Constructing Languages

Day 4: Grammar and Syntax

Word Order

Basic Word Order

✤ When we start talking about grammar, the main questions we are interested in is how words are put together in a sentence.

✤ Sentences have many words — so which words should we talk about at the beginning?

✤ **Basic words order**: relative order of **Subject (S)**, **Verb (V)**, and **Object (O)**

Some Statistics

✤ Word order in the clause (**Subject, Verb, Object**):

✦ 6 possible word orders: **SOV, SVO, VSO, VOS, OSV, OVS**

✤ Matthew Dryer 2005, study of 1228 languages:

	SOV	SVO	VSO	VOS	OVS	OSV	neither
total	497	435	85	26	9	4	172
%	47	41	8	2.5	0.8	0.4	

Basic Word Order

❖ **SOV**: **Japanese, Korean, Turkish, Georgian**

Hasan **öküz-ü** **aldı** (**Turkish**)

Hasan ox-accusative bought

'Hasan bought the ox'

❖ **SVO**: **English, Russian, Vietnamese**

Devushka **kupila** **kvartiru** (**Russian**)

girl bought apartment

'A girl bought an apartment'

Basic Word Order

✤ **VSO**: **Welsh, Irish**

Lladdodd   y ddraig   y dyn   (**Welsh**)

killed   the dragon   the man

'The dragon killed the man'

✤ **VOS**: **Malagasy**

Nahita   ny mpianatra   ny vehyvavy   (**Malagasy**)

saw   the student   the woman

'The woman saw the student'

Basic Word Order

♣ **OVS**: **Hixkaryana**

Toto   yahosiye   kamara   (**Hixkaryana**)
man   it-grabbed-him jaguar
'The jaguar grabbed the man'

♣ **OSV**: **Apuriña**

Anana   nota apa.   (**Apuriña**)
pineapple   I   fetch
'I fetch a pineapple'

Problems with Word Order

❖ Some times **determining the basic word order** is not so easy

✦ **Scrambling**: free word order

❖ **Russian** – any word order is possible, even though some are rare:

Ivan	**ljubit**	**Mašu.**	**(SVO)**
Ivan.nom	loves	Maša.acc	

'Ivan loves Masha'

Ivan	**Mašu**	**ljubit.**	**(SOV)**
Mašu	**Ivan**	**ljubit.**	**(OSV)**
Mašu	**ljubit**	**Ivan.**	**(OVS)**
Ljubit	**Ivan**	**Mašu.**	**(VSO)**
Ljubit	**Mašu**	**Ivan.**	**(VOS)**

Problems with Word Order

❖ Word order might depend on whether you are talking about main clause or embedded clause.

❖ **German**

Der	**Mann**	**sah**	**den**	**Jungen.**		**(SOV)**
the	man	saw	the	boy		

'The man saw the boy'

Ich	**weiß**	**daß**	**der**	**Mann**	**den**	**Jungen**	**sah.**	**(SVO)**
I	know	that	the	man	the	boy	saw	

'I know that the man saw the boy'

Prepositions and Postpositions

✤ In English, **prepositions** such as **in**, **at**, **on**, etc. come before noun phrases

  ✦ in the store

  ✦ on the beach

✤ In other languages, they come after noun phrases — and in this case, we call them **postpositions**

  ✦ **adam-için**   (**Turkish**)
    man-for
    'for the man'

Possessors and Nouns

✤ **Possessor/Noun** order can also vary:

✤ **the man's hat** — English PN

✤ **kadın-ın çavuğ-u** — Turkish: PN
woman-gen chicken-her
'woman's chicken'

✤ **la plume de ma tante** — French NP
the pen of my aunt
'the pen of my aunt'

✤ **het y dyn** — Welsh NP
hat the man
'the man's hat'

✤

Adjectives and Nouns

✤ **Adjective/Noun** order can also vary:

✤ **the green table**   English AN

✤ **büyük şekir**   Turkish AN
large city
'large city'

✤ **le tapis vert**   French NA
the carpet green
'the green carpet'

✤ **llyfr bach**   Welsh NA
book little
'a little book'

SOV Correlations

SOV languages usually have the following properties:

✤ Manner adverbs precede the verb:

  ✦ **badly run**

✤ Postpositions:

  ✦ **house in**

✤ Possessors precede nouns:

  ✦ **father's jacket**

✤ In comparatives, the standard of comparison precedes the marker of comparison:

  ✦ **my house [your house]standard of comparison [than]marker of comparison bigger**

✤ "because", "when" occur after the clause:

  ✦ **[he wants beer]clause because**

  ✦ **[I am tired]clause when**

VSO/VOS Correlations

VSO/VOS languages usually have the following properties:

✤ Manner adverbs follow the verb:

✦ **run badly**

✤ Prepositions:

✦ **in house**

✤ Possessors follow nouns:

✦ **jacket father's**

✤ In comparatives, the standard of comparison follows the marker of comparison:

✦ **my house [than]**_{marker of comparison} **[your house]**_{standard of comparison} **bigger**

✤ "because", "when" occur before the clause:

✦ **because [he wants beer]**_{clause}

✦ **when [I am tired]**_{clause}

SVO Correlations
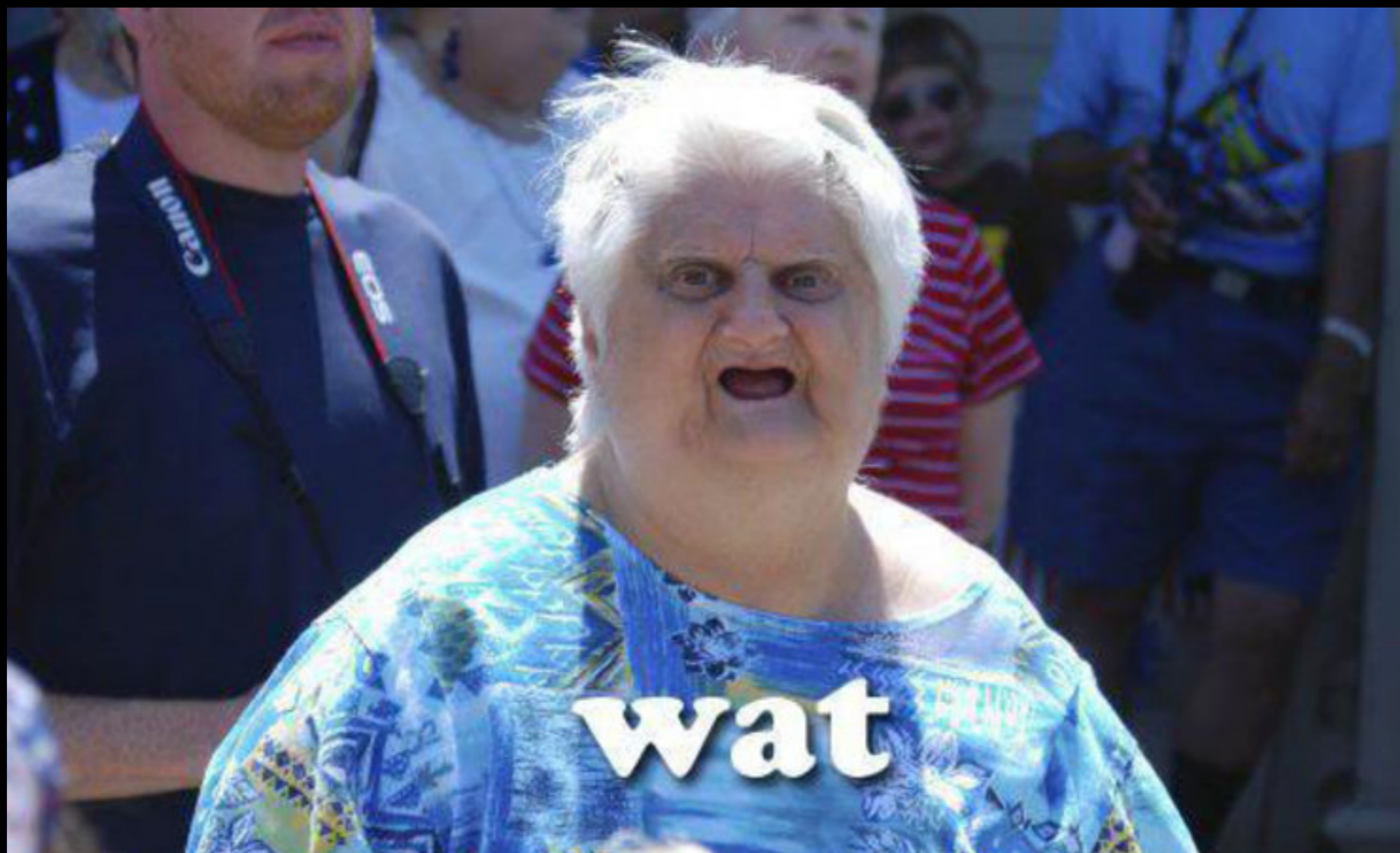
SVO languages usually have the following properties:

✤ Manner adverbs normally follow the verb, but sometimes precede:

✦ **John runs quickly / John slowly walked into the room**

✤ Prepositions:

✦ **in house**

✤ Possessors can follow nouns:

✦ **father's jacket / jacket of the father**

✤ In comparatives, the standard of comparison follows the marker of comparison:

✦ **my house is bigger [than]marker of comparison [your house]standard of comparison**

✤ "because", "when" occur before the clause:

✦ **because [he wants beer]clause**

✦ **when [I am tired]clause**

Summary

SOV	SVO	V-initial
Adverb Verb	Verb Adverb	Verb Adverb
Noun P	P Noun	P Noun
Possessor Noun	Possessor Noun *or* Noun Possessor	Noun Possessor
StandardOfComp Marker	Marker StandardOfComp	Marker StandardOfComp
Clause because/when	because/when Clause	because/when Clause

Directionality

✤ V is the most important thing in the **predicate** — a phrase describing what's happening to the subject: V is a **head** of the predicate.

✦ **VO** languages are called **head-initial**

✦ **OV** languages are called **head-final**

✤ **Head-Initial** languages tend to have:

✦ **V-O, N-Adj, N-Poss, P-N**

✤ **Head-Final** languages tend to have:

✦ **O-V, Adj-N, Poss-N, N-P**

Questions

Yes/No-Questions

✣ **Yes/No-Questions** or Polar Questions: Questions that call for an answer of "yes" or "no", usually.

✣ Ways of forming yes/no-questions:
  ✦ **Question Particle**
  ✦ **Verb Form**
  ✦ **Both**
  ✦ **Intonation**
  ✦ **Word Order Change**

Particle

✤ **Chinese** -ma:

✤ **Nǐ   xǐhuan   kāfēi.**
you   like   coffee
'You like coffee'

✤ **Nǐ   xǐhuan   kāfēi   ma?**
you   like   coffee   Q
'Doo you like coffee?'

Intonation

✤ **Spanish**

✤ **Mi mamá me llamó ayer.**
my mom me called yesterday
'My mom called me yesterday.'

✤ **¿Mi mamá me llamó ayer?**
my mom me called yesterday
'Did my mom call me yesterday?'

Word Order Change

✤ **German**

✤ **Ich   mag   Apfelkuchen?**
I   like   apple pie
'I like apple pie.'

✤ **Mag   ich   Apfelkuchen?**
like   I   apple pie
'Do I like apple pie?'

Wh-Questions

✤ **Wh-Questions**: Questions that have a question word (even if it's not from English, and there are no wh-sequence)

✤ Two major positions for wh-phrases

   ✦ **Beginning of the sentence**

   ✦ **In the original position** (**in situ**)

Wh-Questions

✤ **English**:Wh-phrase at the **beginning of the sentence**

  ✦ **I talked to Bill.**
  ✦ **Who did you talk to __?**

✤ **Japanese**: Wh-phrase **in situ**

  ✦ **John-ga   Mary-ni   nani-o   ageta   no?**
    J.-NOM   M.-DAT   what-ACC   gave   Q
    'What did John give to Mary?'

Relative Clauses

✤ **Relative Clause**: A full sentence whose function is to describe another noun

  ✦ The book **that I bought** is very boring!

  ✦ John read the book **that I bought**.

✤ Three strategies:

  ✦ **Gap**

  ✦ **Resumptive pronoun**

  ✦ **Internal head**

Relative Clauses

- ✤ **Gap strategy**: like English
  - ✦ The book **[that I bought ___]**
  - ✦ Underscore refers to the book — it is an object of the verb **bought**
- ✤ **Resumptive Pronoun**:
  - ✦ The book **[that I bought it]**
  - ✦ **It** refers to the book, and it's an object of **bought**
- ✤ **Internal head**:
  - ✦ **[I bought the book]**
  - ✦ John read **[I bought the book]**.
  - ✦ **[I bought the book]** is boring.

Relative Clauses

✤ The relative clause can appear **before or after the noun**.

  ✦ **the book [that I bought __]** is boring.
  ✦ **[that I bought __] the book** is boring.

✤ Also, it's possible to use either **that** or a **wh-phrase**:

  ✦ the man [**who** I met __]
  ✦ the man [**that** I met __]

Negation

Negation

✤ Every language needs a way to form negative sentences.

  ✦ **Strategy 1**: add a **particle** before or after a verb (or even both, as in French):
    ‣ **Spanish**: <u>no</u> **duermo** "I don't sleep"
    ‣ **French**: **Je** <u>ne</u> **sais** <u>pas</u> "I don't know"

Negation

✤ Every language needs a way to form negative sentences.

  ✦ **Strategy 2**: use a **negative form** of the verb
    ▸ **Swahili**:
      • **Ninasoma Kiswahili.** "I am studying Swahili."
      • **Tunasoma Kiswahili.** "We are studying Swahili."

      • **Sisomi Kiswahili.** "I am **not** studying Swahili."
      • **Hatusomi Kiswahili.** "We are**n't** studying Swahili."

Negation

✤ Every language needs a way to form negative sentences.

  ✦ **Strategy 3**: use a **particle** at the beginning or at the end of the sentence

  ‣ **Quechua**: particle **mana** is used, but it also requires a suffix **chu** on the verb. (notice nice **evidentials**!)

  ‣ Wañu-nqa-paq-**mi**. "(I assert that) it will die."

  ‣ Wañu-nqa-paq-**shi**. "(I was told that) it will die"

  ‣ Wañu-nqa-paq-**chi**. "(Perhaps) it will die"

  ‣ **Mana** wañu-nqa-paq-**chu**. "It will not die"