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Manuel Leonetti

Basic Constituent Orders¹

Abstract

The basic, unmarked order in Romance declarative clauses is SVO, and marked orders are obtained by subject inversion (VS, VOS, VSO), by fronting (OVS) and by reordering of verbal complements. These orders express different interpretive instructions for information packaging. Cross-linguistic variation in this domain depends on how each language constrains the mapping from syntax to Information Structure, i.e. how syntax maps into informational partitions (Topic-Comment, Focus-Background). The main loci of variation in Romance concern the productivity of fronting constructions (in the particular case of non-focal fronting) and the rate and availability of subject inversion (especially in VOS and VSO patterns). A survey of these phenomena leads us to distinguish between a group of “restrictive” languages, basically integrated by French, Catalan and Italian (Central Romance), and a group of “permissive” languages that includes European Portuguese, Spanish and Romanian. The same factors underlying synchronic variation are relevant to explain diachronic changes in word order.

Keywords: word order, information structure, focus, topic, inversion, fronting, reordering, subject, markedness

1 Preliminaries

As far as word order is concerned, modern Romance languages show a remarkable level of homogeneity: they all correspond to the SVO (Subject–Verb–Order) family, and display the major features of SVO languages, such as having prepositions (instead of postpositions), postnominal genitives (instead of prenominal ones) and auxiliary–verb sequences (instead of verb–auxiliary sequences). If the relative order of heads and complements inside phrases is taken as a classificatory principle they can all be described as consistent head-initial languages (Arnáiz 1998). However, a closer look at their properties – in particular, at the conditions that determine how the basic SVO order alternates with other patterns – reveals interesting differences, essentially concerning subject inversion, fronting possibilities, and, to a more limited extent, scrambling of verbal complement². Such differences emerged in the Romance

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² There is only one (partial) exception to the previous generalization concerning SVO order: a group of Rhaeto-Romance varieties, spoken in Switzerland (Swiss Romansh) and Northern Italy (Dolomitic

domain after an initial phase in which medieval Romance varieties were in fact much closer to each other than they are now in their constituent order rules – an expected situation, since at that time they were much closer to their common Latin origin. In this chapter both the synchronic comparative point of view and the diachronic perspective on word order will be considered.

Before starting an overview of the relevant data, some methodological issues must be addressed, in order to provide the key concepts and assumptions for the ensuing discussion and set its limits.

(a) First of all, it has to be stressed that this overview is not intended to cover absolutely all aspects of constituent order. On the one hand, only the major constituents in the clause – subject, verb, and verbal complements – will be taken into account, so that other phenomena concerning minor constituents, such as the relative order of nouns, adjectives, genitives, numerals and determiners inside noun phrases, will not be discussed here, despite their interest for typological research (see Arnáiz 1998 for a panoramic view; →21 Adjectival and genitival modification). Crucially, the position of pronouns is not a topic of this chapter (but →4 Clitics). Moreover, we will deal with declarative clauses only (root or embedded). On the other hand, certain non-canonical patterns of constituent order concerning peripheral positions in clausal structure deserve a specific treatment, and are thus also excluded from the contents of this chapter: dislocations are the topic of Chapter 12 Dislocation and framing, and Focus fronting is the topic of Chapter 13 Focus fronting (though some constructions described in Section 3 are closely related to Focus fronting, and thus connected to the cluster of phenomena currently analysed under the label of *Left Periphery*; →15 Interrogatives). According to these two conditions, only a limited set of facts involving constituent order is considered.

(b) Second, and following a well-established use in linguistic typology, we will assume that when different word order patterns are available in a single language – which is by far the commonest situation – one of them is considered as the basic, canonical or unmarked order, and the rest is taken as non-canonical or marked. The main criteria for determining the basic word order are pragmatic neutrality, textual frequency and formal markedness. Pragmatic neutrality is the most relevant one: the basic word order should be the stylistically neutral formal pattern that is compatible with the greatest variety of contexts, i.e. the one that imposes the least number of restrictions on possible contexts of use. Marked orders typically place heavier constraints on contexts, and are thus compatible with less discourse environments –sometimes they specialize in one or two particular contexts. As for textual frequency, the basic word order is supposed to

Ladin), exhibit a word order pattern that is common in Germanic languages, the so-called Verb-second (V2) constraint (Kaiser 2002, Kaiser & Hack 2013, Benincà 2013). The constraint forces the finite verb to occur in second position in main declarative clauses. This gives rise to the SVO/SVX order when the subject occupies the initial position, and to the XVS order, with subject inversion, when a constituent other than the subject is placed in initial position. The examples in (i-iii), from Kaiser (2002), illustrate the V2 property in Swiss Romansh (Sursilvan).

- (i) La dunna ha legiu in cudisch. RtR.
the woman have.prs.3sg read a book
'The woman has read a book.'
- (ii) In cudisch ha la dunna legiu.
- (iii) *In cudisch la dunna ha legiu.

The existence of a strict V2 syntax in modern times in Rhaeto-Romance may be due to prolonged German influence (Haiman 1988, Kaiser & Hack 2013). However, V2 has often been considered a typical property of Old Romance. A brief discussion of the issue is raised again in section 5.2.

be the most frequent, though this is not always a reliable criterion, since frequency may vary from one type of text to another. With respect to markedness, the basic word order should be less complex than its competitors. In the Romance domain, as already indicated, it is SVO that is usually considered as the basic word order. It is important to recall that, although SVO can alternate with other patterns in many contexts, and in most cases Romance word order shows a remarkable degree of flexibility, Romance languages are not “free word order languages”.

The classical procedure for establishing the compatibility of a pattern with respect to different contexts is the question test: by checking what kind of questions an utterance could be an answer to, it is possible to determine the nature of the constraints that a specific word order places on possible contexts. The Spanish SVO example in (1), for instance, could be used to answer any of the three questions in (2) – this holds for SVO examples in any other Romance language, and confirms the pragmatic neutrality of SVO.

- | | | |
|-----|--|-----|
| (1) | Joaquín terminó el cuadro.
'Joaquín finished the painting.' | Sp. |
| (2) | a. ¿Qué pasó?
'What happened?'
b. ¿Qué hizo Joaquín?
'What did Joaquín do?'
c. ¿Qué terminó Joaquín?
'What did Joaquín finish?' | Sp. |

In what follows the question test will be repeatedly invoked to show what the difference is between SVO and its competitors.

(c) Examining the contextual conditions for choosing one order or another in a language leads us to formulate the basic assumptions for investigating word order. The following three ideas are essential starting points for this overview.

1. It is important to distinguish aspects of constituent order that are syntactically determined from aspects that result from the communicative choices of the speaker. The first are strictly obligatory, leave no room for optionality, and are thus devoid of any interpretive load; the most representative case is subject inversion triggered by the fronting of interrogative and exclamative expressions (→ 15 Interrogatives, 16 Exclamatives, imperatives, optatives), illustrated by the contrast in (3) in Italian, or by the fronting of a phrase interpreted as a contrastive or emphatic Focus (→ 13 Focus fronting), illustrated by the contrast in (4) in Spanish.

- | | | |
|-----|---|-----|
| (3) | a. Come sta tua madre?
'How is your mother?'
b. *Come tua madre sta? | It. |
| (4) | a. UN MERCEDES se ha comprado Jorge.
'A Mercedes [is what] Jorge bought.'
b. *UN MERCEDES Jorge se ha comprado. | Sp. |

In both constructions fronting of a constituent (by *Wh*-Movement or Focus Fronting) bans the possibility of having preverbal subjects; as VS becomes obligatory, it has no interpretive effects. By contrast, modifications of word order that depend on the speaker's choice are usually significant: it is the case of subject inversion when it is not syntactically triggered (in so-called 'free inversion'). In this chapter, only this second case is considered, and marked orders in non-declarative sentences will thus not be treated.

2. If word order can have interpretive effects, the question arises how to describe its contribution to meaning. The best way to capture such contribution is assuming that word order encodes instructions concerning information packaging, i.e. it reflects the speaker's assumptions about the hearer's state of mind – what is already known to him, what is new information, what is still active in his short term memory. Word order instructs the hearer about how to integrate linguistic information into the set of contextual assumptions available for interpretation; as already pointed out, it determines the compatibility of a sentence with different discourse environments. The part of the grammatical system that controls the design of information packaging is known as *Information Structure* (IS). Therefore, word order, together with intonation and possibly other grammatical devices, encodes instructions related to IS – though it does not necessarily determine every aspect of IS. Researchers in comparative syntax try to ascertain to what extent word order can be used for information packaging in different languages –or, from another perspective, how much effect IS has on the linear disposition of syntactic elements.

3. Once the way in which word order contributes to sentence meaning has been introduced, we need to know what descriptive tools IS provides the linguist with. In this chapter only two basic notions will be relevant: the concept of (*sentence*) *topic*, and the *focus / background* distinction. The topic is the constituent that refers to what is talked about in a sentence, hence the more specific term *aboutness topic*. It occupies a prominent position, typically the initial one. In (1), when the sentence pairs with questions like (2b) or (2c), it is natural to understand that the topic is the subject, the name *Joaquín*. In SVO, in fact, the subject is the unmarked topic. Marking a non-subject as topic usually requires a special construction, dislocation or topicalization (→ 12 Dislocations and framings). Topics tend to convey given information, but this is not a necessary condition for being a topic. A related notion is that of *stage topic* (Erteschik-Shir 1997; Lahousse 2011): locative and temporal expressions can play the role of sentence topic when no other aboutness topic is present (for instance, in V-initial orders): when they specify the frame within which the predication holds, they are considered as stage topics³. There is an important correlation between subject inversion in Romance and the presence of stage topics.

As for the *focus / background* distinction, it will play a major role in our treatment of word order. It is traditionally assumed that focus is represented by the constituent carrying new, noteworthy information, and thus providing answers to the possible questions that the sentence could be related to in a discourse context; for instance, in (1) the focus could be the object DP –

³ For instance, in (i), from Erteschik-Shir (1997: 27), the stage topic is implicit, and corresponds to the here-and-now of the utterance:

(i) It is raining.

The utterance is assessed by examining the situation to see if it is true that it is raining there. The stage topic is explicit in examples like *Now it is raining* and *There it is raining*.

if the question is (2c), or the predicate (the VP) – if the question is (2b), or even the entire sentence – if the question is (2a). In the first case, with focus on the object DP only, we have an instance of *narrow focus*; in the remaining cases, focus extends to a wider syntactic constituent, and we have instances of *broad focus* / *wide focus*. When all the material in the sentence is in focus, it is usual to characterize the sentence as *thetic* or *all-focus*; thetic sentences typically present a situation as a single unit of information, with no focus–background or aboutness topic–comment partition (though thetic sentences are in fact associated with a stage topic). If a syntactic constituent represents the focus, the rest of the sentence is called *background*, and is understood as conveying given or presupposed information. Both focus–background and topic–comment are basic informational partitions. Relating a word order pattern with IS means imposing some kind of informational partition or split on it that specifies the way its propositional content must fit into the context. More precisely, word order has the role of constraining informational partitions.

A different, but compatible, way to define the notion of focus is assuming that focus provides a set of contextual alternatives that are relevant for interpretation. Alternatives play a role in contextualizing interpretation since they relate the sentence to a particular question that has to be solved: for instance, if narrow focus on the object in (1) is considered, the relevant question will be (2c), and the hearer will have to take into account a set of alternative propositions of the form *Joaquín finished x* as part of the context. For our purposes, an intuitive idea of focus will suffice to understand the role of word order. One last basic assumption that is needed is that ordinary, unmarked focus – what is usually called *informational focus* – corresponds by default to the rightmost constituent in VO languages like the ones in the Romance family. In (1) this includes the three options we considered: the object DP, the predicate, and the entire sentence, if so-called *focus projection* takes place. In the rightmost position the focused constituent is assigned sentence nuclear stress, since focused elements must be prosodically prominent. If a different constituent has to be focused, the speaker resorts to a marked strategy, either prosodic – with emphatic stress – or syntactic – with fronting plus emphatic stress. However, such marked devices fall out of the limits of this chapter (→ 13 Focus fronting).

This chapter is organized as follows. Section 2 is devoted to subject inversion, i.e. to those patterns of word order in which the subject is placed after the verb, thus departing from the basic, canonical SVO: special attention is paid to the distribution of the VOS and VSO patterns. Section 3 deals with a special kind of fronting construction, in which a non-subject constituent occurs in preverbal position and relegates the subject to a postverbal position. In this case, subject inversion is a result of the fronting of another constituent. Section 4 is a brief review of reordering and scrambling phenomena that are usually considered as minor aspects of constituent order from a comparative point of view, but still deserve some attention. In Section 5 the diachronic perspective is added, in order to obtain a wider picture of word order facts in Romance that encompasses the evolution from Latin to the medieval Romance varieties, and the changes that led to the configuration of modern Romance languages. Section 6 contains the conclusions.

2 Subject inversion

2.1 The properties of VS

All Romance languages, except French and to a certain extent Brazilian Portuguese, are null subject languages, i.e. they have the option of having null DPs as subjects (→ 1 Subject arguments). As null subject languages, they also display a correlated property, namely subject inversion: the subject can be licensed either in a preverbal or in a postverbal position. Even French actually displays this option, though subject to heavier constraints than other Romance languages. Thus, the SV / VS alternation is generally available in Romance. What is its communicative role? It is obviously related to IS. If the SV pattern is chosen, an instruction is conveyed to take the subject as the aboutness topic, thus establishing a topic–comment partition, or alternatively to assign athetic, all-focus reading, to the sentence, possibly with stage topic–comment as the only possible informational partition. The first option is by default preferred. If, on the other hand, the VS pattern is chosen, the interpretation of the subject as a topic is excluded: VS conveys the instruction to assign a focal reading to the subject, either as narrow focus or as a part of wide focus. This is a basic feature of verb-initial orders in Romance. It is the flexibility of Romance syntax that counts as the key factor for defining the mapping from word order onto IS. The preference for a topic–comment interpretation of Romance SV(O) is a consequence of optionality: if the speaker has chosen the SVO option, being VS an alternative grammatical possibility, it is reasonable to infer that the interpretive effect of this choice is one that would be unavailable with VS, i.e. that the subject be understood as topic. What motivates SVO in a language that allows for VS is the possibility of triggering informational partitions that cannot be obtained by means of an alternative order. Notice that this means that preverbal subjects are not necessarily topical, and that their ultimate informational value is pragmatically inferred. Of course, the extended preference for subjects as topics may be overridden if certain factors conspire to impose another interpretation, namely athetic one, with the subject as a part of wide focus.

How is the precise interpretation of SV and VS accessed by the hearer? In a few cases it is fully specified by the grammar, but in most occasions it is pragmatically inferred on the basis of the condition encoded in the syntax plus the information provided by a small set of factors that determine the plausibility of informational partitions. The main relevant factors are the argument structure of predicates, lexical aspect, and the thematic prominence of arguments (cf. Sornicola 1994 for an analysis of the factors conditioning inversion).

Argument structure is important because it is well known that intransitive – monoargumental – verbs favour VS, partly because a simple combination of verb plus argument is the ideal format for athetic, all-focus interpretation, with the subject “integrated” into the predicate. Such integration is harder to obtain when the predicate is transitive. The class of verbs that most clearly give rise to inversion structures are unaccusatives, i.e. intransitive verbs with an internal argument as subject – among them, verbs of motion, appearance and change of state.

Lexical aspect also plays a crucial role. Stative predicates – in particular, so-called individual-level predicates – tend to block integration, since they require a topic–comment partition, and do not make good candidates for subject inversion (except when the inverted subject is under narrow focus). Eventive predicates, on the other hand, favour the integration of arguments into complex predicates – thus, without partitions – and make subject inversion much easier. Incidentally, most unaccusative verbs are aspectually eventive. Grammatical aspect, or point of view aspect, is also an important factor in the acceptability of inversion.

Finally, the degree of prominence of thematic roles is relevant too (Contreras 1978; Gutiérrez Bravo 2007). While non-prominent roles like theme or patient favour integration of the argument into a complex predicate and do not call for an informational partition, prominent roles like agent – the highest ones in the thematic hierarchy – tend to require a partition: topic–comment, by default, or alternatively focus–background. This means that, when the predicate has no external or prominent argument, it will be easier to have informational integration and obtain a wide focus reading by means of inversion, whereas, if the predicate has a prominent argument as subject, integration will be hindered and subject inversion will tend to include a partition, with the subject under narrow focus. Internal, non-prominent thematic roles fit well in presentational contexts where new referents are introduced in the discourse. According to this, inversion with unaccusative verbs and wide focus interpretation should be the most natural and widespread kind of inversion, followed by inversion with unergatives – intransitive verbs with prominent subjects – and by inversion with transitive verbs, the case in which inversion is subject to the highest number of constraints.

A brief illustration of the effects that these factors can have is given by the contrast in (5), with two SVO sentences in Spanish.

- (5) a. El Sevilla elimina al Valencia. Sp.
 ‘Seville eliminates Valencia.’
 b. Mi vecino tiene dos hijas. Sp.
 ‘My neighbour has two daughters.’

While the most natural reading of (5a) is *thetic*,⁴ (5b) can only have a *categorical* reading, one with a topic–comment partition. The contrast is due to the aspectual features of the two verbs: *eliminar* ‘eliminate’ is eventive, and takes an agent as subject argument, but *tener* ‘have’ is stative and its subject is interpreted as a possessor. Thus, even though both verbs are transitive, they have opposite effects in the calculation of informational partitions.

This said, our review of subject inversion in Romance starts with the simplest cases, namely inversion with intransitive verbs (the patterns involving transitive verbs will be examined in sections 2.3 and 2.4). Due to their aspectual and thematic properties, unaccusative verbs (→3 Argument structures and argument structure alternations) give rise to subject inversion as their default syntactic expression, as shown in the examples in (6), where the inverted subjects are in bold.

- (6) a. Alors sont arrivés **trois hommes en armes**. (Fr.; Marandin 2003:347)
 then be.PRS.3PL arrived three men in arms
 ‘Then three armed men arrived.’
 b. Faltam **poucos meses** para as eleições. Pt.
 be.PRS.3PL few months for the elections
 ‘It’s few months until the elections.’
 c. A căzut **o bombă** în grădină. Ro.

⁴ A topic–comment partition is also possible in (5a) in the appropriate context.

- Have.PRS.3SG fallen a bomb in garden
 ‘A bomb fell in the garden.’
- d. Si è sciolta **la neve**. It.
 Cl be.PRS.3SG melted the snow
 ‘The snow melted.’
- e. Quedan **pocos tomates**. Sp.
 Be.PRS.3PL left few tomatoes
 ‘There are few tomatoes left.’

Notice that in French this ordinary kind of inversion requires the insertion of some element in preverbal position, either an expletive pronoun or an expression that counts as a stage topic. In the remaining languages stage topics may be implicit.

However, some qualifications are in order. First, inversion with unaccusative and presentative predicates is not strictly obligatory, and most unaccusative verbs are also perfectly compatible with SV order; in such case, a categorical reading of the sentence, with a topic–comment partition, is strongly favoured. Second, unergative verbs occur in VS sentences not only with a narrow focus reading for the subject, but also with a wide focus reading, under certain conditions, as in the examples in (7); at the same time, not all unaccusatives fit equally well in wide focus inversion, as shown in Benincà et al. (1988) and Tortora (2001) for Italian, with contrasts like the one in (8): both *arrivare* ‘arrive’ and *partire* ‘leave’ are unaccusative, but only the first selects a Goal locative argument, implicit in (8a), and the absence of such locative in (8b) – in an unmarked context – is responsible for the slight anomaly of inversion and the difficulty of obtaining a wide focus reading⁵ (in fact, the subject *Maria* would only receive a narrow-focus, contrastive reading in (8b)).

- (7) a. Ha llamado **el abogado**. Sp.
 Have.PRS.3SG called the lawyer
 ‘The lawyer called.’
- b. Il souffle **un vent du nord**. Fr.
 It blow.PRS.3SG a wind of-the north
 ‘A north wind is blowing.’
- c. Sta piangendo **la bimba**. It.
 Be.PRS.3SG crying the child
 ‘The child is crying.’
- (8) a. Arriva **Maria**. It.
 Arrive.PRS.3SG Maria
 ‘Mary is arriving.’
- b. #Parte **Maria**. It.

⁵ The contrast in (8) is most probably related to the connection between wide focus inversion and stage topics: a predicate that selects a goal locative argument provides an accessible stage topic that favours inversion (cf. Benincà et al. 1988: 125), whereas a predicate lacking such argument requires the presence of some additional factor for wide focus inversion to succeed (for instance, a second internal argument) – otherwise, a narrow focus reading must be assigned to the subject. Other factors, like grammatical aspect and (in)definiteness, may alter acceptability judgements. This confirms the relevance of the notions *wide focus* / *narrow focus* for the acceptability of inversion patterns in Romance; further evidence is presented in Sections 2.3 and 2.4.

Leave.PRS.3SG Maria
'Mary is leaving.'

The possibility of having wide focus in VS with unergative verbs is actually much clearer in Spanish and Romanian than in French, Catalan, Italian and Portuguese. This fact is only a particular manifestation of a systematic property of Spanish and Romanian that will take form in the next sections.

Third, there is another class of verbs that is intimately connected to subject inversion, but is unrelated to unaccusativity, namely communication verbs. They give rise to what is usually called *Quotative Inversion*. The examples in (9) and (10), from Matos (2013), show that quotative inversion is obligatory in Portuguese and Spanish; this is a common pattern in Romance, again due to the focal nature of the subject in the construction.

- (9) a. É tarde! – disse **o rapaz**. Pt.
'It's late! – said the boy.'
b. *É tarde! – **o rapaz** disse.
- (10) a. No es un enanito – rectifica **el viejo**. Sp.
'It's not a dwarf – corrects the old man.'
b. *No es un enanito – **el viejo** rectifica.

The case of Brazilian Portuguese is significantly different from what we find in the rest of the Romance domain. The language has undergone a series of syntactic changes that take it away from its close relative European Portuguese. The main change is that Brazilian Portuguese is losing the possibility of licensing null subjects and, as a consequence, the related property of subject inversion. The consequences can be observed both with intransitive verbs and in inversion with transitives (cf. Costa & Figueiredo 2006). The first case is illustrated in (11), which reflects the judgements of Brazilian speakers, in striking opposition to the corresponding judgements of speakers from Portugal;⁶ the second case corresponds to the examples in (12), where inversion is excluded independently of the domain of focus, wide or narrow.

- (11) - Quem tossiu? Br. Pt.
'Who coughed?'
a. - *Tossiu **um menino**.
b. - UM MENINO tossiu.
'A child coughed.'
- (12) - O que é que aconteceu? / Quem comeu o bolo? Br. Pt.

⁶ Subject inversion seems to be acceptable in Brazilian Portuguese only in a restricted set of environments with unaccusative predicates and wide focus interpretation, like in (i) and (ii), with different positions for indefinite and definite DPs:

- (i) Apareceu um menino na reunião.
'A child appeared at the meeting.'
(ii) Apareceu na reunião o João.
'João appeared at the meeting.'

- ‘What happened?’ / ‘Who ate the cake?’
- a. - *Comeu **o João** o bolo.
 - b. - *Comeu o bolo **o João**.
 - c. – {O João / O JOÃO} comeu o bolo.
- ‘João ate the cake.’

Focused subjects cannot occur in postverbal position in Brazilian Portuguese. They are marked as focused elements by heavy stress in preverbal position, because once the syntax of Brazilian Portuguese has evolved to a stage in which subject inversion is banned or severely constrained, and SV order is the only option left, the language exploits what would otherwise be a marked strategy for expressing focus – emphatic stress – as a last resort operation, instead of relying on word order. This is not totally impossible in other Romance varieties – for instance, in Argentinian Spanish, according to Gabriel (2010) – but represents a marginal option for informational focus. It is relevant to point out that also in European Portuguese, according to recent research (Eide 2006), there has been a shift in the frequencies of SV and VS from the eighteenth century on: a clear decrease of inversion patterns took place in the last three centuries, both in transitive and intransitive constructions, even with unaccusative verbs.

In the analysis of subject inversion it is convenient to distinguish the constructions in which VS freely alternates with SV from those in which VS is triggered by the occurrence of some element in initial position. The data presented until now – and those that will follow in the rest of section 2 – correspond to the first case, which we can refer to as *absolute inversion* (*inversion absolue* in the French tradition; cf. Lahousse 2011: ch. 2) or as *verb-initial order*. In the second case, when inversion is triggered by fronting of a non-subject, inversion becomes obligatory and devoid of interpretive effects; as already pointed out, this kind of inversion falls out of the limits of this chapter. In spite of this announced exclusion, some aspects of this kind of inversion will be treated in Section 3.2.1.

2.2 Constraints on VOS

All Romance languages display VOS sentences.⁷ The core meaning of VOS is the same in all cases: VOS encodes an instruction to limit informational focus to the postverbal subject, i.e. to interpret the subject as narrow focus. This complies with the general requirement to align informational focus with the most prominent stress in the sentence, i.e. as the rightmost constituent in the sentence. VOS typically appears in the answer to a question about the subject: the natural context for the examples in (13) is a question like *Who did X?*, which guarantees that the content of the VO sequence is discourse-given and acts as the background.⁸

⁷ It is important to notice that from now on we deal with inversion patterns like VOS and VSO with a neutral intonation, i.e. without intonational breaks. If one of the constituents were dislocated or placed in an external position, we would have a different word order pattern.

⁸ Lahousse (2011: ch. 4) demonstrates that in French VOS, VO behaves as a unitary constituent, which is correlated with the strict focus–background partition that such word order imposes in French.

- (13) a. Comeu a sopa **o Paulo**. (Pt.; Costa 2000a,b)
 Eat.PST.3SG the soup the Paulo
 ‘It was Paulo who ate the soup.’
- b. Ganó la Copa **el Barça**. Sp.
 Win.PST.3SG the Cup the Barça
 ‘It was Barça that won the Cup.’
- c. Ha mangiato la torta **un gatto**. (It.; Benincà et al. 1988)
 have.PRS.3SG eaten the cake a cat
 ‘It was a cat who ate the cake.’
- d. Paieront une amende **tous les automobilistes en infraction**. (Fr.; Lahousse & Lamiroy 2012)
 pay.FUT.3PL a fine all the drivers in infraction
 ‘All drivers in breach of the law will pay a fine.’
- e. Havia comprat la casa **el metge**. Cat.
 Have.PST.3SG bought the house the doctor
 ‘It was the doctor who bought the house.’
- f. Scrie un articol **Ion**. (Ro.; Soare 2009)
 write.PST.3SG an article Ion
 ‘It was Ion who wrote an article.’

In Italian, Catalan and Portuguese (Benincà et al. 1988; Belletti 2004; Zubizarreta 1998, 1999; Vallduví 2002; Costa 2000a,b, 2004; Vanrell & Fernández Soriano 2013), a preference has been repeatedly signalled for a “lighter” structure with the object cliticized or even dislocated, as in the examples in (14): briefly, in these languages there is a tendency to reduce the weight of the background constituent – VO – to maintain the focus–background partition. Spanish does not seem to be sensitive to these factors.

- (14) a. (La torta), l’ha mangiata **un gatto** (, la torta). It.
 ‘The cake, it was a cat that ate it.’
- b. (La casa,) l’havia comprat **el metge** (, la casa). Cat.
 ‘The house, it was the doctor who had bought it.’
- c. (A sopa,) comeu **o Paulo**. Pt.
 ‘The soup, it was Paulo who ate it.’

These facts reveal that in several Romance languages VOS, though being a grammatical option, is subject to certain constraints that are possibly related to processing and to the “heaviness” of the background constituent. On the contrary, as pointed out in Zubizarreta (1998: 135), inversion in Spanish is not sensitive to any constraint based on the relative heaviness of postverbal constituents. There is, in fact, cross-linguistic variation in the conditions that determine the use of VOS. Lahousse (2007) and Lahousse & Lamiroy (2012) have shown that the discourse functions of VOS differ in French, Spanish and Italian. French is the most restrictive language: in VOS, the postverbal subject must be interpreted as exhaustive identificational focus – a specific interpretation of narrow focus by which the subject is intended to identify all and only the referents that satisfy the predicate (cf. the notion of ‘*inversion focus*’ defined in Lahousse 2011). It seems that a simple interpretation of the subject as new

information is not enough to license VOS, and examples like (15) are deemed unacceptable in Lahousse & Lamiroy (2012); on the other hand, contexts like enumerations and definitions in administrative texts, together with the presence of focus particles like *seul* ‘only’, provide an optimal support for the acceptability of VOS, as shown in (16).

- (15) *A écrit la lettre **une étudiante**. Fr.
 ‘A student wrote the letter.’
- (16) a. Seuls comptent **le travail et la discipline**. Fr.
 ‘It’s work and discipline that count.’
- b. Recevront un bulletin de vote **les étudiants et le personnel académique**. Fr.
 ‘Students as well as academic staff will receive a ballot paper.’

Italian is not as restrictive as French, since speakers admit the use of VOS with a basic new information reading for the subject, not necessarily exhaustive, but is certainly not as permissive as Spanish. Lahousse (2007: 393) notices that a wide focus interpretation is not excluded in Italian VOS, as the default interpretation of (17) confirms: (17) could be used as an answer to a *What’s happening?* question.

- (17) Prende il microfono **il direttore tecnico Ross Brown**. It.
 ‘The technical manager Ross Brown takes the microphone.’

Catalan, Romanian and Portuguese behave essentially like Italian (Ordóñez 1998; López 2009; Alboiu 1999), while Spanish is the least restrictive of Romance languages as far as VOS is concerned -we will see that this is not an isolated fact, but a particular case of a more general cross-linguistic difference. Though the common assumption (Zubizarreta 1998: 125, 1999: 4233) is, again, that Spanish VOS is always associated with narrow focus on the subject, it is true that a wide focus reading is also perfectly possible, if the usual factors – aspect, thematic roles, indefiniteness of the subject, prosodic phrasing – favour it, as in the example in (18).

- (18) Ha comprado el edificio **una empresa china**. Sp.
 ‘A Chinese company bought the building.’

To sum up, following the conclusions reached by Lahousse & Lamiroy (2012), what we have is a scale that goes from the most restrictive conditions on VOS (French) to the less restrictive (Spanish): the scale in (19) reflects an ongoing grammaticalization process “which is more advanced in French than in Italian, and more in Italian than in Spanish” (Lahousse & Lamiroy 2012: 14).

- (19) Narrow focus with exhaustive interpretation < narrow focus (contrastive or not) < both narrow and wide focus

The degree of grammaticalization of word order patterns is determined by the amount of constraints on focus structure that are active in each language. The number of constraints is the lowest in the less grammaticalized system, Spanish. The distribution of VOS has a functional counterpart in the distribution of cleft sentences, as the two constructions can be described as specificational sentences: the decrease in discourse functions for VOS is compensated by an increase in the use of clefts, which is confirmed by the more frequent use of clefts in French compared to Italian and Spanish (cf. Lahousse 2007; Lahousse & Lamiroy 2012).

A look at the distribution of VOS shows that grammatical variation in this domain in Romance depends on the constraints that each language puts on the mapping between syntax and IS. Focus structure, with the distinction between wide and narrow focus, is the key notion. Further confirmation of these assumptions comes from the other inversion pattern with transitive verbs, VSO.

2.3 The distribution of VSO

While all Romance languages employ VOS to a certain extent, VSO gives rise to a neat asymmetry between two groups of languages: Spanish, European Portuguese⁹ and Romanian accept it, but French, Catalan, Italian and Sardinian – the central Romance languages – reject it, as shown by the contrast between (20) and (21), where inverted subjects are marked in bold (Ordóñez 1998, 2007; Zubizarreta 1998, 1999; Bossong 1998; Costa 2000a,b, 2004; Belletti 2004; Soare 2009; Gallego 2013; Leonetti 2014a,b).

- | | | |
|------|---|----------------------------------|
| (20) | <p>a. Ha comprado María el periódico.
 have.PRS.3SG bought María the newspaper
 ‘María bought the newspaper.’</p> <p>b. Partiu o Paulo a janela.
 break.PST.3SG the Paulo the window
 ‘Paulo broke the window.’</p> <p>c. A făcut mama o prăjitură.
 have.PRS.3SG made mom a cake
 ‘Mom made a cake.’</p> | <p>Sp.</p> <p>Pt.</p> <p>Ro.</p> |
| (21) | <p>a. *Ha comprato Maria il giornale.
 have.PRS.3SG bought Maria the newspaper
 ‘Maria bought the newspaper.’</p> <p>b. *Ha comprat la Maria el diari.
 have.PRS.3SG bought the Maria the newspaper</p> | <p>It.</p> <p>Cat.</p> |

⁹ Whereas European Portuguese accepts VSO, Brazilian Portuguese excludes this option, as shown above in example (12). This is expected, due to the heavy restrictions that Brazilian Portuguese places on subject inversion.

The dividing line drawn by VSO in Romance is obviously related to the existence of more or less restrictive systems with respect to subject inversion, with French as the most restrictive grammar and Spanish as the least restrictive one, as already pointed out in the previous section. There are two possible ways to account for this kind of variation. One is assuming that the (un)availability of VSO is a purely syntactic matter, either because less restrictive languages display an extra postverbal position for subjects – different from the one involved in VOS – that is not available in more restrictive languages (cf. Ordóñez 1998, 2007; Gallego 2013), or because the licensing conditions for the direct object in VSO are different in the two groups of languages (Belletti 2004). A strictly syntactic approach, in any case, can hardly explain the informational properties of VSO and its place in a global view of IS marking in Romance.

An alternative way to face the problem consists in locating the difference between the two groups in the mapping from syntactic structure to IS, as proposed in Leonetti (2014b). In the previous sections some data were introduced that supported a view of Romance languages as elements occupying different points along a scale that goes from the most restrictive pole (French) to the least restrictive (Spanish, Romanian), presumably showing a continuum of grammaticalization degrees. Such scale gives expression to the constraints that each language places on word order patterns, and the constraints concern IS, in particular focus structure. If this is correct, then the distribution of VSO should fit in the scale as a result of the relative restrictiveness of languages in the encoding of conditions on informational focus. Some Romance languages show a strong tendency to impose neat informational partitions (either topic–comment, or focus–background) on marked orders, as soon as the basic factors that favour partitions are met – aspect, thematic prominence, number of arguments and complexity. French, Italian and Catalan are the main representatives of this group, to which we can refer as the Central Romance group (Brazilian Portuguese shares important properties with Central Romance, in particular constraints on subject inversion). Particularly in informal use, they make a pervasive use of syntactic devices like dislocation, focus fronting and cleft sentences to avoid the formation of complex sequences without partitions; as a result, very strict conditions limit the occurrence of wide focus readings (basically, they are reduced to SVO and VS with unaccusative verbs and presentative predicates). An interesting piece of evidence for such tendency lies in the fact that non-focal constituents in Italian and Catalan must systematically undergo detachment (left or right dislocation) in order to minimize the weight of the focal domain: the syntactic organization of the Catalan example in (23), from Vallduví (1995: 128), is a clear manifestation of this strategy for information packaging.

- (23) L’hi ficarem, al calaix, el ganivet. Cat.
 Cl Cl put.FUT.1PL at-the drawer the knife
 ‘We will put the knife in the drawer.’

Spanish and Romanian, again, show the opposite tendency: they are less restrictive, in the sense that they allow for wide focus readings not only in SVO and VS, but also in marked orders, as we noticed for VOS. In this group of languages, the choice for wide or narrow focus in interpretation is often context-dependent, and not strictly encoded in the syntax of word order. Thus, marked orders without informational partitions are accepted more naturally than in Central Romance. To sum up, two ways of mapping the syntactic configuration into IS emerge.

In Central Romance, the mapping is quite straightforward and maximally transparent: this is achieved by means of formal strategies that encode informational partitions. In Spanish and Romanian, the mapping is less straightforward and grammar underdetermines interpretation to a major extent – though the same syntactic strategies for managing partitions are, of course, also available. As the processing of marked orders is less constrained, and there is low sensitivity to the factors determining informational integration, even patterns like VSO are acceptable and interpreted as single informational chunks. This is the sense in which these languages can be characterized as “permissive”. Central Romance languages, being more restrictive, cannot accept VSO without partitions: they are highly sensitive to the factors that control informational integration, and such factors tend to block integration in VSO (due to the presence of two verbal arguments, one of them thematically prominent and interfering in the dependency relation between V and O). Therefore, they exclude this pattern, and the VSO asymmetry is derived from the way syntax maps into IS. The grammaticality of VSO in Romance ultimately depends on the eventual success of the integration process. This approach, if correct, opens the way for integrating the problem of the distribution of VSO in the wider context of subject inversion in Romance.

2.4 Generalizations on subject inversion

From this panorama of Romance subject inversion three generalizations emerge that allow us to put some order on the data:

- (a) All Romance languages display some kind of subject inversion, even French, which is a non-null-subject language, and Brazilian Portuguese, which is becoming a non-null-subject language.
- (b) The distribution of subject inversion reflects a scale of “markedness” that goes from the simplest, core cases of VS with unaccusatives in presentational contexts to the most complex case of inversion with transitive verbs, VSO. The scale is reproduced in (24).

(24) unaccusative inversion > VS with unergatives > VOS > VSO

The markedness status of different inversion types predicts that as we proceed towards the right pole, constraints on inversion become heavier: unaccusative inversion – i.e. wide focus inversion with presentative value – is the least constrained, followed by VS with unergatives, and the two inversion patterns with transitives occupy the rightmost half of the scale, with VOS being usually subject to strong restrictions and VSO being even excluded in a large linguistic area. It is expected that the least marked patterns be the most widespread, and, conversely, the most marked ones be the least natural and common. If comparative data are disposed along the scale, a hierarchy of languages appears, probably mirroring a more general hierarchy based on degrees of grammaticalization, as proposed in Lahousse & Lamiroy (2012): the languages we characterized as “restrictive” accept only the least marked kinds of inversion and put severe restrictions on the marked ones, or even reject them, whereas the languages we described as

“permissive” accept any kind of inversion. Table 1 provides a global view of the distribution of inversion, and shows that the restrictive vs permissive distinction sets apart the group integrated by Brazilian Portuguese, French, Catalan and Italian from the group of European Portuguese, Romanian and Spanish (the table does not include data from Sardinian, Occitan, Sicilian or Rhaeto-Romance).

	unaccusative VS	unergative VS	VOS	VSO
Brazilian Port.	√	?	*	*
French	√	√ (constrained)	√ (highly constrained)	*
Catalan	√	√	√ (constrained)	*
Italian	√	√	√ (constrained)	*
European Port.	√	√	√ (constrained)	√
Romanian	√	√	√	√
Spanish	√	√	√	√

Table 1. Distribution of inversion in Romance

- (c) The position each language occupies in the hierarchy depends on the extent to which it allows for wide focus interpretation in inversion, i.e. a reading without informational partitions. As shown in Table 1, all languages admit unaccusative inversion, the context where wide focus is the most natural reading;¹¹ all of them – except Brazilian Portuguese – accept VS with unergatives, but French bans wide focus readings (the core cases of ‘*inversion focus*’ in Lahousse 2011), and Catalan and Italian tend to exclude them; a similar situation obtains with VOS, where French absolutely rejects wide focus, Italian, Catalan and European Portuguese allow for it with strong limitations, and the permissive languages seem to accept it; finally, being wide focus the only interpretive option for VSO – with some proviso for Portuguese –, it is possible only in the three permissive languages.

To sum up, there is cross-linguistic variation in the distribution of subject inversion, and this variation is related to the conditions that control the mapping of syntactic configuration onto IS. The phenomena described in the next sections provide further support for the generalisations on inversion.

3 Fronting

3.1 The OVS pattern

¹¹ Recall that French is restrictive even in unaccusative / presentational inversion: absolute inversion with wide focus is excluded, and some initial constituent representing a stage topic is needed for inversion to be felicitous. There is no such a strict requirement for overt stage topics in the rest of the Romance domain.

The label OVS is used here to refer to a marked word order in which the object – actually, any non-subject constituent, so that perhaps XVS should be more adequate – is fronted and, as a consequence, forces the subject to appear in postverbal position. Crucially, the fronted constituent and the verb must be adjacent: no other constituent can appear between them, thus giving rise to the typical pattern of V2 syntax. This implies that either the fronted constituent rises to the canonical subject slot, i.e. it competes for such slot with the subject (as in Zubizarreta 1998, Barbosa 2009 and Giurgea & Remberger 2012), or it rises to a different position, triggering subject inversion for some independent reason. We do not discuss the theoretical consequences of the two options here; it will suffice to recall that this issue is related to the general problem of subject inversion in interrogative and exclamative sentences (→15 Interrogatives, 16 Exclamatives, imperatives, optatives). What is, by contrast, crucial is keeping OVS distinct from other fronting constructions that imply a different syntax and a different mapping to IS, namely dislocation (→12 Dislocations and framings) and focus fronting or focalization (→13 Focus fronting). While dislocation is a device for topic marking, and focus fronting is a device for marking (mostly) contrastive focus, OVS, as it is conceived here, represents neither: the fronted constituent is not interpreted as a topic or as a focus (contrastive or informational), and there are no intonational breaks (cf. Leonetti & Escandell-Vidal 2009, Leonetti forthcoming for a basic description). The hallmark of the constructions described in this section is precisely this: their contribution to IS and interpretation is not by means of an informational partition between the fronted constituent and the rest of the sentence, but rather through the opposite, i.e. by forcing the absence of any overt informational partition. On the one hand, no constituent is singled out as topic or focus: fronting does not have this function. On the other hand, fronting triggers subject inversion, with no interpretive effects apart from excluding both topic and narrow focus readings for the subject –recall that inversion is obligatory, though there is some cross-linguistic variation (see below). As a result, the sentence is taken as a single informational chunk. In what follows, the term *Non-Focal Fronting* is used to cover all constructions showing these properties.

The main problem raised by non-focal fronting is that, from a strictly syntactic point of view, it is essentially identical to focus fronting, but its intonational properties, its interpretation and its discourse value are completely different: there is no emphatic stress, and there is no contrast. Thus, the interpretive contribution of fronting in this case seems to be related to IS, but in some indirect way. Along this section, two basic types of non-focal fronting are individuated, with two different discourse functions, but the list could perhaps be extended. It is beyond the limits of this chapter to ascertain whether a unified account of all varieties is feasible. An interesting property of non-focal fronting is that it does not appear in subordinate clauses, except in those that behave as independent sentences (for instance, subordinates to communication verbs): it is, then, a *root phenomenon*, limited to main clauses. Subject inversion, instead, is perfectly acceptable in both main and subordinate clauses, and quite often subordinate contexts even favour it (for instance, in French; cf. Lahousse 2011: ch. 3).

The synchronic perspective in this section has to be completed by taking into account that OVS was common and widespread in Old Romance, much more than in modern Romance languages. A historical process of decrease gave rise to its irregular distribution nowadays. This process is discussed in Section 5, together with other changes that affected the encoding of IS.

3.2 Non-focal fronting

3.2.1 Resumptive Preposing

The first type of non-focal fronting corresponds to what Cinque (1990) dubs *Resumptive Preposing* (cf. *anteposizione anaforica* in Benincà et al. 1988): as shown in the examples in (25), the fronted constituent – in bold – contains an anaphoric element that creates a textual connection with a discourse antecedent (Leonetti & Escandell-Vidal 2009; Cardinaletti 2009; Costa & Martins 2011).

- (25) a. **Allo stesso modo** si comportò suo figlio. (It.; Cinque 1990)
 at-the same way CI behave.PST.3SG his son
 ‘In the same way, his son behaved.’
- b. **Eso** creo yo. (Sp.; Leonetti & Escandell-Vidal 2009)
 that think.PRS.1SG I
 ‘That’s what I think.’
- c. **Això** em van dir. Cat.
 that me tell.PST.3PL
 ‘That I was told.’
- d. **Ainsi** écrivait Alexandre. (Fr.; Lahousse 2011¹²)
 so write.PST.3SG Alexandre
 ‘That’s how Alexandre wrote.’
- e. **Isso** queria o director. (Pt.; Costa & Martins 2011)
 that want.PST.3SG the dean
 ‘That’s what the dean wanted.’
- f. **La fel de reușită** a fost cina festivă. (Ro.; Giurgea & Remberger 2012)
 the same of successful have.PRS.3SG been dinner festive
 ‘Equally successful was the conference dinner.’

Notice that although the fronted elements convey given information, they cannot be considered as (aboutness) topics: in such case, a resumptive clitic would appear, at least for fronted direct objects, and subject inversion would not be compulsive. The anaphoric items in the examples are demonstratives, identity adjectives like *stesso* ‘same’ and adverbials like *ainsi* ‘so’ – recall that one of the inversion patterns traditionally identified in English is ‘*so* inversion’ –, but not all languages admit the same range of possibilities. Fronted demonstratives give natural results in Spanish and European Portuguese, but they are rejected in French, and their use obeys heavy restrictions in Catalan and Italian, so that the usual divide between restrictive and permissive languages reappears here. The data Costa & Martins (2011) gather under the label of *Deictic Fronting* confirm that the construction is as productive in Portuguese as it is in Spanish (though we do not assume that the examples in (26) are cases of focus fronting, as the authors claim); notice that the fronted elements in (26) are deictic adverbs, pronouns and demonstratives.

¹² Lahousse (2011: 94) considers *ainsi* as a fronted restrictive focus in example (25d), but it is doubtful that it may be focal in any sense. As the adverb requires a discourse antecedent, it fits nicely in the pattern of resumptive preposing.

- (26) a. **Assim** se vê a força do PC. Pt.
 so CI see.PRS.3SG the force of-the PC
 ‘That’s how you see the force of the Communist Party.’
 b. **Aqui** me criei.
 here CI grow.PST.1SG
 ‘It was here I grew up.’
 c. E **neste regime** me tenho mantido.
 And in-this regime CI have.PRS.1SG kept
 ‘And this is the regime I’ve stayed on.’

In Spanish also fronted comparatives trigger resumptive preposing, as in (27)–(29): these items are anaphoric because the entity with which comparison is established must be retrieved from previous context.¹³

- (27) A: - ¡Qué bien huele! Sp.
 how well smell.PRS.3SG
 ‘How good it smells!’
 B: - Y **mejor** sabrá.
 and better taste.FUT.3SG
 ‘And it will taste better.’
 (28) **Peor** me pareció su anterior trabajo.
 worse CI seem.PST.3SG his previous work
 ‘His previous work seemed worse to me.’
 (29) **Más alumnos** teníamos el año pasado.
 More students have.PST.1PL the year past
 ‘We had more students last year.’

Though resumptive preposing seems to be more productive in permissive languages (Spanish and European Portuguese), there are still some features that are common to all Romance: on the one hand, there is a general preference for fronting of “light” items – single words – instead of complex phrases, probably due to the need to maintain a single informational chunk – otherwise a topic–comment partition would arise; on the other hand, there is some preference for preposing PPs and adverbials instead of DPs, which is possibly due, again, to the need to avoid confusion with fronted topics.¹⁴

¹³ Similar examples can be obtained in French and Italian:

- (i) ...mais plus encore balançaient mes pensées. (Fr.; from Lahousse 2011: 99)
 ‘...but even more my thoughts were swinging.’
 (ii) Peggio ancora andò la seconda riunione. It.
 ‘Even worse went the second meeting.’

¹⁴ It is worth mentioning that subject inversion plays a major role in distinguishing genuine resumptive preposing from the occurrence of initial elements that have nothing to do with this construction. Take the following contrast in Italian:

- (i) Così finì la storia di Michele. It.
 ‘So finished Michele’s story.’
 (ii) Così, la storia di Michele finì.
 ‘Thus, Michele’s story ended up.’

Non-focal fronting, and in particular resumptive preposing, must be classified as an instance of *argument reversal*, following Ward & Birner (1998, 2011). Argument reversal involves the non-canonical leftward placement of a constituent and the non-canonical rightward placement of another constituent – the subject. In English, according to Ward & Birner, the construction is felicitous if the preposed constituent does not represent less familiar information in the discourse than does the postverbal constituent. This implies that the fronted element mostly conveys discourse-old information. The Romance data fit this pattern quite naturally. The connection can be strengthened if we observe that at least some cases of what has traditionally been called *locative inversion* – a type of argument reversal – are nothing else than special uses of resumptive preposing; some examples of locative inversion – in a broad sense – are given for Spanish in (30), for Italian in (31) and for French in (32) (according to Kaiser & Zimmermann 2011: 377, cases of non-focal fronting in Modern French should be considered as “learnt vestiges of an older language stage; (32b), from Lahousse 2011: 66, is the beginning of a poem by Apollinaire), showing that inversion is related to the absence of a topic–comment partition and gives rise to a presentational reading.

- (30) a. Aquí llega el tren. (cf. *Aquí el tren llega. / Aquí, el tren llega.) Sp.
 here arrive.PRS.3SG the train
 ‘Here comes the train.’
 b. A la sequía siguió el incendio. (cf. *A la sequía el incendio siguió.)
 to the drought follow.PST.3SG the fire
 ‘The fire followed the drought.’
- (31) a. Da questo dipende il nostro futuro. (cf. *Da questo il nostro futuro dipende.)
 It.
 from this depend.PRS.3SG the our future
 ‘Our future depends on this.’
 b. Dal soffitto pende una lampada veneziana. (cf. *Dal soffitto una lampada veneziana pende.)
 from-the ceiling hang.PRS.3SG a lamp venetian
 ‘A Venetian chandelier hangs from the ceiling.’
- (32) a. A chaque jour suffit sa peine. (cf. *A chaque jour sa peine suffit.) Fr.
 to every day suffices its trouble
 ‘Each day has enough trouble of its own.’
 b. Sous le pont Mirabeau coule la Seine. (cf. *Sous le pont Mirabeau la Seine coule.)
 under the bridge Mirabeau flow.PRS.3SG the Seine
 ‘Under the Mirabeau bridge flows the Seine’

3.2.2 Quantifier Fronting

The second type of non-focal fronting is usually called *Quantifier Fronting*, as the presence of bare quantifiers and quantified phrases in initial position has attracted the attention of linguists

Whereas (i) is a clear case of resumptive preposing, with an anaphoric reading of *così* ‘so’, (ii) is a completely different sequence: there is no inversion because in this case *così* is a discourse marker and occurs in a position that is external to the clause.

with particular force (Hernanz 2001; Zubizarreta 1998; Leonetti & Escandell-Vidal 2009; Escandell-Vidal & Leonetti 2014; Poole 2014 for Spanish; Quer 2002; Vallduví 2002; Gallego 2007; Batllori & Hernanz 2015 for Catalan; Costa 2004; Barbosa 2009 for Portuguese; Benincà et al. 1988; Cinque 1990 for Italian). The examples in (33) illustrate this core case of fronting for several languages,¹⁵ but the same construction is possible, depending on the language, with a variety of preposed constituents (APs, PPs, adverbials, bare nominals); it is important to recall that there cannot be intonational breaks or emphatic stress, and that the quantified expression is not in focus – the same examples could be pronounced with heavy stress on the initial phrase, but in such case there would be genuine focus fronting.

- (33) a. **Bastante trabajo** tengo ya. (Sp.; Leonetti & Escandell-Vidal 2009)
 enough work have.PRS.1SG already
 ‘Enough work I have already.’
- b. **Poucos colegas** consultei. (Pt.; Costa & Martins 2011)
 few colleagues consult.PST.1SG
 ‘I consulted few colleagues.’
- c. **Algú** hi trobarás, a la casa. (Cat.; Quer 2002)
 someone CI find.FUT.2SG at the house
 ‘(For sure) you will find someone at the house.’
- d. **Qualcosa** farò (non preoccuparti).¹⁶ (It.; Benincà et al. 1988, Cinque 1990)
 something do.FUT.1SG not worry.IMP
 ‘Something I will do (don’t worry).’
- e. **Pe nimeni** nu am întâlnit în parc. (Ro.; Soare 2009)
 to nobody not have.PRS.1SG seen in park
 ‘I didn’t see anybody in the park.’

The most salient features of quantifier fronting are the following:

- (a) Despite the absence of overt informational partitions, the sentences cannot receive athetic reading.
- (b) Fronting gives rise to a typical emphatic flavour, sometimes described as ‘affective’, or ‘evaluative’, or ‘exclamative’¹⁷; this subtle additional value, though it does not affect truth

¹⁵ It seems that French lacks this kind of non-focal fronting. Examples like (i), from Abeillé, Godard & Sabio (2008), look very similar to the core cases of quantifier fronting – their Spanish equivalents can be used as instances of non-focal fronting, in fact –, but they are surely closer to focus fronting, perhaps with a mirative nuance:

(i) A peine huit ans il avait. Fr.
 ‘Just eight, he was.’

¹⁶ In this case a topic interpretation of the indefinite *qualcosa* is also possible, even though there is no resumptive clitic.

¹⁷ A specific construction has been described in European Portuguese under the label ‘evaluative exclamative sentences’ (Ambar 1999; Costa & Martins 2011) that can be considered an instance of non-focal fronting. A representative example is given in (i):

(i) Muito whisky bebeu o capitão. Pt.
 ‘Much whisky drank the captain.’

conditions, makes the sentences in (33) semantically distinct from their unmarked counterparts without fronting.

(c) The fronted quantified expression receives a non-specific, narrow scope reading, and there is a preference for weak, indefinite quantifiers – only bare indefinite quantifiers appear in Cinque’s (1990) Italian examples. The condition on non-specificity goes hand in hand with a restriction against the fronting of heavy, complex constituents: in fact, maintaining a single informational chunk – with the corresponding prosodic contour – when a heavy constituent is fronted is a difficult task, as heaviness calls for some informational split to make processing easier.

Points (a) and (b) can be explained along the following lines. In Leonetti & Escandell-Vidal (2009) it is claimed that the marked, emphatic status of the sentences in (33) can be explained if we assume that fronting triggers a ‘verum focus’ interpretation, i.e. an interpretation in which there is in fact a covert focus–background partition, with narrow focus falling on the positive polarity of the proposition, and the overt constituents of the sentence form a single informational chunk – the background. Focus on the positive polarity leads to reinforcing the strength of the assertion. Thus, the typical emphatic character and the argumentative orientation of the utterance are a result of this specific focus structure.¹⁸ It is non-focal fronting that produces a sentence with no overt informational partitions and thus forces narrow focus to fall on polarity, as a last resort interpretive mechanism. *Verum Focus Fronting* could then be an adequate denomination for the construction.

As for point (c), the constraint against specific indefinites is again rooted in IS. A specific reading of the fronted indefinite would typically trigger an informational partition, with the fronted expression processed as a topic, in particular in languages that are sensitive to prominence factors and easily resort to informational splits, like “restrictive” languages. The fact that specific fronted indefinites are usually interpreted as topics forces a correlation between non-focal fronting and non-specificity, since a non-specific reading is a basic condition for banning a topical interpretation of the fronted constituent (cf. Leonetti forthcoming). Bare quantifiers and negative indefinites fit the construction particularly well just because they are by default non-specific and can hardly be processed as dislocated topics. The best candidates for non-focal fronting are the expressions that are not good candidates for dislocation. This is the reason why many languages allow for constructions like Negative Fronting, a particular instance of non-focal fronting: negative items are the prototypical case of expressions that are incompatible with dislocation.

From a comparative perspective, quantifier fronting, or Verum Focus Fronting – in all its varieties, including cases where elements other than quantifiers are preposed – shows a

Evaluative and exclamative interpretations are in fact common in non-focal fronting. What makes Portuguese evaluative exclamatives different from the rest of the Romance data is that here subject inversion is optional: (i) is also grammatical with SV order.

(ii) Muito whisky o capitão bebeu.

¹⁸ The emphatic nature of Verum Focus Fronting is salient in the role of fronting in exclamative sentences in Spanish, Portuguese and Romanian, as in (i), and in the productivity of the construction for the expression of irony, as in (ii).

(i) Frumoasă casă și-a cumpărat Maria! (Ro.; Giurgea & Remberger 2012)
‘What a beautiful house Maria bought!’

(ii) ¡Bonita faena me has hecho! (Sp.; Escandell-Vidal & Leonetti 2014)
‘A nice chore you’ve done for me!’

distribution that, at this point, is no longer surprising: it is excluded in French, limited to core cases with negative and indefinite quantifiers in Italian¹⁹ and Catalan²⁰, the other restrictive languages, and productive in European Portuguese and Spanish, the permissive languages – to some extent also in Romanian. Beyond this cline of productivity lies the divide between restrictive and permissive languages: only permissive ones can fully accept a marked order with no (overt) informational partition; restrictive languages limit non-focal fronting to the few cases that clearly do not force a partition.

3.3 Non-focal fronting and Romance word order

If OVS is understood as non-focal fronting, according to the view adopted here, the picture that results from a survey on Romance languages includes the following facts:

- (a) OVS was highly productive in Old Romance, as we will see in Section 5, but is not so anymore in modern Romance languages, except in Spanish and Portuguese.
- (b) Not surprisingly, the languages in which it is still productive are the most “permissive” ones, as far as word order is concerned. The rest of varieties make a very limited use of the construction, since they obey the tendency to impose an informational partition between the fronted constituent and the rest of the sentence. Certain languages (Italian, Sardinian) systematically resort to focus fronting instead of non-focal fronting.
- (c) The construction survives in two basic formats, resumptive preposing and so-called quantifier fronting. The same divide between restrictive and permissive languages holds in both cases. In a cross-linguistic view of quantifier fronting, the set of expressions that better fit the construction correspond to the set of the worst candidates for aboutness topic, namely negative quantifiers and bare indefinites. This is, obviously, rooted in the particular informational articulation of non-focal fronting.
- (d) Though more detailed descriptions are needed, the distribution of OVS nowadays follows – with little variation – the same hierarchy of languages that determines subject inversion in Table 1. It is reproduced here as (34).

(34) French > Italian > Catalan > European Portuguese > (Romanian) > Spanish

The main conclusion of a look to OVS is that, once more, variation in word order in Romance is determined by conditions on the mapping from syntax to IS.

¹⁹ Italian allows for quantifier fronting with a small set of elements only (*qualcosa* ‘something’, *qualcuno* ‘somebody’, *poco* ‘few’, negative quantifiers). With other quantifiers and other categories – APs, PPs, adverbs –, fronting is fully acceptable only if the initial constituent is pronounced with a prominent pitch accent, i.e. with the prosodic pattern of focus fronting, and with a focus–background partition (Leonetti forthcoming).

²⁰ Catalan tends to reject the pervasive use of quantifier fronting that is typical of Spanish, but intense language contact somehow blurs the differences and makes speakers’ judgements often insecure and contradictory. Gallego (2007) first noticed that counterparts of Spanish fronting examples are not idiomatic in Catalan, but Quer (2002) and Vallduví (2002) give several acceptable examples (see Leonetti 2013 and Batllori & Hernanz 2015 for discussion).

4 Scrambling and reordering

The syntax of Romance is flexible enough to allow for the possibility of reordering verbal complements (including both arguments and adjuncts). Reordering phenomena, also known as *scrambling* – in this case, ‘short scrambling’ – affect postverbal constituents, and are motivated by IS considerations. Zubizarreta (1998: 124–146) dubs *p-movement* (for *prosodically motivated movement*) the operation that alters the neutral word order to ensure that the phrase that the speaker intends to focalize occurs in the rightmost position, where it receives prosodic prominence. Notice that the idea of reordering implies assuming that there is in fact a neutral order: in Romance, this neutral order is ‘verb + direct object + indirect object or prepositional complement + adjuncts’.²¹ In the following examples, p-movement scrambles the locative argument over the object in (35), the indirect object over the direct object in (36), the secondary predicate over the object in (37), and the direct object over the adverb in (38), where *bem* precedes the object in its basic position.

- (35) a. Se dejó el libro en su casa. (Sp.; López 2009: 174–175)
Cl leave.PST.3SG the book in his home
‘He left the book at home.’
b. Se dejó en su casa el libro.
- (36) a. Abbiamo dato un premio a Dina. (It.; Belletti & Shlonsky 1995: 491)
have.PRS.1PL given a prize to Dina
‘We gave a prize to Dina.’
b. Abbiamo dato a Dina un premio.
‘We gave Dina a prize.’
- (37) a. Cette musique rend son fils fou de joie. (Fr.; Abeillé & Godard 2006: 12)
this music make.PRS.3SG his son mad of joy
b. Cette musique rend fou de joie son fils.
‘This music makes his son mad with joy.’
- (38) a. O João fala bem francês. (Pt.; Martins 2011: 135)
the João speak.PRS.3SG well French
‘João speaks French quite well.’
b. O João fala francês bem.

²¹ As for the relative order of adjuncts, we should at least distinguish between adverbs and PPs, because adverbs can occur in different positions in clausal structure depending on their semantic properties, and thus deserve a specific treatment. There are interesting asymmetries concerning the position of adverbs, like the contrast between Italian and Spanish illustrated in (i)-(ii), but they fall out of the limits of this chapter.

- (i) Lei beve sempre il tè. / *Lei sempre beve il tè. It.
‘She always drinks tea.’
(ii) Ella bebe siempre té. / Ella siempre bebe té. Sp.

Reordering in the (b) examples imposes a reading with narrow focus on the final constituent – a reading that would not be available in the neutral order. At the same time, the displaced constituent escapes narrow focus assignment and is made less salient. This explains that examples (a) and (b) may be answers to different questions. Reordering is, thus, a strategy that creates, through defocusing of the scrambled constituent, a more transparent relation between word order and focus structure. As it is an optional operation, it may be favoured or determined by a series of factors that are known to be relevant for word order in many, if not all, languages: (a) heavier or longer constituents tend to follow shorter ones, and are processed more easily if they occur in final position – cf. the rule of Heavy NP Shift in English; the contrasts in (39)–(40), in French, are due to the “light” status of elements like bare nouns and quantifiers, which excludes them from the final position (cf. Abeillé & Godard 2006); (b) given information tends to be presented before new information; (c) the need to avoid ambiguity and to mark contrast transparently may force reordering; (d) the formation of complex predicates, collocations and idiomatic expressions usually has “freezing” effects on word order.

- (39) a. Cet endroit fait peur aux enfants. Fr.
 ‘This place scares children.’
 b. *Cet endroit fait aux enfants peur.
- (40) a. Paul expliquera tout à son fils.
 ‘Paul will explain everything to his son.’
 b. ?Paul expliquera à son fils tout.

Though the grammar of reordering is essentially the same in all Romance languages, the asymmetry we observed between restrictive and permissive languages reappears here again in subtle ways. The most significant evidence concerns the distribution of wide focus readings. In the relevant literature (Belletti & Shlonsky 1995; Zubizarreta 1999; López 2009) it is usual to observe that the ambiguity between wide focus and narrow focus readings in the neutral order – the (a) examples in (35)–(38) – vanishes after reordering, given that this operation gives rise to a different focus configuration; briefly, only the neutral order admits focus projection. This is surely true for Central Romance. However, Martins (2011) and Leonetti (2013) point out that in Portuguese and Spanish the wide focus reading survives reordering, in adequate contexts, although the other interpretation – narrow focus on the last constituent – may be the preferred one. This is just another piece of evidence for the diverging behaviour of the two groups of Romance languages. Further confirmation comes from the contrast between Italian and Spanish in (41):

- (41) a. *Ha dato a Maria un libro Gianni. It.
 have.PRS.3SG given to Maria a book Gianni
 b. Le ha dado a María un libro Juan. Sp.
 Cl have.PRS.3SG given to María a book Juan
 ‘John gave a book to Mary / John gave Mary a book.’

In these sentences reordering is combined with subject inversion (VOS), which makes them particularly marked. Whereas in Italian the resulting string is ill-formed, due to the fact that the

direct object *un libro* and the inverted subject *Gianni* compete for narrow focus, and only one of them can receive it, in Spanish the corresponding sentence is still acceptable, in a context favouring theticity. Obviously, the acceptability of (41b) is due to the tolerance of Spanish for marked orders with no partitions.

Usually, in permissive languages the neutral order of postverbal elements is less “visible”, since it can be easily modified; in restrictive languages, it has a more salient role. A nice example of the visibility of neutral order in Central Romance comes from the type of inversion labelled as *inversion focus* in French in Lahousse (2011: 197): the subject must occupy the final position, after the verb and the complements, but, crucially, the order of such complements must respect the neutral pattern (‘direct object + indirect object + adjuncts’). The contrast in (42) shows that in this kind of inversion the indirect object cannot be scrambled over the direct object, in accordance with the rigidity of French syntax in this respect.

- (42) a. Ne donneront de l’argent aux pauvres que les riches. Fr.
‘Only the rich will give money to the poor.’
b. *Ne donneront aux pauvres une très grosse somme que les riches.

Needless to say, scrambling would be acceptable in the corresponding sentence in a permissive language like Spanish.

5 From Old Romance to Modern Romance

5.1 Latin word order

It is widely accepted that Latin was in many aspects a free word order language – although word order was not absolutely free, with SOV as its most frequent word order pattern, and SVO, VSO, OVS and other competing orders as alternative options (Salvi 2004; Ledgeway 2011, 2012). SOV was certainly the most conservative order, possibly only dominant in the written language, and its competitors were justified by the need to express different features of IS. In Latin, word order was not necessary for the identification of grammatical functions, since they were marked by the morphological form of words; therefore, it is not surprising that alternations in word order were mainly conditioned by pragmatic or processing considerations. As argued in Ledgeway (2011, 2012), Latin showed all the main features of a non-configurational syntax: there were no fixed positions for syntactic elements, there were no phrasal categories, discontinuity between related items was common, and the internal organisation of sentences was apparently flat, deprived of hierarchical structure. The most significant innovation in the transition from Latin to Romance, then, was the gradual transformation of the original non-configurational system into “an increasingly configurational syntax” (Ledgeway 2012: 31). Changes in word order from Latin to Romance must be seen as a part of this development of configurationality. In the new grammatical systems that appear, word order becomes more rigid

and less pragmatically determined, and the mapping from syntax to IS becomes gradually subject to stricter conditions.

5.2 Word order in Old Romance

The historical development of Latin led to a decrease in verb-final orders, to an increase in verb-initial orders, which had marked discourse functions in Classical Latin and became common – and unmarked – in Late Latin, and, crucially, to a tendency towards verb-medial orders, i.e. patterns with the verb placed between the subject and the object, in whatever order (SVO, OVS), that were widespread in Old Romance.

In these verb-medial orders, the initial position immediately before the verb was exploited as a landing site for fronting of discourse-salient constituents, either with topic value or with a focal interpretation. This formal pattern became the most frequent one in Old Romance, and is usually known as V2 (Verb Second), on the basis of a parallelism with Germanic languages that obey to a V2 constraint in main clauses, like German (cf. footnote 1 on Rhaeto-Romance). The alternation of the two orders compatible with the verb in second position – SVO, OVS – eventually resulted in the prevalence of SVO, due to the progressive reanalysis of fronted topical subjects as occupying a canonical position inside the sentential core. The crucial feature of the V2 pattern is that the preverbal field is not specialised for subjects, so that it hosts topical subjects as well as all kinds of fronted complements – in this case giving rise to subject inversion. It is controversial, to say the least, that old Romance languages were strictly V2 like Germanic languages are, given that sentences with V1 order – verb-initial – and even V3 – verb in third position – are also attested, but it is true that the development of verb-medial orders in Late Latin had a major role in the emergence and consolidation of SVO as the unmarked order in Romance (see Benincà 2004 and Salvi 2004 for the V2 hypothesis for Old Romance, and Kaiser 2002, Kaiser & Zimmermann 2011, Sitaridou 2011, 2012 for a critical assessment of this idea).

If the position of the finite verb in the main clause is taken as a sign of the development of a more rigid syntax, a sharp contrast emerges between Old French and the rest of Old Romance varieties (Sitaridou 2012: 578; cf. Kaiser & Zimmermann 2011): on the one hand, in Old French V1 was very restricted, whereas in Old Ibero-Romance and Old Italo-Romance it was widespread; on the other hand, Old French has the highest percentage of V2 clauses (more than 80%); finally, Old French has a lower percentage of V3 clauses. Be this evidence for a genuine V2 syntax in Old French or simply evidence for a more advanced process of grammaticalization of word order in this language, it is clear that French stands out as a differentiated system among its relatives since the Middle Ages.

One of the consequences of the vitality of the linear V2 pattern is that OVS – or, more precisely, XVS – is well attested in Old Romance (Sornicola 2000). It seems that the interpretation of the fronted constituent was underspecified and context dependent: it could be a topic, or an

informational focus, or be devoid of any specific informational load, as in non-focal fronting (cf. Sitaridou 2011 for an analysis of fronted elements in Old Spanish). This last option is particularly significant. Old Romance displays constructions that conform to the properties of Resumptive Preposing – examples in (44) – and Quantifier Fronting or Verum Focus Fronting – examples in (45) and (46); notice that if the fronted phrase is a direct object, there is no resumptive clitic (Benincà 2004, 2013); with this kind of fronting, there is obligatory proclisis.

(44) a. **Ceste promesse** fist li rois a monseigneur Gauvain. (*Mort le roi Artu* 128, 13-14; OFr.)

this promise make.PST.3SG the King to monsignor Gauvain
‘The king made this promise to monsignor Gauvain.’

b. **Queste parole** gl’ insegnaro i savi vecchi del regno. (*Novellino* VIII, 74; OIt.)
these words Cl teach.PST.3PL the wise oldmen of-the kingdom
‘The wise old men of the kingdom taught him these words.’

c. **Esto é** yo en debdo. (*Cid* 225; OSp.)
this have.PRS.1SG I in debt
‘This I owe you.’

d. **Questo** avrò=e’. (*Lio Mazor* 45; OVto.)
this have.FUT.1SG I
‘This I will have.’

e. **Tal serviço** lhe pode fazer hûn homen pequeno. (Huber 1933, in Benincà 2004; OPt.)
such service Cl may make a man small
‘A small man may make such a service.’

(45) a. **Mucho** se maravilló entonces el rey Nabucodonosor... (*General Estoria* 4, 265; OSp.)

much Cl wonder.PST.3SG then the King Nabucodonosor
‘King Nabucodonosor was then much amazed.’

b. **Motas outras consolacions** li=fes le Senhers. (*Douceline* 47; OOcc.)
many other consolations Cl make.PST.3SG the Lord
‘The Lord made her many other consolations.’

c. ...**molt** me enuja la vostra partida. (*Curial e Güelfa*; Batllori & Hernanz 2015; OCat.)

much me upset.PRS.3SG the your departure
‘Your departure upsets me greatly.’

d. E **niente** poteva acquistare contro a quel populo. (*Novellino* XXXVI, 210; OIt.)
and nothing could gain against to that people
‘And he could not gain anything against those people.’

(46) a. Maestro, **di grande scienza** ti credo. (*Novellino* II, 45 64; OIt.)
master of great science you believe.PRS.1SG

‘Master, I consider you of great knowledge.’

b. ... **grant duel** firent et li povre et li riche por le roi Artu. (*Mort le roi Artu* 136, 16-179; OFr.)

great mourning do.PST.3PL and the poor and the rich for the king Artu
‘Both the poor and the rich made a great mourning for the king Artu.’

the same, but the progressively stricter conditions on its informational value considerably reduced its use; in Central Romance, such reduction was particularly dramatic.

Together with OVS, instances of OSV order are also attested in Old Romance. As OSV is usually the result of combining a dislocated topic with a SV order, it will not be discussed here.

As in the case of fronting/OVS, the evolution of subject inversion patterns is again a story of gradual reduction of existing options. However, in this case, the process took place in Central Romance only; Spanish, Portuguese and Romanian maintain the old system for subject inversion with little modifications. The relevant facts are essentially two: the loss of VSO, and the evolution of informational conditions on the rest of inversion patterns.

As already pointed out, VSO was common in Late Latin; verb-initial orders in declarative clauses had become typically associated withthetic interpretations in narrative and presentative contexts. In Old Romance VSO maintained its wide focus reading. It was soon lost in Old French, and examples like (47)²² are marginal, and rarely found, but in the rest of Old Romance languages, including Italian and Sardinian, VSO was a possible order, as shown in (48)–(49):

(47) Or entendi **messires Robers Canolles** les nouvelles... (J. Froissart, *Chroniques* I, 1, 757; Fr.)

now understand.PST.3SG mister Robers Canolles the news
‘Mister Robers Canolles got the news...’

(48) a. E por eso dio **Dios** al ome entendimiento e razón... (*Zifar* 269; OSp.)
And for that give.PST.3SG God to-the man understanding and reason
‘And this is why God provided man with understanding and reason...’

b. Em várias partes das fronteiras fizeram **os castellanos** fumo. (*Gazeta*; OPt.)
in several parts of-the borders make.PST.3PL the Castilians smoke
‘In several parts of the border the Castilians made smoke.’

c. Posit **Iorgi Capai** terra de Gavini Capra a chiesa. (*SMDB* 116; OSrd.)
donate.PST.3SG Iorgi Capai land of Gavini Capra to church
‘Iorgi Capai donated Gavini Capra’s land to the church.’

(49) a. Aveva **Pericone** un fratello d’età di venticinque anni. (*Decameron* II, 7, 32; OIt.)

have.PST.3SG Pericone a brother of age of twenty five years
‘Pericone had a brother who was twenty five.’

b. Meravigliossi **Melisso** della risposta della donna... (*Decameron* IX, 9, 25-26; OIt.)
marvel.PST.3SG Melisso of-the reply of-the woman
‘Melisso marvelled at the woman’s reply...’

c. Un giorno tolse **questo re** molto oro... (*Novellino* VIII, 75; OIt.)
one day take.PST.3SG this king much gold
‘One day this king took a lot of gold...’

Sornicola (2000: 108) notes that in Old Italian and Old Spanish VSO often appears with a stylistic value of ‘turning point in the narration’, which is, not surprisingly, one of the prototypical discourse functions of VSO in modern Spanish too. Old Spanish is the language

²² The example corresponds to Middle French.

that shows the highest rate of subject inversion (VS, VSO, VOS), and this is another stable feature of the language in the Romance context. Thus, a look at the evolution of VSO indicates that the languages in the permissive group have retained this pattern with the same value it had in the Middle Ages, while the languages in the restrictive group have lost it. It is reasonable to think that the disappearance of VSO in Central Romance – first in French, later in Catalan, Sardinian and Italian – is due to a change in the constraints on focus structure that must have had effects on other phenomena as well.

In fact, certain aspects of the use of VS and VOS in Old Romance confirm this assumption. Any kind of inversion could receive a wide focus interpretation in the old languages, in contexts where modern Central Romance tends to reject it in favour of a narrow focus reading for the subject – i.e. in favour of an interpretation based on an informational partition (cf. Vanelli 1986: 257; Sornicola 2000: 108, 2004: 201–202). VS and VOS sentences were used with the textual function of turning point in the narration, with subjects that were discourse given and were not in focus, as can be observed in (50)–(53):

- (50) E tomó el açor **el enperador** e... (*Zifar* 395–396; OSp.)
and take.PST.3SG the goshawk the emperor and
'And the emperor took the goshawk and...'
- (51) Reçibiolo **el Çid**. (*Cid* 203; OSp.)
Receive.PST.3SG–him the Cid
'The Cid received him.'
- (52) E fez muito dano **a tempestade**. (*Gazeta*; Opt.)
And make.PST.3SG much damage the storm
'And the storm caused great damage.'
- (53) ...e quivi ismontoe **Pernam** per bere. (*Tristano Riccardiano*, quoted in Vanelli 1986: 258; OIt.)
and here dismount.PST-3SG Pernam for drink
'...and here Pernam dismounted in order to drink.'

Once again, the data show that Old Romance word order is much closer to the patterns that we find in modern permissive languages than to the properties of restrictive languages. The major changes that led to the current splitting between the two groups consisted in the development of stricter conditions on focus structure in Central Romance, which led to a severe limitation of the possibility of having wide focus in marked orders. Ultimately, this implies that the highest percentage of inversion is found in Spanish, Portuguese and Romanian – though the rate of inversion has been decreasing over the last two centuries in Portuguese.

All the patterns discussed until now have survived in at least some of the modern languages. However, there is one marked order, SOV – presumably a Latinism, never too productive –, which disappeared in modern Romance (except in some residual cases, such as so-called 'middle scrambling' with deictic locatives in Portuguese, cf. Costa & Martins 2010). This is a common feature in the Romance domain, as noted in Section 4 on scrambling. Some examples of SOV/SXV in Old Romance are reproduced in (54), with the scrambled complement in bold; all of them are unacceptable in modern varieties.

- (54) a. Se l' avessi **a mente** tenuto (Bono Giamboni, *Libro*, cap. 6, par. 6; OIt.)
 if it have.PST.1SG at mind had
 'If I had kept it in mind'
- b. La quale **il suo desiderio** le lodò molto. (*Decameron* V, 2, 38; OIt.)
 the which the her desire her praise.PST.3SG much
 'She praised her will very much.'
- c. Lors chacun **sa joye** renforça. (*Le petit Jehan de Saintré*, 35; OFr.)
 then each-one his joy reinforce.PST.3SG
 'Then everyone reinforced his joy.'
- d. Nem os que **esta estoria desta guisa** contam. (OPt.; from Martins 2011: 147)
 nor those who this story in-this manner tell.PRS.3PL
 'Nor those who tell this story in this manner.'
- e. quem vos **tall cousa** disse... (OPt.; from Pádua 1960: 73, in Martins 2011: 149)
 who you such thing tell.PST.3SG
 'Whoever told you that...'
- f. ...cuando Nabucodonosor **allí** llegó d'aquella vez. (*General Estoria* 4: 187-188; OSp.)
 when Nabucodonosor there arrive.PST.3SG of that time
 '... when Nabucodonosor arrived there that time.'

The generalized loss of SOV must be due to a syntactic change, possibly the deactivation of the position where complements could be moved across the verb in Old Romance (cf. Poletto 2014 for an analysis of Old Italian scrambling in terms of focus movement). This may be unrelated to changes in IS, but the informational properties of SOV may nonetheless offer some clue about the way word order was connected to IS in Old Romance. Martins (2011) notes that short scrambling is compatible with a 'flat', wide focus reading in modern European Portuguese, and middle scrambling of the kind illustrated in (54d,e) had the same property in Old Portuguese – though scrambling is essentially a defocalizing strategy. Thus, the two stages of the language “do not diverge with respect to the informational / pragmatic import of scrambling” (2011: 151), which is valid for Spanish too (cf. Section 4): the tolerance for wide focus readings even in marked orders is constant throughout the history of both languages. This provides further evidence for the assumption that the group of permissive languages today retains the core properties of word order in the old varieties.

5.3 Changes affecting IS

If we leave apart the general process of development of a configurational syntax, which affects the core of the grammatical system, an analysis of changes in word order from Old Romance to Modern Romance leads us to the conclusion that the major changes are related to the management of IS and take place at the interface of syntax and IS (Sitaridou 2012: 594–595).

The main change is the progressive reduction of the option of assigning wide focus interpretations to marked orders, and the concomitant specialization of such orders (for instance, the specialization of fronting for contrastive focus, or the restrictive conditions on VOS). This took place mostly in Central Romance, and the result was the creation of syntactic patterns that

require informational partitions – and, in some cases, the loss of certain orders, like VSO, or OVS in French. The development of stricter conditions on focus structure gave rise to the split between restrictive and permissive languages, which has revealed quite useful from a comparative point of view. Incidentally, the whole process may be seen as a consequence of the rise of configurationality, if restrictive languages are considered as more discourse-configurational than permissive ones.

A secondary process is the gradual loss of productivity of certain patterns that still remained active. This is, for instance, the case of OVS in languages that retained the syntactic option of non-focal fronting but reduced the range of expressions that may occur in fronted position, like Spanish and Portuguese. IS considerations may ultimately be behind this change in productivity: in modern varieties, fronted constituents belong to the set of optimal candidates to fit in non-focal fronting, while in old varieties any kind of constituent could be fronted. Again, IS constraints become stricter, though the syntax remains the same.

Table 2 shows the results of the main historical changes in four Romance languages. The first two columns from the left represent what is common to all of them: the change from OV to VO syntax. The remaining three columns represent the locus of variation: briefly, subject inversion – VOS and VSO – and fronting – OVS.

	SOV	SVO	VOS	VSO	OVS
French	*	√	highly constrained	*	almost excluded
Italian	*	√	constrained	*	highly constrained
Portuguese	*	√	√ (constrained)	√	√
Spanish	*	√	√	√	√

Table 2. Reduction of the initial range of possible orders in four languages

What changed in inversion and fronting? Considering only marked contexts for inversion, i.e. with transitive verbs, the story is quite simple: VOS and VSO naturally accepted wide focus interpretations in Old Romance, but their original values survived only in Spanish and to a lesser extent in Portuguese; in French and Italian, VOS specialized as a device for (restrictive) narrow focus on the subject, and VSO disappeared, being incompatible with the focus-background partitions required in these languages. As for fronting in OVS, the status of the preverbal constituent in Old Romance was not informationally specified, but its status changed in all Romance varieties: on the one hand, topic marking gave rise to Clitic (Left) Dislocation, a different construction; on the other hand, fronting lost the informational focus reading, and retained the contrastive focus reading if paired with emphatic stress (Focus Fronting); finally, in the case of non-focal fronting, restrictive languages reduced it to a minimum, due to their low tolerance for non-partitioned chunks, and permissive languages retained it, with some loss of productivity.

To sum up, the whole set of changes can be reduced to a basic tendency towards a more transparent encapsulation of IS. As suggested in Lahousse & Lamiroy (2012) and Sitaridou (2012), the reorganization of IS can be seen as a grammaticalization process. This does not

necessarily results in a more fixed word order, but rather in a more restrictive mapping between syntactic positions and focus structure.

6 Conclusions

The following points provide a synthesis of the contents in this chapter:

1. The basic order in Romance declarative clauses is SVO. Marked orders are obtained by subject inversion (VS, VOS, VSO), by fronting (OVS; only non-focal fronting considered here) and by reordering of complements or short scrambling.
2. Different orders express different interpretive instructions for information packaging (IS): to this end, the syntax of order provides clues for establishing possible informational partitions.
3. Cross-linguistic variation in Romance word order depends on how, and to what extent, each language constrains the mapping from syntax to informational partitions. In other words, it depends on how each grammatical system instructs the hearer about the possible partitions associated with a word order pattern.
4. Two groups of Romance languages can be identified. The Central Romance group (French, Italian, Catalan) is characterised by the need to impose informational partitions, by means of syntactic or prosodic mechanisms, on marked orders, in order to get a maximally transparent mapping of syntax onto IS. The languages in this group are especially restrictive with wide focus interpretation: it is straightforward only in SVO and VS with unaccusatives. The peripheral group (Spanish, Portuguese, Romanian) shows the opposite behaviour: these languages mark informational partitions like any other SVO language, but are quite permissive with the assignment of wide focus readings to marked orders. The most salient consequences of this property are the acceptability of VSO, rejected by Central Romance, the productivity of OVS, understood as non-focal fronting, and the high rate of subject inversion in all its versions.
5. A look at word order in Old Romance makes manifest that there was greater freedom than in modern languages: in addition to the Latin SOV pattern, which later disappeared in the Romance domain, all modern patterns were possible, and, most notably, they were not subject to restrictive informational conditions. Thus, Old Romance word order was much closer to what we currently find in the languages of the permissive group than to the grammars of the restrictive group. The major changes from Old to Modern Romance concern the expression of IS, in particular the conditions on informational partitions, which became stricter.
6. The factors governing synchronic cross-linguistic variation in word order are, not surprisingly, the same ones that determine diachronic variation.

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