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Introduction

Roland Hinterhölzl and Svetlana Petrova

1. Motivation

The present volume contains papers dedicated to the explanation of word order variation and change in the history of the Germanic languages. It relates to one of the most prominent and widely discussed topics in the syntax of the Germanic languages.

In this volume, these classical topics are approached from the perspective of a novel account to grammar change (cf. Lightfoot 1999, Hróarsdóttir 2003, Hinterhölzl 2004) in which slow gradual language change paves the way for abrupt changes in grammar. In particular, Hinterhölzl (2004) proposes that one important link between language use and grammar is constituted by the grammatical means of information packaging or shortly information structure. Since information packaging represents a core means of the speaker to create novel patterns and expressions for rhetoric expressivity and particular communicative needs, it serves as one of the major sources of variation.

This approach is further developed in the Research Project B4 which is anchored in the collaborative research center (SFB 632) on Information Structure at Potsdam University and the Humboldt University in Berlin. In a large-scale investigation on the interaction between information-structural and grammatical conditions in the development of word order regularities in the Germanic languages, new explanations for the diverse developments of these languages are sought.

The novelty of this approach consists in three main points. First of all, it aims at describing variation in word order not as a result of language contact, as in previous research (cf. Kroch 1989, Pintzuk 1999), but rather as a language-internal phenomenon which is due to stylistic effects related to information packaging and discourse structure. Secondly, bearing in mind that information structure is a completely new field of study in historical linguistics, it develops methods for the analysis of information-structural phenomena in texts from historical corpora that are available only in written form and bear no or little cues to prosody and intonation. Thirdly, the project carries out research on a much larger scale than previous research

on the development of Germanic word order, including empirical studies on large corpora of Old High German (OHG), Old Saxon (OS) and Old Icelandic (OI).

The present volume features important results of this enterprise as well as a number of selected papers from the international conference on *Word order variation and change*, organized by Project B4 in October 2005 in Berlin.

2. Word order Variation and Word order Change in Germanic

The modern Germanic languages display a great variety of different word orders. In German the object precedes the verb (OV), in English it obligatorily follows the verb, while Icelandic allows for both word orders (OV/VO). In German main clauses, the finite verb appears in second position (V2), Icelandic also shows V2-patterns in embedded clauses, while English did not develop a generalized V2-rule at all. The issue of how it came about that so closely related languages developed such diverse word order patterns was one of the main research questions in Germanic linguistics in the past hundred years. Research in this tradition has focussed on the following issues.

2.1. What is the basic word order in Germanic?

One of the central issues was the question of what counts as the base position of the verb in Germanic. In the oldest Germanic texts, the verb appears in a great number of different positions: besides V2 and verb final orders, V1 and medial positions of the verb are quite common as well. Moreover, all these different orders can be found in main as well as in embedded clauses. While Braune (1894) held that verb placement is free in Germanic, Erdmann (1886) and Tomanetz (1879) assumed that due to its high frequency, V2 order must display the base position of the verb. At the end, Delbrück (1911), building on Wackernagel's (1892) work, succeeded in arguing that the verb-final pattern should be treated as the basic pattern in Germanic.

Newer investigations, however, indicate a high proportion of VO orders in the older stages of all Germanic languages (cf. Kavanagh (1970), who claims that 50% of embedded clauses in OHG display VO order). Given that OV order is to be considered as the basic word order, word orders with

postposed objects or preposed verbs were treated as marked word orders whose functions were described with the unanalysed notion of emphasis (cf. Näf 1979, Dittmer and Dittmer 1998). According to Fleischmann (1973) preposing of the verb (V1 or V2) in OHG served the purpose of putting the situation described by the verb into the foreground, while postposing of the verb signalled that the situation described by the verb is to be interpreted as part of the background. In this scenario, the differentiation of verb placement in main and embedded clauses in German can be analyzed as the grammaticalisation of different word order patterns that were originally motivated by information structure.

2.2. The development of V2

Following Delbrück, the question arises how V2 orders have developed from original verb final orders in Germanic. The traditional answer is that according to Wackernagel's law (which has clitics move into second position in Indo-European languages), light finite verbs start to be placed after the accented first constituent in main clauses in Germanic; a movement operation that was later extended to all finite verbs.

A very influential proposal about the development of V2 was put forward by Vennemann (1974). He assumes that Germanic had inherited the basic verb final order (SXV) from Indo-European and that the V2 pattern first initiated with the preposing of thematic stressed constituents. In this scenario, TVX (initial V2) constitutes an intermediate stage in the development of OV languages to VO languages.

Fourquet (1974) proposes a completely different account of the development of V2. In his treatment, V2 results from a gradual process that places the verb in a sentence-medial position due to postposing of non-pronominal constituents. In his scenario, an intermediate pattern arises in which pronominal elements precede the verb in main clauses that is well documented in Old English (OE) texts of the earlier period.

Until recently it was assumed that all Germanic languages, including English, had developed a generalized V2-rule. Newer studies of the development of verb placement in English have shown that OE only displayed a residual V2 pattern: V2 only appears if an operator (wh-word or negation) is preposed, while the preposing of constituents without operator status yields V3 word order.

In order to account for residual V2, Kiparsky (1995, 1996) introduced structural positions for Focus and Topic in the C-domain. In his account,

only movement of an operator into the Focus position is accompanied by movement of the verb, while with preposed topics, analyzed as occupying adjoined positions to the CP, the verb may stay in a lower position. This account raises the question of why OHG was rather different from Old English in this respect, since already in this stage of German, preposing of a non-operator constituent regularly triggered V2 as well.

2.3. The change from OV to VO in English

Most studies about the development of English into a pure VO language assume that OE was an OV language of the modern German type and that VO structures are innovations that came about and spread in the Middle English (ME) period. It is important to note that at the same time in which OV structures disappear, English lost most of its nominal and verbal morphology. Therefore this development was characterized as a process in which due to the loss of morphological distinctions, verb placement serves to distinguish the grammatical functions of subject and objects (cf., among others, Vennemann 1974).

Along these lines, Roberts (1997) tries to explain the change in word order with the loss of Case morphology in Early Middle English (EME). Note, however, that this account must remain unsatisfactory under a wider Germanic perspective, since it raises the question why Dutch had not also developed into a VO language.

There is a growing number of works that take into account the great variety of word orders in early English. Most prominent among these are the accounts of Kroch (1989) and Pintzuk (1999) which relate the presence of OV and VO word orders to the availability of an OV grammar and a VO grammar (double base hypothesis). According to them the availability of two grammars is due to language contact between Anglo-Saxons (basic OV grammar) and Scandinavian settlers (basic VO grammar) in the 10th century.

Also this account remains unsatisfactory since a) one of its presuppositions, namely that the Scandinavian settlers spoke a VO language, cannot be proven and b) it does not take into account that already OE displayed VO word orders. Since VO orders can also be found in OHG and in OI (cf. Hróarsdóttir 2000), it is reasonable to assume that VO orders in English are not due to language contact but are part of the common inheritance of the Germanic languages.

So far it has not been investigated whether the availability of OV and VO orders in OE could not be due to information-structural factors and

there are no comparative investigations of OV and VO orders in the oldest stages of Germanic, that is, in OE, OHG and OI.

2.4. The development of the sentence bracket in German

As discussed above, the positioning of arguments and adjuncts after the verb constitutes a common word order pattern in the early stages of the Germanic languages. Given that the basic word order in these languages was verb final, these word orders were analysed as involving exbracketation or extraposition (cf. Behaghel 1932). In the German tradition, the problem of extraposition was discussed under the perspective of the development of the German sentence bracket and constituted the subject of a large number of empirical studies. Considering only the later stage of OHG, there are three studies that note a significant reduction of extraposed direct objects in this period (cf. Bolli 1975, Näf 1979 and Bortler 1982). Unfortunately, these studies are purely descriptive and do not take into consideration the information-structural role of extraposed constituents. In general, most of these studies treat the development of the German sentence bracket as a purely stylistic phenomenon that is brought about by socio-cultural factors: the influence of Latin classical writers (Behaghel 1892) or the spreading of the written style of formal bureaucratic language (Ebert 1999). In all these studies, the role of grammar in yielding (different) stylistic preferences is not taken into account.

It is remarkable that the development of English has been described as a change in grammar while the development of German has been described as a purely stylistic change in most formal studies, including the approach of Lenerz (1984), which only relates the development of V2 to a change in grammar, namely the introduction of an obligatory C-projection.

Formal treatments of the development of word order regularities in Germanic have mostly ignored the role of information structure so far. Traditional and functional accounts of these developments have often pointed out the influence of information-structural parameters on these processes, but failed to show how stylistic change can be related to grammar change.

Recent works in generative theory on restrictions on movement as well as on restrictions on word order in the left periphery have proposed to integrate pragmatic notions like topic and focus into the syntax by defining pragmatically determined syntactic nodes in the split C-domain (Müller & Sternefeld 1993, Rizzi 1997). These proposals about the information-struct-

tural organisation of the C-domain, as discussed above, has been adopted by Kiparsky (1995, 1996) and applied to the analysis of the left periphery in Indo-European languages. Furthermore, several studies on the representation of focus have shown that focussing of a constituent involves changes in word order in many languages. In the following, Zubizarreta (1998) developed a general theory about the interaction between word order, prosody and information structure. The application of these theories and of insights on the interaction between core grammar and information-structure in the analysis of older stages of Germanic is still wanting.

Finally, as already pointed out above, in the new model of change in which variation in language use is crucial in processes of grammar change, information structure acquires a central role in explaining word order variation and change: the expression of IS-categories in terms of different grammatical means and their more pronounced or reduced use by speakers in specific contexts and communicative situations can be taken as a major source of synchronic variation as well as a crucial link between grammatical form and stylistic form.

This volume collects a number of papers that – by taking into account information-structural factors – try to relate formal and functional explanations in order to yield a more complete and unified account of the development of word order regularities in Germanic.

3. The structure of the book

The volume consists of three sections, each dedicated to different aspects of the complex task of investigating the role of information structure in historic texts. First, there is the question of which information structural notions are relevant for explaining word order variation. Then, the question arises of how to analyse the interaction between core grammar and information-structural conditions. These questions are addressed in the theoretical contributions in Section 2. The authors discuss pertinent theoretical issues concerning word order variation and word order change and review current research on the role of information structure in the grammar. They agree that information structure is a factor responsible for the emergence of new word order patterns and constructions in the early stages of the Germanic languages, which provided the basis for the further development of word order regularities in the individual Germanic languages and their dialects.

Second, there is the question of how to retrieve IS-categories in texts of historical corpus languages, i.e. in texts available in written form only, with no or very restricted access to prosodic information. It is well-known that the Germanic languages are languages in which information structure is reflected prominently in the intonation of constituents. These issues are addressed in detail in Section 3, where different philological and linguistic methods of finding secure cues to unmarked word order and information structure are presented.

Section 4, finally, turns to the information-structural analysis of historical texts proper. The papers present individual analyses of the main texts of the Old German corpus and show to which degree an approach is successful which tries to make sense of word order variation in terms of IS-categories and to which degree such an approach allows to make generalisations across different texts and genres.

3.1. Information structure and word order variation

The contributions in Section 2 feature individual studies on word order variation in OHG, OE and OI, arguing that the consideration of information structure offers new and interesting ways of explaining the pertinent variation.

The contribution by **Katrin Axel** focuses on word order variation in the left periphery in OHG and investigates the status of V2 in OHG texts from Isidor to Notker. Axel argues that the modern V2-system was already in place in OHG leading to the regular fronting of wh-operators and topics, while CP-expletives were still missing in OHG. According to Axel, this system existed parallel to an older system in which clause type was not signalled via word order but by a limited class of particles. Axel surmises that the older system disappeared when the innovative rule of stylistic fronting was extended, giving rise to a further consolidation of the dominant V2-pattern.

The contribution by **Roland Hinterhölzl** focuses on word order variation in the right periphery in OHG and discusses the factors that led to the establishment of the famous sentence bracket in modern German. Hinterhölzl argues that word order variation within one grammar is due to the expression of different IS-categories and word order change involves a change in the mapping between syntactic structure and prosodic structure in which information structure plays a crucial role.

The contribution by **Thorbjörg Hróarsdóttir** discusses aspects of word order variation in the right periphery in OI showing that this variation is

due to a complex interaction between prosodic and information-structural factors. Hróarsdóttir also discusses the change to basic VO order in Icelandic, showing that traditional treatments fail to account for the slow gradual loss of OV orders, and instead argues for a change in language use, namely in the expression of IS-categories, which paved the way to the eventual change in grammar.

The contribution by **Ans van Kemenade** addresses aspects of word order variation in the middle field in OE showing that a certain class of short adverbs separates the domain of discourse-given and discourse-new constituents in the clause, pointing out the similarities of these patterns with scrambling in German. Van Kemenade argues that the syntax, though constituting a tightly circumscribed system, offers a limited amount of options which defines the space in which language users can manipulate word order according to information-structural needs. According to van Kemenade, this system of IS-based ordering of constituents disappeared, when a specific type of referring expressions, namely simple demonstratives, were lost in ME.

3.2. How to identify unmarked word order and IS-categories in a corpus language

The contributions in Section 3 address various methodological issues concerning a) the identification of the unmarked word order in a corpus language displaying mixed word orders and b) the identification of IS-categories in historic texts that provide no or very little clues to prosody.

The contribution by **Thomas Krisch** uses various cross-linguistic generalisations concerning deletions in coordination and in ellipsis to probe the unmarked word order in ancient Indo-European languages like Latin, Greek, Sanskrit and Hittite. Krisch concludes from evidence for backward gapping that these languages were underlyingly SOV languages, while forward gapping is interpreted as a reflex of V-to-C movement. Furthermore, Krisch argues that deletions in coordination provide insights into the information-structural value of the constituents in the clause.

The contribution by **Jürg Fleischer** constitutes a careful philological study of different palaeographic phenomena, foremost accent diacritics and word separation, as potential clues to prosodic information in different manuscripts of the OHG period. Fleischer addresses the important issue of whether diacritics signal prosodic prominence on a single word in the text. His analysis shows, however, that each of the OHG manuscripts displays

its own system of accentuation in which diacritics may serve more than one single function. While in Notker's texts, accents are used to mark vowel quantity, the same diacritics are devices for different types of graphical and phonetic disambiguation in other texts. Nevertheless, Fleischer provides examples in which the use of an accent is related to prosodic prominence in the text. But any conclusion on the role of accentuation as a strategy of marking information structure has to take into account the remaining functions of diacritics in the particular record. This result leaves the historical linguist with a careful and stepwise procedure of text interpretation as the only reliable method of identifying IS-categories in historic texts.

The contribution by **Svetlana Petrova** and **Michael Solf** addresses the different issues one is confronted with in investigating the role of information structure in word order variation in historic texts. The first issue is how to identify the structures that represent instances of authentic OHG word order, given the fact that the large texts of this period are either poetic or constitute translations from Latin. The second issue concerns the determination of the information-structural role of a constituent in a text and presupposes an analysis that breaks up the rather controversial information-structural notions, like topic, focus and background, into their constitutive features that can be used to make the assignment of IS-categories in a given text sequence on the basis of contextual interpretation as objective and tractable as possible. The exposition of this methodological procedure is embedded in a thorough discussion of the analysis of the basic IS-notions in the literature and concludes with some illustrative examples of how IS-categories are to be assigned to a given constituent in the text of the OHG Tatian translation.

3.3. Information structure in texts: five case studies

The contributions in Section 4 constitute detailed empirical studies addressing the question of whether the consideration of information-structural aspects can provide us with a deeper and coherent explanation of the great amount of word order variation in the main texts of the German inheritance. Thus, we selected contributions from researchers which combine the theoretical linguistic knowledge with the necessary philological expertise on the individual text. If not indicated by the author itself, the contributions of Section 4 use the same IS-notions as defined by Petrova and Solf in Section 3, in order to guarantee that the individual results in this section can be evaluated and compared with each other.

The contribution by **Eva Schlachter** discusses word order variation in the OHG Isidor translation which is among the earliest texts of the OHG corpus. She examines the position of the finite verb in subordinated clauses introduced by *dhazs*. She observes that an extraordinarily high percentage of 'light' verbs, i.e. copula and auxiliary verbs, end up in a higher clause position yielding structural variation in the right periphery. Schlachter also demonstrates that variation in the positional realisation of main vs. light verbs in the Isidor text is associated with different strategies to highlight new and contrastive information in the clause.

The contribution by **Svetlana Petrova** addresses the role of information structure in word order variation in the right periphery in the largest and oldest *prosa* text of the German inheritance, namely the Tatian translation. Based on a thorough investigation of word order in embedded clauses, she shows that constituents are mapped according to their information-structural contribution into three different fields of the clause: a) discourse given nominal constituents are realized adjacent to C, b) constituents that are narrowly (contrastively) focussed are realized left-adjacent to the finite verb, while c) constituents that represent new information focus are realized after the finite verb. While the placement of discourse given material is identical to that in modern German, OHG seems to distinguish two types of focus positions. Petrova proposes that the OHG-system in this way allows to avoid focus ambiguities that pervade the NHG-system: if the most deeply embedded argument is stressed in NHG, this pattern can express either narrow focus (on the argument) or wide focus.

Word order and information structure in the *Gospel Harmony* by Otrifrid von Weissenburg are addressed in the contribution by **Andreas Lötscher**. Lötscher argues that word order in this text is largely determined by the same rules and principles that govern modern German clause structure, rejecting the standard view that word order variation is entirely due to the poetic nature of this text. In particular, Lötscher investigates the placement of constituents within or outside of the sentence bracket formed by the finite and non-finite verb in the clause. Lötscher argues that this major characteristic of German word order is well-established in the syntax of Otrifrid, with the distinction that arguments can optionally be placed in the Mittelfeld or in the Nachfeld. Lötscher argues that their distribution is not random but is governed by information-structural factors.

The contribution by **Rosemarie Lühr** examines a late-OHG text, namely the translation of Boethius's *De Consolatione Philosophiae* from Latin to OHG by Notker of St. Gall. The main issue is to investigate the way in which the OHG translation reflects information-structural phenom-

ena of the Latin original. Lühr's careful study shows that Notker was aware of the language-specific means to express IS-categories in the original and investigates the means by which these categories are expressed in the OHG text. The most interesting cases are those in which Notker considerably transformed the word order determined by the original, in order to provide a clear identification of the IS-categories in his translation. Lühr also argues that these changes arguably respect the rules of a genuine grammatical system and therefore provide an insight into the effects of information structure on OHG word order, by pointing out that constructions like the Latin hyperbaton, which serve to mark focus but are ungrammatical in Germanic, are translated without splitting up constituents, as it is typical for Latin.

The contribution by **Sonja Linde** addresses word order and information structure in OS, a language that is almost unexplored from a syntactic viewpoint. She argues that the syntactic variation in the left periphery in the poetic text of *Heliant*, which constitutes the major part of the OS corpus, is best understood if it is regarded as the result of two competing systems, one involving verb fronting to C and optional movement to SpecC, and one representing an archaic stage in which, in line with Kiparsky (1995), the functional category C has not developed yet. Linde shows that in the latter system, the syntactic realisation of sentence constituents with respect to the finite verb was determined by pragmatic, i.e. information-structural and discourse-related factors.

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