

Variability of languages in time and space

Lecture 7: Typology of syntactic features

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November 10, 2021

- Word order across languages
 - subject, verb, object
- Splitting the triplet
 - Verb-initial vs verb-final languages
- Correlations between the verb/object order and other features

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Word order across languages

Dryer (2007):

One of the primary ways in which languages differ from one another is in the order of constituents, or, as it is most commonly termed, their word order.

- order of any set of elements in the clause?

En. (a) *Julia saw a dog in the garden.*

(b) *Did Julia see a dog in the garden?*

(c) *A dog was seen in the garden.*

Ger. (a) *Julia sah einen Hund im Garten.*

(b) *Sah Julia einen Hund im Garten?*

(c) *Ein Hund wurde im Garten gesehen.*

Cz. (a) *Julie viděla psa na zahradě.*

(b) *Viděla Julie psa na zahradě? Julie viděla na zahradě psa?*

(c) *Na zahradě byl viděn pes.*

Word order typology

- Joseph H. Greenberg (1963)
 - a set of statistical universals of the order of three sentence elements (subject S, verb V, and object O) in indicative sentences

En. (a) *Julia saw a dog in the garden.*

(b) *A dog Julia saw in the garden.*

(c) *In the garden, Julia saw a dog.*

(d) **Julia a dog saw in the garden.*

(e) **Saw Julia a dog in the garden.*

Ger. (a) *Julia sah einen Hund im Garten.*

(b) *Einen Hund sah Julia im Garten.*

(c) *Im Garten sah Julia einen Hund.*

(d) **Julia einen Hund sah im Garten.*

(e) **Sah Julia einen Hund im Garten.*

Cz. (a) *Julie viděla psa na zahradě.*

(b) *Psa viděla Julie na zahradě.*

(c) *Julie psa viděla na zahradě.*

Basic word order and sentence elements

- what is basic word order?
 - more than one word order for at least some pairs of elements in most langs
 - basic word order
 - has a higher frequency
 - En. *Paul, I like vs I like Paul*
 - Ger. *des Vaters wegen vs für den Vater*
 - is not restricted in distribution
 - En. *a tall woman vs a woman taller (than the man)*
- what are basic sentence elements?:
 - subject and object defined semantically
 - subject as Actor with a transitive verb in active voice
 - object as Patient with a transitive verb in active voice
 - nominal subjects vs pronominal subjects
 - adpositions vs case affixes
 - genitive nouns vs possessive pronouns

Types of basic word order

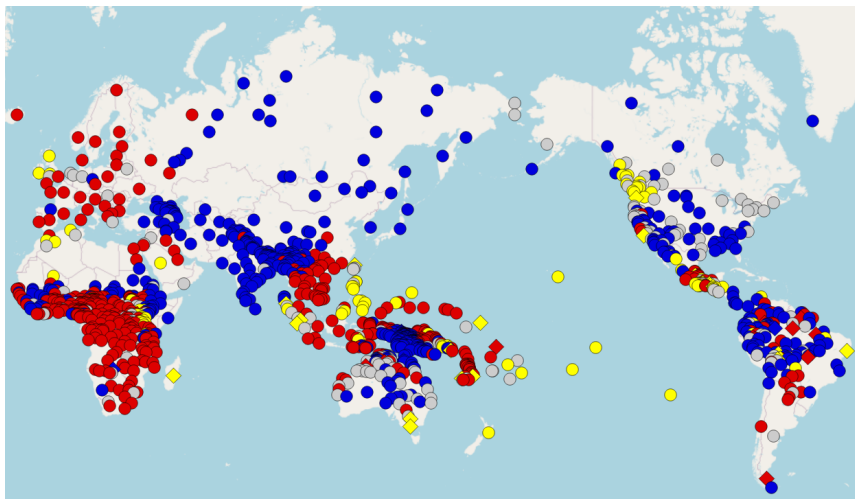
SVO	English	<i>The dog</i>	<i>chased</i>	<i>the cat.</i>
		The dog	chase. PAST	the cat
		S	V	O
SOV	Basque	Jon	sendagileari	joan zaio.
		Jon	doctor.DAT	go AUX
		S	O	V
		Jon	went	to the doctor.
VSO	Welsh	<i>Gwelodd</i>	<i>Rhiannon</i>	<i>ddraig.</i>
		see.PAST.3S	Rhiannon	dragon
		V	S	O
		Rhiannon	saw	a dragon.
VOS	Tukang Besi	<i>No-'ita-'e</i>	<i>na kene-no</i>	<i>te ana.</i>
		3R-see-3OBJ	NOM friend-3POSS	CORE child.
		V	O	S
		The child	saw	its friend.
OVS	Urarina	<i>obana</i>	<i>itɔfwa-a</i>	<i>katɕa</i>
		collared peccary	shoot-3Ps/A	man
		O	V	S
		The man	shot	the collared peccary.
OSV	Tobati	<i>Syaw mahai</i>	<i>nehu</i>	<i>mo-ikor-i</i>
		paddle big	1SG	CAUS-snap-3SG
		O	S	V
		I	broke	the big paddle

Order of Subject, Object and Verb in WALS

- Feature 81A: Order of Subject, Object and Verb

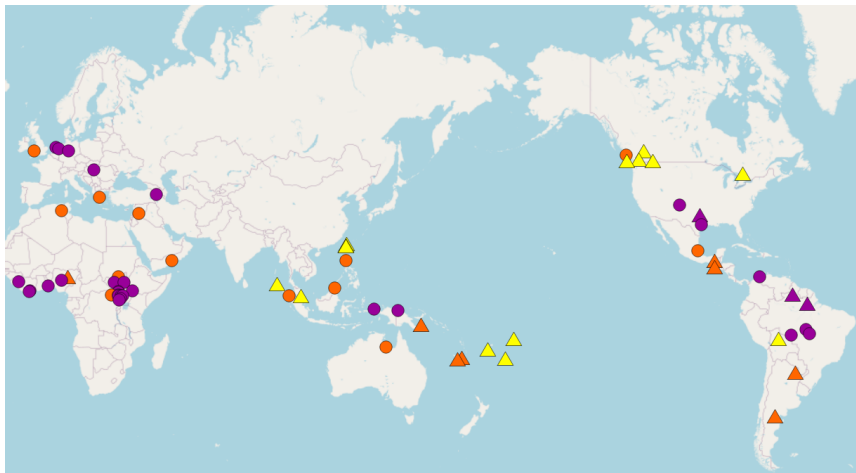
Basic word order	langs in WALS	Percentage	Ex.
Subject (Object Verb)	564	41%	Japanese, Turkish
Subject (Verb Object)	488	35%	English, Czech, Indonesian
Verb Subject Object	95	7%	Celtic, Semitic langs
(Verb Object) Subject	25	2%	Malagasy
(Object Verb) Subject	11	< 1%	Asuriní
Object Subject Verb	4	< 1%	Nadëb
No dominant word order	189	13%	German
Total	1376	100%	

Order of Subject, Object, and Verb (WALS Feature 81A)



● Subject-object-verb (SOV)	564	◆ Verb-object-subject (VOS)	25	◆ Object-subject-verb (OSV)	4
● Subject-verb-object (SVO)	488	◆ Object-verb-subject (OVS)	11	● Lacking a dominant word order	189
● Verb-subject-object (VSO)	95				

Two dominant orders of S, O, and V (WALS Feature 81B)



●	SOV or SVO	29
▲	VSO or VOS	14
●	SVO or VSO	13

▲	SVO or VOS	8
▲	SOV or OVS	3

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Splitting the triplet

- it is common that at least one of the nominal items (subject, object) is substituted by a pronoun or dropped
 - subjects can be expressed by verbal affixes
 - different word orders
- typology study focused on two of the items
 - whether the language is SV or VS
WALS Feature 82A: Order of Subject and Verb
 - whether it is OV or VO
WALS Feature 83A: Order of Object and Verb
- a large number of features correlated with it (statistically)
 - verb and manner adverb; main verb and auxiliary, copula and predicate
 - noun and article, noun and relative clause, noun and genitive, noun and prepositions vs postpositions
 - comparative constructions
 - question particles
 - etc.

Copula verb and predicate

- non-verbal predicates require a copula verb to be used
 - in many but not all langs
 - the copula follows the predicate
 - in Slave (and other OV langs)
 - the copula precedes the predicate
 - in English (and other VO langs)

Jeff is a teacher.

Word order within a noun phrase

- relative order of noun and adjective
Adj N (*green table*) vs N Adj (*the person concerned*)
– WALS Feature 87A: Order of Adjective and Noun
- relative order of noun and relative clause
N Rel (En. *the person (who is) concerned in this investigation*)
vs Rel N (Turkish)
– WALS Feature 90A: Order of Relative Clause and Noun
- relative order of possessive/genitive and noun
N Gen (*the hat of the man*) vs Gen N (*the man's hat*)
– WALS Feature 86A: Order of Genitive and Noun
- relative order of noun and adposition (preposition vs postpositions)
Prep N (En. *in London*) vs N Postp (Japanese *Tokyo ni*)
– WALS Feature 85A: Order of Adposition and Noun Phrase

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Correlations between word order type and other syntactic features: Verb-final languages

- Lezgian

(a Nakh-Dagestanian language spoken in the Caucasus mountains; Haspelmath 1993)

1. also subject precedes the verb (SOV)
2. also manner adverbs precede the verb
3. postpositions after the noun (rather than prepositions preceding it)
4. genitive noun phrases precede the noun
5. standard of comparison (St) followed by the marker of comparison (M) followed by the adjective

- similar features found in Slave (northern Canada; Rice 1989) and in Siroi (Papua New Guinea; Wells 1979)

ex. from Dryer (2007):

1.
Alfija-di maqna kxe-na.
Alfija-ERG article write-AORIST
S O V
Alfija wrote an article.

2.
Mirzebeg-a k'ewi-z haraj-na: " ... "
Mirzebeg-ERG strong-ADV shout-AOR
Adv V
'Mirzebeg shouted loudly: " ... "'

3.
duxtur-rin patariw
doctor-GEN.PL to
NP Po
'She went to doctors.'

4.
Farid-an wax
Farid-GEN sister
G N
'Farid's sister'

5.
sad müküda-laj žizwi ask'an-zawa
one other-SUPERL a.little low-IMPERF
St M Adj
'One is a little shorter than the other one'

Correlations between word order type and other syntactic features: Verb-initial languages

- opposite characteristics to those in verb-final langs
- Fijian
(an Austronesian lang spoken on the island of Fiji in the Pacific Ocean; Dixon 1988)
 1. both subject and object follow the verb (both VOS and VSO common)
 2. manner adverbs follow the verb
 3. prepositions (rather than postpositions)
 4. genitive noun phrases follow the nouns
 5. adjective – marker (M) – standard of comparison (St)
- similar features in Turkana (Kenya) and in Lealao Chinantec (Mexico)

ex. from Dryer (2007):

1.

e	rai-ca	a	gone	a	qase
3SG	see-TRANS	ART	child	ART	old.person
	V		S/O		S/O

‘The old person saw the child’ or ‘The child saw the old person’

2.

bau	'ada	va'a-.totolo	noo
somewhat	run	ADV-quick	ASP
	V	Adv	

‘Try and run more quickly’

3.

mai	Wairi'i
from	Wairi'i
Pr	NP

‘from Wairi'i’

4.

a	liga-i	Jone
ART	hand-POSS	John
	N	G

‘John’s hand’

5.

e	vina'a	ca'e	o	Waitabu	mai	Suva
3SG	good	more	ART	Waitabu	from	Suva
	Adj				M	St

‘Waitabu is better than Suva.’

Correlations between word order type and other syntactic features: SVO languages

- more common than verb-initial, less widespread than verb-final langs
- resemble verb-initial rather than verb-final langs
- e.g. English
 1. verb between S and O
 2. manner adverbs both before and after V
 3. prepositions
 4. both the genitive precedes the noun and the noun precedes the genitive
 5. adjective – marker (M) – standard of comparison (St)
- similar features in Hmong Njua (China; Harriehausen 1990) and in Tetelcingo Nahuatl (Mexico; Tuggy 1977)

ex. from Dryer (2007):

1.

The woman saw the dog.

2.

*John slowly walked into the room.
and John walked into the room
slowly.*

3.

on the table

4.

*the box's cover and the cover of
the box*

5.

*Nancy is more intelligent. Adj
than. M Jeff. St*

Features correlated with the order of O and V (Dryer 2007)

verb-final langs	verb-initial langs
postpositions	prepositions
genitive – noun	noun – genitive
manner adverb – verb	verb – manner adverb
standard – marker	marker – standard
standard – adjective	adjective – standard
final adverbial subordinator	initial adverbial subordinator
adpositional phrase – verb	verb – adpositional phrase
main verb – auxiliary verb	auxiliary verb – main verb
predicate – copula	copula – predicate
final question particle	initial question particle
final complementizer	initial complementizer
noun – article	article – noun
subordinate clause – main clause	main clause – subordinate clause
relative clause – noun	noun – relative clause
noun – plural word	plural word – noun

- SVO langs between verb-final and verb-initial

Features *not* correlated with the order of O and V

- Dryer (2007):
 - adjective and noun
 - demonstrative and noun
 - numeral and noun
 - negative particle and verb
 - tense-aspect particle and verb
 - intensifier and adjective

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