

The clausal architecture of Old French infinitival clauses

Marc Olivier

University of Oxford – St John's College

Over the past decades, the diachrony of finite clauses in French has accumulated a vast literature (Adams 1987, Vance 1989, Hirschbühler and Labelle 2005, Labelle 2007, Zaring 2011, Mathieu 2013, Balon and Larrivé 2016, Donaldson 2018, Klævik-Pettersen 2019, Wolfe 2022). Our understanding of the evolution of infinitival clauses, however, remains elusive. Under the assumption that language variation at the pan-Romance level stems from historical developments, there is evidence that at least some changes took place in French infinitival clauses.

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|-----|---------------------|-----|-----|-------------------------------------|-----|
| (1) | a. Le voir. | FR. | (2) | a. Bien dormir est reposant. | FR. |
| | b. Vederlo. | IT. | | b. Dormire bene è riposante. | IT. |
| | c. Verlo. | SP. | | c. Dormir bien es reparador. | SP. |
| | ‘To <u>see</u> it.’ | | | ‘ <u>Sleeping</u> well is restful.’ | |

Unlike most Romance languages, French infinitives come after the clitic (1a) and after certain adverbs (2a), specifically adverbs from the Higher Adverb Space (HAS) (Cinque 2004, Ledgeway and Lombardi 2005). In this regard, most varieties have enclisis (1b-c) and the order infinitive-adverb_{HAS} (2b-c). Interestingly, these comparative issues have both been (independently) treated with regards to verb placement: since Kayne's (1991) proposal that clitics target a constant functional projection, it is assumed that enclisis is found in grammars where the infinitive moves to a position higher than the v/VP, whereas proclisis is found where the infinitive remains low (Mavrogiorgos 2010, Roberts 2010). Similarly, and within a Cartographic framework, the difference between (2a) on the one hand and (2b-c) on the other has been shown to stem from a low position of the infinitive in French (Pollock 1989, Belletti 1990, Cinque 2004, Schifano 2018, Roberts 2019). In this presentation, I will provide a descriptive and theoretically-informed analysis of Old French infinitival clauses, which I will show is key to contextualise the constructions exposed in (1) and (2).

In order to further characterise the variation attested above, I have investigated two corpora: the Corpus ConDÉ (Larrivé and Goux, 2022) and the Base de Français Médiéval (ENS Lyon, 1989-2022). The prediction that Old French patterned alongside other Romance varieties and underwent a series of changes is borne out, since both enclisis (3), and infinitive-adverb_{HAS} orders (4), (5) are attested until the early 14th century:

- (3) Tu mobliges a ferre **le**.
you me=force to do.INF it
‘You force me to do it.’ (*Grand Coutumier*, Seq. 283)
- (4) il s'en ala mengier et dormir **bien** celle nuit
he REFL=GEN went eat.INF and sleep.INF well that night
‘He went away to eat and sleep well on that night.’ (*Berin*, p. 244)
- (5) Ilz doivent venir **tousjours** à la bataille.
they must come.INF always to the battle
‘They must always come to the battle.’ (*Jouvence* p. 147)

Building on Kayne's (1991) hypothesis, I adopt the view that enclisis as in (3) indicates V-movement outside the v/VP domain. Formally, the clitic is a ϕ -head generated in the complement of the infinitive (Dechaine and Wiltschko 2002), and cliticisation is realised through an AGREE operation with v (Mavrogiorgos 2010, Roberts 2010). Since the clitic is

realised on v , proclisis is found in languages where the infinitive remains within the v /VP (6), whereas in languages with enclisis the infinitive targets a position in the IP domain (7).

$$(6) [IP\ I\ [_{VP}\ \phi_j\ [_{VP}\ V\ e_j]\]\]$$

$$(7) [IP\ V_i\ [_{VP}\ \phi_j\ [_{VP}\ e_i\ e_j]\]\]$$

In order to further characterise V-to-I movement with infinitives in Old French, I introduce an analysis of the data using the Cartographic approach (Cinque and Rizzi 2010), a theoretical framework which offers an appropriate tool to diagnose verb placement (Schifano 2018). For the purpose of my study, I selected adverbs from the HAS, since they necessarily follow the infinitive in languages that have enclisis (e.g. Italian, Spanish, Catalan), whereas they precede it in those that show proclisis (e.g. French). The prediction that Old French adverbs from the HAS follow infinitives is borne out, as exemplified in (4) and (5) which show the same word order as (2b) and (2c).

Formally, I assume that a head of infinitival IP possesses a [-FIN] feature that attracts the infinitive. Further, I propose that the /r/ suffix is a phonological realisation of [-FIN], which is present in the aforementioned varieties that have both enclisis and Infinitive-Adverb_{HAS} order. In so doing, I apply Roberts' (2019) proposal that a morphological cue can serve as 'trigger' for V-movement. The structure of Old French infinitival clauses is given in (8).

$$(8) [IP\ V_i+I[-FIN]\ [_{VP}\ adverb_{HAS}\ \phi_j+v\ [_{VP}\ e_i\ e_j]\]\]$$

Why did this change take place? Incidentally, both the loss of /r/ on French infinitives (Marchello-Nizia et al. 2020) and the loss of enclisis (Olivier 2021) took place at the same time, which further supports the hypothesis that /r/ triggers V_{INF} -movement in Old French, Italian and Spanish (the loss of the suffix initially concerned more verbs than it does in Modern French). I conclude that the infinitival IP domain of Old French was stronger, whereas it is weak, or inert (Roberts 2010) in Modern French since [-FIN] is not present. This naturally accounts for the variation observed today, since there is no diachronic evidence that Spanish and Italian transitioned into a grammar with a weak I.

The contribution of this paper is as follows: (i) it provides an empirical description of a set of unexplored data that allows us to characterise the clausal architecture of infinitival clauses in Old French, whilst also drawing comparisons at the pan-Romance level, (ii) it presents a theoretically-informed discussion, since I show that V-movement is best accounted for using the hypothesis that morphology triggers syntactic operations, and that it connects to clitic placement and adverb placement, and (iii) I provide supporting evidence that the variation attested in (1) and (2) is explained by the diachrony of French.

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