

Object shift in Romance

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Abstract This paper discusses the properties of VOS sentences in Romance and their bearing on Case assignment, verb movement, parametric variation, and the structure of the vP periphery / low IP area. The literature on Romance VOS has argued that this order is derived either through object shift (Ordóñez 1997, 1998, 2000) or VP fronting (Belletti 2001, 2004; Zubizarreta 1998), providing empirical evidence in support of both derivations. In this paper, I focus on various aspects of VOS sentences in Romance languages. First, I argue that both object shift and VP-fronting strategies are actually available, but subject to a very specific parametric cut: Western Romance languages (Galician, European Portuguese, and Spanish) resort to object shift, whereas Central-Eastern varieties (Catalan and Italian) fail to do so, requiring the VP-fronting derivation instead (López 2009a). Second, I put forward a previously unnoticed generalization that reveals that only those varieties licensing object shift based VOS can generate VSO sentences, which I refer to as the *VOS–VSO Generalization*. Finally, I claim that object shift in VOS sentences of Western Romance languages displays a cluster of unnoticed properties that pattern with Scandinavian-style object shift (Bobaljik and Jonas 1996; Bobaljik and Thráinsson 1998; Collins and Thráinsson 1996; Holmberg 1986, 1999; Vikner 2006), thus obeying *Holmberg’s Generalization* (Holmberg 1986, 1999). If on track, the present account not only reveals interesting syntactic similarities between Scandinavian and Romance object shift, but also reinforces a well-known micro-parameter that disentangles Western from Central-Eastern Romance languages.

Keywords Object shift · VP fronting · Minimality · Parametric variation · Verb movement · Romance · Holmberg’s Generalization

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