

Information Structural and Syntactic Status of XPs in Two Non-Canonical Word Order Types
in Old English and Old Icelandic

Yana Chankova, PhD
South-West University

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The present talk reports the major findings from my research on two non-canonical word orders, derived by Scrambling and attested with double object constructions with one non-finite verb in O(ld) E(nglish) and O(ld) Ice(landic), based on The York-Toronto-Helsinki Parsed Corpus of Old English Prose (2003) and the corpus of Íslendinga Sögur (1998). The account of Scrambling is launched in an integrated Minimalist syntactic framework, in particular it draws on theoretical assumptions borrowed from sources in the area of the movement approach to Scrambling (Eythórsson 1995; Haugan 2001; Thráinsson 2001; Epstein & Seely 2006; Wallenberg 2009; Cheng & Corver 2013; Engels & Vikner 2014), but invokes information-structural and semantic factors in an attempt to assess the extent to which the general linearization principles can be affected by such factors. The given-before-new-information packaging strategy is the default option with canonical base orders (Lambrecht 1994; Choi 1999; Hinterhölzl & Petrova 2009; Meurman-Solin, Lopez-Couso & Los 2012; Bech & Eide 2014) but when a syntactically optional displacement operation like Scrambling gives rise to word order alternatives it does not apply uniformly across the alternatives. As information structure interacts with syntactic structure different argument structures may be argued to encode different information-structural constraints. This talk provides convergent support to the claim that Scrambling is an optional displacement operation raising internal Arguments and Adjuncts out of their source positions into phrasally-adjoined targets in the left periphery of vP. Remarkably, while Conservation of C-Command (Wallenberg 2009: 132) prohibits movement of constituents across c-commanding functional heads, a variety of factors (information-structural/ semantic) step in to instigate movement out of the VP domain.

The scrambleability of objects rests with various factors, viz pronominality, definiteness (referential type), weight, and anaphoricity, whereby the main findings can be boiled down to the following claims: pronouns scramble almost obligatorily; definite objects scramble quite freely; indefinite objects scramble only rarely; heavier objects usually remain in the unscrambled position. Scrambled orders in standard V_{fin} -DO(Acc)- $V_{non-fin}$ -IO(Dat) and V_{fin} -DO(Acc)-IO(Dat)- $V_{non-fin}$ constructions are straightforwardly accounted for, hence more pertinent to the analysis prove to be non-canonical derived orders, wherein information structural and syntactic ambiguities arise, cf:

OE Nu wille ic þeah be suman dæle scortlice hit eow sum asecgan. (VercB 50)

‘Now I will though in part and in short tell you some of it.’

OE Ða het he ... þet seolfer him to bringan ðe hit mid bifangen wæs.

(<http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/m/mec/hypidx?type=id&id=hyp.1488.19991101T123123>)

‘Then he ordered ... to bring him that silver with which it was wound.’

OIce ... ef þeir hefðu hlaupið frá manninum en þeir mættu grið gefa honum, (Heið 1387)

‘... if they had run away from the man so they might give him mercy,’

OIce Vil eg það ráð þér gefa sem hverjum öðrum að hann leiti sér þess ráðuneytis ... (Fljót 723)

‘I’ll give that counsel to you as to anyone else that he should seek for himself this solution ...’

Assuming that Scrambling has an effect on the way constituent order correlates with discourse roles, I argue that Scrambling in OE and OIce occurs on the Syntax-Information Structure Interface, and, by corollary that it can be thought of as a type of information packaging syntactic device. It is the

syntactic status of Scrambling as a case of internal adjunction that defines its optional character but at the same time Scrambling is a constrained operation that applies locally to a certain c-command domain, i.e. Scrambling movement targets a left-peripheral adjunction position in the domain between vP and TP. The application of Scrambling as an optional operation is licit in the sense of Chomsky (2001) since disrupting the base-generated order of constituents is construed in connection with information-structural/semantic properties, hence, an information structural effect on outcome is achieved. The studied interactions of word order and information structure can be explained as interface interactions that license scrambled orders on the basis of their syntactic, information structural, semantic and prosodic properties. As syntax interfaces with the syntax-external systems, they modify word order options but do not affect syntax. Base-generated word order and Scrambling of pronouns favour unmarked interpretation, Scrambling definite phrases is a less marked option than Scrambling indefinite phrases, Scrambling focussed phrases is more marked than Scrambling unfocussed phrases.

Among the conclusions are the following: Scrambling in OE and Old Icelandic targets XPs but there are cases when non-constituents are affected by Scrambling; OE and Old Icelandic Scrambling mediates the way discourse roles correlate with constituent order either by invoking specific, topical, defocalized readings or by evoking non-presupposed, contrastive, focused readings; A powerful trigger of Scrambling can be a possible inconsistency between the placement of the default sentence focus and the position of the focus expression.

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