...Obwohl Nebensätze können doch auch assertiv sein: On the disambiguating role of V2 in COMP-introduced adverbial clauses

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In recent years, the literature on non-canonical V2 clauses introduced by formally subordinating connectors in German has extensively focused on the interaction between V-to-C movement and its pragmatic implications. In particular, the relevant question concerns the function of V2 and the conditions licensing its occurrence in adverbial clause structures in which both arrangements would, in principle, be possible. Cf. (1):

(1) a. Das reicht deshalb nicht, weil das Programm des Landes {ist} keine strukturelle Hilfe {ist}, sondern eine temporäre Unterstützung {ist}. (DLF, Nov. 25th, 2014)


While the standard analysis implies a paratactic categorization of such constructs in light of their apparent illocutionary independence (cf. Antomo & Steinbach 2010, Antomo 2012, Freywald 2014), it has also been pointed out that the corresponding Vfin embedded clauses may allow for an assertive potential (cf. Simons 2007, Holler 2008), although this hypothesis is still under debate. Building on syntactic-pragmatic evidence (licensing of assertive modal particles, agreeing test, question tags, resumption of clause-internal cataphoric connectors realized in the introducing predicate) in both Vfin and V2 adverbial clauses, I argue for a hypotactic analysis of V2 causal weil clauses and concessive obwohl and wobei clauses. Given that V2 may exclusively appear in certain types of COMP-introduced adverbial constructions allowing for an assertive reading, I will make the following points:

a. V2 weil and obwohl/wobei clauses are hypotactically, not paratactically, bound to their matrix predicate;

b. Their relative grade of integration into and dependency on the matrix clause is by no means affected by the position of the verb, which amounts to the assumption that the V2/Vfin arrangement is basically not sensitive to Haegeman’s (2004, and much subsequent work)
distinction between central and peripheral adverbials (vs. Freywald 2014);
c. The role of V2 in COMP-introduced adverbial clauses consists in disambiguating the assertive potential of the embedded clause.

References: