

# **Auxiliary Raising in Cimbrian Embedded Clauses: A Further Step in the Dismantling of the Root-embedded Word Order Asymmetry**

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**Abstract:** Cimbrian is a German minority language still spoken in Northern Italy, which has lost the linear V2 restriction but maintains finite verb movement to the lower portion of the split CP domain, i.e. FinP. In this paper, we will discuss auxiliary raising in the subordinate context as an instance of V-to-T movement. This allows us to explain two relevant correlating phenomena: (i) auxiliary raising is incompatible with a post-verbal DP subject which can only appear in the pre-auxiliary position, and (ii) the finite auxiliary in T turns out to be the hosting head for object clitics instead of the lexical complementizer. Our hypothesis is that the lexicalization of T crucially compromises both the subject agreement relation between Fin and the post-verbal, not raised DP and object cliticization onto the lexical complementizer in Fin. In both cases the resulting linear word order pattern reproduces the one of the Cimbrian root clause and potentially leads to a typological change. In this sense, auxiliary raising can be taken as a step in the dismantling of the well-known German-like word order asymmetry and eventually V2.

**Key words:** Cimbrian Syntax; Auxiliary Raising; Loss of V2

## **1. Introduction<sup>1</sup>**

It is a well-known fact that in many languages the auxiliary verb moves higher than the lexical verb (see Haegeman and van Riemsdijk 1986 and more recently Poletto and Tomaselli 2018 for Sappadino-Plodarisch; Madaro and Bidese 2022 for Timavese-Tischlbongersch). So, it does not surprise that Cimbrian displays the same asymmetry (cf. 1a vs 1b):

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- (1) a. I sperar, azz=ta dar Mario \*{**â-rüaf**} *nèt* {**â-rüaf**} haüt  
 I hope, that=da the.NOM Mario PRT-phone.SBJV not PRT-phone.SBJV today  
 ‘I hope Mario doesn’t phone today.’
- b. I sperar, azz=ta dar Mario {**habe**} *nèt* {**habe**} *â-gerüaft* haüt  
 I hope, that=da the.NOM Mario has.SBJV not has.SBJV PRT-phoned today  
 ‘I hope Mario didn’t phone today.’

Nevertheless, Cimbrian exhibits an interesting restriction to auxiliary movement. When the DP-subject is realized on the right of the verbal complex (i.e.: it undergoes ‘free inversion’ much like the Italian pattern), then the raising of the auxiliary over the negation is banned (cf. 2 and 3):

- (2) I sperar, azz=ta \*{**habe**} *nèt* {**habe**} *â-gerüaft* *dar Mario* haüt  
 I hope, that=da has.SBJV not has.SBJV PRT-phonedthe.NOM Mario today  
 ‘I hope Mario didn’t phone today.’
- (3) I sperar, az=ta \*{**saibe**} *nèt* {**saibe**} *gestorbet* *dar Mario*  
 I hope, that=da is.SBJV not is.SBJV died the.NOM Mario  
 ‘I hope Mario didn’t die.’

Why is the post-verbal subject not compatible with auxiliary raising out of the vP? The explanation we would like to propose is that auxiliary raising activates the agreement relation within the TP ‘disrupting’ the process of nominative case assignment.

This paper is organized in four sections. In section 2, we will briefly outline previous analyses of V2 and nominative case assignment in Cimbrian. In section 3, additional data on auxiliary raising will be presented and discussed. In section 4, we will elaborate on the role of T as an intervener in the process of nominative case assignment working within the analyses presented in section 2. In section 5, we will conclude by analysing auxiliary movement to T as an additional step in the dismantling process of the root versus embedded word order asymmetry, ultimately compromising the status of Cimbrian as a COMP dominant, i.e., V2, language.

## 2. V2 and Nominative Case Assignment in Cimbrian

Cimbrian is a Germanic variety of Bavarian origin still spoken in isolation in three different enclaves in the North-Eastern Italian Regions of Veneto and Trentino (see Bidese 2004 and 2021). Structural V2, i.e., mandatory finite verb movement to C in the root clause, is maintained with the following peculiarities:

- (i) On the left of the finite verb, the subject DP may co-occur with other constituents (i.e., no linear restriction), cf. (4a).
- (ii) The subject DP does not invert with the finite verb as in German (\*XP V<sub>fin</sub> S ... V ...), cf. (4b).
- (iii) Subject-finite verb inversion is restricted to pronominal subject, which is realized as an enclitic element, cf. (4c).

- (4) a. Haüt *dar Mario* **hatt** njånka gegrüazt (XP DP<sub>subj</sub> V<sub>fin</sub> ...)  
 today the.NOM Mario has not-even greeted  
 ‘Mario hasn’t even said hello today.’
- b. \*Haüt **hatt** *dar Mario* njånka gegrüazt (\*XP V<sub>fin</sub> DP<sub>subj</sub> ...)  
 today has the.NOM Mario not-even greeted
- c. Haüt **hatt=ar** njånka gegrüazt (<sup>ok</sup>XP V<sub>fin</sub>=he.CL ...)  
 today has=he.CL not-even greeted  
 ‘He hasn’t even said hello today.’

Subject inversion may occur on the right of the whole verbal complex (VP DP), much like ‘free subject inversion’ in a pro-drop language like Italian. Nevertheless, a post-verbal (non-raised) subject DP always requires an expletive clitic *-da/-ta* on the right of the finite verb:<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Cliticization processes resulting in enclisis to either the finite verb in the root clause or the lexical complementizer *az* ‘that’ in the embedded one (i.e.: immediately on the right of the left bracket, namely C) are strongly related to the assumption of a ‘*Wackernagelposition*’ reserved to pronominal elements in Germanic V2 varieties (see Bidese and Tomaselli 2019; Bidese, Padovan and Tomaselli 2020 for further details).

- (5) Haüt **hatt**=*ta* njånka      gegrüazt*dar* Mario  
 today has=*da* not-even      greeted the.<sub>NOM</sub> Mario  
 ‘Mario hasn’t even said hello today.’

It is important to note that (5) does not represent an instance of right dislocation, which would mandatorily require an enclitic pronominal form (3<sup>rd</sup> person singular, i.e. *-ar*) as the following example shows:

- (6) Haüt **hatt**=*ar*      njånka      gegrüazt(*dar* Mario)  
 today    has=*he*.<sub>CL</sub> not-even      greeted (the Mario)  
 ‘He hasn’t even said hello, Mario.’

The (residual) root vs. embedded word order asymmetry relies essentially on the relative position of the finite verb with respect to:

- (i) the negative particle *nèt*, cf. the sequence *nèt* – Vfnt in the embedded clause (7a) versus the sequence Vfnt – *nèt* in the root clause (cf. 7b), and
- (ii) the clitic sequence, cf. complementizer + clitics in the embedded clause (7a) versus Vfnt + clitics in the root clause (7b)

- (7) a. (’Z parirt=*mar*),      **azz**=*ar*      *nèt*      **grüaz**      in Håns  
           it seems=*me*.<sub>CL.DAT</sub> that=*he* <sub>CL</sub> not      greets.<sub>SBIV</sub>      the.<sub>ACC</sub> John  
           ‘It seems to me that he doesn’t greet John.’
- b. Haüt **grüazt**=*ar*      *nèt*      in Håns  
           today greets=*he*.<sub>CL</sub> not      the.<sub>ACC</sub> John  
           ‘Today, he doesn’t greet John.’

In the embedded clause, the nominal subject may occur in both pre-verbal and post-verbal (i.e., after the entire VP) position similar to what we observed for the root clause. Interestingly enough, the enclitic expletive *-da* is required in both cases immediately on the right of the lexical complementizer:

- (8) a. ('Z parirt=mar), azz=*ta* *dar* *Mario* *nèt* **grüaz** in Håns  
 it seems=me.CL.DAT that=*da* the.NOM Mario not greets.SBJV the.ACC John  
 'It seems to me that Mario doesn't greet John.'
- b. ('Z parirt=mar), azz=*ta* *nèt* **grüaz** in Håns *dar* *Mario*  
 it seems=me.CL.DAT that=*da* not greets.SBJV the.ACC John the.NOM Mario
- (9) a. ('Z parirt=mar), azz=*ta* *dar* *Mario* *nèt* **habe** gegrüazt  
 it seems=me.CL.DAT that=*da* the.NOM Mario not has.SBJV greeted  
 'It seems to me, that Mario hasn't said hello.'
- b. ('Z parirt=mar), azz=*ta* *nèt* **habe** gegrüazt *dar* *Mario*  
 it seems=me.CL.DAT that=*da* not has.SBJV greeted the.NOM Mario

Therefore, it does not come as a surprise that Cimbrian does not display any 'that-trace effect,' much like Italian, even though it is not a pro-drop language:

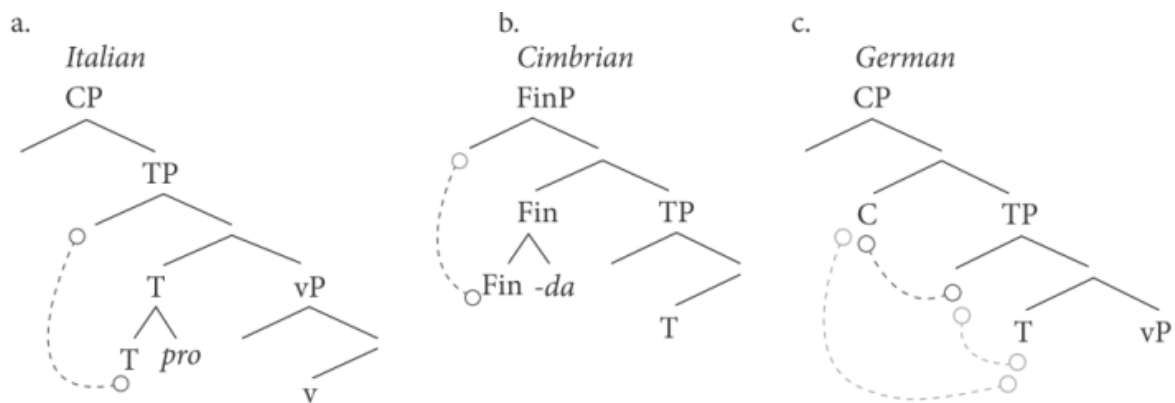
- (10) a. **Ber** gloabest=(t)o, az=*ta* saibe khent atz Lusérn haüt?  
 who think=you.CL that=*ta* is.SBJV arrived to Lusérn today?  
 'Who do you think arrived to Luserna today?'
- b. **Ber** gloabest=(t)o, az=*ta* habe gegrüazt in Håns?  
 who think=you.CL that=*ta* has.SBJV greeted the.ACC John?  
 'Who do you think greeted John?'

As a matter of fact, Cimbrian data provide a good argument in favor of the hypothesis that there is no direct correlation between the violation of the 'that-trace filter' and the positive value of the Null Subject Parameter. What makes the real difference is the post-verbal position of the subject and, ultimately, the 'deactivation' of Spec-head agreement in TP (see Padovan, Bidese and Tomaselli 2021).

2.1. *The Structural Analysis of Nominative Case Assignment in Cimbrian in Comparison to Italian and German*

The preservation of structural V2 together with the observations of subject syntax highlighted above, led Bidese, Padovan and Tomaselli (2020) to propose the following analysis for nominative case assignment in Cimbrian:

(11) Agreement relations for nominative case assignment:



Cimbrian ‘intermediate’ position between Italian and German is captured by the following assumptions:

- (i) Nominative case is assigned by C (namely Fin) to [Spec, Fin] in a ‘canonical’ Spec-Head-Agreement configuration like Italian, where NOM is assigned by T within the T domain.
- (ii) The expletive clitic *-da* is always required by a low Subject (i.e.: whenever the DP Subject does not raise to the structural position [Spec, Fin]) in order to enter a chain with the case assigning head.
- (iii) T does not play any role in the process of nominative case assignment either directly as in Italian or indirectly like in German, where [Spec, T] counts as structural subject position.

The assumption of a T domain in Cimbrian is based on a principled reason, i.e. a condition on structure building, but it is ‘invisible’ as far as its lexical realization is concerned. On one side, the finite verb always moves to the C domain obeying the structural V2 requirement; on the other side, the DP Subject always moves to [Spec, Fin]; as a matter of fact, German-like DP

subject inversion is not allowed in Cimbrian, see above (4b) *versus* (4c). From this perspective, auxiliary raising in the embedded clause represents the first empirical argument in favor of a structural T domain.

### 3. Auxiliary Raising

The observation that auxiliaries have more movement abilities than lexical verbs dates back at least to Emonds (1985). So, it does not come as a surprise that even Cimbrian auxiliaries display more movement possibilities than lexical verbs. First, consider again the Cimbrian system through the following examples:

(12) a. ('Z parirt=mar),    azz=ta    dar Mario    nèt    **grüaz**  
           it seems=me.CL.DAT that=da    the.NOM Mario    not    greets.SBJV  
           'It seems to me, that Mario does not say hello.'

b. \*('Z parirt=mar),    azz=ta    dar Mario    **grüaz**    nèt  
           it seems=me.CL.DAT that=da    the.NOM Mario    greets.SBJV    not

(13) a. ('Z parirt=mar),    azz=ta    dar Mario    nèt    **habe**    gegrüazt  
           it seems=me.CL.DAT that=da    the.NOM Mario    not    has.SBJV    greeted  
           'It seems to me, that Mario did not say hello.'

b. ('Z parirt=mar),    azz=ta    dar Mario    **habe**    nèt    gegrüazt  
           it seems=me.CL.DAT that=da    the.NOM Mario    has.SBJV    not    greeted

As we have already seen (cf. 7a and 7b), the relative position of the finite verb with respect to the negative particle *nèt* represents a piece of evidence in favor of the assumption of structural V2 in Cimbrian. The finite verb raises to Fin in the root clause, which requires post-verbal negation, but does not leave the vP in the embedded clause demonstrating similarities with the well-known Germanic pattern. If the finite verb does not leave the vP in the embedded clause, we would expect pre-verbal negation as examples (12a) and (13a) clearly demonstrate. The significant factor now is that only the finite auxiliary may either precede or follow the negative particle *nèt*. Example (13b) shows that the final auxiliary has moved out of the vP, landing on the left of the negative particle and on the right of the DP subject *dar Mario*. The hypothesis

that (13b) does not represent an instance of CP recursion (i.e., of embedded V2) is supported by at least two observations:

- (i) The complementizer *az* ‘that’ lexicalizes the head which hosts enclitic elements on a pair with the finite verb in the root sentence, i.e., Fin:

(14) a. Haüt    **hatt=ar**    njånka    gegrüazt  
 today    has=he.CL    not-even    greeted  
 ‘He hasn’t even said hello, Mario.’

b. (’Z parirt=mar),    **az=ar**    habe    njånka    gegrüazt    haüt  
 it seems=me.CL.DAT    that=he.CL    has=he.CL    not-even    greeted    today  
 ‘It seems to me, that he hasn’t even said hallo, Mario.’

- (ii) V2 regularly occurs in embedded sentences introduced by *ke* ‘that’ and selected by factive/epistemic verbs. Differently from *az*, *ke* is realized higher in the C domain and refuses enclisis, i.e., it does not represent a proper host for clitics (Grewendorf and Poletto 2009; 2011; Padovan 2011; Bidese, Padovan and Tomaselli 2012):

(15) a. Bar bizzan, ke    dar Mario    **hatt** *nèt*    gegrüazt  
 we know    that    the.NOM Mario has    not    greeted  
 ‘We know that Mario hasn’t said hallo.’

b. \*(’Z parirt=mar),    ke    dar Mario    *nèt*    **hat**    gegrüazt  
 it seems=me.CL.DAT    that    the.NOM Mario    not    has    greeted

c. (’Z parirt=mar),    ke    haüt    **hatt=ar**    *net*    gegrüazt  
 it seems=me.CL.DAT    that    today has=he.CL    not    greeted  
 ‘It seems to me, that he hasn’t said hallo today.’

The constellation of data presented so far is rather well known in the literature devoted to Cimbrian syntax but there is at least one new set of data which has not yet been examined and still needs some explanation. Whenever the DP subject occurs in the post-verbal position, i.e.:



on the right of the verbal complex, embedded clauses introduced by *az* ‘that’ disfavor auxiliary raising (cf. 1b vs. 2 above and here 16a vs. 16b):

(16) a. (’Z parirt=mar),    *azz=ta nèt habe*    *gegrüazt dar Mario*  
 it seems=me.CL.DAT    that=da not    has.SBJV greeted    the.NOM Mario  
 ‘It seems to me, that Mario hasn’t say hello.’

b. \*(’Z parirt=mar),    *azz=ta habe nèt*    *gegrüazt dar Mario*  
 it seems=me.CL.DAT    that=da has.SBJV not    greeted the.NOM Mario

Only embedded clauses introduced by the high complementizer *ke* ‘that’ require auxiliary raising over the negation consistently with the embedded V2 word order pattern:

(17) *Bar bizzan, ke haüt hatt=ta nèt*    *gegrüazt dar Mario*  
 we know    that    today has=da not    greeted    the.NOM Mario  
 ‘We know that Mario hasn’t said hallo.’

If on one side, auxiliary raising in the embedded clause introduced by the low complementizer *az* ‘that’ could be easily analyzed in terms of V-to-T movement,<sup>3</sup> on the other side we are still left with the previous relevant question: why should auxiliary raising to T disfavor a post-verbal subject? The hypothesis we would like to posit in the next section is that a lexicalized T acts as an intervener in the relation between *-da* and the post-verbal/not raised subject, disrupting the process of nominative case assignment within the lower vP domain.

#### 4. T as an Intervener in the Process of Nominative Case Assignment

The analysis proposed so far relies on following basic assumptions:

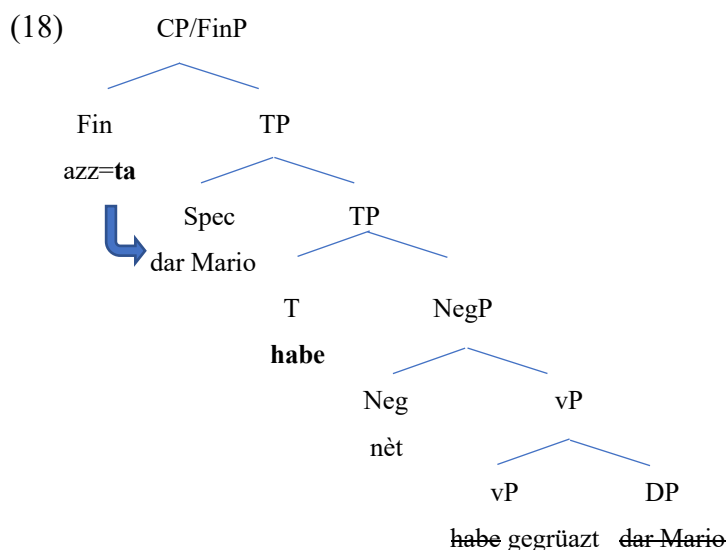
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<sup>3</sup> The hypothesis that auxiliary raising in Cimbrian should be analyzed as an instance of V-to-T movement – and not as an instance of Verb Projection Raising (VPR) – relies on at least two facts: (a) Cimbrian presents no instances of Verb Raising (VR), and (b) Cimbrian is a Germanic VO variety that differs from other historic Germanic minority languages spoken in the Italian Alpine region, like Sappadino (Plodarisch) or Timavese (Tischlbongerisch), which maintain an OV typology. For the assumption of VR as a diagnostic for VPR see den Besten (1986) and Haegeman and van Riemsdijk (1986); see Poletto and Tomaselli (2018) for the assumption of VPR in Sappadino and Madaro and Bidese (2022) for the same in Timavese.

- (i) The case assigning head in Cimbrian is C, or more precisely Fin, and not T, which is ‘inert’ with regards to both nominative case assignment and finite verb movement.
- (ii) In Cimbrian, the TP is never lexicalized in the root clause; in fact, [Spec, T] is never lexicalized by the DP subject (i.e., no German-like inversion), and T does not represent a landing site for the finite verb which moves higher to Fin, consistently with the assumption that Cimbrian is a structural V2 language.

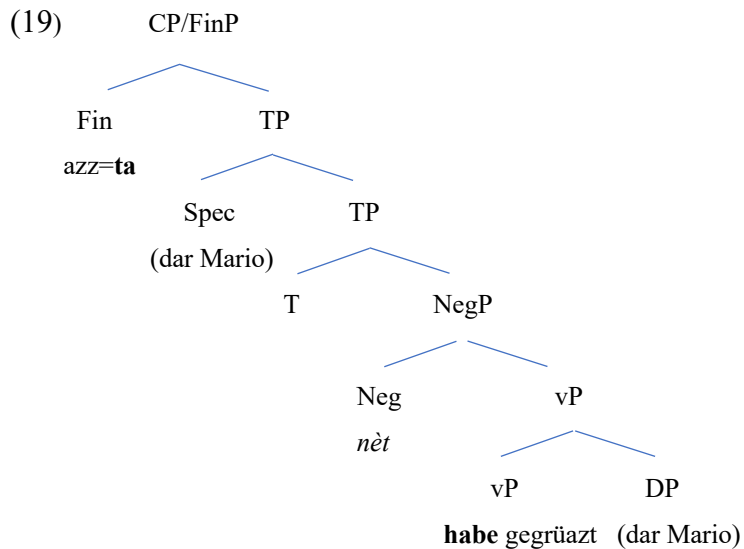
The assumption that only auxiliary verbs may raise to T does not come as a surprise and is a well-known phenomenon from both a diachronic and a synchronic point of view.<sup>4</sup> The hypothesis we want to advance is the following: The lexicalization of T via auxiliary raising activates the T domain with two immediate consequences:

- (i) T acts as an intervener between Fin and the post-verbal subject. In fact, the finite verb does not allow rightwards agreement with a non-raised subject in Cimbrian.
- (ii) It forces Subject raising to [Spec, T] in order to enter the relevant relation with Fin.



Rather contrarily, an empty T allows Fin to assign case via *-ta* to the lower DP subject regardless of its position, either in [Spec, T] or within vP:

<sup>4</sup> For the relevance of auxiliary raising in the history of English, we refer to the work by Kemenade, from her ground-breaking study in (1987) until recent publications, see, among them, Kemenade (2012).



The fact that expletive *-da* obligatorily occurs on the right of the complementizer *az* independently of the lexical realization of T represents strong evidence that Fin still preserves its role as ‘dominant’ head consistently with a +V2 (i.e. Comp-dominant) language. Nevertheless, auxiliary raising to T in the subordinate clause introduced by the low complementizer *az* ‘that’ represents a further step in the dismantling of the root-embedded word order asymmetry and potentially of structural V2 in favour of a non V2 system, like Italian and, more generally, Romance languages, with T as dominant head, i.e., the head endowed with the relevant feature for subject agreement.<sup>5</sup>

## 5. Conclusions

Auxiliary raising to T in the embedded clause reproduces the linear word order pattern of the root sentence (Subj Vfnt Neg V Obj), with the difference concerning the obligatory presence of the particle *-da/-ta* in the embedded context (cf. 20a versus 20b):

- (20) a. Dar Mario    **hatt** *nèt*    gegrüazt    (moin Vater)  
          the<sub>NOM</sub> Mario has    not    greeted    my father  
          ‘Mario didn’t greet my vater.’

<sup>5</sup> The distinction between COMP-dominant versus INFL-dominant languages goes back to Hulk and Kemenade (1995).

- b. ('Z parirt=mar), azz=ta dar Mario **habe** nèt gegrüazt (moin Vater)  
 it seems=me.CL.DAT that=da the.NOM Mario has.SBJV not greeted my father  
 'It seems to me that Mario hasn't greet my father.'

The dismantling of the root/embedded word order asymmetry is confirmed by the position of object clitics. When auxiliary raising occurs, the finite auxiliary is the only possible host for cliticization preventing enclisis to the higher lexical complementizer *az* 'that' (cf. 21b), which remains a possible option only if the finite auxiliary does not move out of the vP (cf. 21a):

- (21) a. ('Z parirt=mar), azz=t(a)={en} nèt **hab(e)={en}** gegrüazt dar Mario  
 it seems=me.CL.DAT that=da=him.CL not has.SBJV=him greeted the.NOM Mario  
 'It seems to me, that Mario hasn't greeted him.'

- b. ('Z parirt=mar), azz=t(a)={\*en} dar Mario **habe={n}** nèt gegrüazt  
 it seems=me.CL.DAT that=da=him.CL the.NOM Mario has.SBJV=him.CL not greeted

- c. Dar Mario **hatt=en** nèt gegrüazt  
 the.NOM Mario has.SBJV=him.CL not greeted  
 'Mario didn't greet him.'

The observation that auxiliary raising to T prevents object cliticization to the lexical complementizer *az* 'that' confirms the role of T as intervener in both directions: top-down as far as NOM assignment to a low (not raised) subject DP is concerned, and bottom up in the process of object cliticization to Fin.

From this perspective, auxiliary raising to T represents a potential step in the dismantling of structural V2, i.e., the disjunction of the position reserved to the lexical complementizer *az* 'that' (i.e., Fin) from the position which represents the landing site for both finite verb movement and cliticization of the pronominal objects. This process is far from being completed as long as Cimbrian maintains the following characteristics:

- (i) pronominal subject inversion with the finite verb in the root sentence, i.e., enclisis to the lower functional head of the C domain (cf. above 4c, here repeated as 22):

(22) Haüt **hatt=ar** njänka gegrüazt  
 today has=he.CL not-even greeted  
 ‘He hasn’t even said hello today.’

(ii) expletive *-da/-ta* encliticized onto the low complementizer *az* ‘that’, which assures a (residual) root-embedded asymmetry (cf. above 20b, here repeated as 23):

(23) (‘Z parirt=mar), azz=ta dar Mario **habe** nèt gegrüazt (moin Vater)  
 it seems=me.CL.DAT that=da the.NOM Mario has.SBJV not greeted my father  
 ‘It seems to me that Mario hasn’t greet my father.’

The maintenance/preservation of what is traditionally called the ‘*Wackernagelposition*’ for (at least) the pronominal (cf. 22) and expletive (cf. 23) subject remains the fundamental evidence for the assumption of structural V2.

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