

Competition at the Left-Edge: Left-Dislocation vs. V2 in Heritage Varieties of Germanic

Recent literature on heritage varieties of Germanic has found that the Germanic verb-second (V2) rule is largely stable across all varieties. Violations of V2 are attested (cf. Eide & Hjelde 2015), but rule-governed, being largely restricted to pragmatic or grammatical triggers (cf. Arnbjörnsdóttir et al. 2018; Sewell 2015; Westergaard et al. 2017). The current work builds on Eide (2011) and Bousquette (forthcoming), asserting that LD is similarly triggered by the presence of an illocutionary force on the topicalized element (e.g. focus, emphasis, contrast), and that such effects occur at a higher rate during narration, and discourses where an interlocutor is present. The study contributes to ongoing work on V2 in Heritage Germanic, piloting a cross-linguistic approach to the competition that occurs at the left periphery of matrix clauses that result in either V2 or LD-structures. This collaboration investigates three distinct Germanic languages spoken in North America: (i) heritage Norwegian, (ii) heritage German, and (iii) Pennsylvania Dutch.

Left Dislocation (LD) LD is characterized by the presence of a topical phrase (XP) appearing at the left-most edge of a main clause, followed by a resumptive pronoun, matching the XP in grammatical features (e.g. number, gender) as its anaphor. Examples (1) and (2) are given below, from heritage Norwegian and Wisconsin Heritage German (WHG) respectively. The use of a resumptive pronoun (Norwegian *de*; WHG *die* ‘they’) is not obligatory, and the utterance would be equally grammatical without them. In fact, the two constructions (with and without the resumptive pronoun) are in competition. While V2 is prevalent in formal and written registers, LD seems to be characteristic of colloquial speech. In Norwegian, LD occurs approximately five times more frequently than in a written corpus (Eide 2011: 181); in WHG this is similarly shown to occur more frequently in extended narration and free conversation than during directed translation tasks (Bousquette forthcoming). The occurrence of LD is evidently ruled by pragmatic factors, signaling a number of possible interpretations (cf. above), and pointing to a regular use in heritage Germanic varieties. However, as for other topicalization structures (e.g. Yiddish movement; Prince 1981) these governing factors are known to be changed or relaxed in a bilingual population, resulting in what is often perceived of as “overuse” of the construction. The latter fact may be informally described as a contact effect, a discrepancy which calls for a comparative feature-based analysis.

The overuse of LD in contact varieties is discussed under various headings, such as (i) parsing and processing (“LD somehow relieves the processing difficulties associated with non-canonical word orders”); (ii) intonation (“LD is a more sturdy tool than intonation to express focus and topic for bilingual speakers”), or (iii) vulnerability of the syntax-pragmatics interface in language contact (cf. Sorace 2011, Benmamoun et al. 2013). In our approach we assume that LD phenomena should be discussed under the larger heading of “left periphery” together with verb second (V2) phenomena, as LD and V2 are evidently competing constructions. We offer a syntactically based, but pragmatically ruled explanation for cross-linguistic variation in the instantiation and use of functional structure in closely related languages.

Working analysis. The structure of LD is a specific and exceptional case to canonical V2, with a pragmatically-motivated syntactic structure obtaining. Following Eide (2011), this can be presented as a Force Phrase (Rizzi 1997) left-adjacent to the finite verb in main clauses, cf. (3) below. This presupposes the availability of multiple projections within the CP domain, making room for different subtypes of LD (e.g. Copy Left Dislocation as in (1,2) and Hanging Topics (cf. 4)). We will discuss the characteristics of the different types of LD and demonstrate how various factors contribute to a rise in LD-forms attested in heritage Germanic, such as informational status of the LD-topic, but also length of utterance (Bousquette, forthcoming).

Figures

(1) heritage Norwegian [CANS corpus]

Mest ta farmeran _i	de _i	var	norske	da
Most of farmers.DEF	they	were	Norwegian	then

‘Most of the farmers were Norwegian back then.’

(2) WHG [Bousquette forthcoming]

[Die Beim] _i	die _i	sin	alle	hoch.
the trees	they	are	all	high

‘The trees are all tall.’

(3) LD in Germanic

[CP[ForceP XP_i PROword/anaphor_i [FinP Vfin] ...]

(4) WHG (Bousquette forthcoming)

[Wie der rieberkam] _i	das _i	hab	ich	ti	nie	gehoert.	(Wurzel, 287)
How they came over	that	have	I		never	heard	

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