RESEARCH

To be or not to be informational: Preverbal complements in Medieval French V2 configurations

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It is widely assumed that Medieval French V2 constructions relate to an informational value (Labelle & Hirschbühler 2018 *i.a.*). This assumption is however rarely tested by quantitative studies, which tend to rely on heterogeneous textual material. The purpose of this paper is to document the informational value of preverbal complements that associate with (unambiguous) V2 configurations. I use a novel, homogeneous corpus of prose legal texts from the Normandy region over the period 1150–1475. Defining a decision tree, I determine the informational value of V2 complements, specifically whether they represent old information (explicit mentioned, anaphoric, accommodated or inferable) or new information. A categorical discourse-old value is evidenced for preverbal V2 complements for the period between 1150 and 1236. The loss of the categorical informational value precedes the decline of V2 as a productive configuration with the emergence of formulaic uses. The detailed documentation of the informational value of historical configurations, based on an explicit, replicable method applied to a homogeneous corpus, contributes to the understanding of the driving role of informational structure for syntactic change.

1 Introduction

Why does the syntactic organisation of languages change? One view is that a variety of options exist at any period, and that what varies is their status as marked or default variables (e.g. Roussou 2016). This is illustrated by the shift from *ex situ* to *in situ wh* partial questions. A significant minority of world languages (29% of the WALS sample, map 93.A) have *ex situ wh* as a default option for partial questions. Some of those have *in situ* as a marked option for specific usage, and in particular for echoic questions, as is the case with English and Ukrainian. As with French and Brazilian Portuguese, some of the default *ex situ* languages are displaying a shift toward a majority of *in situ* uses. These *in situ* are initially found categorically in clauses that are explicitly discourse-old, repeating an antecedent proposition (Larrivée 2019; Rosemeyer 2019). An explicitly discourse-old value thus initially characterise marked variables. Is there a similar trajectory for marked word order that would associate to a categorical informational value at some initial or final point of their development? It might be that word order options categorically associate with an informational value when they emerge or decline, either as a cause or a consequence of that change.

The role of informational value for word-order change is what is investigated in this paper. The considered change is the loss of verb-second (V2) configurations in a well-described language, Medieval French. These configurations are particularly good candidates for the

study of the relation between syntactic change and information structure, since an informational role is generally thought to attach to the preverbal complements[1] (see Labelle & Hirschbühler 2018 *inter alia*). Whether this actually is the case in Medieval French, and what it means for the relation between information structure and syntactic change, are questions that this paper answers.

It is organised as follows. Section 2 reviews recent studies that investigate the relation between declining Medieval French V2 configurations and information structure (IS). It suggests that such investigations should refer to a homogeneous corpus of data and an explicit informational analysis. The corpus and method are presented in section 3. Section 4 reports on the informational behaviour of preverbal complements in V2 configurations, touching upon other configurations such as clefts and dislocations. The final discussion in section 5 summarises the results, and assesses the extent to which information structure can be thought as a cause or a consequence of syntactic change. The overall conclusion is that preverbal complements have a categorical value of discourse-old information while V2 is a productive configuration, and that it is the loss of that categorical informational value that anticipates the decline of V2.

2 IS and preverbal complements

A major word order evolution in Romance is that from Latin (S)OV to SVO in contemporary Romance languages (e.g. Marchello-Nizia 2009; Danckaert 2017), reflecting a universal word-order change trend according to Gell-Mann & Ruhlen (2011). A transition stage of (some) early Romance languages is found in verb-second (V2) configurations XVS. In such configurations, the V2 preverbal complements are very generally believed to involve an informational value (such as e.g. Focus). The purpose of this section is to review recent work on the relationship between information structure and V2 preverbal complements in early French.

The idea that an informational value relates to early French and Romance V2 complements follows from general and theoretical assumptions. On a general level, because V2 is a minority[2,3] configuration in early French and other early Romance languages, and that minority configurations may take on a pragmatic value that relates to informational distinctions, such a pragmatic value could be assumed to characterise the marked structures. This is indeed the traditional view expressed by e.g. Venneman (1974) and Marchello-Nizia (2000). On a theoretical level, assuming a split-CP model *à la* Rizzi

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[1] The term *complement* here denotes phrases with a referential element in preverbal position of the V2 configuration. They are thus contrasted to particles like *si* 'thus' and coordinators like *et* 'and', and not, as is more generally the case, to adjuncts.

[2] A different view is expressed by a reviewer, who argues that following Roberts (1993) and Vance (1997) *inter alia*, Old French is preponderantly V2. That argument however hangs on how clauses with null subjects are analysed. Following a traditional suggestion that null subjects occur in the same contexts as V2, some have considered the former as a subcase of the latter. However, the rate and behavior of null subject do not necessarily converge with those of overt post-verbal subjects. In Prévost's (2015) extensive study of half a million words from literary texts for 1100 to 1400, there are 653 post-verbal expressed subjects, 4009 pre-verbal expressed subjects and 11179 null subjects, out of the 15841 total clauses. Apart from the quantitative disparity (which in the corpus used in this article comprises roughly 5% of post-verbal, 13% of null and over 80% of preverbal expressed subjects), differential behavior is suggested by Ingham (2018). Leaving null subject cases to one side, XVS structure is definitely a minority configuration.

[3] Another construction that for some is relevant to the status of French as a V2 language is the expressed preverbal subject. Arguably, SVO can be analysed as an instance of verb-second in a V2 language. As in the previous footnote, I point to the quantitative discrepancies between unambiguous V2 and SVO, and to their informational differences: if the subject in SVO had the same status as the XP in XVS, it should have the same categorical discourse-old value, and a quick look at full DP subjects (as opposed to clitics, which are expected to be discourse-old in any case) in the 1205 *Patronage* shows no categorical informational value (for more data on informational status of preverbal vs. post-verbal subjects in Medieval French, see Wolfe in this issue). I therefore doubt that SVO is V2 in the same way that XVS is in Medieval French, and concentrate on unambiguous V2 constructions.

(1997), the V2 preverbal complements must be in the left periphery of the sentence, since they precede the verb that is itself assumed to be left-peripheral (*inter alia* Wolfe 2016); and since left-peripheral projections relate to IS distinctions of Focus and Topic,[4] these values should associate to the complements.

There is however some disagreement about which informational value the preverbal complement takes on. That the V2 XP has a uniform Focus value is proposed in a recent monograph on Medieval French (Zimmermann 2014), as it is for e.g. Italian (Poletto 2014). This however contradicts the view of the XP as a Topic (Venneman 1974; Marchello-Nizia 2000), and the frequent attestations of topical deictic and anaphoric XPs, as pointed out by Mensching (2012) (and illustrated by e.g. (5) below).

The debate on the informational value of the preverbal XP in Medieval French is revisited by recent quantitative investigations. A systematic investigation is proposed by Ingham (2018a). Using a textually homogeneous corpus of 13th century narrative prose romances, he considers XPs in V2 configurations, excluding coordinated clauses. A correlation is found between the information status of the XP and the realisation of the subject. XPs comprising the deictic *ce* 'this' occur with 93% of expressed pronominal subjects (excluding impersonal subject pronouns), and only with 7% of null subjects. Conversely, intensifier XPs are found at 3% with an expressed personal pronoun subject, and at 97% with null subjects. Thus, discourse-old Topic XPs relate to an expressed subject in a V2 configuration, whereas discourse-new Focus XPs associate with a null subject. This is interpreted as reflecting the necessity for the null subject to be licensed by an operator in a left-peripheral Topic position, that is therefore not available to host a discourse-old phrase. This provides reasons to believe that at least in homogeneous corpora, for a given period of time, predominant informational roles can be found for preverbal complements. Such a predominant informational role is supported by other studies such as Ingham & Larrivée (2015). They find in the dialogic legal material of the Anglo-Norman Yearbooks for 1282–1284 that while 66% of XPs in X V S are discourse-old anaphoric when there is no particle *si* inserted, 76% of the XP in X *si* V S configurations where the asseveration particle *si* is inserted between the XP and the V are non-anaphoric (see also Rahn 2016).[5]

The literature thus provides reasons to believe that information structure plays a role in the occurrence and distribution of V2 XPs, although the nature of the informational value is a matter of debate. Issues that arise are the homogeneity of the investigated texts, the criteria for informational values, and the fact that informational values may change through time. These issues inform the method and corpus proposed for the current study, which are discussed in the next section.

3 Corpus and method

Research on syntactic change in Medieval French has typically been based on a heterogeneous variety of texts. The earliest available material tends to be literature in verse, and the region, date and author of texts may be difficult to identify. Continued reliance on literary texts may be explained by institutional factors such as the training in France of future high school French teachers in literature department (Lagorgette 2003).

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[4] As pointed out by a reviewer, it is true that there are left-peripheral positions that are assumed to have no definite informational value, such as that where frame complements land. What's more, some researchers state that Topic and Focus position do not necessarily correlate to the expected pragmatic values ("It is important to emphasize that I use the labels Topics and Focus to refer to syntactic objects, putting aside their precise pragmatic values.", Benincà 2006: 54), which of course considerably weakens the left-peripheral analysis. I stick to the strong hypotheses of a correlation between pragmatics and projections, and of Topic and Focus projections as the primary target of V2 XPs.

[5] However, Radwan (2011: 109) finds only 51% of XPs followed by V S in the prose romance *Tristan* written between 1215–1235 to be discourse-old.

This reliance on literary material presents a challenge in determining whether patterns of evolution relate to regional differences, textual differences such as the prose/verse distinction, or a general ongoing syntactic change.

The heterogeneity of the existing corpora impacts on the reliability of the proposed patterns of evolution. Dees (1980) demonstrates the extent of regional variation for a number of variables, including syntactic ones. Simonenko, Crabbé & Prévost (2018) show that mixing quantitative results from verse and prose texts yields unreliable curves of change. Likewise, documented curves of change vary according to text type (Ingham 2018b), and it has been argued that change is attested earlier in legal material (for null subject decline, see *inter alia* Balon & Larrivée 2016 and references therein). It seems therefore desirable to bring together a set of texts that allows the analyses to control for region, genre and text type. This is what is offered by a corpus of prose legal material extending the existing *Français Légal Ancien de Normandie*.[6] The Flan + corpus spans the period from the earliest date for extent legal prose (1150) to 1475. It comprises texts from Normandy, a region where early legal production is relatively abundant, situated between the Anglo-Norman zone, where most of the earliest material has been produced, and the Paris region, where the normative reference of French usage will be defined (see Glessgen 2017). It is homogeneous in terms of genre, relating to the legal field, and is balanced for three legal text types, custom records, judicial hearings and investigations. The goal is to have at least one prose text of each type per quarter of century over the period, so as to optimally have 300 clauses per text type per quarter. The set of selected texts is presented in Table 1.

Not all the initial expectations are met by the corpus as it stands however. Some texts from the Anglo-Norman zone have been used for the earliest period (*Leis Will*, 1150; *Willelmi articuli retractati*, 1200; and the later 1236 *Coutume d'Exeter*). Some texts do not add up to 300 clauses (there are fewer than 200 for custom laws in 1375, hearings in 1275, and investigations in 1250, 1300 and 1450; and fewer than 100 for custom law in 1425 and hearings in 1400). The cells for custom law in 1225 and 1450, for hearings in 1150, 1175 and 1425, and for investigations before 1250 and at 1375 are yet to be filled. It should be noted that the edition of the texts varies: while a number of texts are edited diplomatically following contemporary paleographical practices (thanks in particular to historians Adrien Dubois and Isabelle Bretthauer who have edited some of the manuscripts for this corpus), some are available in more traditional critical editions that may modify the letter of the manuscript – by tacitly resolving abbreviations, putting in punctuation, regularising spelling and morphology – which should however normally not impact word order. It is to be hoped that the gaps can be filled as more material is identified and made accessible.

The texts are imported in a word-processor. A continuous stretch of 300 finite clauses is annotated. Each clause is identified and marked for root or non-root status; the realisation of the subject (expressed or null), its morphosyntactic character (personal pronoun, impersonal, relative, other pronoun, nominal phrase, proper noun), and its position (before or after the verb) are systematically noted. Left-peripheral material is characterised according to its morphosyntactic status (direct and indirect objects, attributive complements, adverbials, particles, connectives and coordinators). Traditional terminology is deliberately used to reach different analytical constituencies when the annotated corpus is made available.

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[6] Available on the web site of CRISCO research centre, at http://crisco.unicaen.fr/ressources-en-ligne/francais-de-normandie/francais-legal-ancien-de-normandie/francais-legal-ancien-de-normandie-902627.kjsp?RH = 1527257177280.

Table 1: Extended corpus *Français Légal Ancien de Normandie.*

Quarter	Year	Custom laws	Year	Hearings + Instructions	Year	Investigations
1150–	1150	Leis Will				
1175–	1191	Établissement Saint-Quentin				
1200–	1200	Willelmi articuli retractati	1207–12	Arrêts de l'échiquier		
	1205	Patronage				
1225–	1236	Coutume d'Exeter	1234	Assises		
1250–	1250	Établissement Normandie	1271–76	Livre rouge d'Eu	1255	Moulin Anzerey
					1260	Enquête Breteuil
1275–	1291	Vicompté de l'eau de Rouen	1278–97	Arrêts de l'échiquier	1279	Enquête Pont Audemer
					1292	Enquête Domfront
1300–	1300	Grand coutumier	1320	Mortemer	1307	Enquête Templiers
					1318	Enquête Cotentin
1325–	1345	Établissement Rouen	1329	Assises de La Ferté	1333-36	Enquêtes normandes
					1344	Assignation du douaire
1350–	1364	Coutume de la prévôté de Caen	1355	Plès Mustel	1357-58	Lettres de rémission
			1358–64	Livre rouge d'Eu		
1375–	1380	Coustumes de l'eaue de saine	1386	Ordonnances		
			1386	Instrucions		
1400–	1398-1409	Coutumier des forêts	1423	Ordonnances	1423	Lettres de rémission
1425–	1444	Pierre Petit Vidimus			1430	Minute française du Procès de Jeanne d'Arc
1450–			1463	Ordonnances	1450	Enquête
			1470	Elbeuf	1472	Moulin des Noes

The annotated corpus thus allows identification and quantification of particular word order configurations at each period and for each text type. Each case of V2, defined as the verb preceded by at least one XP and followed by an expressed subject,[7] was extracted. Thus, cases of V3, V4 and V5 are included, and all the preverbal complements are considered. The sequences were analysed for the informational status of the initial complement(s). Informational status is defined as the relation to antecedent information provided by the text, following Dryer (1996). This means relying on textual flow, which is readily detectable, rather than appeal to any mental salience of referents, that may be difficult to assess, particularly in historical material.

A categorical distinction is made between discourse-new and discourse-old information. Discourse-old information is information that is available to the hearer/reader by virtue of the antecedent information provided by the text. Such an informational value

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[7] As noted in footnote 2, cases of null subjects were left to one side, because of quantitative and informational disparities with post-verbal expressed subjects; from a methodological point of view also, whether configurations with a null subject involve V2 is ambiguous, an ambiguity that does not attach to cases with expressed post-verbal subjects.

concerns complements in the following cases discussed in the literature: the complement has been mentioned explicitly before (i), it refers to a previously mentioned phrase either anaphorically or deictically (ii), it is accommodated by a presuppositional configuration (as with Contrastive Topics) (iii), or it can be inferred from sentential relations or world knowledge (iv). Discourse-new information represents information that has not been entertained before in the text, and that cannot be inferred from the linguistic environment or world-knowledge. Note that this does not mean that discourse-new complements are instances of Focus, but simply that they do not convey information made accessible by the antecedent information. The attribution of an informational status to a complement is done using the decision tree in Figure 1 (following Rahn 2016: 39–40; see Götze *et al.* 2007; Steiner 2014: 92–95; Imel 2019).

Let us take one example from the corpus to illustrate. The attestation below is a straight case of unambiguous V2, with a coordinator *et* 'and' and two complements before the main clause verb *tint* 'held' followed by subject clitic *il* 'he'.

(1)   et   après che quant il   fut   mandé   en eskevinage por
       and   after this when 3S-NOM be-PST-3S summon-PTCP in city-council for
       che   amender les   **tint**   il   tous por pariures
       this amend-INF 3P-ACC hold-PST-3S 3S-NOM all   for perjurer-P
       'And after this when he was summoned to the city council to amend this, he
       held them all as perjurers.'

                                                              (1271–1276, *Livre rouge d'Eu*)

What is the IS role of each of the two complements? The first, *après che* 'after this', has not been explicitly mentioned in the previous discourse (i); it contains however an anaphoric expression referring to the antecedent clause, responding positively to question (ii); it is therefore discourse-old. As for the temporal subordinate *quant il fut mandé en eskevinage por che amender* 'when he was summoned to the city council to amend this', it has not been explicitly mentioned before (i), is not anaphoric or deictic[8] (ii), is not in an accommodating construction (iii), and does not give way to an inference of accessibility (iv). It is therefore discourse-new.

The annotated data thus provide results that allow crucial questions about V2 complements in Medieval French to be answered. Is there a strong relation between V2 XPs and informational values? What is the nature of the informational value(s) concerned? The results are presented in the following section.

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i. Has the phrase been explicitly mentioned in the previous discourse?
     Yes -> It is discourse-old   No -> Go to ii.
ii. Is the phrase referring by anaphor or deixis to a previously-mentioned phrase?
     Yes -> It is discourse-old   No -> Go to iii.
iii. Is the phrase used in a construction that accommodates it as discourse-old information?
     Yes -> It is discourse-old   No -> Go to iv.
iv. Is the phrase used in a context that leads to infer it as discourse-old information based on *a.* previous discourse or *b.* world-knowledge?
     Yes -> It is discourse-old   No -> It is discourse-new.

Figure 1: Decision tree for information structure annotation.

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[8] Although it contains an anaphoric expression, that is however not directly relevant to the time expression of the subordinate.

4 The Information Structure of V2

V2 is a rare typological feature, that is mostly found in some families of Indo-European languages, Germanic, Celtic and Indo-Aryan (see the overview in Holmberg 2015, *inter alia*). It is also attested in a number of Medieval Romance languages (Wolfe 2018a, 2016 and the extensive set of references therein), including French. In most languages, the configuration is asymmetric: it is a feature of main clauses, and is constrained or excluded in subordinates. That would be because subordinates have a less developed left-periphery, which is targeted by V2. However, variation has been alleged between asymmetric and symmetric stages of the same language (see Côté 1995; Hulk & Kemenade 1995 for Medieval French). Another recurrent variation is one between (states of) languages with strict V2, allowing only one item before the verb, as seems to be the case in contemporary standard German, and non-strict V2, typically (some periods of) Medieval French. According to Wolfe (2016), the variation is dependent on whether the verb moves to a relatively low FinP position in a non-strict V2, or to a relatively high ForceP projection in a strict V2, a high position that prevents other XPs from moving up. Evolution from strict to non-strict has been claimed for the same language at different periods (for early French, see the discussion between Rouveret 2004 and Labelle & Hirschbühler 2005).

A recurring allegation is that the XP complement in a V2 configuration is in a sentence-initial position because it has an informational value. The reasons why complement XPs are focused upon in the literature, as opposed to particles and coordinators, are two-fold. First, complements, as illustrated by e.g. verb arguments, adverbials and subordinates, have plausibly moved to the left periphery, rather than being base-generated there. Consider the following:

(2)   mès du gage   ne   **sevent**   riens   li   jureeurs
           but of the pledge NEG know-PR-3P nothing the-P-NOM juror-P
           'But about the pledge, the jurors know nothing.'
                                     (1207–1211, *Arrêt de l'échiquier de Normandie*)

The initial complement *du gage* 'about the pledge' would be expected to be generated within the verbal phrase, as it is normally a post-verbal argument of the verb. As pointed out by Ledgeway (2008), no movement is the case for particles such as *si*, or for coordinators: the coordinator *mès* 'but' in (2) would be in initial position in any case. The movement out of the verb phrase is assumed, because it leads to the left-periphery, to have an informational motivation. The second reason to focus on complement XPs is that they may be assessed for informational value. It makes sense to ask whether *du gage* 'about the pledge' relates to information available in the antecedent discourse or not, since either option is available: in that case, as the *gage* is explicitly mentioned in the antecedent context, the XP represents discourse-old information. Such an assessment is difficult for particles and coordinators; there are no clear cases cited in the literature of variation between discourse-old and discourse-new particles or coordinators.

The results from the informational annotation of the occurrences of complement XPs in V2 configurations in the extended corpus Flan + are provided in the Table 2 below.

Most texts from the corpus contain instances of V2, but not all do. Those that do not are generally brief. No text with 15 or fewer main clauses have V2[9] – 1255 *Moulin Anzerey*

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[9] This includes annotated texts that are not in the main corpus because they are brief or fragmentary: 1133 *Testament Haucourt* with 19 clauses and 10 main clauses, and *ca* 1175 *Réponse à l'enquête des shérifs*, with 5 and 3. However, there is one V2 in the 842 *Serment de Strasbourg* with 12 clauses and 4 main clauses, and two V2 in the beginning of the 12th century *Cérémonial d'une épreuve judiciaire* with 11 clauses and 3 main clauses. This shows the influence of the time period, as short early texts contain a far greater proportion of V2 than later short texts.

Table 2: IS value of preverbal complements in V2 configurations in the Flan+ corpus per quarter, in numbers.

Quarter	Discourse-old	Discourse-new	Total Complement V2	Total V2 cases	Total clauses
1150–	11	0	11	12	229
1175–	0	0	0	0	380
1200–	9	0	9	13	399
1225–	5	1	6	11	518
1250–	13	0	13	24	688
1275–	17	5	22	49	953
1300–	24	9	33	56	729
1325–	22	2	24	40	905
1350–	6	9	15	41	995
1375–	8	10	18	40	747
1400–	2	0	2	12	677
1425–	2	1	3	4	377
1450–	1	6	7	13	599
Totals	120	43	163	315	8196

Table 3: IS value of preverbal complements in V2 configurations in the Flan+ corpus per century, in numbers and percentages.

	Discourse-old	Discourse-new	Total complement V2		Total V2		Total clauses
			n.	%	n.	%	
1150–1249	25	1	26	1,7	36	2,4	1526
1250–1349	76	16	92	2,8	168	5,1	3275
1350–1475	19	26	45	1,3	111	3,3	3395
Totals	120	43	163	2,0	315	3,8	8196

has 60 clauses and 7 main clauses, 1318 *Enquête Cotentin* has 78 clauses and 14 main clauses – although one with 16 main clauses has one V2 (1472 *Moulin des Noes*), and one at 17 (1423 *Ordonnances*) has three. To be complete, we note that texts without V2 include 1278–97 *Arrêts de l'échiquier* with 100 clauses and 30 main ones, and 1191 *Établissement Saint-Quentin* with 300 clauses and 120 main – we interpret the latter as a reflection of the slump of V2 observed at the beginning of the 13th century.

Regarding the general situation of V2, it is infrequent[10] over the whole period. Looking at the number of all V2, an unexpected progression is visible. That is made clearer by aggregating the results by periods of roughly one hundred years, as in Table 3.

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[10] It is as shown in Tables 3 and 4 to be at 3,8% for all V2 and 2,8% for all productive V2 as compared to all clauses. Paul Hirschbühler (personal communication) correctly points out that this includes subordinates, where V2 is rare in our corpus, and almost exclusively with bridge verbs: all V2 and all productive V2 cases as compared to only main clauses (2767) yield percentages of 11,4 and 8,1, hardly preponderant proportions.
    One reviewer is concerned that subordinates are included in the count. There does not seem to be any *a priori* reason to exclude them. For those who wish to do so, I provide the numbers below.

In the first period, until 1250, 2,4% of the clauses in the corpus display V2, a proportion that more than doubles at 5,1% in the intermediate 1250–1350 period, to go back down to 3,3% between 1350–1475. The pattern is the same if we remove formulaic sequences. Formulaic sequences are those where elements of the XP V S configuration are instantiated by similar strings of lexical elements. By way of illustration, in the 1386 *Ordonnances*, the sequence *Si P, dit le conseil que Q* 'If P, says the Council that Q', illustrated in (3), is repeated 6 times.

(3)   Item,   se ung homme fait   semondre   ung autre …, **dit**   le
        Likewise if a   man   do-PR-3S summon-INF an   other   say-PR-3S the
        conseil que brief y   chiet.
        council that writ there-CL fall-PR-3S
        'Likewise, if a man has another summoned (to court), the Council says that the
        writ is dealt with in that court.'

The repetition reflects not the currency of the construction in the ordinary usage of the speakers of the period, but the contribution of an expression to a specific professional genre. Removing formulaic sequences gives the following results.

The productive sequences represent 2,4% of all clauses in the 1150–1249 period, rising to 3,6% in the second period before going back to 2,1% between 1350 and 1475. A similar pattern, although with a less dissonant intermediate rise, is found in the proportion of productive V2 XP complement to all clauses. There is a movement from 1,7% of all clauses in the 1150–1249 period, to 1,9% in the intermediate period, to 0,7% between 1350 and 1475. A regular curve of evolution is found in the relation between productive complement XPs involved in V2 as compared to all productive cases of V2. The curve goes from 72% of complements representing all V2 in 1150–1249 to 52% in 1250–1349 to finally 35%, for an overall proportion of 50%.

Let us consider the main point of the investigation, which is the informational value of the preverbal complements in V2 configurations. Overall, discourse-old is the dominant value, at 73,6% of all 163 occurrences of V2 complements. A practically identical situation is found with productive cases provided in Table 4, where 75,9% of the 112 attestations are discourse-old. The evolution pattern goes from discourse-old being the

Table 4: IS value of productive preverbal complements in V2 configurations in the Flan+ corpus per century, in numbers.

	Discourse-old	Discourse-new	Total productive complement V2		Total productive V2		Total clauses
			n.	%	n.	%	
1150–1249	25	1	26	1,7	36	2,4	1526
1250–1349	48	13	61	1,9	117	3,6	3275
1350–1475	12	13	25	0,7	72	2,1	3395
Totals	85	27	112	1,4	225	2,8	8196

Bridge verbs: Discourse-old (2 in the first period, 2 in the second (including 1 formulaic), 3 in the third (1 formulaic)); discourse-new (2 in the second period, 7 in the third (4 formulaic)); others (1 particle in the first period and 1 in the third).

Other verbs: Discourse-old (3 in the second period); discourse-new (4 in the second period, 1 in the third); others (2 particles in the second period, 1 coordinator in the third).

exclusive[11] informational role of complements in the initial period, and it is not until 1236 that we have one XP with a discourse-new value, in Anglo-Norman *Coutume d'Exeter*. Discourse-old remains dominant from 1250 to 1349 at 82,6%. This dominance is lost between 1350–1475 when discourse-old stands at 42,2%. This is reflected by productive cases at 96,2%, 78,7% and finally 48% for each period respectively.[12]

The discourse-old occurrences relate to explicit previous mention, deixis and anaphor, and accommodation. In the following illustrations, the preverbal complement is mentioned previously,[13]

(4)   & autresi doivent   fere   touz les menors justisiers .... au   justisier
        And also must-PR-3P do-INF all the-P lesser-P judiciary-P To-the judiciary
        doivent   estre   les plaintes   aportees
        must-PR-3P be-INF the-P complaint-P brought-F-P-PTCP
        'And thus all the lesser judiciaries must act… complaints must be brought to the judicial officer'

                                                            (1300, *Grand coutumier de Normandie*)

it deictically refers to an antecedent expression,

(5)   et seur ce **demanda**- il   l'establie
        and on this ask-PST-3S 3S-NOM the ordinance
        'and on this he asked for the ordinance (to be pronounced)'
                                                            (1250, *Établissements de Normandie*)

and it is accommodated as old by a Contrastive Topic, opposing the place where the service of the said Richard is due and where it is not.

(6)   Richarz dist   que il   ne   devoit   pas donner aide
        Richard   say-PST that 3S-NOM NEG   must-PST-3S NEG give-INF help
        ne fere   servise en ost,   mes à Biaumont **devoit**-   il
        nor do-PR-3S service in army but to Biaumont owe-PST-3S 3S-NOM
        service de V   chevaliers
        service of five knights
        'Richard said that he didn't have to give help nor give service to the army, but to Biaumont he owes the service of 5 knights'

                                                            (1207–1211, *Arrêt de l'échiquier*)

Discourse-old status in the whole corpus is actualised by 24 explicit mention (20% of all occurrences), by 48 cases of deixis, 24 of anaphor and 1 familiar topic (60,8%), and 21 accommodation uses (of which 20 Contrastive Topics) (17,5%), and 2 inferred (1,7%) (see (10)–(11) below).

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[11] Interestingly, we note that the very few occurrences before 1150 in brief texts not included in the general corpus are not informationally uniform: 842 *Serment de Strasbourg* has one discourse-old and two discourse-new XPs (in one and the same V2 attestation), and the *Cérémonial d'une épreuve judiciaire* from the beginning of the 12th century has one discourse-old and one discourse-new.

[12] Regarding the statistical significance of the changes, calculated on productive occurrences, the overall number of V2 against all clauses is not significant from first period to second, but it is from second to third; the change in numbers of discourse-old against all V2 is significant from first period to second, as it is from second period to third.

[13] As pointed out by Paul Hirschbühler (personal communication), a question that (4) raises is why the indirect object is preferred as XP to the object, both being definites and presumably therefore at equivalent levels of activation. I do not think that the question has been addressed in the existing literature, and it is to be hoped that it is in future work.

This raises the question of what type of discourse-new complements are found. In other words, is it information not previously evoked in the text, or is it Focus per se? Let us look at the three examples below (out of the five attestations before 1299). The first two cases below are the typical configuration with an initial discourse-new adverb, which has not been evoked before in the text. It might be that they are instances of Focus, in order to emphasise the contrast between the permission to buy things and that of selling them, and the obligation to pay anchorage fees depending on whether a ship has been in the port of Rouen before or not. However, such a status is difficult to apportion with certainty. Even greater uncertainty characterises the third case. It is unlikely to be Focus, which does not easily bear on whole subordinates not explicitly modified by a focus particle such as *only*; the conditional about ships constructed in England could be new information in a paragraph that lists the obligations of ships from Flanders; or it could be interpreted as a Contrastive Topic by way of contrast to the concessive clause regarding ships made in England and those that sail under a Flemish flag, in which case it would be classified as discourse-old; but the fact that the contrast would then be between a subordinate and the main clause led the Contrastive Topic analysis to be abandoned and the attestation to be classified as discourse-new.

(7)   Ben **put**   un home   achater Choses a sun oes …
        well can-PST-3S a man   buy-INF things to his army …
        'A man can well buy things from his army'

                                                        (1236, *Coutume d'Exeter*)

(8)   quar toz jours **doit**   ele   son siège,
        since always   must-PR-3S 3-F-S-NOM her seat
        espousée ou à espouser
        espoused-PTCP or to espouse-INF
        'For she [the ship] must always pay anchorage fees.'

                                                        (1291, *Vicompté de l'eau de Rouen*)

(9)   et, se ele   fu   feite   en Engleterre,[14] bien **soit**
        and, if 3-F-S-NOM be-PST-3S made-PCTP in England,   well be-PR-SUBJ
        ele   de Flandres, si doit   ele   estre   espousée
        3-F-S-NOM of Flandres, if must-PR-3S 3-F-S-NOM be-INF   espoused-PTCP
        'And, if it is made in England, even if it comes from Flanders, it [a ship] must be taxed.'

                                                        (1291, *Vicompté de l'eau de Rouen*)

These reinforce the point that discourse-new covers a range of cases that are not always easy to discern. They also illustrate the necessity to have text-based criteria for classification of informational values, to avoid the difficulties raised by relying on intuition alone.

To summarise, preverbal complement XPs in a V2 configuration relate to an informational value. But they do so categorically only for one period of the configuration's attested development. It is the initial period from 1150 to 1236 that is concerned. A first discourse-new use is attested in 1236, and the proportion of discourse-new cases rises until these represent the majority of uses in the 1350–1475 period. Note that before 1236, variation in informational value is prefigured by two potentially ambiguous sequences, given below. They come from the very brief jurisprudence reports of the 1207–1211 *Arrêt*

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[14] Paul Hirschbühler (personal communication) and a reviewer suggest that the conditional might be an adjunct not counting as one of the preverbal XPs per se, given the punctuation; but as the punctuation is most certainly added by the text editor rather than found in the original, I consider it here as a normal XP.

de l'échiquier de Normandie. The initial complements where the noun is introduced by a definite article are not explicitly mentioned before; but they are inferable from the rest of the sentence that refers to them. This is what Hansen & Visconti (2009) might call *forward inferable* (see Birner 2006).

(10)   Il   fu   jugié   que por la   foi   que uns
       3S-NOM be-PST-3S judge-PTCP that for the faith-F that a-NOM
       chevaliers donna   à l'évesque ne   **pueit** pas li
       knight-NOM give-PST-3S to-the bishop NEG can-PR NEG the-NOM
       évesques   contraindre le   de respond-INF
       bishop-NOM constrain-INF 3S-ACC   to respond-INF
       'It was judged that for the faith that a knight gave to a bishop, the bishop can't constrain him to respond'

(11)   Il   fu   jugié   que à la   suer Richart … **remaint**
       3S-NOM be-PST-3S judge-PTCP that to the-F sister Richard   remain-PR-3S
       la   terre de son mariage qe Richart li   demandoit
       the-F land of her marriage that Richard 3S-DAT ask-PST-3S
       'It was judged that to the sister of Richard remains the land of her marriage that he was asking for'

These nonetheless have the potential to be interpreted as discourse-new contexts, allowing the future reanalysis of the V2 complement as having no characterised informational value.

The loss of categorical discourse-old value closely precedes the decline of V2 as a productive configuration. Decline is evidenced by the fact that productive V2 represents fewer than 1% of sentences after 1350. Also, the proportion of formulaic cases, first attested in the 1250s, rises significantly: comparing Tables 4 and 3, it goes from 0% in the first period to 33,6% in the second and 44,5% in the third. Productive V2 thus starts being lost after complements have ceased to have a categorical informational value.

One reason why informational complement V2 is declining as a productive configuration may be due to a push chain.[15] The idea is that another emerging construction relating to informational structure is gaining currency and making the use of V2 unnecessary. One candidate is clefts. Clefts could be drawing away discourse-old[16] complements from V2 and thus explain the decline of the latter as a productive configuration from 1250. However, the number of clefts is small in the Flan+ corpus. In line with the suggestion from the literature that the use of clefts is not significant before Middle French (Dufter 2008; Bouchard, Dufresne & Dupuis 2010; Stein & Trips 2012; see also Rouquier 2007), they were not initially annotated. For the purpose of this study, they are examined in the annotated part of the hearing text type from 1200 to 1400. Occurrences of *c'* and *ce* are

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[15] Push and pull chains are concepts initially developed in phonology, and "[h]istorical phonologists distinguish pull-chains from push-chains according to whether they are triggered by vacant slots or overcrowding in phonetic space" (Kiparsky 2016: 470). To illustrate, a push chain would be involved in the development of back vowels in the Portuguese dialect of São Miguel in the Azores, where "the vowels have moved up, with each vowel entering the space of its neighbor:/a: –> /ɔ/ – > /o/ –> /u/. Since /u/ is the highest vowel, it would seem to have nowhere to go to avoid a merger with /o/, but by moving forward as a rounded vowel, /ü/." (Lloyd 1987: 37–38). Most phonological chains lead to change rather than loss, and loss can also result from grammatical chains: De Clercq (2016, and references therein) evokes how the emergence of post-verbal negation can accelerate the demise of the preverbal one. Here, regarding V2 decline, the reasoning is that the loss is brought about by new constructions like dislocations and clefts fulfilling its informational function.

[16] Although the informational value of clefted complements is generally believed to be discourse-new Focus, it actually seems to be the object of variation, as shown by Trips & Stein (2018).

searched and retained when in subject position followed by the verb *être* 'to be', excluding the set phrase *c'est à savoir* 'that is'. The result in Table 5 is that there are only 4 clefts in that part of the corpus, and they are all incomplete, not having the expected appended clause (as *that John bought in It's red trousers that John bought*).

The paucity of clefts as compared to total number of V2 makes it implausible that they push V2 out of productive use. This is all the more so since the very few cleft structures occur in the earlier stage, when V2 is still a productive configuration.

Another candidate to a push chain is dislocations, adjoined phrases that are represented in the relevant clause by a resumptive pronoun.

(12)   … distrent: que chacune nef   qui vient   au   port de Caen …,
         … say-PR-3P: that each   boat that come-PR-3P in-the port of Caen
         elle   doura   la   sole et   loial coustume
         3-F-S-NOM give-FUT-3S the-F only and   loyal custom
         '(they) said that each boat that comes into Caen's harbor, it should pay the
         regular custom'

<div align="right">(1205, Patronage)</div>

A push chain scenario with dislocations is even more plausible than with clefts: dislocations are generally believed to represent discourse-old phrases (Ward & Birner 2001: 131ff), which is the informational value of productive V2 XPs. Thus, V2 loss could be brought about by XPs being realised as dislocations instead. As dislocations were originally annotated, the data could easily be assembled. The expectation, if dislocations are recruiting discourse-old complements away from V2, is that there should be a rise of the proportion of dislocations, especially from 1236 when V2 has a first discourse-new XP. An evaluation of these expectations can be provided by calculating the number, time-frame and informational value of occurrences in the corpus. The results of these calculations are provided in Table 6, which as a comparative includes per period the number of V2 with a complement XP and the total number of V2.

It shows that none of the expectations are met. Dislocations are not that common, appearing in less than one clause in 500. There is no sense of a progression of dislocation frequency with time; in fact, its proportion to all clauses does not rise, it decreases from 1,2 % for the 1150–1249 period to 0,3% in 1250–1349 to 0,5% between 1350 and 1475.

Table 5: Clefts and V2 in the Flan+ corpus, per hearing texts, between 1200 and 1400, in numbers.

	(incomplete) clefts	All V2
1207 Arrêts de l'échiquier	2	9
1234 Assises	1	7
1271 Livre rouge d'Eu	0	3
1278 Arrêts de l'échiquier	1	0
1320 Mortemer	0	19
1329 Assises de La Ferté	0	27
1355 Plès Mustel	0	13
1358 Livre rouge d'Eu	0	12
1386 Ordonnances	0	21
1386 Instrucions	0	3
Totaux	4	114

Table 6: IS value of dislocations in the Flan+ corpus per century, in numbers.

	Old	New	Total dislocations	Total Cmp V2	Total V2 cases	Total clauses
1150–1249	9	7	16	26	36	1526
1250–1349	6	5	11	92	168	3275
1350–1475	11	7	18	45	111	3395
Totals	26	19	45	163	315	8196

Finally, while the dislocated XP tends to be discourse-old, discourse-new cases still represent 42% of occurrences. If there is a push chain accounting for the loss of categorical pragmatic discourse-old value of V2, as far as this corpus is concerned, the chain is not pushed by dislocations.

This section has provided quantitative data on the development of complement XPs in V2 configurations in order to assess their informational role. V2 XPs are categorically discourse-old between 1150 and 1236. A couple of occurrences during that period are potentially ambiguous to prefigure the XP informational value variation. The loss of categorical discourse-old value precedes that of V2 as a productive configuration. The first formulaic uses are attested in 1250, and will represent an increasing proportion of all V2 uses as V2 is slowly declining as a proportion of all clauses. The picture that emerges is that since the role of V2 is to profile informational values, when it starts losing its categorical discourse-old value, it then starts to disappear as a productive configuration. Categorical informational value loss appears to be the cause of loss of V2 in Medieval French.

5 Final discussion

This paper analyses the relation between information structure and word order change in Medieval French. An informational value is generally assumed to characterise the preverbal complement in V2 configurations to justify the existence of a minority construction with respect to the established SVO word order. The informational value of the preverbal complement in these configurations is tested in a novel homogeneous corpus of three types of prose legal texts from the Normandy region over the period 1150–1475. The corpus allows control for regional and textual variation, and legal texts have been shown to provide earlier chronology of change and possibly more regular curves of evolution than literary material. A decision-tree is proposed to assess informational value that relies on linguistic cues in the textual environment. Discourse-old status is attributed on the basis of explicit previous mention of the complement, deictic/anaphoric relation to the antecedent context, use in an accommodating construction such as Contrastive Topic or inference as information available to the hearer; discourse-new status characterises information that is not previously made available by the context. Note that discourse-new complements could be instantiations of Focus, but need not be.

V2 is a minority declining configuration. The preverbal complement is categorically discourse-old from 1150 to 1236. This converges with results from Ingham (2018a) who finds near-categorical discourse-old V2 complements with expressed subjects in 13th century romance. Two earlier informationally ambiguous cases prefigure the loss of a categorical discourse-old value, which is realised by one discourse-new attestation in 1236. This change precedes the loss of V2 as a productive configuration. From 1250, V2 complements start to exhibit formulaic uses, their productive uses representing a gradually smaller proportion of all clauses, and of all V2 cases. In other words, after complement XPs lose their categorical discourse value, V2 is becoming a non-productive, declining configuration. The traditional explanation according to which loss of categorical

informational value may be due to competition with other informational configurations that are dislocations and clefts is verified and invalidated: neither dislocation nor clefts, which occur mostly in the early part of the corpus, are represented in sufficient number to constitute a credible vector of change.

It was assumed that a characteristic informational value would relate to the preverbal complement of V2 configurations to explain the subsistence of a minority configuration that represents at most 5% of all clauses in any of the investigated periods. That assumption is confirmed for V2. Its preverbal complement has a categorical discourse-old value. That categorical value is lost, after which V2 starts being represented by formulaic sequences and thus to decline as a productive construction. This reflects a common pattern of language evolution: a phrase in a particular configuration has a distinctive interpretative value, that is lost with time. This can be illustrated by another item involved in Medieval French V2, the asseveration particle *si*. It undergoes an evolution according to which it goes "from a temporal deictic adverb to a Topic continuity marker and then to a FinP expletive which undergoes upwards reanalysis as a ForceP expletive" (Wolfe 2018b: 332). In other words, interpretative features become formal features that are liable to reinterpretation or decline. The proposed causality is that it is loss of categorical informational value that is responsible for the decline of V2 in French.

This perspective helps answer potential objections to the connection between IS and V2 referring to languages where V2 is an established configuration. V2 in contemporary Germanic languages does not seem to imply a categorical informational value for the preverbal XP, as pointed out by reviewers. However, on the one hand, it is not clear that the XP has no consistent informational value (see Bohnacker & Rosén 2007), pending a systematic empirical study. If it were found that in e.g. contemporary German or Swedish, V2 XPs had no determined informational role, this could be due to the bleaching of an interpretative into a formal feature. The question would then be why the historical loss of IS is not leading to the demise of V2 in Germanic, whereas it would have been in Romance. The crucial difference is that where Romance V2 is declining at the time where IS is lost, it is expanding in Germanic (outside English). The same differential pattern is found with other grammatical phenomena such as negation: whereas loss of informational value leads to the decline of French preverbal negative *non* in the Medieval period, it leads to the expansion of *mica* in Italian (Larrivée 2015 and references therein); expansion is also found with *in situ* interrogatives that are initially categorically explicitly discourse-old, as evoked in the introduction. In other words, the level of productivity of a phenomenon is also crucial to its future development when its pragmatic status changes. Whether thresholds of productivity can be defined is an interesting question that remains to be explored.

The results presented here raise a number of perspectives for future research. It would be desirable to verify the correlations established here on a larger set of attestations, especially for the earliest period; and provide more material to show further that the connection identified here between information structure loss and V2 loss is more than correlation.[17] The association between categorical discourse-old value and V2 complement could be tested in homogeneous, non-literary corpora from other regions of northern Gallo-Romance in the 12th and 13th century. This could be done at the very least for Anglo-Norman and Flemish regions, where early documentation is available in edited format. The method could be applied to determine whether similar patterns of evolution can be found for other Romance languages where V2 was found and lost. Such an endeavour would allow the strong hypothesis that it is loss of a categorical informational value of the XP that leads to the demise of the V2 configuration to be verified.

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[17] Using for instance the method proposed by Kroch (1989) regarding the rate of change across contexts, as suggested by a reviewer – contexts being potentially represented by different categories of verbs such as light, modal and lexical ones.

Abbreviations

3S = third person singular, 3P = third person plural, ACC = accusative, CL = clitic, DAT = dative, F = feminine, FUT = future, INF = infinitive, NEG = negative, NOM = nominative, P = plural, PR = present tense, PST = past tense, PTCP = participle

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Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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