

Fred Weerman, *The V-2 conspiracy – a synchronic and diachronic analysis of verbal positions in Germanic languages*. (Publications in Language Sciences, 31.) Dordrecht: Foris Publications, 1989. Pp. 263.

The V-2 (verb-second)-phenomenon is a syntactic constraint which characterizes all Germanic languages with the exception of English. As is well known, the diagnosis of V-2 is rather simple: in the main declarative clause the finite verb can be preceded by one and only one constituent, a constituent which does not necessarily correspond to the Subject NP:

- (1) (a) Peter drikker kaffe om morgenen (Danish)
 ‘Peter drinks coffee at breakfast’
 (b) *Om morgenen Peter drikker kaffe
 (c) Om morgenen drikker Peter kaffe
- (2) (a) Peter trinkt zum Frühstück Kaffee (German)
 ‘Peter drinks coffee at breakfast’
 (b) *Zum Frühstück Peter trinkt Kaffee
 (c) Zum Frühstück trinkt Peter Kaffee

In recent years the V-2 constraint has become one of the most thoroughly studied aspects of Germanic syntax within the generative framework (see Haider & Prinzhorn, 1986). Despite this fact, we are far from having a complete analysis of V-2, mainly because of the complexity of the factors which give rise to such a clear and easily recognizable word order restriction.

In these circumstances, the book by Weerman is extremely interesting for at least two reasons:

- (i) it represents a significant contribution to disentangling the bundle of phenomena which make up what the author calls the ‘V-2 conspiracy’ and in formulating the right questions to be answered (cf. Chapter 2);
- (ii) the adequacy of a synchronic analysis of V-2 is linked to the possibility which such an analysis offers of capturing and giving an account of the diachrony of the phenomenon(/a) under consideration (cf. Chapter 4).

In fact, it is precisely the diachronic perspective (mainly based on some historical developments of Dutch, German and English) which makes Weerman’s book a useful tool in the understanding of V-2. In particular two aspects of Weerman’s diachronic analysis are worth mentioning:

- (i) The scope and the possible results of any diachronic investigation within the generative framework are clearly stated: ‘...our main concern should not be *why language changes*, but *why it could change*.... Thus, the least we can say is that an attested change should be possible, according to the synchronic theories’ (6) (emphasis his).
- (ii) The data show a precise correlation between the rise of the V-2

constraint and the increasing use (obligatoriness) of a lexical complementizer in order to introduce a finite subordinate clause (cf. Chapter 4.3.4).

This diachronic correlation is extremely important not only because it strongly confirms the usual generative analysis of V-2 (movement of the finite V to COMP – cf. Den Besten, 1983) but also because it fits perfectly with the original synchronic analysis of the V-2 constraint proposed by Weerman.

In order to present Weerman's analysis of V-2 it is important to make a distinction between the theoretical assumptions which underlie the whole work and the technical apparatus on which these assumptions are based. Weerman's analysis of V-2 (cf. Chapter 3) is essentially founded on the assumption that at least part of the distribution of verbs and verbal projections follows from the interaction of verbal analogues of Case Theory, θ -Theory and Binding Theory (for related ideas though characterized by quite different perspectives, see, among others, Fabb, 1984; Evers, 1986a/b, and Roberts, 1985). The verbal analogue of Case Theory is a theory of Conjugation, the analogue of θ -Theory a theory of Modal roles; the verbal Binding Theory is relevant since the presence of a Modal role opens the possibility for a V-projection (= Sentence) to refer to a specific illocution.

Given the following Dutch example (see his discussion pp. 242–243):

- (3) (a) $[[c \text{ dat}]_{[v^{\max}} \text{ Piet zijn moeder bezoekt}]]$
 that Piet his mother visits
- (b) $[[c \text{ bezoekt}]_{[v^{\max}} \text{ Piet zijn moeder } e_i]]$
 visits Piet his mother

Weerman assumes that:

(i) At Deep Structure Comp assigns a 'modal role' to V^{\max} : in his terms, C D-identifies V^{\max} . (Note that the concept of 'modal role', although Weerman is not explicit about it, has to be intended here in a semantic sense: 'The characteristic of a finite clause is that it expresses the attitude of the speaker of the clause towards the truth value of the proposition that is expressed. A finite clause has a modal role' (85).)

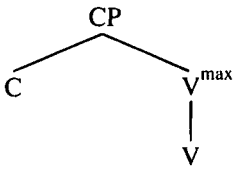
(ii) In order for this modal role to become visible, it is necessary that V^{\max} is assigned 'conjugation' at S-structure (C S-identifies V^{\max} , cf. Chapter 3.3).

(iii) The S-identifier should be lexical, both in the nominal and in the verbal specification. In the example (3a) considered above C is lexicalized as a complementizer; in (3b) the lexical V is moved to C.

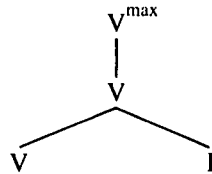
(iv) The modal role of the V^{\max} that is S-identified via a verbal complementizer opens up the possibility to refer to a specific 'illocution': (3b), where C is lexicalized via V-to-C, is a verbal R-expression; on the other hand (3a), where C is lexicalized as a complementizer, is considered a verbal pronominal (or an anaphor, dependent on the structural context) – cf. Chapter 3.5.

We will leave aside the problems which a verbal specification of the Binding Theory in Weerman's terms necessarily leads to, although they would be an interesting topic for discussion, in particular as regards the value of 'assertiveness' with respect to a theory of Modal roles and, more generally, the autonomy of syntax with respect to semantics and pragmatics. We will concentrate instead on the process of S-identification in its verbal specification: the theory of Conjugation. Weerman's hypothesis is rather simple: S-identification of a maximal projection (XP) can take place via mechanisms both inside and outside XP. In a V-2 language like Dutch, V^{\max} must be externally S-identified by COMP (following the definition of syntactic government). By contrast in a language characterized by a rich morphological inflexion like Italian, V^{\max} can in principle be S-identified by the inflexion itself via morphological government (cf. Chapters 3.3, 3.9 and 4.2.3). In other words, V^{\max} could be assigned 'conjugation' both structurally and inherently in a way exactly parallel to Case assignment (cf. Chapter 4.3.3, p. 187 and Chapter 5.1, p. 243):

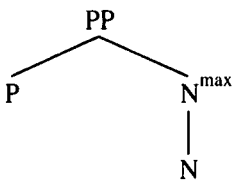
(4) Structural S-identification



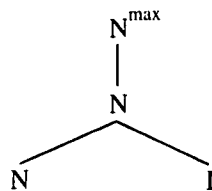
Inherent S-identification



(5) Structural Case-assignment



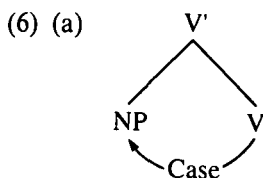
Inherent Case-assignment



(I represents a morphological affix in both (4) and (5).)

From the dynamic interaction between these two parallel mechanisms of S-identification Weerman draws several consequences (which ultimately correspond to a formalization of the traditional typological correlation between the rise of specific word order restrictions and the general process of deflexion):

(i) It is possible to assume that even in the oldest stages of Germanic languages the direction of S-identification (structural government) inside VP is from right to left (158, 161):



(b) *daz mir got alle mine schulde virgebe*
 that me god all my sins forgive (SUBJ)
 'that God forgive me all my sins'

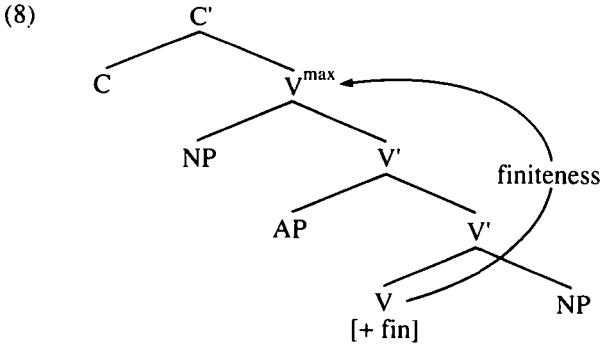
and to attribute the VO outputs to the coexisting process of inherent (morphological) identification. When the case affix disappears as a result of deflexion, only the OV output remains (Continental West Germanic) (cf. Chapter 4.2).

(ii) The OV/VO overlap at S-structure creates the possibility of a reinterpretation of the direction in which V S-identifies (Scandinavian languages and English) (cf. Chapter 4.2.4).

(iii) Similarly, a language that is able to verbally S-identify via (5 b) can escape syntactic S-identification via C, as in (5 a). Weerman argues that this possibility was realized in the oldest Germanic stages: the V-projection could be S-identified via the verbal inflexion. Just as for Case assignment, this possibility disappears as the verbal inflexion is increasingly levelled as a result of deflexion. If this happens, a rise of V-2 effects will appear in the main clause and a rise of lexical complementizers in embedded (finite) clauses (cf. Chapter 4.3).

Although on one hand the main theoretical assumptions which underlie Weerman's work make it particularly interesting, on the other the technical apparatus which Weerman makes use of lays itself open to criticism. In particular, following a general trend which started after the first formulation of the COMP/INFL parameter in Platzack (1983), Weerman assumes that the structure of the sentence is not characterized by an independent INFL projection (and this not only for V-2 languages as Platzack originally proposed but in general); morphological finiteness markings are already present on the verbal head at D-structure. Furthermore, the information about finiteness should percolate to the top of the verbal projection. Given such an hypothesis, a sentence like (7) is assigned the structure in (8) (cf. p. 103):

(7) John frequently visits his mother



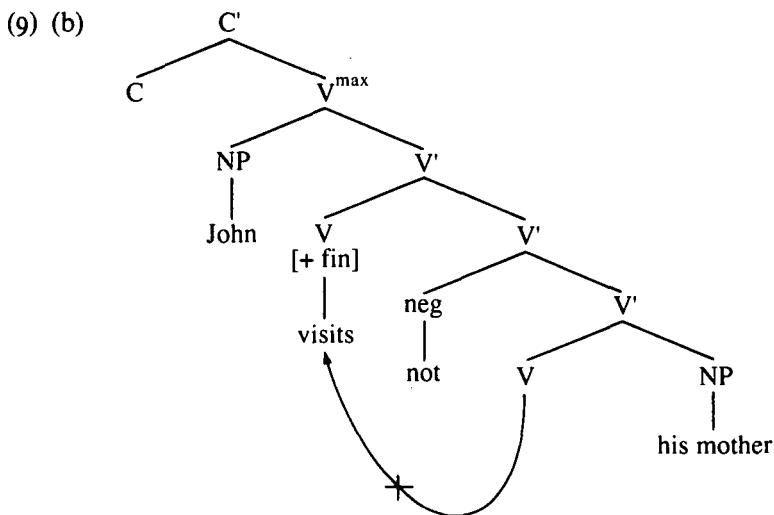
Hence, in this analysis there is no empty INFL head nor a rule of INFL lowering to V in PF (cf. Chapter 3.6.2).

Weerman's analysis runs into serious problems both from a theoretical and an empirical point of view. In particular, the elimination of lowering rules does not constitute, *a priori*, a theoretical improvement. Moreover, the assumption that the structure of the sentence lacks an independent INFL projection goes exactly in the opposite direction with respect to the recent and already fairly well-accepted 'Split-INFL-hypothesis' (see, among others, Rizzi, 1987; Pollock, 1989; Moro, 1988). In fact this hypothesis has opened the way to a reconsideration of the relation between syntax and morphology allowing, in principle, every affix to constitute the head of its own maximal projection (see, Belletti (1989) and literature cited there). Note further that in order to explain the phenomenon of *do*-support in English Weerman is forced to assume the following:

(a) Whenever the process of finiteness-percolation is blocked (this is the role attributed to such elements as *not*, *so*, and *either*), an extra V[+ fin] position inside V^{max} is postulated; a position which, by the way, using Weerman's own words, is independently needed 'in the other Germanic languages with three verbal positions for finite verbs'.

(b) Only non θ -assigning verbs (modals and auxiliaries) are able to show up in such a position (see Roberts, 1985). Hence, the ungrammaticality of (9a) is explained assuming that a full verb like *visit* cannot raise to the V[+ fin] position on the left of the negation (106):

(9) (a) *John visits not his mother



Needless to say, the assumption of an extra $V[+fin]$ position inside V^{max} does not only resemble the 'old' INFL position but it gives rise to serious problems with respect to: (i) X-bar theory (the same maximal projection, V^{max} , has two independently needed heads); (ii) the status of the subject position (cf. Chapter 3.7); (iii) the theory of adjunction.

The lack of an INFL projection also obscures the diachronic analysis. In fact Weerman can analyse word order variation relying just on three parameters: (a) head-complement/complement-head inside VP (OV versus VO); (b) V to C movement; (c) syntactic versus inherent S-identification. Assuming INFL to be the head of its own maximal projection, it would be possible to rely on a further instance of the head parameter, namely, $VP-I^{\circ}$ versus $I^{\circ}-VP$ with interesting consequences not only with regard to the diachronic evolution of Germanic languages but also to language acquisition (cf. Schwartz & Tomaselli, in press).

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Reviewed by ALESSANDRA TOMASELLI,
University of Pavia/University of Geneva.

(Received 2 January 1990)

Halle, M. and J.-R. Vergnaud, *An essay on stress*. (Current Studies in Linguistics, 15.) Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987. Pp. xiii + 300.

This book...started out as an attempt to deal with the issue of locality in rules of phonology within the framework of *The sound pattern of English*... There are basically two kinds of phenomena that present a challenge to any theory that claims phonological processes to be local. The first kind includes processes of ‘action at a distance’, like vowel harmony or the placement of stress in such languages as Sanskrit, Russian, and Lithuanian. The second includes processes that involve repetition of a motif, like the alternating stress patterns of English (Preface, ix).

Thus do Halle and Vergnaud introduce their book. The Preface, a helpful summary of the historical background to the work, goes on to state (ix–x) that in the 1970s two main lines of approach to these two challenges emerged: (a) purely local rules were postulated, which were then applied in an iterative fashion; and (b) ways were sought of constraining the notational power of variables. To begin with, the authors adopted method (b), but found that ‘the linear character of the representations assumed in *SPE*...imposed fundamental limits to this line of research’ (x). This difficulty, they say, was removed by the introduction of the autosegmental model and the metrical model. The version of metrical theory which they espouse themselves is ‘intermediate between the standard version of metrical theory and the treeless grid theory proposed by Prince and others...[It] shares with the standard version the view that strings are hierarchically organized into metrical constituents. It departs from the standard version in narrowly restricting the type of constituents that are admitted and adheres to the treeless theories in assigning a central role to the metrical grid’ (xi).

Equally useful is the Postface (277–283), which gives a ‘nuts and bolts’ overview of the theory expounded in the book. This theory is, as might be expected, intended as a universal theory of stress placement patterns in words