Variability of languages in time and space

Typology of syntactic features

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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. (Dryer 2007)

Does zoology include people? It includes all the animal ancestors from whom man derived his instincts. That paper deals with the instincts of predators. What you might call the criminal class of the animal world. Lady animals figure very largely as predators. Put on the overhead light if you like. The switch is by the door. If the storm worries you that much, I’ll get you something to drink.


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(InterCorp via KonText)
• Word order typology
  • subject, verb, object
• Splitting the triplet
• Correlations between the word order type and other features
- Word order typology
  - subject, verb, object
- Splitting the triplet
- Correlations between the word order type and other features
the order of 3 sentence elements in indicative sentences: subject S, verb V, object O

    (b) In the garden, Julia.S saw.V a dog.O.
    (c) A dog.O Julia.S saw.V in the garden.
    (g) *Saw.V a dog.O Julia.S in the garden.

Ger. (a) Julia sah einen Hund im Garten.
    (b) Im Garten sah Julia einen Hund.
    (c) Einen Hund Julia sah im Garten.
    (d) Einen Hund sah Julia im Garten.
    (e) *Julia einen Hund sah im Garten.
    (f) *Sah Julia einen Hund im Garten.
    (g) *Sah einen Hund Julia im Garten.

Cz.  (a) Julie viděla psa na zahradě.
    (b) Na zahradě Julie viděla psa.
    (c) Psa Julie viděla na zahradě.
    (d) Psa viděla Julie na zahradě.
    (e) Julie psa viděla na zahradě.
    (f) Viděla Julie psa na zahradě.
    (g) Viděla psa Julie na zahradě.
Basic word order and sentence elements

- more than one word order for at least some pairs of elements in most languages
- comparison focuses on the basic word order of three basic sentence elements
- what is 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
    En. *The kid draws a picture.*
### Types of basic word order

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Sentence</th>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Object</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SVO</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>The dog chased the cat.</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The dog chase. PAST</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Basque</td>
<td>Jon sendagileari joan zaio.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Jon doctor.DAT go AUX</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>S V O</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Jon went to the doctor.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VSO</td>
<td>Welsh</td>
<td>Gwelodd Rhiannon ddraig.</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>see.PAST.3S Rhiannon</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>dragon</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Welsh</td>
<td>see.PAST.3S Rhiannon</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>dragon</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VOS</td>
<td>Tukang Besi</td>
<td>No-ˈita-ˈe na kene-no te ana.</td>
<td>3R-see-3OBJ NOM friend-3POSS</td>
<td>CORE child.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>V O S</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The child saw its friend.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OVS</td>
<td>Urarina</td>
<td>obana itcaffwa-a katca</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>collared peccary shoot-3PS/A man</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>O V S</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The man shot the collared peccary.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSV</td>
<td>Tobati</td>
<td>Syaw mahai nehu mo-ikor-i</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>paddle big 1SG CAUS-snap-3SG</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>O S V</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I broke the big paddle</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Körtvélyessy 2017)

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Variability of languages
### Feature 81A: Order of Subject, Object and Verb

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Basic word order</th>
<th>langs in WALS</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Ex.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SOV Subject Object Verb</td>
<td>564</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>Japanese, Turkish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SVO Subject Verb Object</td>
<td>488</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>English, Czech, Indonesian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VSO Verb Subject Object</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>Celtic, Semitic langs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VOS Verb Object Subject</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>Malagasy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OVS Object Verb Subject</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>&lt; 1%</td>
<td>Asuriní</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSV Object Subject Verb</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>&lt; 1%</td>
<td>Nadëb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No dominant word order</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>German</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1376</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Order of Subject, Object, and Verb (WALS Feature 81A)

Variability of languages

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Two dominant orders of S, O, and V (WALS Feature 81B)
• Word order typology
  • subject, verb, object
• Splitting the triplet
• Correlations between the word order type and other features
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
- focus on two of the items
  - whether the language is SV or VS
    WALS Feature 82A: Order of Subject and Verb
    - SV 1192
    - VS 194
    - no dominant order 110
  - whether it is OV or VO
    WALS Feature 83A: Order of Object and Verb
    - OV 712
    - VO 705
    - no dominant order 101
- just the verb in focus
  - verb-final (SOV, OSV) vs verb-initial (VSO, VOS) vs SVO (and OVS) languages
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
Correlations

- individual word order features are mutually correlated
- position of the verb (verb-final vs verb-initial vs SVO languages) and
  - noun and article, noun and relative clause, noun and genitive, noun and prepositions vs postpositions
  - verb and manner adverb; main verb and auxiliary, copula and predicate
  - comparative constructions
  - question particles
  etc.
- Word order typology
  - subject, verb, object
- Splitting the triplet
- Correlations between the word order type and other features
Correlations between the 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):

   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 mukuda-laj 2izwi ask’an-zawa
   one other-SUPEREL a.little low-IMPERF
   St M Adj
   ‘One is a little shorter than the other one’
Correlations between the word order type and other syntactic features:

Verb-initial languages

- opposite characteristics to those in verb-final languages
- 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’

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 the word order type and other syntactic features:

**SVO languages**

- more common than verb-initial, less widespread than verb-final languages
- resemble verb-initial rather than verb-final languages
- 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)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>verb-final languages</th>
<th>verb-initial languages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>postpositions</td>
<td>prepositions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>genitive – noun</td>
<td>noun – genitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>manner adverb – verb</td>
<td>verb – manner adverb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>standard – marker</td>
<td>marker – standard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>standard – adjective</td>
<td>adjective – standard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>final adverbial subordinator</td>
<td>initial adverbial subordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>adpositional phrase – verb</td>
<td>verb – adpositional phrase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>main verb – auxiliary verb</td>
<td>auxiliary verb – main verb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>predicate – copula</td>
<td>copula – predicate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>final question particle</td>
<td>initial question particle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>final complementizer</td>
<td>initial complementizer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>noun – article</td>
<td>article – noun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>subordinate clause – main clause</td>
<td>main clause – subordinate clause</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>relative clause – noun</td>
<td>noun – relative clause</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>noun – plural word</td>
<td>plural word – noun</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- SVO languages 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
References