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*Latin verb placement:
a study of non-V-final clauses
in Cicero's 'Letters to Atticus'*

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The aim of this research is to analyze Latin verb placement and to draw an accurate picture of the factors that play a relevant role in determining it. The general domain to which this thesis belongs can be identified with the study of what is conventionally known as word order, even though – more precisely – the actual interest lies on the investigation of the arrangement of larger units within the clause, that is constituents. A vast and long-lasting tradition is available on this matter, which has inspired the attention not only of several linguists in the last few centuries, but also of some illustrious grammarians who were already active in Ancient Rome. In spite of this, even after the establishment of a scientific method in linguistics, such a quantitatively rich bibliography has rather kept close to the field of classics and yielded a long list of observations that, albeit at times suggestive, carry a considerable degree of subjectivity and unverifiability.

As for the topic of my choice, the main lesson that can be gathered from the reading of canonical literature is that Latin possesses an extremely free word order, almost to the point of shunning any regulating principle: the verb itself, in addition to its final location – unanimously recognized as being standard –, can appear in every other clausal position and this has usually been justified through the recourse to quite vague notions like emphasis and accentuation either of the meaning of the verb or of its grammatical properties. In the second half of the 20th century, more properly linguistic studies equally tended to stress the importance of pragmatics, mainly concentrating on the categories of Focus and Topic and often favoring functionalist approaches. On the contrary, my intention is to pursue the way paved by generativism, which, while representing one of the most revolutionary and successful theories in linguistics, has seldom and only recently been applied to the examination of classical languages. Therefore, in agreement with these promising and pioneering attempts, I mean to contribute to a better understanding of the underlying structure of the Latin clause, thus looking into the syntactic conditions that bring about the broad variety of possible surface manifestations.

In detail, I am going to undertake an analysis of the verbal configurations that depart from the basic pattern, especially focusing on those where the verb emerges in the leftmost region (first, second or third position), in order to verify whether they correspond to a special, marked function or they can appear more freely. To this end, I will adopt two primary perspectives: on the one hand, I will consider the most interesting accounts previously proposed by scholars on Latin itself; on the other, I cannot exempt myself from the comparison with other languages that exhibit similar phenomena. This way, I will obtain a set of relevant features, concerning – as we will see – such elements as mood, grammatical person and expression of the arguments (just to name a few), which will be further delved into and tested.

This research will be conducted on a synchronic dimension, upon the selection of a specific linguistic stage, for the purpose of offering a description that is as precise and truthful as possible. However, given the mixed strategy just outlined, I believe at least that it will manage to hint at some appealing hypotheses on the diachronic and comparative levels, as to the affinity with those varieties that display a solid V2 grammar, like most of the Germanic family and, above all, Medieval Romance languages. In particular, the rise of a verb-second system in the latter group has not been totally clarified yet and its origin could probably be forecast in some phases of the evolution of its ancestor.

Within the greatly extended history of Latin and its abundant and diverse literature, I decided to examine one individual text, namely Cicero's *Letters to Atticus*, written in the 1st century BC. The reasons behind this choice are many and multifaceted: in the first place, it dates back to an era whose language, culture and chronicles have been widely studied – if not admired – and, as a consequence, are still well known to us; the author himself, aside from being one of the leading figures of his time, is regarded as an excellent representative of Latin, thanks to his mastery and versatility. Most of all, though, beside these exterior, stylistic judgments, the *Letters* provide us with a quite unique instance of an authentic private correspondence, not directly meant for publication and, thus, lacking the stiltedness that frequently characterizes the literary register.

Starting from this text, I proceeded to manually create a corpus by means of individuating all the clauses that contain a verb and collecting them together, so that they

could be investigated in accordance to one defined set of parameters. In addition to supplying the data for my analysis, which obviously is its main and fundamental function, this sample will also serve as the source of all the examples that I will be quoting in the next sections to illustrate the phenomena under discussion.

The rest of this thesis is arranged as follows: in the second chapter, I will devote myself to the presentation of the most relevant records pertaining to Latin verb placement that have been put forward in the academic field, beginning with the influential works by Marouzeau, but predominantly centering on the modern accounts suggested in the last thirty years. After a general description of word order and its derivation, I will list the circumstances under which, according to the mentioned scholars, deviant, verb-initial patterns usually take place and we will notice that, in most cases, their emergence is connected to some peculiar pragmatic contexts. Simultaneously, the consideration of the same orders in distinct languages will reveal that other factors, now of a syntactic nature, are plausibly at play. Finally, drawing from all the gathered information, I will be able to formulate the exact tasks of my research.

The third chapter will deal with the methodological aspects: firstly, a couple of sections will be reserved for a better validation of the period, the author and the text of my choice, tracing a rapid but significant overview of the advantages and the disadvantages that would ensue from the adoption of the other possible options; secondly, I will carefully expose the process that led to the building of my corpus and the criteria that I accepted for its inspection, each one of which will then be appropriately justified and exemplified.

The following two chapters, which coincide with the central and original part of this dissertation, will disclose the empirical results of the work that I carried out on our collection. Specifically, in Chapter 4, the data derived from the association of two or more parameters will be showcased with the help of multiple tables and, for the sake of clarity, they will be summarized into synthetic and meaningful generalizations. At this point, in Chapter 5 I will pick up on these generalizations and, commenting on them, I will advance some hopefully well-founded interpretations as well as a few other suggestions that would require stronger evidence to be fully supported. In short, at the end of this study, I will have determined the conditions that govern non-final verb configurations in Latin and

proposed a reasoned connection with the V2 grammar of early Romance languages. At last, a concise conclusive chapter will act as a recapitulation of the pivotal points and of the major outcomes of this thesis and as a recommendation of open questions for future research.

CHAPTER 2

Latin verb placement

The following chapter will be dedicated to a reasoned overview of the main theoretical studies and proposals concerning the object of this thesis. In particular, the first sections will address the definition and the derivation of the existing word orders in Classical Latin, each one of which will then be specifically and individually dealt with in the next sections, starting from the basic configuration and proceeding with the other marked verb positions, so as to assess their possible causes and their attested distributions.

2.1 Latin word order: a matter of pragmatics

It is a well-established conviction, in the scientific literature that has been published since the beginning of the 20th century, that Latin, throughout all its history, is endowed with a strikingly variable word order and that, nevertheless, this much-debated flexibility does not imply an utter lack of governing principles. As a brief and significant caption, we could take the often quoted and pioneering words by Marouzeau (1922: 1): “L’ordres des mots en latin est libre, il n’est pas indifférent”. That is to say, randomness should not be considered a potential cause, let alone the determining factor.

Thus, if we take into account the position of the three main elements of the sentence (Subject, Object and Verb), we will easily see that all their six possible combinations can be found – though at a sometimes relevantly different rate. The following excerpts, belonging to our limited corpus, will give us an example, also showing that such variation is not the result of Latin’s longevity or of its rich and vast literary tradition, but it can be reduced to the extent of a single text by a single author, such as Cicero’s *Letters to Atticus*.

1) SOV:

Terenti-a magn-os articul-orum dolor-es hab-et.

Terentia-NOM.SG big-ACC.PL joint-GEN.PL pain-ACC.PL have-PRS.3SG

Terentia has a severe attack of rheumatism. (I,5)

2) SVO:

Pompei-us am-at nos [...]

Pompey-NOM.SG love-PRS.3SG us.ACC

Pompey loves me. (II,20)

3) OSV:

Viatic-um Crassipes praerip-it.

travelling.allowance-ACC.SG Crassipes.NOM.SG swallow.up-PRS.3SG

Crassipes swallows up my money for travelling. (IV,5)

4) OVS:

Sed me mov-et un-us vir [...]

but me-ACC move-PRS.3SG one-NOM.SG man.NOM.SG

But there is one man who shakes my resolution. (VIII,14)

5) VSO:

Sed hab-et ali-orum omn-ium ratio exit-um,

but have-PRS.3SG other-GEN.PL all-GEN.PL case.NOM.SG escape-ACC.SG

me-a null-um.

mine-NOM.F.SG none-ACC.SG

But the case of all the rest admits of some escape, mine of none. (XI,15)

6) VOS:

Vinc-ere incip-it timor-em dolor [...]

win-PRS.INF begin-PRS.3SG fear-ACC.SG pain-NOM.SG

Indignation is beginning to get the better of fear. (II,18)

Now that I have ascertained the actual coexistence of multiple patterns, what I need to do is establish a persuasive explanation behind it. Let us then follow a path through the most meaningful theories advanced by linguists and scholars on the subject.

An initial and fundamental distinction can be drawn on the basis of the nature of the factors responsible for word order. As Salvi (2004) points out, out of the three options that are usually active on a crosslinguistic level – syntax, prosody and pragmatics – it is the last one that proves to be essential. According to this view, which is shared with the most favor, the clausal configuration of Latin encodes so-called information structure, revolving around categories like Focus and Topic. Pursuing Devine and Stephens’s (2006) model, who employ and develop this interpretation in a notably systematic and coherent way, we could attempt to rephrase the English translation of examples (1)-(6) and observe that each sentence, with its own ordering of constituents, corresponds to a different meaning or, more precisely, to a different pragmatic function¹:

1a) → *What happens is that Terentia has a severe attack of rheumatism.*

(broad scope focus)

2a) → *It’s me that Pompey loves.*

(contrastive focus)

3a) → *What happens to my money for travelling is that Crassipes swallows it up.*

(aboutness topic)

4a) → *There is only one man that shakes my resolution.*

(contrastive focus)

5a) → *But the case of all the rest does admit of some escape, mine of none.*

(contrastive focus and list interpretation)

¹ As a matter of fact, if we modify word order in 2), for instance, yielding sentences like “Pompeius nos amat” or “Nos amat Pompeius”, neither the semantic nor the lexical meaning varies. An alternation in this direction would only be achievable through a change in morphology or vocabulary (Devine and Stephens 2006: 3-4)

6a) → *What indignation is beginning to do to fear is get the better of it.*

(aboutness topic)

First of all, I want to direct our attention to the arrangement exemplified by (1) since it is widely recognized as the basic word order of the language, at least in its Classical stage; which means, in line with its most common definition, that SOV is discourse neutral and identifiable with the notion of broad scope focus (i.e. when the focus selects more than one constituent up to the entire sentence), conveying the appropriate answer to the question “What happened?”, as is self-evidently shown in (1a). Marouzeau (1938) already notes that the final position for the verb is in place whenever the utterance is devoid of any particular role, highlighting the importance of pragmatics – albeit in a quite vague fashion – long before the field gained greater interest in the linguistic community². He also states that this order outnumbers the others with respect to frequency: in Chapter 4 I will statistically demonstrate that this claim holds true in our corpus, though it would be incorrect to deem the numerical superiority an obligatory condition for a sequence to be basic³.

By means of an extensive survey conducted on several recurring phrases, Devine and Stephens (2006) reach the following version of the SOV pattern, now enlarged so as to include new arguments and adjuncts and which is partially represented in (8)-(10).

7) Subject – Direct Object – Indirect Object/Oblique argument – Adjunct – Goal or Source argument – Non-referential direct object⁴ - Verb

² In addition, Marouzeau (1938) stresses the connection between the verb-final pattern and a banal, unrefined writing style, but these rhetorical observations do not belong to the spirit of my thesis.

³ A representative case is the one offered by Medieval Romance languages or German, whose basic orders are, respectively, SVO and SOV, whereas their V2 system makes them superficially rarer.

⁴ Non-referential direct objects are non-specific abstract indefinites incorporated into the meaning of the verb, with which they form fixed phrases, like *impetum facere* “to make an attack” (Devine and Stephens 2006: 82)

8) Direct Object – Indirect Object – Verb:

E-um libell-um Caesar-i ded-i.

that-ACC.SG petition-ACC.SG Caesar-DAT.SG give-PRF.1SG

I presented that petition to Caesar. (XVI,16a)

9) Subject – Direct Object – Goal – Verb:

[...] cum is omn-ia su-a studi-a et

because he.NOM.SG all-ACC.PL his-ACC.PL devotion-ACC.PL and

offici-a in me contul-iss-et.

attention-ACC.PL in me.ACC direct-PLPRF.SBJV-3SG

Considering that he had shown me every sort of kindness and attention. (I,1)

10) Indirect object – Adjunct – Non-referential direct object – Verb:

(Postea vero quam ipse Atticus ad me venit in Tusculanum huius unius rei

causa) tibi ut apud me grati-as ag-ere-t [...]

you.DAT.SG so.that by me.ACC thank-ACC.PL do-IPFV.SBJV-3SG

(But when Atticus himself came to see me) with the express purpose of declaring his gratitude to you. (XV,14)

Further to this point, the two authors assert that “since broad scope focus sentences are by definition less pragmatically articulated, neutral word order should reflect general and intrinsic semantic and pragmatic properties of argument structure rather than sentence specific informational structure” (Devine and Stephens 2006: 36). In compliance with this principle, they then put forward analyses of the sort hereunder mentioned: for example, the subject is said to preferentially occupy the first place by reason of its being – if an agent – outside the event (in generative words: being an external argument) and the prototypical topic, just as the non-referential direct object is “incorporated to the meaning of the verb” (Devine and Stephens 2006: 82), hence their proximity. Finally, concerning the nucleus of this study, the predicate owes the last spot in the sentence to its character of prototypical comment.

In more recent years, Danckaert (2012) has brought a substantial contribution to the matter, especially by examining it through the lens of the syntactic approach known as cartography. For the moment, I am just interested in referring his remark that, in relation to its deep structure, Latin does not display an exceptional behavior contrasting any other language, inasmuch as its neutral order may be regularly derived from an SVO template, the Universal Base assumed by Kayne (1994) – a process that I will describe in detail in section 2.3. In addition, Danckaert (2012) presents the simple but useful clarification that the verb-final model should be better intended as inflection-final, the terminal position of the clause being reserved for the inflected form of the verb: in Classical Latin this can either have the shape of the lexical verb itself (in the majority of cases) or of the auxiliary (the only possibility being *esse* “be”, (11)) and modal (such as *velle* “want”, (12), and *posse* “be able”, (13)).

11) Numquam enim de te ips-o nisi crudel-issim-e
 never PRT about you.ABL.SG self-ABL.SG unless cruel-SUP-ADV
 cogita-t-um est.

think-PRF.PTCP-NOM.SG be.PRS.3SG

For even as to you personally there were never any but the harshest ideas. (XI,6)

12) Diiung-ere me ab ill-o vol-o.
 dissociate-PRS.INF me.ACC from that.ABL.M.SG want-PRS.1SG

I wish to dissociate myself from that man. (VII,1)

13) Luc-em aspic-ere vix possum.
 light-ACC.SG see-PRS.INF barely be.able.PRS.1SG

I can scarcely bear the light. (III,7)

All the authors hitherto discussed make use of approximately the same set of pragmatic concepts for the purpose of illustrating most of the alternations in word order⁵.

⁵ In what follows I am going to list some of the main phenomena involving the movement of arguments and adjuncts, while the displacement of the verb – the primary topic of this research – will be the object of a more elaborate investigation in section 2.3.

One highly effective category is Topic, which is in turn defined as the constituent that “identifies the entity or set of entities under which the information expressed in the comment constituent can be stored in the commonground content” (Féry & Ishihara 2016: 7), “the element that delimits the domain of validity of the predication” (Salvi 2004: 42) or, more easily, what the sentence is about (Reinhart 1981). A more exhaustive investigation on this subject is the one carried on by Benincà and Poletto (2004), originally based on data from Italian and Rhaeto-Romance: the two authors demonstrate that Topic is a field and it can be internally split into smaller units corresponding to Frame (located higher and further divisible into Hanging Topic and a Scene Setting projection, respectively providing information on the main Topic of the sentence – which is redefined as “an element that is present in the shared knowledge of the speaker and the hearer but is not accessible in the immediate context” – and on its space-time coordinates) and to Theme (with classic Left Dislocation and List Interpretation, that is an opposition in a set of already given items). If a constituent is topicalized, it undergoes movement to the left periphery, thus instantiating a sequence of arguments partly mutated from (7). These shifted phrases are clearly distinguishable when they are introduced by the preposition *de* (14) or the conjunction *quod* (15), in the event that an entire clause is fronted, as well as when they precede a subordinator (16), which can be taken as the lower boundary of the Complementizer Phrase⁶ (Danckaert 2012).

14) De sort-e me-a Sulpici-o confid-o
 about fortune-ABL.SG my.ABL.SG Sulpicius-DAT.SG trust-PRS.1SG
 et Egnati-o scilicet.
 and Egnatius-DAT.SG of.course
As to my capital, I trust Sulpicius, and, of course, Egnatius. (XII,18)

⁶ In light of this view, Salvi’s (2004) proposal that complementizers appear further down in the structure in the presence of a Topic or a Focus cannot be accepted.

15) Quod scrib-is a Iuni-o te
 what.ACC.N.SG write-PRS.2SG by Iunius-ABL.SG you.ACC.SG
appella-t-um, omnino Cornifici-us locuples est.
 dun-PRF.PTCP-ACC.SG entirely Cornificius-NOM.SG rich.NOM.SG be.PRS.3SG
*You say that you have been dunned by Iunius: Cornificius is certainly a man of
 substance. (XII,14)*

16) Id nisi fi-t, exclud-emur.
 this.ACC.N.SG unless be.done-PRS.3SG cut-out.PRS.PASS.1PL
Unless that is done, we shall be cut out. (XII,40)

Pinkster (1990) notes that the popular misconception, spread by some grammars, that subjects are the most eligible candidates for the first position originates from the overlapping of the latter with topics: apart from the numerous instances of null expression, subjects sit clause-initially provided that they sustain topicalization. An alternative procedure, whose availability apparently only holds for specific entities and weak topics (i.e. non-contrastive topics), consists in what linguists call “scrambling”, that is, the “reordering of the verb’s arguments inside [...] the middle field” (Danckaert 2012: 44): once again, we can be certain of its application on condition that a subordinating conjunction be present, signalling the left periphery’s upper border (17).

17) Direct Object – Subject – Goal – Verb:
 (Respondit se non dubitare) quin et op-em et grati-am
 that and help-ACC.SG and influence-ACC.SG
me-am ill-e ad pacification-em quaer-er-et.
 my.ACC.SG he.NOM.M.SG for pacification-ACC.SG want-IPFV.SBJV-3SG
*(He replied that he had no doubt) that he wanted my help and my influence for
 effecting a pacification. (IX,11)*

The second central pragmatic operation is Focus, which “indicates the presence of alternatives that are relevant for the interpretation of linguistic expressions” (Krifka 2008: 246). Here again, in line with Benincà and Poletto’s (2004) proposal, the Focus domain is actually made up of at least two subfields, one expressing contrastiveness (i.e., an element of a given set is picked out and concurrently all the others are excluded) and the other representing simple informationality (non-contrasted, “relevant information”). Its primary dedicated placement stands at the beginning of the sentence, right after a potential topic, similarly to which it may arise to the left of a complementizer (18). This is the position where we typically find *wh*-elements and those constituents that provide an answer to a question (19). Furthermore, scholars acknowledge the possibility for a focus to fill the clause-final extremity, although they do not seem to agree on its accurate classification (20): it may be contrastive (Salvi 2004; Pinkster 1990), presentative or informational⁷ (Danckaert 2012). In this last option, it is normally the verb that falls into the scope (Devine and Stephens 2006). Finally, Focus is invoked in order to justify discontinuous constituents (21) (or hyperbaton, according to traditional terminology), a feature notoriously associated to Latin: only the focalized bit of the phrase moves upward, stranding the remainder in its original projection (Devine and Stephens 2006).

18) *Iam enim chart-a _____ ips-a ne nos prod-at*
 by.now PRT paper-NOM.SG self-NOM.SG lest us.ACC betray-PRS.SBJV.3SG
 pertimesc-o.
 fear-PRS.1SG

For I am now afraid lest the very paper should betray me. (II,20)

19) *'Quid tu igitur sens-ur-us es?'*
 what.ACC.N.SG you.NOM.SG then think-FUT.PTCP-NOM.SG be.PRS.2SG
 Non *idem* quod dic-tur-us [*scil.* sensurus sum].
 not same.ACC.N.SG what.ACC.N.SG say-FUT.PTCP-NOM.SG

"What, then, will be your view?" Not the one I shall express. (VII,6)

⁷ We can therefore suppose that such position is accessible to foci, regardless of their subtype.

20) Sed omn-em consolation-em vinc-it dolor.
but every-ACC.SG consolation-ACC.SG win-PRS.3SG pain.NOM.SG

But my sorrow is too much for any consolation. (XII,14)

21) [...] satis aculeat-as ad Dolabell-am litter-as ded-i.
fairly stinging-ACC.PL to Dolabella-ACC.SG letter-ACC.PL give-PRF.1SG

I sent Dolabella a fairly stinging letter. (XIV,18)

We conclude this rapid pragmatic inventory with the mention of tails, whose definition is credited to Devine and Stephens (2006: 17): “tails serve to lexically instantiate arguments that are obligatorily projected but are not topics or foci, and at the same time to confirm the hearer's assumptions or refresh his memory about old or inferable information”. Like some of the aforesaid foci, they also tend to be located in final position, postverbally, and often constitute the unmoved portion of a hyperbaton. It seems clear that, on this occasion, we are actually dealing with the syntactic movement known as right-dislocation.

22) (Sc-ire iam te oport-et [...]) qu-as
know-PRS.INF now you.ACC.SG be.necessary-PRS.3SG which-ACC.PL
ab eodem ad Caesar-em fer-at litter-as.
from himself.ABL.SG to Caesar-ACC.SG bring-PRS.SBJV.3SG letter-ACC.PL
(You ought now to know [...]) what sort of a letter he is conveying from him to Caesar. (VII,17)

A quite diverging, more radical evaluation of word order is the one promoted by Panhuis (1982) and based on the theory known as Functional Sentence Perspective⁸, a product of the Prague school of linguistics. First of all, he assumes that Latin, being a language whose order of constituents is not fixed, obeys a communicative organization that works in a methodical and consistent way and is independent from syntax, as much

⁸ Functional Sentence Perspective hinges upon the notion of communicative dynamism and the degree to which every element of the sentence carries such dynamism: the higher the degree is, the farther the conversation is pushed (Panhuis 1982: 9).

as it is possible – two requirements that he frequently accuses other academics of missing and neglecting in their expositions. The core ingredients of this pragmatic system are to be identified with Theme and Rheme, that is to say the elements expressing, in order, the lowest and the highest amount of communicative dynamism. Subsequently, Panhuis proceeds to differentiate normal, non-emotive sentences from their emotive counterparts: we expect to find a linear succession from thematic to rhematic components in the former and the exact opposite in the latter. This appears to be the standard situation of early and colloquial Latin, represented by Plautus’s comedies, whereas characteristically conservative legal and religious texts witness a much stronger tendency for the verb to be final – the result of two conjoined causes: the long-lasting legacy of the Proto-Indo-European OV pattern⁹ and the stereotypization of habitually clause-final rhematic predicates. Such property later becomes the trademark of the Classical stage of the language, which has to be thought of as an archaizing and purely literary register. In consequence, the verb is conventionally placed at the end of the sentence, when, on the other hand, the remaining constituents are persistently arranged in conformity with the communicative Theme-Rheme scheme. In the remainder of my work, though, I will rather adopt the twofold distinction (which was established within the fields of semantics and formal pragmatics) of topic vs. comment and focus vs. predicate, with the goal of avoiding any ambiguity that may result from the overlapping with the notions of Theme and Rheme.

2.2 The influence of other factors

As it has just been proven, we are entitled to consider, along with many other respected linguists, information structure to be the leading reason accounting for word order variations in Latin. Notwithstanding, pragmatics is far from being altogether unproblematic: indeed, what often turns out to be particularly tricky for us modern readers is understanding, to a sufficient degree, the communicative intentions of an ancient writer and the common ground shared with his intended addressee(s). Most of all, though, pragmatics is certainly not the unique factor. Reprising Salvi’s (2004) tripartition cited on

⁹ It goes without saying that the issue of PIE word order is actually controversial.

page 7, we should not light-heartedly overlook the influence of prosody. Of course, the simple fact that we are dealing with an extinct language poses an extremely difficult challenge, but it is worth mentioning that some suggestions on the matter have in truth been indicated.

Moreover, and more importantly for this thesis, as much as its impact has been variously diminished, syntax does play a role. This becomes evident every time that a principle strictly regulating the array of constituents is recoverable, such as what Danckaert (2017: 41) labels the Negation-Verb Ordering Restriction: “the marker of sentential negation *non* always linearly precedes the hierarchically highest clause-mate verb, but it can either precede or follow all other verbs in the same clause”¹⁰, a constraint of which Cicero’s *Letters* obviously contain no violation (23)-(24).

23) Ut nihil ad te d-em litter-arum
 so.that nothing.ACC to you.ACC.SG give-PRS.SBJV.1SG letter-GEN.PL
 fac-ere non possum.
 do-PRS.INF not be.able.PRS.1SG
I cannot reconcile myself to sending nothing by way of a letter to you. (VIII,14)

24) Non aud-et homin-em id aetat-is mon-ere.
 not dare-PRS.3SG man-ACC.SG it.ACC age-GEN.SG admonish-PRS.INF
[Brutus] does not venture to remonstrate with a man of my age. (XVI,7)

Similar rules are then revealed by each of the other authors that I have been referencing so far: Pinkster (1990) maintains that the unlikelihood with regards to the syntactic category dictates both the distribution of purpose adjuncts (phrasal adjuncts are preverbal (25), clausal adjuncts are postverbal (26)¹¹) and possibly the different behavior of *Accusativus cum infinitivo* from embedded clauses introduced by *ut*; Devine & Stephens (2006: 122) hint that prepositional phrases oftentimes surface after the verb thanks to “the syntactic presence of the prepositional head” (27).

¹⁰ Danckaert (2017) makes use of this principle in order to justify the fact that Classical Latin possesses a Verb Phrase and that *non* is the head of its own projection.

¹¹ We have to keep in mind that the internal complexity of a constituent is not irrelevant to this matter.

25) (Proinde eo animo te velim esse,) quasi me-i negoti-i
as.though my-GEN.SG interest-GEN.SG
caus-a in ist-a loc-a miss-us
cause-ABL.SG in this-ACC.PL place-ACC.PL send.PRF.PTCP-NOM.SG
ess-es.
be.IPFV.SBJV-2SG
*(I wish you therefore to feel) as though you had been sent to where you are in
my interests. (I,10)*

26) His re-bus ac-t-is Reatin-i
this.ABL.PL thing-ABL.PL do-PRF.PTCP-ABL.PL person.of.Reate-NOM.PL
me ad su-a Tempe dux-erunt ut
me.ACC to their-ACC.PL Tempe.ACC.PL conduct-PRF.3PL so.that
ag-er-em caus-am contra Interamnat-is
plead-IPFV.SBJV-1SG cause-ACC.SG against person.of.Interamna-ACC.PL
apud consul-em et decem legat-os.
before consul-ACC.SG and ten commissioner-ACC.PL
*After this was over the people of Reate conducted me to their Tempe,
to plead their cause against the people of Interamna before the consul
and ten commissioners. (IV,15)*

27) Numeri-um Numesti-um libenter accep-i
Numerius-ACC.SG Numestius-ACC.SG willingly admit-PRF.1SG
in amicitia-am.
to friendship-ACC.SG
I have had pleasure in admitting Numerius Numestius to my friendship. (II,22)

Panhuis (1982) himself concedes that a few structural limitations are in fact operative, but only insofar as they syntactically integrate pragmatic-driven phenomena. This is, in his opinion, the case of interrogative sentences (28) and relative pronouns (29), which fossilized, respectively, their original emotive word order and their theme-

motivated initial location, whilst the insertion of the verb of the matrix “inside” the dependent is perceived as a strategy to split the thematic segment from the Rheme¹² (30). Once again, if we convert these observations to our favored generative view, we can easily realize that, in these specific conditions, different – interrogative, relative and so on – semantic operators sit inside the left periphery by reason of their focal quality.

28) Sed quid me id lev-at?
 but what.ACC.N.SG me.ACC this.NOM.N.SG alleviate-PRS.3G

But what alleviation is that to me? (XI,15)

29) Nam dum illud tract-ab-am de _____ qu-o
 PRT while that.ACC.N.SG discuss-IPFV-1SG about which-ABL.N.SG
 ad te ante scrips-i [...]
 to you.ACC.SG before write-PRF.1SG

For even when I was composing that essay, of which I wrote to you before. (XII,18)

30) Iter Asiatic-um tu-um put-o
 journey.ACC.SG Asian-ACC.SG your-ACC.SG suppose-PRS.1SG
 tibi suscipi-end-um fu-isse.
 you.DAT.SG undertake-GDV-ACC.SG be-PRF.INF

I suppose you were obliged to undertake your journey to Asia. (IV,15)

The last property that I want to touch upon in the present passage is the law named after Wackernagel (1892), who, commenting on Proto-Indo-European sentential configuration, famously states that, given their unstressed nature, clitic elements generally sit in second position. As for Latin, scholars have argued its legitimacy for a long time: for instance, if Pinkster (1990) believes that these words owe their placement to the need of letting topics or foci sit up front rather than to phonology, Adams (1994) claims that the actual pertinent spot is the one next to the foremost item of the colon, a unit mainly determined by rhythm. Salvi (2004) opposes clausal connectors, like *enim*

¹² Within the generative approach, such examples are better analysed as exhibiting the raising of a topic above the main clause.

“truly”, *autem* “on the other hand” and *vero* “but”, which follow the exact first word (31), and weak pronouns, which, on the contrary, come after the introductory constituent, whether this has been raised to the left periphery or not (32) (if such a constituent happens to be discontinuous, the particle stands to the right of the preposed, focused part¹³).

31) *Eodem autem di-e tu-as litter-as*
 same.ABL.SG PRT day-ABL.SG your-ACC.PL letter-ACC.PL
vesperi accep-er-am in Pompeian-o [...]
 in.the.evening.ADV receive-PLPRF-1SG in villa.in.Pompeii-ABL.SG
On the same day I received a letter from you at Pompeii. (XIV,18)

32) *De epistul-arum frequenti-a te nihil*
 about letter-GEN.PL frequency-ABL.SG you.ACC.SG nothing.ACC.N.SG
 accus-o.
 blame-PRS.1SG
I have no fault to find with you as to the number of your letters. (IV,16)

However the law is nowhere near being exceptionless:

33) *Nunc demum enim rescrib-o i-is litter-is qu-as*
 now at.length PRT answer-PRS.1SG that-DAT.PL letter-DAT.PL which-ACC.PL
mihi mis-isti conven-t-o Antoni-o Tibur-i.
 me.DAT send-PRF.2SG meet-PRF.PTCP-ABL.SG Antonius-ABL.SG Tibur-LOC.SG
I am now at length answering the letter you sent me after meeting
Lucius Antonius at Tibur. (XVI,3)

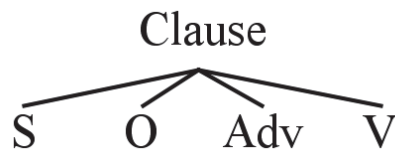
¹³ This way, we are able to avoid resorting to the generalizing theory that Wackernagel’s law is solely valid if we take into consideration the first word and not the first constituent.

2.3 The derivation of Latin SOV

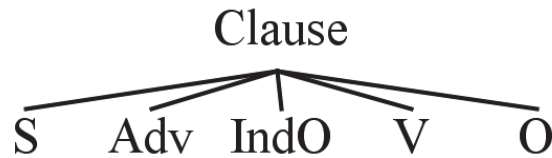
As a next step in my dissertation, after collecting and reviewing the principal elements that, according to the existing literature, are most likely responsible for word order permutations, I still find myself in need of a verified and comprehensive system that allows me to correctly incorporate all the presented facts. In particular, I am now facing the unavoidable choice between the two major methods habitually endorsed in Latin linguistics: non-configurationality against configurationality.

Non-configurational approaches boast an age-old tradition and are still popular in recent years, specially receiving support from functionalists or experts close to such theory, among which we could include the forenamed Panhuis. They are basically grounded on the supposition that Latin word order is markedly free, almost to the point of admitting of no restriction, and totally unconnected to syntax, rather being ruled by pragmatics: indeed, this quality is achievable because of the abundance of the nominal and verbal morphology, which acts as a serviceable sign of relationships between words, which can therefore rest at greater distances one from the other, without causing any difficulty. Since languages of this kind do not showcase an internal hierarchical organization nor give the impression of being divided into constituents, they are simply depicted by means of flat structures, which I hereunder exemplify as regards the SOV and SVO orders. As we can see, the three or more elements are directly placed in the same sequence as they appear in the actual clause, with none of them being confined to a specified location.

- 34) Valetudo tu-a me valde conturb-at.
health.NOM.SG your-NOM.SG me.ACC greatly disturb-PRS.3SG
The state of your health gives me much uneasiness. (VII,2)



35) Clodi-us adhuc mihi denunti-at pericul-um.
 Clodius-NOM.SG still me.DAT threaten-PRS.3SG danger-ACC.SG
Clodius is still threatening me with danger. (II,20)



Ledgeway (2012) interestingly attempts to illustrate all the possible advantages resulting from the adoption of a non-configurational interpretation. Along the lines of the most influential advocates of this method, he goes so far as to speculate that Latin (almost) completely lacks functional projections (above all, a Determiner Phrase headed by articles, a Tense Phrase with auxiliaries and a Complementizer Phrase), the proof being the occurrence of several conditions, such as disjunct constructions, null anaphoras, the absence of expletive subjects and, mostly, a rich case and agreement system¹⁴. Truthfully, the presence of functional elements, like demonstratives and the verb *esse* in some of its uses, is attested and acknowledged, but these seem to remain lexical in their substance, inasmuch as “they do not differ syntactically or formally from canonical adjectives and verbs” (Ledgeway 2012: 180). Besides, Latin provides the indication of an emerging configurational framework in at least two domains, yielding a sort of semi-configurational layout (36): on the one hand, in the CP, which sometimes reveals a well-developed structure, as demonstrated by embedded clauses introduced by overt complementizers, whereas *Accusativus cum infinitivo* is the natural preservation of an ancient CP-free Proto-Indo-European stage; on the other, in the Prepositional Phrase, where the head-complement ordering is consistently exhibited. What is finally proposed within this hypothesis is that, starting from these selected areas, configurationality progressively spread into the fully elaborated hierarchy that characterizes the languages of the Romance family.

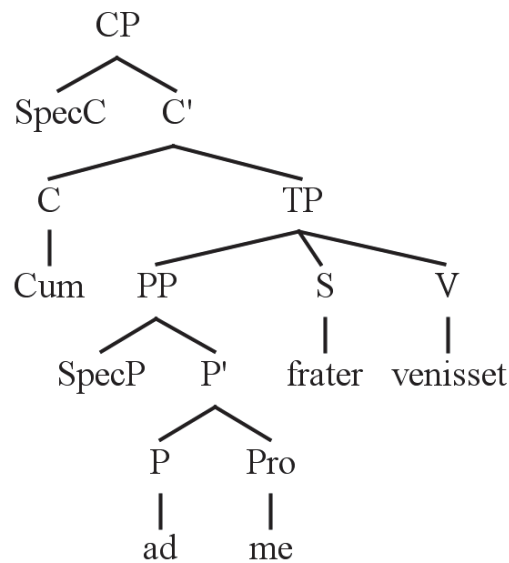
¹⁴ The listed properties represent only a subset of the non-configurationality tests that Hale (1983) detected for the assessment of Warlpiri, one of the Aboriginal languages of Australia.

36) Cum ad me frater ven-iss-et,

when to me.ACC brother.NOM.SG come-PLPRF.SBJV-3SG

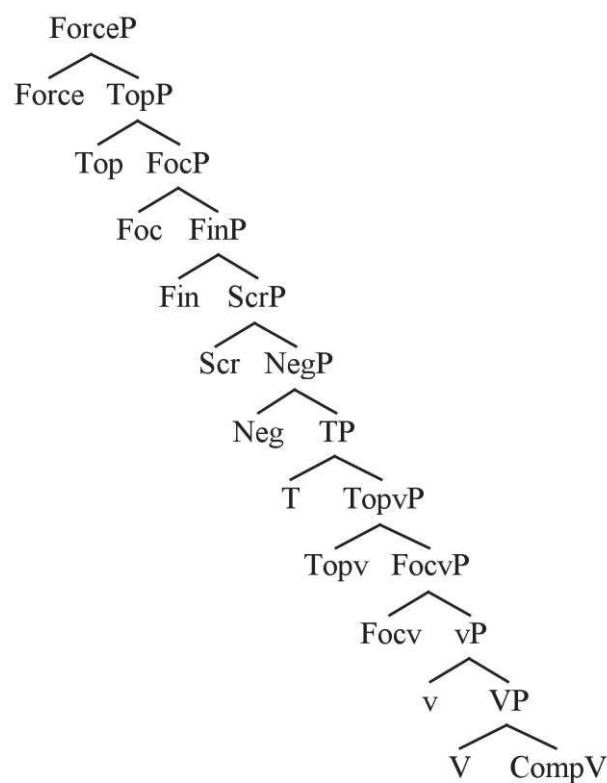
(in primis nobis sermo isque multus de te fuit.)

When my brother came to see me, (our first subject of conversation was yourself.) (V,1)



At this point, availing himself of this last piece of evidence, Ledgeway (2012) goes on to point out that, in spite of any previously expressed intriguing suggestion to the contrary, configurational theories fare much better. In this sense, every language – irrespective of their superficial appearance – shares one common profound structure, which assigns a unique and fixed position to all constituents depending on their lexical and functional role – a universal principle that surely cannot leave Latin out. Instead, its undeniable flexibility and subsequent ambiguity obtain a plausible explanation both in the fact that Latin finds itself in the unstable middle of a lengthy evolution from the Indo-European head-last to the Romance head-first directionality, with the archaizing Classical writing style ostentatiously and tenaciously holding on to the former end, and secondly that, unlike its daughter languages, it benefits from “the greater accessibility of topic- and

focus-fronting to left-peripheral positions situated in the left edge of individual functional projections” (Ledgeway 2012: 182). In conclusion, the most suitable classification for Latin is among languages that are configurational or, more accurately, discourse-configurational, namely languages whose word order is largely based on information structure, as I repeatedly observed in the prior sections. We can take Danckaert’s (2012) tree¹⁵ as one of the most refined and compelling templates at the present time:

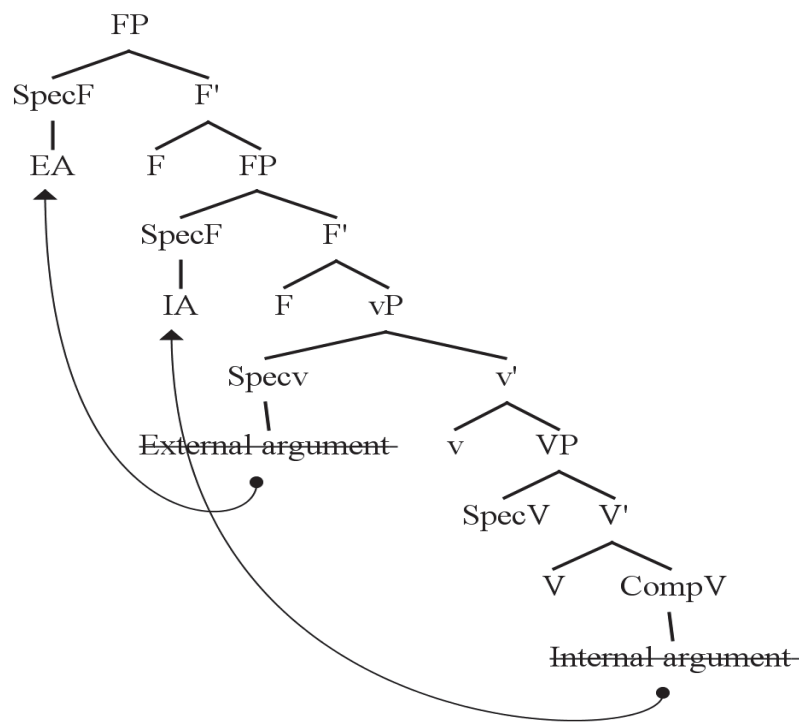


Structure 1

Suffice it to say, the pertinent projections that participate in discourse-driven movements are the two pairs of Topic and Focus Phrases, situated CP-internally and in the left edge of the verbal domain, alongside ScrP, a special phrase reserved for scrambled constituents.

¹⁵ Note that in this and all the next trees only the pertinent projections will be rendered, sometimes with a simplified internal structure as well.

Eventually, we can now engage in clarifying the derivation of Latin neutral order from the Universal Base theorized by Kayne (1994), that is the head-initial SVO pattern that underlies the syntax of each and every language. I will do so again by adhering to Danckaert's (2012) proposal. Firstly, the object, which is generated in the complement of the verb, has to move upward to a functional projection to the left of vP¹⁶, so as to originate the typical OV sequence:

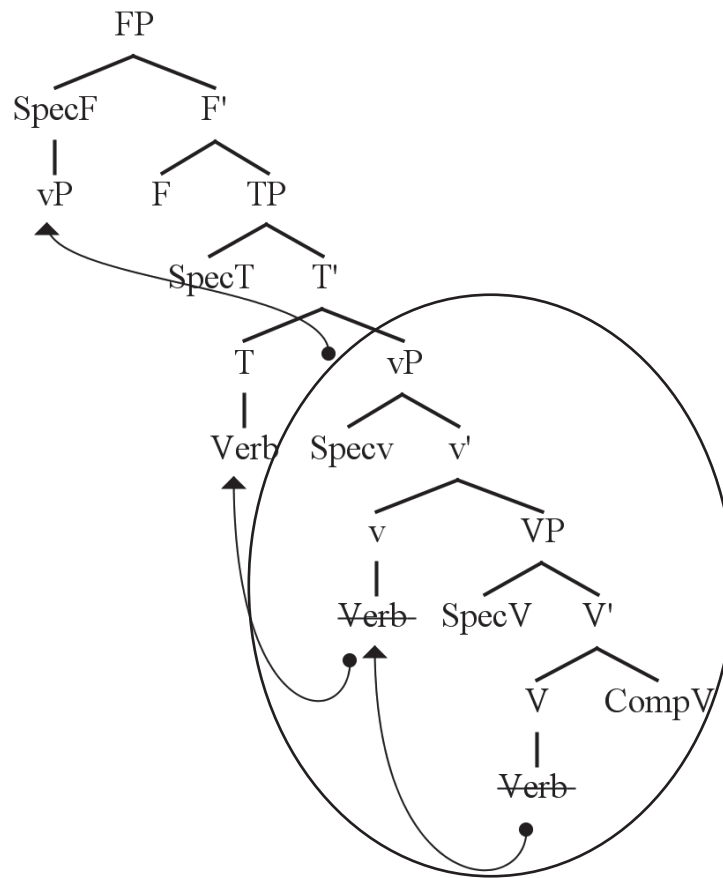


Structure 2

Then, two distinct circumstances are imaginable: if the verb is synthetic, it climbs up to T° as a head to receive its tense, aspect and mood inflection, while the remnant vP rises to the specifier of a functional projection above NegP, so that the Extended Projection Principle requirement is fulfilled¹⁷ (Structure 3).

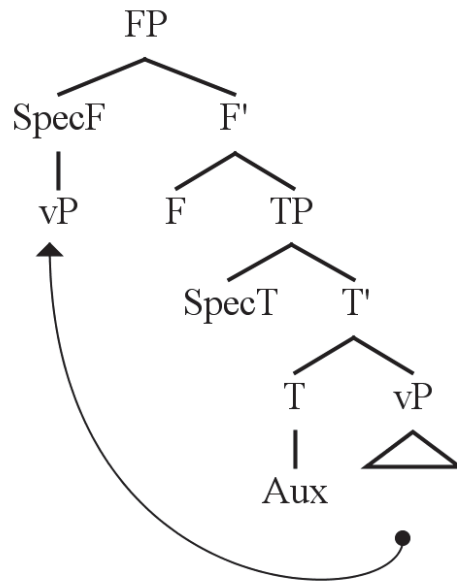
¹⁶ The nature of said projection is not defined further, but it is likely to assume an identical vP-internal raising of the indirect object and the external argument.

¹⁷ To be more precise, it is the highest vP-internal argument (hence, the subject) that is attracted to FP, pied-piping the entire verb phrase (Danckaert 2017: 237)



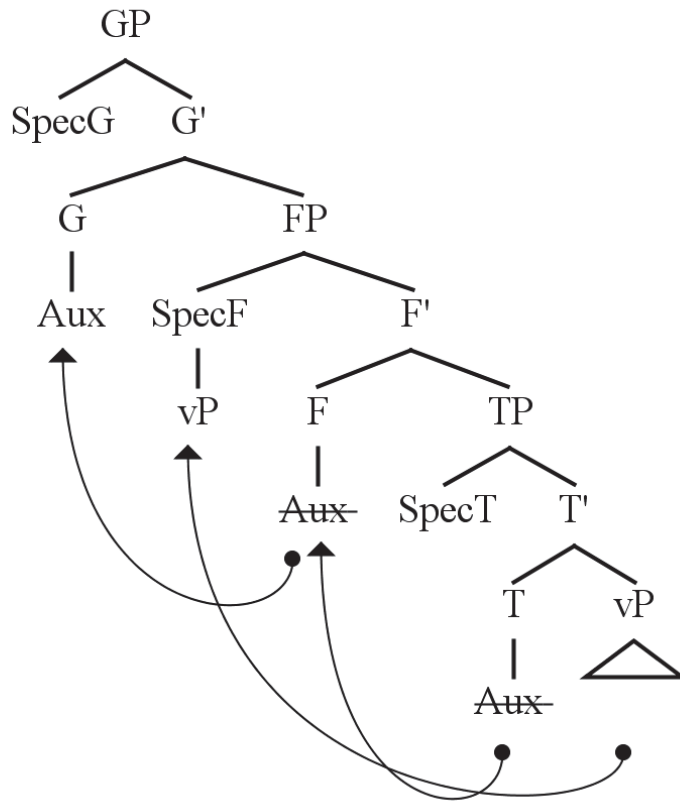
Structure 3

In the alternative event of an auxiliary, its basic position being the head of TP, the lexical verb stays in the verbal domain and, together with it, undergoes the same XP-fronting to SpecFP described in the previous example (Structure 4). In both cases, what we come up with is precisely the expected inflection-final order.



Structure 4

Drawing from this perspective, in more recent works (Danckaert 2017) the author reaches a convincing account for the creation of another pattern that is quite recurrent in Latin texts: Auxiliary – VP. In this instance, the only difference from the prevailing and regularly inflection-final order (viz. VP – Auxiliary) is that the auxiliary undergoes raising to the head of a higher functional projection (GP), located right below the left periphery (Structure 5).

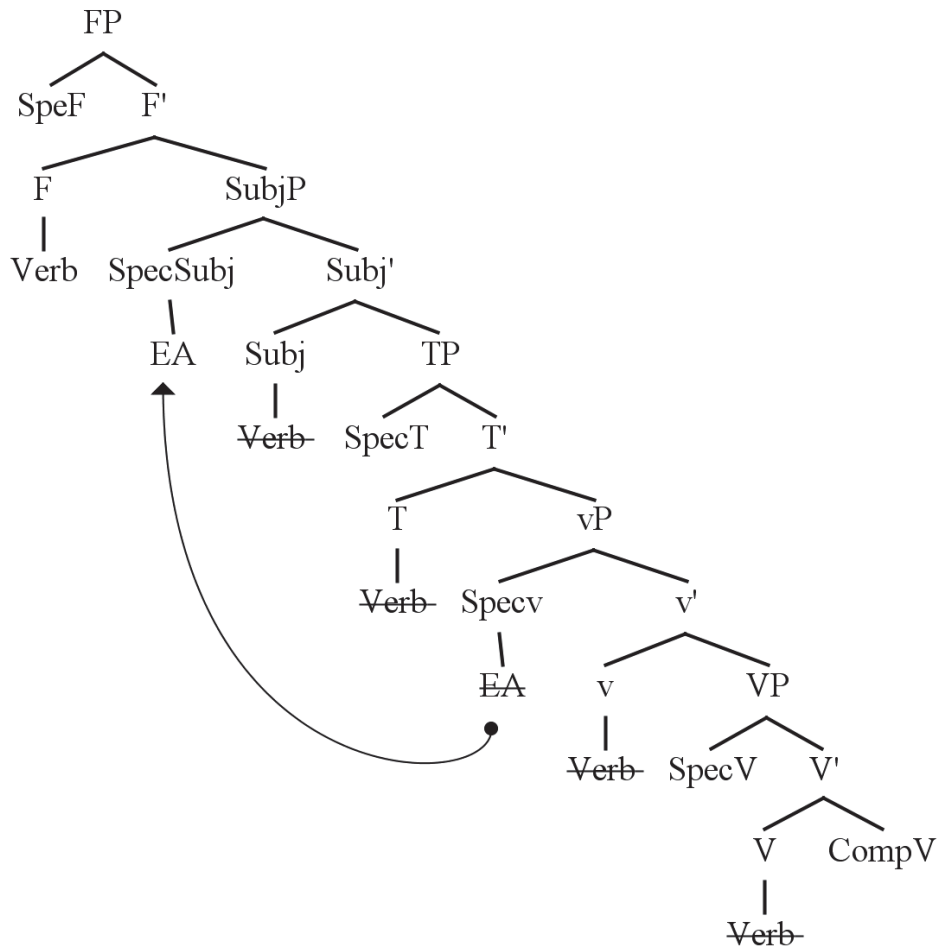


Structure 5

The situation that I have just described is only one side of the picture, though, viz. the syntax of Classical Latin. As a matter of fact, a dissimilar system was at hand (Grammar B, as opposed to Grammar A, in Danckaert's (2017) words), which competed against the former, as early as the 1st century BC, and surpassed it in the end, opening the way for Romance languages. Herein, owing to a change in the EPP-parameter, the verb directly moves to F° for the satisfaction of said requirement¹⁸, with no need for the whole vP to go upwards to SpecF as well¹⁹, although the subject finally can – but does not have to yet – climb to a new specialized projection, SubjP (Structure 6). Considering all this, it is not hard to foresee the eventual emergence of SVO.

¹⁸ This is only viable because of the procliticization of negator *non*, which, being a head within Grammar A, blocked the movement of lower heads, including the verb.

¹⁹ Such XP-fronting is actually still well documented in Late Latin, it is just not obligatory anymore.



Structure 6

Devine and Stephens (2006) pinpoint one more inner divergence in Latin sentential structure, which they denominate “V-bar syntax”. Fundamentally, it involves the stranding of the object in the postverbal position and seemingly responds to a diverse group of reasons: aside from being a syntactic property, this operation is subject to semantic and pragmatic conditions, in that only non-referential abstract nouns and tail nouns are targeted, while prosody cannot be smoothly excluded, either²⁰. In the literary

²⁰ Devine and Stephens (2006) propose that, because verb-object structures are informationally poorer, the object sustains stress reduction and postverbal stranding.

field, such a possibility sets writers like Livy and Cicero apart from, say, Caesar, who, despite being their contemporary, strictly abides by the rules of so-called Specifier Syntax, seeing that almost every internal argument climbs on top of the verb phrase, in accordance with the derivation portrayed above. It is also conjectured that V-bar syntax must have partaken in the establishment of the late VO pattern.

2.4 Verb first (V1)

In the following sections our attention will be drawn to the exposition of Latin word order configurations that depart from the neutral inflection-final model with respect to the location of the verb. The sequence that I intend to pursue matches the principal interests of this work as well as the actual ranking of these orderings based on their frequency, as my data will prove in Chapter 4. Therefore, I am forced to commence with the placement of the verb at the beginning of the clause, which from now on I am going to term verb-initial or simply V1.

Marouzeau (1938) devotes an extended portion of his text to the matter, identifying four distinct properties connected to the application of a V1 structure. Two of them are tightly bound to the “mise en relief” – the emphasis – of the verb, either affecting its function or its meaning: in the first case, what is supposed to be highlighted is the time, the mood or the voice information carried by the verb, often contrasting the predicates situated in preceding or subsequent sentences (37); in the second, we usually find the first person singular form of verbs that denote a desire, a feeling or knowledge, this way revealing the subjectivity of the speaker (38).

37) Sed tamen modic-i fu-imus ὑποθέσει,
 but however moderate-NOM.PL be.PRF-1SG subject.DAT.SG
 ut scrips-i. Er-imus uber-ior-es
 when write-PRF.1SG be.FUT-1PL copious-CMP-NOM.PL
 si et ille libenter accipi-et.
 if also that.NOM.M.SG willingly receive-FUT.3SG

However, I kept within due limits in my subject, when I did put pen to paper. I

shall launch out more copiously if he shews that he is glad to receive it.
(IV,5)

38) Sci-o enim ego ipse quid de me
 know-PRS.1SG PRT I.NOM self.NOM.SG what.ACC.N.SG about me.ACC
existim-em.

think-PRS.SBJV.1SG

For I know what I think of myself. (XII,23)

Conversely, the remaining pair of uses pertain to the scope of the whole enunciation, whether it expresses a sudden, unexpected event (39) or it performs the role of “énoncé fonction” (functional sentence), that is to say, its sense has to be interpreted in the light of the previous or next sentence, even though the association between them does not happen to be marked by a subordinating or coordinating conjunction, but by mere juxtaposition: among the potential kinds of relationship, we can normally recover conditional, causal (40), temporal and consecutive readings.

39) Acced-it aliud non parv-um
 be.added.PRS.3SG another.NOM.SG not little-NOM.SG
incommod-um.

disadvantage-NOM.SG

Added to this is another disadvantage. (III,24)

40) Sed haec omitt-amus; aug-emus enim
 but this.ACC.N.PL disregard-PRS.IMP.1PL increase-PRS.1PL PRT
dolor-em retract-and-o.

grief-ACC.SG recall-GER-ABL

But a truce to these reflexions: I only increase my grief by recalling them.
(VIII,9)

This list of possible causes, albeit fairly particularized and suggestive, has not really been accepted and expanded by later authors. In all probability, this decision – voluntary or not – is due to the fact that said explanatory requisites are ambiguous, non-objective and exceptional, as stated by Marouzeau (1938: 81) himself, and consequently their recognition would be challenging for anyone. Different and nowadays better received records tend to link the V1 phenomenon to specifically defined categories of clauses, which, unifying Salvi's (2004) and Devine & Stephens's (2006) classifications, include, but are not limited to, jussive, concessive, assertive, contrastive, presentative and eventive sentences. In a broader view, all these circumstances seem to be relatable to two more comprehensive subgroups. On the one hand, there are polarity foci that have scope on the entire proposition, encompassing yes-no questions (both direct and indirect, noticeable from the interrogative particle *-ne* joined with the verb (41)), verum foci and negative polarity foci (42), which exclude, respectively, the falsity and the truth of the assertion.

41) Vid-es=ne ut te auctor-e
 see-PRS.2SG=Q how you.ABL.SG proposer-ABL.SG
 si-m utrumque complex-us?
 be.PRS.SBJV-1SG both.ACC.SG embrace.PRF.PTCP-NOM.SG
Don't you see that it was on your advice that I sought the friend-ship of both? (VII,1)

42) Non dubit-ant iur-are ceter-i.
 not hesitate-PRS.3PL swear-PRS.INF other-NOM.PL
All the others take the oath without hesitation. (II,18)

Analogously to this division, we could also mention narrow foci that operate solely on the verb – not on the full event –, raising it to the first position. On the other hand, the pivotal element is found to be theticity, i.e. when the state of affairs is expressed as a whole and the information that it conveys is totally new (Bolkestein 1995). Standard

thetic sentences comprise imperatives²¹ (43), in that the speaker is “interested more in the simple occurrence of the event than in establishing properties or relations that are required to apply to separately established participants of the event” (Devine and Stephens 2006: 150) and existential or presentational sentences, suitable for introducing new referents.

43) Hab-e me-am ration-em. (VII,9)
 have-PRS.IMP.2SG my-ACC.SG candidature-ACC.SG
 Take my candidature into consideration.

In general, we are mainly dealing with predicates lacking an external argument, like unaccusatives, passives and psych verbs, but even so there appear to be contexts able to assign a thetic perspective to transitive and unergative verbs as well as to agent-less verbs. It is primarily the case of the narration of sequential or consequential events, typically characterized by the use of the historical present and perfective tenses and by the insertion of such adverbs as *deinde* “then”, *statim* “immediately” and *igitur* “therefore”, though verb-initial background comments and explanatory (*enim* “in fact”) or adversative (*tamen* “nevertheless”) (44) relations also exist.

44) Mis-i tamen Puteol-os puer-os
 send-PRF.1SF however Puteoli-ACC.PL servant-ACC.PL
 qui pervestig-ar-ent.
 who.NOM.M.PL inquire-IPFV.SBJV-3PL
 I yet sent some servants to Puteoli to inquire. (IX,11)

In this view, word order and particularly V1 may be regarded as a tool to signal cohesion within the discourse (Pinkster 1990). Note that the present situation, in which a topic is maintained in multiple successive clauses, is obviously not a prerogative of Latin and that in some languages it can be made explicit through the insertion of a designated marker: for instance, in Old Italian *e*, beside its habitual capacity of coordinating conjunction, may serve as a continuity marker sitting inside the CP, where it licenses a

²¹ Note that Marouzeau justifies the recurring connection of V1 and imperatives by claiming that commands have to be promptly recognized by the addressee, to the point that potential imperatives following a clause-initial injunction need not be clause-initial as well.

“null Hanging Topic, more precisely the one referring back to the whole previous context” (Poletto 2014: 24).

Anyway, none of the conditions that we have enumerated behaves as an inflexible rule and several counterexamples are readily retrievable. For instance, Bolkestein (1995) shows that, despite the relatively high frequency of initial unaccusative and one-place predicates, neither transitivity nor valency is an absolute criterion. Once more, rather than syntactic and semantic factors, pragmatics creates the impression of being the key: indeed, V1 is the unequivocally preferred arrangement only when the speaker – or the writer – wants to depict “the state of affairs as separate rather than as a constituent part of a continuous chain” (Bolkestein 1995: 43), textual separateness being made evident by the absence of neutral connectives and other linking constructions. A further research individually dedicated to the subject, and equally attentive to informational structure, is the one conducted by Spevak (2005), who reaffirms the correlation of clause-initial verbs with presentational and locative sentences and, more prominently, with the clause-final occurrence of a future topic²², namely a new entity set to be the real topic of subsequent sentences, inside of which it is usually reprised by means of an anaphoric pronoun. Nonetheless, V1 turns out to be the regular, unmarked pattern exclusively for *esse*, in its existential sense (45), whilst being a non-predominant variant of the verb-final order for synonymic verbs like *apparere* “appear” and *relinqui* “be left”.

45) Sunt aliquot satisfaction-es secundum mancipi-um veluti
be.PRS.3PL several bail-NOM.PL for purchase-ACC.SG such.as
Memmian-orum praedi-orum vel Atilian-orum.
of.Memmius-GEN.PL estate-GEN.PL or of.Atilius-GEN.PL
*You will find several guarantees on purchase, such as those of the estates of
Memmius, or rather of Atilius.* (V,1)

On top of this, Latin displays a reduced number of syntactic contingencies that seem to favor, if not demand, the fronting of the verb: by way of illustration, this is what

²² Interestingly enough, future topics also sit clause-finally, or at least postverbally, in more rigid languages like English and French (e.g. “Inside the box is a book”).

on numerous occasions takes place inside the main clause when it comes after an adverbial subordinate (46) or an ablative absolute (Ledgeway 2012: 153).

46) Ali-i si scrips-er-int, mitt-emus ad te.
 other-NOM.PL if write-PRF.SBJV-3PL send-FUT.1PL to you.ACC.SG
If others write treatises on the subject I will send them to you. (I,20)

About the internal structure, a simple and unsophisticated analysis considers V1 configurations to be made up of nothing more than a plain VP, but it does not get to explain why the verb should precede its arguments at all times (Devine and Stephens 2006: 167). For this reason, most scholars lean towards the assumption that the verb undergoes movement to the CP, whereas the remainder of the sentence retains its independent organization, whether neutral or modified by other pragmatically driven manoeuvres. In detail, a covert operator that is variously equipped with a discourse cohesion, assertive, jussive, concessive or other function – just like the null narrative operators proposed by Fuss (2005) for Old Germanic V1 clauses and adopted by Poletto (2014) for Old Italian – and that stands in the specifier of a left-peripheral projection (Focus according to Salvi (2004), Topic or Polarity according to Devine and Stephens (2006)) compels the verb to occupy the corresponding head. Such procedure mirrors the ordinary raising of focalized items, whose overt presence in SpecFoc makes verbal fronting unnecessary, though. Likewise, whenever the content of the operator is inferable from verbal inflection, the verb is not forced to move. Perhaps that is why imperatives, to which designated modal endings are affixed, still stay clause-final on a not so rare basis (Salvi 2004: 55), but this assumption clearly contravenes the generative principle according to which the attachment of a specific ending to the head entails the movement of said head to the matching projection.

However, the indicated theory is not unanimously accepted. As a matter of fact, amongst its few rejections, a noteworthy conjecture has been submitted by Danckaert (2018), who points to the unavailability of irrefutable evidence supporting V-to-C movement: first of all, in Latin prose on no occasion can the verb pass over a

subordinating conjunction, supposedly situated in Fin²³; then, as for interrogatives, not only does the question particle *-ne*, which other authors locate in PolarityP, seem to obey phonological rather than syntactic constraints, being able to attach to any phrasal category, not obligatorily verbal (47), and sometimes emerging in the midst of a constituent, but it might also appear clause-internally²⁴, hence below the left periphery; moreover, as we previously remarked, imperatives and hortatory subjunctives can remain lower in the structure. As a consequence, in these and similar examples the verb does not manage to access the CP-area, its two attainable projections (TP and GP) lying within the TP domain (see tree with GP above for an example of V1).

47) Cotidie=*ne* [...] a te accipi-end-ae
 daily=Q from you.ABL.SG receive-GDV-NOM.PL
 litter-ae sunt?
 letter-NOM.PL be.PRS.3PL
Am I to receive [...] a letter from you every single day? (VII,9)

Now it would be at one time fascinating and appropriate to glimpse an existing resemblance between Latin verb-initial constructions and those phenomena that yield the same order in other languages. More precisely, in V2 Germanic languages topic drop, allowing non-overt topicalized items in first position, automatically gives rise to V1 sentences (Schäfer 2021). What intuitively appeals to us is that such an omission somehow recalls the “detopicalizing effect” (Devine and Stephens 2006: 166) of theticity in Latin, that aims at removing topics in favour of completely new information. Furthermore, on a syntactic level both processes traditionally – though not undisputedly – involve the joint presence of a null element in SpecC and of the verb in the matching head. To a lesser extent, we could also take into account the licensing of null subjects in diary writing style and other conceptually spoken registers, a theme amply developed by Haegeman (1997, 2013, 2019 etc.), at the very least by virtue of the obvious affinity with Cicero’s epistolary genre. Of course, we ought to be careful in making the comparison,

²³ The low placement of subordinators inside the left periphery can be deduced from the fact that they let focalized items climb above them.

²⁴ Danckaert (2018) judges the displacement of multiple constituents to the left of PolarityP to be improbable.

since we are discussing languages clearly departing from Latin, like English (above all because of its non-pro-drop nature, its SVO order and its poor verbal morphology), but in Chapter 5 we are going to test whether the factors influencing topic drop and subject omission, such as grammatical person, argument type, status of the clause and saliency, may impact the likelihood of the verb-initial order in the *Letters to Atticus*.

2.5 Verb second (V2)

Moving on to the next order, Classical Latin does not show clear signs of resorting to constructions containing a verb in second placement (henceforth, verb-second or V2) in a methodical and principled manner, so much so that the subject is frequently overlooked in the literature. Again, we can refer to Devine and Stephens (2006) for an accurate portrayal. In their examination, most V2 examples (48) consist of three ingredients: a focus positioned in the right half of the clause, which could either be weak/informational or strong/contrastive (in the latter case, negative quantifiers are rather common (49)) plus, ahead of it, the verb preceded by one of its arguments, representing the already given information of the sentence²⁵. The two authors think that the best explication is that the verb and the argument enter a Spec-Head relation inside the topical projection while the emphasized constituent sits in the lower FocvP.

48) Sermon-em tu-um et Pompe-i cognov-i
 conversation-ACC.SG your-ACC.SG and Pompey-GEN.SG know-PRF.1SG
 ex tu-is litter-is.
 from your-ABL.PL letter-ABL.PL
I comprehend from your letter what you and Pompey have been saying. (III,8)

²⁵ We must point out that, within this view, the postverbal focus can or should be better interpreted as the comment section relative to the preverbal topic.

49) Tum his tempor-ibus res public-a
 then this.ABL.PL time-ABL.PL thing.NOM.SG public-NOM.SG
 te mihi ita commend-av-it ut car-ior-em
 you.ACC.SG me.DAT.SG so recommend-PRF-3SG that dear-CMP-ACC.SG
hab-eam nemin-em.
 consider-PRS.1SG nobody-ACC.SG
*So in these times the interests of the state have so recommended me to you,
 that there is no one whom I regard with warmer.* (XIV,13b)

A parallel and better studied behavior is also exhibited by *esse* when functioning as an auxiliary (and seemingly as a copula as well). Unsurprisingly, its unmarked position is the clause-final one (50), with the lexical verb being the main information, especially if this is eventive and perfective.

50) Grad-us templ-orum ab infim-a pleb-e
 step-NOM.PL temple-GEN.PL by low.SUP-ABL.SG people-ABL.SG
 comple-t-i er-ant.
 fill-PRF.PTCP-NOM.3PL be.IPFV-3PL
*The steps of the temples were already thronged from top to bottom by the
 populace.* (IV,1)

Vice versa, when the focus has scope over another constituent (habitually quantifiers or words denoting a certain degree or measure), the auxiliary rises to FocusP along with it, thus surfacing in the second spot (51).

51) Astur-am sum a te profec-t-us.
 Astura-ACC.SG be.PRS.1SG from you.ABL.SG depart-PRF.PTCP-NOM.SG
I came to Astura from your house. (XII,40)

Finally, *esse* can often be found right after relative pronouns and those conjunctions that are related to relatives, such as *ut* and *cum* (52).

52) Cum er-imus congress-i, (tum, si quid res feret,
when be.FUT-1PL meet.PRF.PTCP-NOM.PL
coram inter nos conferemus).

When we meet, (if the occasion should arise, we will discuss it together).
(XII,40)

At first, this range of positionings could be traced back to a phonological basis if we hold the auxiliary to be a clitic that climbs “to second position in the lowest intermediate phonological phrase that contains it” (Devine and Stephens 2006: 191). So, in default of a focus, we observe that it follows the conjunction, in the event of an initial narrow focus it stands to its right and, lastly, in eventive declaratives, where the participle is focalized, it occurs at the end. Otherwise, some scholars just postulate that *esse* – or at least its monosyllabic forms, chiefly *sum*, *es*, *est* and *sunt* – has the tendency to comply with Wackernagel’s law (Salvi 2004; Ledgeway 2012). Notwithstanding, given that auxiliaries are syntactic heads, a distinct formulation is achievable for them: exactly like lexical verbs, they are attracted to the left periphery by foci and relatives, which participate in the quality of being predication operators, in that they “add a higher level of predication to the simple sentence” (Devine and Stephens: 193).

The issue becomes even more captivating if we bring the situation of Romance languages into the discussion. As is well known, almost the whole family, beginning from the earliest records all through its Medieval stage, showcased a solid V2 system, whose origin, in the opinion of quite a few linguists, has to be searched for in Late Latin texts. For instance, Salvi (2004) believes that the decisive feature lies in the progressive extension of the verb-initial order to many discourse-neutral contexts and the ensuing loss of its markedness. Bearing in mind that V1 is already the prevailing template in circumscribed areas of Classical Latin (eminently, existential sentences), confirmation for this evolution comes from its overall substantial frequency in later vulgar writings and, more strikingly, from its frequency in embedded clauses: considering that subordinates are conventionally reckoned to possess decreased or even missing illocutionary force, the

only answer positively to the first one and, ultimately, all the other Medieval Romance languages meet both requirements.

A different theory has been advanced by Danckaert (2018), in reason of his aforesaid refutation of V-to-C raising. First of all, he denies the asymmetry affecting main and embedded clauses by revealing that in the latter the sequence auxiliary – participle, which is expected to occur more frequently in main clauses in any V2 language²⁶, is found at a higher rate throughout the complete documented history of Latin. Then, he proceeds to connect the climbing of the verb up to the left periphery with the generation, in Grammar B (see page 27), of a new projection reserved for the subject and situated in the TP domain: only now, provided that the subject is located in SubjP and atop all the fixed adverbial positions, can a preceding verb be unquestionably interpreted as CP-internal by children.

2.6 Verb third (V3) and following orders

In the last paragraphs I noticed how there does not look to be a well-established scheme in action behind Classical Latin V2. This holds even more true once we turn our attention to those arrangements that put the verb in third or successive position: in actuality, it would be presumably more reasonable to ascribe this alleged phenomenon to the larger group of sentences whose verb is neither final nor initial (including here V1 and V2).

Such a deliberation is already approved by Marouzeau (1938), who quickly commits no significant function to the clause-internal verbal placement, viewing it almost as an interchangeable substitute for the verb-final ordering whose employment is contingent upon the stylistic preferences of the writer. If anything, the anteposition of the verb may serve rhythmic inclinations, in some texts particularly influenced by poetry, or make room for a piece of information intentionally left waiting to be revealed – what is merely an impressionistic comment.

²⁶ This is so because the opposite order, participle – auxiliary, is not accepted in matrix clauses, apart from special VP-topicalizations.

In any case, some elements do manifest themselves postverbally with certain regularity. It normally comes down to prepositional phrases (55) (most of all those expressing a locative, agentive or comitative meaning) and heavy constituents like finite or non-finite, complement or adverbial subordinate clauses (56), gerunds, participial constructions and epexegetic constituents (Devine and Stephens 2006).

55) A Caesar-e valde liberali-ter invit-or
 by Caesar-ABL.SG very gentlemanly-ADV invite-PRS.PASS.1SG
in legation-em ill-am.
 to legation-ACC.SG that-ACC.SG

I am invited by Caesar in a very gentlemanly manner to accept a legation. (II,18)

56) Sed iam tempus est me ips-um
 but now time.NOM.SG be.PRS.3SG me.ACC self-ACC.SG
a me am-ari.
 by me.ABL love-PRS.INF.PASS

But now the time has come to shew a little affection for myself. (IV,5)

It is transparent enough, though, that in all these instances the verb is not really exposed to raising, but, inversely, such constituents, owing to their length and the potential difficulty in being processed, are either extraposed to the right or stranded at the end of the clause²⁷, on a par with Devine and Stehens's (2006) V-bar syntax objects (see page 28). Here, in Salvi's (2004) opinion, these heavy units possibly do not receive any morphological case if they do not need it (like adverbial clauses) or they are assigned one through a preverbal anticipating element that can also be phonologically empty. Thereby, we are dealing with only superficially non-final verb positions.

On the other hand, carrying on with the tentative comparison between Latin and V2 languages, we have to acknowledge that, in the latter set, V3 sentences represent a

²⁷ Even so, long embedded clauses can emerge to the left of the verb. This is indeed often attested:

1) Poen-as quidem ill-um pepend-isse aud-iv-i.
 punishment-ACC.PL PRT that-ACC.SG undergo-PRF.INF hear-PRF-1SG
For I hear that he has been executed. (XV,13)

viable option, derived by means of adding, clause-initially, a constituent that is externally merged into a higher projection than the one where the verb and the fronted segment enter a Spec-Head relation and that usually acts as a Frame-setter or as a Hanging Topic. This operation notably takes place in those languages where the V- and XP-movement, necessary to satisfy the two constraints of V2, targets the lower region of the left periphery, so as to permit other constituents to occupy the available upper area (Poletto 2002). As Poletto demonstrates for Rhaeto-Romance dialects, Wolfe (2017) contends that this is also the case of Old Occitan: as FinP – and not ForceP, like in Medieval French or in Modern Germanic varieties – is the landing site of the verb, the overlying projections of the split CP are capable of hosting one or a few more elements in the capacity of frame-setters, topics and foci, this way bringing about V3, V4 or even V5 sequences. Mindful of all this, we could surmise that, as long as the Latin verb has the real chance to climb to C in specified conditions, in such examples it can also be preceded by more than one phrase and fill the third spot within the sentence.

2.7 Research goals

At this point, after having described the main theoretical accounts on the subject of Latin word order and, specifically, of verb placement and its multiple options, I am finally able to state what the goals of our research exactly are, also depending on the issues presented in the preceding exposition that have remained unsolved and that consequentially call for further clarification.

First of all, I am interested in the simple but fundamental point of determining which verb patterns are possible and grammatical in Classical Latin and of computing their numerical amount, for the purpose of offering a statistical ranking based on their overall frequency: this will serve as a confirmation of the data collected by pre-existing scientific literature, but at the same time, aside from the individuation of unmarked orders, it will hopefully reveal the quantitative weight of diverging configurations. Thus, I will focus on the research of those conditions that appear to be most effective in the generation of V1, V2 and subsequent templates. The identification of these criteria will be primarily derived from the set of theories proposed by linguists – and listed in the previous sections of this chapter – on Latin and on other languages. Along these lines, my work will

consider such features as the level of clauses (main vs. embedded), their classification, the expression of arguments and grammatical person, just to name a few. In this case, my thesis aims at establishing which syntactic properties correlate with these minority orders, this way ignoring – or at least containing – the copious pragmatic observations that I went through before.

At last, by attempting to answer these open questions, I also wish to face directly the complex matter about the emergence of a stable V2 grammatical system in early Romance languages and its assumed prelude in (some still unspecified stages of) Latin. In detail, I will test Wolfe's hypothesis judging V1 as the precursor of V2 and evaluate the likeliness of phenomena like verb-raising to C and topic drop. As is clear from the guidelines of the present project, I will do so through the study of a single synchronic stage, but, even so, I expect to capture some interesting symptoms of the ensuing evolution of the language.

In a nutshell, the goals of this research can be rephrased into the following questions:

- Q1) What are the grammatical verb orders of Classical Latin and what is their frequency?
- Q2) Which order is basic and which orders, on the other hand, are marked?
- Q3) Which conditions correlate with non-V-final orders?
- Q4) Can the V2 grammar of Medieval Romance languages be foreseen in Classical Latin?

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

In the current chapter I am going to present the reasons and the decisions that supported my research, simultaneously offering a valid and stable justification for them. In doing so, I will start by drawing a focused portrait of Latin language and literature so as to ascertain why Classical Latin, as for the period, and Cicero's *Letters to Atticus*, as for the author and the text, assuredly provide the best and most authentic option for the purposes of this thesis. At the same time, though, I will also shed light on the main issues that emerge when approaching a dead language and, if possible, try to propose a convincing solution. Then, in the second half, a specific section will concern the details of the construction of the corpus, concentrating on the collection and the analysis of the data.

3.1 Language and period: Classical Latin

When looking at Latin, we find ourselves in front of a prolonged chronology that, if we only consider the time in which it was actually spoken – leaving aside its enduring and successful status of literary and scientific language, in some cases up to the present day –, starts at least in the first half of the first millennium BC²⁸ and stretches until the first few centuries of the Early Middle Ages – or, inversely, the last centuries of Late Antiquity – when Romance languages must have begun to progressively differentiate themselves both from Latin and from each other.

As is already clear from this brief introduction, I will have to deal with a number of complex issues that should never be ignored in any research on Latin: in the first place, Latin is a dead language, as it no longer has native speakers; secondly, our knowledge primarily depends on works of literature, whereas examples of a popular, unaltered register (mainly found in inscriptions) are often scarce and irrelevant to a syntactic

²⁸ The exact period in which Latin came into being obviously cannot be located with accuracy and, as a consequence, most scholars prefer to rely on the earliest Latin text, that is the inscription on the Praeneste *fibula*, dating back to the 7th century BC.

research, which usually requires an extensive sample of sentences; finally, the remarkable lifespan of the language and of the literary tradition, together with the restricted dimensions of this thesis, inevitably forces me to make a reasonable selection.

In truth, the question regarding the situation of Latin, namely the unavailability of direct oral evidence, has proven to be only partial, in that, as it happens for instance with Ancient Greek, a language with a very much similar history, this absence can, to an extent, be compensated for by the extremely large and diverse amount of texts that have survived so far. It is exactly thanks to such an abundance that we are able to keep on profitably investigating Latin with respect to the new and most interesting linguistic topics, as it has been repeatedly demonstrated by the numerous past and present studies: once more, there is no particular reason to treat Latin as differing from any other documented language. Then, while it is certainly true that, especially for earlier times, specimens of the vernacular, colloquial register are mostly recoverable in the shape of insertions and imitations inside literary pieces like comedies, nowadays it is believed that the distance occurring between Vulgar and formal Latin has to mirror the same relation that holds in modern varieties: thus, as long as we put aside those highly artificial and conventional genres and the stylistic constraints imposed by poetry, we could deem the written language to be a roughly faithful instantiation of the way that at least educated Romans talked and, above all, of the way that Latin grammar worked.

Turning now to the specific period of my choice, I think that Classical Latin and, to be more precise, the so-called Golden Age, approximately corresponding to the 1st century BC until the final years of Augustus's reign (AD 14), represent the most appropriate linguistic stage for my examination. As a matter of fact, the literature and the language that was used to compose said literature were soon recognized to be the highest and most refined level reached by Latin – as the adjectives “classical” and “golden” patently indicate – and taken as a model for many centuries to come. Of course, I intend to refute any stylistic, subjective observation, but what is primarily significant here is that such solid and enduring prestige inevitably was and still is a powerful motivation for the transmission, the preservation and the ensuing scholarly study of a substantial multitude of texts: as a result, the Classical era turns out to be the best represented and known for us at all levels, also from a linguistic point of view. An additional advantage resides in the chronological brevity of this interval (just a little more than a hundred years), which

therefore stands as a guarantee of the unity and compactness of the matching language. Lastly, following the current and prevailing way of thinking among experts of the field, we are entitled to assume that the register employed by most authors, at least in those scripts that do not necessarily demand a much elevated, affected writing style, coincides with the variety that was regularly taught to and utilized in everyday life by upper and educated social classes in Rome: rather, the picture changes only when this form remains the literary paradigm irrespective of the subsequent evolution of the spoken language, as it is exactly the case of the first centuries AD.

On the other hand, for the very same reasons, both preceding and later ages seem to be less advisable for a similar project: in the first place, not only do they extend for overlong durations, but neither of them can even be effectively split into well defined analyzable subunits of time. Besides, our knowledge of Archaic Latin depends on a too small quantity of material, which is also almost exclusively poetry, mainly in the form of epic poems and theatre plays (the most notable and famous exception being Cato's prose works). Conversely, another problematic aspect of the production of the imperial period is to be identified with its internal diversity. Apart from the already mentioned diachronic issue, diatopic and diastratic factors often intervene, too, given that, for the first time, we see authors coming from the whole width of the Roman domains and we witness an increase in the composition and in the passing down of Vulgar writings. This framework is further complicated by the pervasive impact of the Classical canon and by the simultaneous diffusion of Christian literature.

3.2 Author and text: Cicero's *Letters to Atticus*

Once we get to the point of choosing the most suitable author for this thesis, we cannot help but take Cicero into account. Indeed, all that has so far been stated about Classical Latin may be easily applied to him as well: it is fair to say that he happens to be the prototypical Latin writer, thanks to the deeply prolific and heterogeneous nature of his production and to his brilliant stylistic mastery – all elements that soon made of him a universally acclaimed, studied and inspiring model for the whole future of Western literature. These two aspects, namely the vastness and the fame of his work, along with Cicero's pronounced self-referential and autobiographical tendency, also allow us to have

a more than satisfyingly detailed depiction of his life, the likes of which are quite rare even for the great persons of antiquity.

For the sake of completeness, hereunder we can shortly recall his illustrious and versatile biography: born in 106 BC in Arpinum, in Southern Latium, from a family of the equestrian order, Cicero received a prestigious education under the teaching of renowned Roman and Greek orators, rhetoricians, philosophers, poets and jurists, which enabled him to pursue a prosperous career first as a lawyer and then as a statesman, following the traditional *cursus honorum* and achieving the consulship in 63 BC, when he successfully blocked Catiline's conspiracy; following this date, the prominence of strong single leaders, such as Pompey, Caesar and, later, Octavian, resulted in his political inactivity, up to his violent assassination in 43 BC due to his open opposition against the triumvir Mark Antony. It is exactly during this time of marginalization that Cicero devoted himself to composing most of his best known texts, principally including treatises and dialogues on rhetoric, politics and philosophy, whereas the rest of his work comprehends a copious quantity of public speeches and private letters, written throughout almost his entire life, and a restricted number of juvenile poems.

Within this immense corpus, I decided to direct my attention toward the epistolary collection – a resolution whose motive essentially depends more on a question of genre than on the aforesaid qualities of the author. In fact, as claimed above, initially we should avoid the syntactic analysis of poetic writings, considering the recurring linguistic manipulation found in verses (this is the main reason why I excluded Old Latin literature, with its scarceness of prose texts), but it is also reasonable to leave out all those scripts that, though clearly falling into the category of prose, are inclined to be governed by rhythmic and prosodic factors, like speeches, which are precisely meant to be publicly recited for the purpose of persuading the listening audience. Contrarily, letters, especially when private, tend to exhibit a rather spontaneous and less altered language.

In particular, Cicero's *Epistulae* represent a unique piece inside the field of ancient literature in that they are the earliest compilation of private letters that has been transmitted to us. Needless to say, a preceding epistolary tradition did exist and seems to have already been codified in the Greek-speaking world, but, given the prevalence of public epistles (such as the ones famously written by Plato and Epicurus), if anything, its

influence on the Latin author is only traceable in some conventional formulas and in the basic structure. Something more interesting can be said on the possible similarity with the few cases of letters that were found by archaeologists in recent times in a group of sites of the Roman Empire (e.g. Vindolanda in northern England or Bu Njem in Libya) and that contain a precious example of direct, non-literary communication: as proposed by Cugusi (1998), Cicero appears to draft letters in the same way as those anonymous writers – and, more generally, any other Roman – did, sharing a significant background of vocabulary and phrases. This is specifically evident in instances of canonical epistolary subgenres, like letters of recommendation, acceptance or delivery, while it does not necessarily hold true for all the other – predominant in number – non-specific, informative missives. The difference, as one could readily suppose, is that Cicero not only deals with a much broader and more articulated variety of topics, but, when needed, he also resorts to more polished and elaborate syntax and style, elevating its scripts with cultivated quotes and figures of speech.

Therefore, what is most notable – and what sets the *Epistulae* apart from all the other works by Cicero – is the natural employment of a colloquial register, the so-called *sermo cotidianus* (i.e. “everyday language”), that is the linguistic variety of which upper classes made use in daily informal conversation, as opposed to *sermo vulgaris* or *plebeius* (“vulgar”), spoken by lower social strata of the population, which nevertheless may sometimes percolate into the letters of our interest. In this regard, we should keep in mind that the collection was not originally intended to be distributed, but it plainly served as a real means of correspondence between the writer and his interlocutors; instead, the project of an actual publication, in which only a selected group of epistles were to be involved, was belated and eventually interrupted by Cicero’s sudden death, luckily for us – I dare say – as in all likelihood the text would have undergone at least some partial refining changes. Among the defining traits of this *sermo* we could mention: the frequency of short sentences, the utilization of paractic structures, ellipsis, the abundance of questions (often rhetorical) and other devices that seek to engage the recipient, and, with respect to the lexicon, the adoption of diminutives and common sayings.

Finally, while Cicero’s letters, as I already expressed, constitute the first epistolary anthology of Latin literature that is still accessible to us, it is certainly not the only one, since we possess analogous works by eminent posterior authors such as Seneca, Pliny the

Younger, Fronto and Symmachus. Yet, I deem them not to be equally appropriate options for my research insofar as they prove to be modelled to a relevant extent upon the esteemed example of the former. Furthermore, they display both a language and a style that are intentionally conformed to a public of erudite readers, additionally corroborated by the fact that these scripts oftentimes take on the function of genuine scholarly essays on philosophical and political subjects. By contrast, Cicero prefers to reserve his missives to a literature of “disengagement”, which delves into the wide array of simple themes, reflections and cues prompted by the tasks and the events of ordinary life.

Carrying on with the specific details of the collection, the *Epistulae* comprehend 864 letters, the vast majority of which were written by Cicero himself, whereas only 90 of them happen to be sent to him by his correspondents, embracing the years from 68 BC, when the author, then thirty-eight, already was a praised lawyer and a promising politician, until his killing in 43 BC. The epistles are then additionally divided into four separate posthumous sets, according to the varying recipient(s), as presented here below:

- *Epistulae ad Atticum*, all addressed to Cicero’s close friend and counselor Atticus, in 16 books;
- *Epistulae ad familiares*, either addressed to relatives, friends and confidants or to some of the most prominent public figures of his time, like Pompey, Caesar and Varro, in 16 books;
- *Epistulae ad Quintum fratrem*, addressed to his younger brother Quintus, in 3 books;
- *Epistulae ad Brutum*, consisting of letters both written by Cicero to Caesar’s assassin Brutus and viceversa, dating back to the last year of the author’s life, in 2 books.

From the standpoint of the content, the collection includes an incredibly ample mixture of topics, ranging from veritable open letters to respected leaders and to fellow politicians and intellectuals to formally canonical missives of request or acceptance, passing through elaborate theoretical dissertations on philosophical and literary issues or, inversely, candid and at times cursory comments on the episodes of that extremely intricate historical period or – way more simply – on the happenings and the (also material) affairs of daily existence. In light of all this, the *Epistulae* turn out to be a very

precious source for the chronicle of the late Roman Republic as well as for the biographical and psychological portrayal of the author, which remains unparalleled in the entire Ancient era. Specifically, in my thesis I opted for the examination of the sole first epistolary compilation listed above, on the grounds that, on the one hand, its letters belong to a fairly extended timespan (from 68 to 44 BC), but, on the other, they all share the same addressee, Cicero's lifelong intimate and adviser Titus Pomponius Atticus. It is this tight and uninterrupted bond between the two that allows Cicero to freely express every feeling, doubt, worry or delight that might cross his mind, with no fear of being read – and perhaps even judged or criticized – by a general audience. Thus, I have the valuable opportunity to analyze a text that, on several dimensions, but more pertinently from a linguistic point of view, maintains internal compactness and cohesion, while concomitantly making space for an expansive thematic variety, which, unlike some of the conventional or ceremonious epistles of the other collections, is conveyed in an informal fashion by a rather natural, unforced language.

3.3 The building of the corpus

Now that I have exposed the primary reasons for the choice of Cicero's *Letters to Atticus*, I can proceed by revealing the principles and the plan that guided my investigation of it. First of all, in order to have a meaningful but not excessive nor dispersive corpus, my analysis concentrates on the body of 58 out of the 396 pieces that make up the anthology, a figure that is nearly equivalent to 15% of all letters and to 19% of the whole written text: these were casually picked from the 16 books of the collection, with a rate of 3 or 4 letters per book. The exact listing of the selected epistles is the following:

- Book I: letters 1, 5, 10, 20
- II: 18, 20, 21, 22
- III: 7, 8, 14, 24
- IV: 1, 5, 15, 16
- V: 1, 17, 18
- VI: 6, 8, 9
- VII: 1, 2, 9, 17

- VIII: 1, 9, 12, 14
- IX: 1, 11, 19
- X: 9, 11, 14
- XI: 6, 9, 12, 15
- XII: 14, 18, 23, 40
- XIII: 10, 21, 28
- XIV: 13b, 17, 18
- XV: 13, 14, 15, 26
- XVI: 3, 7, 14, 16a.

In the second instance, I performed the manual reading of the chosen items: I believe that in this case such a direct, non-computational method represents the most effective option and the right meeting point between a quantity-oriented set of samples and a quality-oriented one. The purpose of this meticulously executed operation was to identify and to gather every clause containing a verb. The final number amounts to 4803 examples and does not include non-verbal clauses (like some exclamations and elliptical clauses) and adverbial clauses with a non-finite verb (such as gerunds and gerundives, ablative absolutes and other participial constructions, but not infinitives – and, particularly, *Accusativus cum infinitivo* – whose function is argumental). By the same token, poetic quotes and somewhat recurrent Greek sentences were dismissed, as would be expected.

Ultimately, all clauses were arranged in a chart so that they could be evaluated and tagged in compliance with a series of parameters. The latter were pinpointed with the goal of indicating some grammatical properties that seem to play a role – as I will either try to confirm or confute – in the determination of verb placement, according to the tasks of our research. I introduce the complete catalogue hereafter, appending an exhaustive record of examples to it for the sake of clarity:

- Clause level: through this label I simply intend to distinguish matrix clauses (1a) from embedded ones (1a), given that, on a global scale, the latter may turn out to be informationally poorer and structurally less accessible, thus providing the verb with a smaller range of potential landing sites than the former.

1a) Metell-us tu-us est egregi-us consul.
 Metellus-NOM.SG your-NOM.SG be.PRS.3SG admirable-NOM.SG consul.NOM.SG
Your friend Metellus is an admirable consul. (I,20)

1b) Id scrips-i ad Erot-em ut redd-er-et.
 it.ACC.N.SG write-PRF.1SF to Eros-ACC.SG so.that give.back-IPFV.SBJV-3SG
I have written to Eros to produce it. (XV, 15)

- Clause type: it serves as a further classification of matrix and embedded clauses; as for the former, it marks declarative (2a), interrogative (2b) and imperative clauses (2c), whereas the latter are divided into declaratives (2d), interrogatives (2e), relatives (2f) and adverbials (comprising causal (2g), concessive (2h), conditional (2i), consecutive (2j), final (2k), modal/comparative (2l) and temporal (2m) clauses). Here again, I expect certain types to be more syntactically fixed than others, even within the domain of subordinates, whilst root clauses are partitioned as well inasmuch as some of its classes, namely interrogatives and imperatives, represent two crosslinguistically widespread contexts that, by reason of their strong pragmatic status, favor the emergence of non-V-final constructions.

2a) In fret-o medi-o hanc epistul-am leg-i.
 in strait-ABL.SG middle-ABL.SG this.ACC.SG letter-ACC.SG read-PRF.1SG
I read that letter when I was in the middle of the strait. (XVI,7)

2b) Quaes-o, quid nobis fu-tur-um est?
 beg-PRS.1SG what.NOM.N.SG us.DAT be-FUT.PTCP-NOM.SG be.PRS.3SG
Pray, what is to become of us? (VI,9)

2c) Sequ-ere nunc me in camp-um.
 follow-PRS.IMP.2SG now me.ACC to campus-ACC.SG
Next follow me into the campus. (IV,15)

2d) Reliqu-um est ut [...] mandat-a
remaining-NOM.SG be.PRS.3SG that commission-ACC.PL
nostr-a exhuri-as.

our-ACC.PL complete-PRS.SBJV.2SG

There only remains for me to beg you to complete all my commissions. (V,1)

2e) Quaer-o autem quid tandem Sesti-us
ask-PRS.1SG PRT what.ACC.N.SG eventually Sestius-NOM.SG
in hac re fac-ere poss-it.

in this.ABL.SG business.ABL.SG do-PRS.INF be.able-PRS.SBJV.3SG

*Still, I am at a loss to know what in the world Sestius can do in a business
like this. (XV,13)*

2f) Urg-eb-ar ab e-o ad qu-em mis-i.

press-IPFV-PASS.1SG by that-ABL.SG to who-ACC.SG send-PRF.1SG

I was pressed by the man to whom I sent it. (IV,5)

2g) Capu-ae Non-is Febr. esse vol-eb-am,
Capua-LOC.SG Nones-ABL.PL of.February.ABL.PL be.PRS.INF want-IPFV-1SG
quia consul-es iuss-er-ant.

because consul-NOM.PL order-PLPRF-3PL

*I mean to be at Capua on the 5th of February, in accordance with orders
from the consuls. (VII,17)*

2h) Nam ist-a veritas, etiam si iucund-a
PRT this-NOM.SG candour.NOM.SG even if pleasant-NOM.SG
non est, mihi tamen grat-a est.

not be.PRS.3SG me.DAT yet dear-NOM.SG be.PRS.3SG

*For your outspoken candour, even if not altogether pleasant, is yet what
I prefer. (III,24)*

2i) Profecto nihil accipi-am iniuri-ae,
certainly nothing.ACC.N.SG receive-FUT.1SG offence-GEN.SG

si tu ader-is.

if you.NOM.SG be.present.FUT-2SG

I am quite certain of receiving no unfair treatment if you are on the spot. (V,18)

2j) Tant-o me dolor-e adfec-it ut postea
so.great-ABL.SG me.ACC pain-ABL.SG afflict-PRF.3SG that after

iacu-er-im.

prostrate-PRF.SBJV-1SG

He grieved me so deeply that I was quite prostrate after it. (XI,9)

2k) Quint-um fratrem audi-o profec-t-um
Quintus-ACC.SG brother-ACC.SG hear-PRS.1SG depart-PRF.PTCP-ACC.SG

in Asi-am ut deprec-ar-etur.

to Asia-ACC.SG so.that intercede-IPFV.SBJV-PASS.1SG

I am told that my brother Quintus has started for Asia, to make his peace. (XI,6)

2l) Er-at enim popular-is, ut nor-as.

be.IPFV-3SG PRT popular-NOM.SG as know.PLPRF-2SG

For he was fond of popularity, as you know. (XVI,16a)

2m) Simul et quid er-it cert-i,

as.soon as anything.NOM.N.SG be.FUT-3SG certain-GEN.SG

scrib-am ad te.

write-FUT.1SG to you.ACC.SG

As soon as anything is settled I will write you word. (II,20)

- Infinitive: it is a special tag whose only function is to discern and to isolate infinitival clauses (3), as their behavior may deviate from that of finite clauses and permit only a limited choice in movement for the verb and other constituents.

3) Ne=que enim umquam arbitr-or orna-t-as esse
 not=and PRT ever think-PRS.1SG equip-PRF.PTCP-ACC.PL be.PRS.INF
 provinci-as designat-orum.
 province-ACC.PL designate.magistrate-GEN.PL

For I think there is no precedent for voting the provincial outfit of magistrates when still only designate. (III,24)

- Subordinating conjunction: in the event of dependent clauses, it specifies the introductory element, such as *ut*, *quod* (4a), *si*, *dum* (4b) and so on.

4a) Sed te am-av-i tamen admira-t-us=que
 but you.ACC.SG love-PRF-1SG yet surprise-PRF.PTCP-NOM.SG
 sum quod nihil-o minus ad me
 be.PRS.1SG that nothing-ABL.N.SG less to me.ACC
tu-a man-u scrips-iss-es.
 your-ABL.SG hand-ABL.SG write-PLPRF.SBJV-2SG

*Yet it roused my gratitude, as well as my surprise, **that** you should, in spite of it, have written to me with your own hand. (VI,9)*

4b) **Dum** tu-a me dom-us lev-ab-at,
 while your-NOM.SG me.ACC house-NOM.SG comfort-IPFV-3SG
 quis a me exclus-us?
 who.NOM.M.SG by me.ABL exclude.PRF.PTCP-NOM.SG

***While** I was finding consolation in your house, who was ever refused admittance to me? (XII,40)*

- Grammatical person: here the options coincide with the six persons of the Latin verbal system. The principal motivation behind this tag, aside from tracing a general overview of the interaction with verb placement, is that, as demonstrated by Haegeman (1997) and Schäfer (2021), interesting phenomena like subject omission and topic drop (with their subsequent effects on verb order) reveal a statistical connection with some persons, especially I-person singular.

5a) I-person singular:

Itaque te in e-a quaestion-e non exerce-o.
 therefore you.ACC.SG in that-ABL.SG question-ABL.SG not worry-PRS.SG
Therefore I do not worry you on that point. (VII,9)

5b) II-p.s.:

Ecquid am-as Deiotar-um et non am-as Hier-am?
 Q love-PRS.2SG Deiotarus-ACC.SG and not love-PRS.2SG Hieras-ACC.SG
Can you love Deiotarus and yet dislike Hieras? (XVI,3)

5c) III-p.s.:

Pridie autem apud me Crassipes fu-er-at.
 the.day.before however with me.ACC Crassipes.NOM.SG be-PLPRF-3SG
However, on the day previous Crassipes had been with me. (IX,11)

5d) I-p.plural:

Nam iracundi-am atque intemperanti-am ill-orum
 PRT resentment-ACC.SG and violence-ACC.SG that-GEN.PL
 sumus exper-t-i.
 be.PRS.1PL experience-PRF.PTCP-NOM.PL
For we have had experience of those men's resentment and violence. (II,21)

5e) II-p.pl.:

Etenim minim-e amic-i Pompei-o nostr-o
PRT least-ADV friend-NOM.PL Pompey-DAT.SG our-DAT.SG
esse deb-etis.
be.PRS.INF have.to-PRS.2PL

For you are not at all bound to be my Pompey's friends. (VII,17)

5f) III-p.pl.:

Dilect-us hab-entur, in hibern-a deduc-untur.
levy-ACC.PL have-PRS.PASS.3PL in winter.quarter-ACC.PL draft-PRS.PASS.3PL
Levies are being held, the men are being drafted into winter quarters. (IX,19)

- Expression of the subject: this parameter sets clauses with an overt subject (6a) apart from clauses whose subject is null (6b), given that Latin is a pro-drop language; it also separately identifies instances where the subject takes the shape of a relative or interrogative pronoun (6c) or of a whole embedded clause (6d), since in such a case the subject obeys some restraints on its position and on the obligatoriness of its presence.

6a) **Ego** et saep-ius ad te et plur-a scrib-er-em.
I.NOM and often-CMP to you.ACC.SG and more-ACC.PL write-IPFV.SBJV.1SG
I would indeed have written to you oftener, and at greater length. (III,7)

6b) De Domiti-o vari-a aud-imus.
about Domitius-ABL.SG varied-ACC.PL hear-PRS.1PL
As to Domitius, we hear contradictory rumours. (VIII,14)

6c) Veri-t-a est enim pusill-a, **quae** nunc
 fear-PRF.PTCP-NOM.SG be.PRS.3SG PRT little.girl-NOM.SG who-NOM.F.SG now
labor-at, ne anim-um Publ-i offend-er-em.
 be.unwell-PRS.3SG that feeling-ACC.SG Publius-GEN.SG offend-IPFV.SBJV-1SG
*For my little girl, **who is unwell**, was afraid of offending Publius's
 feelings. (IV,15)*

6d) Ita fi-eb-at ut, dum minus pericul-i
 thus happen-IPFV-3SG that while less danger-GEN.SG
vid-er-etur, abess-em.
 seem-IPFV-SBJV-PASS.3SG be.absent-IPFV.SBJV-1SG
*The result of that would have been that I should have been abroad as long
 as the danger seemed less imminent. (XVI,7)*

- Expression of the object: its aim is to individuate clauses that display an object or, in other words, clauses whose verb is transitive (7a) and, on the other hand, clauses lacking an object (in this instance, the verb is usually intransitive (7b), but it should be noted that there may be some interesting examples of transitive predicates with null objects (7c)); once again, a side tag is reserved for cases in which the role of the object is occupied by a relative or interrogative pronoun (7d) or by an embedded clause (7e). Through the application of the last two tags, I will manage to ascertain how verb placement relates to the other fundamental components of the clause, whether V1 requires the omission of any element and whether Latin V2 occurs with the same preverbal constituents as its established Germanic and Romance counterparts.

7a) **Ali-am** **ration-em** huius bell-i ger-end-i
 other-ACC.SG way-ACC.SG this.GEN.SG war-GEN.SG carry-GDV-GEN.SG
null-am vide-o.
 no-ACC.SG see-PRS.1SG
*I don't see **any other way** of carrying on this war. (IX,19)*

7b) Nunc access-it etiam existimatio.
 now be.added-PRF.3S also credit.NOM.SG
Now it concerns his credit also. (XVI,16a)

7c) Describ-o et remitt-o.
 copy-PRS.1SG and send.back-PRS.1SG
I am going to copy the book out and send it back. (II,20)

7d) Iam **quid** sper-em ab e-o
 by.now what.ACC.N.SG expect-PRS.SBJV.1SG from that-ABL.SG
 qui mihi amic-us numquam fu-it?
 who.NOM.M.SG me.DAT friend-NOM.SG never be-PRF.S3G
What am I to expect from a man who was never friendly to me? (XI,9)

7e) Neg-a me e-i irat-um fore.
 deny-PRS.IMP.2SG me.ACC him-DAT annoyed-ACC.SG be.FUT.INF
Tell him I shall not be annoyed. (I,1)

- *Esse*: it purely signals the employment of the verb *esse*, both in its lexical (8a) and auxiliary (8b) capacity, as it appears to exhibit a partially diverging behavior. This way, I will test Salvi's assumption that this verb shows signs of an already solid V2 distribution and the validity of Wackernagel's law at this time in the history of the Latin language.

8a) Sed haec fortasse κενόσπουδα sunt.
 but this.NOM.N.PL maybe frivolity.NOM.PL be.PRS.3PL
But perhaps all this is mere idle curiosity. (IX,1)

8b) Numquam enim de te ips-o nisi crudel-issim-e
 never PRT about you.ABL.SG self-ABL.SG unless cruel-SUP-ADV
 cogita-t-um est.
 think-PRF.PTCP-NOM.SG be.PRS.3SG

For even as to you personally there were never any but the harshest ideas. (XI,6)

- Auxiliary: what is shown is the utilization of an auxiliary (*esse*) or of a modal (*posse, debere, solere...*) and its location in relation to the lexical part of the verb (that is, either to its left (9a) or to its right (9b)).

9a) Multo magis est nobis labor-and-um
 much more be.PRS.3SG us.DAT be.troubled-GDV-NOM.SG
 de Afric-a.
 about Africa-ABL.SG

My anxiety must be much more in regard to Africa. (XI,12)

9b) Mult-a per Varron-em nostr-um ag-i
 many-NOM.N.PL through Varro-ACC.SG our-ACC.SG carry-PRS.INF.PASS
 possunt.
 be.able.PRS.3PL

I can carry on many negotiations through our friend Varro. (II,22)

- Verb placement: it categorizes clauses on the basis of the position of the verb, mainly differentiating verb-final clauses (10a) from verb-initial ones (10b) and additionally discriminating those where the verb is clause-internal (thus, V2 (10c), V3 (10d) and V4 (10e) et cetera); naturally, the classification depends on the number of constituents, not on that of mere words²⁹.

²⁹ In addition to proper constituents, particles like *enim* or *igitur* were also counted as preverbal material.

10a) Pompei-us, e-o robor-e vir, i-is
 Pompey-NOM.SG such-ABL.SG strength-ABL.SG man.NOM.SG such-ABL.PL
 radic-ibus, Q. Cassi-um sine sort-e deleg-it.
 root-ABL.PL Quintus-ACC.SG Cassius-ACC.SG without lot-ABL.SG select-PRF.3SG
*Pompey, so strong a man and in so secure a position, selected Q. Cassius without
 regard to the lot. (VI,6)*

10b) Accep-i Rom-a sine epistul-a tu-a
 receive-PRF.1SG Rome-ABL.SG without letter-ABL.SG your-ABL.
 fascicul-um litter-arum.
 SG packet-ACC.SG letter-GEN.PL
I have received a packet of letters from Rome without one from you. (V,17)

10c) Reliqu-a pars epistul-ae est ill-a
 remaining-NOM.SG part.NOM.SG letter-GEN.SG be.PRS.3SG that-NOM.SG
 quidem in utramque part-em.
 indeed in both.ACC.SG part-ACC.SG
The remainder of his letter may indeed be regarded in two different lights. (XV,26)

10d) Numquam ego vid-i tam par-is candidat-os.
 never I.NOM see-PRF.1SG so equal-ACC.PL candidate-ACC.PL
I have never seen candidates so closely matched. (IV,16)

10e) Clodi-us adhuc mihi denunti-at pericul-um.
 Clodius-NOM.SG still me.DAT threaten-PRS.3SG danger-ACC.SG
Clodius is still threatening me with danger. (II,20)

- Word order: this is a specific label that summarily reveals the order of the constituents within a clause, restricting itself to the indication of the verb (V), the auxiliary (Aux), the subject (S), the object (O), the indirect object (Oind),

the complementizer (C) and branding all the other elements (other arguments and adjuncts) with a generic X.

11a) CSXVAux

Etsi id re perspec-t-um est [...].
although that.NOM.N.SG fact.ABL.SG observe-PRF.PTCP-NOM.SG be.PRF.3SG
Though that has been proved by facts [...]. (VIII,9)

11b) OindOSVX

Mihi haec ego pati-or cotidie.
me.DAT this.ACC.N.PL I.NOM endure-PRS.1SG everyday
That's what I have to put up with every day. (V,1)

While some of the parameters that I have enumerated until now allow a clear-cut distinction between diverse categories (e.g. the six grammatical persons can be told apart without any difficulty, just like we are able to steadily verify whether a subject is present or omitted within a given sentence), other tags force us to cope with a certain degree of ambiguity. This is particularly evident in the moment when we have to classify an embedded clause whose subordinating conjunction may work for more than a single type: it is the case, for example, of *ut*, which, coupled with the subjunctive mood, typically introduces a complement clause or an adverbial one (which, in turn, can either be final or consecutive), or – even more significantly – of *cum*, which, also paired with the subjunctive, opens a causal, temporal, conditional or concessive clause. However, luckily for us, the difference that underlies all these subdivisions actually comes down to a matter of nuances, whose resolution I attempted to recover through an attentive reading of the text or, if needed, by turning to the adopted translation. Moreover, such subtleties often do not seem to condition the effective behavior of the phenomena that I mean to observe. Further problems of the same kind arise with regards to the features that must be taken into account when establishing the position of the verb inside the clause, but this issue will be pushed back to the next chapter, where I will undertake the presentation of the results of the analysis on my data.

CHAPTER 4

Presentation of the data

After having exposed the main theoretical issues and the most influential accounts concerning verb placement in Latin, for the purpose of precisely identifying the goals of my thesis, and after having introduced and justified the methodological grounds of this research in the last two chapters, in the upcoming sections I can finally proceed to the direct presentation of the data derived from the analysis of Cicero's *Letters*, which will be reported following the primary categories that seem to be most effective and significant in grouping them together – such as main vs. embedded clauses, grammatical person etc. – with the help of dedicated charts and examples. In addition, each one of these tables (or unified set of tables) will be accompanied by a corresponding generalization, which is meant to briefly define the behavior of the phenomena under observation.

4.1 Overall frequency of verb orders

As I explained in Chapter 3 while describing the tags that I chose to adopt, I intended to distinguish three chief positions for the verbal head inside the clause, namely final, initial and central, the last of which was then further divided into specific V2, V3 and V4 configurations. The statistical results of this discrimination within the whole corpus – thus, no other differentiating factor being taken into consideration – can be seen in Table 1. Note that, by reason of their scarcity, V5 and subsequent orders all fall into the same classification under the label “other”.

	Number of clauses	%
V-final	2411	50,20%
V1	776	16,16%
V-medial ³⁰ :	1222:	25,44%:
V2	438	9,12%
V3	241	5,01%
V4	81	1,69%
Other	8	0,17%
Ambiguous	454	9,45%
One-element clauses	394	8,20%
Total	4803	100%

Table 1: Overall frequency of verb orders

Before moving on to the real exposition of these figures, we should clarify that such a chart, albeit complete, is nevertheless inappropriate: as a matter of fact, it includes all instances (which, by the way, are not quite numerically irrelevant) of one-element clauses where the only overt element is exactly the verb, for which it is not possible to ascertain whether this has been raised or has stayed in the terminal spot, and many examples that I marked as ambiguous in that, although superficially displaying a verb-medial arrangement, they likely represent cases where the verb is actually final and some clausal material has been extraposed. Therefore, in order to avoid wrong or tainted conclusions, I clearly opted for the rejection of said specimens – a resolution that will be valid for my entire work from this point onwards. The adjusted table is showcased in the next page.

³⁰ In this and all the next charts I first report the percentages concerning V-medial configuration and, right below within the same cell, the ones referring to its possible subtypes (V2, V3, V4 and other).

	Number of clauses	%
V-final	2411	60,96%
V1	776	19,62%
V-medial:	768:	19,42%:
V2	438	11,08%
V3	241	6,09%
V4	81	2,05%
Other	8	0,20%
Total	3955	100%

Table 2: Adjusted frequency of verb order

I am now able to formulate the first generalizations regarding Latin verb placement:

G1) *Generalization 1*: the V-final pattern is the prevailing template, followed, in order, by V1, V2, V3 and so on.

G2) *Generalization 2*: the number of V1 clauses equals that of V-medial clauses.

G3) *Generalization 3*: the V1 order roughly exceeds V2 at a +50% rate, approximately like that occurring between V2 and V3 and so on.

4.2 Main vs. embedded clauses

The first feature that I want to add to our statistical analysis as a way of better individuating which contexts either favor or disfavor non-V-final configurations is the distinction between main and embedded clauses. First of all, it is necessary to illustrate the sheer proportion between the two types inside the full collection and its slight,

unimportant change with respect to the adjusted corpus made of 3955 clauses that I have just proposed.

	Number of clauses	%
Main	2086	43,43%
Embedded	2717	56,57%
Total	4803	100%

Table 3: Number of main and embedded clauses

	Number of clauses	%
Main	1744	44,10%
Embedded	2211	55,90%
Total	3955	100%

Table 4: Adjusted number of main and embedded clauses

The two following charts show the distribution of the different verb orders within the domain, respectively, of main and embedded clauses.

	Number of clauses	%
V-final	890	51,03%
V1	431	24,71%
V-medial:	423:	24,26%:
V2	233	13,36%
V3	129	7,40%
V4	56	3,21%
Other	5	0,29%
Total	1744	100%

Table 5: Frequency of verb orders in main clauses

	Number of clauses	%
V-final	1521	68,80%
V1	345	15,60%
V-medial:	345:	15,60%:
V2	205	9,27%
V3	112	5,07%
V4	25	1,13%
Other	3	0,13%
Total	2211	100%

Table 6: Frequency of verb order in embedded clauses

G4) *Generalization 4*: within the domain of main clauses, the approximate 2:1 ratio observed for V1 and subsequent orders also holds between V-final and V1.

G5) *Generalization 5*: within the domain of embedded clauses, as opposed to main clauses, the V-final pattern increases its frequency at the expense of both V1 and V-medial configurations.

4.3 Infinitive clauses

A potential source of disturbance for my research could be found in the recurrent employment of infinitives as dependent clauses, particularly in the construction known as *Accusativus cum infinitivo*. What is peculiar about them is that they are the sole complement clauses in the Latin language that lack an introductory conjunction (if we set aside those cases where the conjunction can be omitted insofar as the subordinate status is sufficiently expressed by the subjunctive mood – but this basically only happens when

velle, or similar predicates indicating the subject's wishes, is the main verb) and that, above all, exhibit a non-finite nature.

	Number of clauses	%
V-final	1118	69,88%
V1	269	16,81%
V-medial:	213:	13,31%:
V2	139	8,69%
V3	60	3,75%
V4	12	0,75%
Other	2	0,12%
Total	1600	100%

Table 7: Frequency of verb orders in embedded clauses, infinitive clauses excluded

	Number of clauses	%
V-final	2010	60,11%
V1	700	20,93%
V-medial:	634:	18,96%:
V2	370	11,07%
V3	189	5,65%
V4	68	2,03%
Other	7	0,21%
Total	3344	100%

Table 7: Frequency of verb orders in all clauses, infinitive clauses excluded

However, once we remove infinitive clauses, which amount to 611, from the count of embedded clauses (Table 6) and ultimately from that of all clauses (Table 7), we obtain the following outcome:

G6) *Generalization 6*: the exclusion of infinitive clauses does not yield substantially different percentages in the distribution of verb orders.

Instead, a somewhat dissimilar picture emerges when we look at the internal distribution in the subfield of infinitive clauses:

	Number of clauses	%
V-final	402	65,79%
V1	76	12,44%
V-medial:	133:	21,77%:
V2	67	10,97%
V3	52	8,51%
V\$	13	2,13%
Other	1	0,16%
Total	611	100%

Table 8: Frequency of verb orders in infinitive clauses

G7) *Generalization 7*: within the domain of infinitive clauses, V1 occurs almost half the amount of times that V-medial configurations do, getting closer to the individual percentages of V2 and V3.

Consequently, in light of these results, I preferred to maintain infinitive clauses in the adjusted corpus for my analysis.

4.4 Clause type

	Declarative	Imperative	Interrogative
Number - % of: V-final	803 – 51,24%	38 – 40,86%	40 – 54,80%
V1	369 – 23,55%	42 – 45,16%	19 – 26,03%
V-medial:	395 – 25,21%:	13 – 13,98%:	14 – 19,17%:
V2	217 – 13,85%	8 – 8,60%	8 – 10,95%
V3	119 – 7,59%	4 – 4,30%	6 – 8,22%
V4	54 – 3,45%	1 – 1,08%	0 – 0%
Other	5 – 0,32%	0 – 0%	0 – 0%
Total	1567 – 100%	93 – 100%	73 – 100%

Table 9: Frequency of verb orders in three classes of main clauses

Starting from the principal types of main clauses, as expected, two of them, namely interrogatives and especially declaratives – the latter forming the clearly predominant class –, stick by the overall percentages given for main clauses. On the other hand, imperative sentences adhere to a diverging, original pattern, which can be summarized in this way:

G8) *Generalization 8*: within the domain of imperative clauses, V1 is the most frequent – though not exceedingly – order, closely followed by V-final.

It should be mentioned that the sum of main clauses that I have just presented does not comprehend 10 optative sentences (1) – which, besides, are consistently V-final – because of their numerical irrelevance.

1) De Buthroti-o negoti-o utinam quidem
 about Buthrotian-ABL.SG business-ABL.SG if.only PRT
 Antoni-um conveni-am!
 Antony-ACC.SG meet-PRS.SBJV-1SG

*As to the Buthrotian business, I wish to heaven I could have an interview with
 Antony! (XIV,17)*

As for the level of embedded clauses, Tables 10 and 11 reveal the information that is relative to its ample internal classification.

	Causal	Concessive	Conditional	Consecutive	Declarative
Number - % of: V-final	79 – 65,29%	33 – 60%	161-78,92%	36 – 62,07%	559 – 66,23%
V1	25 – 20,66%	14 – 25,45%	18 – 8,82%	7 – 12,07%	125 – 14,81%
V-medial:	17 – 14,05%	8 – 14,55%	25 – 12,26%	15 – 25,86%	160 – 18,96%
V2	12 – 9,92%	5 – 9,09%	21 – 10,29%	10 – 17,24%	83 – 9,95%
V3	3 – 2,48%	3 – 5,46%	3 – 1,50%	5 – 8,62%	59 – 6,99%
V4	2 – 1,65%	0 – 0%	1 – 0,49%	0 – 0%	15 – 1,78%
Other	0 – 0%	0 – 0%	0 – 0%	0 – 0%	2 – 0,24%
Total	121 – 100%	55 – 100%	204 – 100%	58 – 100%	844 – 100%

Table 10: Frequency of verb orders in ten classes of embedded clauses – Part 1

	Final	Interrogative	Modal- Comparative	Relative	Temporal
Number - % of: V-final	58 – 75,32%	95 – 67,86%	51 – 73,91%	350 – 69,58%	93 – 70,99%
V1	11 – 14,29%	24 – 17,14%	11 – 15,94%	87 – 17,30%	20 – 15,27%
V-medial:	8 – 10,39%	21 – 15%	7 – 10,15%	66 – 13,12%	18 – 13,74%
V2	3 – 3,90%	13 – 9,29%	4 – 5,80%	46 – 9,14%	7 – 5,34%
V3	5 – 6,49%	7 – 5%	3 – 4,35%	16 – 3,18%	8 – 6,11%
V4	0 – 0%	1 – 0,71%	0 – 0%	3 – 0,60%	3 – 2,29%
Other	0 – 0%	0 – 0%	0 – 0%	1 – 0,20%	0 – 0%
Total	77 – 100%	140 – 100%	69 – 100%	503 – 100%	131 – 100%

Table 11: Frequency of verb orders in ten classes of embedded clauses – Part 2

Considering the limited quantity characterizing some of these categories, wide and comprehensive generalizations do not seem to be attainable, apart from the acknowledgement that within the domain of adverbial clauses – and, especially, of conditionals –, the V-final pattern tends to reach remarkably high frequency rates. In addition to this, we could only note a few exceptional – but, then again, supported by low numbers – phenomena, such as the comparatively elevated percentage of V1 in causal and concessive clauses and, vice versa, V2 surpassing V1 in consecutive and conditional clauses.

Even so, we would like to reserve a separate statistic for the group of dependent declarative clauses, since they represent the embedded version of the most quantitatively and semantically common type of clause, that is declaratives, exactly. In particular, my intention is to set the finite instances aside from their infinitival counterpart, which I already debated above, and to determine any possible contrast between the two of them.

	Number of clauses	%
V-final	168	67,74%
V1	52	20,97%
V-medial:	28	11,29%
V2	18	7,26%
V3	7	2,82%
V4	2	0,81%
Other	1	0,40%
Total	248	100%

Table 12: Frequency of verb orders in finite complement clauses

G9) *Generalization 9*: within the domain of finite complement clauses, V1 fares better than it does in most other embedded clauses, almost doubling the percentage of V-medial configurations.

4.5 Grammatical person

What I want to take into account now is the arrangement of verb orders according to the six grammatical persons of the Latin language. But before doing so it is certainly convenient to inspect their complete rates of usage inside my corpus, irrespective of verb placement. The data shown by Table 13 may be explained by resorting to the combination of two partly different factors: on the one hand, some features, like the prevalence of III-p.s. forms and the near absence of II-p.pl., are probably due to the general written nature of our sample; on the other hand, the specific literary genre – epistolography – easily clarifies the variation of the first two persons. Indeed, since in every letter Cicero, being the sender, naturally expresses his actions and his feelings through I-p.s., this person is found at a high percentage, notably in main clauses, whilst its employment is significantly reduced to the advantage of II-p.s. in embedded contexts, where the recipient is regularly addressed. This pattern is sharply exemplified by the multiple sentences or clauses of the

kind of *oro ut venias* “I pray that you come”, *si vis* “if you want”, *ut scis* “as you know” and so forth.

	I-p.s.	II-p.s.	III-p.s.	I-p.pl.	II-p.pl.	III-p.pl.	Total
Main	835 – 40,09%	262 – 12,58%	680 – 32,64%	131 – 6,29%	2 – 0,10%	173 – 8,30%	2083 – 100%
Embedded	490 – 24,30%	376 – 18,64%	800 – 39,66%	87 – 4,31%	2 – 0,10%	262 – 12,99%	2017 – 100%
Total	1325 – 32,31%	638 – 15,56%	1480 – 36,10%	218 – 5,32%	4 – 0,10%	435 – 10,61%	4100 – 100%

Table 13: Frequency of grammatical persons

Let us then take a look at the interaction between grammatical person and verbal configuration:

	I-p.s.	II-p.s.	III-p.s.	I-p.pl.	II-p.pl.	III-p.pl.
V-final	593 – 57,18%	265 – 56,03%	771 – 60,57%	135 – 72,58%	3 – 100%	240 – 65,04%
V1	256 – 24,69%	149 – 31,50%	204 – 16,02%	33 – 17,74%	0 – 0%	58 – 15,72%
V-medial:	188 – 18,13%	59 – 12,47%	298 – 23,41%	18 – 9,68%	0 – 0%	71 – 19,24%
V2	109 – 10,51%	37 – 7,82%	177 – 13,90%	8 – 4,30%	0 – 0%	39 – 10,57%
V3	51 – 4,92%	17 – 3,59%	86 – 6,76%	9 – 4,84%	0 – 0%	26 – 7,05%
V4	24 – 2,31%	5 – 1,06%	32 – 2,51%	1 – 0,54%	0 – 0%	6 – 1,62%
Other	4 – 0,39%	0 – 0%	3 – 0,24%	0 – 0%	0 – 0%	0 – 0%
Total	1037 – 100%	473 – 100%	1273 – 100%	186 – 100%	3 – 100%	369 – 100%

Table 14: Frequency of verb orders for grammatical person, in all clauses

Once again, these records can be better defined if we apply the distinction, which I already proved to be particularly meaningful, between main and embedded clauses:

	I-p.s.	II-p.s.	III-p.s.	I-p.pl.	II-p.pl.	III-p.pl.
V-final	336 – 50,08%	79 – 38,35%	311 – 52,89%	77 – 63,64%	2 – 100%	84 – 54,90%
V1	184 – 27,42%	91 – 44,17%	103 – 17,52%	28 – 23,14%	0 – 0%	25 – 16,34%
V-medial:	151 – 22,50%	36 – 17,48%	174 – 29,59%	16 – 13,22%	0 – 0%	44 – 28,76%
V2	84 – 12,52%	23 – 11,17%	99 – 16,84%	6 – 4,96%	0 – 0%	19 – 12,42%
V3	46 – 6,86%	10 – 4,85%	44 – 7,48%	9 – 7,44%	0 – 0%	20 – 13,07%
V4	19 – 2,83%	3 – 1,46%	28 – 4,76%	1 – 0,82%	0 – 0%	5 – 3,27%
Other	2 – 0,29%	0 – 0%	3 – 0,51%	0 – 0%	0 – 0%	0 – 0%
Total	671 – 100%	206 – 100%	588 – 100%	121 – 100%	2 – 100%	153 – 100%

Table 15: Frequency of verb orders for grammatical person, in main clauses

	I-p.s.	II-p.s.	III-p.s.	I-p.pl.	II-p.pl.	III-p.pl.
V-final	257 – 70,22%	186 – 69,66%	460 – 67,15%	58 – 89,23%	1 – 100%	156 – 72,22%
V1	72 – 19,67%	58 – 21,72%	101 – 14,75%	5 – 7,69%	0 – 0%	33 – 15,28%
V-medial:	37 – 10,11%	23 – 8,62%	124 – 18,10%	2 – 3,08%	0 – 0%	27 – 12,50%
V2	25 – 6,83%	14 – 5,25%	78 – 11,39%	2 – 3,08%	0 – 0%	20 – 9,26%
V3	5 – 1,37%	7 – 2,62%	42 – 6,13%	0 – 0%	0 – 0%	6 – 2,78%
V4	5 – 1,37%	2 – 0,75%	4 – 0,58%	0 – 0%	0 – 0%	1 – 0,46%
Other	2 – 0,54%	0 – 0%	0 – 0%	0 – 0%	0 – 0%	0 – 0%
Total	366 – 100%	267 – 100%	685 – 100%	65 – 100%	1 – 100%	216 – 100%

Table 16: Frequency of verb orders for grammatical person, in embedded clauses

As can be seen, owing to their scantiness, plural forms exhibit a reduced degree of informativity, but, without consideration of II-p.pl., which is almost unattested, it could be recognized at least that I-p.pl. displays substantially high percentages of the unmarked V-final order and that III-p.pl. closely replicates the behavior of its singular equivalent. Inversely, some interesting generalizations may be concluded from the scrutiny of the first three persons:

G10) *Generalization 10*: the V1 pattern increases its frequency when I- and II-p.s. are employed, positively outdistancing V2 and exceptionally becoming the most recurring order in II-p.s. main clauses.

G11) *Generalization 11*: V-medial configurations increase their frequency when III-p.s. is employed, surpassing V1 rates, which, in turn, nearly equate to those of V2.

G12) *Generalization 12*: difference in the usage of V-final among the three singular persons is, in almost all contexts, not significant.

4.6 Expression of the arguments

In conformity with the methodological plan described in Chapter 3, my work on the Latin text included the adoption of two classifying tags aimed at signalling the expression of arguments whenever these performed the syntactic role of subject or object of the matching clause. In the first case, the parameter allowed me to distinguish null subjects from overt ones, while also separately labelling those clauses whose subject (labelled “special subject”) is either a heavy element (a whole subordinate clause) or an obligatorily expressed and clause-initial item, viz. a relative or interrogative pronoun. In my collection, the three options are thus arrayed:

	Overt subject	Null subject	Special subject	Total
Main	627 – 30,06%	1374 – 65,87%	85 – 4,07%	2086 – 100%
Embedded	948 – 34,89%	1377 – 50,68%	392 – 14,43%	2717 – 100%
Total	1575 – 32,79%	2751 – 57,28%	477 – 9,93%	4803 – 100%

Table 17: Frequency of overt, null and special subjects

However, considering the constraints governing the third kind of subjects, I decided to dismiss them, producing a revised set of data:

	Overt subject	Null subject	Total
Main	627 – 31,33%	1374 – 68,67%	2001 – 100%
Embedded	948 – 40,78%	1377 – 59,22%	2325 – 100%
Total	1575 – 36,41%	2751 – 63,59%	4326 – 100%

Table 18: Frequency of overt and null subjects

An additional obstacle might be generated by infinitive clauses, because, as I already mentioned, they preferentially require an overt subject, thereby diverging from all other clauses:

	Overt subject	Null subject	Total
Infinitive clauses	449 – 70,82%	185 – 29,18%	634 – 100%

Table 19: Frequency of overt and null subjects, infinitive clauses excluded

In the present case, the exclusion of infinitive clauses reveals important changes with respect to embedded clauses (and consequently to the overall count, Table 20) and, in particular, to complement clauses (Table 21), to which infinitive clauses uniformly belong.

	Overt subject	Null subject	Total
Embedded	501 – 29,57%	1193 – 70,43%	1694 - 100%
Total	1126 – 30,50%	2566 – 69,50%	3692 – 100%

Table 20: Frequency of overt and null subjects in embedded clauses, infinitive clauses excluded

	Overt subject	Null subject	Total
Complement clauses, infinitives included	503 – 56,26%	391 – 43,74%	894 – 100%
Complement clauses, infinitives excluded	62 – 22,14%	218 – 77,86%	280 – 100%

Table 21: Frequency of overt and null subjects in complement clauses

Therefore, infinitive clauses will be removed from all the next charts that contain data concerning the expression of the subject. It is now possible to combine the numbers of overt vs. null subjects with those pertaining to verb placement, first in the complete corpus, then, as usual, in relation to main and embedded contexts.

	Overt subject	Null subject
V-final	647 – 62,88%	1161 – 58,08%
V1	94 – 9,13%	544 – 27,21%
V-medial:	288 – 27,99%	294 – 14,71%
V2	139 – 13,51%	189 – 9,46%
V3	101 – 9,81%	79 – 3,95%
V4	43 – 4,18%	24 – 1,20%
Other	5 – 0,49%	2 – 0,10%
Total	1029 – 100%	1999 – 100%

Table 22: Frequency of verb orders with overt and null subjects

	Overt subject	Null subject
V-final	316 – 55,44%	546 – 48,92%
V1	56 – 9,82%	359 – 32,17%
V-medial:	198 – 34,74%	211 – 18,91%
V2	90 – 15,79%	130 – 11,65%
V3	66 – 11,58%	62 – 5,56%
V4	38 – 6,67%	18 – 1,61%
Other	4 – 0,70%	1 – 0,09%
Total	570 – 100%	1116 -100%

Table 23: Frequency of verb orders with overt and null subjects, in main clauses

	Overt subject	Null subject
V-final	331 – 72,11%	615 – 69,65%
V1	38 – 8,28%	185 – 20,95%
V-medial:	90 – 19,61%	83 – 9,40%
V2	49 – 10,68%	59 – 6,68%
V3	35 – 7,62%	17 – 1,93%
V4	5 – 1,09%	6 – 0,68%
Other	1 – 0,22%	1 – 0,11%
Total	459 – 100%	883 – 100%

Table 24: Frequency of verb orders with overt and null subjects, in embedded clause

The resulting picture gets even more accentuated if we only take into account complement clauses, now made clear of infinitive clauses:

	Overt subject	Null subject
V-final	45 – 78,95%	119 – 64,67%
V1	1 – 1,75%	49 – 26,63%
V-medial:	11 – 19,30%	16 – 8,70%
V2	5 – 8,77%	12 – 6,52%
V3	4 – 7,02%	3 – 1,63%
V4	2 – 3,51%	0 – 0%
Other	0 – 0%	1 – 0,55%
Total	57 – 100%	184 – 100%

Table 25: Frequency of verb orders with overt and null subjects, in finite complement clauses

The data just presented suggest the following generalizations:

G13) *Generalization 13*: when the subject is overt, V-medial templates increase their frequency of usage, with V1 almost lowering its percentage to zero in finite complement clauses. Moreover, V1 is repeatedly outperformed by V2 and V3 orders.

G14) *Generalization 14*: when the subject is null, V1 increases its frequency of usage to the detriment of V-final and, more notably, of V-medial orders, whose occurrences roughly amount to half those of V1.

The tag regarding the other syntactic role that I intended to examine, the object, does not indicate whether such an item is overt or covert (a feature that is accessible, though marginal, in Latin). Instead, it serves the purpose of discriminating transitive predicates, which require an object, from intransitive predicates, which do not. Their overall distribution is represented here below:

	Present object	Absent object	Special object	Total
Main	621 – 29,77%	957 – 45,88%	508 – 24,35%	2086 – 100%
Embedded	544 – 20,02%	1643 – 60,47%	530 – 19,51%	2717 – 100%
Total	1165 – 24,26%	2600 – 54,13%	1038 – 21,61%	4803 – 100%

Table 26: Frequency of present, absent and special objects

Like I did with subjects, I believe that it is preferable to leave out the instances of special objects (embedded clauses and relative/interrogative pronouns):

	Present object	Absent object	Total
Main	621 – 39,35%	957 – 60,65%	1578 – 100%
Embedded	544 – 24,87%	1643 – 75,13%	2187 – 100%
Total	1165 – 30,94%	2600 – 69,06%	3765 – 100%

Table 27: Frequency of present and absent objects

Finally, the following chart shows the distribution of the different verbal configuration in accordance with the presence or absence of an object:

	Present object	Absent object
V-final	740 – 66,01%	1297 – 60,75%
V1	159 – 14,19%	373 – 17,47%
V-medial:	222 – 19,80%	465 – 21,78%
V2	109 – 9,72%	279 – 13,07%
V3	72 – 6,42%	145 – 6,79%
V4	36 – 3,21%	39 – 1,83%
Other	5 – 0,45%	2 – 0,09%
Total	1121 – 100%	2135 – 100%

Table 28: Frequency of verb orders with present and absent objects

Seeing that no major fluctuation seems to take place between the two options, it can be stated that:

G15) *Generalization 15*: the presence or the absence of an object is not a relevant factor in the arrangement of verb orders.

One further advantage offered by the dual tagging of subjects and objects is the possibility to investigate what effect the joint occurrence of the two of them in the same clause yields on the position of the verbal head. In other words, we are able to check the behavior of verb placement in the event that two or more other constituents are simultaneously present. The following four scenarios are given:

- 1) both the subject and the object are present
- 2) only the subject is present
- 3) only the object is present
- 4) neither the subject nor the object is present

	Both	Subject	Object	Neither
V-final	161 – 71,56%	394 – 57,35%	436 – 62,20%	472 – 61,94%
V1	7 – 3,11%	79 – 11,50%	138 – 19,69%	183 – 24,02%
V-medial:	57 – 25,33%	214 – 31,15%	127 – 18,11%	107 – 14,04%
V2	11 – 4,89%	122 – 17,76%	77 – 10,98%	70 – 9,19%
V3	26 – 11,55%	68 – 9,90%	35 – 4,99%	28 – 3,67%
V4	16 – 7,11%	24 – 3,49%	14 – 2,00%	8 – 1,05%
Other	4 – 1,78%	0 – 0%	1 – 0,14%	1 – 0,13%
Total	225 – 100%	687 – 100%	701 – 100%	762 – 100%

Table 29: Frequency of verb orders according to the co-occurrence of subject and object

G16) *Generalization 16*: V1 is the second most frequent order when neither the subject nor the object is present, clearly surpassing V-medial patterns, whereas it becomes one of the least frequent orders when both the subject and the object are present, being surpassed by V2, V3 and V4.

G17) *Generalization 17*: V2 is the second most frequent order when only the subject – not the object – is present.

G18) *Generalization 18*: V3 and V4 become, respectively, the second and third most frequent orders when both the subject and the object are present.

4.7 *Esse* and modals

As regards the verb *esse*, its behavior can be studied under three distinct perspectives: when it functions as an auxiliary, when it serves as a lexical verb and, naturally, in its overall utilization. Table 30 illustrates its proportion with respect to all other verbs, while Table 31 records the rates of its two uses.

	<i>Esse</i>	Other verbs	Total
Main	365 – 17,50%	1721 – 82,50%	2086 – 100%
Embedded	637 – 23,44%	2080 – 76,56%	2717 – 100%
Total	1002 – 20,86%	3801 – 79,14%	4803 – 100%

Table 30: Frequency of *esse* with respect to other verbs

	Auxiliary	Lexical verb	Total
Total	345 – 34,43%	657 -65,57%	1002 – 100%

Table 31: Frequency of auxiliary and lexical *esse*

We apply the same tripartition to the analysis of its interaction with verb placement:

	Auxiliary <i>esse</i>	Lexical <i>esse</i>	<i>Esse</i>
V-final	177 – 55,14%	279 – 47,94%	456 – 50,50%
V1	38 – 11,84%	105 – 18,04%	143 – 15,84%
V-medial:	106 – 33,02%	198 – 34,02%	304 – 33,66%
V2	47 – 14,64%	124 – 21,31%	171 – 18,94%
V3	37 – 11,53%	62 – 10,65%	99 – 10,96%
V4	19 – 5,92%	12 – 2,06%	31 – 3,43%
Other	3 – 0,93%	0 – 0%	3 – 0,33%
Total	321 – 100%	582 – 100%	903 – 100%

Table 32: Frequency of verb orders with *esse*

G19) *Generalization 19*: with the verb *esse*, V-medial configurations double the rates of usage of V1, which is exceeded by V2 as the second most frequent order, also at the expense of the V-final template.

G20) *Generalization 20*: despite limited variation between auxiliary and lexical *esse*, V1 is slightly preferred in the latter case.

A similar distribution is expectedly exhibited by modal verbs, as they are crosslinguistically connected to auxiliaries.

	Modals + Auxiliary <i>esse</i>	Modals
V-final	288 – 63,02%	111 – 61,33%
V1	63 – 13,79%	25 – 13,81%
V-medial:	106 – 23,19%	45 – 24,86%
V2	47 – 10,28%	24 – 13,26%
V3	37 – 8,09%	12 – 6,63%
V4	19 – 4,16%	8 – 4,42%
Other	3 – 0,66%	1 – 0,55%
Total	457 – 100%	181 – 100%

Table 33: Frequency of verb orders with modals and auxiliaries

Though mostly resembling the pattern of *esse*, modals seem to somewhat favor V-final configurations, with V1 and V2 equalling each other.

4.8 Subordinating conjunction

Unlike all the parameters that have discussed up to this point, there is one final tag adopted in my research that actually did not turn out to be revealing: the tag labelling subordinating conjunctions for embedded clauses. Among the several items that belong to this category and of which Latin makes use, extremely varying in frequency and in meaning, none appears to affect the location of the verb within its dependent clause. Nonetheless, just for the sake of completeness, I report the data concerning some of the primary conjunctions in Table 34.

	<i>Cum</i>	<i>Quod</i>	<i>Si</i>	<i>Ut</i>
V-final	88 – 67,69%	114 – 64,77%	125 – 78,62%	167 – 69,01%
V1	27 – 20,77%	38 – 21,59%	13 – 8,17%	43 – 17,77%
V-medial:	15 – 11,54%	24 – 13,64%	21 – 13,21%	32 – 13,22%
V2	5 – 3,85%	17 – 9,66%	17 – 10,69%	21 – 8,68%
V3	8 – 6,15%	6 – 3,41%	3 – 1,89%	11 – 4,54%
V4	2 – 1,54%	1 – 0,57%	1 – 0,63%	0 – 0%
Other	0 – 0%	0 – 0%	0 – 0%	0 – 0%
Total	130 – 100%	176 – 100%	159 – 100%	242 – 100%

Table 34: Frequency of verb orders with four subordinating conjunctions

On the one hand, we find conjunctions that typically introduce only one class of embedded clauses, just like *si* with conditionals: in this situation, the results derived from the analysis of the conjunction and those regarding the corresponding clause should agree, as the comparison of Table 34 with Tables 10 and 11 readily confirms. On the other, the examination of the elements that are usually linked to different clauses (also taking on different meanings and requiring different moods), such as *cum* and *ut*, does not disclose any relevant information either, inasmuch as it does not contradict the percentages displayed by general embedded contexts.

CHAPTER 5

Interpretation of the data

Following the abundant presentation of the data collected during the analysis of the corpus selected from Cicero's *Letters to Atticus*, in the final chapter of this thesis I will ultimately commit to commenting on them in order to produce a convincing and comprehensive interpretation. More precisely, I will mostly maintain the set of grammatical properties and domains suggested to be relevant by the statistical results displayed in Chapter 4 and, centering on the insightful generalizations that were formulated, I will try to connect them in an explanatory system that is as unified and coherent as possible. To this end, I will also invoke the theoretical assumptions that were described in Chapter 2, so as to test their validity in grasping special verbal configurations in the Latin language and, if necessary, to propose new or revised hypotheses. Optimistically, what will emerge from the forthcoming exposition is a reasoned and innovative portrayal of Latin verb placement.

5.1 Overall frequency of verb orders

First of all, if we go back to *Generalizations 1-3*³¹, we could easily clear our initial research question: what orders are allowed in Latin and in which quantitative hierarchy do they appear? In the following line-up the primary possible verb positions are listed going from the most to the least recurrent:

- 1) Verb-final
- 2) Verb-initial
- 3) Verb-medial

³¹ *Generalization 1*: the V-final pattern is the prevailing template, followed, in order, by V1, V2, V3 and so on.

Generalization 2: the number of V1 clauses equals that of V-medial clauses.

Generalization 3: the V1 order roughly exceeds V2 at a +50% rate, approximately like that occurring between V2 and V3 and so on.

Or, more specifically:

- 1) Verb-final
- 2) Verb-first
- 3) Verb-second
- 4) Verb-third
- 5) Verb-fourth

While we should probably overlook V4 and subsequent orders by cause of their extremely small frequency rates (around 2%), the results concerning preceding patterns deserve particular attention. Firstly, V-final is simply confirmed to be the leading template and the standard, neutral choice, to the point that we may suspect that the aforementioned V4 and V5 instances are merely derived from the dislocation of some linguistic material to the right of the regularly clause-final verb, thus failing to exhibit any effective verbal movement. In reality, indulging ourselves to a momentary comparative observation with respect to the data reported by previous statistical studies (Linde 1923:154-156), we have to admit that V-final is sometimes significantly less employed by Cicero in his *Letters* than both by earlier or more archaizing authors like Cato, Caesar and Sallust and by posterior ones, such as Livy, Seneca and Tacitus: in all likelihood, this piece of information goes to prove that, as I believe, the *Epistulae* are written in a more spontaneous language than most of the rest of Latin literature, dating back both to earlier and later periods.

At the same time, my tables demonstrate that non-V-final orders, with a combined percentage roughly amounting to 40%, represent an option that is not only accessible and grammatical, but also positively productive, possibly – at least under some conditions – reaching beyond the limits of pragmatic markedness. Within this diversified group, whose types, as per *Generalization 3*, exceed one another with an approximate 2:1 ratio, the most common – and most appealing to my work – arrangements are V1 and V2, which occur, respectively, at a rounded 20% and 11% percentage.

Gathering all the details disclosed in Chapter 4, we are now able to determine which contexts seem to encourage or, contrariwise, discourage the emergence of each one of said verb orders in relation to the numbers showed in Table 2.

1) V-final

- Favoring contexts:

embedded clauses (specially adverbial clauses and infinitive clauses),
presence of plural persons, co-occurrence of subject and object.

- Disfavoring contexts:

main clauses (specially imperative clauses), verb *esse*.

2) V1

- Favoring contexts:

main clauses (specially imperative clauses and interrogative clauses),
complement clauses, presence of I- and II-p.s., null subject.

- Disfavoring contexts:

embedded clauses (specially adverbial clauses and infinitive clauses),
overt subject, co-occurrence of subject and object, verb *esse* (particularly
when auxiliary) and modals.

3) V-medial / V2:

- Favoring contexts:

main clauses, infinitive clauses, presence of III-p.s. and pl., overt subject,
co-occurrence of subject and object, verb *esse* and modals.

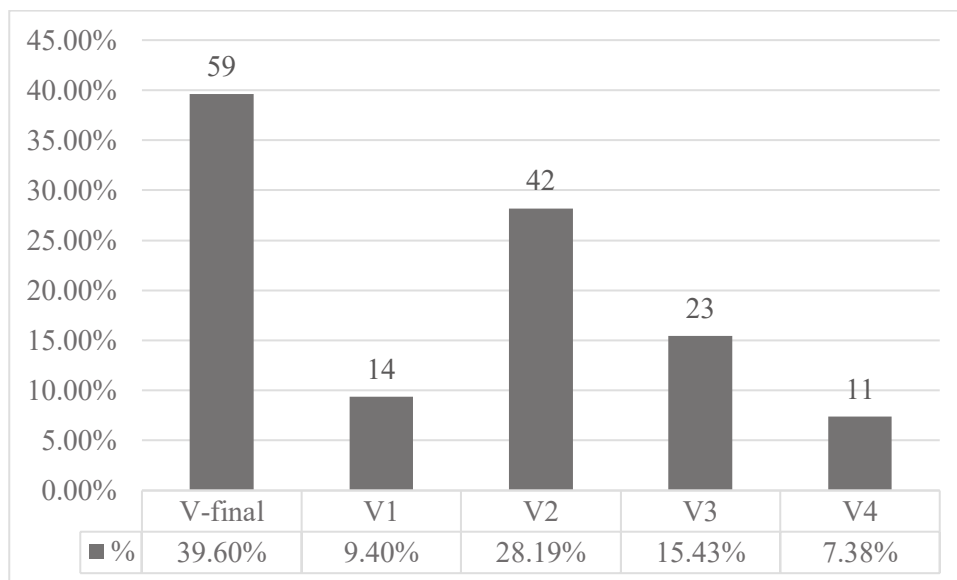
- Disfavoring contexts:

embedded clauses (specially complement clauses), imperative clauses,
presence of II-p.s., null subject.

It goes without saying that the power of such features rapidly increases whenever two or more of them happen to operate jointly. Let us, for instance, take a look at main clauses containing *esse* and an overt III-p.s. subject (compare Tables 2, 5, 15, 23 and 32).

	Number of clauses	%
V-final	59	39,60%
V1	14	9,40%
V-medial:	76	51,00%
V2	42	28,19%
V3	23	15,43%
V4	11	7,38%
Total	149	100%

Table 35: Frequency of main clauses containing *esse* and an overt III-p.s. subject



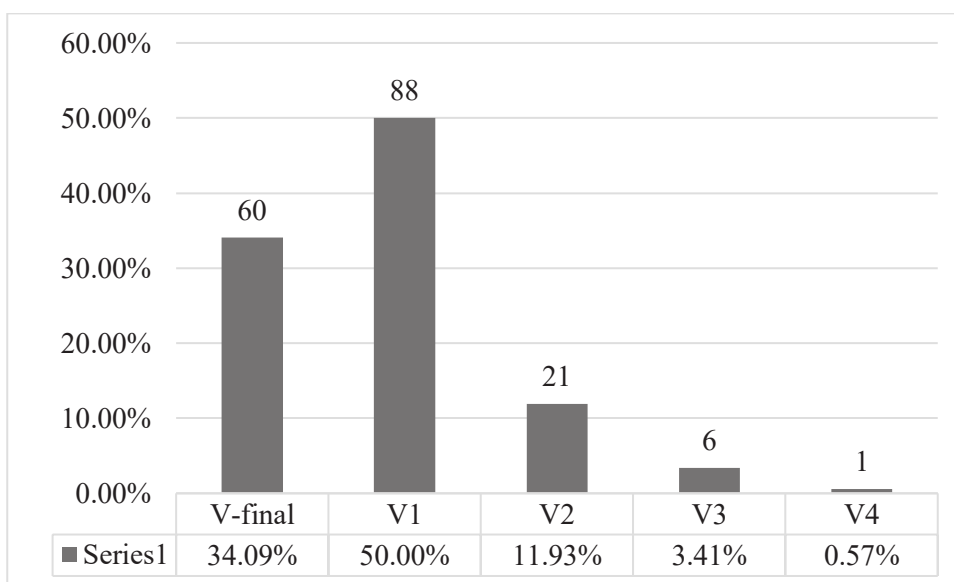
Graph 1: Frequency of main clauses containing *esse* and an overt III-p.s. subject

1) Trebati-us er-at me=cum, vir
Trebatius-NOM.SG be.IPFV-3SG me.ABL=with man.NOM.SG
plan-e et civ-is bon-us.
clear-ADV and citizen-NOM.SG good-NOM.SG
Trebatius is with me, a right good man and good citizen. (X,11)

As expected, V-medial orders cover more than half of the total cases, whereas V1, which is surpassed by V-final, V2 and V3, draws near the percentages of V4. Conversely, if we only count main clauses with a null subject and a II-p.s. verbal form, we can witness the rise of V1 as the prevailing pattern and the simultaneous near disappearance of V3 and V4 (compare Tables 2, 5, 15 and 23):

	Number of clauses	%
V-final	60	34,09%
V1	88	50,00%
V-medial:	28	15,91%
V2	21	11,93%
V3	6	3,41%
V4	1	0,57%
Total	176	100%

Table 36: Frequency of main clauses containing a II-p.s. verbal form and a null subject



Graph 2: Frequency of main clauses containing a II-p.s. verbal form and a null subject

2) Rid-eb-is hoc loc-o fortasse.
 laugh-FUT-2SG this.ABL.SG passage-ABL.SG perhaps
You will perhaps laugh at what I am now going to say. (VII,1)

It should be additionally noted that in both the illustrative scenarios, given the action of its disfavoring conditions (or, at the very least, the absence of its favoring contexts), the usually preeminent V-final template reduces its incidence to a substantial extent.

Although, as I have just verified, these properties are somehow linked together in influencing verb placement, they can be divided into smaller clusters, bearing the potential advantage of detecting different patterns and perhaps different kinds of V1 and V2 configurations. It is exactly these subgroups that I mean to elucidate and justify in the next sections.

5.2 Main vs. embedded clauses

I already had the opportunity to highlight the importance, both from a theoretical perspective and on the empirical level, of the distinction between main and embedded clauses. Numerically, *Generalizations 4* and *5*³² indicate that V1, whose occurrences in the first environment almost correspond to half the quantity of occurrences of the leading order, goes on to lose around 10 percentage points inside the domain of subordinates, to the benefit of V-final itself. Meanwhile, if it is true that unspecified V-medial configurations undergo the exact same decline, this trend does not individually apply to V2, whose variation is much more restrained. This could testify that V2 is a special syntactic configuration that is already developing into the system that we then see being active in Medieval Romance languages.

³² *Generalization 4*: within the domain of main clauses, the approximate 2:1 ratio observed for V1 and subsequent orders also holds between V-final and V1.

Generalization 5: within the domain of embedded clauses, as opposed to main clauses, the V-final pattern increases its frequency at the expense of both V1 and V-medial configurations.

The asymmetry that takes place between main and embedded clauses in reference to the position of the verb is a characteristic trait of many languages and, in particular, it has traditionally been associated to the majority – though not the totality – of those languages that possess a stable V2 grammar. This property is normally explained through the argumentation that subordinates generally lack much of the informational force that, on the contrary, is typical of matrix clauses and, as a consequence, they are also endowed with an equally less accessible left periphery: according to earlier records (Haegeman 2003), this was taken as a suggestion that in embedded clauses the CP structure is truncated at a certain point, wherefore all upper projections are in fact absent; in contrast, more recent proposals (Haegeman 2010) bring evidence that these syntactic nodes do exist, even though either the fronting or the insertion of an element (like a semantically specific operator in the case of adverbial clauses) to one of said left-peripheral sites is responsible for an intervention effect blocking other items from reaching the higher region. The outcome is precisely that, since an operator is sitting inside the complementizer phrase, the verb cannot climb up there nor cause another constituent to move to its left so as to give rise to the classic V2 configuration. By the way, we should remember that this pragmatic and structural discrepancy is accepted on a global dimension, regardless of the specific linguistic type (V2 or other), and it is often exploited as a means to account for the fact that the word order predominantly displayed by embedded clauses has to be taken as the unmarked one. Hence, if we pursue this line of reasoning, we obtain nothing more than another proof that in Latin SOV is the basic order.

Going back to the analysis of V1 – and leaving V2 aside, as for the moment its percentages do not appear to be very revealing – and drawing on the theories that view it as a pragmatically driven raising of the verb, we should not be surprised by its pretty high rates within root clauses, where a fully developed CP is available, and its drop-off in syntactically limited embedded contexts. Nonetheless, an obvious problem is that, in the latter case, V1 does not actually vanish, but it continues to surface with a non-negligible frequency. In this regard, a more detailed examination of dependent clauses might turn out to be useful: first of all, the data shown in the previous chapter make it clear that V1 is rarer in infinitive and adverbial clauses (especially conditionals) and, conversely, it occurs more repeatedly in finite complement clauses. It could be suggested that the opposition between these two specific domains (the first one being partially disfavoring

for V1 and the second being partially favoring) depends precisely on the degree of similarity to main clauses, which must be quite low in the first environment: this is evident with adverbials, considering their satellite function and the presence of an operator in their CP that assigns a particular non-declarative meaning (temporal, causal, modal etc.), and even more so with infinitive clauses, whose lack both of a complementizer and of a finite verb undeniably provides them with an exceptional status. On the other hand, the second group differs from declarative matrix clauses only in the embedment itself, not in the meaning and in the finiteness of the verb.

This insight into adverbials could further enlarge its weight if we reevoke Haegeman's studies (2003, 2010 and more), in which the author advances the discrimination between central and peripheral adverbial clauses, with the former directly modifying the predicate of the main clause and the latter being in action at the level of the discourse, as they "make manifest a context for the proposition in the associated clause". What really matters, though, is that, from a structural point of view, peripheral adverbials do not involve the movement of an operator from TP to CP, thereby properly allowing such phenomena as the fronting of constituents to the left periphery. Concerning Latin, we should be able to predict that, within this kind of clauses (which typically comprehends the concessive and causal types), V1 is much more free to take place and this is exactly what happens, as Tables 10 and 11 show, while also revealing that central adverbials, like standard conditional and temporal clauses, owing to the unavailability of the leftmost projections caused, in turn, by the raising of an operator, mostly host ordinary V-final configurations.

Furthermore, it is interesting to note that, even in asymmetrical V2 languages, the verb-second order is achievable in some embedded contexts (Holmberg 2015): for instance, in Kashmiri, an Indo-Aryan language of the Kashmir Valley, V2 regularly surfaces in complement clauses, but not in adverbials. Likewise, in Icelandic, which has V2 in many subordinates as well, this pattern is in reality optional, yet again, in adverbial clauses and is inoperative in most infinitivals. Finally, all the other Germanic V2 languages admit such order – to a considerable extent – in complement clauses following verbs of saying and thinking. This situation is visibly comparable to that of Latin V1.

As we know from the studies conducted by Ledgeway (2017) and Wolfe (2013), the text of the *Itinerarium Egeriae* (and maybe all Late Latin, beginning from a certain period in time) and Old Sardinian, one of the most conservative Romance languages, exhibit an underlying VSO order, which becomes particularly apparent in dependent clauses, and, according to Salvi (2004), this template resulted from the pragmatic bleaching and the subsequent syntactic generalization of the movement of the verb to the first position. From our point of view, it could be not so improbable that the text of the *Letters* represents a linguistic stage where V1, certainly far from being the basic pattern, is a solid option, originally motivated by information structure and notably recurrent in declarative or assertive circumstances, which, in turn, seemingly prove to be a good starting point for the diachronic spreading of the phenomenon: first and more easily in the domain of root clauses, the most part of which is indeed made up by declaratives, and then among embedded clauses, too, especially when finite subordination takes over and ultimately replaces complementizerless infinitive clauses.

In the last few paragraphs we have seen that the clause level likely has something to do with the distribution of V-final and V1 inside my corpus and I have also proposed a connection with V2 languages that implies intriguing consequences in a comparative and historical perspective. What remains to be done now is to look upon the factors that tell us why V1 occurs in Latin in the first place.

5.3 Expression of the arguments

When examining verb displacement phenomena, among the most meaningful and indicative elements to consider, there undoubtedly is the relation that ties the verbal head itself to the other constituents of the clause, both inside the deep hierarchical structure and in the linear surface sequence. Therefore, it is not by chance that, in my research, the expression of the subject revealed itself to be one of the syntactic features that are most able to influence the location of the verb. Specifically, *Generalizations 13* and *14*³³

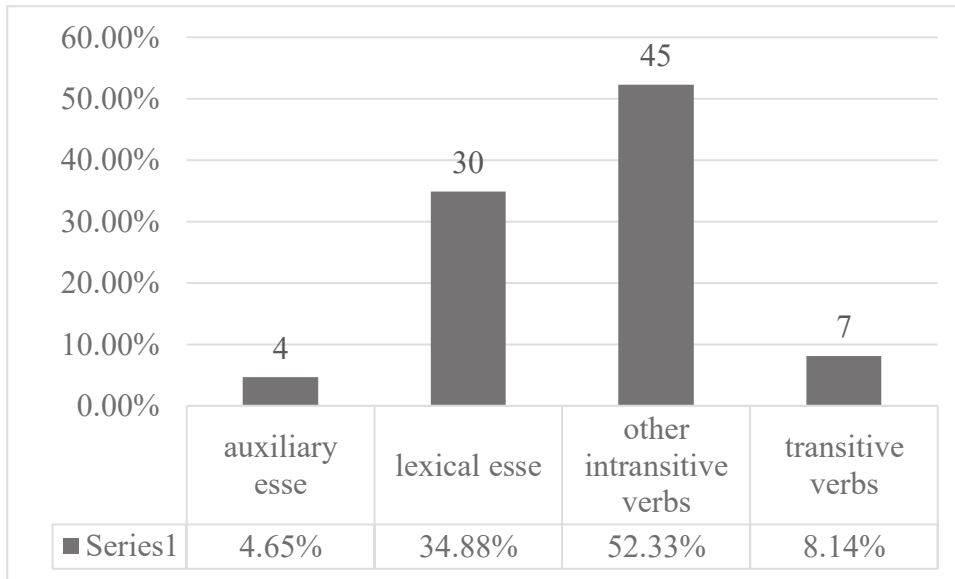
³³ *Generalization 13*: when the subject is overt, V-medial templates increase their frequency of usage, with V1 almost lowering its percentage to zero in finite complement clauses. Moreover, V1 is repeatedly outperformed by V2 and V3 orders.

Generalization 14: when the subject is null, V1 increases its frequency of usage to the detriment of V-final and, more notably, of V-medial orders, whose occurrences roughly amount to half those of V1.

state that there exists a strict correspondence between V1 and null subjects as well as an inverse interdependence between V2 (and truthfully also V3) and overt subjects.

As for the first case, we could rephrase it by saying that, whenever the subject is omitted, the verb is often attracted to the leftmost part of the clause. Of course, such a contingency is not uncommon at all, given that, as is well known, Latin is a pro-drop language. Notwithstanding, the absence of the subject does not happen casually; rather, it has to meet some definite requirements: above all, the reference of the covert item must be recoverable from the linguistic or extralinguistic context (thus, it does not necessarily need to be previously mentioned), while its ϕ -features are readily expressed by Latin rich verb morphology. In other words, it has to represent known, topical information. By contrast, if the subject has a contrastive or, more generally, a focal nature (which is a more marked and less common circumstance), its explicit presence is mandatory.

On this theme, some compelling clues come from the direct investigation of the few instances where V1 and an overt subject coexist, which add up to 86 finite clauses. Within this scarce number, only 7 also contain an object and, on the contrary, the vast majority coincides with third person verbal forms of inaccusative and passive predicates, chiefly classifiable as presentative, existential and locative, and is defined by a comparatively high frequency of *esse* (around 40%), mostly in its lexical function. In all these cases, the subject position is clearly occupied by a constituent denoting a new, relevant referent, that is exactly a focus, presumably sitting inside the vP, either in the upper dedicated focal projection (SpecFocvP) or in its base site itself (CompVP). As a matter of fact, we are dealing, for the greatest part, with nominal subjects, with no more than a couple of occurrences of third person nominative pronouns, as they are typically supplied with a strong topical quality. In view of all the preceding observations, we can finally recognize the existence of an interdependency relationship between V1 and topic drop.



Graph 3: Frequency of intransitive and transitive verbs in V1 clauses containing an overt subject

3) Par-antur oration-ibus indic-es glorios-i.
 prepare-PRS.PASS.3PL speech-DAT.PL title.slip-NOM.PL boastful-NOM.PL
Very high-sounding title-slips are being prepared for my speeches! (IV,15)

In truth, on a crosslinguistic scale, topic drop can naturally affect any topical element, not exclusively subjects, and Latin as well seems to partake of this possibility, which, however, is seldom put into action and usually concerns objects, both indirect and, in particular, direct (4). In order to better understand this property, I extracted all noticeable instances of the latter case (direct object drop) from a portion of our corpus, conveniently reduced to 3038 clauses: the total sum amounted to only 107 clauses, but such a small figure could be due to a partial difficulty in detecting them and in setting them apart from much more habitual examples of indefinite object omission. In addition, as Table 37 shows, there is a sizeable share of one-element clauses, in which, unfortunately, we cannot determine the accurate placement of the verb.

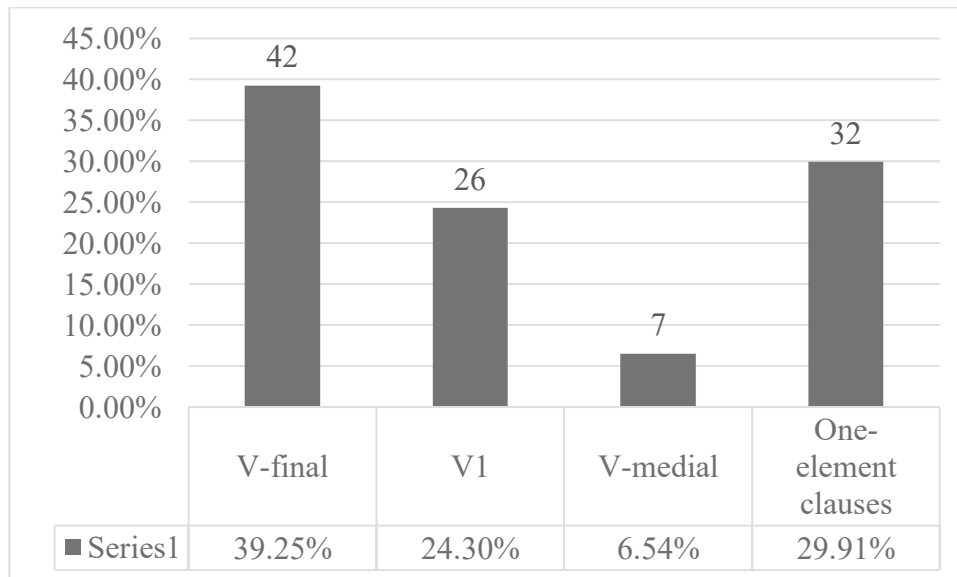
4) A Vibi-o libr-os accep-i [...]
 from Vibius-ABL.SG book-ACC.PL receive-PRF.1SG

Ø Describ-o et remitt-o.
 copy-PRS.1SG and send.back-PRS.1SG

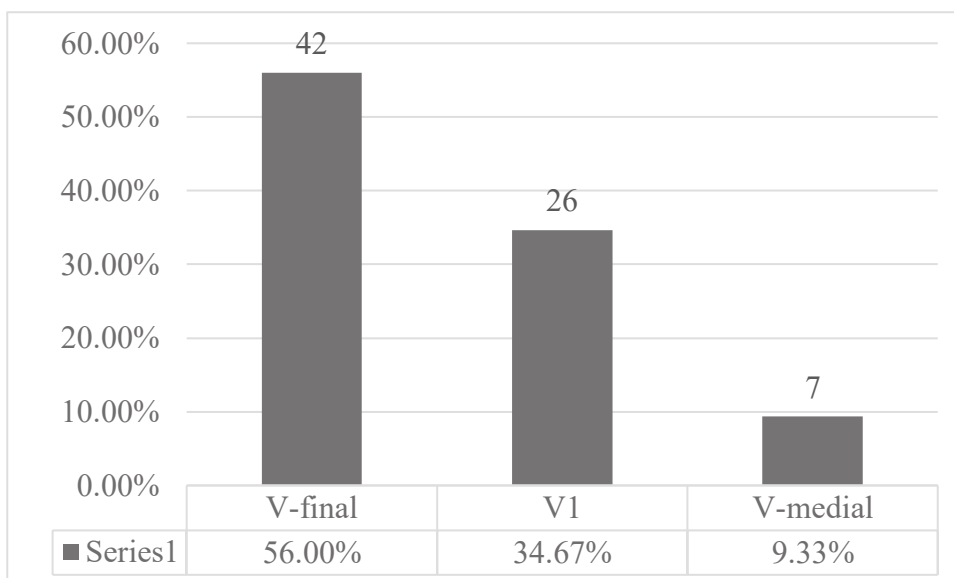
I have received the books from Vibius [...]. I am going to copy the book out and send it back. (II,20)

	Object drop, one-element clauses included	Object drop, one-element clauses excluded
V-final	42 – 39,25%	42 – 56,00%
V1	26 – 24,30%	26 – 34,67%
V-medial	7 – 6,54%	7 – 9,33%
One-element clauses	32 – 29,91%	///
Total	107 – 100%	75 -100%

Table 37: Frequency of verb orders in object-drop clauses



Graph 4: Frequency of verb orders in object-drop clauses, one-element clauses included



Graph 5: Frequency of verb orders in object-drop clauses, one-element clauses excluded

What stands out from the scrutiny of these data is the low percentage of V-medial configurations and, conversely, the surge of V1. As a result, whereas it is surely not possible to reach firm conclusions from such a limited statistic, we are at least capable of perceiving a satisfying tendency that corroborates the alleged correlation of verb-first patterns with topic drop.

Moving on to the transitivity of the predicate, that is to say the actual presence or absence of an object inside the syntactic structure, *Generalizations 15-18*³⁴ suggest that no verb order manifests a plain preference for either condition. Instead, this property gains some significance when associated to the expression of the subject: the co-occurrence of the two items has a favoring effect on V3 and V4, the occurrence of the sole subject on V2 and the absence of both on V1. A situation of this kind probably means that verb placement is not immune to the number of constituents, at least at the surface level, as I will speculate a little later.

³⁴ *Generalization 15*: the presence or the absence of an object is not a relevant factor in the arrangement of verb orders.

Generalization 16: V1 is the second most frequent order when neither the subject nor the object is present, clearly surpassing V-medial patterns, whereas it becomes one of the least frequent orders when both the subject and the object are present, being surpassed by V2, V3 and V4.

Generalization 17: V2 is the second most frequent order when only the subject – not the object – is present.

Generalization 18: V3 and V4 become, respectively, the second and third most frequent orders when both the subject and the object are present.

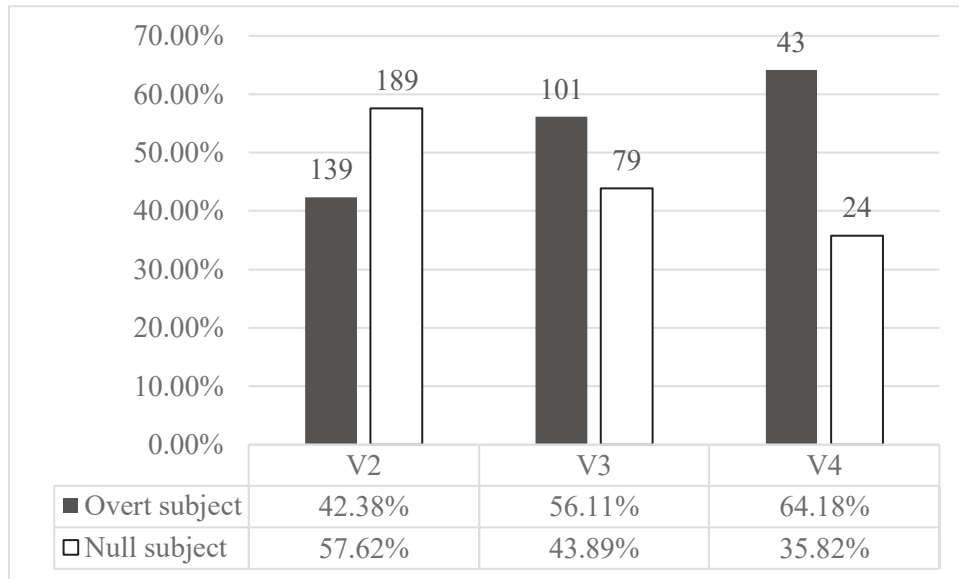
From a structural perspective, topic drop involves the emergence of a phonologically null element *pro* situated in the specifier of a CP projection (TopicP, if accessible) or, with little difference, the movement of the topicalized phrase to this same location, where it is allowed to surface as phonologically empty (Raposo 1986). It is worth recalling that in V2 languages, in which the verb is ordinarily raised to C°, the covert expression of a fronted topic obviously leads to the derivation of a V1 template (5) – an option that has been particularly observed and studied in German (Cardinaletti 1990, Schäfer 2021). What is even more relevant, though, is the fact that this syntactic explanation strictly conforms to the one accepted by Salvi (2004) and Devine and Stephens (2006), among others, in order to account for the topic-free nature of some Latin V1 clauses: according to these scholars, a discourse variable implicit operator standing in the left periphery causes the verb to climb right next to it, with the ultimate goal of assigning a specific pragmatic force (thetic, concessive, imperative and so on) to the clause.

$$5) [CP \textit{pro}_{\text{Top}} [C^\circ V [TP [T^\circ \nabla [vP [v^\circ \nabla [VP [V^\circ \nabla]]]]]]]]]$$

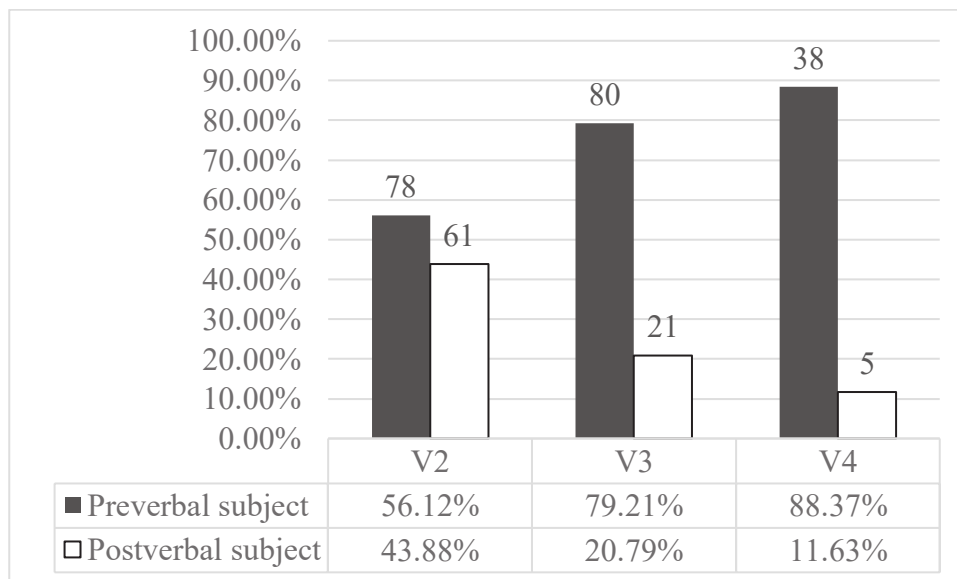
With regards to V-medial configurations, the primary factor related to their potential increase in rates of employment that has been discussed so far is to be identified with overt subjects, under which circumstances they outperform V1, both as a unified division and, oftentimes, also individually. Here below, I present the percentages of overt and null subjects in said verbal patterns:

	Overt subject	Null subject	Total
V2	139 – 42,38%	189 – 57,62%	328 – 100%
V3	101 – 56,11%	79 – 43,89%	180 – 100%
V4	43 – 64,18%	24 – 35,82%	67 – 100%

Table 38 – Frequency of overt and null subjects in V-medial clauses



Graph 6: Frequency of overt and null subjects in V-medial clauses



Graph 7: Frequency of preverbal and postverbal subjects in V-medial clauses

Naturally, when the subject is expressed, it may either fill a preverbal or postverbal position (Graph 7). Nevertheless, we should acknowledge that the progressive expansion of the preverbal placement clearly concurs with the larger and larger field that is available to the left of the verb in V3 and V4 constructions. Additional constituents that may be found holding the clause-initial, preverbal spot, at gradually lower rates than subjects, are

direct objects, indirect objects, other arguments and adjuncts. Since the spirit of this thesis lies on a purely syntactic ground, at the moment I am not able to designate the pragmatic role to which all the aforementioned elements might be linked and I can only refer to the analysis proposed by Devine and Stephens (2006), who believe that, in Classical Latin V2 clauses, the verb moves to a topical projection along with any other material denoting already given information, leaving a focalized phrase in the specifier of FocvP. On the other hand, real V2 – as Salvi (2004) and Ledgeway (2012) contend – becomes established only when verb-raising starts applying to CP-internal foci, in addition to covert operators. Therefore, we ought to suppose that, within my corpus, V-medial configurations all comprise preverbal topics or similar items (6), such as background comments introduced by *de* or *quod*, but in reality we cannot rule out the possibility that, in the event of postverbal foci, the verb only reaches – as usual – the TP domain, not the left periphery (7), or even that the rightmost portion of the clause is simply extraposed and the verb ordinarily stays final (8). This is especially dubious when exclusively one item comes after the verb and all the others (subject, object etc.) precede it – a not so unfamiliar circumstance in V3 and V4 examples of my collection: the shortest and most intuitive derivation would exactly imply extraposition rather than the fronting of multiple constituents.

6) [CP **Topic** [C° V [TP [T° V [vP [v° V [VP [V° V]]]]]]]]]

7) [TP [T° V [FocvP **Focus** [Focv° V [vP [v° V [VP [V° V]]]]]]]]]

8) [VP [V° V]] [**Extraposed constituent**]

As regards the V2 structure outlined in (6), yet another option can be imagined, namely that the preverbal topic is just a constituent that has been externally merged into the upper CP portion and that the raising of the verb is – again – justified by the attraction of an omitted topic: after all, we have seen that, albeit with a reduced incidence, verb-second examples can be found also in the case of subject and object drop. Needless to say, only a focused analysis of these and other similar instances, which I cannot undertake on this occasion, would either confirm or rebut our surmise that some seemingly V2 clauses could uncover an underlying verb-initial template.

Despite this uncertainty, if we adopt the topical reading and we integrate the facts stated in *Generalizations 16-18* (see footnote 31) with the remarks submitted in this paragraph, we can at least attest the connection of V1 with unaccusatives and dropped topics and the ones between V2 and intransitive predicates and between V3-V4 and transitive verbs, when one or more topics are present and overt.

5.4 *Esse* and modals

The preeminent trait differentiating *esse* – and, a little less characteristically, modals – from all the other verbs is its more pronounced inclination to surface in medial place. As revealed by *Generalization 19*³⁵, in such a case V2 becomes the second most frequent order and V3 significantly gains in frequency as well, but this growth does not appear to weaken V1, which remains a viable, only slightly reduced option, as much as it impacts on V-final. A similar distribution of verbal configurations, then, hints at the description of *esse* as of a verb markedly prone to occupy non-clause-final positions. This last statement, though, cannot be related to modals, insofar as they still display moderately high percentages of V-final (more than 60%).

It seems reasonable to assume that at least part of these V-initial and medial patterns respond to comparable conditions to the ones with which I dealt in the previous section. Thus, instances of V1 *esse* may result from the drop of a topic inside the left periphery and/or from the attraction of a null discourse operator. We should also recollect that *esse* emerges in a good deal of those few cases where a verb in first placement is followed by an overt subject. In light of this piece of information, it does not come as a surprise that, as shown by *Generalization 20*³⁶, V1 is preferred by *esse* when the latter performs its lexical function: it is indeed in this capacity that it takes on that meaning of presentative, existential or locative predicate that is so often typical of VS structures.

An analogous propensity encouraged by the lexical use is also noticeable with V2. Considering Devine and Stephens's (2006) view that the auxiliary regularly sits clause-

³⁵ *Generalization 19*: with the verb *esse*, V-medial configurations double the rates of usage of V1, which is exceeded by V2 as the second most frequent order, also at the expense of the V-final template

³⁶ *Generalization 20*: despite limited variation between auxiliary and lexical *esse*, V1 is slightly preferred in the latter case.

finally every time that the verb conveys new, focal information and it can rise only if another constituent is focalized, given the stronger frequency of the first option and the semantic poorness of auxiliaries, it is not hard to imagine why they are normally less wont to undergo movement.

However, the most appealing and academically successful theories concerning the high placement of *esse* – not limited to Latin, but applicable to a large portion of ancient Indo-European languages, too – are the ones that take inspiration from the renowned and already mentioned Wackernagel’s law. Such a rule, which governs the behavior of the verb “to be” and of several other clitic elements (most of all, particles), lies on a phonological motivation at its foundation, in that these weak items tend to attach to a stressed clause-initial unit – whether this has to be identified with the first word, the first constituent or the first rhythmic segment has been debated for long and still is not unanimously settled –, thereby ending up in second position. By the time that Classical Latin stabilized and Cicero composed his writings, though, the phonological origin seems to have become less patent and to have turned into a purely syntactic principle. In support of this view, there appear to be at least a couple of aspects of which I caught sight in my corpus. Firstly, V2 arises not only with short, monosyllabic forms of *esse*, but also with more complex conjugations (such as the imperfect indicative, *eram*, and subjunctive, *essem*): of course, the former case of V2 is more frequently attested, but this is exclusively caused by the much more recurrent incidence of those simpler forms like *sum*, *es*, *est* and *sunt*. Secondly, *esse* also occurs in V4 and specially V3 configurations to a not so irrelevant extent, suggesting that this verb does not merely stand to the right of the first phrase in order to fall under its stress, but, rather, together with it – and just like other V2 examples described earlier –, it can be passed over by an additional constituent (mostly and probably, externally merged phrases with a Hanging Topic or Scene-Setting function), without exhibiting the need to further climb back to second place right after it. The validity of the syntactic interpretation over the phonological one holds even more true if we look at modals, since only a very reduced number of forms within their inflections has a clitic-like appearance, namely *vis* and *vult* (“you want” and “s/he wants”).

In conclusion, we could speculate that this peculiar quality of *esse* and of other similar non-lexical verbs, descended from a much older PIE phenomenon, may have been

one of the concurrent factors that contributed to the rise and the spread of the Romance V2 grammar or, at least, to the eventual loss of the V-final template. In particular, a crucial component in this diachronic evolution can be found in the progressive increase in the employment of modals and auxiliaries and in the introduction of new functional verbs (*habeo* above all), which occurred in Late Latin, where synthetic verbs are gradually replaced by compound forms that make use of auxiliaries, precisely. This way, in my opinion, the extensive emergence of this enlarged group of verbs in second position must have induced other, semantically full verbal heads to do the same without a specific discourse-related reason.

5.5 Imperative and grammatical person

There are two further factors that, in agreement with the data exposed in Chapter 4, turned out to maintain a special interconnection with verb placement and that, as a consequence, still need to be touched upon in this explanatory section of this thesis: these are the imperative mood and grammatical person. The reason why I chose to deal with them in a separate final paragraph is that they possess a certain degree of mutual bondedness and, concomitantly, they appear to operate in a somewhat independent manner from the properties that I hitherto reviewed.

Starting from the first mentioned item, as *Generalization 8*³⁷ confirmed, not only do imperative clauses markedly promote the occurrence of the verb-initial pattern, but they also represent one of the very few environments in which V1 becomes the most frequently employed order, slightly outnumbering V-final and confining V-medial configurations to a decreased share. Despite being noteworthy, this trend has actually been observed in a considerable quantity of languages (Aikhenvald 2012), regardless of phylogenetic relationships, and it has been traced back to the intense pragmatic strength of this grammatical mood (Xrakovskij 2001): as one would easily guess, the basic purpose of an imperative clause is to give instructions and orders and this purpose can be more readily achieved if the object of the command is stated in a fashion that is as clear and

³⁷ *Generalization 8*: within the domain of imperative clauses, V1 is the most frequent – though not exceedingly – order, closely followed by V-final.

straightforward as possible, leaving any unnecessary detail out. Note that a single noun or adverb is sometimes sufficient (e.g. “Silence!” for “Keep silence!” or “Here!” for “Come here!”), but in most cases the desired action is more conveniently expressed by a verb. As an additional result, there emerge many examples in which the verb is the sole overt element: this is also true for my collection, but I dismissed such instances on account of their irrelevance to the determination of the verbal position, as was already illustrated before.

With respect to Latin, from a structural perspective authors like Salvi (2004) and Devine and Stephens (2006) put forward the same idea postulated for almost all other V1 clauses, that is to say, an implicit discourse operator – on this occasion endowed with a jussive reading – located inside the CP-area provokes the rise of the verb and its subsequent clause-initial surface placement. More precisely, we could presume that the verb targets the highest available projection, namely ForceP, which is responsible for the encoding of the clausal type (Rizzi 1997). This would also clarify why V2 and V3 occur quite rarely in imperatives, given the impossibility for other constituents to climb – or even to be externally merged – above the verbal head.

Attending now to the six grammatical persons of the Latin verbal system and principally focusing on the three singular forms, whose data proved to be more significant, we can summarize their distinctive behavior to the core – in accordance to the information contained in *Generalizations 10-12*³⁸ – by recalling that, on the one hand, V-medial orders are favored by III-p.s., with V2 getting quantitatively much close to V1, and, on the other, V1 itself robustly expands its frequency when the first two persons are employed, to the point of becoming the most recurring arrangement in the event of II-p.s. main clauses.

³⁸ *Generalization 10*: the V1 pattern increases its frequency when I- and II-p.s. are employed, positively outdistancing V2 and exceptionally becoming the most recurring order in II-p.s. main clauses.

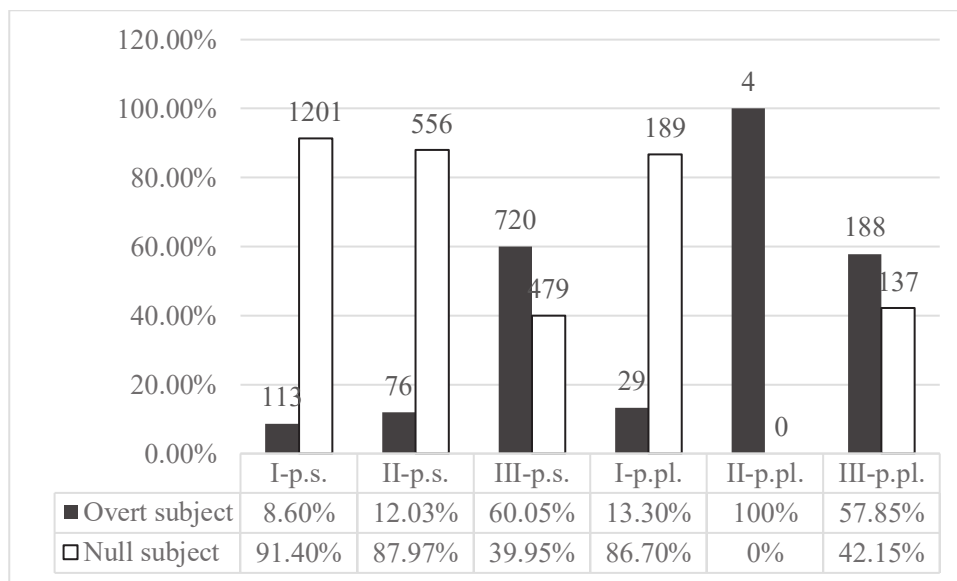
Generalization 11: V-medial configurations increase their frequency when III-p.s. is employed, surpassing V1 rates, which, in turn, nearly equate to those of V2.

Generalization 12: difference in the usage of V-final among the three singular persons is, in almost all contexts, not significant.

One conceivable way to justify this distribution involves the appeal to the expression of the subject. First of all, let us inspect the interplay between the two currently pertinent parameters:

	Overt subject	Null subject	Total
I-p.s.	113 – 8,60%	1201 – 91,40%	1314 – 100%
II-p.s.	76 – 12,03%	556 – 87,97%	632 – 100%
III-p.s.	720 – 60,05%	479 – 39,95%	1199 – 100%
I-p.pl.	29 – 13,30%	189 – 86,70%	218 – 100%
II-p.pl.	4 – 100%	0 – 0%	4 – 100%
III-p.pl.	188 – 57,85%	137 – 42,15%	325 – 100%

Table 39: Frequency of overt and null subject per grammatical person



Graph 8: Frequency of overt and null subjects per grammatical person

If we consider the high rates at which overt subjects occur in III-p.s. clauses and we bear in mind that, as evidenced in 5.3, overt subjects repeatedly appear also in many V2 examples, what we obtain is exactly the aforesaid correlation between V2 and III-p.s.

Vice versa, I- and II-p.s. subjects, which cannot but take the shape of the two pronouns *ego* “I” and *tu* “you”, are subjected to omission in the vast majority of cases simply because they stand for the two given participants in the discourse (the speaker and the hearer, obviously) and the two essential roles in the specific epistolographic genre (that is the sender and the addressee), thus embodying prototypical topical content and ending up being overt only when focalized or similarly marked, anyway. Ergo, once the association of both of these grammatical persons with topic and pro-drop is affirmed, the ensuing link to V1 comes naturally.

It is worth noting that, as claimed by multiple studies, amongst which we find the already mentioned Schäfer (2021), even in non-pro-drop V2 languages like German the covert expression of a clause-initial topic, which begets an apparently exceptional V1 order, preferably targets I-p.s. and, less conspicuously, II-p.s., irrespective of whether verbal morphology, much more meager than that of Latin, can disambiguate the corresponding person. However, unlike what the data derived from my corpus showcase, this phenomenon is almost equally common with III-p.s., too. A potential explanation for this incongruity might be discovered if we take into account that, under this last circumstance, German topic drop actually affects subject pronouns such as *das* “that” and *es* “it”, whereas in Latin their equivalent *id* – and, in general, any nominative III-person pronoun – is nearly always null and V2 clauses usually contain a nominal constituent (allegedly) working as a first-position topic to the left of the raised verb.

The inclination that I-p.s. subjects exhibit towards being covert also in languages that do not license a null *pro* has been further witnessed in English and French, as Haegeman (1997) reports. But, interestingly to us, this omission is proved to happen almost exclusively in root clauses and in a restricted group of registers featuring an informal and spontaneous writing style, such as diaries and letters.

Nevertheless, what the preceding observations seem to be pointing to is not so much the affinity with the situation of Latin in terms of shared grammatical properties as the inherent nature of deictic pronouns. Since these denote referents that are by definition known and recoverable from the external context, they are crosslinguistically allowed to remain silent under some conditions – the number and the extension of said conditions is what varies from one language to another. In this sense, the imperative mood might also

be intended as possessing a certain degree of deictic force, insofar as it entails a strong and direct dependency on the context of utterance and, in particular, on the reference of the second person pronoun, which represents the canonical recipient of a command, to such an extent that the latter ordinarily happens to be covert in most languages.

Summing up, the outcome of the remarks that I have made in this last section goes to show that a portion of the verb-initial clauses found in my collection, characterized by the use of the imperative mood and of the first two grammatical persons, perhaps along with other elements that my research may have failed to identify, is partially unrelated to the features specifically regulating verb order both in Latin and in V2 systems; instead, it likely adheres to some general and tendential principles that function on a universal base and center around the notion of deixis.

CHAPTER 6

Conclusion

At this point, having completed the presentation and the interpretation of the data, I can commit the last few pages of my dissertation to the exposition of the main achievements that I have managed to reach and of the most compelling ideas that I have suggested in the hope of fostering future research.

In the first place, this work may be viewed as a descriptive analysis of the structural behavior of the verb and of its attainable positions within the circumscribed synchronic linguistic domain offered by the *Letters to Atticus*. In this respect, I have been able to produce a detailed picture that can be easily integrated into the longtime well-established general knowledge of Latin word order: as a matter of fact, Cicero naturally conforms to the rest of his fellow authors (and speakers) in the employment of V-final as the prevailing, basic pattern. Nevertheless, there soon appears a first distinguishing quality that carries some interesting consequences both on a diachronic and literary level, namely the fact that, as much as the verb preferentially stands at the end of the clause, the rates at which this configuration emerges are lower than those exhibited by other texts and writers, hence making space for different templates and implying the unusual spontaneous nature of (most of) Cicero's epistolary collection and, perhaps, also the documented beginning of a change inside the extensive evolution of Latin.

More importantly, though, I dedicated myself to the assessment of the principles that seem to control verb-initial and central orders, given that their frequency would lead one to assign them a somewhat and sometimes unmarked status. In the attempt to partially distance myself from the characteristically pragmatic observations proposed by past scholars – without, by all means, neglecting or confuting them –, I have revealed and defined a reasonable number of syntactic properties (or bundles of properties) that had turned out to be relevant in determining verb placement from the scrutiny of my data.

One of the primary meaningful features pertains to the opposition between main and embedded clauses, with V-final being particularly favored in the latter and V1 and V-medial faring better in the former. With the aim of elucidating such a contrast, I resorted to the solid and respected idea that, since some of its projections are occupied by a

complementizer and other operators, the left periphery of dependent clauses is actually less accessible by fronted constituents and heads, including the verb, as can be clearly seen in most V2 languages. In addition, I also highlighted the need to further discriminate within the realm of embedded clauses and, doing so, not only did we notice that V1 becomes remarkably rarer in infinitive and adverbial clauses, but I also specified that, in the second case, there are some clause types, like concessive and causal clauses, that still display a considerable percentage of verb-first instances. The most convincing answer to this peculiar situation was offered by the application of the theory developed by Haegeman claiming the distinction between central and peripheral adverbial clauses, based on the degree of affinity and integration to main clauses: the result is precisely that V1 – as well as other kinds of verb-raising – tends to take place more frequently in root contexts and in those environments that are fairly similar to them, such as finite complement clauses. Conversely, the moderate statistical stability of V2 under both circumstances may indicate its nature of special syntactic configuration already visible in this stage of the language.

In second place, I related the location of the verb to the expression of arguments, concentrating on the role of subject and object. As for the first item, the results showed a clear correspondence that couples its omission with the occurrence of V1. Considering then that the same trend holds true even in the event of null objects (a grammatical but quantitatively quite uncommon option in Latin), we have come to the conclusion that the movement of the verb to the first position can be obtained through topic drop or, in other words, the action of a covert topical operator sitting in the CP area, as Salvi and Devine and Stephens assert. This was also evidenced by the examination of V1 examples containing an overt subject, almost all of which belong to the model “presentative/existential predicate + focalized element denoting a new referent”. On the contrary, V-medial templates, which are encouraged by the presence of phonologically realized arguments, pose a trickier challenge, insofar as they might be derived by means of a fronted topic attracting the verb up to its right – just like in V2 languages – or by the simple displacement of material to the regularly clause-final verb. It should not be ruled out either that, as I would hopefully expect, some verb-second or third cases conceal an underlying V1 structure, with the verbal head having climbed next to a topical *pro*, which, in turn, is preceded by one or multiple externally merged phrases.

Another interesting component that we have associated to the phenomenon of verb placement is the distinctive behavior manifested by *esse* and partway mirrored by modals. Indeed, I was able to demonstrate the validity of the assumption, advanced by Salvi amongst other linguists, that this verb has a preference for the medial spot of the clause, right after the initial constituent: in detail, we noted that all non-V-final configurations are particularly recurrent with it, even more so when it holds its lexical meaning. Subsequently, I took this piece of information as a proof that Wackernagel's law is, at least as regards Classical Latin, a syntactic rule – or, rather, a tendency – whereas its supposedly original phonological motivation is no longer operational, a speculation that is further corroborated by the non-clitic form of part of the conjugation of *esse* and, above all, of modals and by the not irrelevant rates of V3 and V4 instances.

At last, I devoted a separate section to the discussion of two more striking aspects, which, however, seem to obey different principles from the ones that I have so far mentioned. On the one hand, a special place is reserved for the imperative mood, whose conspicuous pragmatic function, for the purpose of expressing an explicit and effective command, often causes the verb to stand at the beginning of the clause, also removing any superfluous or easily inferable item, like the II-person subject. On the other hand, the first two personal pronouns showcase an analogous inclination towards the V1 order, again because, in a context, like Cicero's epistles, where a speaker and a hearer are communicating, these referents represent topical, readily recoverable information, which can thus be dropped without any ensuing complications. Simultaneously, I illustrated that both conditions are not exclusive properties either of Latin or of any grammatically defined set of languages, but they can be better explained as general crosslinguistic tendencies, and I tentatively hinted at the possibility that deixis is the key trait that bonds them together.

Besides the accomplishments that I have just listed, which originally apply to the sole consideration of the *Letters to Atticus*, on occasion this thesis has made way for a series of remarks that, while still requiring stronger and larger evidence, insinuate some intriguing effects on a wider, diachronic perspective. Most of all, I have implicitly suggested an association that links the stage of the language contained in my corpus to the debated birth of the V2 system found in the early Romance family. Based on the data in my possession, I am led to believe that multiple factors concurrently contributed to the

evolution: first, the recurring surfacing of V1 patterns in some pragmatically marked contexts (such as jussive, concessive, assertive clauses), as repeatedly stated by previous scientific literature; second, the specific correlation of this same pattern with topic drop and, according to Wolfe and Ledgeway, its subsequent expansion to all circumstances, which, in my opinion, must have advanced from main declarative clauses and similar environments, like finite complement clauses (aided by the decline of infinitival subordination), eventually becoming the assumed basic order in Late Latin, later preserved only in Old Sardinian; ultimately, the gradual generalization of verb-fronting in the event of initial topics and then also foci, possibly promoted by the already established propensity to emerge in second position displayed by *esse* and modals, also bearing in mind their increased use and the creation of new auxiliaries.

Of course, I acknowledge the necessity for an enlargement of the corpus, so as to encompass both a more exhaustive portion of Classical Latin and a representative selection of the long historical progression of the language. Only this way can the results of this research be additionally confirmed from a statistical point of view and, more significantly, will the hypotheses that I have sketched with respect to the genesis of a V2 grammar be tested. In particular, what needs to be yet verified is precisely the behavior of verb-medial configurations and the nature of the constituents that sit clause-initially, in order to ascertain, through a study firmly combining syntax and pragmatics, which discourse-related categories are involved. At the same time, it would be useful to better inspect those features, like negative operators and *wh*-elements, that are thought to be responsible for the rise of V2 in Germanic languages, as their role has not been detected in my investigation.

Notwithstanding, I believe the present work to be a valid contribution to the understanding of verb placement in a language for which this subject has seldom been delved into from a generative, syntactic perspective. In conclusion, on top of the individual analysis of non-V-final arrangements, I have submitted a substantial record of expository generalizations and an equally ample collection of data that – I hope – will inspire future studies with the goal of tendering a modern and accurate depiction of Latin and of its relationship with Romance varieties.

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The corpus built for this thesis can be downloaded at the following link:

- <https://tinyurl.com/bdf9kx9w>

The Latin text and the English translation of the *Letters* were taken from *Perseus Digital Library*, at the following links:

- <http://data.perseus.org/citations/urn:cts:latinLit:phi0474.phi057.perseus-lat1:1.1.1>
- <https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text.jsp?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0022%3Ayear%3Dpreface>

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