Multifactorial approaches to word order change

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One central objective of the work on language history is to identify the cause of change. Grammatical change has tended to be envisaged as caused by a single factor. To illustrate, the loss of the verb-second word-order in Medieval French has traditionally been attributed to the loss of the case system (Brunot & Bruneau 1949, von Wartburg 1971): as the nominative/accusative case-marking is lost, there is an increasing pressure to put the subject (and object) in a defined position. Even assuming that there is still a case system in Medieval French at the period when V2 is still widely used, such explanations may not however apply to other languages: Medieval Italian uses and loses V2 while displaying no traces of nominal case marking. Apart from empirical issues of chronology, a further challenge to single causal factor approaches lies in modelling the connection with the caused phenomena in a way that is testable. The argument that loss of case may lead to ambiguity in the functions of DPs, and thus to the adoption of SVO over XV seems conceptually plausible, but testing it is not easy, and not necessarily conclusive (see Pinkster 2018).

A potentially more fruitful general model for grammatical change has been developed through the notion of micro-cues. Such micro-cues would structure some properties of a language, like V2 word-order, and make it possible for new generations of learners to acquire them (Lightfoot 1999). As these cues change for independent reasons (such as phonetic reduction or change in pragmatic role), the acquired structure thus evolves. An example of a micro-cue for V2 word-order is proposed by Westergaard (2014).

(25) Micro-cue for V2 in declaratives (adult version): DeclP[XP Decl°V …]

This proposed micro-cue directly reflects the V2 structure itself. Elements associated to the structure may also be considered. The role of asseveration particle *si* (> Lat. *sic* 'thus') is repeatedly identified as a correlate of Medieval French V2 (Wolfe 2018, Ledgeway 2008, and references therein). This suggests that micro-cues that are both internal and external to a structure may support the acquisition of word order. The consequence is that there may be multiple correlates of acquisition and evolution of word order. This would account for the fact that languages with a given word order need not to have all the same set of micro-cues (as suggested by a comparison of the data assembled by Samo 2018 for V2). It would explain why as proposed by Poletto (2019), there are more than one way to lose V2 (see also Wolfe 2021). It might also explain the apparent variation within a language, such that Medieval Italian, has V2 in assertives, but never in total questions.

Thus, a multifactorial model has implications for the methodological approach to word-order change. Such an approach supposes the identification of the repertoire of potential correlating micro-cues and their respective weight through time and across languages. Such an approach has methodological antecedents. In particular, the Labovian framework has put forward methods to identify multiple variables that associate to the evolution of grammatical phenomena, among others. However, whether these variables accompany or determine the change is a question that remains to be addressed. In other words, is a probabilistic model as proposed by Torres Cacoullos & Travis (2019) for null subjects powerful enough to frame an explanation, or are categorical models necessary? Validation of such a categorical model

would have considerable potential impact on the general understanding of syntax itself. If micro-cues are indications of the underlying analysis to be attained by learners, is it necessary to have general syntactic parameters? Do we need a V2 option as part of the repertoire of syntactic options available to learners of a language? If not, this would mean that there are different ways to achieve a V2 construction in different (varieties of) languages, an expectation that would require substantiation.

Research questions
The workshop focuses on word order phenomena. Verb-second vs. SVO word order, the possibility of Fronted complements, and the position of the Object with respect to the verb are major properties differentiating (states of) languages whose study may reveal cues that (many) languages are sensitive to. These issues call for quantitative and qualitative evaluation of correlates of change that answer the following research questions

-Whether word-order relates to identified micro-cues, and whether this relation is specific to word order
-What quantitative and qualitative methods can be proposed to identify micro-cues
-Whether all micro-cues have an equal weight in the learning and stability/change of a word order
-Whether they relate if at all to the entreprise of defining the finite set of properties of human language

The workshop thus encourages systematic consideration of data reflective of the effective diachronic diversity. It invites novel thinking on central dimensions of grammatical change, regardless of the language involved. It encourages answers to be developed to the general question of grammatical change, and the nature of grammatical structures, whatever the theoretical framework adopted.

This proposal brings together presentations that deal with OV and V2, in Romance and Germanic, but also further afield in Basque and Eastern Armenian. They examine the role of one or several micro-cues for OV or V2, bringing together the role of prosodic weight, cliticization, verb types, constructions, and informational status. In particular, constructions are explored in relation to V2 trajectory, but also distributional change. A range of innovative methods are used, such as model-based argumentation, corpus-based generalizations and tree-bank analysis.

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