

## From rigid to flexible verb-finality:

### A prosodically motivated information-structural account of word order change

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**Introduction.** Information-structural (IS) factors play an important role in determining the availability of postverbal constituents (PVCs) in languages that undergo a change from more to less rigid V-finality: e.g., given/backgrounded PVCs have been noted to appear first, later followed by new/focused PVCs (Surányi & Tánzos 2011; É.Kiss 2014; Asztalos et al. 2017).

In this paper, we adopt the GIVEN>NEW generalization for the development of PVCs and further show that (i) different languages may distinguish subtypes of GIVEN and NEW, which may make the observed progression of facts look quite different. We also demonstrate that, (ii) among NEW PVCs, there is a strong preference for NARROWLY focused ones to become available earlier than those that are part of BROAD FOCUS, and, (iii), among NARROW FOCI, CONTRASTIVE FOCUS appears postverbally earlier than NEW-INFORMATION FOCUS. We derive (i-iii) from the prosodic properties of the postverbal domain in V-final languages, and support our analysis by evidence from multiple V-final languages (including Uralic, Turkic, Kartvelian, and Iranian).

**Proposal.** In V-final languages, as a default, nuclear stress (NS) targets the rightmost VP-internal argument, or in their absence, the verb (Truckenbrodt 2006, Büring 2012). We propose that GIVEN PVCs emerge first because the GIVEN PVCs do not change the overall prosodic make-up of the clause. This is because given material is deaccented – therefore, NS will still be in its default position. Next, NEW (and, hence, accented) PVCs become tolerated, but they are still construed as giving rise to a prosodically marked structure, in which the NS is shifted from its default position to the right. As a consequence, such PVCs have a NARROW FOCUS status. As CONTRASTIVE FOCUS is more marked as an IS category, and, accordingly, it may be more marked in its grammatical form (Repp 2016, Cruschina 2021) than NEW-INFORMATION FOCUS, its emergence as a PVC may occur first. As the final stage, postverbal NS becomes an unmarked option, and NEW PVCs that are part of BROAD FOCUS become allowed.

**Cross-linguistic evidence.** The languages in our sample exemplify different points of the GIVEN>NEW trajectory. **Tundra Nenets** (Uralic) likely represents the most rigidly V-final end of the spectrum: it is described as strictly V-final (Tereshchenko 1973, Nikolaeva 2014), and, we show, only allows for clause-external, prosodically separate afterthought PVCs that are associated with a clause-internal (c)overt correlate. Next, in **Turkish** (Turkic), according to the literature, only given PVCs are allowed, which undergo obligatory deaccenting (Özge & Bozsahin 2010; Öztürk 2013). Similarly, only backgrounded PVCs are allowed in SOV **Amharic** (Semitic; Kramer & Eilam 2012), **Quechuan** (Sánchez 2010) and **Siouan** (Gordon 2015) languages. **Khanty** (Uralic) is also described as rather strictly V-final (Honti 1984; Nikolaeva 1999; Schmidt 2008), but allows for clause-internal, non-afterthought PVCs. We demonstrate that their emergence also adheres to the GIVEN>NEW generalization: in the texts collected in 1901, only GIVEN PVCs were allowed: (*He bid farewell to the fox.*) *Away went [the fox]* (Paasonen & Vértes 2001); in today's Khanty, NEW PVCs are allowed too: (*I live with my father, older sister, and brother-in-law.*) *Also with us live [my brothers]* (Csepregi 1998; Pesikova & Volkova 2013). **Udmurt** (Uralic) is described as flexibly V-final, and is further along the GIVEN>NEW trajectory: in the texts collected in 1885 and 1891-92 (Munkácsi 1887; Wichmann 1901), both (a) GIVEN and NEW PVCs were allowed, with NEW exemplified by (b) CONTRASTIVE FOCI and (c) parts of BROAD FOCUS: (a) (*A fox stole a chicken, goose, ram, and ox.*) *All of them <...> slaughtered [the fox]*; (b) (*A man and a bear negotiated planting beets together.*) *I will take THE ROOTS, and you, bear, [THE TOPS]*; (c) (*A poor Udmurt went to hire himself out as a farmhand.*) *On his way, he met [a forest spirit]*. In today's Udmurt, all these PVCs are also allowed, and the frequency of NEW PVCs is higher than in the older sources (Asztalos et al. 2017: 54–56). Similarly, **Georgian** (Kartvelian) and **Ossetic** (Iranian) are flexible V-final languages, and allow for GIVEN and NEW PVCs (CONTRASTIVE and NEW-INFORMATION NARROW FOCI, and parts of BROAD FOCUS).

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