Subject inversion in transitive sentences from Classical to Modern European Portuguese: a corpus-based study

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Several studies on the history of Portuguese argue that Old Portuguese (henceforth OP) and Classical Portuguese (henceforth ClP) had a V2-like syntax (cf. Ribeiro 1995 for OP; Torres Moraes 1995; Galves 1996, 2000; Paixão de Sousa 2004; Galves et al. 2005, Galves e Paixão de Sousa 2005, 2010; Gibrail 2010; Antonelli 2011, for ClP). Other researchers have criticized this analysis on the basis of the fact that both OP and ClP display properties that are not compatible with a V2 syntax, namely high frequencies of V1 and V3 sentences (cf. Kaiser 1999; Fieis 2002; Rinke 2009 for OP; Eide 2006 for ClP). In this chapter, we focus on ClP, and its change to Modern European Portuguese (henceforth EP), bringing to the debate new data concerning transitive sentences. The data are drawn from 16 parsed texts available in the Tycho Brahe Parsed Corpus of Historical Portuguese (henceforth TBC) cf. www.tycho.iel.unicamp.br/~tycho/corpus, written by Portuguese authors born between 1502 and 1836. The size of the parsed corpus is 34293 sentences, which corresponds to approximately 700,000 words. In order to compare ClP with EP, we include in the analysis descriptions of word order in EP (Ambar 1992; Costa 2004; Duarte 2003). Based on the difference between the syntax and interpretation of the different possible word order in transitive sentences (SVO, VSO, VOS) in ClP and EP, we argue that ClP was a V2-like language, i.e. a language in which the verb occupied a high position in the clause, which made a high position for post-verbal subjects available as well.
The chapter is organized as follows. In Section I, we present a quantitative analysis of the evolution of the position of subjects in transitive sentences in declarative main clauses which evidence a drastic change in texts written by authors born from 1700 on. The second section explores the qualitative correlate of this change, showing that the interpretation of post-verbal subjects in CIP is fairly different from what is described for the modern language. In the third section, we bring further evidence, both from the synchrony of CIP and from the diachronic changes observed, in favor of the hypothesis of a grammatical change from CIP to EP, against Eide’s (2006) claim that the change affected not syntax but information structure. The last section concludes the chapter.

1. The quantitative change from CIP to EP

Several recent works have shown that a change affecting the position of subjects took place in texts written by Portuguese authors born from 1700 on (cf. Paixão de Sousa 2004; Eide 2006; Galves & Paixão de Sousa 2010; Gibrail 2010; Antonelli 2011, a.o). Figure 1, from Galves & Paixão de Sousa (2010) shows that the frequency of post-verbal subjects was much higher in texts written by authors born in the 16th and 17th centuries, around 60% of the cases, than in texts by authors born in the two subsequent centuries, around 20%.
In this study, we focus on the position of lexical subjects in transitive sentences, contrasting the three possible orders for the subject, SVO, VSO and VOS. Figures 2 and 3 show that the evolution of word order in transitive sentences is entirely comparable with the overall evolution of the position of subjects. Until 1700, in spite of some variations among authors, post-verbal subjects are generally more frequent than pre-verbal subjects. This state of affairs abruptly changes among authors born at the beginning of the eighteen century, who display 80% pre-verbal subjects. The expansion of the use of pre-verbal subjects continues in the 19th century at the expense of VSO, which thus falls below 10%. Before we discuss the nature of this change, we show in the next section that, in ClP, post-verbal subjects are not only much more frequent than in the modern language, but they can also receive a distinct interpretation. From a semantic point of view, their felicity
conditions are different as well, being associated with interpretations that are no longer available today.

Figure 2. The evolution of Subject-Verb-Object order in matrix declarative transitive sentences (by author)
Figure 3. The evolution of Subject-Verb-Object order in matrix declarative transitive sentences (mean value by century)

2. The qualitative change

Costa (2004:79-80) describes the interpretation associated with the three possible Subject-Verb-Object orders in EP in the following terms (where ‘focus’ means ‘new information’).\textsuperscript{v, vi}

(a) The whole sentence is focused: \textbf{SVO}

(b) The object is focused: \textbf{SVO}

(c) The subject and the object are focused: \textbf{VSO}

(d) Only the subject is focused: \textbf{VOS}
The important point is that in 16th c. and 17th c. texts, VSO and VOS clauses can receive completely different interpretations:

1. Both orders can be interpreted as new information (out of the blue) – against (a).

(1), from A. Barros (b. 1675) and (2), from M. Galhegos (b. 1597) illustrate respectively the cases of VOS and VSO.

(1) Aos 10 de Janeiro de 1650 desferiu as velas o Padre VIEIRA para aquele maior teatro do mundo Católico. (B_001,43.391)

At the 10 of January of 1650 loosened the sails the Father Vieira to that major theater of the catholic world.

(2) Em várias partes das fronteiras fizeram os castelhanos fumo (G_001,38.542)

in several parts of the borders made the Castilians smoke

‘The Castilians made fire on several parts of the border.’

In both cases, the sentences provide entirely new information. In Costa’s terms, this means that they are focused, requiring SVO in EP. In (1), the subject is not new information, which would be required in EP to license VOS. We will come back later to its interpretation, but suffice it to say that ‘Padre Vieira’ is the main character of the text, which is in fact his own biography. In (2), neither the subject nor the object is new information, which would be required in EP to license VSO. Thus, the sentence does not mean that whoever made fire were the Castilians, but it simply asserts that the Castilians made fire in many places on the borders. It is a piece of
information uttered in the first newspaper published in Lisbon: Manuel Galhego’s Gazeta.

2. In VOS, the subject is not obligatorily new information – against (d):

(3) faz menção o texto sómente da parte austral (Vieira, 1608)

makes mention the text only of the austral part

‘The text only mentions the austral part.’

In (3), from Antonio Vieira (b. 1608), the focus of the sentence is clearly the PP ‘da parte austral’, since it is explicitly focalized by ‘sómente’ only. ‘O texto’ refers to a text previously mentioned by the author.

3. VSO and VOS are felicitous when neither the subject nor the object are focused – against (c) and (d).

(4) [Cuidas tu, Ezechiel, diz Deus, que não há aqui mais que o que apparece? Ora

Think you, Ezechiel, says God, that (there) is not here more than (it) seems? Thus, rompe essa parede, e verás.]

break this wall and (you) shall see.

Rompeu a parede Ezechiel... (V_004,189.1441)

Broke the wall Ezechiel...

‘Ezechiel broke the wall.’

(5) [Por deante, Ezechiel, diz Deus terceira vez]

[By ahead, Ezechiel, says God third time]
Passa Ezechiel a terceira parede (V_004,189.1446)

Passes Ezechiel the third wall

‘Ezechiel passes through the wall for the third time.’

The context for (4) and (5), from Antonio Vieira (b. 1608), which is given in the excerpt between brackets, shows that neither ‘Ezechiel’ nor ‘the wall’ is new information in the sentences ‘Rompeu a parede Ezechiel’ and ‘Passa Ezechiel a terceira parede’. On the contrary, those two terms are given in the immediate prior context. We also see that in CIP, VSO and VOS seem to be associated to the same felicity conditions, which is not the case in EP, according to Costa’s description.

4. When the object is focused, the order of the sentence is not obligatorily SVO – against (b):

(6) tomaram- -lhe os nossos algumas armas, e munições (G_001,05.59)

took-from-them the ours some weapons and bullets

‘Ours took some weapons and bullets from them.’

(7) Começou el-Rei a igreja de São Vicente. (S_001_PSD,13.50)

begun the-King the church of São Vicente

Fundaram os estrangeiros a de Nossa Senhora. (S_001_PSD,13.51)

founded the foreigners the one of Nossa Senhora

‘The king began the church of São Vicente. The foreigners founded the Church of Our Lady.’
In the sentences (6) and (7) above, from Galhegos (b. 1597) and Sousa (b. 1675), respectively, the direct objects are the new information of their respective sentences, but the subjects of those sentences are not pre-verbal. In this case again, the referents of the subjects were previously introduced in the narrative as the protagonists of the story. vii

We now turn to the issue of the interpretation of the post-verbal subjects.

5. Post-verbal subjects can be interpreted as topics – against (c) and (d)

The more frequent interpretation of post-verbal subjects in CIP is that of either “familiar topic” or “continuing topic” (cf. Frascarelli & Hinterholzl 2007). According to the genre and content of the texts, familiar topics are either proper names which refer to the main characters of the narratives, God and other religious entities (the Devil, the Holy Spirit), frequently quoted authors (the authors of the Gospels in the Sermons), or abstract or generic entities like “the enemies”, “humankind”, vices and virtues, etc. In the Biography of Frei Bertalomeu dos Mártires (Sousa, b. 1556), 20 occurrences out of a total of 40 post-verbal subjects refer to the Frei, who is the main character of the work. We also find recently mentioned notions and entities, generally preceded by the demonstrative “este” (this). Working with unaccusative sentences, Eide (2006) labels these kinds of topics as “background’. This fact, already evidenced in the examples above, is illustrated again in (8-10), from Sousa (b. 1556), Barros (b. 1675) and Galhegos (b. 1597), respectively:

(8) **Começou Frei Bertolameu seu noviciado** desassombradamente

(S_001_PSD,19.159)
Began Frei Bertolameu his novitiate boldly

‘Frei Bertolameu began his novitiate boldly.’

(9) Estimulavam estes golpes o ânimo ao valor; (B_001_PSD,97.774)

Stimulated these blows the cheer to the valor

‘These blows stimulated excitement for valor.’

(10) [Quase todo este mês ventou, choveu, e nevou,]

almost all this month winded, rained, and snowed

e fez muito dano a tempestade (G_001,31.458)

and made much harm the tempest

‘and the tempest did much damage.’

These examples nicely show the role played by post-verbal subjects from the informational structure point of view. In (8), as in (1), it refers to the main character of the work. As mentioned above, this is the case for half of the post-verbal subjects in the text. Other familiar topics are found in examples (2)-(7), either because their referents are frequently recurrent in the texts (the Castilians in the Gazeta, the quoted texts in the Sermons) or because they have just been introduced in the previous sentences. In this case, the notion of “familiar” comes very close to the notion of anaphor. Anaphoric terms can be repetitions, as in the case of (4) and (5), or summarizing terms as in (10), where ‘tempestade’ anaphorically refers to ‘ventou’ was windy, ‘choveu’ rained and ‘nevou’ snowed. Moreover, they also appear, as expected, with an anaphoric determiner, as in (9).

In the next section, we address the question of the nature of the change between CIP and EP. We argue that a syntactic change was at the origin of both the difference
in interpretation of post-verbal subjects and the loss of VS as a dominant pattern of word order.

3. The nature of the change

The natural question is what produces the quantitative and qualitative difference between CIP and EP, and, correlatively, what is the nature of the change that happened at the beginning of the 18th century. Two hypotheses are available.

The first hypothesis is that what happened was a grammatical change, which yielded a change in the interpretation of post-verbal subjects. CIP was a V2-like language, as argued by the authors mentioned above, and at some point, the movement of the verb to a position in the C layer (Fin, according to Antonelli 2011) was lost. This entails that the high position for post-verbal subjects was lost too, leaving as a unique option a low position associated with focus interpretation (we will come back later to this point). From this point of view, post-verbal subjects can receive a topic interpretation in CIP because they occupy a high position in the clause. When the verb ceases to move to a position in the C layer, this position is no longer available.

The second hypothesis is that what happened was a discursive change, more precisely, a restructuring of information structure. Eide (2006:194) claims that “The restructuring involved that only information that is new can occur post verbally, while background information is placed before the verb.” From this point of view, CIP and EP would generate the same structures, but they are interpreted differently at the C-I interface (and possibly at the A-P interface as well).
In what follows, we give independent empirical arguments in favor of the first hypothesis, by showing that both the verb and the post-verbal subject do occupy high positions in ClP.\textsuperscript{ix} In order to make this point, we first focalize CIP as a synchronic grammar, capitalizing, on the one hand, on its differences with respect to EP, and on the other hand, on its similarities with V2 languages. We then bring further evidence from diachronic aspects related to subjects in the evolution from ClP to EP.

3.1. There is a high position available for post-verbal subjects in ClP

\textbf{3.1.1 Two different positions for post-verbal subjects}

Working in the cartographic framework of Rizzi (1997), Antonelli (2011:158-59) argues that, in CIP, tensed verbs move to Fin and post-verbal subjects are either in Spec/TP or in a lower position since low adverbs like \textit{bem} ‘well’ can occur either after or before them, as illustrated by the following sentences, from Sousa (b. 1556).

(11) E nos gasalhados e abraços \textbf{mostraram os cardeais legados bem} and in the welcome and greetings showed the cardinals delegates well

*este contentamento;*

\textit{this satisfaction}

‘In the welcome and greetings the cardinal delegates showed this satisfaction well.’

(12) E \textbf{quadra-lhe bem} o nome de Piemonte ….

\textit{And fits-to-it well the name of Piemonte}

‘And the name of Piemonte fits it well’
Only the order illustrated in (12) is possible in EP (cf. Costa, 2004). Antonelli (2011) shows that in CIP, two different interpretations are available for post-verbal subjects. Depending on the structural context, they can be interpreted as new information (focus), or as given information (familiar topics, as we argued above). In some cases, this is ambiguous because no other element of the clause suggests what their position in the structure may be. In this case, they are compatible with either interpretation, depending on the textual context. But the presence of adverbs like ‘bem’ *well* indicates the position of the subject, which in turn associates it to a new or given informational status. In the next section, we bring other pieces of evidence that tensed verbs, and not focalized post-verbal subjects, occupy a high position.

3.1.2. Other pieces of evidence

Belletti (2004:19-20) shows the following contrast between Italian and Icelandic and concludes that "The contrast between (3)-(4) [*here (13a and b)*] and (5)-(6) [*here (14a and b)*] suggests that a further, higher position is available for subjects in Icelandic, but not in Italian."

(13a) *Capirà/spiegherà Maria completamente (al direttore)*

*will understand/explain Maria completely (to the director)*

(13b) Capirà/spiegherà completamente Maria (al direttore)

(14a) það luku sennilega einhverjir studentar alveg verkefninu

*there finished probably some students completely the assignment*

(14b) *það luku sennilega alveg einhverjir studentar verkefninu*

*there finished probably completely some students the assignment*

(Bobaljik & Jonas (1996, (21)))
Many examples representative of the Icelandic order are available in the classical period of the CTB; see, for instance, (8) above and (15) - (16) from Barros (b. 1675), where the subject follows the verb but precedes a manner adverb:

(15) e sendo este negócio dos maiores, que podia ter uma Monarquia, o fiou o and being this deal of the greatest, that could have a Monarchy, it-entrusted the animoso Rei inteiramente da inteligência e indústria de um só homem; brave king entirely to the intelligence and industry of a only man ‘and being among the greatest of deals, which could have a Monarchy, the brave king entrusted it entirely to the intelligence and industry of just one man’

(16) Referiu o depois em Carta sua o mesmo Padre VIEIRA formalmente assim: referred it after in letter of-his the same Padre Vieira formally that way ‘Afterwards Padre Vieira himself referred to it formally in a letter this way’

The position of adverbs also evidences that direct and indirect objects can be moved outside of the VP, leaving behind a focused phrase that follows the adverb, as can be seen in the following sentence from Céu (b. 1657):

(17) Em muytas occasiões advirtio Deos à Madre Elena interiormente o que In many occasions advised God to the Mother Elena internally what convinha à sua honra suited to her honor
‘On many occasions God internally advised Mother Elena what suited her honor.’

It is interesting to note that in (17), the two DPs that occur between the verb and the adverb are clearly familiar topics: ‘Deos’ (God) and ‘Madre Elena’ (Mother Elena), the main character of the text, since it is her biography. This suggests that there is more than one position available for familiar topics between the verb and the boundaries of vP. We come back to this issue below.

The VS Floating Q order provides further evidence for the high position of the post-verbal subject, as illustrated in (18), from Galhegos (b.1597):

(18) **Estavam já os esquadrões ambos para marchar**

*were already the squadrons both to march*

‘The squadrons were both already about to march.’

Finally, one of the arguments presented by Costa (2004: 26) in favor of a low position of post-verbal subjects, against the movement of the verb over a high subject, is the possibility of the Aux - Past Participle - Sbj order. In the corpus, we find both Aux - Sbj - Past Participle and Aux - Past Participle - Sbj. The latter is exemplified in (19) and (20), from Couto (b. 1542) and Céu (b. 1658), respectively:

(19) **A este tempo estava Dom Christovão curando-se em casa da Rainha;**

(C_007,46.522)

*At that time was Dom Cristóvão healing-SE in house of the queen*

‘At that time Dom Cristóvão was recovering at the queen’s house.’

(20) **havia esta Religiosa professado de Fevereyro, e falecido a dezoito do Abril**
had this nun professed in February and died on eighteen of April

segueinte,  (C_002,172.524)

following.

‘This nun had professed in February and died on the eighteenth of the following April.’

As for the cases in which subjects follow the past participle, in many cases they are clearly foci, as can be seen in (21), from Galhegos (b. 1597). This means that they occupy the low subject position identified by Antonelli (2011). However, there are cases in which post participial subjects are not likely to be foci, as exemplified in (22), from Céu (b. 1658), where the post-verbal subject is a familiar topic.

(21) **Está-se fabricando**, por traça de Antônio Pessoa Campo, **uma carreta** para o tiro de Dio;  (G_001,40.573)

*is –SE building, by conspiracy of Antonio Pessoa Campo, a chariot for the charge of Dio*

‘They are building, by conspiracy of Antonio Pessoa Campo, a chariot for the charge of Dio.’

(22) A esta Religiosa **hauia previsto** a Madre Elena a sua morte pouco tempo antes de succedida;  (C_002,172.518)

*to this nun had forecast the Mother Elena her death little time before of succeeded*

‘Mother Elena had predicted her death to this nun shortly before it occurred.’

We shall assume, without further discussion, that the order exemplified in (22) is produced by an additional movement of the past participle to the periphery of TP.
3.1.4 The derivation of VOS

As for VOS, the fact that the subject in this order is not obligatorily interpreted as narrow focus indicates that it is in a high position too and that, accordingly, VO moves to a higher position than in modern languages. Adapting Belletti’s analysis of VXS, we propose that VO moves to Spec/Fin. This movement is licensed in CIP since, as argued by Antonelli (2011), the phi-features of the verb are able to satisfy the edge-features of Fin, as they do with the edge-features of T in Modern pro-drop languages (cf. Alexiadou and Anagnostopolou 1998). This analysis is supported by several facts.

1) VO is a constituent which excludes the subject, as shown by the following sentences from Barros (b.1675) and Sousa (b.1556), respectively:

(24) de tal sorte lhes conciliou os ânimos, e humanou os afectos a sinceridade
   in such sort to-them conciliated the spirits and humanized the affects the sincerity
   desta informação,
   of this information
   ‘The sincerity of this information reconciled the spirits and humanized the affects, in such a way….’

(25) Ornam a capela e acompanham a sepultura muitas estátuas de finos mármores
   ornate the chapel and accompany the sepulture many statues of fine marble
   ‘Many statues of fine marble decorate the chapel and accompany the sepulture.’

2) In VOS, the semantic properties of the object are different in CIP and EP.
Costa (2004) proposes several arguments for scrambling of the object in VOS in EP. One of them is that "if the object is indefinite, the acceptability of the sentence is not as good, and it clearly degrades with non-specific indefinite DPs”. In the following sentences, from Galhegos (b. 1597), we observe VOS sentences in which objects are non-specific indefinite DPs:

(26) **causou geral sentimento a sua morte pelo muito que perderam**

*caused general sorrow*  *his death*  *for the much*  *that lost*

*os púlpitos de Portugal*

*the pulpits of Portugal. (G_001,16.215)*

‘His death caused general sorrow for all that the pulpits of Portugal lost.’

(27) **deu-lhe água às mãos o visconde de Vila Nova da Serveira,**

*gave-to-him water to the hands the Viscount of Vila Nova de Serveira*

‘The Viscount of Vila Nova de Serveira put water on his hands.’

(28) **Disse missa o bispo capelão-mor,**  *(G_001,73.1105)*

*said the Mass the bishop chapelain-mor*

‘The bishop arch-chaplain said the Mass.’

In this section, we have presented synchronic evidence that in CIp V(X)S is syntactically different from V(X)S in EP. In the next section, we shall see that there is also diachronic evidence that a change affected the position of pre-verbal subjects, and consequently the position of tensed verbs.

3.2 Evidence that the position of the subject, and consequently of the verb, is diachronically reanalyzed
3.2.1. The sharp increase in the frequency of SVO

As shown by Figure 2, until 1700, in the texts of many authors, SVO is less frequent than VSO. After 1700, the reverse happens with all the authors, and VSO becomes a universally marked construction. In the previous sections, we have argued that post-verbal subjects did not occupy the same position in CIP and EP. In the remainder of the chapter, we will consider other changes observed with the authors born after 1700, which support the claim that not only has the position of post-verbal subjects changed, but also, pre-verbal subjects do not occupy the same position either. The conjunction of these two facts strongly supports the hypothesis that verb-movement to a high position was lost.

3.2.2. The emergence of the XSV-cl order

Galves & Paixão de Sousa (2005) observed that with the authors born before 1700, both the V3 orders XSV and SXV appear with proclisis, but only SXV is attested with enclisis. They interpret this fact as a restriction on the position of subjects when they are in an external position (as shown by the position of the clitic). In this case, they can only be the topmost topic of the sentence. In the texts of the authors born in the first half of the 18th century, the formerly impossible XSV-cl order becomes as frequent as the other V3 orders with enclisis. This suggests that pre-verbal subjects cease to occupy a topic position.

3.2.3. The high frequency of pronouns in VSO sentences

It is worth noting the increasing frequency of the realization of post-verbal S as pronouns. The frequency of pronominal post-verbal subjects in VSO, very low with the authors from the 16th and 17th centuries (from 0% to 5%), is predominant with
the authors from the 19th century, 6/9 (Garrett, b. 1799), 6/7 (Marquês de Alorna, b. 1802), 4/6 (Castelo Branco, b. 1825), and 3/5 (Ortigão, b. 1836), respectively. This approximates the syntax of inversion found with the authors born after 1700 to the syntax of modern languages like Italian.\textsuperscript{xii} Belletti (2004:31) notes that “a systematic class of exceptions to the general ban against VSO in Italian is provided by cases in which S corresponds to a personal pronoun”. She then makes the following claim: “The contrast between the personal pronoun and the lexical noun phrase suggests that pronouns should avail themselves of a further position in the postverbal domain, which is excluded for lexical noun phrases. This further subject position should be higher than the one filled by the lexical noun phrase”. It is remarkable that, when post-verbal, the pronouns are always contiguous to the verb. Furthermore, no occurrence of VOS, S being a pronoun, appears in the corpus.

In the following example, drawn from a non-transitive clause, the position of the pronoun before the adverb 'sempre' (always) shows that post-verbal pronouns occupy a high position in the 19th century: \textsuperscript{xii}

\begin{quote}
(29) Constava \textit{ele sempre} de seis grandes tabuleiros com peixe cozinhado de várias formas, (Marquês de Alorna, 1802)
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
‘It always consisted of six big trays with fish cooked in several ways.’
\end{quote}

3.2.4 The reinterpretation of VOS
After 1700, VOS also comes closer to what is described by Belletti for the restricted cases in which VOS occurs in Italian. She claims that “the more “prototypical” the situation illustrated by the VO sequence is, the better the status of VOS becomes.

Another case where VOS is fully acceptable, and which does not involve pronominalization of O, is the one ... where O is the quantifier “tutto” (Belletti 2004:XX). Recall that, contrary to Italian, European Portuguese licenses VOS only when the subject is focused (Costa 2004). With the authors born after 1700, we continue to observe a few cases in which the subject is not focused, which are semantically restricted in the way described by Belletti for Italian, as can be seen from the following two examples by Castelo Branco (b. 1825). In both (30) and (31), the verbs are not used in their literal meaning, but are compositionally interpreted with their complement. Additionally, in (30), the object is headed by the quantifier “muito”:

(30) Deu muito que pensar e que suspeitar tal coincidência; (B_005_PSD,54.1542)

gave much to think and to suspect such a coincidence

‘Such a coincidence gave people much to think about and to suspect.’

(31) Saiu um anjo a criatura de Deus; (B_005_PSD,54.1562)

came out an angel the creature of God

‘This creature of God appeared to be an angel.’

3.2.5. The loss of the matrix-subordinate asymmetry

Until now, we have only considered matrix contexts. In this section, we shall look at the position of subjects in embedded declarative contexts. Figure 4 shows the
distribution of SVO, VSO and VOS in both embedded and matrix contexts, over time.

Figure 4: SVO, VSO and VOS in matrix and embedded clauses

Figure 4 evidences, with the authors born before 1700, a clear difference in frequency between matrix and embedded clauses. It turns out that in the latter, SV order is clearly predominant. It must be noted that for all the authors, except Pinto (b. 1510), the rate of post-verbal subjects is much higher in root than embedded contexts. This contrast disappears from Aires (b. 1705) on.

Antonelli (2011) argues that in subordinate clauses that have a lexical complementizer, post-verbal subjects can only occupy a low position since the verb is prevented from moving to Fin, which is already filled by the complementizer. Evidence for this analysis comes from embedded sentences in which Comp is not lexically realized. In this case, lexical subjects are categorically post-verbal, which strongly suggests that the verb is in Fin. From this point of view, pre-verbal subjects do not occupy the same position in main and subordinate clauses. In the former, they occupy a position in the left-periphery of the sentence, as with other topics. In the
latter, however, they are in Spec/T, or adjoined to T. This analysis nicely accounts for the difference observed in Figure 4. It also supports the hypothesis that a grammatical change occurs after 1700, in which pre-verbal subjects cease to be treated as topics in main clauses, and come to occupy a specific subject position in the specifier of TP. In the new grammar, the former asymmetry between main and embedded clauses therefore ceases to exist.

This analysis encounters an apparent empirical problem. Although less frequent, the VSO/VOS constructions exist in embedded clauses at a higher rate than in the modern language, both in matrix and subordinate clauses. Additionally, all the possible structures found in matrix clauses are found in subordinate clauses, as illustrated in (32), from Barros. Furthermore, the interpretation of the post-verbal subject in this sentence (the lands of Maranhão) is clearly that of a familiar topic.

(32) é bem, que saiba o Mundo, que não só no espiritual, como veremos

is good that know the world that not only in-the spiritual, as will see

senão também no temporal, devem as terras do Maranhão à Religião da

but also in-the temporal, owe the lands of the Maranhão to-the Religion of the

Companhia de JESUS a felicidade, que logram.

Company of Jesus the happiness, that reach

‘it is good that the world knows that not only on the spiritual level, as we will see, but also on the temporal level, the lands of Maranhão owe to the Religion of the Company of Jesus the happiness, that they achieve’

However, examples like (32), where the main predicate is the epistemic verb “saber”
(to know), and the subordinate verb is preceded by a fronted adjoined clause, are compatible with Antonelli’s analysis, since they are likely to be dependent on CP recursion. The other cases of VS, in which S is not focused, appear in the absence of a lexical complementizer, as in (33). In this case, as argued by Antonelli (2011), the verb is itself in C.

(33) entendendo lhe teria ella encomendado esta deligencia, por ser sua familiar, understanding to-him would-have she asked this diligence, for being her familiar
entraraö em huma Tribuna da Enfermaria que cahe para a Igreja, will-enter into a tribune of-the Infirmary that falls onto the Church (C_002,157.335)
‘understanding that she would have asked him to be diligent, since he is her relative, they will go into a tribune of the Infirmary close to the Church’
(C_002,157.335)

The frequency of post-verbal subjects in embedded clauses in the classical period is therefore accounted for. There are more cases than in the modern period due to the availability of a high position for the post-verbal subject, but there are fewer cases than in matrix clauses during the same period since this high position is licensed either by CP recursion, which is in turn dependent on the main verbs. As emphasized by Antonelli (2011), the other case of VS in embedded clauses is when the embedded verb is in C, due to the absence of a lexical complementizer, which is no longer an available option today.

4. Concluding remarks
In this chapter, we provided evidence, against Eide (2006), that the change in the frequency and interpretation of post-verbal subjects from Classical Portuguese to Modern European Portuguese is due to a syntactic change that affected the position of the verb. The diachronic study of the syntax of transitive clauses in European Portuguese therefore brings more pieces of evidence to the claim that Classical Portuguese was a V-to-C language, which therefore licensed a high position for post-verbal subjects. At the turn of the 18th century, this property was lost, and the VS order became dramatically less frequent and more semantically restricted, on its way to the modern state.

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i The computation here only takes into consideration the sentences in which the subject is lexically realized. When null subjects are included in the analysis, the average frequency of VS sentences is 27% and 37% in the 16th and 17th centuries, respectively, and 15% and 12% in the 18th and 19th centuries, respectively. It is worth noting that there is no substantial change in the frequency of null subjects over time (cf. Galves and Paixão de Sousa, 2010).

ii Galves and Paixão de Sousa (2010) work with 11 parsed texts from the Tycho Brahe Corpus. The corpus considered in the present study contains 5 more texts (cf. fn.3):

iii The Corpus that is at the basis of this study is composed of the following texts:

- 16th century: Pero Magalhães de Gândavo (b. 1502), Historia da Província de Santa Cruz vulgarmente chamada Brasil; Fernão Mendes Pinto (b. 1510), Peregrinação; Diogo do Couto (b. 1542) Décadas; Frei Luís de Sousa (b. 1556) A vida de Frei Bertolameu dos Mártires;
- 17th century: Manuel Galhegos (b. 1598) *Gazeta*; Pe Antonio Vieira (b. 1608) *Sermões*; Maria do Céu (b. 1658) *Vida e morte de Madre Elena da Cruz*; André de Barros (b. 1675) *Vida do apostólico Pe Antonio Vieira*;

- 18th century: Cavaleiro de Oliveira (b. 1702) *Cartas*; Matias Aires (b. 1705) *Reflexões sobre a vaidade dos homens*; Marquesa de Alorna (b. 1750) *Cartas*; J.D. Rodrigues da Costa (b. 1757) *Entremezes de cordel*.

- 19th century: Almeida Garrett (b. 1799) *Teatro*; Marquês de Fronteira e Alorna (b. 1802) *Memórias*; Camilo Castelo Branco (b. 1825) *Maria Moisés*; Ramalho Ortigão (b. 1836) *Cartas a Emília*.

The authors born at the very end of their century, Galhegos (1597) and Garrett (1799) were grouped with the authors born in the next century.

iv A remarkable exception to this claim is Fernando Mendes Pinto (born in 1510), whose atypical 90% use of SVO yields a strong effect on the mean value of the 16th century.

v Ambar (1992:73-86) describes subject-verb and subject-auxiliary inversion in the context of preposed constituents in EP. She shows that this inversion can be obligatory in certain contexts, namely when the verb is semantically weak. The important point for our purposes is that she concludes that: “from the point of view of the textual (informational) structure, the subject that, as a result of Subject-Verb inversion, appears in post-verbal position is interpreted as focus, while the preposed constituent is interpreted as topic.” (Ambar, 1992: 86; our translation)

vi Duarte (2003) summarizes this set of constraints in the following manner: “[in Italian and] in Portuguese declarative sentences with transitive and ditransitive verbs, in neutral contexts (out of the blue), post-verbal subjects are legitimate only if the internal arguments of the verb are not full lexical NPs.” (our translation)
vii Possibly, sentence (7) may receive another interpretation, also available in EP, in which it would answer the question “who did what”.

viii In a more recent text (cf. Eide, 2010), Eide adopts the view that there was a syntactic change provoked by a previous change in information structure and prosody. It is outside the scope of this paper to address the issue of the reason for the change. Note that the loss of V2 has been reported and studied in many languages. To continue with the case of Romance languages, the cause of the loss of V2 in French has been imputed by Yang (2002) to the existence of pro-drop. This cannot be the case of Portuguese since no significant change has occurred in the frequency of null subjects in this language (cf. Galves and Paixão de Sousa 2010). Other scholars have argued that the origin of the loss of V2 in the history of French is to be found in the loss of the Germanic prosody (cf. Adams 1987, a.o). Since a prosodic change is likely to have occurred after the 16th c. in Portuguese (cf. Frota et al. 2012), this hypothesis is worth investigating (cf. Eide, 2010; Galves and Paixão de Sousa, 2010; in progress).

Costa does not comment on the possibility of AuxSbj PP, which he does not seem to consider to be excluded in EP.

xi In a nutshell, VSO is only possible in Italian when S is not focused, which is the case of pronouns. According to Belletti (2004), this is due to the fact that, in Italian, the position where Accusative case is checked is higher than the position occupied by post-verbal full subjects. Pronouns are legitimate in post-verbal position because they occupy a higher position. This is different from EP, which has VSO, with O focus. 

xii cf. Rinke (2009)’s discussion on the position of the post-verbal subject in Old Portuguese.
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