Empirical Approaches to Language Typology

Constituent Order in the Languages of Europe

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Word order in the Germanic languages

1. Introduction

The Germanic branch of Indo-European consists of three main groups (Ruhlen 1987: 327):
- East Germanic: Gothic, Vandalic, Burgundian (all extinct);
- North Germanic (or: Scandinavian): Danish, Swedish, Norwegian, Icelandic, Faroese;
- West Germanic: German, Yiddish, Luxembourgeois, Dutch, Afrikaans, Frisian, English.\(^1\)

Here we will only consider the languages that are currently spoken in geographical Europe. Thus Afrikaans, which is spoken in South Africa, and the extinct East Germanic languages will not be taken into account (but see e.g. König & van der Auwera 1994). The division between North Germanic and West Germanic is useful also as a syntactic typological classification, except that typologically English clearly forms a group of its own, on a par with Scandinavian and the rest of West Germanic. We will therefore occasionally use the term ‘Continental Germanic’ to refer to West Germanic excluding English (but including Frisian, thus departing from Ruhlen’s use of the term).

2. Inflection and other functional categories

2.1. Verbal inflection

All the Germanic languages except Yiddish have two inflectionally expressed tenses, present and preterite. In addition they have a periphrastic perfect tense, formed by the auxiliary have or be and a participle. There is some variation among the languages as to what extent past time reference can be expressed by the periphrastic form. Yiddish lacks the preterite altogether and only has a synthetic paradigm for the present tense. Since the past tense has been replaced by the perfect the former is expressed by hobn ‘have’ or zayn ‘be’ plus past participle (Jacobs et al. 1994: 406–407).
The future is expressed by an auxiliary or, in some of the languages, by the present tense form. English is the only Germanic language which has a special progressive form (be -ing). Apart from the English progressive, no Germanic language has inflectionally expressed aspect. Only Icelandic and German retain a productive inflectional subjunctive mood. In the other languages its use is mainly restricted to certain standard expressions.

Passive is expressed by a participle in combination with an auxiliary meaning ‘be’ or ‘become’. In the Mainland Scandinavian languages (Swedish, Danish, and Norwegian) passive can also be expressed by an inflectional affix -s(t), the use of which varies among the languages. All Germanic languages require a copula in the case of a non-verbal sentence predicate. Finally, as regards subject-verb agreement there is a good deal of variation, ranging from no agreement in the Mainland Scandinavian languages to the relatively rich system of Icelandic, with usually five distinct forms (distributed over three persons and two numbers), in all tenses and moods.

2.2. Nominal inflection

Among the Germanic languages German, Icelandic and Yiddish have the richest case systems, distinguishing nominative, accusative, dative, and genitive. In Luxembourgish the accusative has replaced the nominative (Schmitt 1984: 55, 57, 177). The Faroese case system is similar to the Icelandic one but lacks genitive case. In Icelandic and Faroese case is realized on the head noun as well as on determiners of the noun. In German and Yiddish case is realized mainly on determiners. All languages retain a system of cases with pronouns, distinguishing minimally subjective, objective, and (attributive) possessive forms (e.g. English ‘I’, ‘me’, ‘my’). Alongside the set of full forms, there is also a set of unemphatic, reduced pronouns (in e.g. Dutch, Frisian, and Luxembourgish) which have a special syntax. For instance, in Dutch the reduced (clitic) object forms cannot occur in clause-initial position; it only occurs after a finite verb or a subordinating conjunction (me = reduced form; see also the volume in this series on clitics):

(1) a. Mij (‘Me’) heb je niet gezien.
   me have you:SG not seen
   ‘You didn’t see ME.’

Nouns in all the Germanic languages except English have grammatical gender. German, Luxembourgish, Yiddish, Icelandic, Faroese, and most dialects of Norwegian distinguish three genders: masculine, feminine, and neuter. The remaining languages distinguish only a neuter and a common gender.

The Scandinavian languages have an inflectional (suffixal) definite article. This is one morphological feature which sets North Germanic (i.e. Scandinavian) off from the rest of Germanic.

2.3. Adjectival inflection

In all the Germanic languages except English attributive adjectives are inflected for gender and number concord with the noun, as well as displaying some variety of the typically Germanic ‘strong or weak (W)’ distinction. Among the Scandinavian languages the broad generalization is that the strong form (which is morphologically unmarked in Mainland Scandinavian) is used in indefinite noun phrases, and the weak form in definite noun phrases.

(2) Swedish
   a. den stora bilen
      the big(W) car:DEF
   b. en stor bil
      a big car

The Continental Germanic languages present a slightly more varied picture in this area. In addition to the weak and the strong paradigm, German has a third (“mixed”) adjectival paradigm. Eisenberg (1994: 376) sums it up as follows: “The inflectional behaviour of the attributive adjective is governed by one single principle: the adjective marks the noun phrase for case, number and gender according to the pronominal inflection if no other constituent of the noun phrase does so”.

According to Jacobs et al. (1994: 405), the Yiddish adjectival paradigm is a mixture of the German strong and weak endings, but is also has endings which fit either system. Dutch and Frisian attributive adjectives take an -e suffix, except in indefinite noun phrases with singular neuter nouns.

A major morphological difference concerning adjectival inflection is that the predicative adjective is inflected for gender and number in Scandinavian but not in the Continental Germanic languages.

3. Word order type

All the Germanic languages except English are V2 languages, that is to say, in declarative main clauses the finite verb is the second constituent of the clause
(see next section for examples). The Scandinavian languages and English are unquestionably SVO, OV order being almost totally nonexistent. Yiddish is predominantly SVO, but SOV order is fairly common as well (Santorini 1993). If we separate out main clause VO sentences as results of the V2 rule, the other Continental Germanic languages are predominantly SOV, since when the verb is not affected by V2, a nominal object precedes the verb. According to another terminology the Continental Germanic languages are “mixed VO/OV”.2

All the Germanic languages have prepositions rather than postpositions, the comparative precedes the standard of comparison, wh-questions are formed by fronting the wh-phrase, and yes-no questions are formed by fronting the finite verb (main or auxiliary). In the noun phrase (free) determiners, numerals and adjectives precede the noun, whereas relative clauses appear in postnominal position. However, there is considerable variation in the placement of adnominal possessor phrases (nominal and pronominal).

In the following sections these generalizations will be discussed in more detail, pointing out various exceptions.

4. Main declarative clauses

With regard to word order, the Germanic languages are distinguished primarily along two parameters: Verb Second (V2) and VO/OV.

4.1. Verb Second

All the Germanic languages except English are V2, that is to say, in declarative main clauses the finite verb, main or auxiliary, typically appears in the second position of the clause. In other words, whatever category is preposed, the finite verb will immediately follow that category. In English the verbal cluster can be preceded by more than one constituent, but English retains a form of V2 in main clause wh-questions, where the finite auxiliary must invert with the subject.

(3) a. Dutch
    Jan zag een vogel.

    a’. Jan heeft een vogel gezien.

b. Swedish
    Jan såg en fågel.

b’. Jan har sett en fågel.

c. John saw a bird.

c’. John has seen a bird.

(4) a. Dutch
    Gisteren zag Jan een vogel.

b. Swedish
    I går såg Jan en fågel.
    yesterday saw Jan a bird

c. Yesterday John saw a bird.

(5) a. Dutch
    Wat zag Jan?

b. Swedish
    Vad såg Jan?
    what saw Jan

c. What did John see?

(6) a. Dutch
    Jan zag waarschijnlijk een vogel.

b. Swedish
    Jan såg troligen en fågel.
    Jan saw probably a bird

c. John probably saw a bird.

V2 is perhaps the most salient “special” typological feature of the Germanic languages, distinguishing Germanic from all the other modern European languages.3

4.2. VO or OV

While English, Yiddish (but cf. section 4.4) and the Scandinavian languages are “strictly SVO”, the other Germanic languages (Dutch, Frisian, German and Luxembourgois) have two major verb positions in independent (main) declar-
ative clauses: the second position is usually taken by the finite verb and all other verbs appear in clause-final position. That is to say, the object precedes the verb in embedded clauses, and in main clauses which contain one or more auxiliary verbs. Furthermore when a single auxiliary is combined with a main verb in a subordinate clause, the (finite) auxiliary always occurs after the main verb in German (SOVAux), but it may either precede or follow the main verb in Dutch subclauses (SOAuxV/SOVAux).

(7) Dutch
Hij zei dat hij een vogel had gezien / gezien had
he said that he a bird had seen / seen had
‘He said that he had seen a bird.’

Both orders are also attested in Luxembourgeois (Schmitt 1984: 176) and Frisian, but in Frisian this only occurs in the speech of younger speakers (Tiersma 1985: 123).

The Germanic languages with OV patterns are not consistently verb-final, since they allow, or require, certain verb complements to follow the nonfinite main verb.

(8) Luxembourgeois
E blouf beim Patt sëtze bis d’ Sonn op-goung.
he stayed at+the inn sit until the sun up-went
‘He stayed (sitting) in the inn until sunrise.’

(9) Dutch
Hij heeft gezegd dat hij een vogel zag.
he has said that he a bird saw
‘he has said that he saw a bird’

4.3. Adpositions

On the whole Germanic languages are prepositional but almost all of them (English is an exception) also employ a small number of postpositions, which occur either by themselves or (in some Continental Germanic languages) in combination with a preposition ("circumpositions").

(10) German
a. auf den Berg
b. den Berg hinauf

c. auf den Berg herauf
‘up (onto) the mountain’

English and the Scandinavian languages allow preposition stranding in connection with wh-questions, topicalization, relativization, and other constructions of the “unbounded dependencies” class. Some of the languages, notably English and Norwegian, allow preposition stranding also in passives (“pseudo-passives”).

(11) Icelandic
Hann spurði hvern ég hefði talað við.
he asked who I had spoken with

(12) Norwegian
Reven ble skutt på.
fox:Def was shot at

The Continental Germanic languages have no preposition stranding or only a restricted form of it.⁴

4.4. Double objects

Many Germanic languages exhibit a “Dative Shift” alternation (e.g. Dutch, Frisian, English, and the Mainland Scandinavian languages). That is, if the indirect object is expressed as a prepositional phrase it normally follows the direct object. However, when the indirect object is expressed without the preposition, it must precede the direct object:

(13) Dutch
a. Ik gaf het boek aan Anna.
b. Ik gaf Anna het boek.

(14) a. I gave the book to Anna.
b. I gave Anna the book.

(15) Danish
a. Jeg gav bogen til Anna.
b. Jeg gav Anna bogen.
Icelandic and German do not have the construction with a PP as indirect object, although both languages do allow inversion of two nominal objects.

(16) Icelandic
   a. Ég lánu Mariu bækurnar.
      I lent Maria(DAT) books:DEF(ACC)
      'I lent Maria the books.'/"I lent the books to Maria.'
   b. Ég lánu bækurnar Mariu.
      I lent books:DEF(ACC) Maria(DAT)
      'I lent Maria the books.'/"I lent the books to Maria.'

(17) German
   a. Ich gab Anna das Buch.
      I gave Anna(DAT) the book(ACC)
      'I gave Anna the book.'/"I gave the book to Anna.'
   b. Ich gab das Buch Anna.
      I gave the book(ACC) Anna(DAT)
      'I gave Anna the book.'/"I gave the book to Anna.'

The construction in a. is unmarked, while the construction in b. requires focus (indicated by stress) on the indirect object (Dat). Inversion of two nominal objects presumably requires a certain amount of case morphology, as found in Icelandic and German (see Primus, this volume).5

According to Birnbaum (1979: 295) object NPs in Yiddish appear in the order IO+DO:

(18) Zi git def šnjjer dus pékl.
      she gives her daughter-in-law the parcel
      'She gives her daughter-in-law the parcel.'

Compare next the following examples with pronominal objects. In German the direct object typically precedes the indirect object; if the order is reversed the indirect object must be stressed (focus). In (British) English either order is possible, but only with the order DO+IO can the preposition be omitted; in Dutch the order is DO+IO, with an optional preposition before the IO.

(19) German
   a. Ich gab es ihm.
      I gave it him

   b. Ich gab ihm es.
      I gave him it

(20) a. I gave it him.
    b. I gave it to him.
    c. I gave him it.

(21) Dutch
   a. Ik gaf het aan hem.
      I gave it to him
      'I gave it to him.'
   b. Ik gaf het hem.
      I gave it him
      'I gave it him.'

In Yiddish, when both objects are pronouns the order DO+IO is preferred:

(22) Er darf ys ir gébn.
      he must it her give
      'He must give it to her.'

Recall that Yiddish is not strictly SVO in that it has "significant relics of earlier SOV order: the syntax of passive, of periphrastic verbs, and of separable prefixes, and clitic floating/climbing" (Jacobs et al. 1994: 411). Consider also these examples, where the verb follows rather than precedes its complement:

(23) ober dos hot dem rebn zaynem shtark fardrosn.
      but this has the rabbi his strong annoyed
      'but this annoyed his rabbi a lot'

(24) Ir megt zikh of mir farlozn.
      you can Refl on me depend
      'You can depend on me.'

4.5. Object positions

In the Germanic OV languages objects and adverbials have no fixed position in the space between the subject and the main verb, i.e. their relative order is
4.6. The verb-particle construction

A characteristic feature of the Germanic languages is the verb-particle construction (give up, turn off, etc.): a verb with a general meaning is combined with a locative or directional adverb (a verb particle), to express a more specific meaning. All the Germanic languages have a wide variety of verb-particle combinations, some of which are lexicalized and idiomatic, while others are formed according to a productive pattern. There is plenty of variation among the Germanic languages regarding the syntactic form of the verb-particle construction. The variation is in part determined by the VO-OV parameter. Thus in the OV languages the particle is preverbal whenever the verb in question does not appear in clause-second position. In the VO languages the particle follows the verb.

(28) Dutch
Jan heeft zijn moeder op-gebeld.
Jan has his mother up-called
‘Jan phoned his mother.’

(29) Swedish
Jan har ringt upp sin mor.
Jan has called up his mother
‘Jan phoned his mother.’

The analysis of the verb-particle construction is a highly controversial issue (see for instance den Dikken 1994). The construction is word-like in some respects (especially semantically), but phrase-like in other respects. Note, for instance, that in the V2 languages the verb and the particle are always separated when the (finite) main verb appears in clause-second position.

(30) Dutch
Jan belt zijn moeder vaak op.
Jan calls his mother often up
‘Jan often phones his mother.’

(31) Swedish
Jan ringde tydligen inte upp sin mor.
Jan called apparently not up his mother
‘Apparently Jan did not phone his mother.’
Among the Germanic VO languages there is variation regarding the position of the object in relation to the verb particle: In English, Norwegian, Icelandic, and Faroese a lexical NP object may precede or follow the particle, but a pronominal object must precede the particle. The following examples all mean "We let the dog out" or "We let it out".

(32) Norwegian
   a. Vi slapp ut hunden/*den.
      we let out dog:DEF/it
   b. Vi slapp hunden/*den ut.
      we let dog:DEF/it out

In Danish the object always precedes the particle.

(33) a. "Vi lod ud hunden/*den.
      we let out dog:DEF/it
   b. Vi lod hunden/*den ud.
      we let dog:DEF/it out

In Swedish the object always follows the particle.

(34) a. Vi släppte ut hunden/*den.
      we let out dog:DEF/it
   b. "Vi släppte hunden/*den ut.
      we let dog:DEF/it out

4.7. Raising

Raising is one of characteristic features of Germanic languages. In this section we will briefly deal with (i) Subject-to-Subject raising, (ii) Object-to-Subject raising, (iii) Subject-to-Object raising, and (iv) verb raising.8

Consider first the following Dutch sentence, in which the clausal Subject occurs in clause final position ("extraposition", "heavy shift").

(35) Het is niet belangrijk wat jij denkt.
    it is not important what you[sg] think
    'It is not important what you think.'

Observe that the 'normal' subject position is now filled by the anticipatory pronoun het 'it' (Frisian it, German es).9 With certain verbs, such as 'appear' and 'seem' extraposition is compulsory.

(36) a. Dutch
    Het schijnt dat hij hees is.
    it seems that he hoarse
    b. It seems that he is hoarse'

There is, however, an alternative way to express sentences of the type it+V+Complement, in which the Subject of the complement appears as the Subject of V, i.e. Subject-to-Subject raising (König 1971; see also Hawkins 1986: 75 f.).

(37) a. Dutch
    Hij schijnt hees te zijn.
    he seems hoarse to be
    b. Frisian
    Hy liket heas te wêzen.
    c. German
    Er scheint heiser zu sein.
    he seems hoarse to be
    'He seems to be hoarse.'

(38) Swedish
    Han verkar vara hes.
    he seems be hoarse
    'He seems to be hoarse.'

Object-to-Subject raising ("Tough Movement") is found in most of the Germanic languages (Icelandic is an exception), but is most productive in English. For instance in German this is only possible with five adjectives (leicht 'easy', einfach 'simple', schwer 'hard', schwierig 'difficult', interessant 'interesting').

(39) Es ist leicht, ihn zu überzeugen.
    it is easy him to convince
    'It is easy to convince him.'

(40) Er ist leicht zu überzeugen.
    he is easy to convince
    'He is easy to convince.'
Furthermore, in all the Germanic languages the verbs of perception (see, hear, etc.) allow the subject of the Object Clause to be expressed as the object of the verb in the main clause (Subject-to-Object raising, also called “Exceptional Case Marking” (ECM), or “Accusative-with-in infinitive”; cf. Dik 1987: 237 f.).

(41) Dutch
Ik hoorde dat hij een lied zong.
I heard that he a song sang
‘I heard that he sang a song.’

(42) Swedish
Jag hörde att han sjöng en sång.
I heard that he sang a song
‘I heard that he sang a song.’

(43) Dutch
Ik hoorde hem een lied zingen.
I heard him a song sing
‘I heard him sing(ing) a song.’

(44) Swedisch
Jag hörde honom sjunga en sång.
I heard him sing a song
‘I heard him sing(ing) a song.’

Notice that the hearing in (43) and (44) takes place while the song is being sung, but that this is not necessarily the case in the non-raised construction (which can be paraphrased as: ‘I heard from X that …’).

Some Germanic languages exhibit a similar pattern with at least some verbs of cognition. English is by far the most productive language in this regard. Among the Scandinavian languages there are at best one or two such verbs in each language

(45) I believe John to be intelligent.

(46) Icelandic
Eg tel Jon vera gafaðan
I believe Jón be intelligent
‘I believe Jon to be intelligent.’

Finally, in some West (Continental) Germanic languages, notably Dutch and German, the non-finite auxiliary may appear in the form of an infinitive (verb raising; Kooij 1987 b: 153):

(47) Dutch
Hij zegt dat ie het boek heeft kunnen lezen.
he said that he[cl] the book has be.able:Inf read:Inf
‘He said that he has been able to read the book.’

With respect to the position of modals relative to the main verb, Dutch and Luxembourgeois display mirror image orderings as compared to German and Frisian:

(48) Dutch
Wij denken dat ie het boek moet kunnen lezen.
we think that he[cl] the book must can:Inf read:Inf
‘We think that he must be able to read the book.’

(49) German
Wir denken daß er das Buch lesen können muß.
we think that he the book read:Inf can:Inf must
‘We think that he must be able to read the book.’

Luxembourgeois allows for considerable variation in the placement of the modal infinitive (Schmitt 1984: 175).

(50) a. D’ Kanner hu vill an der Schoul missé léieren.
the children have a lot in the school must learn
b. D’Kanner hu vill missen an der Schoul léieren.
c. D’Kanner hu vill missen léieren an der Schoul.
d. D’Kanner hu missé vill an der Schoul léieren.
‘The children have had a lot to learn in school.’

5. Subordinate clauses

5.1. Word order in finite subordinate clauses

One of the most striking syntactic characteristics of the Germanic languages is the contrast between main and subordinate clause word order (as already tou-
(51) Dutch
   a. Jan zag een vogel.
      Jan saw a bird
      'Jan saw a bird.'
   b. Jan zei dat hij een vogel zag.
      Jan said that he a bird saw
      'Jan said that he saw a bird.'

But it can be observed in the Germanic VO languages, too, if the sentence includes a sentence-medial adverb, as in the following Swedish examples (see Platzack 1986, Holmberg & Platzack 1995).

(52) a. Jan såg inte fågeln.
      Jan saw not bird:DEF
      'Jan did not see the bird.'
   b. *Jan inte såg fågeln.
      Jan not saw bird:DEF

(53) a. "Det är märkligt att Jan såg inte fågeln.
      It is strange that Jan saw not bird:DEF
   b. Det är märkligt att Jan inte såg fågeln.
      It is strange that Jan not saw bird:DEF
      'It is strange that Jan did not see the bird.'

In the main clause the finite verb precedes the sentence adverb (here the negation adverb), due to V2. In embedded clauses the sentence adverb precedes the finite verb.

The contrast is less salient in Icelandic and Yiddish. Both of these languages observe V2 order in embedded clauses, too, in the sense that the finite verb immediately follows the subject; see Diesing (1990), Rögnvaldsson & Thrainsson (1990), Sigurðsson (1989).

(54) Icelandic
   Pað er skrýtið að Jón såg ekki fuglinn.
   it is strange that Jón saw not bird:DEF
   'It is strange that Jón did not see the bird.'

However, in Icelandic V2 order is not obligatory in adverbal clauses or relative clauses, so the main-embedded clause word order contrast can be observed in Icelandic, too; see Sigurðsson (1989: 44 f.).

(55) a. ...þegar Maria loksins keypti bókina.
    when Maria finally bought the-book
   b. Pað er nu það sem ég ekki veit.
      that is now it that I not know
      'Now that is what I don't know.'

5.2. Subordinating conjunctions

Subordinate clauses are typically introduced by a complementizer (subordinating conjunction), but some of the West Germanic languages do not always require such a constituent. For instance, in German the complementizer need not appear with complements of verba dicendi and cognitive verbs. In such cases the finite verb is in the subjunctive form and occurs in second position (Eisenberg 1994: 377; in this example ‘hear’ functions as a cognitive verb).

(56) Ich hörte, du seist gekommen.
    I hear:Pres:1SG you[sg] are:Pres:subj:2SG come:PAST:PA
    'I hear that you have come.'

In (formal) English the complementizer that is often omitted with object clauses (Quirk et al. 1985: 1049–1050). The same holds true of the Scandinavian languages, in particular the Mainland Scandinavian languages (see Holmberg 1990).

(57) I believe (that) he will win it tomorrow.

(58) Swedish
    Jag tror (att) han inte vinner i morgon.
    I think (that) he not wins tomorrow
    'I think that he will not win tomorrow.'

In Scandinavian the complementizer cannot be omitted when the embedded clauses has main clause word order, which is an alternative with, especially, verba dicendi.
6. Sentence types

All the Germanic languages also have V-initial order in yes/no questions, imperatives/requests, exclamations (wishes), and certain conditional subclauses. However, in English only auxiliary verbs can occur initially. When there is no other auxiliary verb, English makes use of a dummy auxiliary do in interrogative (Did he buy the book?) and negative sentences (He did not buy the book).

(60) Frisian
Wolle jo moarn reedride?
want you tomorrow skate
‘Do you want to go skating tomorrow?’

(61) German
Komm her!
come here
‘Come here!’

(62) Luxembourgeois
Versoen d’ Bremsen, dann as es eriwer
fail the brakes then is it over
‘If the brakes fail, it’s over.’

Furthermore at least some languages (e.g. Dutch, Icelandic) can also have the verb in first position in ‘dramatic’ narrative style (notice that Dutch may use the present tense here to describe a situation in the past):

(63) Dutch
Komen we thuis, staat Peter voor de deur!
come we home stays Peter in front of the door
‘When we came home, we found Peter standing in front of the door!’

(64) Icelandic
Komu þær þá áð stórum helli.
came they then to big cave
‘They came then to a big cave.’

Question word phrases always occur in the clause-initial position.

(65) Dutch
Wat heb je gekocht?
what have you[Sg] bought
‘What did you buy?’

(66) Swedish
Vems förslag kommer dom att stöda?
whose proposal come they to support
‘Whose proposal will they support?’

(67) Luxembourgeois
Weini kommt der dann?
when comes he then
‘When does he come?’

Only one wh-phrase can, however, occur clause-initially; in multiple questions other wh-phrases are left in situ.

(68) Norwegian
Hvem har sagt hva til hvem?
who has said what to whom
‘Who has said what to whom?’

In existential/locative sentences there is a general tendency to avoid having an indefinite NP in the first position and one of the strategies employed is to use a repleitive (expletive) element. In English this is possible mainly in construction with be, but in all the other Germanic languages it is possible with a wide range of verbs, sometimes even ‘ungerative’ verbs, as in (74).

(69) Dutch
Er stond een vaas op tafel.
there stood a vase on table
‘There was a vase standing on the table.’

(70) Frisian
Der wenne in tsoender yn dat wald.
there lived a sorcerer in that forest
‘A sorcerer used to live in the forest.’ (‘There used to live a sorcerer in that forest.’)
The construction is possible mainly when the logical subject is indefinite. Dutch er has many uses (repleve, partitive, pronominal, locative; see e.g. Donaldson 1987: ch. 15) and it occurs in a number of contexts where a corresponding particle is absent in e.g. English and German; for instance, when the first position is taken by a question word (Geerts et al. 1985: 395 f., 816–823):

(75) Wie kommt er vanavond? (Dutch – repleve ‘er’)
Wer kommt s heute abend? (German)
who comes there/toa tonight
‘Who is coming tonight?’

Finally, repleve elements are also frequently employed in impersonal passives.10

(76) Dutch
Er werd hier altijd gedanast.

(77) Frisian
Der waard hij altyd dûnse.
there became here always danced
‘There was always dancing done here.’

(78) Luxembourgeois
Et gouf gebaut.
it gave built
‘There was building done here.’

(79) Swedish
Det dansades på bryggan.
there dance;Pass on jetty:DEF
‘People were dancing on the jetty.’

Such passives are impossible in English. Yiddish also lacks the impersonal passive; instead an active form with men ‘one’ or a reflexive pronoun is used (Jacobs et al. 1994: 409):

(80) ven men darf hibn moyekh, helft nit keyn koyekh
when one needs have brains help not no brawn
‘when brains are needed, brawn won’t help’

(81) es brot zikh a katshke
it roast Refl a duck
‘a duck is being roasted’

7. The noun phrase

Noun phrase internal word order is generally characterized by the following pattern:

(82) determiner – numeral – adjective – N – possessor NP – relative clause

where determiner subsumes articles and demonstratives (but note that Icelandic lacks an indefinite article), and numeral includes both quantifiers and cardinal and ordinal numerals. There are, however, several differences between the individual languages.

First of all, the North Germanic languages also have a postnominal element (a suffix) to express definiteness. In Swedish, Norwegian, and Faroese both a bound article suffix and a free (prenominal) definite article are used when the NP contains an attribute adjective (see Börjars 1994, Delsing 1993).11
Free articles (both definite and indefinite), demonstratives, numerals, quantifiers and adjectives typically precede the noun in all Germanic languages.

A modifying past participle has a passive meaning:

The same construction is also attested in North Germanic, but here (with the possible exception of Danish) the "syntactic expandability is heavily constrained. When complements are added in accordance with the valency requirements of the verbs in question, the result is stylistically marked or even deviant" (Askedal 1994: 249).

Finally, at least Dutch and Frisian can also have an infinitival verb (plus te 'to') serving as a modifier, which always has a passive meaning as well as a modal nuance:

German, on the other hand, must employ an inflected present participle

There is considerable variation as to the position of the possessor NP in the Germanic languages. In all languages the adnominal possessor NP can occur on either side of the head noun, albeit that in many languages there is often a preference for one or the other (depending e.g. on the nature of the possessing entity and the internal complexity of the possessor phrase). For instance, possessor NPs generally follow the noun in West Germanic, but if it consists of a
proper name or a relationship term it will often precede. If it precedes it will carry the genitive -s (the so-called Saxon genitive; typically with proper names), if it follows it will be preceded by a preposition (but not necessarily in German, see below).

(93) Dutch
de hond van de leraar
the dog of the teacher
‘the teacher’s dog’

(94) a. Annas kleren
b. de kleren van Anna

(95) a. Anna’s clothes
b. the clothes of Anna

In Yiddish the order is usually possessor-possessed, but the reverse order is found in constructions expressing certain kinship relations and in the prepositional variant; compare (Birnbaum 1979: 299):

(96) zaan svester-s ziindl
his sister-S little.son
‘his sister’s little son’

(97) Iser Braandl’s
Iser Braandl-GEN
‘Braandl’s son Iser’

(98) der klimat fjn Kanady
the climate of Canada
‘the climate of Canada’

The widest range of possible constructions is perhaps attested in German; all examples can be translated as ‘Adenauer’s speeches’.

(99) a. Adenauer-s Rede-n
Adenauer-GEN speech-PL
b. die Rede-n Adenauer-s
the:NOM.PL speech-PL Adenauer-GEN

c. die Rede-n von Adenauer
the:NOM:PL speech-PL of Adenauer
d. dem Adenauer seine Rede-n
the:DAT.M.SG Adenauer his speech-PL

The (substandard) variant with possessive pronoun cross-referencing the possessor NP (as exemplified in (99 d), where both seine ‘his’ and the possessor NP Adenauer refer to the same entity) is also attested in other West Germanic languages, particularly in the more colloquial speech variants. In Dutch this involves the reduced form of the possessive pronoun. Observe that the possessor NP in Luxembourggeois (like in in German) has dative case.13

(100) Dutch
dat meisje d’r fiets
that girl her bike
‘that girl’s bike’

(101) Luxembourggeois
dem Papp séng Vokanz
the:M.SG.DAT father his vacation
‘father’s vacation’

This construction is also widely used in Norweigan (where it is assumed to be originally a loan from Low German), alongside the more standard constructions (all: ‘the Englishman’s boat’); see Fiva (1987).

(102) a. engelskmannen sin båt
Englishman:DEF his boat
b. engelskmannens båt
Englishman:DEF:GEN boat
c. båten til engelskmannen
boat:DEF to Englishman:DEF

In Faroese the prepositional construction is typically used for personal relationships, but it is also possible for the possessor NP to appear in the accusative (Barnes & Weyhe 1994: 208):

(103) a. mamma til Kjartan
mother to Kjartan
‘Kjartan’s mother’
b. pápi drong-in
   father boy-ACC.SG.DEF
   'the boy's father'

Compare also these examples from Faroese (Barnes & Weyhe 1994: 208):

(104) a. Jógván-sar bátur
      Jógván-GEN boat
      'Jógván's boat'

b. bátur Jógván-sar (less common)
   boat Jógván-GEN
   'Jógván's boat'

Note finally that Frisian possessor NPs have the suffix -e, which is mainly used with kinship terms (Tiersma 1985: 55):

(105) ús heit-e piip
      our father-E pipe
      'our father's pipe'

Attributive possessive pronouns generally precede the noun in the West Germanic languages (my book [En], mein Buch [Ge], mijn boek [Du]), except when the noun is also preceded by a demonstrative or an article, as in this Dutch example:

(106) een artikel van jou
      een article of you:OBJ
      'an article of yours'

In such a construction the pronoun is in the object form and follows the preposition van 'of'. In Yiddish, however, an indefinite possessed NP may be preceded by an article (cf. Jacobs et al. 1994: 406; Birnbaum 1979: 299).

(107) mayne a shevster
      my a sister
      'a sister of mine'

Notice that the possessive pronoun can also follow the noun (Jacobs et al. 1994: 406):

(108) der Bankrot zeyerer
      the bankruptcy their
      'their bankruptcy'

Among the Scandinavian languages Danish, Swedish, and Faroese have pronominal possessive pronouns, while Icelandic, Norwegian, and Northern Swedish have postnominal possessive pronouns. In the former case the head noun has the bare, indefinite form, in the latter case it has, obligatorily, the definite form.

(109) a. Danish
      min bog
      my book

b. Norwegian
      boka mi
      book.DEF my

Icelandic and many dialects of Norwegian and Northern Swedish also take a proper name in construction with a pronoun as a postnominal possessor, but only with a definite head noun.

(110) Icelandic
      bókin hans Jóns
      book.DEF his Jón (GEN)
      'Jón's book'

Notes

1. These are the standardized North and West Germanic languages. Which dialects become standardized is of course mainly a matter of politics. For instance German contains dialects, spoken by millions of people, which are as different from standard German as Frisian is from standard Dutch. Luxembourgeois is based on one of these dialects, namely Moselfränkisch. Norwegian has two standard forms.

2. For a recent discussion, see Zwart (1994).

3. Old French was a V2 language (see Vance 1989). Estonian has a form of V2 rule, which, however, is not obligatory the way it is in Germanic (see Vilkuna, this volume).

4. Thus Dutch and various German dialects allow preposition stranding by "R-pronouns":

   (i) Waar heeft hij een prijs mee gewonnen? [Du]
       what has he a prize with won
       'What did he win a prize with?'
5. Note, however, that Faroese does not allow inversion of two nominal objects although Faroese has as clear a morphological distinction between accusative and dative as Icelandic; see Holmberg (1994).
6. See also Jacobs et al. (1994: 411) on separable verb prefixes in Yiddish, whose behaviour can be explained in terms of an earlier SOV order.
7. In the Scandinavian languages the particle may also be incorporated in the verb.

(i) Jag har lågt fram / framåt ett nytt förslag [Sw]
I have put forth / forth.put a new proposal

In most cases the form with an incorporated particle is lexicalized, having a more restricted meaning than the corresponding phrasal construct.
10. There is also the alternative construction without the repletive element in e.g. Dutch and German, as when a locative adverbial appears in clause-initial position.

(i) Hier wordt vandaag gedaan [Du]
here becomes today – danced
‘Here is dancing done today’

12. Compare also Luxembourgois: dat gebroden Fleisch ‘the roasted meat’. The pre-
nominal participle plus complements is also found in Yiddish, but this is said to be a loan from Modern German (Birnbaum 1979: 81); the ‘correct’ position of this modifier is after the head noun.
13. The dative case is also used on Yiddish determiners and adjectives, which have no separate genitive form (Jacobs et al. 1995: 405):

(i) dem altin yidns bukh
the.M.Sg.Dat old:Dat jew:Gen book
‘the book of the old jew’

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An overview of word order in Slavic languages

1. Introduction

There are 14 extant Slavic languages which are typically grouped into three branches: west, east and south. The languages of the west branch are: Czech, Kashubian, Lower Sorbian, Polish, Slovak and Upper Sorbian. The two Sorbian languages, also referred to as Upper and Lower Lusatian, are spoken by about 120 thousand people east of a line from Berlin to Dresden in the upper reaches of the river Spree, mainly around the towns of Cottbus and Bautzen. Kashubian, whose speakers number about 200 thousand, is spoken on the left bank of the lower Vistula, west of Gdańsk. The east branch of Slavic is comprised of Byelorussian, Russian and Ukrainian. To the south branch belong Bulgarian, Macedonian, Slovene, Serbian and Croatian (the last two often grouped together as Serbo-Croatian).

2. Inflection and other functional categories

The Slavic languages with the exception of Bulgarian and Macedonian all display case marking on nouns and pronouns. There are seven cases, namely: nominative, accusative, genitive, dative, instrumental, locative and vocative. In the East Slavic languages and in Slovak and Slovene the vocative case is either obsolete or obsolescent (Byelorussian, Ukrainian). The Sorbian languages and Slovene use the instrumental and locative cases only with prepositions. In Bulgarian and Macedonian vestiges of case marking on nouns are found with masculine nouns denoting proper names and close relatives. Pronouns in these two languages are inflected for nominative, accusative and dative case.

The Slavic verb is inflected for the verbal categories of person, number, mood, aspect, tense and voice. With the exception of Bulgarian and Macedonian, both of which have an additional evidential (renarrated) mood, the mood categories are: indicative, conditional and imperative. The indicative mood has no special morphological markers. No regular, all-embracing rules can be given for the formation of the aspects. The most common means of forming the