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Focusing on SOV in a structural, typological,
and field-linguistic perspective

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A structural perspective

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1. From **linearization to structure** – the positioning of **phrasal heads**

➤ **Head-final (“OV”) – head-initial (“VO”) – unspecified (“T3”)**

➤ **Head-final VP = “SOV”**

(1) a. [in jeder Hinsicht] [die strukturellen Perspektiven] **bevorzugen**

b. [die strukturellen Perspektiven] [in jeder Hinsicht] **bevorzugen**

➤ **Head-initial NP**

(2) a. das **Bevorzugen** der/von strukturellen Perspektiven in jeder Hinsicht

b. *das **Bevorzugen** in jeder Hinsicht der/von strukturellen Perspektiven

➤ **Head-initial VP – English – No scrambling**

(3) e. **prefer** the structural perspectives in every respect

f. ***prefer** in every respect the structural perspectives

2. From **structures to their explanation**

Alternative structural perspectives

Structural perspective #1:

The position of the *head* matters (**parameterized**)

- different *head* positions

Structural perspective #2:

The position of the *complement phrases* matter

- different *complement* positions (**derivational**)

‘Explanantion’ under PERSPECTIVE #2:

- (4) a. **prefer** [the structural perspectives] [in every respect]
b. **bevorzugen** [die strukturellen Perspektiven] [in jeder Hinsicht]

+ FRONTING

[in jeder Hinsicht]

[die strukturellen Perspektiven]

- c. [die strukturellen Perspektiven] [in jeder Hinsicht] **bevorzugen**

Grand prediction under Perspective #2:

Preverbal phrases in OV are phrases in **spec** positions and therefore they will display the very same syntactic properties as **preverbal phrases in VO**.

What is the syntactic reality?

(5) a. **What** do we [need [an explanation for --]] ?

b. ***What** [is [an explanation for --] needed] ?

Consequently:

c. **Was** ist Kayne nicht gelungen, [damit -- zu erklären]?

Prediction for (d): ☒

d. **Was** ist Kayne [damit -- zu erklären] nicht gelungen?

Prediction for (e): ☒

e. **Was** ist [damit -- zu erklären] Kayne nicht gelungen?

Prediction for (f): ☒

f. **Den** wird [davon -- abzuhalten] keiner bewerkstelligen

Explanation under PERSPECTIVE #1:

- a. Generalization on projection structures: right-branching.
- b. Parametrized directionality property of phrasal heads: {←, →}
- c. **Prediction** of the existence of a **third type**
 - Type I: 'OV': ← (head-final)
 - Type II: 'VO': → (head-initial)
 - Type III: 'OVO': ↔ = ← or → (unspecified directionality value)

Ten differential predictions for OV vs. VO

- #1: **No obligatory subject** expletives in OV
- #2: **No 'edge-effect'** for left-adjoined phrases in OV
- #3: Head-final phrases are not compact; head-initial ones are
- #4: Variable order of clause-internal argument phrases, viz. 'Scrambling' in OV
- #5: **Compactness** of the sequence of (auxiliary) verbs in OV
- #6: Interrogative subject left behind ('**Superiority**')
- #7: Fronting of VP **sub-constituents** (in 'fronting' languages)
- #8: Grammatical filler-gap dependencies terminating in preverbal phrases or clauses are ok in OV
- #9: Distribution of result predicates and particles
- #10: **Nominalization** of V+V(+V) sequences

T3 – for instance Slavic languages

	VO	OV	Slavic
▪ Scrambling	no	yes	yes
▪ Superiority	yes	no	no
▪ Edge effect	yes	no	no
▪ Opacity of preverbal phrases	yes	no	no
▪ Variable V-Aux-order	no	yes	yes

See Haider & Szucsich (in press):

Slavic does not share the characteristics of **VO**-languages.

Some open questions on our joint agenda

- a. Are the **Indo-European SVO** languages representative of the **SVO** (= strictly head-initial) **type**?
- b. What is the finer-grained **profile of T3** (subtypes)?
- c. How to adduce **reliable typological data** for deciding these questions?

Please download the materials this presentation is based on from the download section of [my homepage](#) or from [Academia.edu](#):

- 2015. **Head directionality – in syntax and morphology**. In: Antonio Fábregas, Jaume Mateu, Mike Putnam eds. *The Handbook of Parameters* (Bloomsbury Academic).
- (in press) Haider H. & Luka Szucsich. **Scrambling and V-positioning in Slavic languages – exceptionally VO or regular T3?** In: *The German Middle Field in a Comparative and Diachronic Perspective*. R. Hinterhölzl, K. Bentzen, A. Speyer & L. Szucsich (eds.) Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- **Profiling SOV**. Syntactic correlates of head-final phrases. Ms.

Background

2013. **Symmetry breaking in syntax**. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (Cambridge Studies in Linguistics 136).

2010. **The Syntax of German**. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (Cambridge Syntax Guides)