On the nature of integrated V2 relative clauses

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This study investigates the structure of the so-called V2 relative clauses, labeled iV2 structures (iV2) following Gärtner (2001a/b). In German relative clauses (RCs), the verb usually occupies the final position (1a). However, under specific conditions iV2 structures as in (1b) are licensed (cf. Brandt 1990, Gärtner 2001a/b, Zwart 2005).

(1) a. Da sind zwei Frauen, die den Präsident getroffen haben V-final

b. Da sind zwei Frauen, die haben den Präsident getroffen iV2

‘Here there are two women that met the President.’

iV2 structures are licensed under the following conditions: (a) the predicate in the main clause optimally is presentational/existential; (b) the antecedent must be indefinite and have wide scope; (c) the relative pronoun in the iV2 has to be a d-pronoun; (d) the iV2 clause must be in sentence final position; (e) the iV2 must be prosodically integrated in the main clause. In the literature iV2 structures are usually treated as main clauses linked by a discourse paratactic head to CP₁, da sind zwei Frauen in (1b) (Gartner 2001a/b, Endriss & Gärtner 2005). Here, we will rethink this conclusion and argue that iV2 structures are an instance of embedded root phenomena, which rephrases Gärtner’s (2001: 107) observation. Our claim in a nutshell is that iV2 structures are a subtype of subordinate clauses, i.e. TopicP in which the verb has moved to Fin⁰ and the demonstrative is a resumptive topic pronoun (2). Building on Chung & Ladusaw’s (2004) proposal, we argue that IV2 are merged as adjunct in the specifier at the topmost v/VP level, where they saturate the weak indefinite NP as in (2).

(2) VP
   VP
   TopP
   V’
   NP V

Under this analysis, a) the restrictive nature of iV2, b) their information unity with the host sentence, c) the behavior of focus sensitive particles, and d) the nature of the NP antecedent are derived as the result of the position where the iV2 originates. At the same time, this analysis accounts for several problems of existing iV2 analyses (e.g., licensing nominal predicates, the [+REL] feature on the discourse head), by maintaining the advantage of Gärtner’s (2001a/b) proposal, which treats iV2 as main clauses.

The last piece of evidence in support of (2) comes from acquisition. In our picture-supported delayed-imitation task, 3 to 5-year-old monolingual German-speaking children repeated V-final RCs more often correctly than iV2 structures at all ages, and changed iV2 structures
into V-final relatives significantly more often than the other way around. Whereas under a main clause analysis (Gärtner 2001a/b) these findings are unexpected, our proposal predicts this pattern: children are expected to acquire iV2 structures, a type of subordinate clause, later than the canonical subordinate configuration.

In sum, besides accounting for the core syntactic properties of iV2 structures, the analysis in (2) also offers a plausible explanation for our acquisition results.