The Force of V2 revisited

The so-called assertion hypothesis, according to which declarative V2 clauses are asserted whether or not they are embedded, has been discussed extensively (see e.g. Wechsler 1991, Gärtner 2002, Julien 2007, Wiklund et al. 2009). Here I will present some new data from Norwegian, which shed new light on the left periphery of embedded V2 clauses, and, in light of Krifka (to appear), also on their discourse status.

In Norwegian, the word order of an embedded clause has consequences for the possibility of indexical shift. The second person singular pronoun du in the embedded non-V2 clause in (1a) must refer to the addressee in the current speech situation, whereas in the embedded V2 clause in (1b), du can refer to the addressee or to the speaker, who was the addressee in the situation that the speaker describes.

(1)a. Ho sa til meg at du ikkke kan gjera dette aleine.

  she said to me that you not can do this alone

  ‘She said to me that you cannot do this on your own [you = addressee].’

b. Ho sa til meg at du kan ikkke gjera dette aleine.

  she said to me that you can not do this alone

  ‘She said to me that you cannot do this on your own [you = speaker or addressee].’

Further, some speakers of Norwegian accept long distance binding of reflexives across a finite clause boundary, as in (2a) (Moshagen & Trosterud 1990, Strahan 2003, 2007). For speakers who accept (2a), (2b) is grammatical, with the embedded reflexive bound by the matrix subject, whereas for some of them, (2c) is ungrammatical. Again, embedded V2 is different from embedded non-V2.

(2)a. Ho trude at han var sint på seg.

  she thought that he was angry on REFL

  ‘She thought that he was angry with her.’

b. Ho trude at han ikkke var sint på seg, lenger

  she thought that he not was angry on REFL longer

  ‘She thought that he was not angry with her any more.’

c. * Ho trude at han var ikkke sint på seg lenger.

  she thought that he was not angry on REFL longer

  ‘She thought that he was not angry with her any more.’

My analysis of these data builds on the proposal in Sigurðsson (2011) that the C-domain in finite clauses contains a set of C/edge linkers, which are feature bundles representing topics and speech act participants (speaker, addressee). My claim is that C/edge linkers are present in V2 clauses but not in non-V2 clauses. Since the linkers mediate binding relations and pronominal reference, the data in (1)–(2) follow from this.

Concerning the illocutionary status of embedded V2 clauses, I follow Krifka (to appear) and define assertion as an event in which the speaker takes on the commitment to guarantee that the content of the assertion is true. Krifka further argues that V2 clauses are linguistic objects representing events of this type, and that they have illocutionary force even when embedded. (Possibly, the presence of linkers representing the speaker and the addressee gives the clause illocutionary force, since selecting a speaker and an addressee could be seen as the initiation of an illocutionary act.) Since
the implicit speaker of the embedded clause does not have to be identical to the actual utterer of the clause, our definition covers both direct and indirect assertions (Hooper & Thompson 1973).

Wiklund et al. (2009) claim instead that V2 order is connected to the Main Point of Utterance (MPU). As long as we focus on V2 clauses embedded under verbs expressing speech acts or propositional attitudes, the difference between the MPU-approach to embedded V2 and the approach that I am advocating is not very clear. To see the difference, we should consider V2 clauses that appear in other contexts, for example in the consequence of degree-construction, as in (3) and (4). The embedded clause could represent the MPU in (3) as well as in (4). But strikingly, the embedded clause in (4) cannot have V2 order. The speaker’s adherence to the truth of the clause is decisive: the deontic modality of the matrix clause prevents the embedded clause from being presented as true, and consequently, V2 is out.

(3)a. *Stilken var så myk at den bar ikke sin egen vekt.*
   stem.DEF was so soft that it carried not its own weight
   ‘The stem was so soft that it could not carry its own weight.’

   b. Stilken var så myk at den ikke bar sin egen vekt.
   stem.DEF was so soft that it not carried its own weight
   ‘The stem was so soft that it could not carry its own weight.’

(4)a. *Bøtene skal være så store at de ikke frister innehaveren til å fortsette.*
   fines.DEF shall be so large that they not tempt proprietor.DEF to to continue
   ‘The fines should be so large that they do not tempt the proprietor to continue.’

   b. *Bøtene skal være så store at de frister ikke innehaveren til å fortsette.*
   fines.DEF shall be so large that they tempt not proprietor.DEF to to continue

References