# Some remarks on Old Occitan word order: Subject inversion after an initial non-subject (X-V-S)

Barbara Wehr[1]

[1]Romanisches Seminar, Johannes-Gutenberg-Universität Mainz

I would like to discuss a linguistic problem concerning the word order of Old Occitan. From the Eighties onwards, several authors working within the generative approach thought that "Verb Second" (V2) was a common feature of the Medieval Romance languages, including subject inversion after an initial non-subject (X-V-S); cf. for example Renzi (1985), Salvi (2004), Benincà (2006) and Wolfe (2019). Other linguists do not agree, for example Kaiser (2002) and Varga (2017).

As the word order X-V-S is regarded as a "distinctive mark of all V2 languages" (Vance 1997), I shall look at Old Occitan prose texts in order to find out if they show indeed X-V-S as a characteristic syntactic feature. Sentences with an intransitive predicate denoting "existence/coming into existence" or "appearing on the scene" etc. ("presentational sentences") and with a *verbum dicendi* before direct speech ("presentative movement" according to Hetzron (1975)) have to be sorted out because with these predicates the word order V-S can be expected even without an initial element "X". If, however, we find cases for X-V-S with intransitive verbs of action or with transitive verbs, this is without doubt a sign of the X-V-S syntax being present in the grammar of Old Occitan. Only declarative main clauses in narrative prose representing different text genres shall be considered. Kunert's contribution 2003 shall also be taken into account.

# References

Benincà, Paola (2006). "A detailed map of the left periphery of Medieval Romance". In: *Crosslinguistic Research in Syntax and Semantics. Negation, Tense, and Clausal Architecture*. Ed. by Raffaella Zanuttini et al. Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, pp. 53–86.

Hetzron, Robert (1975). "The presentative movement or why the ideal word order is V.S.O.P." In: *Word Order and Word Order Change*. Ed. by Charles N. Li. Austin/London: University of Texas Press, pp. 346–388.

Kaiser, Georg (2002). *Verbstellung und Verbstellungswandel in den romanischen Sprachen*. Tübingen: Niemeyer.

Kunert, Hans Peter (2003). "L'ordine degli elementi della frase in occitano antico". In: *Romanische Forschungen* 115, pp. 194–209.

Renzi, Lorenzo (1985). *Nuova introduzione alle Filologia Romanza*. Bologna: Il Mulino.

Salvi, Giampaolo (2004). *La formazione della struttura di frase romanza. Ordine delle parole e clitici dal latino alle lingue romanze*. Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie 323. Tübingen: Niemeyer.

Vance, Barbara (1997). *Syntactic Change in Medieval French: Verb-Second and Null Subjects*. Dordrecht: Kluwer.

Varga, Eva (2017). *Verbstellungsmuster im Altfranzösischen. Ein Beitrag zur historischen Syntaxforschung aus diskurstraditioneller Perspektive*. Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie 416. Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter.

Wolfe, Sam (2019). *Verb Second in Medieval Romance*. Oxford University Press: Oxford.