; Fanselow 2004; Mohr 2009; Jouitteau 2010). Consider the following examples involving the fronting of objects in German (Mohr 2009: 147):

- (15) a. Diesen Minister hat die Presse schon lange kritisiert.  
           this.ACC minister has the press already long criticized  
           ‘This minister has long been criticized by the press.’  
       b. Einen MINISTER hat die Presse schon lange kritisiert,  
           a minister has the press already long criticized  
           (aber nicht den Kanzler).  
           but not the chancellor  
           ‘The press has already criticized a minister for a long time, not the  
           chancellor.’  
       c. \*Einen Minister hat die Presse schon lange kritisiert. (*broad focus*)  
           a minister has the press already long criticized

---

residual V2 phenomenon, following the loss of V2 in medieval Romance. Relatedly, see also Ledgeway (2012: 68) on the fixing of the Modern Romance preverbal subject position as a kind of post-V2 residue.

With this example, Mohr (2009) shows that the fronted object can only occur in the first position if it is interpreted as a given topic (15a) or as a contrastive focus (15b), but not in combination with a broad-focus interpretation of the sentence (15c).

One of the characteristic features of the preverbal position in medieval Romance V2 systems – as in modern V2 languages – is its ability to host a variety of elements, such as contrastive or non-contrastive focal constituents and aboutness or given topics. The precise nature of the fronted constituent, however, is not always unambiguous and may sometimes remain open to various interpretations. What is even less clear is whether information-structural operations of topicalization and focalization in modern Romance should be regarded as residual V2 (see Cruschina 2011). In some accounts it is indeed claimed that verb movement also takes place, at least with focalization involving FocP (see Rizzi 1997). As already discussed in Section 2.2, the possibility of fronting more pragmatically-salient constituents brings about a situation in which the verb appears in positions other than second (V>2), such as the third or the fourth position of the clause (i.e. V3, V4). The crucial difference between modern and medieval Romance in this respect lies with the syntactic properties that are generally considered to be direct result of V2 syntax, that is, subject inversion and the asymmetry between main and embedded clauses with respect to phenomena like subject inversion or the position of clitic pronouns.

Having described some of the surface properties associated with residual V2, we turn next to the formal and typological characteristics of V2 in general, and partial V2 in particular.

## 5. The formal and typological status of partial V2

We now turn to the formal characteristics of partial-V2 systems. Our point of departure is the seemingly-intuitive statement below:<sup>10</sup>

(16) Partial V2 is a type of V2.

Concretely, the statement in (16) entails that partial-V2 systems are like full V2 systems in exhibiting the properties in (2), repeated here:

- (2) *The two components of the V2 property* (Holmberg 2015: 375)
- a. A functional head in the left periphery attracts the finite verb.
  - b. This functional head wants a constituent moved to its specifier position.

<sup>10</sup> We could have defined partial V2 differently, e.g. to mean roughly “patterns that don’t quite meet the definition of V2 in (2), but come close along one dimension or another”—indeed, this might have been useful for describing various configurations in Modern Romance, such as those involving XP preposing without accompanying V-to-C. However, defining partial V2 this way would mean that *any* language with such configurations – say, Mandarin Chinese, which allows topicalization with no V-to-C – would qualify as partial-V2, which strikes us as highly counterintuitive. Once again, this underscores the importance of the *historical* sense of “residual V2” discussed previously: many configurations in e.g. Modern Romance bear no synchronic relation whatsoever to V2 by the definition in (2), so it is our position that they should not be regarded as partial V2. Their only relation to V2 is diachronic (i.e., as the vestiges of an earlier V2 system which has been lost), and our choice of terminology should properly reflect this.

As we remarked above, Holmberg’s definition of V2 places no minimum threshold on the set of clause types where the functional head referenced in (2a) is found. In other words, there is no (non-zero) lower bound on the number of V2 environments that a language must have in order to qualify as having the V2 property, according to Holmberg’s definition. It is our position, then, that partial-V2 is a useful descriptive term inasmuch as it picks out just those languages in which V2 is present only in a limited set of environments.

What counts as “a limited set of environments”? An implicational universal proposed in Roberts (2004: 313) provides one natural way of specifying this:

- (17) If a language has V2 in declarative clauses, then it has V2 in nondeclarative clauses.

By contraposition, the conditional in (17) “rules out the existence of a [partial-]V2 language with V2 in declarative clauses but not in, for example, interrogative clauses” (*ibid.*). In other words, declarative (main) clauses represent a clear breakpoint along the V2 spectrum, since V2 systems that apply in declaratives always extend beyond them to apply in other clause types as well, but not vice-versa. From this, a working definition of partial V2 emerges:<sup>11</sup>

- (18) *Definition of Partial-V2*

A language’s V2 system is *partial* V2 *iff* the only clause type(s) it arises in are nondeclarative.

Like Holmberg’s definition of the V2 property in (2), this working definition of partial V2 also permits degrees: a language with a large inventory of V2-inducing functional heads is intuitively “more V2” than one with fewer V2-inducing functional heads, even

<sup>11</sup> It is likely that this “declarative/nondeclarative” dichotomy requires further refinement, since e.g. partial V2 in English is possible in a highly restricted set of seemingly-declarative clauses (namely, those where the initial XP has particular quantificational or negative properties; see Haegeman 2000: 22, fn. 1 for discussion and references):

- (i) [At no time] **have** they attempted to contact me.
- (ii) [Only in the summer] **will** I wear something like that.
- (iii) [So pleased with herself] **was** Marie that she left without paying the bill.

For present purposes, it will suffice to say that such clauses count as “nondeclarative” for the definition in (18) (see also the dialectal inversion phenomenon discussed in §5.2 and Sailor 2020), but the important generalization to draw from such examples is that the tightly constrained nature of the initial XP presumably reflects selection by the left-peripheral head that attracts the XP to its specifier (see also Giorgi & Haroutyunian 2020 on Eastern Armenian, which they argue to have a partial-V2 system arising only in focused contexts). In other words, whether the “declarative/nondeclarative” characterization turns out to be exactly the right one or not, it is clear that the featural makeup of a (set of) functional head(s) in the left periphery of a given clause is ultimately what determines whether that clause will be V2, consistent with Holmberg’s (2015) definition of the V2 property in (2) (see also Roberts 2004: §3.1).

A further possible problem for the definition in (18) is quotative inversion. Some scholars such as Roberts (2010) argue for a V2 analysis of quotative inversion (contra Collins 1997), but the fact that quotative inversion is crosslinguistically very common independently of V2 (see Herbeck & Posio, this volume) makes its inclusion in the partial-V2 phenomena questionable.

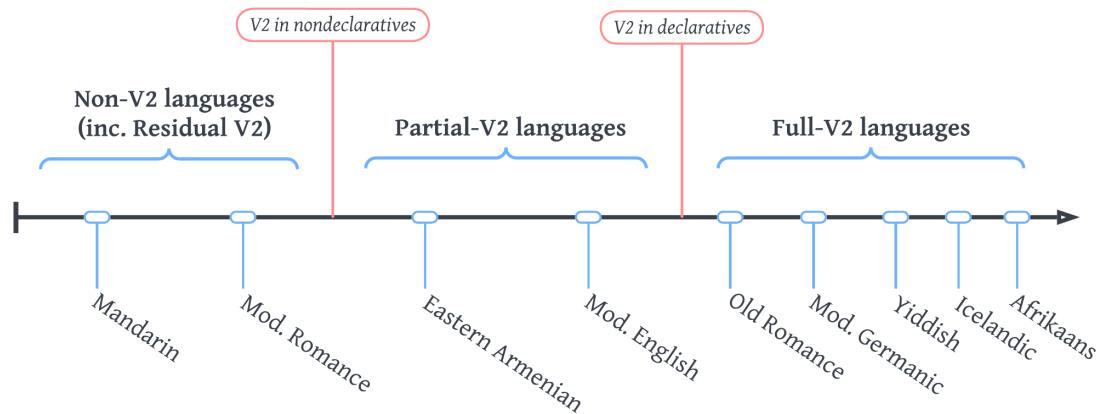
if V2 in both languages is restricted to nondeclarative clauses (i.e., even if both languages have partial-V2).

Consider the case of a language at the tail end of the partial-V2 region of this spectrum—one that barely qualifies as partial V2, so to speak. If a language L has exactly one functional head F that attracts both the finite verb and an XP to its specifier, then by (17) we expect F to arise only in a nondeclarative clause type; moreover, L qualifies as having the V2 property by (2), and specifically the partial-V2 property by (18). Indeed, this may well be the right description for French and Italian, which exhibit subject inversion only in *wh*-interrogatives, as mentioned above (cf. formal/written varieties of these languages, which admit additional putative V2 environments). Whether this counts as genuine (partial) V2 by the definitions given above ultimately depends on whether the finite verb is attracted to the left periphery or not, a matter of some debate which we will not attempt to resolve here (but see the discussion in §4.1). Inasmuch as *wh*-questions in these languages do involve such movement, they can be contrasted with English (which allows partial V2 in several different clause types, induced by distinct functional heads by hypothesis) to define the space of variation within partial-V2 systems.

Pushing further, this spectrum of partial V2 can be situated within the broader space of variation across all V2 systems, again defined by the range of environments in which V2 is attested in a given language. Concretely, we can define a *spectrum of 'V2ness'*, as measured roughly by the cardinality of the set of featurally-distinct morphosyntactic environments in which V2 can occur in a given language (e.g., by clause type, initial-XP type, movement type(s), etc., on the common assumption that each is the result of feature satisfaction on a left-peripheral functional head satisfying property (2a)). The significant breakpoints along this spectrum would be nondeclarative environments (separating non-V2 languages from V2 languages) and declarative environments (separating partial-V2 languages from full-V2 languages). Non-V2 languages – including those with residual (vestigial) V2-like patterns that do not qualify as formally V2 by (2) – would occupy one extreme of this spectrum, with full-V2 languages occupying the other extreme. Within the latter region, we could make further distinctions according to e.g. the diversity of embedded V2 environments the language allows (putting Afrikaans ahead of the rest, following the observations in Biberauer 2017). A rough sketch of this spectrum is given below, including a non-exhaustive set of languages to illustrate the V2 typology:<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> The spectrum of V2 we sketch here is of course an oversimplification: it is well-known that V2 systems are subject to significant microvariation, which can frustrate attempts at a straightforward comparison along degrees of 'V2ness'. For example, consider Dinka: it exhibits V2 effects not just at the level of the clause, but also at the level of the *vP* (van Urk & Richards 2015). By that measure alone, Dinka might be taken as more robustly V2 than all of Germanic. However, this picture is complicated by the fact that clause-level V2 in Dinka is quite restricted: in addition to being realized at Fin rather than Force (and thus 'relaxed' rather than 'strict'), only *nominals* can satisfy the initial XP requirement in Dinka's V2 system; it cannot be satisfied by PPs, adverbials, etc. (van Urk 2020). A similar problem arises with Eastern Armenian, which Giorgi & Haroutyunian (2020) show to have a restrictive partial-V2 system which is nevertheless realized in both the CP and *vP* domains, akin to Dinka. Our simplified spectrum is therefore too coarse to capture the complete range of microvariation across V2 systems, but we believe it constitutes a valuable first step nonetheless.



(19) *Spectrum of ‘V2ness’*

On the far left of this spectrum, we have languages which, by the definition in (2), have no formally-V2 clauses whatsoever. These languages may nevertheless involve *residual* V2 in the purely historical sense we defined above – i.e., they might exhibit certain surface properties generally associated with V2 syntax, having possibly preserved these from an earlier V2 diachronic stage – but, in the synchronic grammar, the syntax responsible for generating these properties does not satisfy the formal definition of V2 in (2).

Moving rightward, we find languages in which some clausal environments satisfying the definition of V2 in (2) *can* be found, but all such clauses are nondeclarative. These are the *partial*-V2 languages we defined above.

Continuing rightward along the spectrum, we cross the threshold of V2 in declaratives. The languages falling within this region of the spectrum all meet the formal definition of V2 in (2) in some number of declarative and nondeclarative clausal environments; yet, some of these languages might tolerate or require V2 in a wider array of environments than other V2 languages. It might be that the picture could be further refined along the lines of the distinction introduced in Wolfe (2015a, 2018) between *relaxed* / Fin-V2 systems (which tolerate more deviations from the surface V2 order) on the one hand and *strict* / Force-V2 systems (which tolerate few or no such deviations) on the other hand; however, at present it is unclear to us whether this distinction directly correlates with a distinction in the set of morphosyntactic environments that V2 is expressed in. We leave further exploration of this matter to future work.

Our refinement of residual and partial V2 has, to this point, adopted a historical perspective only inasmuch as it provided a means to understand how such systems or effects might arise in the first place; we have not yet considered the question of how, once established in a language, such systems or effects might undergo change themselves. Note that language change with respect to V2 principally can happen in either direction on the spectrum, though roughly all cases discussed in the literature describe only the *loss* of V2 (i.e., moving leftward along the above spectrum). For a fuller description of partial V2 of the sort we aim for here, it is necessary to address this question in more depth. We take this up in the next section, placing particular emphasis on the observation that even the highly constrained (partial-)V2 systems under discussion here can be productively extended to novel environments within a given language (i.e., leading to a rightward shift of its position along the spectrum).

## 6. How V2 systems change: loss, preservation, and *extension*

On the question of how V2 systems change over time, the literature has focused on almost exclusively on the *loss* of V2, although *preservation* has received some attention as well, particularly recently.<sup>13</sup> However, what has received significantly less attention by comparison is the *extension* or *broadening* of V2.<sup>14</sup>

At first glance, it may seem counterintuitive that a paper on “residual” V2 should be concerned with extension and productivity within systems of V2 at all, rather than just the loss of such systems. However, recall from the terminological discussion above that the motivation for teasing apart the formal vs. historical senses of the term is partly built on the observation that even partial-V2 systems (in the formal sense) can be productive, with learners extending the pattern to e.g. novel clause types (Sailor 2020). Extension of V2 thus plays an important role in the overall picture we are developing for partial V2, especially in the distinction between partial-V2 systems and residual V2 in non-V2 languages. As it also happens to be an underexplored area of research within the broader literature on V2; thus, we will make a few general methodological remarks about it in here, leaving the main challenges to future work.

We begin by briefly describing two case studies on the extension of V2 within modern Germanic before returning to Romance and the status of partial-V2.

### 6.1. *Extension of V2 within Germanic*

Biberauer (2017) discusses the status of V2 in modern Afrikaans, arguing that its V2 system is undergoing a change in progress characterized by extension into a broader set of clausal contexts than previously available in earlier varieties of the language (or in its closest Germanic relative, Dutch). For example, while modern Afrikaans allows V2 in embedded clauses lacking a complementizer (like German, Vikner 1995: 66), certain varieties even allow V2 in embedded *wh*-complement clauses, regardless of the embedding predicate:

- (20) a. Ek wonder wat **eet** hulle saans.  
           I wonder what eat they evenings  
           ‘I wonder what they eat in the evenings.’  
       b. Ek sal uitvind hoe **kom** ons by die gebou in.  
           I shall out.find how come us by the building in  
           ‘I will find out how we (can) get into the building.’  
       (*Modern Afrikaans*, Biberauer 2017: 80)

This property sets modern Afrikaans apart from the rest of Germanic—even from Yiddish and Icelandic, which are otherwise the most permissive languages in the subfamily with respect to embedded V2 (see Vikner 1995: §4.1.3). Biberauer (2017) provides a detailed analysis of these facts, including a plausible diachronic pathway for the development of structures such as (20) involving the innovation of additional layers of functional structure within embedded *wh*-complements. We leave the details of Biberauer’s analysis aside here; what matters for us is simply that even strict-V2 systems of the sort found in Germanic can undergo innovations that broaden the set of

<sup>13</sup> See Poletto (2019), as well as the papers in the *Secrets of Success* Special Collection of the *Journal of Historical Syntax* (vol. 5, 2021), in particular Wolfe (2021a).

<sup>14</sup> This should be distinguished from the question of what it takes to innovate V2 from scratch (a relevant question, given its typological rarity; see Kiparsky 1995 for one proposal, and Holmberg 2015: §5 for general discussion).

possible V2 environments even further, highlighting the importance of *extension* for a fuller picture of V2 systems in diachrony.

Meanwhile, despite its position at the opposite end of the V2 spectrum from modern Afrikaans, the partial-V2 system of English also shows evidence of having undergone recent extension, at least in the dialects of Britain and Ireland. Sailor (2020) discusses sentences such as (20), involving subject inversion (yielding surface-V1 order) along with a pre-predicate taboo element, yielding an emphatic negative interpretation:

- (21) It's St. Patrick's Day tomorrow, but **will** I fuck be wearing anything green.  
       = *I definitely won't be wearing anything green.*

Based on a series of diagnostics (left aside here), Sailor concludes that such clauses are underlyingly V2, with a covert negative operator occupying first position, as depicted in (22a). This makes such sentences minimally different from typical cases of negative inversion, whose initial negative operators are overt in English (22b):

- (22) a. ...but [Ø]<sub>NEG.OP</sub> **will** I fuck be wearing anything green.  
       b. ...but [under no circumstances]<sub>NEG.OP</sub> **will** I be wearing anything green.

However, canonical negative inversion of the sort in (22b) can be traced back to at least the Middle English period (specifically the 13<sup>th</sup> century: Wallage 2012), which contrasts sharply with the diachronic status of the phenomenon in (22a): based on its restricted dialectal distribution, Sailor (2020: §6.3.6) argues that inversion of the sort seen in (22a) is a very recent innovation, arising only in the post-colonial period.

In other words, this phenomenon is the result of extension: in spite of its highly constrained nature, the partial-V2 system in these varieties of English has nevertheless become productive, with learners extending the pattern to an entirely novel clausal environment (i.e., emphatic negative clauses involving a pre-predicate taboo expression).<sup>15</sup> See Sailor (2020) for further details, including additional cases of extension within partial-V2 systems (e.g. in Scots).

Taking stock, a complete theory of V2 diachrony should provide for all three logical possibilities: *loss*, *preservation*, and *extension*. While the first two are well-represented in the literature, the third seems significantly less so. The two Germanic case studies above are instances of such extension, i.e. innovative V2, but from the opposite ends of the general spectrum of Verb Second (see §6): one involves extension of V2 within an already strict-V2 grammar; the other involves extension of V2 within a constrained, partial-V2 grammar. Both Biberauer (2017) and Sailor (2020) identify clause-level functional structure as the locus of innovation, which accords with various theories of V2 *loss* in both Germanic and Romance (as well as Kiparsky's 1995 proposal for the genesis of V2 in Proto-Germanic): if V2 syntax is present at all in the

<sup>15</sup> Note that this recent change to the V2 system of Modern English is the inverse of Weerman's (1989) description of the process by which Middle English 'lost' V2: "English never became a [V2] language as strictly as the other Germanic languages are now. The non-[strict-V2 pattern] never died out... it seems that [the loss of strict V2] was not a complete innovation, but the reactivation of a pattern that was still present in the language" (Weerman 1989: 182; see also Kiparsky 1995). Putting this together with the recent changes argued for in Sailor (2020), we have a diachronic pattern reminiscent of a cyclic change: [partial V2 > extension of V2 > narrowing of V2 > extension of V2].

language, then changes within the C-layer have the potential to contract *or* extend the pattern, depending on their character.

### 6.2. *Extension of residual V2 within Romance?*

We turn now to the status of extension within modern Romance, setting aside the more robustly-V2 grammar of Rhaeto-Romance to focus on the apparent cases of residual V2 within e.g. French, Spanish, etc. (see §4 above). One question immediately follows from our earlier discussion of English: do we see similar extension of residual-V2 within modern Romance? In other words, do we see any signs of recent innovations in the set of morphosyntactic environments that Romance residual V2 arises in, bearing in mind that (as argued above) such phenomena are quite likely not the product of an underlying V2 syntax?

At present, we are not aware of any evidence that residual-V2 patterns have undergone extension within the modern Romance languages (which is not to say that such evidence does not exist). If modern Romance residual V2 has never become productive, but rather has remained constrained to the same set of environments that have characterized it since it stabilized (i.e., since the underlying V2 syntax that derived it previously was lost), then we must ask why this is so. Two logical possibilities present themselves: (i) extension is possible *a priori*, but simply has not arisen due to historical accident; (ii) extension is *impossible a priori*, implying significant underlying differences between modern Romance residual V2 on the one hand and English partial V2 on the other. We briefly discuss each possibility in turn.

The first of these strikes us as entirely plausible: after all, the innovations within English partial V2 described in Sailor (2020) are quite recent, arising in varieties of British and Irish English in the post-colonial period (perhaps as late as the 20th Century). Given that English had more or less settled into its partial-V2 status by the 15th Century (Fischer et al. 2000), that implies several centuries of stability within the system before new innovations arose.<sup>16</sup> The apparent stability of the English partial-V2 system over several centuries lends some plausibility to the idea that its counterpart within modern Romance *could* have undergone extension, but simply has not.

That being said, the second option – that residual V2 in modern Romance was never a candidate for extension to begin with – cannot be easily excluded. Here the differences with the English system become crucial, and indeed the set of residual-V2 phenomena in Romance is known to be even more restricted than the set of partial-V2 phenomena in English. The question is whether it is so restricted that learners consistently fail to generalize over it (with such generalization a prerequisite for productivity), rather than simply treating the set of partial-V2 environments in the language as something akin to a stored list of exceptions. We will not attempt to answer this question here, but merely highlight its importance for a general theory of V2 in diachrony.

<sup>16</sup> This assumes no other innovations within the partial-V2 system took place prior to one Sailor (2020) focuses on, which may in fact be false: see Biberauer (2010) for another possible case of innovation within English partial V2, arising much earlier than the main phenomenon Sailor discusses.

## 7. Conclusions

By way of concluding remarks, we can now revisit the first question posed in the title of this paper: what is ‘residual verb second’? We have argued here that, as it has traditionally been used, this term conflates two distinct concepts relating to V2 which crucially must be kept separate.

On the one hand, a language might have *bona fide* V2 syntax in accordance with formal definitions of the sort proposed by Holmberg (2015), but the set of clausal environments exhibiting V2 might be tightly constrained in that language, arising only in a limited set of cases (as in English, for example).

On the other hand, a language might entirely lack *bona fide* V2 syntax according to the same definition, and yet exhibit certain surface characteristics typically associated with V2 as a historical accident—specifically, because these surface characteristics have persisted into the non-V2 language as vestiges of some earlier diachronic stage in which true V2 syntax was in fact present (as in modern Romance, for example, with the noted exception of Rhaeto-Romance).

Both concepts are essential to our overall understanding of V2 phenomena and the languages that exhibit them; however, because the two can be doubly dissociated, we drew the following terminological distinction: we use the term *partial* V2 for the first (purely formal) concept, reserving *residual* V2 for the second (chiefly historical) concept. With this distinction in place, we proposed an updated typology of V2 to include partial-V2 systems, giving us a fuller picture of the spectrum of variation across V2 systems in natural language. At the same time, we showed that even a highly restricted V2 system such as that of English can nevertheless shed light on an underexplored corner of V2 in diachrony: namely, as a case study in the *extension* of V2, where previous historical studies have focused exclusively on its *loss* or *preservation*.

Finally, we also hope to have clarified matters relating to the second question posed in this paper’s title: what does Romance have to do with residual-V2 (understood in our now chiefly historical sense of that term)? We highlighted examples where additional work is necessary to determine whether a particular residual-V2 property – e.g. subject inversion in Italian wh-questions – might in fact be the product of underlying (partial-)V2 syntax. While we did not attempt to undertake the kind of careful investigation that would be necessary to definitively answer such questions for individual Romance languages (or, indeed, for individual phenomena within those languages), we hope to have at least provided a means by which such questions can be coherently posed in the first place.

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