Stability and change in the C-domain in American Swedish

Heritage languages (HLs)[1] have been shown to exhibit accelerated diachronic change (Kupisch and Polinsky 2021); thus, they provide a good testing ground for questions about diachronic syntax and syntactic theory. Both the changes that take place in a HL and what remains stable can inform theory development (Lohndal et al. 2019).

Scandinavian heritage languages spoken in North America, with English as the majority language, have received considerable attention in recent years (Johannessen 2018 and references there). One of the areas that have spurred interest is the C-domain, to which the V2 property, a characteristic of declarative main clauses in the Scandinavian languages, is connected. Studies of American Norwegian (AmNo) show that V2 word order can be preserved across several generations in a HL (Eide & Hjelde 2015, Westergaard & Lohndal 2019 (W&L), Westergaard et al. 2021). In present-day AmNo, V2-violations sometimes occur, but with considerable variation between speakers and contexts. Cf. European Norwegian (1a) (with the expected V2 order) and AmNo (1b) with a V2 violation (from Eide & Hjelde 2015):

(1) a. ... der **lager** de vin   b. der de **lager** vin
        there make they wine   *and there they make wine*
        'there they make wine' (EurNo)   'there they make wine' (AmNo)

With respect to the preverbal position (in main clauses without V2 violations), W&L find a high proportion of SV (and a decrease of fronted elements other than the subject) in present-day AmNo; Larsson & Kinn (forthcoming) (L&K) observe a significant increase in SV-order in AmNo already in the 1930s/1940s, but without any change in V2.

In this talk, we introduce American Swedish (AmSw) into the discussion of the C-domain in heritage Scandinavian. Using transcribed and tagged speech data from the Corpus of American Nordic Speech (CANS, Johannessen 2015), we show that present-day AmSw exhibits developments strikingly similar to AmNo (and to American Danish, Kühl & Petersen 2018); cf. Table 1.[2] Like in AmNo, V2 is generally stable; the proportion of non-V2 (columns SXV and XSV) is 1.6%. An example of a V2 violation is given in (2):

(2) han aldrig # **learnade** # engelska
     he never learned English
     'he never learned English' (AmSw)

In V2 main clauses, SV word order is considerably more frequent than in homeland Swedish: 81% in AmSw vs. approx. 65% in the homeland (Jörgensen 1976). Again, this development resembles AmNo (the figure for present-day AmNo is 83%, L&K).

A recurring observation in HL studies is that core syntax is robust (Lohndal et al. 2019). The general stability of V2 in heritage Scandinavian, now also corroborated by systematically tagged Swedish corpus data, supports this notion.[3] With respect to the analysis of V2, we propose that a symmetric analysis (den Besten 1983), whereby the finite verb moves to the C-domain and an EPP feature attracts one constituent to Spec-CP (Holmberg 2020), can be maintained, both in the homeland and heritage varieties.[4] On our analysis, verb movement to

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[1] Heritage languages are defined as languages that are acquired in the home, without being the dominant language of the larger, national society (Rothman 2009).

[2] Well-known exceptions to V2 (e.g. with *kanske* 'maybe') were disregarded. For reasons of scope, only clauses with a past tense finite verb were included in the query.

[3] Arnbjörnsdottir et al. (2018) present results that might suggest more instability of V2 in American Icelandic, but partly based on different types of data than the present study of AmSw and the studies of AmNo.

[4] Contra Westergaard et al. (2021), who present an asymmetric analysis whereby the verb remains in T in subject-initial V2 clauses (both in the homeland and HL). The main argument for the asymmetric analysis is that

C mostly remains stable in heritage Scandinavian main clauses, as does the requirement that one constituent move to Spec-CP. However, *what* moves to Spec-CP changes. We assume that the Scandinavian C-domain only to a limited extent has different landing sites with dedicated information status,[5] and that in heritage Scandinavian, Spec-CP loses its pragmatic function of connecting the utterance to the discourse (cf. the Interface Hypothesis, e.g. Sorace 2011). The heritage speakers instead resort to a default strategy of fronting the subject. Other factors (like cross-linguistic influence and processing) might also contribute, but they do not affect the underlying syntax.

SV-order	(X)VS-order	SXV-order	XSV-order	TOTAL
1637 (81%)	351 (17.4%)	8 (0.4%)	24 (1.2%)	2020

Table 1: *Word orders in declarative main clauses with a past tense verb in AmSw, 2nd and 3rd generation heritage speakers.*

Selected references
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V2 violations in AmNo are, overall, more common in non-subject-initial main clauses than in subject-initial main clauses; this might be taken to indicate two different underlying structures. However, Westergaard et al. (2021) also point out that in their AmNo data, the difference disappears if one disregards sentences with negation; in subject-initial main clauses with adverbs other than negation, V2 violations occur with approximately the same frequencies as in non-subject-initial clauses. In our Swedish data, the number of V2 violations is too low to make any firm conclusions at this point, but we note that although V2 violations are most common in non-subject-initial clauses, they are not categorically excluded in subject-initial clauses (see example 2 and the column SXV in Table 1).

[5] Cf. Engdahl & Lindahl (forthcoming) who show that there is no clear (prosodic or syntactic) evidence for several topic positions in the Scandinavian C-domain (unlike in e.g. German).