

## OV/VO SYNTAX IN MÒCHENO MAIN DECLARATIVE CLAUSES

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### *1 Introduction*

This work<sup>1</sup> is concerned with OV/VO alternations in main declarative clauses of Mòcheno, a Tyrolean dialect spoken in the Fersina valley in Eastern Trentino (North of Italy)<sup>2</sup>. This language has lived in a long situation of isolation from German varieties and in contact with Romance dialects, developing a series of innovations especially at the syntactic level not to be found in the other Tyrolean dialects.

I will try to make sense of OV/VO word orders in Mòcheno claiming on the one hand that the pattern of variation can be accounted for language-internally, refuting therefore the idea of the presence of two grammars (Romance and German) or of the influence of the Romance varieties on the German one (which is not able to make predictions). Starting from the descriptive generalisation that OV/VO syntax depends on what shows up in the high periphery, I will adduce other evidence in favour of the claim that the variation pattern can be accounted for by hypothesising that i) OV/VO word orders are the result of the interaction of low and high periphery and ii) the two peripheries are linked through movement.

### *2 V2 and the high left periphery*

Before introducing the main topic of this article, it is worth saying few words on the syntactic characteristics of Mòcheno. This dialect is a V2 language of the old Romance type (Cognola 2007); this means basically that it displays a fine-grained

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<sup>2</sup> The data presented here refer to the most conservative variety of Mòcheno, namely the one spoken in the village of Palù del Fersina. I would like to thank my good informant Leo Toller for his patience and concern in answering my questions accurately.

high periphery (Rizzi 1997) whose structure is the one identified by Benincà (2001), Benincà/Poletto (2004) and Benincà (2006) and given in (1):

- (1) [ Force [ TS [ scene setting [ wh-rel [ DS [ LI [ I Focus V2 [ II Focus V2 [ wh-interr V2 [ Fin]]]]]]]]]]

The V2 constraint can be satisfied only by XPs showing up in the focus field.

In the examples in (2) it can be seen that Mòcheno is actually a V2 language since if an XP shows up in a Spec position of the focus field, verb-subject inversion is obligatory: (2a) is a case of contrastive focalization of the direct object (from here on DO) and (2c) is a case of a low adverb moved to the high periphery.

- (2) a. A PUACH UND NET A PENNA hot der Mario kaft gester  
a book and not a pen has the Mario bought yesterday  
b. \*A PUACH UND NET A PENNA der Mario hot kaft gester  
'Mario bought a book and not a pen'  
c. Ollbe hot der Nane kaft de oier afn morkt  
always has the John bought the eggs on-the market  
d. \*Ollbe der Nane hot kaft de oier afn morkt  
'John has always bought the eggs at the market'

In the following examples I give some cases of V3 (3a) and V4 (3b), which are ruled out in standard German but possible in Mòcheno with base-generated XPs.

- (3) a. Gester za tschaina hone de pasta gezen  
yesterday for dinner have-CL PRON the pasta eaten  
'Yesterday for dinner I had pasta'  
b. Der Mario, gester petn Nane i hon gem a puach en sell tepp  
the Mario gester yesterday with-the John I have given a book to that crook  
'Mario, yesterday with John I gave a book to that crook'

To sum up, we can say that Mòcheno can be analysed as a V2-language of the old Romance type: this means basically that verb-subject inversion is triggered only by XPs with operator-like properties moved to a Spec position of the Focus field. Cases of V3 and V4 are admitted with XPs base-generated in the Topic and Frame fields.

In what follows I will introduce the pattern of variation concerning OV and VO syntax.

### 3 OV/VO alternations

As far as OV/VO word orders in main declarative clauses are concerned, this language allows for both OV (4a) and VO (4b) apparently with no difference in meaning, according to the judgements of my informants.

- (4) a. Gester hone s/a puach kaft  
yesterday hav-CL PRON the/a book bought  
b. Gester hone kaft s/a puach  
'I bought the/a book yesterday'

The two sentences in (4) do not display the same syntactic properties though; as shown in (5a), in fact, only with OV syntax is it possible to focalise the DO whereas OV is ruled out if the focalised DO follows the past participle as in (5b).

- (5) a. Gester hone A PUACH UND NET A PENNA kaft  
yesterday have-CL PRON a book and not a pen bought  
b. \*Gester hone kaft A PUACH UND NET A PENNA  
'I bought a book and not a pen yesterday'

In this work I reject the hypothesis that the pattern shown by the previous examples can be made sense of by allowing the possibility of having both head-final and head-initial projections, and I assume, following the antisymmetric theory (Kayne 1994), the base order of all projections to be head initial.

Also the hypothesis of morphological-case-driven movement appears to be weak both on general grounds<sup>3</sup> and on account of the fact that Mòcheno has no case morphology on DPs, as can be seen in (6a,b).

- (6) a. Der Mario hot der Nane pakemmt  
the Mario-NOM/ACC has the John-NOM/ACC met  
'Mario met John'  
b. Der Mario hot a puach en Nane gem  
the Mario has a book to-the John given  
'Mario gave John a book'

In what follows I will try to make sense of Mòcheno OV/VO word orders making use of the hypothesis of the presence of a VP periphery (from here on low left periphery) of the clause (Belletti (2001, 2004), Jayaseelan (2001), and Poletto (2006)) showing that OV syntax in Mòcheno involves the use of the low left periphery and is possible as long as i) the Spec of low FocusP has not been saturated by an XP generated below the periphery moving to a Spec of the high Focus field; ii) the past participle remains in a low position; iii) the XP triggering verb-subject

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<sup>3</sup> This is actually not a very strong argument since in old English the verb kept moving to TP even when verb morphology was lost (Roberts 1993). With regard to the relation between word order and morphology, Chiara Polo (2005) has convincingly showed that OV word orders in Latin do not depend on morphology, since DOs in VO constructions always had accusative morphology; according to her VO has rather to be interpreted into relation to information structure.



(10) LOW ADVERBS - PPs - PAST PART – DO

The pattern found with OV syntax:

(11) LOW ADVERB - DO - LOW ADVERBS - PPs - PAST PART

Following Cinque (1999), who claims that adverbs occupy fixed Spec positions in the IP layer, patterns (10) and (11) are enough proof in order to say that DO always leaves VP with OV syntax. Below we will also see that the position to which DOs move in OV syntax is to be found above the area where non-argumental PPs show up that, following Schweikert (2004) and Cinque (2006), I assume to be immediately above the VP layer.

Roughly speaking (see Cognola 2008 for more on this), the area to which DOs move with OV syntax is to be found below the low adverb *schua*, ‘already’ and above *schia*, ‘well’; non-argumental PPs are to be found below low adverbs.

- (12) a. Gester hot der Luca schua s puach gonz galezen  
yesterday has the Luca already the book completely read  
‘Yesterday Luca read the whole book’  
b. Gester hot de mama schua s houz schia putz  
yesterday has the mum already the house well cleaned  
‘Yesterday mum cleaned the house well’

ALREADY - DP – WELL

\*DP - ALREADY – WELL

It is important to notice that the DO with OV syntax cannot in any case precede the adverb ‘already’ (13a,b), whereas – as we will see later on – ‘well’ and ‘gonz’ can precede it giving rise to marked orders. Anyway, in unmarked sentences (that is if the low adverb is not focalised itself, which is in principle not ruled out) low adverbs have to follow DOs (presumably showing up in a Spec position of the low left periphery) (13c,d) and their relative order is gonz-schia (13d,e)<sup>6</sup>.

- (13) a. Gester hone schua a puach kaft  
yesterday have-CL PRON already a book bought  
b. \*Gester hone a puach schua en de boteig kaft  
‘I already bought a book yesterday in the shop’  
c. Gester hot de mama schua s houz gonz putzt  
yesterday has the mum already the house completely cleaned  
d. Gester hot de mama schua s houz schia putzt

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<sup>6</sup> Sentences with ‘gonz’ preceding ‘schia’ are somehow marked (but in any case grammatical), since it would be more natural to use the QP ‘s gonze houz’. Anyway, the important point is that the relative order of the low adverbs is ‘gonz-schia’ and not the other way round.

- yesterday has the mum already the house well cleaned  
e. \*Gester hot de mama schua s houz schia gonz putzt  
'Yesterday mum cleaned the whole house well'

If we take into consideration also a non-argumental PP, its unmarked position with OV syntax is below the low adverb 'schia' and above the past participle, as shown in (14).

- (14) De mama hot schua s hauz schia petn stapsauger putz  
the mum has already the house well with the hoover cleaned  
'Mum has already cleaned well the house with the hoover'

The structure we can derive from the examples seen so far is the one given in (15).

- (15) ALREADY - TOPIC - FOCUS - COMPLETELY - WELL - PPs –  
PASTPART

This structure is strikingly similar to the one identified for standard German by Hinterhölzl (2006) who claims that the positions in which DOs show up are AgrOPs. My assumption, on the contrary, is that at least in Mòcheno the area between 'already' and 'well' contains the low left periphery.

In the following section I will bring evidence in favour of this last claim of mine basing myself mainly on the test of contrasting.

#### 4.1 More on the low left periphery

The hypothesis that the area between 'already' and 'well' in which DOs show up in Mòcheno OV syntax is really the low left periphery seems to find confirmation in the following examples in which the DO can be contrasted only if showing up above low manner adverbs<sup>7</sup>.

- (16) a. \*Gester hot der papa schia petn staupsauger S HAUS UND NET DER  
AUTO putzt  
yesterday has the dad well with the hoover the house and not the car cleaned  
b. Gester hot der papa S HAUS UND NET DER AUTO schia petn  
staupsauger putzt  
'Dad properly hoovered the house and not the car yesterday'

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<sup>7</sup> It would not be possible to contrast the DO also if it showed up in VO syntax. My claim for the VO cases is that no XP following the past participle can be contrasted since it is either a Topic or is in its base position.

In the following structure (17) I give the derivation of (16b) with the DO moving from Spec PredP (where it is presumably to be found in (16a)) to Spec low FocusP<sup>8</sup>.

- (17) [AspP [SpecAsp **schua**] [Asp0] [TopicP [SpecTopicP] [Topic0] [FocusP [SpecFocus **s houz**] [Focus0] [AspP [SpecAsp **schia**] [Asp0] [PredP [SpecPred **s houz**] [Pred0] [VP [SpecV] [V0 **putzt**] [DP **houz**]]]]]]]]]

Also a non-argumental PP could in principle be contrasted (that is moved to Spec low FocusP), since we saw in (14) that in Mòcheno its base position seems to be below the periphery. As shown in the examples below this prediction is borne out since the PP can be contrasted only if showing up before the low adverb 'well' (18b), whereas this is ruled out if it follows (18a).

- (18) a. \*Gester hot der papa schua s hauz schia PETN STAUPSAUGER UND NET PETN STROZ putzt  
yesterday has the dad already the house well with the hoover and not with the cloth cleaned  
b. Gester hot der papa schua s hauz PETN STAUPSAUGER UND NET PETN STROZ schia putzt  
'Yesterday dad cleaned well the house with the hoover and not with the cloth'

In (19) I give the structure of (18b) with the PP moving from its base position to Spec FocusP; the DO is in Spec TopicP.

- (19) [AspP [SpecAsp **schua**] [Asp0] [TopicP [SpecTopicP **s houz**] [Topic0] [FocusP [SpecFocus **petn staupsauger**] [Focus0] [AspP [SpecAsp **schia**] [Asp0] [PP [SpecP **petn staupsauger**] [P0] [PredP [SpecPred **s houz**] [Pred0] [VP [SpecV] [V0 **putzt**] [DP **houz**]]]]]]]]]

One last point concerns the possibility of contrasting low adverbs that in principle should not be ruled out, since at least 'gonz' and 'schia' show up below the Topic and Focus projections. As shown in (20) in Mòcheno it is possible to contrast a low adverb both with the order DO-low adverb (20a) and low adverb-DO (20b); I take this to mean that a low adverb can show up both in Spec low FocusP and in Spec low TopicP<sup>9</sup>.

<sup>8</sup> Following Hinterhölzl (2006), I claim that also in Mòcheno there is evidence in favour of the presence of a projection called PredP below low manner adverbs and immediately above VP. In my analysis this projection represents the first step of the derivation of DOs; only if moving to a Spec position of the low periphery can they become real arguments. Evidence in favour of the presence of predicate DOs come for example from idiom chunks, which are the only constructions showing always OV syntax. Only real arguments can enter the pattern of OV/VO alternations shown so far.

<sup>9</sup> The same pattern is valid also for the adverb 'gonz'.













forces the past participle to rise to the edge of the lower phase: what follows can be either in Spec low TopicP or in its base position and therefore cannot be contrasted.

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