

# Order and structure in syntax I

Word order and syntactic structure

Edited by

Laura R. Bailey

Michelle Sheehan

Open Generative Syntax 1



## Language Variation

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This book is dedicated to Anders Holmberg in recognition not only of his significant contribution to the field of syntax, but also of his support, guidance and friendship to the editors and the contributors to this volume.



# Contents

<b>Introduction: Order and structure in syntax</b> Michelle Sheehan & Laura R. Bailey	<b>vii</b>
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## **I Word order and syntactic structure**

<b>1 Assertion and factivity: Towards explaining restrictions on embedded V2 in Scandinavian</b> Kajsa Djärv, Caroline Heycock & Hannah Rohde	<b>3</b>
<b>2 An argument against the syntactic nature of verb movement</b> Jan-Wouter Zwart	<b>29</b>
<b>3 Feature inheritance in Old Spanish: (re)visiting V2</b> Geoffrey Poole	<b>49</b>
<b>4 Finite sentences in Finnish: Word order, morphology, and information structure</b> Urpo Nikanne	<b>69</b>
<b>5 Scandinavian object shift is phonology</b> Nomi Erteschik-Shir & Gunlög Josefsson	<b>99</b>
<b>6 Mainland Scandinavian object shift and the puzzling ergative pattern in Aleut</b> Ellen Woolford	<b>117</b>
<b>7 Repairing Final-Over-Final Condition violations: Evidence from Basque verb clusters</b> Ricardo Etxepare & Bill Haddican	<b>135</b>
<b>8 Head-initial postpositional phrases in North Sámi</b> Marit Julien	<b>159</b>
<b>9 Probing the nature of the Final-over-Final Condition: The perspective from adpositions</b> Theresa Biberauer	<b>177</b>

<b>10 Nuclear stress and the life cycle of operators</b>	
Norvin Richards	217
<b>11 Response particles beyond answering</b>	
Martina Wiltschko	241
<b>12 The common syntax of deixis and affirmation</b>	
George Tsoulas	281
 <b>II Squibs</b>	
<b>13 V2 and cP/CP</b>	
Sten Vikner, Ken Ramshøj Christensen & Anne Mette Nyvad	313
<b>14 Verb second not verb second in Syrian Arabic</b>	
Mais Sulaiman	325
<b>15 Uniqueness of left peripheral focus, “further explanation”, and Int.</b>	
Luigi Rizzi	333
<b>16 Swedish wh-root-infinitives</b>	
Christer Platzack	345
<b>17 A note on some even more unusual relative clauses</b>	
Richard S. Kayne	363
<b>18 Theoretical limits on borrowing through contact; not everything goes</b>	
Joseph Emonds	373
<b>Index</b>	385



# Introduction: Order and structure in syntax

Michelle Sheehan

Anglia Ruskin University

Laura R. Bailey

University of Kent

Hierarchical structure and argument structure are two of the most pervasive and widely studied properties of natural language.<sup>1</sup> The papers in this set of two volumes further explore these aspects of language from a range of perspectives, touching on a number of fundamental issues, notably the relationship between linear order and hierarchical structure and variation in subjecthood properties across languages. The first volume focuses on issues of word order and its relationship to structure, while the second turns to argument structure and subjecthood in particular. In this introduction, we provide a brief overview of the content of this first volume, drawing out important threads and questions which they raise.

This first volume, consisting of 12 papers and six squibs, addresses the important question of what word order can tell us about syntactic structure and by implication the syntax/semantics interface. In some cases, the claim is that (some aspects of) word order should not be encoded in the narrow syntax (Zwart; Haddican & Extepare; Julien; and Erteschik-Shir & Josefsson) because PF-based explanations are sufficient or even more explanatory. In other cases, it is claimed that word order gaps are best explained by a theory in which word order is encoded narrow syntactically (Biberauer), and the implications of this for the narrow syntax or syntax/semantics interface are explored.

The first three papers (by Djärv, Heycock & Rohde; Zwart; and Poole) focus on the verb second property (henceforth V2), which is characteristic of most of the Germanic language family as well as certain diachronic and synchronic Romance varieties, whereby the finite verb in matrix (and a subset of embedded) clauses occupies the second position and is (usually) preceded by a single constituent (see Holmberg 2015b for an

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<sup>1</sup>All of the papers in this volume were written on the occasion of Anders Holmberg's 65<sup>th</sup> birthday in recognition of the enormous contribution he has made to these issues.



overview). The papers address either how V2 is derived (Poole, Zwart) or its semantic/discourse function (Djärv, Heycock & Rohde), providing novel observations and analyses on a much studied topic. On one hand, Zwart argues that V2 must be a PF phenomenon, based on the fact that auxiliary verbs undergo V2 movement and yet periphrastic tenses must be inserted late in the morphology. Poole, on the other hand, argues that V2 in Old Spanish is derived in the syntactic manner proposed by Holmberg (2012) for the Germanic family: via head and XP movement to the same phrase. Djärv, Heycock & Rohde focus on the semantics/pragmatics of V2 rather than its syntax and are concerned with establishing the precise distribution of V2 clauses and embedded root phenomena more generally, based on novel survey data from Swedish and English. These three papers touch on different aspects of the well-studied V2 phenomenon, highlighting very clearly that the connection between order and structure cannot be taken for granted and nor can the mapping between syntactic and semantic/pragmatic structure. The issues addressed in Djärv, Heycock & Rohde's paper are taken up again in Nikanne's paper (chapter 4), which sketches a new way of thinking about word order in Finnish, a language that displays complex word order patterns, depending on both morphology and information structure. Finally, Sulaiman's squib on verb movement in Syrian Arabic argues that although this language is not generally held to be V2, certain word order patterns are best explained if a similar mechanism to that found in V2 languages is present in this Arabic variety.

The next pair of papers (by Erteschik-Shir & Josefsson and Woolford) and the squib by Vikner, Christensen & Nyvad all focus on another curious word order phenomenon: object shift, a process by which some subset of objects undergoes obligatory or optional movement to the left of adverbs/negation in certain contexts. This phenomenon was studied at length by Anders Holmberg, who observed a curious connection between object shift and verb movement in the Scandinavian languages (Holmberg's Generalization; Holmberg 1986, 1999). Once again, while one paper argues, based on prosodic evidence, that this is a PF operation (Erteschik-Shir & Josefsson), the other takes it to be syntactic and active in languages well beyond those Germanic languages in which it was first observed (Woolford). Woolford's paper argues that in Aleut, ergative case occurs wherever the object of V is null because these null pronouns undergo obligatory object shift out of VP, triggering ergative case (see Woolford 2015).

Chapter 7–9 focus on a peculiar word order gap (the Final-over-Final Condition, henceforth FOFC), which was first discovered by Holmberg (2000) and then developed by Biberauer et al. (2014); Sheehan et al. (2017). FOFC is based on the observation that a head final phrase cannot dominate a head-initial phrase in the same domain (where different definitions of the relevant notion of domain have been offered). Haddican & Extepare consider certain word order gaps in Basque verb clusters, showing that the repairs which occur raise challenges for a narrow syntactic view of FOFC. Biberauer and Julien both discuss the relevance of FOFC to the adpositional domain. Biberauer considers the complex adpositional system of Afrikaans in the contexts of broader cross-linguistic patterns and defends a narrow syntactic view of FOFC. Julien, on the other hand, focuses on data from Sámi, a language which also has both prepositions and postpositions, but argues for a PF-based account, departing from previous approaches.

Finally, chapters 10–12 and the squibs by Rizzi, Platzack and Kayne focus on word order and other issues connected to the left periphery of the clause. Wiltschko's and Tsoulas' contributions focus on questions, answers and responses, showing that complex structures lie behind simple response particles such as *yes* and *no* (see also Holmberg 2015a). While Wiltschko adopts the idea that particles are simplex and their complex meaning arises from the clausal structures into which they are inserted, Tsoulas argues that particles themselves contain internal structure.

Rizzi's squib considers the uniqueness condition on focus and whether this effect should be explained by locality or interface conditions. He argues, based on the fact that the uniqueness condition is preserved even in complex sentences containing multiple clauses, that locality based explanations are insufficient. He further shows, however, that locality may be required to rule out word order restrictions between foci and interrogative complementisers, the conclusion being that both kinds of explanations may be necessary in order to explain cartographic generalisations. Kayne's squib adopts an explanation for the different landing sites of *wh*-movement in questions vs. relative clauses, in terms of locality. He goes on to show, however, that the derivation of relative clauses is more complex than previously thought as it is possible to form relative clauses containing multiple *wh*-phrases. Such examples, he argues, can be accounted for if relative pronouns are actually determiners which get stranded when their NP complement moves to a higher position. Platzack's squib turns to word order effects in a different kind of *wh*-clause: *wh*-root-infinitive clauses in Swedish. He proposes, based on word order facts and the unavailability of overt subjects, that these kinds of clauses lack a T projection.

Richards' paper focuses on movement operations and how they contribute to syntactic structure building, bringing together several different strands of research to argue for two distinct kinds of A-bar movement: one which leaves a null pronoun and another which leaves a null definite description.

Lastly, Emonds' paper uses word order differences between Old and Middle English amongst other grammatical differences to further defend Emonds & Faarlund's (2014) proposal that Modern English is a North Germanic language. While Old English was an OV language (with some complications), Middle English has unmarked VO order in both main and dependent clauses. It also has preposition stranding, parasitic gaps, subject+tense tag questions, all features which it shares with North Germanic but not West Germanic.

The papers in this first volume address different word order-related issues and focus on data from a wide range of languages including Afrikaans, Aleut, Basque, Danish, Dutch, English, Finnish, German, Greek, North Sámi, Norwegian, Old Spanish, and Swedish. They all share the desire to better understand the relationship between linear order, syntax and semantics, using intricate data from the detailed study of individual languages informed by broader cross-linguistic patterns. Anders Holmberg has been a pioneer of this kind of careful syntactic investigation for the past 30 years, and continues to be so to this day.

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## **Part I**

# **Word order and syntactic structure**

